

NEWS AND VIEWS
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Well, do you want the job or not?

This was one of my earliest memories of something that my friend David Johnson said to me. I was engaged in a question and answer session with the congregation at Mount Olivet prior to a vote to issue a call to the pastorate. By the time David asked this question I had tried my best to answer all the others that came my way. I don't know how successful I was as to answering the questions to everyone's satisfaction. And some of the questions I don't remember very well. But I remember his. After he asked the question it seemed that the congregation collectively held its breath. Perhaps to see how I would respond. Maybe to hope that this question didn't overly offend the prospective pastoral candidate and scare him away! Or could it be that this was a question that needed to be asked and answered and few would dare to risk it? I remember David Johnson and his questions.

David's death is one of those blows that the church suffers from time to time. Death interrupts our agendas and causes us to examine our priorities, discerning the things that are supposed to keep us distinct as a people. How the church responds to death in its midst is important. We should grieve, but not as those who have no hope. As a pastor, this one seems to have left its mark upon me. Today, as I write this, it is Wednesday afternoon. Up till recently, on most Wednesdays, from where I sit in the pastor's study, I have a great view of where David would usually park. I would see him as he walked toward the church building. Today I miss that view...today I miss David Johnson. He was a friend of mine. A pastor once told me that he could not afford to have friends among those whom he served as pastor. When I asked him to explain his philosophy he related that sometimes he might have to give people a word of correction, and if they were friends that never worked very well. It seems to me that Jesus didn't lose Peter's friendship when he confronted him in his ungodly thinking, or when He rebuked the sons of Zebedee when they wanted to firebomb a Samaritan village.

There were times when I had to speak with David both as his friend and as his pastor. What I needed to share with him was quite risky. He might have been greatly offended and defensive in his reaction. But I learned during these times that he received what he perceived to be truth from the word of God. I have heard that when people believe that you love them, you can tell them the truth. A few weeks ago, David came to me with a complaint...and when people preface what they are about to say with the word, *complaint*, I can get a little gun-shy. In times like these, I am reminded of the question: *Do you want the job or not?* What he had to say to me was something that I received immediately and resolved to correct. I believed that he was telling me truth and when people love me, they can tell me the truth...and people can usually tell whether other people love them or not.

The answer is still yes. I desire more than ever to fulfill the call of God upon my life to be a pastor and a friend. That is the way of Jesus. He loved people enough to be risky when He told the truth. He still does.

...But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam
