

DESIGNING A BIBLICAL PASTORAL MINISTRY THAT BEGINS TO
DEVELOP MATURING DISCIPLES AT CLEARY BAPTIST
CHURCH, FLORENCE, MISSISSIPPI

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APPROVAL SHEET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Goals of the Project	1
Context of the Project	5
Rationale for the Project	9
Definitions and Limitations	12
Research Methodology	14
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ISSUES	16
Terminology Used to Describe the Pastor	16
Biblical Description of the Pastoral Ministry	19
Acts 20:28	20
1 Timothy 4:12-16	25
1 Peter 5:1-5	31
Biblical and Theological Conclusion	36
3. A MODEL FOR BIBLICAL PASTORAL MINISTRY	38
The Life and Ministry of Richard Baxter	39

Chapter	Page
Baxter's Philosophy of Pastoral Ministry	44
Take Heed to Yourself	45
Take Heed to the Flock	47
Baxter's Methodology of Pastoral Ministry	49
Public Teaching	50
Catechizing	55
Small Groups	57
Church Discipline	58
Conclusion	59
4. PASTORAL MINISTRY PROJECT	62
Introduction	62
Pre-Project Survey	63
Weekly Discussion Forum	65
Public Teaching	68
The Personal Meeting	72
Post-Project Survey	75
Conclusion	77
5. PROJECT EVALUATION	78
Introduction	78
Evaluation of Purpose	78
Pre-Project Survey	79
Post-Project Survey	80

	Page
Evaluation of Goals	82
Evaluation of the Methodology	85
Strengths	86
Weaknesses	87
Theological Reflection	89
Personal Reflection	90
Conclusions	93
Appendix	95
1. PRE-PROJECT SURVEY	95
2. PERSONAL MEETING PREPARATION GUIDE	98
3. POST-PROJECT SURVEY	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY	104

PREFACE

The journey that has resulted in the completion of this project could not have been made without the help and support of several people. I am grateful to the members of Cleary Baptist Church, who allowed me the time to work on a doctoral project, and especially grateful to the support staff for guarding me and my time so well. I am also grateful to the individuals who participated in the ministry project by serving as my test group. They are Scott Grantham, Scott McNamee, Chris Renfrow, Jeff Statham, Danny Harrell, Sheila Dodge, Elizabeth Lang, Misty Vance, Carrie Lovorn, and Traci Beard. This project would not have been possible without the sacrifice of their time and energy.

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Finally, I cannot put into words the debt of gratitude that I owe God. Looking back over my life, there is no rational explanation for all that God has done in me and for me. The calling he has placed on my life to preach his Word and carry his gospel to the ends of the earth is all-consuming. He has given my life meaning and purpose. He has given me hope and a future. He has given me himself. His providence is evident in every step of my life. He has worked all things together for good in spite of my ignorance and many mistakes. Grace is the only explanation for where I am today.

Aubrey Kevin Ivy

Florence, Mississippi

May 2011

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to design a biblical pastoral ministry that begins to develop maturing disciples at Cleary Baptist Church, Florence, Mississippi.

Goals of the Project

Four goals served as the criteria for measuring the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to gain an accurate understanding of the biblical ideal for pastoral ministry. Opinions abound concerning the most effective method of pastoral ministry. Opinions abound concerning what constitutes a truly biblical pastoral ministry. Those opinions often differ dramatically from one generation to another. What many in the younger generation view as most important to their spiritual life and walk is often vastly different from what many in the older generation see as most important. Some view the pastor's priority as visitation. Others view the pastor's primary duty as proclaiming the Word of God. Still others view him as an administrator. In the words of John Piper, "We have by and large lost the biblical vision of a pastor as one who is mighty in the Scriptures, apt to teach, competent to confute opponents, and able to penetrate to the unity of the whole counsel of God."¹ Pastors often find themselves searching their way

¹John Piper, *Brothers, We are not Professionals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 84.

through a host of opinions and ideas in search of what God really expects of them.

Through this search, pastors sometimes discover that what God expects stands in contrast to what the people expect. O. S. Hawkins stated the dilemma of pastoral priority clearly:

Many pastors find themselves in pastorates which expect them to be spiritual supermen, always “ready to leap tall buildings in a single bound.” The pastor is expected to counsel without a degree in counseling. He is expected to manage the financial affairs without a degree in accounting. He is expected to effectively manage all personnel matters without a degree in management. He is expected to take care of all the business without a degree in business administration. He is expected to heal without a medical degree. In addition to all this, some churches expect their pastor to preach like Paul and then simply nod when someone says what a great deal he has. He preaches a couple of sermons a week and that is about it.²

The number of differing views and opinions that abound concerning pastoral ministry do not only exist among the parishioners. The views and opinions differ among ministers themselves.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon saw the preaching ministry as the pastor’s primary duty. In his view, time for message and messenger preparation must be carefully guarded. He wrote, “Those incessant knocks at our door, and perpetual visits from idle persons, are so many buckets of cold water thrown upon our devout zeal. We must by some means secure uninterrupted meditation, or we shall lose power.”³ While Charles Spurgeon viewed preaching as the pastor’s priority, Charles Jefferson promoted pastoral ministry as the priority. He wrote, “The pulpit is a sort of housetop from which they can shout their tidings to all the town. In pastoral work a man is on the ground, and the world is not likely to pay attention to him.”⁴ He goes on to say that pastoral work “seems

²O. S. Hawkins, *The Pastor's Primer* (Dallas: Guidestone, 2006), 110.

³Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 309.

⁴Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd* (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., 2006),

puttering work compared with making a great hit with a crowd of people all at once on the Lord's Day."⁵ The twenty-first century pastor is left confused by all of the conflicting views and ideas. He is left to wonder what God expects and what God's Word really demands of him in his modern context. The number of differing views and opinions that abound concerning pastoral ministry demand that a biblical pattern of pastoral ministry be established and clearly understood.

The second goal of the project was to gain an understanding of the pastoral ministry of Richard Baxter. Baxter's pastoral ministry at Kidderminster, England, transformed the church there and virtually the entire parish. In his words, "When I came thither first there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away there were some streets where there was not passed one family in the side of a street that did not so."⁶ What was the secret to Baxter's impact upon the parish in Kidderminster? According to him, it was largely due to his pastoral ministry. A variety of differing views exist concerning the importance, effectiveness, and best method of pastoral ministry today. Understanding the methodology and ministry of Richard Baxter will aid in designing a biblical pastoral ministry today that will develop maturing disciples.

The third goal of this project was to personally shepherd a group of individuals for the duration of this project. I designed a pastoral approach based upon the findings of

22.

⁵Ibid., 23.

⁶Richard Baxter, *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (Mobile, AL: R. E. Publications, 1984), 3.

my studies of the Scripture and upon the example of Richard Baxter. I then implemented, in this group of individuals, that biblical pastoral ministry. Through the implementation of this pastoral ministry, it was hoped that the individuals involved in the project would show evidence that they matured as disciples of Christ.

Cleary Baptist Church is presently doing much better at seeing baptisms and new members than they are at seeing disciples made. Many have had their name added to the church rolls only to become inactive within a short period of time. The number of baptisms and additions at Cleary Baptist Church far exceeds the numerical increase in Sunday school and worship attendance.⁷ The number on the church rolls far exceeds the number of active church members. In order to reverse these trends, professing Christians must be led to mature in their faith and hold one another accountable as followers of Christ. It was believed that a biblical pastoral ministry was one way to accomplish this goal.

The fourth goal of this project was to determine the effectiveness of the newly developed pastoral ministry. This goal was accomplished by forming two groups of people to be evaluated through the project. The first group served as a kind of control group. Though their experiences were not completely controlled, they were not subjected to the same intensive pastoral ministry as the test group. Rather, they were involved in normal church activities such as Sunday school, worship, and mid-week activities. The second group, made up of individuals similar in age and gender to those in the control group, served as a test group. I personally and biblically pastored the test group for the

⁷All demographic and church information is provided by the Church and Community Impact Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

fifteen week duration of the project. In order to determine the effectiveness of the project, a survey was issued to both groups before and after the project that analyzed each individual's spiritual growth. The outcomes of the surveys were compared in order to determine how effective the project was at producing maturing disciples as opposed to normal church attendees.

Context of the Project

Cleary Baptist Church is located in the Cleary Lakes subdivision of Florence, Mississippi. The church was a mission of the First Baptist Church of Florence. The church's first service was held on Sunday, May 26, 1963. The first pastor, Dale Holloway, was called to Cleary in August 1963. Plans were made to organize a Sunday school at the church and the first classes were scheduled to begin on October 6, 1963. A goal of 50 was set for this first Sunday school. The goal was reached and surpassed with an attendance of 52 persons.⁸

In November 1963 a building campaign began and in July 1964 the church family met for the first time in their own building. In August 1964, James Brannon of Mississippi College was called as the first paid worship leader at Cleary. Over the next decade the church continued to grow. They began to elect deacons, hold prayer meetings, and schedule revivals. A youth director, who also served as an assistant to the pastor, was called in 1970. Discipleship Training, Royal Ambassadors, Girls in Action, Sunbeams, World Friends, Brotherhood, and Baptist Women also began during Cleary's first decade as an organized church.

⁸All historical information about Cleary Baptist Church was gleaned from the written records of S. O. Walters, the church's first historian.

In 1983, the church called Gene Gillis as full time pastor. He served the Cleary church family for twenty three years. During that time period the church continued to grow. Under the leadership of Gene, the church built additional educational space, a new worship center, and began construction on a state of the art activities and recreation center. A full time secretary, worship pastor, and youth pastor were also added to the staff during his time as pastor.

In 2006, Gene resigned as pastor of Cleary Baptist Church and a transitional pastor served the church for the next year. During that time, the church borrowed funds to complete the construction of the activities and recreation center begun under the leadership of Dr Gillis. Many challenges arose due to the transitional pastor having a different leadership style. Some of those who were more comfortable with Gene's style of leadership began to quietly visit other area churches. Many others were excited about the new leadership style and the direction of the church. Under the transitional pastor's leadership the people of Cleary were being prepared to accept new leadership.

I was called as pastor of Cleary Baptist Church in October of 2007. The church has continued to transition as many of the former members have moved their membership to other fellowships and new people have joined Cleary's fellowship. The community is slowly, but consistently growing and changing as well. The community is made up of mainly middle-income, white families. The median age of those living within a three mile radius of the church is thirty-five, which produces an abundance of youth and children in the immediate area. The membership of the church reflects the community in this regard. The children's ministry and youth ministry are by far the two most active and well attended ministries in the church. The majority of those attending Cleary are

young to middle aged adults. This sets Cleary apart from most of the area churches. The worship style of the congregation stands out amidst the other Southern Baptist congregations in the area as well. The worship of Cleary is blended with a definite leaning towards the contemporary. Unlike virtually every other Southern Baptist church in the area, Cleary uses a praise band made up of guitars, drums, and keyboards to lead worship. The congregation is free to worship as God leads without fear of ridicule or belittlement. This freedom makes the worship style more appealing for many of the younger generation.

Due to the foundation laid by the previous long-term pastor, the people are generally willing to attempt the diverse, uncommon, and out of the ordinary. According to William Chadwick, “Much transfer growth occurs because of a church’s hard heart toward trying something new.”⁹ The people of Cleary are not locked into tradition to the extent of many established congregations. This fact has helped us maintain our attendance in the midst of many changes. While changes are not effortless to make, they are made easier at Cleary than in many other churches I have attended and served.

Cleary Baptist Church has experienced a number of changes over the past several years. One notable change that has occurred is in relation to the annual budget. The church has a full time pastor, worship pastor, associate pastor, youth intern, administrative assistant, and a part-time secretary. With an increase in the number of paid staff came an increase in personnel expenses. Furthermore, funds that were needed to complete the activities and recreation center were borrowed under the leadership of the

⁹William H. Chadwick, *Stealing Sheep* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 110.

interim pastor. This building note, along with an increase in the cost of utilities and insurance for the new building caused an increase in the budget as well. Media and technology costs have increased also. A system was installed that equips the church to record the services onto DVDs, post sermon audio and video online, and send a live satellite feed of the services to overflow rooms and off campus locations. All of these changes have caused an increase in the budget.

Another change that took place at Cleary in recent years was the institution of a required new member class. Prospective members are required to attend and complete this new member class in order to join Cleary. This class is intended to inform prospective members about the direction of the church, the doctrine of the church, and the expectations of the church with the hope of conveying the importance of membership in a day when membership is not considered very important. According to Thom Rainer, “Less is expected of church members today than civic organizations expect of their members. We have dumbed down church membership to the point that it means almost nothing.”¹⁰ Voting to make the new member class a requirement was the biggest change implemented in the church since my arrival as pastor. Making this change was worth the effort however. Rainer wrote, “the relationship between assimilation effectiveness and new member classes is amazing.”¹¹ If current trends in membership and attendance were going to be changed, making this requirement official was vitally important.

Currently, another major change is taking place. The membership rolls are being analyzed in order to reconcile or remove inactive members of the church.

¹⁰Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 12.

¹¹Ibid., 105.

Groundwork is also being laid in the area of carrying out redemptive church discipline. In addition to the changes that have taken place within the church membership, Cleary has increased her outward focus as well. Over the past three years, Cleary has begun taking the Great Commission more seriously. Members are beginning to open their homes to the lost in order to reach out through hospitality evangelism and home Bible studies. Work is being done by the members in inner-city Jackson among the homeless. The church family has maintained a presence in China, the Dominican Republic, and India over the past two years. New work in Malaysia and Africa has recently begun. Cleary is intentionally striving to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. The numbers of rapid changes and directional shifts that have taken place have left the church family at a very critical juncture. Despite the apparent progress in so many areas, the church is not stable in my view. The members of Cleary Baptist Church need to go deeper as they go farther. They are in need of a biblical and effective pastoral ministry.

Rationale for the Project

Twenty-first century ministry brings with it many challenges and struggles. A number of opinions exist concerning the pastor's role in ministry and often those opinions do not include disciple-making. A pastor's success is often determined more by how many the church baptizes than by how many disciples are being made. The number of buildings and bodies present on Sundays are often considered more a gauge of the pastor's success than how many maturing followers of Christ are being produced and reproduced. What does God consider a successful pastorate?

A number of biblical passages enable us to better understand the role of pastors and leaders in the church. For example, Acts 20:18-28 reveals the perspective of the

apostle Paul as he reflects upon his own pastoral ministry at Ephesus and charges the Ephesian elders to take heed to themselves and to the church. 1 Timothy 4:12-16 records the personal guidance of the apostle Paul to Timothy concerning pastoral ministry. Finally, 1 Peter 5:1-3 gives insight on pastoral ministry from the perspective of Simon Peter. A biblical pastoral ministry was outlined based upon these Scriptures in this project because the pastor's ultimate job description, guide, and gauge of success was and is the Word of God.

Not only was there a biblical rationale for a disciple making pastoral ministry, but a practical rationale existed as well. Between the years 2000 and 2010 there were 368 total additions to the church by baptism and letter. In spite of the large number of additions, Sunday school attendance and worship attendance only slightly increased. These facts revealed the startling truth that well over three hundred individuals joined the membership of Cleary Baptist Church at some point over a ten year period of time only to fail to be faithfully involved in the ministry of the church for the long term. A large portion of those who joined were from other fellowships, which often poses a problem in itself. According to Chadwick, "Transfer growth is not at all about gathering those who are in the world to be saved. It simply gathers the already saved to a new location. Transfer growth promotes division and enables strife to go un-reconciled as wounded members of the body simply limp away."¹² Since members gained by transfer growth often bring unresolved issues with them, they do not become committed to the new fellowship and are difficult to assimilate. Not only had Cleary historically failed at

¹²Chadwick, *Stealing Sheep*, 56-57.

retaining transfer growth and assimilating new members from other congregations. The church had failed at retaining those who professed faith in Christ through baptism as well.

An example of this type of failure occurred in the aftermath of the morning worship services of February 17, 2008. The pastor was approached by a young woman who was struggling with her spiritual standing. It was discovered upon briefly counseling with her that she had made a public decision and been baptized just prior to the pastor's arrival. When questioned as to how she came to this decision, her reply was disturbing. The transitional pastor led her in a prayer at the altar during the invitation following the morning sermon and baptized her that evening. No counseling was provided to help her understand her depravity, her need of repentance and faith, and her need for the Spirit of God to do a work in her life. No effort had been expended to help solidify her decision or disciple her in the faith. Cases like this revealed that increasing the number of baptisms has been more important historically than increasing the number of maturing disciples at Cleary Baptist Church. These trends seemed to reinforce what Chadwick wrote: "In church growth, bigger is better because size empowers you to generate the resources you need to achieve new expansion programs 'for the kingdom.'"¹³ Increasing numbers and resources has historically seemed to be the primary goal at Cleary Baptist Church.

