

THE SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY OF THE SENIOR PASTOR AND OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE TO HIM

The Apostle Paul listed pastors among the five-fold ministry in Ephesians, Chapter 4. Among pastors, the Senior Pastor is gifted by God to perform his tasks in a place of leadership, as he cares, nurtures and protects the sheepfold God has assigned to him. He is not better than any of the other sheep. He simply has a different call, a different anointing and a different responsibility than the other five-fold ministers or the people who are under his care. He may be looked at as a sheep with a bell around his neck. It has been delegated to him by God to lead and communicate as God directs. The Senior Pastor does so by delegated authority placed upon him from heaven. He has the same general purposes as all those God assigns to the five-fold ministry. He differs because of the specifics of his particular assignment.

The Purposes of the Five-Fold Ministry: Two-Fold

Before we can understand why the Senior Pastor does things the way he does, it would be good to understand the purposes motivating his actions.

(Ephesians 4:11-12 NKJV) "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,"

(King James Version) {12a} "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry..."

First Purpose - Equipping or Perfecting the Saints

The word Paul uses for "equipping" or "perfecting" in verse 12 is the Greek word *katartismos*. It implies the broader meaning of, "providing what is necessary to bring the saints to a maturity in their gifts."

Second Purpose - Edifying the Body of Christ

As he finishes verse 12, Paul writes the Greek word "*oikodome*," which means, "edifying." The broader meaning, in the context of Paul's writings implies, "constructing a firm, solid structure that will withstand the attacks of life, and from which the Kingdom of

A Clarifying Note

My intentions for this study are not to engage in the debate about whether women should be eligible for the position of Senior Pastor. For clarity of intent, the use of "he" within this teaching may be assumed to be inclusive of both genders. Within these writings, I make no judgments concerning this argument.

For the record, my personal position is that both men and women are called to this position.

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God can go forth.” Clearly, this broader meaning pertains to a Senior Pastor’s motives and casts light on his need for authority.

Intended Biblical Outcomes

(Ephesians 4:13-16 NKJV) “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; {14} that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, {15} but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ; {16} from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Outcomes:

1. Unity of the Faith (One Belief)
2. Knowledge of Christ that is Full and Complete
3. Fully Mature People of God
4. Unity of the Body (One in Relationship, with everyone doing what they are called and equipped by God to do)
5. Growth of the Body, so its people can encourage and build each other up through their expressions of love

When a church is properly equipped and edified, then unity, stability, direction and an ability to learn and grow in the things of the Lord - all become dominant. The result is that the people grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. This happens in a church where spiritual position, responsibility and authority are understood and properly represented. The position of the Senior Pastor and the authority he carries enables this to happen - all in a place of safety and security as the church moves forward.

You can see how vital it is that the Senior Pastor walks in humility before God and his congregation. If he fails to do so, the intended Biblical outcomes will be spoiled. This same need for humility falls upon all others in authority and under authority in the church.

Responsibility and Authority

When God gives someone responsibility, He always gives them the authority to carry out their responsibility properly. Those He

gives authority to are responsible to Him (and to those they care for, too). It is a “two-way street.” Everyone is accountable.

(Romans 13:1-7 NKJV) “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. {2} Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. {3} For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. {4} For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. {5} Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. {6} For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. {7} Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”

The instructions are clear. They are specific. Since God has appointed all authority in the church, its people are to make themselves subject to these authorities. The Senior Pastor stands at the apex of this system of accountability, receiving his authority from God, and appointing others who will be responsible to him and ultimately to God. Paul teaches that if you resist this truth, which he calls an “ordinance,” you bring judgment upon yourself. These are very strong words. They must be taken as biblically correct!

The Church - A Theocracy (The Government of God)

The church was established by God to be a theocracy. It is a kingdom with a King! Christ is at its head.

PRINCIPLE: All valid authority in the church is established by the will and decree of God.

1. All acts of God issue from His throne.
2. His throne itself is established on His authority and is the symbol of His authority.
3. The church is the body of Christ, with Christ being our Head.
4. Authority in the church is always God’s sovereign choice. It is never the result of man’s attainment, ambitions or opinions.

5. Those in authority in the church are to watch for our souls and keep us from doing those things which are harmful to the church and to us. They are God's ministers. At their head is the Senior Pastor. He carries an awesome accountability.

The Biblical Order of Authority

Understanding how God views the structure and order of leadership in a local church will help it become a place where spiritual position, responsibility and authority are properly represented and used effectively, with power. God calls, anoints and appoints people to specific positions. Let us look further into the position of Senior Pastor and those who are called to work alongside of him.

