

## **Pastoral Reflections on Baptist Polity in the Local Church**

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### **Introduction**

It was my first pastorate. My first year in seminary. Racial turmoil was surging through the south. Our area was in the eye of the storm, and subsequently, I discovered so was our church, and so was I. On a quiet Sunday evening as I was moderating the monthly business meeting and asked for new business, we all were shaken when a man I considered a friend, rose to his feet and made a motion that I be fired as pastor because "I was a n---- lover." Have you ever called for a second for your own demise? I did. There was a pregnant silence and finally I heard a muffled second. Discussion followed; mainly from the originator of the motion. Finally, I asked if the question could be tabled for a week. I told the people I would visit each member's household on Saturday and they could answer the door with a yes or a no with no questions asked. I would report to the church on Sunday and if no's were more than yeses, I was history and would resign that day. I'm not sure of the procedure, but to that small and shocked congregation of believers it seemed to give a segue to buy some time.

Long story short, some godly deacons intervened on my behalf during the week, and at a Wednesday night meeting, asked the church to continue to stand for a free pulpit as long as the preacher preached the Word of God. Their conclusion was I had, and in so many words, the church should uphold that standard whoever was the pastor. The recommendation passed by a

safe margin; the weekend circuit ride became unnecessary, and I continued to serve for another year and a half as their undershepherd, somewhat bruised, but still afloat! I was learning as a neophyte in the ministry, some of the complexities and nuances of Baptist church polity.

### **The Role of the Pastor**

The role of the pastor, his authority, leadership, congregational government, elders, multiplicity of pastors, and the rate of pastoral leadership in large churches and the emerging church plants, is one of utmost importance, not only for each local church, but for all evangelicals, especially Southern Baptists. Why so? Stephen Olford said, “There can be no peace or prosperity in national, social, or spiritual life, without rule, authority, and order. . . . God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”<sup>1</sup>

Recent testimony that has come personally to me, a promising young pastor in a growing church ousted by older members who felt threatened by the growth; after the vote, when he arrived home, a “for sale” sign had been planted in his yard. Another pastor in a more established church, seeking to move the church forward, had a minority group of active deacons at a deacon’s meeting, discuss his leadership and invited an inactive deacon to the meeting where he spent an hour pouring out invectives and urging his removal, yet all evidence pointed to the reality of 90% of the congregation being behind their young leader. Another pastor, starting a church from scratch, decided on elder leadership with a plurality of elders. The church grew, then the other elders decided to vote him out by majority rule! I could add countless other stories; I usually hear about one or more a month. The problem is rampant. The issues are multiple. The losses and wounds inflicted on the body of Christ are grievous.

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Olford, *The Bible Says* (Institute for Biblical Preaching, n.d.), 24.

### Survey of Baptist History on Role of the Pastor

What is the solution? What does the Word of God call for? I looked up some of our Baptist history and some writing on the role of pastor and congregation. By no means is this exhaustive, but insightful perhaps. Some observations:

J. Clyde Turner, in *Our Baptist Heritage*, wrote: “Three names are given to the same officer in the New Testament church—elder, bishop, and pastor. The three New Testament names designate three functions of the pastoral office. ‘Elder’ suggests maturity and experience. ‘Bishop’ means overseer. ‘Pastor’ means shepherd.”<sup>2</sup> I. J. Van Ness wrote:

Every church is a religious democracy. Great as is our individual obligation, an obligation which we cannot escape, yet a part of this obligation is to subordinate ourselves in the fellowship of a church for the good of the whole body. He who has respect for the religious life of others will have respect for the church as an institution whose interests are above his own selfish interests. The church is the one place where we put ourselves in the background and think of the good of the institution rather than of any selfish good which can come to us. We should be willing to submit to the judgment of the church and should always remember that others are being considered as well as ourselves. The fountain of all democracy is to be found in the brotherhood of the church.<sup>3</sup>

H.W. Tribble, in *Our Doctrines*, noted:

The local congregation is autonomous, that is, it derives its authority from within. In all matters of organization, polity, and general procedure the members of the body act in accordance with their own convictions and on the basis of their interpretation of the will of Christ. This, of course, should always be under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The church is democratic in government. It is the purest democracy to be found on earth. Every member has equal authority and rights with every other member. The pastor has no more authority than any other member. He may exert a greater influence than some of the other members, but he has only the authority that the church chooses to vest in him.

