

# THE SHEPHERD-LEADER AT WORK: **MOVING FORWARD**

THE NEED FOR CAREFUL LISTENING & CAREFUL REASONING



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God speaks; reality results. So, he says, “Let there be light.”<sup>1</sup> This was not a sanguine whisper, hopeful of what one day might be. It was the Almighty’s declaration of what now was. “There was light.” God speaks; reality results.

The boat “was nearly swamped”<sup>2</sup> by the powerful storm. Men whose living was made on the water were drowning in dread, certain that soon they would drown literally. Then God spoke. “Quiet! Be still!”<sup>3</sup> I remember one of my sons, then a frightened four-year-old hiding under his blanket, shouting roughly the same at a late-night South Carolina thunderstorm: “Stop! Quiet!” Nothing happened then. Jesus’ “Quiet!” is different—more than an expression of anxious hope. Creator commands creation. The Divine declares and instantaneously, supernaturally, there was a new reality. “The wind died down and it was completely calm.” God speaks; reality results.

The reality: Lazarus was very dead. Stand near the tomb and inhale. That tang is empirical evidence of reality. But at the tomb, God spoke. “Lazarus, come out!”<sup>4</sup> Just like that, there was an entirely new reality. God speaks; reality results.

“I’m no leader.” Have you said that to yourself yet? I say “yet” because if you have not, you likely will. Even the most confident clergyman will, at times, feel like a fraud. He understands that he holds a position of leadership; yet, he believes he lacks the aptitude.

Oftentimes, this happens when the pastor has looked at the challenges enveloping his congregation and wondered to what degree he is responsible. He knows that God’s law is a hammer and Christ’s gospel a balm. There is no deficiency in the Word. So, he wonders if there is deficiency in him... in how he has used the Word... in how he has equipped others to use the Word. He knows full well that in these Last Days “the love of most will grow cold.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, deep down he believes that the precarious issues before his congregation cannot be attributed entirely to the apostasy of his members and community. The reason for at least some of the issues... “I’m no leader,” he thinks.

Except... God speaks; reality results. And God has spoken. Through his Church, brothers, he has called you “leader.” “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”<sup>6</sup>

The point is made metaphorically. There is a flock and a shepherd. In that illustration, it is crystal clear whom God considers the leader. (Hence, the title of this symposium.)

The point is made in straightforward language. The Holy spirit has made you an *ἐπίσκοπος*.<sup>7</sup> A plethora of papers have been written about all that term conveys. Suffice it for our purposes to say that among those many conveyances is the responsibility to lead. “An overseer manages God’s household,” Scripture says.<sup>8</sup> That includes both the *treasures of* and the *servants in* that household.

God has called you a shepherd-leader. To say, “I’m not a leader” is more than self-pity. It is a denial of reality. God speaks; reality results. God has spoken; thus, you *are* a leader.

Now, are you currently all that God ever intends you to be as a leader? Probably not. What of it? Do you believe you currently have achieved the apex of homiletical skill? You do not. Do you sob, “I’m no

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:3

<sup>2</sup> Mark 4:37

<sup>3</sup> Mark 4:39

<sup>4</sup> John 11:43

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 24:12

<sup>6</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>7</sup> The point is often made that we cannot say that the office of *ἐπίσκοπος* is completely identical to that of the modern-day pastor. Granted, but that is not really relevant to our discussion. Throughout history, the Lord of the Church has called men to provide leadership in public ministry. The precise title is secondary to the responsibility/privilege.

<sup>8</sup> Titus 1:7

preacher”? No! You know that you are a preacher for no other reason than God has called you to preach. You also know that the one who *made* you a preacher can also *grow* you as a preacher.

This is often how it works with the Almighty. Creation begins אֵלֹהִים בְּרָא אֶת הַלְּאוֹהִת. When “there was light” God was not done with luminescence. He had yet to make the sun and stars. When Lazarus came out of the tomb, there was still work to be done before life-as-normal could resume. “Take off the grave clothes.”<sup>9</sup> Likewise, while the Lord of the Church has called you a leader—while *that is the reality*—there is still work to be done. However, you can “be confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”<sup>10</sup> He has no intentions of leaving you alone, brothers.

That brings me to the primary aim of this presentation, titled *The Shepherd-Leader at Work: Moving Forward*. So that you can “move forward” in your high calling, I pray that Christ provides you this encouragement—that what he needs you to be for his Church, he will make you to be.<sup>11</sup> He will shape you into the exact type of leader he knows your specific situation needs.

We will attempt to accomplish this aim in two steps.

First, let us look at the institution, the corruption, and the redemption of leadership. Where does leadership originate? What exactly is leadership? How did (does) God enable leadership, even after the Fall?

Second, let us look at four key aspects of leadership within the Church: spiritual leadership, relational leadership, operational leadership, and replicational leadership. Let us see how all these aspects require two things: *careful listening* to the Word of God followed by *careful reasoning*. Most importantly, let us pray that the Lord of the Church grant us these gifts that we might better serve within his Kingdom.

## Part I THE INSTITUTION, CORRUPTION & REDEMPTION OF LEADERSHIP

### The Institution of Leadership

This paper is titled *Moving Forward*; however, we must first look back.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

<sup>29</sup>Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. <sup>30</sup>And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and

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<sup>9</sup> John 11:44

<sup>10</sup> Philippians 1:6 – The phrase “until the day of Christ Jesus” would seem to imply this passage is speaking primarily about the working of faith in the heart of believers. I do not believe it is inappropriate to apply this gospel promise more broadly as well, however.

<sup>11</sup> This does not deny that in our sinful flesh we retain the *facultas terribilis* to resist the working of the Spirit. Our sinful nature can fight against the Spirit as he attempts to make us into something more.

all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.<sup>12</sup>

*And it was so.* God speaks; reality results.

We know that God made mankind in his image. Rarely do we discuss why: “so that they may rule...” Two words are used to describe this special gift to mankind. Moses tells us that mankind is made in God’s “image,” his *צֶלְמֵי*, a word that is typically used to designate an object that is a representation of something better. (For example, the word is often used to refer to idols, e.g. 2 Kings 11:11; Ezekiel 7:20.) But we also are told that we are created in God’s “likeness,” his *דְּמוּת*, a word that stresses the similarity between the original and the facsimile (cf. Genesis 5:3; 2 Kings 16:10; Isaiah 40:18). Image. Likeness. Pastor John P. Meyer writes, “Together [these two words] state that man is God’s representative on earth, corresponding in his entire way of thinking exactly to God’s mind.”<sup>13</sup>

As God’s *צֶלְמֵי*, man was to “rule over” (*רָדָה*, “to have dominion over”) absolutely everything in creation. The ox would not pull the plow for God alone; he would pull it at man’s bidding. The nightingale would sing not just for her Creator, but for her Creator’s *צֶלְמֵי*. “Fill the earth and *subdue it*” (*כִּבְשֶׁתָּהּ*), God had said. Man was to make everything in creation—the animals, the land, the raw elements—bend to God’s will and serve his good purposes. The psalmist summarizes, “You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.”<sup>14</sup>

This raises a question. What would ensure that man would not abuse or exploit creation? *כִּבַּשׁ* can be darker than “subdue.” It can refer to enslavement (cf. Nehemiah 5:5) or rape (cf. Ester 7:8). What would prevent mankind from molesting creation? What would keep Adam from beating the ox for not plowing fast enough? What would restrain Eve from annihilating the entire *Tagetes* genus (a.k.a. marigolds) to plant tulips in their place? Answer: mankind was made in God’s *דְּמוּת*, his “likeness.” Man’s thoughts were the likeness of God’s thoughts, always pure and lovely. There is nothing lovely about inflicting pain on one of God’s creatures, so the thought would never cross Adam’s mind. Man’s will was perfectly attuned to God’s will. Since the Almighty created the marigold, it is obvious he wants it to thrive. Thus, so would Eve.

That is how we typically speak of the *Imago Dei*. Man was created holy, thus his thoughts and wants and feelings perfectly reflected those of God. Moreover, just as God’s intellect is infinitely “higher than” man’s<sup>15</sup>, so also man’s intellectual capacity is substantially higher than anything else in creation.<sup>16</sup> This heightened capacity would allow man to know God, to love God, and to relate to God in a way the beasts and the birds could never. More, this heightened intellectual capacity would enable mankind to “rule over” creation, to “subdue” everything within it. In his commentary on Genesis, Martin Luther writes, “The image of God in which Adam was made was something most beautiful and noble. The leprosy of sin adhered neither to his reason nor to his will. But, within and without, all his senses were pure. His intellect was very clear, his memory very good, and his will very sincere.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Genesis 1:26-30

<sup>13</sup> John P. Meyer, “The Image of God, Genesis 1,” WLS essay file, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 8:6 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 55:9

<sup>16</sup> Is the superior intellect something that is part of the image of God, along with holiness and perfection? There are some theologians who talk like this. I have heard the image of God illustrated with a walnut. The meat of the nut—the best part!—is holiness and purity. The shell of the nut is man’s heightened intellect, will, and emotion. But there are other theologians who will state that the image of God is *only* holiness and perfection, and that man’s heightened intellect is simply natural to humanity. Why is this important? It slightly changes what we mean when we say that mankind “lost” the image of God in the Fall. Here are the two possibilities. Possibility A) In the Fall, mankind lost the meat of the walnut in totality, but only *partially lost* the shell; i.e. man lost the holiness part of the image, but he retained, at least to some degree, the part that gives man an intellectual, volitional, and emotional capacity higher than anything in creation. Proponents of this view will sometimes ascribe the conscience to this “remnant” of the image of God. It is a piece of the broken shell. Possibility B) In the Fall, mankind lost the image entirely; nothing of it remains. I lean towards A for several reasons that would necessitate another paper to explain. It is obviously an open question. What *is* consistent throughout all who write on the *Imago Dei* is how impossible it is to define precisely. Pastor Meyer: “As long as our understanding is in its current corrupt form, we will never grasp the blessing called the “image” (1).

<sup>17</sup> Martin Luther, “Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5.” In *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan. American edition. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987), 1.62. Interestingly, Luther thought that the *Imago Dei* did not just give man a heightened intellect, but also a heightened physicality. Immediately after the

This is God's institution of leadership. He gives mankind the privilege of governing creation. Yet, "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."<sup>18</sup> God never made man an autonomous king. He made man to be his steward, the manager of what would remain *God's* kingdom. To discharge this distinguished duty, God provided man with two gifts.

Gift number one: man would receive divine revelation. God would intimately commune with man. At times, God would give man specific information or instruction. E.g., "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."<sup>19</sup>

Gift number two: man was made in God's image. Part of this image is that he has a heightened and enlightened intellectual capacity. Thus, Adam is able to make wise decisions about matters where God *hadn't* spoken. He is able to observe the properties and potential of creation and then utilize those in his effort to "subdue the earth."

