

"YOUR PASTOR DETERMINES YOUR POTENTIAL"

I Peter 5:1,5; I Timothy 3:1-7

A Lutheran newsletter has some tongue-in-cheek suggestions for church members unhappy with their pastor: "Simply send a copy of this letter to six other churches who are tired of their ministers. Then bundle up your pastor and send him to the church at the top of the list. Add your name to the bottom of the list. In one week you will receive 16,436 ministers, and one of them should be a dandy. Have faith in this letter. One man broke the chain and got his old minister back." [Source Unknown](#).

Well this morning we continue in our series of 70 Days of Vision as we continue to look through the window of a Biblical worldview over and against a secular worldview. This morning we talk about me- not really me, but pastors- so if you want to get technical I guess we are going to talk about me. Anyway, I really thought about having someone else preach this sermon but no one else wanted to talk about me while I was in the room so

you're stuck with me, for better or worse and I guess that depends on who you talk to.

These are exciting times for ministry; these are difficult times for ministry, for ministry has always been hard. The other day I found an article by Dr. Andrew Purves, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, who has preached a few times from this pulpit on our Scottish Kirkin of the Tartan Sundays. In his article, *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, Dr. Purves writes, "Experientially, what is happening to us, we who are ministers in the mainline Protestant churches? Many of us are professionally, spiritually, and financially depressed.... For example, one respected study concluded that around forty percent of Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod clergy suffer from mild to severe burnout.... In fact, denominational health insurance agencies report that the medical costs for clergy are higher than for any other professional group.... Another report... published by the respected Alban Institute... is poignantly entitled 'Great

Expectations: Sobering Realities.' Excessive demands on time, conflicts within congregations and between minister and members, loss of one's personal spiritual life... and loneliness, account for a deep malaise within our professional and personal lives..." (*Theology Matters*, Nov/Dec 2006, p. 3)

Now while there are a lot of variables that play into malaise there is hope when we focus once again on Jesus, when we connect to whatever it is God is doing, when we focus or refocus on the Biblical understanding of the role of the congregation's spiritual leader and the Biblical role of the congregation, the parishioners, that he or she serves.

First, I want to begin this morning by looking at a Greek word-presbyteros which translates Elder as we look at the Pastor's

Qualifications found in our two scripture passages. The word presbyteros means "older" and the eldership is the most ancient of all offices within the Church. Historically, the Jews had their elders, and they can be traced back to the days of Moses when the Israelites were in the

desert wandering. For Moses appointed 70 men to help him dealing with the people and their issues and care. Every synagogue had its elders and they were the real leaders of Jewish community for they presided over worship, exercised fatherly oversight over the spiritual and material aspects of the Jewish community, they brought forth rebuke and discipline when needed, they even settled disputes when in other places in the old world they would have been dealt with in courts of law. Other nations besides Israel had elders who ruled over the people.

When you turn to the New Testament the terms bishop, elder or presbyter are used interchangeably to speak of those who are the leaders of a local assembly of believers.

The pastor is one who should meet elder qualifications. **In our passage from I Timothy we read of 15 qualities presented for an overseer.** The Apostle Paul, writing to young Timothy, saw this position as very significant and the person serving should show forth character qualities

that reflected Christ-like maturity. Let's continue to look at the pieces of the job description of the pastor found in various places in the New Testament.

Second, **bishop or overseer. This is the Pastor's Authority.** (I Tim. 3:1) The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible translates the Greek word episkopos bishop which literally means overseer or superintendent. The job of the overseer is to look out for the concerns of the sheep, the people. And so when people wander off it is out of love and concern that the overseer reaches out. If you look over to Titus 1:5-9 you will read the word Elder rather than overseer and you will find there is some overlap between the two with regard to the church office. Elder and overseer are two different perspectives that describe the same role. **And in a number of churches, the pastor is called a teaching elder.** Peter makes reference in I Peter 2:25 to Christ as the overseer when Peter wrote, "For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

So, when you think about it, pastors and elders are Christ's representatives to serve with Christ in the caring for the souls of Christ's sheep.

Third, **Equipper**. **This is the Pastor's Process.** Turn with me to Ephesians 4:11-12 where it speaks of equipping. It says, "The gifts he (Christ) gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to (here it is) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Hear the rest of what Paul writes in Ephesians 4:12-13 when he describes the pastor's process, for Paul says that pastor equips "the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." I found it interesting that the Greek word "to equip"- *katartizo* describes the process of resetting bones. So the pastor who helps in the setting of bones can provide the comfort, encouragement, hope and support to the person or persons who are broken.

Friends, restoration, healing and hope can only come through Christ. The equipper of the saints, the pastor, can work with others, the saints already in the church to do the work of ministry so that they can minister to the other saints in the church so that believers are moving towards maturity.