The Senior Pastor: a Person with Specific Responsibilities

As we saw in Ephesians 4, the Senior Pastor is appointed by God to equip and edify the saints. God charges him with responsibility to love, care for and correct the flock of God. In order to accomplish this, God places him in a position of authority.

(John 10:11 NKJV) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

Like Jesus, the Senior Pastor is a shepherd of the flock (sometimes referred to as an "undershepherd" in deference to Christ's sole position of Chief Shepherd). God has placed the well-being of the lives of His people in the Senior Pastor's hands. He is equipped to care for them. He is given supernatural wisdom and has the counsel of God. God has gifted and empowered the Senior Pastor to be shepherd, teacher and spiritual father to the flock. God has charged him with their spiritual health. He is to lead and guide them in a walk that is fully pleasing to God.

(1 Thessalonians 4:1 NKJV) "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;"

The Senior Pastor is called to, and chosen for his function. This is a cause for rejoicing. This is not cause for jealousy. It falls heavily on the Senior Pastor. His actions always carry eternal consequences for his flock (and for him). It is a serious, sobering

responsibility to be a Senior Pastor. Those he leads ought to understand and appreciate this... and appreciate the willingness of the Senior Pastor to accept this responsibility.

Elders - Appointed and Anointed by God to work alongside the Senior Pastor

(1 Timothy 5:17 NKJV) "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine."

Elders may be called by a number of titles (pastors, co-workers, board members, etc.) depending upon the traditions of the particular local church they govern. They are co-laborers with the Senior Pastor and with each other. They are fellow bondservants, working closely alongside the Senior Pastor. They are to hold up his arms in every way. They are to use their gifts to assist the Senior Pastor in the work of the ministry.

The Glue of the Church

The elders have a key calling to be the Senior Pastor's eyes, ears and hands, just as Joshua was to Moses. They are to provide leadership in the name of the Lord and on behalf of the Senior Pastor. They share in the joys of watching over the flock of God. They are responsible, along with, and at the direction of the Senior Pastor, for the maturing and edifying of the saints.

- The elders are to maintain unity among the sheep. **They are the glue that holds the church together.** They are the watchmen and women on the walls who keep the house of God secure. The well-being of the sheep depends on the elders' faithfulness and selflessness. They are to be bondservant-leaders who have no agenda other than to give of themselves. They must not allow pride to rise up among them.
- They are to perform the work of the ministry according to their gifts. They are to seek God for their purposes and then fulfill them. They are to function in support of and in deference to the Senior Pastor.

Potential Danger

A potential danger among elders is that they will define their own place and purposes, instead of letting God do so. Often, people

occupy a place God never intended for them. As a result, they minister in functions they have not been called to or gifted in. We all must know our places, so we can experience the joy of fulfilling them, as loyal bondservants of the Lord. We must fulfill our places with loyalty to the Senior Pastor.

Spiritual Authority - The Divinely Designed Safety Net

Spiritual authority is the divinely designed safety net for God's people. It provides structure within the Kingdom of God. Scripture records great men of God who walked in God's authority throughout recorded history. Men like Abraham, Moses, Aaron and many others accepted God's call on their lives and walked in authority. God appointed judges and then ordained kings. When the temple was established God appointed high priests.

PRINCIPLE: When God establishes leaders, He imputes to them, (or places upon them) His authority.

Rebellion against spiritual authority is nothing less than the sin of rebellion against God.

Examples of Rebellion to Spiritual Authority - Strange Fire

1. Ham (**Genesis 9:20-27**):

Noah was the head of the family, and at that time, the head of the whole world. When Ham mocked his father, his sin was to mock the dignity of God's delegated spiritual authority. He was cursed.

2. Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10:1, 2**):

They demanded to serve in a position without being appointed by God, or His delegated authority to that position. Strange fire is assuming a position of authority and trying to fulfill that position without God appointing you to do so. Their sin was to do what God reserved for His delegated authorities, Moses and Aaron.

Strange fire may be defined as, "assuming a position of authority and trying to fulfill that position without God appointing you to do so. Strange fire is offered when people try to exercise the authority of a position God has bestowed on another. Strange fire is when people try to place themselves where God does not want them."

People who try to do what God ordained another to do are in danger of judgment for strange fire. Notice that the function or

actions of these people can be identical with that of the person God appoints, but God will nevertheless, consider them an abomination. Do not take the office of Senior Pastor or elder lightly. They are each ordained by God. Each has its particular function.

3. Aaron and Miriam (Numbers 12):

Their sin was to revile God's anointed (Moses). They never recognized and certainly did not honor the authority of God in His appointed and anointed representative.

