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Many churches are in trouble. Often (though certainly not always) the cause is to be laid at the feet of those in positions of leadership. Entrusted with shepherding the souls of men and women and boys and girls, some spiritual leaders sadly give into secret sins that harm the church in a most insidious way.

There are those whose fall is tragic and public. Their moral failure is simply so devastating and the effects so staggering, everyone can feel the disgust of the scandal and no one is blind to the consequences. Those cannot be considered secret sins of spiritual leaders.

But secret sins do, in fact, exist and can destroy a church even as the more scandalous transgressions do. I refer to those less obvious, but equally treacherous, sins in this essay.

I also refer to more than the secret sins of pastors, although they must certainly be addressed, because the spiritual leadership in a church also includes the elders, deacons, their wives and the pastor's wife. It also includes Sunday School teachers, Children's ministry leaders, Youth ministry leaders and sponsors, church musicians, and Bible Study teachers. All of these are also spiritual leaders in a church and they too can yield to secret sins which become like termites that eat away from within.

What are some of the secret sins of spiritual leaders?

Impatience

God is the God of patience (Rom. 15:5) and the Holy Spirit produces this godly character quality in genuine believers who obey the Word and yield themselves to Him (Gal. 5:22-23). Patience is one of the marks of older, mature, godly men (Titus 2:2) and God commanded that it be demonstrated by all Christians toward all people (1 Thess. 5:14). As spiritual leaders in local churches deal with the flock of God, they need patience in their responses toward people. It's a sin to bully people, to be impatient and combative and argumentative. But spiritual leaders also need to patiently wait for God to work in His way regarding various ministry situations. Impatience is a subtle sin that shows an unwillingness to wait for God to act in His time. Leaders often are guilty of leading where God is not directing, in the time not of His choosing. Local church leaders sometimes forget to wait for God to do His work in His way in His time. Sometimes impatience drives leaders to abandon a ministry before God has. Their impatience can harm the congregation of God.

Manipulation

Related to impatience, the sin of manipulation is another attempt to get your own way in your own time by self-directed means. Through clever thinking and quick wits, many leaders assemble a complicated series of conversations, meetings, and smaller decisions designed to assert their will. But if things begin to go in a direction not planned or not intended, leaders who lack integrity seek to control the outcome by disingenuous comments and behavior in order to redirect the group. The manipulative leader will be inconsistent in what he says, varying his words to fit each conversation, always attempting to control the listener(s). Different from influence, manipulation is excessive and crafty and dishonest. Sad to say, but manipulation is often times more frequently present in local churches than honest discussion, gentle persuasion, and biblical assent.

Fearfulness

The attraction to popularity, approval, and success leaves a leader vulnerable to fear and insecurity. Fear of what men say, fear of disapproval, fear of failure can subtly choke those in spiritual leadership and leave them paralyzed. There's no feeling so free as the freedom from intimidation because you've made
the prior commitment to fear God, always seeking to please God in everything. As Paul asked the Galatians: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

One older, Irish pastor had this inscribed on the flyleaf of his Bible:

Some will love thee,
Some will hate thee,
Some will flatter,
Some will spite.
Cease from man and look above,
Trust in God and do the right.

**Covetousness**

Few churches have large financial resources held in reserve. Most churches live frugally, even from offering to offering. One secret sin of those in spiritual leadership is a jealous envy of other churches that have more people, bigger budgets, larger staffs, newer buildings. Covetousness can bring ruin to the man or woman who yields to its temptation. It can also drive churches to "keep up with the neighbors" and fashion ministries based on what everyone else is doing rather than on how God leads them in His Word. The nation Israel frequently made disastrous decisions in the Old Testament simply because they coveted their neighbors and wanted to be like them. This secret sin can bring very obvious, and very sad, consequences to churches today.

**Dealing with Mistakes**

Every leader will make mistakes and errors of judgment. Wise leaders learn from their mistakes and humbly communicate to those who follow. But unfortunately, there are some people in positions of spiritual leadership who actually damage ministries by their inability to accept blame and admit an error. They exacerbate their mistake and frustrate the people by this subtle sin.

**J. Oswald Sanders wrote:**

"Spirituality does not guarantee infallible judgment. The Spirit-filled person is less likely to make mistakes of judgment than his secular counterpart, but perfection eludes us all, whatever our level of spiritual development. Even the apostles made mistakes that required divine correction. Spiritual leaders who have given such a significant share of their lives to knowing God, to prayer, and to wrestling with the problems of renewal and revival may find it difficult to concede the possibility of misjudgment or mistake. Surely the leader must be a person of strength and decisiveness, to stand for what he believes. But willingness to concede error and to defer to the judgment of one's peers increases one's influence rather than diminishes it. Followers will lose confidence in a leader who appears to believe himself to be infallible. It is strange but true that a perception of infallibility in one area of life often coexists with great humility in other areas." (Spiritual Leadership, Moody, 1994, p. 156-157).

**Suspicion**

Discernment is a godly character quality to be sought and honored. It is commended in the Bereans (Acts 17:11) who "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." It is given major treatment in Proverbs as an important aspect of wisdom. But discernment must be controlled by the Word of God and the Spirit of God or else it can become an attitude of suspicion which casts doubts upon other people's motives and twists them into incorrect conclusions. We must be careful not to attribute to others our own sinful behavior, insecurities, attitudes, and motives ("I know what I'd do in that situation… and so that must be what they're doing!") Note what Cardinal Richelieu, who led the bitter persecution of French Protestants in the 17th Century, stated: "Give me 15 words written by the most innocent of men, and I will find something with which to hang him." (World 4/12/97, p. 12). It is indeed grievous when this type of spirit is found in our people or in our spiritual leaders. To assume the...
worst in people is a burdensome type of leadership which is not loving, godly leadership. Instead, love "rejoices in the truth (i.e. discernment) and bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things (i.e. not suspicious)." Discernment and love is the Spirit-controlled balance we should seek as opposed to the natural attitude of suspicion. Suspicious leaders wreak havoc in local church relationships.

Pride

When people rise in position and authority, the natural tendency is for pride to arise. And if unconfessed or undeterred, pride will lead to destruction because "God resists the proud" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Pride in spiritual leaders takes many forms: an unwillingness to delegate; a prayerless life of furious activity done in the strength of the flesh; an unteachable attitude; a desire to protect "my turf, my territory, my programs, my office, and my ideas." It is seen when leaders cling to their positions in ministry with the notion of indispensability or when they begin to believe theirs is always the better way. Nothing poses a greater peril for spiritual leaders than our own tendency toward exaggerated opinions of self-worth. And God will not only remove His blessing from the proud, but He will actively resist them. That is devastating.

Conclusion

There are scandalous sins that no one would deny will bring ruin to a church. But secret sins can also destroy. May we commit ourselves to be men and women of God who do not allow our subtle, secret sins to become termites that eat away our churches from within.

Keys to Building Ministry Teams that Work and Win

George Harton

Sports fans want their team to win. Pro football fans hope this year's draft will improve their teams. But no single player can win an NFL championship. Football is a team sport, not an individual one. So is ministry. Too many Christian workers seem to think that ministry success all depends on them. We forget too easily that the church is a body (1 Cor 12), a team designed to work together. Who is on your ministry team? In a small church, a pastor's team probably includes the church officers, other lay leaders, and church "pillars". In a multiple-staff church, a pastor's team consists of other paid staff, lay ministry heads, and other lay leaders. In a school setting, faculty members, administrative staff, board members, and student leaders constitute the team that determines how well the school will fulfill its mission. I write having completed thirty-three years of full-time ministry. As I have reflected on years of service as an Assistant Pastor (visitation and youth), small church pastor, church planter, mission board member, seminary faculty member, and seminary Academic Dean, I have identified several keys to unlocking ministry growth. Here are six of those keys.

Select new people cautiously (1 Tim 5:22)

Attracting great players can make a big difference to any team. But hurry can lead to unwise choices. God commands that we proceed cautiously in drafting people to join our leadership team when He says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim 5:22). The context of this verse involves ministry leaders - elders (1 Tim 5:17f). Leaders need this admonition; all too often they are eager to find more people to help carry the load. As a young pastor of a small church, I jumped at a chance to have an intern help me for several months. Unfortunately the intern caused more trouble than good. On another occasion when a small church I was pastoring hired someone to assist me, I insisted on an initial mutual probation period. When the assistant did not continue beyond the initial six-month period, no big problem developed. May we trust God for patience to keep building for future success and not look for quick fixes. God grant us patience to go slowly enough to wait on Him to supply people we need. Are you winning the battle with impatience?

Select new people decisively (Eph 5:16)
If the only key were to proceed cautiously, we might fall prey to indecision or indolence. God also commands us to "awake…and…walk…as wise, redeeming the time" (Eph 5:14-16). This is no admonition to manage time efficiently. The Greek word translated "time" is not chronos, but kairos, which means season. God wants us to discern how He is working just as a farmer discerns when it is planting or harvesting season. Redeeming the season requires recognizing what time it is and then moving decisively. This second key forms a polarity with the first key; we must be both cautious and decisive. The two full-time faculty members hired by Capital Bible Seminary in 1999 and 2000 illustrate this polarity. When the Seminary first approached Dr. Robert Kellemen about joining its faculty in 1993 to begin a discipleship-counseling department, he declined because he had recently begun pastoring a church. The Seminary patiently waited for the Lord to supply the right man at the right time. Five years later, when Dr. Kellemen sensed the Lord leading him to pursue a teaching ministry, the Seminary leadership moved aggressively to pursue him. He had been considering several Bible Colleges, but not Capital Bible Seminary. However, Dr. Kellemen and the Capital team recognized God's hand leading them together.