The statistics discovered through the demographic study of Cleary Baptist Church and the situations discovered through experience were not a good testimony to

¹³Ibid., 28.

the church or to the power of the gospel of Christ. Decisions without discipleship are difficult to maintain and do not promote or encourage evangelism and faith. Ken Hemphill explains, “A lack of attention to assimilation can also lead to a lack of confidence in the power of the gospel. If church members see people making public professions of faith, but they do not see them incorporated into the church with an accompanying lifestyle change, they may begin to question whether people are really being saved and why the gospel does not appear to exert much power in the lives of these people.”¹⁴ It was obvious that we, as a church, were not effectively shepherding people to become maturing disciples of Christ.

Definitions and Limitations

In this project, the following definitions of disciple and pastoral ministry were used. Avery T. Willis Jr., in his discipleship material entitled *MasterLife*, offers three definitions of a disciple. He writes, “First, it is a general term used to describe a committed follower of a teacher or group. Second, the New Testament uses the term disciple to refer to the twelve apostles Jesus called. Jesus also used disciple to describe a follower who meets His requirements.”¹⁵ A disciple is not defined as simply one who walks an aisle, professes his faith, is baptized, and admitted into membership, nor does disciple refer to one of the twelve disciples of Christ. For the purposes of this project a disciple was defined as a committed follower of Jesus Christ; one who walks with Christ

¹⁴Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur: A Sunday School Growth Strategy for the 21st Century* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 115.

¹⁵Avery T. Willis Jr. and Kay Moore, *MasterLife: The Disciple's Cross* (Nashville: LifeWay Church Resources, 1996), 12.

daily in prayer, Bible study, and in obedience to his commands, and his commission. Pastoral ministry was not defined as simply hospital, nursing home, shut in, and bereavement visitation. Pastoral ministry, for the purposes of this project, was defined as shepherding, encouraging, and equipping believers, as described in Scripture, to become maturing disciples of Christ.

The limitations on this project were several. First, the project was heavily dependent upon the willingness of the individuals participating to desire to grow in their walk with God. I could discover the biblical pattern for pastoral ministry as well as understand more of Richard Baxter's philosophy and method of pastoral ministry. I could design a pastoral ministry based upon these discoveries and attempt to implement that plan in the lives of a select group of individuals. However, if they refused to follow my leadership and allow me to pastor them, the project would fail. If the test group of individuals resisted my leadership, the project would suffer.

Second, the amount of spiritual growth that occurred was difficult to determine. First, the basic characteristics of a disciple must be settled upon in order to determine if the subjects involved are maturing in these areas. For the purposes of this project those characteristics will be summarized as walking with God in prayer and Bible study, obedience to his commands, obedience to his commission, and obedience to his leadership, guidance, and direction in everyday life. The spiritual growth of a control group, as well as a group of individuals that I pastored for the fifteen week duration of the project were compared through pre-project and post-project evaluations. These evaluations helped determine if these characteristics were present in the attendees' lives, if they were increasing, and to what extent. The pre-project and post-project evaluations

were the sole method of evaluating the effectiveness of the project.

Another challenge that arose in this project was attempting to determine the reasons for any spiritual growth that did occur. If a person gave the perception that they grew spiritually during the execution of the project, did they grow because of the shepherding they received from me? Did a crisis occur in their lives that drove them to Christ? Did a particular message preached by another pastor stir them to pursue a deeper level of maturity? In order to help determine the reasons for any change in one's level of spiritual maturity, a question was added to the post-project survey that helped to narrow down the possible causes for growth in the group.

A fourth challenge of the project was to develop an improved pastoral ministry that would fit into the overall disciple making ministry of the church. A pastoral ministry implemented in the lives of a small group is different than a pastoral ministry implemented in a group of several hundred. For this project to be practical and beneficial, it had to be able to fit into the overall disciple-making ministry of the whole church body.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to gain an accurate understanding of the biblical ideal for pastoral ministry. Scripture passages concerning the ministries of the New Testament church leaders were studied in order to accomplish this goal. First, the pastoral ministry of the apostle Paul in Ephesus was examined from Acts 20:18-28. Second, the instruction given to the young pastor Timothy by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 4:12-16 was considered. Finally, Simon Peter's words concerning pastoral ministry in 1 Peter 5:1-3 were considered. Conclusions were drawn from these

New Testament Scriptures and determinations were made concerning needed changes to the current method of pastoral ministry at Cleary Baptist Church.

The second goal was to gain an accurate understanding of the pastoral ministry of Richard Baxter. A brief biography of Richard Baxter was presented in the project in order to familiarize the reader with his life. An account of his pastoral ministry at Kidderminster, England, was conveyed, and the methodology he used there was unfolded. The priorities of Baxter's ministry were identified, compared to the findings from Scripture, and applied in a twenty-first century context.

The third goal of this project was to form a test group of individuals that I would personally shepherd for the duration of this project. I designed a pastoral ministry project based upon the findings of my studies of the Scripture and upon the example of Richard Baxter that I implemented with this group of individuals. I personally pastored the test group for the fifteen week duration of the project and compared their progress to the progress of a control group at the end of the fifteen week project.

The fourth goal of this project was to determine the effectiveness of the newly developed pastoral ministry. This goal was accomplished by evaluating, through pre-project surveys and post-project surveys, the test group and control group. The data gathered from the two groups through the surveys was recorded and analyzed in order to determine how effective the project was at producing maturing disciples as opposed to normal church activity.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY

This chapter establishes the biblical description of pastoral ministry. First, the different terms used to describe the pastor in the Word of God will be defined and compared. Second, three separate texts from God's Word will be discussed in order to demonstrate the biblical duties and expectations of the pastor. Paul's parting address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:18-28 will be examined along with his counsel to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12-16. 1 Peter 5:1-5 will then be examined in order to understand what the apostle Peter viewed as the pastor's priority. Finally, some general conclusions will be drawn about the role of the pastor from this research.

Terminology Used to Describe the Pastor

Throughout the New Testament, several words are used to describe the pastor. Ironically, the least commonly used word for a church officer, is pastor. According to Wayne Grudem, "It may be surprising to us to find that this word which has become so common in English, only occurs once in the New Testament when speaking about a church officer."¹ In fact, the terms elder, bishop, pastor, overseer, presbyter, steward, and shepherd all seem to refer to the same type of office in the church. James Barton

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 913.

Coffman writes, “Other New Testament synonyms for the same office are presbyters, pastors, shepherds, and stewards.”² Jefferson wrote, “We lose something by confining the Anglo-Saxon word ‘shepherd’ to the fields, and shutting up the Latin word ‘pastor’ in the church. We know with our intellect that the two words are synonymous.”³ Charles S. Ball also views the words translated presbyters, pastors, shepherds, and stewards as synonyms for elder.⁴ By comparing the use of these terms in parallel passages of scripture we can conclude that the apostles used these terms in a basically interchangeable fashion. According to Phil Newton, “The Epistles use overseer or bishop interchangeably with the word elder.”⁵ James R. White wrote,

Two primary Greek terms underlie the various English terms used to describe elder, overseer, or bishop: *presbuteros* and *epsikopos*. The term translated “pastor” or “shepherd” is *poimen*. While later ecclesiastical history drew sharp distinctions between each of these terms, elevating the bishop, lowering the overseer/elder, and creating, in Roman Catholicism, a myriad of orders, classes, and subcategories for each, the biblical usage is straightforward. By comparing the use of these terms in parallel passages we are able to discover that the apostles used these terms in a basically interchangeable fashion.⁶

We can deduce therefore, that whether the writers of scripture use the term pastor,

²James B. Coffman, *Commentary on James, 1-2 Peter, 1,2, 3 John, Jude, The Coffman Commentary Series*, vol. 11 (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1979), 243.

³Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd* (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Co., 2006), 16.

⁴Charles S. Ball, *I & II Peter*, vol. 6 of *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1966), 272.

⁵Phil A. Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 34.

⁶James R. White, “The Plural Elder Led Church,” in *Perspectives on Church Government*, ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 269-70.

overseer, bishop, or shepherd, the conclusion is the same. Elders in the New Testament can be described as, and viewed as, pastors.

New Testament elders were appointed as the spiritual leaders in the churches the apostles established. They were appointed to oversee the operations of the church, discipline, protect, and instruct. According to John Peter Lange, “their functions were to oversee, to administer order and direct discipline, to watch over pure doctrine, and even to teach.”⁷ Newton wrote, “Elder emphasizes the spiritual maturity required for this office; overseer implies the leadership and direction given to the church; pastor suggests feeding, nurturing, and protecting the flock.”⁸ Elders were those men that provided leadership and oversight to the early church.

A plurality of elders seems to be the pattern in New Testament churches. In Acts 14:23 we read, “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”⁹ Acts 20:17 says, “Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.” Paul writes to Titus in Titus 1:5, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.” From these texts, it is apparent that a plurality of elders existed in each church and town. According to White, these texts indicate that “in each instance we have a plural number of elders in a singular location or context. This is the apostolic pattern: plural

⁷John Peter Lange, *James*, in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, trans. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1867), 85.

⁸Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life*, 36.

⁹All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version of the Bible (2001).

elders in each church. This is part of the setting in order the church.”¹⁰ White is not alone in his interpretation. According to Newton, “Every example shows a plurality of elders serving individual churches in the early years of Christianity.”¹¹ Grudem adds,

No passage suggests that any church, no matter how small, has only one elder. The consistent New Testament pattern is a plurality of elders in every church (Acts 14:23) and in every town (Titus 1:5). Second, we do not see a diversity of forms of government in the New Testament church, but a unified and consistent pattern in which every church had elders governing it and keeping watch over it (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3).¹²

Multiple elders were set apart in each of the churches planted throughout Asia Minor and these elders served as the shepherds or pastors of the New Testament churches. If one is to pursue a biblical pastoral ministry, the standards set for and instructions given to the New Testament elder are the standards for today.

Biblical Description of the Pastoral Ministry

In order to have a biblical pastoral ministry, one must rely on the Bible for direction. It is in the Word of God that one may discover the will of God for pastors, elders, or overseers and their ministries. The Scriptures reveal the description of the biblical pastor, his duties, and the details of his ministry. A godly minister’s priorities are assigned for him in Scripture; therefore it is to Scripture that we now turn to gain our understanding of a biblical pastoral ministry.

¹⁰White, “The Plural Elder Led Church,” in *Perspectives*, 271.

¹¹Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life*, 34.

¹²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 913.

Acts 20:28

Acts 20:18-28 is Paul's parting address to the Ephesian elders. In this address Paul reminds the elders of his past ministry, of his future calling, and gives what could be his final guidance for their ministries. First, he reminded them of his past labors at Ephesus. His labor had been carried on with whole-hearted consecration to the Lord, humility, sympathy, and risk. According to Thomas Whitelaw, "He kept back nothing from his hearers which might be spiritually profitable unto them, insisting on repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only and all sufficient way of salvation."¹³ According to John Calvin,

[Paul] commends his own faithfulness and diligence in teaching in three particulars, that he gave the disciples sound and thorough instruction so that he omitted nothing which made for their salvation, that not satisfied with general preaching, he also took pains to be of service to individuals. In the third place he summarizes the whole of his teaching saying that he urged them to have faith in Christ and to repent.¹⁴

Paul not only taught in the assembly, but in the homes of the people calling upon them to repent and have faith in Christ. From Paul's example we see that the pastor is not called to preach the Word from a pulpit to the masses only. He is called to make disciples by ministering the Word in every way. By publicly preaching, privately teaching, and personally bringing back the wandering to the flock, the pastor ministers the Word of God to the people of God. He also ministers by binding up the broken, healing the sick, and supporting the weak. According to Calvin, "Christ did not ordain pastors on the

¹³Thomas Whitelaw, *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1978), 433-34.

¹⁴John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 174.

principle that they only teach the Church in a general way on the public platform, but that they also care for the individual sheep, for general teaching will often have a cold reception unless it is helped by advice given in private.”¹⁵ Paul was an example of just such a ministry.

Paul also informs the Ephesian elders of his future calling. He shares with them his conviction that imprisonment, affliction, and perhaps even death, lay before him. He believed it to be God’s plan for him to go to Jerusalem. So, with the uncertainty of his future weighing heavily upon him, he issues a reminder for their ministries. Based upon the description provided by Paul of his past, present, and future ministry contexts, this exhortation from the apostle for the leaders in the church comes with an implied weightiness. He exhorts these elders in Acts 20:28 by saying, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” The job description Paul outlines for these Ephesian elders was simply to pay careful attention to themselves and the entire flock that God had called them to oversee.

First, they were to pay careful attention, or take heed, unto themselves. Paul attacks, in the beginning, the ministry mindset that says busying oneself with constant ministry activity at the expense of personal holiness, is the key to a biblical pastoral ministry. According to John MacArthur, “Effective ministry is not mere outward activity. It is the overflow of a rich, deep relationship with God.”¹⁶ While the temptation

¹⁵Ibid., 175.

¹⁶John MacArthur, *Acts 13-28*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 222.

may be to carry out those labors that are publicly visible and measurable, Paul calls the elders to first pay careful attention to their own spiritual condition.

Taking heed to oneself is more demanding than simply reflecting on a daily devotional thought. According to Thomas Whitelaw, “In order to properly discharge his duty as a shepherd and an overseer, the minister must see to his own personal relation to the Master whom he serves; to the liveliness of his own faith; to the extent and correctness of his own knowledge in religion; to the purity of his own heart and life, to the sincerity and uprightness of his own motives.”¹⁷ If one is to be God’s minister, he must first be godly, and in order to gain and maintain godliness, the effective minister must take careful heed to himself.

The pastor is constantly in danger of guarding his public reputation while neglecting his private holiness. The natural tendency of the old nature is to operate in the flesh, to rush into the visible labors, while neglecting the private ones. This temptation must be resisted if one is to have an effective pastoral ministry. Thom Rainer wrote concerning pastors in effective evangelistic churches,

These pastors referred often to Acts 6:1-7, particularly the words of the apostolic twelve who said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables’ (Acts 6:2). They understood fully that if the ministry of the church depended solely upon them, ministry would never get done. Indeed, they echoed the apostles’ words, ‘But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word’ (Acts 6:4). But the pastors in the non-evangelistic churches allowed themselves to get distracted in other tasks. They were more likely to give in to the pressure to be omnipresent.¹⁸

Distractions that take away from a pastor’s personal time in prayer and in the Word will

¹⁷Whitelaw, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 439.

¹⁸Rainer, *High Expectations*, 76.

hinder his ministry of the Word. The weakness of such a ministry will be evidenced by its lack of lasting fruit. Jesus said in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” The pastor can accomplish nothing of eternal value apart from Christ; therefore the biblical minister will seek to bear fruit by abiding in Christ, the vine, rather than attempting to produce fruit through the busyness of his own endeavors. He will make it his priority to take heed to himself and to his personal holiness.

In the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, and throughout church history, the pastor’s personal care and integrity are put before his pastoral efforts. In a powerful passage from his classical work *The Reformed Pastor*, Richard Baxter gives a stirring call to pastors to examine themselves. Baxter writes,

O brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions, and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith, and love, and zeal: be much at home, and be much with God. Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices: remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty, to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you.¹⁹

Without a personal pursuit of godliness, the pastor’s ministry will suffer. Without a personal pursuit of holiness, the pastor’s ministry will not be as fruitful as it should be.

The pastor must be careful to watch over himself. In the words of Alexander Maclaren,

The care of one’s own soul comes first. He will be of little use to the Church whose own personal religion is not kept warm and deep. All preachers and teachers and men who influence their fellows need to lay to heart this exhortation, especially in these days when calls to outward service are so multiplied. The neglect of it undermines all real usefulness, and is a worm gnawing at the roots of the vines.²⁰

¹⁹Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 62.

²⁰Alexander Maclaren, *The Acts, Expositions of Holy Scripture*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 191.

The biblical pastor must take heed to himself, before he can effectively take heed to his flock. Biblical pastoral ministry leaves no room for spiritual slackness, for the minister of God bears the Word of God and has been entrusted with the flock of God as well as the honor of God.

