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SUPERVISING GIFTED PEOPLE:
A CONSIDERATION OF THE FIVEFOLD GIFTS IN THE
EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF MISSIONARIES

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SUPERVISING GIFTED PEOPLE:
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I dedicate this thesis to all those who are laboring for the expansion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, especially those serving cross culturally. It is my sincere hope that my efforts herein will be useful to all who supervise missionaries—may we strive to honor Jesus in our supervision of those whom the Father is forming into the likeness of His Son.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ACCSNT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament
<i>AF</i>	Kirsopp Lake, ed., <i>The Apostolic Fathers</i>
<i>ANF</i>	Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., <i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BAM	Business As Mission
<i>BCER</i>	Charles John Ellicott, ed., <i>A Bible Commentary for English Readers</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IMB	International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention
MBTI	Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Bible Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

PREFACE

For fifteen years, I have served as a cross-cultural missionary. Supervisors have come and gone over the years. Most of my experience with supervisors has been good, or at least average. It is rare to have an outstanding supervisor, though I am uncertain as to why.

For five years, give or take, I have supervised a few other missionaries. These men and women are my co-laborers, my friends, my brothers and sisters. I love them, and I want to see them thrive and succeed. I want to be more than an average supervisor for them. What do they need from me to excel in their service to our Great God and King? How can I be an excellent supervisor? I want to be the best supervisor they have ever had. Is this aspiration too high? I have not yet attained that goal. I have much more to learn.

This thesis has allowed me to focus my attention on the supervision of missionaries. Precious little is written about supervision. It seems everyone wants to write about leadership—the big picture. Leadership is important, for the big picture, the broad strokes. Supervision is the detail work, the nitty-gritty, the daily grind. How can missionary supervisors become excellent supervisors? I hope to shed some light on this subject.

I would like to express my gratitude to the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for providing a study stateside assignment during which I was able to undertake these studies. My gratitude extends to Saulo Xavier de Souza in Brazil, who recommended the YWAM model of supervision for my consideration. Shannon Ford, Pamela Weaver, and Lloyd Rogers offered helpful suggestions for relevant reading and research. Several people read early drafts and offered comments on content, flow of argument, and cogency—Shirley Meador and Chris Julian, thank you. I am eternally grateful for Russell Kyzar, who invested in my life as the best supervisor I

know. Thank you, brother. My gratitude also extends to David Sills, who guided me through this program of study and thesis writing. I am abundantly blessed to supervise several fine missionaries, mature men and women whole-heartedly pursuing the words, “Well done, my good and faithful servants.” I am grateful beyond expression for the sacrifices my parents, Don and Shirley Meador, made to provide for me an education in Baptist schools. Finally, I am blessed beyond comprehension to be the husband of Wendy Meador and the father of Ariana Meador. Thank you both for patiently loving me as I was buried under books to complete this program of study. I love you, Wendy, my beautiful wife, and Ariana, our sweet child.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will develop a conceptual framework of ministry functions commonly encountered in mission work. The framework will be loosely based on the Fivefold ministry (Eph 4:11), including administrators (1 Cor 12:28). After describing the ministry functions, this thesis addresses effective missionary supervision in relation to them. Before considering the five ministry functions, it is necessary to explain several foundational presuppositions. In order to understand God's original design for the fivefold ministry (Eph 4:11), it is essential to understand the NT reality of the church. Failure to understand God's provision of leadership for the NT church will blind the reader to its significance for the church today, as well as its importance to the missionary task.

Anachronistic misunderstandings about the church and her leaders obscure the vision of many. Briefly examining the NT concept of the local church, general ministry functions, and ministerial authority will prevent such misunderstandings. A cursory discussion of the missionary task is also necessary to clarify foundational presuppositions underlying this thesis. A common understanding of essential concepts will aid the reader in understanding missionary supervision of the proposed ministry functions.

The Dual Reality of the New Testament Church

The leadership structure of the NT church is difficult to decipher. Some insist that the polity and leadership established in the first century church is lost. Augustus Nicodemus Lopes writes, "É praticamente impossível reavermos com exatidão o funcionamento prático do sistema de governo ou liderança que era exercido nas igrejas

cristsãs no período apostólico.”¹ Lopes reads Presbyterian polity back into the NT church, and, self-admittedly, cannot find it among the earliest Christians. He, along with many others, concludes that no one can understand apostolic church polity and leadership.

NT church polity is a puzzle. Each model of polity fits many pieces from the NT into their schema, but none has succeeded in getting all the pieces to fit. The reason for this inability is that they have the wrong picture on the box top. All current models of church polity were developed with a Post-Reformation or Post-Constantinian picture of church on the box top. Restoring the NT church to its rightful place on the box top will enable theologians to fit all the pieces together and solve the puzzle of the polity and leadership of the early church. However, the completed puzzle may be shockingly unlike the reader’s current ideas about church polity, ministry, and leadership.

The followers of Jesus met daily in the temple courts and daily from house to house (Acts 2:46). The NT church was the assembly of the followers of Jesus. Both the large group meeting in the temple courts and the small group meetings in homes were assemblies of the followers of Jesus. The church of the city or region was one reality of the church. Each individual house church within the city or region was another reality of the church. Both were fully and completely the local church. Paul confirms this truth in his epistle to the Colossians. Paul tells the Colossian believers to greet Nympha and the church in her house, which was in Laodicea. He also tells them to read the epistle he wrote to the Laodicean church (Col 4:15-16). I refer to this as the dual reality of the church in the NT.²

¹Augustus Nicodemus Lopes, *Apostólos: A Verdade Bíblica Sobre o Apostolado* (São José dos Campos, SP: Editora Fiel, 2014), loc. 2476, Kindle. My English translation: “It is practically impossible for us to reconstruct with exactness the practical functioning of the system of government or leadership that was exercised in the Christian churches in the apostolic period.”

²Due to the ministry of apostles to people groups, the dual reality can be expressed in terms of the church among a people group, as well as a city or region. In this thesis, references to the church of the city will include the possibility of a regional or people group focus for the church and the five ministry functions.

General Ministry Functions

Understanding the dual reality of the NT church, brings clarity to the functions of church leadership. God provided leaders for each of these church realities. He gave five ministry functions to the church of the city (Eph 4:11). Each of the Fivefold functioned as itinerant ministers within the city. God gave the overseers and deacons to the church in its house church reality.³ These local leaders were resident with the house church community—usually identified and chosen from within (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).⁴ Each type of leadership had its own primary sphere of operation, though each was interdependent on the other.

The five ministry functions are gifts given by God to the church.⁵ Some confusion arises in discussions of spiritual gifts as to whether the Fivefold are spiritual gifts. The Fivefold are not spiritual gifts.⁶ Paul distinguishes between spiritual gifts and ministry functions in 1 Corinthians 12:4-5.⁷ It is important to note that the Fivefold are not called charismata in the NT. There is a spiritual gift of teaching and of prophesying, but the NT never speaks of apostleship, evangelism, or pastoring as spiritual gifts. Fee explains, “Apostles and prophets, for example, would better be described as ‘ministries,’ whereas ‘prophecy’ itself is a *charisma*.”⁸ The Fivefold are ministry functions given by

³In this thesis, I will use the term “overseer” for the bishop and presbyter, as there is no conclusive functional distinction between the two in NT church leadership.

⁴Melvin L. Hodges, *On the Mission Field: The Indigenous Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 51.

⁵F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 345.

⁶William W. Combs, “The Biblical Role of the Evangelist,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 7 (Fall 2002): 31. See also Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*, AB 34A (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974), 435.

⁷Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 388.

⁸Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 587.

Jesus to the church, whereas the spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to individual believers. The manifestation of the spiritual gift of teaching or prophesying does not necessarily mean a person is a teacher or prophet in the Ephesians 4:11 sense of those terms. Scripture does not support the assumption that manifesting a spiritual gift automatically places a person in a corresponding ministry function in the church of the city.

Ministerial Authority

Ministerial authority within the dual reality of the NT church differs from the concept of ministerial authority developed at the time of Constantine (and in subsequent centuries). In the NT, the itinerant five ministry functions ministered within a house church network in a city/region or among a people group; they did not hold positions (e.g., senior pastor) in a single local church. In many churches globally, church leaders exercise authority within individual churches. Such churches today do not reflect the ministry functions of the NT church.⁹ Anachronistic misunderstandings here will hamper this study. If one accepts that the five ministry functions did not claim ministerial authority over disciples the way churches today exercise ministerial authority over their members the way opens to further explore the biblical implications of the Fivefold and the proposed ministry functions for mission work today.

One persistent issue is whether the Fivefold ministry were offices in the NT church. Schreiner states, “The English word *office* suggests an appointment to a certain position.”¹⁰ Given that the NT church was organic rather than institutional, positions as

⁹Albeit an imperfect example, an Associational Director of Missions is similar to the five ministry functions. The DOM has responsibilities in all the churches in the Association, but he does not hold an authoritative position in any of them. Consultants of Baptist State Conventions function in the same way—ministering to all the churches in the State without having positional authority in any local church. Rather than think of ministry positions like “Senior Pastor,” one should think of the DOM or these consultants when trying to understand the question of ministerial authority in relation to the Fivefold.

¹⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 356.

the church thinks of them today did not exist. Arnold explains, “[The Fivefold] are not elected officials, nor are they distinguished offices that one achieves after serving in a series of lower roles (such as in the Roman political system). They are roles fulfilled by people whom Jesus himself sovereignly chooses and enables for their service.”¹¹ If “office” communicates a regular ministry function to the citywide church, it is an acceptable nomenclature. If “office” communicates an authoritative position within a single local church, it misrepresents the Fivefold ministry.¹²

The Fivefold are ministry functions, not authoritative offices.¹³ Combs believes Paul described “individuals whose primary ministry can be designated and differentiated by the titles apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.”¹⁴ The church of the NT did not have a hierarchical structure with authoritative offices; the clergy-laity separation was a later development. God places people in the church to carry out specific ministry functions in order to develop a complete and healthy church; they are people gifted by Jesus to the church.

The Missionary Task

Understanding the missionary task should be easy. All missiologists and theologians read the same Bible and should come to a common and accurate understanding regarding the task God has given to the followers of Jesus. However, making the assumption that the task of the missionary is accurately understood is not advantageous. Hodges wrote, “If our goal is not clearly defined we may err in the choice

¹¹Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 255-56. The question is not whether some people were identified and elected to fulfill certain ministry functions within the NT, but whether those functions constitute authoritative “offices.”

¹²In order to avoid confusion, I will not refer to the Fivefold as offices in this thesis.

¹³Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Function or Office? A Survey of the New Testament Evidence,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 8 (April 1984): 25n47. In the descriptions of each ministry function below, the subject of authority is revisited.

¹⁴Combs, “Evangelist,” 34.

of methods employed and fail to realize the true fruit of our labors.”¹⁵ It is necessary to examine this subject briefly. The missionary task will be examined in more detail below.

Several different ideas about the missionary task exist. Some argue that the task is global evangelization. Others argue, “The purpose of missionary endeavor is to establish indigenous churches.”¹⁶ Some agencies, such as the IMB combine these two into one vision. A third expression of the task focuses on social ministries. In this thesis, I argue that the missionary task is global disciple-making (Matt 28:18-20).

For more than a century, missionary societies and mission sending agencies have promoted global evangelization as the missionary task. Much effort and energy is expended to track the status of global evangelization. However, global evangelism is only one part of the missionary task.

Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples. He only clarified this task by telling His disciples to baptize new disciples and to teach them to obey all that He commanded them. There can be no doubt that evangelism, proclaiming the Good News about Jesus, is a part of that task (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8). The Western penchant to separate and compartmentalize beliefs and ministry activities places a strong distinction between evangelism and discipleship. The two are not clearly distinct activities in the NT. They are not quite two sides of the same coin. Rather, evangelism should be understood as a subset of disciple making.

Two of the Core Values of the IMB serve to highlight this question.¹⁷ Their fourth core value is: “We seek to provide all people an opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the Gospel in their own cultural context.” Continuing, the fifth is: “We

¹⁵Melvin L. Hodges. *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 9-10.

¹⁶Hodges, *Mission Field*, 8-9.

