

## PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

Realizing the tremendous potential that exists for God in the hearts and lives of Christians, the pastor must have a philosophy or belief system that will govern his ideas, goals, thrusts, and the execution of his ministry. Even as the best fighter pilot will miss the mark unless he has properly acquired his target, so the pastor must make sure he is “locked on” to his target. The pastor’s over-arching concern is that Christ have the preeminence in all things (Col. 1:18), and that all things be done in such a manner so as to give others an accurate opinion of Who his God really is (1 Cor. 10:31). Specifically, the pastor will have three primary goals which he must constantly keep in the forefront of his mind: (1) To train his people in *holding forth the word of life* (Phil. 2:16) [evangelism], (2) To train his people in *holding fast the faithful word* (Titus 1:9) [instruction in Biblical principles and doctrine], and (3) To equip them to be able to do *the work of the ministry* (Eph. 4:12, 13).

I have chosen Colossians 1:27-29 as the basis for my pastoral ministry. Knowing and enjoying the wealth that exists for the Christian in and through the gospel, it is the privilege of every pastor to proclaim “Christ in all His fullness to men in all of their need.” Verse twenty-eight summarizes Paul’s aim: *that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. A pastor’s number one priority is the development of and nurturing of his own personal relationship with Christ, not to “grow a ministry.” He should not be entangled with the affairs of this life so that he gets so distracted or so busy serving the Lord that he “forgets the Lord of the work.” *Holiness to the LORD* (Exodus 39:30) and total devotion to Him are to be the hallmarks of his life and ministry. To the extent that Paul knew the reality of Christ’s power working in his own life would he be able to share that with those to whom he ministered. In essence, ministry is to be the outgrowth or overflow of his own personal relationship with the Lord. People will not live what they do not know; nor will they voluntarily devote themselves to do that which they have not come to love. Herein must the pastor be the visual inspiration for such devotion and the human pattern for an unseen Christ (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). A consistent Biblical example that reinforces a sound, Biblically-based verbal message is vital as a pastor works with His people. His long-range objective is to present his flock mature in Christ while his immediate goal must be to use the ministry to build people rather than use people for the sole purpose of building a ministry.

Paul’s admonition to Timothy that *the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned* (1 Tim. 1:5) then presents what must become the compelling motivation for ministry for every minister: to lead His people to love God and to love others as a reflection of supreme devotion to Him (Cf. Matt. 22:37-40). Any man not driven by this aim of ministry will inevitably find himself compelled to adopt a wholly different outlook--the need to “prove” himself, his worth or his value; to exercise dictatorial powers, to take control of “his” church; to flaunt his knowledge; or to demonstrate that he can “make things happen” or “get the job done.” It is imperative therefore that the pastor avoid these pitfalls of ministry and encourage the reception of truth by his life as well as by his words.

The burden of ministry will at times seem too great to bear and the chasm ever widening between one’s perception of his ability to adequately discharge these responsibilities and the demands themselves. The overwhelming sense of inadequacy or insufficiency that inevitably comes should motivate the pastor to acknowledge as did the apostle Paul, *And who is sufficient for these things?* (2 Cor. 2:16). Maintaining a right focus is essential during these times and claiming God’s promises will fortify the minister. He must recognize the truth of Paul’s declaration to the Corinthian church, *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency [is] of God* (2 Corinthians 3:5), and rely upon

the divinely appointed provision: *And God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work* (2 Cor. 9:8). A spirit of self-sufficiency and self-reliance is not only unbiblical but detrimental to a pastor and his ministry.

If one of the main goals of a pastor is to train his people to do the work of the ministry, there must be a means to implement his mission. Some of these would include:

1. The systematic teaching and preaching of God's word (Titus 1:3). God's word must be delivered without fear or favor (Jer. 1:8, 17; Prov. 29:25), and without being handled deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2). When a preacher has finished preaching/teaching, he ought to honestly declare what our Saviour did in John 17:14, 26: *I have given them thy word. . .and I have declared unto them thy name.* 1 Thess. 2:4 is sufficient to counteract the current ministerial thinking regarding preaching and the “seeker-sensitive” approach to ministry. “People-pleasing” is displeasing to the One a preacher ought to be pleasing (Gal. 1:10). Not everything pleasing to God will be pleasing to men. In fact, our Lord declared that in the last days, people would turn their ears away from hearing God’s truth and would prefer instead to gather around teachers who would say what they are itching to hear (2 Tim. 4:3-4), and would seek for those preachers who would *prophesy not unto us right things, [but rather] speak unto us smooth things* (Isa. 30:10). They would not be willing to endure sound doctrine: sound doctrine requires endurance therein (2 Tim. 4:3). Regardless, he is to declare *Thus saith the LORD* regardless of how the hearer will respond (Ezek. 3:11, 27; Jer. 1:9; Jer. 2:2a; Isa 51:16a). But boldness in presentation does not justify crudeness, abrasiveness, or being personally offensive. God's spokesman must herald His words when it is favorable to do so and when it is not (2 Tim. 4:2). Preaching that glorifies God and demonstrates good stewardship of the gift given to a preacher (1 Peter 4:10-11) says what He says, in the way He has said it, using the verbal style He has mandated.

Furthermore, the preacher’s attitude toward preaching and preparation for preaching is not to be treated lightly, slovenly done or flippantly viewed. Deuteronomy 5:27 establishes the preacher’s heart and mindset toward the delivery of God’s word to His flock each week: *Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.*

2. The building of strong, godly families
3. The training of youth in body, mind, and spirit as they are the ones who will become the future preachers, teachers, missionaries, deacons, etc., and the ones through whom the church should be reproducing itself.
4. The spiritual development of godly men. A church will only be as strong as its men and the homes which they represent.
5. The enjoyment of an intimate relationship with God
6. The effectual ministry of prayer
7. The nurturing of meaningful, personal relationships through the richness of Christian fellowship Events are to be scheduled at the right time because they are effective or because they enhance the spiritual welfare of the congregation. A church calendar is not to be filled merely because of habit or tradition.

8. The loving of the community to Christ through social and evangelistic activities/ministries.
9. The responsibility of local and world evangelization via soul-winning outreach, home and foreign missionaries; the development of church mission trips
10. The development of and maintenance of a solid, Christ-honoring musical ministry. Contemporary Christian music has no legitimate place in the local church. Musical choices are directional choices. A wrong philosophy of music either reveals or insures a wrong philosophy of ministry. Music in a worship service is God's idea, not man's (Cf. 2 Chron. 29:25). Therefore, we must be good stewards of God's gift of music and the incorporation of it in worship must be in keeping with Biblical principles governing true worship.
11. The development of and enrichment of skills and talents of the congregation for Christian service They are to express a commitment to outreach, holiness, learning and living the Scriptures. They need to be wholly committed to the purpose God has established for the local church. This purpose is expressed in Ephesians 4:11-16—maturity for Christian service (v. 12). *(What is true for the purpose of the church must also be true for any auxiliary ministries of the church such as a Christian School. A school is not to exist primarily for the purpose of being an evangelistic outreach tool of the church; it is not there to simply educate young people; it is not there so that a church can increase its attendance; it is not there to show the world that what they can do, the church ministry can do better. What makes a Christian school unique is that it has a different goal from the public school as well as a different philosophical orientation. Its goal is not merely education nor is it merely maturity. It is all about maturity for Christian service. That is not to say that evangelism cannot take place in the elementary school level; however, it is to say that the mindset is predominantly geared towards that of a "spiritual boot camp" where discipleship is a prime focus (Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Apart from this focus, many Christian schools become in reality nothing more than either a private or public school with a chapel program, a Bible class, Christian teachers and prayer thrown in.)* God's word places a higher premium on equipping many other believers to do the work of the ministry than upon a spiritual leader attempting to do the work of many believers (Ex. 18:13-26; Matt. 10:1-5; 2 Tim. 2:2). An errant and misdirected focus views the pastor as having the responsibility of doing the work of the ministry while church members view themselves as fans at an athletic event, which either cheer on or criticize the spiritual leaders as they spectate the ministry. Believers are to be equipped to do the work of the ministry while the pastor assumes the role of "Player/Coach." According to Eph. 4, the spiritual goals of equipping believers in the local church are as follows: unity of the faith, mature knowledge of Christ, spiritual stability against deception, loving communication of the truth, and humble acceptance of one's place in the body of Christ. While the aim of many local churches seems to be that of growth and increase in attendance, true and healthy growth is not always numerical, but can be seen numerically as the normal result for the church whose spiritual leaders are equipping the believers and whose members are performing the work of the ministry and edifying one another in love (4:16).
12. The development/mentoring of pastoral staff members/lay leadership
13. Communication with other pastoral staff and lay leaders in the planning, organizing, and execution of ministry goals and objectives.

