

# Personal Code of Ministerial Ethics

I have signed the Ministers Council *Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders* (<http://www.ministerscouncil.com/WhoWeAre/documents/CodeEngAmended2004.pdf>). Below, I have laid out additional guidelines to which I have committed myself.

Each point should be understood as qualified by a resounding, “God being my helper...”

## Ministry

- **I will strive to maintain an attitude of servant-leadership.** I will always remember that I have given up any life of self-fulfillment or self-seeking in order to serve God by serving my congregation. I will think of them in love and lead them with gentleness. I will avoid extreme forms of leadership, being neither dictatorial nor easily manipulated. I will serve my congregation by helping them grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus and will not allow anything to impede this mission.
- **I will balance preaching, teaching, discipleship, evangelism, and other duties.** I will do my best to fulfill all facets of my job description. I will not put an undue amount of time and energy into any individual facet to the exclusion of the others. Still, I will recognize that my primary role is that of preacher and will give it the appropriate emphasis.
- **I will never knowingly misuse a text to fit my agenda in preaching.** I will strive to always exegete, not “intro-gete” the Holy Scripture, paying careful attention to the original language, historical and cultural context, etc.
- **I will maintain a heightened professional sense of confidentiality.** I will never break the confidence of a counselee, colleague, or parishioner unless they plan to harm themselves or others.
- **I will respect the traditions of the church I am serving.** I will seriously pray and seek God’s will when considering changes to an existing tradition in the church. When such a change does take place, I will do my best to implement it gently and lovingly, understanding that traditions are important to people and often serve as aids to worshipping God.
- **I will not take advantage of any authority or prestige attached to my position as a pastor.** I will not use the pastorate as a tool to gain deals, freebies, or preferential treatment. Nor will I use my pulpit or position to advocate particular political parties or positions. To do so would be to trivialize my call to ministry.
- **I will not show favoritism in dealing with my congregation.** Recognizing that I will undoubtedly develop closer relationships with some church members than with others, I will not allow my ministry to be corrupted through the exchange of favors, preferential treatment of friends, etc. in the context of church business and ministry.
- **I will cooperate with other Christian churches and denominations as much as possible.** I will teach my congregation about the vastness of the Kingdom of God through joint worship, service, and fellowship with other Christian churches. I will not attempt to recruit members from other Christian churches.
- **I will take on additional responsibilities (beyond my role as pastor) only if I can fulfill them without a negative effect on my ministry.** Pastors are in a unique position to be salt and light to the community. I will always consider carefully my motives in taking on such additional roles and make certain that I have the time and energy to carry them out.

- **When I leave a church, I will do it for the right reasons and will not come back without the consent of the new minister.** Although churches are usually happy to see an old pastor, I will bear in mind that, in order for my successor to be effective, he or she needs to develop relationships without competition from former leaders. I will always seek God through serious prayer to ensure that I never consider leaving a church for purely monetary or status-related reasons.

### Personal

- **I will not use my ministry as an excuse to neglect my own physical, mental, and emotional needs.** In order to be a good steward of my body and in order to be the most effective minister possible, I must take care of my own needs as a fallible human. I recognize that there will be a temptation to become a “martyr” for my ministry by ignoring personal needs. I will overcome this temptation, God being my helper. I will strive to regularly exercise my body, maintain a healthy diet, and get adequate sleep in order to remain physically fit. I will work at allowing myself to forget about ministry pressures and responsibilities for set periods of time to keep myself from mental and emotional overload. I will make wise use of advanced planning on a calendar or planning device to secure the time needed for these activities.
- **I will continually seek God in order to grow in faith and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ through personal study, prayer, and continued education.** I may be tempted to neglect my own spiritual development because of the demands of helping my congregation with theirs. I will never stop studying God’s word, seeking His will through prayer, developing my theology, and enjoying personal times of worship. I will take part in seminars, conferences, and classes that will help me in my personal spiritual formation as well as those that will help me as a pastor and leader. I recognize that all Christians are called to a lifetime of continued maturing in faith.
- **I will respect the Fourth Commandment by devoting one day out of seven to rest, reflection, and prayer.** Although I may always be on call for emergencies, I will make every effort to rest regularly. In addition to weekly rest, I will try to have yearly retreats both with family (vacation) and alone (sabbatical, study).
- **I will honor God with the way I conduct my finances.** As a good steward of the gifts God has blessed me with, my family and I will always live within our means and cheerfully give the Lord a tithe of our income.
- **I will pursue friendships outside of the congregation I serve.** In order to maintain a healthy personal life and avoid burnout, I will maintain friendships with some people outside of my church and denomination. These friendships may or may not be evangelism opportunities, but evangelism will not be their only goal.
- **I will not take advantage of the freedom afforded by a career in ministry.** I recognize that although a career in ministry offers some flexibility and less direct supervision than most, ministers are more accountable to God and man. I will never take advantage of this flexibility and fall into the sin of laziness. If I do, I will confess it immediately and seek God’s help in correcting it.
- **I will remain humble in successes, reminding myself that it is ultimately not my ministry, but God’s.** I will continually pray for God to strengthen me against the pride that often plagues ministers. Should I find that I am becoming prideful, I will ask God to break me of my pride, knowing that He will do so.
- **I will avoid inappropriate conversation and gossip.** As a minister, I will be privy to information that should not be shared in casual conversation. I will decide before the fact what I will and will not discuss with others, based on the factors involved.

- **I will take part in a clergy accountability group.** Because a cord of three strands cannot be broken, I will seek out a group of at least two other ministers for the purpose of accountability, mutual edification, and encouragement.
- **I will not be alone with a woman to whom I am not related.** Because Satan gains footholds through such indiscretions and because pastor's are to be above reproach, no matter how trivial they seem, I am committed to avoiding all such situations. I will not share a car, office, or boardroom with a woman unless others are present (with the exception of visiting elderly women.) I will not be seen interacting socially with a woman who is not my wife unless it is part of a group or my wife is present. I will never counsel a woman alone unless others are present in the vicinity and able to see us at all times.

### Family

- **I will always recognize that my first commitment is to my family.** Because a man must first have his own house in order to be eligible for ministry, I will always make my family my first priority. I will do whatever I can to keep my ministry from becoming a source of conflict within my family. I will block out, in advance, regular times devoted exclusively to my wife and children and protect these times from sources of competition.
- **I will not use my vocation as an excuse to impose unrealistic expectations on my family.** I will communicate to my church that my family is a normal family and must be allowed to operate as such.
- **I will respect my family's gifts and talents.** I will not look to my family as an easy way to fill a position or need within the church unless they are gifted in that area of ministry and feel a call to it. I will not communicate to my children any expectation that they will go into professional ministry unless they are called by God.
- **I will secure permission from family members before using them in sermon illustrations.** Because the pastor's family should not be expected to always open every detail of their lives up to the church, I will be very judicious about my use of family situations as sermon illustrations.
- **I will strive to maintain a healthy boundary between "work" and "home."** Although a minister can never (and should never) completely separate his personal life from his "work life," I will respect my wife's needs and develop boundaries with the church as to when I am available and when I am unavailable, save true emergencies.
- **I will maintain an open and honest relationship with my wife.** I will not hide personal and pastoral failings from my wife. If I violate an area of my personal or family ethical code, I will tell her immediately.
- **I will not get divorced. Ever.** If my marriage were to end in divorce, I would immediately step down from pastoral ministry.