¹⁷“Core Values,” International Mission Board, accessed February, 23, 2016, <https://www.imb.org/vision-and-mission/>.

evangelize through proclamation, discipling, equipping and ministry that results in indigenous reproducing Baptist churches.” Evangelism resulting in churches is the emphasis. Disciple making is relegated to an auxiliary role through which evangelism occurs. The subset becomes the major emphasis used to define the task. While the statement does not exclude disciple making, A.W. Tozer captured the essence of what occurs too frequently when evangelism, inappropriately elevated, becomes the focus. He wrote, “Everything is made to center upon the initial act of ‘accepting’ Christ. . .and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him, we need no more seek Him.”¹⁸ No missiologist or theologian would state such a misunderstanding of the missionary task. Nonetheless, in haste to evangelize, the task of disciple making is often left neglected and unfinished. Such mission agency values can derail the missionary from accomplishing the God-given task of making disciples.

Historically, many mission societies and sending agencies have failed to make disciples with tragic results. Sills observes, “But in the places where we simply evangelized and moved on without discipling and teaching, the forms of Christianity tend to be blended with traditional religions and definitely are not conducive to the future of a healthy evangelical Christianity.”¹⁹ To represent the Great Commission accurately such statements of vision, mission, and core values should reflect a commitment to making disciples through evangelism, equipping and ministry that results in indigenous reproducing churches.

Is this merely splitting hairs? No. The way an agency views the missionary task affects the way an agency views missionary deployment and the completion of the

¹⁸A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1982), 16.

¹⁹David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission: Responding to Global Challenges* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 194.

task. If the goal is seen narrowly as evangelism that results in church planting, a priority of deploying evangelists and pastors results. If the goal is seen broadly as making disciples, which biblically includes evangelism and church planting, but also requires relationships through which healthy disciples are made, the deployment of missionaries must include missionaries with ministry functions in roles suited to each facet of the task. God has supplied the church with people uniquely prepared for all the ministry functions necessary for the task of full-orbed disciple making. All of the ministry functions must be deployed if we are to complete the missionary task of making disciples of all peoples.²⁰

The mission sending agency's understanding of the time involved in missions commitment must also be guided by the missionary task. Each of the ministry functions has a specific role to play in making disciples of all peoples. All five are different, but interdependent. Each requires distinct missionary supervision. The five ministry functions will not complete their aspect of the task simultaneously, therefore each will have different exit strategies. The ministry functions are often neglected in mission strategy and supervisor training. Such neglect cannot continue.

²⁰God will provide some people with various ministry functions from within the harvest.

CHAPTER 2

THE FIVEFOLD GIFTS

The Fivefold are necessary for full-orbed disciple making. Paul introduces the Fivefold ministry in Ephesians 4:11-13. While he does not describe the individual functions, he states their purpose. He wrote,

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (NASB)

Jesus gifted these ministry functions to the church to prepare disciples for ministry.

Performing such ministry produces both maturity and unity in the church. Without all five ministry functions it is not possible to develop a complete and healthy church. For this reason, all five ministry functions are necessary to complete the missionary task.

Five ministry functions derived from the Fivefold are described in this section of the thesis. The five ministry functions commonly encountered in missions contexts are visionary strategist, church encourager, evangelist, pastoral caregiver, and teacher. The specific characteristics, unction and spiritual authority, and pitfalls or blind spots for each ministry functions are explained. Through these descriptions, identification of the specific ministry function of each missionary will be possible. Such identification of function will contribute to increased effectiveness in missionary supervision. The reader must know that any of the five may at times serve the Body through a different ministry function. Some overlap among the five occurs when gaps need to be filled, but working outside one's function does not carry with it the unction and spiritual authority of one's God-given function.

Common to the five functions is their equipping role within the network of churches within a city, a region, or among a people group. Due to this role, all five will teach others because equipping comes through teaching.¹ Nonetheless, not all five are teachers in the sense of that function. The five ministry functions also share two common areas of risk. Each of the five runs the risk of using their function in a way that does not equip believers for ministry. If one's ministry does not produce active ministers, one's ministry is not an equipping ministry. A second area of risk is pride. Paul warns against pride in Romans 12:3. His warning is vital for the five functions because they are interdependent functions. Ego is the death of the five ministry functions.

Visionary Strategist

Vision and strategy are a necessary part of missions in cities and people groups. The various churches, believers, missionaries and missions agencies need to work together under a shared vision and strategy to make disciples and plant churches in the target city or people group. Given the myriad denominations and theological variance, this may not always be possible. Nonetheless, to the extent which it is possible, collaboration must be pursued. Visionary strategists serve to develop a God-given vision and strategy for a city or people group.

Characteristics

By examining Scripture and the ministries of several men who I believe are visionary strategist, I have identified several characteristics that prove useful in identifying such strategists in the history of Christianity, as well as today.² Visionary

¹Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 276. See also, Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 298; Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*, AB 34A (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974), 436; David Tomlinson, "The Need for Wisdom in Building the Church," in *Apostles Today*, ed. David Matthew (West Yorkshire, UK: Harvestime, 1988), 71.

²Two visionary strategists with whom I worked are Daniel Allen, my first team leader in Brazil, and Valter Slengmann, a local pastor with whom I partnered in Joinville, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

strategists will express a specific type of calling, have a vision and strategy related to that calling, and sense a unique burden to fulfill it.

Calling. God calls the visionary strategist to minister to a people group or in a place. This calling is evident in Scripture. Paul, as an apostle, was the visionary strategist to the Gentiles (Gal 2:8).³ Peter, as an apostle, was the visionary strategist to the Jews (Gal 2:8). James, as an apostle, was the visionary strategist to Jerusalem (Gal 1:19). Church historians, in retrospect, refer to many historical figures as apostles due to their influence in spreading the gospel. It is often their vision and strategy fulfillment that is in view. However, not all such men bear the characteristics of apostles. Three men stand out, in terms of calling, as visionary strategist. Patrick was the visionary strategist to the Irish Celts. John Knox was the visionary strategist to Scotland. John Wesley expressed his calling as a visionary strategist to the whole world.⁴ Other examples exist, but this sampling is sufficient.

Vision and strategy. The apostle Paul had a clear vision of what the church among the Gentiles would look like. He also had a detailed and defined strategy of how to establish the church among his target people. God gave him this clear vision and strategic knowledge. He described both his vision and strategy, in part, in Romans 15:18-21,

For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO

³Andrew C. Clark, "Apostleship: Evidence from the New Testament and Early Christian Literature," *Vox Evangelica* 19 (1980): 53. Clark argues that Rom 1:14 indicates Paul's calling embraced the whole Gentile world.

⁴David Tomlinson, "Need for Wisdom," 66. Tomlinson believes John and Charles Wesley were an apostle-prophet team.

NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”
(NASB)

A detailed examination of Paul’s vision and strategy are beyond the scope of this thesis. By way of example, one aspect of Paul’s strategy bears mentioning. When Paul entered a new city, he usually began his ministry by going to the synagogue. In Philippi, where there was no synagogue, Paul began his ministry by the river, where he expected to find a place of prayer (Acts 16:13). One facet of Paul’s strategy was to begin where he was likely find people disposed to hear and accept the Good News about Jesus.

Today, the visionary strategists’ God-given vision and strategy serve as blueprints for the church in the city or among a people group. Any strategy of lesser scope may indicate that the visionary is not a visionary strategist. Miley writes,

The leaders we refer to have an unshakable sense of God’s call upon them. They are visionaries, but the vision they carry is God given and not from man. They are big-picture thinkers. They carry God’s message and are gifted by him to initiate new works, to lay foundations for these works, and to identify, develop, and release new leaders for these works.⁵

Most churches in the United States develop vision statements, though few have true serious intentions of extensive ministry beyond their own congregation—certainly not citywide disciple making. Having a vision or developing a vision statement does not make one a visionary strategist. Through this God-given vision and strategy, the visionary strategist understands how to guide the other four ministry functions most effectively to bring maturity and unity to the church in the city or among the people group. The visionary strategist’s vision and strategy will encompass the totality of the target people group or the entirety of the target city or region.

The ministry of the visionary strategist is not just for work among unreached people groups. The visionary strategist is necessary both among unreached people groups and unreached cities. Part of the ministry of the visionary strategist is to keep the

⁵George Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations: Pursuing the Role of Local Churches in Global Missions* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 84.

churches on task—focused on the task of making disciples. Many churches lose focus very quickly; they become inwardly focused. The visionary strategist is necessary to keep the vision of making disciples of all peoples before the church. Even among a people group or place where there are already many churches, the visionary strategist’s function is vital for having a healthy and complete church.

George Miley observes, “The God-given ability to lay foundations carries with it the ability to repair them.”⁶ Paul, along with Silas, laid the foundation and established the work in Ephesus. Later, he called the elders to Miletus to exhort them—a charge to diligently carry on the task he began—to shore up the vision (Acts 20:17-35). Even though the church was established and the house churches were functioning as the body of Christ, the Paul and Silas still had a function and role with the elders to keep them focused on the task of making disciples of the lost. He encouraged them to maintain an outward focus, not focusing solely on the needs of the believers. Such inward focus is detrimental to accomplishing the missionary task.

Burden. Paul lived with a burden for the lost. Whether Jew or Gentile, the lostness of those who had never heard the gospel drove Paul forward. Paul’s burden was not merely for the lost; he expressed an amazing burden for the churches he established. Paul’s prayers for everyone in all the churches reveal his burden for the saved (Phil 1:4; Eph 1:16). His compulsion to proclaim the gospel reveals his burden for the lost (1 Cor 9:16).

The visionary strategist will endure extreme situations for the sake of his people or city. Paul described some of what he endured,

To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are

⁶Miley, *Loving the Church*, 104.

slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. (1 Cor 14:11-13 NASB)

This describes the visionary strategist's tenacity in the face of suffering. Jones writes, "This is the apostolic heart – a single minded holding to the course without regard for personal welfare."⁷ Tenacity is not limited to visionary strategist, as others may be just as tenacious. The God-wired visionary strategist carries such a burden for his target people or target region that he will unrelentingly expend blood, sweat, and tears to fulfill the calling of God to make the Way of Christ known among them.

Unction (Spiritual Power)/Authority

The unction of the visionary strategist targets the expansion of the church. Miley observes, "Leaders called by God, gifted by him to initiate kingdom breakthroughs and empowered by the Holy Spirit, make kingdom expansion happen."⁸ The visionary strategist is God's anointed for this task, whether in a city or among a people group.

God designed the combined vision and strategy of the visionary strategist to keep the church focused on the task of making NT disciples, which results in a mature and unified church. Paul lived this out in his own life and ministry. When pondering the question of whether it would be beneficial to die and be with Christ, Paul concluded that it was more necessary to continue living so he could continue to make disciples (Phil 1:24-25). Zdero writes, "The combined efforts and skills of a web of house churches working together can propel it to movement status, something that an equal number of isolated house churches will have more difficulty accomplishing because of their lack of vision and resources and their tendency to scatter."⁹ The visionary strategist of the city or

⁷Bryn Jones, "Wise Men of Action," in *Apostles Today*, ed. David Matthew (West Yorkshire, UK: Harvestime, 1988), 52.

⁸Miley, *Loving the Church*, 83.

⁹Rad Zdero, *The Global House Church Movement* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2004), 107.

people group is the God-anointed vision caster who keeps the network focused on the vision.

The vision casting abilities of a visionary strategist are amazing due to the spiritual power God gives them in this area. In a short time, a visionary strategist can cast his God-given vision and people usually want to be a part of it. Sometimes people reject the vision, but they know they cannot remain neutral to it. In contrast, a teacher can explain the same vision clearly and everyone will understand the vision. However, they will not usually respond to the vision as a cast vision. The interdependence between the visionary strategist and the teacher is necessary as casting the vision and teaching its minute details are both necessary.

Visionary strategists do not have automatic authority. Interdependence characterizes the relationship between the visionary strategist and the other four ministry functions. Visionary strategists must also develop strong relationships with other ministry partners (missions agencies and churches) in the place God has called them to serve. These partners will wisely test the claims of visionary strategists before accepting the vision and strategy and partnering with them.

The visionary strategist is one who serves others, poured out like a drink offering, rather than lording his ministry function over others. His ministry function exercises spiritual and relational influence rather than organizational power.¹⁰ Miley writes, “There is no authoritarian role here, except the kind of authority that comes when others recognize God’s calling and gifting upon another and submit to the benefits thereof.”¹¹ His description of authority applies to all five of the ministry functions as they work in mutual interdependence for the equipping of the saints for works of service.

