

Glorifying God in the Church – The Roles in the Church - 3

Ephesians 4:11-16 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ -- ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

The perfect pastor has been described as one who preaches exactly twenty minutes and then sits down. He condemns sin but never hurts anyone's feelings. He labours from 8AM to 10PM in every kind of work, from preaching to custodial service. He makes R800 a week, wears good clothes, buys good books regularly, has a nice family, drives a nice car, and gives R400 a week to the church. He also stands ready to contribute to every good work that comes along. The ideal pastor is twenty-six years old and has been preaching for thirty years. He is at once tall and short, thin and bulky, and handsome. He has one brown eye and one blue eye, his hair is parted down the middle with the left side dark and straight and the right side brown and wavy. He has a burning desire to work with teenagers and spends all his time with older folks. He smiles all the time with a straight face, because he has a sense of humour that keeps him seriously dedicated to his work. He makes fifteen calls a day on church members, spends all his time evangelising the lost, and is never outside of his study!

That might be humorous, but the only reason someone was able to write something like that is because of a common phenomenon: people have very differing views on what a pastor is supposed to be and do. People come into a church, and their expectations of pastoral ministry may be completely different from the person sitting next to them. They might have been shaped by past experience – the church they grew up in, a previous pastor they really liked, or perhaps just a mix of vague ideas.

In fact, your expectations and understanding of what pastors are supposed to be and do is one of the keys of a church growing in maturity, unity and conformity to Christ. When you correctly understand the role of the pastors in your life, and cooperate and use that ministry to the fullest, you are better able to perform your ministry, as we saw in verses 15-16.

There are several reasons why you should understand what a pastor is and what a pastor does.

- 1) It gives you biblical and realistic expectations.

Some people believe the pastor is supposed to be a professional speaker. He is paid to produce an interesting, lively and stimulating talk every Sunday, amongst other things. So, they come, settle down into their chairs, and wait to see how he will perform. Some Sundays they feel they could say, "Bravo! Encore!" Other Sundays, they feel a little let down with his performance.

Others see him as a mix between a motivational speaker and a personal trainer. Someone who spends all his hours in one-on-ones, exhorting, cheering, and encouraging.

For others, the pastor-teacher is the provider of all ministry. Whether it is the sick who need to be visited, absentees who need to be phoned, unsaved relatives who need to be

evangelised, church business meetings that must be administered, church buildings to be overseen – it comes back to him. After all, what do we pay him for?

And if he is one of those things, he can't be the others. So if your expectation is not a biblical expectation, and your pastors are trying to be biblical pastors, you are going to be disappointed. Disappointment creates resentment, and resentment creates conflict.

Your expectations have to be biblical ones. That way, you can do two things:

1. You can place yourself in a posture to receive the maximum benefit from your pastors. If you know what they are there to do, and how they will do it, you can position yourself and relate to them in ways that will enable you to truly be blessed and helped by the gifts God has given the pastors.
2. You can know when a real failure has occurred. If you know what the biblical requirements are, you can see when your pastors have fallen short, and how badly, or even if something needs to be confronted.
- 3) It enables you to know what to look for and whom to call. At some point, a church has to call pastors. Churches lose their pastors in different ways: they can die, retire, be disqualified, resign, step back, be called elsewhere. Churches grow and require more pastors, and they need to go through the process of evaluating a man to see if he has the gifts and calling to be a pastor.
- 4) It guides you if you believe God may be calling you to the ministry. How do you know? You consider the desire He has placed in your heart, and you consider what will be required of you character-wise, and responsibility-wise.

A. The Role of Pastors

In verse 11 and 12 the Bible makes it very clear why Jesus set the church up the way he did. It says:

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and **some pastors and teachers**, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

The pattern is simple. These men are not there to do the ministry, they are there to equip you to minister. What is ministry? It is what we saw last week in verses 15-16. The body lovingly 'truths' itself, each member finding ways to lovingly speak the truth to the others.

Christ gives men to the church to train, encourage and oversee this ministry of 'truthing' one another, so that it gets better and better, more and more biblical, so that the body does come to unity, maturity and conformity to Christ.

Pastors are coaches, trainers. They are ministers who train ministers; ministers who encourage and enable more ministry. Now you'll notice that Paul doesn't only mention pastors-teachers, he also mentions three other men. What are the four men here, and how do they train you to minister?