The Ephesian elders were also to pay careful attention to, or take heed unto, the flock that they were appointed to serve. In order to pay careful attention to the flock, the pastor must feed the flock with sound doctrine. According to Whitelaw, “He is to minister the word to them in every way that he can, calling them to godliness, holding them accountable, and casting a vision for them to follow.”²¹ In the words of Coffman, “Nothing is any plainer in the NT than the priority of the Word and doctrine of Christ over every other consideration, even that of taking care of the poor.”²² The pastor should prepare his sermons and lessons with prayerful dependence upon the Spirit who empowers the Word.

He should pray for his people that their spiritual ears and eyes may be opened and their spiritual hearts be softened and prepared to receive that Word. In the words of John MacArthur, “Prayer must permeate a pastor’s sermon preparation, or his sermons will be superficial and dry. He must also pray constantly that his people will apply the truths he teaches them. The man of God must also pray that he would be a pure channel through which God’s truth can flow to his congregation.”²³ According to Calvin, “We

²¹Whitelaw, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 439.

²²James B. Coffman, *Commentary on Acts*, The Coffman Commentary Series, vol. 5 (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1977), 124.

²³John MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 179.

ought to bear in mind always that we shall throw away our labour in ploughing, sowing and watering, unless the increase comes from heaven.”²⁴ An effective pastor must take heed to his prayer life so that he can better take heed to the flock God has given him to shepherd. According to Whitelaw, “Praying and preaching are twin gospel ministries that never should, and cannot be dissociated except to the detriment of both.”²⁵ Praying without preaching could be described as presumption, while preaching without praying will likely be unprofitable. Paying careful attention to the flock means more than preaching and prayer. It also includes pastoring.

Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles. He never knew Jesus in the flesh or walked with him on earth. In spite of this, he recognized the importance of the idea of shepherding and called the elders at Ephesus to do just that. Jefferson wrote,

Paul, like Peter loved to think of himself as a shepherd. He looked upon men with the loving solicitude and searching affection of a shepherd’s eyes. Every church was to him a fold, and the men in charge of the church shepherds. He speaks to the officers of the church in Ephesus in the language of a shepherd: Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.²⁶

Paul calls the elders to shepherd the flock by taking heed to themselves and to all the flock.

1 Timothy 4:12-16

In 1 Timothy 4:12-16, the apostle Paul gives guidance to the younger Timothy who was serving the church in Ephesus. Timothy is likely in his thirties and in need of

²⁴Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162.

²⁵Whitelaw, *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletic Commentary*, 137-38.

²⁶Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 9-10.

direction from the more experienced Paul. According to William D. Mounce, “Timothy started serving with Paul during the second missionary journey about A.D. 49. Allowing for that journey, the third journey, the imprisonments, and the time required for a subsequent release and time spent in Ephesus, thirteen years or so had passed. Combined with the fact that Timothy must have been old enough in Acts 16 to have been an effective helper, Timothy was likely now in his late twenties to mid thirties.²⁷ John MacArthur wrote, “Timothy was probably in his early twenties at the time of the second missionary journey, and thus now in his late thirties.”²⁸ While there appears to be no certainty as to Timothy’s exact age, it can be safely estimated that he was between thirty and thirty-five years old.²⁹ Considering these sources, one could estimate that Timothy was somewhere in his thirties and approximately thirty years younger than more experienced Paul.

It would appear from the text that Timothy was meeting extreme opposition and being ignored because of his age. Timothy was dealing with people whom Paul himself had personally evangelized many years earlier and who had been leaders in their church for some time. These people likely had reservations about following the younger elder, Timothy. According to Mounce, “It would have been natural for them to look down on any young pastor who was seeking to correct them.”³⁰ The Apostle exhorts

²⁷William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 258.

²⁸John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 173.

²⁹Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1,2 Timothy Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 137.

³⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259.

Timothy to let no one despise him for his youth. “To despise can be a strong word, denoting disgust and even hatred,” according to Mounce.³¹ Joseph Exell wrote, “The tendency of Timothy was to yield to this opposition rather than to command. He was tempted to sacrifice truth for the sake of peace, and to lessen his own authority by morbid self-depreciation.”³² Paul knew that Timothy needed to be reminded of his pastoral authority and responsibilities if he was to effectively lead the Ephesian church. Knowing Timothy’s insecurity and the Ephesians lack of respect, Paul instructs Timothy, in writing, not to allow the flock to despise him. According to Mounce, “Paul is attempting to transfer his authority to Timothy in the eyes of the Ephesians.”³³ He gives Timothy some pastoral insight and advice to follow in order to embolden him and empower his ministry. Timothy needs to have credibility before the people and respect from the people.

The Apostle Paul encourages Timothy to set a clear example for the believers. He was to conduct himself with such gravity, wisdom, and steadiness that instead of being exposed to contempt for his age, he would be respected in spite of his age. In order to receive this respect he must show himself an example to his flock, a pattern worthy of imitation. According to Lange, “The word ‘example’ signifies a pattern or a model.”³⁴ According to Mounce, “it can refer to an impression made by something and used as a mould to shape something else. The word picture it paints is not so much that Timothy is

³¹Ibid., 258.

³²Joseph S. Exell, *1 Thessalonians*, The Biblical Illustrator (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 207.

³³Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 258.

³⁴Lea, *1, 2 Timothy Titus*, 137.

an example that others can emulate but that he is a mold that should be pressed into the lives of others so that they attain the same shape.”³⁵ Timothy must gain respect by taking heed to himself and to the example that he is to set before the Ephesian believers.

Paul specifically names five areas in which Timothy should be an example. First, he should set an example through upright conversation. The words one speaks manifest to others the nature of one’s inner life. Excell states, “The tone of a person’s words can either weaken or strengthen one’s influence for good.”³⁶ Second, Timothy must be an example in behavior. MacArthur notes, “An excellent minister is required to be a model of righteous living who manifests his biblical convictions in every area of his life.”³⁷ Next, he is also to set an example in self-sacrificing biblical love. He must be willing to lay down his life for the sheep. Fourth, Timothy is to set an example in faith. This faith, according to MacArthur, “does not refer to belief, but to faithfulness or unswerving commitment.”³⁸ An excellent minister is consistently faithful. He is not unstable, does not swerve off the track or deviate from his course. Finally, Timothy is to be an example in purity. This purity, according to MacArthur, “refers primarily to the area of sexuality, both in actions and in the intentions of the heart.”³⁹ A minister’s life is a powerful message, and must reinforce what he says if what he says is to effect change.

³⁵Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 259.

³⁶Exell, *1 Thessalonians*, 208.

³⁷MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 173.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 175.

³⁹*Ibid.*

Timothy is to take heed to himself so that he can be an example to the believers he has been called to lead.

Paul then turns his attention from Timothy's person to his pastorate. Paul encourages Timothy by reminding him that he plans to come to Ephesus where he would come along side Timothy and publicly support his authority and ministry. Until that time however, Timothy is to take heed to his flock by devoting himself to the Word of God. According to Mounce, "Timothy is to immerse himself in the Word of God, commit himself to encouraging his people to follow the Word, and to faithfully teach its doctrines to the flock."⁴⁰ Scripture is the material with which an excellent minister builds his ministry. Timothy is to continually give his attention to those areas Paul mentioned. They are to be his way of life. He, in turn, is to deliver those doctrines to his people.

Timothy is to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture. Ralph Earle wrote, "The early church followed the example of the Jewish synagogue in publicly reading the Scriptures at every service."⁴¹ He must not only read the Word of God to his people but also devote himself to exhortation challenging the people to apply the truths they have been taught to their lives. He is to devote himself to teaching and systematically explaining the Word of God. Timothy's teaching could also include developing a means of teaching people individually or in groups. The point is that an excellent minister is to circulate sound teaching to all people, at all times, through all means. MacArthur said, "Teaching does not only encompass the act of teaching, but all

⁴⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 260.

⁴¹Ralph Earle, *Ephesians-Philemon*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 374.

the commitment, study, and preparation associated with it.”⁴² Timothy is to practice these duties and immerse himself in them so that the congregation can see his progress and sufficiency as a minister called by Christ.

Timothy is commanded to give himself totally to these ministerial duties. According to MacArthur, “A man of God must have a single-minded, consuming devotion to his calling. When not involved in actual ministry, the excellent minister is preparing, praying, or planning for ministry. An excellent minister is consumed by his work.”⁴³ It requires labor to dig into the depths of God’s Word and resurface with a message for the people of God. In the words of John Stott, “A man does not qualify to be a preacher of the Word by making weekly sallies into the good book to discover some peg on which to hang some scattered observations about men and affairs.”⁴⁴ An excellent minister must labor in the Word in order to effectively teach his people in public and in private.

Paul instructs Timothy to keep a close watch on himself and on the teaching. Every Christian worker must first watch himself; not only his outward life, but also his own thoughts and feelings. According to George Barlow, “No matter how accurate a person may be in his doctrine or how effective he may be in his teaching, if there is a flaw in his life, it will ruin him.”⁴⁵ Personal holiness must be diligently sought and

⁴²MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, 176.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁴John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 182.

⁴⁵George Barlow, *1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, in *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletic Commentary* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1978), 36.

cultivated. While he is watching over others, the pastor must keep watch over himself, for the failures of the leader affect all those he influences. Lea wrote, “The stumbles and fumbles of a wandering spiritual leader will infect a congregation with a variety of spiritual sicknesses.”⁴⁶ Paul calls Timothy to take the spiritual leadership of the church at Ephesus by taking heed to himself and to the flock of God appointed to him.

1 Peter 5:1-5

Peter, like Paul, also gives insight into the pastoral ministry. What does Peter teach concerning pastoral ministry and leadership? Peter’s teaching can be outlined by three duties. First, the pastor must feed the flock by preaching to them the Word of God, and leading them as the Word of God prescribes. Second, pastors must oversee the church by providing personal care for all the flock that God has committed to them. Third, pastors must be examples to the flock by practicing holiness and by requiring of themselves what they require of their people. Peter’s instruction is closely related to Paul’s instruction to the Ephesian elders and to Timothy to take heed to themselves and to the flock of God among them.

The elders that Peter addresses are instructed to shepherd, or tend, the flock of God that is among them. According to Raymond C. Kelcy, “The word Peter uses here is exactly the same word that Jesus used when he admonished Peter to tend his sheep in John 21.”⁴⁷ According to Lange, “tend the flock” denotes, “Lead it to the wholesome pasture of the Divine Word, guard it from the poisonous weeds of false doctrine, and go

⁴⁶Lea, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 141.

⁴⁷Raymond C. Kelcy, *The Letters of Peter and Jude* (Austin, TX: R.B. Sweet Co., 1972), 98.

before it by your own example in well doing.”⁴⁸ This tending of the flock requires more than simply preaching and teaching however. According to Jefferson, “Just as the shepherd idea was swallowed up in the priest idea, causing a blight to fall upon the church, so a calamity of another sort is sure to overtake us if the shepherd idea is swallowed up in the preacher idea.”⁴⁹ Peter is exhorting the elders to shepherd the flock among them. According to White, “One must have knowledge of the identity of the sheep to shepherd them properly, of course, and this only takes place within the context of the local assembly. The command to shepherd points us to the fact that elders are pastors.”⁵⁰ Jefferson addresses this issue of knowing the shepherd:

Many a young man has been sorely troubled on entering his first church because of his feeble love for people. On examining his heart he has found it cold and dead. He has looked at the men and women before him and confessed to himself that for most of them he does not care. There seems to be no point of contact between him and them. He has been studying and they have simply been existing. They know hardly anything and he knows a lot. He has been thinking, they do not seem to have thought at all.⁵¹

He continues,

How is it possible for a young man reared in the world of books to take a hearty and genuine interest at once in a world so stupid and belated? It is by no means easy for a young man to become a shepherd, and he ought not to be discouraged if he cannot become one in a day, or a year. An orator he can be without difficulty. A reformer he can become at once. In criticism of politics and society he can do a flourishing business the first Sunday. But a shepherd he can become only slowly, and by patiently traveling the way of the cross.⁵²

⁴⁸Lange, *James*, 86.

⁴⁹Jefferson, *Minister as Shepherd*, 17.

⁵⁰White, “The Plural Elder Led Church,” in *Perspectives*, 277.

⁵¹Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 23.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 24.

If the pastor or elder is to effectively engage the flock of God with the Word of God, he must seek to know his sheep. In order to know his sheep, he must work hard and diligently to get to know them. He must be intentional about becoming their shepherd. He must be intentional about leading them, teaching them, and providing an example to them not only on Sunday's from the pulpit, but other days of the week as well. White writes, "The fact that they provide leadership, direction, teaching, and example is part and parcel of what it means to lead or pastor the flock."⁵³ To take care of the flock of God means more than simply preaching and administrating. Tending the flock should be done carefully and reverently knowing that it is the flock of God that Christ purchased with His own blood.

Obviously, since the flock was purchased with Christ's own blood, it is valuable to the Lord. Though the flock has been fully purchased at a price, they have not yet reached heaven, and therefore need leadership, guidance, and direction. According to George Arthur Buttrick, "God's people, like sheep, often wander far from the Shepherd and the fold. Though part of Christ's flock, they have not yet reached heaven. They pathetically lose themselves."⁵⁴ Therefore, they must be fed, cared for, and guided on their way there. The office of ministry was instituted, at least in part, for this reason. Jesus loves the souls of men so much that He commits them only to those who love Him and will feed His flock.

⁵³White, "The Plural Elder Led Church," in *Perspectives*, 277.

⁵⁴George Arthur Buttrick, *The Holy Scriptures James, Peter, John, Jude, and Revelation*, in vol. 12 of *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1951), 149.

The flock does not belong to the elders. It is Christ's flock. The elders are only under-shepherds overseeing the flock. Commentator R. C. H. Lenski writes, "Flock brings to mind all the shepherd imagery found in the Scriptures: the sheep gentle, defenseless, liable to stray, needing a shepherd, happy, peaceful under his care, pitiful when lost, scattered, etc. God's flock was bought at a great price and is precious in his sight, therefore it is a great trust placed into the hands of human shepherds."⁵⁵ In fact, shepherds serve only at the pleasure of the Chief Shepherd. It is the flock of God that has been entrusted to them. According to Newton, "The terminology suggests the Master parceling out portions of his flock to this shepherd or that shepherd with the understanding that they will report to him for the discharge of their duties."⁵⁶ What shepherd could have the care of any part of God's flock and treat it carelessly? The elders are to take heed to the flock of God that he purchased, in love, by his blood.

The elders were instructed to exercise oversight, to zealously look after, and watch with great care the flock on behalf of Christ, the chief shepherd. According to Lange, taking oversight meant to "watch with great care over everything that belongs to their welfare."⁵⁷ MacArthur describes exercising oversight as literally meaning "to have scope over, or to look upon."⁵⁸ Shepherds must watch over the sheep to assess their condition, so as to lead, guard, and feed them. It is not enough for ministers to preach.

⁵⁵R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 218.

⁵⁶Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life*, 106.

⁵⁷Lange, *James*, 86.

⁵⁸MacArthur, *1 Peter*, 267.

They must also take a particular oversight of the flock. In the words of Exell, “If a minister knows any of his people riotous or profane, he must rebuke them; if any out of the way, admonish them; he must hearten them that be in a good course to go on still, and must comfort them that languish under their sins, temptations, and fears; in a word, deal with every one as the cause requireth.”⁵⁹ Exell goes on to say,

This rebukes those ministers that be absent from their people usually or continually. How can these take care of them that come not at them but rarely, except they could indent with the devil, never to trouble their people or tempt them in their absence? It rebukes those also that living among their people, yet care not thus, but think themselves discharged that they meet them at Church on Sunday, and then preach them a sermon, whereas all the week after they consider not of them.”⁶⁰

Pastors will not fulfill their biblical role if they are lazy, apathetic, and unloving.

MacArthur states it this way: “The shepherd must be diligent rather than lazy, heart motivated rather than forced to be faithful, and passionate about his privileged duty rather than indifferent.”⁶¹ The flock God has entrusted to pastors is their personal responsibility. Pastors are to lead, guide, teach, and direct the sheep to eternal life and knowledge of God. Such leading is accomplished by careful oversight.