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Sufficient examples may be found easily in the New Testament to support the position that a gospel church is autonomous and democratic. We may notice the election of Matthias by the “one hundred and twenty” to take the place left vacant by Judas (Acts 1:15-22); the choosing and setting apart of the seven by “the multitude of the disciples” (Acts 6:2-6); the appointment of Barnabas as a committee by “the church which was in Jerusalem” (Acts

<sup>2</sup>J. Clyde Turner, *Our Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the SBC, 1945), 73.

<sup>3</sup>I. J. Van Ness, *Training in the Baptist Spirit* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the SBC, 1914), 130-31.

11:22); the setting apart of Barnabas and Saul by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:3); the election of the presbyters by the vote of the churches (Acts 14:23); the sending of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem on the circumcision controversy by the church at Antioch (Acts 15:3); and the recognition of the right of the members of the church to exercise discipline (I Cor. 5:4). Yet other examples might be cited.

Bishops, elders, or pastors. – The New Testament uses three terms to designate the pastors of churches. They are “bishop,” “elder,” and “pastor.” The most commonly used word is “elder.” It literally means an older person. It is a term brought over from common use in Israel. It appears that some of the churches in the New Testament had several elders. The word “bishop” is not so commonly used, but the office evidently was recognized in every church. The word means an overseer. The term “pastor” is used only once with reference to an officer in the church (Eph. 4:11). These three terms seem to be used almost interchangeably to refer to the officer that Baptists call pastor. He is an officer of the local church, not of any group of churches with general jurisdiction. He is called of the Spirit and set apart to a life of spiritual influence and leadership. He has no authority to govern or control in the sense of commanding and enforcing obedience. He is both servant, and teacher and leader. In his own eyes he is to be servant; in the eyes of the church he is to be teacher and leader. In the end, his leadership and mastery must depend not so much upon his official position or any authority bestowed upon him as upon his consecration, his character, and his influence.<sup>4</sup>

Findley Edge observed:

According to the Scriptures the pastor is to preach (Acts 15:32), to oversee (1 Tim. 3:1), to shepherd (1 Pet. 5:2-3), to evangelize (2 Tim. 4:5), and to rule/preside (1 Tim. 5:17). All of these designations point to one central task. The pastor is to help the believers grow into mature Christians who will minister according to their calling.”

The classical statement of the pastor’s task is found in Ephesians 4:11-12. The King James Version translates this, “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.” There are three parallel clauses here that seemingly indicate the work the pastor is to do—perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry, and edify the body of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, from a biblical perspective, the central task of the pastor is very clear. The pastor is to help those who are believers to grow and develop toward maturity and to equip them in their ministry of fulfilling God’s mission in the world. Hankins Parker, in *What Southern Baptists Believe*, noted:

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<sup>4</sup>H. W. Tribble, *Our Doctrines* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1936), 109-13.

<sup>5</sup>Findley B. Edge, *The Doctrine of the Laity* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1936), 76-77.

*This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. . . . Christ is the “head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). The head controls the body in its function and work. This makes Christ Lord of the body and all of its parts. As He guides the members of the body, the body moves and serves Him.*

The church is autonomous and responsible to no one except Christ her living Lord. Her government is a body of believers under Christ. To her He imparts His wisdom, reveals His will and gives His direction. Christ does this by imparting to each member that which He wants him to know and to do in cooperation with other members. The composite divine revelation and leadership to the members becomes the action of Christ in government and service. *In such a congregation members are equally responsible . . . to know the will of God and to express the will of God.*

Each member is an equal with one voice and one vote in the local congregational government under God. Each has his own functional status according to the “grace that is given . . .” (Rom. 12:6). Likewise, each has his own function in letting Christ live in him and express Himself, in word and action, through him. The pattern is that of many members of equal status united and functioning as one body in the worship and service of the one Lord.<sup>6</sup>

Lloyd Elder, in *Blueprints*, wrote, “Within the Southern Baptist denomination, the most basic source of authority is the local congregation. The local church is the foundation for all other authority and leadership. In fact, the local church has been rightly called ‘Baptist headquarters.’”<sup>7</sup> Herschel H. Hobbs noted:

Role of the Pastor “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account...” Hebrews 13:17.