The same was true of Dr. Ken Quick. Having considered a change in pastoral ministry in 1994, Dr. Quick sent his resume to several IFCA regionals, including DelMarVa. The DelMarVa resume was given to President Heater at Capital Bible Seminary and placed on file. When Dr. Quick was contacted in March 2000, he had just stepped back into his church office in Toronto following a short-term teaching ministry in Ukraine (which whetted his appetite for teaching). Never having written Capital Bible Seminary himself, he was amazed at the contact from his resume sent to churches years before. He and the Seminary faculty were convinced God was at work and both redeemed the time. Within weeks he was called and within months he had joined his new team.

There are always Christians seeking new church homes and ministers seeking new positions. The challenge for those seeking to draft new church members or new staff is to discern with whom to go slowly and with whom to move aggressively. As a pastor, I have called on some church visitors who wanted to be pursued aggressively and almost promised some immediate ministry. I have called on other visitors looking for a new church while still recovering from burnout or some other discouraging ministry experience. Leaders who operate merely on the basis of their own personalities (passive or aggressive) will miss connecting with certain types of people. God wants us to be sensitive to His Spirit, both to be cautious and decisive. God wants us to live with the tension of depending on Him to work and exercising responsible leadership. It is exciting to be a co-laborer with the Lord!

**Know your people individually (John 10:14-15)**

Attracting new team members is an ongoing challenge for all ministries. So is using and building the people we have. Sometimes God does not give us new people because we are not working well with the ones we already have. We must study and know our people. This is basic shepherding. The good shepherd "knows his sheep" (John 10:14-15). Whether shepherding a Sunday-school class, a church, or a faculty, leaders need to spend time studying their people in addition to studying the Bible. Great coaches know their players and can employ them to take advantage of their strengths and work around their limitations. Dallas coach Tom Landry knew just how to use Hershel Walker, but the Minnesota Vikings (who almost traded the franchise for Walker) did not. Just as husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (1 Peter 3:7), so ministry leaders need to live according to knowledge with those under their authority. We should know who would appreciate a meeting reminder and whom a reminder would offend. We should know who needs to process issues emotionally, needing private time and space to do so. We should know who is interested in every detail (even of others' ministries) and solicit input from such early and privately rather than be annoyed at unsolicited input or last-minute challenges to new ideas. Ministry to individuals is cross-cultural. Knowing our sheep is foundational to ministering with them.

**Value diversity graciously (1 Cor 12)**
As we study the people God gives us, we will discover that some think and act differently than we do. It is selfish and arrogant to expect everyone to be just like us. Our natural response is to welcome those most similar to us and to hold those who differ at arm's length. However, God would have us welcome diversity. We know this intellectually from passages like 1 Corinthians 12:18-19, where diversity in the body of Christ is established as a virtue. Sports fans know the simple truth that strong teams require players with a variety of skills fitting various positions. No one fields a football team of all linemen, all quarterbacks, or all wide-outs. Nevertheless, some leaders try to surround themselves with colleagues just like them. Instead, leaders should welcome the diversity that can make their teams stronger. We need some leaders committed to defending the faith and who resist change from biblical absolutes. We also need others committed to resisting dead orthodoxy and blindness to important cultural changes. We need to have both those with a vision for relational ministry and those with vision to accomplish tasks and goals. Some may add humor, others professionalism, and still others technological expertise. Many missionary and pastoral staff teams take personality tests and spiritual-gift inventories. Let us not reduce diversity to a few categories; let us rejoice in the great diversity potential of leadership teams.

**Position each person strategically (1 Cor 12:18-22)**

We will build teams that work if we study our people well, welcome the diversity we find, and then position our people strategically (1 Cor 12:18-22). God has positioned each member in our bodies to optimize function. Some people use the "shape" acronym (Spiritual gift, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience) to determine which ministry position an individual best fits. Too often we go about staffing positions - squeezing people into positions they do not fit very well. We find someone to teach the sixth grade Sunday school class regardless of fit. The emphasis should not be on positions in programs - someone to be the youth director, or to be the academic dean. Let's make people, not programs, our priority. Let's position our staff (people); let's not staff our positions. People give a maximum effort and achieve effectiveness when serving in the right position, whereas people in misplaced positions give minimum effort. Having attended numerous meetings of Academic Deans, I find that over half would change their positions in a heartbeat.

As an elder of a Bible church, I introduced the idea of seeking feedback from those already ministering in the church in order to discover those needing repositioning. Some of my fellow-elders were afraid of a deluge of people wanting to drop their ministry commitments. As it turned out, however, the people loved the consideration given them, and several changed to more appropriate ministry positions that enhanced the effectiveness of the church. One of the best moves I have made as Academic Dean was relieving my Assistant Dean from his administrative duties to devote his full energy to the classroom (most deans' dream) and moving someone else with training, vision, and administrative experience into that post. Both the teaching ministry and the overall administrative effectiveness of the school were greatly improved. May God help us to value our people enough to tailor every job (and job description) to every individual.

**Give the credit to God and others (2 Cor 4:5)**

Finally, as God gives the increase (1 Cor 3) in our ministries, let us be careful to give God and our teammates the glory. Even though we value humility as a virtue, we naturally feel good when people praise us. To counteract my desire for being praised, I am learning to seek the special satisfaction that comes from working with others in a way that brings them all the credit, and to resist the temptation to remind people of my contributions. God has not called biblical leaders to be lords over God's heritage (1 Peter 5:1-3), taking credit themselves for the contributions of others. God has called us to serve our people. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5). "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor 3:5). God help us to discover the potential blessing and impact of ministers willing to give all glory to God and others!
These six lessons hardly exhaust the ways of God with ministry leaders. But they are keys which individually can unlock doors to ministry effectiveness in the days ahead until Christ returns.

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### The Myth Called Adolescence

**Rick Holland**

The worldview of the fourteenth century included the assumption that the world was flat. Nautical horizons were presumed to be the parameters of the earth and few questioned that these were, indeed, the rims of reality. But when maritime trade and exploration demythologized the flat earth theory, progress was unleashed and the worldview of the masses was adjusted. Yet, incredibly, some continued to believe in a flat earth, even after such thinking was corrected by truth (a "Flat Earth Society" still exists today!).

Unfortunately, there is an ironic parallel in the church. Our generation has assumed a perspective of teenagers that needs to be demythologized in the light of Scripture. This myth is called adolescence. The concept of adolescence has become so commonplace that the few have stopped to challenge its definition or legitimacy.

Adolescence as a definite stage in human development has been accepted, almost universally, in secular thinking. But the church has swallowed the idea whole as well. So what's the big deal? Isn't the concept of adolescence true? And what would it matter if it were not?

An honest interview with many youth pastors would reveal that of the students under their pastoral care, those who are exhibiting an independent dependence on Christ are a minority. Why are so few of our teens "walking in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called" (Eph 4:1)?

For the answer, we should note some misconceptions associated with the concept of adolescence that have yielded significant consequences in youth ministry. A brief observation of current trends in youth ministry reveals at least four assumptions prevalent among the philosophies of many, if not most, youth ministries in our generation. Unfortunately, these presuppositions find no biblical support. A quick examination of these trends will help reveal what is perhaps the single most devastating misconception in youth ministry.

### Four Wrong Assumptions in Youth Ministry

1. **A youth ministry must entertain/amuse students to be effective.**

The 1970s, 80s, and 90s were replete with conferences, seminars, and conventions regarding youth ministry. A common thread running throughout these resources was an emphasis on what it takes to "draw" a student into ministry. The common questions seemed to be, "What will it take to get kids to come to church?" and/or "What will it take to keep the kids we have?" It is obvious that these are the significant questions, yet the way they have been answered for the last twenty years in youth ministry circles is astonishing! Everything from $100,000 sound systems to dances and contests have been used and promoted as legitimate means for drawing kids in. The all-important principle to remember is that whatever you use to "draw" a student into a ministry is what you'll need to "keep" that student coming. It is easy to see how many youth pastors burn out trying to keep their students entertained and interested enough to start coming and keep coming. There must be more to youth ministry than entertaining and amusing students.

2. **A youth ministry must be activity-centered.**
It is difficult to trace the development of youth activities as a focus in youth ministry. But no matter how it started, most of us as youth pastors have inherited what could be called an "activities monster." The most common question from students is, "What fun thing is next?" Holding youth activities is not necessarily the enemy, but when a youth pastor spends more time on planning hay-rides, afterglows, and fifth quarters than he does praying and studying the Word, something is out of balance! (Remember the emphasis of the Apostles in Acts 6:4.)

