

Pastor As Servant-Leader

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I. INTRODUCTION

Pastor as a servant-leader is an endangered species due to several factors: general Christian practice (ministerial practice included) not in accordance to the Scriptures but in conformity to contemporary culture, spiritual character of leader (including pastor) minimized and natural/managerial quality maximized, etc.

Due to the limitation of length, the precedent of Jesus' practice and principles from the Bible for pastoral leadership will be presented in a summary format.

II. PRECEDENT: JESUS AS THE SUPREME MODEL

2.1 A RECENT PUBLICATION

In a perceptive but brief study of C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale 1988), he listed out seven observations (p.11-12) and proposed the corresponding servant-leadership principles (chapters of the book) he "discovered that describe how Jesus led as a servant" as follows:

1. Jesus humbled himself and allowed God to exalt him
 - humble your heart: move away from the head table
2. Jesus followed his Father's will rather than sought a position
 - first be a follower
3. Jesus defined greatness as being a servant and being first as becoming a slave
 - find greatness in service
4. Jesus risked serving others because he trusted that he was God' Son
 - take risks
5. Jesus left his place at the head table to serve the needs of others

- take the tower: lead as servant

6. Jesus shared responsibility and authority with those he called to lead

- share responsibility and authority

7. Jesus built a team to carry out a worldwide vision

- build a team

2.2 FROM THE SCRIPTURES

The following is a summary of Jesus' supreme model of servant-leader according to the Scriptures:

- Absolute submission to the Father's will (Mt 26:42; Jn 4:34) and brought blessings to believers (Jn 16:23), spoke only words from Father (John 7:16) with wisdom from above to teach (Matt. 13:54; Col. 2:3)
- Suffered as a "servant Messiah" (Is 53) and "led many to glory" (Heb 2:10-11)
- Humbled Himself in incarnation (Phil. 2:6-10), laid down his life as sacrifice (John 1:29; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 2:5-6) and was exalted above all.
- Loves the Church and gave His life for her and deserves her following (Eph 5:22-33)
- Humbly washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:5) thus modeling servanthood though being their master.
- Was compassionate for the weak, attended the needs of the sheep, and ready to serve (Heb. 4:15; John 4; Mark 7, 10) and is to be followed by them as their shepherd.
- Serving believers by providing care as shepherd (Jn 10, 14), interceding for them as priest (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) thus has earned the right to direct/govern the church (Is. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-22; John 18:37; Eph. 1:22).
- Sent by the Father and so sends the believers (John 20:21).

III. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL SUMMARY -

PASTOR AS SERVANT-LEADER

3.1 PASTOR AS ELDER

The current practice of categorizing Christians to be “clergy” vs. “laity” and distinguishing pastor as “reverent” (sacred/ecclesiastical vs. ordinary church member) has been the cultural tradition from Christian past. Paul warns of these “reverent” type of people, 2 Tim. 4:3-4. The priesthood of believers was rediscovered during reformation and is to be continued for the expansion of the Church and the mobilization for Christian missions.

“Elders” in the Bible is always in plural (Titus 1:5, 1 Pet. 5:1; deacons - 1 Tim. 3:8-13) thus a team-approach (in spirit and practice) is expected; no patriarchal/ authoritarian/ lording over (1 Pet 5:1-4).

3.2 PASTOR AS SEVANT-LEADER

Pastor is a servant-leader, in that he is first a “servant,” i.e. the roles of providing model, teaching and shepherding (1 Tim 3; Tit 2; 1Pet 5:3), those not concerned about sheep under care are scolded (Ezek. 34:1-10) and are accountable for the well being of those being entrusted.

Pastor is also a “leaders,” i.e. the roles of motivating, equipping, vision-building, mobilizing or “empowerment of others for service” (Eph 4:12-16;) such as Joshua urging people forward (Josh. 24:14-24), the apostle Paul serving in suffering and humility while giving leadership (1Cor 4:6-13; 2Cor 6:1-10).