The King James Version is an unfortunate translation. The Greek text reads “the ones leading you” as a shepherd leads his flock. According to Arndt and Gingrich (Lexicon), the word for “obey” may also read “follow.” In the light of “the ones leading you,” “follow” is the sense here.

“Submit” (Greek) means to “yield under,” “to give up.” The idea seems to be that if the pastor has one idea for the church program different from others in the church, if the matter cannot be resolved in conference, the latter should yield under to the former. Not because of his **authority**, but his **responsibility**. If a program fails, it should be his and not one thrust upon him. He must watch over souls entrusted to him and give an account to God. Again, responsibility, not authority.

In Acts 20:17, 28 Paul used **elder**, **overseer** (bishop), and **shepherd** (“feed” means to “tend as a shepherd”) to refer to the same office. Inherently in these words respectively are **counselor**, **administrator** (leadership in planning and performance), and **pastor**.

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<sup>6</sup>Hankins Parker, *What Southern Baptists Believe* (Orlando: Golden Rule Book Press, 1988), 81-82.

<sup>7</sup>Lloyd Elder, *Blueprints: 10 Challenges for a Great People* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984), 99.

In the same vein 1 Peter 5:2-3 says, “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples [examples] to the flock” (v.3). The pastor should set the example in both life style and in labor for the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

W. O. Vaught, in his sermon “The Spiritual Authority of the Pastor-Teacher,” argued:

**The Place of Rulership:** This is the first place of a pastor. He is the ruler of the congregation. It doesn’t mean he is arrogant, or a bully throwing his weight around. Many ministers are not mature enough for a job like this. He just should tiptoe in and start teaching. At first he just whispers and then people begin to listen and little by little as he teaches doctrine, he earns his authority. (You recall in John 21, Jesus told Peter to “Feed the baby sheep, then to care for the hard-headed sheep, then to feed the mature sheep. This is the pastor’s task.)

**Don’t Abuse This Authority:** Some people resent this when they hear that the pastor is the ruler of the church. They think they are the rulers. No pastor should be arrogant about his authority. And it is very easy for him to abuse his power. He can’t rule as he ought until he has spiritual maturity. The idea of a preacher throwing his weight around because he loves his own voice is ridiculous. No preacher should get the idea that he is God’s gift to the human race.<sup>9</sup>

Others have also spoken and written on this matter. Dr. Oswald J. Smith wrote:

God’s plan is that His flock should be led by a shepherd, not run by a board. Committees are to advise, never to dictate. The Holy Spirit appoints men. The care of the churches is given to bishops and elders, never to committees. They are to be the overseers, the shepherds. Each one has his own flock. Because men have failed to recognize this, there has been trouble. When God’s plan is followed, all is well.

**The Bible Plan:** The Bible knows of no other plan. All down through the centuries it has been the same. When God wanted something done He chose a man, equipped and fitted him for the tasks; placed him at the head of His people and told them to follow and obey.

If a leader is worthy of the position, he is worthy to be followed. If he cannot be trusted, he ought not to be the leader. The man who is qualified to be the pastor of a congregation is entitled to the loyal allegiance and support of every member of his flock. If the official board feels that they must run the church and that the pastor must take his orders and get his vision from them, then they ought not to have him as their pastor at all. If a man is capable of being the pastor, he is capable of leading the flock and guiding the church.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, “Baptist Beliefs” in *The Baptist Messenger* (n.d.), 8.

