

RESTORING THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY

Pastors or Elders for the Church Today

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Foreword

This book is not intended to be an argument but is an honest look at a Biblical plan for church government. The author would welcome any feedback and desires to hear any opposing view. Please provide your comments to the following questions and e-mail to the author's e-mail address:

- Why do you think the church today changed from a concept of multiple elders in the Bible to a single pastor concept?
- Is there New Testament support for having only one pastor in the church, while a church can have more than one of any of the other ministries in the fivefold ministry?
- Do you believe Ephesians 4:11 supports a fivefold or a fourfold ministry?
- Is there another form of church government that should be considered in place of either a single pastor form or a collegial eldership form of government?
- Why do you think pastors insist on being the sole authority in the local churches?
- Do you think it is possible for a group of men to govern a local church equally?
- Is there a difference between a *board*-run church and a church governed by elders?
- What is the scriptural difference between elders who may also have a ministry and a board of elders not properly ordained?

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An Introduction

*T*ake heed therefore unto your selves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,¹ Paul says to the elders of the Ephesian church whom he has called to Miletus for a final conference. In this one verse, Paul summarizes the basic duty of the spiritual ministry which has oversight for God's flock. Guarding the flock and feeding the flock are the two main purposes of the overseer. But he precedes his instruction with a very strong admonition: "take heed therefore unto your selves".

Jesus himself recognized that the shepherds of the flock were always great targets for Satan's devices. He quoted the prophet Zechariah, "smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zech 13:7 and Mark 14:27). Satan failed to smite the Great Shepherd with temptation and perhaps thought that death on Calvary would vanquish forever the Son of Man. While the resurrection of Jesus Christ has proven forever that Satan is a defeated foe, it has not stopped this determined adversary from doing everything in his power to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. Satan did learn this one truth, however, that sheep will indeed flee when the shepherd is smitten. When a sheep is separated from the shepherd, he becomes prey.

This book deals with a different aspect of spiritual leadership. There have been books written by the score that deal with the sins of the ministry. The failures of well-known preachers from Jim Bakker to Jimmy Swaggart have only spotlighted facts that we should all know well, that preachers are human and that a tall pedestal makes for a long fall. But the biggest reason for tragedy in ministry is not because of the personal

¹ Acts 20:28 KJV

sins of the individual minister but because the ministry itself has become something entirely different from that which God has ordained for His church.

First of all, preachers for the most part no longer *minister*. The calling of *ministry* has given way to the function of *administration*. If one wonders about why someone would want to become a bishop, elder, deacon, pastor—or whatever title one might choose—you have to ask the question, “Whose needs are being met?” The first principle of ministry was service, not to be served. When a vow of poverty includes the promise that your living will be generously provided, one has to wonder “whose needs are being met.” If the “ministry” entails having the spotlight, “whose needs are being met?” When it is normal to receive the praise of men, “whose needs are being met?” All the basic temptations are inherent in being a preacher. Fame, fortune, prestige, the adoration of men or women, the chance to perform—all of these can be seen to flourish in the pulpit today. The most difficult problem of all is the fact that the position of minister in the scheme of things today is one of “authority.” This was the very problem that Jesus warned about when he was defining the role of church leadership.

²⁵But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. ²⁶But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; ²⁷And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: ²⁸Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus’ basic pattern was *authority inverted*. How can this be? When we speak of church government, pastoral authority, and ministerial leadership, elders that rule, how do these things fit the idea of “minister”? It is impossible to understand the Lord’s meaning if one looks at “authority” in its natural context and adopts the normal meaning of authority to this term. That is exactly why Jesus pointed out to his disciples that His way was not the way that the world sees authority. “It shall not be so among you,” he said. The way to minister is as a servant.

When the Lord set up his kingdom, he established it with *his* principles of leadership in mind. For his model, he did not use the model of a king as we know in Saul or David, but the model of a servant. He actually used the model of a king dethroned, Moses, who fled the life of pleasure in the palaces of Egypt to tend to sheep in the desert. But since most preachers today believe that Moses was a type of the pastor, it is very important to look deeply at the life of Moses to find exactly what shadow is being cast for the New Testament Church.

Moses was *not* a type of the pastor of the local church. Moses was a type of Jesus Christ and of Jesus Christ alone. He was a king who fled Egypt. This was a preview of the fulfilled prophecy of Jesus Christ spoken by Matthew:

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son (Matthew: 2:15).

Moses, like Jesus, was condemned to death while still a child. His name means “drawn from the water.” I find it interesting that Moses’ mother did indeed obey the edict of Pharaoh to cast her son into the Nile River. However, she put an ark under him. Moses was spared by God’s intervention, just as Jesus was spared by God’s intervention. In many ways, we can find parallels in the life of Moses with the life of Christ. We know that Moses prophesied concerning Jesus Christ,

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Moses was a king who became a shepherd. Jesus was a king who also became a shepherd. The Bible speaks of Jesus Christ as being our “Chief Shepherd,”² but it is this typology that has also been misunderstood. Many ministers today have taken Moses as a type of the pastor of a local church rather than as a type of Jesus Christ, the one for whom this type was intended. Indeed, there is a type for the local pastors mentioned in the Old Testament. That type is elders. The elders of Moses,

² 1 Peter 5:4 KJV

as recorded in Numbers 11, are a type of the local pastors of the church inasmuch as they are to receive the same spirit as their chief shepherd. Notice how this scripture reads:

And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease (Numbers 11:25).

In the course of this small book, I hope to provide enough scripture to help the church to understand the principle of “eldership”. The early church did not operate with a single person fulfilling an ecclesiastical role. There was no church with a pastor who had complete and total oversight of the local congregation. Instead there were only two offices, which could be filled from the local congregation, in the local church (Philippians 1:1 and I Timothy 3). It is important to understand that the *office* of elder (also known as “bishop,” Titus: 1:5–7, I Timothy: 3) or deacon is distinct from the *ministry* of Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. A pastor may be an elder, but not all elders have the ministry (or gift) of pastoring.

Quoting from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* under the topic, *Ministry*, we read:

It may be said generally that about the close of the 1st century every Christian community was ruled by a body of men who are sometimes called presbyters (elders), sometimes but more rarely bishops (overseers), and whom modern church historians are inclined to call presbyter-bishops. Associated with them, but whether members of the same court or forming a court of their own it is impossible to say, were a number of assistant rulers called deacons. The court of elders had no president or permanent chairman. There was a two-fold not a threefold ministry. During the 3rd century, rising into notice by way of geographical distribution rather than in definite chronological order, this twofold congregational ministry became threefold in the sense that one man was placed at the head of each community with the title of pastor or bishop (the titles are interchangeable as late as the 4th century at least). In the early centuries those local churches, thus organized, while

they never lacked the sense that they all belonged to one body, were independent self-governing communities preserving relations to each other, not by any political organization embracing them all, but by fraternal fellowship through visits of deputies, interchange of letters, and in some indefinite way giving and receiving assistance in the selection and setting apart of pastor.³

Also:

The uniquely Christian correlation of the three conceptions of leadership, service and “gifts”; leadership depended on service, and service was possible by the possession and recognition of special “gifts”, which were the evidence of the presence and power of the Spirit of Jesus within the community. The “gifts” gave the church a Divine authority to exercise rule and oversight apart from any special apostolic direction.

Regarding the threefold congregational ministry, BibleSoft says:

During the 2nd century the ministry was subject to a change. The ruling body of office-bearers in every congregation received a permanent president, who was called the pastor or bishop, the latter term being the commoner. The change came gradually. It provoked no strong opposition. By the beginning of the third century, it was everywhere accepted.⁴

When we seek to trace the causes why the college of elders received a president, who became the center of all the ecclesiastical life in the local church and the one potent office-bearer, we are reduced to conjecture. This only can be said with confidence, that the change began in the East and gradually spread to the West, and that there are hints of a gradual evolution.⁵

Jerome, one of the early church fathers, wrote,

³ *Ministry*, in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Electronic Database, BibleSoft, 1996.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Lindsey, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, 180, 183-85)

A presbyter is the same as a bishop. And until there arose divisions in religion, churches were governed by a common counsel of presbyters. But afterward, it was everywhere decreed, that one person, elected from the presbyters, should be placed over the others.⁶

Basically, the first church operated on a local level with elders (also known as bishops) and deacons as the offices of the church. The offices were filled by men who had special ministerial gifts defined in Ephesians 4:11. An elder might be a pastor, or he might have the gift of evangelist. The Apostle Peter calls himself an elder (I Peter 5:1), not in the sense of an older man but in the sense of an elder who shepherds the flock. We shall look more at the office of the elder later. It appears that apostles, like Paul, Timothy, and Titus, filled a governing role but on a wider level than the local level. It might be speculated that the apostle “in the field,” though not necessarily subject to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, received recognition from them, as when Paul and Barnabas received the right hand of fellowship and were sanctioned by the Jerusalem body of elders.. (Acts 15, Galatians 2:9). Although it seems that this hierarchy of the Jerusalem Church, apostle, and elder is similar to that of the Catholic church of today, there are two major differences. One is the structure of government at the local level. The second is that the line goes from bottom to top, not top to bottom. The Jerusalem Church represented the foundation, not the roof. This again is *authority inverted*. There is only one person at the top level of authority, and that is Jesus Christ and He alone.

