

The Vanishing Office (A Method to My Madness)

I know that second line on the title may sound like unbelief but please read the whole article before you make judgment. You probably understand that my observations on any given subject may differ from yours just because we may view it from different angles. Most people who read this article are not in the ministry while I have spent the last 30 years in it. This doesn't mean they don't know anything about the bible or the Lord. It is not a negative statement about anyone but people generally approach their beliefs from their own standpoint whereas I have to look at the big picture. That is my job.

Let me explain. You may be a doctor, lawyer, house painter, secretary, or a restaurant owner. If you were to use an idiom in a statement like, "*Feed them and they will come*", it probably will apply to a restaurant owner but not necessarily to a secretary. In my thinking people are fed two ways. One way is through natural food for strength and nourishment. The other way is through spiritual food. Jesus told Peter to "*feed my sheep*." We all know he was referring to spiritual food although he wants us to feed people that are naturally hungry. I believe that most folks would say that they are generally strict when it comes to eating right naturally. But, when it comes to spiritual food, if you "feed" them according to the Word (and I might add with a good balanced diet), a lot of the time their standard changes. I find that most people are satisfied to eat spiritual junk food. So, if you feed them with real spiritual meat, they might not necessarily come.

Jeremiah 3:15 "*and I will give you **pastors** according to mine heart, which shall **feed** you with knowledge and understanding.*"

God gives us Pastors. We are not to select your own pastor but allow God to give us one that is "**according to his heart.**"

Eph. 4:11-13, "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*"

1 Cor. 12:28, "*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments (pastors), diversities of tongues.*"

Then in the next verse he asked the question, "*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?*" Etc. Of course the answer is no. We call these ministry gifts, "the 5-fold ministry". But in actuality they are offices set in the church by God. Four of these offices are rovers or they move about. One is stationary which means it is permanently set in one place, which is the local church, to tend to the flock. How is the office of the Pastor supposed to tend to his flock?

1. By feeding them with knowledge and understanding.

2. By being a shepherd over the flock. Notice I said “over” the flock and not under the flock or under the rule of the flock.

I have never seen a flock of sheep in the natural ruling over a shepherd or any of them having an equal say in decisions. Nor have I ever seen a flock of sheep having a vote about the decisions of the Shepherd or about anything. I have seen goats butting heads and wolves trying to devour the flock. In the church you can find these same three characters. You find goats butting and wolves trying to rule but never real bible “sheep”. There is not any design in the Word that declares that there is a democracy in the local church. If you find one, please let me know.

The shepherd leads the sheep to the green pastures where they are to feed. To make it simple, they are to graze and produce wool. And, sheep always beget sheep. A sheep can not beget a goat or a wolf. It just can’t happen to a mama sheep. Impossible!

But, in the church I have seen sheep become goats or even wolves. Today we call this Tran- genesis. That is not a good word. How can you become another animal? I don’t think people realize what they are doing by changing to a goat or wolf. No - I know they don’t.

I am told that the fastest growing churches today are the seeker friendly churches. We could describe it as No Word (or very little), for sure no meat, no power, no Holy Spirit, no tongues, no gifts of the Spirit, no commitment, no confrontation, no correction, no rebuke, or to put it plainly, a feel good church. If you speak the truth today and I don’t mean some of the time, it makes it uncomfortable for Christians. “Well Pastor, you are always on our case!” Yes, and there is a purpose. One individual said, “You always have an agenda”. Yes, you’re right again.

Today, most people want fellowship and friendship. That’s nice, so do I. But, that is not my criteria or my job description. The name of the game is “*Iron sharpeneth Iron*”. And, there is a “method to my madness”. Please let me explain. “Method” is a careful, systematic way that something intelligent is done. “Madness” is the strange and meaningless action of a crazy person. There is method to one’s madness when what looks like strange and meaningless actions (madness) is actually the result of a carefully reasoned plan (method). Example: If you were to say, “Give me a moment to explain; there is method to my madness.” (This idiom comes from Hamlet by William Shakespeare. Polonius speaking says: “though this be madness, yet there is method in it.”) Example: “We thought he was crazy to do it that way, but it turned out that there was method to his madness.” In other words, there is a reason why we do some things even though it seems silly or even mad.

