

Metrics of Ministry

How should we think about and evaluate pastoral ministry in the church?

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Two Realities We Should Affirm

I. The Presupposition of Providence. Matt 16:18; Acts 2:47, 13:48; 1 Cor.3:6; Eph.5:27; Phil 2:12-13.

A. God is doing this before we are. Providence and prevenience shape our pastoral theology in the following ways:

1. The Holy Spirit is actually the one building the Church, not the pastors or leaders alone.

a) Our goal then is to follow His lead and not try to “use” Him to do what we think is important. He speaks to us in the Scripture to give us the general direction He is headed, with specific illustrations and instructions on many issues. But we must never think that He has given us the instruction book, the owner’s manual, and then just “let us go.” He is personally doing this work and we are simply helping Him. This concept is crucial to spiritual leadership, especially in pastoring. We need to ask ourselves, Is He helping me, waiting for my initiative, standing by to work when I want to get things done? Or, Am I helping Him, waiting on His initiative and guidance, standing ready to cooperate with His work in people’s souls? The interface between our efforts and his is precisely where much church leadership falters. (Jas.4:13-17)

b) When churches get ahead of the Lord in their view of leadership or in their “vision casting” the result is often far less than spiritual, even if it appears “successful” in the estimation of this age.

c) One of the sure signs that we are not connecting with this providential reality is that prayer fades to insignificance in our daily priorities, or becomes essentially ceremonial.

(1) Prayer meetings naturally degenerate into planning sessions unless we keep this principle of providence firmly in mind.

2. We have all the personnel and tools necessary to do what the Lord wants done today.

a) There is a scene in the movie *Apollo 13* in which the ground crew, desperate to offer to the stranded astronauts a solution to their mechanical failure, dumps all the equipment actually available to the space crew on a table. The supervisor says, “OK, this is what you have to work with, solve the problem with what you see on this table.” And they did! It took some creative configurations and some duct tape, but they were able to piece together an air purification system that kept the astronauts alive. If the Lord is faithful and providential, we must trust that we have what is necessary in our tool bag to do His work, at least today.

b) Patience and focusing on soul transformation by Spirit and Word in the context of daily life is the way we move “forward.” Other supplies will present themselves as needed.

3. We will have all the personnel and tools necessary to do what the Lord wants done tomorrow—tomorrow.

a) If we need more, the Lord will show us how to find more or simply present more to us, sometimes in unlikely places and times. John Piper in his book *Faith in Future Grace* reminds us that a central aspect of faith is trusting that the Lord will be there with what we need in the future, not just in the past or present.

b) When Peter walked on the water for that few seconds, he trusted against the odds that the water would “firm up” under each step he took in the direction of Christ. This is fundamental to faithful spiritual leadership. We must trust that what we need will be there for us when we need it.

II. The Priority of Spiritual Formation. Matt 28:19-20; 1 Cor.2:6-16; Gal 5:22-26

A. The fruit the Spirit produces is primarily in the *character* of the people, demonstrated in their *relationships* rather than in the *gathering* of the people demonstrated in *attendance figures*.

1. Attendance figures may have a place in evaluating ministry, but it is not primary in determining spiritual effectiveness.
2. Organizational structure is needed and important, but not a good *predictor* of spiritual health or ministry fruitfulness.
 - a) *Good ecclesiology does not guarantee or even accurately predict spiritual formation or kingdom expansion.*
 - b) Structure is helpful *if it encourages and facilitates spiritual formation of both individuals and the church*, but organizational structure, policies and theological precision do not guarantee conversions or Christlikeness. If it did the Lord would have congratulated the Pharisees because they were masters of these things. But a cursory reading of Jesus' words reveals that His view of the Pharisees was not nearly as high as their view of themselves. Apparently, our being "God Experts" does not insure the progress of His Kingdom. Much of what we hear and intuitively follow is based on a metaphor that misses the Lord's point.
3. Individual devotional life is not nearly as accurate a gauge of spiritual maturity as relational health—love, compassion and forgiveness in real life and close relationships, especially through times of conflict.

