**BMi SALTS COURSE**

**Pastoral Care**

Any attempt at pastoral care without a sound theological foundation is bound to fail in its prime objective - to train effective subjects for the kingdom of God. *“The art of pastoral work involves dedicated ministry to believers in which theologically correct concepts are applied to the conduct of congregational and individual living.”* Jay Adams, The Pastoral Life, Bk 1, p.3.

**Pastoral Theology**

The idea of pastoring is uniquely Christian and is drawn from the shepherd role of our Lord. Psalm 80:1 calls Him the *Shepherd of Israel,* and ultimately the one who gives His life for the sheep. Psalm 23 could be rendered, *The Lord is my Pastor*, and it could be well contended that a major role of the pastor is to teach the flock to make the Lord their Pastor. In that process the pastor stands in the gap and makes provision, such as we find in Psalm 23.

Concern for individual sheep—Jesus calls them by name John 10:3

Rest—he knows what we can handle and protects us.

Provision—provides our daily sustenance.

Refreshment and encouragement—when we are tired, worn and discouraged.

Guidance and leadership—leads us in the way we should go.

Instruction, training and discipline—trains us in the righteousness ways of God.

Provision for goals and motivation—for His name’s sake.

Security and protection—the sovereign protector.

Personal fellowship and loving friendship—God’s presence with us.

As the church developed, the role of the leader of the church became known as the pastor. The function or role of the pastor is presented to us in Ephesians 4:11-16. He performs one of the five ministries needed in the church to bring it to maturity. The role of the pastor and teacher are linked, which is to say that there is a distinction between teaching and pastoring. From the apostles presentations we see there is the closest possible relationship between the shepherd, elder, overseer and bishop.

**Expectations**

The cost of pastoring is high:

* We are taking ground from the enemy who will resist vigorously.
* We are dealing with people often in the area of their emotions, which means it can easily be volatile.
* It is time consuming and often for no obvious result.
* It is mentally and emotionally tiring.
* Often requires separation from loved ones, Luke 18:29-30; Mark 10:29-30.
* Tends to be a seven day a week, 24 hour a day job.

The understanding of the flock is important; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7 and 17; James 3:1.

**Qualifications for Ministry**

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

To place a person who does not fill the criteria is to court problems as character development will not match the demands of the position. The ministry is for men who have been gifted by God and have learned to use those gifts for the work of shepherding.

There must be an unmistakable **call of God** to the role as pastor.

There should be adequate **educational preparation**—an inadequate educational preparation can render the person embarrassed. God expects us to develop our mental capacity for His use.

The minister should be physically healthy. Whilst the ministry may not require heavy lifting, etc. long hours, emotionally draining meetings and constant public exposure will take a severe toll on a minister who is not healthy physically.

Emotional maturity and stability is vital as uncontrolled outbursts can ruin any ministry. One must be in control of emotions and be able to withstand significant emotional pressure.

**Factors in Developing Ministry**

**Devotional Life:** In addition to preparation for ministry the pastor needs to spend time in the Bible as well as quality time in prayer. This time should primarily be for fellowship with God.

**Evangelism:** Paul wrote to Timothy: “Do the work of an evangelist.” 2 Timothy 4:5. The pastor sets the practical example to the people as an evangelist, although he should not attempt to do the congregations work of evangelism as it is the sheep who beget sheep.

**Cultivate mind:** Time needs to be set aside to develop the mind in the ways of the Lord outside of his regular pastoral duties.

* Set aside time each day for self-directed, self disciplined study.
* Take formal courses of study.
* Teach regularly.
* Keep in touch with world events

**Poise and Manners:** Try to be aware of annoying habits and get rid of them. Develop an understanding of manners, e.g. standing when a lady enters the room, taking off hat when entering a building. Ensure an understanding of table manners, personal hygiene, etc. Falling short in these areas does cause offence, limiting our effectiveness.

**Family and Social Life**

**Family Life:** This is an imperative for all in ministry, 1 Timothy 3:4-5. A pastor’s family is his most powerful testimony. Failure to manage ones house is an automatic excluder from ministry; if a man cannot manage his house how could he manage the church? There has been much written about family; what should and should not be done, and each family will function differently depending on the personalities of the parents, but in the final analysis it is the fruit in the lives of the family members that counts.

**Social Life:** It is important to cultivate friendships, particularly with those with whom you can share. We need people around us we can trust and be able to share our life experiences with. We need to hear a different perspective to help keep us on track. Some more gregarious people have a greater need for friendship, whilst others are quite happy in their own company.

The pastor’s home needs to be open for Christian fellowship at the table. Ministers must be “given to hospitality.” Titus 1:8. Fellowship over a meal provides opportunity for useful discussion and ministry.

Visiting ministry is an important aspect of a minister’s hospitality that requires careful planning and attention.

* Picking up the guest at the airport;
* Taken to lodgings; at pastor’s home or motel. Allow time for him to refresh and rest before a meeting. Make sure food and drink are available in his room as required.
* Meals - find out if he has any preferences or has a particular diet. If he visits several homes for meals ensure the hosts understand his requests and that they do not force too much food on the man.
* Ensure the speaker has free time alone to attend to personal needs, prayer and study.
* Ensure the speaker gets adequate sleep; don’t keep him up talking late and then expect him to be up early in the morning.
* Honoraria should be decided and prepared beforehand and handed to the speaker before he leaves. The church should enquire about travel costs and ensure these are covered in addition to any honoraria.

**Time Factor**

The pastor is responsible for the use of his time. Significant self discipline is necessary to ensure proper use of time. Poor use of time is a major contributor in many failures and breakdowns in the ministry. We all have 24 hours each day - it is how we use it that matters. We have time for the will of God for our lives, so the issue is in identifying the things we do that are not part of His plan for our lives. A disorderly life will lead to disorderly service for the Lord and His people.

**Visitation**

The value of visiting in the life of a Christian or non-Christian is significant in terms of drawing them into fellowship with the Lord and, importantly, the church.

**1. Prioritize time for visitation**

If you fail to plan, you’re not likely to visit. Some chance encounters can have an impact, but intentionally scheduling blocks of time allows you to target who you should visit and to organize a systematic approach.

**2. Visit by appointment**

Demonstrate the value you place on time both for yourself and those you visit by establishing an advance schedule. Although some people welcome “drop-in” guests at any moment, most prefer notice. Also, when a person knows that you will visit, the Holy Spirit can prepare their mind for a spiritual discussion.

**3. Keep it short!**

Like sermons, pastoral visits need not be everlasting to make eternal impact. Jesus’ interaction with people demonstrates how much can be accomplished in short encounters.

**4. Don’t visit alone**

For your own protection, especially when visiting someone of the opposite sex, always take a visitation partner. “Two-by-two” is Jesus plan. Request a mature member to serve as your visitation partner. If you enter a home unaccompanied, your reputation is at risk from what someone might say happened. False accusations are nearly impossible when two go together.

**5. Find assistance**

You cannot and should not do all the parish visitation yourself. Recruit lay elders to specific responsibility for visitation. Train elders by having them accompany you and then empower them to find their own visitation partners and to accept responsibility for nurturing an assigned group of congregants plus potential members.

**6. Expand your staff**

Teach your members that a visit from their assigned elder constitutes a pastoral visit. Provide each elder with your own business cards and ask them to begin each visit as your delegated representative, an extension of your pastoral care. “Pastor asked me to visit and pray with you.”

**7. Go with an “apparent agenda”**

Give a Bible tract, encouraging booklet, church bulletin, or study guide to each person. This establishes that your visit is intentional, not casual, and immediately focuses the conversation on spiritual matters. Your elders should begin each visit by presenting your card and the “apparent agenda” gift. “Pastor requested that I bring you this tract.”

**8. State your specific purpose**

After setting a spiritual framework with your “apparent agenda,” move directly to your specific reason for coming by asking an open-ended question which cannot be answered by “yes” or “no.” For example, “How do you feel about your relationship with God at this time in your life?” or “What have you observed in our church that encourages your faith or causes challenges for you?”

**9. Ask questions for specific needs**

To an inactive or non-attending member: “How can your church better serve your needs?” To those who should be involved in church activities: “What areas of service for Christ would interest you if you received training to accomplish the task?” To those who have influence in the community: “Who could you introduce to me so that I might invite them to our church services?” To those who know a lot of people: “What special events could you help us design and implement to which you would invite your friends?”

**10. Meet special needs**

For those who are grieving: “Please tell me the story of your loved one’s impact on your own life.” To those who are sick, “How can I pray for you to assure you of God’s love, forgiveness, and promises?” To the elderly: “Tell me how God has led you and what provides you assurance of His value for you personally?” To parents: “What would you like me to pray for concerning your children?” To volunteers or leaders: “I want to praise God in appreciation for the contribution you make to His cause.”

**11. Respect confidentiality**

Never gossip about information you receive. However, never promise confidentiality to those who victimize others with physical, emotional, sexual violence and abuse. In fact, in most jurisdictions clergy are legally required to report any knowledge or suspicion of sexual violation of children or teens. Never fail to follow your professional, ethical, moral, and legal responsibility to protect the innocent from predators.

**12. Enjoy social events**

Every person needs to relax and enjoy festive occasions such as parties, weddings, luncheons, and birthday or anniversary celebrations where you will likely meet new and interesting individuals. Pleasant conversation can be followed with your business card or a brief note of encouragement as an excellent way to initiate a new relationship. Remain observant for those who would welcome the opportunity to visit with you further.

These Visitation notes taken from the *Ministry* magazine.

**Practical aspects of visitation**

Pray God’s blessing on the house before going to the door. Under normal circumstances present a happy presence. Use a few sentences as ice-breakers; the garden is looking good, I like the new carpet; type comments.

Wait until invited before sitting down.

If there is no special issue ask some thought provokers relating to spouse, family, marriage, school, work the church and the person’s relationship with Christ. Such questions will usually draw out some issue of importance.

It is a good idea to read from the Bible, preferably from their own Bible.

When preparing to leave you may ask; I am going to pray before I go, is there anything you would like me to pray about?

On subsequent visits ask what has happened in issues discussed previously.

**Hints**

Take care that you are not kept on the run with unnecessary house calls - learn to say, no!

Make sure your calls don’t become just a social visit—you need to give direction to what happens during the house call.

Take care not to be caught up in gossip. If people are talking about another person, remind that if this were to continue you would need to go and see this person and, of course, reveal the source of the report.

Whilst visitation is an important aspect of the pastoral ministry the more important aspects are participation in corporate worship and fellowship.

**Visiting the Sick**

This is an important ministry as the scriptures testify; Matthew 25:26; James 5; Zechariah 10:2-3;11:15-16; Ezekiel 34:4. This is closely linked to the ministry of mercy, but is far more than taking a greeting to a sick person. Rather taking the authority of God’s word to them in healing and restoration. The pastor should teach his people the principle of James 5, that people should call for the elders - they should exercise their faith in obedience to the word of God.