¹⁰Miley, *Loving the Church*, 118.

¹¹Miley, *Loving the Church*, 106.

Pitfalls/Blind Spots

The primary pitfall of the visionary strategist relates to his God-given vision and strategy. He sees what the body of Christ can and must become, but often focuses so much attention on what the future holds that he does not accomplish today the necessary tasks to bring the vision and strategy to fruition. He is dependent on the other functions to accomplish all that God has designed for the church. Nonetheless, living out that dependence does not always come easily. Communication and patience are necessary as all five work to equip the church God desires to establish through them among a people group or in a city.

Another pitfall for visionary strategists, also related to vision and strategy, is interpersonal relationships. The visionary strategist can focus so much on the vision and strategy that he does not “waste” time with those who do not immediately and directly contribute to the task. This may be what happened with John Mark. Ramsay proposed that one of the motivating factors behind John Mark abandoning the first missionary journey was Paul’s vision and strategy to reach the Gentiles.¹² Scripture does not clearly state John Mark’s motivation. However, Scripture does clearly state Paul’s disagreement with Barnabas about John Mark as they planned to embark on the second missionary journey. At that point, John Mark was of no use to Paul because he had proven himself unreliable in fulfilling Paul’s God-given vision and strategy to reach the Gentiles. Only later did John Mark become useful to Paul. If church tradition is correct, this usefulness came after John Mark carried the gospel effectively to Egypt, contributing to the fulfillment of Paul’s Gentile mission.

¹²Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 12.

Equipping

The visionary strategist possesses a blueprint for the citywide church or among a people (1 Cor 3:10). Much of his personal ministry focuses on vision and strategy. This begs the question of the equipping function of the visionary strategist. Two primary areas of equipping are identifying, developing, and releasing new leaders to fulfill the strategy and mobilizing prayer (derived from the burden the visionary strategist carries).

Leadership training is the bottleneck of any movement. Paul was constantly developing new leaders. Paul understood the ministry function of each one and encouraged them to fan it into flame (2 Tim 1:6). He also identified and acknowledged elders for the house churches, though he sometimes sent others to accomplish that task. The visionary strategist will also prioritize leadership development.

Paul also prayed intensely. He constantly taught prayer and encouraged believers to engage the Father through adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. The visionary strategist may not pass his burden on to others, but he has a strong desire to equip others to pray effectively for the people or place for which he has a burden.

The visionary strategist's equipping role is not limited to equipping future visionary strategist. All believers benefit from the equipping function of the visionary strategist. Without this equipping, it is not possible to have a complete and healthy church.

Church Encourager

Jesus gifts the church with Church Encouragers. This ministry function is vitally important because it edifies the community of believers.¹³ For this reason, it is also commonly encountered among missionaries.

¹³Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 257. See also Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 19.

The modern church encourager does not get *carte blanche* to speak his own opinions as messages from God. If a church encourager proves false, inaccurate, or unable to discern between God's message for the church and personal opinions, the church should ignore or shun him like the false teacher (2 John 10-11). All messages delivered to churches must be tested. Scripture is still the standard by which all are tested.¹⁴

Characteristics

The ministry function of the church encourager is primarily for the church. It is also possible for God to send a message to lost people through church encouragers. This is compatible with the way God worked through Daniel and Jonah. Whether proclaiming to believers or unbelievers, church encouragers are specialists in delivering messages from God.¹⁵

Paul said such messages serve to strengthen, encourage, and comfort the church (1 Cor 14:3). These three characteristics come when church encouragers “see facts in relation to God’s purpose and report that information in such a way that the church might be built up, encouraged, and consoled.”¹⁶ Jones adds, “They are there to give an understanding of the concept, purpose and will of God for the moment.”¹⁷ The ministry of church encouragers builds up the church (1 Cor 14:4-5). It is possible that this building up relates to strengthening, encouraging, and comforting. However, the building

¹⁴Arthur Wallis, “Apostles Today? Why Not!” in *Apostles Today*, ed. David Matthew (West Yorkshire, UK: Harvestime, 1988), 16.

¹⁵David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 198.

¹⁶Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 99.

¹⁷Bryn Jones, “Apostles and Prophets: What’s the Difference?” in *Apostles Today*, ed. David Matthew (West Yorkshire, UK: Harvestime, 1988), 109.

up of the church also includes numerical growth. The presence of church encouragers in the church is often a pleasant experience.

Sometimes the presence of a church encourager is not so pleasant. Church encouragers also applied divine truth to the spiritual necessities of men.¹⁸ This is when their messages get personal. When the people of God stray from the precepts of God, the church encourager call the wayward believers to repent and return to faithful obedience to the commands of Christ.

The overarching characteristic of the messages of church encouragers is veracity. Falsehood diametrically opposes encouragement. Church encouragers must always proclaim God’s message accurately. Church encouragers cannot deliver messages anonymously. The message always carries the name of the church encourager. Any church encourager who proclaims falsehood destroys his credibility and loses his voice in the church.

Unction (Spiritual Power)/Authority

The unction of the church encourager is manifest in receiving and delivering messages from God to specific people or to the church. Such messages will occur with sufficient frequency and accuracy that the person through whom God works becomes known as a church encourager. Jones describes the unction of the church encourager with these words, “when he speaks, he *inspires people to action*. The word he carries from God demands decision, action, change or adjustment. . . . Not only does he bring men and women to the point of decision; he also *communicates faith for action*.”¹⁹ The issues faced may be decisions in the church, sin in people’s lives, or social justice issues in the

¹⁸E. H. Plumptre, “Acts,” in *A Bible Commentary for English Readers*, ed. Charles John Ellicott (New York: Cassell and Company, 1905), accessed December 11, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/acts/4-36.htm>.

¹⁹Jones, “Apostles and Prophets,” 107.

city or people group. The church encourager will sound the message of God clearly and spur people to action.

The authority of the church encourager has limits. No one claiming to be a church encourager has automatic authority. The church encourager delivers a message from God. Like the watchman in Ezekiel, that is where his authority and responsibility end (Ezek 33:9). God uses church encouragers to bring things to our attention, but their messages can contain human interpretation and mistakes. The message of the church encourager is subject to judgment by Scripture according to Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14.²⁰

Pitfalls/Blind Spots

Confusion of God's message with their own thoughts and ideas is a foundational pitfall for church encouragers.²¹ This pitfall generates excessive abuse by church encouragers in some strands of Christianity. Since there is little church discipline against false messages, the problem goes unchecked. Where mature church encouragers do not recognize this error and mentor newer church encouragers there is little reduction in the degree abuse.

Equipping

Self-proclaimed church encouragers who speak some things of God and some things that are not of God show themselves to be immature, not able to discern the message of God from other thoughts. Such church encouragers appear to be like the double-minded man James describes or like one who has not offered himself a living sacrifice and transformed his mind—he is unable to proclaim consistently the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, confusing it with his own ideas. One cannot heed

²⁰Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 93-94.

²¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 258.

such a church encourager, as it will not be possible to know whether he is delivering a message from God or one from himself. He disqualifies himself from ministry. This very risk of self-disqualification shows the need for mature church encouragers to disciple younger, immature church encouragers, teaching them how to discern the message of God from their own thoughts and ideas. This type of mentorship existed between Elijah and Elisha (2 Kgs 3:11). Judas and Silas also ministered together (Acts 15:32).

Another aspect of church encourager equipping is the manner of delivery of messages. Church encouragers should speak with accuracy, their messages delivered in love. Wisdom and discretion are also in order. Mature church encouragers can equip newer church encouragers to deliver messages well.²²

Evangelist

Evangelism is also a ministry of proclamation—the proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ. The Ephesians 4 ministry function of the evangelist is not limited to the proclamation of the Good News, but includes equipping members of the body of Christ for effective proclamation as well. The Bible never speaks of a spiritual gift of evangelism given by the Holy Spirit to some believers and not to others.²³ All believers are responsible to proclaim the gospel message.

Characteristics

An urgency to proclaim the gospel to the lost marks the evangelist. His is a practical, rather than theoretical, conviction. The evangelist ministers among unbelievers to proclaim the gospel in a way that is relevant, even compelling them to repent. He feels that spending too much time with the saved is sinful because hell-bound people need to

²²Bill Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God: God's End-Time Plans for His Church and Planet Earth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1997), 141-42.

²³William W. Combs, "The Biblical Role of the Evangelist," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 7 (Fall 2002): 31.

hear the gospel immediately. For this reason, evangelists do not want to spend excessive amounts of time in the company of other believers—they prefer to be among unbelievers proclaiming the gospel.

Many evangelists focus so much on the basic message of the gospel that others consider them theological lightweights. They may personally have sound theology and deep theological understanding, but their urgency to share the gospel occupies the majority of their ministry, giving the impression that they know little beyond the basic gospel message.

Unction (Spiritual Power)/Authority

God hard-wires evangelists for the harvest. They proclaim the gospel with clarity and conviction. The evangelist is in tune with the Holy Spirit and can sense when He is moving to convict a person of sin and his or her need for repentance. In this moment, evangelists press for decisions. The evangelist among an attentive group of lost people works tirelessly even after other believers have reached the point of exhaustion. This is the unction of the evangelist.

The evangelist focuses ministry efforts outside the church. This makes questions of spiritual authority difficult to describe. He is usually on the short end of the authority stick. Because others often perceive the evangelist to be theologically shallow or excessively focused on matters outside the body, he experiences difficulty gaining a voice internally. However, in terms of accurate and culturally relevant proclamation of the gospel, the other four must hear his voice.

Pitfalls/Blind Spots

For cross-cultural evangelists, the primary blind spot lies in the contextualization of the gospel message. An evangelist will instinctually carry the gospel presentation that proved effective in his home culture into his host culture. The way of expressing the gospel is as natural to him as breathing. Changing the presentation of the

gospel will be difficult, even when the content remains faithful to Scripture. Sills expresses the necessary balance of contextualization. “We must work to understand the existing worldview and beliefs, and must be ever vigilant against the insidious slide toward an expression of Christianity that is more cultural than Christian.”²⁴ Failure to contextualize the gospel appropriately can lead to syncretism or heresy on a foundational level. The evangelist in a new country cannot assume that he can communicate the gospel in the new culture exactly as he did in his home country. The missionary supervisor must help the cross-cultural evangelist understand the new worldview and contextualize the gospel appropriately.

Evangelists are interdependent with the other four ministry functions. Many desire to take new believers to others for continued teaching in the Way of Christ. This is necessary. The desire to proclaim to the lost can outweigh the need to develop strong relationships with ministers fulfilling the other functions. Tomlinson observes, “It is distressing to note that a large number of very talented evangelists end up ‘going it alone’. Probably because of the pioneer instinct in them, but the evangelist needs a relationship with men of different ministry who can consolidate his work.”²⁵ The urgency for the spread of the gospel in some parts of the world is producing a shallow church. The task is to make disciples who make disciples, not evangelists who make evangelists. Disciple making must include all five ministry functions to develop a complete and healthy church.

²⁴David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission: Responding to Global Challenges* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 203.

²⁵David Tomlinson, “Apostolic Teams: A Strategy for Corporate Maturity,” in *Apostles Today*, ed. David Matthew (West Yorkshire, UK: Harvestime, 1988), 125.

Equipping

The equipping function of the evangelist focuses on training believers to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers. Morton writes, “An Ephesians 4:11 evangelist is meant to equip all Christians for evangelism. He trains both by word and deed so that the whole community can communicate the gospel effectively. He is developing an *evangelistic community* who, in time, will win more people for God than the one person ever could.”²⁶ It is vital for evangelists to understand the multiplicative power of their equipping ministry. “The evangelists’ primary concern is the salvation of men and women. . . .”²⁷ This can create an internal conflict for the evangelist. Taking time to equip others who are already believers versus proclaiming the gospel to those who have not yet heard creates an internal conflict. The urgency of the evangelist for the souls of the unredeemed must infect the whole church.

The evangelist will equip believers with many skills related to effective proclamation. The transition from spiritual conversations to gospel presentations is imperative. He develops a toolbox full of varied explanations of the gospel. One missionary working with the International Mission Board has intentionally developed gospel presentations of various lengths. Whether he has 30 seconds at a bus stop or twelve weeks for an evangelistic Bible study, he has a plan to proclaim the Good News. An evangelist can equip the church to have this level of awareness to gospel opportunities. The evangelist must also be in the vanguard position, learning how to adapt the presentation of the gospel as societal, generational, and cultural changes occur.

