

The Work of the Pastor

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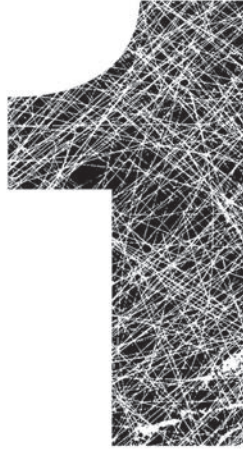
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CONTENTS

1	<i>God has a mission</i>	5
2	<i>Understanding the work</i>	11
3	<i>Called by God</i>	19
4	<i>Women in ministry</i>	29
5	<i>The pastor-shepherd</i>	39
6	<i>The pastor-priest</i>	55
7	<i>The Body of Christ</i>	65
8	<i>The pastor-leader</i>	79
9	<i>The pastor's anointing</i>	89
10	<i>The Sunday worship service</i>	103
11	<i>Anointed preaching</i>	117
12	<i>Baptism and communion</i>	137
13	<i>Pray for the sick</i>	149
14	<i>Care for the dying</i>	159
15	<i>The pastor and money</i>	171
16	<i>The pastoral family</i>	179

CHAPTER



GOD HAS A MISSION

God's heart is hurting. It is hurting because part of his creation rebelled against him and is destroying itself.

In the beginning, God spread out the heavens and filled them with galaxies, stars and planets. God decorated one planet with blue oceans, green forests, lush grasslands, brown sandy deserts, and icy polar regions. God filled it with a vast variety of plants, flowers, birds, insects, fish, and animals of all shapes, sizes, and colours. It is called earth.

God looked at everything he made and smiled at the beauty and diversity. Then, God created humans. He did something new, something he did not do to any of the other parts of creation. He breathed his Spirit into them and made them in his image. He blessed them with intelligence so that they could plan, reason, design and build. He blessed them with

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

creativity so they could sing, speak, write poems, compose songs, and make up stories. They were able to develop thousands of different languages, and they were able to develop ways to write them down. Humans developed tents, houses, castles, and kingdoms.

God took a big risk. He wanted people to love him, but love is only possible if a person has a choice. People can choose to love God, or they can choose to reject God. They can choose to obey or to disobey God. God made those first humans in his image, but they chose to follow their own desires. They rejected God's commandments. They listened to Satan's lies and became proud, selfish, greedy and violent. They and their descendants admired their own abilities, wisdom, and power. They did not worship God. Instead, they created gods of their own. They bowed down and worshipped their own creations.

God's heart aches for his broken world, a world torn apart by wars, violence, rape, and torture. Greed and selfishness drive people to destroy God's creation. Humans destroy forests. They carelessly tear apart mountains seeking gold and precious metals. They pollute rivers. God's creation groans. The rich and powerful take advantage of the poor and weak. Babies are aborted for the convenience of their parents. All of this causes God's heart to ache.

God wants to renew and restore his fallen creation to its original design and beauty. He wants to bring peace and harmony so that people have peace with God, live in harmony with each other, and care for his creation.

GOD'S PLAN

A long time ago, God chose a man called Abraham. He promised to bless him and make him a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. God promised to give him children, grandchildren, and so countless descendants.

The descendants of Abraham became a nation called Israel, the Jewish people. The Old Testament tells their stories. God showed his mighty power by delivering them from slavery and giving them a land in which to live. He gave them laws so that they could live in harmony with him and with each other. God had a plan. He wanted Israel to be his special people so that other nations could see his power and blessings. God desired that the other nations would hunger to know the God of Israel and also to live under his rule and blessing.

Unfortunately, Israel did not always obey God. Often, they rejected God and followed the man-made gods of other nations. Instead of living under God's blessing, time and again they came under God's curse. God rejected his own people and allowed other nations to defeat them. His people suffered. In their misery they cried out to God and confessed their sins. Each time, God graciously brought the nation back to himself. He restored them, cared for them, and blessed them once again.

Still, human life was not the way God meant it to be. Three enemies—Satan, sin, and death—made life miserable. God had a plan to destroy these three enemies. When the time was right, God became a human and entered human history as a baby called Jesus. Jesus came to world to carry out God's mission. That mission was to restore harmony between humans and their creator and to restore the true wor-

ship of God. He wanted a people who would believe in him completely and follow him unconditionally. This mission was costly. It demanded that Jesus be completely obedient even though he would suffer rejection, humiliation, torture, and death.

Through the sinless life of Jesus and his perfect obedience, he defeated Satan. Through his sacrificial death, Jesus provided a means for forgiveness of sins. He took the sin and shame of every human with him when he died on the cross. He did this so that they could be reunited with God and become his dearly loved children. Jesus rose from the dead and through his resurrection he defeated death. Now, Jesus holds the keys to death and the place of the dead. Death no longer has any power over those who have faith in him.

Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God created a new people. These people—of all tribes, languages, and nations—who believe in Christ are his church. God calls the people of his Church to join him in his mission of announcing this good news—called salvation—and helping to bring the world back to him.

As the people of God, we do many things:

- We worship God, the everlasting creator of the universe, praising him for his greatness and celebrating his wonderful salvation.
- We tell others of his power and love so they may also experience his salvation and the benefits of his victory over sin, death, and Satan.
- We demonstrate his character by acts of compassion, honesty, truthfulness, and taking care of the poor and unfortunate.

- We care for God's creation. This is God's world, and he wants us to take care of it, to keep it clean and green.

This is the mission of the church.

Pastors are those people whom God calls to lead and encourage the Church as it works to accomplish his mission in the world.

CHAPTER

2

UNDERSTANDING THE WORK

“The pastor’s work is more important than being the Queen of England. It is more important than the work of the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Britain.” I looked at the enthusiastic speaker with his faded shirt, and worn trousers as he exhorted a group of fellow pastors.

I thought to myself, “Where are the newspaper reporters and the television crews?” Obviously they do not believe him. Here we are in a village church with a plywood pulpit, a thatched roof, and a rough cement floor. Is it really more

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

important to be a pastor than to be the ruler of a great and powerful nation?”

The speaker continued, “Our work is more important because God himself chose us and called us to be his workers. He promised to be with us. Do not be timid. Do not be afraid. Lift up your heads. Be bold. Be strong. Be courageous. God chose you. You are not a nobody. You are special, for God chose you.”

Pastoral work is different from other occupations because God calls pastors to a special role. They do not work for money, prestige, or security. Rather, they often work very long hours for little or no salary. They are pastors because God called them. Jesus said to his disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16 NIV).

Pastors have one of the most challenging jobs in the world. In some countries, the governmental authorities persecute them and make life difficult their families. In a few countries pastors are treated with great respect, but, in other countries, many people are so busy chasing after money, power and pleasure that they have little time for God and the church. Often, television programs ridicule pastors and make them look out of date and irrelevant. But again and again, when people face difficulties, they turn to a pastor for help or prayer.

THE CHURCH

To understand the work of the pastor we must first understand the church. What is the church? Why does it exist?

Jesus made an important statement about the church in a discussion with Peter. Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you think I am?”

Peter replied that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Jesus replied, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:13-18 NIV).

This important passage from the Bible tells us three important things about the church:

1. *The church belongs to Jesus Christ.* Jesus said, “I will build my church.” It is his church, and he builds it. It is not simply a human organization. The church does not belong to the pastor or to some person who gave land or money for a building. The church does not belong to us; it belongs to Jesus. We belong to the church because the church belongs to Jesus. He is the head of the church.

2. *The church is powerful.* Jesus said “the gates of Hades will not overcome” the church. This means two things.

Firstly, all the powers of hell and Satan will never be able to defeat the church. Through the centuries people persecuted the church. Pastors were imprisoned. Enemies burned Bibles and church buildings. Kings, dictators, governments, and armies tried to destroy the church, but no one succeeded. And, no one will succeed, because the church is not a building or a human organization.

Secondly, “The gates of Hades will not overcome it” because the church of Jesus Christ extends beyond the grave. Those who died believing in Christ are still part of the church. They are absent from a physical body but are present

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

with the Lord, for Jesus is “Lord of both the dead and the living” (Romans 14:9 NIV).

3. *The church is built on a solid foundation.* The church is built on a solid rock which is faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of the one, true God. This solid rock can never be moved or destroyed.

Years after Jesus spoke those words to Peter, the apostle described the church with these words:

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV)

This passage tells us five important things about the church.

1. *The church is a community of God’s people*, “a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” The church is not just a group of isolated individuals. Rather, we become a community of God’s people.

After the Israelites left Egypt, God told them, “I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:12 NIV). Because of the work of Jesus, his church replaced Israel as the people of God. Through Jesus’ sacrificial death we are able to have a right relationship with God. We become his children. He wants to walk with us and talk with us. He desires to live in close relationship with us, just like he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

2. *The church is a transformed community.* We were changed by God's redeeming grace. "Now you have received mercy." God called us "out of darkness into his wonderful light." This is not because of our good deeds but because of God's grace. He transforms us.
3. *The church is a worshipping community.* "Declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness." Christians love to sing because God took us out of the darkness of sin and brought us into his wonderful light. When we gather together, we spend time focusing on his goodness.
4. *The church is a witnessing community.* Worshipping and witnessing belong together. We "declare the praises of [God] who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." We tell others about the wonderful transformation that God made in our lives. We invite them to join us.
5. *The church is a caring community.* "You are a chosen people." God chose us for a purpose, so that we may share his love with others. The greatest commandment in the Bible is "Love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31 NIV).

The Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts so that we can love each other. The Bible describes the church as "the Body of Christ." This means that we are the eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet of Jesus. We see people with compassion just as Jesus did. We hear their cries just like Jesus did.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

We reach out to them with comfort compassion and healing just like Jesus did.

CARING FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

The church is much more than a group of people meeting together on Sunday morning and singing songs. The church belongs to Jesus, and it is his body. Today, we continue the work that Jesus began. The world is full of people who are broken and hurt. They wonder if God cares about them. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and the church must do the same. Jesus came to serve others, and the church must also serve the people in the community. The church experiences God's love in a powerful way, and it wants to bless others with the same love it received from Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament we read these words: "Comfort my people," says our God. "Comfort them! Encourage the people of Jerusalem. Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven" (Isaiah 40:1-2 GNT).

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ... Learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest" (Matthew 11:28 GNT).

The pastor is God's representative to bring comfort, encouragement, and peace to God's people. The pastor helps the people to find relief from their burdens and worries. Much of this work is done as the pastor visits people in their homes.

Jesus did not set up an office and wait for people to visit him. Nor did he only preach to large crowds. Jesus talked to all sorts of people. He taught small groups of people.

Let's look at some of the people Jesus talked with:

- Nicodemus, John 3:1-15
- A Samaritan woman, John 4:1-42
- A centurion, Matthew 8:5-10
- A royal official whose son was sick, John 4:43-54
- A widow whose son was dead, Luke 7:11-17
- A teacher of the law, Matthew 8:18-22
- A woman of Canaan, Matthew 15:21-28
- A rich young ruler, Matthew 19:16-22
- An immoral woman, John 8:2-11

Jesus often met with people where they lived and worked:

- on the seashore, Mark 4:1
- at a village well, John 4:6
- on a highway, Mark 10:46
- in a market, Matthew 20:3
- at a tax office, Matthew 9:9
- at the Temple, Matthew 26:55

Jesus often met with people in their own houses:

- The house of Levi the tax collector, Luke 5:27-32
- The wedding at Cana, John 2:1-11
- The houses of the Pharisees, Luke 7:36-50, 14:1-24
- The house of Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-42
- The house of Simon the leper, Matthew 26:6

The pastor's work is to help the church become all that God wants it to be. There is no occupation anywhere in the world that is more demanding, more exciting and more rewarding. The pastor works with God, and he or she watches as God transforms people. It is exciting to see churches ma-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

ture in their knowledge of God as it reaches out in love and compassion to bring transformation to their communities. This is the work of the pastor.

CHAPTER

3

CALLED BY GOD

“Pastor, what did it sound like when God called you?” Billy asked. “How did God call? Did you hear him speak out loud?”

The pastor smiled. He knew that Billy was very involved in the youth group. He watched the young man mature in his Christian life. “Those are big questions, Billy. Why do you ask?”

Billy thought for a moment and said, “I think maybe God is calling me to be a pastor, but how can I be sure?”

“That is wonderful Billy. We need to discuss this in depth. Let us sit down and talk about it, for a pastor’s call is very important.”

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Some people become pastors for the wrong reason.

- Some people think that if they go to Bible college and become a pastor they will escape the boring life of their village or home town.
- Some people think that a pastor's work is easy. They think all they have to do is to speak in church on Sunday and get paid for talking.
- Some people apply for various jobs but are not accepted, so they apply to Bible college because it seems to be an easy way to get an education.
- In a few places, pastors receive a lot of honour and prestige. Sometimes, the pastor has a nice house and is treated with respect. Some people think this will happen to them if they become a pastor.

Have these people really heard God's call, or are they simply following their own desires? When difficult times come, will these people quit and leave the work, or will they endure hardship and continue serving?

A pastor leads God's people, and this requires a special type of leadership. A pastor is a servant-leader. Often, in business and in politics leaders are not servants, and servants are not leaders. But in the kingdom of God things are different: leaders are called to be servants. They are called to care for the people they lead. The Bible often describes the leader of God's people as a shepherd who watches over and protects the flock.

God wants everyone to repent and believe in Jesus as their Saviour. God also wants every Christian to be filled with the Holy Spirit. However, God does not call everyone to be a pastor. So, what exactly does it mean to be called by God? Let

us take a look at one example of a time God called someone to lead people.

GOD CALLS MOSES

Moses was surprised. “A burning bush in the middle of the desert? How strange!” he thought. He went closer to look at this strange sight.

“Moses! Moses!” The voice came from the burning bush. “Yes, here I am,” answered Moses.

“Do not come any closer; take off your sandals, because you are standing on Holy ground.” The voice continued, “I am the God of your ancestors: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Not many people hear God’s call as dramatically as Moses did, but we can learn a lot from his call.

1. God gets our attention

It was an ordinary day like any other day. The sun was hot, the land was dry, and the sheep were hungry. Moses led them through the desert land to patches of grass and to tiny pools of water. Suddenly, something caught his eye: a bush on fire in the middle of nowhere. By itself, this was not strange. Moses saw things on fire before. Strangely, although the bush blazed with fire, the leaves and twigs did not burn up.

God spoke to Moses in the middle of his daily routine. Unfortunately, God calls many people, but they do not always hear. Many people are too busy with their own ideas that they do not even think about God. Some people are so busy that they do not stop to listen. Some people are so intent listening to radio, TV, or music that God cannot get their atten-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

tion. Normally God does not shout or yell. Instead, he usually speaks quietly. He will interrupt our routines, but we have to be ready to listen.

Sometimes God speaks through the words of a song, or through a sermon. God may speak through a book, a Christian friend, or through the reading or listening to the Bible. God speaks, and if we listen we will hear him. Sometimes God speaks through a dream. Sometimes when we are sick or face a big crisis, we are more open to hear God's voice. God tries to get our attention. We need to do as Moses did: stop what we are doing, go close, and listen.

2. God calls workers

God called Moses while he was working as a shepherd. God called Samuel as he worked in the temple. David was looking after sheep when he was called. Gideon was threshing wheat when the angel appeared to him. Elisha was ploughing with oxen when he was called. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishing when Jesus called them to follow him. Matthew was collecting taxes when Jesus said to him, "follow me."

All of these people were busy with their everyday work when God called them. There is no example of God calling someone who was wasting time doing nothing. God looks for workers. If we are faithful in little jobs, God will call us to bigger jobs.

3. God calls us by name

God always treats us as individuals. God said, "Moses! Moses!" No one else in the Bible ever saw a burning bush, that was only for Moses. Sometimes, God's call is very dramatic.

Sometimes, though, God's call is gradual, like a flower opening to the sunshine. Some people sense an increasing awareness that God wants them to do something very special. Deep in their hearts they have a feeling that God wants to do something special through them.

God is persistent. He speaks through songs, through prayer, and through church services. He calls us to trust him and obey him. Often God's call involves leaving home and family and going somewhere to get training so that we know the Bible thoroughly. If we listen and open our hearts to obey God, he will guide and direct us.

4. God calls us to help others

God said to Moses,

I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt. I have heard them cry out to be rescued from their slave drivers. I know all about their sufferings, and so I have come down to rescue them. ... Now I am sending you to the King of Egypt so that you lead my people out of his country. (Exodus 3:7, 8, 10 GNT)

God is concerned about those who suffer. He sees their sufferings; he hears their cries; and he feels their pain. God said to Moses, "I, the Lord, am a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered and who shows great love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6 GNT).

Jesus saw the people who were lame, blind, crippled, and unable to speak, and he had compassion on them (Matthew 15:30-32 NIV). In the same way, the person who is called to be a pastor needs to have compassion, kindness, patience, and love for those who are hurting and lonely. We should

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

“warn the idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14 GNT).

The Church as a whole is called to be the eyes, ears, hands, feet, and mouth of Christ as we show God’s love to the people around us. Pastors, as leaders of the Church, set the example.

5. God promises to go with us

We often feel very weak and inadequate when we hear God’s call. Moses possibly thought, “I have failed in the past. Will people trust me? Will they accept me? How can I go to the King?” God replied, simply, “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12 NIV). Many people have felt the same as Moses. They feel inadequate: the job is too big; they are not smart enough; or, they do not have the gifts and abilities that are needed.

This was Jeremiah’s problem. He said to God, “Lord, I don’t know how to speak; I am too young.”

God replied, “Do not say that you are too young, but go to the people I send you to, and tell them everything I command you to say. Do not be afraid of them, for I will be with you to protect you” (Jeremiah 1:7, 8 GNT).

Jesus made the same promise to his disciples.

Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19, 20 GNT)

Paul experienced many difficulties and much persecution. He should have been depressed, but instead he thought about all the wonderful things that God prepares for those

who believe in him. He said, “I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18 GNT).

As pastors, we must know that God called us to this work. If we have a clear call from God, it will help us to stand strong when all sorts of difficulties come into our lives. Jesus said to his disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16 NIV).

Did God call you?

Were you obedient when he called?

Will you be obedient if he calls?

We do not need to fear the size of the task. We need to be courageous, for we have God’s promise to be with us.

GOD CALLS PAUL

Paul was a young Jewish man who studied the Old Testament thoroughly. He memorized large sections of the Scripture and was very careful to obey all the laws of the Old Testament. He heard about Jesus, but he refused to believe that this man was the Messiah, the Son of God. He was so angry that he did everything he could to destroy those who believed in Jesus.

One day he was on a trip to a distant city, Damascus. He planned to arrest all those who believed in Jesus and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. Suddenly, he saw a blazing light that was brighter than the sun. Paul fell to the ground, and a voice said, “Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute me?”

Saul asked, “Who are you?”

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” the voice answered.

Saul was shocked to find that he was now blind. He continued to Damascus, and for three days, he prayed and fasted. He realised that Jesus really was the Messiah, and Saul became a changed person.

Saul remembered the words that Jesus spoke on the road to Damascus, “You are to tell others what you have seen of me today and what I will show you in the future. ... You are to open their eyes and turn them from the darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God, so that through their faith in me they will have their sins forgiven and receive their place among God’s chosen people” (Acts 26:16-18 GNT).

God’s call was a powerful turning point in the life of Saul. Saul took a new name, and today we know him as Paul the apostle. Later in life, when he described the events of his call, he said, “I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven” (Acts 26:19 NIV).

Paul did not have an easy life. Even though he was an apostle, he faced many dangers. In one of his letters, he gave wrote out all of the problems he faced because of his obedience to God’s call. Here is a list of what he described in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28.

- Whipped five times (39 lashes)
- Stoned once
- Three shipwrecks
- 24 hours adrift on the sea
- Survived floods
- Possessions stolen
- Betrayed by false friends

- Sleeplessness
- Hungry
- Thirsty
- Lacking food, shelter and clothes

Even though his life as a Christian worker was difficult, Paul stayed obedient to Jesus' call. He never returned to his old life. He said, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16 NIV). Paul believed very strongly that he was doing God's work and that God was speaking through him. He said, "Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends!" (2 Corinthians 5:20 GNT).

This clear call from God helped Paul to keep his faith strong when he faced difficult times. Most of us will never have a dramatic experience like those of Moses or Paul. However, it is important that we know in our hearts that God is calling us to work for him. It is also important to remember that the God who calls us will never forsake us or leave us. He will be with us to strengthen and help us. God wants us to be successful pastors. He wants us to have fruitful ministry, and he desires that his love will flow through us to others. If we are faithful and obedient to God's call, many people will experience God's love and transforming power in their lives, and God will be pleased.

Therefore, right now, there is an important question that everyone reading this book should ask: "Do I know clearly that God called me to this ministry?" Here are three possible answers to this question:

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

- *Yes!* I know that God called me to be a pastor!
- *No.* God has not called me to be a pastor.
- *Maybe.* I am not yet sure if God is calling me to be a pastor.

If you answered “yes” to the question, then it will help you in the future if you write down the details of the call. Then, when times are difficult in the future, you can read and remember that God called you.

If you answered “no,” do not feel discouraged. God does not call every believer to be a pastor. However, you are still called to be his witness in the world. If God did not call you to be a pastor, perhaps he is calling you to some other role in the church. Or, perhaps the answer isn’t “no” but “not yet!” It is important, even if you are enrolled in a pastoral studies program, not to fake a call from God. Be honest with yourself and with others. Continue to pray daily for God’s guidance.

