

The Stops of a Pastor and Church

Part One

There are times that stopping is just as important as starting in our Christian life. Someone has said that the steps and the stops of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

(Psalm 37:23, 31) “The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”

Pastors are always looking to start something and sometimes after starting they wished that they hadn't, and then find it's hard to stop. Ministries, programs, methods, styles and a host of others things could have been started from a former pastor or church member that really doesn't work or is needed any longer. There is an old saying that it's easier to start something than it is to stop it.

We are all prone to get into poor or bad habits in all areas of life including our spiritual lives and ministries. If we are not careful these things can be a hindrance to us and our ministries. Things we do or don't do may not be sin but may not be the best for us or the church and its ministries. If we're honest some things have out lived there usefulness.

Many churches are doing the same things that they did for decades when their church and ministries were totally different. They are trying to hang on to the past without realizing the present, and have no vision for the future. Pastors have a hard time letting go of things that just aren't working, as they did years before. There is a time to evaluate what the pastor and church is doing to see if it's realistic to continue a certain ministry, program, or method of doing the present ministry of the church.

Dear pastor don't just exist in the ministry, enjoy the ministry where the Lord has placed you “he delighteth in his way”. Don't just do certain things in the church because it's the way they have always done them. Be a leader and visionary for the church where God has you to serve and don't feel guilty or fearful about stopping things that just aren't working for the ministry today. Stopping may be more important than starting something new. Some churches have started more than they can do and are not willing to stop any of them. Many pastors and people are wore out trying to make something work that doesn't work today in their present ministry, (if the horse is dead dismount).

In the next few weeks we want to look at some things that pastors can stop doing and it will be helpful for them as well as the church. Stopping could be a great change for both a pastor and the church if done with a right spirit and motive. Stop signs are a great help if we use them properly. The stops and the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

Bro. Mickey
SCM

The Stops of a Pastor and Church

Part Two

Stop trying to do everything yourself.

Exodus 18:17-18 “And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.”

A pastor will need to learn delegation and “stop” trying to do everything himself, if the church is to move forward. A one man operation can only do so much in the ministry and a church will be hindered and eventually hurt if that one man leaves or dies. We have seen many churches run by one man and then didn't know what to do after he was gone.

Many pastors are perfectionists with a touch of OCD that tends to make them overly controlling or micromanagers (been there/done that). Some rather do things themselves rather than let others try and not do what they would have done, or as good as they would have done it.

May I say this about small churches and by-vocational pastors, having very few to whom to look at getting things done in the church. I have been working with small churches for decades and been by-vocational for many of these years and in these churches. You may have to do many things in the church yourself at the beginning until God gives you more people to use and work in the church. But this should not continue for the life of the ministry as you are there. If you don't let others take responsibility and do things in the church they will always depend on you to do everything. Even in smaller churches the members should take on some type of responsibilities so that the pastor is not giving his time to the menial task of keeping everything going in the church.

Let's get back to some of the most important duties of the pastor which is prayer, studying, preaching, visiting and caring for the flock. Some pastors think that if they don't do it, it won't get done and maybe that's true, but we need to try and train and let others do the things that they can in the ministry and for the church. A pastor should not have to make sure that he gets to the church first to make sure that the temperature is set for the service and the doors unlocked for the members and visitors, and then make sure all is off and locked before he leaves. Some pastors spend hours mowing the grass and cleaning the church buildings while their members waste their time doing nothing. Some members are willing to let the pastor do everything if he doesn't ask them - (“ye have not because ye ask not”).

There are many things that I could mention but I think you get the idea that as a pastor and servant leader we should be willing to do anything, but also willing to train others to do what they can in the church. Learn to stop trying to do everything and become skilled at delegating the non essentials so you and the church can move forward together. It may surprise you that there are some members that would be glad to do something in the church to relieve you, so that you can do the main thing that God has called you to do for the church.

This is not an easy lesson to learn for the pastor or the members, but necessary for the health and growth of the church. May the Lord help you to have the willing help from the members that will encourage you as well as be a challenge to them. God bless and let someone else do it ____.

Bro. Mickey
SCM

The Stops of a Pastor and Church

Part Three

Let us stop a superior attitude which comes from pride and divides the brethren.

2 Cor. 6:17-18 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Romans 14:1-3 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

I know that separation is a hot topic in many groups (camps) of Independent Baptist, but there needs to be a balanced view on this debate among the brethren. I'm not trying to say what is right or wrong for individuals, churches or colleges. But the Bible is clear about the sin of pride, haughtiness and arrogance in our lives, our churches and schools which hinders God's grace to us. **James 4:6** But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

The Lord stands and opposes all pride no matter what form it may take in our personal and church life. It may have been R.A. Torrey that said "a church can be as straight as a gun barrel and just as empty" and in many of our churches that is the case today. Many have been so separated that they have become isolated from everyone else that aren't in perfect line with their ideas of personal preferences in certain standards. This forms what I would call "Super-Separatist Ideology" which has been given to some by a few prominent preachers, churches or colleges of the past or maybe also present, which has given their personal standard for everyone else to follow.