²⁶Tony Morton, “Jerusalem: An Apostolic Community,” in *Apostles Today*, ed. David Matthew (West Yorkshire, UK: Harvestime, 1988), 95.

²⁷Wallis, “Apostles Today?” 20.

Pastoral Caregiver

Pastoral care is another ministry function necessary for complete and healthy churches. It should come as no surprise that Jesus gifts the church with pastoral caregivers. This ministry function is also common on the mission field, though many parts of the world have greater needs for this ministry than missionary deployment provides.

Characteristics

Care, nurture, and encouragement mark the pastoral caregiver. The term pastor refers to one who tends sheep. Best identifies several functions of ancient shepherds. Pastors led their sheep, provided for their sheep, and protected their sheep.²⁸ Arnold augments this list, “From Jesus’ example in his Good Shepherd Discourse, we know that this involves knowing people intimately (John 10:3, 14), leading them (10:4), protecting them from ‘wolves’ (10:7–10, 11–13), and loving them enough to sacrifice one’s life for them (10:11–13, 15).”²⁹ Leech, writing from the perspective of spiritual direction, explains, “The Shepherd is one who feeds and nourishes the flock, makes the weak strong, seeks the lost [sheep], cares for the sick, and bandages the wounded.”³⁰ Scripture does not task pastoral caregivers with administrative functions.

Pastoral caregivers lead their sheep to food and water. An important difference between a modern rancher and an ancient shepherd is the way they feed their animals. A rancher provides prepared food for cattle—they only have to come and eat. A shepherd leads his flock to green pastures and calm water and releases them to nourish themselves. The predominant concept of pastors is more akin to ranching than shepherding. Pastoral

²⁸Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 392.

²⁹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 261.

³⁰Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: A Study of Spirituality* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), 37.

caregivers will not spoon-feed their flock, but ensure that they are capable of nourishing themselves.

Pastoral caregivers lead their flocks to safety. The pastoral caregiver chooses the location of the pasture and the sheepfold for the safety of the flock. When danger encroaches, the shepherd will protect the flock, laying down his own life if necessary.

Within the safe environment, the pastoral caregiver cares for and nurtures the sheep. The young grow strong and mature, the weak gain strength, the sick and hurting receive care. “The shepherd is involved with the flock, and this social dimension of spirituality is of crucial importance.”³¹ While pastoral caregivers are not resident in a local house church, their ministries will likely focus on a city. Many pastoral caregivers today function in counseling ministries, rather than administration-laden pastorates. “But pastoral care in the Christian understanding is not restricted to the troubled or distressed or to crisis points in life.”³² God designed pastoral caregivers to rejoice in the joys of the flock, not just to sorrow in the crises of those with needs. These pastoral caregivers will eventually face burnout as counselors or therapists due to imbalance.

Pastoral caregivers seek the straying sheep before they wander so far astray as to need the church encourager’s call to repentance. Pastoral caregivers have a high degree of mercy and do not want to see people in pain or discomfort. When disciples begin to stray, the pastoral caregiver pursues them, desiring to lead them back to healthy communion with God and other believers.³³

³¹Leech, *Soul Friend*, 37.

³²Leech, *Soul Friend*, 100.

³³Howard Baker, *Soul Keeping: Ancient Paths of Spiritual Direction* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 24.

Unction (Spiritual Power)/Authority

The unction of the pastoral caregiver manifests itself in care and concern for the flock. God spiritually nourishes a true pastoral caregiver while he sits by the deathbed of a brother in Christ dying of cancer. A pastoral caregiver thrives when helping people overcome spiritual struggles. A pastoral caregiver will endure many other distractions for the opportunity to hold the newborn child of a sister in Christ, rejoicing in her rejoicing. Self-sacrifice for the spiritual well-being of others and extending grace and mercy to them are natural for the God-wired pastoral caregiver.

Soul care is the natural sphere of authority for pastoral caregivers. The other four ministry functions may consider the pastoral caregiver too inwardly focused, but that is God's design for his ministry. He exercises spiritual authority in this area.

Pitfalls/Blind Spots

Sometimes the pastoral caregiver focuses internally to the extent that he neglects the task of making disciples of the lost. Pastoral caregivers have a natural tendency to treat everyone as if they are already believers, caring for them just as they would care for the flock. An overemphasis on true pastoral function can lead to a heavy emphasis on social ministry.

The pastoral caregiver does not want to see anyone hurting. However, the truth sometimes hurts. Another pitfall of the pastoral caregiver, when unchecked by the other four ministries, is the temptation to compromise the truth of God's Word to soften its blow.

Equipping

The equipping function of the pastoral caregiver will focus on wellness. Usually this will manifest itself in a robust focus on the spiritual and emotional aspects of life, rather than the physical. Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation on Scripture, fasting, and solitude mark the equipping functions of the pastoral caregiver.

Teacher

Misunderstandings of the function of the Ephesians 4 teacher developed early in the history of the church. NT Christianity was intended to be a holistic belief system, a way of life. Teachers taught the Way of Christ publicly and from house to house, though the predominant venue was the relational reality of the house church. The ministry function of teachers within the church began to change about AD 180 with the beginning of the catechetical schools.

Characteristics

While Jesus occasionally taught enigmatically, the NT does not show such methods in use after the resurrection. Ephesians 4 teachers sought to teach the precepts and truths of God with accuracy and clarity, building on the foundational knowledge established during evangelism. Teaching is based “on Scripture, and generally results from conscious reflection and preparation.”³⁴ The goal is not to fill heads, but to transform lives. Such teaching rarely took the format of classroom lectures, as such venues were scarcely available to the NT church. Rather, teaching was life on life.

Paideia was the Greek educational ideal in which Greek children were enculturated to become ideal Greek citizens.³⁵ Paul expresses the idea of a Christian paideia in Ephesians 6:4, charging fathers with raising their children to be ideal followers of Jesus. One must pause and wonder how Paul expected first-generation believers in pagan Ephesus to raise their children as ideal followers of Jesus. This is not an impossible task. Ephesians 4 teachers will teach a complete, biblical worldview. The followers of the Way of Jesus gained the name “little Christs” in Antioch because of their dedication and zeal to follow the teachings of Jesus as a holistic lifestyle.

³⁴Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 118.

³⁵Douglas Wilson, *The Paideia of God and Other Essays on Education* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1999), 11.

Unction (Spiritual Power)/Authority

God graces a teacher with clarity.³⁶ Teachers teach the minutia in ways that people understand. They convey abstract concepts in practical ways. Their heart's desire is to see learners understand and apply the truth of God to daily life. They live for the moment when the light bulb of understanding shines in the eyes of those whom they teach.

No teacher has undisputed authority. "All other gifts and teachings today are to be subject to the words of Scripture and are to be judged by them. No other gift or teaching or writing should be allowed to compete with them for absolute priority in our lives."³⁷ This is an ever-present warning for the church. The day has arrived when the sound bites of popular teachers and theologians flow from the lips of believers more readily than Scripture. Biblical illiteracy is so high that few can discern whether they are hearing biblical truth or are simply having their itching ears scratched.

Pitfalls/Blind Spots

Teachers teach truth. They know they will be held to a high standard of accountability by God (Jas 3:1). When a teacher accepts an idea as truth, he will teach it as truth. Even errant ideas will be taught as truth once a teacher accepts them as truth. Teachers must be especially diligent to test everything they learn and teach with the Bible—the church's only standard of truth. The teacher must teach the precepts and truths of God, not unbiblical theories of men.

In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His disciples to teach new disciples to obey His commands. Jesus did not merely want new disciples to have knowledge of His commands. Growing up in a modern educational system, teachers from

³⁶Tomlinson, "Need for Wisdom," 67-68.

³⁷Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 49.

Western cultures can forget they are teaching a lifestyle, not a disconnected system of ideas.

Equipping

Teachers do not equip by passing on knowledge. They equip by teaching in such a way that faithful men and women can teach others what they have learned (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:3-4). Skilled teachers know that simple is reproducible and strive to pass on the truth of Scripture as clearly, simply and thoroughly as possible. Teachers also equip by developing teaching skills in their learners.

When Five Are Not Enough

Christ gave the five ministry functions for the equipping of the church. There will come a time in the growth of the church in a city or among a people group when the five are not enough. God made provision for this growth.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul lists more ministry functions in conjunction with the apostle, prophet, and teacher. The additional functions listed include some spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to individuals. The spiritual gifts listed here have a scope for use beyond the local house church. While they are useful in the house church, they also manifest within the church of the city. However, they do not have the same equipping function as the Fivefold. For purposes of missionary supervision, it is only necessary to examine the administrator here.

Administrator

In Acts 6, the church of the city of Jerusalem faced a crisis. A group of widows was being neglected in the distribution of food. The apostles suggested a course of action to resolve the crises; the church chose seven men and gave them responsibility to act. The scope of their responsibility was to administer the distribution of food to all the believing widows in Jerusalem.

Characteristics

The seven men chosen resolved a conflict based in poor administration. They were men of good reputation, full of wisdom, and full of the Holy Spirit. Their administrative ministry enabled the apostles to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

A consistent tension exists in missions agencies between the roles of strategists and administrators in decision-making. Who trumps whom in times decision-making? Naturally, each group believes it has the priority. Miley opines, “Managers must work for visionaries, not the other way around.”³⁸ Acts 6 bears testimony to this. The role of the seven in resolving an administrative dilemma facilitated the ministry of the apostles. In modern missions settings, decision-making should occur with ample discussion between both administrators and strategists, but administration serves strategy.

A common pitfall of administrators involves organization. An administrator will organize everything. The priority can easily become checking items off the list. When this becomes the priority, the administrator can lower standards in order to check things off the list so that he can feel as though he is making progress. The visionary leader must be in front of the administrator to keep the true end vision in the priority position. The administrators’ lists must be in line with the vision and the goals necessary to attain the true end—making disciples of all peoples.

Interdependence of the Five

The people with the five ministry functions described above fulfill specific facets of disciple making within the church of the city or people group. Combined, these functions develop the church to maturity and unity. Separated and isolated, they are but a fragment of what is possible. None is sufficient, in and of itself, to develop a complete

³⁸Miley, *Loving the Church*, 102.

and healthy church. God has specifically designed this set of five ministry functions to equip the saints for works of service. They are interdependent.

No single ministry function holds unequivocal authority over the others. In fact, at any given moment the ministry setting may place one in authority over the other, as the Holy Spirit sees fit. The visionary strategists are first in the sense that their vision and strategy guide the overall work in the city. The church encouragers are second, often in tandem with the visionary strategists. The evangelists are often trailblazing among the lost. The pastoral caregivers and teachers are in close, intimate contact with believers. All five functions equip the saints. The saints minister. The elders and deacons are diligently caring for and teaching in the house churches. When they encounter a situation they cannot resolve, they call on someone with the appropriate ministry function. All are connected. All are dedicated to making disciples of those who are not yet disciples. As blood circulates through the body delivering need oxygen, the five ministry functions circulate through the church of the city ensuring the health and life, maturity and unity, of the church. This is the NT church at its interdependent best, the Body of Christ on mission.

The Complexity of the Missionary Task

The mission is to make disciples of all peoples. It is simple, and yet so complex. Complexity is in the diversity of the Five. Complexity is also in the paideia of God—the making of disciples who understand that the Way of Christ involves their complete worldview, lived out in body, mind, and spirit, as each generation of disciples makes the next generation of disciples of all peoples. All five ministry functions are necessary to accomplish this task. A task rarely accomplished since the first century.

Identifying Ministry Functions

Sometimes it is difficult to identify which ministry function a person fulfills.³⁹

When a person acclimates to the one-man ministry of the traditional church, he becomes proficient in filling gaps in all areas of ministry. This does not mean he thrives in all areas, but he compensates to fill the gaps. Such proficiency in attempting to fulfill all the functions can make it more difficult to discern the actual way in which God has hard-wired a person to serve. If the person in question served at a multi-staff church, he may have ministered specifically within his God-given function, making it easier to identify.