If you answered “maybe” then you should be keenly attentive to prayer, fasting, and seeking God’s will for your life. Ask others to pray with you, so that you can have a clear answer when someone asks you, “How did God call you to be a pastor?”

CHAPTER

4

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Does God call women to become pastors?

This is a question that is greatly debated. Very sincere Christians hold opposing viewpoints, and both sides quote Scripture to support their views.

Some people quote the following two passages of Scripture:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man: she must be silent. (1 Timothy 2:11-12 NIV)

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission as the law says. If they want to enquire about something they should ask their

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NIV)

These passages seem to teach clearly that women should not be pastors. However, when developing doctrinal positions, we need to carefully examine the whole Bible, and not only one or two verses. As we will see later in this chapter, there are other verses that show women in leadership roles within the church.

So the first question to ask is “Why would Paul say these things?” Some scholars believe that Paul wrote that women were not to be teachers because of the situation in the city of Ephesus. Timothy was a pastor there. In Ephesus there was a very large temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis. The temple worship was led by women who served both as priests and as prostitutes, because sexual immorality was a significant part of their worship of Artemis. It is possible that Paul made this statement to Timothy to show a clear distinction between the worship of God and the pagan worship that was so common in Ephesus.

The context of 1 Corinthians 14 also gives us clues to why Paul would tell women to be silent in church. These two verses are found in a larger section about orderly worship where Paul teaches that church services should not be chaotic. In those days, women and men sat on different sides of the room. So if a woman asked a question of her husband on the other side, she disrupted the service. Obviously, Paul did not mean that women should be completely silent in church, since earlier in the letter he gives instructions on how women who pray or proclaim God’s message in public worship should act (1 Corinthians 11:5 NIV).

Therefore, in order to understand the role of women in ministry, we need to look at the wider teaching of Scripture.

CREATION

Genesis 1:27 says that both male and female were made in God's image. It says in Genesis 2:18 that the woman was made to be a helper for the man, but that does not mean she was inferior or that she was made to be his servant. In fact, the Hebrew word for "helper" is often used to describe God! In Deuteronomy 33:29 and Psalm 115:9, Israel is urged to "trust in the Lord" because he is our "helper!" The woman was not created to be a servant of man. Instead, the Bible teaches that the woman was "the other half" of the human being, not "the inferior half."

However, this equal status between men and women changed. When Adam and Eve sinned, a curse came upon the earth. There were difficulties and hardships for both men and women. For the man, the curse brought hard, painful work and sweat. For the woman there would be pain in childbirth. Also, as part of the curse, God says to the woman, "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16 NIV). The curse that came because of sin brought inequality. The good news is that Jesus came to redeem us from the curse and make life better.

WOMEN IN OLD TESTAMENT

God used women to accomplish his plan in various places throughout the Old Testament. True, women aren't mentioned as often as men, but they exercised leadership and

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

held positions of authority in the unfolding of the biblical drama.

Very early on we read about Miriam, a prophet (Exodus 15:20) who is listed with Moses and Aaron as those who led Israel out of slavery in Egypt (Micah 6:4). Deborah was a prophet and a judge (Judges 4:4). She led the Israelite people and was credited with a great military victory (Judges 4:9). She settled disputes and delivered Israel from their enemies (Judges 4 & 5). Huldah was a respected prophet in Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:14). All these women lived in a very male dominated society, so their examples are significant. These women and others used their talents and gifts even though they lived in a patriarchal society. They were leaders.

WOMEN IN THE GOSPELS

Jesus was born into a culture that treated women badly. They were not even considered citizens. Instead, they were the property of the significant male in their lives, usually their husbands or fathers. Usually they were not taught in schools or considered much better than slaves. In fact, a popular prayer at the time said, "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, that I am not a Gentile; blessed are you, O Lord our God, that I am not a slave; blessed are you, O Lord our God, that I am not a woman."

Yet Jesus spent time with women. He valued them and treated them as equal to men. This was extraordinary, as the rabbis of his time would not normally acknowledge women in public. Instead, they were treated as part of the background of daily life.

Jesus came and preached “Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand.” This was a call for people to change their ways, for now God rules in people’s hearts and transforms communities. His actions were immediate, but they also hinted toward a better future. Jesus healed the sick, thus showing that one day there will be no more sickness. He raised the dead, showing that in the coming kingdom there will be no more death. Jesus cast out demons, showing that his kingdom and his authority are stronger than Satan’s dominion of darkness. And, Jesus treated women with respect, for this is also one of the signs of the coming kingdom when the curse that came as a result of Adam’s sin will be completely swept away.

When he visits the home of Martha and Mary, Jesus gently rebukes Martha for worrying about housework and meal preparation and missing the opportunity of learning at his feet. Who was the student at his feet? Mary, a female (Luke 10:38-42).

One day, the disciples were surprised to find Jesus talking to a woman at the well. Normally, a Jewish male would not speak to a woman in public. Also, Jews did not speak to Samaritans, whom they considered inferior. In this case Jesus had a theological discussion with her, even though she was both female and a Samaritan. Obviously, he considered her worthy of instruction. She then went home and convinced others to believe in Jesus and to come listen to him (John 4:1-42).

He was supported financially by women (Luke 8:1-3), told parables about them (Matthew 13:33; 25:1-13; Luke 15:8-10; 18:1-8), and allowed a sinful woman to touch him and anoint him much to the disgust of his host (Luke 7:36-40).

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Many sermons and Bible studies focus on Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah (Luke 9:20). However, Martha's confession is equally clear and insightful (John 11:27).

One time, a woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by a group of men. They wanted to trap him and used her as the bait. Jesus turned the situation around, and in the end, the men leave one by one, ashamed. The woman could have slipped away, too, but she stayed. Jesus did not condemn her as all the others did. Instead, he told her "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:1-11 NIV). Jesus valued women, and did not allow men to exploit them.

Women were never second-rate in their love for Jesus. Rather, they were the faithful ones: the last ones at the cross and the first ones at the empty tomb. When all the disciples ran away and deserted Jesus, the women came to anoint him for burial (Luke 23:55-24:1). In a culture that refused to recognize women as witnesses in court, Jesus allowed women to be the first witnesses of his resurrection and to personally carry the news to the other disciples (Matthew 28:1-10). In other words, women were the first evangelists.

Jesus lived in a very male dominated culture, but he went against the cultural values of his day and showed kindness and respect to women. He raised them to places of importance.

WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Women were at the upper room on the day of Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them as well as on the men. In Acts 2:18-19 Peter quotes the prophet Joel and says that all sorts of people will be filled with the Holy Spirit and

will prophesy: young and old, men and women, and male and female servants. Prophecy was more than predicting the future. Usually, it was a declaration of God's message to his people. Peter (and Joel) stated clearly that God makes no distinction on the basis of age, gender, or social status. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and all of them were to proclaim the wonderful things that God was doing.

Earlier, we read about a common prayer that Jewish men prayed, thanking God that they were not gentiles, slaves, or women. With that prayer in mind, look at Galatians 3:28:

So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. (GNT)

This was a very radical statement by Paul. In the culture of his day, Jews were superior to Gentiles, slaves were inferior to free people, and men were superior to women. Here, Paul is echoing Peter (and Joel) in proclaiming that there are no superior or inferior classes or groups within the kingdom of God.

In the Jewish Temple there were walls that set boundaries. Gentiles were allowed to enter only so far and no further. Jewish women could go a bit further inside, but they faced another barrier. Men could go further inside, but then only priests (always male) could go into the temple itself. When Jesus died, the veil hiding the interior sacred temple was ripped open. This showed that now there was free access into the presence of God. Today those who believe in Jesus Christ are the new people of God and also the temple of God. God's people are a "royal priesthood." The old walls and barriers are broken down and all people—young and old, of any

nationality, male and female—can go into the presence of God.

IMPORTANT WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Anna, a prophet, rejoices at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:36-38). Priscilla is one of the few people that Paul calls his “fellow worker” (Romans 16:3). She and her husband preach and teach (Acts 18:26). Tabitha is known for her acts of mercy and as a helper to the poor (Acts 9:36). Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9). Eudia and Syntche were “fellow workers” of Paul. He said they “worked hard with me to spread the gospel” (Philippians 4:3 GNT). In this verse, Paul mentions three co-workers; two of them were women.

The clearest demonstration of the strategic leadership role of women is found in the last chapter of Romans. At first it looks like a long list of names with little meaning. However when we read Romans 16:1-15 and count the number of people mentioned by Paul, we find something amazing:

1. Phoebe was a deacon and she was a great help to many. (The Greek wording implies that she was probably wealthy.)
2. Priscilla was a “fellow worker,” and a church met at her house. Her name is usually mentioned before her husband’s name thus implying that she was the leader.
3. Mary who worked very hard.
4. Junia and her husband Andronicus were “outstanding among the apostles.” This suggests that she may have been called an apostle.
5. Tryphena and ...

6. ... Tryphosa are two women “who work hard in the Lord.”
7. Persis, “another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.”
8. The mother of Rufus was like a mother to Paul.
9. Julia
10. The sister of Nereus

Ten out of 29 church leaders in Rome were women!

CONCLUSION

We acknowledge that there are different interpretations of Paul’s attitudes toward women, especially the two verses mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. However, when we look at Scripture as a whole, there is a clear biblical basis for women to be involved in ministry and leadership. In light of the whole canon of Scripture, the biblical pattern is one in which women are equal to men, and we should expect them to be leaders in the Church as well as men. Spiritual gifts are given to all people, not just to men.

Sometimes in Christian books, and elsewhere, an author or a speaker will use “he” and “him” when referring to the pastor. Even if they are not referring only to males, they find it easier than saying “he or she” or writing things like “he/she.” Many of us were taught to use “he” in places where no gender is specified. However, when this happens, we should not interpret it to refer only to men.

CHAPTER 5

THE PASTOR-SHEPHERD

One day, Jesus and the disciples sat together around the fire eating fish they had just caught. Jesus looked directly at Peter and said, “Peter do you love me?”

No doubt, Peter thought back to a few weeks earlier when he stood beside a fire in the courtyard of the high priest while Jesus was on trial. On that dark night he cursed and denied that he knew Jesus.

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Take care of my sheep.”

Three times Jesus asked the same question, “Do you love me?” Each time Peter answered, Jesus told him to “take care of my sheep” (John 21:15-17 NIV). Jesus treated Peter with

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

love and compassion and gently restored him to a place of leadership.

Many years later when Peter was old, he said to the elders of the Church, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care ... not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be” (1 Peter 5:2 GNT).

THE BIBLICAL IMAGE OF A SHEPHERD

It may seem strange that Jesus (a carpenter) would tell Peter (a fisherman) to act like a shepherd (“feed my sheep”). However, the image of a shepherd caring for sheep is used very often in the Bible. Sheep thrive when they are cared for by humans, but they struggle to survive in the wild. There are wild cattle, wild horses, wild goats, wild pigs, and wild dogs, even wild cats, but there are very few wild sheep. Sheep provide humans with wool for clothing. Some varieties give milk for drinking and good meat to eat. Shepherds provide sheep with protection from enemies and danger, and they lead the sheep to good pasture where they can find healthy grass to eat.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all shepherds. Moses was a shepherd when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The Bible uses the picture of a shepherd and a flock of sheep to show the relationship between God and his people.

David was looking after sheep when Samuel anointed him to be king of Israel. This shepherd-king wrote a lovely song:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside quiet waters.

He guides me in paths of righteousness.

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*

Your rod and your staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:1-4 NIV)

Isaiah also described God as a kind and gentle shepherd who watches over his flock.

He tends his flock like a shepherd:

He gathers the lambs in his arms

And carries them close to his heart;

He gently leads those that have young.

(Isaiah 40:11 NIV)

Ezekiel condemned the leaders of Israel, and used the image of a bad shepherd to prove his point.

You are doomed, you shepherds of Israel!

You take care of yourselves, but never tend the sheep.

*You drink the milk, wear clothes made from the wool, and kill
and eat the finest sheep.*

But you never tend the sheep. You have not ...

... taken care of the weak ones,

... healed the ones that are sick,

... bandaged the ones that are hurt,

... brought back the ones that wandered off,

... or looked for the ones that were lost.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Instead, you treated them cruelly.

Because the sheep had no shepherd, they were scattered, and wild animals killed and ate them. So my sheep wandered over the high hills and the mountains. They were scattered over the face of the earth, and no one looked for them or tried to find them. (Ezekiel 34:2-4 GNT)

God rejected those careless, greedy shepherds. Instead, he would be the real shepherd that they should have been.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I will find them a place to rest. ... I will look for those that are lost, bring back those that wander off, bandage those that are hurt and heal those that are sick. (Ezekiel 34:15-16 GNT)

Jesus also used the image of the shepherd to teach the people about himself. He said “I am the good shepherd who is willing to die for the sheep” (John 10:11 GNT).

Paul used the image of a shepherd to teach the leaders of the Church at Ephesus. “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God” (Acts 20:28 NIV).

In English, the word “pastor” comes from the word “shepherd.” In some languages of the world, the two words are the same. Why do we use a word for “shepherd” as our title? The answer is found in the biblical progression of the use of the term.

1. God promised, “I will give them a King like my servant David to be their shepherd and He will take care of them” (Ezekiel 34:23 GNT).

2. Jesus fulfilled the promise and said, “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11).
3. Jesus entrusts the work of shepherding to his disciple Peter, “Take care of my sheep” (John 21:15-17 NIV).
4. Peter shows that the instruction to be a shepherd was not for him alone. He wrote to church leaders and said to them, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, ... not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be” (1 Peter 5:2 GNT).

So David, Jesus, and Peter are our examples of what it means to be a pastor-shepherd. The command that was given to the church elders almost 2,000 years ago by Peter is now given to us. We are to be shepherds of God’s flock. God wants us to lead his people with gentleness and kindness like good shepherds.

Let us look at what all of this means for us today.

FAT SHEPHERDS AND SKINNY SHEEP

God expects the leaders of his people to be good shepherds that really care for the sheep. God is angry when he sees fat shepherds and skinny sheep.

We saw earlier where God was angry with the leaders of Israel. He said through the prophet,

You take care of yourselves but never tend the sheep. You drink the milk, wear clothes made from the wool, and kill and eat the finest sheep; but you never tend the sheep. You have not taken care of the weak ones, healed the ones that are sick, bandaged the ones that are hurt, brought back the ones that wandered off, or looked for the ones that were lost. ... Because

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

they had no shepherd, they were scattered and wild animals killed and ate them. ... They were scattered over the face of the earth, and no one looked for them or tried to find them. (Ezekiel 34:2-6 GNT)

This is a very sad picture. God is angry with the leaders of Israel because they did not do their jobs properly. This passage, even though it was written thousands of years ago, is helpful to us today. It shows us the qualities that God expects to find in a good shepherd-pastor.

A good shepherd-pastor will care for the sheep—take care of the weak ones, heal the ones that are sick, bandage the ones that are hurt, bring back the ones who wander off, look for the ones that are lost, and protect them from wild animals.

God fired the bad leaders! They were self-centred and did not take care of the sheep. They were well fed while the sheep were skinny and sick. They would no longer be allowed to lead. They would no longer be shepherds. God himself would look after the sheep instead. God promised that in the future there would be a leader who has the heart of a shepherd. “I will give them a king like my servant David to be their shepherd and he will take care of them” (Ezekiel 34:23 GNT).

Jesus, the Good Shepherd

Hundreds of years later, Ezekiel’s prophecy came true. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11 NIV). So we ask the question, “What did Jesus mean when he called himself the good shepherd?”

In Jesus' day shepherds had many different size flocks. Some had only 10 or 20 sheep while other shepherds had as many as a hundred sheep. In the daytime the shepherd led the sheep to the hills to find grass to eat. In the evening he led the sheep back to the sheepfold. A sheepfold is an enclosure made with stone walls and a narrow gateway through which the sheep enter and leave.

It was common for many shepherds to share a sheepfold. At night the sheep were surrounded by strong stone walls, protected from wild dogs or other animals. Also, a shepherd would sleep in the gateway to stop sheep from getting out or wild animals coming in. In the morning the shepherds came and called their sheep by name and lead them out to the fields.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows his sheep by name. He calls them one by one, and they come to him. They trust him, and he leads them out to good pastures. They follow him. These are all good qualities, but many shepherds did this for their sheep. But Jesus is a very different kind of good shepherd. Jesus says that he is willing to die for the sheep (John 10:11). This is a remarkable statement, because normally the sheep are the means for a shepherd to live. But Jesus showed that he really meant it. He did die for his sheep. He loved them that much.

Since pastors are supposed to be the shepherds of God's people, we need to understand what our responsibilities are. We can look at what good shepherds do, and then we can see what we are supposed to do.

The shepherd feeds the sheep

Each morning a shepherd leads his sheep out to places where they can find good grass to eat. The pastor-shepherd also needs to feed the congregation. This food comes from the Word of God. Consider these instructions that Paul gave to Timothy:

- “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13 NIV).
- “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living” (2 Timothy 3:16 GNT).
- “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2 NIV).

It is easy to think a pastor is first of all a preacher. But, before the sermon, there must be study. The pastor needs to read God’s Word each day.

First of all the pastor reads it for his own spiritual food. Jesus quotes the Old Testament when he says, “Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks” (Matthew 4:4 GNT, and see Deuteronomy 8:3). If we go a few days without food, we will feel weak. In the same way if we do not read God’s Word on a regular basis our spiritual lives become weak.

Secondly, the pastor studies God’s Word daily in order to have good food to share with the people.

Have you ever walked past a bakery and smelled the delicious aroma of freshly baked bread? It makes your mouth water, and you are tempted to go and buy some. Nothing

smells better than freshly baked bread. On the other hand who wants stale bread that is a week old? Shops cannot sell it, and in some places they give it away as pig food.

Pastors need to provide their congregations with freshly prepared messages. Some pastors are busy doing many other things and do not save time to prepare good sermons. Then, they preach an old sermon that they have used before. People will quickly realise when they are being served stale bread. They will become discouraged and before long many will go elsewhere. People want food that comes fresh from the oven, not some left-over food that has been warmed up a little bit.

Studying God's Word is the most important way we prepare to "feed the sheep." But, we also need to spend time in prayer that God would make his Word burn in our own hearts. The fire of the Holy Spirit must burn within the heart of the pastor, and then the message will be hot, fresh, and meet the needs of the people.

Paul said, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4 NIV). Paul was highly educated, but he did not rely on his education. He knew that only the Word of God presented in the power of the Holy Spirit, has the power to change peoples' lives. He said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16 NIV).

The shepherd protects the sheep

Wild dogs can kill a lot of lambs in one night. A shepherd must guard the sheep, and protect them from dangerous animals. Paul said to the church leaders at Ephesus, "I know

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock” (Acts 20:29 NIV). Peter warned the church leaders, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8 NIV).

We live in a sinful world. Temptation is all around us. Satan likes to make sin appear attractive and pull believers away from following Christ. The pastor needs to be alert and to remind people of God’s commands and expectations. Jesus overcame temptation by quoting Scripture. Many others find that there is great power in quoting God’s Word.

Young people face many temptations. Sin looks attractive and exciting, and they do not have a lot of experience with the destructive part of sinful living. Unless young people have studied God’s Word and placed it in their hearts, they might wander away from the safety of the shepherd or leave the sheepfold. Consider these two verses from Psalm 119:

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (verse 11 NIV)

“How can young people keep their lives pure? By obeying your commands.” (verse 9 GNT)

False teachers are another type of danger. Jesus said, “Be on your guard against false prophets; they come to you looking like sheep on the outside, but on the inside they are really like wild wolves” (John 7:15 GNT). These are preachers and teachers who initially seem to be Christians. They talk about God and Jesus, and they live good lives. Unfortunately, if we look more closely, not all of these preachers and teachers actually, in all ways, live good lives.

For instance, Mormons teach that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he is the Saviour. However, they do not hold the Bible as the only written Word of God. Instead, they study *The Book of Mormon* as well. They believe it is equal to the Bible. Sadly, many of their teachings do not agree with the clear message of the Bible.

Jehovah's Witnesses created their own translation of the Bible in order to force it to agree with their beliefs. Because of this, they do not believe in some fundamental Christian beliefs such as the Trinity (One God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Followers of Baha'i talk a lot about peace and love, but they do not believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. They teach that there are many ways to find and know God.

Pastors need to be excellent teachers so that their people will be faithful and will know what to believe. Then they will not be led astray by false teachers. The Bible is a lamp to guide us and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105). If people know their Bible, they are less likely to be led astray by false lights.

The shepherd picks up the sheep that fall down

In some countries, there is a lot of fresh grass, and the sheep are big and healthy with heavy coats of wool. Sheep have little legs, and as their coat grows, they often become top heavy. Sheep often live in hilly country, and if a sheep loses its balance and falls on its back, it is too heavy to get on its feet again. Unless a shepherd comes to help it, it will lie on its back, kicking its feet until it dies. If a shepherd sees a sheep in trouble he runs to it, lifts it, turns it over, and stands

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

it on its feet. Then the sheep is safe and able to join the other sheep.

