

A MINISTRY MANUAL PRIMER

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Box 49

THE NATURE OF MINISTRY

Pastoral ministry is the specific area of service in the church which has been ordained by Christ and His Apostles for the good of His Church (Jn. 21:15-17; Eph. 4:11). Pastoral ministry is first of all service, which is borne out by the Greek word *diakonia*¹. The Lord Jesus, in Mark 10:45, states, "The Son of Man did not come to be served (aorist passive infinitive of *diakoneo*), but to serve (aorist active infinitive of *diakoneo*) and give His life, a ransom on behalf of many." The Lord Jesus, in the service of His Father, served His people. So likewise, the pastoral minister is in the service of Christ, serving His people.

The pastor serves Christ's church by ministering the Word of God to it (1 Cor. 4:1; Col. 1:27; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:28). This task of the pastor is the means by which Christ rules over His Church. And it is this task which serves as the hub for all other ministerial tasks.

The pastor serves as an under-shepherd² to God's people (1 Pet. 5:1-2). The pastor is the (or one of the) governing

¹Abbott-Smith states that *diakonia* is used to denote service in (a) domestic duties; (b) spec. of religious ministrations, and the exercise of ministerial functions in the Church. A Manual Lexicon of the New Testament, 107. This is demonstrated in Lk. 10:40, "Martha was distracted with much service;" and Acts 6:2,4 "It is not desirable for us to neglect the Word of God in order to serve (*diakonein*) tables... But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry (*diakonia*) of the Word."

²In fact, the English word "pastor" etymologically was used for a literal shepherd, and thus we have our derived usage today.

administrators (1 Tim. 5:17) in the church. The pastor is also a protector of God's people and God's truth (Acts 20:28,31; 2 Tim. 1:14). And the pastor also equips the people of God for their own ministries (Eph. 4;12-16).

THE CALL AND REQUIREMENTS FOR MINISTRY

The call to ministry is two-fold, there is an internal aspect and an external aspect. The internal aspect consists of an intense, all-absorbing, disinterested, inescapable compulsion to serve in the ordained³ ministry of Christ's Church (1 Cor. 9:14,16; Gal. 1:15-16; 2 Tim. 1:11; 1 Tim. 3:1). This call is absolutely necessary, lest one goes who has not been sent (Jer. 14:14-15; 23:21,32).

The external aspect of the call to the ministry consists of meeting the qualifications for ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9), a recognition by the church of gifts and abilities (2 Tim. 2:2; Acts 13:2-3), as well as a demonstrated faithfulness and usefulness in smaller areas of ministry (2 Tim. 2:3-6; Gal. 1:23-24).

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MINISTRY

In order for one to be called, his call must be in alignment with some external, objective realities. This aspect of the call is *one* of the guards against self-delusion, selfish ambition, self-

³I am not using this term in the technical sense of "ordination," but rather in the general sense of Christ's ordained or appointed ministry offices (Eph. 4:11).

promotion, etc.. The actual requirements for ministry are found in 1 Tim. 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. It is interesting to note that the emphasis of these qualifications deal with character, which is often a missing note today in terms of ministry and ministers. The contemporary evangelical scene esteems gifts far above character, and tragic failures have been one of the results. Therefore, we must not overlook this emphasis!

A Synopsis of Qualifications for Ministry:

1. Possesses such integrity of character that he is unassailable.
2. A faithful husband, of moral integrity.
3. A serious, well-balanced personality.
4. A man of self-control and sound judgement.
5. A man well respected.
6. A man who is friendly to strangers.
7. A theologically informed mind, with corresponding abilities to communicate it and defend it.
8. Not addicted to alcohol.
9. Not hot-tempered.
10. Conciliatory and congenial.
11. Not materialistically ambitious.
12. Displays good headship qualities in the home, and has faithful (or believing) children.
13. Mature in his faith.
14. A good reputation with those outside the household of faith.
15. Not pursuing ministry for self-interest.

Although no man is flawless, and cannot fulfill these qualifications perfectly, it should be recognized that his pattern of life should be consistent with these qualifications, and perfect conformity where possible. For instance, a man may have a good reputation with 99% of his acquaintances, and yet there may be one person who has a different opinion because of a mistake or misconception. This man would still qualify for ministry although his reputation is not perfect. However, if a man commits adultery,

or embezzles the church's money, he has violated an area where perfect conformity is expected and is therefore disqualified.

MISSION AND MODELS

The Christian ministry is one of perpetuation (Jn. 17:18; 20:21). The Christian minister is to fall into line with what has already been started with the Father sending the Son. Ministry that does not conform to the precedent already established can rightfully be questioned as to whether or not it is Christian ministry.

