

## *Abundant Life Lesson 11 - The Pastor and the Ministry*

### Introduction

If man could understand and correctly apply the scriptures on their own, then Jesus Christ would not have needed to spend three and a half years of extensive earthly ministry. If just having the written Word of God was enough, then God would not have had to send so many preachers and prophets to Israel throughout history. The plan of God has always been to send Godly men who would hear His voice to expound upon the scripture and lead the people of God closer to Him. A sign of Israel's rebellion was that they refused to hear the messengers appointed by God to minister (Acts 7:51-53). *In other words, a warning sign of someone going astray is when they feel that they no longer need a preacher or a minister in their life to help them draw closer to God.*

God, Himself, has ordained the principle of ministry and preaching to help saints grow closer to Him. Notice the following scriptures:

**1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. NIV**

True believers are saved through the "foolishness of what was preached." It does seem, to the natural mind, crazy to think of others patiently listening to someone else talk and exhort with fervency about a book, but that is the plan that God has chosen to bring salvation into this world!

**Titus 1:2-3 In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began 3 and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ESV**

The word "manifested" means "to make visible" or "to reveal." God has chosen to use preaching and thus a preacher to reveal His word and illuminate the correct way to apply it to our lives.

**Rom 10:14 But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ESV**

**Rom 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ESV**

God uses preaching to bring faith in our lives so that we can receive everything that He has for us. Without a preacher, you would not grow very close to God because your faith would not be challenged to trust more and more in God. Everyone needs a man of God in their life to reveal and help apply the scriptures. Perhaps the story of Philip and the Eunuch best illustrates this truth:

**Acts 8:30-31 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and**

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**asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ESV**

When you read the entire story, Philip was having terrific revival in Samaria and God commanded him to leave the revival and go to a specific lonely spot in the desert. When Philip got to the place, he saw a chariot traveling into the desert with an Ethiopian man reading the book of Isaiah. When Philip ran to him and asked the man "do you understand what you are reading about?" The Ethiopian confessed that he did not and said "how can I, unless someone guides me?" He was reading a prophecy about how Jesus Christ would suffer and thought that the passage was talking about Isaiah himself. As Philip began to tell him the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, the man believed what was being told. Before the day was over, the man had been baptized in the name of Jesus and received the Holy Ghost! Philip had performed the same ministry to the Ethiopian that Jesus had for the disciples after His resurrection, by explaining scripture correctly and bringing revelation and thus faith and salvation.

No doubt there has been a passage of scripture that you have read many times but really did not understand the importance or how to correctly apply it to your life until a minister or a wise saint began to explain it with other scriptures that correlated. That is because God calls and uses men to help apply the scriptures to our lives. You need a minister for that very purpose in your life!

### *The Five-Fold Ministry*

There are five distinct offices to which God calls men when He calls them into the ministry. They are found in the following scripture:

**Eph 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ESV**

The five-fold ministry in order is then:

1. Apostles - The word "apostle" literally means "one who is sent forth with orders." The word has a two-fold meaning in the modern church. First, the work of an Apostle is done when God sends someone into an area that has never heard the Gospel before and establishes a work of God "from scratch." Second, the office of the Apostle carries the idea of a "leader of leaders" and someone who is sent from God to "pastor ministers" and ministry. We know this because throughout the New Testament scriptures everyone designated "Apostle" arose to a position of authority over other ministers. Taking into account all of the scriptural instances of the use of the term Apostle, reveals that a modern-day Apostle is a man who is sent by God to give general direction to the leadership of a church and movement.

There is quite a controversy over the term "apostle" today. We do not have the time to delve off into the many varied beliefs, but I would like to point out one refutation of a dangerous misconception. Many people teach that if a person is an Apostle, then they

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have the right to write scripture. While it is true that there were Apostles who were called to write scripture, that is not true for all of them (such as Barnabas, for example). We must remember that to write scripture, one had to be an "eye witness" of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and had to have Him appear to them (2 Peter 1:16). This is why the Apostle Paul called himself an "apostle born out of due time" because Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (1 Corinthians 15:8-9). For Paul to have the authority to write scripture, he had to have such an experience. You and I today cannot add our own books to the Word of God because we were not eye witnesses of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. The job of the ministry today is to teach the principles found in the perfect Word of God.

2. Prophets - The word here in the Greek literally means "foreteller." It refers to a minister that is called by God to operate deeply in the realm of the Spirit. They may be used to reveal the future of a particular situation or to reveal what God would like to do in someone's life or church if they will step out in faith. There are some men (and women) whose calling in life is to bring spiritual direction to a church or body of believers and to supernaturally reveal the plan of God in situations. These people are prophets.

3. Evangelists - Literally in the Greek "bringer of good news." It refers to someone who is called to preach the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Typically, an evangelist feels a special calling to reach the lost. Their job is to come into a local area and hear from God for that particular time and then move on to encourage and ignite a fire in the next place that God would send them.

4. Pastors - The term literally means "shepherd." It refers to a calling of God to "live with the flock" of believers and guide them day in and day out in the things of God. We will talk more about the pastor in a moment.

5. Teachers - This is a very neglected ministry in many churches, but it is just as important as the other four callings of God. Some people are called by God to study the scriptures in depth and be able to convey difficult concepts in a way that people can understand and use them in their personal lives. Such ministers are called to be teachers.

Also note that within scripture, we find not just men but women working and filling offices of ministry. Junia was an apostle (Romans 16:7) and Deborah was the judge and "spiritual direction giver" of all of Israel (Judges 4-5). Philip's four daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9). There were many women who reached out to the lost in ministry as evangelists (see Romans 16 for many examples). Among teachers there are also examples within the church. For instance, Rufus' mother became a mother figure in the Apostle Paul's life (Romans 16:13) and Priscilla taught Apollos in the ways of the Lord along with her husband Aquilla (Acts 18:24-26).

