

PHILOSOPHY OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

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The Church (mission within the body of Christ and in the community)

The Church is the body of Christ. Jesus is her head. It is his Church and he built her on the foundation stone that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The church is to be salt and light in the world, meaning that we are to preserve the biblical truths and shine the light of righteousness.

The church is to evangelize and disciple her members. The Great Commission is the church's mission statement. It comes directly from Jesus and commands us to create disciples. This consists of baptizing and teaching. In order for the church to baptize, we need to first evangelize. Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world is our first responsibility to build the church. Once we have evangelized and baptized, we are not to leave them to wonder but to teach them. Jesus specifically called us to teach them to obey all he commanded. Hence, we are to teach them the biblical truths and then we are to teach them to obey the biblical commands.

The church is to love God and love her neighbors. The Great Commandment completes the church's mission statement. God is the church's priority. We take seriously the First Commandment to have no other god before the Lord God Most High. We love God by glorifying Him, worshipping Him, prioritizing Him, and building our relationship with Him. We love our neighbors / others when we evangelize and teach them with love. If we do everything else right but we do not love, then we are nothing.

The church is not an organization but a living body. The church is not simply a group of members but disciples of Christ. The church is not to be observers but active participants. The Holy Spirit gifts the members of the church for the benefit of the entire church body. The church is a holy nation and a royal priesthood. The church is not a building but a people. These people make up a house of prayer. The Holy Spirit indwells His church.

Hence, by the leading of Jesus as her head and the power of the Holy Spirit as her strength, the church goes out as a holy and blameless body to impact the world with the Gospel and make disciples of all nations.

Worship (corporate)

Worship is too often associated with a time of singing and music. However, this definition is much too narrow. Worship is music, but it is much more. Whenever the church gathers together, worship is her task and goal. Worship is giving God what He is worth, what He deserves because of who and what He is, and because of what He has done, is doing and will do.

We worship who and what God is by understanding His attributes. God is holy, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, faithful, just, good, merciful, eternal, infinite, and many other characteristics that make up what He is. Worship of what God is comes out of the awe we have for the being of God.

We worship what God has done throughout the history of the world. We see His creation. We read in the Bible about His work in history. We discern His work in the history of the church. We recognize God's work in the history of our nation. We see the return of Israel to the land. We see God's hand moving in our own personal history and in our salvation. We also see God working in the present day. We sense the season is near of His return. We see what He is doing throughout the world with the persecuted church. We see the apostate church growing. We believe He is coming again to take us to be with Him as He promised. We look forward to his rule and reign in the world to come. We expectantly wait for God to live with us, for the

resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come, with our God living with us forever. When we see what God has done, is doing and will do, our hearts desire to worship Him.

Hence, we worship Him not only in music but in every part of our services. We praise Him in the call to worship. We sing His praises in the hymns, psalms and spiritual songs. We worship Him in the offering and tithes. We worship Him in the preaching of the word. We give Him worship in the communion. In every part, during every second of the church gathering, we give him worship.

Finally, we worship Him by sacrificing our own desires, even our lives, and living obediently, as a holy church, set apart from the world in our behavior, but not our presence.

Evangelism/Witnessing (Outreach)

Evangelism is the first part of the Great Commission and is part of Jesus' command for us to make disciples as we are going into the world. Evangelism is the sharing of the gospel. Not all who hear will obey, and therefore, we are not called to make believers, for only God can draw and turn the heart of stone into a heart of flesh. However, we are to plant the seeds and water the soil so that God can bring the growth.

To do this, we need to be in the world and not within our own four walls. We need to be in the world, even as we are not a part of the world. We need to go where they are for they will not come to where we are. We need to live spirit-filled lives, full of the fruit of the Spirit. If our lives do not look any better or different than the rest of the world, the world does not see the power of God in us, nor His light, and we have not witnessed. We witness by what we do. We also witness by what we say. We must be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope they see in us. If we do not tell them, they will not know.

Hence, the church must be trained in evangelism methods that are successful today. Many evangelism tools are available for us to put into our tool belt. Friendship evangelism, confrontational evangelism, and servant evangelism might be called many different names and there might be several different methods to do each, but they are useful categories for these evangelism tools. Events must also be part of the outreach as we invite them to visit the church using concerts or VBS and we go into their neighborhoods giving gifts, handing out tracts and asking if anyone needs prayer.

Discipleship

Of all the things the church has done poorly over the past 100-years, discipling the body is probably at the top of the list. It is a rare pastor that mentors his leaders and members. It is a rare church that has trained her bible study teachers hermeneutics and exegesis, leaving them to read the study notes of their Bibles and hoping that will be effective. It is as rare for small group leaders to be trained in the arts of facilitation, conflict management and time management.

The pastor needs to make discipleship one of his top priorities. He cannot use the excuse that he is too busy doing other things. Making disciples is the Great Commission and if he is not discipling his flock, he is not pastoring Christ's church. Hence, the pastor needs to create a plan to disciple the leaders of his church by spending time with them. He needs to live life with them so they can see what a life of following Jesus looks like. He needs to teach them the lessons that can only be learned when the Christian journeys down the straight and narrow path that is also filled with many enemies, including Satan, who will try to take the Christian off his path and stop his progress in the faith.