A "super-separatist ideology" that forms cliques and camps with pastors and churches have been the downfall of many good pastors, families, churches, schools and colleges. It has caused untold problems and hurt in relationships that only needed more love, forgiveness and understanding from each other. A super-separatist attitude has hurt the missionaries who have been serving for decades and those who are now trying to raise support today for their mission field. There is a balanced view of separation from the scriptures that leads to a holy life of the believer, with a heart of humility and love for others. There is going to be a whole lot of surprises in heaven of what we thought were a strong stand in separation and personal standards that was really our own personal preferences.

Sure the Bible does call us to be separate from certain things and people, but it's not saying to cut off and isolate ourselves from everyone that has just a little different point of view on nonessentials of which is not "true" Biblical doctrine. Even in our separation we are to show love, respect, and compassion with a heart of humility for the Lord and others. We need to learn how to be truly separate from sin and sinful practices but accepting and loving the sinner whom the Lord gave His life so that they may be saved. May we lay aside this "super-separatist" attitude that causes us to be lifted up with pride, which may be the downfall of many churches.

By the way I do practice Biblical separation, but just can't seem to please everyone's personal preferences. We try not to be a stumbling block to others and show them Biblical love any way.

Bro. Mickey
SCM

The Stops of a Pastor and Church

Part Four

Let's stop Pulpit Plagiarism that contributes to church Paralyzation. (2Tim.2:15)

I really want to be a help to pastors and churches here with a subject that can be really sensitive to those whom it may affect and may even offend some, but that is not my intention. Most everyone knows, even the secular world that plagiarism is wrong, but with the men of God that preach to God's people it should be very much *guarded against*. For those who may be plagiarizing ignorantly, may this be a help in understanding what they are doing and how to correct it. For those who are doing it knowingly, may the Holy Spirit use this to convict and bring a repentant heart to confess what they're doing and correct this dependency. This practice not only grieves the heart of God, but is not healthy for the church or the pastor.

Pla'gia-rize - To steal or purloin from the writings of another; to appropriate without due acknowledgment (the ideas or expressions of another).

Webster's 1913 Unabridged English Dictionary.

In the current access of so much material online, pastors are subject to getting into a bad habit of just copying sermons and preaching them as their own without due acknowledgement from the original author. In the proper use of other sermons for getting insight and help to inspire one's sermon is one thing, but to get all your sermons (series) and preach them as your own that is plagiarism and that's a sin. As with anything there should be balance, therefore a pastor should inform himself of what is and is not plagiarism.

Some churches are in "paralyzation" which means that they are not going anywhere in their ministries and almost no spiritual growth of the members. The Holy Spirit will not bless lying, deception, manipulation and stealing which is plagiarism and plagiarizing is causing churches to be destroyed or be rendered ineffective. Without the power and energy of the Holy Spirit in our churches we are in a paralyzed mode, doing everything in the flesh.

Par'a-ly-za'tion - The act or process of paralyzing, or the state of being paralyzed.

Par'a-lyze - Fig.: To unnerve; to destroy or impair the energy of; to render ineffective;

Webster's 1913 Unabridged English Dictionary.

If God has called a man to preach, then He has called him to take time to study and this is something that every pastor will have to decide for himself with the Lord. Many pastors are by-vocational and are strapped for time to study but God can help you set some priorities and be balanced in sermon preparation. For the fulltime pastor it may be managing your time and priorities in a way that a good portion of time is for sermon preparation. For the multi-staff pastor there should be no excuse, maybe a total rearranging of everyone on staff is needed to make sure that the pastor has his quality time to study. Studying is not online sermon searching.

If one is caught up in plagiarism as a continual way of getting all his sermons, just know that the Lord wants to use you and would rather you look to Him for His message each week to preach to His people. Maybe one should read more on sermon structure, (homiletics), priorities and time management. May the Lord use this to challenge and encourage pastors to use what God gave them to serve His church and not solely depend on another preachers sermons.

Below are some sites that will help in understanding plagiarism and its effects in the church as well as the pastor. Note I don't endorse nor agree with everything on these sites – please be mature enough discerning the good and leave the rest. (Churchleaders.com / Just what is pulpit plagiarism) (Christianitytoday.com / Preaching, Plagiarism and Sermon Central by Ed Stetzer May 21, 2008) (Sermoncentral.com / 5 Leaders Examine Plagiarism in Preaching)

Bro. Mickey – SCM

The Stops of a Pastor and Church

Part Five

Stop listening and believing satan's lies and instead, know, believe and live the truth.

John 8:44 "the devil... He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Psalms 63:11 "the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped."