Sometimes Christians fall into sin. The pastor and other Christians must not reject them or criticize them. Instead, they should love them and help them to get back on their feet. Peter was the leading disciple. He loved Jesus and left his business and family to follow Jesus. But when Jesus was arrested, Peter followed Jesus at a distance. His faith was not strong, and when people said, “Are you a disciple of Jesus?” he denied his Lord. He claimed that he never knew Jesus. Even so, Jesus did not reject Peter. After his resurrection, Jesus had a personal conversation with Peter and restored him to a place of leadership.

Listen to this good advice from Paul.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1 NIV)

A pastor has a lot more to do than to preach in church on Sunday mornings. Those who are feeling defeated or struggling with their faith need support. The pastor needs to visit them in their homes or someplace where they can talk in private. He or she should enquire about their spiritual life and try to discover the problems they face. It is good to encourage them. We do this in different ways, but normally we share Bible verses with them and pray with them. Sometimes, a pastor will need to lead a person in a prayer of repentance and confession. This will help them to re-establish their faith in Christ.

My friends, if any of you wander away from the truth and another one brings you back again, remember this: whoever turns a sinner back from the wrong way will save that sinner's soul from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins. (James 5:19-20 GNT)

It is very important that a pastor learn to keep the confidence of the people in the church. A pastor should not share with others, even a spouse or close friend, those things told to him privately.

The shepherd loves the sheep

Pastors must work from a heart of love. Paul said, "Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV). No one forced Paul to be an apostle and to risk his life in preaching the good news. God's love—which filled Paul's heart—was the driving force that pushed him and motivated him.

We also must work from hearts overflowing with love. Listen to these words from John:

Let us love one another because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. We love because God first loved us for we cannot love God whom we have not seen if we do not love others whom we have seen. The command that Christ has given us is this: "Whoever loves God must love others also." (1 John 4:7, 19-21 GNT)

A pastor's work is not easy. The primary task of the pastor is to study and prepare messages to preach, but there is more to do than that. A pastor must consider others and listen to them. Pastors need to be with families at times of sickness or death. When a couple have marriage problems, a pastor needs to take time to listen carefully to both husband and

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

wife. The pastor must visit people in their homes. All of these actions show the love a pastor has for the people of God.

Also, a pastor oversees all the programmes of the church. This is a lot of work, and can be very tiring. The pastor can only do this well if he or she has a deep love for people. Peter described the proper attitude of a pastor in 1 Peter 5.

A pastor must:

Be willing ... not unwilling

Have a real desire to serve ... not merely work for money

Be an example to the flock ... not rule over them.

The pastor should not do the work unwillingly or reluctantly, but eagerly from a heart full of love for God and love for people. This love is not merely an emotion that we feel on the inside. The Apostle John said, "Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action" (1 John 3:18 GNT). The pastor needs to be paid, and should be paid well; but that is not the primary motive. The primary motive to do all this work is love.

The shepherd leads the sheep by example

Jesus said the shepherd goes ahead of the sheep, and the sheep follow him "because they know his voice" (John 10:4 NIV). The shepherd does not walk behind the sheep, shouting, scolding, and cracking a whip. He does not chase the sheep with a big stick, but quietly goes before them, calling them by name. The sheep follow because they trust the shepherd. Peter said to the elders in the churches. "Do not try to rule over those who have been put in your care, but be examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3 GNT).

If the pastor is a woman of prayer, it will not be long until her people develop a strong prayer life. If the pastor is a man of faith, soon the people will also become people of faith. If the pastor is keen on personal evangelism, soon the people will begin sharing their faith as well.

The people in the congregation watch their leaders, and often without even realising it, they begin to follow their example. This is true for both what they see in the life of the pastor as well as what they hear the pastor say. If what they hear agrees with what they see, then they will be more eager to follow the pastor's example. If they hear wonderful messages but do not see it worked out in daily life, they will reject the messages and not follow him or her.

The Chief Shepherd will reward the shepherds

Pastors are shepherds, but Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. One day we must stand before him and account of our activities. Paul said, "Be shepherds of the Church of God which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28 NIV).

We use the word "sheep" to speak about the Christians in our congregations. However, they are not our sheep, they are Jesus' sheep. The church belongs to God; it does not belong to us. The church is very valuable, for God bought it with the blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing could be more valuable than the blood of God's own Son.

Jesus said, "I will build my Church." The local church is not ours but his. However, he placed it in our hands to care for and nurture it so that it grows strong and flourishes. This is an awesome responsibility. We are part of a long history of pastors who cared for God's church. Some churches in Europe are over a thousand years old. Pastors have come and

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

gone but the church continues. Not one of us will pastor a single church forever. Eventually, we will resign or retire and someone else will take over that church.

We must look after the church carefully so that when we stand before God, we will be able to give a good report. Peter said that Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, has a prize for those who do his work.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:4 NIV)

In this life many pastors work long hours and receive little money. They do not always have good houses. Sometimes they struggle to find food and clothing. God sees all of this. He understands.

Paul suffered many hardships and much persecution but he was not discouraged. He focused on his current tasks. With hope, he looked forward to a future reward.

I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18 GNT)

CHAPTER

6

THE PASTOR–PRIEST

“I’m not a priest,” the young man insisted, “I’m a pastor. Priests wear robes and light candles. I do not do that. I preach God’s Word and help people believe in Christ.”

Many people hear the word “priest,” and they associate it with robes, candles, and stained glass windows. While this is a common understanding of the word, it really means more than that. A priest is one who stands between the people and God. In biblical times, priests brought the people’s prayers, offerings, and sacrifices to God. He also proclaimed God’s mercy, grace, and forgiveness to the worshippers.

PRIESTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament we see two types of spiritual leaders: prophets and priests. Prophets spoke for God to the people. Priests spoke for the people to God and proclaimed God's blessings to the people.

Moses and Aaron are good examples of these two types of leaders. Moses was a prophet who heard from God and then spoke for God to the people. They said to Moses, "Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey" (Deuteronomy 5:27).

Aaron was a priest, and his responsibility was very different. He led the worship and presented the prayers, thanksgiving, offerings, and sacrifices of the people to God.

Today, we do not kill animals and pour out blood on stone altars. That does not mean, however, that there is no priestly work to do.

When the pastor leads the congregation in prayer and brings their fears, hurts, sicknesses, and confessions to God, he or she is acting as a priest. When a new believer is baptised, or the people receive communion, the pastor performs priestly duties. When the pastor preaches, though, he or she is acting as a prophet, sharing God's Word with the people. In the ministry today, prophet and the priest are combined into one work—the work of the pastor.

Priesthood

An individual is a priest, but the priesthood is the whole group of priests and their responsibilities. The priesthood is very important in the Old Testament. The books of Exodus,

Leviticus, and Deuteronomy contain detailed instructions about worship and about how the priests are to perform their religious tasks. Everyone could not be a priest. Priests had to be from the tribe of Levi. They had to be ordained in a special ceremony. This ordination ceremony set them apart and authorised them to lead the worship of the people.

God was very specific about what priests were to do. He also described what the priests would wear. Their clothes were symbolic. The Chief Priest's clothes very elaborate. God described these in Exodus 28 and 29. The Chief Priest's clothes were rich with important symbols.

Head. The Chief Priest wore a turban on his head. On the front of his turban, above his forehead was a piece of pure gold like a large medal. "Holy unto the Lord" was engraved on the medal. Whenever the priest went into the temple, he wore this gold badge stating that he was set apart from others, dedicated to the Lord. In the same way pastors need to keep at the front of their minds this same idea. "I am dedicated to the Lord. I must walk before God and the people in a way that is pleasing to God."

Shoulders. Two precious and colourful stones were engraved with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. These beautiful stones were then placed in gold settings and fastened to the shoulder straps of the priest's clothing. This symbolised the fact that the Chief Priest bore the names of the tribes on his shoulders as he went about his work in the temple. God said the priest was to do this, "So, that I the Lord, will always remember my people."

The two stones were symbols, showing that the priest carried the responsibility for the people. The same is true for

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

pastors today. Paul said, “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care” (Acts 20:28 GNT). It is an awesome responsibility to carry the burden of people’s spiritual welfare. Paul also said, “Every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress” (2 Corinthians 11:28-29 GNT).

If we tried to carry the burdens of all our people on our shoulders, it would be unbearable. However the burden is not ours alone to carry. “Jesus, then, is the High Priest that meets our needs,” and “He is able now and always to save those who come to God through him, because he lives forever to plead with God for them” (Hebrews 7:26, 25 NIV).

Breastpiece. Another twelve precious stones were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. These polished stones were then placed in beautiful gold settings and fastened to the priest’s robes over his chest. Again this symbolised the idea that the names of the people were upon his heart, and that he represented the people whenever he went into the temple to make sacrifices. In the same way, when the pastor leads the people in worship, it is not just an individual who speaks. Rather the pastor represents the people. During the pastoral prayer, the pastor acts as a priest and brings the people’s joys and sorrows failures and successes, hopes and fears, to God.

Ordination

We can learn much about the life of a pastor when we study the ordination ceremony for Old Testament priests.

Aaron and his sons came to the entrance of the tent for worship and took a special bath and then put on their special clothes. The washing symbolizes cleanliness, and the special clothes symbolize righteousness. Righteousness and worship belong together. They were anointed with oil which symbolised the presence of the Holy Spirit.

After all the preparation, they made three offerings.

The first animal was killed as a sin offering to take away the sins of the priests. They could not make sacrifices for others until their own sins were atoned.

The second animal was a ram, a male sheep. It was killed, cut into pieces, and all of it was burned on the altar. This symbolised the priests giving themselves totally to God. The New Testament equivalent is found in Romans 12:1, where we are told to present ourselves as a living sacrifice unto God.

The third animal sacrifice was related specifically to their work as priests. Aaron and his sons placed their hands on the ram's head. It was killed, and the blood was applied to their ear lobes, their right thumbs, and their right toe. Then some of the anointing oil was mixed with the ram's blood and sprinkled on Aaron and his sons and their clothes. This ritual was performed every day for seven days.

This ritual sounds very strange and gruesome to many people today because it involves killing and blood. The blood was important because God said, "The life of every living thing is in the blood, and that is why the Lord has commanded that all blood be poured out on the altar to take away the people's sins. Blood, which is life, takes away sins" (Leviticus 17:11 GNT).

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

The blood on the ear lobe emphasised the need to listen to God and obey Him. “The Lord your God commands you to obey all his laws; so obey them faithfully with all your heart” (Deuteronomy 26:16 GNT). The blood applied to the thumbs and big toe shows that our work (hands) and our daily walk (feet) should be controlled by God.

Even though we no longer sacrifice animals, we should study these passages to better understand our faith. “If you look closely into the perfect law, ... and keep on paying attention to it, and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice, you will be blessed by God in what you do” (James 1:25 GNT).

JESUS IS OUR HIGH PRIEST

When you read about the blood on the ear, the thumb, and the big toe, it is easy to see why some people see a picture of the crucifixion of Jesus. There was blood on Jesus’ hands, feet, and head. The nails and the crown of thorns pierced him in those places. One of the ways the New Testament describes Jesus is “our High Priest.” The book of Hebrews compares and contrasts the work of the Jewish High Priests and the work of Jesus.

Differences:

- The Jewish High Priest was from the priestly tribe of Levi, but Jesus was from the kingly tribe of Judah.
- The High priest was an ordinary person, but Jesus was the Son of God sent from heaven.
- The High priest was himself a sinner. Jesus was sinless.

- The High Priest made sacrifices for his own sin first and then made sacrifices for the people. Jesus was sinless and offered himself as a sacrifice for all people.
- The High Priest made sacrifices every day, year after year. Jesus made one sacrifice of himself for all people of all nations for all ages. It will never be repeated.

Every Jewish Priest performs his services every day and offers the same sacrifices many times, but these sacrifices can never take away sins. Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective forever; and then he sat down at the right hand side of God. (Hebrews 10:11, 12 GNT)

Jesus is now seated beside God where he intercedes for us. Jesus is able to be our High Priest because he first became a human. He can represent us, for he lived among us. He knows what it is like to be tired, hungry, and thirsty. He was tempted like we are, but overcame all the temptations. He worked for a living as a carpenter. He walked the dusty roads. He was rejected, betrayed, beaten, spat upon, and hated, yet he forgave the people who hated him. This is why he can be our High Priest.

We can go to him with confidence knowing that he understands our problems. He sympathises with us. This gives us boldness and confidence to go to God with our requests; for we know we will receive grace and mercy when we need it. Hebrews 4:15-16 has more information about this.

THE PASTOR AS PRIEST

The life of Jesus is our pattern for ministry today. The pastor who keeps aloof from the pain, problems, hurts and

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

fears of the people cannot intercede for them properly. Only the pastor who visits the congregation, who listens to their problems, and understands their fears, can really lead them to God in prayer.

One of the most important things a pastor can do is to pray for the congregation. Samuel said to the Israelites, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV).

Jesus set us an example in prayer. He sometimes spent whole nights in prayer (Luke 6:12) and often woke before sunrise to have unbroken time with his heavenly Father (Mark 1:35). We read that he would often slip away into the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:16). Even now, Jesus—our great High Priest—is at the right hand of God interceding for us. We need to follow his example and intercede for those that are entrusted into our care.

On Sunday morning, many people come to church. Some are strong in their faith, some are new, and others are perhaps struggling with temptation. One person may be rejoicing because he has a new job, while some else is sad because she lost a job. Some will be sick, others angry, some may feel lonely. Some of them do not know how to pray. They have a dull ache inside. Others are rejoicing in being together with God’s people and want to celebrate the victory of Jesus. So on a single Sunday, a pastor speaks to many different people who have gone through very different experiences.

This is a tremendous challenge for the pastor as he or she leads the people in worship.

Worship must blend together many things including ...

... our worship of God,

- ... our confession of our sins and our failures,
- ... our praise and thanksgiving for God's goodness,
- ... our celebration of the victory that Jesus won on the cross,
- ... and our dedication of our lives to him.

It is the pastor's privilege and responsibility to design a worship service that enables the people of the congregation (with all their different needs) to present their prayers, requests, and thanksgivings to God, and to receive his mercy, grace, and strength.

This is the work of the pastor-priest!

CHAPTER

7

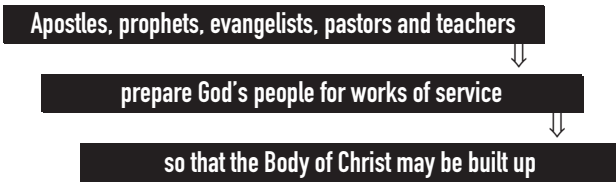
THE BODY OF CHRIST

It helps us to understand the pastor's responsibilities if we study the pastor as shepherd and the pastor as priest. However, we also need to understand the responsibilities of the congregation. Paul tells us that there are different kinds of leaders. But look at this verse and see what it says about those who are not called to be leaders.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV)

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Many people think that the work of the congregation is to attend church, to help out in the services, and to give offerings to support the church. This verse shows a very different picture. It says the church leaders' job is to prepare the congregation or body of Christ to do works of service. When this happens the church is built up both spiritually and numerically.



THE BODY OF CHRIST

After his resurrection, Jesus returned to heaven and left the Church to carry on his work. He gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us, guide us, and direct us. The Bible describes the church as a human body with Jesus as the head and the rest of us as his arms and feet doing his work through the power of the Holy Spirit. The most important part of the body is the head. We can lose an arm or leg and still keep living, but if we lose the head then death is instant. The mind is the control centre that directs every part of the body.

Just as Jesus had compassion on the poor, the lonely, the rejected, and all sorts of hurting people, the Church must reach out in loving compassion to those around it. We are his body. Jesus speaks through our mouths. He listens with our ears. He touches with our hands, and he walks the streets with our feet. The Church is much more than a meeting on Sunday. Jesus wants to live his life through us all week long.

God wants the Church to be like a strong athlete with all parts of the body working in perfect harmony. Unfortunately, the Church often appears weak and crippled and unable to do very much.

One body—many parts

Our bodies are made of different parts, even though each of us is just one person. All our body parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ. We are all joined to each other as different parts of one body (Romans 12:4-5).

Paul discusses this concept in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 12.

- The body is a single unit, though it has different parts. We are one (verse 12).
- Different parts have different functions. We each are a part of the body (verse 27).
- No part is inferior. I do not say that I am no good (verses 15-19).
- No part is superior. I do not say that you are no good (verses 21-24).
- All parts must operate in harmony with each other. We work together, undivided (verse 25).

Every believer is an important part of Christ's body. Each one has a work to do. All the parts of the body should ...

- ... Know what gifts they have
- ... Work in harmony with others
- ... Use their gifts to serve others

The pastor cannot do all the work alone. One of a pastor's greatest challenges is to help the people of the congregation

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

to discover their spiritual gifts. The next challenge is to train them to use those gifts to help and to bless others.

The human body has hundreds of different parts. Liver, lungs, heart, kidneys, skin, bones, veins, muscles, and nerves are all very different. Each part has its own special function and is needed to help the other parts of the body. The Church is the same. Every Christian is a part of the body, and each Christian has a different work to do. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts so that we are able to do the work he wants us to do. “Under [Christ’s] control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love” (Ephesians 4:16 GNT).

We should not feel inferior because we have a different gift from someone else. We should not feel superior to someone who does not have the same gift that we have. We are all parts of the same body, and we all work together. We all need to listen to Jesus who is the head of the body. When we cooperate, the whole body grows. It is stronger and can do great things for God.

GOD GIVES DIFFERENT GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are like tools. God gives us these tools so that we can work for him and become a blessing to others. No one person has a full set of tools. We have to work together if we want to get the job done. These gifts are not just given to men but to women as well. They are not just given to pastors but to lay people as well. They are not just given to adults but to children and adolescents as well. They are not

given to make us proud but to make us useful in God's service.

The Spirit's presence is shown in some way for the good of all.
(1 Corinthians 12:7 GNT)

Each one ... must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God. (1 Peter 4:10 GNT)

It was he who gave gifts to people. ... He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service in order to build up the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11 GNT)

These gifts are given to individuals in the church for the good of the church and for the good of the entire community. The New Testament contains various lists of gifts, and no two lists are exactly the same. We will look at several gifts that are closely associated with the work of the pastor.

Apostle

This word originally meant a fully prepared and authorized messenger sent as an ambassador with clear directions to deliver a message. Jesus changed the name of the disciples (which means "followers") to apostles (which means "sent ones"). The twelve apostles were called by Jesus, personally. They were eyewitnesses of his ministry, and the Church relied on them for accurate knowledge of all that Jesus said and did. They hold a very special place in church history. Sometimes the Bible calls them simply "the twelve."

However, there were other leaders in the Church who were also called apostles: Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7), and James the brother of Jesus (Colossians 1:9). These apostles helped to put in place

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

the foundation of the Christian faith. “You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself” (Ephesians 2:20 GNT).

Today, most churches do not use the title of apostle to describe a church leader. However, throughout the history of the church, God used people to do the work of apostles. They went out, started churches, and turned the leadership of the church over to a pastor. Then, they went on to start other churches but continued to have oversight, give guidance, and direction to the churches. For instance, John Wesley began and led the Methodist movement. William Booth founded the Salvation Army. Many pioneer missionaries functioned as apostles as they established the Church in a particular nation or among different people groups.

Prophet

A prophet is inspired by God and gives clear directions or leadership to the church. The prophet speaks to people “for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3 NIV). Many people hear the word “prophet” and think it means someone who predicts what will happen in the future. Yet, the prophet should not be seen as some sort of Christian fortune-teller who controls other people’s lives and tells them what the future will hold. Prophets should not invent new doctrine. Rather they call the people of God back to the heart of the faith, to repentance, and to renewed commitment to God.

Evangelism

The evangelist is especially gifted in presenting the gospel to those who are not Christians and leading them to faith in

Christ. Some people are gifted in personal evangelism. They may never conduct a public meeting, but they lead many individuals to believe in Jesus. Other people speak in citywide meetings and lead hundreds of people to faith in Christ at one time.

While some people have this gift, we should not make too big a difference between pastor and evangelist. Paul encouraged Pastor Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5 NIV). In other words, there may be some people with the gift of evangelism who are not pastors, but all pastors should be evangelists.

Teaching

Jesus commanded his disciples to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20 NIV). Similar to the gift of evangelism, some people are gifted teachers, though they are not called to be pastors. Yet, one of the pastor’s primary responsibilities is to “feed the sheep,” which involves careful teaching on the Word of God. The pastor needs to be able to teach, but people with teaching gifts are also needed elsewhere: children’s ministry, Bible clubs, home groups, or other Bible studies to name just a few.

Miracles

God often demonstrated his power and love by performing miracles. This was often the case when the gospel entered a new area and people had many questions about the faith. The demonstrations of God’s power often convinced people that the Christian messengers were from God. We must remember that it is God who does the miracles. The person through whom God does the miracle is merely the

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

channel of God's power. There is only one God, and he is in control. We do not tell him what to do. Instead we rely on him, trust him completely, and allow him to work through us.

Healing

The gift of healing is closely related to the gift of miracles. Jesus gave his 12 disciples power and authority to cure disease and sent them out to “preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2). Later, he appointed 72 others to preach and heal (Luke 10:1-11). Notice that the proclamation of the gospel is tied closely to the gift of healing.

God does not heal every sickness; after all, we all die at some time or another. Yet, we look forward to the time when Jesus returns and “there will be no more death, no more grief or crying, or pain” (Revelation 21:4 GNT). Each miracle of healing today points forward to when all disease will be gone.

