

## Some Lessons I've Learned As Pastor of BBC

During the 32 years I've been the Pastor of Bible Baptist Church, God has taught me some valuable lessons. Here are a few things I've learned since coming to BBC in 1986. I can say with Laban, "***I have learned by experience...***" (Gen. 30:27).

1. ***I have learned*** Bible preaching/teaching is the main thing, not facilities or programs. While a facility is important in America, buildings do not feed the flock (Acts 6:4; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 5:2). The facility is nothing more than a "sheep shed" or "glory barn."
2. ***I have learned*** I cannot do the work of the Holy Ghost. I preach God's Word as He leads, with His power, then leave the results with God (Isa. 55:10-11; 1 Cor. 3:5-6).
3. ***I have learned*** there is no substitute for the pastor's physical presence at church events or ministries. People notice when the pastor does not attend functions he expects other church members to attend (i.e. work parties, G.R.O.W. outreach, Life Groups, Men's Breakfast, etc.). A pastor's absence sends a message that this event/ministry is not very important to him.
4. ***I have learned*** to never ask or expect anyone to do something I am not doing myself. The old saying is true—"If you want someone to jump a foot, you must jump *two feet*." I must be a model servant if I expect people to serve (1 Cor. 9:19; Mark 10:44).
5. ***I have learned*** ministries or programs that I do not *publically* and *enthusiastically* promote from the pulpit usually dwindle and eventually die. The adage "Out of sight—out of mind," applies here. Various ministries must be kept before the congregation if people are to participate.
6. ***I have learned*** love covers a multitude of mistakes (Prov. 10:12). People will forgive most of my mistakes if they know I love them.
7. ***I have learned*** expressing genuine gratitude for the labor and giving of people is absolutely essential (and scriptural).
8. ***I have learned*** youth are the church's future leaders. Therefore they must be made *a* priority in ministry, while being careful **not** to neglect the seasoned saints. Youth have the *energy*—seasoned saints have the *experience*. Youth may have the *skills*, but the seasoned saints pay the *bills*.
9. ***I have learned*** splitting theological hairs... riding doctrinal hobby horses... or grinding ecclesiastical axes does not edify the church.
10. ***I have learned*** to deflect the praise and accept the blame—Praise the people for any success and accept the blame for any failure in ministry. A sign on the desk of President Truman said: "The Buck Stops Here!" That sign could also sit on the desk of every pastor.

11. ***I have learned*** to be kind and gracious to *all* people—Both friends and enemies. I try to esteem others better than myself (Phil. 2:3) and condescend to men of low estate (Rom. 12:10, 16).
12. ***I have learned*** critics are the unpaid guardians of my soul and ministry. I therefore prayerfully and honestly listen to all criticisms, and consider if it is valid or not. It might be true!
13. ***I have learned*** silence is often the best defense against false accusations (Isa. 53:7; Mt. 27:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:23; 1 Cor. 6:7). I let my accusers rage and imagine a vain thing (Ps. 2:1). Retaliation often intensifies a situation.
14. ***I have learned*** it is a waste of time to argue about differences that don't make a difference. ***I have learned*** to ask myself, "Does this really matter? What difference does it make?"
15. ***I have learned*** not to try to hide my faults or weaknesses. People like to know the pastor is "human" like they are. [Sometimes I will actually make a mistake on purpose!]
16. ***I have learned*** there are some people *I* cannot help no matter how hard I try. I just pray for them.
17. ***I have learned*** not to judge cases that do not belong in my courtroom and mind my own business. Meddling makes things worse.
18. ***I have learned*** to be *firm* in doctrine, but *flexible* in my demeanor.
19. ***I have learned*** standards change, but the Standard (the Bible) never changes. I must be careful about imposing man-made rules or codes of conduct upon God's people.
20. ***I have learned*** church members do not belong to me. The sheep are God's, therefore I try to treat them as God's property!
21. ***I have learned*** when a church member informs me he is leaving the church, it is a big mistake to try to talk him out of leaving. It is best to gracefully let them leave. The church will be better off without someone who is disgruntled and does not want to be there (Prov. 22:10).
22. ***I have learned*** not to preach beyond my own experience. I must only preach what I am living myself.
23. ***I have learned*** to treat others the way I would like to be treated—with patience, love, and mercy (Mt. 5:7; Luke 6:38). ***I have learned*** the value of the wisdom of Jesus in Luke 16:8-10.
24. ***I have learned*** a person doesn't have to be 100% KJV for God to use or bless them.
25. ***I have learned*** I will only give account of my own ministry and not another preacher's ministry (Rom. 14:4, 10-12). I am an independent Baptist and answer only to God. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.