The descriptions of the five ministry functions given above will aid missionary supervisors in identifying which functions God has designed their supervisees to fulfill. When examining the characteristics, unction and spiritual authority, pitfalls and blind spots, and equipping descriptions, where does the missionary supervisee naturally fit? Here are additional tips for identifying ministry function.

In John 4, Jesus talks with the woman at the well while the disciples go into town to buy food. They are gone for some time, but return with the food. They offer Him something to eat and He tells them He has food they do not know about. This puzzles the disciples. God sustained Jesus while He was ministering to the woman at the well.

God provides spiritual sustenance for each of the five ministry functions. When one works within one's function, God staves hunger and tiredness until the ministry task of the moment is accomplished. Sustenance can involve ministering through a meal or two. Sustenance can involve going for days with little sleep to accomplish the necessary task. God can even extend this sustenance to health, warding off sickness for days until the task is complete. This is in conjunction with the unction that accompanies

³⁹The interdependence of the Fivefold seems to indicate that God does not give more than one ministry function to a person. While a person may fulfill more than one ministry function for a time, the unction related to his true function is not present. More is presented about this idea below.

each of the functions. What type of ministry does the missionary supervisee undertake without easily feeling tiredness or hunger?

All five ministry functions will represent the vision and strategy; all will encourage the church; all will evangelize; all will care for believers; all will teach in some way as they equip the saints for ministry. Ministry function is determined by the way in which God empowers a person to thrive in His power. Ultimately, their fruit will identify each of the five ministry functions. Only showing evidence of the fruit of one of the functions provides confirmation.⁴⁰ There is no substitute for a close, personal relationship where identifying ministry function is concerned.

All of these considerations contribute to correctly identifying a missionary's function. As missionary supervisors become familiar with the five ministry functions, they can ensure that each is equipping the next generation of disciples according to their ministry function. Fulfilling the missionary task must be according to each missionary's God-given function. Missionary supervision must also be in accordance with this function. When missionary supervisors understand and identify the function correctly, they will understand why each supervisee is too valuable to lose.

⁴⁰Hamon, *Coming Moves of God*, 164.

CHAPTER 3

EFFECTIVE MISSIONARY SUPERVISION

Missionary supervision is a ministry.¹ Those entrusted with this oversight carry great responsibility. Not only are they accountable to their missions agency; they are accountable to God. This is no small undertaking. The missions agency has specific goals and policies. God also desires to accomplish something through missionary supervision. The missionary supervisor walks a path to fulfill the desires of God and the missions agency. When God's and the missions agency's goals are aligned, all is well. The goal God seeks to accomplish through missionary supervision is the formation of the missionary supervisee into the image of Jesus Christ. The missionary supervisor is not wholly responsible for this transformation, but he does have a role to play.

Missionary supervision is never about less than developing personnel into the image of Christ. The goal is not to form the missionary into the image of the supervisor, nor of the missions agency. The task of missionary supervision cannot be divorced from the quest for holiness, the quest for Christ-likeness in the life of both supervisee and supervisor. This requires personal relationships and spiritual discipline.

Role of the Missionary

Current thought on the role of the missionary defines "missionary" in several categories. Missionaries serve on volunteer teams, as short-term workers, through business as missions, and in career or long-term missionary assignments. The missionary supervisor should assist supervisees in understanding each and prayerfully developing

22. ¹Doran McCarty, *The Supervision of Mission Personnel* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, 1983),

intentional strategies to utilize those appropriate to the people group or place of service for the greatest kingdom advance.

God can bring the five ministry functions to a city or people group through short-term missionary roles. God orchestrates the presence of the five functions according to His providence and purposes. It is beyond human control, so caution is in order when thinking about forming permanent or long-term teams of the five ministry functions. God provides the functions within a city or among a people group through many people. God will provide each of the five functions when needed. In time, the additional functions listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28 may appear, but only as God provides them.

Biblical Considerations

Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples. His only additional qualifications of that task were baptism and teaching new disciples to obey all He commanded them. Almost all of the imperatives spoken by Jesus relate to relationships, mostly commands to love God and others, and to treat others as one wants to be treated. This is the Way of Christ. Teaching people to live in this way, founded upon saving faith in Jesus, is the missionary task—a task which entails a life-long journey of transformation by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to lecture this transformation into being; rather life-on-life relational learning is required.

The role of the cross-cultural missionary is multi-faceted. Mission strategy varies by missions agency, from place to place, and among different people groups. Some people groups and places have so little knowledge of Jesus that laying evangelistic foundations is the only possible starting point for new missionaries. Other places received missionaries centuries ago, but national churches are in a crisis due to insufficient disciple making, whether from the beginning or by later generations. Sills observes that evangelization without full-orbed discipling and teaching tends to produce syncretism

and is not conducive to the future of a healthy evangelical Christianity.² He identifies the pressing need for missionaries to reenter these places to reevangelize, make disciples, and train leaders. The task is not complete until the church is self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting.³

Given the historical patterns showing evangelism and missions work that did not result in healthy and complete expressions of evangelical Christianity, it is necessary to reevaluate the role of the missionary. Sills argues,

If there is even the slightest risk of history repeating itself, missionaries must strive to establish ministries that disciple disciplers, teach teachers and train trainers in order to minimize the danger of creating even more areas of the world that bear the name Christian, but have not been taught all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).⁴

God uniquely equips every missionary to fulfill a specific role in making disciples.

Sills describes the historic role of pioneer missionaries. The pioneer missionary establishes a work through evangelism, then becomes the one who “disciples the saved, plants churches, trains leaders and trainers, and leaves the work in their hands as a fully functioning New Testament community.”⁵ Missions agencies must ask, “Did God design the task for a one-man pioneer who tries to fulfill all five ministry functions?” The NT does not show this approach to the missions task. Jesus worked with many disciples; sometimes focusing on three, twelve, or seventy. He sent them out for a short time in groups of two. In Acts, it is rare to find anyone working alone for long. Paul usually travelled and worked with a group. The lone missionary approach denies a fundamental missiological truth from the NT—God did not design the task in such a way that an individual can complete it.

²David Sills, *Changing World, Unchanging Mission: Responding to Global Challenges* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 194.

³Sills, *Changing World*, 194-95.

⁴Sills, *Changing World*, 196.

⁵Sills, *Changing World*, 204.

God has hard-wired different missionaries for each facet of the missionary task. Missions agencies must consider the five ministry functions in order to deploy the right person to the right place to accomplish the right facet of the task. Understanding ministry function allows missions agencies to understand which facet of the task God uniquely prepared each missionary to accomplish. One must also acknowledge that God raises up people within the harvest to fulfill some of these functions. The missionary supervisor must encourage, and perhaps aid, the supervisee to recognize those God raises up from among the harvest.

Missionary Supervision

Missionary supervision is vital for missions agencies. No one wants ineffective missionary supervision, especially not missionary supervisees. Few people are natural born supervisors. The skills necessary for effective supervision are acquired skills.

Current Trends in Supervisory Training

Given the realities of global missionary deployment, many missions agencies use workshops to train supervisors. Groups of supervisors meet for a few days in a convenient location, saving the agency the expense of gathering all supervisors in one place. During their time together, supervisors learn a variety of concepts and skills deemed necessary for effective supervision.⁶ Additional time may focus on applicable agency policies.

In addition to supervisory skills, leadership skills are also a common topic. Often, the concepts presented originate from business models, baptized for Christian use.

⁶Wendal Mark Johnson, "Mentoring Program for Urban Missionary Apprentices of the International Mission Board Serving in Brazil" (DMiss diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012). Mark Johnson's dissertation is an excellent example of supervisory training for mentors of missionaries in their first three years of service in cross-cultural missions. No less crucial is the on-going supervision of cross-cultural missionaries. Training for on-going supervision is lacking in many missions agencies.

This does not mean there is no value in learning about these skills. The truth is that leadership skills and principles are not identical to supervisory skills.

Perhaps the most pressing concerns for many new supervisors are conflict resolution and dealing with difficult people. These are related issues, though different. Conflict resolution includes communication and mediation skills. Dealing with difficult people often has more to do with resolving personality conflicts. Both are vital skill sets for supervisors.

Missions agencies that utilize an evaluation process for their missionaries' performance will include training for new supervisors in this area. This may include an overview of developing effective goals, giving constructive feedback (both positive and negative), and pointers for conducting an encouraging evaluation process. In this area, baptized concepts from the business world also prevail.

Supervisory training has a strong focus on the personality, strengths, and spiritual gifts of the supervisor and supervisees. The tools used to study these aspects of personhood are helpful, but they have limitations. The tools use a reductionist approach to emphasize principles. Reduction is helpful for understanding basic concepts. One cannot forget that the complexity of the individual does not reduce. Reductionist concepts and theories can quickly breakdown in practical supervision.

Personality. The complexity of the human personality is beyond dispute. Personality conflicts arise in every aspect of life. Missionaries are not immune from clashing over personality differences. To reduce the frequency and severity of such clashes, many missions agencies utilize personality profiles to increase understanding among their personnel. Littauer explains the importance of gaining such understanding. "When we don't have a way to understand people's personalities, we tend to judge others from our own perspective and to condemn them when they don't conform to our image."⁷

⁷Florence Littauer and Marita Littauer, *Personality Puzzle: Piecing Together the Personalities*

This applies to missionaries too.

Perhaps the most commonly used personality profile is the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator. This tool serves missions agencies well because it describes the personality traits of normal people.⁸ A cursory knowledge of these types is beneficial for missionary supervisors, but the individual supervisee's uniqueness cannot be lost to a system of generic personality typing.

Strengths. Analytical tools also exist to help identify a person's strengths. These tools can also be helpful for understanding one's complexity and uniqueness. More than any other tool I have used, the Strengths Finder tool helped me understand how God had uniquely created me. This tool classifies a person according to strengths, focusing on the top five of thirty-four possible strengths. Understanding these strengths is also beneficial, but each person remains unique beyond these thirty-four options.

Spiritual gifts. More important for missionaries than personality and strengths are spiritual gifts. The best approach to understand spiritual gifts is to read the NT attentively and minister to others. An understanding of one's spiritual gift(s) will come.

There are several difficulties with using analytical tools for discovering spiritual gifts. Often these tools incorrectly consider the five ministry functions (Eph 4:11) as spiritual gifts. Some tools include more gifts than others, even considering Old Testament texts. These tools often present the spiritual gifts in a general manner within an institutional church context, which often differs from the mission context.

When one understands that Jesus gifted the church with five ministry functions for equipping the saints and the Holy Spirit gives different spiritual gifts to each believer,

in Your Workplace (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), 7.

⁸Paul Goring, *The Effective Missionary Communicator: A Field Study of Missionary Personality* (Wheaton, IL: The Billy Graham Center, 1991), 22. The word "normal" is original to Goring.

the possible combinations are incredible. There is no mystery as to why Paul encouraged unity within diversity. God gifts the body of Christ in a complex, but complete way.

Many times, supervisor training falls prey to one of the classic blunders of Western education—assuming that teaching is the same as training. In the workshop setting, supervisors are more often taught than trained. The agency passes information to its supervisors, but they do not acquire, practice, develop, and hone skills. McCarty describes effective training, “Training in supervision should go beyond orientation about the supervisory system. Supervisors need to learn and practice skills involved in actual day-to-day supervision. The time and money invested in training will pay off in good supervision.”⁹ Training for supervisors must move beyond talking points.

Workshops can be useful for foundational and conceptual information about missionary supervision. Intentionally developed material is of paramount importance. Vella, writing about adult education, explains, “We know that most learning involves more than cognitive material (ideas and concepts). It involves feeling something about the concepts (emotions) and doing something (actions).”¹⁰ Supervisory training must incorporate all three aspects in order to begin developing the skills necessary for effective supervision. Too often training is exclusively conceptual. In a workshop setting, role-play can help, but it must be well played and well debriefed. Sometimes theorists, rather than practitioners, conduct these workshops. Agencies must use practicing supervisors to teach supervisory skills. In addition to workshop-based training, the agency must provide follow up for supervisors.

Few people can learn the skills necessary for effective missionary supervision solely through a workshop or a book. Mentoring relationships in which skilled and

⁹McCarty, *Supervision*, 150.

