

**IDENTIFYING, EVALUATING, PREPARING, AND AUTHORIZING MEN FOR
ORDAINABLE LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY**

RW 827 DOCTOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES MAJOR WRITING PROJECT

Submitted to the Faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

at Trinity College of the Bible and Trinity Theological Seminary

By

William Miller Hill

Newburgh, Indiana

June 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

Identifying, Evaluating, Preparing, and Authorizing Men for Ordainable Local Church Ministry

William Miller Hill

Read and Approved by:

Chair

© Copyright 2017 William Miller Hill

All Rights Reserved. Trinity College of the Bible and Trinity Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation and instruction.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
VITA	vi
CHAPTER 1: PLACING MEN INTO BIBLICAL MINISTRY: DOES GOD CONTINUE TO USE THE SAME PLACEMENT METHOD TODAY?	1
CHAPTER 2: EVALUATING VARIOUS POSITIONS ON HOW MEN ARE PLACED INTO VOCATIONAL MINISTRY	32
Point One: Imbalanced or Incomplete Understanding Position	32
The Activity of Preaching Being Independent from the Office of Pastor	32
Confusing Gifts with Qualifications	34
Failing to Distinguish Between Old Testament and New Testament Methods	36
Attributing a Man’s Gifting by God to the Prayers of Family Members	45
Point Two: Misusing and Abusing Scripture	45
Use Scripture for God’s Intended Purpose	48
Interpret Scripture Accurately and Use Scripture Properly	58
Point Three: The Mystical/Experiential Position	62
Touchy/Feely Terminology	62
Continuing Revelation to Some	70
Experience being Instructive, Understandable, Authoritative, and Binding	71
Point Four: The Bibliocentric Position	78
Calling	78
Local Church Authority and Accountability	82

Qualifications for the Office	90
Gifts for the Office – He is gifted and is also a gift to the Church	92
Desire for the Office	94
Conclusion	97
CHAPTER 3: ESTABLISHING THE CRITERIA NECESSARY TO DISCUSS “THE CALL” WITH THEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY, BIBLICAL ACCURACY, AND PRACTICAL CLARITY	98
Words Matter	98
Guidelines for Biblical Understanding and Profitable Discussion	122
Questions that Must Be Answered	141
Conclusion	153
CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING MEN FOR THE ORDAINABLE OFFICE OF BIBLICAL MINISTRY	154
Recognizing the Paradigm Shift and Accompanying Authority	154
The Desire for the Pastoral Office	162
The Qualifications for the Pastoral Office	167
The Giftedness for the Pastoral Office	171
Conclusion	178
CHAPTER 5: PREPARING AND AUTHORIZING MEN FOR THE ORDAINABLE OFFICE OF BIBLICAL MINISTRY	180
What Is the Biblical Context for Preparation?	180
What Is the Biblical Method for Preparation Process?	193
Now that Preparation Is Under Way, by What Necessary Authority Does He Function in an Office of the Church?	199

Conclusion	220
APPENDIX A	227
APPENDIX B	229
APPENDIX C	233
BIBLIOGRAPHY	234

ABSTRACT

IDENTIFYING, EVALUATING, PREPARING, AND AUTHORIZING MEN FOR ORDAINABLE LOCAL CHURCH MINISTRY

William Miller Hill, DRS
Trinity College of the Bible and Trinity Theological Seminary
Chair: Dr. James Chatham

Keywords: Calling, Call to Ministry, Ministry Calling, Equipping for Ministry, Ministry Preparation, Shepherding, Pastoral Gifts, Pastoral Qualifications, Pastoral Desire, Ordination, Ordained, Local Church Leadership, Elder, Authorized, Authorization for Ministry, Local Church

How does God place men in vocational ministry today? Is it the same procedure he utilized in the Old Testament and early New Testament? If not, how has it changed?

Historically, God directly and audibly called and, by that calling, authorized and personally placed in ministry. Is that same method viable today? Is the term “call” or process of “calling” theologically legitimate to describe the means whereby men are qualified and placed in ministry today? If not, how are gifted, qualified men identified, prepared, and authorized for ministry?

A clear, distinct, and vital paradigm shift occurred in the early New Testament. Up until this time the call of God was direct, spontaneous, and subjective. Rather than direct, it has now become indirect (through the local church). Rather than spontaneous, it is a deliberate and extended process. Rather than a subjective audible voice, the local church has an objective record (the Word of God) for evaluating giftedness, qualification, and desire.

The local church is God's means for engaging men in ministry. She is the caretaker of this monumental process and responsibility. Though God is no less involved today than before, the locus of delegated authority to carry out this process has been assigned to the local church.

When did this paradigm shift take place? Is recognizing this paradigm shift important? If so, how important is it? Now that a shift has been made, what does the process of identifying, preparing, and authorizing men to vocational ministry look like today?

The research will answer these questions and many other related questions. The research will show clearly when and how this paradigm shift took place. It will demonstrate how the subjective nature of the call has been replaced by the objective, slower, and intentional process of preparation and ordination. The research paper also will provide a practical program for the local church to follow in fulfilling her responsibility to identify, evaluate, prepare, and authorize men to biblical office ministry.

VITA

WILLIAM MILLER HILL

PERSONAL

Birthplace: Pinehurst, N.C., United States of America, 1954

EDUCATION

B.A. Bob Jones University, 1976

M.A. Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary, 1998

CERTIFICATES AND LICENSES

Ordination, 1976

License to Preach, 1972

EMPLOYMENT

Director: Equipping Nationals Worldwide, 2005-present

Sr. Pastor, Bethany Baptist Church, 1987-2005

Assistant Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1984-1987

MEMBERSHIPS

Church Membership: Grace Bible Fellowship

International Counseling Organization: Association of Certified Biblical Counselors

PUBLICATIONS

Shepherding a Child's Heart Study Guide

Election and Evangelism: Pursuing Balance and Biblical Clarity

CHAPTER 1:

PLACING MEN INTO BIBLICAL MINISTRY: DOES GOD CONTINUE TO USE THE SAME PLACEMENT METHOD TODAY?

Is God still “calling” men into ministry today? If so, how does He do that? Is there a clear answer to this question?

Is the term “call” an accurate or viable term to use today? Has it contextually and historically served its purpose and outlived its usefulness only to be replaced by another method? If so, what is that method?

How important is it for the church of Jesus Christ to recognize clearly who is to serve the church in the role of pastor, elder, bishop, shepherd, and/or evangelist? How important is it for those leaders to be gifted biblically for, qualified for, and desire that office for the right reasons? What are those gifts and qualifications, and how does the church go about identifying and evaluating the men possibly possessing them?

If the term “call” is no longer biblically legitimate to describe God’s placement of men in ministry today, what is the current method and how is it described? Where is that method displayed in the New Testament? If God’s ways and means have changed, how and when did that happen? Where is this procedure adjustment seen in the New Testament?

Can someone simply say, “I am called to preach” and, upon that profession, be accepted without question, as a pastor in the church of Jesus Christ? After all, if he is “called” by God, why should that “call” need to be validated or verified? The Apostle Paul was “called” by God. Abraham, Moses, and Gideon are just a few of the many other men who were “called” by God.

Are men occupying the office of pastor today who should not? Are men not occupying the office of pastor today who should be?

These questions merely represent the myriad of questions surrounding the issue of how God, through the centuries, has placed men in His designated and ordained offices. This issue has many implications of whether the office is an Old Testament prophet, priest, or king, or whether the office under discussion is the New Testament pastor, teacher, elder, or evangelist.

The *method* is the **initial aspect** to be considered when discussing how God places men in ministry today. In considering method, since God actively has been putting men in ministry in both the Old and New Testaments, the right approach to Scripture must be taken. One of the issues making this point so crucial is the fact that many, many people (pastors included) look at the Old and New Testaments the same way with no consideration for progressive revelation, an open or closed canon, and the like. How one approaches the Word of God requires proper hermeneutics. Specific principles of interpretation must be used. Why is it important for one's approach to Scripture to be governed by a set of consistent principles of study? Scripture spans 1500 years and involves forty writers. Cultures differ. People groups differ. God's methods of communicating differ. All these, and many more, considerations must be factored in when interpreting various parts of Scripture.

Many people, as sincere as they may be, reason "if God called Abraham, then why can He not call me the same way?" They may be thinking, "What makes Abraham special in that he received a direct 'call' from God? If it was good enough for Abraham then it is good enough for me. After all, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If this method was utilized in the Old Testament, why can it not still be utilized in the New Testament?"

This seemingly simplistic view fails to consider hermeneutics at all. It fails to consider progressive revelation. It fails to understand the "call" of Abraham, as well as the call of every other man through the apostle Paul, was part of God's intentional methodology prior to the

closing of the canon of Scripture. God did “call,” God did speak, and God did communicate in visions and dreams for centuries. Nevertheless, when the canon of Scripture closed, God’s voice was not heard anymore. He no longer “called” or spoke to people as He had before. He had revealed Himself through His self-disclosure—His Word. That was complete, so the need for audible, direct, or verbal communication was no longer necessary. His message was complete. His declaration was final. Through His full and final revelation, He comprehensively has given His people everything they need for “all of life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:2, 3).¹

It is difficult to imagine anyone giving serious consideration to an individual claiming anything like the following: “God came into my office Thursday morning and told me He wanted me to leave my job, move to another state, and look for the church He has prepared for me.” This is how God engaged Abraham, though.

One may claim, “I was on the road last Tuesday afternoon, and a huge flash of light blinded me, knocked me off the road, and put me in a ditch. While I was in that ditch, I heard God’s voice tell me to turn around and go a different direction. I am changing your life’s journey drastically.” However, God got Saul’s attention this way.

Another may state, “I was in bed one night and suddenly woke up, hearing a voice as clear as any I have ever heard. It said for me to carry a message to a man, and that message was going to be a challenge for him to accept.” However, God spoke to Samuel using this method.

These illustrations represent God’s method of “calling” men down through the centuries. If the preceding samples must be tossed out as illegitimate, then using the term “call” today must be as well because Scripture used it exactly like this until the canon was closed.

¹ All Scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

The principle of hermeneutics obviously ignored by this mystical approach is, indeed, the revelation of God is complete, final, and comprehensive. Jude makes it clear “the faith” has “once for all been delivered” to God’s people (Jude 3).

In his New Testament Commentary on 2 Peter and Jude, John MacArthur speaks of this crucial text in Jude:

“In referring to **the faith**, Jude is not speaking of a nebulous body of religious doctrines. Rather, **the faith** constitutes the Christian faith, the faith of the gospel, God’s objective truth (i.e., everything pertaining to **our common salvation**). It is what Luke wrote about in Acts 2:42, noting that the early believers “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (cf. I Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Thess. 3:6). Paul admonished Timothy to protect that faith: “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (II Tim. 1:13-14; cf. I Tim. 6:19-20).

Jude further defines **the faith** in succinct, specific terms as that **which was once for all handed down to the saints**. *Happax (once for all)* refers to something that is accomplished or completed one time, with lasting results and no need of repetition. Through the Holy Spirit, God revealed the Christian faith (cf. Rom. 16:26; 2 Tim. 3:16) to the apostles and their associates in the first century. Their New Testament writings, in conjunction with the Old Testament Scriptures, make up the “true knowledge” of Jesus Christ, and are all that believers need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The authors of the New Testament did not discover the truths of the Christian faith through mystical religious experiences. Rather God, with finality and certainty, delivered His complete body of revelation in Scripture. Any system that claims new revelation or new doctrine must be disregarded as false (Rev. 22:18-19). God’s Word is all-sufficient; it is all that believers need as they contend for the faith and oppose apostasy within the church.”²

The failure on the part of men desiring ministry, as well as men already in positions of church leadership, to view Scripture through this one hermeneutic principle (to conclude where God has concluded) has created great confusion regarding who should and should not be in ministry. It fails to recognize God’s objective Word as the means today for identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men for ministry. It leaves men searching for some type of

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Peter & Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 156.

subjective notion, some sort of mystical indication, some sort of inner voice speaking, or some sort of feeling of peace to confirm a “call” to ministry.

This confusion reveals itself as churches attempt to function today, now that the Word of God is complete, as if God continues to speak directly, verbally, and personally to men as He did up until the canon was closed. Many still are trying to determine if they should be in ministry by a method God employed prior to the completion of Scripture—when He still communicated directly and verbally with men.

This confusion is illustrated practically in the following testimony from a young man with ministry ambitions who was confused initially regarding how he should go about entering the ministry. This man is now the pastor of a strong church and continues to identify, evaluate, train, and ordain other men in ministry:

Nearly a decade ago I was confronted with the Scripture’s truth in a very unusual way. I was attending school at a big university enrolled in their Bible program. Many professors and pastors in the fields of discipline required for the program had taught me. As I was studying, listening and learning I became perplexed by a certain phrase I had heard repeatedly. I thought I knew what it was; I had even professed to be actively pursuing this expression. This phrase is “The call”. I had lectures, question and answer sessions, group panel discussions and personal guidance as resources to my thinking. With all of those resources and even Bible verses sprinkled in to punctuate the points I had heard, I was still unsettled in the matter.

I began attending a Church in Brevard, NC while still working through school. After about six weeks in attendance, I knew this was a place where our family could grow. I began to get involved where I could. This led to becoming closer friends with Pastor Bill Hill. He began to invite me to talk with him after services. He began to invite me to lectures he was teaching in the area’s colleges. We began conversations about almost everything that had to do with ministry. He could see my desire for ministry. Along the way the subject of “the call” came up. I shared with him the things I had heard and the confusion that remained as I still searched for answers. He saw I was genuine in my inquiries. He also saw an opportunity to challenge me with the truth.

Pastor Hill began to ask me a few questions concerning my desire for the work of the ministry. I remember a basic question he asked me “What are the offices of the Church”. This was easy for a theology student, “The Evangelist, the Pastor and the Deacon” I answered. “Correct,” was his reply. I had just received the first installment of truth that would set me free. Up to this time in all the lessons, lectures and literature I had read told me that “the call to preach” would come to a man and this call would sustain

him the rest of his life to accomplish all God wanted him to do. I had heard, “if you’re not called, you’ll not stay”.

Additionally, the training and schooling I received in this area was largely drawn from the Old Testament model of God actually speaking to a prophet and telling him his new job was to speak for God. Pastor Hill would challenge me to look at every instance in the New Testament where the word call or calling or called was used. I did so. He would challenge me to find one person “called” after the Apostle Paul. I took the challenge and found none. Many successive blows were dealt to my thinking in this area. I had no substantial evidence to stand on in the Biblical New Testament Church history.

Being “called to preach” has to be part of my testimony, I thought, for it is what God has done and is doing in my life. Thinking that preaching was the essential substance of all ministry, this had to mean a person is “called” into the occupation. Realizing at last that The Church of Jesus Christ has three offices smashed the walls of man-built systems. If any “calling” was going on it would be to an office, not just a function of an office. The function of preaching is one responsibility among many the pastor bears. So if I’m not “called to preach”, what am I? I had to find a Biblical reason for this disparity between what I had been taught and the new information I was being challenged to face. Later the Biblical reason would emerge. I did not understand The Church of Jesus Christ well enough to discern the synthetic teaching I had been supplied on “the call”. I do believe anyone who taught me in this area had good intentions and right motives to want to see a young man develop maturity in his understanding. I do not believe there was ever any intentional misleading or misguidance involved.

These conversations happened over a period of time, until after services one Sunday evening while traveling home, I revealed to my wife that I did not think that I was called to preach. Throwing water on a fire would not get a faster response. “What do you mean, how can you say, why are you...”. So would go the line of questioning as we began to learn together the precious truths from the Scripture. We had several hours of conversation that night. I had learned it gradually; she learned by deep and instant immersion.

This learning process would produce a completely new set of questions. “Can you be called to be a deacon, a missionary, a house wife, a steel mill worker? Is God calling men to be Christian radio show producers and is God calling men to be college presidents? Content that I do not have to answer all these types of questions, I pursued what we do know. Pastor Hill guided me to consider how men entered the ministry beginning with Timothy. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother, involved in his church family, developed a desire for the ministry, seen by the Church as gifted, trained by Paul and ordained by the Church for ministry.

The pattern of New Testament ministry was being established. Paul wrote to Timothy stating the desire for the office of a Bishop was a good thing. Then immediately following is a list of standards for the office. The Church is to use the standards to evaluate a person who raises his hand with a desire for the office. This came as a great relief to me personally. I no longer had to claim the “call”. I simply would submit to the scrutiny and evaluation of the Church. If their evaluation led them to believe I was gifted and qualified, then they could take the action to ordain me. Here was the process for official authorization for ministry and it did not originate in my call, but an objective, scriptural evaluation by the Church. According to Ephesians 4:11, 12, God gifts the

Church with men who are gifted to lead the Church in its responsibilities to God. The Church is able to recognize the gifted men God has gifted to the Church.

Now having submitted to the process, I am more sure of God's ways and work in my life than ever before. I am more confident, having been examined by 200 people, that God has gifted me for ministry and He has fulfilled my desire for the office of a bishop.

Authorization for ministry is inherent in this understanding. Many wonder if certain men should be preaching and teaching in the church. The simple answer is some should not. However, if you confront their theology and question their giftedness, you are thundered at from Mt. Carmel. This applies across the spectrum of so-called Christian ministry.

When I share these principles from the Scripture, I am usually branded a heretic, a rebel, a seditious cultist or any number of other sanctimonious judgments pronounced on me. I simply have been set free of the bondage of "the call". I live in good conscience (not seared) to this day having taught and expounded this teaching to others. Some that I have warned have later returned to me and asked forgiveness for the mean-spirited disagreements and others have returned in sorrow having made "preachers" out of a "called" young person, only to see them leave the ministry in shame and ruin. One may ask, "Are you called into the ministry"? My answer is easy, "I am ordained and authorized to do Biblical ministry."

Certainly, I have a lot to learn. Certainly, I do not have the corner market on the understanding in this area. I know that my thinking has been accurately taught and my understanding challenged by the Word of God. I am open to correction and admonition. But, I refuse to accept unbiblical, man-made systems of thought as the normal practice for the Church of the Living God.³

The term "call" is legitimate to use when kept within the historical context of Scripture, but oftentimes it is used simply because it always has been used. It seldom is challenged or examined theologically as to when and how God used it. It rarely is questioned as to what it implies when used out of its historical context. Many preachers using the term to challenge young men at altar calls seemingly do not really understand nor do they explain what they mean by using the term. It is assumed everybody understands all about it. This failure leads to much confusion.

How was the term "call" used in the New Testament? Two words are translated *called*, *calling*, or *calleth* as translated in the King James Version.

³ Mike Faidley, e-mail message to author, September 2008.

The first word being, “**called (2564)**,”⁴ and MacArthur notes, “The Greek word is *kaleo* and means ‘to call, invite; of the divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption.’”⁵The second word being, “**calling (2821)**,”⁶ and MacArthur notes, “The Greek word is *klesis* and means ‘to call, a calling, condition or employment.’”⁷

Klesis and *kaleo* are both used in Ephesians 4:1. The condition, employment, or vocation to which Paul clearly is referring is that of “full-time Christian living.” It is not a career such as a mechanic or plumber at some Christian organization. It is not a “call” to go somewhere as a preacher. It is the call of God by the Holy Spirit through His Word to come to Christ and be converted. When you are called to Christ, you are called to an employment, a position, a vocation—that being salvation.

Acts 13:2 and Acts 16:10 are the only two places where this term *proskaleo* (4341) is used to put men in the ministry. The term comes from *pros* (4314) meaning “to” and *kaleo* (2564) meaning “to call.” The reason for commenting about these two passages is to emphasize this term, for a time, was still being used to put men in the ministry; but, some facts must be kept in mind.

⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 811. All noted Strong’s Concordance numbers are from Spiros Zodhiates’ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*.

⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Peter & Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 925.

⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 868.

⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Peter & Jude* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 928.

First, the book of Acts is a transitional book. God’s methods are changing. Second, the Apostle Paul is a transitional figure. He is the last man to experience this phenomenon—a direct call from God. Third, verbal messages, visions, and the like, are still in operation at this time because the canon of Scripture (special revelation) is not complete. Fourth, at this point in history, this use of the term “call” is still very legitimate. God still is speaking verbally and audibly.

In 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, the English word “called” is used several times. MacArthur comments, concerning this passage: “in the Epistles, being called by God (cf. V.17) always refers to an effectual call to salvation.”⁸ Therefore, God’s methodology began to change with Paul. The apostolic period was ending. The canon was closing. God’s method of identifying men and engaging them in ministry was beginning to change and shift.

After Paul, the term “call” is never used again to describe how a pastor/teacher, bishop, elder, evangelist/church planter, or deacon is selected, prepared, qualified, equipped, or dispatched to do ministry. This point is a crucial truth and must impact how the term “call” is used today. The question is not, “Does God still gift, equip, and place men in ministry?” Absolutely, He does. Rather, the pertinent question must be, “How does He place men in the ministry?” What method does he use now?

Can one truly be honest theologically and exegetically and not acknowledge the distinct shift in methodology after Paul? It is too obvious to be ignored. One cannot keep using the term “call” the way God did in the Old Testament and early New Testament without creating confusion in the church, and particularly, with young men who may have a sincere 1 Timothy

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 171.

3:1 desire for ministry. According to the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration, words do matter. God's choice to stop using a word He used for thousands of years to describe a method of engaging men in the ministry does matter.

Since the term "call" seems to conjure up ideas of something attacking a person from outside or welling up from within, many describe "the call" with emotional and experiential terms (for example: I perceived God's call. I felt called. I sensed a call, etc.). The following are some questions that must be asked when speaking of "the call" in subjective terms. Some of them have no real answer but are asked to reveal the utter difficulty and, in some cases, impossibility of legitimizing the use of this term.

What does "a call" feel like? If someone refuses to use the Bible specifically as a grid through which to think, how can anyone know what is being communicated, let alone properly interpret a feeling accurately? It cannot be submitted to the test of Scripture.

How can one particular feeling be proven to be from God and another feeling of the same kind be rejected as not from God? For example, how can one distinguish between a "call feeling," and the feeling from an unexpected salary raise or from winning a state championship game? What tests determine differences in subjective experiences?

How would one teach that method of "feeling a call" to someone else? What God wants His people to know should be taught and communicated to others easily.

Does Scripture ever teach or even imply something can be determined by a feeling? No. Feelings are never to be decision-makers. Feelings are always responders to thoughts and actions. To determine something as serious as pursuing the ministry merely by some sort of feeling is very dangerous. This is especially true when Scripture clearly teaches that our bodies

(where feelings happen) are still cursed by sin. A feeling of any kind is not dependable because it cannot be interpreted accurately or tested by Scripture.

The **second aspect** regarding men placed in vocational ministry is *qualifications*. Who is qualified to fill the biblical office? How is this determined? By what set of characteristics, by what criteria is this determination made?