Jesus rejected the view that every sickness is a direct result of a particular sin (John 9:2). Yet, the physical, spiritual, mental, and psychological parts of our lives are intertwined and cannot be separated. Jealousy, bitterness, and anger are like poisons in our bodies. “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones” (Proverbs 14:30).

James says that the elders of the church should pray for the sick. He also links effective prayer with confession: “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you will be healed” (James 5:16 NIV). When people confess their anger, jealousy, bitterness, resentment, and other sins it opens the way for God to heal. We need to treat the

whole person and not separate physical needs from spiritual causes.

When God heals someone through our ministry our attitude should be like that of Peter after the lame man was healed at the temple. He said,

Why do you stare at us? Do you think that it was by means of our own power or godliness that we made this man walk? God has given divine glory to his servant Jesus. ... It was the power of his name that gave strength to this lame man. What you see and know was done by faith in his name; it was faith in Jesus that has made him well. (Acts 3:12, 13, 16 NIV)

We see here a combination of humility, faith and exaltation of the name and power of Jesus.

Languages (tongues)

This gift has caused much debate, and the debate has resulted in many churches being divided. Some argue that this gift is the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Others go to the opposite extreme and believe that people who speak in tongues are deluded by the devil. The Scripture does not support either extreme position. This means that the truth must be somewhere in between.

Now is not the time to discuss it in depth. The gift is discussed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12–14. Paul says that speaking in tongues without love is nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell (13:1). He says languages will cease; but love is eternal (13:8). He also says that those who speak in tongues may help themselves, but clear prophetic teaching builds up the whole Church (14:4). The person who speaks in tongues should pray for the gift to explain what is said

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

(14:13). Paul admits that although he has this gift he would rather speak five words that everyone understands in order to teach others than “thousands of words in strange tongues” (14:19 GNT). We must use our spiritual gifts in such a way that everyone in the church is strengthened and blessed.

Helping

Some people do not like to be in front of others as a leader, but they enjoy helping. They are very happy to be active behind the scenes. Some make cups of tea or coffee. Others are happy to work in someone’s garden or clean the church. Some look after the sound system at the church or keep track of the church’s finances. A pastor who tries to do all these jobs is foolish. It is important to delegate responsibility to others and then allow them to get on and do the job. The New Testament has many examples of people with this gift including Tabitha (Acts 9:36), Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2), Clement, and others not named (Philippians 4:3).

Administration

Some people are able to organise the many aspects of a church’s programs so that everything runs smoothly. In fact, the word used in the 1 Corinthians 12:28 literally means “to pilot or to steer.” Not every pastor has the gift of administration, even though he or she will be required to do many administrative tasks. If a pastor does not have this gift then it is important to find someone who does.

Other gifts

The Holy Spirit gives many other gifts, and they are all important. Some of the other gifts listed are serving, gener-

osity, encouraging, leadership, showing mercy (Romans 12:6-8), interpretation, wisdom, knowledge, distinguishing between spirits (1 Corinthians 12:7-11), and hospitality (1 Peter 4:9).

Prepare God's people for works of service

On the first Easter Sunday, Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, "As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21 GNT). This important statement says that we are to continue the work that Jesus began. This means that Jesus is the head, and we are his hands and feet so that his work continues.

The work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers is to prepare God's people for works of service. We do not come to church simply to receive a blessing but also so that we can leave church and be a blessing to those outside the church. The church must always fight the temptation to focus inwardly and run only those programs that help the church people. Instead we should be focused outwardly and do those things that will help the community around us.

When Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion on them. Since the Church is the body of Christ we must also have compassion on the poor, bruised, broken, and hurting people who live around us.

These gifts could be described as spiritual tools that we can use to serve others. No one person has a complete set of tools. We therefore work together as a group using our different tools (gifts) so that we can be a blessing and encouragement to other believers.

Know your gifts

How can we know which gifts we received? How can we as pastors help our church members know what gifts they received? It is important that people involve themselves in ministries where they can use their spiritual gifts so that others are helped and blessed. The following may help the people of your church identify their gifts.

- *Prayer.* Encourage your people to pray that God will show them which gifts he gave them.
- *Evidence.* God does not hide the gifts he gives. There should be evidence that a person has received a gift. Ask your people questions such as, “Are there activities in the church or community that attract you? Do you ever feel like you would really be good at doing this or that?” Their answers may be an indication of God’s leading. However, we must remember that spiritual gifts are given so that we can help others. They are not given so we will feel proud or successful.
- *Experiment.* Encourage the believers to volunteer to help in various forms of ministry. Cell groups are excellent places where people can gain experience without standing before a large group.
- *Evaluate your feelings.* Ask questions such as “How did you feel after participating in this type of ministry?” Often, people will say that they felt scared and nervous. This is normal. But the follow-up question is “Did you feel a sense of fulfilment?” If so, that could be an indication of a certain gift. If they felt really uncomfortable and miserable, then that might be an indication that they are not gifted in a certain area of ministry.

- *Examine the results.* Gifts are given to help others. The priority, then, is to see if people were helped. If so, then that is an indication of a spiritual gift at work. Help your people see the results of their ministry. If someone witnesses to others and are able to help them come to faith in Christ, then perhaps they have the gift of evangelism. If someone prays for a sick person, and that person's health rapidly improves, it may be the gift of healing at work.
- *Expect confirmation from other Christians.* Gifts are given to help the Body of Christ. As a person volunteers and gets involved in various areas of ministry, help them listen for confirmation from others in the Church, especially leaders.

CHAPTER

8

THE PASTOR-LEADER

Church leaders are not like political leaders who seek money, prestige, and power. A church leader is called to serve others. In fact, a church leader should expect to serve as Jesus served. He said,

You know that those who are considered rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it is among you. If one of you wants to be great, you must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, you must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people.” (Mark 10:42-45 GNT)

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Our task is to pour out our lives in loving service to those who are lost and hurting. We are to show them love and compassion. We need to be patient with those who are weak and comfort those who are hurting. The Church is to be the hands of Jesus reaching out to those in need. The Church is to be the eyes and ears of Jesus looking and listening with love and compassion to those in need. We are to lead like Jesus did.

THE PASTOR'S AUTHORITY

The pastor must have the heart of a servant and yet must also speak with authority. Pastors must keep the right balance between serving with humility and leading with authority. Our authority does not come from diplomas or degrees but from being called by God. Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16 NIV). Jesus also said, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:18-19 NIV). Our authority does not come from a title such as "pastor" or "reverend." It does not come from denominational leaders, church committees, or church boards. Instead, it comes from our call by God and from our adherence to his Word.

Also, the Scripture is our source of authority. We do not preach fictional stories. We do not preach our own ideas, theories, or human philosophies. Our source of authority is the Word of God. We need to know it thoroughly and preach it boldly. Paul said, "I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom. ... I resolved to know nothing ... except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2 NIV). He also said, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teach-

ing, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV).

These two things help a pastor to speak and lead with authority: a personal call by God to be a pastor and a solid understanding of Scripture. If we keep our hearts and minds focussed on Jesus and seek his glory, we can work and speak with his authority.

THE PASTOR'S VISION

The local church belongs to God, and the pastor looks after it. It is important, then, that the pastor asks God for a picture of what the church should look like and be like in the near future, as well as in five or ten years. As the leader, the pastor needs a clear vision of what God wants to do in and through the church.

God said to Abraham, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. Go walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you” (Genesis 13:14, 17 NIV). Even though Abraham still did not have any children, he believed that one day God would give all this land to him and his children and grandchildren. Faith and vision are closely related. “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1 NIV). A good leader spends time in prayer asking God to give a clear vision of what he wants to do in and through the church and in the community. Then the pastor believes that what God has promised he will also bring into existence.

THE PASTOR AS A MANAGER

A pastor not only needs a clear vision for the direction of the church, but the pastor also needs to be very good at organizing things and keeping things running smoothly. A good pastor needs to be able to organize people, finances, and events. If the pastor is not gifted in this area then the pastor needs to find someone else in the church to help him or her.

THE PASTOR LEADS BY EXAMPLE

The pastor is a shepherd who looks after God's people. Jesus said that the shepherd, "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. He goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:3-4 NIV). First of all, this verse shows the close relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd knows the sheep and calls them by name. The sheep also know and trust the shepherd's voice. Notice also that the shepherd goes in front and provides an example for the sheep to follow. Peter wrote to church leaders and said, "Be shepherds of God's flock which is under your care, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5: 2-3 NIV).

The pastor leads by setting an example for people to follow. Paul wrote to a young pastor, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12 NIV). He also wrote, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV).

If the pastor is a man or woman of prayer then it will not be long before people in the congregation also become

strong in prayer. If the pastor is generous this will flow over to the congregation, and they will become generous. If the pastor and spouse have a good marriage relationship, then the congregation will understand how a husband and wife should live. If the pastor loves the Scriptures, then the congregation will also develop a love for God's Word.

A good leader will lead by example, and the church will grow and become a stronger witness for Christ in the community. A poor leader will allow the church to drift into stagnation, ineffectiveness, irrelevance, and possibly division.

THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD PASTOR

The pastor's work is important. It is good work, and it is God's work. However, it is not easy work. The Apostle Paul gave us a list of the qualities of a good pastor in 1 Timothy 3:2-7. Notice that some of these describe *the character* of a good pastor, while others describe *the actions* of a good pastor. A strong church leader has an inward character that is in harmony with outward actions. A church leader must:

- be without fault
- have only one spouse
- be sober,
- be self-controlled
- be orderly
- welcome strangers into the home
- be able to teach
- not be a drunkard
- not be violent
- be gentle

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

- be peaceful
- not love money
- be able to manage his or her own family well
- make his or her children obey respectfully
- be mature in the faith
- be respected by the people outside the Church

These are very high qualifications. Who will ever qualify and measure up to this standard? Many business leaders and politicians come far short of this standard. It is possible that someone whom God called to the ministry might read this list and become anxious. However, do not be discouraged. We do not become like this ideal leader in an instant. We do not achieve this level of leadership by our own efforts. Instead, we allow God to transform us. It may take time.

James 1:5 says “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should pray to God, who will give it to you” (GNT). This is good advice for other things that we lack. Do any of you lack self-control? You should pray to God, who will give it to you. Are any of you prone to anger and violence? Pray to God, who will rescue you. Remember what Paul said to the believers in Philippi: “I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished” (Philippians 1:6 GNT).

Discipline

The pastor must be disciplined and self-controlled. He or she does not work in an office or a factory where supervisors watch to make sure the work is done properly. The work of the pastor is often unsupervised. Therefore, it takes self-discipline to properly use the time. If a pastor does not plan well then much time will be wasted. This is most easily seen

in preparation for preaching. A Sunday arrives every seven days, and a pastor must be disciplined in preparation for it. Without discipline you will find that Saturday night arrives quickly and you will not be ready for the next morning.

This is also true in other areas. A pastor needs to set aside time to visit people and help people with problems. It takes discipline to effectively organize the activities of the church.

Courage

A pastor's work is not easy. Sometimes we need to speak to people about habits or attitudes that are not right and which need to be changed. Often we bring a message of encouragement, but sometimes we need to bring a rebuke or a warning. It is not easy to give that sort of message. However we must have courage, be bold, and speak with love the message that God wants us to give. Paul said, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (1 Timothy 1:7 NIV).

Humility

Many people in the world are chasing after fame and a high position. They want to be noticed, and they want people's approval. In some areas of the world, people want to be pastors because the pastor is a highly respected person in the community.

However Jesus showed us a different pattern. Our "attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5 NIV). Jesus left the throne and glory of heaven to be born as a baby in a poor house in a little country town. He identified with the poor and homeless. He even took on the role of a servant and washed the feet of his followers. Jesus said to

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

his disciples, “I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example for you” (John 13: 14-15 GNT).

John the Baptist said about Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 NIV). Pastors today must have the same attitude. Our goal is to exalt Jesus and lift him up as the hope of the world. This means that we must be willing to become humble so that people will see Jesus and not us.

Integrity

A church leader must be without fault. He should be respected by the people outside the Church (1 Timothy 3:2, 7). Pastors must be known as trustworthy, people who keep their word. Many times, people lose confidence in a pastor who says that he or she will do something, but then never does it. We must be careful in what we say, and not exaggerate the truth or gossip. A pastor must not share with other people what is told in confidence. A pastor must also be totally trustworthy in finances. If people ever lose confidence or faith in a pastor, then that pastor’s ministry is finished. As Paul told us, the pastor’s reputation both in the church and in the community as a whole must be without fault.

Humour

God gave us a sense of humour and the ability to laugh. Sometimes when things are tense, the ability to help people to laugh and see the funny side of a situation can be very helpful. However, we should never laugh at other people, ridicule them, or make them or others feel embarrassed.

Patience

A pastor needs to learn to be patient. Galatians 5:22 lists it as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Often the work of looking after a church is similar to that of a gardener. We plant the seed and water it, but we need to be patient as we wait for it to grow and bear fruit. It takes time for the fruit to develop and ripen. Gardens need to be weeded and fertilized. All of this takes time. We therefore need to be patient as we work with people and care for them. We must realize that some habits and attitudes may change quickly, but others will take a long time.

When a pastor comes to a church, he or she needs to be patient, as it will take months and maybe years to earn the trust of the people. It may take a lot of time for them to share with the pastor the problems and difficulties they are facing in their lives.

Servant Attitude

Pastors must always remember that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Peter referred to Jesus as the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4). Jesus chose us and commissioned us to work for him. We are responsible to Jesus and one day will stand before him and give an account of all that we have said and done.

The pastor is called to be a servant-leader. The pastor is not the “Church Boss” who orders people around and controls everything that happens. Peter wrote to church leaders and told them not to be bossy, but to “be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3 GNT).

The church leader does not seek after power and prestige, for the Church exists to bring glory to God. The godly church

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

leader desires that the church will grow in godliness, in numbers and in effective ministry in the community, for when this happens then God is glorified.

CHAPTER

9

THE PASTOR'S ANOINTING

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach. (Luke 4:18 NIV)

“Anointing” is a very religious word. In some languages the word does not even exist, so it is often difficult to translate verses like Luke 4:18 where Jesus says he was “anointed to preach.” Anointing is sometimes used to describe a part of a ceremony where a liquid, usually oil, is poured or gently smeared on someone’s head. This symbolizes the presence of God coming in to their lives. But, anointing is often used to describe a spiritual reality that does not involve actual oil.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Rather, it speaks of the presence of God in a person's life and his approval and authorization of their tasks or missions.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Jesus did not begin his ministry until the Holy Spirit came upon him. John the Baptist baptised Jesus and while Jesus was praying, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove. Jesus began his ministry with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus went out into the wilderness where he fasted, prayed, and prepared himself for his ministry. At the end of 40 days, he felt very weak physically. Satan came and tempted Jesus, but Jesus relied on the Word of God. As a boy, Jesus memorized Scripture, and he used those verses to defeat all the temptations. Jesus returned from the wilderness and the temptations "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14).

Jesus went to the synagogue (the Jewish house of worship), and they asked him to read the Scriptures. He opened the scroll to Isaiah 61 and read the first two verses. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has chosen me to bring good news to the poor." Three important things stand out in this story.

1. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit before he began his ministry.
2. He overcame the temptations in the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. He began his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus carried out his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When some of the Jewish leaders said that Jesus drove out demons through the power of the devil, Jesus replied, “It’s not Beelzebul (the devil), but God’s Spirit who gives me power to drive out demons” (Matthew 12:28 GNT). His miracles and teaching were all done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

JESUS PROMISES THE HOLY SPIRIT

Just before he died Jesus told the disciples that he must leave them. They were worried. Jesus told them, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God” (John 14:16-17 GNT).

After Jesus rose from the dead, he commanded the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit. He said, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised. ... In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:8 NIV). Jesus did his ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit, and he knew it was essential that his disciples be filled with the Holy Spirit before they began their ministry. They were not yet ready for service, even though these men were with Jesus for three years, saw all the miracles, and heard all his teaching. They needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit to begin the work of building Jesus’ Church. The Holy Spirit was very important in the life and ministry of Jesus, and he is also very important in our lives and in our ministry.

On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and the other believers, both men and women. The Holy Spirit came as fire, symbolizing the refining fire of God that not only cleansed their hearts from self-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

centeredness and self-will, but also set them on fire with a blazing passion for God.

The Holy Spirit came like a mighty wind symbolizing the life-giving breath of God, and on that day a baby church was born.

The Holy Spirit came with the sound of many languages symbolizing that the gospel of Jesus Christ was not just for the Jews but for people of all nationalities. People of every tribe and language can be citizens of the kingdom of Heaven.

The Holy Spirit gave them courage and confidence. He anointed their messages so that thousands of people realized their need to repent and believe in Christ. The Church was born, and over 3,000 believed in Christ on that first day.

Today, people still want to hear a preacher that is anointed with the Holy Spirit. They do not want to hear human wisdom, some person's ideas, or the latest dream or vision. They want to hear from God, and they want to hear a pastor who comes to the pulpit with the anointing of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit began working in and through the lives of the disciples to build Jesus' Church. That work continues today, and the Holy Spirit is just as active now as he was then.

The Holy Spirit is constantly at work

Jesus said to Nicodemus. "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born again" (John 3:3 GNT). Jesus was not talking about physical birth but spiritual birth. One of a pastor's important responsibilities is to help people experience a

new birth. But if a pastor has not personally experienced this new birth, how can he or she help others to be born again? Jesus said about some religious leaders: “They are blind leaders of the blind; and when one blind man leads another, both fall into a ditch” (Matthew 15:14 GNT). We would all be blind and lost if it were not for the loving guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Almost three hundred years ago John Wesley was a young pastor in England. His father was a pastor, and John grew up in the church. He went to Oxford University and studied to become a pastor too. He knew his Bible well. He learned Hebrew, Greek, and Latin as well as French and German. He read books written by great preachers and famous scholars. He tried his best to live a Christian life. He was disciplined in church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer. He was ordained as a minister, but he had no real peace in his heart.

One time he was sailing on a ship in a big storm. The waves crashed into the boat. Wesley was frightened and thought he would drown. He saw other Christians on the same boat who were calm and unafraid. He wondered, “What do they have that I don’t have? Why do they have peace when I have none? Why are they not afraid to die?”

Even though Wesley grew up in the Church and was an ordained minister, he was unsure about his salvation. He tried to earn his salvation by his own hard work and good deeds. But in his heart, he knew that this was not what God wanted.

Some months later, he went to a Bible study and listened carefully as a person read a book written by Martin Luther. As he listened, he realized that salvation came through faith.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

He said later, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation.” This brought about a big change in Wesley’s life. God used him to bring an incredible revival to England. He became the founder of the Methodist movement which has since spread around the world.

It took John Wesley many years, even after he was ordained as a minister, to understand salvation. However, salvation is not complicated. It’s as simple as A-B-C-D.

“A” • Acknowledge your sins

The Bible is very clear. “Everyone has sinned and is far away from God’s saving presence” (Romans 3:23 GNT). Instead of obeying God, we follow our own desires. We are like sheep that are lost, each of us going our own way (Isaiah 53:6).

“B” • Believe that Jesus came to be our Saviour

We cannot save ourselves, so Jesus came to save us. The wage we earn from our life of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Romans 6:23). “Let us praise God for his glorious grace, for the free gift he gave us in his dear Son! For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God!” (Ephesians 1:6-8 GNT) We must believe that Jesus died for us.

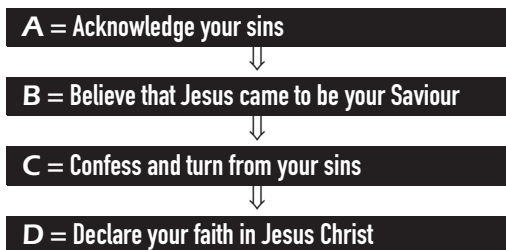
“C” • Confess and turn from our sins

God provided salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We must turn from our sins and accept God’s gift of salvation. “If we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise. He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrong doing” (1 John 1:9 GNT). The Bible also says, “You

will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you” (Proverbs 28:13 GNT).

“D” • Declare your faith in Jesus Christ

If we believe that Jesus is our saviour we need to tell others. This not only strengthens our faith, but it helps others to believe in Jesus also. “If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Jesus from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved” (Romans 10:9-10 GNT).



God, the Holy Spirit, works this wonderful salvation in our lives, transforming and renewing us. “You have been purified from sin; you have been dedicated to God; you have been put right with God by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11 GNT).

A pastor must know the joy of salvation. You may be asked to share your story. If possible, take the time and carefully write out your testimony and keep it in your Bible so you will be ready to share it. Also, it will help remind you of God’s goodness to you. If you, like John Wesley, are uncertain of your own salvation, perhaps God is using this book as a

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

way to draw you to him in a definite way. Do you need to “A”cknowledge, “B”elieve, “C”onfess, and “D”eclare?

As a pastor, you will have the wonderful opportunity to assist people in finding God’s salvation. Often the process is quick, a person believes and becomes a Christian in one evening. Other times it is a more gradual process, where a person begins to acknowledge their need and starts believing in Christ’s promise of salvation. You may need to help them to confess their sins, even if they are embarrassed to do so. They do not have to tell you all their sins; they should tell God. Afterwards, as the pastor, help them find a way to declare their new faith. Perhaps give a chance during a church service to tell what happened.