3. A youth ministry must be program-centered.

Structure is good. But over-structure is exhausting. It seems as though when a youth pastor identifies a problem or has a new idea, oftentimes a new program is instituted to meet the need. It is not long before the issue in the student's mind becomes "what's happening at church." Again, it's not that programs are bad, but when the focus in a student's mind is what's going on more than Christ Himself, there is a problem. There is a constant pressure on youth pastors to crank out a variety of programs and to view simplicity as naïve. The tragedy in this fallacy is that for every program or aspect of a program added, the youth pastor's focus becomes that much more dispersed. We must ask ourselves if "spinning plates" is prudent in youth ministry.

4. A youth ministry must be focused primarily on the "issues of being a teenager."

Again, we have been bombarded with "help" concerning running a youth ministry from a variety of sources and people. One over-arching theme coming from such literature and seminars is a perspective that to be effective in teen ministry one must consume himself with the needs of teens. To a certain extent, this perspective is true in that the Scriptures teach that a shepherd must know his sheep. However, the imbalance comes when the shepherds know the sheep better than they know the Great Shepherd. Though teens do have special needs, a constant focus on these needs points a ministry horizontally (to man) rather than vertically (to God). We must ask if our job as leaders is to meet needs or to present God!

Why are These Wrong Assumptions Prevalent in Youth Ministry?

All of these fallacies, and many others, may be traced to one tragic misconception. Ministry to youth has assumed a presupposition that is based on a cultural myth rather than the Word of God. The cultural idea that must be exposed as myth is commonly called adolescence.

The Myth Called Adolescence

The age group that youth ministry deals with is commonly known as adolescence. Our modern-day society has been identified as unique in history for classifying teenagers as a group of people called adolescents. To label a teenager an adolescent is to say that he is no longer a child, but not yet an adult. Note Webster's definition: "the state or process of growing up; the period of life from puberty to maturity terminating legally at the age of majority." This is a fairly vague definition for such a pervasive philosophical ideology.

Significant to note is that this state called adolescence is a twentieth-century, Western invention. Ours is the only culture in history to see three stages of development to maturity, namely childhood, adolescence, adulthood. All other cultures outside of Western culture and its influence, as well as history in general before the twentieth century, see only two stages in the development of maturity--childhood and adulthood. What we've done is to create an unnatural state called adolescence where a person is not a child, yet not an adult. From where did such an idea come?

David Bakan identifies three developments in American society that propelled adolescence into public acceptance: compulsory education, child Labor laws, creation of a juvenile justice system.1 This seems
to be the ideological foundation that was laid in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But the articulation of adolescence didn't find the printing press until early in the twentieth-century.

In 1904 Dr. G. Stanley Hall published a book entitled, Adolescence: Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education. This is the first known treatise on adolescence as a stage in a person's life. In it Hall argued that the stages in a child's development parallel in mankind's development in history. The thesis of his book is that the period between thirteen and eighteen is a crisis and stormy period in a young person's life. Hall concluded that these years almost always include extreme inclinations for a young person to be very good or very bad. It was his book and these expectations that were the basis segregating school children by age for educational purposes. At this point adolescence was invented. What should be made of such an arbitrary assertion?

Consider the history of Judaism. Since the days of the Pentateuch, the Jews have celebrated the passing of a boy from childhood to adulthood in their Bar Mitzvah Ceremony. In other words, the Jews have held for centuries that at around age thirteen a person should be fully accepted as an adult in the religious community. Jesus shows up in the synagogue as a twelve-year-old in Luke 2:41-47. It is worth noting that no one seemed to be shocked by his presence there; rather it was the questions he was asking and the words he was saying.

The thesis of this study is that the teens to whom we minister are not adolescents; they are adults. Granted, they are "young" adults, but adults nonetheless. Physically, emotionally, and volitionally they have capabilities commensurate to adulthood. Yet, of all places, the church (through youth ministry primarily) retards the young person's spiritual development by not allowing or expecting him to be spiritually responsible or challenging him to the extent of biblical expectations or examples. We are not too different from Saul and the rest of the men of Israel who looked at a young teen named David as an insignificant youth (see 1 Samuel 17:33 and context) just before he leveled Goliath. If God put such stock in a "youth," why don't we?

By creating this mythical state known as adolescence the teenager is in constant flux between childhood and adulthood since he is not fully accepted as either. This is a significant part of the teen problems in our society. It contributes greatly to the teen syndrome of seeking identity in peer groups, gangs, drugs, alcohol, and premarital sex. It also generates anger at parents and a general anti-establishment attitude. The problem is that in some contexts, the young person is patronized as a child, yet in others he is expected to act responsibly as an adult. And we wonder why teens are so confused!

The tragedy is that this tension is propagated in youth ministry. We try to keep our feet on both sides of the fence between children's ministry and adult ministry by implementing elements of both while at the same time neglecting elements of both. The current assumptions and expectations in youth ministry have problems that must be corrected if we are to raise up a generation for Christ.

**Problems With the Myth Called Adolescence**

1. **Adherence to the idea of adolescence promotes a low view of teens.**

   The reason our teens are not living Spirit-filled lives is because we don't expect them to. Our view of teens and their effectiveness in ministry is embarrassingly low compared to God's view and expectation of them.

   As we consider Scripture, it is clear that the Bible does not recognize adolescence. Certainly no Greek or Hebrew term represents such a stage. And perhaps we need only consider the following brief list of the significance of teens not only as adults, but also as the heroes of our faith. Throughout the Bible we see God calling and putting teenagers at the cutting edge of His work and trust. Consider Daniel and his friends, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joseph, Hezekiah, Ruth, Mary and Joseph, David, Josiah, and Mark. If God
Himself put such great stock in teens, why don't we? Because we don't really believe that teens can be significant for Christ.

We must call our young people to the standard of following Christ that the Scriptures require and expect of any Christian. Maybe our whole discussion can be summarized by stating that God's Word is not age-aged! Our goal must not only be to present Christ, but also to expect Christ-honoring lives out of our young people.

2. **Adherence to the idea of adolescence promotes a low view of God.**

Following on the heels of this first point, low expectations for the spiritual maturity of teens reflects a low view of the heart and power of God. Colossians 1:28-29 reveals Paul's passion for the maturity of the saints: "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me" (emphasis added). It is the heart of God that every man be made complete in Christ. The point needs to be underscored that the students in our ministry fall under the category of "every man." To underestimate the spiritual capacities and capabilities of teens with regard to loving and serving Christ is to underestimate God. The Bible record is a testimony to the fact that God is quite pleased and capable to minister to and through teens. To back away from this emphasis is to back away from the heart of God. Either we believe God has the power to work through our teens or we don't. The issue must be pressed to this point of trusting God at His Word. Buying into the cultural lie that adolescents cannot be spiritually responsible merely reveals a deeper problem, namely a belief that God cannot or will not use our teens to make an impact in our world.

Other pragmatic problems or dangers associated with a belief in adolescence follow as well. Since the "adolescent" is confused about his identity (he is accepted neither as a child nor an adult), a host of consequences ensue. Low moral standards become accepted, expectations for maturity are confusing, and little responsibility is required. Maturity is left undefined, so sexual promiscuity and substance abuse become easy ways to "grow up." In the area of finances, a responsible work ethic is avoided and selfish spending habits begin an undertow of debt.

In the spiritual realm, opportunities are wasted with a generation who needs to hear the gospel from its peers. Instead of organizing a army of "Christian soldiers, marching as to war," we should be transforming our youth ministries into social alternatives for worldly options. Youth ministry is not to be the social alternative to the world--it is to be the staging arena for engaging the world with the gospel!

So what can we draw from these observations? Consider the following implications.

**Implications for Student/Teen Ministry**

1. **Focus on becoming a "youth ministry" rather than a "youth group."**

The first step to changing our focus from "adolescent" ministry to teen or student ministry must begin with checking our philosophy of what we are about. In other words, we must decide if we are going to have a youth group or a youth ministry. By definition, a youth group consists of students who group together, period. In contrast, however, a youth ministry consists of students who minister together. The subtle emphasis contained in what we call ourselves reveals much more than a title. We are either a group or a ministry.

The weight of the direction of a given ministry ultimately gravitates to the leader. For this reason, it is clear to see why understanding the assumptions, expectations, and philosophy involved in what we do and why must be carefully thought through by the youth pastor/leader.

2. **Hold students accountable to the biblical standard.**
Just as a young Jewish boy was expected to obey the Torah after his Bar Mitzvah, we may expect that our teens can obey the truth of the Word of God. We can thus hold these young people responsible for how they deal with their time, money, and opportunities. This expectation also raises the bar for our study and teaching of the Scriptures.

3. Deal with students as adults.

The church should be a leading influence in these young people's lives to grant them both the responsibilities and privileges of adulthood. We should help them understand biblically how to make decisions, allow them to utilize their creative energies for the Lord, help them find a place of ministry in the body of Christ, include them in evangelistic and discipling efforts, and let them be examples of Christian virtue (1 Tim. 4:12).

Could it be that the church has allowed the myth called adolescence to go unchecked? Could it be that youth ministries have been operating with the wrong diagnosis? I am often asked what I think is unique about ministering to students. And I usually get a look of shock when I answer, "nothing."

First John 2:16 reveals that there are only three problems (rather, sins) with all people, including teens: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This diagnosis of man's hamartiological hangover is not unique to any age group. And the sooner we apply this to our students, the sooner we will do youth ministry God's way.