Does the “I am called” take precedence over any and every attempt to evaluate the character, gifts, or preparedness of someone? Does a person’s claim to have been “called” by God eliminate any responsibility by the local church? The clear answer to these questions is no. Now that the canon is closed and the church has a complete and comprehensive revelation from God, she has all she needs for the task of identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men to vocational ministry.

A quick, panoramic sweep of the church epistles gives the following terms describing the man who qualifies for and fills the office of pastor/elder/bishop. Following is a simple list of those terms and the texts out of which they are drawn. The announcement “I am called” cannot ignore or become a substitute for any of these. The local church must determine. She has the resource, privilege, and responsibility to do so.

This man is qualified – 1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9

This man is gifted – Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10

This man is authorized – Acts 13:1-3; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6

This man is furnished thoroughly – 2 Timothy 3:15-17

This man is a student – 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:15

This man is a steward – 1 Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:7a

This man is an example – 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3

This man is male – 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Timothy 3:1,4a

This man is an authoritative mouth-piece for God – Titus 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:11

This man is a shepherd; a feeder of the sheep – Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2

This man is a shepherd; a protector of the sheep – John 10:10-13; Acts 20:28-30;
Hebrews 13:17

This man is a bishop – 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2

This man is an elder – 1 Timothy 5:17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1

This man is a teacher – Ephesians 4:11; Colossians 4:4; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 4:11

This man is a preacher – 2 Timothy 4:1-2

This man is a counselor – Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14

This man is a mentor of men – Acts 20:18, 31; 2 Timothy 2:2

This man is disciplined – 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:3-4, 16; Titus 3:9

Another similar list of descriptive phrases regarding this man and the office he potentially will fill establishes what God requires of and holds this man accountable to do. It is not merely about who he is but also about what he is tasked to do. If a man possesses the characteristics listed above, a biblical job description is also given. This man does not decide what he does as a shepherd; God makes that determination. The local church must make that clear and equip him to function as God intends. God holds this man accountable:

To speak and not keep silent – Titus 2:1,15; 2 Timothy 4:1,2

To handle God's word accurately – 2 Timothy 2:15

To be present truth clearly – Colossians 4:3,4

To be bold and courageous – Ephesians 6:19,20

To prepare diligently – 1 Timothy 5:17

To serve passionately – Colossians 1:28,29

To teach others to live by the truth they hear – Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 3:16

To teach with authority – Titus 2:15

To make Scripture the basis of all preaching – 2 Timothy 4:2a

To pay close attention to himself and his doctrine – 1 Timothy 4:16

To feed his sheep – Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2

To equip the saints for ministry service – Ephesians 4:11,12

To care for the souls of His people – 1 Thessalonians 2:7,8; Hebrews 13:17

This partial list of shepherd duties, like the list of pastoral character qualities, cannot be neglected, ignored, or be substituted with the announcement “I am called.” Both lists establish unmistakably the entrance into pastoral office is not simply a matter of experiencing a euphoric feeling and interpreting that experience as a validation or authoritative call.

Three more extensive passages directly address this issue. The first passage is Ephesians 4:8-16 which discusses the gifts given to the church when Christ, the Head of the church, ascended back to heaven after his earthly mission was fulfilled. This short list of gifts includes the pastor/teacher and the evangelist. These are both operative gifts today. The question, however, is who possesses these gifts? How is this determined? Who is responsible to identify, evaluate, and make this determination? It is important to understand these gifts are not chosen by man for himself; they are granted sovereignly by God to men He chooses for these offices. These gifts, in the form of gifted men, are gifts to the church. Someone attempting to shepherd a church without these gifts will lack not only what is required to lead a church but also will do much damage to that assembly. One who does not possess pastoral gifts cannot do the work of a pastor

effectively. A person cannot acquire these gifts volitionally; they are granted, again, sovereignly by God to the men He chooses for this office.

The second and third passages are 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 which lay out the essential characteristics required for this office. Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely make some valuable observations about these characteristics in *Life in the Father's House: A Member's Guide to the Local Church*:

Although every member of the body of Christ is commanded to be a godly example that leads others to grow in Christ, the men of the church are especially commissioned to serve others in this way. Being an example is such an integral part of effective leading and teaching (1 Peter 5:3; 2 Thess. 3:6-7) that those roles cannot be fulfilled effectively without it. Also, husbands are called by God to relate to their wives in a way that typifies the Great Example, Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:25-27).

First Timothy 3:2-13 and Titus 1:6-9 contain lists of character traits that are true of a godly man. The primary purpose of those lists is to identify which men may serve in the church offices of elder and deacon, but a secondary purpose is to challenge every man in the church to cultivate those traits in his life. We know that because Paul encourages any man who desires the church offices (1 Tim. 3:1,13). Moreover, none of the qualifications in the lists is too high for any man to attain through God's gracious enabling. Actually, the characteristics listed are simply those which should be true of every Christian man (in some growing degree), and Paul is saying that we should not appoint to leadership anyone who lacks one or more of them.⁹

In his book, *The Message of the New Testament; Promises Kept*, Mark Dever contributes,

In chapter 3, Paul sets down qualifications for overseers (elders) and deacons. This helps us know what kind of people should serve in each capacity. He gives instructions for how these leaders should conduct themselves within both the church family and their own families, as well as how they should relate to the wider world. Overseers, or elders, should be irreproachable in their observable conduct. They should have exemplary marriages and family lives. And they should be temperate in all things, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not violent or quarrelsome or greedy, not recent converts, and well-respected by those outside the church (3:2-7).

Deacons too should be blameless, exemplary in their family lives, temperate in everything, not greedy but respectable, not given to lying but to honestly holding the deep truths of the faith (3:8-13).

⁹ Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely, *Life in the Father's House: A Member's Guide to the Local Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, December 1, 2006), 77.

This is an impressive catalogue of virtues. The false teachers in the Ephesians church clearly were not living up to such standards. Their lives probably gave evidence of the falseness of their doctrine. But the virtues Paul lists here are necessary for those who shepherd the church of God as elders, and for those who serve God's church as deacons.

In chapter 1, you may recall, Paul talked about God graciously including in the church people who have done terrible things, like murdering fathers and mothers. Then, here in chapter 3 he gives this list of virtues necessary for church leaders. Murderers and lawbreakers and such are the kind of people the gospel comes *to*, but the gospel does not leave us unchanged. It works in our hearts by God's Holy Spirit and changes us! Leaders within the church should be individuals whose lives are particularly marked by a gospel-produced and Holy Spirit-given godliness and others-centeredness.¹⁰

First Timothy 3:1 also must be considered regarding qualifications. Paul says "desire" is a qualification. What is this desire? How should it be evaluated? Again, who is responsible to evaluate? Certainly, the individual must examine himself to determine whether this desire is legitimate. What does he really desire and for what reasons? The church, however, must do her part to evaluate this desire as well, asking the same type questions.

A variety of renderings of 1 Timothy 3:1a helps one understand Paul's emphasis. The following translations are from *The New Testament From 26 Translations*:

"If any man aspires to the office of overseer" – The New American Standard Bible: New Testament

"If anyone longs for the office of bishop" – The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (John Broadus et al)

"If anyone for oversight is eager" – The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation (J. B. Rotherham)

"When a man aspires to be a Presiding Officer in the Church" – The Twentieth Century New Testament¹¹

¹⁰ Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2005), 350.

¹¹ Curtis Vaughan, ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 967.

According to Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, *desire* means "to reach or stretch out" and "is used only in the middle voice, signifying the mental effort of stretching oneself out for a thing, of longing after it, with stress upon the object desired."¹²

Spiros Zodhiates, in the *Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, defines *desire* as "literally, to stretch out especially with the hands, to snatch. In the NT, only in the mid. *Oreghomai*, to stretch oneself, reach after something, and hence metaphorically meaning to covet, long after, desire, try to gain, be ambitious."¹³

In the *MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version*, MacArthur says the following about 1 Timothy 3:1a:

aspires...desires. Two different Greek words are used. The first means "to reach out after." It describes external action, not internal motive. The second means "a strong passion," and refers to an inward desire. Taken together, these two words aptly describe the type of man who belongs in the ministry – one who outwardly pursues it because he is driven by a strong internal desire.¹⁴

It is obvious this desire is not some whimsical, loose, thoughtless impulse that easily comes and goes depending on the day or time of day. It is a focused ambition. It is a strong, almost insatiable yearning, so to speak. This must be evaluated properly and determined to be what God intended it to be or the church runs the risk of men with a desire of this nature focused on anything but the welfare of the church. That would be disastrous, to say the least. Sadly, men with this type of desire are in many churches. They express that desire by pursuing personal,

¹² W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 1 (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 298.

¹³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 1056.

¹⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 1816.

selfish gain and by using God's people rather than serving them. Again, proper examination of this desire cannot be overstated.

The **third aspect** that must be considered is: once men have been identified and evaluated as possessing the proper and biblical desire, gifts, and qualifications for ministry, *who then is responsible to teach, instruct, train, mentor, equip, and otherwise influence and impact them for pastoral ministry?* How is pastoral ministry passed on to the next generation? In what context should this training take place? To whom has the Lord of the church delegated the privilege, responsibility, and authority to prepare the next generation of shepherds? This question must be answered.

In the researcher's experience, parachurch institutions, such as Bible colleges and seminaries, tend to utilize anyone with, what seems to be, a broad knowledge of the Bible. These men also have demonstrated high academic achievement throughout their training in that particular institution. They can present, with a certain amount of confidence, academic truth from the Bible and thus are appointed to be a member of the pastoral training department. They intentionally are assigned a schedule of classes to train the next generation of shepherds attending that particular institution. Does Scripture affirm this model? Is the key qualification merely to be biblically educated, academically sharp, and willing to teach? Is Bible knowledge alone the issue? Does someone who can study well, maneuver through a text, compose an exam, stay organized in the classroom, and disciplined in the grading process meet the necessary, valued qualifications to mentor the next generation of shepherds? Make no mistake, all the above are certainly characteristics to be desired and developed, but does the possession of them alone qualify one to train pastors? Is the parachurch institution the context where this training should be done?

On the other hand, is there a specific, narrow, limited, spiritually gifted, and biblically qualified group, who can and must invest in the next generation? Has God, through His own providence, plan, and model, equipped a group who is responsible and accountable to train the next generation? If so, who is this group and where does Scripture specify this?

It is interesting non-Christians involved in certain job or career disciplines seem to understand the non-negotiable principle of mentoring and being mentored by those practiced and experienced in that same discipline. The Church of Jesus Christ, on the other hand—vested with the responsibility to identify, evaluate, and train the single most important office/officer for the growth, maturity, sanctification (both personal and cooperate) and development of His institution—often does not?

For example, those serving in the medical field never would consider allowing an individual to become a medical doctor without a huge amount of practical experience, implementing over and over what he or she was taught in the classroom—moving through clinical scenarios, serving in various apprenticeships, serving under another or several other observant doctors.

He would be extremely unqualified to be a doctor if his training was limited to sitting in a classroom day after day listening to instructors who, themselves, never had practiced diagnosing diseases, stitching up wounds, giving shots, treating ailments, resetting broken bones, etc. What could the student learn from a teacher who was woefully inexperienced at the very thing he was teaching? Who would go knowingly to a doctor like that?

The field of medicine seems to understand it. The field of dentistry seems to understand it. The field of law seems to understand it. The field of cosmetology seems to understand it.

No one is willing to go to a dentist who never has practiced dentistry. Merely sitting in a classroom, passing exams with superior grades on the technicalities of how teeth grow, knowing how an overbite effects the rest of a person's dental growth, or knowing what nerve must be hit with the needle to numb a certain area does not qualify one to practice dentistry.

No one takes a car to a mechanic whose training was limited to sitting in a classroom but never has gotten his fingernails dirty changing a tire, water pump, or set of breaks. These illustrations could go on and on with a hair stylist, a florist, a butcher, and many others.

The church must answer the question—to whom has she turned over her young men for training? To whom has the church abdicated her privilege and responsibility to equip the men who will tend the future flocks of God? To whom has the church relinquished the very mandate to perpetuate this process? The man who never has been evaluated carefully, authorized ecclesiastically, and engaged intentionally and passionately in the pastoral task is unqualified to either explain or exemplify that roll.

It makes no difference if he sits in many classrooms. It makes no difference he reads and reports on countless books. It makes no difference if he listens to numerous messages on Sermonaudio.com. It makes no difference if he earns multiple academic degrees. It makes no difference if he receives honorary degrees from multiple institutions of higher learning. These kinds of intellectual pursuits and honors do not qualify him to train the shepherds of God's flocks adequately.

Pastors are responsible to train other pastors. Pastors train pastors in the context of pastoral ministry. Men rigorously vetted by the biblical standards briefly discussed under the last concern are qualified to train.

It must be noted further, the man who never has wrestled through the theological and practical issues of a sticky divorce situation, felt the weight of shepherding his church leaders and his congregation through a heart-breaking discipline process, counseled a family with rebellious kids, a violent, angry, and stubborn husband, or a rebellious, disrespectful, or adulterous wife, is ill-equipped to equip others. The man who never has stood in the trenches with his people through difficult times, loved them when they did not love back, studied and labored to the point of exhaustion (1Timothy 5:17) until he understood the text and the Holy Spirit's purpose in it, preached the truth he labored to dig out of the Bible when some did not want to hear it, or humbled himself and sought forgiveness from God and the appropriate people when he himself sinned, is ill-equipped to equip others.

The man who never has stepped out from behind his pulpit, rolled up his sleeves, and gotten his hands dirty in the messy lives of a congregation of sinful people is ill-equipped to equip others to do so. A college professor with impressive academic degrees who never has left his classroom lectern, and personally and strategically mentored men by investing himself in their development, is lacking the skill set to equip the next generation of shepherds. The man who does not know how to identify other gifted, qualified men, understand and function by the principles of true biblical leadership within a local congregation, and train those men to do the same, is less than qualified to equip others to be leaders.

The man who has not sacrificed his time, energy, and treasure to train other men to be godly husbands and fathers and has not invested his time and energy to fight off and protect a congregation from the wolves of theological error is lacking woefully in his preparation to help men to shepherd congregations effectively. The man who never has practiced the pastoral gifts of oversight in the efficient and consistent organization and administration of a local congregation,

evaluated the condition and needs of a flock of people and as a result planned and executed preaching series, Bible study topics, personal counseling sessions, or special training times to target those needs, again, would seem to be deficient to prepare someone else to do so adequately.

The point is not that a pastor mentoring other pastors must go personally through some ridged, legalistic, formularized checklist of experiences established by some ecclesiastical hierarchy. The point is, however, a man yearns for the position and opportunity (1 Timothy 3:1), is qualified truly by proper ecclesiastical (local church) evaluation (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), is recognized to be gifted by God (Ephesians 4:11), is prepared theologically (Acts 16:1-3), is authorized/ordained ecclesiastically (Acts 13:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), and is engaged passionately and experienced practically in pastoral ministry (Colossians 1:28, 29) to equip others properly to do the same. Any method or attempt at equipping where the men with pastoral gifts are left out clearly bypasses the biblical model (2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 16:1-3; Acts 20:17ff).

These kinds of men know cookie-cutter, canned, theoretical, academic answers are not answers at all. Worse than that, these men know that those kinds of answers not only fail to help but confuse God's people. It robs them of the hope and help they truly need and could have received had the pastor been properly prepared for ministry.

These kinds of men know by personal experience the hard work, labor, toil, tears, and time investment required to shepherd a flock of God. These men are not looking for quick, simple, Band-Aid fixes for their people so they do not have to be bothered with more people and their problems. These men do not say to themselves, "The ministry would be great if it were not for people."

These kinds of men do not hide *in* their studies and *from* their people and live to perform merely 2-3 times a week in the pulpit. They understand and pursue, often despite their feelings, the round-the-clock privilege and responsibility of a New Testament shepherd. These men are men who live by passages such as,

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:** (29) Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:28-29).

“**Feed the flock of God, which is among you,** taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Peter 5:2).

“**Let the elders** that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who **labor in the word and doctrine**” (1 Timothy 5:17).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they **watch for your souls**, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

“**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. (29) For I know this that after my departing shall grievous **wolves enter in among you,** not sparing the flock. (30) Also **of your own selves shall men arise,** speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, **the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also**” (2 Timothy 2:2).

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (2) **Preach the word;** be instant in season, out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.** (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (5) **But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions,** do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

These are men whose personal theology did not come from the latest edition of some classroom textbook written by someone who may or may not be gifted, experienced, or qualified, but from personal, laborious efforts in studying the Word accompanied by proper use of the truth

discovered to provide authentic pastoral care for their sheep. These are gifted, qualified, recognized, evaluated, prepared, authorized, experienced, and engaged men who reject cookie-cutter, simple, thoughtless, superficial answers—as pious and spiritual as they may sound. They labor to know God, His thoughts, His ways, His heart, and His purposes so they can minister God’s truth lovingly, tenderly, firmly, boldly, passionately, patiently, prayerfully, intentionally, continually, and thoughtfully to God’s flock entrusted to them as stewards and under shepherds (Acts 20:28).

Who are the truly qualified men biblically responsible, accountable, and privileged to train the next generation of New Testament shepherds? Who are the gifted men entrusted to impact by both a life’s model and Word ministry (showing and telling) the men who will shepherd God’s flocks? Who has been given the charge to equip these pastors theologically and practically (Acts 20:18, 27-31)?

The answer is clear. It is not the academic lecturers who know little of the life of a passionate pastor. It is the man submitted to the process of recognition (Acts 16:1-3), evaluation (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1 – having been found qualified), preparation (2 Timothy 2:2), and authorization (Acts 13, 14; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

It is the man bringing pastoral desire (1 Timothy 3:1), gifts (Ephesians 4:11), and experience (Acts 20:18-32; Ephesians 4:12-16; Colossians 1:28,29) to the process of training and equipping others. These men alone truly are qualified to train, disciple, mentor, and reproduce themselves in the lives of other men. They call themselves New Testament shepherds; the local church refers to them this way as well. God entrusted to these men the equipping process, having been molded and mentored by that same process. Paul clearly stated in his second letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:2), “And the things which you heard from me personally in the presence

of many witnesses, these things commit as a trust to trustworthy men who are of such a character as to be adequate to teach others also.”¹⁵

In the same book, Wuest defines *commit*, “‘Commit’ is *paratithemi*, ‘to deposit as a trust.’” He also defines *faithful*, “‘faithful’ is *pistos*, not ‘faithful’ in the sense of ‘believing’ but in the sense of ‘trustworthy.’”¹⁶ These faithful, trustworthy men were those who must teach others also.

In his book, *The Message of the New Testament; Promises Kept*, Mark Dever supplies,

This brings us to Paul’s second reason for writing Timothy. In chapters 2 and 3, he warns Timothy about the difficulty of the road ahead and exhorts him to count the cost. In the first half of chapter 2, Paul again reminds Timothy of the gospel with which he has been entrusted: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” (2:8). But now he also charges Timothy to entrust the same message to others: “the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2:2).

Timothy is given quite a charge. Certainly, it involves knowing the gospel clearly. Every Christian must understand the message. Yet Paul’s charge involves more. Timothy must teach this message. He must teach it to people who in turn can teach it to still other people. Paul (generation 1) speaks to Timothy (generation 2), telling him to entrust the gospel to reliable men (generation 3), who will be qualified to teach others (generation 4).

We have no reason for supposing that Paul’s charge was a unique apostolic calling of the apostolic age. Paul is simply teaching Timothy what the Great Commission means in his life. For ourselves, then, we should ask whether we are involved in teaching others who will then be able to teach still other. **Those of us who are pastors like Timothy should be directly involved in training future ministers, or elders.** [emphasis added by researcher]¹⁷

To be fair, a non-ordained man may dispense information regarding Bible-related topics such as church history, Bible geography, and ancient languages. However, for a gifted, qualified

¹⁵ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, vol.2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 128-129.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁷ Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2005), 364-365.

man-in-training to receive, assimilate, benefit from, and implement practically this in a round-the-clock pastoral ministry, he needs, yea, requires the help and mentoring example from a gifted, seasoned, experienced, engaged shepherd who can model, mentor, and monitor; who can scrutinize and supervise; who can equip and evaluate; who can otherwise bring his pastoral gifts with God ordained intent and impact to the process of equipping the next generation of shepherds. The professor/classroom teacher may impart the information mentioned above, but in demonstrating and displaying how to use it in a context, correcting, teaching by word and life, and in doing pastoral ministry, he falls short.

The man not gifted by God as a pastor/teacher (Ephesians 4:11,12) *cannot* think and function as a pastor/teacher; therefore, he cannot pass this on to the next generation clearly and effectively. This candid evaluation is not to criticize unduly or find fault unnecessarily with this man attempting to do something he is non-gifted and unqualified to do. He simply does not have the Ephesians 4:11 gifts or the 2 Timothy 2:2 responsibility to do this. Those gifts are given sovereignly by Christ, the head of the church (Ephesians 4:8-16). No one simply chooses this; he must be gifted by God for it.

How does someone not possessing Ephesians 4:11 gifts or 1 Timothy 3:2-7 qualifications get in a position and assume the responsibility to train the next generation? The answers to that question, though beyond the scope of this research, are many and involve a variety of perspectives. They are very important and impacting. If they are not considered and thought through, the cycle of having non-gifted men training gifted men will continue to the confusion and detriment of the church of Jesus Christ.

The **fourth aspect** that must be considered in the training is captured with the question, *how is the next generation to be trained?* What pattern is followed? Have local church shepherds

been given a model? If so, where in the New Testament is it practiced, and who established and initiated it?

What is the most effective, efficient, and *biblical* way to equip men for ministry? The answer to this question is inherent in and tied inextricably to the training method Christ employs with his disciples. Jesus not only *taught* these men but *showed* them. They *heard* about and *saw* the training model. Jesus established a visible, functioning, working model of how to train with His own disciples. The Great Shepherd is training the next generation of shepherds. Jesus is the model Shepherd, and He displays how training is to be done. *His* pattern for teaching and equipping must become *the church's* pattern. The church has no authority to reinvent or adjust what Christ did successfully and passed on to His church. This pattern or method simply is discipleship. Many speak of discipleship but what is it truly? Just as importantly, how did Jesus employ this method in his training?

In his classic book, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, Jay Adams advises,

What is the discipleship method? Fundamentally, teaching by discipleship is the “with Him” method. When Jesus chose His disciples, it does *not* say that He chose them to attend His lectures (though at times they did just that) but, rather, “to be with Him” (Mark 3:14). What does this imply? Why were the disciples to spend time with Jesus? In Luke 6:40, where Jesus explains His philosophy of education, the answer to those questions comes clear. He says that a student, when properly trained, will “*be* like his teacher.” That is a startling statement to many modern-day educators, who would never think of such a goal. But why shouldn't they? Why should they think of themselves merely as verbal deliverers of information, rather than embodiments of it?

Notice, Jesus does not say that good teaching will help the student to *think* like his teacher –of course, that is *part* of what He has in mind. But there is more: he will “*be* like his teacher.” In this distinction lies the basic difference (in goals and purposes) between the academic and the discipleship methods of education. The one who *becomes* like his teacher *thinks* like him, it is true, but he will come to resemble him in other ways as well – in attitudes, in skills, in incorporation of values and skills in everyday living, etc. A whole person will affect whole persons on all levels, that is the goal of discipleship training.