B. The church is a living organism, like a tree or a vine. *But it is a fruit bearing tree, not an ornamental.*

1. A living organism functions on different principles than a machine (a popular metaphor in our modernist society, "This office is a well-oiled machine.")
 - a) There is a certain *order of life* in any living organism whether plant, animal, human, angel, or the source of all life—God Himself.
 - b) In the church that order of life is the life of Christ Himself, his Spirit. (Eph.3; 1 Cor.3; 1 Cor.12)
2. Much of what we hear today about church leadership is what we might call "topiary" pastoring. It aims at shaping the church in various ways to impress the world, or pastors and other religious observers. What better validation is there than having your church featured in a magazine as the biggest, best, the hippest, the hottest, the most "emergent" or "missional"? Encyclopedia Britannica says that topiary is "The art of training, cutting and trimming trees or shrubs into odd or ornamental shapes." Disneyland does this masterfully, lining its paths with beautiful bushes carved to resemble everything from elephants to Mickey Mouse. When this is the model of spiritual leadership the result seems to be churches with varied and highly marketable personas, shaped for maximum cultural impressiveness, but lacking long-term discipleship impact. This may be the problem behind the ubiquitous complaint these days that the church in America has practically no effect on society.
3. *Pruning*: A fruit tree receives pruning, but not for looks. The "shaping" is not "carving," but encourages the health and fruit natural to the created life of the tree. *It too has a pleasing form, but one that flows from the goal of healthy fruit. A well pruned apple tree looks like an apple tree, not like Mickey Mouse.*
4. *Nourishment*: A fruit tree (or any living organism) grows in the order of its life (according to its DNA as God intends) when proper nutrients (sun, water, food) are administered or available. The same is true in Holy Spirit life. Shepherds and farmers do have work to do, but "making the life happen" isn't in their job description.
 - a) Healthy sheep reproduce. Healthy trees re-seed.
 - b) Farmers are not park rangers, watching nature happen. They cultivate and work the land. Yet they never actually control the life of the farm. They cooperate, sometimes to the point of weariness, with God's providence (natural life, weather, etc.). But they are never "in charge" of the life itself.

5. *Seasons*: Fruit trees have seasons, too. And sometimes the fruit is years in coming. Apple trees bear fruit after 3-5 years. Churches have seasons of various sorts as well, when some types of ministry and outreach flourish and others do not.

6. *Mess*: Working farms are interesting and busy, but they are not tourist attractions. Healthy churches are the same. There is usually a more or less “working mess.” This includes personality clashes, failed plans, mistakes and blunders that need correcting and so forth.

C. The right *metaphor* is crucial to our understanding of ministry, because the metaphor we live in shapes our imagination and our intuition, two central areas of spiritual formation.

III. These observations prompt the following three operating principles as we seek to develop workable ways of observing progress in leadership fruitfulness.

A. People are more important than policies or programs.

1. Pastoral work is not about policies, but about people—healthy people and healthy (holy) relationships. When policies become necessary, as they do in a large group, they must always serve the goal of spiritual formation, not institutionalization.

2. Any seminarian can outline what they think the perfect church should look like and write policies that will supposedly make it all happen. This is the “topiary” model. But in real church life, almost nothing goes precisely according to our pastoral plan. When plans fail, we must revert back to our primary focus on souls, individual souls first, and the organism of the living church second. We must trust the Spirit and the Word, seeking to nourish the spiritual formation.

3. On the other hand, policies and programs, properly understood and implemented, create a venue for Spirit growth in the same way that a building supplies warmth, light, shelter, and ambience for family life.

4. But form (organization) follows function, and the function is spiritual and biblical.

a) This is why most policies, procedures, and protocols must be evaluated in light of the mission statement and the spiritual needs of the body from time to time so that our traditions do not replace or nullify God's actual instructions (Matt. 15:1-9).

