

January 29, 2017 Now That FBC Has a Pastor...I Need Your Help
Exodus 17:8-13 Battle with Amalekites
Philippians 2:12-16 – The Message
Exodus 18 – Jethro’s advice to Moses

I’m not perfect – surprised?
Of course not!

What other discoveries are you making that throw cold water on your hopes, your expectations ?

Ralph participated in Face to Face last April. Face to Face, which ABC-MI helps sponsor, has been called “speed dating” for pastors and church search committees. It is an opportunity for a search committee and persons seeking placement to participate in up to 10 interviews over a two-day period. Ralph was what every church says they want in their next pastor: young (in his 30s), married, children, a seminary degree, some church experience. Ralph was the pastor most requested for interviews at Face to Face. But Ralph can’t preach very well and he really didn’t have enough experience to grasp how to be an effective church pastor. Ralph did not receive requests for follow-up interviews. Moral of the story: Ralph looked good on paper but wasn’t prepared to be the kind of pastor most churches need.

What does a pastor do? – Preach on Sunday morning – that can’t be too hard, too time-consuming, can it? All of you know Sunday morning worship ISN’T a pastor’s only ministry responsibility. Let’s take a look at the bulletin insert. This is my listing of what I have observed over 40 years of what pastors do, and my list isn’t all inclusive. Most likely I’ve left out some very important areas of ministry!

When I worked at Central Baptist Seminary, I would hear graduates say, “They didn’t teach us that in seminary”

How many administrative tasks must be done!!!

Staff relations – could extend to relations with volunteer lay leadership

Who’s really in charge in the local church? Elected leaders, informal leaders.....

Deal with loneliness AND avoid developing favorites within the church family

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Budgeting in a church setting

Establish boundaries

Pastors need to be needed – work more than is healthy for the pastor’s physical health and for the pastor’s personal relationships (e.g., spouse)

Ethics – relationships with spouse and those not in biological family

How to rid the bell tower of pigeons

Studies of pastors completed in the past 10-15 years remind us that 85% of seminary graduates entering the ministry leave the ministry within five years and 90% of all Protestant pastors will not stay in ministry until retirement. (Repeat)

That means if 100 students graduated from Northern Seminary in the Chicago area this past May 2016, by 2021 only 15 of those students would still be in ministry.

If we continue to follow those 100 students, only 15 of whom are still in ministry five years later, by the time those 15 reach retirement age, only 10 will have served in ministry all of their working years. That’s a very high “drop-out” rate!

A number of factors for so many choosing to leave ministry. Ultimately, however, the reasons come down to the church’s expectations for their pastor are beyond, are greater than, what the pastor can do as an individual

. Pastors, by themselves, cannot make a church healthy

Pastors, by themselves, cannot grow a church congregation.

By myself, I can’t grow this church. congregation; I can’t make this church healthier.

Pastors are important, definitely, but this church, any church cannot expect that calling “the right pastor” will bring more and more people into this building on Sunday morning.

For this, I need your help!

Let’s look at our scripture passages

Exodus 17:8-13 The Israelites face opposition in the wilderness. As they move—up to 2 million in number—they cross territory controlled by other people groups. This time it’s the Amalekites’ territory. The Amalekites do not politely say, “Welcome. You may move through here or you may choose to settle here. We’ll share our scarce 2

water resources and the little vegetation there is in this area.” No, the Amalekites fight the Israelites, led by Joshua. Now the interesting thing about this battle is what Moses is doing. Moses is standing on a hill watching the fighting. When he has his arms raised, with the staff of God in his hand, the Israelites are winning; but if he lets his arms fall, lowering the staff, the Amalekites succeed. That means Moses must keep his arms up **all the time**, and this is not a quick battle. In time, Moses becomes tired. He has to have help!! First his helpers provide a stone on which Moses can sit. That helps for a while but his arms still got tired. So, scripture tells us, Aaron (Moses’ brother) and Hur prop up Moses’ arms—one on each side—throughout the day, until the Amalekites are defeated

Moses got tired, he needed help from those around him. Pastors get tired—there is much ministry to do; they need help from those around them.

A second passage, again about Moses, further emphasizes that leaders need help. This is found in Exodus 18 when Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law visits. Moses is the judge of all disagreements among the Israelites; Moses is the **ONLY** judge. And remember, again, there are about 600,000 men among the Israelites. That’s a lot of possible disagreements!!

Jethro observes what Moses is doing and quickly assesses the problem:

Exodus 18:17-18: What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you: you cannot do it alone. Moses was worn out, resolving disagreements day in and day out. One person could not do this job. Moses needed help.

The research study from 2007 “What’s Going on With American Pastors?” that I’ve referred to concludes:

“The results of the survey are that pastors face more conflict, more anger, and more expectations than ever before.”

If you, as individuals and as a congregation, desire to be God’s people, serving as Jesus served, your pastor cannot be everything and do everything—even if you call the “perfect pastor.” You also are called to be ministers. We talked about this last week: What Ministry is Seeking You? We also talked about this last year, in a sermon based on 1 Peter 2:5 ...like living stones let yourselves **3**

be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We sang “I Am the Church, You are the Church, We are the Church together” We need to sing together again...

I heard this statement not too long ago and it summed up what I knew I wanted to say today: You are the one you’ve been waiting for. There is no perfect pastor; YOU are the one you’ve been waiting for—the one to bring vitality to First Baptist, the one to help this church grow.

Paul writes to the church at Philippi encouraging the Philippians to continue being God’s people, right where they are, even though he is in prison and can’t be with them:

13 Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is *God’s* energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

None of us is doing this in our own energy. Just like Moses, we would be overwhelmed with the enormity of the ministry. We would get tired. But we don’t have to rely on only ourselves: We have God’s energy, God at work, and we have one another.

And then Paul continues:

14-16 Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I’ll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You’ll be living proof that I didn’t go to all this work for nothing.

Many times the best evidence that a leader, whether that leader is a pastor or a leader of a group other than a church is that the group can continue carrying out its vision and purpose even after the leader is gone.

Leaders become great not because of their power but because of their ability to empower others -- John Maxwell, pastor, speaker, author

I think that is what Paul was saying to the Philippians: be a breath of fresh air, provide people with a glimpse of the living God, be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing. They could be witnesses for God, they could tell and live the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, even though Paul was no longer there.

You are the person you've been waiting for; I'm here for a season to minister alongside you. And I need your help if First Baptist is to be a breath of fresh air in a divided country. I need your help if First Baptist is to be a glimpse of good living and of the living God. I need your help to carry the light-giving Message into a world of darkness. I need your help for we are the church together and there is a ministry seeking First Baptist!