The Pastor needs to discern which of his members he ought to be discipling personally. These are the Christians who will be able to teach others. He needs to spend time with these people on a weekly basis. These are the people who will build the church, for they are the people who will make disciples. Hence, the pastor needs to make disciples who will make disciples.

Missions

A church without a mission mindset will soon plateau and decline. Missions allows a church to look outside herself and join God in what He is doing in the world. Both local missions and foreign missions should be addressed.

Local missions allows a large number of members to participate in the work. The local homeless shelter, food pantry, pregnancy care center or prisons are some examples of local missions that are always needed in every community. Giving money to these organizations is an important part of creating a mission-minded church. However, more important is to have the members go to these places to participate in the actual work via volunteering. Monthly outings and small groups designated to do these ministries are great ways to get the church involved.

Foreign mission is also important, though harder to do. Hence, less people will be involved in going into the mission field when that field is a distant country. More cost and more time is needed for these missions, but in most churches, people are waiting to be called to do this work. Again, the entire church can help in these mission projects through donations. However, it is important for the pastor to make the call for foreign missionaries on a consistent basis.

In either local or foreign mission work, the missionary ought to be commissioned and encouraged by the entire congregation. They should be called of God to do the work. They should be budgeted by the church to support their mission.

Ministries (church and community-focused)

Different churches will do different ministries. God places the people in the church to do certain tasks. For example, if God places many widows in a church, the church needs to have a ministry for widows. God also places a church in a particular neighborhood to impact that neighborhood. Hence, a church God places next to a university would expect God to also place members into the church who are able to reach college-aged young adults, resulting in a young adults group, a college outreach, and apologetics classes.

The ministries of the church must deal with both internal and external circumstances. Who has God placed in the church? Are there members who are dealing with the same types of problems or in similar situations? The pastor and leaders of the church need to assess who God has placed in their midst and determine the best ministries for those people. Looking externally, the church needs to analyze their community. How has it changed? What is its makeup? What events are well received by the people living there? What organizations employ the most people? By answering these kinds of questions, a church can determine the best ministries for the community where God has placed them.

Administration (programs and facilities)

Administration of the church should be led by the pastor but done by the entire leadership team. If the pastor is left to be the sole administrator, he will not be able to do what he is actually supposed to do: equip the body, preach the word, and disciple the flock in addition to caring for his own spiritual growth via Bible study and prayer and the care of his family. Hence,

administration is something that must be done by elders and/or deacons and other leaders under the pastor's guidance.

If necessary, an administrative board or committees can be created to do the work of administration, being overseen by the pastor and elders. The administration of the church needs to deal with the normal functioning of the church, including any church programs such as Sunday School, worship, finances, and missions as well as the proper functioning and upkeep of the facilities.

Stewardship (Time, Spiritual Gifts, Resources – personal and church)

God has given the church the resources she needs to do the work He is calling her to do. Too often, the church is not able to do this work because they do a poor job of caring for what God has provided.

The church needs to be good stewards of the people God has placed in her care. These people need the church and are needed by the church. Hence, programs and ministries are needed to care for these people, but the members must also be ready to use the spiritual gifts that God has given each individual in order to do this work. The church has been poor stewards of these gifts and hence the typical church has only 20-percent of the members doing 80-percent of the work. This is poor stewardship of resources.

Additionally, the church needs to be good stewards of the money that comes to her. A budget must be made and followed. Though the budget should be spiritually discerned, it must also ensure that money that comes in is used as God would have them be used. Hence, a budget ensures good stewardship of what goes out and depends on the Spirit to provide for whatever the church has budgeted, not more or less.

Finally, the church needs to ensure proper stewardship of her time. Time spent in useless services should be minimized (i.e.: Sunday evening services that have 10-percent attendance is poor stewardship of her time). Additionally, if a church is spending no time in corporate prayer, then this is also poor stewardship of time. Therefore, a church needs to assess how much time is being spent in different areas of church life, both internally and externally, and determine whether she is being a good steward of that time. Anything that wastes the time of the members or facilities usage should be ceased immediately while anything that the church is called to do, such as prayer, Bible study, or evangelism, must be given the time it needs to be successful.

Conflict Management

In any family, there will be conflict. The idea is not to avoid conflict but to manage it. Conflict can often lead to positive changes. However, conflict is also often useless and a way for Satan to attempt to destroy a church. Sometimes conflict can be a result of a real issue that needs to be resolved. In these cases, the conflict should be managed with skill and care.

As a church, every conflict must be viewed from a biblical perspective and not the eyes of the world and culture around us. Once, the conflict has been placed in a proper biblical framework, there should be a methodology in place for dealing with the conflict properly. Not every conflict needs to be dealt with by the pastor or the entire church. A process should be documented that describes when a conflict should be brought to leadership and when it should be brought to the pastor or the church. Anyone who has been given authority to deal with these conflicts should have attended training, either by the pastor or an outside authority, so that they understand how to facilitate the resolution of the conflict. Each conflict is different and so each

must be dealt with on its own individual basis. One conflict may call for church discipline while another calls for grace.