I have taken up this issue because teaching methodology is not optional. Biblically, it is wrong to teach in the abstract; all teaching is for life. It all involves commitment to God. Therefore, truth incarnated in life is the goal.

There is a *theological imperative* for teaching by discipleship.

The Gospel of John most fully expounds the theological relationship between the Father and the Son that forms the basis for the teaching by discipleship that *ought* to undergird all levels of Christian education, including counseling.

In John 8:26-38 Jesus says (among other things) that He does nothing on His own. Rather, He speaks what He has heard the Father speak and does what He has seen the Father do. In the midst of this discussion of His discipling by the Father (note the backbone of the discipling method is revealed), Jesus says, “If you continue in *My* word [as He did in His Father’s, He implies] you are really *My* disciples” (vs. 31b). Cf. also these very significant passages; John 3:32, 34; 5:19,20,30 for additional confirmation of this emphasis.

In some way – not fully understood because of the mysteries surrounding the Trinity – the Son brought to His ministry such a replication of what the Father is like that He could say, “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).¹⁸

It seems crystal clear that the *thoughts, words, and actions* of the Son were the result of what He both *heard* His Father *say* and *saw* His Father *do*. Wow! That is an incredible thought.

Those who train pastors must wrap their theological minds around these truths. There is a method and it was brought to the context of humanity by the Chief Shepherd Himself. He employed it as He trained the very first group of pastors. A question must be asked at this point: did it get passed on after this first generation? Did the succeeding generation employ this same pattern of training?

Acts 20 provides the clearest answer: “And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner **I have been with you** at all seasons” (Acts 20:18). In his book, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*, Wuest translates Acts 20:17, 18 this way, “And from Miletus, having sent to Ephesus, he called the elders of the assembly to himself. Then, when they came to him, he said to them, As for you,

¹⁸ Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1979), 88, 89, 91.

you know that from the first day when I set foot in Asia, how I was with you in close association for the entire time.”¹⁹

The word *with* (*meta* 3326)²⁰ is the same word Mark used in Mark 3:14 to describe Christ’s ordaining purpose of His men. The word implies accompaniment or together, which expresses conjunction, union. It suggests close association, fellowship, and involvement. This is powerful! Paul brought to the context of training pastors the discipleship model of Christ and His disciples. How can proper and effective training be done any other way? Paul intentionally gave himself to the task of equipping these men at the level of personal and intimate involvement in their lives.

Paul writes in his second letter to his young protégé, Timothy, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience” (2 Timothy 3:10). Wuest explains, “‘Thou hast fully known’ is *parakoloutheo*, ‘to follow after, so to follow one as to be always at his side, to follow faithfully (a standard or rule), to conform one’s self to.’ The simple verb *akoloutheo* means ‘to join one as a disciple, become his disciple, conform wholly to another’s example.’”²¹

This is amazing! No wonder Paul could say, “For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state” (Philippians 2:20). Those accountable for equipping the next generation of pastors must understand clearly and fully embrace this pattern.

¹⁹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), 325.

²⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 964.

²¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, vol.2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 148.

The local church, under the supervision of experienced, pastoral leadership, is the context for training. It is the context where pastoral theology must be learned and practiced. This is the context of ministry and of shepherding. This is the context providing the place for the next generation of shepherds to see, hear, experience, and mature in the process of learning to shepherd. This is why only an Ephesians 4:11 shepherd can accomplish this thoroughly. Only he is gifted by God and authorized by the local church to do so.

If non-gifted men are allowed to mentor, train, and be the key influence in training gifted, young men consistently, then the process is void of the essential *pastoral gift package* of Ephesians 4:11. It is destined to devolve into yet another generation of theorists who may have acquired facts and even discussed at length theories of local church methodology but who are not equipped to flesh it all out in the context of pastoral ministry.

In summary, several problems are apparent and must be solved. It is the purpose of this research to do that. The spiritual welfare, health, and maturity of the church is at stake. Biblical solutions must be reached. The problems center around the following areas of confusion.

First, there is confusion about how God engages or places men in vocational ministry today. There is confusion regarding the means and ways of God in the Old Testament versus His ways and means in the New Testament. A significant issue is how to define, view, and contextualize the concept of God's call. Some believe God engages men today by some sort of call as He did in the past. Others see clearly a paradigm shift between the Old Testament and early New Testament ways and means of placing men in ministry. An important, yet clear and simple, hermeneutic principle will shed great light on this issue.

Second, there is confusion about who should be engaged in vocational ministry. The confusion is personal and involves how an individual must evaluate himself. What is the basis

upon which to determine and discern whether he truly desires, is gifted, and qualified for, and therefore, should pursue vocational ministry. The confusion is also ecclesiastical and involves the struggle by the church as she attempts to determine who she should and should not pursue, evaluate, and prepare strategically for vocational ministry.

Third, there is confusion about who can and must step up, take the responsibility, and train and mentor men. Does a person's simple love for God qualify him to do an adequate job? Does God specially and specifically gift and equip a group of men to invest purposely and purposefully in the next generation of shepherds? Once it is determined who should be training, the question remains: in what ways should this training be done? Does the college or seminary classroom thoroughly fill that void? Should the church simply send her gifted men away; thus, in many ways, abdicating her privilege and responsibility to train? Does Scripture provide a pattern? Does the Great Shepherd give us any insights? Does the generation after Christ perpetuate the Christine model? Is a Pauline pattern clearly distinguishable? If so, does it resemble the Christine model? Where does this pattern originate? Is that important to know and, if so, how does it frame how the church is to train?

Fourth, there is confusion about the context of this training. Where must it take place? Where is pastoral ministry seen, heard, and practiced truly? Are there places commonly utilized for this training that are less than adequate to accomplish the task? Does Scripture designate a place, the place? Where is the locus of authority designated by God for this process? Is there a clear biblical model to follow? As the pillar and ground of the truth, is there another institution better equipped to do what God authorized the church, and only the church, to do? The answer is no.

Fifth, there is confusion about the method of training. Is the college/seminary sufficient? If not, what is lacking? Most importantly, does the church have an inspired model to follow? If so, where is it found? Who initiated it and is there a biblical track record of success with that method?

Sixth, there is confusion about what these gifted men—this next generation of shepherds—need to be taught. What makes up the curriculum for these men? What foundations need to be laid and established? What theological topics are non-negotiable? What ecclesiastical truths are necessary? What must they have in their theological tool belts before they are launched out to do shepherd work? What should come first in the priority of subjects? Do the pastoral epistles help answer that question? Who was Paul writing to and for what purpose?

CHAPTER 2:
EVALUATING VARIOUS POSITIONS ON HOW MEN ARE PLACED INTO
VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

Perspectives on placement into vocational ministry are varied. Some views clearly are biblical. Other views are wildly mystical, and some even disturbingly dishonoring to God and His Word. It is alarming so many writers, many with multiple post-graduate degrees in Bible, theology, or other aspects of ecclesiastical ministry, simply did not handle Scripture properly. To make the situation even worse, many of these writers are significant influences in the lives of these young men aspiring to vocational ministry by virtue of the fact these young men sit in their classrooms.

In one sense, the various views could be placed accurately into two broad groups: bibliocentric in one and everything else in the other. That, obviously, is too general. The researcher has narrowed his findings down to four main categories with sub categories under each. The categories will be labeled as points.

Point One: Imbalanced or Incomplete Understanding Position

The Activity of Preaching Being Independent from the Office of Pastor

In an online article posted on Gotquestions.org entitled, “How can I know if I am being called to preach,” the author of the article uses the phrase “called to preach” more than once:

There is no doubt that *preaching is a noble calling*.

...But how can one be sure he is *called to preach*?

...Second are objective indicators of *God’s calling to preach*.

...If God is truly *calling a man to preach*, He will confirm it in many ways.[emphasis added by researcher]²²

The author justifies his terminology in the following quote:

The words of the preacher are to be faithful to the Word of God, which is “the power unto salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Paul’s admonition to the young pastor Timothy stresses the priority of preaching: ‘In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...*I give you this charge: Preach the word*’ (2 Timothy 4:1–2). So there is no doubt the preaching of the Word is of primary importance to God. Anyone considering entering the ministry as a preacher should also view the Word of God as priority number one. [emphasis added by researcher]²³

In the questions and answers section from Preachology.com, one article has a clear emphasis on the call to *preach*. One of the questions asked and answered is, “Are you called to preach by God?” Hollingsworth summarizes, “...To be called by God into the preaching ministry, one must have the capacity to hear Him call (only believers); one must actually hear Him call (in tune with God); and one must answer or obey the call (surrender to fulfill the call of God and actually engage in a preaching ministry).”²⁴

The emphasis in Scripture on *preaching* is unmistakable but is preaching a “calling” in and of itself? Can or should that be isolated from overall shepherding or the office of bishop/elder?

This is an interesting perspective. The emphasis in both articles is “call to preach.” It is interesting because the New Testament does not speak in that language. “Preach” is not a calling, or a position, office, etc. “Preach” is *a function of the office* of both elder and evangelist. When

²² S. Michael Houdmann, “How can I know if I am being called to preach?” Gotquestions.org, <https://www.gotquestions.org/called-to-preach.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

²³ S. Michael Houdmann, “How can I know if I am being called to preach?” Gotquestions.org, <https://www.gotquestions.org/called-to-preach.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

²⁴ Mark Hollingsworth, “Called to Preach?” Preachology.com, <http://www.preachology.com/called-to-preach.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Paul says, “I give you this charge, preach the word,” he was not categorizing Timothy as a “preacher,” he is charging him as a shepherd of a flock. This was to be an important component of his overall pastoral duties. The text is not intended to establish a position to which someone can be called, aspire to, or limit himself to as an elder/pastor/shepherd.

This is yet another example of a man of influence, a writer, a Bible teacher, not using Scripture as God intended. Preaching is certainly the specific challenge in the text—that cannot be denied. However, what is the intent of the text? What is the context of the text within the chapter, book, or for that matter, all three pastorals?

This phrase is, however, very common on Bible college campuses. It seems to be used freely in the contexts of ordinations, pastors’ fellowships, and conversations among young men expressing a 1 Timothy 3:1 ministry desire. It has taken on a life of its own since there is no text out of which it comes nor which can be used to discuss it theologically. It just has slipped into the mind, conversations, and classrooms of the next generation of 1 Timothy 3:1 ambitious young men.

Confusing Gifts with Qualifications

Pastoral gifts and pastoral qualifications are not synonymous. They are different and distinguished clearly in Scripture.

David P. Murray is professor of Old Testament and practical theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In his online article entitled, “Am I Called to the Ministry?” he writes,

4. Do you have the necessary gifts (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9)?

One of the most useful exercises I've given in my class on the Christian ministry was to ask the students to write up a job notice based on the characteristics and gifts found in the passages above. (Maybe I'll ask some of my students for permission to post their

responses in a future blog.) I noticed that one of *the recurring gifts in these lists is self-control, or self discipline*. This is so utterly indispensable for time-management in pastoral ministry, when we have no boss or professor to keep us on track. If you have a record of being late for work or appointments, or if you are regularly late in submitting assignments, what reason is there to think that you are suddenly going to change when you have to preach a sermon every Sunday at 9.30 am?

Another vital gift is simplicity. Are you able to preach or teach simply? I'm not talking here about "dumbing-down." I'm talking about taking profound truths and translating them into simple, clear language (as Jesus did). Some men seem to have the opposite gift, the ability to make the simple complicated and confusing. If that's your gift, then please don't burden the church of Christ with it. [emphasis added by researcher]²⁵

Murray is a professor of Old Testament (maybe that is what accounts for his seeming prejudice toward Old Testament "calls" being legitimate for today) and is also professor for practical theology at a Reformed Seminary. A crucial issue highlighted by Murray's quote is how men, who have such seeming advanced theological education, manage to handle the Word of God so irresponsibly and come to such erroneous conclusions. While some may consider Murray's teachings of little consequence, the researcher vehemently disagrees. It is just this type of carelessness in dealing with Scripture that has created so much chaos in the first place. Men like Murray, standing before impressionable young men week in and week out, having stated things like this in his article (completely misusing the term *gifts* to discuss what are clearly character qualities from the pastorals), heavily influence those young men to think this way. Furthermore, the fact that he is a professor for practical theology (the practical, ecclesiastical, pastoral application of Scripture) makes this kind of irresponsibility and these kinds of errors even more grievous and egregious for generations to come.

²⁵ David P. Murray, "Am I Called to the Ministry?" Thegospelcoalition.org, entry posted June 7, 2010, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/am-i-called-to-the-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Failing to Distinguish Between Old Testament and New Testament Methods

It is not unusual to find essentially no distinction made by authors between the Old Testament and New Testament methods of engaging and placing men into ministry. The following quotes illustrate this ongoing failure.

In an online article regarding this call to preach, Lance Olimb quotes the following excerpt of John Broadus' work entitled "On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons,"

The preacher should be a person with a call from God. Ministers are classed as professionals, but they should never be persons with just a "profession." They are people with a divine calling. Paul declared that he was "called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). Spurgeon asserted, "I am as much called to preach as Paul was." And so it has been with every true preacher. The impulse to preach comes from God.

Moreover, this call is intensely personal. It comes to people of all ages and classes in a variety of ways. Samuel was a child when he heard God's voice; the apostle John answered the call with all the enthusiasm of youth, as did Spurgeon and Alexander McLaren. However, Matthew was a mature man, and so were Augustine, John of Antioch (Chrysostom), and John Knox.

Amos was a shepherd, but Paul was a "university" man. John of Antioch, Ambrose, Canon Liddon, and Phillips Brooks had the advantage of wealth and social position; while Bunyan, Spurgeon, Joseph Parker, and D.L. Moody were from families of sturdy, working people.

To Peter and John the call came quietly; to Paul it was a great, cataclysmic experience; to F. W. Robertson the call came when other doors were closed.²⁶

Ray Gilder, the bivocational ministries specialist at the Tennessee Baptist Convention and also a bivocational pastor, says the following in his article entitled, "Five Elements of the Call to Ministry,"

1. Receiving the call

Most Bible students agree that the ministry is reserved for those who sense a call of God upon their lives for this work. The Bible gives the details of the specific call of many Old Testament prophets. (Moses Exodus. 3,4; Jeremiah Jeremiah. 1:5-10; Isaiah Isaiah 6; Amos Amos 7:14-15, and Jonah Jonah 1:1,2.)

²⁶ Lance Olimb, "Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Is the Holy Spirit Pushing You Toward Preaching?" Amicalled.com, <http://amicalled.com/2014/11/is-the-holy-spirit-pushing-you-toward-preaching/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

In reference to the role of the Old Testament high priest, the writers of Hebrews made this statement, "and no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is call of God, as was Aaron." Hebrews 5:4.

A New Testament example of this call is seen in the early church when God called Barnabas and Saul: "as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them out." Acts 13:2,3.²⁷

Gordon MacDonald, chancellor of Denver Seminary and editor-at-large for *Leadership Journal*, states in his article on "God's Calling Plan,"

The concept of a *call* is one of the most profound of all biblical ideas. The Bible is riddled with stories about calls to men and women.... First, in one way or another, they all originated out of the Godhead. God the Father *called* Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Amos (to name a few). Jesus *called* twelve men "to be with him," and then sent them out to disciple the nations. The Holy Spirit *called* Saul and Barnabas and others to apostolic opportunity.²⁸

In the article previously mentioned, "How can I know if I am being called to preach?" the author notes,

But how can one be sure he is called to preach? First are the subjective indicators. If a man has the burning desire within him that cannot be denied, that is a good indication of a "calling" by God. The Apostle Paul and the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah experienced the same desire. Paul said, "Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). To be "compelled" to preach means to be driven onward by an irresistible and undeniable compulsion to do so. Jeremiah described it as a "burning fire" (Jeremiah 20:8-9) that could not be stifled. Trying to hold it back made him weary.²⁹

In his article entitled, "Divine Call to Preach or Man's Call to Preach?" Mark Hollingsworth agrees with author Merrill Unger who ignores any distinction between Old and

²⁷ Ray Gilder, "Five Elements of the Call to Ministry," LifeWay.com, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Five-elements-of-the-call-to-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

²⁸ Gordon MacDonald, "God's Calling Plan: So what exactly is a call to ministry? Christianitytoday.com, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/fall/3.35.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

²⁹ S. Michael Houdmann, "How can I know if I am being called to preach?" Gotquestions.org, <https://www.gotquestions.org/called-to-preach.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

New Testament methods of placing men in vocational ministry, combining them together in one category. Hollingsworth writes,

According to Merrill F. Unger in his book, "Principles of Expository Preaching" the preacher must have a divine call and commission... "This call and commission have been the portion of all God's prophets and apostles throughout Old and New Testament times. Moses was called in the desert (Ex.3:1-12), the child Samuel in the Tabernacle (1 Sam.3:1-18), Isaiah in the Temple (Isa.6:1-13) and Paul in the city of Damascus (Acts 9:17)."

"Jeremiah had such a constraint to preach the message of God that it was in his heart 'as a burning fire' shut up in his bones and he was 'weary with forbearing' and could not stay (Jer.20:9). Paul cried out, 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!' (1 Cor.9:16)."³⁰

In an online article entitled, "Brace Yourself, Jeremiah! Answering God's Call with Our Lives," Ann K. Ratcliffe states,

A biblical call is generally a dialogue between God (or an agent of God) and a human. Moses sees the burning bush and hears the voice of God calling him to deliver the Israelites (Exodus 3:1-10). Sarah's call to be "mother of nations" (Genesis 17:16) comes through Abraham as she overhears a stranger telling her husband that she shall bear a son in her old age (Genesis 18:10). Ezekiel's long, detailed call narrative covers chapters 1 through 3 with visions and dialogues. The dialogue begins in chapter 2 as a voice speaks from out of the throne vision: "Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you" (Ezekiel 2:1). An angel appears to Mary and begins with "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28)

The directness of these calls is more likely the ancient author's way of heightening the drama of an experience that is more common than we know: Spirit is always speaking to us in inner dialogue. This "call" can come to us in a whisper, a nudge, a barely perceptible thought. To answer the call effectively, we must learn to hear the Inner Voice which guides us, discerning the direction of a call through meditation and prayer.

...Moses protested. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11) Like Jeremiah, Moses is bold, even quarrelsome, in his discussions with God. "They'll never believe me!" Sarah laughed. "I am past bearing children now" (Genesis 18:12 NEB). Gideon argued, "Pray, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (Judges 6:15). Isaiah complained of "unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). "How shall this be" asked

³⁰ Mark Hollingsworth, "Divine Call to Preach or Man's Call to Preach?" Preachology.com, <http://www.preachology.com/divine-call.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Mary, after Gabriel had announced that she would conceive a son, "since I have no husband?" (Luke 1:34).³¹

Every example Ratcliffe gives is from the Old Testament. The one she mentions from the New Testament (Mary) is obviously still within the open canon era in which God is still speaking because His revelation is yet incomplete. In Mary's case, God uses an angel.

It is interesting Ratcliffe cites Mary among the "called men" of the Old Testament. No similarity exists between what God called these men to do and what God had appointed for Mary.

Nothing is mentioned regarding any transition between how these Old Testament prophets were placed into ministry and how God does so now that His revelation to man is complete. No mention is made of the obvious distinction between Paul and the next generation. Paul is the last man actually to receive the type of call Ratcliffe describes in her article—that being, a direct, "call." By failing to make any distinction, Ratcliffe seems to use her examples to make Old Testament "calls" normative for all ages.

The placement of Timothy and Titus into ministry was not the same. God's methods are changing. This cannot be ignored. Rather than a "call" received directly from God, the terminology used to discuss their placement into ministry (as well as the ones they would be instrumental in seeing be placed into ministry) includes gifts, authority from the presbytery, and ordination. Nothing is said anymore (after Paul) about some sort of subjective call.

Again, it is too obvious to miss the transition of how God placed men into ministry in the Old Testament and early New Testament and how that process is displayed after Paul. According

³¹ Ann K. Ratcliffe, "Brace Yourself, Jeremiah! Answering God's Call with Our Lives," Unity.org, <http://www.unity.org/resources/articles/brace-yourself-jeremiah-answering-gods-call-our-lives> (accessed June 28, 2017).

to Acts 13:2, “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,” Paul and Barnabas are “called” to plant churches.

In Acts 16:10, “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them,” Paul, Silas, and Timothy are “called” to take the Gospel to Macedonia. Acts 13:2 and Acts 16:10 are the only two places where this term *proskaleo* (4341)³² is used to put men in the ministry. The term comes from *pros* (4314) meaning “to”³³ and *kaleo* (2564) meaning “to call.”³⁴ The purpose of noting these two passages is to emphasize that this term, for a time, still was being used to put men in the ministry, but some facts must be kept in mind.

The book of Acts is a transitional book. God’s methods are changing as this research will continue to prove. The Apostle Paul is a transitional character. He is the last man to experience this phenomenon—a direct call from God. Verbal messages, visions, and other similar communications are still in operation because the canon of Scripture (special revelation) is not complete. At this point in history, this use of the term “call” is still very legitimate. God still is speaking verbally and audibly; therefore, “calling” men to ministry is still legitimate.

It is certainly obvious God engaged men in ministry in both testaments. There is no question about that, but to lump them together summarily with no explanation or distinction made regarding varying methods employed, leaves the clear impression there is no difference.

³² Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 1232.

³³ Ibid, 1224.

³⁴ Ibid, 811.

This, to the point, gives the impression and even encourages young men to think, if God called Moses by a particular and personalized method, and if God called Samuel by a particular and personalized method, then God certainly can do the same for them.

This idea of merging, combining, or consolidating across the board “calls” from both testaments is not credible. This fails to use proper hermeneutics. It fails to consider any differences at all in how God engaged men in ministry throughout. It seems to use the term “call” to make it all blend together. When key principles of Bible study are not adhered to, when progressive revelation is not considered, when no distinction is made between God’s Old and New Testament methods of communication, when the close of the canon (see MacArthur’s quote on page 42) is not part of the grid through which various texts are viewed and interpreted, the result is chaos and confusion. No objective way or means is given to direct young men. No objective method is available to set before the next generation of potential shepherds. Each is just sort of on his own to decide how he is being “called.” Maybe the church has a part and maybe she does not. Maybe gifts are considered; maybe they are not. When objective, propositional revelation is NOT the standard, then mysticism and various subjective means become the guiding principles.

Whenever the term “call” is used to speak of God engaging men in ministry, it must be used as God used it in His Word. Words matter. Paul exhorts, in 1 Corinthians 2:13, that spiritual words be used to discuss spiritual issues. Terminology is important. When inspiration is discussed, “plenary” and “verbal” are words that describe God’s communication; in other words, every word, jot, and tittle is emphasized. Individuals are not at liberty to pick and choose what they think is or is not part of God’s revelation. By the same token, individuals must not alter the very words of God. The various translation processes are so vital to retaining what God said and

how He said it for this reason. It matters! Words matter. A man cannot use a biblical term and attach his own context, definition, or application to it. Principles of hermeneutics guide the process of reading, understanding, and interpreting God's Word.