<sup>9</sup>W. O. Vaught, “The Spiritual Authority of the Pastor-Teacher,” Sermon from Hebrews 13.7, 17, Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, AR; n.d.

<sup>10</sup>Oswald J. Smith, “God’s Plan for Leadership” *Pulpit Helps* (July 1979): 19-20.

M.O. Owens, Jr. commented:

The Bible clearly tells us that God opts for authority and responsibility in the three most important areas and institutions of life—government, the home, and the church.

The Epistles: clearly in the Epistles, authority for the pastor or elder in spiritual matters is presupposed. The writer of Hebrews instructs, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who much give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden . . .” (13:17 NIV) The pastor must give an account to his Lord. Believers who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ will have no problem in following the spiritual admonitions and exhortations of the consecrated undershepherd. Paul says much the same: “and we beseech you brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess. 5:12-13) This same submission is implied in 1 Cor. 9:7,9,11,13). In Titus 3:1, Paul gives instruction, “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed” (NASB). The recognition of the inherent authority and responsibility of the pastor/elder is evident in Titus 1:7-11, “For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward . . . holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men . . . who must be silenced . . .” (NASB).

Those who would emphasize the “authority” of the pastor in all matters pertaining to the church have done great disservice to the truth. At the same time, the teachings concerning democracy in the church and the priesthood of the believer have been misconstrued and distorted. The pastor, though he has “authority” from God, is never shown in the New Testament to be one who is “boss” or “dictator.” His task is not to control, but to guide with love, concern, and the proper teaching and example. God does everything “decently and in order.” True humility in the believer is as true of the pastor as of the member.

Whatever “authority” the pastor has issues from his personal character, his spiritual dynamic, and his love for his people. Peter says, “Therefore I exhort the elders among you . . . shepherd the flock of God among you . . .” (1 Peter 5:1,2 NASB).

In God’s order, the pastor is to be the leader, the shepherd, the overseer, the teacher of his congregation. His task is to be a spiritual leader. The Scripture knows nothing of the “boss” concept. He is to teach the truths of God, to preach the Word, to set the right example before the people, and to exhort them to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and the will of God.

The pastor’s motivation is NOT to be money. “Not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” (1 Peter 5:2c NIV); “not a lover of money: (1 Tim. 3:3d NIV).

His leadership is not to be from a position of power or dominance. “. . . not lording it over those entrusted to you . . .” (1 Peter 5:3a NIV).

The pastor is to be a minister, a servant, with a servant heart, following the teaching and example of our Lord, who said, “Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant – just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve . . .” (Matt. 20:26-27 NIV).

The pastor is instructed by Paul, “. . . set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, in purity . . . devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them . . . Watch your life

and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim. 4:12b-16 NIV).<sup>11</sup>

Stuart Briscoe wrote:

“The Obedience Response.” The responsibility of the leader, having observed God’s will, is to persuade followers that it is in their best interest to follow what the leader is leading them into. If they can do that, the person following is going to be “served.” The leader is a “servant leader.” These two words hardly seem to go together, but it is the model Christ gave us.

“The Submission Response.” The word used here and translated “submission” is not the one used in the military sense when one rank submits to another. This word has more the meaning of “to resist no longer,” “to yield” and it goes along with the idea of “convincing” and “persuading.” It is a cases of the leader winsomely, in the Spirit, encouraging people to understand the will of God from the Scriptures and to no longer resist but to yield to His will. Frankly, there are many churches who are going nowhere fast. Sometimes it is because they have an inadequate leadership which has no vision, no drive, no initiative, no Spirit-entrepreneurial attitude. Or it is because there is a good leadership which people are resisting. Either way, you’ll find that it is a church stuck in a rut (which after all is a grave with the ends knocked out).<sup>12</sup>

Ray Stedman, in “A Pastor’s Authority,” argued:

The task of the elders is not to run the church themselves, but to determine how the Lord in their midst wishes to run His church. Much of this He has already made known through the scriptures, which describe the impartation and exercise of spiritual gifts, the availability of resurrection power, and the responsibility of believers to bear one another’s burdens , confess sins to one another, teach, admonish, and reprove one another, witness to and serve the needs of a hurting world. In the day-to-day decisions which every church faces, elders are to seek and find the mind of the Lord through an uncoerced unanimity, reached after thorough and biblically-related discussion. Thus, ultimate authority, even in practical matters, is vested in the Lord and in no one else.

