

# SHOE SHINE KING

Now when I think about it, we were so very “Proud” as young Christians, but that’s because of the way we were trained. Years later I would come to hate that word “Proud” because it was like every little thing that someone supposedly did wrong in the church was a direct result of them being that way. If you were late for church... “Proud!” If your face showed the slightest disapproval... “Proud!” If you dared to be an individual... “Proud!” Enough already, give it a break.

In actuality, we did about the only thing we could do for someone to take notice of us and that was wear a nice tie (stupid) and shine them shoes (vain). We couldn’t afford to do anything else because any money that we did have went to either bills or conference expenses. That is unless both spouses were in the military at the same time; then you were making some serious bank. Now I wish I would have just paid my bills and stayed out of debt. Dummy!

Well the shoe shine thing started out as just some friendly competition based off of who could shine their shoes the best. No worries here, nothing to even talk about. But years down the road when we learned where that stemmed from; it became more than just a friendly competition amongst the brothers. Soon we’d be looking as sharp as a tack to impress the upper echelon preachers at Bible College. And little did we know we were being trained for something that we didn’t even know about; it would become a standard that we would embrace for the rest of our natural lives.

I feel as though there is absolutely nothing wrong with dressing nice and keeping yourself well groomed. But due to the state of mind that we were in at the time, it was made into foolishness. The senior pastors would talk about the expensive

brands of shoes they wear and so therefore all the brothers wanted to wear them. But why? Why else, because they wanted to be just like their pastors. In itself that's actually a good inspiration, just as long as he is right with God and we realize that ultimately "I want to be more like Jesus" and not copy all of someone else's mannerisms. When you want to talk, walk, preach, sing just like your pastor does, I think it might be time to change a few things.

As a Bible College student, I wouldn't be caught dead with unshined shoes. It was ~~corporate~~ college policy that part of our uniform was a white shirt, suit and shined shoes. I remember that in Washington State it rained constantly for days at a time during certain months of the year. So if you have to walk in water every day, guess what happens to the leather on those shoes? They rapidly deteriorated; is what happened to the shoes when they were constantly soaked. Especially when you have older cheap shoes; they go real fast.

I remember I had holes on the bottom of my shoes and my feet were always soaked, but my shoes were shined! I had to sit through hours of Bible College classes nightly in soaking wet shoes just so I could keep myself looking "Professional." I tried to avoid every single puddle of water like it was the Bubonic plague. I remember trying to walk on the heels of my feet just so the holes near center of my shoes wouldn't fill with water. I later came up with the idea to put tape in my shoe so I could keep some of the water out, but I think I eventually ran out of tape. I guess some things never change; when I was a teen I took my brothers old shoes and put tape in them also. It was a little different though because the holes were on top. I had to put the tape on the inside and try to stick as much of the frayed material from the shoe onto the sticky part of the tape. It worked pretty good actually after I mastered the self-taught technique of "Ghetto shoe repair."

The other horrid thing about having holes in your shoes as an associate pastor; part of your commission is to pray for people. No problem just as long as their standing up in one place and you can put an arm around them. Were they to go down to the altar and pray, uh Oh! Now you have to kneel down where everyone will see the holes in your shoes. Solution: just stand by them and lift their hands, or have someone else just pray for them. Sometimes I could get around the altar

and position my feet where no one would see them while facing towards the podium.

I never told anyone these things before (not that it would matter back then). There was even a time when I was wearing shoes that were a size and a half too small for my feet, but it's all I had. The shoes were nice though and they kept the water out so I had to make the tradeoff. I would put them on before leaving home and then take them off in the car cause they hurt my feet so bad. Once we got to church I would put them back on and then if I was in a place where people wouldn't notice, I'd take them back off to relieve the throbbing. Praise God huh?

I wasn't even intending on writing any of this, but I really feel led to do so. In fact I hadn't even thought about this stuff for many years. But as usual, I just sucked it up and drove on for another day. After all, I was becoming a "Leader" and a leader did whatever it took to achieve his or her goals. Although what it is I was to lead still remains to be seen. Oh the days of undue, unneeded stress, they are finally over.

Well if we talked about the shoes, then we may as well talk about the suits also real quick. My suits looked well enough on the outside, but on the inside they were trashed. If you were to see the insides of my suit jackets back then, you'd be like, Maan! The lining of my jackets were so old and worn it was ridiculous. It got to the point where I couldn't even put a pen in that pocket because it would fall into the abyss. Sometimes I would forget and put change in there, but I quickly learned of my error. The change would go all throughout the jacket lining and end up in places I couldn't even figure out how to get to. The stuff at the thrift store was of better quality than I was wearing.

The suit pants, who can forget those things? The crotch area was so worn in my suit pants that I could see through them. I'm glad I didn't weigh as much back then, because surely there would have been an accident. But hey, when times get hard in the ministry (as they stayed) you just bust out with that tape to cover that multitude of holes. Anyway, it went on like this for years, well after I became a minister. Hey, you came here for the truth, so that is what I'm going to give you.

(Now back to before I went on a tangent) When I look back at all of that I now realize that we were being made into business men. We were pushed to wear the

same uniform even as church members, but it wasn't as mandatory. Thing is though, if you didn't dress that certain way, you were sneered at by everyone and considered "Not in" yet. So apparently, one of the qualifications to being fully saved was wearing their prescribed attire. Otherwise, you still needed some work done in order to be called a "Brother." Just so you know, before you get saved you're a "Bother" but afterwards you become a "Brother."

You know, I get the whole attire thing, if that's your school rules, I can buy that. However, I can't buy it when you are sneered upon just because your shirt is blue rather than white. My friend, the color of my shirt didn't save me. Well the good thing about the suits and white shirt is this; now I have a closet full of them just sitting there. I was so successful at my secular employment that I didn't need them anymore for attire. Working in the warehouse and picking up filthy Time Warner equipment doesn't require a suit and tie. Even if I spend a nice evening out with my wife, I still feel over dressed with a suit and white shirt....so why were we wearing that to church all the time? Egomaniac, control freaks! Stupidity! Gee, I wonder what everyone else did with their white shirts when they left or got kicked out of the church. Hopefully someone got a professional job where they were needed and not wasted.

I remember one time as a minister I came to bible study with a sport coat and slacks on. Well, a few minutes after walking in the door I was confronted by the pastor and told to go back home and change my attire. Seriously! These are just games that people like to play which show others who's in charge of running everything and everyone (to the ground).

Believe me, this is not my hang up, but the more I think about it, the dumber it gets. White shirts get filthy just like any other shirt you wear but the stains show through quite a bit more. So when you're constantly sweating in church, and you're having service 5 times a week, you can obviously expect a lot of dry cleaning bills. Great, another expense to go along with those suits (that you can't iron unless you want them ruined) that also need cleaning. Anyway, go shine your fancy shoes and play the part of a successful Christian.

If that's what makes you happy; pretending like you've actually succeeded at doing the work of the Lord...then go for it! Hey, who knows, after twenty years of servitude maybe you'll actually get to be the one calling the shots and pulling

the wool over people's eyes...in the name of JESUS. Christian, brother, sister, you can look as clean as a whistle on the outside, but remember that it's the inside of the cup that must come clean. What a shame, so many dressed for success...and for what?