The elders are to serve, not under compulsion, but willingly as glad volunteers in God’s service. Pastors are not to serve as dictators who domineer over the sheep, but as shepherds who lead the flock by example. Shepherds are to become so involved in the lives of the flock that they establish a godly pattern for the people to follow. Paul encouraged people to observe and follow his example. In 1 Corinthians 4:16 he wrote, “I

⁵⁹Joseph S. Exell, *St. James in The Biblical Illustrator* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 388.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹MacArthur, *1 Peter*, 268.

urge you, then, be imitators of me.” Again in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he wrote, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Newton writes, “They are never to lord over the flock since the flock has one Lord, Jesus Christ. Instead, they are to prove themselves to be examples to the flock.”⁶² He goes on, “Peter describes the elders as ‘Christians with skin on them’ who demonstrate how to live the Christian life in all circumstances.”⁶³ That is a weighty responsibility, but much needed in the church. Elders are not to enter the ministry so they can dictate others, but so they can exemplify the character of Christ to those under their charge. Elders should be examples to the flock. Elders are to take heed to themselves in order to ensure they are good and godly examples to the flock.

Biblical and Theological Conclusion

In these three passages of Scripture, two recurring themes appear as the role and duties of the pastor are considered. First, a repeated call to personal integrity is issued. In Acts 20 Paul instructed the elders from Ephesus to pay careful attention to themselves. In First Timothy, Paul instructed Timothy to set the believers an example and keep a close watch on himself. Peter instructed the elders in Jerusalem to be examples to the flock. Part of pastoral ministry is clearly spiritual maturity and authenticity. Baxter wrote, “Take heed to yourselves, lest you are weak through your own negligence, and lest you mar the work of God by your weakness.”⁶⁴ Biblical pastoral ministry includes personal oversight, but also pastoral oversight.

⁶²Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life*, 106.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 71.

Throughout the Word there exists a repeated call to the pastor to invest himself in the Word of God, prayer, and the people of God. In Acts 20 Paul instructs the Ephesian elders to pay careful attention to the flock among them. In First Timothy, Paul instructs Timothy to devote himself to the public reading, exhortation, and teaching of Scripture. Timothy is to immerse himself in it and devote himself to it. In First Peter 5, Peter calls the elders to shepherd or tend the flock of God that is among them. Shepherding, teaching, and oversight should be done, not only in the public assembly, but at every opportunity. The flock of God can be fed from house to house, with individuals, families, in small groups, as well as in the congregation as a whole. The biblical responsibility of a pastor, as described in these passages of scripture, is in its simplest form to take heed to himself and to God's flock assigned to him.

CHAPTER 3

A MODEL FOR BIBLICAL PASTORAL MINISTRY

As determined in the previous chapter, in order to have a biblical pastoral ministry, one must take heed to himself and to the flock of God that he has been called to shepherd. The seventeenth century Puritan pastor Richard Baxter exemplifies this type of ministry. According to David F. Wright, “Baxter had the most fruitful Puritan pastorate anywhere recorded.”¹ This chapter suggests Baxter’s ministry as a model for biblical pastoral ministry today.

First, the life and ministry of Richard Baxter will be introduced with a brief biography. Understanding his background, the context in which he ministered, and the fruit his ministry produced will likely inspire the modern pastor to develop a biblical pastoral ministry. Second, Baxter’s philosophy of pastoral ministry will be explained. Grasping Baxter’s understanding of biblical pastoral ministry will help clarify pastoral priorities for the modern pastor. Finally, Baxter’s method of pastoral ministry will be described. Baxter’s methodology stands in opposition to the abundance of modern programs that promise unlimited results with limited pastoral efforts. His method was one of personal and diligent pastoral ministry.

¹David F. Wright, Sinclair B. Ferguson, and J. I. Packer, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 82.

The Life and Ministry of Richard Baxter

Richard Baxter was born on the twelfth of November in 1615 to Beatrice Adeney and Richard Baxter Sr. at Rowton in the county of Shropshire.² According to Powicke, “Rowton was the home of his mother, Beatrice Adeney or Adney, who belonged to an old yeoman family.”³ Born in relative poverty and raised in a time when Puritans were reviled more than respected by many, Baxter became a giant that stood out in the realm of pastoral ministry. The revival that took place through the pastoral ministry of Baxter is enlightening and encouraging to those who are called to shepherd the flock of God in this twenty-first century.

Baxter’s life began in obscurity with little promise. According to Murray A. Capill, “Richard Baxter, an only child, was raised by his grandparents for the first ten years of his life and brought up in relative poverty owing to his father’s gambling debts.”⁴ Circumstances were to change in the Baxter home however. Frederick Powicke wrote, “It pleased God to instruct a change in his father. Accordingly, mother and son rejoined him in the ancestral home at Eaton Constantine.”⁵ According to J. I. Packer, “Baxter’s father was converted and was mocked as a Puritan by his neighbors for staying indoors on Sunday afternoons to read the Bible and pray with his family instead of dancing and

²Richard Baxter, *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (Mobile, AL: R. E. Publications, 1984), 3.

³Frederick J. Powicke, *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter* (London: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2007), 15.

⁴Murray A. Capill, *Preaching with Spiritual Vigour* (Johnson City: Appalachian Bible Co & Christian, 2003), 29.

⁵Powicke, *A Life of Baxter*, 15.

playing games on the village green.”⁶ This conversion experience of Baxter’s father was to make a lasting impact upon the life of young Richard, for he too was converted to Christ.

Baxter was never able to trace the exact time of his conversion, though at about the age of fifteen he did experience some type of encounter with God. He wrote, “When I was about fifteen years of age it pleased God to awaken my soul. Yet whether sincere conversion began now, or before, or after, I was never able to this day to know.”⁷ His early education was poor, being mainly in the hands of the local clergy, themselves virtually illiterate. According to Powicke, “At High Ercall he had been under four ignorant men; two of them also immoral in their lives; and Eaton Constantine brought no improvement, so far as church schooling was concerned.”⁸ Powicke wrote, “His father, though no scholar, taught him to read the Bible as to acquire a love for it, a benefit which ever afterwards he recalled with gratitude.”⁹ He was also helped by John Owen, master of the free school at Wroxeter, where he studied from approximately 1629 to 1632. Baxter wrote, “The chiefest help that I had for all my learning in the country schools was with Mr. John Owen, schoolmaster at Wroxeter.”¹⁰ By the grace of God, Baxter was educated in spite of the circumstances. He was apparently influenced more by the Puritans, than by professors. In the words of Mark Galli, “Within the Anglican church,

⁶J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 50.

⁷Baxter, *Autobiography*, 7.

⁸Powicke, *A Life of Baxter*, 15.

⁹*Ibid.*, 15-17.

¹⁰Baxter, *Autobiography*, 6.

Baxter found common ground with the Puritans, a growing faction who opposed the church's episcopacy."¹¹ Though Baxter never received an official university education, he was educated by what proved to be a fruitful Puritan influence and eventually became schoolmaster at Dudley.

After a brief time as schoolmaster at Dudley, Baxter moved to Bridgnorth where he served as a full time minister. Powicke wrote that "preaching was no longer an annex to teaching, but his chief business."¹² In his own words, "I was by God's very gracious providence invited to Bridgnorth, the second town of Shropshire, to preach there as assistant to the worthy pastor of that place. The people proved a very ignorant, dead hearted people."¹³ In spite of the spiritual deadness of the congregation, he served at Bridgnorth for two years (1639-1640) before being called to his life's ministry at Kidderminster in March 1641. Kidderminster proved to be a very different and more fertile field than Bridgnorth. Of his arrival at Kidderminster he wrote, "As soon as I came to Kidderminster, I was brought by the gracious providence of God, to that place which had the chiefest of my labors and yielded me the greatest fruits of comforts."¹⁴ His ministry there would be interrupted however.

He served at Kidderminster only two years before his ministry there was put on hold by civil war. According to Capill, "He spent two years in the army but in February

¹¹Mark Galli, "131 Christians Everyone Should Know." *Christianity Today* (2007) [on-line]; accessed 12 November 2007; available from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/special/131christians/baxter.html>; Internet.

¹²Powicke, *A Life of Baxter*, 24.

¹³Baxter, *Autobiography*, 18.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 76.

1647, his health collapsed, and he was no longer able to remain in the army.”¹⁵ After the war, he returned to Kidderminster and served another fourteen years as their pastor. It was at Kidderminster that Baxter’s pastoral ministry truly took shape.

A revival began after his return to Kidderminster. At the time, the Kidderminster parish consisted of a market town and about twenty small villages. During his ministry the majority of the people there were converted. J. I. Packer described the transformation of the community: “Kidderminster parish contained about 800 homes and 2,000 adults, most of them in the town itself, and Baxter saw himself as spiritually responsible for them all. It appears that the majority came to a solid Christian faith under Baxter’s ministrations.”¹⁶ The church at Kidderminster grew dramatically under his leadership. Baxter wrote, “We were fain to build five galleries after my coming thither. When I came thither first there was about one family in a street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away there were some streets where there was not passed one family in the side of a street that did not so.”¹⁷ This revival was accomplished, not through mass evangelism, but through the daily labors of a local pastor.

Throughout Baxter’s time in Kidderminster he was a single man, able to devote all his time and energy to the work of ministry. He said, “I found that my single life afforded me much advantage; for I could the easilier take my people for my children. Being discharged from the most of family cares (keeping but one servant) I had the

¹⁵Capill, *Preaching with Spiritual Vigour*, 32.

¹⁶Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 304.

¹⁷Baxter, *The Autobiography*, 79.

greater vacancy and liberty for the labours of my calling.”¹⁸ Baxter did not waste this liberty. He worked long and hard. One of the remarkable achievements of the Kidderminster ministry was his commitment to visit all 800 families of the township each year, individually catechizing each family.¹⁹ It was personal catechizing that became the backbone of Baxter’s pastoral ministry.

God used Baxter’s pastoral leadership in Kidderminster. According to Capill, “The change that took place in the township amounted to nothing less than a great work of revival in the church and a spiritual awakening of the entire township.”²⁰ Packer wrote, “Family catechizing, family worship, a public worship pattern full of praise, church discipline, preaching, devotional reading, regular pastoral counseling, and small-group ministry under Baxter’s oversight, were all part of it, and reformation was Baxter’s name for it.”²¹ His achievement at Kidderminster was amazing, especially since he was almost constantly unwell, doing all while suffering from weakness, being seldom an hour free from pain. To quote Packer again, “England had not before seen a ministry like it, and by the late 1650’s Baxter was a widely acclaimed role model for pastors throughout Puritan England.”²² Baxter’s ministry in Kidderminster continued until the time of the restoration when Puritan pastors suffered ejection and persecution.

¹⁸Ibid., 80-81.

¹⁹Capill, *Preaching with Spiritual Vigour*, 23.

²⁰Ibid., 25.

²¹J. I. Packer, *Hot Tub Religion* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1988), 218.

²²Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 304.

After losing his pastorate, he felt as though he was free to be married. Capill writes, “On September 10, 1662, Richard and Margaret were married.”²³ During his marriage, Baxter was arrested on four occasions. He spent his last years in ill health still laboring with his pen. His last days were spent in misery and pain until the Lord took him home on December 8, 1691. According to Capill, “He was buried beside his wife in the ruined Chancel of Christ Church Newgate Street.”²⁴ Baxter’s life was one of hardship, hard work, and laying down his life for the sake of the flock of Christ. His ministry continues to the present day as his voice resonates through his powerful and convicting writings.

Baxter’s Philosophy of Pastoral Ministry

Baxter’s philosophy of ministry was simple; “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”²⁵ Baxter believed that if one failed to pay careful attention to himself, he would be weak and therefore hinder God’s work with his weakness. He wrote, “Take heed to yourselves, lest you are weak through your own negligence, and lest you mar the work of God by your weakness.”²⁶ In his view, it was only by awakening one’s own heart that he would be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners. He challenged pastors, “In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your own hearts, before you go to the pulpit, that you may be fit to awaken the

²³Capill, *Preaching with Spiritual Vigour*, 33.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Acts 20:28.

²⁶Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 71.

hearts of sinners.”²⁷ In Baxter’s philosophy one should not only pay careful attention to oneself, but also to the entire flock of God that one oversees by showing particular care over every member. He wrote, “We should know every person that belongeth to our charge. For how can we take heed to them, if we do not know them?”²⁸ Formulating a biblical model for pastoral ministry will be easier with an understanding of Baxter’s philosophy of biblical pastoral ministry.

Take Heed to Yourself

Baxter urged the ministers of his day to take careful heed to themselves. In order to properly take heed to one’s self, one must guard his heart in order to keep out that which would damage him and his ministry. He must fill his heart with faith, love, and zeal for God and his Word. He must also pray fervently and meditate on the scripture in order to harness the power of God for the good of God’s people. Baxter wrote,

O brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions, and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith, and love, and zeal: be much at home, and be much with God. Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices: remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty, to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you.²⁹

The pastor taking heed to himself affects more than just himself. If he fails in this regard it will hinder his relationship with Christ and also hinder his work, and thus negatively affect those he ministers to. Not only does his own spiritual health depend

²⁷Ibid., 148.

²⁸J. William Black, *Reformation Pastors* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 91.

²⁹Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 62.

upon him paying careful attention to himself, but the spiritual health of his flock as well. In the words of Baxter, “It is not only the work that calls for heed, but the workman also, that he may be fit for business of such weight.”³⁰ It is a weighty responsibility to oversee the flock of God.

Baxter recognized the weightiness of this task and challenged the ministers of his day not to take it lightly. He wrote, “Did Paul cry out, who is sufficient for these things? And shall we be proud, or careless, or lazy, as if we were sufficient?”³¹ In fact, he warned that one of Satan’s chief areas of attack was the personal life of the pastor. He wrote,

A minister should take some special pains with his heart, before he is to go to the congregation; if it be then cold, how is he likely to warm the hearts of his hearers? Therefore, go then specially to God for life; read some rousing, awakening book, or meditate on the weight of the subject of which you are to speak, and on the great necessity of your people’s souls, that you may go in the zeal of the Lord into his house.³²

According to Baxter’s philosophy of pastoral ministry, the minister must be intentional about examining himself. Packer wrote, “Richard Baxter convinced me long ago that regular discursive meditation, in which as he quaintly put it you ‘imitate the most powerful preacher you ever heard’ in applying spiritual truth to yourself, as well as turning that truth into praise, is a vital discipline for spiritual health.”³³ The minister must intentionally set aside time to examine himself with the Word of God.

³⁰Ibid., 78.

³¹Ibid., 70.

³²Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 62-63.

³³ Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 13.

Take Heed to the Flock

Baxter further called upon the ministers of his day to take heed to the flock that God had called them to shepherd. This call to care for the flock of God meant more to Baxter than simply preaching a dynamic message on the Lord's day. In fact, due to his own experiences, he was convinced that preaching alone was insufficient for the task of shepherding the flock of God. Baxter asks, "Will preaching a good sermon serve the turn, while you never look more after them, but deny them that closer help that is necessary?"³⁴ In his view, it would not. Baxter was surprised at the lack of impact his messages were having upon his hearers, even among those who had been listening for more than a decade. He wrote, "I am daily forced to wonder how lamentably ignorant many of our people are, who have seemed diligent hearers of me these ten or twelve years, while I spoke as plainly as I was able to speak."³⁵ After more than a decade of preaching, Baxter was discouraged by the ignorance of his congregation. He was convinced that if he were to biblically shepherd the people of Kidderminster, more than public preaching would be necessary.

Baxter concluded that shepherding the flock that God had assigned him would require personal one-on-one discipleship of all the flock in addition to the public ministry of the Scriptures. According to Charles F. Kemp, "He compared the work of the pastor with that of the teacher, the physician and the lawyer. A teacher, he said, must take personal account of her scholars if she is to do them good, and it is not enough for a physician to read a public lecture on medicine or a lawyer on law. Each case demands

³⁴Ibid., 156.

³⁵Ibid., 212.

personal work.”³⁶ Baxter set himself to do this personal one to one work with his people and God honored his efforts.

Since personal work was considered so important, it follows that the congregation must be no larger than the pastor is capable of overseeing, or taking heed to. Baxter wrote,

It is necessary, that we should know every person that belongeth to our charge; for how can we take heed to them, if we do not know them? We must labour to be acquainted, not only with the persons, but with the state of all our people, with their inclinations and conversations; what are the sins of which they are most in danger and what duties they are most apt to neglect, and what temptations they are most liable to; for if we know not their temperament or disease, we are not likely to prove successful physicians.³⁷

In Baxter’s view, the primary reason that a minister moved into the community that he served was to carry out this personal work with them. Baxter, according to Kemp, named this as “the chief reason a pastor was settled in a community: so that individual souls might have personal recourse to him for the resolving of their doubts, for help against sins, and for direction in duty.”³⁸ Part of paying careful attention to the flock of God, in Baxter’s philosophy of ministry, was assuming personal responsibility for shepherding each individual member of the congregation in their walk with God.

