

THE WORK OF MINISTRY

Ephesians 4:12

- **KJV** ...For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”
- **NKJV** ...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”
- **NIV** ...to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”

Ephesians 4:16 ...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.

2 Timothy 4:1-5 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- ***The Upward Look, p. 264*** My brethren and sisters, there is something more for you to do than to sit in your churches Sabbath after Sabbath and to listen to the preaching of the Word. You have a work to do for friends and neighbors. God requires... that you visit these families and seek to create an interest in the truth for this time. You are not laboring together with God if you neglect the work of helping others to take hold upon eternal realities. Our ministers are not to be encouraged to hover about the churches to repeat to the believers week after week the same truths.

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HISTORY

1886, Elder G.B. Starr: “Well, in the first place, we have no settled pastors. Our churches are taught to take care of themselves, while nearly all of our ministers work as evangelists in new fields.” (response to a newspaper reporter who asked, ““By what means have you carried forward your work so rapidly?””)

1912, General Conference President A.G. Daniells: “We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; for when we cease our forward movement work and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to weaken, and to lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized and our work will be on a retreat.”

1957, HMS Richards, Sr. “The time of too many of our preachers, instead of being occupied with carrying the message into new fields, is taken up in settling church difficulties and laboring for men and women who should be towers of strength instead of subjects for labor. When I was baptized, and later became a young preacher, we looked upon churches [other denominations] that had to have settled pastors over every flock as being decadent. Most of our preachers were out on the firing line, holding meetings, winning men to Christ, and raising up new churches. Then every few months they would come around and visit the churches that had already been established. This seemed to be according to our view of it, the plan of the apostolic church.”

1994, *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook*, p. 23 "During the Middle Ages, the clergy largely took over the work of the church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church still struggles to overcome that Medieval tradition and seeks to restore the biblical concept that all believers are ministers. Members in general, and elders in particular, need a greater vision of their significance and responsibility in the church and its work."

2013, *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook*, p. 28 "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing rapidly and many churches are understaffed. In such situations there may be large multi-church districts where pastored are shared among several churches and is able to visit each church only once every two or three months. It is the faithful service of local elders that helps keep these churches strong and growing."

LESS PREACHING, MORE TEACHING

***Evangelism*, p. 381** "If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work. But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them... They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again."

***Ministry of Healing*, p. 149** Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted.

***Testimonies for the Church, Volume 7* 19, 20** The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers... Let the minister devote more of his time to educating than to preaching. Let him teach the people how to give to others the knowledge they have received.

***Pacific Union Recorder*, April 24, 1902** Oh, what a work there is before us! Our ministers are not to hover over those who have received the message. Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members to work. The newly-formed churches will need to be educated. The minister should devote more of his time to educating than to preaching. He should teach the people how to extend the knowledge of the truth."

***Atlantic Union Gleaner*, January 8, 1902** "There should not be a call to have settled pastors over our churches, but let the life-giving power of the truth impress the individual members to act, leading them to labor interestedly to carry on efficient missionary work in each locality. As the hand of God, the church is to be educated and trained to do effective service. Its members are to be the Lord's devoted Christian workers."

***Review and Herald*, October 22, 1889** If church members are educated to be silent and useless members, instead of benefiting the church, they will be a hindrance to its advancement and growth. If they are educated to lean upon the minister, they will become only inefficient and demoralized members, and the church will be powerless, instead of active and efficient."

LESS WATCHING, MORE WORKING

***The Ministry of Healing*, p. 147** Everywhere there is a tendency to substitute the work of organizations for individual effort. Human wisdom tends to consolidation, to centralization, to the building up of great churches and institutions. Multitudes leave to institutions and organizations the work of benevolence; they excuse themselves from contact with the world, and their hearts grow cold. They become self-absorbed and unimpressible. Love for God and man dies out of the soul. Christ commits to His followers an individual work,-- a work that cannot be done by proxy. Ministry to the sick and the poor, the giving of the gospel to the lost, is not to be left to committees or organized charities. Individual responsibility, individual effort, personal sacrifice, is the requirement of the gospel.

***Evangelism*, p. 382** "If the ministers would get out of the way, if they would go forth into new fields, the members would be obliged to bear responsibilities, and their capabilities would increase by use."

Review and Herald, July 16, 1908 There are many who have never heard from the Word the reasons for our faith; and yet some of our ministers feel a burden to hover over little companies of believers in an effort to hold them together. The best way to hold them together is to induce them to maintain a living connection with God, and to exert their influence in seeking to draw others to Him.”

Gospel Workers, p 197 “In some respects the pastor occupies a position similar to that of the foreman of a gang of laboring men or the captain of a ship’s crew. They are expected to see that the men over whom they are set, do the work assigned to them correctly and promptly, and only in case of emergency are they to execute in detail.

The owner of a large mill once found his superintendent in a wheel-pit, making some simple repairs, while a half-dozen workmen in the line were standing by, idly looking on. The proprietor, after learning the facts, so as to be sure that no injustice was done, called the foreman to his office and handed him his discharge with full pay. In surprise the foreman asked for an explanation. It was given in these words: ‘ I employed you to keep six men at work. I found the six idle, and you doing the work of but one. Your work could have been done just as well by any one of the six. I cannot afford to pay the wages of seven for you to teach the six how to be idle.’ This incident may be applicable in some cases, and in others not. But many pastors fail in not knowing how, or in not trying to get the full membership of the church actively engaged in the various departments of church work. If pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively engaged at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visiting, and also avoid many causes of friction.”

Review and Herald, August 26, 1902 Our ministers are to go forth to proclaim the message of present truth to those who have not heard it. And our churches should not feel jealous and neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear much fruit to his glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object,--the salvation of souls... It is not God's purpose that ministers should be left to do the greatest part of the work of sowing the seeds of truth. Men who are not called to the gospel ministry are to be encouraged to labor for the Master according to their several ability. Hundreds of men and women now idle could do acceptable service. By carrying the truth into the homes of their neighbors and friends, they could do a great work for the Master. God is no respecter of persons. He will use humble, devoted Christians who have the love of the truth in their hearts. Let such ones engage in service for him by doing house-to-house work. Sitting by the fireside, such men--if humble, discreet, and godly--can do more to meet the real needs of families than could a minister.”

Gospel Workers, p. 352 “The work of God in the earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.

DOING THE WRONG JOB WELL

In recent years many evangelism training schools have popped up all over the country and around the world. From a pastor’s perspective, I’m thrilled these schools exist but also embarrassed that they have to exist! As a pastor, part of my job is to support such fantastic institutions and at the same time to do everything in my power to run them out of business!

Statistically, though perhaps counterintuitively, territories with fewer pastors almost always grow faster. A reasonable argument could be made that pastors kill church growth, not because pastors are doing a *bad* job, they’re merely doing the *wrong* job. The problem isn’t poor pastors, but poor expectations of pastors. Inspiration has warned and history has demonstrated that settled pastors lead to settled elders, settled deacons, and settled members. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, “member” should mean “missionary.”

Matthew 9:36-38 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”