B. Discernment is more important than decisiveness or design.

1. The ability to discern how the Spirit wants us to think and feel about actual current situations facing us, especially in an individual believer's soul, but by extension also in the broader body, is more important than appearing decisive or wise to our leadership peers. Interestingly, when a pastor does focus wisely on the soul nourishment of his church, spiritual decisiveness and design seem to follow, and with them respect from people who understand true pastoral work.

2. This being the case, waiting until there is real heart/peace about major decisions is quite a decisive thing to do.

3. The Spirit works within His clearly stated biblical priorities. For instance:

a) If the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5) then one of the markers of Holy Spirit work will be an enhanced ability to love each other and the people around us through the tough times and hurt feelings that inevitably arise in long-term ministry.

b) If the purpose of God for His people is their sanctification, that they share his feelings and thoughts morally (1 Thess. 4:1-3), then an indicator of Holy Spirit fruit will be an increase in moral purity among the flock.

c) If what we are doing doesn't promote these and other priorities He has revealed in His word, then we are to some extent out of step with the Spirit and we should re-evaluate the situation. Part of leadership discernment is knowing this and being able to see it in the way we do ministry. We cannot do this simply by fiat, coercion, or policy. We must do it “hands-on” with compassion and personal risk.

C. *Attempting the good is more important than avoiding mistakes or appearing faultless.*

1. If the Spirit is at work, using our efforts as his tools, then we must not let the fear of failure stop us from leading.

a) One of our ministry mottos at TCF is, *If God Couldn't Use Our Mistakes, He'd Have Nothing to Work With*. During the cold war the American submarine forces were the most effective deterrent to nuclear holocaust. But they presented almost insurmountable technical obstacles. One of the engineers charged with solving such hideous puzzles as how to launch missiles from under water, how to find lost nuclear warheads that had fallen somewhere in the Atlantic, and how to locate sunken subs, blown to bits without warning by mechanical failure, was a man named John Craven. He was a genius who succeeded in accomplishing these and other impossible, unavoidable tasks. His motto was: *If something is worth doing, it's worth doing badly*. By this he meant that one must do that which is truly important, even if one cannot do it well the first time. In spiritual leadership and pastoral ministry, the Lord charges us with the impossible, unavoidable work of conversion, spiritual direction, and soul nourishment of His personal friends and family against the odds and in a hostile environment. But we can trust the Spirit to use even our mistakes as we seek to do this. Making mistakes is not a virtue and we should avoid as many as possible. But *not attempting to do the work* is the biggest mistake of all, and a direct violation of the Lord's command to boot.

b) A spiritual servant-leader's job then is not to plan God's work for Him and try to get God to bless the plan. Nor is it to take God's divine "blueprint" (a very modern paradigm) and rush off to beat the laborers into submission to it. *It is to know enough about God's already progressing, dynamic soul-project to keep in step with what He is already doing in the local venue*. This is a gift of discernment, insight and wisdom rather than clairvoyance, strategy and expertise. Even when a new thing is done (as in Acts 13:1-3) the initiative remains with the Lord, not the leaders. Their job is to hear the Lord's voice. His voice rings out through Scripture, body-life, and mature spiritual intuition.

c) Scripture is the source of the wisdom and the seedbed of the Spirit's revelation to us. Body life is the less-than-perfect, but still crucial interaction we offer to each other as a family with varying gifts (1 Cor. 12-13).

d) Mature spiritual intuition is the "feeling" element that all mature Christians have, but that many would rather not talk about. It grows through painful experience in seeking to follow the Lord and understand His word and ways. Like the instinct that some people have for good parenting, this informed intuitive ability to offer spiritual wisdom founded in the Word and long-experience with Christ and His church is crucial to real spiritual direction. It does not come from simply reading books about leadership.

IV. Metrics for Evaluating Ministry

Five ways to tell if we are “in step with the Spirit.”