Both gifts were needed for leadership. To state it in terms of responsibility, being a Christian leader requires *careful listening* and *careful reasoning*.

You see an example of this already in Genesis 2.

<sup>19</sup>Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found.<sup>20</sup>

Now, God could have named "each living creature" himself. But he had made Adam to be a אָדָם, his image to creation. Adam needed to function as such. Thus, God allows Adam to name the animals. The dusky dolphin has a brain to body mass ratio almost identical to that of a human being. So does the common field mouse. Yet that was not their role. Nor, in spite of their large brains, did they have the capacity for this task. Adam did. He was made in God's תְּמוּנָה, his likeness.

How did this all unfold? Was it instantaneous and instinctual—the animals paraded by quickly and after one glance Adam assigned them a name? Did Adam take his time, pulling on ears and lifting up tails like a judge at the Westminster Dog Show? We don't know. What we *do* know is that this was a snapshot of how leadership would work moving forward. Man would use both gifts of God—the direct revelation of God's will *and* his heightened intellect—to make decisions that were for the benefit of creation and the glory of the Creator. *Careful listening. Careful reasoning.*

From the beginning, it is clear that God had no intention of telling mankind, in detail, everything that he was to do. If he did, Adam could not demonstrate the leadership for which he was created. Imagine I start a

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quote above he writes, "I am fully convinced that before Adam's sin his eyes were so sharp and clear that they surpassed those of the lynx and eagle. He was stronger than the lions and the bears, whose strength is very great; and he handled them the way we handle puppies."

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 24:1

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 1:16,17

<sup>20</sup> You will hear and read some theologians say that the reason God had Adam name the animals was so that Adam would recognize that there was no "suitable helper" for him yet. That certainly seems to be one of God's goals. However, the text simply says, "He brought them to the man *to see what he would name them.*" God wanted Adam to begin exercising dominion over creation. As an extension of that, Adam realizes that in this responsibility, there is no creature capable of offering the type of help he most needs. The elephant had the physicality to help man, perhaps, when governing creation required muscle. The dog could be a "best friend," providing a degree of companionship. But more was needed. Since Adam was made in God's likeness, he *knew* God. Thus, he desired through his governance of creation to demonstrate devotion to his Creator. Yet, there was no other creature (other than spiritual ones, the angels) who understood God. Only Adam. That would soon change. In Eve, Adam would receive a "suitable helper," not just in the sense that procreation was physically possible, but in the sense that they together could love, delight in, and serve the One in whose image they were made. Yet, you *do* see in this God allowing Adam to use his reason. God could have simply said, "Adam, there is no suitable helper for you among the rest of creation." Instead, it appears God lets Adam figure that out on his own through this process. In our exercise of leadership, rather than telling us exactly what to do, God allows us to exercise our reason and our faculties, which are First Article gifts of God.

company making widgets. I hire you to lead the company as CEO. Then I tell you exactly how to manufacture the widgets, how to package them, how to sell them, who to hire, what time you must come in, when you may go home, and when you may take ten minutes for your morning constitutional. I can call you my CEO, but it would be a meaningless title. You are not providing leadership! But when God speaks, reality results. So, when God told mankind they were to rule over creation in his stead, he did not then hand over a mammoth set of instructions. Instead, God made mankind in his image—holy and pure, with an intellectual capacity that would allow him to provide leadership.

What breathtaking dignity God bequeathed to mankind! In creation, God did what only he could do—making something *out of nothing*. But God had composed creation with raw and limitless potential. So, the one made in the Creator’s likeness could do a sort of creating too—making something *out of something*. God enabled man to rule. He allowed man to lead.

God did not reveal to mankind how to make music. Instead, into the laws of nature, God wrote rules about tonality and pitch and reverberation. The birds could make beautiful noises, but they could never grasp those laws. Man could. He was made in God’s likeness. He had the ability to ascertain those laws and then put them to use. It is the Almighty who made music possible. But God let man take the lead in producing music.

God would not need to tell man how to construct machines or fabricate facilities or produce and store energy. He made mankind in his likeness. Thus, man would be able to figure that out (if those things were necessary in man’s quest to subdue the earth). As man “filled the earth,” if the need arose for organization (even the holy angels are organized into various ranks), God wouldn’t have had to dictate any specific governance. Why not? Man was made in his image. Man had both the intelligence to discern and the holy impulses to use the knowledge he gained in God-pleasing ways. Whatever government would have been established, it would not have been Republican or Democrat, but in the likeness of the Divine.

This was God’s institution of leadership. Man was to rule over the earth. That would require both *careful listening* to the Word of God and *careful reasoning* as man unlocked the potential God had placed within creation. Both were needed for leadership. Both still are.

Do we always understand that? I would say we understand the need for *careful listening*. Do we appreciate the need for *careful reasoning* as we demonstrate shepherd-leadership?

A few years ago, I was consulting with a congregation whose neighborhood had changed drastically over the last half-century. The congregation had remained homogenous. So, on a Saturday, about fifty members gathered in the church basement to spend eight hours in Bible study and assessment of current ministry. In discussing the effort to reach the community, a sweet, elderly woman asked—and I remember this word-for-word because of how she put it—“Do the blacks like to chant?” There were no SJWs<sup>21</sup> there to censure this woman for using a less-than-PC label. There were about a dozen LCWs<sup>22</sup> that were aghast that she raised the question, including some key leaders. Unlike her comment, I cannot recall the retorts word-for-word, but I easily remember the general thrust of their argument. A) What is chanted is the Word of God. B) The Word of God is always efficacious. The ardor with which the argument was made suggested, to me at least, an assertion: that if you questioned the merits of chanting (at least, in that context), you did not trust in the power of the Word.

Let us pull on that thread for a moment. Does anyone believe it a good use of time to stand in a Wal-Mart parking lot wearing a sandwich board with Romans 3:23 on the front and 3:24 on the back?<sup>23</sup> After all, A) what is written is the Word of God. B) The Word of God is always efficacious. If you *don’t* put some serious sandwich-boarding into your next annual ministry plan, do you condemn yourself, proving you do not trust in the power of the Word?

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<sup>21</sup> Social Justice Warriors

<sup>22</sup> Liturgical Chant Warriors

<sup>23</sup> “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” on the front. “and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” on the back.



I do not believe anyone would make that argument. Why not? *Careful reasoning*. In Paul's day, preaching in the *agora* was normal. Not today. We understand this tactic would be perceived as kooky. Thus, it would be a bad vehicle for gospel proclamation.

Well, was not that elderly woman simply asking if liturgical chant was a good vehicle for gospel proclamation in their context? The only difference between those situations—one real (chant), one fictional (sandwich board evangelism)—is that the weakness of the tactic in the fictional example is glaring. Whether chanting is a good tactic in the inner city would require more careful thought. Intelligent people could come to differing opinions. I am certainly no expert on African American culture, so I have no opinion on whether chanting in that context makes sense. My point is simply this. By her asking the question, this woman was *not* demonstrating a lack of trust in the efficacy of the Word. She was calling for *careful reasoning*; thus, she was demonstrating a better understanding of Christian leadership than some of the congregational leaders in that meeting.

Scripture calls for *careful reasoning* often. For example: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”<sup>24</sup> Teaching and rebuking are alike in that they involve communication and have loving goals. Beyond that, they are very little alike. A shepherd who rebukes someone when they need to be taught (or vice-versa) is not a leader who “correctly handles the word of truth.”<sup>25</sup> How does one know what is called for in a given situation? *Careful listening* is required, certainly. But so is *careful reasoning*.

This is God's institution of leadership. The LORD did not give Adam instructions on how to do everything. Instead, he made Adam in his likeness—possessing reason undergirded with purity. Likewise, as we provide leadership in his Church, he simply does not provide a lot of detailed direction. We might like him to. He chooses not to, so that we might demonstrate our love for him through *careful reasoning*.

Unfortunately, that does not always happen. I wish I could say the example of that elderly woman was an isolated incident, but it is not. It seems to me that at times there is an unwillingness to examine how we are proclaiming the Word; to ask, “Are we proclaiming the Word in ways that makes sense, given our context?” Sometimes, it seems we are hesitant to simply ask, “Is this the best we can do?”

Why is this the case?

## The Corruption of Leadership

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

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<sup>24</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>25</sup> 2 Timothy 2:15

*Careful listening. Careful reasoning.* The serpent attacked careful listening first. “Did God really say...? Eve, are you *certain* you understood what God was telling you?” As *careful listening* began to unravel, *careful reasoning* fell completely apart. “You will be like God,” Satan said, promising man something he already possessed. Man *already was* created in God’s likeness! The devil asserts that God is withholding something good from mankind, the same God that had told mankind that all creation was *for him* to rule over and enjoy! God had shown incomprehensible generosity to mankind. Yet, man was wrestling with the thought that God was stingy. *Careful reasoning* was long gone. “The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom...” Eve “saw,” i.e. she used her senses and her reason to size up the fruit. She concluded that something God had promised would bring death was “good.” Why? She was no longer in God’s likeness... no longer thought as he thought... no longer wanted what he wanted. Fallen man was entirely *unreasonable*.

The image of God was lost. Holiness? Purity? Those were *completely* lost. “The faithful have been swept from the land; not one upright person remains.”<sup>26</sup> Now “likeness” to God is nowhere to be found; therefore, “no one is good—except God alone.”<sup>27</sup>

What about the heightened intellect? Luther writes, “Intellect and will have remained, but both very much impaired.”<sup>28</sup> When mankind fell, he did not devolve into some dumb beast. We still figured out how to split the atom; however, without the *Imago Dei*, we use that knowledge not just to generate power but also construct powerful weapons. Man can still produce art that elicits emotion. But no longer being in God’s likeness, the art may be profane; the emotion elicited, blasphemous. Mankind is still largely able to כָּבַשׁ the earth. But no longer bearing God’s image, we do not just subdue creation; we rape it. Thus, “we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”<sup>29</sup>

Worst of all? In fallen man, the “very much impaired” intellect does not really know God, i.e. what God is like. Oh, natural man still knows that God exists. Man just assumes the very worst about him: God is cruel; God is impersonal; God is apathetic; God should serve me; etc. St. Paul says, “For *although they knew* God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking (διαλογισμοῖς) became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.”<sup>30</sup> Bereft of God’s image, man is no longer able to think or to reason properly. Deprived of God’s likeness, the desires of man’s heart do not demonstrate illumination, but the darkness of sin. The Spirit summarizes: “Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted.”<sup>31</sup>

We see this corruption reflected everywhere in mankind’s leadership, do we not? Human leadership is corrupted through and through. Name one substantial problem—just one!—which any world leader at any point in history has been able to solve.<sup>32</sup> “Subdue [the earth].” Where is the plan that subdues poverty? Is it socialism? Capitalism? Karl Marx and Adam Smith both gave it their best shot. Neither has turned Jesus into a liar: “The poor you will always have with you.”<sup>33</sup> Where is the strategy that eliminates crime or violence? There is none. So, in place of strategy, God gave leaders steel. “If you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason.”<sup>34</sup> There is nothing beautiful about lopping off someone’s head. God does not give rulers the sword because it is an *elegant* solution, but because it is an *effective* one—a practical way to deal with creatures that, *sine Imago Dei*, are often bestial.

