

# Faith Pulpit

## Effective Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral leadership is taught in the Bible, and yet it is a topic of frequent, if not fervent, discussion and debate in pastors' meetings, as well as in church parking lots.

Pastoral leadership must be and can be effective. A thorough understanding of Scripture is important at this point. There must be a proper application and implementation of Scriptural principles.

While there are available many excellent books on the subjects of leadership, administration, and management, some people become frustrated when they are unable to see these subjects presented in their Biblical setting. Don't make the mistake of confusing functional ideas with their foundational support.

### **I. Effective pastoral leadership is AUTHORITATIVE**

Being authoritative is not the same as being dictatorial. Leadership is an essential dimension of pastoral ministry—it should not be treated lightly. Yet we must also keep in mind that over-management will bring problems that may obscure the central mission of the church, and when it leads to dictatorial rule it is inconsistent with the Biblical position God gives to pastors.

A pastor must know what he is doing, where he is going and why. Otherwise, intelligent people will not have confidence in him and will not follow him very far.

The church should not be seen as a complex organization. Man tends to make the church complex, whereas God made it simple. Then why the conflict-producing and tension-invoking implications of leadership? Simply because we do not understand the true nature of pastoral leadership or submit ourselves to the ultimate central authority on this topic—the Word of God.

A pastor must always be cognizant of the fact that Christ Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, has authority over him. He, as pastor, is not possessed with authority in himself. Therefore, he must provide authoritative leadership in the church as Christ would do were He the Shepherd of that flock.

Paul in Romans 12:8 reminds pastors of the need for diligence in ministry. Laboring and leading require seriousness of purpose.

## **II. Effective pastoral leadership is SPIRITUAL**

To some, if a pastor possesses appropriate skills as well as a wealth of experience, his leadership is less likely to be challenged. Skill and experience are both important and should not be minimized, but being Spirit-filled and being Spirit-led are also essential and important qualities for pastoral leadership.

The pastor of a local church must realize that the spiritual life of the church is closely geared to that of its pastor. No doubt you remember hearing the statement, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” This is especially true relative to the spiritual life of the church.

The pastor is the minister of Christ; therefore his ministry should center in the person and work of Christ whose character he must demonstrate.

The shepherd or pastor of a local church is to be an example for the flock which God has given him. His source of power is from God Who called him and not the result of his personality or his ability to manipulate. His life should command as his tongue persuades.

The pastor must always lead with love. There is no room for cruelty or force. He must not perform his duties in an arrogant manner nor rule the church with tyranny. He is not to have a highhanded, autocratic rule; yet he must be the leader.

The pastor then is to supply spiritual organization, spiritual leadership and spiritual driving power in the church. He should never appeal to pity, eliciting concern for his own welfare. He must rather demonstrate true spiritual concern for others.

In Acts 20:28, we find the Biblical exhortation: “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” No one can take heed of others until he has first taken heed unto himself. A man can lead another in spiritual things only in proportion to his own understanding and experience.

## **III. Effective pastoral leadership is SACRIFICIAL**

No calling requires more wisdom and grace than that of the pastor. He must work with people of different temperaments and do so under varied circumstances. Both theoretically and practically, the

situation in the area of pastoral ministry is often uncertain. Much of what has been written on the general subject of pastoral work assumes that everyone knows what it means to be a spiritual leader, or it assumes that such a person always exercises appropriate control of his own thinking and feeling.

It must be established, however, that a pastor is not simply a “hired man.” Pastor and people must recognize the God-given position which belongs to the pastor. The source of his authority is God Himself; therefore the pastor ought to receive appropriate respect.

There is a sensitiveness which lies at the heart of spiritual influence at its best. The pastor must possess a sensitiveness to the needs of his people. God gives unusual wisdom and grace to those who lead with pure motives.

1 Thess. 5:12, 13 reveal the importance of understanding the relationship between pastor and people in the words: “know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works’ sake.” Evidently, some left their places in the ranks, and such admonishing was not only in order, but vitally necessary. Those who were to be regarded with warm affection were those who exercised proper leadership.

A person becomes a leader long before he occupies a position or a place of influence. A man is a leader by virtue of his performance rather than by virtue of his position. But when he occupies a position of leadership, his leadership ability should grow and increase. Leadership is both an ability as well as an activity. A pastor must know how to work with people, work through people, minister to people, and lead people.

A good pastoral leader cannot be constantly passive and non-directive. In any group, if tasks are accomplished, some of necessity must assume some degree of leadership. On the other hand, a good pastoral leader does not always have to do everything himself and does not think that his way is always the correct way. A good leader does not have to act like a slave or a martyr; he must be actively involved in the planning process as well as the implementation process. A good pastoral leader is able to provide direction, supervision and still have an appreciation for group dynamics.

We believe that with a proper understanding of Scriptural principles, it is still possible to be effective in pastoral leadership today.

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*Dr. Robert Domokos (D.Min.) is a seasoned pastor, educator, and leader with a heart for ministry and the local church. Referred to as "Dr. Bob" by students and peers, Domokos has served in various pastoral roles and is known for his teaching, mentoring, and discipleship*

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