This principle is best understood if we recognize the principle of *ministerial gifts* described in Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church. I believe that the major hindrance to God’s ministry today is not sin, as grievous as this may be, but the lack of ministry operating as a “spiritual gift.” It is not hard to see how the ministry has become a vocation, occupation, or profession. The earliest colleges in America were primarily religious schools whose first and foremost mission was to prepare candidates for service in the ministry. One of the oldest professions known to mankind is that of priest or cleric. It is not that God did not intend for there to be such a vocation, but the duty of the Old Tes-

⁶ *Annotations on the Epistle to Titus*, as quoted by Dr. Woods on Episcopacy, p. 63.

tament priest was usually fulfilled in the religious roles of ceremony. The New Testament brought about a different kind of ministry.

In reality, what has happened today is that the new wine has been poured into old bottles. This is true for the ceremony of the church. It is also true for the religious trappings, from the styles of worship to the ministerial offices. And in spite of how the “conservative” Christian wants to distance oneself from the “liberal” Christian, there are a lot of carryovers that only say that Christianity is a mingled and mixed multitude that still does not listen well to the Savior who leads us.

Before we begin our discussion of the ministries, allow me to discuss the crisis that exists in the church today. Although not seen by most ministers in evangelical churches as a crisis, the truth is that we have lost the power of the apostolic ministry. The ministerial gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 do not operate according to God’s plan. There is a high incidence of failure among preachers and teachers of the gospel, and for the most part the lack of true apostolic ministry only contributes to the worldly, powerless, and backslidden condition of the church today.

Chapter One

My Awakening Understanding

Over twenty years ago, Jesus Christ saved me then called me to preach during a prayer vigil in a Pentecostal church in Baytown, Texas. I was baptized in Jesus' name and received the Holy Spirit in a revival preached by a much anointed young evangelist. The Lord led my steps in many peculiar ways, but I was blessed to be under the teaching and preaching of some of the finest pastors and teachers in the Apostolic and Pentecostal movements. These men were tremendous ministers and had one thing in common: all were leaders among men, great administrators as well as great ministers.

During the next twenty years, I became a home missionary, opening new works in New York, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. I soon discovered that I had many weaknesses, but I also found that the Lord could do a great work even with all of my weaknesses and failures. I also discovered that I had this constant desire to do things my own way instead of doing them God's way. I was able to lead. I was able to build. I was able to organize and direct, to supervise, administer. I could do many of the things that I had seen other and more successful ministers and pastors do so effectively. The hardest thing for me to do was *serve*.

This became the most evident in Rhode Island, where my family and I experienced some of the most wonderful miracles in starting a new church. It was in Louisiana that the Lord directed me to move to the city of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. I had never heard of the place, but, by faith, I loaded my wife and two young children and moved to the city of Woonsocket with a small trailer towed behind my car. We had no furniture, no job, and no contacts in the city. Little did I realize

that in the city of Woonsocket was a young group of baptized born-again, one-God believers meeting in the basement of a home praying for a pastor. At the same time, there was a young couple originally from that town, that had been living in Memphis, Tennessee, but were now returning to the city of Woonsocket. They too were praying that there would be a church there.

I found an apartment for \$30 a week on the third floor of a housing unit in which several other families lived. Woonsocket, a crowded city of 50,000, was rich in French-Canadian heritage and was also notably Catholic from one border of town to the other. Although there were a few non-Catholic churches in town, Woonsocket has some of the most beautiful Catholic edifices in the state, with thriving congregations and a large number of Catholic charismatics as well.

Within the first month, while I visited a sister church in Worcester, Massachusetts, I met one of the young men whose family was praying for a church to be established in Woonsocket. There was no pastor at the time, but three of the men had been ordained as elders by an elderly apostolic preacher who had one time been with the group. It was also in that first month that I witnessed to a young Catholic man whose father was a lay minister in the Catholic charismatic movement. I was immediately invited to preach for that group, and we baptized eleven individuals from that first service. By the end of the second month, we had nearly fifty in Sunday school and were renting a Knights of Columbus hall for church services.

I won't take the time to tell of the church growth, the miracles that provided a new building, nor of many other miracles. But we also had our trials. It was during this time that I was introduced to the concept of the plurality of elders by two co-pastors of the church in Worcester, Massachusetts. In spite of all that I had been taught, I could not deny that the scriptures teach consistently that it was a plurality of elders that were to be the overseers of the New Testament church.⁷

However, I worked with the three elders of our church in the old-fashioned way, as senior pastor, or pastor over the elders. This was done on the premise that there could only be one pastor and, as someone said, "anything with two heads is a monster." Eventually, my non-biblical approach to protecting what I thought was my God given right of leadership cost me dearly when the church split over differences of opinion.

⁷ Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17-28; I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13: 7, 17, 24

Let me point out here that God never intended for there to be differences of opinion that would divide the church. What God wants is that differences of opinion would give way to unity of understanding in which God's right answer is eventually reached through prayer, love, study, and relationship. I could be totally right and a brother totally wrong, but the end result should be that the brother in the wrong will come to the right while unity and the relationship is being maintained. I am not advocating holding a wrong point of view or accepting the wrong point of view. I am advocating a loving relationship while the errant party is discovering the truth.⁸

I did not do that. I was the pastor and, as such, I was to be right in what I had to say. I was advised to not allow the elders the upper hand or they would overthrow the pastor. How wrong was my thinking. The oversight of the church is not in the hands of one man other than Jesus Christ alone. Jesus is the only One, the I Am, where the buck stops. The buck does not stop with the pastor. Whoever feels that this is the case is stopping one level short. There is only One Shepherd that is above all the church. All the elders, pastors, apostles, evangelists, teachers, and prophets are under shepherds who oversee the church on an equal basis.

The Church in Crisis

With the pain and failure of a church split, I found myself not only leaving Rhode Island, but also having opportunities then and later to consider what I considered one of my greatest failures. I readily admit that I was spiritually low, leaning toward carnality, making mistakes and errors in judgment. But worse was the fact that my pride was preventing me from doing the right thing that would have kept the church together. I believe that would have brought a greater revival to Rhode Island. I did not submit to the brothers, who were not only ordained elders in the church, but in a much better spiritual condition than I was at that time.

Let me point out a repeated problem for many preachers. Because we have it in our heads that we must be the head of the local church when we are pastors, it is easier and more face-saving to move on than to sit down and submit to other men who were called to work with us in

⁸ 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Ephesians 4:13

the church where we are leaders. The problem is that we carry our baggage and mistakes with us. We will often repeat the same error simply because of our erroneous understanding of being *the* pastor. Note that I did not say *a* pastor.

Over the next several years, I did a thorough study of the scriptures concerning pastoring, plurality of elders, and the apostolic ministry. I continued to start churches as one man (still not given over entirely to a new concept), but wanting more and more that starting churches could be easier. I also began to see more clearly why the single pastor concept was totally contrary to scripture.

No one can tell me what to do but the Pastor

Like the Apostle Paul, I needed a home church when I was not pastoring. Texas is my home state, and after several years in the northeast, my family and I returned to Texas. We attended a small church in east Texas. When we first arrived, the pastor of the church treated my family with dignity and this was such a blessing for us. Eventually, he left to become the pastor of a larger church near Houston. He certainly had what it takes to do the job.

The second pastor during our stay was another wonderful man, a good preacher, a caring, loving man, and a gentleman. I can say that both of these pastors were doing a fine job. Unfortunately, there was little growth, little revival, and little actual working of spiritual gifts, except for what is normally seen in our churches today. Preaching is a gift and we do see that. A person receiving the Holy Ghost still continues to be a miracle. But there is a little prophecy, an occasional healing, and fewer miracles. Instead, we have “normal” church.