The mission of the ministry is often missed by evangelicals because a man-centered focus has permeated the church. However, the purpose of ministry is to bring glory and praise unto God (Rom. 11:36; 1 Pet. 2:9;). Ministry is really the facilitator in bringing glory to God, due to the fact that it is central in each of the main means by which God is honored and glorified among His people.

The mission of the ministry is to bring the message of redemption to the lost (Matt. 28:20; perpetuating Lk. 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15, etc.). This ministry of evangelism brings glory and honor to God (Rom. 15:7-13; Eph. 1:12-13). The plan of redemption is God-centered, the goal of salvation is the glory of God, and therefore, when one in ministry ministers salvation by the power of the Spirit, he brings praise to the Author of salvation.

The mission of ministry is also to build up the body of Christ

(Eph. 4:12-16; Col. 1:28; perpetuating Jesus' teaching ministry, Matt. 28:20). This ministry of edification assists in the sanctifying process in the lives of God children. As a result of growing in grace, God is glorified (1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).

Christian ministry may use a number of different avenues by which it can evangelize and edify, however, these avenues are never to become ends in themselves. For instance, dealing with homeless people providing food and shelter may be a legitimate ministry, as long as its *ultimate* objective is evangelism. Ministry may also be involved in social and moral issues, such as abortion. And although saving unborn lives is of extreme importance, and should be done, if it takes place under "Christian ministry" then the *ultimate* goal exceeds the salvation of human life and looks towards the salvation of a soul. And all of this must be within a context of God-centered, God-glorifying motives.

MODELS FOR MINISTRY

Many spiritual leaders in the Bible serve as excellent models for ministry. The Lord Jesus Himself is the quintessential model for ministry. "From the earthly ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, we learn the rudiments of Christian ministry. Jesus' vision and practice of ministry is significant for all Christian vision and

⁴This is not to say that we, as Christians, do not fight for justice, because we do. However, we must be cautious about what we call Christian ministry, and what is simply obeying mandates for social justice and moral obedience.

practice of ministry. If ministry cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus' own intention and practice, we lose its central theological premise."⁵

Obviously the Lord Jesus has revealed the Father's shepherd-heart (Psa. 23; Jn. 10:11-30; 14:9-10). However, the qualitative differences between any human minister and Christ must be recognized. There are certain aspects of Jesus' life and ministry that are not reproducible, nor are they meant to be. This is why the Apostle Paul serves as the model for New Covenant ministry. In fact, Paul set himself forth as the example insofar as he followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). For within Paul we see a human model, who displayed a pastor's heart and ministry (Acts 20:18-35; 1 Cor. 4:1; 2 Cor. 3-4:15; 10-13; 1 Thess. 2:7-11; 2 Tim. 1:11).

THE CONTEXT OF MINISTRY

The context for ministry, ideally, should be within the parameters of the local church. Inter-church relationships and extensions of a local church fit within these parameters, however, organizations rising up to do the work of the ministry should not be independent of a local assembly or assemblies. The Biblical foundation behind this is Jesus' words in Matt. 16:18, "I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it,"

⁵Thomas Oden, Pastoral Theology (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1983), 59-60.

coupled with the NT paradigm of *ecclesia*.

The book of Acts reveals ministries that extend beyond the "walls" of the local church, but these are inter-church ministries, and extension ministries (e.g., sending out Paul and Barnabas, collections for other churches in dire need, etc.,) of the local church.⁶ This should affect the way missions and seminary training is done. Missions should spring from and be supported by local churches, as in Acts, not as independent agencies. Seminary training should be more church-oriented, existing as an extension ministry of churches within in a given area or doctrinal commonalities.

THE ENEMY AND POWER OF MINISTRY

The ultimate enemy of ministry is Satan. He is the one who steals the Word implanted (Matt. 13:19), who destroys character and reputation (1 Tim. 3:7), who promotes doctrinal errors which destroys the souls of men (1 Tim. 4:1), and who seeks to devour God's people through pride (1 Pet. 5:8).

Even though the Devil is the enemy of ministry, it must not be forgotten that each one of us possesses enough rottenness and sin to do just as much, if not more, damage to the cause of Christ than the Devil himself. There is enough remaining corruption and

⁶It should be noted that with the then extant office of Apostle, there were occasions when one church, namely in Jerusalem, exercised authority over other churches (Acts 15 and the Council at Jerusalem).

sin in each minister of Christ to bring his own life and ministry into disgrace, and terrible reproach upon the name of the Savior (Gal. 5:17,19-21; Rom. 7:14-25). Paul himself saw this danger in his own life (1 Cor. 9:27).⁷

The pastor must be keenly aware of his own areas of moral weakness and must violently put them to death, holding nothing back in their destruction (Matt. 5:29-30; Rom. 8:13). John Owen, the great Puritan theologian asks: "Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; *be killing sin or it will be killing you.*"⁸

THE POWER OF MINISTRY

The power of ministry simply put is dependence upon the Triune God for strength, power, and effectiveness. Dependence, by its very essence, reveals a sense of inadequacy and weakness. Therefore, Paul gloried in His weaknesses and inadequacies because they magnified God's power working within him (2 Cor. 3:5-6; 4:7; 12:9-10). When dependence is actively at work, it leaves no room for questioning the source of power (as demonstrated in the foolishness of preaching, 1 Cor. 1-2).