Proverbs 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Satan is all about lying and he doesn't care what lie is told, to whom it is told or where it is told, just so long that someone listens and believes him. There are literally thousands of lies bombarding us each day in our thoughts, coming from the world and the flesh which satan uses to instigate and insinuate into our lives daily. This is why we are to put on the whole armor of God daily starting with the girdle of truth and renounce all the lies of the enemy for that day. Here are some lies that he gives to pastors and churches;

- We can't build a church here – truth is Jesus will build His church; all we have to do is follow His building instructions and trust Him for the results. (Matt.16:18)
- I don't know if I can continue in the ministry – truth is you can with the strength of the Lord and your dependency on Him. (Phil.4:13 / 2Cor.3:5)
- I can't stay here because of what is happening – truth is you stay as long as God's will gives you grace to stay. (2Tim.2:3,10 / 2Tim.4:5 / 1Peter2:19)
- Why keep doing all of this if there's no fruit – truth is its God's work and the results are His if we are doing our part. (Gal.6:9 / 1Peter2:15)
- Our church is getting to liberal or is staying to legalistic – truth is there are all kinds of stages of maturity from which each one sees things in a different light as they grow in Christ. (2Peter3:18 / Rom.14) Note please let the Bible be our guide and not our pet peeves.
- Our church is not as loving as it should – truth is that each church is as loving as they want to be and can increase in their love for the Lord and each other. (Eph.4:16 / 1Thes.3:12)
- I could be a better pastor if I were in a different church – truth is God can help you be the best pastor where you're at if it's His will for you to be there. (Jer.3:15 / Eph.11)
- My ministry and family life is conflicting and I can't seem to please both – truth is you don't have to choose it's already been chosen for you. (Eph.5:21-33 / 1Tim.3:1-7) Note as one puts God first (Matt.5:33) everything and everyone will be put into proper place in our lives.
- I have so much to do but I can't meet everyone's demands or expectations – truth is that we are accountable unto God first and He doesn't put more upon us than we can handle. (Pro.3:5-6) Sometimes we ourselves and others put unrealistic expectations upon ourselves.
- No one cares or understands how I feel – truth is Jesus knows, cares and understands how we are feeling. (Heb.4:15 / 1Peter5:7 / Phil.4:6-7) By the way others do care, we care!
- I'm afraid of falling and failing in the ministry and everyone will forsake me – truth is no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes, but God will not forsake you and really true Christian friends won't either. (Heb.10:5 / Pro.17:17 / Pro.18:24)

Many times pastors and church members are being misled by satan's lies about each other in which he tries to cause conflict and mistrust. Just don't believe everything that comes into your mind as truth, test it against God's word and true facts. Remember to put on the whole armor of God each day and stand against the lie's of satan, the world and the flesh. May the Lord bless you and that's the truth!

Bro. Mickey

SCM

The Stops of a Pastor and Church

Part Six

Let's stop performance based works that lead to frustration and disobedience in the church. A proper balance of the motivation of God's love and grace will produce the right kind of works. Then believers can have a right attitude of the joy of "getting" to serve the Lord instead of "having" to serve Him. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still"- Dale Carnegie, the same can be said about church members. Only God can change the heart.

(Philippians 2:12-13) Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

(1 Thessalonians 2:13) For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

(Ephesians 1:6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

I learned a long time ago that I can't do or try to be good enough to make myself pleasing or accepted by God. This was already done in Christ Jesus by His grace and now I'm accepted in Christ no matter my performance. When we see what Jesus has done for our acceptance unto God then we can serve Christ out of love for what He has done. And not in order to obtain His acceptance by any works. I'm not saying that we don't work and serve the Lord but change the way we are doing it with the right attitude of not trying to serve to be accepted, but rather getting to serve because we are accepted in Christ. Don't mistake performance with responsibility.

This is an unsaid attitude but yet still true for many pastors and church members which is; that what one does or doesn't do determines their acceptance by the pastor or church. This is what performance based love and works is and has hurt many people and ministries countless times. This is not excuses for allowing sin in the church but rather loving and accepting people even though they might sin and show repentance—"love covers a multitude of sin". People need to know that they are accepted not only by the Lord but by His pastors and church; many just need to know that they are accepted, before they can grow in their Christian life to see their acceptance of both the Lord and the church. Jesus changes us as we look unto Him and His love and grace toward us- "the love of Christ constraineth us" (1Thess1:3).

The key is to help believes to see what and who they are in Christ that they may see God's grace and mercy that He have given them, so that in return they are willing and thankful to work and serve Him out of a heart love. Many believers just need to know and grow in the Lord that they are accepted by Him and the church, which will lead to serving Lord and the church more out of delight than duty.

This should not be taken as a license to sin- (Rom. 6:1-2) or do things that would be a stumbling block for others- (Rom.14:13 / 1Cor.8:9) but rather a motivation of love for Christ to do what is right because one is accepted in Christ. We should be willing to obey God not out of a heart of dread but of love and acceptance. Let's help people grow and learn that they "get" serve the Lord by grace and not "have" to serve him by law- (our own man made many times). God bless!

Bro. Mickey - SCM