No one man is the sole expression of the mind of the Spirit: no individual has authority from God to direct the affairs of the church. A plurality of elders is necessary as a safeguard to the all-too-human tendency to play God over other people. Even then, the authority exercised is not one of domination and arbitrary decree over anyone. The ability of a servant to influence anyone else does not lie in ordering someone around but by obtaining their voluntary consent. This is the nature of all authority among Christians, even that of the Lord himself! He does not force our obedience, but obtains it by love.

The true authority of elders and other leaders in the church, then, is that of respect, aroused by their own loving example. This is the force of two verses which are often cited by those who claim a unique authority of pastors over church members: “But we beseech you,

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<sup>11</sup>M. O. Owens, Jr., “The Authority and the Pastor” *The Southern Baptist Advocate* (July 1986): 10-12.

<sup>12</sup>Stuart Briscoe, “Where to Find Help, Studies from Hebrews,” *Evangelism Today* (June 1995): 12.

brethren, to respect those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”<sup>13</sup>

A. Strauch, in *Biblical Eldership*, noted:

*Spiritual disaster.* God appoints elders for the spiritual profit of His people, but the elders’ success in a large measure depends on the people’s response. All the shepherds’ good efforts are fruitless if the sheep disobey or run away. While disobedience distresses church leaders, it has an even more serious impact on the wayward believer. Ultimately, the disobedient believer is hurt, or as the writer to the Hebrews says, “this would be unprofitable for you.”<sup>14</sup>

Stephen Olford, in *The Bible Says*, wrote:

*A Divine Rulership Which Must Be Respected* – “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). The church of God is not a democracy, but a theocracy: a place where the Son of God rules (see Heb. 3:6). Therefore, the church is not a sphere where every man has equal status and authority, but rather a fellowship in which the Head of the house appoints each to his own place and duty (see Matt. 25:14-15; Mark 13:34). Thus, to refuse honor to whom the Lord has qualified to lead His people is to reject the authority of the Head of God’s house. This divine rulership teaches us to respect:

*The Authority of Christian Leadership* – “Obey those who rule over you..” (Heb.13:17). We are not speaking here of dictators, or bosses, but rather of Christian leaders, raised up by the Holy Spirit, who manifest by their word, call and life God’s authority upon them. Such leadership is not self-appointed but God-appointed and recognized by the spiritual membership of the church. Such people are to be known and loved in the church (see 1 Thess. 5:12). They cannot be rebuked, except for serious sin (see I Tim. 5:1), nor can they be accused of any wrongdoing in the church, except it be before two or three witnesses (see I Tim. 5:19). This is a hard truth to appreciate or appropriate in these days of lowering standards and rebelliousness, but the text is clear: “Obey those who rule over you . . .” (Heb. 13:17).<sup>15</sup>

Adrian Rogers has said: “Pastor led; deacon served; committee worked; church approved.”

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<sup>13</sup>Ray C. Stedman, “The Preacher” *IBP Newsletter Serving Ministers and Lay-Leaders* vol. 1 no. 6 (Wheaton: Institute for Biblical Preaching): 1, 4.

<sup>14</sup>A. Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton: Lewish & Roth, 1988), 164.

<sup>15</sup>Olford, *The Bible Says*, 26, 27.

### **Personal Reflections on Church Polity**

My own experience in large churches has been an evolving one. At Two Rivers, we had a business meeting to vote on the color of floor tile, it was a tie vote twice, the third time as moderator, I cast the deciding vote and found out when I got home I voted for the wrong color, much to my wife's consternation who had voted otherwise! Another time, we voted without dissent on a huge budget (for us) for the next year, but spent 30 minutes debating the cost of a piece of office equipment that cost less than \$1,000.00. As time passed and the church grew, these experiences lessened and debates on budgets and personnel diminished with the passing years.