The greatest indicator of genuine dependence is prayer. "Prayer is His delight because prayer shows the reaches of our

⁷See also Paul's exhortations to Timothy to be pure in life and doctrine (1 Tim. 4:12-16, esp. 16; 6:11-15; 2 Tim. 2:11-26).

⁸John Owen, The Works of John Owen, Volume 6 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967 reprint), 9.

poverty and the riches of His grace."⁹ Prayer is the power that wields the weapons of ministry (Eph. 6:10-20).

Prayer as dependence is the great source of power of ministry. However, power is also unleashed in the life of the pastor through purity of life. A weak vessel that is not a clean vessel is functioning on borrowed time. Paul reminds Timothy, "Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:21-22).

Calling upon the Lord (dependence in prayer) from a pure heart (a holy life) makes for a fit vessel, one through which God's power can flow through. Therefore, holiness of life is also a great source of power for ministry. Owen again, "The vigour, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh."¹⁰

ASSESSING MINISTRY

"It may be laid as the ground of our inquiry-that the warrant of Ministerial success is sure... A Measure of success is assured to our work. Some seed shall fall on the good ground, as well as

⁹John Piper, The Pleasures of God (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1992) 217.

¹⁰Owen, Volume 6 Temptation and Sin, 9.

by the way-side, or upon the stony or thorny soil... But we must remember also, that present success is not always visible. Apparent must not be the measure of the real result. There is often an under-current of piety, which cannot be brought to the surface. There may be solid work advancing under ground, without any sensible excitement."¹¹

This wise counsel by Bridges who ministered in Scotland in the 1830s, acknowledges two major realities in assessing ministry. First, it recognizes that results in ministry rest with the sovereignty of God through the operations of the Spirit. Therefore, there will be some "success" in ministry simply because God is committed to His redemptive plan in the world, and the Lord Jesus has pledged to bring in other sheep into His fold (Isa. 48:11; Jn. 10:16).

It also recognizes that it can be folly to evaluate ministry simply by what we see. Therefore, a main standard must be used in primarily assessing ministry, other than the apparent results. Results can be helpful, but they are not conclusive, consequently we must rely upon that which we can measure. A standard which can be effectively used to assess ministry can be found in the pastoral imperatives found in Paul's instructions to his pastoral understudies.

Hughes has catalogued the biblical standard of success, and

¹¹Charles Bridges, The Christian Ministry (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980 reprint), 72-73.

has given the following:

1. Faithfulness, revealed in obedience to the Word.
2. Servanthood.
3. Loving God and reflecting that love.
4. Faith in God, and in all that He is.
5. A disciplined life of prayer.
6. Holiness and moral purity.
7. A properly grounded positive attitude.¹²

When we assess ministry, the only thing we can genuinely evaluate, with any certainty, is our lives in light of the commands of Scripture. And we can only do this accurately when we open ourselves up to the Spirit's spotlight (Psa. 139:23-24).

¹²Kent and Barbara Hughes, Liberating Ministry From the Success Syndrome (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1988), 35-104.

GOD'S MINISTRY FOR MY LIFE

Within the past year, God has prompted our (my wife and I) hearts towards the ministry of church planting. He has marvelously opened a door for us in Minden/Gardnerville, NV.

We will begin this ministry Sept. 1, 1993. We will be ministering under the auspices of Conservative Baptist Association of Northern California and Northern Nevada. We will be working as an extension of our home church, Lake Baptist Church, and in conjunction with Sierra Community Church (CBA) in Tahoe.

My specific ministry will be a church-planting pastor. I will organize small groups (the foundation of the new church), teach Bible studies, train people in evangelism and leadership, and carry on the normal duties associated with the pastorate. I will be the leader or point man, until the church is established, and then we will form an elder board.

I believe that God has called me to this pastoral ministry, to preach and teach God's Word, to nurture God's people, disciple God's people, oversee the operations of the church, and be involved in evangelism in that area.

My purpose, and the purpose of our church, will be to glorify and honor the name of our God through worship, nurture and outreach.

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