



Lesson Title: The Power of Pastoral Leadership

Last week, we talked about the Power of the Local Church. In this week's lesson, we're going to talk about the very special people that God has called to lead, guide, nurture, correct, instruct and share the love of God with the local church and beyond – Pastors.

Our Pastors, Bishop Lyle Dukes and Pastor Deborah Dukes, have been leading the Harvest Life Church for 28 years. That in itself is a reason to shout – but we have even more to celebrate! Their leadership is Spirit-led, strong, loving, energetic, intentional, visionary and more. They have shepherded us through the tragedy of 9/11, a deadly pandemic, and thousands of our individual personal crises. Yet they still stand strong and lead with joy and grace. We are blessed to have them as our God-given leaders and spiritual parents. Read on to learn more about the power of pastoral leadership.

PASTORS ARE CALLED BY GOD

Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28

Pastors are called by God to carry out God's Vision for the local church that they are leading. They receive their "marching orders" from God and the congregation, through the work of the ministry, helps to bring them to pass. Knowing that our pastors are called by God, we honor them and walk in obedience to their leadership – and therein lies the blessing for each member of the congregation. Bishop often shares a quote from one of the church mothers who raised him in the gospel – she said, "If you take God to be a small God, then that's what He'll be...but if you take God to be a great big God, then that's what He'll be." The same holds true for our Pastor / member relationship. If we take our Pastors to be motivational speakers sharing great principles for a successful life, then that's the type of blessing we'll receive. But if we take our Pastors to be the mouthpiece of God, carrying His vision for

the local church and each one of us, then that's the kind of blessing we'll receive.

Through the power of Pastoral leadership:

- We have access to the next steps God would have us take in our ministry assignment and in our lives.
- We are given a right interpretation of scripture as delivered through pastoral preaching and teaching.
- We are protected by the prayers and spiritual covering of our Pastors.
- We receive many other benefits.

PASTORS FEED THE CONGREGATION

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

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:13-14

God has called pastors to feed His children with knowledge and understanding. But all children aren't the same. Hebrews 5 differentiates between the babes who can only tolerate milk and those who are of full age and can eat "strong meat". Just like natural parents with their children, Pastors have to know which meal to serve which person in order to help them grow. Giving a natural infant roast beef will make them sick, but serving a mature person the same meal will provide valuable nutritional elements that will help them grow. Through prayer, intentional teaching, ministry assignments and by-the-wayside conversations our Pastors are growing us up and moving us from milk to meat – getting us ready for the next stages of spiritual growth and development.

PASTORS EQUIP US FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

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: Ephesians 4:11-12

Pastors equip us for the work of the ministry in several different ways:

- Through corporate teaching and preaching (e.g. Worship Services, Word Wednesday, etc.) that will lead us into spiritual maturity and stronger faith
- Building a strong Christian work ethic in us
- Taking opportunities for on-the-spot character development
- Providing challenging (but achievable) ministry assignments
- Providing systems for ministry training and development
- Building strong leaders to assist with discipleship
- Revealing and refining our hidden gifts

Not all of our equipping is done corporately – we are also on spiritual IDPs (individual development plans)! Pastors are typically not doing anything just for the moment – they have looked 10 years down the line, seen what you'll be doing, and then they deal with the instance accordingly. So they deal with all of their children differently, according to their level of spiritual maturity, where God is taking them and other dynamics.

PASTORS EMPOWER US FOR A VICTORIOUS LIFE IN CHRIST

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 long suffering and doctrine.

When we become Christians, we don't immediately go to heaven. Between the day we get saved and the day we meet Jesus in heaven, we have to live out our lives here on Earth! Pastors empower us, through the Word of God, to live according to God's principles that will bring blessing, victory and favor into our lives – and they correct us when we operate in a way that will cause us to reap a harvest that we don't want. Disrespect, disobedience, sowing discord – these are just a few behaviors that are not pleasing to God and are detrimental to the health of the church and to the person exhibiting those

behaviors. Pastors are called to reprove and rebuke in order to keep the church healthy and to steer us back onto the path of righteousness.

PASTORS PREPARE US FOR ETERNITY IN HEAVEN

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Jude:21-23

Pastors put a lot of thought into how to get more souls saved – and how to keep the souls that are already in the church saved and growing...and winning others to Christ. There are various ways to bring people to Christ, but Pastors need to be able to recognize the difference. Some may be motivated by compassion, but some need to be pulled “out of the fire” they are already in...a whole different approach!

Closing Thoughts

There is power in pastoral leadership. Called by God Himself, Pastors provide safety, spiritual nourishment, correction, encouragement and tools to become who God is calling you to be. As church members, we gain access to the power by submitting to that leadership. God makes it very clear that we need pastoral leadership in Mark 9:36:

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Jesus compared these hungry, tired souls to sheep with no shepherd...people with no pastor. Sheep having no shepherd wander aimlessly, are susceptible to health issues, and vulnerable to predators – sheep with a shepherd are protected and cared for, well fed, and refreshed. Make sure that you are availing yourself of the power of pastoral leadership.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

1. How long have Bishop and Pastor Dukes been pastors of the Harvest Life Church?

2. (Fill in the blanks) Pastors are called by _____ to carry out God's _____ for the local church that they are leading.

3. List two blessings we receive through the power of Pastoral leadership:

1) _____

2) _____

4. According to Jeremiah 3:15, what do Pastors feed their congregations with?

5. What are two ways that our Pastors help move us from “milk” to “meat”?

1) _____

2) _____

6. List 4 ways that Pastors equip us for the work of the ministry:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

7. (Fill in the blanks) Called by God Himself, Pastors provide

_____, _____, _____,
_____ and tools
to become who God is calling you to be.

8. As church members, how do we gain access to the power of Pastoral leadership?