While in the church in east Texas, my family became close to another family, and as we often did, we had dinner at their house. On one occasion, the dear sister (for whatever reason) rebuked her husband in a manner that would be considered entirely inappropriate according to scripture. I admonished this sister concerning this behavior. Her response to me was, “You can’t tell me what to do. No one can tell me but the pastor.”

I later had a chance to recount the incident to the pastor of the church. At that moment, I asked him these questions. “Brother,” I asked, “when the apostle Paul was between missionary journeys, he

would return to his home church in Antioch. Was he not an apostle while he sat on the pew or while he was at home? Why is that we think that when a man is between pastoring churches, he is not a pastor?"

The answer is simple. Our definition of a pastor is relative to an *office*, rather than being considered a *ministerial gift*. It is OK to have more than one apostle in a local church (providing, of course, that we believe in apostles today). You cannot say otherwise and agree with the scriptures. It is clearly evident that the church in Jerusalem had more than one apostle working together in that church. It is also clearly evident that there were multiple prophets and teachers in the Antioch church.⁹ So why is it that a local church can have more than one apostle, more than one prophet, more than one teacher, more than one evangelist, *but only one pastor*?

At the same time, it is clearly inconceivable that when there are multiples of these ministries in any local church, only one of them can operate in that gift, while the others must refrain from exercising that gift.

But I am a Pastor, you know

I heard of this incident, and since it is hearsay, I can only paraphrase my understanding of what may have been said. At a ministerial conference, I understand that one of our best apostolic preachers was being introduced as the guest speaker. For years, this brother had been an evangelist, but at this time had also been a seasoned pastor for many years. I understand that he was introduced as "evangelist so and so."

When the brother came to the pulpit, it is reported that he said, "But I am a pastor, you know." The message was clear. He felt this had to be clarified for him to feel that he had validity to preach to all these preachers.

Early in my ministry, I was in the evangelistic field full time. During that time and ever since, I have had opportunities to attend many sectional, district, and general conferences. For the most part, pastors are elevated and set apart above all other ministries. I can remember getting a certain amount of recognition because I was a special speaker or good evangelist, but there was always an understanding the evangelist did not have equality with pastors.

⁹ Acts 13:1

Take note that in most conferences today the pastors still have a separate recognition. Sometimes only pastors are allowed to vote in business meetings. Seldom, if ever, are apostles recognized, or prophets, or teachers. Seldom do assistant pastors get recognized as equal co-workers in the ministry. The fact of the matter is that pastors have been elevated to the first of the five- (or four-) fold ministries while the single pastor concept has practically wiped out the functionality of the other ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11

This is the crisis. The church is making extinct the understanding of spiritual ministerial gifts. The term “pastor” now refers to an *office* not a *function*. And I feel that most pastors do not have a clear understanding of the distinction between apostle and pastor, or prophet and pastor.

It is interesting to note that in the scriptures we can see evidence of apostles, evangelists, and prophets as they minister in their callings. There is *not one person* called a pastor in the New Testament other than Jesus Christ. The title of pastor is not specifically identified with any individual in the New Testament church, while there are clear and specific accounts of men who function in the other ministries.

Yet *pastor* has been elevated above all the rest. What we see is a clear example of a spirit that manifested itself in Diotrephes when he wanted preeminence in the local church.¹⁰

Who Gets the Tithes?

Some of the problems with having more than one pastor are as follows. How do you divide the tithes? How do you divide the pulpit? How do you divide the power? Some preachers teach that the pastor gets all of the tithes. What if you have an apostle in the church? What of the teachers? Scripturally, we have evidence that “they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel,” and this was written for the sake of the apostle Paul.¹¹ We can also find that the support of ministries applied to a plurality of elders¹².

I have experienced more than once that it was expected that visiting ministers would receive an offering from the local church. But I also

¹⁰ 3 John 1:9

¹¹ I Corinthians 9:14

¹² I Timothy 5:17-18

have experienced that it was expected that if you were a minister in the local church and had an opportunity to preach or teach Sunday school, this was to be done without remuneration. This was a privilege not worthy of reward. Most often, the pastor would be the only minister in the local church receiving remuneration. When it comes to the support of the fivefold ministry, I have learned that the pastor generally gets tithes, the missionaries and evangelists get offerings, and most often prophets and teachers get nothing.

You see, most ministers interpret Paul's instructions to Timothy, "Let the elders that *preach once in a while...*," but conveniently leave out the rest of the scripture. It does not say, "Let the elders that preach once in a while be counted worthy of double honor." It clearly says, "Let the elders that *rule well* be counted worthy of double honor." The job description for an elder is to rule, to oversee, and to supervise and this is always given in the plural case, never singularly.

Home Missions the Hard Way

Whatever happened to the apostolic teams that started churches in the New Testament? What about Jesus sending out his disciples two at a time, even when he sent the seventy? How many apostles and elders were in the Jerusalem church?

One argument that always arises is that Jerusalem had multiple preaching sites, and each preaching site had a pastor. The same is said of Ephesus where Timothy was supposed to have been the sole pastor.

Many want to use the argument that the plurality of elders always meant that elder was just another term for a pastor, and that it referred to elders working in separate locations in a city. Supposing that argument were true, then I can only say it would be an evidence of us not working scripturally because most pastors in most cities do not share oversight for the church corporate. We are blind indeed if we think that churches work together in most cities.

But consider that argument in light of the scripture that says, "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."¹³ Using the argument just given, we are to gather all the pastors from each of the local apostolic churches to come pray for our sick.

¹³ James 5:14

No, you say. It is all right to have elders in the local church. But since there are very few Apostolic churches that have real elders, we encourage any of the saints to come lay hands on the sick as a substitute.

How wonderful it would be, I think, if two or more families worked together to start a church rather than just one. But it would also be wonderful if men who had the call of home missions would develop men who would become elders and had the understanding of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

I believe that Jesus Christ will only increase as men decrease. I don't see how this is possible in churches where the single pastor concept is fostered to the exclusion or subordination of other ministries. Biblically, there is not one scripture that supports the elevation of the pastoral ministry above the other ministries. Many will denounce the concept of collegial eldership, but this is the crisis. We are far removed from scriptural principles in church government and in the recognition and operation of all the ministerial gifts.

Chapter Two

The Fivefold Ministry

There has been disagreement today concerning the nature and number of ministries that exist in the New Testament church. Most Evangelical, Pentecostal and Apostolic churches accept the term *pastor* for their primary minister. The *evangelist* is usually defined as a traveling minister, and *teacher* can apply to just about anybody who teaches in the local church ... unless they become famous, and then the title might be added to their resume or ad lines when doing seminars or special services.

Ephesians 4:11, on the other hand, speaks of several different ministries given to the church as “gifts.” We read, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers....” Some groups see this scripture as referring to a “five-fold ministry,” while still others see the last two (pastors and teachers) as being one ministry, thus recognizing a “fourfold ministry.” In reality, few churches today are willing to call anyone an apostle.

Some Christian churches teach that the apostle and the prophet are early New Testament ministries that were to cease at the end of a time period called the apostolic age. The Bible does not speak of an apostolic age, nor does it teach that the Lord intended for his church to change message or ministry while the church existed in this world. This same teaching is parallel to the idea that prophecy, tongues, and interpretations have all ceased at some point near the beginning of the church age, probably after the death of the last living original apostle, John, who wrote the book of Revelation.

The Bible however declares that both *message* and *ministry* would continue for as long as the church is in this present world. When speak-

ing of the spiritual gifts that were imparted to the church, Paul declares in I Corinthians 1:7, “So that you come behind in no gift waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ himself is “the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). This kind of teaching is rooted in the idea that knowledge gained through the written word is equal and even superior to the power of the church before the Bible was printed.

However, I believe that any church that no longer recognizes the exercise of spiritual gifts, whether those given in the form of vocal gifts or those given in the form of power gifts, is far removed from the design that God gave and should not be counted as a part of God’s true church. Instead such churches fulfill the scripture that speak of those that have a “form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,” and we are admonished to turn away from such teachings.¹⁴

Whether Ephesians 4:11 is speaking of a “fivefold” or a “fourfold” ministry is not important when we understand that this scripture is not defining offices but speaking of types of ministry. The very reason why there is confusion is that each of these ministries is seen as a specific office to be held rather than as a ministry of service. Many think of the office of the apostle and the office of the pastor as something to elevate instead of truly seeing how these are ministries that serve the body of Jesus Christ.