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Some Thoughts for Churches in Transition
Kevin Chapman

Most characteristics of independent Bible believing churches are useful in building the church. However, there can be great difficulty in our churches when dealing with pastoral transitions. In this area, our independence becomes our weakness. The church can actually prosper when a pastor moves to a new ministry, retires or dies while in the pastorate, when we consider this inevitable event as the pastor's personal responsibility.

There are several current mindsets controlling the search for pastors. One is that an interim pastor must be hired to assist in the transition. Another is that future ministers of our churches must be found within the church. The exact opposite mind set is also frequently seen, that it is never right to promote from within the church. Still another is the strong denominational view that demands that the association screen and/or select the men they believe are qualified for that pulpit and then the congregation picks from among those 'pre qualified' candidates. I believe there is another, perhaps a better way, to transition between pastors.

Both of my grandfathers and my father were farmers. My grandfather named his cows: Bessy, Susie, Matilda and so forth. When I was a child on the farm, we numbered our cows from 1 to 300. What was the difference? My grandfather would leave the house and say, "I need to go to the barn to take care of
the animals." While we would say, "I need to go do chores." The difference is more than mind set. My
grandfather's cows were part of his life, while our animals were part of the family business.

God uses a similar illustration revealing that people are like sheep, in need of a shepherd. The shepherd
will lead them in the daily walk of life. That shepherd can have one of two different viewpoints as he
leads the flock. On the one hand, he can view the flock as his own. Jacob did that in Genesis 30. On the
other hand, the pastor can look at his position as a job or profession and refuse to view himself as the
Master's servant.

John 10:11-13
I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and
not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth:
and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and
careth not for the sheep.

Perhaps it's time to rethink the process the local independent church goes through to locate a successor
pastor.

We know what it means to be a shepherd. Perhaps, we need to realize what it means to be a hireling as
we consider this area of the ministry.

Since it is inevitable that the church will go through the process of finding a new pastor, the pastor
should train for and equip his flock in preparation for that inevitable day. The outgoing pastor can
disciple, train, and equip his board and staff to carry on the work of the ministry in his absence.

Obviously, there are times when because of sin, immaturity, misunderstandings or other such issues, the
specialized teaching of an interim pastor may be essential to the survival of a local body. However,
ideally the current pastor has a great shepherding and loving relationship with his people. Even if it is
not a perfect fit, the pastor knows his people. He sees his church as his family and fully intends to
remain there for the long haul. He desires to build growth, maturity and a sense of community that will
last indefinitely. He knows the problems and his church's future need.

However, there are times when it is essential that a shepherd leave a ministry. He knows his flock still
needs pastoral care and without it the church will lose momentum, focus and vision.

Although a change in leadership might be necessary, a shepherd would not willingly leave his flock
without ensuring that it is well cared for. Therefore, he should prepare the church, in advance, for the
inevitable.

The outgoing pastor could have a great impact on the direction the church takes for finding a new pastor.
He should not be disinterested nor uninvolved. The outgoing pastor should be as concerned for the sheep
of his flock as a shepherd is concerned for the sheep in the field. He may have other personal plans, and
there may be reasons for quick release from his duties, but his continued involvement will protect the
flock from disintegration and becoming susceptible to attack by the evil one.

A mature, outgoing pastor will recognize that the best thing for the church is not a duplicate of himself.
He will look for a man who knows the heart of God and is willing to be led by Him, having a passion for
the sheep under his care.

There's no biblical reason why he cannot assist them in the search for future pastoral leadership. In fact,
there is biblical reason to take this responsibility. The evidence is that Paul did this with Timothy.

Granted, when a church discovers their pastor needs to move on, they may desire significant change in
style, leadership, focus, or qualification. Nevertheless, the outgoing pastor is uniquely qualified to
understand the hearts and minds of his people, to determine their true needs. Obviously, the church with
multiple pastors will transition with more continuity, but any pastor can counsel his church through the process and eventually hand the reins over to his successor. The health, safety and growth in number and maturity will be this pastor's heart-throb. This man has a shepherd's heart.

Even if the outgoing pastor is unable to assist in the search for a new pastor, the principle is still the same. Yes, an interim and a series of guest speakers can make sure that the people have the essentials of life (food and water to a shepherd of the fields), but they are not necessarily at their side in the walk of life.

Churches need pastors who "take care of" the flock and do not just "do the chores."

Except in the most difficult situations, the church could encourage the outgoing pastor to assist and give advice. However, any vote for a new pastor should be taken, without any involvement in any way, of the outgoing pastor. His role should be behind the scenes to avoid negative votes for purely emotional or attachment reasons.

The transition time between pastors should be short. The outgoing pastor and current board should put everything else aside and concentrate on this need, until it is met.

Only after the selection of the new pastor is complete, will the outgoing pastor's responsibility cease. Then, the replacement will need to wind down his current ministry, make the physical move and get to know the new flock. During that transitional time, an interim pastor or guest speakers would be highly valuable to the church at large and its new pastor. An interim can prepare the flock for the arrival of the new pastor. By partnering with the new pastor and the former pastor, he can set the stage for the new potentials, goals and visions of the new pastoral leadership. He can speak on issues of money, discipline and ministry styles. He can address issues in ways that the regular pastor could not. He will now be interim pastoring with a purpose -- to assist God's man in the work of the ministry. The interim pastor may continue for three or more weeks after the arrival of the new pastor, allowing the new pastor to get to know his people, get settled, become familiar with the community and be fed while transitioning, slowly, into the full responsibilities of being the pastor.

This intimate pastoral involvement will benefit the church (due to shorter times between pastors), the pastor's future church (because they will know how committed he is to his flock), and the candidates and/or young pastor moving into that ministry.

The primary purpose of this "ideal" transition is to secure qualified leadership as soon as possible. The interim pastor then teaches with the new pastor in mind and the future in sight.

This addresses the hard issues early, focusing on solving the inherent problems of the pastoral transition. The work of the ministry continues and your church may not go through the usual transition slump in attendance, commitment and finances. Everyone wins. And Christ's name is honored.

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The Pastor's Family: Design or Default?

Who hasn't heard some form of the complaint that the pastor's children are the most unruly kids in the entire church? One pastor responded, "They get that way by playing with the deacon's kids!" Humor aside, the matter of the pastor's family is a very serious issue. Too many ministries have been hurt, or even ended, due to the failure of the pastor and wife to rear godly children. Are pastoral families made by design or by default?

The Pastor's Family and the Call to Ministry
The call to the ministry is a high honor and privilege, but it also brings a special responsibility to the family of the man called. In the strictest sense it is a call to the man to be the minister. In another sense, however, it is a call to the entire family. The husband/father's call is also the family's call to ministry.

The apostle Paul speaks to this when he writes the minister is "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence" (1 Tim 3:4). Paul then raises the importance of the home by immediately adding, "For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" When giving instructions to Titus the apostle states the minister is to have "faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination" (Titus 1:6).

In order to serve the minister must, of necessity, make his home part of his first priority. I personally do not like using the compartmentalization method of "God first, family second, and work third." Life simply is not lived in such neat categories. Besides, God is always first even as we deal with family, work and life issues. The pastoral passages of Paul use strong terms for how the minister is to live at home. The right to serve in the church is demonstrated in the home. A poor home life or an unsuccessful parenting life disqualifies the man as pastor.

Paul describes the minister/husband/father as one who is a good manager or ruler of his home. This management involves all aspects of home life, but especially how the children live. This managing is to be done "well" or with a good quality. The children's response is one of submission to the father's leadership. The father's response to the children is that he is the one who does this with dignity or reverence (Kent, The Pastoral Epistles, p. 129). The issue is the character of the man who is called. It will be evident in how he raises his children.

In the Titus passage Paul is more pointed in the character of the minister's children. Here he instructs that the pastoral family have saved children. The word can be translated "faithful", but the concept is "believing children" especially when the context compares them to wicked children. The word for "dissipation" means an "abandoned man, one who cannot be saved" (Kent, p.213). A constantly rebellious child in the pastoral family will hurt the name of the Lord.

The first field of ministry for the pastor is his own home. Leading one's own child to Christ is an awesome moment. It is also validation of one's ministry. Then the training and growth time comes in their walk with Christ.

Some time ago Moody Monthly ran an article written by a PK ("preacher's kid") who had been continually rebellious as a teen. Her rebellion was putting pressure on her dad. He chose to resign the ministry and took a job as a milkman in order to have steady hours at home. He made his daughter his number one project. This was a huge sacrifice as a minister, but the right sacrifice for a father. God blessed and the daughter was won by her father's loving sacrifice. If we ministers are to be creditable servants of God we must, of necessity, make the rearing of our children part of our first priority in following God.

The Pastor's Family and Living in the Ministry

The biblical basis is clear and we, as IFCA ministers, accept this standard. The rub comes when we have to actually do it as a daily routine. There are emergencies, funerals, visits, people issues, board meetings, sermons to prepare and we also get tired. It is in the daily grind that life is lived. It is here where schedules and life collide. It is here that we learn "this is going to be normal so let's deal with it."

