

Essential Characteristics for Nazarene Pastors

The Viewpoints of Pastors and Lay Members

Kenneth E. Crow, Ph.D.

The role of pastor is a demanding one. It requires strong Christian character and many abilities. Therefore, committed Christians who become pastors must be convinced that this is God's will for their lives, must prepare themselves for their calling, must find continuing, strong resources, both spiritual and professional, and must continually draw on divine guidance and power.

Therefore, in the spring of 1991 an ANSweR POLL survey was conducted as a beginning of the process of identifying the qualities and abilities which are so essential that every Nazarene pastor must be helped to possess them. This study is the first phase in what may be a lengthy process to identify essential competencies and adjust the preparation process to ensure them. The overall goal of ministerial education is robust spiritual development of future pastors and at least adequate development of those abilities which active pastors, informed laity, educators, and other denominational offices have identified as essential for every pastor.

The ANSweR POLL representative samples of pastors and lay members are each made up of about six hundred people. Three hundred and forty-four (57%) responses were received from pastors and two hundred and fifty (42%) from lay members.

The ANSweR POLL survey series is an important tool, as it is one of many resources available to administrators in the Church of the Nazarene as they prayerfully make decisions. The findings of this survey show general agreement between pastors and lay members over which characteristics are most important.

Relative Importance of the Major Areas

The area of personal and spiritual qualities was seen as most essential by both pastors and lay members. Abilities in the area of organizational management were seen as least essential.

Means are reported in Table 1, and throughout this report, since they capture the range of responses more accurately than percentages. For analysis, responses were coded with the lowest score given to "Essential" and the highest given to "Unnecessary." **Therefore, the lower the mean, the more important the area was seen to be by respondents.**

Personal And Spiritual Qualities

Loyalty to Christ was perceived by both laity and clergy as the most essential element for Nazarene pastors. Indeed, the top five items among the personal and spiritual qualities, presented in Table 2, were also the top items overall.

Abilities in The Area of Evangelism

The area of evangelism ranked second overall among the eight general areas. Among the pastors, the most important skill in this area was the ability to evaluate and implement methods which result in the sanctification of believers. For lay members the most important was the ability to present the faith in personal evangelism.

Abilities in The Area of Preaching

Both pastors and lay members perceived an ability to communicate the gospel of Christ with clarity from the pulpit as the most important type of preaching ability. Ability to preach sermons that involve the people in meaningful participation in the sacraments ranked least important among both groups.

Abilities in The Area Of Pastoral Concern

People skills were at the top in this area. Ability to get along with people was seen as most important by both lay members and pastors. Laity tend to see this ability as more essential than pastors see it.

Abilities in The Area Of Teaching

Both groups rated the ability to understand and interpret the basic content and teaching of the Bible as most important of the items in the general area of teaching. Ability to understand and interpret Christian doctrine, especially Wesleyan-Armenian thought was second in this area. The ability to plan and direct effective social, educational, and recreational activities were evaluated as the lowest in importance.

Abilities in The Area Of Community And Organizational Relationships

The general area of community and organizational relationships was the seventh of the eight areas. Ability to understand and interpret Nazarene polity, as presented in the *Manual* was rated the most important of these items by both lay members and pastors. Ability to write was rated least important in this general area.

Abilities in The Area Of Organization And Management

Abilities in the general area of organization and management averaged the least important ratings overall. However, both pastors and lay members gave the ability to constructively deal with conflict a mean rating lower and 2.0 This was the only item evaluated as this important by pastors.

Critical Items

Means ranged from a low of 1.048, which was the mean pastors' evaluation of "Loyal to Christ," to a high of 3.419, which was the mean lay members' evaluation of "Maintain the

office functions of the church, such as typing, filing, office machines. Eight items were rated at or below 1.50 by pastors.

Table 4 presents all of the items, regardless of general area, for which the mean evaluation was lower than 2.0. Since the coding gave "Essential" a 1 and "Very Important" a 2, a mean lower than 2.0 would indicate that the average evaluation was somewhat more important than "Very Important." Any respondent choosing a rating of lesser importance than "Essential" would cause the mean to be greater than 1.0.

Comments

The opinions of pastors and active lay members are important to any review of the standards which shape Nazarene pastors. They cannot, and of course will not, be that last word. To some extent their sense of the importance of various qualities and abilities is a result of the education they received and the general culture of the denomination. Still, they allow us a special opportunity to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the local churches, and their insights are important to the review of criteria.

So, this study is not an end in itself. It is a part of the process in which the Consultation on Ministerial Preparation at Breckenridge in 1990 was an important milestone. Prayer, deliberation, debate, and negotiation by and between Nazarene educators, boards of ministerial studies, district superintendents, general offices, pastors, and lay members will continue the process.