Baxter’s willingness to look closely after each member of his charge revealed his deep compassion for the people of God. This love for the people was deepened by Baxter’s love for Christ. As he looked upon the congregation he was reminded that they were the purchase of Christ’s blood. Since the church is the purchase of Christ’s blood,

³⁶Charles F. Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948) 43.

³⁷Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 90.

³⁸Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 43.

and since Christ left the glories of heaven to give his life for them, those who serve as his under-shepherds should also have a deep interest in and love for the church. In the words of Baxter, “Did I die for these souls, and wilt not thou look after them? Were they worth my blood, and are they not worth thy labour? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which was lost, and wilt thou not go to the next door, or street, or village, to seek them? How small is thy condescension and labour compared to mine!”³⁹ His challenge to take heed to the flock has challenged many ministers. Packer wrote, “Baxter also focused my vision of the ordained minister's pastoral office. My sense of being called to preach the gospel, teach the Bible, and shepherd souls could have been learned from the Anglican ordinal that was used to ordain me, but in fact it crystallized out through my study of Baxter's own ministry and his Reformed (we would say, Revived) Pastor.”⁴⁰ Baxter’s philosophy of ministry not only included paying careful attention to himself, as minister, but also paying careful personal attention to each individual member within his charge.

Baxter’s Methodology of Pastoral Ministry

Free of the big business models of our own day, Baxter sought to take his orders from the Scriptures and work out in practice a method of faithfully shepherding the flock of Christ. Baxter’s method would include public teaching, but would not be centered around it alone. In fact, Baxter sometimes entered the pulpit ill-prepared due to the priority of his personal pastoral labors. Kemp writes, “He speaks of the deep concern

³⁹Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 131-32.

⁴⁰Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 13.

it caused him to sometimes have to go to the pulpit unprepared, but he said there was no other remedy except to neglect this personal consultation and ‘to omit this we dare not, it is so great and necessary a work.’”⁴¹ Baxter’s methodology of pastoral ministry would supplement the public teaching of the Word through catechizing, small groups, and discipline. Kidderminster experienced an amazing transformation under his ministry. Packer summarized his method in these words, “Family catechizing, family worship, a public worship pattern full of praise, church discipline, preaching, devotional reading, regular pastoral counseling, and small-group ministry under Baxter’s oversight, were all part of it, and reformation was Baxter’s name for it.”⁴² For Baxter, this type of pastoral ministry was foundational to church life and to preaching.

Public Teaching

If Baxter’s ministry could be summarized by one thing, it would likely not be public preaching. In fact, Kemp recorded Pattison in his *History of Christian Preaching*, as stating, “Baxter’s sermons should serve as warnings rather than as models.”⁴³ Baxter’s ministry was more characterized by catechizing and personal work, than public preaching. He encouraged his fellow pastors to invest in personal work and saw it as a work of very great necessity. Black records Baxter’s argument for modifying his method of parish ministry: “Experience in my pastoral charge convinced me that public preaching is not all the ordinary work of a faithful minister, and that personal conference with every

⁴¹Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 33.

⁴²Packer, *Hot Tub Religion*, 218.

⁴³Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 26.

one about the state of their own souls, together with catechizing, is a work of very great necessity.”⁴⁴ He considered this personal work, which he is best known for, of great necessity because he discovered that privately teaching his parishioners and personally asking them questions seemed to awaken them more than public preaching. Black wrote, “those things which were spoken to them personally and put them sometime upon answers, awakened their attention, and was easilier applied than public preaching, and seemed to do much more upon them. I find more outward signs of success with most that come, than of all my public preaching to them.”⁴⁵ This type of personal pastoral ministry is what Baxter is best known for.

In light of the stress on this type of work in his ministry, the impression could be given that the public work of preaching was not important. When one considers the lack of confidence Baxter seemed to place in public teaching alone, it can give the impression that preaching publicly is unnecessary or unfruitful. According to Black, “Baxter was increasingly aware that even a lively, godly and painful preacher armed with his most powerful sermon may struggle to awaken a spiritually drowsy auditory. Sermons were not enough.”⁴⁶ In spite of the insufficiency of preaching, in Baxter’s view, the public preaching of the word was a necessity and was vitally important in the ministry and mind of Baxter.

Baxter was a preacher, as well as a pastor. It was through the preaching of the Word of God, that he sought to call his parishioners to salvation. According to Frederick

⁴⁴Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 178.

⁴⁵Ibid., 184.

⁴⁶Ibid., 190.

Powicke, “Baxter’s work was to preach. At first he did, and was expected to do, nothing else; and he shared, to the full, the Puritan estimation of his office as the highest possible. He took it to be the chief instrument of salvation.”⁴⁷ While, he did not consider public preaching to be the only duty of the minister, he viewed it as an extremely important duty. Powicke went on to write, “For Baxter, the office and function of preacher always held the first place.”⁴⁸ Baxter himself described the pastor as one “Appointed to guide the church to salvation by opening and applying the rule thus already sealed and delivered.”⁴⁹ Much of Baxter’s pastoral and personal ministry came out of his preaching ministry.

Baxter not only viewed the public preaching of the Scripture as important, but he was passionate about it as well. Baxter often characterized his preaching as coming through a dying man to dying men. Packer records Baxter’s words, “As one that ne’er should preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.”⁵⁰ He proclaimed the Word of God with passion and earnestness. According to Kemp, “He criticized other ministers who did not seem in earnest and lamented the fact that so ‘few ministers preach with all their might.’ Undoubtedly, it was this intense earnestness that made such an impression on the people and accounts, at least in part, for his pulpit success.”⁵¹ His passion for the public preaching of the word is evidenced by the fact that he refused to refrain from

⁴⁷Powicke, *A Life of Baxter*, 48.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (Grand Rapids: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2008), 1:581.

⁵⁰Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 288.

⁵¹Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 23-24.

preaching, even with the promise of freedom from prison. Kemp records that “on one occasion when he was arrested they offered him his liberty until Monday if he would promise not to preach on Sunday but he refused to promise and was taken away. When he was too old and sick to go out and preach he opened his house so the people could come in.”⁵² He was so passionate about preaching the Word of God that he refused to refrain from preaching.

Baxter viewed the task of publicly preaching as important. He focused on the messenger as well as the message and encouraged other pastors to do so as well. Kemp wrote, “In speaking of the preparation for preaching he urged men to spend much time in secret prayer and meditation, when they would not only be preparing a specific sermon but preparing and deepening their own souls.”⁵³ He worked diligently to prepare, not only himself, but his messages too. He believed that the message should be prepared as thoroughly as possible, and carried a manuscript with him into the pulpit. Kemp wrote, “He labored over the preparation of his sermons. That was why he favored the use of a manuscript, for he felt that those who preached without one were usually not as thoroughly prepared.”⁵⁴ Clearly Baxter viewed preaching as vitally important to his pastoral ministry, even if it was not as productive as his personal work.

For Baxter, preaching was a task almost as tedious as surgery. His approach was to go for the heart of the sinner. The way he got there, was through the mind. According to Powicke, “He tells us expressly, indeed, that the preachers aim should be

⁵²Ibid., 29-30.

⁵³Ibid., 30.

⁵⁴Ibid., 28.

first to convince the understanding and then to engage the heart. Light first, then heat. And such was his unvarying method. Beginning with a careful opening of the text, he proceeded to the clearance of possible difficulties or objections; next, to a statement of uses; and lastly, to a fervent appeal for acceptance by conscience and heart.”⁵⁵ The work of the pastor in Baxter’s view was first “to preach the gospel for the conversion of the unbelieving and ungodly world. And that is done, partly by expounding the words by a translation into a tongue which the hearers or readers understand; and partly by opening the sense and matter.”⁵⁶ The Word must be understood by the hearers if it is to be effectively applied to their hearts. Explaining the Word in an understandable manner then enabled Baxter to convict and convince the heart. It was not enough merely to present the truth in Baxter’s estimation. The preacher must carefully apply the Word to the hearer in order to get past the symptoms and to the heart of the spiritual disease. He said, “We mistake men’s diseases when we think there needeth nothing to cure their errors but only to bring them the evidence of truth. Alas! There are many distempers of mind to be removed before men are apt to receive that evidence.”⁵⁷ Baxter viewed the task of preaching as a tedious process of engaging the hearts of his hearers, applying the Word to their hearts, and expecting the Holy Spirit to work change in those hearts.

Baxter, known by most as a pastor who focused on and encouraged personal work and catechizing, was also a preacher. He viewed the task of preaching, not as an option, but as a necessity. Preaching was important enough to Baxter that he encouraged

⁵⁵Powicke, *A Life of Baxter*, 50-51.

⁵⁶Baxter, *Practical Works*, 1:581.

⁵⁷Baxter, *The Autobiography*, 107.

careful preparation of the message and of the messenger who was to deliver it. Preaching was not a task that he had to make time for because it was expected of him. It was a task that he was passionate about. He sought to change lives by impacting hearts through preaching. While he may not be known foremost for preaching, it was a vital part of his pastoral ministry.

Catechizing

The main method Baxter developed for his most well known work at Kidderminster was that of personal catechizing. His aim was twofold: to visit every family in the parish at least annually, and to use those visits for teaching and instructing them in the faith. Beougher writes, “Baxter believed that catechizing was the chief means by which the church had been reformed in the past and the chief means of hope for the future.”⁵⁸ Packer wrote, “Christians, he urged, should regularly come to their pastor with their problems and let him check their spiritual health, and ministers should regularly catechize their entire congregations.”⁵⁹ If any one method could describe Baxter’s pastoral ministry, it would be personal catechizing.

Baxter believed that the fruit of public ministry would be increased by the labors of private ministry. He promised pastors that “You will not lose in public service if you have been fruitful in this private ministry.”⁶⁰ He continues, “We will know better how to preach to them when we know their personal problems, temptations, and

⁵⁸Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion* (Glasgow, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 135.

⁵⁹Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 305.

⁶⁰Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 106.

sufferings. Knowing their own personal needs of prayer, the pastor will also be able to pray more intelligently for their needs.”⁶¹ A focus on pastoral ministry, in Baxter’s view, affected virtually every other area of the ministry and the minister himself. Pastoral ministry was his heartbeat, passion, and hope. He wrote, “It makes me leap for joy to anticipate what pastoral work, when it is well-organized, can produce. Truly, my brothers, you are privileged in such a work.”⁶² Baxter’s private ministry of catechizing was well organized and used by him to evaluate, explore, and develop the spiritual condition of his parishioners.

To put his strategy into practice Baxter and his assistant devoted two days of each week for visiting between fourteen and sixteen families in the parish. According to Beougher, “He devoted Monday and Tuesdays to catechizing. He thus was able to see about 16 families per week and was able to cover the entire parish in a year.”⁶³ Kemp quotes Baxter as saying:

Two days every week my assistant and I myself took 14 families between us for private catechizing and conference. The assistant, in calling from house to house, delivered a copy of the catechism to every family personally and urged them to read, mark, and learn, and he reminded them that in six weeks he would call again and carry out the questioning, taking special care to deal with every one.⁶⁴

During the meetings, the family members would be questioned and counseled based upon the contents of the catechism.

⁶¹Ibid., 107.

⁶²Ibid., 105.

⁶³Beougher, *Baxter and Conversion*, 136.

⁶⁴Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 33-34.

It seemed as though virtually everything in Baxter's ministry hinged on his pastoral labors. According to Capill, "Baxter questioned the effectiveness of any preacher who did not pastor. He understood preaching to be an extension of pastoring."⁶⁵ He actually viewed his private pastoral labors as preaching itself. He writes, "I hope there are none so silly as to think this conference is not preaching. What? Doth the number we speak to make it preaching? Surely a man may as truly preach to one, as to a thousand."⁶⁶ Virtually every aspect of Baxter's pastoral ministry was viewed as preaching the gospel, whether it be from the pulpit, in the home, or in the context of a small group. The goal was evangelism. Packer wrote, "Personal catechizing and counseling, over and above preaching is every minister's duty: for this is the most rational course, the best means to the desired end. So it was in Baxter's day."⁶⁷ The desired end was the conversion of sinners.

Small Groups

Another method Baxter utilized to get the Word of God before his people was the small group. According to Kemp, "He also supplemented his other work by public meetings which can rightfully be classed as pastoral work. Every Thursday evening his parishioners were invited to his house to discuss the sermon of the previous Sunday."⁶⁸ Aware of how swiftly the seed of God's Word is often snatched away from the hearers, the follow up meetings in Baxter's home reminded his hearers of the content of the

⁶⁵Capill, *Preaching with Spiritual Vigour*, 64.

⁶⁶Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 228.

⁶⁷Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 307.

⁶⁸Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 38.

message and also afforded them the opportunity to have any of their questions addressed. By taking the time to reinforce the doctrine conveyed through the public teaching of the Word, Baxter was further solidifying his message in the hearts of his hearers.

The Thursday evening meetings were not the only occasions Baxter addressed smaller groups from among the people. Packer wrote, “He held a weekly pastor’s forum for discussion and prayer.”⁶⁹ According to Beougher, “He held classes for the youth in his parish, and put them through carefully graded stages of instruction.”⁷⁰ Apparently Baxter utilized a step by step discipleship program that he implemented among the younger generation in his parish. It seems that Baxter took advantage of as many avenues as he could to lead his flock along the path of discipleship.

Church Discipline

Discipline was a vital part of Baxter’s revival ministry as well. He urged his people to love, reverence, read, study, obey, and stick close to Scripture. Out of that call to obedience came discipline. According to Black,

Though he had found it to be the single most effective aspect of his ministry, Baxter was quick to acknowledge that catechizing would not be sufficient of itself to bring about the desired reformation of a parish. Baxter’s second request, therefore, urged the nation’s ministers unanimously to set themselves to the practice of those parts of Christian discipline, which are unquestionably necessary, and part of their work.⁷¹

Beougher writes, “Baxter admitted that if God had left it to his choice, he would preach each week and do nothing more. But as God had commanded ministers to

⁶⁹Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 304.

⁷⁰Beougher, *Baxter and Conversion*, 136.

⁷¹Black, *Reformation Pastors*, 86.

exercise discipline, he would gladly bear the scorn it brought forth.”⁷² A meeting was scheduled each month to administer church discipline. Kemp writes, “At this meeting those offenders against church morals who had been privately admonished but were still impenitent were publicly reproved before all.”⁷³ Baxter firmly believed that if churches are to be strong and faithful, vibrant and effective, there must be the practice of biblical discipline in which sinners within the church are called to account for their ungodliness. Therefore, the first Wednesday of every month he held a meeting for parish discipline.

The goal of these pastoral efforts was ultimately evangelism. Beougher writes, “What is the minister’s primary task? Baxter’s response was clear and concise: evangelism must be the first and greatest priority of the minister.”⁷⁴ Whether it was public preaching, private catechizing, small group discussions, or church discipline, Baxter’s primary goal was to ensure that his flock was made up, in its entirety, of sheep rather than goats. Evangelism was his first and greatest priority, and the first and greatest priority of his methodology of pastoral ministry.

Conclusion

Baxter’s pastoral ministry at Kidderminster is a model that can benefit, challenge, and encourage those involved in pastoral ministry today. Kemp wrote, “It is one of the most notable instances of pastoral work and success in all history. A transformation was wrought. It was a case where intense and laborious personal and

⁷²Beougher, *Baxter and Conversion*, 133.

⁷³Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 38.

⁷⁴Beougher, *Baxter and Conversion*, 99.

pastoral work was supplemented by devoted and earnest preaching.”⁷⁵ Baxter seemed to simply set himself to making disciples by every means available when he began his labors at Kidderminster, and God honored his labors.

Baxter’s method of pastoral ministry called for great sacrifice and effort. His preaching, disciplining, and regular small group meetings occupied much of his time. It was the catechizing however that cost him the most time and energy. He wrote, “I think it an easier matter by far to compose and preach a good sermon, than to deal rightly with an ignorant man for his instruction in the more essential principles of religion.”⁷⁶ Though personal work was taxing, Baxter believed that, in order for one to be a successful minister, he must pour himself into his people. He wrote, “A pastoral ministry will scarcely be successful if one is not doing his work heartily and faithfully so.”⁷⁷ In the view of Baxter, the pastor “must be willing to spend and to be spent for the sake of the church.”⁷⁸ In the midst of ill health and tumultuous times, Baxter laid down his life in order to call his parishioners to conversion and provide them a solid foundation to build upon.

He called other pastors to follow his example and reform their philosophy of ministry and methods of ministry. Baxter was supposed to deliver a series of lectures to the members of the Worcestershire Association; however, he was too ill to go. He

⁷⁵Kemp, *Pastoral Triumph*, 19-20.

⁷⁶Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 237.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 69.

gathered the material he had prepared and published his popular work: *The Reformed*

Pastor. Packer wrote,

On the title page of the original edition of Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*, the word reformed was printed in much larger type than any other, and one does not have to read far before discovering that for Baxter a reformed pastor was not one who campaigned for Calvinism but one whose ministry to his people as preacher, teacher, catechist and role-model showed him to be, as we would say, revived or renewed. The essence of this kind of reformation was enrichment of understanding of God's truth, arousal of affections Godward, increase ardor in one's devotions, and more love, joy, and firmness of Christian purpose in one's calling and personal life.⁷⁹

A reformation of the minister would likely renew the ministry. A renewed ministry could possibly serve as the catalyst for revival in the church. This is the reform Baxter, not only called for from fellow pastors, but made in his own life. It is a reform worth pursuing in the twenty-first century church.

⁷⁹Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, 26-27.

CHAPTER 4

A PASTORAL MINISTRY PROJECT THAT BEGINS TO MAKE DISCIPLES

Introduction

I began conducting my ministry project in October 2010. The project included several components. The first component was a pre-project survey which was delivered to two groups of ten individuals. One group served as a control group while the other group served as a test group. The second component was a weekly discussion forum held with the test group in order to challenge them with deeper theological truths and to answer any spiritual questions they might have, particularly questions related to the previous Sunday's sermon. The third component was a series of four sermons to which each individual test group member was asked to listen. These sermons helped prepare the individuals for the fourth component, which was a personal meeting with each individual member of the test group. Each member of the test group was instructed to study a series of questions and Scriptures for a six-week period during the project. The personal meeting with each test group member was scheduled in order to discuss those questions and Scriptures. The final component was a post-project survey which was delivered to the original control group and test group. The post project survey was identical to the pre-project survey except for two additional items. An identical survey allowed for a more accurate reading of change in the individual's spiritual growth.

Pre-Project Survey

I began the project by distributing a pre-project survey to two similar groups of ten people.¹ The first group, made up of 5 men and 5 women of varying ages, served as a kind of control group. Though this group was not strictly controlled, they were not subjected to the pastoral ministry implemented in the project. The second group, also made up of 5 men and 5 women of varying ages, functioned as the test group. The survey administered to these two groups served several purposes. One of the purposes of the survey was to gauge the individual's level of spiritual maturity, to the extent that spiritual maturity can be measured.

The survey began by asking the individual to indicate the number of days each week that he or she spends in study of the Word of God. The survey continued to inquire as to how many days each week the individual spends in prayer, in personal evangelism, and in living a godly lifestyle. The individuals taking the survey were instructed to give answers that reflect their current lifestyle pattern and not what they once did in their Christian walk. Nor were they to select answers that would convey what they aspire to accomplish someday. The first type of survey questions were intended to give as accurate as possible the number of days, on average, the individual spends in practicing basic spiritual disciplines.

The remainder of the survey consisted of a series of statements intended to explore how faithfully the individuals were applying biblical principles to their everyday lives. The intent of these statements was to reveal more of who the subject was than simply what he was doing. Statements were made such as "I look forward to spending

¹A copy of this survey is located in Appendix 1.

personal time with Christ,” “I sense conviction from the Holy Spirit when I sin against God or my fellow man,” and “I filter my thoughts and actions through God's Word.” The subject was asked to respond by circling never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always. I hoped that questions worded in this manner would help determine motives and heart condition, and not simply actions. The primary intent of the questions and statements contained in the pre-project survey was to help determine at the onset of the project the approximate level of spiritual maturity of the individuals involved.

A second goal of the survey was to establish a standard that could be used to measure any spiritual growth that may occur throughout the duration of the project among the two groups. The pre-project survey responses from the control group would be averaged to determine the approximate level of spiritual maturity in the lives of those involved at the beginning of the project. These averages were recorded to be compared with the post-project averages of the same control group. The pre-project survey responses from the test group were averaged as well in order to determine the approximate level of spiritual maturity among the members of the test group. These averages were recorded in order to be compared with the post-project survey results of the test group collected at the end of the project. By comparing the two averaged results from the pre-project survey, and the post-project survey any apparent spiritual progression or digression by either group could be noted.

A third purpose of the pre-project survey was to reveal the difference between the spiritual maturity of the control group and the members of the test group. Through the pre-project survey results, the average level of spiritual maturity and commitment could be compared between the two groups. Any difference between the two groups

would be noted and considered when the results of the post-project survey were averaged and recorded. Noting this information at the beginning of the project was important because the goal of the project was not to determine which group scored higher on the surveys, but rather which group appeared to progress the most according to the information discovered through the surveys.

Weekly Discussion Forum

Upon completion of the pre-project survey, the control group was dismissed to engage in their normal religious activities. Since the control group was made up of average church members, most of them regularly attended Sunday school, morning worship, and mid-week services for the duration of the project. The control group was not a traditional control group. Their normal activities were not restricted. No records were kept of the activities of the control group, nor did any of the members report on their activity. They were simply restricted from taking part in the pastoral ministry implemented with the test group.

The individuals who made up the test group also regularly attended Sunday school and morning worship. Instead of the normal midweek activities however, the test group met with me for a discussion forum. In this forum the message from Sunday was discussed, as well as deeper doctrinal issues that were not covered in depth from the pulpit. The weekly discussion forum was inspired by the pastoral ministry of Richard Baxter.

Baxter held weekly meetings in order to discuss with parishioners the sermon from the previous Sunday. According to Charles Kemp, "Every Thursday evening his

parishioners were invited to his house to discuss the sermon of the previous Sunday.”² Portions of the Sunday message could be developed further and applied more personally to his parishioners in this type of setting. The weekly discussion forum at Cleary Baptist Church was intended to do the same as well as address the deeper and more difficult doctrines of God’s Word.

In the small group, doctrines that were too difficult to cover thoroughly in a Sunday sermon were discussed. Most of the discussions centered upon the gospel, salvation, and the different doctrines that relate to salvation. For example, the doctrine of election and its objections was discussed. In this discussion we sought to answer from Scripture questions such as, if the doctrine of election is true, does this mean that some people are predestined to hell? How do we interpret Scriptures that clearly state God’s desire for all men to be saved? How does this affect our responsibility to respond in repentance and faith? How is the doctrine of election fair and if this doctrine is true, why should we do missions? The hour was spent answering each objection directly from Scripture.

Another discussion forum focused on the doctrine of regeneration. In this discussion we focused on the words of Jesus in John 3:3, “you must be born again.” We discussed what it means to be born again or converted. We were also warned of the danger of decision-ism and many of the popular evangelistic methods of modern Christianity. The next week we continued the discussion concerning salvation by focusing our time on the doctrine of sanctification. The small group meeting was primarily intended to help the members evaluate their own spiritual condition.

² Charles F. Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948) 38.

Other discussions centered on issues within the local church such as the theological importance of biblical, redemptive church discipline. One entire discussion forum was spent studying Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5. We discussed not only the purifying work of church discipline, but also the redemptive value it holds. Many believers who have strayed away from the church for a season could have been disciplined by their brothers and sisters in Christ and brought to repentance sooner. Included in this discussion was the importance of church membership and membership integrity. Another weekly discussion forum addressed the growing trend of age integrated ministry in the local church rather than age segregated ministries. The role that foreign missions should play in the local church was also discussed.

At other times during the weekly discussion forum, members of the test group would raise questions with which they were personally struggling. For example, one member asked what the Bible taught concerning divorce, remarriage, and the qualifications for leadership in the local church. The small group was an opportunity to answer these and more questions that the group members were struggling with.

Another purpose of the discussion forum was to give practical advice to the group members that they could apply in their personal walks with Christ. One discussion forum was spent teaching the group step by step how to pray biblically by following the model prayer given by Jesus in Matthew 6 and by praying the Psalms. Another discussion forum was spent instructing the group how to study the Word of God in its context. The test group was also encouraged to share their faith and given basic instructions on how to do so.

The Wednesday night discussion forum gave me an opportunity to challenge the test group to live a holy life and apply biblical principles to every area of their lives. The forum gave the individuals of the test group an opportunity to ask me specific questions, have a better understanding of the material covered on Sunday, be challenged to practice what they learned, and hopefully experience some level of personal spiritual growth in the process. In summary, the small group discussions served as an opportunity for me to invest fifteen weeks in the lives of ten individuals with the hope that they would experience some measure of personal, spiritual growth.

Public Teaching

A third component of the project was a series of four sermons that the test group was required to listen to, in addition to the normal Sunday message. The sermons were intended to clarify the gospel and help each test group member have a better grasp of his or her own salvation. They were also part of the preparation process for a later component in the project: the personal meeting. Finally, the messages were intended to solidify and clarify the topics discussed during the weekly discussion forums.

The first sermon I shared was an exposition of Genesis 3:1-21. The title of the sermon was “The Glory, Grace, and Gospel of God in Genesis.” This text is a picture of the gospel in the very first book of the Bible. The text reveals the fall of man from a position in a world that is perfect and good. God has placed Adam and Eve, who up to this point are sinless, in an environment in which disobedience and death do not exist. Due to their doubt of God’s Word and distrust of God’s character however, disobedience resulted. Mankind fell into sin.

The fall of man resulted in a fear of God. Due to their sin, the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened and they saw themselves in light of who they knew God to be. They saw their sin in the light of his holiness and they hid themselves in the garden because they were afraid of him. In spite of their attempt to hide from the presence of God, Adam and Eve were forced to face God and be sentenced to death. The fall of man is by far the saddest event in human history, because Adam, Eve, and all of mankind are left without hope.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is introduced in the midst of this hopelessness, guilt, and judgment. God promised that a deliverer would come who would crush the head of Satan. God foreshadows the way this would happen by killing an innocent animal and covering the nakedness of Adam and Eve. God clothed the naked, exposed, guilty, shamed sinner with a covering provided by the death of an innocent substitute. The first sermon listened to by the test group was a survey of the gospel. The sermon was intended to solidify the biblical gospel, for without a solid understanding of the gospel spiritual growth cannot take place.

The second sermon, a message gleaned from the first epistle of John, was entitled "The Final Exam." The purpose of this message, according to 1 John 5:13, was to help the professing believer examine their salvation based upon the Word of God. Throughout 1 John the professing believer is given several tests by which he or she can examine the validity of his or her profession of faith in Christ. These tests were the main points of the message. First, they were called upon to examine the lifestyle they practiced and their love of the brethren. Does the lifestyle they practice testify to the gospel impacting their lives? Do they love their brothers and sisters in Christ? Second,

the hearers were called upon to examine their priorities. What is really important to them? Who or what is their real master? Third, they were called upon to examine their perseverance. Are they continuing in the faith? Next, the test group was called upon to examine their peace with God. Has God given his Holy Spirit to them? Is there a conviction of sin, chastisement for sin, peace, and comfort given by the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual? Finally, they were called upon to examine their profession. Was their profession of faith biblical? Was it characterized by repentance, faith, and a transformational work of the Spirit in their lives? The second sermon the test group listened to was intended to help them examine themselves to see if the gospel had truly taken root in their lives.

The third sermon was an exposition of Hebrews 6:4-12. The title of the sermon was “Finishing Well.” In this text, the necessity of the ongoing work of sanctification in the life of the believer is revealed. The importance of finishing well is made clear. First, the hearer was informed that if they are to finish well, they must be deeply converted. The people described in verses 4 through 6 of the text had been enlightened, they had tasted of the heavenly gift, partaken of the Holy Spirit, tasted the Word of God, and the powers of the age to come, yet they were not converted. If men are to finish well, they must be deeply and fully converted in the beginning. Second, the hearer was informed of the importance of being fruit producing in the present. Those who have been deeply converted will produce fruit and be productive for God. Finally, the hearers were informed that they must be persevering until the end if they are to finish well. Those who are truly born again are those who persevere in the faith through sanctification. Perseverance in the faith and the evidence of sanctification in the life of

the professing believer gives evidence that one has become a partaker in Christ. This message was intended to help the test group understand that salvation is a walk with Christ, not just a decision that one makes.

The final sermon that the test group was required to listen to was an exposition of Matthew 18:15-20. The title of the message was “The Role of Redemptive Church Discipline in the Life of the Believer.” In this message, the purpose of dealing with sin in the life of the believer and in the church was addressed. The first purpose addressed was the purity of the church. We must deal with sin because Christ wants a pure bride. The second purpose of dealing with sin is the restoration of the sinner. The goal of discipline in the church is not to throw people out, embarrass them, or drive them away. It is to bring them back in. The purpose of dealing with sin is not to punish, but to restore. Finally, a purpose of practicing redemptive church discipline is the salvation of the lost. How can we shine as lights in the world, purify as salt in the world, and reach a lost world with the gospel of Christ if that world sees no difference in us?

If we preach against sin and do nothing about sin in our lives and churches, we lose integrity with God and with the world. Most of our churches are losing their integrity in this regard. According to Rainer, “The vast majority of churches in America today do not exercise church discipline. And yet moral failure is common among many members of evangelical churches. Even more common is the lack of commitment of other church members.”³ This message was intended to help the test group better understand redemptive church discipline and their responsibility in helping one another

³ Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 112.

persevere and finish well as professing believers. The test group was required to listen to these four sermons during preparation for a fourth component in the project.

The Personal Meeting

During the last six weeks of the project, each member of the test group was given a series of questions and Scriptures that they were to read, study, answer, and absorb. After the six week period of study, I sat down for an hour with each of the 10 members of the test group in order to discuss their studies. This component of the project was inspired by Richard Baxter and his method of counseling members one on one using a catechism as his guide.

Baxter would acquire and deliver catechisms to each household in his parish. He would return approximately six weeks later in order to test their understanding of the catechism. J. William Black quotes Baxter as saying, “After giving families six weeks to learn the catechism, the Clark goeth a week before to every family to tell them when to come. At the appointed hour, a family would come to Baxter’s house at which time they recited the catechism to us.”⁴ The goal of having this personal meeting with each member of his parish was not simply for them to learn theological truths through the means of a catechism, but to give Baxter an opportunity to inquire concerning their eternal state. The personal meeting and catechism gave Baxter an open door to analyze and question his parishioners concerning their personal spiritual condition.

The personal meeting component of the project was centered on a series of Scriptures and questions intended to facilitate spiritual reflection among the individuals

⁴Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph*, 84.

of the test group.⁵ While the questions were not a catechism like Baxter used, the intent was the same. The purpose of the Scriptures and questions was to have each individual test group member consider his or her spiritual condition. Baxter met personally with his members to go over the catechism for the purpose of helping determine the condition of their souls. Again Black records, “After that I first helped them to understand it, and next enquired modestly into the state of their souls, and lastly, endeavored to set all home to the convincing, awakening, and resolving of their hearts.”⁶ The goal of the meeting between Baxter and his parishioners was to first and foremost solidify their testimony of conversion.

Like Baxter’s parishioners, each test group member was given six weeks to consider the questions, study the Scriptures, and formulate his or her individual answers. They were instructed to learn the information provided in the guide. At the end of six weeks I scheduled one hour with each member of the test group to walk through the information previously delivered. The personal meeting gave me an opportunity to hear the testimony of each test group member as well as assess the spiritual condition of each one. Each hour spent in the personal meeting with the test group members followed the same pattern.

I welcomed each test group member upon his or her arrival to the personal meeting by inviting the person into my office and asking simple personal questions. I asked about family, job, and what he or she enjoyed doing during leisure time. The tone of the personal meeting was slightly different when I interviewed the women however.

⁵A copy of this document is located in Appendix 2.

⁶Kemp, *A Pastoral Triumph*, 84.

In those instances, I ensured that the office door remained open and that other staff members were present in the area in order to maintain integrity and accountability. After the individual had grown more comfortable with me, I turned to the information provided six weeks earlier and began to examine carefully the spiritual condition of each one based upon the Scriptures and statements provided in the document. We began by examining what the individual discovered about God in the Scriptures listed. We then turned the conversation towards ourselves and examined what the Scriptures taught concerning the sinfulness of every man and woman. We addressed each statement in the document and discussed what is hardest to accept concerning the sinfulness of man. The discussion naturally turned to the separation between God and man and then to the only hope of reconciliation: the gospel of Jesus Christ. We spent the remainder of our time together studying what our response to that good news must be and what changes the gospel will make in our lives. Finally, I sought to investigate the spiritual condition of each one and before concluding the meeting sought to reach a consensus with the individual as to the state of his or her soul. The intention of the personal meeting was primarily to come to a state of satisfaction concerning the conversion of each individual member of the group.

The personal meeting with each test group member could best be compared to the work of a doctor, lawyer, or teacher. Richard Baxter wrote, “A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be known as a counselor for their souls, as the physician is for their bodies, and the lawyer for their estates.”⁷ Each individual needs and demands personal work to diagnose the condition of his or her soul. Such work requires skillful spiritual investigation and counsel. Baxter wrote, “To this end it is very necessary that

⁷Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 96.

you be well acquainted with practical cases, and especially that you be acquainted with the nature of saving grace, and able to assist them in trying their state, and in resolving the main question that concerns their everlasting life or death.”⁸ The personal meeting with each test group member gave me an opportunity to do the work of a counselor and apply the Gospel to each of their lives individually.

Post-Project Survey

Following the final personal meeting with the last test group member, I distributed the post-project survey to the test group and the original control group.⁹ The second survey was identical to the first survey, with the exception of two added statements. I intentionally made the survey identical because I felt it was the best way to gauge the extent of the change that had taken place in the spiritual maturity of those involved in the project. Having an identical survey also helped me to determine if my pastoral ministry was more effective with the test group than the more common form of pastoral ministry that the control group experienced. The two additional statements were added in order to help determine two things.

First, the statements were added to help determine, with more certainty, whether any spiritual growth had occurred or not. Calculating the results of the pre-project survey, the post-project survey, and then comparing them would be helpful in determining if any spiritual growth had occurred, however certain factors could skew the

⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁹A copy of this survey is located in Appendix 3.

results. For example, an individual could have had a higher self esteem during the pre-project survey than he or she did during the post-project survey even though, during the post-project survey they were closer to God. The opposite is true as well. An individual could have felt better about himself or herself during the post-project survey than he or she did during the pre-project survey and therefore score higher on portions of the survey even though the person was not necessarily more spiritually mature at the time. A risk existed that a person's survey numbers would reflect something different than what actually occurred in his or her life.

Adding a statement that asked the individual to estimate his or her level of spiritual growth over the fifteen weeks, allowed the individual to express what they believed they had experienced, in addition to what the prior survey questions revealed. Each individual could estimate their spiritual growth over the ministry project to be none, little, average, above average, or transformational. The personal estimate of each individual could then be considered along with the survey results in order to more accurately determine if any spiritual growth had occurred and if so, how much.

A second statement was added to help gauge what factors played a role in any spiritual growth that was experienced in the lives of the two groups. The individual was able to indicate what component had the most influence on any spiritual growth experienced. They could choose from corporate worship, Sunday school, pastoral discipleship, trials, or other. Individuals could have faced trials that drove them closer to God throughout the project. They could have experienced God in a more personal way in their corporate worship or Sunday school class and thus experienced spiritual growth. Any number of events or experiences could contribute to their growth. By giving the

individuals an opportunity to select pastoral discipleship from the choices, I was better able to determine if the pastoral ministry project played a factor in their spiritual growth. Without this added statement the spiritual growth that occurred could be attributed to any number of factors unrelated to the project.

Conclusion

The final phase of my project involved gathering all the data and evaluating the results. I evaluated the results of the pre-project survey and drew some basic conclusions. I then evaluated the post-project survey and drew some basic conclusions. I then compared the results of the two surveys to determine to what extent the individuals in each group experienced spiritual growth, if any. I determined how much spiritual growth each individual estimated experiencing and considered it along with the survey results. I also noted the primary factor they attributed that growth to. Finally, I reviewed the stated goals of my project in light of all the data to determine to what extent I reached my goals.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

This project encompassed several different aspects of research and work. In addition to biblical research to determine what the Bible has to say about the responsibilities and priorities of the pastor, I also examined the pastoral ministry of sixteenth-century Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter. In the project itself I sought not only to implement a biblical pastoral ministry, but also to develop a method of pastoral ministry based upon Baxter's example. This chapter presents an evaluation of the purpose of this project. The purpose is evaluated by examining the pre-project and post-project survey data collected in the course of conducting the project. This chapter goes on to present an evaluation of my stated goals for the project and an evaluation of the methodology used in the project. The strengths and weaknesses of the ministry project are reported as well as a number of theological reflections on the project. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection and some final conclusions drawn from the ministry project.

Evaluation of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to design a biblical pastoral ministry that begins to develop maturing disciples. In order to determine if this purpose was accomplished, and to what extent it was accomplished, a pre-project survey and post project survey were given to two groups of ten individuals. The data from both surveys

was analyzed and some conclusions were drawn. The results of the control group's surveys were then compared to the results of the test group's surveys in order to determine if the stated purpose of the ministry project was achieved.

Pre-Project Survey

The pre-project survey that was administered to the ten people that made up the control group and the ten people that made up the test group provided some insight into their levels of spiritual maturity, to the extent that spiritual maturity can be measured. The pre-project survey was made up of twenty-seven questions. Each answer given was recorded with a number between 0 and 7. The first 8 questions were answered by the subjects indicating the number of days they were involved in spiritual disciplines or activities. The questions covered such spiritual activities as personal quiet time, Bible reading, prayer, and personal evangelism. The subject was to indicate how many days each week they practiced these activities by circling the appropriate answer between zero and seven.

The remaining 19 questions were based less on the activity of the individuals and more on their motives. For example, question 13 states, I look forward to spending personal time with Christ. Questions such as these were intended to reveal the motives and heart condition of the individuals. After all, the subject could practice a quiet time every day of the week, but if they carried out this activity based solely on duty with no desire to encounter Christ, they would be Pharisaical rather than spiritual. The subject was asked to respond to the last 19 questions by selecting never, seldom, sometimes, often, or always. Each response was given a numerical value between 0 and 7 and appropriately recorded.

The question that received the lowest response from both the control group and test group was question 4: How many days each week do you currently share your faith with non-believers? The average response from the control group was 2 days each week, while the test group averaged only 1.5 days each week. The highest response from the control group differed from the highest response from the test group however. The control group scored highest on questions 3, 15, and 20. These three questions related to frequency of personal prayer, conviction of sin, and personal integrity. The average response from the group for all three questions was 6.4, or almost every day of the week. The highest score for the test group was for statement eighteen which indicated how often the subjects trust Christ to help them through the problems and trials of life when they arise. The average for the group was 6.6 or slightly more than six and a half days each week. The average score for the entire survey by the control group was slightly higher than the average score for the entire survey by the test group. The control group scored 5.174 on a scale of 0 to 7 while the test group scored 4.659 on a scale of 0 to 7 on the same survey. These numbers served as a starting point for me to evaluate any spiritual growth that occurred in the lives of individuals from both groups through the duration of the ministry project.

Post-Project Survey

The post-project survey was the same as the pre-project survey, with the exception of two added items. Comparing the surveys allowed me to identify areas where positive change had taken place as well as estimate the amount of spiritual growth in each group. The area that the control group improved the most in was the area of personal evangelism. In the pre-project survey, the control group averaged 2 days each

week sharing their faith with non-believers. In the post-project survey, they averaged 3 days each week. The control group showed very little variation in the remainder of their responses. The test group improved the most in the amount of time they prayed for non-believers increasing on average 1.6 days each week. It was interesting to note that the test group showed improvement in every area except for personal evangelism, persevering through trials, and being intentional about maintaining relationships with non-believers and un-churched individuals. The decrease in these areas was minimal.

Two items were added to the post-project survey. The first item read as follows: How would you estimate your spiritual growth over the past fifteen weeks? The subjects could indicate the amount of their spiritual growth by selecting one of the following responses: none, little, average, above average, or transformation. This question was intended to either provide support for, or contradict the results of the remainder of the survey. It was intended to be another approach to discover each individual's spiritual growth through the project.

The response above average was chosen by 60 percent of the test group, while only one individual indicated that their spiritual growth had been transformational. This finding is significant and the responses on the survey overall would seem to support the fact that some growth was experienced by the group. The control group indicated less spiritual growth in response to this question. While one individual from the control group did indicate that their spiritual growth had been transformational, only 30 percent of the control group indicated above average growth and one experienced only little. The responses to the survey overall by the control group would support these findings.

The second item added to the post project survey read as follows: If you experienced any spiritual growth over the past fifteen weeks, what would you most attribute that growth to? The subjects were asked to respond by circling one of the following responses: corporate worship, Sunday school class, pastoral discipleship, trials, or other. This question was intended to reveal the primary reason for any growth that occurred in the lives of the subjects. By allowing the individuals an opportunity to identify the cause of any perceived spiritual growth, I was better able to determine if my pastoral ministry project was responsible for the growth, or if some other factors influenced their growth. The response pastoral discipleship was chosen by 70 percent of the test group and is significant because the responses indicate that the spiritual growth experienced was, at least in part, a result of the ministry project.

A comparison of the pre-project survey and the post-project survey gave the indication that the test group likely experienced more spiritual growth than the control group, though any change that did take place was minimal. Based upon the findings of the surveys, the purpose of the ministry project was achieved, at least to an extent. A biblical pastoral ministry was developed. Based upon the data collected, some growth likely took place among the test group, thus indicating that the ministry was successful at beginning to make maturing disciples.

Evaluation of Goals

My first goal for this project was to gain an accurate understanding of the biblical ideal for pastoral ministry. Three separate texts from God's Word were examined in order to demonstrate the biblical duties and expectations of the pastor. Paul's parting address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:18-28 was examined along with

his counsel to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12-16. 1 Peter 5:1-5 was also examined in order to understand what the apostle Peter viewed as the pastor's priority. In these three passages of Scripture, two recurring themes appeared as the role and duties of the pastor were considered. First, a repeated call to personal integrity was issued. The pastor must take heed to himself. Furthermore, throughout the Word there exists a repeated call to the pastor to invest himself in the Word of God, prayer, and the people of God. The biblical responsibility of a pastor, as described in these passages of Scripture, is in its simplest form to take heed to his self and to the flock of God assigned to him. Through my study of the biblical ideal of a pastoral ministry, I have been challenged to be more than simply a preacher of the Word. I have been challenged to be a shepherd of God's people. I have been burdened as I have come to realize the gravity of caring for the flock of God. I have been humbled as I have realized my responsibility before God for taking heed to myself and the flock he has assigned me.

My second goal for this project was to gain an understanding of the pastoral ministry of Richard Baxter. First, the life and ministry of Richard Baxter were introduced with a brief biography. It was inspiring to understand more of his background, the context in which he ministered, and the fruit produced through his ministry. Second, Baxter's philosophy of pastoral ministry was explained. His philosophy of ministry could be summarized as simply taking heed to oneself and to the flock God has assigned to him. Finally, Baxter's method of pastoral ministry was described. His method included catechizing, small groups, preaching, and church discipline. Studying the life and ministry of Richard Baxter has challenged me, possibly more than anything else in some time. The seriousness with which he took his calling as

well as the energy he poured into shepherding his people served as a reminder of my responsibility as pastor.

The third goal of this project was to personally shepherd a group of individuals for the duration of the project by designing a pastoral approach, based upon the findings of my study of the Scripture and upon the example of Richard Baxter. The first component of the project was a pre-project survey which was delivered to a control group and a test group. The second component was a weekly discussion forum inspired by the small group ministry of Richard Baxter. The discussion forum was held with the test group each week in order to challenge them with deeper theological truths and to answer any spiritual questions they had, particularly questions related to the previous Sunday's sermon. The third component was a series of four sermons that each individual test group member was asked to listen to in order to help prepare for the fourth component, which was a personal meeting with each member of the test group. The personal meeting component of the project was inspired by the catechizing ministry of Baxter. The final component was a post-project survey which was delivered to the original control group and test group.

The final goal of the project was to determine the effectiveness of the newly developed pastoral ministry. A comparison of the pre-project survey and the post-project survey indicates that the test group likely did experience more spiritual growth than the control group. The pre-project survey revealed that the spiritual maturity of the average control group member was 5.174 on a scale of 0 to 7 at the beginning of the project. The post-project survey revealed that the spiritual maturity of the control group increased only .007 points to 5.181 on a scale of 0 to 7, indicating virtually no change.

The test group, on the other hand, experienced some measurable growth, to the extent that spiritual growth can be measured. The pre-project survey revealed that the spiritual maturity of the average test group member was 4.659 on a scale of 0 to 7 at the beginning of the project. The post-project survey revealed that the spiritual maturity of the test group increased 0.389 points to 5.048 on a scale of 0 to 7. While the overall score of the test group was lower at the beginning and end of the project than the overall score of the control group, the test group did show a more significant increase in perceived spiritual growth through the duration of the project.

Evaluation of Methodology

The first step in the ministry project was the pre-project survey delivered to a control group and test group. The survey accomplished its purpose because it gave me an idea of where the members of the test group stood spiritually in comparison to the control group. The survey also established a starting place for my small group lessons to follow. For example, knowing that the individuals all struggled with personal evangelism helped me to see that I needed to focus some small group time on how to share the gospel and call people to salvation. Most importantly, the survey provided a starting point that enabled me to determine if any change had occurred, and if so, how much. It enabled me to compare the two surveys and therefore determine if, on average, the group improved, stayed the same, or declined in their spiritual walk.

The weekly discussion forum was an important element of the project because it gave me an opportunity to dig deeper into doctrine and explore the group's reaction to potentially controversial changes and reforms within the church. The public teaching component of the project was important because it was another avenue to call the people

to examine themselves and their religious convictions. The personal meeting was possibly the most important component of the project. The personal meeting was an opportunity to explore the spiritual condition and convictions of each individual test group member. I was able to sit down one on one with each test group member to clarify any misunderstandings or questions that he or she might have. I spent approximately an hour in my office addressing the spiritual condition of each man in the test group. I followed the same pattern with the women except, in the case of the women, another staff member was always in the office area and my door remained open in order to maintain integrity.

The final component of the project was the post-project survey. This survey was an extremely important and necessary part of the project methodology. The post-project survey provided data to record and compare with the data recorded from the pre-project survey. Without this survey, it would be impossible to measure and compare the amount of spiritual growth and change that occurred among the two groups.

Strengths

To begin with, the pre-project survey was very helpful. Determining the level of spiritual maturity of an individual, especially through a simple survey, is difficult however. Based solely on the surveys and the nature of the answers, a Pharisee likely could have achieved a perfect score. True spiritual maturity is indeed challenging to measure; however, the data gave me an approximate idea as to the spiritual maturity of those who made up the control group and the test group. The weekly discussion forum gave the hearers an opportunity to interject ideas and ask questions. It also gave me an opportunity to be in regular personal contact with them. The main strength of the public

teaching component of the project was the fact that the messages assigned to the group were in addition to the Sunday message, and therefore could be tailored specifically to the needs of the group at the time. The messages that were required were specifically tailored to reinforce and lead into the personal meeting component of the ministry project.

The personal meeting was one of the strongest components of the project. Spending an hour with each individual test group member was extremely beneficial. This time was effective at clarifying material and examining evidence of the individual's conversion. Finally, the post project survey enabled me to determine the results of the project. The post-project survey was identical to the pre-project survey except for two additional items. The fact that the majority of the survey was identical was important because it allowed for a more accurate depiction of change. The two additional items were important because they helped determine if change had really occurred, and if so how much.

Weaknesses

As the ministry project unfolded, several weaknesses were discovered. I could have added a few items to the pre-project survey, and it would have proven even more helpful. For instance, it would have been helpful to have the individuals indicate on a scale of 0 to 7 how spiritually mature they believed they were. Again, this data would be subjective rather than objective; however, by combining a response to this statement with the remainder of the survey the results of both the pre-project survey and post-project survey could be more solid. Also, incorporating some method of determining how spiritually mature their peers perceived them to be would also be helpful. A series of

open ended questions would have enabled the subjects to reveal their hearts more than the simple 0 to 7 scale alone.

The small group discussions were good, but could have been better. If I had provided an outline and study guide for the test group members to use as they listened to each Sunday's sermon, further study could have been facilitated. Furthermore, the small group discussions would have benefited because participation by the test group would have likely increased with a guide. Finally, the discussions that did take place in the weekly discussion forum would have likely remained more in line with the sermon from Sunday if such an outline and study guide had been provided. Instead, many of the weekly discussions were random and disjointed.

