



# Faith Pulpit

## Pastoral Direction and Congregational Motivation

One of the factors that contributes to spiritual and numerical growth in a congregation is that of the direction given by the pastor. Perhaps we need a new pastoral determinism in our churches today. There appears to be a great deal of wishing and hoping, but little wise planning. I've heard some of the expressions (and I have used some myself) such as, "We need new blood in this church. We need more motivation. We need new programs. We need a shot in the arm. We need more new workers." How can we eliminate some of these frustrations? I want to offer three suggestions.

### **1. Build A Relationship With The People.**

Let's always look at people the way Jesus looked at them. He saw people as sheep without a shepherd. He came to minister to them not to be ministered to by them.

I may still be a bit old-fashioned, but I see nothing wrong with pastors spending time with their people. The pastoral ministry should not be considered a no-contact vocation. Get to know your people. Know where they live. Know where they work, and know what interests and problems they have. Be available to your people, but you don't have to allow them to monopolize all of your time. Be careful of the two extremes of avoiding your people on the one hand, and being with them almost 24 hours a day on the other. Let them know that you really care about them. It may take time to orient them relative to your schedule, but make sure you are available in times of emergency and need.

Don't be demanding all the time. Don't complain about needing another car, needing new carpeting in your home, or needing dental work done. Avoid the spirit of jealousy of your people. Build a strong, trusting and lasting relationship with your people.

### **2. Learn To Work With The Church Board.**

Frequently, one extreme begets another. If a church has had a pastor who has exercised firm leadership and has preached in a very harsh manner, it may be that that church may look for a pastor who is more warm-hearted and people-oriented. When you are extended a call to the church, get to know the members of the board and try to understand their goals. In other words, try to look at the church through their eyes. They can help you avoid some mistakes.

Each church has a unique history. Invest some time in talking with some of the old-timers, or look into some old church bulletins and newsletters and try to understand the history of that church. By doing this, you may also determine some of the strengths and weaknesses of the church today. Try to focus your attention on the abilities of your present congregation, rather than wasting time trying to prop up programs that have already started to die, or worse yet, implement new programs for which the people are not prepared. Prepare your people before you ever present any program.

It is possible for a church to be knee-deep in programs and activities that keep the people mired in effort that produces nothing by way of lasting results. A common belief is that steady and diligent effort produces the most results. What may produce more or even better results, is well-timed and appropriate effort.

Don't begin your ministry by criticizing your board or congregation. Praise your people. They are worthy of honor if they serve well. Be sincere, open and fair. Try to always feel the pulse of the congregation and don't ever play favorites. It is important to learn to work with and through the church board.

### **3. Understand Your Position As A Spiritual Leader.**

From the very first day of your ministry, try to be yourself. Be diligent and disciplined in life and ministry. Try to remain positive and remember that your congregation will begin to take on some of your personality as your influence becomes stronger. Make sure your pulpit ministry is scriptural and strong because your preaching will activate the entire church leadership.

A pastor must set the tone for the entire church. One test of a pastor's contribution to a church is in terms of the number and quality of people he discovers and develops for service for Christ in that church. One very important dimension of church management is to help common people to perform uncommon tasks. Strong churches with dynamic ministries are not built quickly.

Effective church ministry depends on the ability of the pastor and the people to follow through with clearly designed goals. It is so easy to get locked into plans and programs that may work for another church.

Learn early in your ministry that you never properly motivate a person by manipulating him. How much better to create a climate of a healthy relationship in which you feel that the desired action will

contribute something of value. People must never be used merely as tools.

Some inadequate methods of motivation are threat, flattery, or fear. Perceptive people react with disgust to such a maneuver. Temporary cooperation may soon shift to resistance. The insecure worker usually responds to flattery and thus becomes very vulnerable to phoniness. Also, to shame a person into doing something is a very damaging method of manipulation.

God has given pastors the responsibility of guiding and directing people in spiritual growth and development. God has also entrusted pastors with the responsibility of motivating their people with proper spiritual values. Along with these responsibilities, God also provides divine enablement.

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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 efforts within the church.*

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