God ordained man to lead. To enable him to do that, he made man in his image, his likeness. Man knew God. He heard God speak and gladly assented to what God said. He had a heightened intellect and will that

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<sup>26</sup> Micah 7:2

<sup>27</sup> Luke 18:10

<sup>28</sup> Luther, 1:64.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 8:22

<sup>30</sup> Romans 1:21,22

<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 1:5

<sup>32</sup> I am not denying that in some ways the world gets better. Even fallen man can figure out how to eliminate polio or increase crop resiliency or put a man on the moon. But has that really moved the needle on the human condition? Are we substantially happier? Are we even *a little* happier? We have pushed death back a few decades. Does man no longer fear it? Does he have any hope of escaping it?

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 26:11

<sup>34</sup> Romans 13:4



were in harmony with the Creator. He had the ability to empirically observe and correctly understand the world around him. He had a righteous capacity to use his reason in his mission to subdue the earth. But that has all been lost. So, what is human leadership now? At best, it is a mostly impotent attempt to constrain chaos and constitute a tiny bit of order. At worst, as in Eden, it is man's attempt to elevate himself from leader to Leader. What happens when man tries to exist apart from God. "[God] deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; he makes them wander in a trackless waste."<sup>35</sup>

We see this in the church too, do we not? In one church, you have leaders playing hide-the-pedophile. In another, a Texan with great hair spends each week telling his followers how to "name it and claim it," a not-even-subtle theology of glory. And to how many Lutheran churches does this admonition apply: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness?"<sup>36</sup> Church leadership has become corrupt.

We know full well we are not exempt. I mentioned earlier that there is sometimes a reluctance to use *careful reasoning* to examine ministry. I believe there are several reasons for this.

1. In some cases, I believe there is confusion about "the proper use" of the Word. God has promised, "[My word] will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."<sup>37</sup> Adolph Hoenecke explains, "The powerful Word has no effect apart from its use (*extra usum*)."<sup>38</sup> So a congregation believes that the lost in the community will be saved because they are there, in the middle of it all, with the Word. What of it? God did not send the Word to do evangelism. That is man's job. Thus, Paul's question, "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?"<sup>39</sup> Yet at times, we attribute to the Scripture what is man's job. Because we know Scripture is always efficacious, we therefore conclude, "Things are fine." This is a *corrupt understanding* of the relationship between the instrumental cause of salvation (the gospel in Word and sacrament) and the ministerial cause of salvation (believers as they utilize those means).
2. I believe in other cases, there is a fear that an examination of ministry will lead to changes which some find uncomfortable. I am perhaps being uncharitable, but I suspect that was the case with those who objected to that elderly lady's question. They were not really worried about anyone despising the efficacy of the Word. That was pious pretense. They were concerned that something they had grown to cherish in their long time in the church—liturgical chant—would be deep-sixed.<sup>40</sup> There is a *corruption in priorities*, if "what I like" trumps "what serves the gospel."
3. I believe in still other cases, the fear is that an examination of ministry will lead to an exposure of some sort of "defect," the discovery of a lack of certain skills perhaps. In my introduction, I touched on the fact that pastors are often well-aware of weaknesses. It can be hard enough to endure the existence of these weaknesses. To *broadcast* them...! That thought can be unbearable. This too is a corruption. We have a *corrupt sense of identity*, tying feelings of personal worth to perceptions of personal skill. E.g., "I'm worth something because I am such a good preacher."

What is worst of all is that, at times, church leaders will twist Scripture to support a corrupt view. Prof. Scharf gave one example yesterday. He wrote, "I have heard some *almost* use the doctrine of Election as a reason not to be aggressive in outreach."<sup>41</sup> Me too. I have also heard James 4:14<sup>42</sup> used to explain why strategic planning is unnecessary and maybe even Church Growthy. I have heard both Isaiah 55:12 and Hebrews 4:12 cited as reasons it is just fine to read your sermon. I have heard the term *ἐπίσκοπος* used to

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<sup>35</sup> Job 12:24

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 5:20

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 55:11

<sup>38</sup> Adolph Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics IV*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Romans 10:14

<sup>40</sup> I am not saying that their preference was only a matter of taste. Chant had served as a useful vehicle for the gospel for them personally! Their preference was rooted, in part, in a concern for their own spiritual edification. That does not change the fact they were *not* willing to consider what was potentially necessary for the edification of others.

<sup>41</sup> David Scharf, "St. Paul and Martin Luther: Paradigms of Shepherd-Leaders," 2018 Symposium on the Pastor as Shepherd-Leader, 11.

<sup>42</sup> "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

explain why a pastor should not be expected to share the previous month’s ministrations in a report to his council.

I have personally demonstrated this *corruption of leadership* more often than I care to admit. I remember when, years ago, a member of my council suggested we conduct annual reviews of leadership, starting with the pastor. I was aghast. Why was this necessary? Things were going well! I had what I believed were sound Scriptural reasons to object to this suggestion. There are passages that talk about the high respect that members should have for their pastor, passages that talk about how fruits of ministry are often invisible. But, “The heart is deceitful above all things.”<sup>43</sup> Rather than beating my councilman down with Scripture, I asked for time to think. In prayer and meditation, I concluded that I really wasn’t concerned about respect for public ministry. I was afraid of being critiqued.

Worse, I was willing to use Scripture to skewer a suggestion that had a very good intention—*careful reasoning*, an examination of whether we were doing all we could with the gospel. To use Scripture that way is not just bad leadership. It is demonic. It is like Satan in the wilderness, quoting Scripture to serve selfish purposes.

The corruption of sin. It taints every leader, including Christian ones. Thus, it twists Christian leadership.

Thankfully, God speaks; reality results.

## The Redemption of Leadership

The sad reality is that man lost the image of God. But God has spoken. “Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen.”<sup>44</sup> God speaks; reality results. The Holy Spirit has taken our dead, closed ears and opened them. He has enabled, once again, *careful listening*. Listen to what God has said about all that corruption.

“He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”<sup>45</sup> God speaks; reality results. The serpent has no more fangs.

“It is finished.”<sup>46</sup> God speaks; reality results. The payment for our sins, including the times we have failed to lead, is complete.

There is now a new reality. The holiness that was completely lost is now perfectly restored. “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”<sup>47</sup> The Christian once again bears God’s likeness, for the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to him through faith. “All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”<sup>48</sup> In that sense, we can say that the image of God *is restored* in the New Man.

However, we can also speak of the image of God *being restored* within us in the sense that through *careful listening* to the Word, the Holy Spirit is restoring our knowledge of what God is like. He is restoring our understanding of God’s will, and along with that, empowering us once again to joyfully assent to it. St. Paul writes, “You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which *is being renewed in knowledge* in the image of its Creator.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, the Spirit is also enabling *careful reasoning*.

The God of all mercy has redeemed man. He has made us anew in his likeness. Thus, God also is redeeming man’s ability to rule over creation... to subdue the earth... *to lead*.

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<sup>43</sup> Jeremiah 17:9

<sup>44</sup> Isaiah 32:3

<sup>45</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>46</sup> John 19:30

<sup>47</sup> Hebrews 10:10

<sup>48</sup> Galatians 3:27

<sup>49</sup> Colossians 3:9,10

The Christian politician “is being renewed in knowledge in the image of [his] Creator.” Thus, he understands that to the degree laws and standards reflect the Creator’s design, society will thrive as much as possible in a fallen world. That sanctified knowledge enables *careful reasoning*, which commends him as he governs.

The Christian scientist “is being renewed in knowledge of the image of [his] Creator.” Thus, as he uses the God-given gift of reason to unlock the mysteries of creation—say, for example, genetic engineering—his guiding question is not, “What *can* I do?” It is “What *should* I do?” The world might think that knowledge is god. The Christian scientist knows that God is God, and scientific knowledge is to be used only to his glory. That sanctified knowledge produces *careful reasoning* that chaperones him as he exhibits leadership in his field.

The Christian father “is being renewed in knowledge in the image of [his] Creator.” So, he is an objectively better father than the non-Christian. It is not necessarily that the Christian father feels more affection for his children than the non-Christian. But as the Christian father structures his children’s lives, he is able to prioritize in a more loving manner. Teaching his son to throw a curveball is not as important as teaching his son to know Jesus. Getting his daughter into a good college is not nearly as important as getting her into the Word. Sanctified knowledge enables *careful reasoning* which allows that father to lead his family well.

Note the passive: “the new self, which is being renewed” (ἀνακαινούμενον). This is all the work of the Spirit! Our work for him is ever only his work within us. “It is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”<sup>50</sup> In this symposium, we are focusing on his “good purpose” to enable you to lead. *Careful listening*. As we *carefully listen* to his voice, he makes *careful reasoning*—which God himself built into the nature of leadership when he instituted it in the Garden—possible again. Leadership is redeemed.

Take those three reasons we said we sometimes use to justify not examining ministry carefully.

1. *We have a corrupt understanding of the role of the instrumental cause of salvation and the ministerial cause of salvation.* Well, what else could cure that but *careful listening*? In his paper, Pastor Schroeder said it beautifully. “God has a plan to save mankind: God has a part, the Word has a part, and you have a part.”<sup>51</sup> As we listen carefully to the Word, the Spirit makes it clear what those “parts” are. That allows for *careful reasoning*. Every single aspect of ministry that is under man’s regulation, we will be willing to scrutinize regularly. That which only the Spirit can accomplish, we leave entirely to him. “The only cause of salvation you and I have any control over is the ministerial cause.”<sup>52</sup>
2. *We have a corruption in priorities, elevating personal preferences over what would best serve the gospel (or, best serve our community with the gospel) in our context.* St. Paul encourages the Philippians: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”<sup>53</sup> That goes contrary to inclination of our sinful nature, which is why immediately after Paul encourages such an outlook, he asks the Philippians to *listen carefully* to all that which Christ has done.

Being in very nature God, [he] did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

The gospel melts us. The incomprehensible sacrifice of Christ moves us to a willingness to sacrifice *anything except* the gospel... to sacrifice *everything for* the gospel. Priorities fall quickly in line. Christ and his gospel first. Everyone else second. My wants... my personal preferences... my desires.