The following five broad headings form at least one model for grasping the spiritual, biblical priorities for pastoral work. Surely there are others that may be added, but this is a good starting point. These headings are in logical rather than chronological or temporal order since they may happen chronologically at any time in a church's life and are probably happening all the time in different venues. Note that Scripture shapes these, but Scripture itself is not one of them. I did not include “biblical” in the titles, but let the Bible shape the titles and thoughts.

A. Personal Spiritual Formation. John 13:34-35; 15:12-13; Phil.2:1-11, 1Cor 3; Gal 5:22-26; 2 Tim.3:10-17; Jas 3:13-18

1. Love is the primary Spirit intuition for all growing Christians. The character fruit of the Spirit is the indicator that the Spirit is at work in a person or in a church.

a) In almost every New Testament letter the author exhorts the readers to live up to the life of the Spirit within and among them. Most the letters were written because the group in question was in some way *not* cooperating with the Spirit and not living in deep love with each other. And almost all the instructions focus on relational issues that come under the heading of Christian love.

b) Spirit life, love and wisdom should be evident in the relationships among staff and leaders especially, but should also show up spontaneously among members of the body.

c) This is individual but not “private.” The spiritual growth of the individual precedes that of the community. Individual spiritual growth in Christlikeness always happens in community, but it must occur in the individual first for the community to experience it authentically. Focusing on the community “policy” to the exclusion of the personal and individual growth in grace creates Pharisaism—the outward appearance of unity and holiness laid over the inward desire for other things. Topiary.

d) Note: *this is anything but a flawless process.* The church will have all sorts of personality conflict, trauma, and difficulty from time to time. The sign of a spiritually healthy Christian body is not that they have no conflict, but how they handle conflict when it comes. (See below for more on this).

2. A thirst for God's Word is another indicator of personal spiritual growth. **John 10:27ff**

a) There may be Pharisaic motives which show themselves in pride, anger, self-sufficiency, party spirit and so on. Nevertheless, a growing believer in Christ will have a desire to grasp the Scriptures because that is how Jesus was. It is a family trait (2 Tim.3:10-17).

3. Basic spiritual disciplines should be evident among the people even though not legislated in the body.

a) People should be learning to pray together, worship together, give, fast, and meditate on God's word (Matt 6; Acts 2:42).

b) Other spiritual disciplines may also be in evidence, but these four should certainly be there.

B. Communal Spiritual Maturity. Jn.13:34; Rom.12:1-2; Eph.4; Phil.2:1-11, 1Cor.12-14; Jas.3:13-18; 1Tim.1:5

1. In Rom.12:1-2 the bodies presented are plural (somata), but the sacrifice is singular (thusian). Christians *together* are a single living sacrifice before God. Of course, this presupposes their (our) individual consecrations, but it is significant that they are a sacrifice *together*. A church is not a group of free-lance spiritualists who gather to compare notes from time to time. It is one living organism composed of many members.
2. This means that a metric of health will be relational harmony and mutuality exhibited between the Christians in daily life over a long period of time. This is tested often and the presence of tests in this regard is not an indicator of overall spiritual ill health any more than catching a cold is a sign that a person is dying. But the question is, do they work through the pain of friction together? Do they show patience and persistence in Christlike behavior? Can they forgive? (The skill of forgiveness is the *sine qua non* of Spirit life because it is the exercise of love in the face of victimization and provocation. Matt. 6:14-15).
3. Personal spiritual maturity is always demonstrated at the *interpersonal level*. Paul was very clear that true spiritual anointing always showed in the way one treated and related to others (1 Cor.12-14). It doesn't matter if you *levitate* during devotions in the morning. If you can't get along with other believers, somebody's not walking in the Spirit.
4. Healthy and loving connections between age groups, genders and races where much of our culture is mired in conflict.
 - a) Spiritual maturity should show in the way older people and younger people mix easily in ministry and worship.
 - b) Men and women should love and respect each other and the "gender war" in our broader culture should be *conspicuous by its absence* in the Christian community.
 - c) Racism in any form should be conspicuous by its absence as well. This was especially true of the early church, which was multi-ethnic.
5. Authentic, relational "church discipline."
 - a) A sort of grass-roots ability of brothers and sisters to confront and correct each other in healthy ways (Matt 18).
 - b) This is not just having a "church discipline policy." Writing "pure" policy is not the same as experiencing healthy Holy Spirit life in community. A church may have precious little written down and experience a rich and full koinonia, while another church has a doctoral level dissertation on church purity and discipline, and no koinonia or ability to work through trauma or injury.