¹⁰Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 15.

effective supervisors invest in training the next generation of supervisors are the best venue for skill acquisition and development. Few, if any, missions agencies offer such supervisory training. The sage advice of Sanders begs for attention. “Failure to make provision for the succession of leadership has spelled ruin for many missions and churches.”¹¹ Training and skill development for missionary supervisors is a desperate need. People are complex and the interpersonal relationships necessary for effective supervision can be messy.

People are complex creations. Complexity does not necessarily mean complicated, but the greater the complexity the higher the likelihood of complication. Missionaries are people—as complex as any other person. Sometimes they are complicated too. Tucker describes past missionaries with these words:

I have often wondered as I have studied missions history if there is any other field of endeavor that has been peopled by such a “crazy” lot. Many of them were, it seems to me, more eccentric and risky and individualistic and driven than other segments of the population. Often self-sacrificing to the extreme, many were also pedantic and critical and mean-spirited—unable to live in harmony with colleagues or with those to whom they sought to minister.¹²

She shows her readers the lives of many missionaries, confirming her assessment.

Missionary supervisors must know their supervisees are complex people.

Every missionary is unique. Each one walks a different, but related path. No one else has identical life experiences, or reactions to them.¹³ Beyond personality, strengths, and spiritual gifts, supervisors need to understand that many factors contribute to the complexity of their supervisees. Missionary call, culture and worldview, generational distinctions, family background, season of life, education level, and

¹¹J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1994), 139.

¹²Ruth A. Tucker. *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), locs. 340-44, Kindle.

¹³McCarty, *Supervision*, 32.

theological differences contribute to the uniqueness of each missionary. This individuality and uniqueness marks the complexity of missionary supervision.

Effective Supervision

It is never safe to assume. Clear articulation of one foundational truth is necessary here. Effective supervision requires spiritually and emotionally healthy supervisors.¹⁴ Regarding spiritually healthy supervisors, McCarty writes, “Signs of spirituality are private prayer, meditation, silence, kindness, forgiveness, love and care.”¹⁵ One may wonder why silence was included in this list. In the practice of silence, one learns to listen intently. Listening is a non-negotiable skill of healthy interpersonal relationships—a vital skill for effective supervision. Emotionally healthy supervisors can maintain a balanced approach to supervision. Emotional insecurity leads to dictatorial supervision. Emotional arrogance contributes to paternalistic supervision.¹⁶ Emotionally healthy supervisors are capable of supervising in love, grace, and mercy. They guide and nudge when necessary. They provide wisdom for the task as needed. They empower and trust. They care deeply for the missionaries whom God entrusted to their supervision.

Effective supervision is only possible through love and a desire for Christ-likeness. The twin influences of the supervisor on his own Christ-likeness, and that of his supervisees, are personal relationships and spiritual discipline. Effective missionaries neglect neither. Ministry function matters little when one fails to love God with his entire being and his neighbor as himself.

The missionary supervisor establishes the ethos of supervisory relationships. The tone of the relationship influences everything related to the work of the supervisee.

¹⁴McCarty, *Supervision*, 15.

¹⁵McCarty, *Supervision*, 27.

¹⁶Harold R. Cook, *Missionary Life and Work: A Discussion of Principles and Practices of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 134-36.

The supervisee will either feel encouragement or dread when he sees his supervisors name in the inbox or on his cell phone. These feelings can change the course of a day, a week, or a career. The supervisor can experience the same feeling when the supervisee calls. However, the supervisor must discipline himself to practice love, accepting the supervisee as God created him. The supervisor establishes the relationship with the supervisee and reinforces it with every interaction.

In addition to God's goal of developing Christ-likeness in supervisors and supervisees, missions agencies also have goals for missionaries. While it is not possible to delineate all the possible goals, general observations about supervision are useful. Supervision exists to help missionaries accomplish the objectives of the missions agency.¹⁷

Supervision is an organizational function that supports missionaries as they work to accomplish the objectives of the missions agency. When divorced from God's objective, supervision can be sterile and utilitarian. A God-honoring system of supervision focuses on accomplishing tasks, but also seeks the well-being of personnel. McCarty opines, "Supervision is designed to support the mission personnel, not destroy their independent and initiating spirits."¹⁸ Effective missionary supervision respects the uniqueness of each missionary, understands his God-given ministry function, and matches the articulation of the task to said function. In so doing, the objectives of the mission and the uniqueness of the missionary align for mutual benefit.

¹⁷Sadly, transitions of strategy or vision within a missions agency sometimes results in field missionaries feeling as though they can no longer fulfill the task for which they originally went to the field. When a missions agency eliminates music missions, medical missions, and/or theological education, missionaries called to those ministries feel as though they can no longer be the missionaries God called them to be. They must fulfill a different ministry with their missions agency or leave it. In such situations, supervision merely focuses on the strategy of the missions agency. Ideally, supervision will serve both the missions agency and the missionaries, aiding the latter to be the missionaries God called them to be.

¹⁸McCarty, *Supervision*, 12.

Image of Christ

God created man in His image. Due to the fall of Adam and Eve in sin, the image of God in man is marred. God is transforming those who believe in Christ back into His image (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29). God uses personal relationships and spiritual discipline for this life-long transformation. Missionary supervision entails both. Every interaction with a supervisee will either move him toward Christ-likeness or away from that goal. There is no neutral interaction. Effective missionary supervision consistently contributes to the Christ-likeness of the supervisee.

Iron Sharpens Iron

Western individualism is not the friend of biblical interdependence. God created humankind for relationships. Healthy relationships are mutually beneficial. “Iron sharpens iron; so one man sharpens another.” (Prov 27:17 NASB). This truth lies at the heart of missionary supervision. The supervisor sharpens the supervisee in personal relationships through mentoring. Spiritual direction sharpens the supervisee in spiritual discipline. The latter is foreign to many modern Protestants, though it was a crucial aspect of missions for centuries before the Reformation. Where complex human beings are concerned, both people in the relationship can sharpen each other. Iron sharpening iron is a two way street—mutual sharpening, mutual benefit.

Personal Relationships

Like Jesus, Paul shared daily life with his co-laborers. Except for the few occasions on which Paul travelled alone, he was with his friends. They shared the good times and the bad. Their personal relationships were deep, as well as spiritual. In life and ministry, they shared life together.

Sharing such a close and transparent relationship with them, Paul recognized areas in which they needed to grow. Timothy’s experiences with Paul enriched his life

and faith.¹⁹ Timothy knew Paul’s teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings (2 Tim 3:10-11). Many of Paul’s co-laborers shared similar experiences with Paul.

Both culturally and by ministry function, Paul was the senior man. It was his responsibility to establish the nature of his relationship to his disciples. Healthy personal relationships involve respect, trust, open communication, listening, forgiveness, humility and love.²⁰ It is the supervisor’s responsibility to establish the ethos for his relationship with supervisees.²¹

Paul referred to people with whom he ministered as brothers and sisters, fellow workers, and fellow soldiers. Each of these references describes different depths of relationship. There are few relationships more intimate than family relationships. Paul shared this level of intimacy with his brothers and sisters in Christ. Those with whom he ministered were also his fellow workers. This relationship allowed them to achieve more together than they could achieve individually.²² Paul’s cohort consisted of fellow soldiers. The phalanx was a unit that fought in tight formation. Their overlapped shields provided protection for the whole group. Well trained and highly disciplined, each knew his exact function and performed it until death. Fellow soldiers know that others’ lives depend on them; they risk everything fighting as a unit. Supervising fellow soldiers is a God-sized responsibility that requires deep personal relationships. Two aspects of these deep relationships are mentoring and spiritual direction.

¹⁹Chuck Lawless, *Mentor: How Along-the-Way Discipleship Will Change Your Life* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2011), 53.

²⁰Vella, *Learning to Listen*, 8. See also Jerry N. Berlow, “Relating to Church Staff,” in *Interpersonal Relationship Skills for Ministers*, ed. Jeanine Cannon Bozeman and Argile Smith (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2004), 176-77.

²¹Berlow, “Church Staff,” 175.

²²O. S. Hawkins, *The Art of Connecting: Advice from Philemon on the Power of Productive Relationships* (Dallas: Annuity Board, 2004), 34.

Mentoring

Mentoring is an old approach to education that recently came back into vogue. Previous generations knew mentoring as apprenticeship. Stanley and Clinton observe, “Throughout human history, mentoring was the primary means of passing on knowledge and skills in every field—from Greek philosophers to sailors—and in every culture.”²³ The rise of public education diminished the fields in which mentoring was utilized. In Western and modernized contexts, current generations rely on classrooms and books to attain information. Whether that information translates into experienced skill is another question.

Supervisors are mentors. Mentoring is a God-given relationship in which one missionary, himself a growing Christian, encourages and equips another missionary to fulfill his calling according to his God-given ministry function. The missionary supervisor passes knowledge and skills to supervisees at appropriate times in order to equip them to thrive in missions service. The supervisor-mentor should help the supervisee discover strengths and ministry function, develop character, determine focus, discern blind spots, and close the gap between potential and performance.²⁴ The supervisor needs to recognize gaps in knowledge and skill, as well as areas of needed growth.²⁵ The ability to recognize such needs is a skill that supervisors must attain. Some needs come automatically when missionaries arrive on the field; others require discernment. In both cases, the personal relationship allows discernment of the proper time to pass on skills and information.

The supervisor cannot meet all the mentoring needs of the supervisee. The supervisor has already walked parts of the path the supervisee will walk. Therefore, he

²³Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992), 17.

²⁴Tim Elmore, *Lifegiving Mentors* (Duluth, GA: Growing Leaders, 2008), loc. 1249-83 Kindle.

²⁵Lawless, *Mentor*, 53.

can guide the supervisee on portions of the path.²⁶ The supervisee will need other mentors for other parts of his journey.²⁷ The effective supervisor will be a resource person who can connect the supervisee to other needed mentors. Some of these mentors will come from the target people or city. Cross-cultural mentoring has its own difficulties.²⁸

Mentoring does not exclude spiritual discipline, but can focus more on the mundane aspects of life. Humans are holistic beings (body, mind, and spirit). Western worldviews have a tendency to hyper-compartmentalize many aspects of life, even to the point that one no longer sees the inter-relatedness of the whole of our beings.²⁹ Nonetheless, it is easier to explain these distinctions by separating the foci. It is essential for the supervisor to understand the holistic nature of the Way of Christ in order to understand how best to supervise missionaries.

Spiritual Direction

Western society succeeded in separating the secular from the sacred. Many Christians in the West believe their religious life is private; a personal matter into which no one can meddle. Christians have not always believed this. Leech observes, “‘Spirituality’ and ‘spiritual life’ are not religious departments, walled-off areas of life.”³⁰ The NT offers no such illusions about the Way of Christ.

Jesus walked daily with His disciples instructing, guiding, sending out, debriefing with no discernible separation between the spiritual and mundane. Attention to

²⁶Walter C. Wright, *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), xxiii.

²⁷Lawless, *Mentor*, 67. See also Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 41; Wright, *Mentoring*, 92.

²⁸Additional study of cross-cultural mentoring in missions would be beneficial.

²⁹Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005). Pearcey offers a detailed analysis of the sacred-secular divide as it developed in Christian history.

³⁰Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: A Study of Spirituality* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), 34.

spiritual matters marked Paul’s relationships with Timothy and Titus. Spiritual direction as a practice dates back to the desert fathers. One note-worthy discipleship development in Celtic Christianity was the Soul Friend (anam chara). A Celtic proverb states, “Anyone without a soul friend is a body without a head.”³¹ Within Celtic Christianity, everyone was expected to have a soul friend, even the elders and most respected leaders. The soul friend was a trusted counselor and guide in matters of physical and spiritual life.³² Two important traits of a soul friend were discernment and discretion, as confession is a part of the soul friend relationship. It should be obvious to everyone that such a friend and confidant would aid those living the Way of Christ.

Spiritual direction was not exclusive to Catholicism. Richard Baxter describes four types of converted people who need special pastoral attention: the immature, those struggling with specific sins, declining Christians, and the strong. Baxter claims that the strong need the greatest care.³³ Missionaries need spiritual accountability and spiritual direction.

Spiritual direction is not about condemning spiritual immaturity and sin. Rather, spiritual direction seeks to overcome sin and develop deeper spiritual maturity. McCarty writes, “We move our souls next to their souls so that healing and growth might occur.”³⁴ Baker gives an expanded explanation,

The spiritual director was a companion who could walk right beside someone, able to give direction because he or she understood the way to go through the dilemma and have a closer relationship with God on the other side of it. The spiritual director kept God in sight when the person had lost sight of Him. Who else could give us spiritual direction *out* of where we were struggling, stuck, or lost but one who has been there before—one who has learned how to fix his or her heart on things above?³⁵

³¹Leech, *Soul Friend*, 45.