The Hand Ministry

One writer has described the fivefold ministry (or fourfold, if you like) as “the hand ministry.” Using the five fingers of the hand, he describes it this way:

The Apostle for Governing

The Prophet for Guiding

The Evangelist for Gathering

The Pastor for Guarding

The Teacher for Grounding

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 3:5

Notice that this system associates each ministry with a *function*, not an office. Each function works together like the fingers of the hand work together to do the work. It might be noted that of all the parts of the body, the one that does the most work of any kind is the hand. It is the body's natural tool. Regardless of what industry we are in, from clerical administration to surgeon, the hand is the basic body part on which we depend the most.

The Apostle

To begin, let us set the record straight about apostles. There has not been a cessation of this kind of ministry in the church. Although there were twelve apostles duly appointed by Jesus Christ as a part of the foundation of the church, the number was not limited to twelve and did not cease with twelve. Here are a few other apostles mentioned by name in the New Testament:

- (1) Acts 1:26: Matthias was the replacement for Judas. The qualification for Matthias was that he had to be chosen from among those who were in the company of the rest of the apostles from the time of John the Baptist until the ascension of Jesus Christ (verses 21 and 22). This was not the qualification for all apostles; otherwise, Paul could not have been later considered as an apostle, nor Barnabas who was also an apostle. (Acts 14:14)
- (2) Acts 14:14: Paul (Saul of Tarsus, later to be called Paul) was not one of the original twelve mentioned in the gospels. He was later chosen by God. Many feel that his mention of the fact that he had "seen" Jesus in 1 Corinthians 9:1 was a statement of an explicit qualification for apostleship. This could not be the case for apostleship, but was only a qualification for the twelve. Certainly Paul did not meet the other qualifications mentioned in Acts 1:21 and 22 that Matthias had to meet. I do not believe that Matthias' qualifications were for all apostles, but only to be numbered among the original twelve. And I do not believe that "seeing the Lord," as Paul did, was also a qualification for all apostles. We do not know whether Apollos or Barnabas or Timothy, who were also

apostles, ever “saw the Lord,” but we also do not know that they didn’t. We also need to realize that it is very possible that the Lord could appear to men today. There is no indication in the scripture that he would stop doing so.

- (3) Acts 14:14: Barnabas is called an apostle. Also, see 1 Corinthians 9:6 in the context of apostleship. Barnabas is given the same right hand and perceived commission in Galatians 2:9. He was also considered an apostle to the Gentiles.
- (4) I Corinthians 4: 6-9: Paul speaks of Apollos and says, “God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death.”
- (5) Galatians 1:19: James, the Lord’s brother (not the James who was the brother of John who was killed by Herod in Acts 12:2) is the same James who wrote the book of James and who was also considered as one of the *pillars* of the church.
- (6) I Thessalonians 1:1 compared to 2:6: Silas and Timothy are listed in verse 1 and referred to as “we the apostles” in 2:6.
- (7) 2 Corinthians 8:23: Titus is called one of the messengers to the church. The word “messenger” is from the Greek *apostolos*.
- (8) Philippians 2:25: The same word, “messenger” or *apostolos*, is used for Epaphroditus

What of the other ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11? As already mentioned, we have seen that Agabus was listed as a prophet, and Acts 13:1 speaks of several prophets and teachers. The only evangelist mentioned by name is Philip, who was originally among the seven chosen in Acts 6 to take care of the daily care of service to the widows. It is often thought that these seven were the first deacons in the church. However, both Stephen and Philip out of that group were heavily anointed and preached the gospel. Stephen was soon martyred, but Philip began to preach in Samaria, when the church came under persecution, and fled Jerusalem (Acts 8).

Philip’s message was the simple gospel of Jesus Christ: “preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus

Christ” (Acts 8:12), which led to the baptism of new converts. First he was in Samaria, and then he was led to preach to the Eunuch from Ethiopia in the desert. Next he preached in all the cities near Azotus, and finally he settled in Caesarea. According to Acts 21:8–9, Philip was known as the “evangelist.” He had four daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

What stands out in the New Testament is that whereas there is at least one example of four of the ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, there is not one person in the New Testament who was given the title “pastor.” This may be one reason why some see pastors and teachers as a single ministry. One thing is certain. This ministry did exist because the Bible says so in this verse.

However, I will submit that the term “pastor” might be appropriately used synonymously with the term “elder,” inasmuch as Acts 20:28 refers to “elders” as the recipients of Paul’s admonition to “feed the flock.” This is the function of pastoring. In this regard, the issue here is not that the major local ministry, referring to elders, may be pastoral. The issue is whether there should only be one chief elder. Or should there be multiple pastors working as a group to oversee the church? The makeup of this collegial group of elders may include others of the fivefold ministry (for example, teachers and prophets, as it seems in Acts 13), but the Bible does not support a single pastor concept, and the only “chief shepherd” is Jesus Christ.

What is an Apostle?

Yes, apostles do exist today. The word *apostolos* simply meant “messenger,” as we have already stated. The foreign missionaries who have been ordained, appointed, and sent out by their organizations are apostles.

Notice that one of the duties of apostles is to ordain elders in every church.¹⁵ Our foreign missionaries go into another country and do more than just evangelize the lost. They focus on developing national ministers. Their calling is more than to just a local city; it is to a country or region. In starting Bible colleges and in overseeing more than one work, all the functions that we see in the apostolic ministry as evidenced in Paul, Apollos, and Barnabas exist today in the work of missionaries.

¹⁵ Acts 14:23

It is no wonder that oftentimes there are more miracles recorded in the work of foreign missions than in home missions, although there is no lack of miracles in home missions, either.

The apostles are responsible for explaining and protecting doctrine and for mentoring preachers, not just saints. There is a greater gift for discipling others, I believe, in the ministry of the apostles than in any of the other ministerial gifts. This is not to say that the ability to disciple another does not exist in the other ministries. It just seems to be more pronounced and developed in the man who is gifted with the missionary calling, the apostle.

I believe that another function of the apostle was to govern, not on the local level but on a broader level. Paul had powers of correction that he most assuredly referred to while he refrained from exercising the authority that he was given. Sometimes we may feel that, as ministers, our votes make a general superintendent or district superintendent. Perhaps they do, but I also feel that God does bring influence to bear on certain leadership roles that are of a broader nature, and that God has often ordained the vote to go toward a particular individual who is appointed to that office. In Acts, it was “casting lots,” which could be similar to taking a vote, but the result of the lot was determined by God in response to the prayers of those who cast the lots.

That doesn't mean that mistakes, or even faulty elections, don't happen. But if we can only look at the spiritual impact of many of these men on the organization, we can understand that there has been some spiritual substance to how they were gifted to provide leadership.

I am not concluding, however, that all men who obtain an organizational leadership role in a district, conference, or national organization are apostles. Many will have the titles, and maybe the administrative and organizational abilities that get them where they are. But I do believe that there are some who really have an apostolic gift, and they excel. In time, we will know when we receive our rewards.

Chapter Three

The Prophet

Who was the greatest prophet who ever lived? Matthew 11:11 says, “Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” What an honor given to John the Baptist from the Savior!

When we think of the preachers of the Old Testament, we usually think of the prophets, Elijah, Isaiah, Jonah, and the others. Although the word “priest” is still in use for a segment of clergy among certain Christian churches (Catholic, Lutheran, etc), in the evangelical ranks most ministers would not place themselves in the same type of ministry. A priest might still be considered one who, for the most part, functions in a ceremonial role. Their pulpit ministries are not usually as pronounced as the Bible-thumping preachers of the evangelical churches.

In the Old Testament, you can see a similar distinction between priest and prophet. Moses was a prophet. Aaron was a priest. It is interesting that Moses complained about his lack of speaking ability when asked by God to deliver his command to Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt, but he still did the talking, even though God had conceded to Moses by sending Aaron as his spokesman. As we see the roles develop in the lives of Moses and Aaron, we can see that their religious duties were very different. Aaron and his sons were given all the garments and duties of ceremony, but Moses was the prophet-preacher-shepherd that most evangelical pastors of today pattern themselves after.

We note that prophets like Moses and Elijah were often endowed with great power. These two were miracle workers, although we don't see the same power with other prophets, such as Jonah or even Isaiah. One thing we do know, however, is that these men were chosen by God, ordained by God, commissioned by God, and that their lives were God-controlled, often to extreme measures. For preachers today who want to be prophets, let me say this: it isn't always easy.

For one thing, these men often found themselves alone in their work. Moses was not alone, but Jonah, Jeremiah, and others were usually ministering alone and without help. Moses had Aaron, but God also gave him seventy elders to assist him (Numbers 11:25). Moses was alone on the mountain when he received the Ten Commandments, but his ministry was more than just that of the simple prophet. His ministry was also that of a shepherd. There is a distinction between Moses as a prophet and Jonah as a prophet.