The obvious question then is: How did God use the term "call" in His Word? Where is it used? For what purpose is it used? Is it always used (in both Old and New Testaments) the same way? Was there a time when God did not use that term any longer, inserted a different term, or changed the description of how men are engaged in ministry? If so, when and what were the circumstances (canon closed and God's voice, His "call," is no longer active in the direct communication with men)? What new way, means, or method took the place of the "call"? Does the Bible give examples of a transition between different methods? If so, where are they and who are the men involved? How obvious is it? Is it merely semantics? Is it legitimate to continue using a term no longer used in the flow of Scripture?

The fact that the canon is closed must be acknowledged as crucial to the discussion of the call to vocational ministry. So many use the terminology (such as call, called, calling, spoke to) that was historically and contextually relevant in the Old Testament and early New Testament. This methodology and terminology is not relevant to use in the later New Testament and, especially, not now since the canon is closed, and God's voice is silent apart from His revealed will in His Word. Also, since God's voice is silent (He does not speak, or "call" any longer), a recognition of this must be embraced and a strong effort must be given to use biblical terminology to discuss the subject.

MacArthur addresses the issues of a closed canon in his book, *Charismatic Chaos*:

The Canon is Closed

The truth is, there is no fresher or more intimate revelation than Scripture. God doesn't need to give us private revelation to help us in our walk with Him. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in

righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, emphasis added). Scripture is sufficient. It offers all we need for every good work.

Christians on both sides of the charismatic fence must realize a vital truth: God’s revelation is complete for now. The canon of Scripture is closed. As the apostle John penned the final words of the last book of the New Testament, he recorded this warning: “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18-19). Then, the Holy Spirit added a doxology and closed the canon.

When the canon closed on the Old Testament after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, there followed four hundred “silent years” when no prophet spoke God’s revelation in any form.

That silence was broken by John the Baptist as God spoke once more prior to the New Testament age. God then moved various men to record the books of the New Testament, and the last of these was Revelation. By the second century A.D., the complete canon exactly as we have it today was popularly recognized. Church councils in the fourth century verified and made official what the church has universally affirmed, that the sixty-six books in our Bibles are the only true Scripture inspired by God. The canon is complete.

Just as the close of the Old Testament canon was followed by silence, so the close of the New Testament has been followed by the utter absence of new revelation in any form. Since the book of Revelation was completed, no new written or verbal prophecy has ever been universally recognized by Christians as divine truth from God.³⁵

The doctrine of cessation is another vitally important theological issue that is a companion to and synonymous with the closing of the canon. In his book, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Alan Cairns uses B. B. Warfield’s lectures given at Columbia Theological Seminary, South Carolina, in 1917 to argue the point for the complete cessation of miraculous gifts and that of Scripture itself successfully. He points out,

Many deny that the NT itself testifies to the cessation of sign miracles with the completion of the Biblical revelation. However, Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 13:8-13 clearly establish the point. He emphatically states that the supernatural gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will vanish away, or be abolished (v. 8). He sets the time of this in verse 10, “when that which is perfect is come.”

³⁵ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 60-61.

The crucial question is, what does he mean by “that which is perfect?” Cessationists argue that he means the completion of the canon of Scripture.³⁶

Cairns goes on to say, “Since *that which is perfect* cannot mean the day of Christ we are left with the historic Protestant interpretation of the passage. Paul meant that with the completion of the NT the revelation of God would be perfect and that therefore the temporary signs and supernatural gifts would be removed.”³⁷

Adams also establishes this important point in his book, *Signs and Wonders in the Last Days*:

In order to explain verse 8, in which the revelatory gifts are said to be temporary, Paul says that this is because the present revelation given through these gifts is only *partial* (v. 9: “We know in *part* and we prophesy in *part*”). He goes on to say that this partial revelation will be replaced by a full and complete one: “but when that which is complete comes, that which is partial will be set aside” (v. 10). In other words, at that time there would be no need for further revelation since Christians would have all that they would ever need.³⁸

Adams goes on to say, “There is nothing about heaven, eternity, or the second coming here. The discussion is solely about revelation. It is partial revelation given by God through prophecy, properly interpreted tongues, and special knowledge that is the subject of Paul’s discussion. He isn’t introducing another subject here.”³⁹

In another of his books, *Fifty Difficult Passages Explained*, Adams notes,

It is certain, therefore, that 1 Corinthians 13 has a time in view when the revelatory gifts will be done away with, that is during this present life. A complete revelation, which would replace the partial ones, Paul says, would come. When it did, these partial means

³⁶ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd ed. (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1998), 78.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁸ Jay E. Adams, *Signs and Wonders in the Last Days* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, September 2000), 24.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25

would no longer be needed. That revelation, of course, was the fully completed New Testament.⁴⁰

Attributing a Man's Gifting by God to the Prayers of Family Members

In the article mentioned previously, "God's Calling Plan," MacDonald gives the following personal testimony,

How God called me – I have lived my life under the discipline of a call. Looking back, *the call seems to have emerged in a family conspiracy in which my mother and grandmother prayed fervently that God would raise up a preacher in their family.* That apparently was me. How (or why) God merged his choice with the prayers of two women is a mystery to me. But their prayer is part of the story.⁴¹

While a parent or grandparent praying for a son/grandson certainly is not wrong, prayer is not the means whereby God grants pastoral gifts to an individual—that is His sovereign choice. It is clear in Ephesians 4:8-16. Granted, their prayer could be part of the story, but that is not the reason someone ends up (or should end up) in ministry.

Point Two: Misusing and Abusing Scripture

Several years ago, the researcher was given a set of notes from a ministerial student attending a fairly well-known Christian college. The teacher was a very popular member of the administration. He had served as a pastor shortly and was then on staff and spoke regularly in the college chapel. He was teaching a mini course of sorts on the call to the ministry. The content of

⁴⁰ Jay E. Adams, *Fifty Difficult Passages Explained* (Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, October 2008), 68.

⁴¹ Gordon MacDonald, "God's Calling Plan: So what exactly is a call to ministry?" Christianitytoday.com, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/fall/3.35.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

the notes was disappointing and appalling considering the source. Following is, in part, the brief outline of the notes.

God's Call to the Ministry

Preaching – Its Principles, Problems, and Power (Ezekiel 37:1-10)

The Call of the Preacher (vv. 1-2)

Five elements always incorporated in God's call

Ordination – “the hand of the Lord was upon me”

Separation – “carried me out”

Inspiration – “in the Spirit of the Lord”

Humiliation – “set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones”

Education – “caused me to pass by them round about”⁴²

This passage is dealing with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. The vision is about Israel's national resurrection to life again. Verses 11-13 are key to the interpretation of the vision. These verses talk of the resurrection and salvation of Israel.

Somehow the lecturer draws from this passage or rather “puts in” (isogesis rather than exegesis is practiced clearly on this text) the concepts of ordination, separation, inspiration, humiliation, and education all in verses 1 and 2. According to the lecturer, this is how the preacher is called supposedly.

Several observations must be made. To address aspiring pastoral students with an Ezekiel 37 pattern of how God puts a man in ministry seems to be a quantum leap, to say the least. To challenge men to think through their 1 Timothy 3:1 desire in terms of an Ezekiel 37:1-10 vision to an Old Testament prophet would seem to be confusing. To equate an Old Testament prophet with a local church pastor or teacher just is not good hermeneutics. To equate a valley of dry bones seen in a vision which represents dead and dispersed Israel with a New Testament local church congregation seems to be a stretch, if not yet another, quantum leap. The point is simply

⁴² Dr. Bob Wood, “God's Call to the Ministry” (lecture, Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC, Fall Semester, 1993).

this: much evidence for gross misunderstanding and confusion surrounds this whole issue. If this is the model being set before young men today by reputable colleges and seminaries, it is no wonder confusion abounds.

Douglas Brown, PhD, in his article entitled, "The Call to the Ministry," states,

Modern Misconceptions about the Call to Ministry

Great confusion currently surrounds the call to ministry. There are two extreme positions that need to be refuted. The first misconception is what I call *mystical subjectivism*. According to this view, one must have a "lightning-bolt experience," similar to Paul's on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19). If one never experiences such a crisis encounter with God, the assumption is that God has not called him into the ministry. Conversely, a believer who is not called to the ministry might have some experience that he misinterprets as a divine call. Advocates of this view make two errors: they misunderstand that God no longer gives direct revelation apart from the Scriptures, and they place too much emphasis on experience.

The second misconception is *rational objectivism*. Advocates of this position actually argue that God no longer calls people into vocational ministry.² This position is partly a reaction against the perceived "mysticism" in the so-called traditional view of the call to ministry. The main premise behind this view is that God does not have an individual will for each believer. It is argued that as long as believers obey God's moral will, they can choose whatever path in life they want. As a result, vocational ministry is not a divine call to be obeyed but merely a career option. The fundamental problem with this approach is its denial of God's individual will for the believer (cf. Rom. 12:1, 2). While God no longer gives special revelation, He still leads and guides His children through providence and the Spirit's leading (e.g., Gal. 5:18).

²See Gary Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Press, 2004). [emphasis added by researcher]⁴³

Brown rightly challenges the mystical subjectivism and rightly summarizes two of the errors within this concept. It is true God no longer speaks by divine, direct revelation. It is also true many place too much emphasis on personal experience. These are clear errors, and Brown identifies both as such.

However, Brown does what so many others do after presenting a fairly good case with one aspect of the issue. In his attempt to prove his point, his casual use of Scripture confuses the

⁴³ Douglas Brown, "The Call to the Ministry," Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, <https://www.faith.edu/2008/01/the-call-to-the-ministry/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

issue further. Upon closer examination, the Scripture he cites does not mean what he says it means or implies at all. He, again as others, has misinterpreted and, therefore, misused the text. This creates so much confusion since rightly understanding this already complex issue demands rightly using Scripture and that requires right interpretation.

Brown's teaching (which is demonstrative of many who hold the same positions on calling and determining the will of God) requires two things: the development of a biblical theology of *proper use* of God's Word, and a clear and thorough refutation of how Brown has *misused* several of the passages he cites in his article. The following treatment will deal with both the radical abuse of Ezekiel 37:1-10 (the first example above) as well as Brown's misuse of several passages.

Use Scripture for God's Intended Purpose

It is imperative to use Scripture for God's intended purpose. It is chaotic and disastrous to do otherwise. Declare what God has declared—nothing else. Say what God said. What God said and meant through His revelation then is what God says and means now. Components such as time, cultures, generations, and traditions do not provide new and improved hermeneutics by which to read and interpret Scripture. What God meant He means. His Word does not come to mean something different now. Give no substitutes. Replace nothing with human thoughts or ideas.

Using God's Word as He intended it to be used is absolutely crucial in a Christian's growth and, particularly in discussing the issue at hand—the call. This issue, proper interpretation and use of Scripture, must be settled; and, settled it can be. The researcher will begin with one of the most familiar texts in the Bible. It clearly addresses not only the

comprehensive nature of Scripture, but more importantly for this discussion, the *usefulness* of truth. When truth is misused, as is being done in Douglas Brown's article, from that point on nothing is clear. Any discussion about the call will be out of balance. It essentially will be pointless and profitless.

Scripture itself demands proper interpretation and use. By reason of the crucial nature of this argument, a rather extended treatment is necessary.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 provides helpful insight and a solid theological place to begin the discussion. The word *profitable* in verse 16 teaches the Word of God is useful to accomplish all four successive steps from teaching truth to the disciplined training in righteous living of that redeemed man. Therefore, the Word of God is useful to justify the sinner and sanctify the saint.

The Word is not just to be read, studied, memorized, preached, taught, and discussed. If that is as far as one takes Scripture, then it becomes something to merely know. Scripture is to be *used!*

In the pages of Scripture, God has given to His children all they need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2, 3). The powerful, instructional, transforming, comprehensive, and sufficient truth of God is for the believer's growth and maturity, to mature him in his relationship with his Creator, and for him to grow in his relationship to man. Scripture is useful to enable the believer to "love God and his neighbor" (Matthew 22:35-40). The strong point is the Word of God is not merely something to be known but something *to be used, applied, practiced, and implemented* into one's life for the purpose of conforming him to his predestinated goal of Christ-likeness (Romans 8:28, 29).

Scripture declares itself to be the Sword of the Spirit *to use* in the context of warfare: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"

(Ephesians 6:17). This text (Ephesians 6:17) is in a context of Christian warfare. Paul is describing the weapons to be *put on* for the believer to be an effective warrior in the Christian life. Among this arsenal, Paul mentions “the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” In order to use the sword effectively and practically, the believer must know precisely what it is.

The two words, *word* and *sword*, are described as to their meaning in this passage. *Word, rema* (4487)⁴⁴, refers to a specific statement in Scripture, not the entirety of *the faith* as Jude 3 addresses. It is a principle, a compact truth, or specific command. It is not a lengthy passage but a simple, short, and precise truth.

The *sword* is a specific type. This word does not refer to a long, cumbersome, two-handed sword as one may think. It refers to a short dagger. It is a weapon designed to be used in close hand-to-hand combat. Its purpose is to be thrust accurately to do the most damage. It is certainly easy to see the parallel being set forth.

Just as a short dagger may be reached for and used conveniently and precisely in hand-to-hand combat, so the sharp, pointed, specific truth of God’s Word can be *used* effectively at the point of temptation. So again, it is imperative to see and understand that truth is not merely to be read, known, or even quoted, but to be *used* in the believer’s warfare and process of maturing into Christ-likeness.

Does Scripture provide a place to go to observe this crucial dynamic being displayed, that of specifically using Scripture; unsheathing the Sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, and thrusting it at the point of temptation? Does an individual set the pattern for the believer as to

⁴⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 1262.

when and how this process of *using truth* is to function? Can the believer see in this individual a clear and victorious example?

Matthew 4:1-11 provides the place to see it all lived out. Jesus *uses* Scripture:

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (2) And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. (3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. (4) But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, (6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. (7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (8) Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. (10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (11) Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him (Matthew 4:1-11).

In this passage, usefulness is taken to another level—*how* to use it. This is an exciting and powerful event in the life of the Lord demonstrating how to use truth effectively.

This passage is preached often when evaluating and dealing with the area of temptation. It is emphasized that Jesus used the Word of God; but, *how* did He use it and for *what purpose*? Does His use of truth demonstrate the proper view of Ephesians 6:17?

When Satan tempted Jesus to sin, Jesus did not pick up the Old Testament scroll and take a swing. This would be like trying to beat the devil away by hitting him with a Bible. This is the two-handed, long, cumbersome sword imagery.

Instead, each time Jesus was tempted by Satan, He immediately *drew the dagger* of truth (thus, demonstrating the Ephesians 6:17 emphasis) and thrust it at the point of temptation. The *truth dagger* He *used* was chosen selectively as to its purpose, intent, and appropriateness to

answer the temptation specifically. He used it as God intended it to be used. Jesus *used* three *truth daggers* to respond to Satan's temptations.

Jesus uses the *Sword of the Spirit* in the *first temptation*. In Matthew 4:3-4, He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3. When challenged to *make bread of stones*, He refused by living at that moment based on a specific Old Testament truth. He used Scripture properly, accurately, and (not that Jesus could have sinned) successfully. The power of truth is in the accurate use: of it.

Jesus said, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4), and proceeded to quote Deuteronomy 8:3: "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live."

Jesus uses the *Sword of the Spirit* in the *second temptation*. In Matthew 4:5-7, He quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. When challenged to *tempt God* and act presumptuously, He refused by living at that moment based on a specific Old Testament truth. Jesus said, "It is written" (Matthew 4:7), and proceeded to quote Deuteronomy 6:16, "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah."

Jesus uses the *Sword of the Spirit* in the *third temptation*. In Matthew 4:8-10, He quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. When challenged to *worship Satan*, He refused by living at that moment based on a specific Old Testament truth. Jesus said, "It is written" (Matthew 4:10), and proceeded to quote Deuteronomy 6:13, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."

Christ did not go to the concordance and pick out the first verse including the word *bread*, *tempt*, or *worship* and try to force an out-of-context verse into His scenario somehow. He *used* Scripture for the *purpose* God gave it. The Word of God was used accurately for the *intent*

and *purpose* it was given. He met the temptation with the dagger of the Word, the Sword of the Spirit. He fleshed out for believers the theology and practice of the Ephesians 6:17 principle.

It is very interesting, in this same text, Jesus is not the only one who “uses” Scripture. Satan attempts to use Scripture as well. In Matthew 4:6, Satan *quotes* Scripture and *attempts* to use it for a very specific purpose.

What did Satan want to accomplish by his “use” of Scripture? Satan wanted Jesus to jump off the highest point of the temple (Matthew 4:5, 6a). How did Satan use Scripture (Matthew 4:6b)? Satan stated this Old Testament passage, Psalm 91:11-12, directly to Jesus. Satan's attempt to “use” Scripture fails; but, why? It is clear Jesus refused to yield to Satan's challenge.

However, the question must be asked: why would the living Word of God (John1:1) intentionally and purposefully refuse to live consistently with the written Word of God (Psalm 91:11,12 – “as it is written”)? The answer is very insightful and crucial to this discussion. Again, it is important to understand the answer does not lie in who is using the Word at this point. It lies in his *use* of it and *the purpose for which* he uses it. In other words, as Matthew 23:1-3 teaches, even if sinful wicked people happen to present the Word properly, it is still authoritative and binding, not because of the *presenter* but because of the Word itself.

Jesus refuses to yield to Satan's “use” of the Word. Satan said in Matthew 4:6, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

Jesus refused to comply with the written Word at this point for two reasons. First, Satan tampered with inspiration: the text is misrepresented. Satan misquoted the text. What did God

say? This is inspiration. Second, Satan tampered with authorial intent: the text is misused. Satan misused the text. He twisted and corrupted God's purpose for the text. What did God *mean* by what He said? This is authorial intent. Jesus was committed to using truth and living consistently with truth (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10):

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

...Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

...Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Of course, though it may have appeared to be slight or subtle, Satan had intentional deceit, and cunning, purposeful false representation. Jesus certainly recognized the deceptive mishandling of truth immediately!

With some, evil may not be intended at all. As a matter of fact, a man may be as sincere as he can be, but if the Word is misused, it is misused regardless of motive or intent.

When the Word of God is misused, all the power and authority is squeezed out! Christian work in the areas of preaching, teaching, counseling, and discipling holds no power or authority if the Word is not the basis for all that is said and done. The Word of God is able powerfully, alive energetically, and useful relevantly to accomplish God's purpose in the believer's life for his good and God's glory, but only when God is represented accurately by what He said (inspiration) and what He meant by what He said (textual and authorial purpose and intent).

Whether intentionally or, by neglect, unintentionally the King cannot be misrepresented. Jesus established the pattern of Word *use*. He *used* the right text for the right occasion. The *truth dagger* was used effectively.

He not only used the Word (He chose the correct truth to meet the specific temptation appropriately, for its intended application), but He followed up by living consistently with the

Word He used. Of course, it could have been no other way! He selected accurately, wisely, and appropriately. Furthermore, He responded obediently based on the truth He used. It was not merely academic (knowing) but practical (acting, using and doing).

The story does not end with Jesus using God's Word accurately, for the purpose it was written and intended, but Jesus also responds to the *misuse* of Scripture (Matthew 4:7). Not only does Jesus establish a pattern for *using* truth at the point of temptation, but He sets an example as well of how believers should respond when the Word itself is misused. Jesus established the pattern of proper response to Word misuse. How did Jesus respond to Satan's *misuse* of the Word?

He responded to and contradicted Satan's misuse *quickly, intentionally*, and again, *accurately*. He refuted Satan's weak attempt at Word misuse. In Matthew 4:7, Jesus does not say merely, "It is written," as He does in 4:4, 10. He adds a word to His response that establishes for believers this proper response to Word misuse.

Jesus says, "It is written *again*." The Greek word is *palin* (3825).⁴⁵ Zodhiates defines *again* as "a continuative particle connecting circumstances which refer to the same subject; again, once more, further; also, where there is an implied opposite or antithesis; again, on the other hand, on the contrary – Mat. 4:7."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 1091.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1091.

Cited below are several translations of this phrase. Each provides clarity to exactly how Jesus reacts to Satan’s misuse of truth:

“It is also written” – New International Version⁴⁷

“But it is further written” – The New Testament in the Translation of Monsignor Ronald Knox⁴⁸

“Again, it is written” – The Christian Counselor’s New Testament⁴⁹

“On the other hand” – The New American Standard Bible⁵⁰

“Again, it is written” – The English Standard Version⁵¹

“Yes, retorted Jesus, and the scripture also says” – The New Testament in Modern English⁵²

Jesus refuses to tolerate misuse. Error cannot be allowed to go unaddressed. Error must be refuted, especially when it comes to training the next generation of shepherds. The churches of Jesus Christ depend on the previous generation passing on accurately translated and properly used and applied truth.

Satan makes his attempt by “using” Psalm 91. In a proper response to Word misuse, Jesus says to Satan, “You will not misuse Scripture that way—no, no, no, that will not work with Me—on the contrary!” Jesus, then, proceeds (as has been discussed) to demonstrate proper use and application of *truth-to-life*.

⁴⁷ Biblehub.com, “Bible Hub,” Apple App Store, Vers. 1.0 (2016).
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-hub/id1090228108?mt=8> (June 28, 2017).

⁴⁸ Curtis Vaughan, ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 10.

⁴⁹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s New Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 7.

⁵⁰ Biblehub.com, “Bible Hub,” Apple App Store, Vers. 1.0 (2016).
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-hub/id1090228108?mt=8> (June 28, 2017).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Curtis Vaughan ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 10.

Anyone can be deceived if not on the alert. John challenges God's people in his first epistle:

Beloved, believe not every spirit [i.e. everything that is promoted as truth], but try [put to the test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (2) Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.... (6) We [the Apostles bring God's revelation to man] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us [i.e. listens to God's word]; he that is not of God heareth not us [refuses to hear and live by God's word]. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error [the ones who listen to and live by God's truth as opposed to the ones who reject and deny God's truth] (1 John 4:1-6).

A failure to be familiar with the Word leaves a man vulnerable to deception and misuse. If a man rejects and refuses to *use* truth, that individual really does not *know* truth. Properly using truth to handle life can come only from diligent work in the Word (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:17). The Word must be understood for it to be used successfully.

Paul tells Timothy to work energetically to know and teach God's Word rightly. Paul says elders are to labor in their study efforts. Work hard at understanding and using truth.

- 2 Timothy 3:16—God's Word is useful.
- Ephesians 6:17—God's Word can and must be used specifically and accurately. Personal victory is possible and expected.
- Matthew 4:1-11—Jesus established the pattern of both “using the truth” (v. 4,10) and responding to the “misuse of truth” (v. 7).
- Matthew 23:1-3—The Word that has inherent authority, not the one quoting or teaching.
- 2 Timothy 2:15—Effort is required to study and understand.