The Holy Spirit is our helper

God not only saves us from sin, but he also gives us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us so that we may live godly lives. Before we believed, we were completely under the control of darkness and sin. We had no hope and we were without God (Ephesians 2:12). Thankfully, God did not leave us like that. As believers, we now find ourselves alive in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are able to live holy lives because the Holy Spirit is within us and guides us. Paul encourages us with these words, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25 NIV).

The Holy Spirit is our teacher

The disciples were worried about what would happen when Jesus left them. Jesus encouraged them. “The Holy Spirit will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you” (John 14:26 GNT). This is a wonderful

promise. We have the most wonderful teacher in the world to help us. He is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Holy Spirit inspired and directed those who wrote the Scriptures. Today, the same Holy Spirit helps us to read and understand them. When you read the Bible and find sections that are not clear or difficult to understand, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and help you understand (1 John 2:27).

If you run into problems in your church, and you are not sure what to do, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you. He will help you find the right way to solve the problem. When you are preparing a sermon, the Holy Spirit will help you to understand God's Word and help you prepare a message for the people.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to witness

Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would give them power to speak for Him. "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power, and you will be witnesses for me" (Acts 1:8 GNT). A few days later the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, and they became bold. Peter preached a powerful message to a huge crowd, and 3,000 believed his message and were baptised.

Peter was not always so bold. When the soldiers arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples abandoned him and ran away. That same night, Peter denied knowing Jesus. However, when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, they received power to be courageous witnesses. When they were arrested and brought before the Chief Priest and leaders of the people, they were not afraid. Because they

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

were filled with the Holy Spirit, they said, “We cannot stop speaking of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:18).

Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit. He was a powerful speaker. Some people tried to argue and debate with him, “But the Spirit gave Stephen such wisdom that when he spoke they could not refute him” (Acts 6:10 GNT).

We need a fresh anointing from God every time we preach. Last week’s anointing will not do for next week’s message. We must continually rely upon God’s power and pray for the anointing of God’s Spirit.

The Holy Spirit helps us to overcome temptation

Jesus overcame the tempter through the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our helper (John 15:26 GNT). He gives us strength to overcome temptation. Paul prayed, “I ask God ... to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves. ... I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love” (Ephesians 3:16-17 GNT).

A tree that has deep roots will not be blown over in a strong storm. A Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit can stand up against the storms of temptation and persecution and will not fall down.

The Holy Spirit fills us with God’s love

Jesus loved people. Crowds of people came to him. Many were sick, worried, and lonely. Jesus never turned them away. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36 NIV).

We are Christ's representatives. He sends us to carry on the work he started. God also wants us to love people, really love them. A pastor needs to be kind, compassionate, helpful, loving, and patient. This is why we need the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can cleanse our hearts of self-centredness and fill us with God's love.

"God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:5 NIV). The Holy Spirit can cleanse our hearts of sin and self-centredness. He can fill us with wonderful "fruit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV).

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit

Christians receive the Holy Spirit at the moment they were born again. "You became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised" (Ephesians 1:13 GNT).

Some Christians go further in their Christian lives and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Other Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit. They have an ongoing struggle between their own desires and the desires of the Holy Spirit. They are double-minded and unstable in their Christian lives (James 1:8). They gave up many of the sins they used to commit, but they still have wrong attitudes that make God sad.

Do not make God's Holy Spirit sad. ... Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insulting, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead be kind and tender hearted

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

to one another, and forgive one another as God has forgiven you through Christ. (Ephesians 4:30-32 GNT)

Do you have anger, bitterness, and an unforgiving attitude to others? If you do then you make the Holy Spirit sad.

Think of a jar full of water with rocks in it. You cannot completely fill the jar with water until you take the rocks out. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of Love. Love cannot dwell with bitterness, anger, hatred, and resentment. We must confess these wrong attitudes, and ask God to cleanse our hearts and fill us with his love.

The Holy Spirit is love: love for God and love for other people. But many people are in love with things or pleasure. They love to please themselves. We cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if our hearts are filled with love for ourselves.

Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world, what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of, none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live forever.”
(1 John 2:15-17 GNT)

If our hearts are full of pride or worldly desires it cannot be full of the Holy Spirit. We need to surrender all these desires to God. We must give ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, so that we no longer follow our own desires but do his will. The Bible tells us, “Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God dedicated to his service and pleasing to him” (Romans 12:1 GNT).

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6 GNT). He also said, “Whoever is thirsty should come to me, and whoever believes in me should drink. As the Scripture says, ‘Streams of life giving water will pour out from His side.’ Jesus said this about the Spirit that those who believed in Him are going to receive” (John 8:37-39 GNT).

Are you thirsty for God’s Spirit? Do you want him to fill you to overflowing? Do you desire to please God in everything you do? Will you obey everything he tells you to do? Do you love him more than any other thing? Then ask him to fill you with his Holy Spirit. “You know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Luke 11:13 GNT).

CHAPTER 10

THE SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday is the most important day in the week for the pastor. On Sunday, people leave their normal jobs and come together to worship God and have fellowship with each other. God is love, and relationships are very important to him. Pastors should design Sunday worship services so that people can express their love to God, and so that they can experience God's love for them. It is a time for praising God, giving thanks to God, and expressing our worship of him through songs and testimonies. It is also a time to come together as a

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Christian family and listen to God's Word so that we can be strengthened.

In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to work for six days and to keep the seventh day as a special day to be free from work and to worship God (Exodus 20:8-11). This special day of rest was called the Sabbath (which means "rest"). The seventh day on our calendar is Saturday. Today, though, we worship on Sunday to celebrate the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. He met with the disciples on that same day. Seven weeks later the Holy Spirit descended on the first day of the week, and Jesus Christ's Church came into being. So every seven days, on Sunday, we set aside the normal routines of life, and gather together as the Church for rest, worship, and fellowship.

When people come to church they look for many things. These are the most common reasons:

1. *Uplifting music and inspiring worship.* People want to worship and celebrate God's goodness and wonderful salvation. God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—must be the focus of our worship. We do everything in a way that will bring glory to God, and not the preacher, the song leader, or any other person.
2. *Good preaching.* People expect to hear from God. They come with needs, hurts, pains, worries, and fears. They are looking for guidance, strength, and direction. Some want to be reminded of God's love and protection. Others may need to be corrected and reminded of how God expects them to live. Some want to know more about what it means to live the Christian life. They expect to listen to a preacher who has spent time in God's pres-

ence praying, studying the Bible, and who comes with a fresh word from the Lord.

3. *Love.* People like friendly churches where they experience God's love and fellowship with other Christians. This is especially the case for people who live away from their extended families. The church needs to be the family of God and express love and acceptance to everyone.
4. *Motivation.* The worship service should inspire and motivate Christians to show God's love to people around them both through words and through acts of kindness.

It is important that the pastor do everything possible to make Sunday a wonderful day of worship praise, thanksgiving and spiritual growth.

LEADING WORSHIP

The pastor not only speaks for God to the people, he also leads the people closer to God. He helps them bring their praises and petitions to God. When people come to church on Sunday, they come with many different needs. A mother may be worried about a sick child. A man may be concerned about finding a job. People come with financial worries. Perhaps there is a disagreement in a family, and angry words were spoken. Some people come rejoicing in God's victory and blessing while others are struggle with temptation. It is a huge responsibility and honour to help these people bring their problems, difficulties, joys, and sorrows into the presence of Almighty God.

The pastor will have musicians—perhaps a choir or praise team, maybe a song leader and others—who will help in the worship. However the pastor is the one who plans and pre-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

pares so that people experience the presence of God in the worship service.

A worship service is like a dialogue. It's a two-way conversation between God and his people. The pastor's role is to help the people bring needs, dreams, fears, pain, joy, and celebration to God. The pastor also seeks to bring God's Word of encouragement, instruction, warning, guidance and comfort to the people.

WORSHIP IS LOVE IN FOUR DIMENSIONS

Worship does not simply flow in one direction: from us to God. Instead, it happens in four directions.

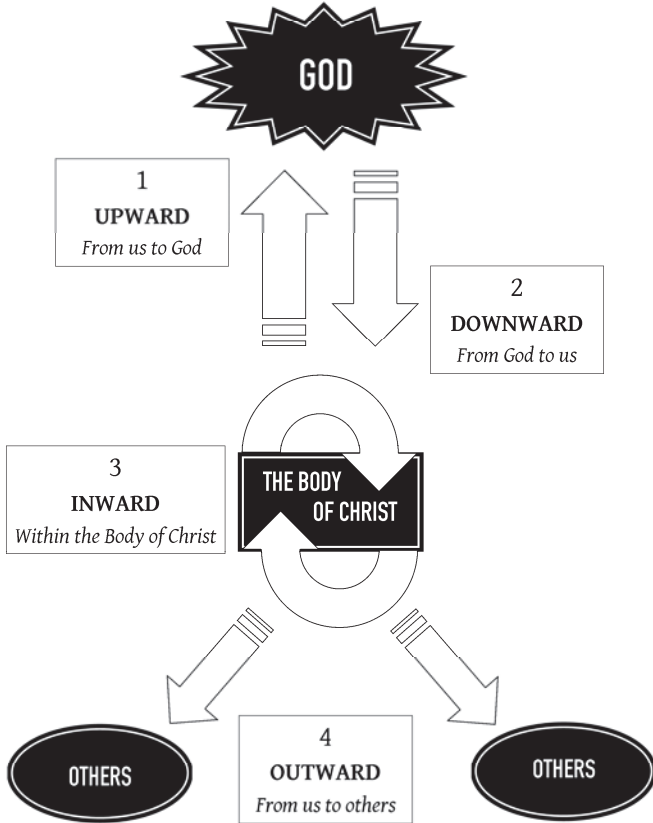
1. *Upward* (from us to God): In song and prayer the people come close to God and pour out their hearts to him.
2. *Downward* (from us to God): Through the Bible reading, songs, and sermon the people hear God's Word to them and experience his love, comfort, and strength.
3. *Inward* (Internal—within the Body of Christ): The people enjoy fellowship together.
4. *Outward* (External—from us to those outside the church): True worship inspires us and motivates us to share God's love with others during the week.

PLANNING WORSHIP SERVICES

Great worship services do not happen by accident. Great worship services are a result of spiritual preparation and good organization.

Personal Preparation. If we want to lead the congregation into the presence of God, then it is essential that we

WORSHIP IS LOVE IN FOUR DIMENSIONS



ourselves have spent time in the presence of God. This is why Jesus often went off by himself to spend time in prayer (Mark 1:35). After the Day of Pentecost, the church was growing very rapidly. There were a lot of demands on the apostles, but they said, “[We] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4 NIV). Paul said to the church

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

leaders from Ephesus, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer” (Acts 20:28 NIV). The pastor has to be responsible for his or her own spiritual life. Pastors need to spend time with God, so that on Sunday morning they come to the service with a clear sense of the presence of Jesus and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Be Organized. The Bible does not tell us how to organize a worship service. Worship styles vary from country to country. Rural churches are different from city churches. We use different languages and different types of musical instruments. Some church services last for one hour and others last for two or more hours.

What is important is to have God’s blessing on the service, so it is good to plan ahead. The pastor should write out an order of service, and give a copy to everyone involved in leading the service. That way everyone who is involved in a service knows what songs will be sung, who will pray, and who will do all the other things. Of course, we always need to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that changes can be made if necessary.

An order of service does not have to be fancy. Here is an example of one possibility:

- Opening song of praise and worship to God
- Opening prayer asking God’s blessing on the service
- Song 2
- Song 3
- Pastoral prayer: Bringing the needs of the people before God

- Announcements of things that will happen during the week
- Song 4
- Testimony
- Offering
- Prayer for the offering
- Song 5
- Bible reading
- Message from God's Word
- Concluding prayer

Beside each item in the order, the pastor should put the name of the person responsible for that action. This is just an example of how one pastor organizes a worship service. The Bible does not give specific instructions on how to conduct a worship service. Instead, God gives us a lot of freedom, because it will make a difference if we are in a rural village or in a big city. The culture of the people also shapes the service, helping the pastor decide what type of music to play, how long the service should be, and so on.

Involvement. The Bible describes the church as a body with many different parts, and each part has its own work to do. In our worship services we should use as many different people as possible doing different things. Some help with the music, others read the Scriptures, others take up the offering, and others greet people when they arrive at the door. Some people come during the week to make sure the church is neat and clean for Sunday morning.

It is good idea to involve as many different people as possible. It is also important that everyone who is involved knows ahead of time what is planned. Those helping in the

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

service should come prepared. If we are well prepared it can make a big difference to the worship service.

The length of a service is different from place to place. Some people are very concerned about time, whereas others live by the sun rather than by a clock. They begin when everyone is present and finish when they feel like it. It is important, though, that we are consistent. If we announce that church starts at 10:00 am, then let us be true to our word and start at 10:00 and not at 10:30.

Singing and music

Christians love to sing. We received forgiveness, and we have abundant life now. We sing to express our joy and thanksgiving for the wonderful salvation and eternal life that God gave us. Also, we have the hope of the resurrection to come. God promised to supply our needs, and he blessed us many times. It is not surprising that singing praise songs is such a big part of Christian worship.

There are many different styles of worship. Some churches use keyboards, while others have orchestras or praise bands. Sometimes a church will have just one person playing a guitar, while another church may use a lot of drums. Some people include dancing as a part of their worship as they celebrate God's goodness. People should be able to express their feelings freely and with deep meaning in words and music that is culturally meaningful to them.

Testimonies

Some churches give people an opportunity to tell how God has helped them in their daily lives. Psalm 96:2-3 (NIV) says,

Proclaim his salvation day after day.

Declare his glory among the nations,

His marvellous deeds among all peoples.

It is good to proclaim God's salvation and tell about the marvellous deeds he has done. A good testimony should be:

- **Up to date.** If someone says the same "testimony" every week, it gets stale and boring. Worship should be exciting, so we want to hear what God has done in someone's life in the past week. People want to hear how God answered prayer, healed someone's sickness, blessed a person financially, or provided a job.
- **Short.** Testimonies are not sermons but short stories of God at work in our everyday lives.
- **Glorifying to God.** Testimonies are not a time to draw attention to ourselves but to give glory to God. I heard someone tell a long story about all the bad things he did, and it seemed as if he was boasting about all of his crimes. That is not a good testimony. We should be ashamed of our sin and thankful for all that God did.

Some people are shy, and so they need to be encouraged to tell how God blessed them and changed their life. Sometimes the pastor needs to encourage a new person to share his or her story with the congregation, since that person may never volunteer. One good idea is to give the person a week to think about what to say. Perhaps he or she could even write it out, so that it will say exactly what needs to be said. In any case, when Sunday comes again, that person will be ready to share what God has done.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

As we tell about God's blessings and hear other testimonies in church, it gives us confidence to share our stories of God's goodness with our friends and neighbours.

Prayer

Prayer is a very important part of our worship services. It is a time to bring our praise and thanksgiving to God, as well as our personal requests and concerns.

Many people like to make prayer the first thing they do when they enter a church building. They like to be silent and bow their heads and praise God for his goodness. They like to open their hearts to hear his voice for they want God to speak to them. It is also good to pray for God's anointing on those who will be leading the worship service.

There are different kinds of prayers.

Opening prayer. The pastor or worship leader leads the people in prayer expressing praise and gratitude to God and asking for God's anointing on every part of the service.

Community prayer. Some churches have a prayer time when the whole congregation prays out loud at the same time. This is good since it allows maximum participation. Since no one but God is listening to the individual prayers, everyone feels free to pour out their joys, heartaches and problems to God. After everyone has an opportunity to pray together, it is good for everyone to be silent as someone chosen ahead of time leads the congregation in a final prayer, and brings their praise and intercession to God.

Pastoral prayer. The pastoral prayer is a time for the pastor to represent the whole congregation, and speak to God on its behalf. He or she begins by emphasizing God's greatness, goodness, power, and majesty. This encourages

people to believe that God enjoys answering the prayers of his children. The pastor then brings the needs of the congregation to God in prayer. He or she will pray for the sick and those with special needs. It is good for the pastor to remember to pray for the leaders of the community and the leaders of the nation, that God will give them wisdom and help them to be upright and honest in their responsibilities. Sometimes the pastor will pray for rain so that crops will grow, or at other times for protection from flooding. God is our heavenly Father, and we must feel free to bring every concern to him, whether big or small.

Prayer for the offering. This is a short prayer of thanksgiving for all of God's blessings of health and strength, sunshine and rain, food and family. It is also a prayer of dedication as God's children give to support the financial needs of the church.

Closing prayer or benediction. Many times, the pastor will choose to close the service by praying for God's blessing to go with the people as they leave. This is called the benediction. The benediction is spoken directly to the people. Even though it is not spoken to God, it is still a type of prayer. It is a prayer for God's blessing to rest on his people. Aaron gave the following benediction to the Israelites:

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV)

Here is another benediction from the last two verses of Jude:

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

To him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (NIV)

Other benedictions can be used, including Romans 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 3:20, Revelation 22:21, and Hebrews 13:20-21.

The Lord's Prayer. Some churches encourage people to memorise the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). This is a good prayer to recite, and it is a good example for teaching new Christians how to pray.

Offering

The offering is an important part of our worship. Psalm 96 is all about ways to worship God. It says,

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name;

Bring an offering and come into his courts

Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness. (Psalm 96:8-9 NIV)

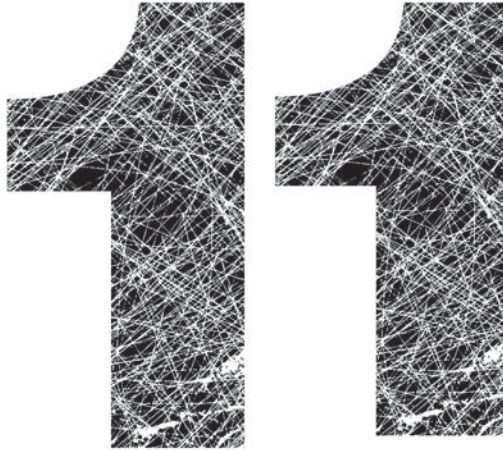
The offering is an important part of our worship as it demonstrates our thankfulness to God for all that he has given to us. Life, health, strength, family, and friends are all gifts from God. Everything we own—whether it be our house and land, our talents and education, health and strength, or friends and family—it all comes from our loving heavenly Father. He is the source of everything, and he gives these blessings to us. We are his servants, and we use them for his glory and must give a report to him.

As pastors we must use great wisdom when it comes to money. God blesses those who give generously to him. Therefore, as pastors, we should encourage people to give generously to God, for he rewards those who love and trust him. On the other hand because the pastor's salary comes from the offering many pastors are afraid to talk about money in case the people think that the pastor is greedy.

As pastors, we do not want to lead people to believe that money is the most important thing, but at the same time we need to encourage people to give generously as an act of worship. When people give 1/10 of their income to the Lord, they are blessed and so is the church. But, when people are selfish and reluctant to give, the church becomes dry spiritually.

The following verses are very helpful to remind people of God's blessing on those who give: Matthew 6:33, Luke 6:38, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Luke 12:32-34, Psalm 96:8, Proverbs 3:9-10.

CHAPTER



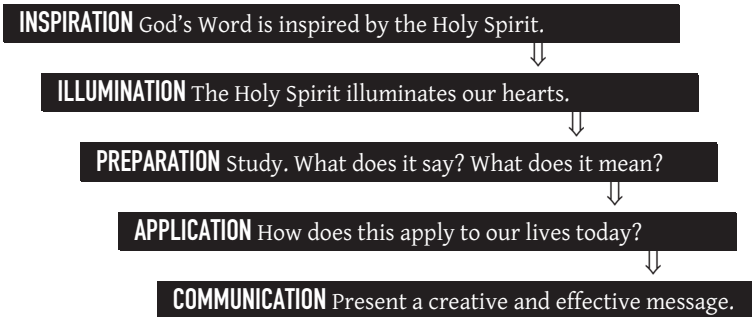
ANOINTED PREACHING

When Paul gave the pastoral charge to Timothy, the first task listed was to “preach the Word” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). The primary work of the pastor is to speak the Word of God to the people of God. Paul said, “Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20 GNT). Nothing could be more important, but who is qualified for such an important task? We should not stand behind the pulpit and speak our own thoughts and ideas, for we are to be God’s messenger. All the education in the world does not qualify us to speak for God. Only a person who is chosen, guided, and anointed by the Holy Spirit is qualified to speak for God.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Effective preaching involves the Holy Spirit, because the Word of God is the “Sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). Without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the sword is dull and blunt, and our preaching is merely empty words. Paul said, “We brought the Good News to you not with words only, but also with power and the Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 1:5 GNT). Paul also said, “My teaching and message were not delivered with skilful words of human wisdom, but with convincing proof of the power of God’s Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:4 GNT).

To prepare to speak God’s message to God’s people involves a number of stages, and each stage needs the anointing of the Holy Spirit.



Inspiration

The Holy Spirit inspired the people who wrote the Scriptures. He did not dictate every word that they wrote, but rather worked through their hearts and personalities so that the words they wrote became God’s message in human language. The writers had different personalities and styles. Luke has a different writing style than Paul. Matthew’s gos-

pel is written very differently than John's gospel. Yet, the Holy Spirit was behind each author, guiding him. "No prophetic message ever came just from the human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that come from God" (2 Peter 1:21 GNP).

Illumination

The Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of Scripture also illuminates our minds as we read it. Illuminate means to shine light on something. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher (John 14:26), so we ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scripture and make its meaning clear to us. As we do this the Holy Spirit causes certain verses or chapters to stand out, and their meaning becomes very clear and significant to us. The Holy Spirit helps us to correctly understand God's Word and apply its message to our own lives and to the lives of the people we serve.