Priorities need to be set in place so that the entire family has a standard to live by. How frustrating for children to hear and see their parents saying one thing to them and then doing another. This inconsistency leads to anger and rebellion. Keeping children of the ministry on the family team requires a diligent effort to design the family to succeed. Consider the following as suggestions that may help in a successful design for the family.
The minister/father spells love with t-i-m-e. The ministry is fraught with many things that will take your time. You will have to fight to make time for your children. There used to be a great deal of discussion comparing quality time with quantity time. For a child the choice is just time, lots of it. As my sons competed in baseball, football and basketball I made time for their games and rarely missed one. Their activities became a part of my calendar and were as important as any other scheduled appointment. On the infrequent occasion that a game was on Wednesday night my wife, Denise, went to the game and I came later. I would tell my church that I go see them play and they come hear me preach. It worked well for us. And it is not just dads and sons. It is parents with all the children. We spent time attending our daughter's recitals, cheerleading and volleyball games. Time well spent yields godly dividends.

There will at times be obstacles because some church members do not see your time with the children as a high priority. Take the time to teach the church about the family and how those principles affect the pastor's home. Ask church leaders to help cover your family by prayer and by making it possible for you to have time with your children. One church elder came to me and asked if I was taking my day off. Then he asked if I was taking the entire day off and spending time with my children. In those days I needed that kind of accountability and it was a church leader who helped make it possible.

Time spent with our children does not always mean doing an activity. Sometimes it needs to be spent just listening. I recall a minister commenting that his daughter was always talking so fast to him. He asked her to slow down. She replied that she needed to talk fast before his attention was diverted to the paper or television. Listening is a great skill that needs to be developed in the ministry. It is a great skill to develop at home, too.

The minister/father sets a biblical standard for family living. This almost goes without saying, but it must be said just the same. How sad for us to win the world to Christ and lose our own children. Another elder shared his family verse with us and how it impacted his home. They had chosen 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Since I had led all three of my children to Christ I thought this was a great verse for our family, too. It became normal to remind one another about the importance of walking in truth. When one of the kids would go out they would be reminded about walking in truth. As they got older (and bolder) they would remind me to walk in truth. It became the theme of our family.

The minister spends significant time studying the Scriptures. It is easy to do that in order to turn out a sermon, but, at the same time, fail to bring it to bear on one's own life and family. Our children must see the Word at work in our lives. Our words and actions must reflect Christ in the home as well as in the church. Christianity must not be seen by our children simply as a job, but as life. Children can be like water which seeks the lowest level. They will model what we do far quicker than what we say. Therefore, we ministers are the model of biblical living for our children. Let's be sure we are demonstrating the right model.

Part of a biblical environment is prayer. Children not only need to be prayed for, but to be prayed with by the parent. It is a tender moment to hold one's child close and pray for them. They hear their name called before God. It is here that they learn to pray. This is a heritage that needs to be cultivated and passed on.

The minister/father must set a loving environment for his children. There are two ways this can happen. First, the minister must express his love to his children. They need to hear "I love you" and "I think you are the best." Those hugs and kisses are important to the children. Words of affirmation are better than Miracle Gro! The children need to experience their discipline in a context of love and consistency. They need to know that love is something that is said and demonstrated. They will learn how to love their own families by how they are loved.

Second, the best gift of love you can give your children is a good marriage to your wife. Children need security and a vibrant love between father and mother creates a sense of safety. It also provides children
with a frame work on how they are to love as future husbands and wives. Now that I am a grandfather I am beginning to experience those dividends of having tried to do it biblically. It is a wonderful blessing to have your adult children come and thank you for a godly example and to be told they are seeking to follow your example.

**Conclusion**

The pastor's family is designed by God. It is our joy and responsibility to see that the design functions in our homes then each home will be its own customized version of what God wants. May the Lord grant it to His glory.

*Aaron W. Webb is pastor of Grace Bible Church in Homosassa Springs, FL. He and his wife, Denise are parents of three children.*

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**Immanuel's Child**  
Churches Helping Churches Reach The Children  
Todd Provost  
Director of Church Ministries  
Slavic Gospel Association

In the Gospel of John, an announcement was made by John the Baptist that changed the world forever:  
*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* (John 1:29).

This Christmas, churches in America will have a special new opportunity to help churches in the lands of Russia announce this great event to the children in their communities. Through Immanuel's Child, churches in America can help the churches in Russia tell the Christmas story to many thousands of children and their families. While this is a new project for SGA, no evangelism in the past has been more fruitful in Russia than the outreaches during the Christmas season.

Russian believers will go door-to-door in their communities, inviting children and their parents to a special Christmas program. There will be games, singing, gifts for the children, and most importantly, a moving presentation of the Christmas story. In many communities, people will be hearing this all-important news for the very first time. And this will be just the beginning. In the weeks to follow, brothers and sisters from the church will work to develop relationships with the children and their families. Many of the children will begin to attend their first Sunday school or AWANA program. Children will come to faith and, often, their parents will follow. They will be discipled and brought into the church. A gift to Immanuel's Child will, indeed, be a gift that keeps on giving! We have received these three testimonies from similar ministries held last year:

In the town of Schekino we had a Christmas festivity and 590 children came. They were from unbelieving families. During the meeting some parents came and threatened to burn the church house and said bad words to us. We began to pray for them. And soon they calmed down. At the end of the program they thanked us for teaching their children to be kind. These same parents then allowed their children to attend our children's club, organized after the evangelization.

A very exciting Christmas program was prepared for the children. The hall was overcrowded with 1,100 children, and some had to stand. They enjoyed the program, were glad to receive the 800 small presents that our church had prepared for them, and all the children were invited to come to our Sunday school.

On Christmas my wife and I led a children's evangelism in the village of Luganske. We went house to house distributing invitations for our Christmas program. Many children came. With the aid of a flannelgraph we read them the story about the birth of Jesus Christ from the Bible. We gave the children small presents and taught them some Christmas songs. They liked everything so much, that they didn't want to go home.
Churches throughout the lands of Russia are now planning Christmas outreach programs for the unchurched children and families in their communities. The pastors tell us that it is the greatest opportunity of the year for them. But they are utterly lacking in resources. They are praying that the Lord will provide the funds needed for the program, for the purchase of the gifts for the children, and for the additional Sunday school materials to help them disciple the new children that will come as a result. Immanuel's Child would be a wonderful way for your church to come alongside a Russian church this Christmas, and help them reach out to the children and their families in their community, and announce the good news to them.

Editor's Note: For more information on how your church can get involved with Immanuel's Child, contact SGA's Todd Provost at 1-800-BIBLE-50.

The Ministry of Prayer
Ivan French

Over the years men of spiritual stature have made strong statements concerning the importance of prayer in the Christian life and experience.

"The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution in history to world evangelization" (Andrew Murray).

"The man who can get believers to praying would, under God, usher in the greatest revival that the world has ever known" (Leonard Ravenhill).

Many such opinions might be cited. The statement that "the most important activity in which a Christian may be involved is the exercise of prayer" can be defended by several considerations.

1. Anyone can do it: children, shut-ins, timid folks, elderly folks, etc.

2. There are no geographical or spatial limitations to its outreach. One can kneel in his small bedroom or office and reach out to the most distant places on earth.

3. When one prays, he is laying hold of the power of God Himself the result of his praying will be a demonstration of what God can do.

4. The apostles' statement in Acts 6:4 indicates that they put prayer right on the same level of importance with the ministry of the Word: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word."

5. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our example in all things, was a praying Man. At least fifteen times in the Gospels He is seen praying in private or publicly. His last word as He was dying was a prayer: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

6. The amount of space in the Bible given to the subject of prayer is impressive. In the "Publisher's Foreword" of All the Prayers of the Bible by Herbert Lockyer, the statement is made that "Exclusive of the Psalms, which form a prayer-book on their own, the Bible records no fewer than 650 definite prayers, of which no less than 450 have recorded answers." This does not even include teaching on prayer, the exhortations to pray, or statements of the rationale for prayer.

Surely then, it is clear that prayer is important and the exercise of prayer is vital in the life of the individual Christian and of the church. But our thoughts here must be limited to the ministry of prayer. What is this? It is simply that there is a service to be rendered to God and to men by praying. It is praying that is systematic, regular, and planned. It is not the quick shot heavenward over a cup of coffee or a "God bless our missionaries" type of thing. It is prayer that is focused, planned and consistent.
As in many other things the responsibility for a prayer ministry by the church or any of its members devolves upon the pastor. Ideally, every local church should be a great prayer fellowship and the pastor is the key figure in that fellowship. He must be a man of prayer - private, personal prayer. In addition, he must lead out regularly in public prayer. To do this effectively he must make preparation. Why does a pastor work so earnestly upon his sermon and not spend five minutes in preparation for leading his people into the presence of Almighty God? So many pulpit prayers are just plain trite, repeating the same "acceptable" phrases week after week. In his helpful little book Sense And Nonsense About Prayer the late Dr. Lehman Strauss describes an occasion when he was called upon to lead in the main prayer of a meeting. The entire meeting was taped. When he heard the tape and heard himself pray, he was horrified. And he was stirred to give attention to his public prayers in the future. By his public example the pastor must demonstrate that prayer is a high and holy exercise and the greatest privilege of the Christian experience.