Men, especially those in positions to greatly influence the next generation of shepherds, must maintain the highest level of integrity when handling God's Word. The teacher in the ministry class dealing with the Call to the Ministry using Ezekiel 37:1-10 completely destroyed

God's purpose for that text; and, by doing so, disrespected and dishonored the God Whose Word it is. Right interpretation matters! Right use of the rightly interpreted text matters as well!

One of the disappointments in doing this research (as well as in decades of hearing God's Word abused in pulpits, classrooms, theological discussions, and the like) is seeing men with high profile positions in colleges and seminaries not handling God's Word rightly, but yet influencing the next generation of young men with 1 Timothy 3:1 ambitions. As long as God's Word is mishandled, the consequences very well could be felt for generations to come. The researcher does not want to overstate the case, but the future church plants in which these men will serve as shepherds are at risk if this generation of equippers fails to handle the Word of God properly.

Interpret Scripture Accurately and Use Scripture Properly

Brown argues in the second part of his quote above that Gary Friesen believes God does not have an individual will for each believer. The researcher would take, at least some, exception with that assessment. Giving Brown what he concludes is completely accurate and on point, he then goes on to misunderstand, misinterpret, and misapply the Scripture he cites. Both Romans 12:1, 2 and Galatians 5:18 are offered to combat what he argues as faulty in Friesen's theology, but his own attempt to "use" the texts for the purpose he desires comes up woefully lacking. This treatment is not unlike the first yet it approaches the issue of biblical accuracy and clarity from a different vantage point.

What do these two texts say and mean? What they meant when penned is what they mean today. They did not and do not come to mean something different in the twenty-first century. The Word of God is cross-generational and cross-cultural. It never changes. God forbid that man

would alter His intention, whether it be for selfish ambition, financial gain, or because of lazy study habits.

Both passages are very popular and used quite regularly in discussions about the will of God and the topic of decision making. Accuracy is paramount. It is paramount not simply because it is the Word of God (and that is enough reason to be sure), but because these two passages are used so frequently or, more accurately, misused. Again, accuracy and clarity must be maintained.

Since Brown specifically cites the Galatians 5:18 text, an explanation will be given, and since Romans 8:14 is a companion text, it will be addressed as well. Misunderstandings of God's will are rampant. When Scripture is misused, confusion and misunderstanding grow.

Sometimes the phrase *I am being led by the Spirit* is said to mean and equal *guided by the Spirit in decision-making*. Romans 8:14, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” is often cited for biblical confirmation of this idea. Upon further examination, that is not what Paul is discussing in this passage at all.

This passage has nothing to do with decision-making, determining God's will as who to marry, what car to purchase, or where to buy a house. Further, it has nothing to do with extra-biblical notions, nudges, or inner indicators of some sort. Rather the question in view in this text (as well as the Galatians 5 text) is sanctification—walking in righteous paths by the Spirit's strength. It deals with the believer building new living patterns in his or her life by the Spirit, as the Spirit set believers free from being shackled to the old patterns. Verse 13 speaks of the power through which the believer mortifies sin. This supplies the context for verse 14 which is the believer's sanctification and growth.

The first four verses of the eighth chapter of Romans is yet another often misused text when discussing the issue Brown brings up—the will of God. The phrase “led by the Spirit” is pulled from its context and given a very different meaning and use:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4).

To be led by the Spirit and to walk after the Spirit present the same idea: *To be under the government of the Spirit*. The word *walk* in verse 4 means to order one's behavior or conduct. The word *after* in verse 4 comes from a root which indicates *down* and it suggests dominion. The believer orders his life in a way that is dominated by the Holy Spirit (which is synonymous with Scripture). The companion passages, Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18, give clarity on this issue.

Though the Romans, Colossians, and Ephesians passages are not mentioned by Brown, it is vital to see the connection of several of these often-misused passages. Again, integrity in viewing, understanding, interpreting, and using these truths is non-negotiable. Careful examination shows the contexts of Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 are the same: One passage emphasizes being *filled with the Word*—Colossians 3:16. The other emphasizes being *filled with the Spirit*—Ephesians 5:18.

Galatians 5:18, “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law,” is the specific verse Brown cited as a refutation to Friesen’s teaching. Paul discusses these truths in the passages cited (thus putting together the systematic teaching from Scripture on this subject);

therefore, being led by the Spirit should be understood not as *being led apart from*, but rather by *means of Scripture*.

From a broad and very important contextual perspective, this passage is not a *decision-making passage*. Paul is dealing with a contrast. That contrast is living under the legal dictates of the law versus living under the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit. It is a life orientation Paul is dealing with, not how the Spirit mystically *leads a person* to become a truck driver or find his future spouse.

Galatians 5:18, 22, 23, and 25 are set in the context of *walking in* and *being led by* the Spirit, not decision-making. This passage deals with obedience to truth and living a fruitful Christian life.

Brown also cites Romans 12:1, 2 as a refutation to Friesen's teaching. Again, upon closer examination of this text, it does not say what Brown strongly implies. The wording in the King James Version of the phrase "perfect will of God" may contribute to the confusion. Wuest deals specifically with verse 2b in his *Word Studies of the Greek New Testament*:

"That" is eis, which often shows result. When the saint in dependence upon the Spirit renovates his mental processes, the result will be that he will "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." "Prove" is dokimazo, "to put to the test for the purpose of approving, and finding that the thing tested meets the specifications laid down, to put one's approval upon it." As a result of the Spirit's control of the mental processes of the saint, the latter is enabled to put his life to the test for the purpose of approving it, the specifications being that it conform to the Word of God, and thus, experiencing what obedience is to the Word, and finding out what it feels like to have the Word saturate and control the life, he sees that it really is the Word of God and puts his approval upon it. Our Lord Jesus was speaking of the same thing when He said, "If any man will to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). "Perfect" is teleios, "brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness."⁵³

⁵³ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans*, vol. 1 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 208-209.

Regarding Romans 12:2b, the *MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version* states,

renewal of your mind. That kind of transformation can occur only as the Holy Spirit changes our thinking through consistent study and meditation of Scripture (Ps. 119:11; cf. Col. 1:28; 3:10, 16; Phil. 4:8). The renewed mind is one saturated with and controlled by the word of God. **Good...acceptable...perfect.** Holy living of which God approves. These words borrow from OT sacrificial language and describe a life that is morally and spiritually spotless, just as the sacrificial animals were to be (cf. Lev. 22:19-25).⁵⁴

This context (Romans 12), as well as that of Galatians, Colossians, and Ephesians, is not a *decision-making* context, nor is it a *discover-the-will-of-God* context. For Brown (or anyone else for that matter) to “use” these passages to refute Friesen’s teaching concerning the will of God or how a believer should make decisions only makes the matter worse since none of these passages do what Brown is “using” them to do!

Point Three: The Mystical/Experiential Position

Touchy/Feely Terminology

Some writers who have a reasonably balanced theology about ministry still use terms, phrases, and words that confuse. They use words and phrases such as, “sensing a call,” “what does a call feel like,” a mysterious “call in the night,” “experiencing a call,” and “do you truly feel this call is from God.” Tim Challies introduces his online article, “The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer,” this way,

The call to ministry is indeed a subjective thing. We use phrases like “feeling called” and “sensing a call.” Sometimes we may talk about “discerning” a call or “wrestling with” a call. If you are in one of those categories of thinking, how can you get beyond such internal deliberation and get more objective about ministry aspirations? If you’re

⁵⁴ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 1672.

discerning a call to ministry, the following ten questions may help you re-locate a “gut feeling” to one of mind and heart.⁵⁵

As spot on as Challies seems to be in some points from his list of questions, he still is very loose with the idea of “sensing,” “calling,” and “feeling.” Now, if this is all part of the 1 Timothy 3:1 desire, it is biblically legitimate. However, he expresses himself with very mystical, feeling-oriented terminology.

Challies concludes his article by stating, “Answering these questions provide[s] a good start for discerning your sense of calling to ministry.”⁵⁶ The wording Challies chooses is very subjective, mystical, and, to say the least, non-objective and non-propositional. When the conversation about ministry is discussed using these terms, solid, objective, yea, biblical answers cannot be offered. The Bible is an objective, propositional document. It discusses vocational ministry but not in these terms, not with language which cannot be subjected to proper examination. How can a feeling be examined objectively? How can an experience be examined objectively, theologically, or intellectually?

In an article posted on Gotquestions.org entitled, “How can I know if I have received a call to ministry?” the terms and phraseology of confirmation or calling to ministry are set in very emotional, feeling-oriented, and subjective/mystical terms. In the second paragraph of the article, the author poses two questions. The subjective, mystical flavor of both should be noted:

In confirming any calling, it is important to first examine your heart and motivation (Jeremiah 17:9). *Do you truly feel* this call is from God, or is it a personal desire?

⁵⁵ Tim Challies, “The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer,” Challies.com, entry posted September 26, 2016, <https://www.challies.com/sponsored/the-10-questions-anyone-considering-a-call-to-ministry-must-answer/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

...*Are you feeling 'called'* because you think that in order to be “most Christian” you must work in a distinctly “Christian” ministry? [emphasis added by researcher]⁵⁷

This author establishes *feeling* as a basis by which to determine, at least in part, whether you are “called” to ministry. This is not unusual. How should one think about and respond to this type of mysticism, subjectivism, and experience-oriented language?

The blog, Valiant for Truth by Westminster Seminary California, posted an article entitled, “A Pastor’s Reflections: How Do I Know If I’m Called?” in which the author uses touchy/feely terms several times to describe an internal call, and his in particular.

The internal call is the personal sense that one has...but the man doesn’t have an internal sense that he’s called to the pastorate... When I was in college I volunteered to teach Jr. High Sunday School. I did this because I sensed an internal call to do so... I volunteered to teach the college Sunday School class for the same reasons—I sensed a call to do so... You therefore need both an internal call, a personal sense that you need to serve as a pastor, as well as the external call, the confirmation and encouragement from the church that you genuinely possess the gifts to pursue the pastorate.⁵⁸

Besides these repeated, feeling-oriented phrases, indicating some sort of sense (how does one detect, understand, or rightly interpret a *sense*?) to do something, he never cites one text of Scripture. Instead, he makes the following statements, “Speaking from my own experience, I can remember having a sense...How does this work in real life? Again, drawing upon my own experience.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ S. Michael Houdmann, “How can I know if I have received a call to ministry?” Gotquestions.org, <https://www.gotquestions.org/call-to-ministry.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁵⁸ J. V. Fesko, “A Pastor’s Reflections: How Do I Know if I’m Called?” Valiant for Truth, Westminster Seminary California, entry posted January 13, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160403114131/http://wscal.edu:80/blog/a-pastors-reflections-how-do-i-know-if-im-called> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Even though this article has some practical advice, these two glaringly unbiblical ways of communicating about such a sober and serious topic (sense—personal experience), once again convolute the whole discussion if not the entire subject under consideration. No one can or should depend on some sense for direction nor should someone cite personal experience as a basis of authority or advice for another. Again, the objective, sufficient, comprehensive, practical, and instructive Word of God was nowhere to be found in this article.

When an individual leaves the pages of God’s objective revelation, the only option remaining, though the category is broad and varied, is subjectivity. At that point, language begins to change. No longer can the discussion include “God’s Word says this, or the Bible instructs in this regard” since subjectivity has taken precedence over objectivity.

The discussion will include more than likely phrases such as those listed below. When questioned about an individual’s use of these types of phrases, the responses may be something like, *I just know it (i.e. the peace, feeling, sense, urge, etc.) was from God. Therefore, do not question the wisdom of it; do not ask me to explain the biblical process of it.*

I feel led or God is leading me...

God told me or God spoke to me...

God laid this on my heart...

I feel God is calling me...

I am sensing the Lord’s direction...

I have peace about it...

None of these phrases are found in Scripture, yet they are some of the most commonly used in our churches when discussing or making decisions, including whether or not to consider vocational ministry. No one has any idea where feelings, impressions, urges, or hunches come

from, and certainly has no intelligent way to understand the message, let alone interpret the meaning of it.

One of the objections given when these “touchy/feely” phrases are dismissed is that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is limited. In other words, some think if *only* the Bible is used (which is propositional, objective, recorded truth), then the ministry of the Holy Spirit is limited. He, therefore, cannot communicate some other way apart from the Bible.

One of the foundational issues that must be established is: every believer must be willing to conclude what the Bible concludes regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Once the Apostolic age was over, and the apostles and prophets were gone, the record of God’s communication to man was ended. It is closed and fully recorded in the Bible.

As the New Testament progresses toward completion, the extra-biblical communication is concluding. The following questions are essentially hypothetical, yet address the mystical, touchy/feely issue at hand. If the Holy Spirit’s impressions, nudges, sensations or, otherwise, mystical communications were actual...

- How would one know absolutely it was from the Holy Spirit?
- How would one clearly interpret the impulse?
- What exactly did the Holy Spirit say?
- What exactly did the Holy Spirit mean by what He said?

How is one bodily sensation distinguished from another? In other words, what is the difference in the *nature* of a divine mystical feeling and a feeling of excitement, sadness, tiredness, and the like? The body (where feelings originate) remains under the curse of sin (still waiting to be redeemed fully—Romans 8:23). It is therefore fruitless, not to mention ridiculous,

to try to get some type of indication from a bodily sensation. If one wants to argue the Holy Spirit does not use bodily sensations, but spiritual sensations, what does that even mean?

Scripture does not provide a way to test a feeling, urge, or sensation. If the communication is not given in rational or propositional form, then there is no way to understand it. It cannot be processed by the mind. If it cannot be understood or interpreted, it certainly cannot be authoritative or binding for the believer.

Below are nearly thirty references indicating God, the Holy Spirit, an angel, or some voice is speaking for God. They are all in the Book of Acts.

Examples of Divine Communication in Acts:

Acts 7:3, 6, 7, 30-34

Acts 8:26, 29

Acts 9:4-6, 10-16

Acts 10:3-6, 13-16, 19, 20, 31-32

Acts 11:7-9, 12, 13, 28

Acts 12:7, 8

Acts 13:2

Acts 16:6, 7, 9

Acts 20:23

Acts 21:4, 11

Acts 22:18-21

Acts 23:11

Acts 27:23, 24

These references demonstrate the fact that God did speak in a variety of ways during the time Scripture was being recorded. Now that period of time is over, and the full and final record is here—the Bible.

Nowhere does God's Word say the Holy Spirit will function according to the methods assumed in the above hypothetical questions. Nowhere does Scripture instruct the believer to ascertain something accurate from an impression, nudge, urge, or sensation.

The Bible holds the believer responsible to read, interpret, and apply the truths of God. Therefore, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not limited at all. He is doing what Scripture said He would do, teaching the believer truth and enabling the believer to understand and obey truth. In his book, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*, Arthur L. Johnson contributes to this problem of subjectivism:

Many difficulties arise when a subjective urge, identified as God's revelation, is not open to any public test of truth. The subjective factor is itself without rational content and therefore cannot properly be called either true or false. It just "is." To say something is either true or false is to imply that it has rational content. The words **true** and **false** apply properly only to propositions. [Teacher's note: the word "proposition" indicates an expression in language of something that can be believed, doubted, denied, or is either true or false.] If someone claims to have a "word from God" and that "message" was not given in words, they the "prophet" has interpreted it during the articulation process. This interpretation is the "prophet's" judgment of what the impression meant. How does he know that this is what the urge means? Perhaps even more significantly, how are we, who have not had the impression, to test whether or not his interpretation is correct?

Another difficulty concerns the source of the message. How is anyone, the "prophet" himself or his hearers, to determine if the source of that prophecy was really God? Might it not just as well have been his own desires, the effect of a physical disorder, some psychological quirk, or even "the father of lies"? What test is available? If the experience was truly nonrational, without cognitive content, no test seems to apply, not even the test of Scripture itself. And we must keep in mind that we are commanded to "test the spirits" (**1 John 4:1**).⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Arthur L. Johnson, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 120.

Regarding the online article cited above (page 63), “How can I know if I have received a call to ministry” if there is no way to subject what is “felt” to the test of God’s Word, it cannot be concluded with any authority. A feeling is just that, a feeling. It is not objective. It has no rational content. It is not propositional. It is not something the mind can think about, consider, reflect on, and determine the message or interpret the meaning. It has no understandable content; therefore, it carries no instruction or authority. Therefore, it cannot be binding. It cannot be tested biblically because it is not stated in propositional form.

These touchy/feely terms and phrases sound so warm, inviting, non-threatening, and palatable to the emotionally-driven and experientially-oriented person. However, the fact of the theological matter is, they are not biblical. They are dangerous. They are confusing. They cannot be tested with Scripture. They have no place in any serious discussion about determining whether someone should consider vocational, biblical office ministry.

To conclude this treatment of touchy/feely terminology, consider the following quoted statements from the periodical, “Sowing & Reaping.” These statements from the article, “The Unfolding of God’s Call,” illustrate the mysticism, thus inherent confusion and potential danger when thinking, considering, and deciding on this basis.

...I started to feel
...That sense of “calling” stayed with me
...he felt that God might be calling me into the ministry
...That same sense of “God’s calling on my life” has stayed with me for the past 24 years
...I have always been certain of the “call.” God’s call to serve in _____
...My pastor is firmly convinced that every Christian needs to answer the “call to go” before he decides to stay in America.
...God spoke to my heart in a very real way, and I felt compelled to offer myself to God
...After becoming convinced that God had called me to be a missionary
...I was sure that God had called us to work with the _____
...God has called my family and me to start a church in the _____
...God’s call on my life

...I have come to see that God will reveal His calling for us as we faithfully submit to Him daily.⁶¹

These statements were part of a single page story in the article. Mysticism is alive and well. The article contained nothing about evaluation by a local church. Scripture was not cited as a basis for needed qualifications to fill the biblical office. The entire summarized testimony of a man entering the ministry and taking his family with him was purely mystical. It was based on subjective feelings and receiving a message directly from God in his heart. The danger of this is self-evident based on the theology developed.

Continuing Revelation to Some

This sub point, under the mystical/experiential position, is similar to the first sub point; yet, it seems to be more obvious in not only allowing for but building a calling theology on the fact that God still directly communicates with man. The following excerpt from an article submitted to *Christianity Today* by Seminary Grad School Guide, clearly shows the thorough mysticism often part of the discussion of vocational ministry. The author, Kara Miller, begins by discussing a young man's personal testimony and ends by citing a statement by a staff member of Calvin Theological Seminary:

In the midst of what seemed to be a plush lifestyle, Twigg began to sense that God was speaking to him, sometimes even audibly.... At its root, a calling is God reaching out to man in a way that is experienced subjectively, even mysteriously, by the individual... "I find God's internal call to be quite subjective and even mysterious," says Alvern Gelder,

⁶¹ David Shumate, "The Unfolding of God's Call," *Sowing & Reaping* 149 (January-February 2000): 2.

director of mentored ministries at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.⁶²

The obvious, direct communication acknowledged, admitted, and even extolled, in this article is incredible. This strain of mysticism is rampant among professing believers and in the context of determining if one should pursue vocational ministry. Couched in the language of many is the emphasis that God can and does still communicate directly with people.

Experience being Instructive, Understandable, Authoritative, and Binding

In her article, “Experiencing a Call to Ministry,” Juli Nelson says,

For most people, recognizing and responding to a call to ministry is a process. *It may start with a mysterious “call in the night” ...*

Recently, in rereading the conversation between the woman of Samaria and Jesus at a well, *I was struck by the elements of “call” that I saw in that story...* But Jesus, in naming her brokenness (five marriages and involvement in a sixth relationship), also named the societal/universal brokenness (only men could write a writ of divorce in that society). *In doing so, he liberated her to run back to her village as a proclaimer—as a preacher—and “many Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony” (John 4:39).*

My own call to ministry involved a personal sense of God’s claim on me but also a generous amount of spiritual nurture—an affirmation of that call... Then the spiritual nurture began as I confided in a mature Christian woman. Her open-ended question jump started my journey to ministry. “Do you think you might be experiencing a call to ministry?” she asked.

The feelings were compelling enough to explore the possibility of seminary work. [emphasis added by researcher]⁶³

Scripture addresses experience as very fallible, inferior, and non-objective. Experiences are very subjective and non-authoritative. Though experience is a broad category covering a

⁶² Kara Miller, “Are You Being Called?” Seminary Grad School Guide, *Christianity Today*, <http://www.seminarygradschool.com/article/Are-You-Being-Called-to-Ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁶³ Juli Nelson, “Experiencing a Call to Ministry,” *Womenministers.ag.org*, <http://www.womenministers.ag.org/articles/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

variety of possibilities, the common denominator is subjectivity, non-rational, non-cognitive data or knowledge to consider, think through, evaluate, analyze, or ponder reflectively. Experience is something felt, sensed, or emotionally received. To the mystic, the one convinced he or she can receive, understand, interpret, and act with confidence based on experience, it is powerful, authoritative, and binding.

Peter addresses this very issue in his second epistle:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. (21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:16-21).

The text is clearly Peter's comments about his *personal experience* at the transfiguration of Christ, and what an *experience* that must have been. That personal experience, however, is used as a backdrop to establish something far more certain and reliable than what one sees, hears, or feels.

The word translated *more sure* in v. 19 is the Greek word *bebaios* (949).⁶⁴ It means “fixed, sure, certain. Figuratively, that upon which one may build, rely on, trust. That which does not fail or waver, immovable and on which one may rely.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 331.

⁶⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, June, 1992), 896.

As a caution to someone who may try to read between the lines in this discussion, what Peter is not saying is important. The words *more sure* should not be taken to mean or imply in any way that “experience is somewhat certain, the Bible is just more certain.”

Peter is not intending to lend any credibility to experience but, on the contrary, to steer the reader away from fallible personal experience to the fully reliable Word of God. The text is not implying that experience is a close second to God’s Word as being trustworthy. It is doing just the opposite. It is minimizing purposefully and intentionally the trustworthiness of experience.

As you examine the text, it is not an issue of favorable comparison but a sharp and distinct contrast. The one thing (experience) is not reliable, consistent, or to be trusted regardless of how real it seems or feels. The other thing is always without question reliable, permanently fixed, absolutely sure, and unquestionably certain.

This Greek term *bebaios* is translated in other texts as follows:

Hebrews 6:19 – steadfast (KJV)

Romans 4:16 – sure (KJV)
– certain (NASB)

2 Corinthians 1:7 – steadfast (KJV)
– firmly grounded (NASB)

Hebrews 2:2 – steadfast (KJV)
– proved unalterable (NASB)

Hebrews 3:6 – firm (KJV)

2 Peter 1:10 – sure (KJV)
– certain (NASB)

In his study Bible, MacArthur comments about this text:

This translation could indicate that the eyewitness account of Christ's majesty at the Transfiguration confirmed the Scriptures. However, the Greek word order is crucial in that it does not say that the transfiguration confirmed the Scriptures. It says "and we have more sure the prophetic word." That original arrangement of the sentence supports the interpretation that Peter is ranking Scripture over experience. The prophetic word (Scripture) is more complete, more permanent and more authoritative than the experience of anyone. More specifically, the Word of God is a more reliable verification of the teachings about the person, atonement and second coming of Christ than even the genuine first hand experiences of the Apostles themselves.⁶⁶

Peter follows up by saying, "you better *take heed*" to what Scripture says (2 Peter 1:19a).