Preparation

People look to pastors to preach and explain God's Word so that the meaning is clear to them. Then, they can receive encouragement, correction, and guidance in their lives. They want to leave the worship service feeling stronger, and with a greater faith and knowledge of God, than when they entered.

The preparation of a sermon requires a lot of the pastor's time. It is hard work and requires a lot of study. Some people do not feel they need to study. Instead they believe all that they need to do is pray and then speak whatever words come to their minds. Prayer is a very important part of the process, as we mentioned earlier. However, it is not the only im-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

portant part of being an effective preacher. Prayer must accompany study. Both are equally important.

Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Mathew 22:37 NIV). God gives us the Holy Spirit, and he also gave us minds. We must use our minds to study and meditate on the Word of God. The preacher is a life-long student of the Bible.

A good preacher does not just take one verse and preach from it. Instead, he or she studies the passages in details. A good preacher studies the context around our scriptural passage (we will talk about this more); uses a concordance to find other passages that speak about the same topic; re-searches the background information behind difficult passages; and so on.

Sometimes the study of one verse leads to a study of a broader theme in the Bible. The pastor does not know all that will be found during the study time. He or she should expect to learn much more than what will be taught on Sunday morning. It is important to remember that the pastor will not include everything in a sermon. Instead, from all the wonderful results of the study, the sermon will present the finest and most relevant pieces: the best of the best.

If we are faithful to study God’s Word, the Holy Spirit will speak to us and help us to understand it thoroughly. Then, he will help us craft a sermon from our studies that will touch people’s hearts and draw them closer to God.

In order to understand a scriptural text we must also understand the context. The text may be a verse or a chapter of the Bible. To understand it properly we need to ask ourselves

questions about it. The basic context questions are who, when, what, where, and why.

- **“Who”**–Who wrote the passage? To whom did he write it?
- **“When”**–When did he write it? The answer can be a date (such as before 580 BC) or a situation (for example, while in prison). What was happening at this time?
- **“What”**–What type of writing is it: poetry, a prayer, a personal letter, a story?
- **“Where”**–Where was the author? What was going on in his life? Where does the action take place?
- **“Why”**–Why did the author write this passage? Why did he write in the way he did (for instance, as a song) instead of another way (a sermon). Was it to encourage people? To inspire them? To rebuke them? To correct errors? To praise faithfulness?

These are just sample context questions you should ask as you study. If we preach from one Bible verse but take it out of context we may be giving people the wrong message. A good preacher does not guess at answers but rather searches for them.

The first resource should always be the Bible itself. If one passage is difficult to understand, use other passages that are clearer to help you understand it. Most of the time, the answers are found in the surrounding verses or chapters. Other times they are found in other books of the Bible.

After the preacher thoroughly examines the text and the context, there may still be questions. If so, he or she should consult Bible commentaries and Bible dictionaries for help. We should always try to understand what was happening at

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

the time a passage was written so that we can understand what the original author meant when he wrote it.

It is an awesome responsibility to be God's spokesperson, and the pastor needs to have a deep, rich knowledge of the Bible to feed his flock properly. The more we read the Scriptures, the better we will understand them, and the more effective preachers we will be. Paul said that Timothy needed to be "a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God's truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 GNT).

Some preachers use a verse at the beginning of their messages, but then preach their own ideas rather than exposing God's people to God's Word. Remember, as pastors we are God's representatives. Our task is to proclaim his message to the people. Before reading just one verse and then preaching a whole sermon, consider that Paul gave Timothy some important instructions.

The Apostle Paul charged the young Pastor Timothy to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul also said to Timothy, "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. ... Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them" (1 Timothy 4:13-15). That sounds like Paul expected a lot from Timothy, much more than simply reading a verse and preaching whatever came to mind. One day we will stand before God, and we want his smile of approval to be upon us. We want to be good workmen who are "not ashamed" of our work.

Application

The pastor must understand the people of his congregation. He must know their hopes and fears, their problems and

disappointments. He needs to know where they are in their spiritual journey and what difficulties and temptations they face. As part of your weekly preparation for preaching on Sunday, you should bring the needs of the congregation before God in prayer. Think about the people who make up your congregation. What problems do they face? What social needs are there in the community? What spiritual needs are there? What temptations are the young people facing? This is called the social context of the audience. God's Word must relate to the people where they are and help them to deal with the problems they are facing in their everyday life.

After we have studied the Scripture, we have to ask the question, "How does this text apply to our lives today?"

It is good to know what God said to other people thousands of years ago, but people want to hear God's message to their lives today. Today, when people come to church, they hope that the pastor will have a message from God. They are looking for direction, encouragement, and strength for their lives.

Remember that there are many different people in your audience every week. Some are smart, and others are slower to learn things. Some are old and have many experiences, maybe more than you. Others are young, and have not heard many sermons. Some are new believers, eager for new details about the Christian life. Others have heard hundreds (maybe thousands) of sermons. It is not always easy to make a sermon that everyone will appreciate. However, you must ask for God's help, and trust him to aid you.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Communication

We need to be creative in the way we communicate God's message to his people. Preaching the Word of God is one of the most challenging and rewarding tasks of the pastor. God is the creator, and when he made us in his own image he gave us creativity. He expects us to use that creativity in communicating the gospel. The heart of Christianity is not a set of rules but the story of Jesus: his birth, his sinless life, death, resurrection, and his coming again. We can tell stories, create drama, show pictures, use visual aids, sing, and dance as well as words to communicate the message.

When we preach we are following in the footsteps of Jesus. He told a lot of stories that used words and images from the people's everyday lives. Often he did not give complete answers to questions, instead he allowed people to think through the story for themselves. The Bible is mostly stories. In fact, 75% of the entire Bible is in the form of a story. We should never be afraid to use stories in our preaching, because stories are easily remembered.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ANOINTING

When Jesus began his ministry, he said, "The Spirit of the Lord, is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news" (Luke 4:18). We also need to be anointed by the Holy Spirit, and we need a fresh anointing each time we stand to preach. The blessing of last week is not sufficient for next week's message. Anointing comes as a result of spending a lot of time in prayer. Paul, the great apostle and preacher of the Gospel, asked others to pray that God would help him to preach, "pray also for me, that God will give me a message

when I am ready to speak” (Ephesians 6:19 GNT). He also said to the Colossians, “Please pray that I will make the message as clear as possible” (4:4 CEV).

The pastor should pray that God will reveal the special needs of the congregation, because he or she needs to apply the message of the Scripture to the lives of the congregation. It is possible to preach a sermon that is theologically correct in every detail, but still be dull and boring. If the message is only seen as “head knowledge,” then it is weak and not life-changing. However, when a pastor spends time kneeling and praying for the spiritual needs of the congregation, God will illuminate the mind and lay his message on the heart. That is how a pastor is able to preach with anointing.

MAKING PLANS TO “PREACH THE WORD”

The pastor is God’s spokesperson who proclaims God’s message to the people. The pastor must be a man or woman of God. Pastors need to spend time with God in prayer so that they can hear from him. They need to live godly lives, for if their lives do not demonstrate what they speak, people will reject their message. They need to know God’s Word thoroughly so they can teach it clearly and correctly.

Paul wrote to a young pastor called Timothy, and gave him this advice. “Do your best to win full approval in God’s sight as a worker who’s not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God’s truth” (2 Timothy 2:15 GNT).

The word for “worker” used in this verse could also be translated “craftsman.” It means a skilled worker. Some carpenters only build rough wooden structures, maybe the

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

frame of a house or supports for a roof. Their work does not have to be high quality. Other carpenters are professionals, and they create fine items out of wood, such as furniture, cabinets, and chests. They are careful in their work, and they know how to use their tools skilfully. The furniture they make is both strong and beautiful. They are craftsmen.

God wants us to be craftsmen who are experts at teaching and proclaiming God's Word. We should teach it and preach it so that people are informed, encouraged, blessed and their lives transformed. Not only that, we should preach in such a way that God, who is also listening to our sermons, smiles with approval.

Paul's words of advice to Timothy are helpful to all pastors.

Give your time and effort to the public reading of the Scriptures and to preaching and teaching. ... Practice these things and devote yourself to them, in order that your progress may be seen by all. Watch yourself and watch your teaching. Keep on doing these things, because if you do, you will save both yourself and those who hear you. (1 Timothy 4:13-16 GNT)

Notice the double emphasis: watch yourself and watch your teaching. If we are careful to do both, then everyone will benefit. If our lives do not match our words then everyone's time is wasted. And both our lives and our messages must be in harmony with the Word of God.

The Bible—the Written Word of God

The Bible was not written all at once, like a modern-day book. Instead, it was composed over a period of 1,500 years by at least 40 different writers. Yet, the Bible is not just a col-

lection of 40 different people's ideas. The Holy Spirit is the editor who instructed and guided the writers. It is therefore God's Word to us. The Bible uses many images to describe God's Word.

Food: "Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks" (Matthew 4:4 GNT).

Light: "Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105 GNT).

Fire and Hammer: "My message is like a fire and like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29).

Sword: "Take the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17 NIV).

Like a surgeon's scalpel: "For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it cuts all the way through to where soul and spirit meet. ... It judges the thoughts and desires of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12 GNT).

Inspired by God: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living" (2 Timothy 3:16 GNT).

Eternal: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35 GNT).

It is an awesome responsibility to be called by God and ordained by the church to preach the Word of God. We must not abuse this privilege but must study carefully so we may proclaim it effectively.

Jesus—the Living Word of God

The Bible is, physically, a book with pages, so sometimes, we call it the “written word.” But then we read a passage like this from John, “In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us” (John 1:1, 14 GNT). So while the Bible is the written Word of God (a book), Jesus is the “revealed Word of God” (a person). Some people prefer to use the phrase “the living Word of God.”

Jesus is called “the Word” because he is the message that comes from God. Jesus reveals God not only in the words he speaks, but also through his life: His birth, teaching, miracles, sacrificial death, and his victorious resurrection. Both in what he said and in what he did, he reveals God to us. Jesus said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9 NIV).

The Old Testament points forward to Jesus and the cross. The New Testament shows us the life of Jesus and the impact his life, death, and resurrection has on all of humanity. Jesus is the heart of our message.

Both the “written Word” and the “living Word” come from God, and both reveal him to us. That is to say, they both help us to know God.

Meditate on the Word

Just as a guitarist tunes the guitar before playing it, the pastor also must make sure that his or her heart is in tune with God before delivering a sermon.

Before writing a single word of a sermon, spend time focussing on God: his greatness, his salvation, his love, and his

power. We must begin in an attitude of prayer, quieting our own thoughts and opening our hearts to listen to God and hear his voice. This allows God to speak his message to our souls. It may be a message of encouragement, or it may be a message of correction. God shows us things in our lives and in our attitudes that need to be changed. We should be eager to receive these corrections ourselves.

A preacher must also meditate on the Word of God before he can preach it. Meditate means to think deeply and thoroughly about the words of the Bible and the implications of their meaning. Before preachers can preach the Word, they must first meditate on the Word. We must feed on the Word before we can feed others.

Have you ever watched how cows eat? They go out in the morning and eat a lot of grass. They do not chew the grass, but simply swallow it and store it in a special part of their stomach. When the sun is hot they sit down and they bring the grass back up into their mouths and chew it over and over to get all the goodness out of it. Meditation is similar. We bring the words of Scripture back into our minds, and we think them through carefully. We pray over them and apply them to our own lives. When we do this, the beauty, the goodness, and the strength of God's Word becomes part of us, and we receive strength, courage, and fresh insight.

The Bible uses images of a growing plant to talk about how we connect to God and God's Word. People who study God's law day and night are like trees, "that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do" (Psalm 1:2-3 GNT).

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

In the New Testament, Jesus compared his followers to the branches of a vine. Jesus is the vine (the stem), and we are the branches. The branches have no life or power of their own. If they are cut off from the stem they shrivel and die. Jesus said that when we stay connected to him—like branches of a vine—we will bear a lot of fruit (John 15:5). Just as the sap of the vine flows into the branches and produces juicy fruit, in the same way, as we meditate on God’s Word, his life-giving power flows into our own lives.

A balanced diet

We are called by God to feed his sheep, and we know that the “food” we give is carefully prepared messages from God’s Word. However, we must offer a balanced diet of food.

Some pastors are proud of the fact that they preach “evangelistically,” which means they spend most of their time preaching messages about the need to be saved. However, our people need a balanced diet of biblical preaching. There is much more to the Christian life than being saved. We need to live strong Christian lives that are glorifying to God. Paul said, “I did not hold back anything that would be of help to you” and “I have not held back from announcing to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:20, 27 GNT). Notice that Paul said, “the whole purpose of God.” Paul did not just have a few sermons or a few themes that he preached over and over. He knew God’s Word thoroughly and often quoted the Old Testament writers. He knew the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he proclaimed all of it to the people.

There are many ways to help offer a balanced diet to the people. Some pastors plan their sermons a year in advance.

Others plan two or three months in advance. Some pastors preach through a book in the Bible, looking at a new chapter or section each week. Others base their messages around a theme that would be helpful to a congregation. When making a preaching schedule, the pastor needs to think about the people of the congregation and where they are in their spiritual journey.

Think about the times when people come to you for help or advice. Here are some questions to ask yourself, in order to help you prepare a balanced preaching plan.

1. What temptations do your people face most often? What temptations do you face most often?
2. What are their doubts and fears? What are yours?
3. Do you have many “double-minded” people in your congregation? Are there many who are not really sure about following Jesus? Do you struggle in this area?
4. What habits do your people need to leave behind? What habits hinder you?
5. What new habits do they need to start doing? What about you?
6. Are most of your congregation filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you?

You and the people of your congregation are on a spiritual journey. However, not everyone is at the same place in the journey. Some are just beginning; others have been on the journey a long time. As you think and pray about their spiritual journey (and yours) it will help you to know what sort of food they need. Remember though, you should not prepare a message directed at one individual. Preach the whole Word of God to the whole congregation.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Here are some aids as you make a preaching plan.

1. **Seasonal series.** Look at the calendar, and mark out times and seasons to help you prepare a year-long preaching plan.

Christmas. Including the weeks before Christmas. Consider a series based on the anticipation of Christ coming into our lives.

New Year. This is a good season to preach on renewal or focus on the need for fellowship.

A new school year. Prepare a series encouraging young people leaving home to go to college or university

Easter. Easter is a time of celebration. Some churches spend the 40 days before Easter as a time of repentance in preparation for it.

Pentecost. Pentecost Sunday comes seven weeks after Easter. This would be a good time to preach on the spirit-filled life.

National holidays. Most countries have special days of national significance.

Planting season or harvesting season. These are good times to preach about evangelism.

2. **Topical Series.** Create times in your calendar to preach series of related messages. Usually a series is four to six weeks. Here are some ideas:
 - The miracles of Jesus
 - The parables of Jesus
 - Heroes of the Old Testament
 - Little-known Bible characters

- People who met Jesus: Matthew, Zacheus, Mary Magdalene, Bartimeus, etc.
 - The fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22)
3. **Community Events.** While you cannot predict these events, it is good to be prepared for them. Spend time creating outlines or thinking about your sermons in situations like the following:
- Death in the community
 - Marriage
 - Drought, floods, or other disasters

These are just a few ways to plan for preaching. In this way you can cover a wide variety of material in the course of a year, and your congregation will grow spiritually as a result. If you make plans like this, your people will enjoy the variety of messages, as well as receive a balanced diet of sermons.

Life of the preacher

Anyone could learn how to preach, even an atheist! Preaching is much more than giving a speech about Jesus or the Bible. True preaching must be supported by a righteous life. Preachers must practice what they preach. One person said it this way, “Anyone can talk the talk, but not everyone walks the walk.” This is why the Scripture says,

For since a church leader is in charge of God’s work, he should be without fault. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered, or a drunkard or violent or greedy for money. He must be hospitable and love what is good. He must be self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. (Titus 1:7-8 GNT)

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Preaching must come from the heart. Unless we have experienced God's transforming power in our own lives, we will not be able to communicate it to others. We must always be honest, and not try to deceive ourselves. Often, we will preach sermons that burn in our own hearts, as if the sermon was directed at us. This is normal! The preacher must not pretend to be free from struggles. At the same time, the preacher should lead by example.

It is an awesome responsibility to speak for God. If we give the wrong message, we can do great damage. But, if we clearly communicate God's message, we can be a great blessing.

Remembering the heart of our message: Jesus

The heart of our message is Jesus Christ. The Old Testament points forward to Jesus Christ. The Gospels tell about his life on earth, and the rest of the New Testament points back to him.

Jesus (his words, life, death, and resurrection) is the heart of the message. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47 NIV).

The book of Acts shows this taking place. On the day of Pentecost Peter preached about Jesus, and 3,000 people were converted. The apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin, and they preached about Jesus. They said, "Salvation is to be found through [Jesus] alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us" (Acts 4:12 GNT). Stephen was brought to trial. When asked if the charges were

true, he preached about Jesus instead of defending himself (Acts 6.8–7:53)

When Philip went to Samaria he “preached Christ” to the people (Acts 8:5 NIV). Later he met a government official from Ethiopia and “told him the Good News about Jesus” (Acts 8:35 NIV). When Saul was converted, “he went straight to the synagogue and began to preach that Jesus was the Son of God” (Acts 9:20 NIV).

At the end of his life Paul was in jail in Rome, but his message was still the same. “He preached about the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:31 NIV). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “When I came to you, my friends, to preach God’s secret truth, I did not use big words and great learning. ... I made up my mind to forget everything except Jesus Christ and especially his death on the Cross” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2 GNT).

Our primary responsibility is to lift Jesus and point people to him. Jesus loved us so much that he left heaven to come to the earth. Jesus humbled himself and became like a servant in order to demonstrate how great God’s love is. This is the most wonderful story of all. Our task is to tell this good news. Preach about Jesus’ power and his miracles. Explain the parables so that your people will understand the kingdom of God. Tell of Jesus’ perfect obedience and godly life. Tell of his sacrificial death and his wonderful resurrection.

We are not saved from sin by following church rules or by getting baptised. Instead, we are saved by the wonderful grace of God that is clearly visible in the life of Jesus. Jesus is in heaven interceding for us, and he gave us the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. Jesus will return, and we will be

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

with him forever. This is the good news that we need to share. Let us preach it to the best of our ability under God's anointing.

CHAPTER 12

BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

God loves to communicate with his people. God reveals himself through the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God speaks to us through the written Word—the Bible. God also speaks to us through the “spoken word”—the sermon in which God’s story is recited, remembered, re-interpreted, and applied to our lives today.

And yet, there are still other ways that God speaks to us. He also speaks to us powerfully through the sacraments: baptism and communion. The word sacrament means “a holy event.” These are mini-dramas or re-enactments in which

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

the whole Church participates. To fully understand these important events we must look at the Old Testament.

CEREMONIES THAT STRENGTHEN FAITH

In the Old Testament, we read about many ceremonies and rituals of God's people. Two of them were especially important: circumcision and Passover. God instructed Abraham and his descendants to carry out circumcision as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 17:9-11). All baby boys were circumcised when they were eight days old. This showed that they were part of God's special people. Passover was an annual event, where God's people remembered how he mightily delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

In the New Testament baptism is the ritual that shows a person has become a member of God's special people. Communion takes the place of Passover, as we remember the mighty deliverance that Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection. Let us look more deeply at each of these Christian sacraments.

BAPTISM

John the Baptist was Jewish, and he preached mostly to Jewish people. His message was clear: Repent and be baptised! This was a very radical message. Most Jews believed that they were already in good standing with God because they were circumcised. Circumcision was the sign that they were part of God's special people. John's message troubled them.

There were four parts to John’s preaching:

1. Turn away from your sins—“Repent, the kingdom of Heaven is near” (Matthew 3:2 NIV).
2. Confess your sins and be baptised—“The people ... went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised” (Mark 1:5 NIV).
3. Change your way of life—“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8 NIV).
4. Look for the Messiah, Jesus—“I baptise with water ... but after me will come one who ... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11 NIV).

John emphasized that the people could not simply point to a ceremony that happened when they were eight days old as proof that they were right with God. Instead, they needed to have a change of heart (repentance), and baptism was a symbolic and public way of showing it.

In the first sermon after the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke to the crowd and said, “Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 NIV).

Jesus commanded his disciples, “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Obviously, baptism is important. It is the public and symbolic sign of repentance from sin and faith in Christ. Baptism does not save a person (that happens when God forgives us),

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

but it is a powerful, visible way to announce the arrival of a new member of family of God. That is why baptisms are public events and not private occasions.

Baptism is rich in symbolism. Primarily, it is a picture of our participation in Jesus' death and resurrection: "When you were baptised you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised Him from death" (Colossians 2:12).

When a person goes under the water, it is a picture of:

- Jesus' death for us
- Our death to sin

When a person comes out of the water, it is a picture of:

- Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
- Our new life in Christ.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4 NIV).

Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ. It strengthens the faith of the new convert, and the baptism ceremony can be an evangelistic event when other people are challenged to give their lives to Christ.

How soon?

One question that many people ask is, "How soon after people become Christians should they be baptised?" This is not an easy question to answer, but here are some guidelines to help you decide.

