

Article to Kingsway Ministries

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Man's Mission or God's vision: The face of the church today

With the new church dispensation in the book of Acts, when the Holy Spirit was poured out onto the 120 people in the upper room, they started to congregate from house to house. Preaching the Word of God to all that were willing to listen. In Acts 2 Peter, through the fire of the Holy Ghost, converted 3000 people in one sermon. The congregants grew in number and needed attention. In Act 6 people already felt neglected by the disciples. The twelve disciples called the disciples together to choose seven who should maintain and manage the tables and the distribution of the food, while the twelve continued to devote themselves to prayer and the ministering of the Word. They had a vision from God to maintain the gospel of our Lord.

Have congregants today lost the vision to maintain the gospel of God?

The picture within the church structures have changed drastically. In many churches today the elders (congregation board members) are reluctant to do their functions as they should and lay the failures within the church at the feet of the Pastor. Not-with-standing that if the church board does not function as they should, the pastor is reluctant to ensure everything is done.

Now the pastor must wear different caps everyday such as, being the visionary leader, ensure that new members are visited, hospital visits are maintained, ensure the administration of the church is up to date, ensure the finances is up to date, etc. Over and above this the pastor must maintain the quality of life with his family.

This may then ensure that man's mission become more important than God's vision!

Do not quench [subdue or be unresponsive to the working and guidance of] the [Holy] Spirit.

1 Thes 5:19

When the pastor is more focused on man's mission than God's vision, he will not be able to assist congregation members who needs help. When congregation members are not attended to, they become less transparent with their problems and traumas, and keep it to themselves. This may directly influence the member's relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When the pastor is not aware of the traumas and problems in his congregation, he cannot attend to it or adjust his sermons to accommodate the nature of the problems the people experience.

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The congregation members may try to resolve their problems or traumas on their own which may result that they may obtain the wrong assistance to solve their problem. Should the congregation members problems or traumas remain to be stressful they may start to struggle with their faith. This may lead them to believe that God does not hear when they are praying or alternatively, they may leave the congregation because they feel no one cares.

This inability of the congregation members to conceptualize the stress of the pastor may eventually have a direct influence on the pastor when he sees member numbers are declining and he does not know why.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (KJV)

Acts 20:28

Due to the focus that shifted from God's vision to man's mission, the pastor's attention is on the ministry to ensure it does not fail. When the pastor realizes that the congregation member numbers are declining, it may put him in a state of distress, which may become harmful to his body if he does not seek help.

The term stress is derived from physics and can be defined as the application of an appropriate force to an object to ensure its movement is distorted. This definition conceptualizes the fact that any form of stress comes from outside the object or organism. The human body, when placed under stress, responds in either fight or flight. This transaction is now taking place between the body and the environment. Therefore, the focus that has impeded the belief system will make the brain interpret what has occurred and tell the body how to respond.

This response will activate the adrenal glands to release adrenaline into the bloodstream.

- Blood diverts from various organs to the brain and muscles,
- The pupils in the eyes dilate, which will make the person's vision more acute,
- Breathing and the heart rate increase, and,
- The body will be on red alert to respond to the impediment.

Although pastors may not be subjected to dangerous situations, they are driven by tight programs, or schedules, which will put a demand of expectation on their thinking (i.e., I am not going to meet the congregation's expectation). This demand on the brain and body will cause the pastor to react similarly to being in a dangerous situation.

Dr. P Rosch, president of the American Institute of Stress, notes,

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“The type A male (50% of all pastors are type A male) who live in the fast lane has become addicted to his adrenalin and unconsciously seeks ways to get those little surges.”

This is the alarm stage, which is stage one of stress.

“Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God.” (AMP)

Philippians 4:6

Due to the alarm stage, pastors may experience Vicarious Trauma (VT):

- Decreased energy level,
- A Feeling of failure in their vocation,
- They may feel they have failed the congregation member,
- Reduced sense of reward in return for pouring so much of oneself into the ministry,
- Cynicism and negativism about oneself, others, work, and the world in general,

The alarm stage may cause the pastor to experience personal and health issues that can interfere with his professional competency. As a result, many pastors need help now, or will in the future, as they navigate the troubled waters, it may cause them to make poor decisions in their judgment. The impact of VT on the psyche of the pastors may cause their belief systems to change, influence their reality, impact their professional life, it may even cause them to withdraw from society, friends, and family, or it may even cause substance abuse.

The impact may further exacerbate due to the feeling of emotional isolation, guilt, or shame which may cause them to doubt their abilities and faith. Pastor's may experience in their cognitive a loss of hope, become pessimistic, experience general rejection of established social conventions and beliefs especially of morality and religion, become cynical, they may question their competence and self-worth, experience low vocation satisfaction, challenge their safety, trust, self-esteem, intimacy, control, and may even feel an excessive sense of personal threats or vulnerability.

The emotional and cognitive turmoil may allow the pastor to experience an impact on his relationship at home. Emotional breakdown is what satan want the congregation leaders to experience. The emotional breakdown will put a demand of expectation on the pastor and his family, which may cause PTSD and fear for the future.

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When the pastor's quality of life deteriorates, his focus is not God-orientated but performance orientated.

Whatever takes your freedom away will trigger fear in you!

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (KJV).

1 John 4:18

“Fear causes God's vision to be lost because man's mission is to survive.”



Blessings

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