C. Spontaneous Missional Initiative. Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:6-8, 11:19-24, 13:1-3

1. Kingdom priorities in action *without intense pre-programming by church leadership*.
 - a) This does not mean we never use programs to encourage or shape the desires of Christians to spread the Kingdom. But the *desire*, un-coerced and un-programmed, is the sign of health to look for. When Christians are impressed with and growing in the Lord (as the first Christians were) they should sense the Spirit's direction to impact their private and public worlds. When people respond with ideas of how to bear witness of Christ's lordship in their working world, represent Him in public and private venues, serve their community as a mission field, or cross-cultural boundaries with the gospel, this indicates that they are growing spiritually and that the ministry is succeeding.

2. Intra-cultural witness surfaces when the church finds ways of serving the local community that put Christians out in front where deeds of mercy and kindness, compassion and help are obvious witnesses to Christ's lordship.

- a) Community involvement that sees the church as a health giving and healing part of the local culture, rather than a fortress (with a moat) in the midst of it, indicates spiritual growth and effective ministry. This is spontaneous, Spirit prompted engagement in the world with a missional view. Acts 11:19-24 records Christians breaking the Jewish racial barrier and bringing Gentiles directly to Christ by faith. It is powerful evidence of the Spirit's work—again spontaneously. When we read about the uproar that the Gentile conversions produced, it becomes obvious that the Jerusalem church would never have “programmed” an outreach to Gentile suburbs in Antioch. The Spirit did it through the grassroots ideas and passion of simple believers.
3. Short and long-term missions to other cultures indicate health in the body in the same way.
- a) Cross-cultural missions focus on training and deploying people over national boundaries to share life and help in Christ with other ethnic groups. This of course does take some programming and education, and time to develop an ethos of cross-cultural outreach. But again, the ability of a local body to sense the Lord's call and raise up people to accomplish it is a measure of success in ministry.

D. Internal Leadership Emergence. 1Tim 3:2; 4:12; 2Tim 2:1-2, 4:3-4

1. A sure sign of leadership is the development of more leaders.

- a) When men and women want to serve and are volunteering for discipleship and service there is good reason to think that ministry is succeeding.
- b) Where there is spiritual formation, one should eventually find men and women who want to lead, who have gifts, talents and maturity in the area of influencing and directing others toward the goal of Kingdom priorities.
- c) This type of person doesn't simply want to “be a leader.” He or she wants to help other people think like Jesus. If these sorts of disciples are growing naturally in a church or Christian organization there must be sufficient spiritual nourishment in the ground to germinate them. That is a good sign.
- d) This is one reason to “hire from within.” Not that most ministry must be paid. Far from it. Most ministry in a healthy church should be done by unpaid people who are being trained and encouraged by pastor/teachers (Eph.4:11). But if the Spirit is at work and we trust his providence, we should have all we need to do his work right now. This may at times require hiring or recruiting from outside. This is not wrong necessarily, but if internal leadership emergence is a sign of spiritual growth (and I think it is), we should use the leaders we train.

E. Natural Organic Growth. Acts 2:47; 1 Cor.3:7

1. This is the *last* metric because it happens only in conjunction with the other four.

2. The *goal* is not the speed or size of organic growth. The goal is healthy, God-ordained development appropriate to the life of the organism.