1. *Baptism does not save a person.* God saves people when they repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and confess him as their Lord.
2. *Baptism does not make a person a member of the Church.* The Church is the family of God, and a person joins that family at the moment of salvation. Some churches combine baptism with entering into church membership, but they are not the same thing.
3. *Baptism requires that people understand the basics of their new faith.* We do not force anyone to be baptised; it is their choice. The pastor will ask the new believer to publicly acknowledge faith in Jesus. The person must know what that means.
4. *The Bible stories show that baptism happens soon after conversion, not later.* We should not wait until a person is fully mature as a Christian before offering baptism.

The pastor must consider many things before baptising anyone because baptism is important. However, the pastor should not withhold it from someone as punishment or to keep someone out of the church.

Baptism of children

There are different opinions on how old a person must be to be baptised. Some churches baptise infants, and then later (when the child is 12 years old or more) they offer confirmation classes to affirm the earlier baptism. Many churches baptise only those people who repented of their sins and believed in Christ as Saviour. Instead of baptism, they conduct a dedication service for infants in which the parents seek God's

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

blessing on the child, and they promise to bring up the child to love and follow Jesus.

COMMUNION

Passover was the most important annual celebration for the people of Israel. God instructed Moses to celebrate Passover in memory of the dramatic deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

A long time ago, God sent a series of plagues to Egypt, in order to convince Pharaoh to liberate the Israelites, God's people. Pharaoh did not listen, so God warned Moses about the last plague: on one night, all the firstborn sons in Egypt would die. In order to save the people from this terrible event, God instructed every family to slaughter a lamb at twilight and put some of the blood on their doors. They were to eat the lamb that night, along with bread made without yeast. There was not enough time for yeast to rise. The people were supposed to eat the meal that night fully dressed, with their shoes on. God's deliverance would come quickly, and the people were ready to leave.

That night, when the angel of death visited Egypt, he "passed over" all the homes with the lamb's blood on their door. If people did not have the blood of the lamb on the door then the eldest child of that family died. This was the final act that convinced Pharaoh to free the Israelites.

The Passover celebration was, therefore, a time to remember God's mighty acts in the past and to celebrate his salvation. The focus of the celebration was a special meal that the whole family shared. It was rich in symbolism. They ate lamb to remember the lamb that was killed in Egypt so

that the Angel of death would “pass over” their home. The Passover meal also included bread made without yeast, and wine. Jewish people still celebrate Passover even today. They look back with thanksgiving to God for his amazing deliverance many years before.

There is a direct connection between the Passover feast of the Old Testament and the communion celebration of the New Testament.

1. *It was a community meal.* Passover was a family meal. It was never eaten alone, but always as a community. It was a time of fellowship and rejoicing together.

Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples. And then at the end, he introduced the communion meal using the bread without yeast and the wine. Jesus told his disciples to remember him when they ate the meal (Luke 22:19).

2. *It focused on God’s salvation.* God liberated the people from Egypt, but he also saved them from the last plague. The families who were protected by the blood of the lamb were spared.

Jesus is the “Lamb of God,” whose shed blood rescued us. Jesus predicted his own death, and told the disciples about it. His death is at the very centre of the Christian faith.

The bread and wine that we eat at communion do not have special magical powers. Instead, they help us to focus our thoughts and faith upon Jesus. It is Jesus who forgives us. “For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift, so that no one can boast about it” (Ephesians 2:8-9 GNT). The elements of communion (bread and wine) are symbols of the death of Jesus, but they are also symbols of our future hope.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

We do not believe that the bread is the real body of Jesus and the wine is the real blood of Jesus. The bread and wine are excellent symbols that we see, touch, taste, and eat. We do not merely hear the story of Jesus, but we act out the story of his death and resurrection. This strengthens our faith.

The symbols of communion

God speaks to us through words and through visible symbols. The communion service is very rich in symbolism.

The bread

The bread is a picture of Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If you eat this bread, you will live forever. The bread that I will give you is my flesh, which I give so that the world may live" (John 6:51 GNT).

Bread was the common food, eaten every day to give strength and energy. In the same way taking part in communion is a wonderful way to strengthen our Christian lives.

Unleavened bread

The bread was unleavened, which means it was made without yeast. Yeast was often used as a picture of sin. A little yeast will multiply and spread through a whole batch of dough. In the same way, if we allow a little sin in our life, it will spread through our life and destroy us. Unleavened bread speaks of the sinless life of Jesus.

Broken bread

Before he gave the bread to the disciples to eat, Jesus broke it. This is a picture of Jesus' death. Grains of wheat which are living seeds are crushed and ground between stones to make bread: the wheat must die to make flour. The

bread is broken again in the communion service. Then when we eat the bread, we bite it and chew it before we swallow it and digest it. This is a powerful picture that Jesus was crushed, broken, and died. It is the death of Jesus that gives life to us.

In the early days of the Church, believers did not buy the bread in a store. Instead, they made it at home. The Christians, therefore, brought the work of their hands, common everyday food, and used it for the communion service. This is a wonderful picture of the way in which God takes ordinary things—and ordinary people—and transforms them into something special.

The wine

Wine is made from crushing grapes and collecting the juice. In the time of Jesus, people actually walked on the grapes and crushed them with their feet. Again we have a picture of brokenness and crushing that points us to Jesus.

Wine is also dark red. The wine reminds us of the blood of Jesus flowing from the wounds he received: his hands and feet from the nails of the cross, his forehead from the crown of thorns, his back caused by the whipping, and especially the spear thrust into his heart. Predicting his own death, Jesus offered the wine to his disciples and said, “this is my blood, which seals God’s covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28 GNT).

The meaning of communion

As we hold in our own hands the symbols of Jesus’ broken body and his poured out blood, they remind us powerfully of Jesus’ death for us. Salvation is free to us, but it was expen-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

sive to God. He paid a great price for our salvation (1 Peter 1:18-11).

1. *Communion speaks about the past.* The bread and wine remind us of Jesus' suffering and death.
2. *Communion speaks to the present.* Communion strengthens our faith. As we eat the bread and wine, we receive grace and strength for our daily life as we live for Christ.
3. *Communion looks to the future.* "Every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26 GNT). Jesus' death is not the end of the story. Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven. He will come back again. Jesus said to the disciples, "I will not eat it again, until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16 NIV). One day we will join in a victory banquet where we will celebrate Christ's triumph over sin, death, and hell.

Communion, like Passover, is a family celebration. When we come to the communion table we come as unworthy sinners, saved by the grace of God. "As a result, there is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, and free, but Christ is all, Christ is in all" (Colossians 3:11 GNT).

Often people eat a meal together as a symbol of reconciliation. For example, in some cultures when two tribes at war make peace with each other, they eat food together to symbolize that they are no longer enemies. Some tribes will kill a goat or cow and the leaders of the opposing tribes will share the meat from the same animal as a sign of their unity. This is a good symbol of the communion meal. Paul said, "We

were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life!" (Romans 5:10 GNT).

Communion is a meal that proclaims the peace and reconciliation that we have with each other and with God.

Who should receive communion?

Communion is for every believer. This means everyone who has confessed their sins and believed in Jesus as their saviour. It is best if the person is baptised first before taking communion. Communion must be treated with respect. Paul tells us to examine our hearts before coming to take it (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Some Christians do not participate in a communion service because they feel guilty about something in their lives. Some churches prepare for communion ahead of time by having a special service the week before communion designed to help people examine their hearts and confess their sins before taking communion. Most pastors provide a time of silent prayer at the beginning of the communion service so that people may pray and confess their sins to God.

If Christians refuse to take communion they often go home feeling even more defeated and discouraged than before. The communion service is a time for accepting grace and forgiveness. It is not a time to judge who is worthy and who is not. No one really is worthy of Jesus' blood. We all were guilty sinners, and we continually rely on God's grace and mercy. None of us is perfect enough to deserve God's grace. As pastors, we should encourage believers who are feeling guilty to use communion as a time to confess, repent, and receive God's loving forgiveness again.

CHAPTER 13

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Jesus is one of the best known healers in the all of history. He healed the sick, and he told his disciples to heal them as well (Luke 9:1). The pastor is often asked to pray for sick people. This is a very important part of ministry. Often, when people are sick, they are also worried. They wonder things like this:

“Why am I sick?”

“Is God angry with me?”

“Has someone performed sorcery against me?”

“Can I afford to go to the doctor?”

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

“Did I commit a sin and forget to ask God to forgive me?”

These worries are very real for a sick people and their families. The pastor needs to help them.

THE CAUSE OF SICKNESS

The Bible says again and again that God blesses those who obey Him, and that God will judge those who reject Him. “The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish” (Psalm 1:6 NIV). However, not every righteous person is healthy, and not every wicked person is sick. Why do bad things happen to good people?

God is all powerful, and God is always good. He loves us and cares for us. When God created the world, there was no sickness, sin, or evil of any kind. When Adam and Eve sinned, judgement came upon the world. Sin brought God’s judgement which included thorns, thistles, pain, sickness, and death. We live in a world that suffers because of sin. The good news is that when Jesus returns, everything will go back to the way it was in the beginning. Sin, sickness, death, and every form of evil will be destroyed. In the meantime, we live in a world that is far from perfect.

Sometimes, we find a direct connection between sin and sickness. Other times, an innocent person gets sick with the same disease. Consider this example: an immoral, married man has sex with a prostitute and gets syphilis. It is easy to see the connection between the sin of adultery and the disease of syphilis. However, that same man may go back to his wife, who is faithful to him, and she gets the same disease. So, sometimes even the innocent suffer.

The Bible has many examples of innocent people suffering from sickness or disease. One time, Jesus was walking with his disciples, and they saw a man who was born blind. Jesus' disciples asked if it was because he or his parents had sinned. Jesus clearly told them that it was neither (John 9:2-3).

The story of Job in the Old Testament shows us a righteous person who loved God with all his heart. He lost everything he owned and became covered with painful boils. Even though he was innocent, he suffered physically. However, even in the hardest time of his suffering, he never rejected God.

Satan can bring sickness upon us. Jesus met a woman who was crippled, bent over and could not stand straight. He healed her. Jesus said that Satan had kept her in bondage for eighteen years. Jesus set her free from this sickness caused by Satan.

Sometimes God allows sickness to come so that we will stop and think. Sickness may be God's way of correcting us and bringing us back to him. "The Lord corrects the people he loves and disciplines those he calls his own" (Hebrews 12:6 CEV).

Sickness never means that God does not love us. God loved us even when we were enemies. God always loves us, even in times of sickness. The sickness may cause us to sit still and think. Maybe it will give us time to pray like David did, "Look deep into my heart, God, and find out everything I am thinking. Don't let me follow evil ways, but lead me in the way that time has proven true" (Psalm 139:23-24 CEV).

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Sickness and problems can make us stronger. An athlete exercises daily. The exercises are not easy, the muscles feel pain, and the person feels tired. But the result is a strong and healthy body. If life were always easy we would not develop strong faith and confidence in God. "It is never fun to be corrected. In fact, at the time it is always painful. But if we learn to obey by being corrected, we will do right and live at peace" (Hebrews 12:11 CEV).

Peter describes it this way:

On that day you will be glad, even if you have to go through many hard trials for a while. Your faith will be like gold that has been tested in a fire. And these trials will prove that your faith is worth much more than gold that can be destroyed. They will show that you will be given praise and honour and glory when Jesus Christ returns. (1 Peter 1:6-7 CEV)

That is what Job experienced.

God never promised to heal every sick person. If God healed every sick person, then very few people would die. Sickness, pain, and death are all part of life on this earth. When Jesus returns, they will all be destroyed. However, God is with us in our sickness and pain. He understands our pain. Jesus endured far worse pain and suffering on the cross than anything we will ever experience.

Joni Erickson was injured in a diving accident and became paralysed. The injury caused her to live in a wheelchair. She prayed and cried to God to heal her, but God did not. Instead, he gave her strength and courage to live a positive victorious life in a wheelchair. She blesses many other paralysed people. When she talks about God's grace and strength, they listen. They know that she has experienced God's strength in

her own life. Her wheelchair gave her a greater ministry and testimony than if she was completely healed.

As we trust in God and overcome sickness, pain, and suffering we can be an encouragement and blessing to others who are going through hard times.

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 GNT)

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

We find the best instructions on praying for the sick in James 5:14-16 (NIV):

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Praying for the sick is one of the main jobs of a pastor. While each person may have different needs, here are the steps you should follow.

Call the elders of the church. It is good if there can be a team of people in the church who pray for the sick. The pastor may be the leader of this group. If there is someone who is gifted in praying for the sick, then the pastor should delegate this responsibility to him or her. United prayer has added

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

power. Jesus said, “I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:19-20 NIV).

Having a group of people to pray not only encourages the faith of those who are praying but it also strengthens the faith of the sick person. Because this group is appointed by the church, they represent the united prayers of the congregation.

Anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. In the Old Testament, a prophet or priest anointed new kings and new priests with oil. This was a sign that God chose them and that God’s Holy Spirit rested on them. Therefore, the oil is a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit. There is no magical power in the oil. The power to heal comes from God alone. Many pastors keep a little bottle of oil available, especially for when they pray for the sick.

Allow the sick person time to pray and confess their sins.

Sin is not usually the cause of sickness. However, often the two are related in some way. It is always a good idea to give the opportunity for the sick person to help guide you in how to pray.

The pastor can ask the sick person questions such as,

Other than your sickness, is there anything else I can pray about?

Is there anything in your life that needs to be confessed?

Has God spoke to you about some things that you need to put right?

Are there any family problems, anger, jealousy, or bitterness that we need to deal with first?

These questions and the answers should not be rushed. A sick person needs to open his or her heart to God. It is good to invite the whole family to participate in this time of confession and repentance. Sickness often comes when there is lack of harmony. When there is stress and broken relationships in the family, physical sickness can easily develop. Therefore it is important to restore harmony and health to the relationships in the family if we want physical healing to take place.

Consider these verses from the Bible:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. (1 John 3:21-23 NIV)

If you don't confess your sins, you will be a failure. But God will be merciful if you confess your sins and give them up. (Proverbs 28:13 NIV)

Pray out loud. Our faith is in God who is both all-powerful and the God of love. It is good to quote some of the promises of God. Read some Bible story that shows God healing the sick. These help to lift our faith and it also strengthens the faith of the sick person. After you pray you can ask the sick person questions:

What did you feel?

Is anything different?

Did God show you something?

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Listen carefully to the answers. They may guide you as you continue to pray. We should not pray and then leave quickly. Prayer is a part of the process of pastoral care. We do not think only of the physical condition of people. We want God to touch them physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Follow Up. Our goal is to see this person completely well physically, spiritually, socially, and mentally.

Physically—No sickness

Spiritually—At peace with God; no fear of God; not hiding from God

Socially—Living in harmony with family, friends and neighbours

Mentally—Conscience is clear; at peace with themselves; no inner turmoil

God often heals people, so be prepared for great things to happen. When people see God's power at work they often turn to God. In one Bible story, a person was sick in bed for eight years. God worked through Peter and healed him. When people heard about "all those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw [the man] and turned to the Lord (Acts 9:32-35).

When God heals someone miraculously, it is often a good idea to work with the family and help spiritually establish them. Sometimes a sick person will make a promise to God. He or she may pray: "Oh God if you heal me I will follow you forever." We need to help this person fulfil the promise to God.

FEAR OF SORCERY OR WITCHCRAFT

In some parts of the world, fear of sorcery or witchcraft is very strong. Sometimes neighbours will tell a person: “Someone cursed you,” or “Your sickness is caused by sorcery.” This may cause the sick one to feel defeated. Perhaps he wonders if he will die. Maybe he feels pressure from family members to visit a sorcerer for help.

We need to listen carefully to find out what the sick person is feeling. Do they have deep fears that they do not want to mention? The pastor breaks down fear and builds up faith. Here is a suggestion when you have a family who is frightened: Read Psalm 91 and pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen their faith in the mighty, protecting power of God.

CHAPTER 14

CARE FOR THE DYING

Death comes to all people. When it visits a family, they seek a pastor for comfort, strength, and advice. For Christians, death is not the end. We look forward to the final resurrection and heaven. The pastor needs to believe confidently in heaven. Listen to these words from the New Testament:

We are full of courage and would much prefer to leave our home in the body and be at home with the Lord. ... All of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life. (2 Corinthians 5:8, 10 GNT)

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

If I live, it will be for Christ, and if I die, I will gain even more. I don't know what to choose. I could keep on living and doing something useful. It is a hard choice to make. I want to die and be with Christ, because that would be much better. (Philippians 1:21, 23 CEV)

We believe that a person's spirit leaves the body at the time of death, and he or she returns to God. God is the righteous judge. The spirit of a dead person does not stay in the house or the village. It does not haunt the family.

Believers do not fear death, because "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1 NIV). Also, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36 NIV). Yet, those who rejected Jesus wait for the coming judgement.

Christians believe in two resurrections, and this gives us great hope. Firstly, we believe that Jesus died and that God raised him to life again. The resurrection of Jesus defeated death, and made eternal life possible. Secondly, we believe that all people will be raised to life. This resurrection will happen when Jesus returns to the earth. The Bible tells us that those who died believing in Jesus are now with him in heaven. When Jesus returns they will come with him. "We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died believing in him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14 GNT).

Our resurrected bodies will be superior to the bodies we now have. Our bodies become old, get sick, and deteriorate. Our resurrected bodies will never wear out, never age, and never become ill. We will never die.

Those who rejected Jesus during their lives will also be resurrected. They will appear before the judgement seat of Christ. However, they will not receive any second chances. God already gave them many opportunities to repent and accept the Gospel. He is the righteous judge, and he knows each person's thoughts. His judgement will be completely just and final.

It is important that a pastor understands clearly the meaning of the victory of Jesus over death. He or she will be able to offer hope, comfort, and encouragement to those who grieve.

WHEN A PERSON IS NEAR DEATH

Sometimes, the family knows when a person is dying. When this happens, it is important that the pastor be present to help them through the dying person. Some people reject the Gospel during their lives, but they will turn to Jesus in their last few days or even hours. Some people grow cold in their Christian faith, and they want to put things right before they die. Often, they need to mend relationships with God, their family, or their friends. The pastor can help them.

If the dying person is a believer, you should ask, "How is your relationship with Jesus Christ? I want to pray for you, and it helps to know if you have a specific need." This will guide your prayer and also allow you to give good advice to the dying person before and after. Sometimes a dying Christian has fears and doubts, because Satan works continually to destroy faith in God. Sometimes they feel that there are some broken relationships they need to put right, or apologies that

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

they want to make. The pastor can help them overcome their fears and doubts.

If the person is not a Christian, the pastor can ask, “You do not have much longer here on this earth. Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, and do you want to accept him as your Saviour?” Many people will say “Yes.”

Some need comfort and reassurance, because death is a mystery. In these cases, the Scriptures help. Many people receive comfort by hearing the words of John 14:1-3. These verses tell us that Jesus prepared a place for us to go when we die.

Another good passage to read is Psalm 23. A dying person may understand well the words, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me” (Psalm 23:4 NIV).

The words of Jesus in Revelation 1:17-18 are a blessing to many. “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (NIV). Jesus defeated Satan and death. So, when a Christian dies, he or she does not go into a dark, unknown place. Instead, the believer goes into the presence of Jesus who is ruler of both the living and the dead (Romans 4:9).

Two other passages are good to use to comfort and reassure a dying person: 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. These verses may help the family as well.

Finally, it is important to remember that when a person is dying, he or she may not be able to speak, but that does not mean he or she cannot hear. So, even though dying people may seem unresponsive, read the Scriptures to them and

pray for them. Sometimes, you may need to get very close and pray right beside their ear. Your words can bring comfort and encouragement.

WHEN A PERSON DIES

When death comes to a family, Christians need to be ready to show God's love and compassion. Jesus spent time with Mary and Martha and listened to them when their brother died. Later Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and people noticed how much Jesus loved him (John 11:35-36). We should "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15 NIV), and "carry each others burdens" (Galatians 6:2 NIV).

This is a good time for the church people to demonstrate what it means to be the body of Christ. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. We demonstrate his compassion and helpfulness. Funeral practices vary from one country to another, and so we cannot give specific instructions here. However, when the church shows love, thoughtfulness, and compassion, the family members of the dead person really appreciate it.

MEETING WITH THE MOURNING FAMILY

In some cultures, the body of the deceased is kept at the family home until the time of burial. In other cultures, the body is kept elsewhere. However, in almost all cultures, the family has a place to gather and mourn. Usually, there is a time for friends to come and visit the family. The pastor should go and meet with the family and read Scripture and pray. Pastors need to be very sensitive to the feelings of the

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

family. We need to make ourselves available and look for opportunities to be of practical assistance as well as give comfort and counsel.

In some countries there are two services: one for the family, and one for the public. The pastor is often invited to both. These are opportunities for the pastor to show the love and compassion of Christ. Many times, the pastor will be able to speak to family members that he would otherwise never meet. This is a wonderful opportunity to speak about the peace and hope that Jesus gives.

Perhaps the pastor is uncertain what to say during times like this. What is the proper way to talk about the deceased person in public? In private? A young pastor may want to ask the advice of other, older pastors in the area.

Often family members want to speak about the person's childhood, life, and the good qualities and deeds of the deceased person. Listen carefully, so that you will understand the person better. If the deceased was a keen Christian, then we have wonderful opportunities to talk about the joy and hope that Christians have even in the midst of sorrow and loss.