- Never despise God's anointed.
- Never speak evil against God's anointed. Such behavior invites the wrath of God. People should be looking for ways to bless the Senior Pastor and his elders, both verbally and otherwise.

"Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house."

The Issue of Control

Example of David

Scripture records Saul, tormented with a jealous, murderous spirit, chasing after David, trying to kill him because he feared for his position as king.

- David never once responded in disrespect. He never attempted to do anything to touch Saul's person or office. He restrained himself from either physically harming Saul (though he had ample opportunity) or even speaking evil of him.
- David never tried to gain any measure of control over Saul as long as Saul was king. David would gladly have served Saul, even though the prophet Samuel had already anointed him to be king.
- David crucified his flesh. He made no room for pride or personal ambition that would have been at the expense of the man occupying the place of authority. Crucify the flesh that wants position, prominence and power!
- Ambition never has the blessing of God **if** it covets the authority of another man!

Example of the Centurion

The centurion understood authority. He was a man in authority and under authority. He knew the value of the spiritual chain of command, the chain of authority. He recognized the controlling authority of Jesus and fully expected that submission to it would bring about the blessings of God.

PRINCIPLE: Submission to spiritual authority brings the blessings of God.

Example of Christ

Jesus submitted to the will of the Father in all things. He was a Man under in authority and under authority. Like the centurion, Jesus recognized the value of the spiritual chain of command. As He struggled to obey the Father's will and go to the cross, He said the key words for all authorities in the church. It was His declaration of Independence from "self."

(Luke 22:42 NKJV) "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

PRINCIPLE: The Attitude that leads to God's Blessings:
"Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

Conclusion

The Senior Pastor is chosen by God to shepherd the people of the church. He is a man whose life is committed to serve God by serving others. Rebellion against his authority is rebellion against the Most High. A Senior Pastor is put in his position by the hand of God. He is honored by God. He is anointed by God. He is empowered by God. The lives of the sheep are in his hands and he lifts them up to God in his prayers. The task of the people of the church is to love him, stand with him and submit to the safety of his God-given spiritual authority. Unity between the Senior Pastor and his leadership is the key to blessings.

The elders are chosen by God to minister to the Senior Pastor and the people of the church. The elders hold the church together. They are called to be the eyes and ears of the church. They are to hold up the Senior Pastor's arms so the battle will go well. The well-being of the sheep depends on the elders' faithfulness and selflessness.

ADDENDUM: COVENANT CONFESSIONS

Death and life are in the power of the tongue (**Proverbs 18:21**). The following confessions will bring fresh life and new anointing into the church. If, after you read these confessions, you find yourself unable to make them, you need to search your heart for spirits of bitterness, unforgiveness, pride or rebellion. The distinguishing feature about these four spirits is that they hide themselves and those holding them do not realize they are there. If you find them within, repent of them now and make your covenant confession.

I. COVENANT CONFESSION OF COMMITMENT FROM THE ELDERS

TO THE SENIOR PASTOR

“Pastor, we do covenant with you to serve you faithfully in the office the Lord has appointed us to. We will hold up your arms in the battles we face. We commit to represent you with purity and zeal, with faithfulness and unswerving loyalty. We will always be aware that when we speak, we are responsible to speak for you in ways that glorify God and accurately represent your heart and calling as the Senior Pastor and leader of this church. We honor you and will always give you the agape love of Christ. We will allow no hurtful words toward you to be spoken in our presence, but will always defend you and walk in agreement with you, in Jesus name.”

II. COVENANT CONFESSION OF THE CONGREGATION

TO THE SENIOR PASTOR

“Pastor, we thank you for your commitment to God and to us. We covenant with you to love you with the agape love of Christ, and to honor your ordained position as spiritual leader of our fellowship. It is of the Lord. We recognize what God is doing and make this covenant commitment to you:

‘We will not murmur or speak unkind words about you or to you. We will walk with you and support you in your role as leaders among us.’ We are thankful for you and speak a blessing over you – in Jesus name.”

III. COVENANT CONFESSION OF THE SENIOR PASTOR

TO THE ELDERS AND CONGREGATION

“To the elders and congregation – I commit to serve you by example, as I lead you in the areas that God has appointed me to and that, as Senior Pastor, He requires of me. I will do my best to edify and encourage you. I will instruct you in the things of God. I will always speak the truth in love to you, even if I am to bring correction to you. I willingly accept my responsibility to lovingly help lead and guide you into the fullness of God’s blessings – in Jesus Name.”

(Psalms 133:1-3 NKJV) “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! {2} It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. {3} It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing; Life forevermore.”

God bless you as you serve your Senior Pastor and each other in the unity God has commanded.

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