

How Well Does Your Church Understand the Role of the Pastor?

Whenever I hear someone say ... *"I'm helping my pastor get his ministry accomplished"* ... I cringe a little. I know that comes from a good heart, but there is a better and biblical principle still to be discovered.

Ephesians 4:11-13 seems clear enough, but a striking number of churches don't fully understand, embrace and practice this biblical plan.

There are three interpretations commonly practiced within the local church when it comes to understanding the role of pastor and the congregation:

1. The church hires the pastor to do the ministry. This is common in long-standing small churches, almost always under 100 people. The church board has long been established and owns the real authority in the church. It's the group who "runs" the church and hires the pastor to "preach and visit." Other than a few of the most dedicated people who do a few things like help in the nursery, serve as an usher, or play the piano, the pastor does the work. This is a very difficult scenario in which to lead change and move forward.

2. The people help the pastor do his or her ministry. This is the next level and better than the "Hired Gun" illustrated in the first point. In this scenario, there are some, sometimes many, people who eagerly jump in to serve in all the ministries of the church. The pastor is the encouraging shepherd who expresses gratitude for helping him carry the load. But the pastor is still the spiritual hero of the church. It's often a positive environment, willing to embrace change. It has potential to grow, but sometimes slowly. It is

a friendly environment, but has not yet embraced the biblical model in Ephesians 4.

3. The pastor helps the people do their ministry. This approach represents the biblical principle found in Ephesians 4:11-13. The pastor is the leader who equips the people to do the work of ministry that God called them to do! The pastor is the coach and the people are the spiritual heroes who build the church! The pastor expresses gratitude to the people *not* for helping him or her, (although I'm sure, like me, they are appreciative) but for serving Jesus and advancing the kingdom vision of the church. In this model the people are empowered to serve and lead according to their gifts and calling, and the potential for change and growth is significantly higher.

"He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," (Eph. 4:11-13, MEV).

Verses 12-13 reveal the purpose: We are to build the body of Christ until we become mature in our faith and experience unity in the fullness of Christ!

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