Moses was a type of Jesus Christ. Other prophets were like Jesus Christ in other ways, but John the Baptist was that prophet who, more than any other, could be seen as one who would be the last of that special breed of prophet-preacher sometimes seen in the Old Testament. Whether facing down a king or proclaiming judgment and God's vengeance, there may never be another John the Baptist. These men usually worked alone. Yes, they had disciples. Elijah had Elisha and John had baptized disciples, but their ministry was to preach, not to pastor, nor even to evangelize. They were proclaimers of God's word. The elements needed for the New Testament church were evangelizing, gathering, guarding, and building, and these were not the usual duties of the Old Testament prophets. We might say that they spent much of their ministry tearing down walls in preparation for a new building to be built upon a new foundation.

It is true, however, that there are New Testament prophets. The ministry list of the church in Ephesians 4:11 shows that the prophet is one of the ministerial gifts included in what is commonly known as the fivefold ministry.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, *prophets*; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

After John the Baptist, we do not see another prophet in ministry other than Jesus Christ until we get to the Book of Acts. This does not

mean they did not exist. Anna (Luke 2:36) was a prophetess who ministered in the temple. The prophet is a ministry included in the New Testament church and the prophetic ministry exists today. The first mention is in the eleventh chapter of Acts. Agabus is mentioned by name as a prophet, but the scripture also tells us that there were several in the church at Jerusalem. We find Agabus “foretelling” the famine to come upon the church. In two instances, Acts 11:27 and Acts 21:11, we find Agabus foretelling future events.

For a time, according to Acts 13:1, the apostle Paul was a prophet or teacher. Judas and Silas were called prophets in Acts 15:32. The prophet is also listed in I Corinthians 12:28 among the ministerial spiritual gifts and in I Corinthians 14 as the predominant form of spiritual ministry.

But what exactly is the prophetic ministry? Does it differ from that of the Old Testament? The answer is *yes*. Whereas the Old Testament prophet acted as the primary spokesman for God during that time, the New Testament prophet is only one of several ministries. The prophetic ministry of the New Testament is shown as a part of the ministry of the body of Christ and does not stand alone. For this reason, the purpose has been changed.

There is still the foretelling aspect, as we see in Agabus, but the gift of prophecy, which may be exercised either by the prophet or as a communal gift, is generally used for the purposes of “edification, exhortation, and comfort” (I Corinthians 14:3). It is not generally used as a means of pronouncing judgment or declaring rebuke. We find that reproving and rebuking can be administered, but it is through the preaching of God’s word with longsuffering and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2).

Chapter Four

The Pastor

The word “pastor” was used in the Old Testament for religious leaders in Israel, and this ministry did not change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Of course the men who were given the ministry in the New Testament were ordained of God to this ministry rather than ordained of man, but that was true of any of the other ministries mentioned. All of these ministerial gifts were imparted by God’s spirit and those who obtained them were to be filled with the Holy Spirit and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Since we do not have a New Testament example to refer to, we have to look in the Old Testament to find the job description of a pastor. The word “pastor” comes from the Greek *poimen*, which means “helper” or “feeder of the flock”. As the God of the Old Testament and as Jesus Christ in the New Testament, God himself reveals himself as the Shepherd of Israel (Psalms 80:1), and describes his work in Ezekiel 34: 12-22:

As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they

lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. 16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

The primary work of pastors is toward the saved. Although it appears that in Acts 20:28 the job description of an elder and pastor are the same, thus causing some to assert that the elder and the pastor are the same, there are some differences in the real definition. Let me note some distinctions here.

1. A pastor has received a spiritual gift from God and is ordained *by God* to that "gift". An elder is ordained *by man* to the elder's "office".
2. A pastor is primarily for the sheep. An elder is for oversight of the local church, which includes both saved and lost who are in the congregation.
3. A pastor's primary duties include feeding, healing, seeking, and restoration *of the sheep*. It does not extend to evangelizing, administering, ruling, or dealing with the unsaved (although it does not exclude these in the function of a soul-winning saint). But we are speaking of the specific functions of pastors. The style of ministry for the pastor to the sheep differs from the style of ministry of the evangelist to the unsaved.
4. An elder does not specifically have to have a pulpit ministry. Although both feed the sheep, we note that I Timothy 5:17 indicates that there may be elders who "labor in the word and doctrine" and elders who do not. Otherwise, the phrase "especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" would not have indicated that there was a distinction.
5. The job description for elders is ruling and oversight, which includes working with all of the other ministries in the church. Apostles, pastors, teachers, prophets, and evangelists are all subject to the elders of the local church as to direction, rules, and availability of the pulpit. The general chairman of any organization does not have the liberty to determine at what time he will take the pulpit when visiting in a local church. An apos-

tle or pastor from another church does not have the liberty to set the order of the service or times of the service for another local church.

It is very important to make a distinction between the gift of pastoring, as a ministerial spiritual gift, and the office of the elder, which though requiring spiritual men is not a spiritual ministry in and of itself and is not one in which God ordains the elders.

The Elders of the Local Church

I am purposely discussing elders and pastors together because of the confusion that exists between the two. As I have said above, it is important to understand the distinction between the ministerial calling, gift, or function of a pastor, and the office of an elder.

One may wonder, as it would seem that if elders are ordained by man, how is it that God would put elders above the ministries that God has ordained. This would be like having man's hand above God's hand. The fact is that men who fill the eldership more often than not will have one of the ministerial gifts. It is not specifically required, according to 1 Timothy 5:17, but it generally happens. In practice, there may be some validity in noting that a pastor and elder might be used synonymously, but it is important to understand the differences. It is not God's will to limit eldership to a pastoral ministry, for as we have seen, by doing so, the importance of the fivefold ministry is lost and thus many abuses mentioned in this book will result.

I believe that God did make a distinction in keeping with his concept of *inverted authority*. God did this because it was necessary to maintain a fivefold (or fourfold) ministry that would otherwise be destroyed if the office and gift became one and the same. I submit that this is exactly the point of this entire discussion. Men would become *administrators* instead of *ministers*.

First, let us review again that there is no scriptural basis for a single authority over a local church. There are only two offices in the local church: elder and deacon. We note that the qualifications for elders and deacons are given together in 1 Timothy 3, where qualifications for any of the ministerial gifts are obviously left out.

1. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and

deacons." It might be that they had multiple preaching sites (i.e. more than one local church) or they might not have. In any case they had plurality of elders and deacons (Philippians 1).

2. The terms bishop and elder are synonymous. Some want to make a bishop an elder over elders. This is absolutely not correct (Titus 1:5-7).
3. Elders were always ordained over local churches in plurality, never singularly (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24).
4. Elders ruled in plurality with the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15:2–22).
5. The function of the elder was to "rule well" (I Timothy 5:17), not to "preach once in a while." This fact is lost on men who want elder boards but do not want to give them authority. My experience is that most pastors refuse to have elders because they think it makes the pastor a hireling. No pastor is *the pastor*. To say that would mean you can only have one pastor in a church, which is contrary to scripture. *Jesus Christ is the pastor*, and all pastors are under shepherds. Under shepherds were never owners of the flock. They were always subject to the chief shepherd.
6. Pastors, along with apostles, prophets, teachers, and evangelists, must submit to the local elders of a church. If they happen to be one of the elders, they must certainly submit to each other.

Now I can imagine that I have just stirred up some controversy, but I pray that we will be open to the Bible and to reason. If we insist that all other ministries are subject to the pastor (when we believe that the pastor is the head of the church), why— if we conclude the elders are the legitimate overseers of the church—shouldn't we conclude that all other ministries (apostles included) are subject to the elders?

The fact is that we have elevated pastor (a gift) to the position of elder (an office) to the exclusion of the other ministries. Most men will not recognize anyone who calls himself an apostle, and seldom do men want to choose any other title than that of pastor because if they chose another title, they would invalidate their position as the head of their local church. This is how the recognition of the five fold ministry has declined.

Chapter Five

The Evangelist

Other than the example of Philip, there is little information on the evangelist in the scripture.¹⁶ The word "evangelist" means "a carrier of glad tidings". Easton's Bible Dictionary points out that Philip evidently did not have the authority of the apostles, the gift of prophecy, nor the responsibility of a pastoral ministry. It is evident that Philip's ministry was for his time and place.

