

## Introduction

In a myriad of ways this pastor's primer you hold in your hand capsulates my over a quarter of a century of pastoral ministry. This journey took me from the little town of Hobart out on the southwestern plains of Oklahoma to the concrete canyons of downtown Dallas. It has been my joy and privilege to be called "pastor" to four wonderful congregations of believers across the years. While at the First Baptist Church of Hobart, Oklahoma I learned that the pastorate is the people business and that life is about relationships. While at the First Baptist Church of Ada, Oklahoma, those good and godly people with a rich pulpit heritage inspired me to become an expository preacher. While serving the First Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida for fifteen years, I had the privilege of being on the cutting edge of church growth and for that decade and a half watched God do what few local churches have been able to see and experience. Then, at the First Baptist Church in Dallas I found anew the stewardship of pastoral authority and the respect that goes with heritage and history.

Along the way of my personal journey I have been fortunate to have had two remarkable mentors in ministry. Dr. W. Fred Swank, my father in the ministry who led me to Christ as a seventeen year old young man, consistently modeled the pastor's heart before me and was my constant source of encouragement, correction and counsel. Then, after his death, Dr. W. A. Criswell "adopted" me as his own. He took me under his wing and into his heart during my days in Fort Lauderdale and then it was my good fortune to pastor the same people he had pastored for fifty years. He was my biggest asset and greatest encouragement during my Dallas days. Both of these pastors, like righteous Abel, "though dead still speak" today through much of my own philosophy of ministry which is found in this volume.

The journey of this Pastor's Primer will take us through twenty six chapters. Each chapter contains a *PowerPoint* where we will deal with the power of the subject at hand. There is also a *PracticalPoint* where we will seek to put our hand on the handle of how "to do" ministry at the chapter's particular point of interest. This is followed by a *PressurePoint*. Here we will be cautious of various things to avoid and seek to be watchful of potential problems which could possibly arise at the point of the particular chapter's topic. Then we will come to a *PulpitPoint* where we will establish by a Biblical basis from an expository sermon outline related to the chapter's primary subject. Finally, each chapter will conclude with a *PersonalPoint* at which the reader will have opportunity to make personal applications for future considerations.

As the years unfold before us it is my prayer that some young pastor out there somewhere, perhaps going to his first pastorate, will find some nugget of truth and help from these pages in order that he might, like David, lead his people "with the integrity of his heart and the skillfulness of his hands." (Psalm 78:72).