- a) Where the fruit of the Spirit is flourishing in persons and groups, and spontaneous missional activity takes place, there will be fresh conversions, baptisms, and (all things being equal) increased numbers.
- b) But bigness is a sign of health only when the size is appropriate to the creature. Being “super-sized” may not be a sign of blessing. A gestation of eleven months and a birth weight of a hundred or so pounds are good for a foal—but not a human newborn! Furthermore, slow, steady growth may be a better sign of health than explosive expansion.
 - (1) Of course, there are exceptions to this. Three thousand came to Christ on Pentecost. But that event didn't seem to repeat itself in precisely that way as Acts records the spread of the gospel.

c) We do not use size of gatherings as a *primary* metric of our success in serving the Lord. He didn't use this metric and we shouldn't either. In fact, "less is more" when it comes to many Christian gatherings.

d) Instead, I want to ask, "Has anybody come and *encountered Christ Himself* through the Christians they met here?" (1 Cor.14:24-25). This of course implies that they have heard the Lord's voice and are responding to Him. We're not just a restaurant offering a "good dining experience." On the other hand, the overall experience of being among Christians should tell a person what grace is. This means that from the first contact (parking attendant or phone answerer?) to the pulpit work, there must be demonstrable grace and Christocentric emphasis. Did these people hear about the cross and the Lordship of Christ here (Matt 28:18-20)? Did they experience love here? Did they experience (or observe) worship among people who truly know the Lord here? Did they hear from God's Word, the Bible, in this place? Did they feel that this place has sacred significance? If they did, my guess is that they will be back and there will be some organic, conversion growth.

V. Can we evaluate ministry effectively based on these metrics?

A. Yes, to a certain extent, but not by simply counting bodies in attendance.

B. We must train ourselves and others to look for the subtle signs of spiritual health beneath the outward evidences of group size and enthusiasm.

1. Look for spontaneous spiritual fruit around the edges of the main events.
2. Watch for people staying after church to talk, pray, share. Give opportunity for this often.
3. Listen for good ideas that crop up naturally and encourage people to do them.
4. Highlight accounts of good spiritual direction offered in unscheduled moments where people are suddenly “teachable.”

VI. What does the Spirit use to *produce* these metrics? Six things:

A. The message of the gospel. Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-8; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-48. (See document *What is the Gospel?*)

1. The truth of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done.

- a) Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, the risen and gracious Lord of the universe who died for our sins and offers totally free salvation on his authority.
- b) The message of the gospel, the word about Jesus, announced clearly and consistently, is what begins the process of spiritual formation that is discipleship to Christ.
- c) When a person hears and believes this news, they repent and trust Christ as Lord and Savior.
- d) Note: The gospel is not just the “swearing in ceremony” of the Christian life, the little affirmation that initiates one into the kingdom of God. It is an entirely new way of thinking where the Father is the ultimate reality, the Son is the King, and the Spirit is regenerating. We are always growing into the gospel in deeper ways, learning how to think within the kingdom of God in Christ.

2. The astounding exchange: Double Imputation. God in Christ did the following three things.

- a) Lived the life we should have lived.
 - (1) Total obedience to and loyalty to the Father as his character is revealed in the Law. (Matt 5:17-20; 2 Cor. 5:21)
- b) Died the death we should have died.
 - (1) Absorbing the curse of the Law for not living in perfect loyalty to God, (Gal 3:13)
 - (2) Jesus took the blame for our sin—all of it, forever.
- c) Gave us complete credit for both. Rom. (3:21-4:8)
 - (1) A complete gift, through no effort on our part, no “works” from us at all.

3. This message of who Christ is (the risen divine/human Lord) and what he has done (singlehandedly achieved the salvation of the universe) *is* the good news. It is not advice on holiness, but announcement of God’s provision for us—a complete provision.

