

Marching Along in March

At its latest Monthly Review meeting your Fanning the Flame team tackled the question of “How do we protect the Pastor’s time?” based on a message by Dr. Lynn Downing, which focused on Acts 6 and the need for the appointment of the Deacons so that the Apostles could focus on their primary mission which was (& still is) prayer and the study of the Word.

In the Acts 6 passage we see how the Apostles were drawn away from their first priority of preaching & prayer because not everyone was getting adequately served in a timely manner—disharmony threatened the early church. It was time to spread the ministry and appoint Deacons in order to free up the Apostles for their chief responsibilities. They weren’t above serving, but that wasn’t their chief calling.

What does this have to do with church revitalization? The short answer is that our Pastor, like those early Apostles, can be drawn away from his chief calling of prayer & study of the Word. This can be due to taking care of so many demanding situations, unrelated to his chief responsibility, that he may be unable to adequately prepare his sermons and devote himself to prayer on our behalf. Which would weaken the biblical message upon which the Church is founded. The proverbial “tyranny of the urgent” too easily gets thrust upon him and can thus draw him away from his chief purpose.

The question was raised: How is it that we have come to assume that the Pastor is on call 24/7 for everything? We are reminded that some pastoral duties get more emphasis than others and that our casual or urgent needs can distract our (& every) Pastor from his chief calling and key responsibility to the congregation, resulting in weakening his ministry and allowing Satan to not only distract but to disrupt the smooth working of the entire church.

This is where Deacons & church members come in. We can help as we recognize & activate our gifts. We need to recognize that our “emergencies” are often not true emergencies. The point was made that in God’s church, we function as a body, each member having & utilizing his/her own spiritual gifts so as to spare the Pastor having to take care of a multitude of matters unrelated to his calling. When we fail to work as a body, the church flounders.

Dr. Downing reminds us that the Pastor’s prayer & study time are his top priorities. He points out that the Pastor may spend pastoral time with us but he may also send others to do this for him. With respect to leadership development, he must follow the biblical pattern to help choose officer candidates, train & help them discover their giftedness, and finally based on those gifts, identify 4 or 5 priorities to focus on.

Finally, according to Dr. Downing, every church needs a commonly understood plan for members to pray for her Pastor & leaders. “*We have not because we ask not, when we do ask we ask amiss*” (James 4:2b-3a). We need to pray for our Pastor to be strong in the Word for our welfare, spiritual welfare, study/prayer time (most church members do not do this). The suggestion is made that we sign pledge cards to pray at some time during the day for the above things for our pastor & church leaders. Church revitalization is not realized without prayer for these things.

This message by Dr. Downing is available for you to listen to on the church website (as are many others that the Team has listened to—all highly recommended). You’ll need to check with Webwacker Randy Steinhoff to learn how you can access it for yourself.

March 19, 2017