The pastor must also maintain an acceptable and Biblical standard of success rather than measuring the

success of his accomplishments based purely on numbers, popularity with people, what another church in town is doing, or any pragmatic result. A wrong view of success will lead one to adopt poor and/or unbiblical methods in the building of a ministry. Methodology is just as important to God as the actual performance of His commands (Cf. 2 Sam. 6:1-18). The church is not to adopt Philistine methods of ministry: God's work must be carried out in the manner He prescribes if it is to have His blessing and approval. Faithfulness to God's precepts and principles is essential for ministry success. Any other standard for measuring success is skewed. Substituting the building of a ministry upon the solid rock of His words for the shifting sands of man's words or current trends/fads, etc., will bring disastrous results in time.

The Lord has given to the church an all encompassing mission—an official assignment. This mission is general and primary; the objectives to accomplish this mission are secondary and specific. The mission is the bull's eye on an archery target while the objectives would represent the concentric circles surrounding the eye. The mission is the glory of God (corporately--Eph. 3:20-21; individually--1 Cor. 10:31). Since believers are the visible manifestation of God in this world, it is imperative that the church corporately and church members individually present a true and accurate reflection of God's character and do their best to form the right opinion of God's character in the minds of others.

If the church's chief mandate as a whole is to glorify God, then it follows that each constituent element in church ministry should do the same. From the manner in which a church worship service is conducted (1 Cor. 14:40) to the way a church's financial and administrative matters are handled (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Cor. 9:13), from the internal affairs of maintenance and upkeep (Haggai 1:3-8) to the external affairs of outreach ministries (Rom. 15:9; Matt. 5:16), others should easily see that God holds a high place of honor and esteem and that the imitation of God's characteristic of excellence pervades the atmosphere. To do "all to the glory of God" should be the standard operating procedure for a fundamental ministry.

The six biblical objectives which are to be done for the Scriptural mission of the glory of God are as follows: evangelism, instruction, fellowship, worship, prayer, training/equipping believers for service. Every new idea, prospective program or potential ministry (be it a Daycare or Christian school ministry, men's or women's ministry, etc.) as well as all current activities and ministries of the local church must be examined and evaluated by the biblical mission of the church. If it doesn't fall under at least one of the six clear-cut objectives (and is not in keeping with the mission of the church), then it should be discontinued or disregarded.

The "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; Jn. 20:21-23; Acts 1:8) specifies the responsibility and privilege of the church.

- Matthew 28:18-20 presents *their assignment*—make disciples of all nations for the Lord Jesus Christ. Their aim is not the number of decisions that can be obtained or decision cards that can be filled out, but disciples made. In reality then, an evangelistic thrust satisfies only 1/3 of this commission and is not to be construed as the fulfillment of it.
- Mark 16:15 presents *the scope of their commission*—preach the gospel throughout the world.
- Luke 24:46-48 declares *the message they are to deliver*—repentance and faith in Christ for the remission of sins.
- John 20:21-23 instructs them regarding *the authority for their declaration*—the King of Kings has personally commissioned them as His official ambassadors.
- Acts 1:8 assures them of *the power available to carry out the assignment* the Lord Jesus has given as they seek to herald the truth regarding the person and work of Christ.

Fellowship is vital to any Bible-believing Christian. There are kinds of fellowship that call forth the condemnation of Christ (James 4:4; Judges 2:2-3) while other types receive his commendation. Therefore, in his fellowship, a pastor must be alert to safeguard his fellowship with Christ, the enjoyment of which is clearly tied by God's word to separation from spiritual wickedness and error (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Many seek to remain within denominations believing they can distance themselves from the liberalism prevalent within those organizations without necessarily separating from them. With the formation of the National and World Council of Churches, with the current craze of moving towards an accommodation with Roman Catholicism, it becomes more difficult for such to justify their position.