But what about the ministry of prayer? The pastor must instruct his people in this. We can do little more here than list some of the ways. Let us assume that a couple has just come to faith in Christ. The man and his wife have been a part of typical American paganism. When the pastor calls in their home he discovers that they don't know the first thing about prayer. He must then explain the basics: the privilege, the responsibility, the fact that while there is a mysterious element in prayer, it is a vital part of the Christian's walk with God. In the wonder of it all, God has programmed personal prayer into the operation of His universe. It is not unlikely that when the pastor has concluded his visit and has requested permission to pray for them, at the conclusion of his prayer he will hear the wife tearfully exclaim, "Wonderful! Nobody has ever prayed for me before." What will happen in the prayer experience of the new members of the family of God may be guided by the pastor himself, or by an associate or by a mature praying member of the congregation.

**Personal needs**

The folks will learn that they can bring anything to the Lord in prayer (Phil. 4:6,7). Gradually, they will recognize the difference between their needs and their desires, and between the directive and permissive will of God. Someone will carefully instruct them in how to pray together, that is, to worship God as a couple. Perhaps they may be introduced to some helpful devotional booklet as a basis for their praying.

**Church needs**

They will gradually become acquainted with the ministry of the church which they are attending - its outreach and the ministry of its various departments. Their hearts will be moved when they are told by the pastor that he needs their prayers. They had assumed, as many do, that the pastor spends his time reading the Bible, studying and praying, and certainly has no need of being prayed for by others. The music of the church, the youth program, the summer Bible school, the encouragement of the elderly and shut-ins are all set before them as dependent upon the prayers of the Lord's people.

**Missions**

A careful presentation of the missions' outreach of the church with an introduction to the missionaries serving on the various fields can be a great eye-opener to the new Christian. And the fact that he can be a praying missionary, touching the lives of people all over the globe, will be a source of unending wonder to the new believer. One of the most moving of all their new experiences will be to learn that they can be involved in the work of the Gospel in China, Ecuador, Togo or Indonesia through the avenue of prayer. Indeed, they can be encouraged to become a "World Christian" by planning to pray for some part of the world each day. For example, they can pray for Africa or one of its countries on Monday; for Europe or one of its countries on Tuesday; for Asia or one of its countries on Wednesday; for South America or one of its countries on Thursday; and so on. Someone - perhaps the church secretary - should see that the folks have a copy of prayer letters as they come from various missionaries. The results of this ministry can be far-reaching. The church through the pastor ministers to the new converts.
prayerfully instructing and challenging them; and the new believers begin reaching out through prayer to missionaries and mission fields. Who can tell what the ultimate results of such a prayer ministry will be?

**Unsaved family and friends**

When one enters into the joy of his or her salvation, one of the first accompaniments is usually a concern for the salvation of loved ones and friends. I once visited a young wife and mother who had just come to faith in Christ. She had been thrown out of her home by a rough father when she was sixteen years of age. On this day, her expressions of thanksgiving for her salvation were blended with longings for her father's salvation. This is not uncommon, and it provides a fine opportunity to get that person started on a regular program of praying for the lost. Help them call to mind several for whose salvation they are concerned; help them make a list for daily prayer; encourage them to think carefully about what it is that, on the surface, seems to be keeping their loved one from the Lord so that they can pray intelligently, asking for the removal of the obstacle. The pastor can do much with the "little things." When he reads of an outstanding answer to prayer resulting in someone's salvation, clip it out and send it to the new convert for his encouragement.

**Folks in trouble**

Another object for a personal prayer ministry is intercession for those who are hurting. Our imaginary new converts might be asked whether they know anyone in trouble - family problems, a business about to go under, severe illness, etc. A warm response nearly always comes to this question. They then can be assured that they can minister to the hurting ones through prayer. A ministry which I have wanted to see developed but which I have not been able to "sell" to any congregation is this: Have a small group (perhaps only three) who you (the pastor) know to be mature, experienced and effective persons of prayer to whom you might go from time to time with a marital problem in the congregation. You would be assured of the absolute confidentiality of the matter. This action could well fulfill the spirit at least of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, bring healing to hurting marriage and honor to the Lord. I have never seen this worked out, not because there were not praying people available to make up the group, but because the troubled parties did not want their difficulty revealed to others.

In the dictionary that I use regularly the first definition of the word "ministry" is "the act of serving." The Christian life is a life of service to God, to fellow believers, and to all men within our sphere of influence. For our fellow believers and for our family and friends no higher service can be rendered than to pray for them regularly. As a writer of another day has said, "The greatest thing anyone can do for God and for man is to pray. It is not the only thing, but it is the chief thing" (S. D. Gordon). To pray earnestly, consistently and purposefully for another person is to render service of the very highest order. This may be done in the worship service of the church, at the specially appointed times of prayer, in small groups or in the privacy of one's own prayer closet. And with each experience of prayer ministry there will be growth in understanding of the apostles' request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1)

*Ivan French is retired after 52 years in Gospel ministry, including 20 years on the faculty of Grace Theological Seminary. He resides in Indiana with his wife, Arloeen. They have one daughter and three sons. Two of their sons are missionaries: one in South Africa and one in the Philippines. He is Pastor Emeritus of Pleasant View Bible Church.*

**Mixing Children, God's Word & Fun**

Mike Calhoun  
Vice President, Local Church Ministries  
Word of Life Fellowship
Can a children's program really change lives? Can it have a long-term impact lasting literally for years? Can it provide the foundation for teen and adult ministries in your church? A biblical program based on biblical principles can, because God's Word changes lives!

Children's ministry should be more than fun and games or a Christian babysitting service. Word of Life believes that children can learn, memorize and apply the Word of God. Teaching biblical principles to children and providing age-specific outlets for practical application creates a strong platform upon which to develop the child for God.

We believe that an effective children's ministry will have the proper balance of fun, games and biblical teaching, along with plenty of personal application. That is why we provide a six-year Bible Survey course with complete lesson plans for each leader. The Bible Studies, plus our Quiet Time daily devotionals, Scripture Memory Paks and Christian Service Manual, are all age specific and graphically dynamic.

Our curriculum is specifically designed for children of all ages, but we have divided the material based on the various ages and skill levels. Our Preschool Program is for ages 4-5; Challengers are grades 1-2; Conquerors are grades 3-4; and Champions round off our ministry to children in grades 5-6.

Our Quiet Time daily devotionals, Scripture Memory Paks and other curriculums are created with each age group in mind. For example, the Preschoolers will begin drawing and coloring pictures in their own personal Quiet Time booklet. As the children progress through the various age groups, they will see everything from "fill-in-the-blank", "connect-the-dots", to "word searches" and will complete the cycle with personal application questions and service opportunities.

By the time they reach fifth and sixth grades, the children are ready for a transitional program. These children do not quite identify with the younger children, but they are not necessarily ready for the teen ministry either. With the middle school movement that is so popular across our nation, this age group needs a program that can be connected to the children's ministry, but also serve as a stand-alone program, if necessary. These kids are at a critical stage in their development and need our discerning attention.

Our awards system is creative and exciting, and we have worked hard to keep it from being cumbersome or costly for churches of any size, not just those with large attendance. We have designed it with the children in mind, but with sensitivity to the local church and parents.

One area that sets Word of Life apart is our commitment to Leadership Training for local church leaders. Training local church leadership (one leader per six children) has been one of our basic tenets from the time of our inception. Our Area Missionary field staff members are "Children Consultants," committed to ministering to the youth leaders in your church. Helping each church effectively evangelize and disciple children is their passion.

Our current program is available for churches that hold to our same doctrinal position. Because of our commitment to the constant improvement of our products, our newly upgraded materials will be released in July 2003. The new enhancements will keep your church on the cutting edge of children's ministry, while insuring doctrinal distinction.

Let us help your church create the perfect children's program! If you would like more information about Word of Life Local Church Ministries for children or teens, please contact us at:

**Word of Life Local Church Ministries**
P.O. Box 600
Schroon Lake, NY 12870
Phone: 1-888-93CLUBS (2-5827)
One afternoon a young man came into my study to talk about becoming a missionary. A number of years earlier, he had spent a summer in South America on a student missions trip with our church young people. When he returned there was no evidence that the trip had impacted his interest in missions. Now he was entertaining the possibility of returning there as a missionary. Since his involvement in our local church missions program was nominal, I decided to pointedly ask him why he felt that the Lord wanted him to become a missionary. I was taken back by his answer. He stated that his present vocation did not afford him enough time as he would like to spend with his children. He had observed that the missionaries he visited had much more time with their families than he did and therefore becoming a missionary would enable him to do a better job raising his children. Needless to say, we did not pursue him as a viable missionary candidate from our church.

This may be an extreme example, but it does illustrate that many believe that vocational ministry is merely a matter of choice. This was reinforced for me while interviewing a young man for ordination. I asked if he found the ministry to be too demanding on his family, what would he do. His answer reflected the view that ministry is a matter of choice when he said, "I would seek to find another vocation that fit my talents." In fact, I have found that in recent years, the concept of a "call" to ministry with its life long commitment has fallen on hard times. Perhaps it is because we have spoken of the "call" in such mystical terms that require some punctiliar experience to validate its authenticity. Or perhaps it is because our faith has become so man centered that we have "put" ourselves in the ministry and can remove ourselves at will.