### *The Purpose of the Five-Fold Ministry*

The scripture in Ephesians goes on to tell us why God ordained such a system of ministry:

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**Eph 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ESV**

There are three purposes given here:

1. To equip the saints - The word "equip" literally means "complete furnishing." God has sent the ministry to mature saints from new born babes in Christ to mighty warriors in the Spirit (see verse 14 below).
2. For the work of the ministry - The word "ministry" literally means "to be as a servant, carrying out the orders of the master." For a church to exist and function as God intended for it to do so, there is a tremendous amount of work that must be done. The ministry is to lead by example how to "serve God."
3. For building up the body of Christ - The ministry is to build up faith and joy and righteousness within the local church and form them into a spiritual army fighting for the will of God.

**Eph 4:13-15 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ESV**

The ministry is to keep working, exhorting, preaching, and reaching until all come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ and become mature Christians that are no longer easily swayed by every "new belief" that men create but become Christians who are well grounded in the Word of God and able to produce fruit for the kingdom of God.

### *Your Pastor*

Your pastor is special because he is the one who God has called to be your spiritual shepherd and to protect you, guide you, feed you, correct you, nurture you, and help you mature. The Apostle Peter wrote about the duties of the pastor/shepherd:

**1 Peter 5:1-4 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ESV**

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The Pastor is commanded to perform several duties here and throughout the scripture:

1. Shepherd the flock of God - One of the primary duties of the pastor is to feed the sheep/saints with spiritual food each week. Much of his time and effort each week must go into preparing well balanced meals of preaching and teaching that provides the spiritual nutrients that the flock needs. A good shepherd makes sure that his flock is well fed and also causes them to lie down so to thoroughly digest the food (Psalms 23:2). A good pastor must lead the flock to the right area of God's Word each week and present it in such a way that it encourages them to consume everything that God has for them at that time.

2. Exercising Oversight - This literally means in the Greek to "watch carefully, inspect, and beware of the dangers surrounding." It is a pastor's job to watch carefully for spiritual danger and to oversee the spiritual direction of the church and saints. The scriptures say:

**Ezek 33:7-9 "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 8 If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. ESV**

**Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. ESV**

One day the pastor must give an account of you to Jesus Christ, the "chief shepherd!" We will all be judged according to whether or not we obeyed them and submitted ourselves to their leadership. Listen to your pastor, he prays and fasts for your souls!

3. Lead by example - Peter goes on to write that the pastors should perform their calling willingly and not by compulsion or for shameful gain (literally greed). "Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock." The KJV adds the word "lord" here in place of domineering. A lord does not perform himself the duties of his servants. The pastor is not to preach and demand something from the flock that he does not do himself. He is rather to lead by example in prayer, worship, soulwinning, holy life style, etc...

There are other responsibilities of the local minister given in scripture. The pastors must also:

4. Preach the Word - 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

5. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. - 2 Timothy 4:2.

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6. Make disciples, baptize, and teach them to observe all things the Lord has commanded (Acts 8:26-39).

7. Give direction for our lives as Paul did to the Corinthian church - 1 Corinthians 5:11.

### *The Saints' Responsibilities to the Pastor and Ministry*

The saints have some scriptural duties and guidelines to make sure that the relationship between them and the ministry stays correct and Godly. Here are some of the responsibilities to the ministry:

1. Obey your leaders and submit to them (Hebrews 13:7). Follow their advice and spiritual teachings.
2. Esteem them very highly in love (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). Love them with a godly love and pray for them and lift up their ministry.
3. Count them worthy of double honor (1 Timothy 5:17). Treat the ministry with respect and honor, twice as much as you would anyone else in authority in your life.
4. Salute (greet with respect) them that have the rule over us (Hebrews 13:24). Do not call them by a first name basis, but give them a title of honor and speak them in respect and not in disrespectful tones or comments.
5. We are not to muzzle them (1 Timothy 5:18). In other words do not try to use your influence, position, or money to try to alter what they preach and teach from the Word of God. Do not get upset if the preacher preaches a message that "hits home."
6. We are not to receive an accusation against them except before two or three witnesses with the minister present (1 Timothy 5:19). Refuse to listen to others who are bitter against the ministry. Refuse to join with them. Believe the best about the ministry and do not receive an accusation unless you have three witnesses that are willing to go with you to confront the person accused! If people are just mumbling and complaining and they do not have the guts to face the person that they have a problem with their complaints, then they are sinning by gossip and you do not want anything to do with that sort of spirit! Remember that if a person is offended by anyone, they are to first go to that person alone according to scripture (Matthew 18:15-17). If they have told you of the problem before they have gone to the person that offended them, then they have sinned against God and likely have a rebellious spirit of which you cannot afford to partake.
7. Pray for them (Hebrews 13:18). Because of their influence in so many lives, the devil would like nothing more than to see the ministry get discouraged, complacent, or fall into sin. Pray that God will keep them from such attacks and that their ministry would be fruitful and Spirit led. If you do not like how a minister is preaching or ministering, then ask yourself one question before you complain: how much prayer and fasting have you

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invested for that preachers' ministry? Perhaps they need you to stand with them and fight against the false doctrines of this world and the attacks of Satan.

### Conclusion

God has placed the five-fold ministry and in particular pastors within our lives to help us to live Godly in Christ Jesus. Submit to them, honor them, and when the "Chief Shepherd" Jesus Christ comes, you will find yourself rewarded with eternal life. God not only wanted to deliver you from your sins but also to see you become fruitful in the kingdom of God. The ministry has been sent to help you become all that God wants you to be. God's plan is perfect and we cannot help but see positive results when we submit to the leadership ordained by God.