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<sup>50</sup> Philippians 2:13

<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Schroeder, “Shepherds Under the Cross,” 2018 Symposium on the Pastor as Shepherd-Leader, 24.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Philippians 2:3,4

These do not even exist for one who has listened carefully to the gospel!<sup>54</sup> That *careful listening* enables *careful reasoning*. In ministry, do we do what we do because it is what truly serves the gospel? Or do we do what we do because we like to do it?

3. *We have a corrupt sense of identity, tying feelings of worth to perceptions of skill.* I drove here today in a 1999 Toyota Camry with 247,000 miles and change on the odometer. If you offer me \$20,000 for that car, the BlueBook value is meaningless. (BTW, sold!) Something is worth whatever one is willing to pay for it. We know this. Yet, we need to hear it again and again. *Careful listening*. “You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ.”<sup>55</sup> If God was willing to bankrupt heaven to redeem me, then I must be worth everything to him. In baptism, he even called me his son. God speaks; reality results. If I am a “son” of the Almighty, I don’t need to be “best preacher” or “best teacher” or “amazing evangelist” or “super administrator.” I will certainly endeavor to be my best in those areas, simply because I want to make Dad proud. But I will not be undone if my ministry performance is critiqued. In fact, I *welcome* it. Public ministry flies by. I blinked and was half-way to done. So little time! I want to give my best. How can I give Christ my best if no one tells me where I need to improve?

*The Shepherd-Leader at Work: Moving Forward.* Leadership “moving forward” requires the same things that were required for leadership when God instituted it in the Garden. *Careful listening*. Through his Word, God builds our faith and clothes us in righteousness. He recreates his image. Thus, he also enables *careful reasoning*. He gives us the capacity to use our reason to survey our corner of creation, to examine strengths and weaknesses in current ministry, to assess what resources are available to us in our Kingdom work, to cultivate those resources, to plan ways to increase our gospel efforts. That is leadership. It is God’s own creation.

## Part II

### THE NEED FOR CAREFUL LISTENING & CAREFUL REASONING IN ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

This is supposed to be the “practical paper.” So, let us spend a little time applying this fact—that God instituted Christian leadership to include both careful listening and careful reasoning—to various aspects of four categories of Christian leadership:

- *Spiritual leadership:* The shepherd leads his people into Scripture, helping them to understand and apply it, for the maintenance of their faith and their service of their Savior.
- *Relational leadership:* The shepherd nourishes relationships within the congregation, which is essential not only for spiritual encouragement but also for effective, harmonious functioning of ministry.
- *Operational leadership:* The shepherd sees what needs to be done in the congregation and can organize and manage resources to get those things done.
- *Replicational leadership:* The shepherd attempts to expand the total gospel efforts of his congregation by equipping others for ministry; i.e., he “replicates himself” for certain tasks.

We cannot possibly cover every facet of each of these aspects of leadership. That is fine. I mentioned in the introduction that we should look at growth in leadership as a ministry-long effort. So, instead, we will focus on just one facet for each of these four aspects of leadership, using it to illustrate the intersection between *careful listening* and *careful reasoning* in leadership.

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<sup>54</sup> I realize I am painting an overly rosy picture perhaps. This side of heaven, we remain *simul justus et peccator*. Therefore, we are never entirely free of selfishness. That just emphasizes the need for careful analysis of ministry, determining exactly *why* we do what we do. Our rationale will rarely be entirely self-less and pure. Here, I am simply talking in terms that demonstrate gospel-rooted optimism.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Peter 1:18,19

## Spiritual Leadership

*Careful listening: The shepherd-leader is always a student of the Word; he understands and continually reiterates to his people that God's Word is the only source of absolute truth.*

*Careful reasoning: The shepherd-leader guides his people as they measure "wordly" concepts and ideas against the truth of God's Word to determine their usefulness.*

Spiritual leadership is the focus of this symposium. The theme is not *The Pastor as CEO-Leader* or even *The Pastor as Manager-Leader*. No. *Shepherd-Leader*. Leadership within the church is to be first and foremost a spiritual thing.

What *isn't* spiritual activity within the Church? Something as humdrum as cutting the church lawn becomes a spiritual activity when it is done to demonstrate respect for the place Christ's gospel is proclaimed. The pastor demonstrates spiritual leadership as he inspires others to serve in all their vocations out of reverence for Christ and thankfulness for their salvation.

Younger brothers, this is the aspect of leadership you can exhibit from the get-go. "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."<sup>56</sup> You may have to grow into operational leadership. But on day one of your first call, you can demonstrate spiritual leadership by "[watching] your life and doctrine closely,"<sup>57</sup> by serving joyfully, by demonstrating a radical level of sacrificial love for others.

Another way you demonstrate spiritual leadership is by helping your people to be discerning. That is what is meant by "measure concepts and ideas against the truth of God's Word to determine their usefulness."

We established that when God instituted leadership, he did not then give Adam a playbook. There is no divine flowchart explaining what to do in every situation. Instead, God made man in his image—holy and pure, with a heightened intellect. Adam would demonstrate leadership by using holy reason to determine the best ways to manage creation for the Creator.

That is *still* how it works. Scripture is not a ministerial instruction manual. It is not a *Papierpapst* that states, "This is exactly how to run the church." Scripture does not even say, "This is exactly how to run your life."

For example, take marriage. Where are the detailed instructions in Scripture that explain exactly how to conduct yourself in marriage? There aren't any. It *must* be this way. If Scripture were a marriage manual, it would necessarily be massive. It would need to be tabulated so you could find the appropriate applications for your time in history and your culture.<sup>58</sup>

Instead, the Spirit gives us some broad spiritual principles in Ephesians, chapter 5. Paul explains it is God's will that a husband approach life alongside his wife with an underlying willingness to sacrifice anything, including his own life, for her happiness and eternal well-being. Paul explains that God's will for the wife is that she support her husband in every way she can as he seeks to carry out his God-given mission. Note that Paul never explains exactly how this will play out. Thus, he is calling for *careful reasoning*. "Boys and girls, figure it out." But smack-dab in the center of these broad principles, he calls for *careful listening*. "Listen carefully, you husbands and wives, to the story of a greater wedding... the tale of a greater Spouse. 'Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water

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<sup>56</sup> 1 Timothy 4:12

<sup>57</sup> 1 Timothy 4:16

<sup>58</sup> Would your wife be ok with you treating her exactly the same way Abraham treated Sarah or with you speaking about her the same way Martin speaks about Katie at times? If you believe "yes," go ahead and try it. When the time comes, I have a couch in my basement you can sleep on.

through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”<sup>59</sup> We are left breathless by grace. God sees not even a blemish? Christ thinks that I am *radiant*? This is transformational love. I can be (and often am) a jackass; yet, on those days, my wife still loves me for no other reason than she loves her heavenly Bridegroom.

Thus, in Scripture, God has not given us a marriage manual. “These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,” Jesus says.<sup>60</sup> As the Spirit brings the husband closer to Jesus and the wife closer to Jesus, he brings them closer to each other too.

“It is important that husband and wife have a regular date night.” Moses does not say that. Oprah does. Part of spiritual leadership is taking a concept like that, which *doesn't* come from Scripture, and then applying reason carefully. “Would having a date night help me do what God has asked me to do as a husband?”

When it comes to management of the church, I think we are at times hesitant to do this. For example, here is an excerpt from an e-mail I received in December 2016.

When I hear talk of about having a vision and core values, it strikes me that the [Commission on Congregational Counseling] believes the church is essentially no different than a business... What causes God's church to grow spiritually or numerically is not our cleverness or even our plans, but the power of the Holy Spirit contained in Word and Sacrament.

In subsequent dialogue, it became clear that the gentleman's objection was that, in consulting with congregations, the CCC will often encourage the use tools that come out of the business world. The gentleman is correct. Nowhere does Scripture tell a church to have a core values statement. So what? Nowhere does Scripture tell a church to have a budget. That is a business tool too. It is not demonstrating *careful reasoning* to say, “Scripture doesn't tell us to do this, so we won't.” In fact, that does not even demonstrate a proper understanding of the purpose of Scripture. In church leadership the question is not always, “Does Scripture call for this?” but “Can this be used in service of the gospel?”

St. Paul puts it this way. “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”<sup>61</sup> (λογισμοὺς καθαιρούμεντες καὶ πᾶν ὕψωμα ἐπαιρόμενον κατὰ τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες πᾶν νόημα εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.)

The world is full of “arguments”—ideas, concepts, views—that seem *logical* (λογισμός). And yet, if we bought into those views, it would create a barrier wall between us and Christ. (A ὕψωμα is something that is elevated. It can be used to refer to things like bulwarks or ramparts.) Why do they separate us from Christ? Simple. They are “against the knowledge of God.” Those worldly ideas and concepts are contrary to what we have come to know through the enlightening of the Spirit about God, his love, and his will. Thus, with many of the ideas we find in the world, we are not only to reject them, we are to rip them down (καθαίρω), to expose them for what they are.

Is that the case with *every* idea or concept that comes from the world? No. Paul says there are some thoughts (νόημα) where, instead of completely destroying them, we should instead capture them (αἰχμαλωτίζω, “to take captive in a war, to subdue”). From the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*: “In the NT [νόημα] occurs only in Paul (5 times in 2 C., once in Phil.). It is found only in the plural or with a plural sense, and always (apart from Phil. 4:7) *sensu malo*. It means corrupt human thoughts...”<sup>62</sup> What is our goal in “taking captive” these thoughts? We want to make them “obedient to Christ,” i.e. we want to see if they can be redeemed and used to serve his will. If so, great. If not, we “demolish” them.

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<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 5:25-27

<sup>60</sup> John 5:39

<sup>61</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:5

<sup>62</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume IV* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 961.



Go back to my example of my leaders wanting to conduct an annual review of their pastor. Where did they get that idea from? I am skeptical that they read Proverbs 27:17—“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”—and subsequently developed the concept of an annual review. Instead, I believe they saw how performance reviews were used in “the real world.” Now, when performance reviews are conducted, is the underlying goal always pure—the company simply wants their employee to be happy and do their best? Not always. Leadership has been corrupted; therefore, the underlying goal might be more about the bottom line. Does that mean it is impossible to use some sort of performance review in the church?

“Does Scripture tell us we should have annual reviews?” is the wrong question. “Do the Lutheran Confessions call for an annual review?” is even more wrong. What are the right questions? “Does Scripture explicitly prohibit an annual review?” “Would implementing some sort of annual review set up a barrier wall between our activity and what God has said in his Word?” Answering those questions requires *careful listening*. “Could an annual review help the pastor and other leaders better carry out their God-given mission?” “Could conducting annual reviews help us get individuals the help and resources they need?” Answering those questions requires *careful reasoning*.