R. C. Sproul makes the point that "the prophetic word of Scripture is a more solid proof than even the spectacular experience of witnessing the transfiguration."⁶⁷

This passage is Peter's reflection and evaluation on his own *personal experience* of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus recorded in Matthew 17:1-6. Peter *saw* with his own two eyes and *heard* with his own two ears (and felt with all the emotions possible) the sights and sounds of the manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ. What an *experience* that would have been!

After all the incredible and mind-boggling observations Peter actually sees and hears (remember he actually and literally saw the glory of Christ and heard the voice of God), he makes this powerfully significant statement in v. 19. Do not trust experience!

Mysticism and experientialism is alive and well when it comes to discerning the call of God into vocational ministry. It is important to identify it, mark it, avoid it, and help others do the same.

⁶⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997), 1954.

⁶⁷ R. C. Sproul, *New Geneva Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., April 1995), 1980.

The Apostle Paul writes to a church inundated with and influenced by mystical philosophers claiming to know what they know by either empiricism, intuition, or both. Paul must address this false method of “knowing” and, in this text, that of “knowing” *God*. The doctrine of epistemology (how one proposes to know what he claims to know) is at the heart of this text and, more broadly, this subject of determining if one should consider vocational ministry:

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit, which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

After elaborating on the total inadequacy of human reason to provide help in solving the problems of man (1:18-2:8), Paul describes what does speak to man's problems—the wisdom of God (2:6-7) in contrast to the wisdom of man (1:19-20). In the next seven verses (2:10-16), Paul explains in three basic and successive steps the transmission of God's wisdom to man.

First is revelation (2:10-11): the act of God the Holy Spirit imparting truth incapable of being discovered by man's unaided reason to Bible writers. Second is inspiration (2:12, 13): the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling the Bible writers to write down in God-chosen words infallibly the truth revealed. Third is illumination (2:14-16): the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling believers to understand the truth given by revelation and written down by inspiration.

It is interesting Paul not only discusses the only way one *can know* God (this, of course, has strong implications to biblical sufficiency) in 2:10-16, but he also explains how one *cannot*

know God (this, too, has strong implications to sufficiency) in 2:9. Paul wrote this passage to a radical group that stands out in history as the most self-proclaimed intellectual of all people—the Greeks. They were a race of creative thinkers. Their sole instrument used to pierce through the mysteries of existence was their own human reason (again, an issue of epistemology).

Paul was raised and trained by the best. Thus, by making the following statement, he not only instructs, but testifies to the fact he has turned his back away from his formal, pre-salvation training. He says in v. 9, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Eye and Ear

Man cannot know God by empiricism, observation, investigation, objective evidences, or scientific experiments. Similarities should be noted between this phrase, “eye and ear,” and the conclusion previously discussed by Peter in his second epistle (2 Peter 1:16-21). These external experiences and observations, once again, are here said to be lacking woefully, inadequate, and insufficient for grasping spiritual truth. Paul and Peter agree!

Heart of man

Man cannot know God by intuition, reasoning, musings, contemplations, or subjectivism. Man cannot come up with knowledge about God through an intuitive hunch, feeling, or mystical sensation. This second source (intuition) that Paul says is totally and completely inadequate to gain knowledge of God is akin to, if not the grandmother of, what today is expressed by some as mysticism.

An explanation of mysticism is necessary because of its emphasis in the topic of the “call of God” to vocational ministry. Though the glaring errors in both Kara Miller’s and Juli Nelson’s

articles have been the catalyst for this discussion, many of the articles read by the researcher have used mystical terminology and emphasized, whether directly or indirectly by implication, the same error.

Johnson, in his aforementioned book, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*, explains mysticism this way,

There are two aspects to mysticism that we must recognize to avoid confusion. First there is a psychological aspect, often called the mystical experience. Then there are the beliefs that arise from that experience. These philosophical and religious beliefs constitute a set of ideas sometimes collectively called mysticism. However, the term mysticism is often used for both the experience itself and the belief resulting from it. Our first major concern is to answer the question, What makes an experience mystical?

When we speak of a mystical experience we refer to an event that is completely within the person. It is totally subjective. It is the lack of objectivity in the mystical experience that presents the major difficulty for the mystic when he tries to justify his claim to knowledge.

We are now ready to develop a more formal, definition of mysticism. It will be helpful to do this from three slightly different perspectives: first, the psychological aspects; second: the philosophical implications; and finally, the theological expressions.

The **psychological dimensions** involve assigning primary significance to inward, subjective, non-rational impressions. It involves seeing intense, non-cognitive, subjective experiences as having such deep significance that they should be sought. One's life should be directed by them.

For many people, mysticism is an unexamined psychological attitude – one that while it may profoundly influence their lives, is not clearly understood and may not even be recognized. But for a knowledgeable mystic who has sought to understand his commitment to the mystic way, this **psychological attitude** is grounded in a **philosophical belief**. This belief sees truth and knowledge as attainable through mystical experience. All truth is tested by inner, subjective impressions rather than by its logical consistency or other rational considerations.⁷ When mystical states constitute an intense experience, this experience is seen as somehow a “union” with whatever is ultimate, and therefore as the proper fulfillment of human existence.⁸

When either the psychological attitude alone, or the more complete philosophical grasp, is translated into **theological terms**, the resulting view leads the person to equate his inner impressions or subjective states with the voice of God. Such a person, if he is a Christian, tends to believe that the activity of the Holy Spirit within us is expressed primarily through emotional or other non-cognitive aspects of our being. Having and “obeying” such experiences is what “being spiritual” is all about.

⁷Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual man* (New York; Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968)

⁸William Ralph Inge, *Mysticism in Religion* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1948), p.25. See also W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p.66⁶⁸

Point Four: The Bibliocentric Position

Calling

In the following definitions, no indication is evident in either that the term “calling” is employed to engage men in ministry today. In *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, Matthew George Easton provides the following definition of calling: “Calling—a profession, or as we usually say, a vocation (1 Corinthians 7:20). The ‘hope of your calling’ in Ephesians 4:4 is the hope resulting from your being called into the kingdom of God.”⁶⁹

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, defines “calling” in this way,

CALLING

kol'-ing (klesis, from kaleo, "I call"):

Is a New Testament expression. The word is used chiefly by Paul, though the idea and term are found also elsewhere. It has a definite, technical sense, the invitation given to men by God to accept salvation in His kingdom through Jesus Christ. This invitation is given outwardly by the preaching of the gospel, inwardly by the work of the Holy Spirit. With reference to Israel, it is on the part of God irrevocable, not repented of. Having in His eternal counsel called this people, He entrusted them with great gifts, and because He did thus enrich them, He also, in the course of time, summoned them to fulfill the task of initiating the world into the way of salvation, and of preparing salvation for the world. Therefore, He will not desert His people, for He Will not revoke that call (Romans 11:29). This calling is high or upward, in Christ, that is, made in heaven by God on account of Christ and calling man to heaven (Philippians 3:14). Similarly it is a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1); also a holy calling, holy in aim, means, and end (2 Timothy 1:9). Christians are urged to walk worthy of this calling (Ephesians 4:1) (the American Standard Revised Version and the Revised Version (British and American), but the King James Version has "vocation"). In it there is hope; it is the inspirer of hope, and furnishes for hope its supreme object (Ephesians 4:4). Men are exhorted so to live that God will count them worthy of their calling (2 Thessalonians 1:11). They are also urged to make

⁶⁸ Arthur L. Johnson, *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 20, 25, 26.

⁶⁹ M. G. Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1983).

their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). See ELECTION. There is a somewhat peculiar use of the word in 1 Corinthians 1:26 and 1 Corinthians 7:20, namely, that condition of life in which men were when God called them, not many of them wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, some circumcised, some uncircumcised, some bond, some free, some male, some female, some married, some unmarried.⁷⁰

Drew Hunter, of Zionsville Fellowship in Zionsville, Indiana, has given an online review of Dave Harvey's book, *Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry*. In his review, Hunter makes the following helpful observation,

One thing some readers (including myself) will wish were different is how the topic is framed. *The image used in the title and throughout the book are the "call" and "summons" to pastoral ministry. Although a thorough explanation of this idea is missing, with the picture of a telephone on the cover and language of hearing a summons from God throughout, we get an idea of what he means. While this is not the place for any thorough interaction with the idea of calling, the NT doesn't seem to frame pastoral ministry this way.* It speaks of godly, qualified men who desire to lead the church as elders (1 Tim 3:1-7), one or more of whom will likely be recognized and freed up to be the primary teacher/preacher (1 Tim 5:17). [emphasis added by researcher]⁷¹

MacArthur offers some help when discussing this topic. He comments on 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, "In the Epistles, being called by God (cf. V.17) always refers to an effectual call to salvation. The Apostle Paul's 'call' to be an apostle was synonymous with his 'call' to Christ for salvation. Remember Paul is a transitional figure and his office of apostle and method of being called to that office died with him."⁷²

⁷⁰ George Henry Trever, "Entry for 'CALLING'" Bible Study Tools Online, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/calling.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁷¹ Drew Hunter, "Book Review: Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry by Dave Harvey," Thegospelcoalition.org, *Themelios* Vol. 38, Issue 1, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/review/am-i-called-the-summons-to-pastoral-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁷² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 271.

Under “Answers” on the website, 9Marks.org, the question is asked, “Does a pastor have to be ‘called’ by God?” The following answer is given. It is absolutely accurate:

On the one hand, there seems to be no biblical indication that the New Testament office of elder or pastor requires a special “calling.”

1. The New Testament gives no indication that a pastor must be called by God in the same way that prophets and high priests were called in the Old Testament (Jer. 1:5; Heb. 5:4). Moreover, the New Testament never applies the terminology of “calling” to the pastoral office, but only to the Christian life in general (2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1).

2. If the New Testament taught that pastors must be specially called by God, it seems that there would be some sort of discussion of how that happens and how to discern whether one has been called. Instead, Paul writes, “Here is a trustworthy saying: if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Tim. 3:1). Paul doesn’t say, “If anyone wants to be a pastor, he must have a special, supernatural, subjective call from God,” but rather, “If *anyone* wants to be a pastor, he desires a good thing. Now here are the qualifications.”

That said, pastoral ministry is not for everyone. It’s spiritually demanding. It’s emotionally demanding. It’s physically demanding. It subjects a man and his family to extraordinary burdens and pressures. So, while we may or may not want to use the term “call” to describe it, a man should have a sober and informed commitment to the work of ministry before he seeks to pastor a church. He should also have a local church’s affirmation of his gifts and character.⁷³

Kevin DeYoung, in an article published by The Gospel Coalition entitled, “How Can I Tell if I’m Called to Pastoral Ministry?” offers the following introductory comment,

I’ve been asked the question many times, and I’m not sure I agree with it. The question often assumes that pastors, unique among all the vocations of the world, will (and sometimes *must*) have a powerful, divine, subjective call to ministry that overwhelmingly points them in their God-ordained direction. I don’t see support for that sort of normative experience in Scripture.

But I understand what young men are looking for. They understand that pastoral ministry is weighty work, not to be entered into lightly. So naturally they want to know that their inclinations are not self-serving and their direction is not a fool’s errand. They are looking for a few signposts along the way to show them that they’re not obviously on the wrong road. That’s a commendable impulse.⁷⁴

⁷³ Jonathan Leeman, “Does a pastor have to be ‘called’ by God?” 9Marks.org, <https://www.9marks.org/answer/does-pastor-have-be-called-god/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁷⁴ Kevin DeYoung, “How Can I Tell if I’m Called to the Pastoral Ministry?” Thegospelcoalition.org, entry posted February 15, 2013,

God's methodology began to change with Paul. The apostolic period was ending. The canon was closing. The method of putting men in ministry was beginning to change and shift. After Paul, the term "call" is never used again to describe how a pastor/teacher, bishop, elder, evangelist/church planter, or deacon is being selected, prepared, qualified, equipped, or dispatched to do ministry.

This point is crucial and must impact how one uses the term "call" today. The question is not: Does God still gift, equip, and place men in ministry? Absolutely, He does. Rather, the pertinent question must be: How does He place men in the ministry today?

Is it being honest theologically and exegetically if the distinct shift in methodology after Paul is not acknowledged? It is too obvious to be ignored. One cannot keep using the term "call" the way God did in the Old Testament and early New Testament without creating confusion in the church and, particularly, with young men who may sincerely have a 1 Timothy 3:1 desire for ministry.

According to the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration, words do matter. It does matter that God chose to stop using a word He used for thousands of years to describe a method of engaging men in the ministry.

<https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2013/02/15/how-can-i-tell-if-im-called-to-pastoral-ministry/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Local Church Authority and Accountability

Some ignorantly and maybe arrogantly advocate or strongly imply the decision can be unilateral. In the article, “Five Elements of the Call to Ministry,” Gilder says the following,

3. Announcing the call

A major step for every young minister is to announce before the church that he is sensing a call of God to enter the ministry. Some call it "announcing your call to preach" others use the term "surrendering to the ministry." This allows the church to know what God is doing in your life and encourages them to pray that you will follow His leadership.⁷⁵

This ignores the local church as the only institution authorized to identify (though someone *initially indicating* a 1 Timothy 3:1 desire is part of the overall process), evaluate, equip, and ordain the individual. It puts the proverbial cart before the horse. It bypasses the authority of the local church and makes her merely the affirmer of what the individual has determined. Gilder makes the following statement under the Fifth Element, “**5. Solidifying the call...**After the church has had sufficient time to witness the evidence of your call, you will want to ask the church to license you to preach. This is done by an official vote of the church and is a statement of their approval of your preparation for the ministry.”⁷⁶

The online newsletter, *Compelling Truth*, posts an article entitled, “How can I discern a call to ministry? How can I tell if I’ve been called to vocational ministry?” offering six considerations to discover whether a man has a call to ministry. The end of the article offers this statement, “A call to ministry also involves the affirmation of others at some point. Whether your local church or another Christian organization, acceptance with a group of believers offers strong

⁷⁵ Ray Gilder, “Five Elements of the Call to Ministry,” LifeWay.com, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Five-elements-of-the-call-to-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

confirmation that God has called you to serve in a vocational role to use your gifts to serve Him in a particular way.”⁷⁷

In this insightful comment, the writer gives merely cursory consideration at best to the local church. Nothing is even suggested regarding the necessary connection to the local church for identification, evaluation, recognition, or authorization for entrance into vocational ministry.

In the review of Dave Harvey’s book, *Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry* mentioned earlier, Hunter makes the following observation,

From beginning to end, Harvey sets the call to pastoral ministry within the context of the local church. *The decision to pursue pastoral ministry should be affirmed by those in a local church; much of the training should be done within the local church; and the reason for ministry should be a love for the church. This emphasis on godly character and pastoral gifting identified within the local church provide a robust approach to thinking about the pursuit of pastoral ministry.* [emphasis added by researcher]⁷⁸

In Tim Challies’ article “The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer,” Challies says the following,

5. Does your church affirm your calling? Here is another glaring omission in many aspiring ministers’ sense of calling. There really is no such thing as an autonomous feeling for ministry. If you are not currently a part of a Christian community that can affirm your gifts and qualifications, not a member of a church that could effectively “send you out,” you really have no business seeking to shepherd a flock. The question is not so much “Do you feel called?” but “Do your elders think you’re called?” or “Does your pastor encourage your aspiration to ministry?”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ S. Michael Houdmann, “How can I discern a call to ministry? How can I tell if I’ve been called to vocational ministry?” Compellingtruth.org, <https://www.compellingtruth.org/call-to-ministry.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁷⁸ Drew Hunter, “Book Review: Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry by Dave Harvey,” Thegospelcoalition.org, *Themelios* Vol. 38, Issue 1, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/review/am-i-called-the-summons-to-pastoral-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁷⁹ Tim Challies, “The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer,” Challies.com, entry posted September 26, 2016, <https://www.challies.com/sponsored/the-10-questions-anyone-considering-a-call-to-ministry-must-answer/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Challies rightly makes a strong appeal for desire for ministry to be expressed and affirmed by the local assembly. However, his use of mystical terminology, “sense of calling/feeling for ministry,” shows the need for a return to biblical language when discussing biblical issues—a key point to this research.

David P. Murray, in his article entitled “Am I Called to the Ministry?” rightly points out,

6. External confirmation

Before pursuing the ministry, or studies for the ministry, you should seek input from your local church. You should ask your pastor and elders to examine you in points 1-5 above and give you their own more objective opinion of whether you have the marks of a man called to the ministry. You should seek their prayerful and practical support in going forward. If they express doubt or disapproval, you should usually view that as the voice of God speaking through His Church.⁸⁰

Dr. Tommy Kiker posted an article entitled “Discerning the Call: Spurgeon’s Lectures,” to his blog, *The Pastor’s Corner with Dr. Tommy Kiker*, in which he makes the following comments based on a quote from Spurgeon’s *Lectures to My Students*,

The will of the Lord concerning pastors is made known through the prayerful judgment of his church. Spurgeon is right when he declares that the church is a powerful authority on the legitimacy and genuineness of one’s calling. He writes, “Churches are not all wise, neither do they all judge in the power of the Holy Ghost, but many of them judge after the flesh; yet I had sooner accept the opinion of a company of the Lord’s people than my own upon so personal a subject as my own gifts and graces.”

“If an individual claims the call of God on his life, but does not have the confirmation of a local body of believers, it should cause great hesitation on the part of those who might consider coming under his teaching.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ David P. Murray, “Am I Called to the Ministry?” Thegospelcoalition.org, entry posted June 7, 2010, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/am-i-called-to-the-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁸¹ Tommy Kiker, “Discerning the Call: Spurgeon’s Lectures,” Tommykiker.wordpress.com, entry posted June 25, 2013, <https://tommykiker.wordpress.com/2013/06/25/discerning-the-call-spurgeons-lectures/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Dr. Ray Pritchard of Keep Believing Ministries writes an article entitled “21 Ways to Prepare for the Ministry.” He encourages training through the local church. Though he does not give it the priority the researcher believes necessary, he does say,

17. Seek training through the local church.

I mention this because more and more churches offer internships, weeknight classes, training institutes, online courses, and other methods of ministerial training. In earlier generations training tended to happen on-the-job in real-world settings. Spurgeon trained hundreds of young men for the ministry in London in the 1800s through his college associated with the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Look around and see if your church, or a church near you, offers some sort of formal leadership training.⁸²

The significance of Acts 13 and 14 is paramount to establish the authority of the local church, and only the local church, to identify, recognize, evaluate, and authorize men and the mission they pursue. Acts 13 is not the first passage to record evangelistic efforts. It is not the first one to record individuals doing ministry. It is not the first one to mention local church outreach or shared financial support of one church to another. It is not the first one to mention the local church as an institution.

As previously mentioned, Acts is a book of transition. Things are becoming clearer (for example, the development of the church, the planting and reproduction of other churches, the establishment of leadership for the church) and taking shape developmentally.

Up until this point, God Himself was choosing, authorizing, and commissioning men and mission work directly (one such man was Philip being sent directly by God to give the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch). However, as the transition unfolds and becomes clearer, God delegates that privilege and responsibility to the local church. This eliminates unilateral entrance into vocational ministry. Men have no right to decide privately, pursue individually, and enter

⁸² Ray Pritchard, “21 Ways to Prepare for the Ministry,” Crosswalk.com, entry posted September 9, 2011, <http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/21-ways-to-prepare-for-the-ministry-11598759.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

unilaterally vocational ministry. There is a process. This process centers in the local church. The local church has been given authority by Christ, her Head.

What, then, is so significant about the Acts 13 and 14 texts? This is the first text to present clearly, in step-by-step, traceable form, New Testament church planting missions from beginning to end. This sets the local church as the locus of authority to authorize men and ministry.

The word *church* is mentioned no less than ten times before Acts 13. Previous chapters provide hints of order, structure, and leadership in local churches prior to Acts 13. Some hints and suggestions may be present as to how and when some of these local churches were established prior to Acts 13. However, no clear, observable, describable pattern of a local church identifies, recognizes, evaluates, and authorizes men for ministry as well as commissions them to plant churches until the church at Antioch makes this inaugural launch.

The local church is the only God-ordained ecclesiastical agency, organization, institution, or organism with the delegated authority and resources to authorize (and demand accountability for) men and the work they are sent to do. One thing should be abundantly clear: delegated responsibility and the right to authorize men and mission work has transitioned to one and only one place—the local church.

The local church at Antioch rightly assumes and acts on the authority delegated to her by the Great Shepherd. Three elements in this text are either mentioned explicitly or implied, each of which flows out of the responsibility and delegated authority given to the local church by her head, Jesus Christ. These three elements demonstrate the necessary process for men being authorized for vocational ministry.

First is the identification, recognition, and evaluation by the local assembly. This is determined by and results from the church's observations. The church (not just the elders) not only observed these men but also was blessed and benefitted by their ministry.

The church observed the following about Paul and Barnabas:

- Their ability to handle the Word (Acts 11:26).
- Their ability to handle responsibility (Acts 11:27-30).
- Their present ministry (Acts 13:2a).

Second, these men were recommended by the local assembly. The recognition of their God-given gifts and character was the basis for this recommendation.

Third, these men were authorized by the local assembly. One of the striking aspects of this development is Paul's subordination to the local church, even though he had been called by God directly, audibly, and experientially (Paul being the last man to have such an experience as a means of placing a man into ministry).

Even though he had that experience, even though he was authorized directly by God as an apostle, and even though he had ministered previously with those credentials, he now submits himself to the authority and process of the local church. In the view of the researcher, this is not only noteworthy but incredibly instructive as to a new pattern being established for authorizing men to vocational ministry.

It should be noted in verses 2-4, the local church and the Holy Spirit are functioning together, not independently. When any one of these three components are not part of the process of a local church, there is potential for great trouble.

For example, Acts 15:1-4:

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (2) When therefore Paul

and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (3) And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. (4) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

The place of the local church in handling this issue should be noted. The local church in Antioch discharged Paul and Barnabas (v. 2), and the local church in Jerusalem received them (v. 4).

The church discussed the troublesome teaching. A letter is sent back to Antioch along with chosen men. The place of the local church in responding to the issue in Acts 15:22 is important: “Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren.”