We see Philip first going into Samaria, where he preached Christ to the un-evangelized.¹⁷ He worked miracles and signs, preached the gospel, and baptized believers. He evidently did not have the gift of laying on of hands for his converts to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, or perhaps it was needful that Peter be involved in the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost in Samaria in order to fulfill his personal commission. In any case, we know that this was not evident in his ministry at this time.

We then see Philip evangelizing a congregation of one, the eunuch of Ethiopia.¹⁸ Again, other than preaching the gospel and baptizing, then being transported away, the ministry of Philip was limited in scope to reaching lost individuals.

I believe that the major characteristic of the evangelistic ministry is in the message. The anointing was powerfully attached to the gospel as being preached by Philip and possibly did not include all the "filler" of the teacher or other ministries that we will sometime see. One might

¹⁶ Acts 21:8

¹⁷ Acts 8: 5–25

¹⁸ Acts 8:26–40

say that Philip and other true evangelists specialize in gospel preaching that is limited to the gospel. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of the message.

Could it be that many home mission churches are started by an evangelist who feels that he needs to be a pastor? I have talked to many men who started churches and over the years have stuck it out. Some reach a peak, but stay with small congregations and no move of God. The majority of home mission works eventually change hands or close because there is no transition in ministry.

On the other hand, there are men who are pastoring churches who are true evangelists, but because of God's blessings they have men who have grown and added to their ministry while the founders continue to be evangelists while assuming the title of pastor. Other men in the church actually do the work of pastoring. I believe one way to determine what kind of ministry a man actually has is to look at how it functions. Is there a preacher who is more adept at counseling the saints? He may be pastoral in ministry. Is there a preacher who is a tremendous soul winner and does not work one on one with the problems of saints? He may be an evangelist.

It is because preachers feel that they must assume the title of pastor to be validated in a church or a district that we have lost the true recognition of ministries. Sometimes, therefore, churches will experience tremendous turnover because a pastoral or teaching ministry is not supporting an excellent evangelistic ministry. We glow in the excitement of constant activity and think we are doing great work, but the many souls who have come and gone are an indication that there is no balance. Of course, then we blame it on the ones who leave as being worldly, sinful, or unbelieving.

Chapter Six

The Teacher

One of the most suppressed of all ministries in the church today is the teaching ministry. Since all elders are apt to teach and all pastors think they can teach, and since teaching does not always have the appeal of the fiery preacher, there are many teachers who sit in limbo on church pews, frustrated and wanting to share what God has given. We are limited by our view of who is supposed to do all the preaching.

I have met quite a number of great teachers who left their local churches and sought out positions as pastors in order to be validated. Again, the evidence that there is a lack of ministerial balance in the church. The average church is small and lacks in the operation of spiritual gifts.

The common argument, that the sheep should always hear the shepherd's (pastor's) voice, is given as a reason why the pastor does ninety percent of the preaching. This is simply not a good reason. If the sheep are listening to Jesus Christ, as they should be, they *are* hearing *the pastor's* voice. If all they hear ninety percent of the time is the preacher in the church who calls himself by the title of pastor, then, let me submit unto you, there is a lot less hearing of *the pastor's* voice than there should be. I have listened to a lot of preaching over thirty years. It has included lots of filler, lots of story telling, and lots of opinion.

The average saint has very little good teaching, or at least there can be a lot more. I have heard men make almost whole sermons on why beards are a sin. It is wrong for a man to preach against beards, because

that would be lying - and lying is a sin. I have heard of the fellow who preached from the passage of scripture in Matthew 24:17, "Let him which is on the housetop not come down." He used the title "Top Not Come Down" for a sermon against the wearing of wigs.

Good teaching is indeed a gift. One preacher explained the difference between the body, the soul, and the spirit in this manner. The soul is the seat of emotion. As the psalmist, David, once said, "And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation."¹⁹ And again, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God".²⁰

The spirit is the seat of understanding. We are told in Paul's writing to the Corinthians, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."²¹

The body is the gateway for the soul and spirit to experience the life of this world.

The evangelist generally ministers to the emotions of man when he deals with repentance and the hunger and thirst of a man's soul. The teacher deals with the spirit of man when he feeds the understanding. Some of the best teachers in the apostolic church were "dry as corn shucks" when it came to delivery, but the word came across in a powerful way to give understanding and resulting change in lives.

It is often said that pastor and teacher may be one ministry. I cannot argue that possibility, since we know that the work of pastoring is more to the sheep than to the sinner. If that is the case, then I can certainly point out that a church can have more than pastor. Acts 13:1 gives just one more proof against the concept of a single-pastor church.

¹⁹ Psalms 35:9

²⁰ Psalms 42:1

²¹ I Corinthians 2:11

Chapter Seven

The Ministry of Women

Up to this point, the discussion has been about recognizing the fivefold ministry. At the same time, a major point of this discussion is how the lack of plural elder-ship in the church and the change in concept to single rule by one who has become known as “pastor” has resulted in several kinds of abuses. Earlier, I stated that one of the results of centralizing the ministry into one individual in the local church has been that others in order to be validated feel that they must also become “pastors”. This can result in men or women stepping out of what might be inadvertently a restrictive environment to receive either the freedom to minister or the recognition of a minister. Unfortunately, the least restrictive way of doing this is to become what is commonly known as a “pastor”. The common second alternative is to take the title “evangelist” and become a roving preacher.

Concerning this centralization of ministry – in reality there was a centralization of power, which then created an unhealthy focus on a single ministry. Most pastors are willing to share the ministry but not the power represented by the office of the pastor. The truth is, the authority and power in the local church is to be centralized in Jesus Christ, and manifested in multiple leaders, not just one. A fivefold ministry (multiple ministries) and a multiple elder-ship both have the same premise – there is one head, Jesus Christ.

Here is the reality, however. God did intend that ministry was to operate in an environment which must be subject to spiritual authorities. If we look at ministry in the context of a spiritual gift rather than

an office, it is easier to understand how both men and women can be used in the fivefold ministry without violating some of the Biblical instructions concerning the qualifications for elders or deacons.

The first spiritual authority is the Holy Spirit itself - that is Jesus Christ. Only Jesus Christ can equip and anoint someone in the ministry. It is the Spirit that operates through an individual, and that person must follow the leading, direction, and prompting of the spirit of God in the operation of the gift. This is basic and I would think there is really no disputing this fact.

One of the reasons why I am addressing this issue is that the Bible does support the fact that women may be exercised under the authority of the Spirit of God in the fivefold ministries, if we recognize those ministerial gifts in the context of “function” rather than in the position of an office. That is, she may receive one of the ministerial gifts and it is important that she has the freedom to operate in that gift within the environment of the church.

The second spiritual authority, however, is the word of God, and it is the word of God that limits the authority of a woman, but not the ministry of a woman. Before I discuss this further, I will point out that the third authority in the church is the leadership represented by elders and deacons.

But let us talk about how these authorities relate to the operation of a woman in the fivefold ministry. The easiest of the ministries to identify in reference to women is that of prophetess. There are several women in the Old Testament referred to as prophetesses, including Deborah,²² Huldah,²³ Noadiah,²⁴ and even the sister of Moses, Miriam.²⁵ In the New Testament we find Anna the prophetess in the temple²⁶ and the four daughters of Philip, the evangelist.²⁷

Now I admit it is much more difficult to specifically identify by function women operating in the other ministries. However, if we were to look at the work of an apostle, for example, that which we commonly know as a missionary, we might see that there are many women who operate in that gift today, and even then. For example, Aquilla and

²² Judges 4:4

²³ 2 Kings 22:14

²⁴ Nehemiah 6:14

²⁵ Exodus 15:20

²⁶ Luke 2:36

²⁷ Acts 21:9

Priscilla appear to have ministered together in the several examples given of them in scripture. They were always mentioned together, not separately, first as possible converts of Paul, but then as laborers in the gospel. Together they instructed Apollos concerning the truth of the gospel.²⁸ Then they were mentioned together as being fellow helpers to Paul,²⁹ and together as having a church in their house.³⁰

Other prominent women who were spoken of for their labors in the Lord, include Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis.³¹ But one possible reference to a woman apostle (missionary) is that of Junia.³² According to the Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown commentary, Junia was either the wife or sister of Andronicus, and the expression “who are note among the apostles” was literally, “noted apostles”. This was the translation later accepted by Chrysotome, Luther, Calvin, Bengel, Olshausen, Jowett, and others.