Many today want a soft gospel. They want a kinder, gentler message. They want appeasement. They don’t want meat. They don’t want confrontation. They call it condemnation and being judgmental. They don’t want anything that offends. Well - Jesus offended all the time. He constantly corrected, reproved, and rebuked Pharisees, Sadducees, the priesthood, and religious folk. They didn’t crucify Jesus for what he did but for what he said. He called them liars, hypocrites, blind guides, and offspring of vipers. I know you don’t like to hear this about Jesus because most just look at Jesus as a sweet little shepherd with a sheep under his arm. Paul called people “*whited sepulchers and full of dead men’s bones.*” Who was James? James was the Pastor of

the church at Jerusalem. When you read his book you find that he was a shepherd who had to address his flock and correct their faults. Was this method or madness? Yes and Yes!

Paul tells the ministry (that includes Pastors) in II Timothy 3:16, "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*". The NIV translation reads like this "*All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" Or, you could say that we may mature the man of God. Part of teaching and training is rebuking and correcting. Why do you raise your voice to children sometimes? It is because you are trying to get their attention. Why do you spank your children sometimes? It's all part of training up a child. Is this method or is this madness? Today, they call it brutality but its not. You know that if your spare the rod you will spoil the child. It isn't that you are a mean parent but there is a method to what others call madness. In the same way we are to parent the church for Jesus. It is so that the man of God may be perfect or mature. Jesus wants the church to quit whining about this and grow up.

Then in the very next verse the Apostle Paul gave a charge to Timothy (the ministry - which includes pastors) in II Timothy 4:1-4, "*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*" Now, why is it that we are to reprove and rebuke? We do this in order to get their attention. If we don't, sooner or later, they will not be mature enough to endure sound doctrine. They will go get their own feel good teachers and turn their ears away from the truth. I have observed many today get to the point that they receive not "*the love of the truth*".

In these scriptures you have the method and the madness - (please remember, this is just an idiom). The Lord, the chief shepherd, told us to mature the saints. Sometimes, I have thought this was just madness. It is almost like beating against the wind. I repent for thinking such things.

For these reasons today, people seek out their own pastor and divorce the one God assigns them, then they leave them, turn traitor on them, and sometimes frankly speaking, just break our hearts. Many (Most) pastors bow to the pressure and back off. They turn their churches over to seeker friendly and glorified social clubs. They know they must satisfy the whims of the people in order to build a big church. If they don't there is the fear of loosing the people, the money, and the prestige. It is either please the people and not Jesus, or else lose the people. To me this really is madness.

The office of the true Pastor is quickly vanishing and I wonder if there will be many of us left when Jesus comes. Believe me, we pastors are not here to win friends and influence people. Rather, just the latter part. Winning friends has nothing to do with our calling. Face it, servant of God (pastor), we can't afford to make friends with the flock. I know the word teaches us fellowship but it also teaches us a lot more. Acts 2:42

states, “*And they continued stedfastly in the **apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.***”

I know its hard losing people you have poured your life out for. I am a true witness of that. I have cried many a night about it. I want to say to some of the people, “Gee - at least Jesus got a kiss from Judas before he was betrayed”. But, sometimes you just have to let them go. It hurts, I know, but don’t you get in error by getting in the way of the Lord who is trying to train and mature them. You did your part. Let them go. Don’t run after goats and wolves. Sheep who fall into sin is one thing. But, goats and wolves have to learn things the hard way. Remember, Jesus said, “*Feed my sheep.*” Milk the goats while you have them but sooner or later they will be gone if they don’t change. And, run off the wolf as soon as you recognize him or her. They are only there to devour. You cannot pastor a goat or a wolf.

Listen to me pastors, if you do your job right, the goats will butt and the wolves will howl at the moon. But, don’t back down. Don’t be afraid of their howling. And, don’t run after them. The bible always tells the backslider to return. In Jer. 15:19 the Lord says, “*let them return unto thee: but return not thou unto them.*” Pastor, you are God’s man. You are His shepherd. Your job now is to “*strengthen the things that remain.*”