The letter reveals the focus of the problem—men went out from the Jerusalem church without *ecclesiastical authorization* (15:24b). Several different translations add clarity:

- “quite *unauthorized* by us” (The New Testament: A New Translation James Moffatt)⁸³
- “although we had given them *no such commission*” (The New Testament in the Translation of Monsignor Ronald Knox)⁸⁴
- “without our *authorization*” (Berean Study Bible & Holman Christian Standard Bible)⁸⁵
- “we did not *authorize* these men [to speak]” (GOD’S WORD Translation)⁸⁶

⁸³ Curtis Vaughan ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 536.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Biblehub.com, “Bible Hub,” Apple App Store, Vers. 1.0 (2016).
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-hub/id1090228108?mt=8> (June 28, 2017).

This is a very significant point. No one has unilateral, independent, authoritative, self-appointed entrance into the ministry. No one has individual and independent authority to ordain or commission themselves. That authority resides in one place—the local church.

The local church is God's only launching pad. The men who go must be observed, evaluated, recognized, gifted, qualified, and authorized properly by the local church.

Many pertinent questions could and probably should be asked, and the answer to each is the local church. Following are a few examples:

What ecclesiastical organization/organism did God...

1. Promise to build (Matthew 16:18)?
2. Indeed build (Acts 2:37-41)?
3. Give authority to (Matthew 18:15-20; Matthew 16:19; John 20:23)?
4. Require all believers to be part of (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 2:41-42)?
5. Determine to propagate via local church planting endeavors (Acts 13-14)?
6. Commit the care, defense, and support of the truth to (1 Timothy 3:15)?
7. Equip believers to serve in (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4:11-16)?
8. Establish official offices for (Ephesians 4:11)?
9. Give the responsibility of detecting and training official church officers to (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1)?
10. Give the command to make disciples to (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 14:21)?
11. Require attendance to (Hebrews 10:25)?
12. Give specific instructions to (epistles)?
13. Give ordinances to (1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Matthew 28:19)?

⁸⁶ Ibid.

14. Establish as the counseling center for believers (Romans 15:14)?
15. Promise to protect (Matthew 16:18b)?
16. Establish the pattern of cooperate meeting on the Lord's Day for (Acts 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2)?
17. Require the authorization of anyone who teaches and preaches from (Acts 15:1-24)?

Qualifications for the Office

John Barry, in his study Bible, makes insightful observations about Paul's list of qualifications given to Timothy:

Paul provides a list of qualifications for the individual desiring to serve the church as an overseer or elder. These qualifications emphasize the character of the leader, not the duties to be performed. Paul's emphasis on the untarnished reputation of the potential leader suggests a concern for the public perception of the church; he exhorts communities of faith to avoid appointing a leader whose respectability in the community is (or could be) questioned.⁸⁷

Qualifications are essential for the one desiring the pastoral office. Knute Larson and Max Anders emphasize this in their comments, "For the person desiring or under consideration for the position of pastoral leadership, Paul listed character qualities which were evidenced by certain observable behaviors. These were manners which should characterize the pastor's life."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ John D. Barry, *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 1 Tim. 3:1-7.

⁸⁸ Knute Larson and Max Anders, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 183.

In his book, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, MacArthur, regarding the kind of man God wants to shepherd His sheep, says,

The book of Titus addresses one of the most disturbing trends I've noticed: the disregard of God's guidelines for what kind of man He wants shepherding His sheep. Titus 1:9 tells what God wants the pastor to do, but first and foremost, verses 6-8 tell who he is to be. That is God's standard for any pastor's character and is thus the primary consideration in preparing for pastoral ministry.⁸⁹

In his commentary on the book of 1 Timothy, Adams adds to this discussion:

Note, the eldership is not an honorary office, (though it does carry honor with it), that requires little of those who fill it. It does not merely involve one's presence at ceremonial occasions. No. As the saying indicates, it is a **fine** (the word "good" does not adequately express the sentiment of the original) **work**. What that work entails is the overseeing of God's people as a shepherd oversees a flock....To be ordained (that is, set aside) to the office, one must have (to some extent; no one has them perfectly exhibited in his life) the qualities listed in verses 2-7.⁹⁰

MacArthur, in his commentary on the book of 1 Timothy, explains,

The church is called to be committed to maintaining leadership that is godly. The church is responsible to measure men by the standard of **above reproach**. In 3:2-7, Paul lists four areas in which a man aspiring to church leadership may be evaluated as to whether he is **above reproach**. These have to do with his moral character, home life, spiritual maturity, and public reputation.⁹¹

These character qualities are non-negotiable and must be considered in the evaluation process by the church. Therefore, a man's qualifications for the office are observed, recognized, and established by the evaluation process conducted by the local church. Not only is this man a qualified man, but he is an evaluated man as well, thereby determining his qualification for the office.

⁸⁹ John MacArthur et al., *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1995), 87-88.

⁹⁰ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 19-20.

⁹¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 103-104.

Gifts for the Office – He is gifted and is also a gift to the Church

In commenting on Ephesians 4:11, Peter Thomas O’Brien says,

While in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 the ‘varieties of gifts’ are the diverse ministries allocated by the Spirit and the ability to exercise them, here the gifts are the persons themselves, ‘given’ by the ascended Christ to his people to enable them to function and develop as they should. Christ supplies the church with gifted ministers.¹⁰⁰ Four (or five) categories are mentioned: *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers*.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Best, 388, comments: ‘The gifts are not gifts made to people but gifts of people, people who have a particular role in the church’. Following Calvin, he adds: ‘it may be assumed however that the charisma appropriate to the role which each is to play will have been bestowed’.

¹⁰¹ Paul enumerates and distinguishes his list through the expression τοὺς μὲν ... τοὺς δὲ ... τοὺς δέ.... The definite article probably belongs directly with the following nouns, rather than functions as a substantive with the nouns serving as predicates. Accordingly, the rendering ‘[he gave] the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, etc.’ is preferred to the usual translation, ‘[he gave] some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, etc.’ So H. Merklein, *Das kirchliche Amt*, 73–75; Schnackenburg, 180; Lincoln, 249; R. A. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 109; and E. Best, ‘Ministry in Ephesians’, in *Essays*, 157–77, esp. 162; cf. BDF §250. Against this S. E. Porter, *Idioms*, 113, suggests that the μὲν ... δέ, when coordinated with the article, causes it to function much like a pronoun, here in a partitive sense: ‘he gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers’.⁹²

Kenneth Wuest, speaking of Ephesians 4:11 says, “In verse 11, Paul identifies the gifts spoken of in verse 7. They are gifted men, given to the Church. There is an intensive pronoun in the Greek text. ‘He Himself gave,’ and no other.”⁹³

In his commentary on the book of Ephesians, Adams notes,

The gifts that He gave to His Church are also thought of as the officers in the Church (vv. 11-16). He **gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers**. As may be clearly seen in the original (the English is

⁹² Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 297.

⁹³ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians*, vol. 1 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 100.

deceptive), there are four groups here: **apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers**. The last group is expressed by two characterizations (the two works of the elder: teaching and ruling).

Two of these offices are extinct (**apostles and prophets**). As we have already noted, they were foundational offices, through which revelation was given. The foundation has been laid, the revelation is in the Bible; there is need no more for either. **Evangelists** are what we now call missionaries – those who go to places where the gospel has not been heard to proclaim Christ and found churches. The **shepherd/teachers**, on the other hand, minister to the church. They shepherd the flock and they teach the Word of God to them.⁹⁴

In his commentary on the book of Ephesians, MacArthur mentions,

After his parenthetical analogy (vv. 9-10) from Psalm 68:18, Paul continues his explanation of spiritual gifts. Christ not only gives gifts to individual believers but to the total Body. To each believer He gives special gifts of divine enablement, and to the church overall He gives specially gifted men as leaders (see v. 8, “He gave gifts to men”) – **as apostles...prophets...evangelists, and...pastors and teachers**.

He gave emphasizes the sovereign choice and authority given to Christ because of His perfect fulfillment of the Father’s will. Not only **apostles and prophets** but also **evangelists, ...pastors and teachers** are divinely called and placed.

Evangelists (euangelistes) are men who proclaim good news.

Pastors translates poimen, whose normal meaning is shepherd. It emphasizes the care, protection and leadership of the man of God for the flock. **Teachers** (didaskaloi) has to do with the primary function of **pastors**.

How is the pastor-teacher related to the bishop and elder? Pastors are not distinct from bishops and elders; the terms are simply different ways of identifying the same people...Textual evidence indicates that all three terms refer to the same office.⁹⁵

Each of these men rightly acknowledge the necessity and specificity of pastoral gifts. The giftedness for pastoral office is given or granted by the Lord of the church Himself. The shepherd not only is gifted as a pastor/teacher/bishop/elder but Christ gives him to the church as a gift. Without this “gift package,” the shepherd cannot function as God intends in the pastoral office.

⁹⁴ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 94.

⁹⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 140-144.

Desire for the Office

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, gives the following definition for desire, "**Desire**—literally, 'stretch one's self forward to grasp'; 'aim at': a distinct *Greek* verb from that for 'desireth.' What one does voluntarily is more esteemed than what he does when asked (1 Co 16:15). This is utterly distinct from ambitious desires after office in the Church. (Jam 3:1)."⁹⁶

Daniel Arichea and Howard Hatton's *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, also defines *desire*:

Aspires (literally "to stretch oneself out," New King James Version [NKJV] "desires") is here used not in a bad but in a good sense. It is one of many Greek words that is used to describe a strong desire to do something or to accomplish a particular goal, so "greatly desire." In many languages this can sometimes be translated with the use of figurative language; for example, NIV "sets his heart."⁹⁷

In the same article mentioned earlier, Kiker, makes the following comments regarding several quotes from Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*,

An intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. We have all heard, "If you can do anything else, then do it!" Spurgeon argued that if you could be content doing any other work then you most certainly should do it. He exclaimed, "A man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants." Spurgeon clarifies that this desire must be one that is God honoring not self-promoting. He explains, "If a man can detect, after the most earnest self-examination, any other motive than the glory of God and the good of souls in his seeking the bishopric, he had better

⁹⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 409.

⁹⁷ Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 64.

turn aside from it at once; for the Lord will abhor the bringing of buyers and sellers into his temple.”⁹⁸

Kiker has cited Spurgeon’s expression of the 1 Timothy 3:1 desire rightly. This is part of the process and journey of determining whether a young man should consider vocational ministry. Desire for this office is the subjective component of the overall issue. Desires must be evaluated as well as the man’s character and gifts.

In his article entitled, “The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer,” Tim Challies says, “Some people are suspicious of men who seem especially desirous of ministry. And yet in 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul says that anybody who aspires to pastoral ministry desires something noble. The apostle Peter says that pastors should shepherd eagerly (1 Pet. 5:2).”⁹⁹

This obviously is the subjective component of becoming engaged in biblical office ministry. It is clear Paul lays this out as an all-consuming passion to be a bishop. Certainly, this would involve, if not come after, actually understanding what the office of a bishop is and what it entails. This subjective ambition must be subjected to tests and hard questions, such as: what is it that you are ambitious for, what do you want in ministry, what is it that you are desirous for, and the like.

Ambition alone (as sincere and biblical as it may be) does not qualify a man for biblical office ministry and must be made clear to anyone seeking, aspiring to, or having ambition for the

⁹⁸ Tommy Kiker, “Discerning the Call: Spurgeon’s Lectures,” Tommykiker.wordpress.com, entry posted June 25, 2013, <https://tommykiker.wordpress.com/2013/06/25/discerning-the-call-spurgeons-lectures/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

⁹⁹ Tim Challies, “The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer,” Challies.com, entry posted September 26, 2016, <https://www.challies.com/sponsored/the-10-questions-anyone-considering-a-call-to-ministry-must-answer/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

office of pastor. Paul gives Timothy explicit instructions to avoid ordaining any young man too quickly. This crucial admonition is found in 1 Timothy 5:22. Following are several translations of this verse to aid in understanding:

– “Do not be over-hasty in laying on hands in ordination” (The New English Bible: New Testament)¹⁰⁰

– “Never be in a hurry to ordain a presbyter” (The New Testament: A New Translation James Moffatt)¹⁰¹

– “Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader” (New Living Translation)¹⁰²

– “Don’t be too quick to appoint anyone as an elder” (Holman Christian Standard Bible)¹⁰³

– “Do not ordain anyone hastily” (International Standard Version)¹⁰⁴

– “Do not ordain any one hastily” (Weymouth New Testament)¹⁰⁵

This solemn instruction must be followed by both the church eldership in evaluating young men, as well as the young men who are aspiring to biblical ministry.

¹⁰⁰ Curtis Vaughan ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 983.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 983.

¹⁰² Biblehub.com, “Bible Hub,” Apple App Store, Vers. 1.0 (2016).
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-hub/id1090228108?mt=8> (June 28, 2017).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

In summary, only one category of research proves satisfactory—the bibliocentric position. Even though imperfections are within it because all men are flawed, the researcher found good, solid conclusions among these men.

Their view of, respect for, and approach to Scripture was good. The hermeneutics employed in their study were healthy. Their understanding of the subject was grammatical, contextual, historical, literal, practical, and pastoral.

The other three categories were found lacking. Identifying the errors in each was somewhat basic. Sadly, these represented the majority of material researched. Thankfully, the church of Jesus Christ has all she needs to identify, recognize, evaluate, prepare, and authorize gifted, qualified shepherds with passionate desire for vocational ministry.

CHAPTER 3:

ESTABLISHING THE CRITERIA NECESSARY TO DISCUSS “THE CALL” WITH THEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY, BIBLICAL ACCURACY, AND PRACTICAL CLARITY

Words Matter

Words matter. Biblical words matter. Biblical words matter because of the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration. Biblical words matter because of the doctrine of authorial intent (in other words, what does the text say, and what did the biblical author mean by what he said in that text?). How did the original audience hear it in their life context? Biblical words matter because of the doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture. This term means the Scriptures are clear. They can and must be studied and understood by God’s people. Systematic Theologian, Charles Hodge, clarifies, regarding this term and its implications, “The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people. They have the right and are bound to read and interpret it for themselves; so that their faith may rest on the testimony of the Scriptures, and not on that of the Church.”¹⁰⁶ Words do matter, and the issues of concern are addressed in detail in this chapter.

The Canon of Scripture is the theologian’s base line—the sole source for thinking God’s thoughts, discovering His opinion about the subject at hand—establishing the necessary criteria to discuss the call with biblical and theological accuracy and clarity. One need not go anywhere else to find all that is necessary for this discussion.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 183.

The canon is the rule of faith and practice for the church. It is described concisely by John Barry as “the official list of texts determined to be both inspired by God and authoritative for the church.”¹⁰⁷

What does the word *canon* mean? The English word *canon*, derived from the Greek *kanon*, is translated in the King James Version as *rule* as seen in these verses:

2 Corinthians 10:13 “But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the **rule** which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.”

2 Corinthians 10:15 “Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our **rule** abundantly.”

Galatians 6:16 “And as many as walk according to this **rule**, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”

Philippians 3:16 “Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same **rule**, let us mind the same thing.”

According to Zodhiates, it is “anything straight used in examining other things.”¹⁰⁸

Following are two technical definitions of the term canon: “**Canon.** The term ‘canon’ (Gk. *kanōn* ‘law, regulation, rule of conduct,’ a transliteration of Heb. *qāneh* ‘reed’) refers to the whole of the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God. Their authority rests on their ‘God-breathed’ (Gk. *theópneustos*; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) nature...”¹⁰⁹

Biblical theology demands as its presupposition a fixed extent of biblical literature: this extent is traditionally fixed, since the era of the great theological controversies, in the Canon of the NT. ‘Canon’ is here the latinization of the Gk. *kanōn*, ‘a reed’, which, from

¹⁰⁷ John D. Barry, Rachel Klippenstein, and Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, “Canon, Overview of the,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, June, 1992), 818.

¹⁰⁹ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 187.

the various uses of that plant for measuring and ruling, comes to mean a ruler, the line ruled, the column bounded by the line, and hence, the list written in the column.¹¹⁰

That word is accurately used to describe the sixty-six books of the Bible—*The Canon*—the rule from which a measurement is to be made. It is any measurement that pertains to faith (what one believes and teaches) and practice (how one lives). The canon is therefore the rule by which the theologian can and must measure everything pertaining “to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:2, 3).

The Scriptures (the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) declare themselves to be the resource required sufficiently and exclusively. Following is a list of terms the Bible uses to describe itself. These are necessary and relevant to affirm the source from which one draws information.

The Bible Is Inspired

2 Timothy 3:16 “All scripture is given by **inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

One of the most significant characteristics of the Bible is its declaring itself to be given to man directly by God. This is called inspiration.

Verbal inspiration references the very words of Scripture. The Bible is “theopneustic,” breathed out by God. Thoughts are revealed by words, and God revealed His thoughts in words.

Plenary verbal inspiration references *all* of Scripture. The word *plenary* means “all.” Nothing is left out. It is exactly as God spoke it right down to every “jot and tittle.”

Following is a discussion of this vital characteristic by MacArthur from his book *Charismatic Chaos*: “But the Greek term for inspiration is *theopneustos*, which means ‘God-breathed.’ Literally the verse says, ‘All Scripture is God-breathed’ – that is, Scripture is not the

¹¹⁰ J. N. Birdsall, “Canon of the New Testament,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 169.

words of men into which God puffed divine life. It is the very breath of God! Scripture is God himself speaking.”¹¹¹

The doctrine of inspiration cannot be overemphasized. Yet another helpful definition of this precious doctrinal word is found in J. I. Packer’s *New Bible Dictionary*:

According to 2 Tim. 3:16, what is inspired is precisely the biblical writings. Inspiration is a work of God terminating, not in the men who were to write Scripture (as if, having given them an idea of what to say, God left them to themselves to find a way of saying it), but in the actual written product. It is Scripture—*graphē*, the written text—that is God-breathed.¹¹²

In the *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Alan Cairns defines inspiration as “the work of God, by His Holy Spirit, communicating His word to the writers of the Bible and enabling them to writ that word without error, addition, or deletion.”¹¹³

The Bible Is Inerrant

Proverbs 30:5-6 “Every word of God is **pure** (purified – tested): he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. (6) Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

The word *pure* (6884) means “to purge gold or silver by fire in order to separate it from the impurities.”¹¹⁴ The original autographs are free from any and all error. The Bible contains no mistakes. It is wholly true and contains absolutely no impurities. The Word of God is reliable and trustworthy with no error.

¹¹¹ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 51.

¹¹² J. I. Packer, “Inspiration,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 507.

¹¹³ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd ed. (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1998), 195.

¹¹⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, 1994), 2358.

Psalm 19:9 “The fear of the **LORD** is clean, enduring forever: **the judgments of the LORD are true (571)** and righteous altogether.”

Psalm 19:9 stresses the fact God’s Word is **true (571)**. If it is all true, and it is, then it cannot be any more inerrant than that. Zodhiates says this feminine Hebrew noun (571) means, “firmness, stability...sureness...It is used 127 times in the O.T. and, being derived from aman (539), has firmness or stability as its basic meaning. In the sense of faithfulness it is used frequently of God and expresses one of His key O.T. attributes. It is the principal Heb. word for truth.”¹¹⁵

The Bible Is Infallible

This characteristic of the Word of God is similar to the last. Whereas *inerrant* means “free from error,” *infallible* means “incapable of failing.” Norman Geisler and William Nix, in their *General Introduction to the Bible*, describe it this way: “Infallible—Literally, ‘not fallible or breakable’; it refers to the divine character of Scripture that necessitates its truthfulness (cf. John 10:35).”¹¹⁶

John 10:35 “If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, **and the scripture cannot be broken.**”

In this verse, Jesus is quoting from Psalm 82. Gangel reinforces this truth in his *New Testament Commentary* of this passage. He explains, “In both Greek and Hebrew understanding, not being broken refers to unity, and the phrase itself argues that if Scripture says something, it must be true.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1984), 1579.

¹¹⁶ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Rev. and expanded (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 604.

¹¹⁷ Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, vol. 4 of *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 206.

The word *broken* (3089) in this verse is *luo* and means to loosen or dissolve. In his *Complete Word Study Dictionary*, Zodhiates remarks, “When it is used figuratively of a law the idea is to loosen, make void or do away with its obligation.”¹¹⁸

The point is the Word of God is incapable of failing to fulfill the purpose for which it was written. Its obligation cannot be done away with or made void. None of God’s Word will fail. Cairns, in his *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, describes the concept of infallibility as “that quality of the Bible, the inspired word of God, by which it is free from error, is authentic in its writings, reliable in its revelation, and authoritative in all its communications.”¹¹⁹

No one dare attempt to adjust the Scriptures. They are what God intended and all God intended. Jesus validates the authority, certainty, credibility, and veracity of Scripture by His statement in Luke 16:17, “And **it** is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”

Trent adds weight to this with his following comments:

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God present in his ministry. This does not mean he discarded the written word of the law and the prophets. The Old Testament remained valid. It would be simpler to have the universe disappear from sight than to do away with the authority of God’s Word.

...Viewed in Jesus’ way, the law will never lose its power. Not even the smallest part of one letter can be taken away, for that smallest part of a Hebrew or Aramaic letter could mean the difference between two letters and thus the difference between two words. It would be the same thing as taking the bottom horizontal leg off an E or the angular line at the bottom of an R, suddenly changing these letters to F and P. Christ

¹¹⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 932.

¹¹⁹ Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2nd ed. (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1998), 192.

brings full meaning and understanding and obedience to God's Word. He does not want to replace it.¹²⁰

The Bible Is Preserved

God's word is preserved forever. This doctrine stands because it is the God, Whose Word it is, Who is eternal. The nature of God Himself testifies to the eternity of His Word. Several verses seem to testify to the preservation of God's Word. Some of the verses refer to shorter or even prophetic sections of Scriptures while others seem to have a wider application to the doctrine of preservation. The fact of the theological matter is, whatever God said will stand the test of time. It matters not whether what He said is referring to something that is to take place in the future, recording something that has already taken place, or the Old Testament law. It is eternal and is recorded eternally because He is eternal.

Psalm 119:152 “**Concerning** they testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever.”

His word is inextricably connected to and founded upon himself. Barry helps clarify this in his study Bible. Speaking of the phrase, “You have established them forever,” he notes, “The Hebrew word used here, *yasad*, conveys the idea of laying the foundation of a building. The psalmist implies that God has founded His testimonies upon Himself.”¹²¹

Matthew Henry says the following about the Word of God's firmness and permanence as declared in Psalm 119:152: “This is firm, as true as truth itself. For, 1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity. Such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things,

¹²⁰ Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 265.

¹²¹ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ps 119:152.

that it cannot but be sure. The promises are *founded for ever*, so that when heaven and earth shall have passed away every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, 2 Co. 1:20.”¹²²

Psalm 119:160 “Thy word is true from the **beginning**: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.”

Matthew Henry speaks of the permanence of God’s Word as stated in this text: “It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous.”¹²³ It is permanent because of its nature—righteous. It is righteous because of its source—God. It is preserved because of God’s sovereign purpose to do so.