One big problem today however, is the numerous situations where women have decided to operate in the “function” of an elder, because they believe that is the appropriate place to minister as a pastor. First let me state that the pastoral ministry is one that is to the sheep, and as we read in Ezekial 34: 12-16, the ministry of the shepherd was to seek for, restore, heal, and feed the sheep. The spiritual guardianship of a shepherd is that of one who must be intimate with the needs of the sheep. Most often, I believe that gift is evident in the ability of one to counsel.

In the context of the ministry of “pastoring”, it is not so unrealistic to have “youth pastors”, “pastors to the elderly”, “pastors to women”. The most ridiculous statement ever made is that a church can only have one pastor. And a woman may pastor in the context of *ministry*. But this in reference to the ministry does not give women the “authority” to be an elder or ruler over an assembly.

Actually the ministry of a woman to women is evident in the scriptures. I once heard a preacher explain that the last place a woman should go for counseling is to the “pastor” of the church. One way to avoid the pitfalls that happen to ministers getting caught in unhealthy counseling relationships is to follow some steps laid out in scripture.

The first place of counsel for a woman in the church is her husband if she has one. The man was given to be a woman’s covering. In 1 Co-

²⁸ Acts 18:26

²⁹ Romans 16:3

³⁰ I Corinthians 16:19

³¹ Romans 16:12

³² Romans 16:7

inthians 14: 34-35, there is a scripture that has often been taken out of context.

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Some have felt that this scripture was written because women were chattering too much and being unruly. We know that it could not mean that a woman cannot say anything because we read in I Corinthians 11:5 that a woman may pray and prophesy. It is verse 35 that gives us the clue – “And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home.” In order to protect the headship and priestly covering that a man must be to the home, God ordained that the married women should first go to her husband if there were questions concerning church matters. Take notice that this admonition is not one of Paul’s opinions, but rather we then read in verse 37, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” This appears to be one of the commandments often overlooked in scripture considering that it is often not followed in our society today.

But what if a woman is not married or if her husband is not a spiritual man or is possibly a sinner away from God? What if the husband is part of the problem? The second place a woman should go for spiritual guidance is to the “elder women”, or it might be said, a woman who has the pastoral ministry. The best source of family counseling for the women in the church is the woman who has a walk with God and may have the pastoral ministerial gift. In Titus 2:3-4

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children

What of a Woman Pastor Over a Local Church?

The most common excuse I have heard from women who “pastor”, as to their taking that role is, “no man would answer the call.” First we must understand that when we refer to pastor in this context it means one who has become the ruler of the assembly. After all, this is the function given to elders. “Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls.”³³ Also, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor”.³⁴

The function of eldership is that of ruling or overseeing the assembly. The qualifications of an elder as we read in I Timothy 3 include that of being a good ruler over his house, and being the husband of one wife. If this was the only scripture in the Bible that speaks of a man as a leader of the home or the church, we would have a problem, but the Bible has several references to the order of authority in the home as well as in the church.

Since this book is not intended to deal specifically with family relationships, I will assume that the reader has most likely some knowledge concerning the story of creation, the admonitions for the husbands, wives, and children concerning their duties in relationship, and all the scriptures that state a husband should love their wives, and wives submit to their husbands. I won’t go into those here because I don’t want to frustrate our lady readers when more importantly I am advocating for their freedom to minister.

However, the freedom to minister in the fivefold ministry is not the same thing as the authority to rule a congregation. In the very first part of this book, I have suggested that the definition of ministry has been lost because of the changes that have taken place by centralizing authority in one person in the church. Women should desire whole heartedly to minister, but should not desire to become rulers in either the church or the home – otherwise they have stepped out of place with God’s order.

I mentioned that most women pastors whom I have known have used the excuse that they became the pastor of the church because there wasn’t a man making himself available for the job. As I see it, this sends a wrong message to the ladies who are members of the congregation. Let me explain.

³³ Hebrews 13:17

³⁴ I Timothy 5:17

In I Peter 3:1, the scripture read – “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation (behavior) of the wives.” This passage of scripture instructs the godly woman on what to do about the husband who is a sinner or not obedient to the word of God. Since the Bible instructs the man to be a Godly leader and teacher to the home and the head of woman,³⁵ what should a woman do if the man chooses not to accept that responsibility? Should they then conclude that “if the husband won’t be the head of the house, then I will be the head of the house”? No! The scripture teaches that a woman must continue in subjection to the husband even if he is out of place.

When a woman pastors a church using the excuse that no man was willing to do it, she sends a message to the ladies in her congregation that they have the liberty to supplant the husband as the head of the home if he is not functioning as he should in that role. If a woman becomes a pastor (elder-ruler) for any reason, she has stepped out of God’s word which has plainly laid out the qualifications for the elders of the church.³⁶

It is important to understand that there is a difference between the spiritual gifts that equip someone in the fivefold ministry, and the office or function of elder. Whether a man or a woman – an individual may be used in the ministerial gift providing they are subject to the three spiritual authorities ordained by God – the spirit of God, the word of God, and the leadership of ordained elders.

³⁵ I Corinthians 11:3

³⁶ I Timothy 3

Chapter Eight

Restoring Eldership in the Local Church

I am aware that there are men in different organizations who will fight the concept of collegial eldership. I realize that time, and tradition, have always been powerful forces against change. But we have already been warned by Jesus Christ that tradition can make the word of God of no effect³⁷. At the same time, we are told that the apostles passed down traditions.³⁸ The Bible is clear that there are ministerial gifts, where God ordains men to those ministries, and there is plural eldership, where men are ordained by men to the office of elder.

I once assisted a fine man in a church who made a statement to me I have always remembered. He rebuked me for using the term "body ministry" in a sermon because it sounded too charismatic. In my discussion with him, he let me know that in a prior church he had taught heavily on spiritual gifts in order to get them operating in the church, but when they began to operate, they created problems and then he had to reverse course and limit their operation.

It is apparent to me that spiritual gifts can be abused. There is a potential for abuse in plural eldership. But we are seeing tremendous abuse in the single pastor concept and either don't want to acknowledge it or want to minimize it. We have disowned the offices of apostle and prophet. We have degraded the gifts of evangelist and teacher to a second tier ministry. We have exalted the pastoral ministry above the real pastor, who is Jesus Christ, who is above all other ministries. We have invalidated the callings of the many to promote the few. (This is something that was also done by Diotrephes.)

³⁷ Mark 7:13

³⁸ 2 Thessalonians 3:6

The result is that we now have hundreds of organizations with hundreds of churches, and hundreds of ministers *who cannot or will not work together* for the kingdom of God. In many cities there are multiple churches that cannot get together. It is not that there doesn't need to be more than one preaching point or location for services. But men should be able to work together to oversee the corporate body of a city. Often there are several churches with very small congregations meeting in less than adequate facilities. If these churches could merge, they could reap the benefits of larger congregations and financial stability. *But they don't because someone has to be "the pastor"*.

Very little relationship develops among the body of Christ in a local area. This should not be. The responsibility and the blame actually lie with men who have an un-Biblical concept of church government.

I am appealing to men who will read the scripture and make it right. It isn't going to be easy. How do you divide the tithes? How do you divide the pulpit? How do you divide the authority? I submit that these issues are not hard to figure out if you know they are supposed to be done.

What Should Be Done?

The first steps toward any spiritual change are prayer and understanding. Prayer can impact our lives in two ways. First, it brings understanding from the Lord. Second, it brings direction (or wisdom) from the Lord. It is true that knowing *what* to do is not the same thing as knowing *how* to do it. The first is knowledge, the second, wisdom.

Of course, every minister, pastor, and elder should want both the understanding and the wisdom to be relative to God's holy word. Both requests are to be made with the desire to know how to apply God's word to the understanding of ministerial gifts and to the application of church government. That is the purpose of this book. Before anything can be done, however, leadership must be convinced through the Word and the Spirit concerning the truths that I have just written. If what I have written is understood to be true, then I suggest the following steps be taken:

- 1 Evaluate the current condition of the ministry in the church. If you are the sole pastor of the church, you are the current elder.

As the current elder, you have the responsibility to ordain other elders in the church. You may get the assistance of another local pastor (elder) or district official, but note that experience has shown that there will be many who will not accept the idea of multiple-eldership. It may be something one has to do alone. Also note that when Moses selected elders, God imparted to them the like spirit of Moses. If one says, "I have no one qualified," then is it not one of the jobs of an elder and minister to bring others to that qualification? But I submit that for the majority of mature churches, chances are good that elders are there.