I do believe choice is involved in the concept of God's call. One has to choose to live in such a way that he can hear and respond to the call of God to ministry and at times to specific locations in which to exercise that ministry. This is based upon the biblical teaching that as a believer I have been purchased by the blood of Christ and therefore am no longer my own. I am subject to a sovereign Lord's approval in all areas of my life. I also believe that in saving me to serve Him he also specifically gifted me for service. Whether or not I am in vocational ministry or not, I am responsible to utilize my spiritual giftedness within the life of the church. The Bible gives ample reason to believe that the Lord sovereignly reaches into the affairs of men and designates certain of His servants to carry out specific ministries designed to fulfill His purposes for His church. Ministries like the pastor-teacher and evangelist mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 are good illustrations of this.

It is very obvious that God was very purposeful in calling the Apostles. In the case of Peter and Paul He even designated the people upon whom they should focus the conduct of their ministry. Luke records for us the message given to a concerned Ananias about Paul. "Go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and Kings and the children of Israel." Paul has an understanding of this and opens most of his epistles with reference to the fact that he is "called to be an Apostle" or is an Apostle by the will or commandment of God. He further communicates to Timothy that he knows that the Lord "put" him in the ministry despite his sordid history. He chooses to use a Greek word that means "to appoint or to place."

The biblical narrative employs the concept of sovereign design in describing the placement of certain individuals in particular offices and ministries. It records for us that the Lord specifically chose and anointed David to serve in the office of King. (II Samuel 7:8). Jeremiah 1:5 points out that Jeremiah was ordained a prophet before he was even conceived in his mother's womb. In commenting on the office of
High Priest, the writer of Hebrews states "no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Some will say that these circumstances were unusual and not the norm, yet the New Testament teaches us that in order for the church to function as God intended, these kind of appointments had to be made. Acts 14:23 records that men were "appointed as elders." In Titus 1:5 Paul writes "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city." Acts 20:28, where the terms overseer, elder and pastor are used interchangeably, notes that men are placed (made) in these offices and functions by the Holy Spirit. This seems to indicate cooperation in this process between God and men. The word translated "made" in this verse is the same word Paul used of himself when he said that the Lord had "put" him in the ministry.

I think it becomes evident that our God does place His hand on certain of His servants for specific ministry and function in the church whether it be as a missionary, pastor, teacher, elder, deacon or any other ministry that demands ones full life focus.

The question is often asked, "How can I be certain that I have been called of the Lord." God is finished with His audible communication and therefore it is senseless to look for some kind of voice or even visual sign. But God is still speaking to His servants. His mouthpiece is the Holy Spirit and His message is in His written Word. If one is to find a message from God in life's circumstances he must look beyond incidents and find out how his spiritual priorities fit the messages God has already revealed in His Word. As one consistently reads His Word he will find that ninety five per cent of God's will for him is clearly found in its instruction. When one's spiritual priorities are consistent with God's Word, the Holy Spirit moves to provide a burden and a pervasive inner desire for a particular ministry. Involvement in that sphere of ministry provides the resources needed for others to reinforce the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives. It is the law of two witnesses. Someone once said, "All I can be is willing, others must determine my worthiness." That is why men were "appointed or ordained" to ministries and missionaries are commissioned. The call of God is constituted by the witness of the Holy Spirit with ones inner spirit and the affirmation in ones life of others. It is the hunger and thirst to be involved in a particular ministry where ones gifts are utilized and ones training is maximized and the appointment of others to this responsibility.

The longer one functions within the framework of the calling of God the more assured one becomes of the sovereign hand of God in choosing both the ministry and the sphere where that ministry is exercised. Recently I was talking to a mission executive. He said, "I can't even envision spending my life doing anything other than I am doing." Another man in the room commented, "That is because God has called you to this ministry." That man had an understanding of the effects of the biblical "call of God." Without this understanding, ministry is simply a choice to be entered and left according to the circumstances that life dictates. With this understanding, one perseveres even when discouraged and disappointed with people, circumstances and unfulfilled expectations because he is confident that he has been called of God.

CHAPLAINS DIARY

One of the blessings your chaplains experience is encouragement from those they have been serving. The following email was received by Chaplain Paul Yoon, who is assigned to a Field Artillery Battalion in Schweinfurt, Germany. It is from 1LT David Young, who having left the Army has entered Grace Seminary with the desire to enter the Chaplaincy. This brief message to Chaplain Yoon illustrates the life changing impact possible through your military chaplains...

Ministry in Germany
CH (CPT) Paul Yoon, U.S. Army

Sir,

Just wanted to drop you a quick note to give you some encouragement. I have been in this unit for
almost 3 years and in that time you are the only chaplain that has had a positive impact on this unit and me personally. You have restored my hope in the chaplain corps and are a major factor in my decision to join. Your servant heart is abundantly obvious to me and the troops. You have shown me that a Chaplain with the right heart can make a difference. Although they may not realize it yet, you are a valuable asset to this staff and the battalion. The Lord has blessed you and your family and will continue to bless the First Lightning Battalion because of your spiritual leadership and intercession. Believe me, God is moving in the lives of soldiers in this battalion. I have experienced it first hand. Since you have been here I have had more troops approach me wanting to know more about God and most importantly about walking the Spirit-filled life than I have in my previous 2 1/2 years. I thank you so much for your obedience and loyalty to God. May He richly bless you as you serve.

In Christ,
Dave

Chaplain Steve Francis is your Protestant Chaplain at Centinela State Prison in California. He shares with us a snapshot of the work God is doing in the lives of inmates...

**Changed Lives in Prison**  
Chaplain Steve Francis, Centinela State Prison, California

I was called to go to the Infirmary to speak with an inmate that had attempted suicide by slicing his wrists. He had serious wounds on both wrists and was very discouraged. His mother had died while he was in prison and he had also lost an appeal. Noticing his despair someone recommended that he request a Bible and speak with a chaplain.

When an inmate is on "suicide watch" he is in a medical cell all by himself. The lights are on 24 hours a day and there is an officer assigned to him that sits in front of the cell and watches to ensure that he does not attempt to harm himself. He is only allowed slippers and his cotton boxers, a mattress and a single non-tear blanket. If I call on one of them I have to speak to them through the tray slot in the door. They are also not allowed to have any books.

When I entered the unit I saw that the officer assigned to the inmate was one that had recently been demoted from the rank of Sergeant. As a Sergeant he had been very disrespectful to me and had made comments about God and Christ that were offensive. As I approached the cell he greeted me very cordially and asked if I wanted to speak with his charge. He then opened the door and he and another officer stood and observed to make sure I was safe.

I spoke with the man for a few minutes and then asked about his spiritual background. He said that he really didn't have one. I then asked him if I could show him what the Bible said about getting into heaven. Just minutes later he prayed to trust in Christ.

As I left his cell the officer assigned to him asked me if he was now a Protestant. I said, "No, he is a new-born babe in Christ." He then said that is great and began to talk about his own spiritual journey. The loss of his position had greatly discouraged him and he sought help from God. The Sergeant who was his new supervisor is a devoted believer and they were having Bible study together during their shift. Praise God for His response to this man's cry for help.

In a Saturday service on B yard I showed the video Left Behind for those who had not seen it. Those that did not want to watch it again joined me for a Bible study on Romans 8:28f. One of the men was a two week old believer. Two weeks before he had approached me and explained that his dad was an Arab and embraced Islam. His mom (deceased) was Native American and had followed the spirits of her people. He said, "I am confused." I like confused people because they are often being drawn by the Spirit and are ripe for picking.
I did not have time to speak with him then but told him I would after chapel. The service went long and I couldn't meet with him. As I was leaving the prison I realized that we had not spoken. The following week he came into the office and I began by apologizing to him. He said "no problem." The following day, Sunday, he came to chapel and trusted in Christ as his Savior. He exclaimed, "It's like a big, heavy burden has been lifted off of my back."

Now he is in the regular Bible study. As with most new believers he has a lot of questions and some confusion, but now he says, "I now know that Jesus was not just a prophet but He is God." During a study session he shared a great blessing.

He had not spoken with his father for ten years. Previously, every time he spoke to his father they had fought bitterly. He had been following his deceased mother's Native American religion. Early this week he got a letter from his father's new wife. She sent him 50 envelopes and encouraged him to write and invited him to call.

On Friday he was authorized a 15 minute call on the phone. He was very nervous and when his stepmother answered the phone he was relieved. However she immediately said, "I'll get your father." When his father came on they were both guarded. His father asked if he was still following the "native ways," he responded that he had embraced Jesus Christ and was a Christian. His father said "good," because in his thinking, according to the Quran, Muslims, Jews and Christians are brothers because they all worship the same "Allah."

When he told his father that Jesus was God and not just a prophet his father started to argue. Then the man took his Sura (book with portions of the Quran) and read statements by Mohammed stating that the things Christ said of himself were true. After 15 minutes they were cut off but the father had told him to call back as soon as he could. As he hung up the man that had the next block of time told him that he was not going to use his time. They asked the officer in charge of the phones if he could use that time and he granted him the time. He called his father back and they resumed the conversation. Before the time was up the father said that he was almost persuaded and would study and pray about it. Pray for this young man and his father.

A young Jordanian/Palestinian who I will call "Y" trusted in Christ. He has been a great joy to have in the chapel. He is deeply hungry for the Word of God and is so enthusiastic it is infectious. It is marvelous what one believer can accomplish if it is done in faith.