From this servant-leader quality other duties flow, pending on the church polity of various traditions, pastor may be: CEO, voting member of the administrative core, non-voting spiritual guide, church growth specialist, etc.

These are relatively minor variations but his primary duties and characteristics are:

- 1) Shepherding the flock (i.e. not silent about sin, 2 Kgs. 20:1, Is. 21:11, Ezek. 3:17, 2 Cor. 11:29)
- 2) A godly man devoted to prayer (i.e. Jer. 23:22, Joel 2:17, Lam. 5:21, Hab. 3:2, examples of Paul’s prayers, Rom. 1:8-10, Phil. 1:3-11, etc.).
- 3) Ministering of the word and preach the Gospel,
 - a. “Woe...if I don’t preach Gospel” 1 Cor. 9:16, 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:2;
 - b. those gifted to speak should use it, 1 Pet. 4:11
 - c. message should ring with “authority of an Isaiah (Is. 1:2)
 - d. such as the fearless heartbeat of a Jeremiah (Jer. 1:17), and
 - e. the passion of an Amos

- 4) caring with a parent's heart as stated by John Stott:
 - a. "Truth is powerful when it is argued; it is even more
 - b. powerful when it is exhibited."
- 5) making disciples by multiplying himself, John 17:18, 20:21
 - a. Jesus commissioning Peter who did likewise, John 21:15-17, 1 Pet. 5:1-4
 - b. Paul encouraging future pastors, 1 Tim. 2:1-2, 8
- 6) a leader by example and with a servant's spirit

3.3 PART OF THE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY

No compartmentalization of "professional" vs. "private" life, "role" vs. "personhood" in the pastorate or life, "authority" vs. "responsibility" in relation to people under his care. These are just dimensions in his life & ministry and these dimensions are to be integrated.

- 1) Micah 1:8 identified with his people
- 2) Daniel 9:5-6 weeps with people and says "we"
- 3) All believers are equal in a sense as priests, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, Gal. 3:28

3.4 ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

for the well being of members under his care.

3.5 COMPARED TO WORLD'S LEADERS

Leadership different from that of the world (power-trip, self-fulfillment, etc.). His ministry is not to be conformed nor conditioned by culture; he is to be instrumental in transforming culture, Rom. 12:1-2

- 1) Ezekiel without concern for world's opinion, Ezek. 2:6

- 2) Only listening to God's voice, Is. 50:4-5

3.6 CALLED OUT AND CONTEXTUALIZED

Pastoral ministry is a matter of calling from God and commitment for the ministry, not a personal/private matter only. It has to be socially and publicly recognized and affirmed. Therefore the ministry context is very important. i.e. Paul's calling, but then being sent by Antioch church, Acts 13:1-3; laying on of hands for deacons, Acts 6:6

And in some cases, women may fill-in such a role and perform such duties accordingly. Romans 16 mentions ten different women who were engaged in various kinds of ministries. Examples:

- Deborah the judge, Judges 4-5
- Miriam and Huldah referred to as prophetesses with significant roles, Exodus 15:20,21 and 2 Kings 22:14-20
- Phoebe a deacon, Rom. 16:1,2
- Priscilla, a fellow worker of Paul, Rom. 16:3, Acts 18:26
- Others: Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis: women Paul described as ones who labored in the Lord (Rom. 16:6, 12). Also, possible that Rom. 16:7 refers to a woman, Junia, as an apostle, rather than to a man named Junias as in many translations of this text. Euodia and Syntyche, are said to have struggled along with Paul, Phil. 4:2, 3.
- Galatians 3:28 all are equal in Christ

NOTE: Many verses cited equate prophets with pastoral roles. Dr. Johnson argues that "After all, NT pastors are not synonymous with OT prophets. Pastors...have a much broader ministry. [But] spiritual offices – prophet, priest, sage, and king – were established by God to lead his people. ...They coalesced in the person of Christ. It follows, then, that pastors who seek to emulate Christ will have [these qualities]."