- 2 Begin to teach on eldership in the church. Like most changes, there will always be resistance unless there is understanding. People fear what they don't know. What is the goal? To expand the oversight? To expand the ministry? To grow the church? What did Paul say was the work of the ministry? "For the perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ."³⁹
- 3 Begin to teach on the fivefold ministry. Every church should be promoting both hand (fivefold) and congregational (or body) ministries. I once had a saint say to me, "Brother Davis, could you teach on spiritual gifts? We need some meat." I replied, "Brother, if you will read that again, teaching on spiritual gifts was milk because Corinth couldn't receive meat." Understanding ministry should be basic to every Christian's understanding of God's principles of living for God and relationship in the church.
- 4 If you select elders, they should be of a similar spirit and mind, but don't try to select "yes" men. Consider the qualifications and ministry of a man. Home mission works are a little more difficult because there are often limitations to the availability of qualified individuals. I believe another Biblical principle should be considered here, that a home mission church should be started by no less than two men. This was the Lord's method of sending. But if a current home mission work is working with a sole pastor and not a plural eldership, the pastor should be looking to disciple men for qualification and not allow himself to limit his vision to a single-pastor church. If a man does not have a vision of eldership, chances

³⁹ Ephesians 4:11

are there is the danger of “personal kingdom building.” One of the purposes of this book is to bring us to the understanding that it is not God’s will to have sole-pastor churches.

5 The whole reason for I Timothy 3 is to provide a guideline for the selection of elders. Let me comment that God never intended that elders were to be chosen by the congregation. The voting in of pastors is another inappropriate process often done by evangelical churches. It is ironic that there are some processes in the liberal churches that are still correct. The eldership of the local church is a matter of succession, not one in which the sheep choose the shepherd. In those cases, the elders are sent or selected by other elders (bishops). Scripturally, all elders were ordained by apostles or elders. Only deacons were selected by the congregation and ratified by the apostles, if indeed Acts 6 refers to the selection of deacons. Note what the apostles said regarding the placing these deacons: “Wherefore brethren, look ye out [that is, the congregation is to select] among you seven men ... whom we may appoint”.⁴⁰ These seven were chosen by the congregation and ratified (appointed) by the apostles or elders. Elders are ordained from among the congregation, but only by apostles or other elders. There is also an error in which elders or pastors are rotated by many of the liberal churches. Although elders may come and go, the admonition to “ordain elders in every church” implies that elders were usually from within the congregation.

6 The whole concept of single pastoring churches is wrong. Jesus is the pastor. Examine your attitude toward other ministers in the local church. Are you guilty of paying yourself out of the tithes, but not paying the other ministers the same? Are you guilty of not allowing any others to “pastor”? Do you give remuneration to visiting ministers but not to ministers in the local church when you ask them to serve or labor? Doesn’t this automatically annul their gift or indicate that you don’t recognize their ministry as a gift? Act with caution when it comes to remunerations, tithing, or support. Please understand that there can be a distinction and monetary difference in support.

⁴⁰ Acts 6:3

- 7 Concerning the above, remember that eldership and ministry are two different things. There may indeed be a difference in remuneration because elders are worthy of double honor, especially if they labor in the word and doctrine. Because most pastors are preaching elders, their double honor accounts for both their eldership and their ministry. Once eldership is working correctly, the decisions of remuneration and support will become a shared responsibility and the level of support should be equitable in accordance with the responsibility provided by the elder or ministry.
- 8 The Bible makes a distinction between preaching elders and non-preaching elders. There are also preachers who are not elders at all. They have not been ordained to that position in a church. My objection is that failing to support a man's labor is minimizing his ministry in attitude. It is not the money that matters; it is the principle. When local ministers preach, see that they are rewarded for their labor.
- 9 Remember that the job of elders is to oversee or rule the church, not to "preach once in a while." Here will be the biggest problem, learning to relinquish authority. God never intended you, the pastor, to have sole authority in the church. There is not one example of such church government in the scriptures. Jesus did not start the church in Jerusalem in such a manner, nor did the Apostle Paul endorse any such model. You do, however, have the authority to ordain elders. Then you must learn to work with other elders. Working together, a fivefold ministry will flourish and the church will flourish.
- 10 Quit using the titles pastor, apostle, or bishop as a senior over other elders. Every elder is a bishop.⁴¹ Bishops are not elders over elders. How do you know you are a pastor? Why do you have to be a pastor? Could you be an evangelist? Quit telling people, "I am THE pastor." Only Jesus is THE PASTOR. You may be *a* pastor, but when you use such language, it assumes that there can be no other pastors in the church. This is totally incorrect. You may be THE ELDER if there are no other elders in the church, but hopefully it will not remain that way. If you are a pastor, you may say so in the context of your ministry, but you must understand what kind of ministry a pastor has. Never give any saint the impression that only a pastor can oversee a church.

⁴¹ Titus 1:5-7

- 11 Give recognition to all ministers of the gospel when you are able to do so in a meeting. If you are in charge of a service, refrain from only recognizing pastors. If you know that there are other ministries there, recognize them all. This includes teachers, apostles, evangelist, prophets, those who have worked as assistant pastors. Otherwise, just recognize all the preachers and elders regardless of which ministry they may have.
- 12 Change the by-laws of the church to allow for eldership. This allows for succession and continuity from within the church. If the church is in need of a pastoral ministry, then let the elders seek a pastor to add to the eldership. If the church is in need of an evangelistic ministry, let the elders seek an evangelist. But the eldership must recognize one another's ministries and give freedom to those styles of ministry.
- 13 If a church is small and there is another church of the same faith in the local area, cannot churches consolidate and have elders that work together? I can understand how this is not likely to happen unless both pastors come to the same conclusion. You can have more than one pastor and share eldership. But to have two or more churches of the same faith right near each other is a shame to the Kingdom of God. It creates division among the brotherhood. Such things should never be.

I can picture some now saying, "Oh no, the church is being run by the elders." Is that not what the Bible teaches? "Let the elders that rule well...." "Obey them [plural] that have the rule over you...." What is the difference between being ruled by one and being ruled by many? With plural eldership, no one person can become the focus. If the eldership is doing what it should, there should be no focus on any single individual but on Jesus Christ alone. If the eldership is doing what it should be doing, multiple ministries, the fivefold ministry, should flourish.

The Pillars of the Church

I conclude with one caveat. The Bible does not mention senior pastors and assistant pastors. One of our practical and legitimate questions concerns whether or not members of the collegial eldership would all

have equal voice or responsibility. What about the idea that the pulpit would be shared equally among all elders when the Bible indicates that there are elders who labor in the word and doctrine? This of course would imply that there are elders who do not labor in the word in doctrine (pulpit preachers, so to speak). It should be obvious that the pulpit would not be equally shared, and it is also obvious for that reason that there was a double honor or distinction in reward.

In practice, when one elder ordains another, the new elder takes responsibility and oversight of the church in equality with the first elder. But it can also be noted that, while the apostles were equal in order, Jesus shared with three notables in an inner circle. These were Peter, James, and John.

As the church was established at Jerusalem, we notice that the apostles were in conference with elders who now had their voices. All the decrees to the churches did not come from the apostles alone. But the Bible also alludes to James, the brother of Jesus, as being a chief spokesman. Some want to conclude from this that James was “the pastor” of the church in Jerusalem, but that would be in contradiction to all the other scriptures that teach the church is to be overseen by elders.

Paul writes in Galatians 2:9 that Peter, James, and John “seemed to be pillars,” and it was his impression that there was significance in how these three viewed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

In all of this, let it be said that it is not likely that Peter, James, or John ever took the opportunity to elevate themselves in their offices. After all, it was John and his brother James (not Jesus’ brother) who were rebuked for desiring a place on the right and left hand of Jesus’ throne. It was these two who reaped the indignation of the other ten when Jesus first explained his principle of *authority inverted*, which I mentioned in the first chapter of this book.

I believe that most men who are now pastors of churches are humbly trying to do the right thing. Unfortunately, they’re trying to do the right thing the wrong way. I pray that a study of scripture and consideration of these things written will at least create a desire to see a restored fivefold ministry.

About the Author

Hartwell T Paul Davis has almost thirty years experience in ministry, having been an evangelist, pastor, and church planter. After starting four churches in the South and Northeast, he acknowledges that his awakened understanding to the need for collegial eldership in the local church is a direct result of learning the hard way the need to share the ministry with other men. "There are other ministries as gifts to the church, not just that of pastor." The author has a Master's degree from Trinity Seminary and additional graduate studies in counseling from both Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA and Columbia Seminary, Columbia, SC. He now lives in Lancaster Pennsylvania with his Jewish wife who is a Holy Spirit filled Christian. In addition, Hartwell Davis has won several awards for his poetry and has published in both the United States and in England.