Shortly after he trusted in Christ, Y led his father to a saving faith. His father lives in Southern California and is a Sheik in Jordan. He cannot return because he would be killed for renouncing Islam. Y then began diligently writing letters to family members in Jordan

Just prior to the terrorist attack in New York and Washington D.C. Y entered my office and said, "33 chaplain, the number is 33." I asked for some clarification and he explained that since he trusted in Christ 33 of his family members had trusted in Christ in Jordan after reading his letters. In addition, five family members in California had experienced the second birth. The next Tuesday the terrorists struck. Some of my first thoughts were of him and what this would mean to his family.

Since the attacks he has had a real burden for his family. One of his cousins in the US was beaten to death and his father and the family living in California had to move. The church they attended had been fired on because they offered services in Arabic and had an Arabic sign announcing it.

Last week he gave me a sheet of paper with the Arabic alphabet and an explanation of the origin of Islam and their alphabet. Without thinking I left it on my desk. Each of the chaplains share offices on each yard with one of the offices assigned to each chaplain. On Friday there was an Islamic Jumah service in the chapel where my office is located and one of the Muslim inmates saw the paper and decided that it was anti-Muslim.
The next day Y was surrounded by six Muslim inmates that told him he had disrespected Islam and Allah and they were there to do him harm. His response was to tell them that he would gladly die for the Lord and then shared the Gospel of Christ with them. They then left him alone. He is still under threat. He does not want to "roll himself up" (seek protective custody) and does not want the staff to protect him. He only asks for our prayers.

I have been working on reading through the Bible again and today I read the Lord's works when the Centurion came to him with a dying child. When the Lord said that He would go to his home the man said that it would not be necessary as the Lord could heal without going. The Lord's response was that he had not seen such faith among the children of Israel.

I and another chaplain had the privilege of sharing the gospel with this one man and now there are 38 more souls who have come to know Christ. His enthusiastic faith and spiritual hunger is so intense that many of the believers he comes into contact with feel convicted because of their spiritual laziness. I am humbled by this young man. Such faith…Please add Y to your prayer list. I am sure that I will be sending reports on him in the future.

Thank you for your interest and prayers.
Steve

*Please remember in prayer all of your Chaplains in the military services, law enforcement, firefighting, prisons and hospitals. If you would like to know more about how you can become a chaplain in one of these worlds of missionary ministry contact:
Rev. Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy
e-mail: chaplain@ifca.org*

**Let's Go Team!**

Miriam Lofquist

When I think of the ministry, I think of one word: **teamwork**. The ministry is done by a team of workers. Often these workers are husband and wife. The church is made up of those who are part of the team: the pastor and his wife, the elder(s) and his wife, the deacon(s) and his wife, and all the other volunteer leaders and their wives.

Although I am mainly addressing pastors' wives, these thoughts can also help to improve the entire team working in the church. Sadly I have seen many leaders' wives that consider it "his" job and have no part in helping on the team. I strongly think that a leader's wife should also realize her role: that of leading and mentoring others and being an example. Others are watching to see if she is a helpmate and if she is on the same team as her husband. If not, it hurts him because he is without a teammate. He is also a man in need of help but without a helpmate. It hurts the church because his wife is not stepping up and helping to train and lead other women "to love their husbands..." as Titus 2 commands.

Let me share some thoughts on ways God has called me to be a helpmate and teammate for my husband—no matter what his ministry.

**Pray for him:** I found that when I entered into prayer for my husband I began to see the heart of God for our ministry. One evening I was feeling unable to help my husband prepare for the next day's services. So I went to our bedroom and began to read the Word and pray the Word for him. My focus changed from my activities of the evening and the children to the ministry and how I could help by praying earnestly for the one God was going to speak through in the Sunday services.

**Respect him:** Let others know and see the respect that you have for your husband's position. Over the years I have had people ask me questions that should've been addressed to my husband. Although I could've given them an answer, I knew that my husband really needed to answer them (I might've said
something different not knowing the circumstances). I never wanted it to seem like I was running things in the church apart from any interaction with my husband, the pastor. I need to show respect for his pastoral position and hope my example will be followed.

**Trust his wisdom:** I must not expect nor require full knowledge and input regarding all that goes on between pastor and congregation. There are some things he just will not or should not tell me. If he does inform me about a situation, then I must be trusted to keep it confidential, not let it change my thoughts regarding that person, and most of all I must be sure to ask if the situation was resolved. In one of our ministries my husband talked with me about a situation between him and a congregation member. I then went from day to day thinking that this person was still causing trouble in the church, not knowing that they had talked and everything had been resolved. If your husband does want to share things with you, ask him to let you aware when all is determined to be at peace. You don't want to become bitter or resentful toward a person because of incomplete knowledge.

**Be his cheerleader:** Look for opportunities to cheer for your husband in ministry. One pastor's wife that stands out in my mind is just this kind of helpmate. She shows great joy in his very presence. As he speaks to others, there she is beside him with delight and interest, listening to all he shares. No husband is perfect but as a helpmate you are to show others how much you love him.

**Listen to him:** Sometimes there is confusion about this. The husband, as the leader in the church, starts to listen to his wife and do as she says. I knew of a pastor whose wife would read over his sermons on Saturdays and change them to suit her. We have a saying in our house, "let the boss be the boss". That isn't too popular with today's feminists, but we in the church are to listen to our husbands. If we don't, our example for other women will be tarnished and we will be demonstrating wrong actions and attitudes. Be open to the Holy Spirit teaching you through the ministry of your husband's preaching.

**Guard my tongue:** We all know how many times we say things we shouldn't and don't say things we should. When it comes to teamwork, my job as the wife of a church leader is to speak of him and his leadership in a positive way. I am not to be a "fire starter" or one that adds "fuel to the fire". If I show respect for my husband and speak only things that I would want him to hear, then others will not feel free to speak negatively about him to me. They will already know that I don't want to hear or talk about those kinds of things. Rather, I point them directly to him and suggest that they talk to him face to face.

**Be myself:** Early on in our ministry I decided that I would be like another pastor's wife. So I began to be very quiet, always agreeable, speak very softly and smiled a lot. It didn't take long for my husband to ask me if I was sick! When I told him what I was doing - he laughed and said that she is a wonderful match for her husband, but God gave me to complete him. Each team in ministry will be different. Each pastor's wife is different. Even as I write this I am reminded of a few examples of women who are excellent pastor's wives because they are excellent helpmates - yet they are all different. One lady likes to mingle with the people of her church. They are her joy in ministry. Another likes to listen and make her congregation feel like she has all day to hear all they have to say. Another loves to work side-by-side with her husband in ministry from sun up to sun down. They are all different and yet all have the same desire: to be a helpmate for their husband in ministry.

**Be flexible:** Ministry demands change. One day you may be required to do something you would rather not do. Then the next day you are asked to do a task you thoroughly enjoy. In teamwork, especially when you have young children, you may be required to sit on the sidelines. Though necessary, it is not always enjoyable. Many of the first ten years of our ministry in Utah were found with me in the nursery when I would much rather have heard the sermon and talked with the people. Most Wednesday nights for a few years I was the one who cared for the children during the evening Bible study in a home. I wanted to be upstairs with the adults and interacting with them, but God had me on the team to help so the ministry could grow from those who came with young children. Did I always have a great attitude? No. I even talked to my husband about it and complained. God had to change my heart. Eventually I saw
that this was also part of the ministry and I was missing out on being a blessing because of my attitude. This period of my life soon passed and others stepped in and helped with this responsibility allowing me to be in with the adults.

**Wait on the Lord:** There are many times that I have wanted to join my husband as he travels in ministry. But I have been needed to take care of the home front. In our ministry in Indiana there were three times that my husband went to visit churches in Ukraine and Russia. I so wanted to go with him, but at that time I had five children at home and the trips were two to three weeks long. So he went alone. I spoke about this once to one of our dear IFCA wives, Esther Camp, and she gave me some very good advice. She told me that the Lord knew when the right time would be for me to join Les on a trip to Russia. I must just wait on the Lord. So I took her words to heart and began to pray that God would show me His time. And He did. Only a few years later I was able to travel with Les to Russia and Ukraine. God knows what is best and when His time is right. On those occasions when I cannot go with Les, I am always encouraged when he tells me that he could not have gone and ministered there without my help back home. That makes me feel part of the team!

**Be zealous for the ministry:** How can you do this? Come early to church and talk to the people as they come. Listen to their hearts as they speak and learn about their lives. Wait around after church until all have gone and talk with your husband about the day's services and events. Encourage him when he needs it. Some pastor's wives I know don't even like going to church. Some come and ignore the people. Some don't listen, they only talk, and talk, and talk about themselves. When they are done with church, they fly out the door and go home. The husband is left to close up and go home alone.

There are many more ways to be a helpmate in ministry and to work as a team. Look around and observe your actions. See if you can't think up some other ways to help on this most important team. (I'd love for you to share with me what God shows you.)

Each day I continue to learn more ways to improve as a team player and helpmate. It is definitely a learning process that will continue through my entire life. Being on a team in ministry is a treasure. May God bless each of you as you work on being a team player and a helpmate to your husband in ministry. God will bless your desire to support your husband as you both minister for Him.