³²Leech, *Soul Friend*, 50.

³³Leech, *Soul Friend*, 86.

³⁴McCarty, *Supervision*, 28.

³⁵Howard Baker, *Soul Keeping: Ancient Paths of Spiritual Direction* (Colorado Springs, CO:

Many missionaries need a soul friend. In some respects, the missionary supervisor can fulfill this role. Some missions agencies have member care to fulfill this type of role for missionaries who seek such help, though it is sporadic and based on felt needs. The on-going relationship necessary for soul care is not the function of member care.

The supervisor will have spiritual conversations with his supervisees. For this reason, supervisors need insight into the human heart.³⁶ Because not all missions agencies view the role of the supervisor in the same way, it may not be possible for the supervisor to have a spiritual direction mentorship. One's supervisor is rarely one's wisest choice of confessor. This is a sad reality in missions today. During the Celtic Missions Movement, the missionary monks practiced spiritual direction amongst themselves. The lead missionary monk viewed his guiding role as a spiritual father raising spiritual sons, nurturing them in spiritual learning.³⁷ The effective missionary supervisor will encourage his supervisees to develop accountability relationships, but also spiritual direction mentorships.

In many parts of the world, people have complicated pasts filling their lives with negative and sinful experiences and emotions—scars that must be healed. Spiritual direction, emotional healing, must become a part of every missionary's skill-set. This specific focus of ministry falls upon the Ephesians 4 pastor, but all believers need to have some knowledge and practice in this area. Whether with supervisees directly, or with the people to whom they minister, supervisors need to lead the way in this area.

In the supervisory relationship, there needs to be mutual guidance and mutual admonition.³⁸ Lawless writes, "Indeed, the best mentoring has the informality of a strong

NavPress, 1998), 28.

³⁶McCarty, *Supervision*, 31.

³⁷Jennifer O'Reilly, "Adomnán and the Art of Teaching Spiritual Sons," in *Adomnán of Iona: Theologian, Lawmaker, Peacemaker*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 69.

³⁸Leech, *Soul Friend*, 87.

relationship coupled with the formality of intentional goals toward spiritual growth.”³⁹ Transparency without fear must mark the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Only a history of trust suffices to overcome doubt about a supervisor’s intentions. Leech posits that humility is also a guarantee of purity of intention.⁴⁰ Though desperately needed, the mentoring and spiritual development aspect of supervision is not mandatory. If these do not develop, the supervisory relationship remains that of supervision.

Player-Coach

There are few things worse than a supervisor who no longer understands the daily struggles, difficulties, and challenges faced by front-line missionaries. The term player-coach describes one who coaches, but who also actively plays the game. Paul was a player-coach. He was actively involved in daily ministry of the same nature as those he was supervising, coaching, mentoring, and discipling. He struggled alongside them to make disciples of the lost and establish churches. He was intimately acquainted with the reality they faced. Those with no daily involvement in the struggle of front-line ministry should not be direct supervisors of those who are.

The supervisor must maintain two perspectives; the perspectives of both the missions agency and the missionary demand his attention. McCarty observes, “Keeping things in proper perspective is a delicate art.”⁴¹ A supervisor who is not engaged in the same ministry as the supervisees may struggle to understand their perspective. Those same missionaries, without the supervisor, may lose the perspective of the missions agency. A player-coach maintains both perspectives.

³⁹Lawless, *Mentor*, 73.

⁴⁰Leech, *Soul Friend*, 49.

⁴¹McCarty, *Supervision*, 33.

Making Disciples

The coach knows the objective, the goal his team strives to achieve. The mission is to make disciples. On the mission field, there is no shortage of good and important ministry possibilities. The good can become the enemy of the best. Any ministry that distracts the missionary from making disciples impedes the mission, no matter how good and important it appears. The supervisor, as player-coach, keeps his supervisees focused on the task of making disciples. Dever exhorts, “Focus on more *and* better disciples—and recognize that better disciples are your best strategy for seeing more disciples.”⁴² Many ministries facilitate the making of disciples. Discerning between facilitating and impeding ministries is essential. Where missionaries fail to discern wisely, the supervisor needs to intervene. Such intervention need not be authoritarian. Initially, conversation allows both parties to understand the other’s point of view about the ministry. The supervisee may have discovered a legitimate avenue to turn an impeding ministry into a facilitating ministry. Effective missionary supervisors will allow supervisees to try creative approaches to ministry. If the idea does not prove effective, a valuable lesson is learned.

Missionary supervisors must use one phrase carefully: “I tried that and it did not work.” This phrase can be crushing, communicating that the supervisor does not believe the supervisee can achieve positive results either. If this phrase escapes the lips of the supervisor, it should not be uttered alone. A conversation about what the supervisor, or other missionaries, tried is necessary. The supervisee needs to know that after trying *that* there was a period of reflection. What did the supervisor learn from trying *that*? How long ago did he try *that*? What has changed since then?

After this conversation, the supervisor and supervisee need to decide how to proceed. The supervisee will better understand what has occurred in the past and whether

⁴²Mark Dever, *The Compelling Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 128.

he understands societal and cultural realities related to the idea. Together, they can decide whether the God-wired ministry function of the supervisee might be what God wants to use to accomplish *that* at this time. A supervisor is presumptuous to assume that God will not do through another person now the thing he did not do through the supervisor then.

Sills captures this truth with these words,

To make disciples we must engage the world as it is and preach the gospel. Engaging the world as it is means adjusting as it changes, not allowing our methods to become fossilized. When we are fossilized in ways of the past, trying to reach and teach people as we imagine them to be, wish them to be or as they once were, we miss the opportunities God gives.⁴³

The need is too great to allow fossilized methodologies to impede the mission. The supervisor frees supervisees for effective disciple making. God uniquely calls and equips each missionary to make disciples in his own way, in a specific place, at this time. Experience holds important lessons, but does not limit what God may do through a new missionary (in accordance with His Word).

Planting Churches

When missionaries make disciples according to the NT, church develops. The wise missionary will direct the formation of the church through the new believers studying the NT. The Book of Acts must be the foundational guide. Hodges wrote, “No matter how many converts there are, or how many workers, if we have not enabled them to form themselves into local, self-governing churches, then we do not have an indigenous church.”⁴⁴ The self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting church is the NT church. Missionaries must enable new disciples to develop this church within their culture through studying the NT. Supervisors must encourage their supervisees to pursue this path.

⁴³Sills, *Changing World*, 21.

⁴⁴Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How to Grow Young Churches* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 24.

Personnel Development

As a coach, the supervisor understands the goal, knows his team member's strengths, and coordinates them in the most effective way to attain the goal. When anyone on the team needs training, the supervisor arranges it. He desires for each player to reach peak performance, but to work in coordination with his teammates. Player-coaches must continue to focus on their own development for the benefit of the team.

Supervisors derive great joy from seeing supervisees, in whom they invested, thrive within their ministry function and fulfill their calling.⁴⁵ For this reason, supervisors focus heavily on personnel development. Supervisors must become skilled in needs assessment. Such assessment comes by observing the supervisee's work, understanding his function, and knowing him personally. As with all supervisory tasks, communication with the missionary is vital to assess needs.

Beyond needs assessment, the supervisor must know what training the agency provides for its missionaries. If the agency does not offer the needed training, the supervisor should seek other sources of training (with the blessing of the agency). In this way, the supervisor serves the missionary as a resource person.

Local Gaps in Ministry Functions

Timothy was not an evangelist. Nonetheless, Paul admonished him to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5). Paul was aware of Timothy's ministry function. Paul was aware of Timothy's ministry context. Even though Timothy was not an evangelist, it was necessary for him to do the work of an evangelist. Apparently, that ministry function was lacking. Many believe Paul wanted Timothy evangelize, in addition to his other duties. The actual work of an evangelist was to equip others for evangelizing (Eph 4:11-13). All believers must actively proclaim the gospel. The work of an evangelist is to equip them to do so.

⁴⁵Wright, *Mentoring*, 96.

The supervisor must understand the five ministry functions. Some situations necessitate that a missionary work outside of his function for a time. The supervisor must be able to discover the function-gaps existing in the local context. Knowing this, the supervisor admonishes the supervisee to fill temporarily roles outside his function until God provides someone else with the missing function. This understanding also allows both the supervisor and the supervisee to team with others based on their function.

Too Valuable to Lose

No one is indispensable. This is true. However, missions agencies must hold this truth in tension with another truth. God uniquely calls and prepares each missionary to accomplish a specific task, in a particular place, at a certain time.

Supervision based on the idea that no one is indispensable creates a toxic environment. The agency will dismiss a missionary who does not accomplish the objectives of the agency, in the way the agency desires. This is tantamount to saying, “God made a mistake sending this one. Send him home. We will just get another one.” Such thinking has more in common with a divorce-ridden modern culture than with the NT.

Uniqueness is one of God’s specialties. No two people are alike. This is God’s creativity, His masterpiece. God places every missionary on the field to accomplish something for which He designed no one else. In this sense, every missionary is too valuable to lose.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Some who arrive on the field prove themselves unfit. With wise supervision and development many can become useful for the expansion of the Kingdom, as was the case with John Mark. William D. Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997). Taylor’s work popularized the phrase “Too valuable to lose” that I have chosen to head this subsection.

Commitment and Loyalty

Supervisors must be committed to serve their supervisees long-term. Paul ministered for years alongside several men. They shared a mutual commitment to finish the task. Hawkins observes, “Lasting relationships are those which are built upon loyalty and commitment to one another.”⁴⁷ Supervisees need to know that supervisors value them, their calling, their ministry function and its fulfillment. Hamon exhorts, “Only God knows the fullness of what He has called a person to be and become.”⁴⁸ Supervisors must patiently develop their supervisees, encouraging them to persevere faithfully in their calling.

Throughout his writings, Paul exhibits his desire to see his co-workers finish their races. Love, grace, and mercy characterized his long-term relationships. He knew his fellow workers were not perfect people, but he never abandoned hope that they would persevere until the end.

Imperfect Supervisees

Some supervisors desire to pass an imperfect supervisee, often a person they do not like, off to someone else. Others encourage such supervisees to leave the field, thinking the next supervisee might be better. Such supervisors fail to accept that the current supervisee is the person God uniquely prepared and sent to the field.

The supervisor-supervisee relationship must transcend personal likes and dislikes.⁴⁹ If the supervisor disrespects, or fails to respect, one supervisee it jeopardizes the supervisor’s relationships with all other supervisees. Such disrespect can generate anger, fear, and disappointment among the supervisees.

⁴⁷Hawkins, *Connecting*, 141.

⁴⁸Bill Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God: God’s End-Time Plans for His Church and Planet Earth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1997), 156.

⁴⁹Vella, *Learning to Listen*, 9.

Not everyone who arrives on the field will be a perfect match for local strategy when they arrive. This does not mean they are worthless to the kingdom. Rather, they need the correct supervisor to walk alongside them for a time.⁵⁰ This is an important principle related to the value of new missionaries that agencies must embrace in order to develop healthy supervisory relationships in missions.

Paul parted ways with Barnabas over John Mark. When he and Silas met Timothy, Paul invited the young man to join them. While Timothy was a good match for Paul's team, he was far from perfect. Lawless writes,

Young. Lustful. Timid. Often ill. That's the picture of Timothy we find in Paul's writings. Yet Paul not only addressed each issue, he also pushed Timothy to press on in spite of these obstacles. In the power of the Spirit and with the support of his fellow believers, Timothy could grow as a Christian leader. His mentor, Paul, would be beside him.⁵¹

Few readers think of Timothy as he was. Rather, Timothy garners a cleaner image in the minds of readers. However, Paul was still telling Timothy to flee the evil desires of youth ten to fifteen years after he joined in Paul's ministry.

Paul admonished Timothy to continue striving to overcome sin. Paul never lost sight of what Timothy could become.⁵² Because he knew Timothy's unique ministry function and contribution to the team, Paul never abandoned him. Nor did Timothy ever abandon Paul. Both men knew the other was too valuable to lose.

