

Replicating the Ministry

Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Introduction

Beyond equipping the saints of God to live righteously and to fulfill the great commission, one of the most important roles for the ministry is to replicate itself. Paul tells Titus that this replicating of the ministry is the reason I left you in Crete. If the twenty first century church is going to go on to thrive and have the revival that we so desperately desire, having a solid, stable, honest, God-called ministry is essential. It is incumbent upon existing five-fold ministers to do everything within their power to foster an environment that produces, trains, and then releases to the work of God, the men who will lead the next generation. We have heard and believe that we need our elders. Equally important and equally needed is the future generation of ministers, called and trained, continuing the work the elders established. Paul knew his time was limited and that the church needed preparation for when he and the rest of the apostles were gone. He admonished Titus that this, along with setting the church in order, was his primary objective.

1. The Pitfalls of Uncalled Men

One of the earliest lessons we learn as children is that square pegs don't fit into round holes. There is nothing more frustrating for an individual that feels a burden to be used by God, who is misguidedly encouraged towards a preaching ministry, but is not called to the five-fold ministry. Pentecost is littered with the spiritual corpses of men and their families who were never truly called to that role. One being shoehorned into a role that God never called him to, is the most damaging thing imaginable. If a man in this position is able to effectively self-reflect, it leaves the man with a constant feeling of failure that ultimately leads to discouragement, disappointment, and possibly soul-destroying bitterness. If he lacks the capacity for self-reflection, he becomes arrogant and is lifted up with pride and ultimately becomes that cloud without water and that wandering star that Jude rightly condemned. He will be unable to lead or be led. The Bible speaks of helps. Mentor those helps in the local church. Allow men to feel fulfilled in that role. We do not call; we only confirm who God calls. God set apart for the ministry those whom he calls.

A man must be called. Paul admonished Timothy to lay hands on no man suddenly. Simply because a man is loyal, can testify well, or has some other skill that distinguishes him above other saints, does not determine that he is actually called to the five-fold ministry. Be careful that, in our desire to replicate our own ministries, we don't elevate a man to a role that God never called him to. Be doubly careful with your own family. Your calling doesn't presuppose your son's calling. Simply because he is your son, grandson, son-in-law, or prominent nephew, doesn't mean that God has called him to the five-fold

ministry. Care needs to be exercised that you don't project your aspirations on your family. Only God's aspirations for him matter. More than anything, you want your family to thrive in the kingdom of God. They will thrive when they are doing what God ordained them to do, not what we hope they will do. Don't force a square peg into a round hole. It only frustrates you and it damages the square peg.

2. Timing

When is a man ready? When should he be released to fulfill his calling? How much and what level of oversight is necessary, required, or appropriate? These are questions that must be answered for every man and the answer will always be unique to the individual. We acknowledge that every ministry is different and that there is no absolute formula for a successful ministry. Time has taught us that there are certain things that will short circuit a successful ministry.

Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 3:6 *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.* Giving a man an opportunity to make "full proof of his ministry" is essential, however, placing too great a responsibility or too great an autonomy on a young minister can be disastrous. A man's ministry needs development and that development needs to be tiered, allowing him the opportunity to grow into all that God has called him to.

He must be a soul winner and that soul winning needs to be demonstrated at the local level. No man can make claim to a calling and burden for souls that has never won the lost or demonstrated a willingness to labor in the soul winning efforts of the local church. He must be loyal. There should be a clear loyalty to the pastor and the local church. Lip service loyalty can be feigned during good times, but it is in times of adversity that loyalty will be proven. This is further reason for adhering to Paul's admonition to "lay hands on no man suddenly". A man who has not developed a sufficient loyalty to his God-ordained authorities will not be loyal to God, the doctrine, or even his family when the stresses and privations of the ministry are thrust upon him prematurely.

Conversely, holding a man back from advancing past any particular stage in his ministerial development because you don't want to lose his ability at the local church level, can do just as much damage as pushing him out too early. A man held back from effective ministry because you can't do without him, not only hurts the development of the young minister, but hurts the local church. When the young minister is frustrated, his effectiveness is diminished and ultimately his utility to the local church is harmed. Trust God to provide for the local church whatever skill and energy you are losing. You can never out give the Lord.

Clearly communicate with those you are mentoring. Make clear to them the expectations you have, but also make clear the development timeline you see in his life. Do this regularly. Update the aspiring preacher as you see things unfold. This helps prevent the

developing minister from imagining things that are not accurate or having expectations that ultimately go unrealized and cause a breach in your relationship.

3. Support

One the greatest and most special relationships that a man can have is the relationship he has with his pastor. It is a unique bond that transcends family, mutual interests, or traditional friendships. That relationship cannot end when a minister is released into full-time ministry. This is the time that it is needed more than ever. In our busy world, it is essential that we make a conscious effort to maintain the same closeness that we had while he was in the local church. Don't leave it up to the new minister to maintain it. A young man can often be deceived into thinking he needs to "be his own man" or "find his own way". This developmental characteristic is something we see in our teenagers as they approach adulthood, and it is commonly seen in ministers as they grow from being saints in the local church to preachers recognized outside of the local assembly. The interactions will obviously be different, but the closeness should remain. There are significant challenges that no amount of preparation and training will allow the new minister to avoid. He needs that close relationship and mentoring, yet still. Without it, he will turn to his peers for counsel and wisdom. While his friends might be well-intentioned, they are more like cheerleaders than mentors, sometimes encouraging behavior that lacks the introspection that age and experience provide.

Conclusion

We have a tremendous responsibility. The kingdom of God is not limited to our local assembly nor even to our generation. It is essential that we equip the next generation to not only maintain what we have, but to lead the church to greater heights than we have previously seen. That next generation of Apostolic preachers must be prepared for the challenges that lay before them. If they fail, if they don't maintain our old paths, if the next generation can only look into its past to find real Apostolic power, we have failed in our role as mentors. Being careful to vet the ministry, to know them that labour among us and to confirm their calling, we must equip them to be the powerful five-fold ministry Jesus intended.

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