By virtue of their membership in these denominations, they have become part of a movement to create a one-world church under the leadership of Rome. With no little help or encouragement, Dr. Billy Graham (and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) has been instrumental in involving modern Evangelicals in the current move towards Rome and the increased dialogue and cooperation with the NCC and WCC with the consequent compromise of the faith they once professed to uphold. Thus, the ecumenical movement is a major reason for separation but not the only one. A pastor must realize that whether or not another church is in the NCC or WCC, if it denies the fundamentals of the faith, he should have no fellowship with it (Amos 3:3; Eph. 5:11). Liberalism, Romanism, the National and World Council of Churches, and the ecumenical movement as a whole are clearly “works of darkness” and the duty of separation is plain.

The Scripture is also very clear regarding the necessity of personal holiness/personal separation. In a day in which society is drifting in an ungodly direction, the pastor must help his people realize that if they are not anchored to the timeless truths and principles of God's word, they will find themselves drifting right along with the unsaved. The result will be that Christians will find themselves doing ten years from now what they would have objected to today. Constant exposure to and toleration of sin desensitizes one to its stench and repulsiveness. The pastor must challenge his people to draw and maintain a line of demarcation--to be *steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord* (1 Cor. 15:58), and in contrast to a world moving farther away from Truth, they are to *continue in the things which they have learned and been assured of, knowing...the holy Scriptures which are able to make [them] wise....* (2 Tim. 3:14-15). He is to challenge them to not *learn the way of the heathen* (Jer. 10:2), to not evidence a love for this present world-system (1 Jn. 2:15-17), and to keep themselves *unspotted from the world* (James 1:27). Neither a superficial spirituality nor a desire to turn his flock into clones of his should be the goal of a pastor with a balanced ministry. Rather, as Paul stated, his focus must be on Christ as he challenges his people to *be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ* (1 Cor. 11:1).

Separation then, is not to be thought of as a mere negative reaction. It is thoroughly positive because it is basically a separation unto Christ (Cf. Heb. 13:13). Close fellowship with any person, organization, or movement that denies Christ, repudiates His Word, attempts to add or detract from the finished work of Christ and the gospel of justification through faith apart from works, and seeks to maintain close ties with those that do such, is a fellowship that leads one away from Christ. Enjoyment of a relationship with and a jealous safeguarding of a fellowship with our Lord demand a separation from apostasy and fundamental error.

The pastor must also realize that separation should not blind him to the duty of Christians to express their love one for another. The balanced pastor will endeavor to stand with faithful men and churches around the world that are true to Christ and the Scriptures, even when they do not endorse his particular position on matters that although are important to him, are not fundamental to the gospel. Without compromising the faith

once for all delivered to the saints (Jude v.3), the pastor strives to be a Biblical separatist, not an isolationist.

As the first divinely ordained institution, the home is not to be sacrificed for the sake of the ministry. All too often Matthew 6:33 is wrongly used to justify a pastor's abandonment of his children/wife because of a "more important" ministry schedule. One of the qualifications of a pastor is that he be a good manager of his home (1 Tim. 3:4-5). If he cannot practice Biblical precepts regarding marriage/the home in his own family, how can he credibly expect his congregation to do so? The Biblical priorities for the minister are given in Ephesians 5 and 6. The demonstration of wisdom includes not only *redeeming the time* (5:16) but also *understanding what the will of the Lord is* (5:17). God's will for the minister is to make the best use of his opportunities as he sets up his priorities in keeping with Scripture's emphasis: his top priority is cultivating his own relationship with God (5:18-21). All of the following relationships become areas in which his being filled with the Spirit are to be evidenced. His second priority is his marriage relationship (5:22-33); his third priority is his children (6:1-4), his fourth priority is his employment (6:5-9). This does not mean that church meetings should be forsaken to have a "family night out," for God's word is clear regarding the matter of faithfulness in church attendance (Heb. 10:25; cf. Luke 4:16). The minister will need God's wisdom to practically work out the truths of Scripture so that a balance is maintained and an accurate opinion of our God is given to those who observe the preacher's family.