And yet when you think about it, this equipping involves discipling, training, loving, mentoring, guiding, appreciating, healing, correcting, rebuking, comforting, supporting, encouraging and restoring. What equipping entails is doing whatever is necessary to help prepare believers to serve Christ.

Fourth, **teacher**. **This is the Pastor's Task.** Paul wrote to young Timothy in I Timothy 4:13, "Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching." One of a pastor's major responsibilities is to teach God's Word and relate God's Word to daily living-how then shall we live?

Fifth, **shepherd**. **This is the Pastor's Motive.** Peter writes in I Peter 5:1-2, "I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it." The Greek word for "shepherd" means to act as a shepherd, to care, rule and tend the sheep. The way pastors' care for their flock is by administering loving oversight. But that oversight comes with it a variety of styles- there is the shepherd/chaplain- this is where the pastor is a gentle, compassionate encourager who visits at the hospital or stands beside the family that is grieving. But this is only part of it. Shepherds are not only chaplains but they are shepherd/warriors who try and protect the sheep from the wild animals- false doctrines and false teachers. And there are those times when the shepherd might have to even discipline the sheep because sheep can be prone to wander and stray and just as God did it for Israel and Jesus does it for all of us, the shepherd

might have to bring out the staff and rod to bring the sheep back into the fold.

Sixth, **disciple- maker**. **This is the Pastor's Purpose.** Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20 that we are to go forth and make disciples. The term "disciple" means to train, to educate, to teach, to increase one's knowledge, to be informed. You know, it is great to hear and learn about God, the Bible and Jesus Christ. To hear and to learn is great. But it is only when that person who is a believer has fallen in love with Jesus that disciple-making puts pastors off the charts. For it is when a person falls in love with Jesus that there is a commitment, a dedication, a willingness to serve Him and others who are hurting and broken that makes pastors' say, this is what it is all about. This is what gives me hope and the encouragement to keep on keeping on.

Making disciples is the job of disciples in the book of Acts. It has been said that while the mission of the church is more than growth, it is not

something other than growth. And it is certainly not decline. When you read the books of Luke and Acts you discover that the church will grow when it is bold enough to preach the Word of God. The church will grow when it meets the cultural status quo head-on. The church will grow when the people are convinced of the truth of its message. And the church will grow when it is willing to suffer for the truth of the Gospel. Friends, it is more than an evangelism campaign, it is about making many disciples.

So let me sum it up my purpose and your purpose. Ephesians 4:11-12 tells the primary purpose for pastors. There are other functions and responsibilities but one primary purpose and that is, "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry so that they become disciple-makers for God. But it is not just the primary purpose for the pastor but it is the primary purpose for all Christians. We are to multiply ourselves, we are to disciple others. And this happens by learning Biblical truths and by on-the-job training. Think of it this way- pilots don't just study the aspects, the truths of flying

and then go out and fly- No. They get in the cockpit with an instructor and they learn from their teacher. Carpenters and plumbers learn as apprentices. So on-the-job training is crucial to Kingdom building, to Kingdom multiplication.

Jesus trained His followers and this is what He did- He did and they watched. Then He did and they helped and in the process He helped them. Then they did and He watched. And in the final stage they did and they repeated the process. And when they did they also needed to equip another to start the process again. A question for all of us to consider- who are we discipling right now? Who is the one we are zeroing in on so that we are equipping someone else?

Folks, when every person in our church is engaged in some effort of ministry, when every person who is in ministry is training someone else then the church moves from growth by addition to growth by multiplication. And then Christianity takes that crucial jump from being an organization to a

movement and then the work of the Kingdom moves beyond growth to an explosion across this land. And when this happens, I wonder if pastors then aren't so stressed out, if there is less conflict within congregations and pastors are rejuvenated and excited about ministry again? Friends, we all have work to do so that pastor and parishioners potential is maximized to the fullest for Christ and His Church. Amen.

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Introduction: Church members unhappy with their pastor...

Exciting times for ministry; difficult times for ministry- there is hope...

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Presbyteros means _____

In the New Testament the terms bishop, elder or presbyter are used interchangeably

From I Timothy we read of ____ qualities presented for an “overseer”

Second, bishop or _____: This is the Pastor’s Authority

I Tim. 3:1

In a number of churches, the pastor is called a _____ elder

Third, _____: This is the Pastor’s Process Eph. 4:11-12

The Greek word “to equip” (katartizo) describes the process of resetting bones

Fourth, _____: This is the Pastor’s Task I Tim. 4:13

Fifth, _____: This is the Pastor’s Motive I Pet. 5:1-2

Sixth, _____-_____: This is the Pastor’s Purpose Matt. 28:18-20

My purpose and your purpose is...

Conclusion: we all have work to do so that the pastor and parishioners potential is maximized to the fullest for Christ and His Church