When the person who died was not a Christian then it is much harder to know what to say. We must not give a false message that implies that God accepts all into heaven regardless of how they lived. On the other hand we should not be cold and blunt. Do not tell the family that their loved one is now in hell. We are not the judge. Only God knows, and he is the righteous judge. We commit the spirit of the dead person into the loving hands of almighty God who judges all persons fairly.

If a child dies, our message should be comforting. Remind the family of the time when Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14 NIV). Tell the family about God: he is loving; he is gracious; and he is compassionate. The little one rests in the arms of Jesus. Encourage the family to relax and be at peace. Christians also have the hope that we will reunite with our loved ones who have died in Christ, even the young ones. We therefore pray that God will bless the family with comfort and peace. When King David’s baby boy died he said, “I will go to him, but he will not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23 NIV).

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Most cultures have a final gathering to remember the deceased. Usually it is open to the public. In some parts of the world, funeral services may be held in a church or a funeral home belonging to an undertaker. In other places the funeral takes place in the community. The location and the local customs of the people will make a big difference to how you conduct a funeral.

If the pastor is in charge of the funeral service, he or she should have two objectives.

1. To commit the spirit of the person who has died into the hands of God.
2. To use the Word of God to bring hope and comfort to the family who are grieving.

Music is very important, for it is the language of the heart. Often a hymn or Christian song can bring comfort and

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

blessing to those who mourn. Songs that speak of heaven, abundant life, God's faithfulness, and his love are good to sing.

Prayer is very important as well. We thank God for the life of the one who died, and we ask God's peace and comfort for the family that mourn. We commit the life of the person who died into the hands of almighty God. Remember, we do not ask God to take this person into heaven, for that is God's decision as the righteous Judge.

The Bible is our source of authority and hope. Allow the reading of Scripture to speak to the people. Here are some verses to consider. Choose the ones that you feel are most appropriate for the funeral.

- John 14:1-3
- John 11:25-26
- 1 Peter 1:3-9
- Psalms 23
- Psalms 27:3-5, 11-14
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

It is good if you present a brief message that focuses on God and the Christian's hope of salvation.

Conclude the service with prayer.

It is good to have a short prayer and Bible reading at the grave as the family members say their final farewell to the one they love.

A CASE STUDY

“When the dead do not depart”

“Pastor, our brother Tam, who died two weeks ago, keeps coming back, and he is bothering us. What should we do?”

Pastor Joe listened carefully as the people described hearing strange sounds in the middle of the night. Some said it sounded like Tami calling out to them. Others said it sounded as if Tam was crying. Other people reported having seen what they thought was the spirit of Tam wandering around the village. They also said that when it happened the dogs began to howl. They were really frightened. “Pastor, what should we do?” they asked.

Have you ever faced a situation like this? What happened? That night Pastor Joe went to the house. He told the story of the rich man and Lazarus from Luke 16:19-31. He reminded the people that the spirits of the dead are not free to roam around or go where they liked. He also read Romans 14:9 “Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (NIV). He also read the words of Jesus from Revelation 1:17-18 “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (NIV).

Pastor Joe explained that Jesus was the ruler of the living and the dead. Jesus holds the keys to Hades, so we have nothing to fear from the spirits of the dead. Jesus is in charge, and they are not able to go anywhere without his permission.

The pastor asked about the brother who died. They said Tam died very suddenly, and it was a shock to the family and community. Pastor Joe said, “Perhaps some of you wish you

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

could tell your brother something. However, since he died so suddenly, you did not have the opportunity. Some of you wanted to say ‘I love you’ one last time. Others may feel the need to clear up misunderstandings or to apologize for something you did wrong to him.”

People nodded their heads in agreement. Pastor said, “We do not talk to the dead nor do we ask the dead for advice, protection, or any form of help. God is our counsellor, protector, and provider. Jesus is Lord of the living and of the dead. He is here with us now. All of the dead, including your brother Tam, are under his control. So this is a good opportunity for you to tell Jesus your feelings and thoughts. Tell him the things you wished you could say to Tam. When everyone says what they want to say, we will then ask Jesus to take our messages to Tam.”

There was silence for a while as they thought about the pastor’s words. Then they began to speak. Some people spoke of their love for Tam and how much they miss him. Some people said they wanted to apologize for a silly argument they had some weeks ago. When everyone had finished speaking, the pastor said, “Jesus heard all that we said, and we will leave all these messages in his hands. We no longer need to be worried or fearful.”

The pastor prayed,

Lord Jesus you are the Lord of the living and of the dead. Our brother Tam who died is in your hands and for this we give you thanks.

These messages are words we were not able to give directly to Tam while he was alive but now we pass them to you, for we know that Tam is with you.

Bless this family with your peace and give them comfort to their hearts that are full of sorrow.

Lord Jesus if a deceiving spirit caused these events, then in your mighty name we command it and all other deceiving spirits to leave this house and this area. We pray that all attacks by deceiving spirits will cease. We pray that your peace will fill this house.

We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus who has defeated sin, death, and Satan. Amen.

CHAPTER 15

THE PASTOR AND MONEY

Most pastors do not have a lot of money. God called them to follow him and to serve him. He promised to supply their needs, but God never promised to make them rich and famous. Jesus spent his life among the poor people. Most pastors also spend their lives helping those who are poor. Therefore, it is very important that pastors manage their money very carefully, spending it wisely.

When a pastor receives money, the first thing he or she should do is to give one-tenth to the Lord's work. This is called tithing, and it is a very old practice. Abraham and Jacob gave a tenth of their income to God. In a very practical way, tithing shows that God is first in our lives. It is also a way to show our thanks to God for all the blessings he gives

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

us. Food, water, friends, family, health, and strength are all blessings that we receive from God. Tithing shows our gratitude to him.

When money is short, Satan will tempt you. “You do not have enough money, and you have to care for your family. You should stop tithing so that you will have enough money.” Do not listen to these lies of Satan. Tithing demonstrates that you believe God’s promises and that you put him first in your life. God is faithful, and he will supply your needs in amazing ways.

Looking after our money is very important, so we need to ask God for wisdom. “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5 NIV).

It is important that a married couple agree about how to spend money. A husband or a wife who spends money without consulting the spouse needlessly risks causing bitter arguments. A home with this kind of discord does not please God. It creates anger and distrust.

Also, a married couple need to plan for the future. It is important to save money. For instance, at the beginning of the school year we must pay school fees. A wise person starts saving several months in advance. Then, when it is time to pay the fees, the money is available and the family does not have to borrow. It is helpful to consider this money as “already spent,” so that when some urgent need comes up among your friends and family, you do not take from this important reserve.

The Bible is very clear that the congregation provides for the leader of the church. “The Lord has commanded that

those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14 NIV). Here are more verses to consider: Matthew 10:10, 1 Corinthians 9:11, Galatians 6:6, and 1 Timothy 5:17.

Sometimes a small church does not have enough money to pay a pastor a sufficient salary to support his family. When this happens, the church may agree that the pastor can start a little business to help support the family. The Apostle Paul did this sometimes (Acts 20:33-35). He made tents and sold them in order to have enough money. However when gifts of money came, he stopped making tents and gave his full time to teaching and preaching.

Some pastors find themselves in trouble because they are in debt. It is dangerous for a pastor to owe money to people in the congregation, to stores, and to shopkeepers. The pastor who borrows a lot of money causes the church to have a bad name. The pastor must never borrow the church’s money. People give money to the church as an act of worship to God, so we must treat it as God’s money. The pastor must never borrow the church’s money, because this will create problems and will destroy his or her ministry.

The pastor needs to pray regularly for wisdom so that he or she will know how to properly handle money.

MANAGING THE CHURCH’S MONEY

Be very careful how you handle the church’s money. People gave this money as part of their worship. It is God’s money. We must treat it with respect and carefully use it. We need to spend it wisely so that the ministry of the church is expanded.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

The members of the church board should decide how to use the church's money. However they should not think of themselves as the bosses of the money. They act on behalf of the church as a whole. The congregation trusts them to act wisely, and they must be very careful not to spoil the trust. If they are careless with the money or misuse it, the congregation will lose trust, and the people will be reluctant to give any more.

The pastor should not keep the money in his or her house or control the money. However it is very important that the pastor knows the church's finances, so that the church can pay its bills properly.

The church board must appoint two or more people to count the offerings each week. These people write the amount of the offering into a notebook and sign it. Someone else should deposit the money into a bank as soon as possible. If the church has a cheque account, two or more people must sign each check. This is important to insure that no one person can steal or misuse the money.

If a church is a long distance from a bank, it may keep the money in a money box with a lock. One person holds the key, and a different person holds the money box. This way, no one can bring false accusations against the people who look after the money.

The church board meets at the beginning of each month. The treasurer must give a report each month about the church's money. This is not a secret, because the money belongs to God. In the report, the treasurer explains many things, including the following details:

- How much money was in the bank at the beginning of the last month
- How much money was given to the church this month
- How much money the church spent, including details about any unusual expenses
- How much money is reserved for future expenses or projects
- How much money was in the bank at the end of the month

A regular report from the treasurer is important. If the church board does not receive a financial report for several months, it might have serious difficulties. The church board may find that money is missing or that money was spent without proper authority. When this happens, it is difficult to correct the problem. When a congregation loses faith in the pastor and the church board, it is very difficult to regain that trust.

If the church board and the treasurer are careful and honest, then everyone knows that they will wisely spend the money of the church. If offerings are not enough, the church board must take responsibility and bring this problem to the church as a whole.

Ezra's example

The Bible gives an excellent example of financial integrity in the eighth chapter of Ezra.

The armies of Persia defeated Judah in war, and they took captives to Babylon, the capitol. Many years passed, and a new Persian king allowed the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem. The king chose Ezra to lead 50,000 people back to

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The king gave a huge amount of gold and silver to help rebuild the temple.

Before they left, Ezra assembled the people. He counted out every piece of gold and silver, and wrote down the amounts. There were 25 tonnes of silver, and 3,750 kilograms of gold. Also, there were thousands of silver and gold dishes and other expensive items. The value of the gifts was incredibly high, millions or possibly billions of dollars in today's currency. Every bit of it was properly weighed and recorded.

Ezra said to the people,

You as well as these articles are consecrated to the LORD. The silver and gold are a freewill offering to the LORD, the God of your fathers. Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel. (Ezra 8:28-29 NIV).

Every one fasted and prayed for God's protection over them as they travelled the long distance from Babylon to Jerusalem. They did not have soldiers for protection. The whole group of 50,000 men, women and children travelled for four months. God protected them from enemies and bandits for the whole journey. When they got to Jerusalem, they went to the temple and weighed out the silver and gold. Ezra records, "Everything was accounted for by number and weight and the entire weight was recorded at that time" (Ezra 8:34 NIV).

Ezra was careful with the gifts that were given to God's work. This treasure was regarded as God's property and there was accurate counting and recounting with many witnesses. Nothing went missing. Ezra was meticulous and hon-

est. This is a good example of how pastors should handle money. As leaders of the church, we also need to be very careful to look after the money that God's people give for his work.

PREACHING ABOUT MONEY

Sadly, some unwise pastors keep, for themselves, the money people give to the church. Those pastors tarnish the reputation of the rest of the pastors. Many pastors are afraid to encourage people to give money for God's work because they fear the appearance of being greedy. However, we should not be afraid to preach about giving freely to God. As pastors we need to remind our congregations that all Christians should be good stewards. Our time, our talents, and our money are all gifts that we received from God. He expects us to use them wisely for his glory. What we do with our money and our time reflects whether or not God is first in our lives.

The Bible clearly teaches that "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV).

Jesus himself says, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38 NIV). If we want our congregations to experience God's blessings to the fullest, it is important that we encourage them to be good stewards and to give a tenth of their income to God.

We must not force people to give. We need to teach our congregations that tithing is not like paying a bill. We do not "pay" God for his services. Instead, we freely give back to God part of that which he gave us. We need to show the peo-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

ple that giving our time, our talents, and our treasure to God shows that he has first place in our lives. When we do this we receive his blessings in abundance.

The pastor needs to be a good example of a cheerful giver. People should see the pastor giving one-tenth of his or her salary back to the church. And, the pastor takes the lead in giving extra money in special offerings. If a pastor does not tithe, then he or she is not a good example. In fact, such a pastor shows that he or she does not truly trust God.

GIVING TO MISSIONS AND TO OTHERS

The church has many financial needs. It needs to pay the pastor a good salary. Also, the church must pay the bills on time for phone, for power, and for many other needs. It needs to buy materials for the children's classes, to purchase musical instruments, to pay for repairs, and so on. But, if the church focuses only on itself, it will have problems. The church needs to care for the needs of people outside of its own fellowship.

Some churches appoint a group to care for needy people in the community, to help them with food and clothing. Some churches reserve time each year to raise money for world evangelism and send money to support missionaries in other countries. Many churches give money to support Bible colleges that are preparing students to become pastors.

Many churches set a goal of giving 10% or more of their income to help others. They see this as a tithe of the congregation's income to help other people. These churches learned that God loves a cheerful giver.

CHAPTER 16

THE PASTORAL FAMILY

A large part of the work of the pastor is to care for the spiritual needs of other people. The pastor's work is very important. If a pastor does his or her work well, the church will grow. Christians will become stronger in their walk with God, and new people will come to believe in Jesus as their saviour. If a pastor is lazy or careless, then the church will not grow. People will become discouraged and may give up, and new people will not come to faith in God.

Satan is aware that a good pastor is vital to the life of a church, and so he will do all he can to destroy the life and faith of a pastor. One way that Satan tries to destroy a good pastor is to attack the family of the pastor. If he can destroy a pastor's faith or disrupt the family life of the pastor, Satan

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

knows many other people will be harmed. So, a pastor must care for his or her own needs, and the spiritual needs of the family.

A DISCIPLINED LIFE

The Apostle Paul was aware that he needed self-discipline so that “after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Corinthians 9:27 NIV). We must be careful not to allow sin to enter our lives. It is a shame when a pastor who has a good, long ministry grows cold spiritually and backslides. Paul wrote some encouraging words to the young Pastor Timothy, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16 NIV).

Pastors need to be very careful that they live what they preach. If we are to be a spiritual blessing to others, we need to be in a right relationship with God. In order to maintain our spiritual life, we must have good habits, such as these:

- Read the Bible as our own spiritual food, not just as preparation for teaching or preaching to others
- Pray regularly, both privately and with our families
- Constantly examine our attitudes about others so that we do not become pessimistic or spiteful
- Demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in our lives
- Guard our tongues so that we do not say things that might hurt others

Unfortunately, it is possible for a pastor to perform all the proper actions and yet have a cold and lifeless heart. God spoke to Isaiah about such leaders when he said, “These peo-

ple come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Isaiah 29:13 NIV). We need to be careful to keep the fire of God burning in our hearts and not to become cold in our love and service for God.

THE PASTOR'S SPOUSE

The pastor's work is different than any other occupation. The pastor and spouse need to work together as a team. If a man works in a factory or an office, he and his wife are usually not serving as a team to get his work done. If a woman works as a teacher or clerk, it usually does not matter what her husband does for a living. However, the pastoral family is different. The pastor and spouse are partners in ministry, even though only one of them might actually be called “pastor.”

In most churches, the pastor is a man, but a majority of the congregation are women. Many women do not feel comfortable talking to a man about their problems. However, they often feel free to talk to the pastor's wife who understands things from a woman's perspective. If a pastor has a wife who can help him with his work it is a huge benefit. On the other hand a wife who is not interested or who has a bad attitude can cause many problems.

The husband of a pastor functions much the same way. Female pastors often have difficulty being accepted by the men of the congregation. A sympathetic and supportive husband will allow his wife to become the best pastor possible.

Many people will examine the marriage of a pastor to see if it is strong. It is important for all husbands and wives to

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

have a time to read the Bible and pray together. These private devotions are especially important for the pastoral couple.

While the spouse is a partner in ministry, the pastor must remember that he or she is also part of the congregation. Some pastors become so busy visiting all the people in the church and attending various committee meetings that they spend little time with their families. This is not good. We must keep our priorities in order:

- Our first priority: God
- Our second priority: Family
- Our third priority: Work and ministry

If we put our work, even God's work, before our families then we risk neglecting them. We need to involve our spouses and children in our work as much as possible so that they feel loved and appreciated.

It is dangerous for a pastor to spend too much time away from home without telling his or her spouse. Sometimes the wife of a pastor might wonder, "Where is my husband, and what is he doing?" It is easy for Satan to supply fake answers. He might whisper, "Your husband is not interested in you anymore. He is off talking with the young women." Satan is a liar, and he will try all sorts of tricks to create problems with your family.

MARRIED PASTORS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX

The pastor needs to keep a good close relationship with his spouse. For a man, he needs to be very careful how he

relates to other women. A female pastor must also be careful in her relationships with men. Satan would be happy to break apart a good marriage.

There are two kinds of possible problems that arise from a pastor's interactions with members of the opposite sex:

Misunderstandings. A pastor shows concern for people, asks questions about their problems, and genuinely cares about what happens to them. Some people mistake pastoral concern as personal interest. A male pastor must be very careful how he speaks to women, and especially how he touches them. A female pastor also must be concerned about how her actions are viewed by men. Some people have very unhappy marriages, and they might get the wrong idea about the pastor's attention. While the pastor may be innocent, he or she should be careful to avoid these situations.

Temptations. Sadly, some pastors abandon their spouse and family for another person in their congregation. This is not common, but when it happens, everyone in the community knows it. It hurts the work of the Church as well. This type of situation does not happen quickly. Rather, both the pastor and the other person give into temptation, and usually it is sexual temptation. Pastors should be careful to avoid situations where they will be tempted like this.

One lady said, "Pastor, I have some problems, and I need to talk to you." He said, "I will be happy to come and to talk with you, and I will bring my wife." She said, "Oh, you do not need to bring your wife. Come by yourself." He sensed danger and said, "Sorry. I do not talk to ladies in private by myself. I always have my wife with me when I talk to women." This is a wise pastor.

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

Paul gave good advice to Timothy, a young pastor: treat the older women as mothers and the younger women as sisters (1 Timothy 3:1-2).

THE SINGLE PASTOR

The work of a pastor is very difficult. If a pastor has a supportive spouse, the work becomes a bit easier. In many cases, though, God calls a young person to be a pastor before he or she is married.

If a young man senses that God is calling him to be a pastor, he needs to prepare to answer that call. One way to prepare is to pray that God will lead him to a young Christian lady who also feels called. Similarly, a young woman should pray for a supportive, Christian husband to assist in the ministry. If two people share a similar vision, and if they both feel called by God, they will have an effective ministry. But if one is more interested in money, fame, or a comfortable lifestyle, then that person will be a hindrance rather than a help in ministry.

Sometimes a person graduates from Bible college and then gets married. If the spouse does not have a proper understanding about the ministry this can cause problems. It is a good idea for a young woman to talk to other ladies who have been in the ministry for several years and learn from them. Books about the work of the pastor can also be a good way to learn more about the ministry.

In some cases, the pastor of a church is a single person. This is often a big challenge for the pastor and the church. The work is difficult, and the pastor may become lonely. However, a single pastor should not get married just to satis-

fy the people of the church. He or she should pray regularly for guidance and for strength to remain an effective pastor.

THE PASTOR'S CHILDREN

The pastor and spouse must teach and train their children well. Paul described the ideal church leader in his letter to Timothy. He included these words: “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)” (1 Timothy 3:4-5 NIV).

It is not easy to train our children to behave properly. It takes time, patience, and consistency. We must start while our children are young. It is important that they learn to obey their parents. You need to pray often and to ask God to give you patience and wisdom as you train your children. There are good Christian books that are written to help us in this important assignment.

Both mother and father need to work together as a team to raise children. They support each other. Sometimes, the mother disciplines a child, and then the child cries and runs to the father. What should the father do? If the father shouts at the mother and gives the boy a cuddle, then the family is divided. Fathers need to support mothers, and mothers must support fathers. If they have different opinions about disciplining the children, then the parents need to discuss it privately.

We need to teach our children about God. Even very small children can learn to pray and to memorise short Bible vers-

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR

es. We can teach them the stories of the Bible and teach them to sing Christian songs.

When it is time for church, the children need to sit quietly and respectfully in the service. Parents should not allow them to run around in the church or disturb the service. If the pastor's children are noisy and disruptive, then the other children will act the same way. If the pastor's children set a good example, then this will help the others.

THE PASTOR'S REWARD

Most pastors do not receive large salaries, and often they struggle to have enough money for school fees or other needs. Sometimes people in the congregation complain and grumble about the pastor. Sometimes people will tell lies or start false rumours about the pastor. When these problems come, we need to remember the words of Jesus, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:11-12 NIV).

Peter gives us very good advice about the work of the Pastor in the fifth chapter of his first letter. "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 5:4 NIV).

Paul reminds us, "Therefore we do not lose heart. ... Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV). Paul is right. If we allow ourselves to focus on what

other people own, or how they live we may become discouraged and envious. But, when we focus our thoughts on Christ and all that he is preparing for us, then we are encouraged.

When Paul came towards the end of his life, he thought about his journey as a servant of God. He said,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8 NIV)

Pastor, there is a prize, crown, and reward waiting for you in heaven. Do not get tired and discouraged. Do not give up. God called you to this work. He will strengthen you, walk with you, and help you to complete your life's journey. One day, we will stand before Jesus. He told us the words he will say on that day: "Well done good and faithful servant ... Come and share your Master's happiness" (Matthew 25: 21 NIV).