The personal meeting could have been better as well. I spent the bulk of the project simply preaching and leading the test group in the weekly small group discussion. Six weeks prior to the conclusion of the project, I provided the test group with the information to study and prepare for the personal meeting. The personal meeting took place at the conclusion of the fifteen-week project and was promptly followed by the post-project survey. I believe the personal meeting would have been better if the information used to prepare for the personal meeting had been delivered at the beginning of the project and the personal meeting had taken place six weeks into the project instead of at the end. This would have allowed for the information to be considered some time before taking the post-project survey. I fear that by administering the post-project survey so quickly behind the personal meeting, the subjects were not given time to absorb the information and experience as much spiritual growth as would have been possible otherwise.

The post-project survey was the most valuable source of data I gathered. The post-project survey let me gauge how much of a change had taken place in the spiritual maturity of both the control group and test group and how those changes compared. Except for two items being added, the post-project survey was identical to the pre-project survey. Using two virtually identical surveys is one aspect of the project that I definitely would not change. Using two totally different surveys would have made it very difficult to measure how much change, if any, had taken place in specific areas.

Theological Reflection

After conducting this project, I am more convinced than ever of its value. With so many plans and programs available today that are intended to maximize the ministry of the local pastor, it is important for us to understand what God expects and does not expect from the pastor. With so many people appealing for the pastor's time, it is liberating to have a clear understanding and reminder of God's priorities for the pastor. The expectations placed upon the pastor vary from congregation to congregation and from member to member, and sadly those expectations are often not associated with spiritual work or disciple making. Clarifying the biblical expectations for the pastor is encouraging. This project has served to magnify both my role and my priorities.

As the biblical expectations for the pastor have been discovered, I am much more aware of the seriousness of the pastorate and the responsibilities of the pastor. While the priorities of a pastor are indeed prayer and the ministry of the Word, it has helped me personally to be reminded that it is also his priority to take heed to the whole flock of God in his care. A study of the pastoral ministry of Baxter magnified the grave responsibility of shepherding the flock of God. God has used this project to provide me

understanding and conviction about being personally involved with each member of the congregation I serve.

It has been made clear to me, through the duration of this project, that the benefits of pastoral ministry are many. The productivity of preaching is increased by personally investing in members individually. Furthermore, by investing a season of time in a small group, and an hour in each individual member of the group, reforms in the church are more effectively made. As individuals understand and embrace the vision of the church, they will change and also support and initiate changes in the church. The value of personal work and investing in small groups within the church has been magnified through this ministry project. Due to the changes in my own ministry, owing largely to the influence of Baxter and the experience of this project, changes are being made in the church that do and will affect the kingdom.

Personal Reflection

As I reflect upon this ministry project, several questions have arisen concerning the most popular methods of pastoral ministry today and their effect upon the health and growth of the church. It would be very interesting to see a report on the actual productivity of modern day churches that have produced large numbers through program driven ministries rather than people driven discipleship. Baxter placed a great amount of emphasis on personal work and personal disciple making. It would be interesting to see how fruitful the program driven church has been in producing true spiritual growth.

Another question that has arisen in my mind concerns the effectiveness of modern counseling methods. Have we oversimplified the gospel and the process of conversion? Do modern pastors understand how to effectively and biblically deal with a

soul? Through this ministry project, I was challenged each time I sat down with a test group member for our personal meetings. Though the questionnaire remained the same, each person was different, and each interview was unique. I learned firsthand the complexities of applying the Word of God to the lives of individuals who were from different walks of life and who were facing different challenges and trials in their spiritual lives at this time. I experienced firsthand the labor involved in personal counseling. In the words of Baxter,

Alas! How few know how to deal with an ignorant, worldly man, for his conversion! To get within him and win upon him; to suit our speech to his condition and temper; to choose the meekest subjects, and follow them with a holy mixture of seriousness, and terror, and love, and meekness, and evangelical allurements-oh! Who is fit for such a thing? I profess seriously, it seems to me, by experience, as hard a matter to confer aright with such a carnal person, in order to his change, as to preach such sermons as ordinarily we do, if not much more.¹

Through personally counseling each test group member, I came to understand more of what Baxter meant when he discussed the difficulties of personal work. The simplest thing to do would be to go through a checklist and have the subject pray a model prayer: however, what would be the most biblical way of dealing personally with individuals? Based on the experiences of the personal meeting component of the ministry project, I believe it would be beneficial to have a work devoted strictly to thoroughly, biblically, and effectively dealing with a soul. It would be extremely helpful to have a guide that provides real scenarios, biblical answers, and a plan to counsel people, not just to make a decision, but to understand and experience genuine conversion.

Another personal reflection initiated by the project is the critical importance of personal contact with the membership of the church. I am most comfortable when I am

¹Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 193.

on my knees in prayer, in the Word in study, or behind the pulpit to preach. It is work for me to sit down and personally interact with the membership. Though it can be burdensome to visit with individual members, this project has reminded me of the great importance of doing so.

Sitting down with the ten members of the test group individually and working with them through the Scriptures and material they were assigned was not only encouraging for me, but for them as well. I have been reminded of the importance of visitation for spiritual instruction. Mark Dever shared some hopes for his own life and church along the lines of pastoral visitation and personal ministry. He wrote:

Since coming to this church, I have personally interviewed all new members about their understanding of the Gospel and about their own testimony of becoming and being a Christian. I am now trying to have that conversation with all the members in the church. I am hoping to gain an understanding of these people that goes beyond what can be gained by the brief times I have with each of them—sometimes only at the church door on Sunday morning.²

Due to the information and inspiration gained through this project, I have implemented a personal meeting with each person who completes our new member class. I am also, working my way back through the membership to meet with current members as well.

The final personal reflection on the project may be the most inspiring. After digesting the life, ministry, and writings of Richard Baxter over the past few years my attitude towards pastoral ministry, my grasp of the process of salvation and conversion, and my ministry have been deepened. Baxter has inspired and challenged me in ways that few other men have done. His works have become a passion of mine. According to Mark Shaw, “Baxter’s library output was enormous. He wrote nearly 140 books and had

²Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 211.

sixty written against him, but those rather added to than diminished his reputation.”³

Baxter’s *A Christian Directory* was only written because of the urging of others, but is a masterpiece on Christian ethics. Shaw wrote, “He had been encouraged by the great Bishop James Ussher of Ireland to sum up the Puritan tradition of practical divinity.”⁴ He goes on to say, “Baxter’s writing is full of wisdom and prudent advice from someone who had studied the Bible and Christian writers with great care.”⁵ As one who has been consumed with a portion of the writings of Richard Baxter, I cannot recommend them highly enough. As I personally reflect upon the research and journey of this project, possibly the most life changing, ministry impacting portion of the project was reading about Baxter and works by him.

Conclusions

I draw three major conclusions from this ministry project. First, a successful pastorate must be personal. While it is tempting to pour the majority of our energies into the public preaching of the Word, I have concluded from the information learned in this project that the fruit of preaching will be maximized through personal work. While preaching is vital to the growth of the congregation, that growth will be minimal without personal one-on-one discipleship. Second, a deep and biblical conversion is the root of true spiritual growth. Richard Baxter had a grasp on biblical conversion and he had learned to examine the soul based upon what he had learned. In the twenty-first century

³Mark Shaw, *Ten Great Ideas from Church History* (Downers Grove, IL: Intersity Press, 1997), 98.

⁴Ibid., 98-99.

⁵Ibid., 99.

church, we desperately need to gain a biblical understanding of conversion and how to evaluate the spiritual condition of a soul. Third, I have concluded from this ministry project that spiritual conversations are important to have so that we understand our people and they understand our message.

In a day of technology, social networking, audio visual advances and an ever increasing multitude of methods, programs, and ministries a return to biblical pastoral ministry that begins to make disciples is essential. The pastor must be more and more transformed into a Christ-like shepherd who will lay his life down for the sake of the sheep. In the words of Jefferson,

Would you know, then, the work of a shepherd? Look at Jesus of Nazareth, that great Shepherd of the sheep, who stands before us forever the perfect pattern of shepherdhood, the flawless example for all who are entrusted with the care of souls. I am the Good Pastor, he says, I watch, I guard, I guide, I heal, I rescue, I feed. I love from the beginning, and I love to the end. Follow me!⁶

Baxter sought to follow the chief shepherd in his method of shepherding and pastoral ministry. The twenty-first century pastor who endeavors to follow the pattern for pastoral ministry described in the Scriptures and exemplified in the life of Richard Baxter will be in pursuit of a worthy endeavor.

⁶Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 58.

APPENDIX 1

CLEARY BAPTIST CHURCH:
DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL PASTORAL MINISTRY
THAT BEGINS TO MAKE DISCIPLES
PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

Please complete the following assessment carefully and honestly by choosing the appropriate answer from those provided.

1. How many days each week do you currently practice a regular quiet time?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. How many days each week do you currently study the Bible?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. How many days each week do you currently have a prayer time?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. How many days each week do you currently share your faith with non-believers?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. How many days each week do you currently pray for non-believers?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. How many days each week do you currently make your faith known to your peers?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. How many days each week do you currently live in such a way that your commitment to Christ is clear?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. How many days each week do you live in such a way that your commitment to the Great Commission is clear?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. How often do you experience life change as a result of corporate worship experiences?
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

10. How often do you contribute time to a ministry at the church?
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
11. I sacrificially contribute my finances as a tithe offering to my church.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
12. I sacrificially contribute my finances to help others in my church and community.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
13. I look forward to spending personal time with Christ.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
14. I seek Christ's guidance when making decisions in life.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
15. I sense conviction from the Holy Spirit when I sin against God or my fellow man.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
16. When the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin, I repent and strive to forsake my sin.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
17. My priorities demonstrate a passion for God's kingdom rather than my own.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
18. I trust Christ to help me through the problems and trials of life when they arise.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
19. When trials come, my faith in God perseveres.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
20. I am the same person in public that I am in private.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
21. I filter my thoughts and actions through God's Word.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
22. My prayers include worship, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and requests.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
23. I spend as much time listening to God as talking to Him.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
24. I have a prayerful attitude throughout each day.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

25. I forgive others when they harm me or those I love.

Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

26. I am willing to admit my offenses in relationships and seek forgiveness from the one I have offended.

Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

27. I intentionally form and maintain relationships with non-believers and un-churched individuals in an attempt to lead them to Christ.

Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

APPENDIX 2

PERSONAL MEETING PREPARATION GUIDE

Please carefully study the following scriptures, reflect upon the following statements, and answer the following questions in preparation for a personal meeting with the pastor in six weeks.

1. What are the three most prominent things the following verses reveal to you about God? Rev 4:2-11, Isa 6:1-5, Hab 1:13
2. Consider the following statements about man and answer the questions below.
 - a. Man is totally wicked and sinful: Gen 6:5, Eccl 7:20, Rom 3:10-12, Rom 3:23
 - b. No matter how “good” of a person we are, we are still wicked in God’s holy eyes: Rom 3:10-12, Gal 3:10
 - c. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners: Mark 7:21-23, Jer 13:23
 - d. What of these statements and verses is hardest to accept and what if any of these Scriptures and statements do you disagree with?
3. If what you have read about God and man above is true, then there is a definite separation between God and mankind. How can God and man be reconciled? Rom 5:10-11, Col 1:21-22, John 14:6, 1 John 4:10
4. How does mankind experience reconciliation? What is the way of salvation? Mark 1:14-15, Acts 26:16-20
5. What does it mean to repent or turn away from sin?
 - a. We must recognize and confess that we are guilty of personal sin: Rom 7:18, Rom 3:23
 - b. There must be a genuine sorrow for and hatred of sin: 2 Cor 7:9-10
 - c. There must be a purpose to forsake sin: Isa 1:16, Isa 55:6-7

- d. Summarize repentance in your own words.
6. What does it mean to believe or turn to God?
 - a. To believe means more than to simply believe in Jesus: James 2:19
 - b. Do you think the demons believe in the existence of God more than us or less than us?
 - c. Believe means to commit, trust, and obey.
 - d. What does the person who believes in the Son have according to John 3:36?
 - e. What does the person who does not obey experience?
 - f. Is there any difference in believing and obeying in the context of this verse?
 7. When a person is born again, what are some works that prove biblical repentance has taken place?
 - a. Our lifestyle will change: 2 Cor 5:17, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 3:6-9, Rev 21:7-8, 1 Cor 6:9-11
 - (1) Do the Scriptures you just read point to a decision or a lifestyle for evidence of salvation?
 - (2) According to the following parable and scripture, what gives the most evidence of salvation: the profession or the action?
 - (3) Matthew 21:28-31, Matt 7:21
 - b. We will love our brothers and sisters in Christ: 1 John 3:10, 1 John 2:9-11, 1 John 3:14
 - c. Our priorities will change: 1 John 2:15-16, Matt 6:24
 - d. We will persevere in our walk with Christ: 1 John 2:19, Luke 9:62, Matthew 13:18-23
 - (1) What do these verses say about the one who makes a profession of faith, appears to begin the journey of faith, and responds to the Gospel invitation and yet permanently falls away?
 - (2) Consider the following verses as you consider the importance of persevering in the faith: Matt 24:13, 1 John 2:24

- (3) Based on these verses, what is the condition of one who permanently falls away from the faith?
 - (4) Is this a public falling away only, or could it be a private, secret falling away as well?
 - e. You will have peace with God: 1 John 4:13, 1 John 3:24, 1 John 5:10
8. The process of growth and transformation in a believers life can be referred to as a process called sanctification.
- a. Sanctification is to set apart to holiness and is a process: Heb 12:1, Lev 11:44, Heb 2:11
 - b. According to the following verse, who has Christ perfected for all time? Heb 10:14
 - c. According to the following verse what process are we saved through? 2 Thess 2:13
 - d. What are some evidences that you, as an individual, are persevering through sanctification?

APPENDIX 3

CLEARY BAPTIST CHURCH:
DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL PASTORAL MINISTRY
THAT BEGINS TO MAKE DISCIPLES
POST-PROJECT SURVEY

Please complete the following assessment carefully and honestly by choosing the appropriate answer from those provided.

1. How many days each week do you currently practice a regular quiet time?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. How many days each week do you currently study the Bible?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. How many days each week do you currently have a prayer time?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. How many days each week do you currently share your faith with non-believers?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. How many days each week do you currently pray for non-believers?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. How many days each week do you currently make your faith known to your peers?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. How many days each week do you currently live in such a way that your commitment to Christ is clear?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. How many days each week do you live in such a way that your commitment to the Great Commission is clear?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. How often do you experience life change as a result of corporate worship experiences?
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

10. How often do you contribute time to a ministry at the church?
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Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
18. I trust Christ to help me through the problems and trials of life when they arise.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
19. When trials come, my faith in God perseveres.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
20. I am the same person in public that I am in private.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
21. I filter my thoughts and actions through God's Word.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
22. My prayers include worship, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and requests.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
23. I spend as much time listening to God as talking to Him.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)
24. I have a prayerful attitude throughout each day.
Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

25. I forgive others when they harm me or those I love.

Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

26. I am willing to admit my offenses in relationships and seek forgiveness from the one I have offended.

Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

27. I intentionally form and maintain relationships with non-believers and un-churched individuals in an attempt to lead them to Christ.

Never (0) Seldom (1-2) Sometimes (3-4) Often (5-6) Always (7)

28. How would you estimate your spiritual growth over the past fifteen weeks?

None (0) Little (1-2) Average (3-4) Above Average (5-6) Transformation (7)

29. If you experienced any spiritual growth over the past fifteen weeks, what would you most attribute that growth to?

Corporate Worship Sunday school class Pastoral discipleship Trials Other

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ABSTRACT

DESIGNING A BIBLICAL PASTORAL MINISTRY THAT BEGINS TO DEVELOP MATURING DISCIPLES AT CLEARY BAPTIST CHURCH, FLORENCE, MISSISSIPPI

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This project is an attempt to design a biblical pastoral ministry that begins to develop maturing disciples. Chapter 1 defines the goals of this project as well as the rationale for the work.

Chapter 2 seeks to establish a biblical and theological basis for pastoral ministry. This is accomplished by examining three biblical texts related to pastoral ministry: Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 4:12-16, and 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Chapter 3 seeks to establish a model for biblical pastoral ministry by examining the life and ministry of Richard Baxter. A brief biography of Baxter is presented followed by a summary of his philosophy and methods of pastoral ministry.

Chapter 4 describes the biblical pastoral ministry that is developed and implemented in the lives of the people of Cleary Baptist Church.

Finally, in chapter 5, the results of the ministry project are revealed. These results demonstrate that measurable spiritual growth can be accomplished through a biblical pastoral ministry. The results also reveal that little if any measurable spiritual growth was achieved in the lives of those who were not shepherded through the pastoral ministry implemented through this project.

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