Firstly we read of apostles:

The apostles were unique men. They were chosen by Christ personally. They had witnessed the risen Christ. Their number was twelve exactly, - matching the twelve tribes of Israel with Paul the apostle born out of time. They had unique authority in the churches. They received

special revelation. One of the ways New Testament books were regarded as inspired was if it was written by an apostle. They had special miraculous powers. They have a unique reward in heaven. Do we have apostles today? No. These were unique men.

The prophets were similarly unique. They received special revelation directly from God. They could foretell what God revealed of the future, and forth-tell what God directed them to say. God spoke directly to and through the prophets.

Now what does the Bible say about the apostles and the prophets in this very same epistle?

Ephesians 2:19-21 *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,*

They laid the foundation of the church. Not only because they began the first churches and trained the first leaders, but mainly because they gave us the New Testament.

Ephesians 3:5 *which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:*

How could we minister without the local church? How could we minister without the Bible? They have provided the gospel and the New Testament's guidance as to how to minister. This is the foundation which they laid which enables us to minister.

Now with the New Testament in our hands, what does the evangelist do? He preaches the Gospel, and from his converts, he plants a church. The evangelist is the church planter. He sows seed, he waters, he establishes New Testament churches along the lines of the New Testament given by the apostles and prophets. The evangelist clears the land so that the church can be planted. Ministry happens in a local church, and the evangelists build on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and set one up.

Then, guess who comes in after him? The pastor-teacher: The pastor-teacher waters that seed. He comes in to coach and train, and mentor and shape and mould the saints as they minister to one another.

So this leads us to what we want to study. How does a pastor equip the saints to do the ministry? A pastor-teacher trains believers to be ministers in three primary ways. He equips through teaching, he equips through example, and he equips through leadership.

I. He Equips Through Teaching

The very title gives away his primary method of equipping. He is a pastor-teacher. The word pastor means shepherd. What do shepherds do? Primarily they lead the flock to food. They lead and feed. Pastors primarily lead through teaching, by teaching the Word of God.

1 Timothy 4:6 *If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.*

1 Timothy 4:13-16 *Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*

1 Timothy 5:17 *Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.*

2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

2 Timothy 2:24-25 *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,*

2 Timothy 4:1-2 *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

His primary ministry must be to make known to the saints what God requires, so that they can perform that ministry better. He lays out what God wants in a local church – the unity, the purity, the one- another ministry; the ministry towards the lost and the unsaved.

His primary ministry is not mainly visitation, it is not mainly evangelism, it is not mainly personal exhortation, though it will include all those things. It is mainly using the Word of God to equip you to do the ministry.

Do you realise that every time a pastor preaches a 1 hour sermon to 100 people, he is accomplishing 100 hours of ministry? That's more ministry than he could achieve in two weeks of 8-5 visitation. If that sermon is poor or mediocre, he has just wasted 100 hours of ministry. He has wasted two full work weeks.

If that is the case, do you think a pastor should spend time preparing for that 1 hour sermon that translates into 100 hours of ministry? How many hours do you think he should take to make sure that he doesn't waste that hour? Would it surprise you to hear that it takes more than 8 hours? It can take 12, or even 16 or 20 hours to prepare for that one hour. But if is done well, the pastor-teacher manages to equip the saints in a concentrated way. We achieve unity of the faith, maturity and conformity to Christ in a far more efficient way than if he tried to individually catechize each person.

The pastor may teach in other ways too. He teaches through writing, in preparing material to read and go through. He teaches through one-on-one meeting and visitation. He teaches through counselling when you ask for it. He teaches through discipleship and mentoring. In all these ways, his teaching gifts are used by the Lord to equip the saints to do the ministry.

So what that means, is that to benefit maximally from the ministry of the pastors, you need to try to be there when that public teaching will take place – be it Sunday School, the Sunday sermon, Wednesday night, Bible studies. You need to encourage your pastors to study and learn, and be glad when they do, knowing that when they teach, it will be of a greater quality. When you free your pastors up to study, they have the time to study what you do not have the time to study, meaning when it comes time for them to teach, you benefit.

II. He Equips Through Example

Hebrews 13:7 *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*

Here the Bible tells us to remember those who speak the Word of God to you, which would be your pastors, and it tells you to follow their faith. The word for follow means to imitate. The idea here is imitate your leaders' faith. Why? As you consider the outcome of their conduct, as you observe their lives, does it add up? Is there joy? Is there satisfaction? Is there peace? Is there a good marriage? Is there a God-glorifying family? Is there strength and joy during trials? Is there a holiness of life that is winsome and attractive and desirable?