Apply this concept to things like having a mission statement or core values statement... or engaging in broader strategic planning... or using a consensus model tactic within your governance. These things all come from the world. Again, I ask, so what? *Can you make these concepts obedient to Christ?* Maybe. Maybe not. *Careful reasoning* is needed. It has been ever since God instituted leadership in the Garden.

## Relational Leadership

*Careful listening: The shepherd-leader allows all his relationships to be defined by God in his Word.*

*Careful reasoning: The shepherd-leader determines how to relate to others in ways that conform to God's definition.*

In his book *Called to Lead*, John MacArthur writes, “Leadership is not automatically conferred by title or by rank. Leadership is influence. It is a matter of ability, not position.”<sup>63</sup> He is right and wrong. He is wrong in the sense that what “confers” leadership is not ability, but God’s decision. God speaks; reality results. If God has called you a leader, that is what you are. But MacArthur is right in the sense that you cannot function well as a leader without influence. An appeal to position—“I’m the pastor. Respect the office. Listen to me.”—typically does not work well.<sup>64</sup> Later in the book MacArthur goes on, “Leadership is all about motivating people to follow. Therefore, everything in leadership hinges on the leader’s relationship to people.”<sup>65</sup> He is talking about relational leadership.

In the business world, relational leadership is almost entirely a matter of manners. Be humble. Be kind. Treat others with respect. Listen. Encourage. These are all good. In fact, these are Biblical. But in the Church, relational leadership requires more than good manners. It requires the appreciation that when God speaks, reality results. Thus, relational leadership begins with *careful listening*. We go to God’s Word and hear how he defines all our relationships. Relational leadership then requires *careful reasoning*, as we determine how to shape our lives to fit those definitions.

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<sup>63</sup> John MacArthur, *Called to Lead* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 46. I think MacArthur overstates things a bit. Leadership necessitates influence. They are not identical, however.

<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that an appeal to position should never be made. Not infrequently, in consulting with congregations I have had to communicate with testy members and say something like, “Christ himself chose that man to be your pastor. Your disrespect for your pastor is contempt for God himself. Repent or face damnation.” My point is when the person *who is in a position of authority* needs to regularly appeal to his position of authority, something is amiss.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 70.



Take, for example, our relationship to God. How he defines that relationship should shape the way you think and act. So, when God calls you an “ambassador”<sup>66</sup> or “herald”<sup>67</sup> that *must* shape the way you view things “moving forward.” Your responsibility is not simply to simply speak *about* Christ. You speak *for* him.

Or, consider your relationship with others. When God calls you a “shepherd,” he is declaring reality—he has made you their leader. This obviously does not mean God values you more than your sheep. It does not even necessarily mean God believes you to be more knowledgeable in spiritual matters than they are. He simply says, “*For my own reasons, I chose you to provide leadership: lead, feed, give heed.*”

Another term that the Spirit uses to describe the shepherd-leader? “The Lord’s *servant* (δοῦλον) must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”<sup>68</sup> A δοῦλος is more than a servant. He is a slave, the legal property of another. We are owned by Jesus. Twice in 1 Corinthians, Paul tells his readers, “You were bought at a price.”<sup>69</sup>

Being Christ’s slave is not burdensome. The great theologian Bob Dylan says, “It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you’re gonna have to serve somebody.”<sup>70</sup> We *did* serve the devil at one point. “You followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air.”<sup>71</sup> We were owned by Darkness. *That* is burdensome. Slavery to sin leads to a meaningless life and a nightmarish eternity. But “he shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery (δουλείας) by their fear of death.”<sup>72</sup> Free! In gratitude, we now joyfully live for Christ.

One of the ways we do that is embracing the fact that God applies this owner/slave relationship elsewhere in our lives. Paul says, “For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants (δούλους ὑμῶν) for Jesus’ sake.”<sup>73</sup> A pastor is not to view himself simply as a servant of his members. Brothers, you are *owned* by your members “for Jesus’ sake.” And not just by your members! “Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone (πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα), to win as many as possible.”<sup>74</sup> *Careful listening.* Scripture describes your relationship to your members and to the lost in your community in owner/slave terminology, i.e. they have a claim on you. *Careful reasoning.* How will you now structure your ministry in a way that reflects that reality?

Another way God defines your relationship with your fellow believers is as “family”; “brothers and sisters.” We need to listen carefully. The Spirit is not sloppy with his words. The only reason he would use this terminology as pervasively as he does is because he wants us to think of our fellow believers as kin. That is more than symbolic. God speaks; reality results. So, if the reality is that you are kin to your members... that they are kin to each other... how will that be reflected in the way your congregation operates?<sup>75</sup>

We have not the time to discuss every possible way our lives might be shaped by these definitions. The applications would not be the same in every situation anyway. I will highlight two applications that I have observed to be important, no matter what your context may be.

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<sup>66</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20

<sup>67</sup> Romans 10:14; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11; 2 Peter 2:5

<sup>68</sup> 2 Timothy 2:24

<sup>69</sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23

<sup>70</sup> From the 1979 album *Slow Train Coming*.

<sup>71</sup> Ephesians 2:2

<sup>72</sup> Hebrews 2:14,15

<sup>73</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:5

<sup>74</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:19

<sup>75</sup> When consulting with congregation, I stress that a goal should be that members are willing to do for each other what they would do for biological kin. If a sister goes into the hospital, you visit her. Now, in a church of 400 souls, you probably shouldn’t have *everyone* visit the elderly member who has her knee replaced. But there should be the desire. “That’s my sister.” What would you do if your brother fell into financial hardship? Hopefully, you wouldn’t not just write him check. But you would probably be willing to dig into his finances and, yes, to make a personal sacrifice if he needed that help. If we are “brothers and sisters,” should not that same willingness be there for fellow members?

First, “Offer hospitality.”<sup>76</sup> J. Oswald Sanders writes:

The leader must show hospitality. This ministry should never be seen as an irksome imposition but rather as one that offers the privilege of service. *The Shepherd of Hermas*, a widely used book written in the second century AD, mentions that a bishop ‘must be hospitable, a man who gladly and at all times welcomes into his house the servants of God.’<sup>77</sup>

But not only the servants of God. The Spirit would add, “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.”<sup>78</sup>

Within two weeks of the arrival at my first call, my mission counselor, James Radloff, came for a few days of “missionary orientation.” I do not remember everything he told me during his visit. I remember vividly what he told my wife. Over dinner, she had asked him how she might best help in this new start endeavor. Worshiping about a dozen, we would not have a Sunday school for a couple years. My wife does not play organ or keyboard to a degree she could assist in worship. Pastor Radloff’s suggestion: “Have a good lunch ready to go every Sunday.” She listened. In those early years, it was normal to have either a prospect or a member (and their families) over after church. That first year, we had sixteen adult confirmations. The year after, same. Most of them had sat at my table (or I at theirs). Please, don’t misinterpret. I know a hardroll stuffed with ham and swiss does not create faith.<sup>79</sup> Only the Spirit can do that. But typically, the way the Spirit creates faith is as a believer shares the gospel. Hospitality created an opportunity for that. Was this something I *liked* to do? Not at all. 1) I rehearsed sermons early Sunday mornings. I was tired and wanted the post-church pastoral nap. 2) I am introverted. Trying to converse with strangers does not come easily to me. What does any of that matter? Christ had told me in his Word that I do well to think of myself as a slave to the lost. They owned me, my time, and my lunch. So, *careful reasoning*—in this case, through the advice of a wise, older brother—told me demonstrating hospitality would be a good way to live that reality.

When it was members coming over, there was a different benefit. It connected us in a way that made it easier to ask for help. I could preach a dozen sermons to Member A, ask them to help me with canvassing some weekend, and get excuses. I preach the same sermons to Member B but *also* break bread with them. When I ask for their help, rarely would they say no. I did not sense any guilt motivation. “He served me lunch, so I guess I gotta.” It was something else. Sanders writes, “Leaders must draw the best out of people, and *friendship* does that far better than prolonged arguments or mere logic.”<sup>80</sup>

This was by no means unique to my situation. I served on a District Mission Board that oversaw the work of thirty-plus missions. When hospitality was a *modus operandi* for pastors and other leaders, evangelism and volunteerism efforts generally were more robust than when it wasn’t.

You even see a variance of this tactic in Scripture. What is one of the criticisms often leveled against Jesus? He was “a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”<sup>81</sup> Why would they think Jesus was their “friend,” if all he was doing was teaching in synagogues? Because that was *not* all Jesus was doing. “*Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?*” the Pharisees asked.<sup>82</sup> This face-to-face time seemed to be a priority for Jesus. “When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. *I must stay* (δεῖ με μεῖναι) at your house today.’” Now, Jesus is asking for hospitality rather than showing it. But we can cut him some slack as “the Son of Man [had] no place to lay his head.”<sup>83</sup> You and I cannot say the same.

I am certainly not saying that if you build more hospitality into your ministry every challenge your congregation faces will disappear. That is Church Growth, the belief that if you just do A, B will follow. I

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<sup>76</sup> 1 Peter 4:9

<sup>77</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 48.

<sup>78</sup> Hebrews 13:2

<sup>79</sup> Though, it declares that our God is wise and good and only wants the best for his children.

<sup>80</sup> Sanders, 84.

<sup>81</sup> Matthew 11:19

<sup>82</sup> Mark 2:16

<sup>83</sup> Luke 9:58

am asking you to use *careful reasoning*. Others have found this to be a very good way to demonstrate relational leadership. Might it also serve well in your context?

A second tactic for developing relational leadership—identify with the people you are trying to motivate for service.

The book of Nehemiah contains a number of Christian leadership principles.<sup>84</sup> In chapter 2, Nehemiah asks King Artaxerxes if he can return to Judah to help rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah arrives; he inspects the walls. When he goes to the leaders, he says: “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”<sup>85</sup> Nehemiah had *not* lived in Jerusalem; therefore, he was not responsible in any way for the decay of the city. Yet, he identifies with the people. He does not say, “*You* messed up.” No. “*We* will no longer be in disgrace.” Not, “*You* need to fix this.” Instead, “Let *us* rebuild the wall.” As you read through the book, it seems like Nehemiah was willing to do anything. He planned. He managed. He did physical labor too it seems. Nothing was beneath him. This provided additional motivation for the people.