Table 1				
Comparison of Pastors and Lay Members Mean Evaluations in General Areas (In Order of Pastors' Assessment of Importance)				
	Pastors N Mean*		Lay Members N Mean*	
Personal and Spiritual Qualities	318	1.535	219	1.622
Evangelism	318	1.771	227	1.744
Preaching	317	1.821	223	1.720
Pastoral Concern	318	1.975	235	1.815
Worship Leadership	316	1.993	223	1.979
Teaching	304	2.197	211	2.173
Community and Organizational Relationships	314	2.283	222	2.290
Organizational Management	316	2.465	211	2.465
*Sums of responses within each area divided by the number of items where				

1="Essential," 2="Very Important," 3="Desirable," 4="Optional," and 5="Unnecessary"

N = the number of responses

The lower the *Mean*, the more important the item was seen to be by respondents

Table 2

Pastors and Lay Members' Evaluations of Various Personal and Spiritual Qualities

Quality	Percent* Clergy/Laity		Means** Clergy/Laity	
Loyal to Christ	96.1	95.5	1.048	1.058
Dynamic personal faith in God	94.3	89.7	1.075	1.024
Exemplary ethical lifestyle	84.8	65.3	1.185	1.405
Complete integrity in keeping promises and confidences	81.6	82.7	1.202	1.193
Commitment to personal spiritual formation	71.7	59.2	1.322	1.467
Divine call to ministry which is affirmed by the Christians who know him/her best	76.3	62.2	1.322	1.567
Commitment to ethical standards as understood by the Nazarenes	58.1	54.9	1.502	1.509
Ability to develop and follow a discipline of Bible study	53.8	47.7	1.538	1.613
Emotionally mature and secure	39.1	46.1	1.667	1.617
Continuing development of Biblical Interpretation skills	29.3	32.1	1.897	1.946
A realistic self-appraisal	29.8	20.4	1.875	2.096
Commitment to continuing education and development	19.3	15.5	2.136	2.363
Continuing development of Theological skills	13.8	16.4	2.273	2.414

*Percent choosing "Essential" where the choices were "Essential," "Very Important," "Desirable," "Optional," and "Unnecessary"

**Mean response where 1="Essential," 2="Very Important," 3="Desirable," 4="Optional," and 5="Unnecessary"

Table 3

Pastors and Lay Members' Evaluations of Worship Leadership Abilities

Quality	Percent* Clergy/Laity		Means** Clergy/Laity	
Ability to create in worshipers an expectation of God's presence	53.4	557.4	1.534	1.533
Ability to plan and lead public worship services	49.2	53.3	1.608	1.558
Ability to lead worship services in which the music, language, and symbols communicate well with unchurched people	27.3	32.2	2.012	1.933
Ability to make transitions which bring worshipers along from one facet of worship to another	25.4	30.4	2.015	1.975
Ability to read the Bible effectively orally	24.7	36.6	2.040	1.903
Ability to lead worship services in which the music, language, and symbols communicate well with believers	24.5	27.7	2.086	2.000
Ability to enlist music leadership	16.9	12.7	2.237	2.422
Ability to coordinate a music program in a local church	6.2	7.4	2.749	2.909
*Percent choosing "Essential" where the choices were "Essential," "Very Important," "Desirable," "Optional," and "Unnecessary"				
**Mean response where 1="Essential," 2="Very Important," 3="Desirable," 4="Optional," and 5="Unnecessary"				

Table 4

Means of Pastors' and Lay Members Evaluations of The Importance of Various Qualities and Abilities (in Rank Order by Pastors' Evaluations)

Quality or Ability	Mean Pastors Members	
Loyal to Christ	1.048	1.058
Dynamic personal faith in God	1.075	1.124
Exemplary ethical lifestyle	1.185	1.405
Complete integrity in keeping promises and confidences	1.202	1.193

Commitment to personal spiritual formation	1.322	1.467
Ability to understand and interpret the basic content and teachings of the Bible	1.202	1.193
Divine call to ministry which is affirmed by the Christians who know him/her best	1.322	1.567
Commitment to ethical standards as understood by the Nazarenes	1.502	1.590
Ability to get along with people	1.508	1.395
Ability to develop and follow a discipline of Bible study	1.538	1.613
Ability to understand and interpret Christian doctrine, especially Wesleyan-Arminian thought	1.573	1.723
Ability to communicate the gospel of Christ with clarity from the pulpit	1.593	1.329
Ability to preach sermons that challenge Christians to deepen their spiritual commitments	1.605	1.517
Ability to create an atmosphere of worship	1.608	1.558
Ability to evaluate and implement methods which result in the sanctification of believers	1.618	1.600
Ability to plan and lead public worship services	1.619	1.552
Commitment to evangelism and membership growth	1.637	1.686
Ability to understand and interpret Christian ethics	1.648	1.572
Emotionally mature and secure	1.667	1.617
Ability to evaluate and implement evangelistic methods which result in conversions	1.679	1.594
Ability to preach sermons that nurture, uplift, and strengthen the people	1.692	1.585
Ability to present the faith in personal evangelism	1.697	1.564

The lower the *Mean*, the more important th item was seen to be by respondents