This is why the qualifications for ministry are almost all qualifications of character.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 *1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴ one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷ Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

D.A. Carson pointed out that the most extraordinary thing about this list is how unextraordinary it is. Everything on this list is really normal Christianity. The pastor must not be an adulterer, or a drunkard, or a brawler, or an embezzler, or a man with a lack of control over his temper and his appetites. He must be a good husband, a good father, self-controlled, hospitable, experienced and able to teach.

It's really a simple list. It's really saying, the man must be a consistent Christian. He must have a blameless testimony, and be able to teach. Why is this so important? Because so much of Christianity is not only taught, it is caught. It's one thing to talk about loving God, or forgiveness, or generosity, it's another to see it modelled in front of you. We learn not only by instruction; we learn by example and exposure.

The equipping of the saints is not a matter of delivering information from one man's mouth to another man's mind. Equipping takes place in a living context, with real human relationships. Like so many things in life, we learn when we see it done. So Scripture calls on a pastor to set an example. In his example, he equips. In his decision-making, and attitudes, and speech, and responses, and relationships, he equips the saints to minister to each other.

So we try, and do not always succeed, to be involved in people's lives. We try to meet folks for lunch and coffee. We try to visit where possible. But you can be a part of that too. We are never too busy to meet with the members of our church. But we also don't want to be a nuisance. So some give-and-take is necessary for a good balance.

II. He Equips Through Leadership (1 Pet 5:1-4)

1 Peter 5:1-3 *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;*

Here Peter calls for the elders, which is another words for pastors, to shepherd the flock. Pastor the sheep of God. How? By willingly, eagerly, honestly, serving as overseers. Taking the oversight, which means lead - superintend, watch over.

The pastor teaches, and the pastor sets an example. But the pastor is not supposed to adopt a false humility and pretend that he has not been called to shepherd. If the church has affirmed his call, he needs to step up to the plate and lead. He must take oversight. He must provide leadership. That means planning - setting goals for the church, setting targets and ways of reaching those. It means organising – organising the worship services, and the fellowship, and the discipleship, and the evangelism and the administration. He must do a good bit of administration, to make sure things are in their place. It means guiding and training others to take up their roles in this process.

A pastor is and must be a leader. But Paul is very clear what kind of leadership he must provide. Firstly, it is a joyful leadership. He must do it willingly. The qualifications of a pastor begin with “if any man *desire* the office of an overseer”. He must want to do it.

Hebrews 13:17 ¹⁷ *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

Secondly it is an eager leadership. He is not a mercenary. His primary joy must not be the money he can get out of it. His desire for ministry outstrips whatever financial rewards he can get, with the accompanying lifestyle.

Thirdly, it is gentle leadership. The pastor does not act as an overlord with absolute authority. He seeks to persuade, and to persuade primarily with the authority of his example. Someone has said that cattle are driven, but sheep are led. You lead sheep from the front, you do not drive and prod them from behind. God's people are not to be horse-whipped every Sunday, guilt-tripped, brow-beaten, and otherwise scourged. They are to be persuaded. They are to be called to embrace the promises and goodness of God. Yes, we all need rebuke. We all need the plain truth which sometimes hurts. We all need conviction, which is never enjoyable. But there is a world of difference between faithful shepherding that will show you your sin and call you to embrace more of Christ, and a kind of weekly skinning of the sheep that goes on in some pulpits.

When the pastors are providing leadership, it equips the church to do ministry. Pastors must provide direction and structure and guidance, but they are not there to provide all the ministry. They are there to encourage ministry.

As you can tell, it's a tall order. No man can do it without much grace. Which is why we need your prayers. We need spiritual strength. We need growth. We need encouragement. We need you to judge our ministry based on what Scripture calls us to do- equip by teaching, equip by example and equip by leadership.

You will benefit most when you avail yourself of these areas. If you receive the teaching when its present. If you follow the example where its biblical, and pray for it, and if necessary, speak to us about it, where it is not. If you follow the leadership as a team-member, as a family member, as we together strive to build up the body.

If the body is connected to the head, and every part is present and in place, and the equippers are equipping every part, and every part is ministering to the others, the body will grow itself. It will edify itself in love. It will grow to unity, maturity and conformity to Christ.