4. *Ministry implication: Pastoral work begins and continues with proclamation and exposition of the gospel. This is crucial and must be central to all our teaching or we will fall into moralism. All Bible studies, sermons, etc., should bring people back in some way to who Christ is and what he has done for us. This must be repeated often because the default position of human thinking is moralism (Pharisaism)*

B. Radical Conversion. Luke 5:1-11; Titus 3:3-7; Jn. 3:1-8.

1. Repentance: metanoia = change of mind

- a) The turning from evil and sin and the old worldview (with the world at the center of it) to Christ as gracious Lord, forgiveness, future life in the present.

2. Regeneration: A supernatural and life-changing reality of Spirit in us. The Spirit draws us, converts us, regenerates us and motivates us in sanctification.

3. *Ministry implication: Pastoral work is about discerning, nourishing, and encouraging the spiritual formation in people’s souls. All effective pastoral counsel, teaching, spiritual direction, and soul care must touch people at the deep, soul level, connecting with what really makes their lives “tick.”*

C.Apprenticeship to Jesus. Matt. 11:25-30; 28:18-22; Gal.4:19.

- 1.Knowledge of Jesus as Lord right now and forever carries an implicit motivation toward real discipleship
- 2.Baptism into the Trinitarian reality—the reality of the kingdom of God now.
- 3.Instruction in all that Jesus taught, including what he teaches in the epistles and in the OT.
- 4.Spiritual formation, shaping of the heart, mind, and life into that of Christ.
- 5.*Ministry implication: In pastoral work we must always ask ourselves, “In what way does this activity, teaching, writing, outreach, event, policy, procedure, etc., encourage people to think and feel like Jesus in the here and now of their life?” Apprenticeship to Christ, not loyalty to the church, is the sign of real spiritual life. The church is about Christ before it is about itself.*

D.Nourishment in the Word. Ps 1, 19, 119; John 6:63, 15:7, 21:15-17; Acts 2:42; 20:20-21; Col.3:16; 1 Thess.2:13; 2 Tim.3:14-17.

- 1.The Spirit uses the Scriptures to shape the heart/mind of his people.
- 2.Teaching the scriptures, interpreted through the Cross of Christ, is the main way the Spirit nourishes the souls.
- 3.*Ministry implication: Pastoral work is grounded in exposition of Scripture from a gospel perspective (as opposed to a Pharisee perspective). The goal is to nourish redeemed character in gospel truth, not create new rules to “obey.” Spiritual formation is not the same as Pharisee righteousness, though both claim to be anchored in the Bible and both use the Bible.*

E.Connection to the Body, the local church. Acts 2:42 (Matt.16:18; 1 Cor.12; Rom.12:3-8)

- 1.Prayer (together)
- 2.The Word of the Apostles (meditating on it together)
- 3.Breaking Bread (communion, together)
- 4.Life-sharing (Koinonia)
- 5.*Ministry implication: Pastoral work includes encouraging people to desire real connection to the local body of Christ, being “members” of a local church (whether or not the church has an “official” membership roll). People who do not connect in this way will not grow in their discipleship to Christ.*

F.Daily Life. Jas 1:2-8; Col 3:16-17

- 1.The venue for spiritual exercise is the life the Lord has providentially shaped around us.
- 2.Family, marriage, work, suffering, grief, all the daily struggles of life.
- 3.The curriculum of the Spirit is not contained in a classroom, but is a 24/7 experience of life of KingdomThink within a fallen age.
- 4.This means that as we teach, train, coach, and encourage, the real growth in people’s souls actually happens slowly in daily life, not quantifiably in our classes.
- 5.*Ministry implication: Pastoral teaching, counsel, spiritual direction, coaching, etc., is very often shaped by the traumas, trials, and temptations (the three “Ts”) of the daily lives of the people. Suffering, grief, challenges and the wreckage of this fallen age form the venue for spiritual growth among God’s people. God uses the bardness of life, over time, to draw people to himself and deepen their understanding of him. We work at the interface of the people’s souls with God’s direction.*

VII. Passages That Shed Light on the Lord's Priorities for Pastors. (There are others as well, but these have been helpful to me in some very specific ways.)