This is horse sense (*careful reasoning*) as much as Scriptural principal. Tyson Foods is the world’s second largest processor and marketer of meat. It has annual revenue close to \$40 billion. Tyson employs over 122,000 people. Tyson’s greatest period of expansion came under CEO Don Tyson, who ran the company from the 60s to the 90s. Every day when he came into work, he wore a brown uniform with “Don” embroidered on the shirt pocket, the same as his employees.<sup>86</sup> As Herb Kelleher was building Southwest Airlines into the third largest airline in North America, he was responsible for management, logistics, and expansion. Yet baggage handlers will tell stories of Kelleher taking off his coat and tie and helping them load luggage when things got busy. Southwest flight attendants will share how Kelleher would appear on the plane carrying boxes of the peanuts Southwest used to distribute. This was not a sale’s pitch. “Hi, I’m Herb, CEO of Southwest. Thanks for your business!” He did it simply to help the flight attendants.<sup>87</sup> Scripture speaks of the need for humility in leadership. Humility is certainly part of what is behind these examples. But so is the desire to identify with the people these men were trying to lead. It was a means of motivation.

Brothers, do you want your members to invite their next-door neighbor to church? How will you motivate them? First and foremost, you motivate them by helping them see Jesus. But secondly, you motivate them by doing yourself what you ask them to do. *You* have *your* neighbors over for dinner. *You* cultivate that relationship. Let your members know you are doing this. It might even happen from the pulpit, when appropriate. That is not bragging. It is leading by example, which is part of relational leadership. Where the shepherd walks, the sheep will tend to follow.

Do you want your members to show up in large numbers on Arbor Day? Then let them know you’re going to be there and could use their help. Do you want to have good participation at your *Christmas For Kids*? Then don’t just pop in, say a prayer, and duck out. Be there for the entire thing. Maybe help a child or two with his craft. And if you say, “But I’m the pastor! I don’t have time for all that,” that might be true. *Careful reasoning*. Maybe, after we discuss replicational leadership, you will conclude there is a way to create the time for such things.

## Operational Leadership

*Careful listening: The shepherd-leader recognizes that the mission of the Church has been established by Christ. The shepherd-leader makes certain his people are clear about that mission, and that they are committed to it.*

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<sup>84</sup> Earlier I warned against turning Scripture into a detailed manual for Christian behavior. Lest I be accused of doing that here, let me state for the record that the book of Nehemiah’s main purpose is *not* to establish Christian leadership principles, but to show us Christ.

<sup>85</sup> Nehemiah 2:17

<sup>86</sup> Lorin Woolfe, *The Bible on Leadership* (New York: Amacom, 2002), 73

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid* 84.

*Careful reasoning: The shepherd-leader guides his people as they strategize how to carry out that mission in their specific context.*

We use the word “mission” in many ways: the Apollo space missions, military missions, a mission trip to India, etc. Likewise, the words translated “mission” in Scripture refer to many different things.

In Joshua 22, Joshua tells the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh that “you have not deserted your fellow Israelites but have carried out the mission (מִשְׁמֶרֶת) the LORD your God gave you.”<sup>88</sup> He uses a word which can mean “duty” or “obligation.” Indeed, we understand there is a responsibility conveyed in a mission.

In 1 Samuel 15 the prophet reminds King Saul that he has a mission to prevent Israel from falling under pagan influence. “The Lord anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission... (פְּדֹרָה).”<sup>89</sup> דְּרָכִים can refer to a “journey” or “road.” Sometimes, we picture missions that way—a long trip, an adventure.

In Acts 12 we are told, “When Barnabas and Saul finished their mission (διακονίαν), they returned from Jerusalem.” That same word is translated “task” elsewhere, e.g. “My only aim is to finish the race and complete the task (διακονίαν) the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”<sup>90</sup>

Again, the word “mission” is used to refer to many different tasks. So, what is the common thread? Two things. First, a mission is handed down from above. “...the mission the Lord your God gave you...” “...he sent you on a mission.” Missions are *never* self-chosen. They are given to you by one with authority. Second, missions are a temporary task. You “complete the task” eventually.

What is the mission of the Church on earth? *Careful listening* is needed. The mission of the Church on earth is *not* worship, because worship is not temporary. There was worship before the fall into sin. There will be worship in heaven. In the narrow sense of the word “worship,” worship is mankind’s *purpose*. We exist to *ascribe worth* to God. “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.”<sup>91</sup> In the broader sense of the word, worship is mankind’s need. “I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer.”<sup>92</sup> My need for forgiveness, my need for the strengthening of faith, my need for the restoration of joy—my deliverer gives this all to me as I gather with fellow saints for *careful listening*. This is *Gottesdienst* with the subjective genitive—God serving man in worship. It is what *enables* mission—enlightening us, motivating us—but is not the mission itself.

What is? You know Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20, Acts 1—the so-called “Great Commission” passages.<sup>93</sup> It would be inaccurate to say those passages are all about evangelism. “...teaching them...everything”<sup>94</sup> stresses the importance of nurture. However, it would be more than inaccurate—absurd—to suggest those passages do *not* state that evangelism is the great privilege and responsibility of the Church on earth. It is our mission—the temporary responsibility that the One with “all authority in heaven and on earth”<sup>95</sup> had handed down to us.

Do our people understand that? Mark Zarling writes,

By the Spirit’s grace Lutheran leaders are men who always view matters from the spiritual and eternal perspective. The Lord’s Great Commission

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<sup>88</sup> Joshua 22:3

<sup>89</sup> 1 Samuel 15:17,18

<sup>90</sup> Acts 20:24

<sup>91</sup> Psalm 29:2

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 40:17

<sup>93</sup> I sometimes hear pushback against referring to such portions of Scripture as “the Great Commission.” Typically, the argument goes, “Has not Jesus asked his Church to do many things? What makes those passages ‘great,’ when compared to the others?” Well... ok. However, the fact that the Great Commission, in multiple books of the Bible, is the *final* set of instructions Jesus gives to his followers before he ascends probably *does* count for something. Or is that just coincidence? This is probably sinful cynicism on my part. When I hear that argument, I typically do not believe the one making the argument is truly interested in theological precision. I believe he is uncomfortable with the ramifications of those passages actually being the Church Militant’s *raison d’être*, our “reason to be.”

<sup>94</sup> Matthew 28:20

<sup>95</sup> Matthew 28:18

to his Church is always foremost in their minds. The Lord's promised return always lights the fire of urgency in discussion and decisions. Other people might get bogged down in the mundane aspects of congregation life, but Lutheran leaders always see issues from a simple perspective—In what ways does this impact a soul?

Consider how often my selfishness displays itself in being willing to fund church programs that serve the saved, and yet hesitate to be generous in the efforts to reach out to the unsaved with the Gospel in word and action. Such actions are sins, brothers. <sup>96</sup>

Now, E. Allen Sorum:

If we are not imploring others on Christ's behalf to be reconciled to Christ, then somebody better hurry up and implore us to be reconciled to Christ. God does not recreate us (2 Corinthians 5:17) and then ask us to *consider* pleading to the world on Christ's behalf to be reconciled. God does not change our nature and then wait for us to find time in our schedule to be his witnesses. God made us to be his people who proclaim his glory in and to the world. If we are not doing and being what God re-created us to do and be, we are living in open rebellion against him. Brothers and sisters, our arms are too short to box with God. We will lose.<sup>97</sup>

What were Pres. Zarling's paper and Prof. Sorum's article both about? Leadership. I asked if people *really* understand the mission of the Church on earth. If not, it is because of a lack of operational leadership within the congregation. Operational leadership's genesis is when the shepherd-leader helps his people engage in *careful listening*, hearing and committing to the mission Christ himself has given us in his Word. Operational leadership continues as the shepherd-leader guides his people through *careful reasoning*, determining the best way to carry out the mission of the Church in the local context.

That second part is what we call planning. Scripture tells us God himself makes plans.<sup>98</sup> It tells us what can make plans more likely to fail or be successful.<sup>99</sup> Scripture encourages us to pray to the Lord to bless our plans.<sup>100</sup>

In chapter 4 of his epistle, James addresses planning for the future. He reminds us that "you do not even know what will happen tomorrow."<sup>101</sup> Therefore, he warns against our plans becoming our boast, i.e. the thing that makes us feel secure. But even with that warning, he says, "You ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that (τοῦτο ἢ ἐκεῖνο).'"<sup>102</sup> "The activity options, though unspecified, are listed in order of priority. The idea is, 'If we can't do this, then we'll do that.'"<sup>103</sup> In other words, James encourages having both a plan and a back-up plan! *Careful listening*. One cannot read Scripture and conclude that planning *isn't* vital.

So how to do it? There, Scripture is silent. However, in the real world, there are many different approaches to planning. Might you adapt one of these approaches to fit your congregation? *Careful reasoning*. For example, consider the way businesses tend to break up planning into two parts: strategic and tactical. What is all involved in strategic planning, and how might it fit into your congregation?

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<sup>96</sup> Mark Zarling, "Leaders in the Lord! What makes a "Lutheran Leader?," WLS Essay File, 4,6.

<sup>97</sup> E. Allen Sorum, "Pastors and Laypeople in Partnership to Advance Christ's Kingdom", Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, 117

<sup>98</sup> Jeremiah 29:11

<sup>99</sup> Proverbs 15:22

<sup>100</sup> Psalm 20:4

<sup>101</sup> James 4:14

<sup>102</sup> James 4:15

<sup>103</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 328.

*First, the congregation assesses the current reality.*

A congregation would regularly assess the strengths and weakness of current ministry efforts. “How can we build on what we are currently doing well and mitigate what we are not?” “Is there anything we are currently doing that we should stop doing, simply because it is consuming a lot of resources and has produced no visible fruit over a prolonged period of time?”

A congregation would also assess human resources: skill sets of called workers or staff, the amount of volunteerism hours available, etc. Congregations typically do a decent job of determining if they have the financial resources to carry out a plan. Conversely, they do a poor job of ascertaining if they have enough people available to carry out the plan.

Finally, a congregation would study the makeup of the community: demographics, culture, etc. *Careful reasoning.* The congregation wants to think about how it can share the gospel in a culturally relevant manner without losing sight of the fact that the Church has always been counter-cultural.

*Second, the congregation clarifies mission and core values.*

A core values statement is simply a list of the most important things a congregation believes it needs to do if it is going to fulfill its mission. As a congregation produces an annual ministry plan, the core values statement serves as a template. Human and financial resources are allocated towards *each* core value. If resources are *not* allocated towards the value, it is only an *aspirational* value, not an *actual* value. I.e., The congregation says, “This is important to us,” but does not really act that way.