Buffer/Shield

The supervisor knows when to be a buffer between his supervisee and the missions agency. Stanley and Clinton refer to this as the "protection function." This is the

⁵⁰Aligning the missionary with the correct equipping supervisor may require a transfer or reassignment. Player-coaches must decide who makes the team and who goes to training camp. Such decisions can only be made with intense prayer and wisdom.

⁵¹Lawless, *Mentor*, 54.

⁵²One must deduce that Timothy was not scandalously sinning. He was above reproach despite his struggles. The correct attitude toward sin is necessary for missionaries to remain on the field.

ability to “maintain a balance between the tension of what is good for the organization and what is good for the individual.”⁵³ Not all missions organizations appreciate and encourage this practice. Supervisors with this skill “are strategic people in an organization, for they benefit both younger leaders and an organization.”⁵⁴ Supervisors who do not risk the ire of the agency to shield faithful missionaries will not prove effective.

One of the most complicated aspects of supervision is the relational tension between the missions agency, the supervisor, and the supervisee. Whom does the supervisor represent? The most obvious answer is that he represents the missions agency. This is the foremost barrier to a deep trust-level relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. “This trust factor is critically important when problems arise and difficulties emerge.”⁵⁵ When the supervisor exclusively represents the missions agency, the supervisee knows he has the best interest of the agency in mind, rather than the best interest of the supervisee.

It is true that the supervisor must keep the best interest of the agency in view, but not always exclusively. The question of best interests cannot be a one-way street; otherwise, it will be a dead end. For a supervisor to have trust-level relationships with those he supervises, the question of best interests must be a two way street. The supervisor must learn the delicate art of representing both the missions agency and the supervisee.

Situations will arise in which the just course of action requires the supervisor to support his supervisee against the wishes of the missions agency. In such situations,

⁵³Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 120.

⁵⁴Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 123.

⁵⁵Steve Echols, “Building a Culture for Managing Church Conflict,” in *Interpersonal Relationship Skills for Ministers*, ed. Jeanine Cannon Bozeman and Argile Smith (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2004), 166.

the supervisor serves as a shield for the supervisee. Sometimes the supervisor will serve as a buffer to relieve pressure on the supervisee or to soften the blow from the missions agency. The supervisor must have broad shoulders to carry loads his supervisees will never even know he carried for them.

Organizational Accountability

Missionaries sent by churches through missions agencies submit themselves to organizational accountability. Accountability helps missionaries fulfill their calling. Supervisors hold supervisees accountable in accordance with the missions agency's objectives and policies. The supervisor is also accountable to the organization and the supervisee for developing the latter. The supervisor and the supervisee both have responsibilities for which they are accountable.⁵⁶

Accountability requires clearly defined tasks and expectations. Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus describing tasks and expectations. These two men submitted themselves to accountability when they joined Paul's team. Accountability without clearly defined tasks and expectations is dysfunctional, ineffective, and unjust.

Missionary Success

For what is the missionary accountable? This is not a question of tasks and expectations. Rather, it is a question of responsibility. Effective missionary supervisors understand the missionary is responsible for faithfully fulfilling his ministry function in the missions context.

The missionary task involves two elements merging together. The missionary is human and has tasks and expectations to fulfill. The spiritual results only come from the hand of God. One plants, another waters, but the Lord gives the harvest (1 Cor 3:6-9). In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus praised those who took what the Master gave them

⁵⁶Vella, *Learning to Listen*, 10.

and served faithfully. The unfaithful servant did nothing with his talent. God’s standard of success is faithful service. Missions agencies often prefer quantifiable results. In most cases, faithful service yields quantifiable results—but God gives the increase in His own timing.

In evaluations, the supervisor distinguishes between the responsibility of the missionary—faithfully and diligently doing all that is humanly possible—and the responsibility of God—giving spiritual harvest.

The supervisor, seeing his supervisee diligently and faithfully carrying out his ministry according to his calling and ministry function, will be filled with joy. John, writing to Gaius, stated that he had no greater joy than hearing about Gaius’ faithful ministry (3 John 3-5). Gaius’ ministry was not explained by John. John only states that he was faithfully serving the church, and praised him for it. The faithful service of missionaries, regardless of results, is a fountain of joy.

Communication

All aspects of supervision depend on communication. Supervisors need good communication skills. Without effective communication, there is no supervision. Speaking and writing skills are necessary; most missionaries have acceptable spoken and written communication skills.

Listening

For supervisors, effective communication begins with listening. No other communication skill is more important.⁵⁷ McKeever contrasts active and passive listening. “‘Active’ listening refers to the way we take in information that has special meaning to us. . . . ‘Passive’ listening is the way we receive information that means

⁵⁷Joe N. McKeever, “Learning to Listen,” in *Interpersonal Relationship Skills for Ministers*, eds. Jeanine Cannon Bozeman and Argile Smith (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2004), 45.

nothing to us.”⁵⁸ Effective supervisors can ill afford to listen passively to their supervisees. “The supervisor who does not listen to mission personnel with concentration can expect to be heard with the same indifference.”⁵⁹ Failure to listen is a recipe for ineffectiveness.

Feedback

Feedback and listening are related skills. “Feedback is a response on the part of the recipient of the message that indicates that the message has been received and understood.”⁶⁰ Supervisors must develop the habit of giving feedback to their supervisees. This allows supervisees to know the supervisor hears them. Feedback also allows them to confirm that he understood. The supervisor is responsible to create the expectation of feedback from supervisees when communicating with them.

Non-verbal Communication

Body language was once the primary subject of non-verbal communication. While there are ways to read body language, not everyone communicates the same way through all body language. “Ambiguous, non-verbal communication can have many possible meanings and interpretations. Therefore, non-verbal messages should be thought of as clues, not facts.”⁶¹ In cross-cultural settings, this fact is more important. Supervisors should always seek clear, verbal confirmation of a message rather than assume they have interpreted non-verbal communication correctly.

⁵⁸McKeever, “Learning to Listen,” 48.

⁵⁹McCarty, *Supervision*, 138.

⁶⁰Jeanine Cannon Bozeman, “Developing Communication Skills,” in *Interpersonal Relationship Skills for Ministers*, ed. Jeanine Cannon Bozeman and Argile Smith (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2004), 37. See also Echols, “Building a Culture,” 171.

⁶¹Bozeman, “Communication Skills,” 37.

Non-verbal communication exists electronically too. Consistently neglecting to respond to e-mails sends a message that the supervisor really does not care about supervisees. This is unacceptable. “Caring is not determined by age, intelligence, dexterity and experience. It comes spontaneously from the regenerate soul. Caring infers that the supervisor respects the supervisee. Without respect there is no reason for the relationship because it will not work.”⁶² There is no effective supervision when supervisors appear indifferent toward their supervisees.

When supervisors and supervisees communicate well, a trust-level relationship and a mutual love for one another develops. Supervision requires difficult conversations. An established relationship of love and caring make difficult conversations possible. The idea “My supervisor is my boss and I am in trouble” adds a level of anxiety to these conversations. Often a temptation to lie or mislead arises during difficult conversations. The stronger the supervisory relationship, the longer the habit of speaking truth into each others’ lives, the deeper the commitment to mutual edification, the easier it is to walk further down this path together. We see this in Paul’s relationships with Timothy and Titus.

Missionary Call

The missionary life is a journey. Each missionary is called by God and walks a different path than many of the people he knows who were not so called. As time passes, he will realize many old friends, and even family, do not really understand the missionary life and the changes it brings. The missionary calling changes a person. The missionary needs someone who appreciates his uniqueness as a person and the life-path of the missionary call.⁶³ The missionary supervisor will play a crucial role in the life of the

⁶²McCarty, *Supervision*, 28-29.

⁶³Baker, *Soul Keeping*, 29.

supervisee and his experience will allow him to appreciate all that the supervisee is going through.

God's call on the life of a missionary is important. A missionary's understanding of his missionary calling affects his understanding of his role on the mission field. It is important for missionary supervisors to know the supervisee's missionary call. This is not just a testimony to hear once; it is a concept to understand deeply. For example, a missionary may express his call as a call to a specific people group, to a certain country, or to a specific type of ministry. Underlying any of these expressions of a missionary call should be the foundational understanding that the missionary is called to make disciples of Jesus Christ, manifest specifically in relation to his calling. There is no calling of God that exempts any believer from the responsibility of making disciples of the lost.

When a missionary supervisor communicates with the supervisee in terms of his calling, he will receive the communication more readily—the supervisee will see that the supervisor understands and respects his missionary call, even if adjustments in local ministry prove necessary. A missionary's sense of calling is the basis for the hopes and dreams he has for his people or place. His sense of fulfillment and success in ministry relate ultimately to his understanding of his calling. Therefore, an understanding of the missionary's specific call will aid the supervisor in communication, goal setting, ministry development, and encouraging the supervisee. A useful formula for missions strategy and supervision is: missionary calling + ministry function = effective and fulfilling service.

Sills describes missionaries succinctly:

The people whom God is calling to missions are the ones who have an awareness of the needs of the nations and an awareness of the commands of Christ. They are concerned and burdened for the needs they see, and they are committed to do whatever the Lord tells them to do. Whether or not to follow Him is never in doubt. They long to make His name known and praised around the world. They are committed to living a holy life for God's glory. They know that it will require

sacrificial living for the lost peoples of the world to become committed to Christ as King.⁶⁴

It is an honor and a privilege to supervise these missionary supervisees, who are men and women, called of God. God entrusts the missionary supervisor with the responsibility to help them accomplish all that God desires to accomplish through them. Understanding their sense of calling is the foundation for effective missionary supervision.

⁶⁴David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Finding Your Place in God's Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2008), 26.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

God created a world that is marvelously complex, full of beauty and variety. He created the church, which is full of followers of Jesus. Each of them is a complex and unique individual growing in Christ-likeness. From this diversity, God calls men and women with specific ministry functions to cross cultures and make disciples.

This thesis examined and defined the five ministry functions found in Ephesians 4:11, clarified the purpose of missionary supervision and the mission task, briefly addressed the complexity of the supervisee, and identified elements of effective missionary supervision. The complexity of missionary supervision with its inherent potential for complications is clear. The task appears overwhelmingly difficult.

God's grace is sufficient and His mercies are new every morning, even for missionary supervisors. Jesus is with us as we go making disciples. The Holy Spirit indwells us. Despair is not in order.

Effective missionary supervision is possible. God designed and gave missionary supervisors everything necessary for effectiveness. Five keys bring simplicity to this complex responsibility: (1) understanding the goal of missions, (2) understanding the ministry function of missionaries, (3) understanding God's definition of success (4), determining to bless the ministry of one's supervisees in every way possible, and (5) finding joy in their faithful service. Effective missionary supervision will result when supervisors are committed to these five keys.

May this prayer of Aelred of Rievaulx serves as an example for the prayers of missionary supervisors.

Grant me to accommodate myself to the character, ways, dispositions, gifts, shortcomings of each; to do as circumstances demand, and as you see best . . . You know, Lord, my intention is not so much to be their superior as to lovingly help them and humbly serve them, to be at their side, one of them . . . Grant them, Lord, the grace to ever think and feel towards me your servant and theirs, for your sake, as best serves their spiritual welfare. Let them love and fear me, but only so far as you see is for their good.¹

¹Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: A Study of Spirituality* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), 53-54.

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ABSTRACT

SUPERVISING GIFTED PEOPLE: A CONSIDERATION OF THE FIVEFOLD GIFTS IN THE EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF MISSIONARIES

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God gifted to the church certain people with specific ministry functions in order to develop a complete and healthy church. These gifts are ministry functions that the apostle Paul presented in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. This thesis proposes a conceptual framework loosely based on these five ministry functions and examines effective supervision of cross-cultural missionaries in light of them. Chapter 1 outlines foundational presuppositions to aid in understanding the ministry functions in a missions context.

Chapter 2 describes six ministry functions common to the missionary task. The visionary strategist, church encourager, evangelist, pastoral caregiver, and teacher are examined as equipping functions. The administrator is examined as a function that facilitates the equipping functions.

Chapter 3 addresses effective missionary supervision. The role of the missionary, current trends in missionary supervisor training, and effective missionary supervision are examined. Mentoring and spiritual direction are featured as functions of biblical supervision.

Chapter 4 concludes this thesis summarizing five keys to effective missionary supervision.

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