A. Matt 20:20-28 "Servant Leadership" is regrettably a cliché in some circles. What does it really mean? This passage reminds us of at least two things.

1. Evaluation of success must be based on the Lord's criteria.

a) We all tend to evaluate success as our world sees it rather than as our Lord sees it. Mrs. Zebedee and her boys remind us of ... *us*. She wanted prestige, perks, power and prerogative for her boys. (They don't have to run the universe exactly, but they need to have the corner offices).

2. The criteria are kingdom and spiritual.

a) Whatever else the Lord means by being a servant leader he must have in mind the Father's spiritual priorities for his people, not simply the people's personal desire for self-fulfillment.

(1) This is clear in the fact that Jesus not only refused Mom's request, but he used this teachable moment as an opportunity to gently rebuke the whole group about their ideas of leadership.

(2) Jesus served people, but did not let them manipulate him.

b) See Luke 12:13-21 where he not only did not make the older brother share the inheritance, but pierced the real issue, which was not *justice* (as the younger brother implied) but *greed* (probably for both of the brothers in question). Now *that* is servant leadership and spiritual direction in action. But I'll bet his questioner was not pleased.

B.1 Peter 5:1-5.

1. The Shepherd metaphor is foundational to understanding God's view of leaders among his people from one end of the Bible to the other. This passage is a classic exhortation to shepherds.

a) Timothy Laniak, puts it well: "Peter reminds the elders that the nature of leadership among Jesus' followers is that of eager (*prothymos*) service (5:2). Echoing the Lord's disdain for overbearing rulers, the apostle rejects the approach that 'lords it over (*kataklyrueuo*; v. 3) others (Matt 20:25; Mark 10:42; cf. Luke 22:24-27) ... Authority is a feature of the shepherd's role, but one comprehensively qualified by the reminder that elders are caring for the flock *of God*. There is no room for pretense in the service of the divine Shepherd. (Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart* [IVP, 2006] p 233)

2. The warning to "not lord it over" the flock is serious.

a) Taking too much authority in others' lives is a common temptation among pastors and it is not servant style shepherding. It is the sign of either insecurity or hubris.

b) On the other hand, spiritual direction is not completely passive, either. Leading and directing require initiative, especially in teaching and discipling.

c) But this warning is also a great relief. It reminds all spiritual leaders to be careful to let the Lord work in people's lives.

d) Patience, coupled with the assumption that the Lord is actively discipling His people, gives perspective and prevents us from becoming little protestant "Popelets" or from burning out.

C. John. 21:1-23 When Jesus returned Peter's resignation letter, he reminded the fisherman of a few things.

1. The outcomes of ministry are in the Lord's hands (the miraculous catch).

a) Peter's efforts and expertise were not the primary sponsors of God's success.

2. Peter's care for the Lord's sheep should find its motive in his radical love for the Lord.

a) Good pastoring does not spring primarily from love of the sheep, or from personal enthusiasm, as counterintuitive as that may sound at first. We should love the sheep of course, and it is good to be enthused about the work, but long-term ministry grows only from personal love for the Lord. *"If you love me then shepherd my sheep."*

b) Caring for souls, spiritual direction, teaching, counseling, reproving, rebuking, exhorting in season and out of season—these can wear a person down. If the only reason we do the work is because we have warm feelings for the sheep, that motivation will weaken like lake ice in springtime. We will fall through into despair. But if we lead and serve because we love the Master, because we believe he is at work in these people and we are assisting him, we stand a good chance of finishing well.

c) Deep love for the Lord gives stamina to pastoral work.

3. Our work in the Lord should be our primary focus, not how the Lord is using somebody else.

a) *Lord, What about him? What do you care, Peter? You follow me.*

b) In a world of instant and overwhelming information, where pastors read each other's books and see far more of what is happening in the world than previous generations did it is easy to lose track of the relatively simple calling of nourishing the sheep in front of us.