*Third, a congregation envisions a desired future.*

Sometimes the congregation produces a “vision statement,” a document that summarizes what the congregation hopes to accomplish long term. It can give clarity to a congregation as they plan ministry. Imagine you were taking an art class. The instructor gave you a blank canvass and some oils. She then said, “Paint!” It would take you awhile to put brush on the canvass. You’d have to think about what you wanted to paint. Once you finally decided that, since it would only be a nebulous mental image, your brushstrokes might be tentative. Now imagine the instructor gave you a canvass, oils, and brush, and then placed an object before you—a bowl of fruit, a bouquet of flowers, your favorite Seminary professor posing tastefully—and the instructor said, “Paint *that*.” You can move more boldly. You have an image of what you are trying to create. A vision statement of the desired future can give the congregation clarity than enables bold ministry movement.

*Fourth, a congregation sets goals that attempt to move the organization from the current reality to the desired future.*

Those goals are set in areas that man can control. Pastor Elton Huebner writes:

Let’s say it with unequivocal clarity. We formulate strategy for ourselves. We make plans for ourselves. We make projections for ourselves. No one strategizes or plans or projects for the Holy Spirit. He is and always will be the wind that “bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh” (John 3:8). And when our strategy and our plans and our projections are not the strategy and plans and projections of the Holy Spirit, he will let us know. In that respect, I have never known the Holy Spirit to fail us. We can set goals for ourselves, but not for the Holy Spirit.<sup>104</sup>

If my church sets the goal that this year we are going to have twenty adult confirmations, we set ourselves up to be disappointed. Only the Spirit can enlighten someone to see the benefit of being part of a Christian community. Now, we *could* set a goal that we are going to canvass 10,000 homes this year... or that we are going to follow up on every worship visitor within 48 hours. As a pastor, I *could* set a goal of spending 15

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<sup>104</sup> Elton H. Huebner, “The Role of Administration in the Church,” WLS Essay File, 6.

hours per week doing something evangelism related: cold calls, training, etc. Such things are within our control.

If your church sets a goal that in the next three years, the percent of your members in worship each week is going to increase from 35% to 55%, you have made the Spirit's job description your own. Now, you could set the goal that you are going to a) double the size of your Board of Elders, b) train them thoroughly, c) start tracking church attendance, and d) follow up on members who are absent four weeks, eight weeks, etc. That *is all* within your control. You understand the Spirit works *through* you, and so you are attempting to increase your efforts. Commendable. That demonstrates *careful reasoning*.

Tactical planning is the process of taking those broad strategic goals and breaking them into manageable steps. It includes assigning due dates and responsibility for each step. Tactical planning also is when a congregation allocates resources. "How much time and money will we spend on this?" It sets your objectives in the short-term. Thus, tactical planning is helpful in producing your annual ministry plan.

You will *not* find this cycle of strategic and tactical planning described in Moses or John or Paul. It is not mentioned anywhere in Concord. That does not make this an unworthy pursuit. Measure the process against Scripture. Whatever "sets itself up against the knowledge of God," demolish. But if you find something that might help you carry out the mission Christ has placed before you, then take that idea and "make it obedient to Christ."<sup>105</sup>

Brothers, here is what I believe to be the best part of operational leadership, i.e. the most important reason to plan. It encourages cross bearing.

In Luke 14, Jesus discusses the need to estimate the cost before you begin building a tower. He talks about crunching the numbers before going to war. Jesus is discussing *careful reasoning*. I will sometimes hear people point to those verses and say, "See! Jesus encourages planning." Well, yes, but see the bigger picture. What is the context? In the verse *right before* he gives those examples, Jesus says, "Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."<sup>106</sup> In the verse *right after* those examples, Jesus says, "Those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."<sup>107</sup> Planning is discussed in the context of bearing our crosses.

Jesus makes it clear that following him is not going to be easy. It is going to require sacrifice and come with hardship. He is teaching his disciples to plan... *to die*. Put that in the context of ministry. Ministry is going to require us to do things that are difficult. Some aspects of ministry are unnerving. Planning, at its best, is simply thinking through how we are going to rely on Christ's strength to do that difficult thing he has asked.

For example, I have often spent about thirty minutes Monday mornings blocking out my ministry efforts for the week. In twenty years of parish ministry, I *never* once wrote "Do text study" anywhere in my DayTimer. Why not? Visit my old office. Two walls were bookshelves, floor to twelve-foot ceiling. I would be perfectly happy doing *nothing but* studying and writing. Correspondingly (and I say this to my great shame) I would often forget to pray before beginning my sermon work. I did not find writing a sermon hard, and I typically do not ask for help when something comes easily. Now, what you *would* find in my DayTimer is every single evangelism or delinquent call I ever made. Those terrified me. Twenty years in a home mission, and my heart would still race when knocking on a prospect's door. Correspondingly, I don't think I ever drove to one of those calls without praying something to the effect of "Christ Jesus, you have promised to be with me... to give me the words to say. Assure me that your promise is true, or I will turn this car around."

I said I *often* spent thirty minutes blocking out my week. Not always. When I didn't, those tough visits and prayers for assistance would wane. That little bit of planning was an encouragement to seek Christ's help in picking up what, for me, was a cross.

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<sup>105</sup> Shameless pitch. WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling offers a *School of Strategic Planning*. It brings together pastors and leaders from multiple congregations to learn the cycle of strategic and tactical planning. It is an intense twelve hours. It is typically spread out over two days; however, if you like drinking water out of a fire hose, it can be done in one Saturday.

<sup>106</sup> Luke 14:27

<sup>107</sup> Luke 14:33



Apply that principle on a macro level. Operational leadership in the church requires *careful listening*. Your people need to hear Jesus tell them why their heart still beats. It also requires *careful reasoning* as you think through how to help your members bear their crosses with the strength that Christ himself provides.

Finally...

## Replicational Leadership

*Careful listening: The shepherd-leader acknowledges that God has given him the responsibility of equipping others for service. He understands this service takes place in countless ways as believers live out their God-given vocation. He also understands that part of believers' vocation may be to serve the church in some aspect of public ministry.*

*Careful reasoning: The shepherd-leader considers the wisest way for this to take place in his context. He deliberates about how to help his people better serve God in their personal lives. He also weighs how to equip people to serve God in the church, including through gospel proclamation.*

The doctrines of Vocation and the Universal Priesthood are inextricably interwoven. The term “priest” designates our *God-given* status. Our *God-given* vocations—i.e. the innumerable responsibilities that God has placed before us—are the way we live out that status. We see that in the Garden too.

In six days, God created a sanctuary. On that sixth day, he created the priesthood. “Fill the earth and subdue it,” was the rubric. Man would proclaim the praises of God, how? Sowing and reaping. Bearing children and raising them up. Ruling over a creation in a way that demonstrated the holiness that was part and parcel of the image of God. We established that the term *מְלֶאכֶת* stresses that man would represent the Creator to creation. It parallels Dr. Luther’s teaching that believers serve as *larvae Dei*, “the masks of God.” Preaching to the saints gives glory to God. But, so does *everything* that is performed in Spirit-wrought faith, even the tasks that seem more “worldly.” It is all worship. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, Luther writes, “There is no true basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all truly priests, bishops, and popes.”<sup>109</sup> So, we rightfully teach that the handiwork of the Christian plumber is as glorious as that of the Christian pastor, for both are serving where God has called them. That is the doctrine of Vocation. *Careful listening*.

The moment sin entered the world, another responsibility was added to the priesthood—proclaiming the gospel; unlocking the gates of heaven to the penitent. This is the job of every believer. John Schaller writes:

The Holy Scriptures incontrovertibly show that the ministry, that is, the commission to preach the gospel, is given to every Christian; that at conversion not only the ability but also the impetus for this preaching is implanted in him; and that gospel by its very nature as a message presupposes this preaching activity and at the same time by the effect it has guarantees it will occur.<sup>110</sup>

This is now a fundamental duty of the Universal Priesthood. It is a responsibility of every Christian. Luther writes, “Every baptized Christian is a priest already, not by appointment or ordination from the pope or any other man, but because Christ Himself has begotten him as a priest and has given birth to him in Baptism.”<sup>111</sup> The establishment of public ministry does not create two castes: the laity and the *real* prophets. It simply

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<sup>108</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31

<sup>109</sup> David Valleskey, citing LW44:130, “Motivating and Mobilizing the Laity for Service,” WLS Essay File, 4.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, citing WLQ 78:1, 38, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Volume 13: Selected Psalms*, 329

establishes order and defines scope for gospel proclamation. Public ministry is performed on behalf of one's fellow Christians.

I am flying back to Charleston after consulting with a church. The small talk with the woman sitting next to me—obviously terrified of flying—has turned spiritual. At that moment, I am acting as part of the Universal Priesthood. As we land, I give her my card and invite her to attend Beautiful Savior the following Sunday. Now I am acting as pastor of my church, i.e. public ministry.

When your member Bill, a telecommunications engineer, counsels a next-door neighbor about his failing marriage... when Bill explains how Christ helped him and his wife work through some rough patches... Bill is acting as part of the Universal Priesthood. When Bill, as one of your elders, suggests church discipline against a member who has abandoned his marriage and repeatedly spurned Bill's call to repent, Bill is engaging in public ministry. Now, he does not have a piece of paper with *In Nomine Jesu* emblazoned on the top. This is not a full-time responsibility. He is not paid. What of it? None of those are what defines public ministry. What does? The fact that Bill has been asked by other believers to represent them in a form of gospel ministry.

Note that in those examples, Bill and I are *always* acting within our vocations. It would be a mistake to think of our vocations as being *only* related to our profession. Vocation, from the Latin *vocatio*, simply means "calling." Yes, God has called the preacher to preach and the baker to bake. However, when turbulence hit and that woman spontaneously sunk her press-on nails into my forearm, that too was a calling to perform one of the "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."<sup>112</sup> If Jesus calls to us through the one who is hungry or thirsty or naked or in prison,<sup>113</sup> then he is also calling to Bill in the tears of his broken neighbor. At that moment, Bill's vocations grew just a bit: engineer... elder... and now marriage counselor.

A major aspect of the shepherd-leader's job is to equip his people for *all* of this. St. Paul writes,

<sup>11</sup>Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν) his people for works of service (ἔργον διακονίας), so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.<sup>114</sup>

What are these "works of service" of which Paul speaks?

- A. Is he speaking of equipping our people to see how their Christianity cannot be compartmentalized, but that instead they are to live as Christians at work, at play, in the home, i.e. in all aspects of their vocation?
- B. Is he speaking of equipping our people to serve as part of the Universal Priesthood—to exercise the Keys in their personal lives... to be the witnesses Christ has called them to be?
- C. Is he speaking of equipping our people to serve in some public capacity within our congregation?

Yes. Yes. Yes.