At First Baptist, Orlando, I walked into a different scenario. There was a type of Executive Committee made up of laity who led or served in various facets of the church's ministry. They met on a monthly basis for reports and recommendations. At first blush, this seemed good, but shortly after arriving, I found out the Education Pastor did not have a key to the church facilities. He told me that it was not allowed for anyone except the pastor. I had to go to the committee to get permission to give their called leader a key to get into the church. I set about changing the church constitution to facilitate less red tape, and more efficient use of time and manpower. Most of my recommendations were rebuffed or watered down. I took the matter to the deacons, spent two lengthy deacon's meetings, proposing a more biblical style of government and leadership, and after heated debate, we were able to see some changes, including the loss of some members.

In subsequent years, we have moved to a more pastor-led style, with heavy input from laity on major issues, with day-to-day matters left to the pastors. I meet monthly with the deacons to inform and answer questions. Our pastors are also available to the men. Deacons do

not have to approve major items such as budget, building programs, etc., but I usually get their affirmation in bringing it to the congregation. We only have congregational votes on calling of ordained pastors, budget, financial matters that pertain to borrowing over \$500,00 and major building programs. Quarterly, we receive reports in the evening service regarding transactions taken by the trustees. I've found this to be comfortable, fairly close to the biblical model, and generally favorable with our people.

Looking around and looking ahead, I see several things:

1. Today's congregants may be more difficult to lead because of societal mistrust in authority and more dysfunctional people.
2. Most pastor-congregation conflicts are about 75% congregational oriented; 25% pastor oriented. From the congregational viewpoint, several factors are involved; poor teaching or understanding of pastor-congregation responsibilities as understood in the Bible; power plays, traditions, and carnality or unregenerate; from the pastoral side; a poor understanding of pastoral leadership and authority; poor people skills; not leaders; moving too fast, misunderstanding his playing field; unwise decisions.
3. Large and mega churches cannot operate in today's world in the traditional democratic form of church governance. For the most part, there seems to be a high level of trust in the leadership. We found in earlier years as we were morphing as a church, that even when we announced a church "business meeting" and urged people to attend, we had a continually diminishing turnout. They neither cared nor trusted their called leaders. I trust the latter.
4. The men in ministry, 50 and under, especially those in their 20s and 30s, are strongly prone to strong pastor leadership or a multiple of elders. They do not want the hassle of what they have observed in their churches or heard the war stories, and do not want to spend their energy and time in debate and confrontation. They are more entrepreneurial and had rather plant a church than inherit the problems of an established church. This poses a good/bad dilemma. We are establishing some excellent and growing new churches, but great and historic churches small, medium, and large are going to be seen as dinosaur-like, unattractive, and may have to choose leadership types that may be more status quo oriented rather than aggressive and expanding. The law of diminishing return will have serious evangelistic, financial, and mission impact dimensions.
5. Seminaries and leadership conferences are going to have to do more in providing mentoring, interviewing, and teaching, from people in the trenches, or we are going to see diminishing numbers of healthy pastors and healthy churches. We will lose by attrition because of burn-out, throw-out, and fall-outs faster than we can replenish.

6. More material on video, books, magazines and periodicals on proper understanding of authority, leadership, and congregational responsibility must be produced, and the profile raised on this issue, or we will have a landscape with the increasing litter of broken pastors, families, and churches.
7. We have to get across the idea that the “CEO concept” can be helpful if understood in biblical terms. Leaders must function with certain skills that include administrative, personnel, conflict-management, etc. This must be done in humility and in the Servant-leadership style. It need not be a negative concept, but an understood one from pastor and congregation. If so, it will be a happy marriage, and the churches and pastors will flourish, and the long rides through meetings and congregational disputes, once described by a fellow pastor as a “long ride through Ulcer Gulch” will become an incredible journey of shepherd and sheep thriving beside still waters and green pastures of a loving and productive relationship, and it will be a mutual “bless be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.”