Pastoral Leadership

The pastor is the undershepherd of the church, directly reporting to Jesus the Chief Shepherd. Hence, he is the physical representative of Christ in leading the church and should have leadership responsibilities of most areas of church life. This does not mean that he needs to be spending all his time in leadership tasks, but he has the authority to choose what areas he will be directly responsible for and which areas he will delegate to others in the church.

It would be wise for the pastor to own the leadership of the worship service, the staff and the spiritual development of the church. However, he would be wise to delegate responsibilities of specific ministries, finances, and administration to others. In all areas, he will be required to oversee and monitor what is happening but he need not be involved with day to day operations, decisions, or problems. By doing this, the pastor is able to lead the church by casting vision, teaching and preaching, and praying.

Priesthood of the Believer and Congregational Involvement

The church is to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood. Hence, each Christian is called to be a priest unto God. A Christian is not obeying the command of God if he or she is not acting as a priest of God. Hence, it is important for every believer to take on the role of standing between God and man and offering sacrifices to God.

We are privileged that He desires that we stand in the gap for Him, on the basis of His word, to do His work, and to suffer what is needed to stand before God for others. No Christian should be comfortable watching from the sidelines. God has not called us to heaven yet. Until then, He has left us here to be His priests to the world.

Hence, as priests of God, we are to offer up sacrifices of praise to Him. We are to do good and share what we have. We are to offer our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. We are to live controlled, upright and godly lives. We are His workmanship, created for good works, which God has prepared beforehand for us to do. We are to offer up prayers for the people inside and outside the body of Christ. These are the sacrifices we are to offer to God.

Family (views of and maintaining balance with ministry priorities)

God has created the family unit as His building blocks for mankind. Without the family, society self-destructs. Hence, Satan would like nothing better than for the family unit to fall apart. Thus, we do Satan's bidding when we do not place our family before all other things, outside of our relationship with God.

This means that the church members need to have boundaries regarding their access to the pastor and their expectations regarding the pastor's time and his wife's responsibilities. The pastor needs to guard his family time. This means he cannot prioritize exceptional church business over his family.

A pastor needs to have ground rules that apply when church and family time conflict. He needs to protect his family time and therefore, unless church business falls into a certain category, it should not pull him away from his family time. All other business needs to wait until normal business hours. A church that respects the pastor's time and family will reap the rewards of a joyful pastor who lives a joyful life with a joyful family.

Personal Growth

The pastor must ensure his own personal growth. If a pastor becomes stale in his own spiritual walk, he will be unable to feed his flock spiritually. Hence, the pastor is responsible for making time in his schedule for prayer and Bible reading, both for study and devotion.

Every pastor is only able to do his job if he has been covered in prayer. A pastor's work is not like any other job in the world. Only a pastor is incapable of doing his job without the help of the Holy Spirit, for the pastor's work is mainly spiritual and needs The Spirit to make the work effective. This means that he must constantly be seeking the filling of the Spirit in order to do his work well. The filling of the Spirit will only come through prayer and the word.

Therefore, a pastor must devote at least an hour to private prayer each day. If a pastor properly schedules his time, he should be able to spend two hours in prayer. He can spend time praying when he awakes and before he sleeps. He can also add prayer time during his lunch break or after his morning meal or afternoon coffee break. If he travels in his car, he has found more time to pray.

Additionally, he needs to spend at least two to three hours a day in his Bible. He needs to read it devotionally for his own spiritual growth and as a study for his own intellectual growth. It is during these Bible reading times that God will give him the messages He wants delivered to His church. It is also during this time that God will fill the pastor in order to grow him spiritually. It will be from this spiritual fount that the pastor will be able to give water to his flock.

Church Revitalization

Since 80-percent of all churches are either in decline or plateauing, most pastors will be involved with revitalizing the church. The pastor will need to analyze what has caused the church to cease growing. Once he determines the probable causes, he will need to determine a plan for moving forward.

This work should be done with other church leaders in order to ensure the best possible solution and the buy-in of those who are influential in moving the church forward. The pastor will need to cast the new vision from the pulpit to energize and educate the flock. Part of casting the vision is to display the problem in no uncertain terms, clearly showing the church their desperate need for change.

Once the church is onboard with the changes that need to be done, the pastor needs to lead in implementing the plan he and the leadership team designed. In most cases, a plan for evangelizing the community will be part of the larger revitalization plan. After all, to revitalize means we need to grow the church and that will only happen when new people begin to come.

When the changes have been implemented, a new assessment will be needed. Is the plan working? Is the church growing numerically and spiritually? If not, the pastor needs to tweak the plan and implement the new plan. This cycle of planning, implementing and assessing needs to continue until the church is moving in the direction God intends.