In regard to A: Paul speaks of being "mature," of being "no longer... infants." He seems to imply that maturity is *not* achieved by merely gaining knowledge, e.g., when one can tell you who the Jebusites are or has memorized the names of all twelve apostles. Maturity is achieved as people are taught *to apply* God's Word to

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<sup>112</sup> Ephesians 2:10

<sup>113</sup> Matthew 25:35,36

<sup>114</sup> Ephesians 4:11-14

all aspects of life: their role as parents, as citizens, as employees or employers, etc. “Works of service” could refer to all aspects of one’s vocation. Pastors are to prepare people for these works.<sup>115</sup>

In regard to B: Paul utilizes a word for “service” that regularly in the New Testament refers to gospel ministry: “this apostolic ministry (διακονίας)”<sup>116</sup>; “Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry (διακονίαν).”<sup>117</sup>; “[Christ] gave us the ministry (διακονία) of reconciliation.”<sup>118</sup> Thus, “works of service” can be referring to what we do as part of the Universal Priesthood. Pastors are to equip people for that too.

In regard to C: Paul states explicitly elsewhere that spiritual leaders are to train others to engage in public ministry, e.g. “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, pastors also equip the saints for “works of service” such as elder, congregational evangelist, Sunday school teacher, or whatever other position would serve the gospel in one’s context. *This* is what is meant by replicational leadership.

That raises a big question. What is the right division between A, B and C? Karen is a mother of four. She has four families on her block that do not know Christ. And now my church is considering asking her to serve on the teen ministry team. Is that good? Is there balance? Dearest Jesus, grant me *careful reasoning*.

On the one hand, we do not want to give the impression that there are *Über Christen*, all those who serve the church in some formal way. Bill needs to understand that what he does as an engineer is just as beautiful to God as what he does as an elder (vocation). Karen needs to appreciate that holding Christ before the eyes of her children and neighbors is just as needed as being a youth group teacher (Universal Priesthood).

On the other hand, we do not want to downplay the importance of serving one’s congregation in a public capacity. For that too might be what the Lord of the Church has in mind as part of one’s vocation. More, we do not want to let one who *would* be able to serve their church... who *should* serve (if God has given them both the time and aptitude)... to use the doctrines of Vocation or the Universal Priesthood as an excuse not to serve. Bill says, “Pastor, I appreciate you asking me to serve as an elder. The thought makes me a little nervous. I’m not a confrontational type of guy. Plus, through my work, it is God himself who provides cell phones for creation. That is just as beautiful!” Bill has turned a promise to the New Man into an excuse for the Old. And *we’ve helped him* if we have talked sloppily about the doctrine of Vocation.

Moreover, the practical reality is that you *need* to have members replicate certain things you now do if your congregation is going to function well. Former LCMS vice-president and now triumphant saint Guido Merkens once wrote,

In the vast majority of cases our church has fostered, whether consciously or not, a one-man ministry, which has oft-times proved to be as ineffectual in getting results as it has been ruinous to the health of many a pastor. In many cases the ministry of the church is undermanned, the pastor is overburdened, and the Lord’s cause suffers... We who pride ourselves as the proclaimer of the Reformation touchstone of the universal priesthood, often do little more than pay loquacious lip serve to this salient doctrine. In actual practice we have all too often reserved for the clergy exclusively the rights, privileges, and duties which Christ has given to all believers. We thereby train a laity which has a mass inferiority complex, is unaccustomed to spiritual expression, and is in reality trained for nothing else than eloquent silence... The pastor who today is convinced that he is able to be not only prophet, but also priest and king, in his church and to minister

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<sup>115</sup> I will confess, this is one of the ways I most often failed my people. Starting in a mission church, one gets so consumed by the need to reach the lost. It is easy to lose sight of the doctrine of vocation. I repent of my failure to exhibit *careful listening* or *careful reasoning* in this manner.

<sup>116</sup> Acts 1:25

<sup>117</sup> Romans 11:13

<sup>118</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18

<sup>119</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2

effectively to the spiritual, educational, and physical needs of all his parishioners without their assistance is either suffering from delusions of grandeur or else is engaging in the near fatal habit of head burying...<sup>120</sup>

“...habit of head burying...” It sounds like he is calling for *careful reasoning*, does it not? Brothers, what are you currently doing that is *not* direct gospel proclamation? Is there anyone to whom those tasks can be delegated?<sup>121</sup> But, replicational leadership in the church is about more than handing off administrative tasks. In replicational leadership the pastor *replicates* himself in the sense that he raises up individuals who, like him, engage in gospel proclamation on behalf of the church.

Are we always intellectually consistent when it comes to this responsibility? For example, take your Board of Elders. That is replicational leadership. Elders assist the pastor with pastoral activities. Most everyone in our circles is fine if they receive the host from an elder who is assisting the pastor with distribution. Most everyone finds it appropriate for an elder to make a delinquent call. However, in most of churches, elders are *not* asked to make hospital calls or homebound visits.<sup>122</sup> “The people want to see their pastor.” I certainly appreciate that. Moreover, I greatly appreciate the pastor who yearns to be with those people himself. I thank God for the pastoral heart! However, that does not change the fact that neither the wishes of the sheep nor the desire of the shepherd should be the fundamental consideration when planning ministry direction. “What do my people want?” Shepherd-leadership considers that, but not *primarily* that. “What would best serve the mission of the Church in our context?” *That* is the real question. I would be willing to bet some of the widows were not elated the first time Procorus showed up on their doorstep instead of John. When you read his three epistles and see into the tender heart of John, it is fair to assume he was not elated to hand off that responsibly. None of that matters! What does? “The ministry of the word.”<sup>123</sup> Christ had told the apostles their mission was to proclaim the Word to the ends of the earth. *Careful listening*. To do that well would require ongoing faithful deliberation about who exactly did what. *Careful reasoning*.

There is not time to go through multiple tactics for exercising replicational leadership. Here, quickly, is one simple process that could be used to equip the saints for several different pastoral-type activities: modeling. Let us say the pastor wants to equip others to make evangelism calls. Five steps.

1. *I do. You watch. We talk after.* The pastor takes a member along on a law/gospel presentation to a repeat worship visitor. The member knows that other than introducing himself and making a tiny amount of small talk, he has nothing to say. The pastor does all the witnessing. The member just watches. After the visit, the pastor and member debrief, allowing the member to ask questions.
2. *I do. You do. We talk after.* The pastor takes that same member along on a similar call. But this time, the discussion outline calls for both pastor and member to speak. Again, they debrief after.
3. *You do. I watch. We talk after.* Now the member is doing all the talking. The pastor is as a “safety net,” instilling confidence. The member knows if he gets lost, the pastor will step in. After the visit, the pastor and member discuss how things went.
4. *You do. We talk after.* The member does a law/gospel visit on his own. He is becoming more comfortable with making an evangelism call, as he slowly makes the process his own. He knows the pastor is always available if the member wants to talk about something.

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<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Valleskey, 2

<sup>121</sup> One of the recommendations that the Commission on Congregational Counseling often gives to congregations who are thinking of adding a second pastor: don't. They do not need a second pastor. They need a good administrative assistant. That is more than someone who can hunt-and-peck on a typewriter. It is someone who can manage schedules and systems, who can edit, who can prioritize problems and direct them to the right person (which isn't always the pastor).

<sup>122</sup> This is based on both what we have observed in the Commission on Congregational Counseling in its short existence and what is in consultation reports that go back thirty years.

<sup>123</sup> Acts 6:2, 6:4

5. *You do. Someone else watches. You both talk after.* The trained becomes the trainer. This is replicational leadership at its best.

How about doing that for hospital calls, homebound calls, delinquent calls? You say, “People will say they are too busy.” Perhaps. But have you demonstrated relational leadership? If so, you might be surprised at the sacrifices your people are willing to make for you when you ask fervidly. Have you demonstrated operational leadership? If so, and your members see how their effort is not just spiritual busywork but *makes sense* as a part of a larger vision for your joint ministry, they will perhaps feel a Spirit-wrought compulsion.

This is eminently practical. “The experts” say that the ratio of members to pastor needs to be somewhere between 1 to 100 and 1 to 200. Some will say the larger number refers to total members. Others will say it refers to worshipers. Personally, I find this overly simplistic. If a congregation were to say to me, “We have 550 souls on our rolls. How many pastors do you think we need?” I could not answer. It depends. Is the expectation within the church that a pastor make all hospital calls, visit every home-bound member once a month, follow up quickly on worship visitors, do all the counseling, teach the clear majority of Bible classes, teach confirmation, etc.? Then that church of 550 needs 5 pastors. But is replicational leadership part of the congregation’s culture? Is Ephesians 4 a “core value,” where the congregation believes that the pastor’s responsibility is to equip *them* to do much of this work? Then that church of 550 could potentially be served by 1 pastor. But those are two *extremely* different congregational cultures.

Which is what this often boils down to. You serve a church that has existed for a century. Expectations are almost as old as the cornerstone. There is deeply engrained culture where the pastor does it all. I appreciate that. But brothers, has not God called you leaders? God speaks; reality results. *Change* the culture. *Alter* expectations, if there is a direction that would better serve the gospel. Might this raise some hackles? Sure. But Jesus warned, “Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you.”<sup>124</sup> However, the Spirit works powerfully among us. God’s people will often surprise their pastor. When spiritual leadership lays a foundation... and relational leadership allows members to see the love the pastor has for the members and for the lost... and operational leadership demonstrates a wise direction for mission endeavors... many will warmly embrace replicational leadership. Not only will they be willing to have someone *other* than the pastor ministering to them, they will be interested in doing some of that ministering themselves.

## Moving Forward

“I’m no leader.” That is simply not true. Leadership and the image of God go hand in hand. And God has remade his image within you. He looks at you, and he sees one who does all things well—including lead—simply because when he looks at you, he sees his Son.

Moreover, the Spirit is *remaking* God’s image within us in the sense that he is taking the gift of heightened reason and stripping it of all its damnable baggage. Selfish ambitions and desires are crucified. Pride and defensiveness are both drowned in baptismal waters. Through the Spirit, our reason is once again undergirded with purity. We can assess ministry objectively—Christ’s glory and mission being our only concern. We can plan properly—weighing culture and tradition and ethnology—while retaining the confidence that faith is wrought through Scripture alone.

Moving forward, we cling to truth that “apart from me you can do nothing.”<sup>125</sup> Open my ears and speak to me, Jesus! *Careful listening*. We also cling to the corresponding truth. “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”<sup>126</sup> “All this,” including *careful reasoning*. To say, “I’m no leader” does not demonstrate a lack of confidence in your ability, but a lack of confidence in Christ’s power.

Brothers, if our God can create something out of nothing, he most certainly can create something out of you! That is what he will do through your ministry, which ultimately always remains *his* work. Therefore, what he needs you to be for his Church, he will make you to be.

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<sup>124</sup> Luke 6:26

<sup>125</sup> John 15:5

<sup>126</sup> Philippians 4:13

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