Bratcher and Reyburn affirm the Psalmist’s declaration of the eternity of God’s Word in their combined work, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*. They explain, “The strophe closes with the confession that the Law (*thy testimonies*) is eternal. The verb in verse 152b means ‘to establish, found, appoint,’ as though the Law were part of God’s universe, which he created to last forever.”¹²⁴

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withereth, the **flower** fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

MacArthur concisely states the permanence of Scripture “guarantees against any deviation from the divine plan (55:11).”¹²⁵ The *Pulpit Commentary* makes it clear one thing will

¹²² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 926.

¹²³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 927.

¹²⁴ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 1040.

¹²⁵ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1013.

remain, as it records, “**The Word of our God shall stand for ever.** Amid all human frailty, shiftingness, changefulness, there is one thing that endures, and shall endure—God’s Word.”¹²⁶

Matthew 24:35 “**Heaven** and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Craig Blomberg, in his commentary on Matthew, speaks of the enduring nature of Jesus’ words in that “verse 35 concludes the first half of Jesus’ teaching on the Mount of Olives by stressing the certainty of everything that Christ has outlined. His words will endure even longer than the universe itself, which will be destroyed and re-created.”¹²⁷

Stuart Weber echoes the eternity of truth. It stands strong and stable even after the rest of creation has passed away: “Jesus underscored the faithfulness and reliability of his teaching (24:35). His words will stand even after **heaven and earth ... pass away**. Jesus’ words are firmer than earth’s bedrock, more sound than the foundations of heaven (cf. Ps 119:89–90; Isa. 40:6–8). Christ’s words are more certain than even the existence of the universe.”¹²⁸

The Bible clearly teaches the ultimate and absolute indestructibility of the verbal declaration of God. God’s Word will not pass away; it will abide forever.

The Bible Is Sufficient

Does the church need go outside of Scripture to find answers and solutions? Did Christ leave His church ill-equipped for her task? Did the Lord of the church forget to thoroughly supply her for all she needed? Obviously, the answer is no to all three questions. Paul and Peter both testify to the comprehensiveness and adequacy of God’s Word.

¹²⁶ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Isaiah*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1910), 67.

¹²⁷ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 364.

¹²⁸ Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, vol. 1, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 405.

Paul—2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished** unto all good works.”

George Knight’s technical treatment of verse 17 adds crucial insight to the Scripture’s sufficiency:

The concluding participial phrase strengthens the ἵνα clause by affirming that “the person of God” has been “equipped” by scripture “for every kind of good work.” ἐξηρτισμένος, the perfect passive participle of ἐξαρτίζω, is used here with the meaning “having been equipped,” or “having been fully equipped” (with the perfective use of ἐκ- [Robertson]; from the same root as the adjective ἄρτιος). That for which (πρός) the person of God has been equipped is πᾶνἔργονἀγαθόν, i.e., every aspect and task of the Christian life, and in Timothy’s case, of the Christian ministry. The phrase πᾶνἔργονἀγαθόν, “every good work,” occurs several times in the PE [Pastoral Epistles] (see 1 Tim. 5:10) and elsewhere in Paul’s letters. It signifies that without exception (πᾶν, “every,” in the sense of every kind) God has equipped “the person of God” to do what is “good,” i.e., what he has indicated in his scripture should be done, since he himself is the norm of all good. Since God created Christians for good works and calls on them to do good works (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:21), he has given scripture to instruct them so that they may know in principle what God expects of them and thus be equipped to do that particular “good deed” called for in each situation.¹²⁹

Vincent gives full credence to Scripture’s sufficiency by affirming that it completely matures the child of God. It fully adjusts him to be exactly what God intended him to be. That requires and attests to the sufficiency of God’s truth:

Perfect (ἄρτιος). N.T. LXX. Rev. *complete*; but the idea is rather that of mutual, symmetrical adjustment of all that goes to make the man: harmonious combination of different qualities and powers. Comp. κατάρτισις *perfecting*, 2 Cor. 13:9: καταρτισμός *perfecting* (as accomplished), Eph. 4:12: καταρτίσαι *make perfect* or *bring into complete adjustment*, Heb. 13:21.¹³⁰

Peter—2 Peter 1:2-3 “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of **Jesus our** Lord, (3) According as his divine power **hath given unto us all**

¹²⁹ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W. B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 450.

¹³⁰ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 4 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 318.

things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

In his book, *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, MacArthur offers the following statement regarding biblical sufficiency: “Contrary to what many are teaching today, there is no need for additional revelations, visions, or words of prophecy. In contrast to the theories of men, God’s Word is true and absolutely comprehensive. Rather than seeking something more than God’s glorious revelation, Christians need only to study and obey what they already have.”¹³¹

Barry directly speaks to the issue of sufficiency, commenting in his study Bible: “**Necessary for life and godliness** Peter asserts that Christians are fully equipped to live a life pleasing to God, to overcome any obstacle they face, and to persevere under trial. In summary, God is sufficient—a concept that Peter will come back to later in this letter (see ch. 3).”¹³²

Gangel firmly states that believers have all they need. What they need for all of life comes from the knowledge they have from and about Christ:

Christ’s **divine power** has provided **everything** believers **need for life and godliness**. “Divine” translates *theias*, which is from *theos* (“God”) and is used only three times in the New Testament (here and in Acts 17:29; 2 Peter 1:4). “Power” (*dynameōs*) is one of Peter’s favorite words (cf. 1 Peter 1:5; 3:22; 2 Peter 1:16; 2:11). All that believers need for spiritual vitality (life) and godly living (*eusebeian*, “godliness,” “piety”; cf. comments on 1:6; 3:11) is attainable **through our knowledge of Him** (Christ).¹³³

¹³¹ John MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 87-88.

¹³² John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), 2 Pe 1:3.

¹³³ Kenneth O. Gangel, “2 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 864.

The Bible Is Authoritative

The authority of Scripture, like the permanence of Scripture discussed above on page 104 (The Bible Is Preserved), is anchored in the character of God Himself. God’s children must consider His Word to be authoritative because of Whose Word it is—God’s.

John 14:15 “If ye love me, **keep my commandments.**”

1 John 2:3-4 “**And** hereby we do know that we know him, if we **keep his commandments.** (4) He that saith, I know him, and **keepeth not his commandments,** is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The *Geneva Study Bible*, regarding scriptural authority, states,

The Authority of Scripture

The Christian principle of biblical authority means that God is the author of the Bible, and has given it to direct the belief and behavior of His people. Our ideas about God and our conduct should be measured, tested, and where necessary corrected and enlarged by reference to the Bible. Authority is also the right to command. God’s written Word in its truth and wisdom is the way God has chosen to exercise His rule over us, and Scripture is the instrument of Christ’s lordship over the church.

The canonical Scripture is the voice of God in the world. It has the authority or right to command, corresponding to its divine author. For this reason we submit our thoughts and moral standards to the Bible. It was through the recognition that the Bible cannot be subject to any person or group, however exalted, that the reformers freed their consciences from human traditions and authorities.¹³⁴

On the concept of authority, *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* states, “The authority of the Bible stems from its inspiration, in whole and in part, by the Spirit of God in the lives of his people and the work of the authors and transmitters of this Word. Thus the teachings contained therein are held to be authoritative for faith and action.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ R. C. Sproul, *New Geneva Study Bible: New King James Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., April 1995), 1922.

¹³⁵ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 149.

The Bible Is Clear

The two texts cited here directly state and generally assume the Bible can be understood clearly, interpreted accurately, and taught plainly. This is the doctrine of perspicuity. *Merriam-Webster* gives further insight to the word *perspicuity* with these synonyms and related words: clarity, lucidity, directness, comprehensibility, intelligibility, explicitness.¹³⁶

The fact that Paul challenges Timothy to study (endeavor, put forth a strong diligent effort) the Word of God, which instructs him how to be approved by God, implies that it is understandable. All that Timothy needs to know in order to have God's approval is not only contained in the Scriptures but can be grasped and embraced by the child of God. It is clear.

2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”

George Knight helps establish the clarity with which the Word of God can be handled in his commentary on 2 Timothy:

The material that this worker is to handle correctly [**and can handle correctly because of the understandable nature of God's word—researcher's clarifying comment**] is “the word of truth” (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας). Only when he handles it correctly will he be unashamed (ἀνεπαίσχυντον). The rendering given in several of the modern translations, using a combination of the verb “handle” and some adverb such as “accurately” (*NASB*), “rightly” (*RSV*), or “correctly” (*NIV*), for the compound verb ὀρθοτομοῦντα with the phrase “the word of truth” as the direct object captures this relationship quite well.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ “Perspicuity,” Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/perspicuity> (accessed April 20, 2018).

¹³⁷ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W. B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 412.

Larson, along with Knight above, speaks to the point of scriptural clarity. He emphasizes that “all preaching should present the truth clearly, cutting through erroneous ideas or inaccurate opinions.”¹³⁸

MacArthur reinforces the clarity by which the Word can and must be presented:

Rightly dividing. Lit. “cutting it straight”—a reference to the exactness demanded by such trades as carpentry, masonry, and Paul’s trade of leather working and tentmaking. Precision and accuracy are required in biblical interpretation, beyond all other enterprises because the interpreter is handling God’s Word. Anything less is shameful. **the word of truth.** All of Scripture in general (John 17:17), and the gospel message in particular (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5).¹³⁹

Colossians 4:4 “That I may **make it manifest**, as I ought to speak.”

Ian McNaughton grasps the importance of Paul’s words as he emphasizes the characteristic of clarity as being necessary in Word ministry. Commenting on the phrase, “that he will preach Christ *clearly*,” he clarifies that Paul “requests that he and his team will be able to speak clearly and boldly to sinners about the glories and love of Christ. He wishes to make the gospel ‘manifest,’ ‘to make clear by uncovering.’”¹⁴⁰

Douglas Moo agrees with McNaughton regarding the responsibility to make sure the ministry of the Word is done in a way that removes all obstructions to a clear understanding. He

¹³⁸ Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 286.

¹³⁹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1877.

¹⁴⁰ Ian S McNaughton, *Opening up Colossians and Philemon*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 84–85.

concludes, “Here, however, it translates the more pointed verb ‘manifest,’ ‘make clear’ (*phaneroō*; cf. ESV; HCSB).”¹⁴¹

The Bible Is Determinative

Responses have consequences. Reactions produce results. One’s response or reaction to God’s truth has implications. The following two texts illustrate this dynamic.

Psalm 66:18 “If I regard iniquity in my heart, **the Lord will not hear me.**”

In their *Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, Bratcher and Reyburn comment on the results or consequences when God’s Word is not obeyed. In this specific case, it is the sinful failure to confess personal sins. They observe, “Verse 18b states what would have happened if the psalmist had not been aware of and confessed his sins; God would not have listened to his prayer, that is, God would not have done what he had asked God to do.”¹⁴²

Proverbs 28:9 “He that turneth **away** his ear from hearing the law, **even his prayer shall be abomination.**”

In this verse, Solomon affirms the same truth regarding confessing sins. This principle is probably established most clearly in the following passage.

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; (27) A **blessing, if ye obey** the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: (28) **And a curse, if ye will not obey** the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

Eugene Merrill highlights the determinative nature of Scripture. He stresses the link between obeying and disobeying with blessing and cursing as well as emphasizing the *inevitable results* of choosing one way or the other:

¹⁴¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 325.

¹⁴² Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 573.

11:26 Having completed his presentation of the general stipulations of the Deuteronomic covenant text (chaps. 5–11), Moses, in customary covenant practice, set before the people the blessing and curse that follow obedience and disobedience. They did not take the form of lists of each according to specific acts of covenant conformity or of the lack thereof but consisted only of the broadest possible linkage of obedience and disobedience and their inevitable results (vv. 26–28).¹⁴³

In the *Apologetics Study Bible*, the authors make the simple point of consequential implications to choices. Very plainly, “Blessing comes by obedience and cursing by disobedience.”¹⁴⁴

The Bible Is Complete

An Old Testament Reference...

Obviously, the Old Testament was not a complete revelation from God and still had more to be added. However, in principle, the *completeness of Scripture* is stated in both testaments.

Psalm 19:7 “**The law of the LORD is perfect**, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”

The *law* (“doctrine”) of the Lord is *perfect* (“whole”), converting the soul. The simple point to be drawn from this verse is whatever the soul needs and however it needs to be *converted* (“to turn around”) is all contained in the *perfect, whole, or complete* Word of God.

It is comprehensive. The Bible addresses any problem, need or question concerning man. It is complete. God is not continuing to give new revelation.

To ask God a question of the most intimate nature, His answer would include nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different than what He has said in His complete and final word—the Bible.

¹⁴³ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 213.

¹⁴⁴ Ted Cabal, *The Apologetics Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 284.

A New Testament Reference...

Jude 3 “Beloved, while I was **making** every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

In his excellent *Word Study* series, Vincent defines a very important word in the Jude 3 text, “**Once** (ἄπαξ). Not *formerly*, but *once for all*. So Rev., ‘No other faith will be given,’ says Bengel.”¹⁴⁵

In his study Bible, MacArthur gives clarity on the finality of the Word of God: “**Once for all delivered ... saints.** God’s revelation was delivered once as a unit, at the completion of the Scripture, and is not to be edited by either deletion or addition (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19). Scripture is complete, sufficient, and finished; therefore, it is fixed for all time.”¹⁴⁶

MacArthur adds more to the argument for the Word of God being complete in his book *Charismatic Chaos*. He points out how “Jude 3 is a crucial passage on the completeness of our Bibles. This statement, penned by Jude before the New Testament was complete, nevertheless looked forward to the completion of the entire canon: (Jude 3).”¹⁴⁷

Edmund Clowney, in his book *Called to the Ministry*, expounds on the final and complete revelation God:

This new Testament revelation has the finality of Christ himself. Before Christ came, revelation was incomplete. God spoke to the fathers by the prophets “at sundry times and in divers manners” (Heb.1:1). In these last days, however, this time of fulfillment, God

¹⁴⁵ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 712.

¹⁴⁶ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1985.

¹⁴⁷ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 61.

has spoken finally by his Son. God does not keep giving more books of the Bible because he does not keep sending Jesus Christ to die for sinners. The Bible was finished when the finished work of Christ was fully revealed. That which was spoken by the Lord Jesus was confirmed to us by them that heard him (Heb. 2:3) and the fuller revelation that awaited his resurrection was given to the apostles as Jesus had promised (John 14:25-26). Christ is the “Amen” to all the promises of God (Rom. 15:8; II Cor.1:20).¹⁴⁸

These nine descriptive characteristics of the Bible answer the following questions regarding the importance of a closed canon:

- What is the basis for one’s belief?
- What is one’s epistemology? What is one’s source of truth?
- How does one propose to know what is to be known and believed?

These characteristics render *mysticism* null and void. Mysticism is essentially something that happens completely within the person; *it is an experience*. It is totally subjective, an inner event. When this thinking is inserted into the discussion, it is heard usually in terms of “God told me, God spoke to me, God nudged me, God prompted me, God laid this on my heart,” and the like. It is then substantiated, validated, and authenticated by a reference to some kind of feeling or sensation described by a variety of terms, “I feel, I sense, I just know, I got an impression.”

The canon is closed. God has spoken in objective propositional form in a book. No sensation or feeling is necessary for proper interpretation. No sensation or feeling can be substituted for God’s objective Word. Sensations or feelings are not required to understand clearly or minister accurately the Word of God. Neither are those feelings necessary to live faithfully by and obey God’s objective truth.

¹⁴⁸ Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964), 69.

Mysticism is the enemy of biblical truth. MacArthur, in *Charismatic Chaos*, explains a mystical or experiential approach to what is believed:

Charismatics err because they tend to build their teachings on experience, rather than understanding that authentic experience happens in **response** to truth. Too many charismatic experiences are utterly detached from – and in some cases contrary to – the revealed plan and operation of God indicated in Scripture. When these become the basis for one’s beliefs, there is almost no limit to the kinds of false teaching that can emerge.

Mysticism is a system of belief that attempts to perceive spiritual reality apart from objective, verifiable facts. It seeks truth through feelings, intuition, and other internal senses. Objective data is usually discounted, so mysticism derives its authority from within. Spontaneous feeling becomes more significant than objective fact. Intuition outweighs reason. An internal awareness supersedes external reality.

[In a note by MacArthur quoting Pinnock:]

The new theologian abandons confidence in the intellectual and historical content of the Christian message and places his trust in a subjective, man-centered experience which is indistinguishable from gastric upset.¹⁴⁹

Discussing the “call” (or any other biblical topic for that matter) requires one to adhere to the complete and closed canon of Scripture alone for truth, thus eliminating mysticism of any form from the conversation.

For any discussion to be profitable, guidelines must be established for identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men for biblical office ministry. What terms did the Holy Spirit use? What terms did the Holy Spirit not use? Do these questions matter? The answer is yes, these questions do matter. The Scripture gives clear, instructional guidelines for this crucial discussion. Those inspired guidelines must be followed for profitable discussion and to reach true, biblical, objective conclusions.

Steven Lawson, in an article entitled “Martin Luther & Sola Scriptura,” discusses Martin Luther’s famous words setting the tone for an unshakable commitment to the words of Scripture

¹⁴⁹ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 24-25, 31, 43.

alone in thinking through the subject at hand. Luther knew he faced possible death when asked by the counsel, “Will you recant?” Lawson notes:

Luther realized that this was not an open debate, but an examination for a capital offense. Sensing the gravity of the moment, he asked to recess for the night that he might give careful thought to the answer. The request arose not from any lack of courage, but from a sense of responsibility. He wrote a friend that night, “I shall not retreat one iota, so Christ help me.” The next day, Luther appeared before the dense crowd and stated that he would not recant his books. Such writings are filled with Scripture, he asserted, and to recant would be to recant the Word of God itself.

Luther then issued his famous response:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason, for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves, I am bound by the Scriptures that I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot to do otherwise. Here I stand, God help me.¹⁵⁰

Luther’s situation was obviously critical. His response to the posed question was a matter of life and death for him. However, that was not the issue with which he concerned himself. The issue was loyalty to the Word of God. That must be the commitment always, and, in the researcher’s opinion, especially when pursuing theological clarity for the subject at hand.

Lawson goes on to say:

Luther said, “We attribute to the Holy Spirit all of the holy Scripture.” He held that every jot, tittle, verb tense, word, phrase, sentence, chapter, and book of Holy Scripture is the product of the Holy Spirit. Again, Luther stated, “The Scriptures, although they were written by men, are neither of men nor from men, but from God.” By this, he stressed that when the Bible speaks, God Himself speaks.¹⁵¹

Words do matter—God’s words supremely matter. When God speaks, at that very point, divine authority is established and, by what He says, is determined. That authority is binding and must reign in any discussion of a Biblical topic.

¹⁵⁰ Steven J. Lawson, “Martin Luther & Sola Scriptura,” *Expositor*, November/December 2017, 5-6.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 6.

Lawson continues:

. . . Luther stressed that what really matters in determining the veracity of any issue is what God says about it. He exclaimed, “Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on the earth.” Found in this statement again are the words “Scripture alone,” which came to be *sola Scriptura*. Luther went on to say, “God’s word wants to be supreme or it is nothing.” Simply put, God’s Word must be recognized as sovereign over the church and all human lives or it has no binding authority whatsoever. There is no middle ground.¹⁵²

The Word of God is clear. The doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture is paramount here. Chapter two of this research demonstrated how loose and thoughtless some are when handling the Scriptures. When this is the case, error, confusion, misunderstanding, misuse, and misapplication abounds. God’s Word is clear but it takes diligent work in the Word to discover clear meaning. Each ordained man of God is charged with this task—to be a workman in the Word.

Paul told Timothy to “study to shew [himself] approved unto God, a **workman** that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Importantly, the phrase, *rightly dividing the word of truth*, is amplified, clarified, and understood more fully in the following translation options taken from *The New Testament from 26 Translations*:

“...rightly laying out the word of...” – The New Testament (Henry Alford)

“...correctly analyzing the message of the truth” – The Berkeley Version of the New Testament (Gerrit Verkuyl)

“...skillfully handling the word” – The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation (J. B. Rotherham)

“...declaring the word of God without distortion” – The Epistles of Paul (W. J. Conybeare)¹⁵³

¹⁵² Ibid, 8-9.

¹⁵³ Curtis Vaughan ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 999.

Paul even asks the church at Colossae to pray for him that he might make the Word of God clear as he should (Colossians 4:4). Clarity (the doctrine of perspicuity) should be the goal, and that goal can be achieved if the workman is diligent in his pursuit of truth. Also, that goal must be reached for any discussion to be profitable and God-honoring.

Regarding the doctrine of perspicuity, Lawson specifies that “a dedication to Sola Scriptura meant that Luther affirmed the perspicuity of Scripture. This particular aspect of the Bible refers to the unmistakable clarity with which it speaks.”¹⁵⁴

Why has accuracy and clarity become so scarce when dealing with certain subjects of Scripture? How can one be so precise on one topic and so inaccurate on another? The answer lies, in part, with a failure to hold forth the form of sound doctrine. Paul uses this word *form* in his challenge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13 to be firm and unwavering in handling truth correctly. Wuest emphasizes the importance of *adherence to biblical terminology* by commenting on the word *form* in this verse in *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*:

(1:13) “Form” is hupotuposis. The verb is hupotupoo, “to sketch, outline.” The noun tupos means “a blow”; it was used of the beat of horses’ hoofs; it meant the impression left by a seal, the effect of a blow or pressure, an engraved mark, a pattern, a model. The word thus speaks of a pattern by which one can maintain the sameness of a thing. Paul exhorts Timothy to hold fast the pattern of the sound words committed to him. That is, he is to hold to the doctrinal phraseology he received from the great apostle. Particular words are to be retained and used so that the doctrinal statements of the truth may remain accurate and a norm for future teachers and preachers. This is vitally connected with the doctrine of verbal inspiration which holds that the Bible writers wrote down in God-chosen words, the truth given by revelation.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Steven J. Lawson, “Martin Luther & Sola Scriptura,” *Expositor*, November/December 2017, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, vol.2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 125.

Maintaining the pattern, form, model, or imprint of what Scripture teaches is crucial. The pastor has nothing else to say. He is to speak what God spoke, the way God spoke it, using God's words to articulate God's thoughts. Tony Merida comments on Paul's challenge to Timothy in 1:13:

The word "pattern" in verse 13 can be translated as "outline." Just as an architect might sketch a pattern before adding the details, or as an artist might sketch the design of a painting before completing it, or as a writer may start with an outline of a paper before writing the manuscript, so Timothy was to follow Paul's outline—and then expound and apply it. Timothy was not told to make up his own outline, add to it, or take away from it. He was to take what Paul taught and teach it to others.¹⁵⁶

Many strong, conservative scholars aggressively assert the importance of Paul's challenge to Timothy in this verse (2 Timothy 1:13), one being MacArthur: "**Standard** translates *hupotuposis*, which was used of a writer's outline or an artist's rough sketch, which set the guidelines and standards for the finished work. The Christians' **standard** is God's Word, which encompasses the **sound words which you have heard from me [Paul]**, an apostle of Jesus Christ."¹⁵⁷

Timothy is not the only one taught about the crucial issue of maintaining biblical clarity by employing biblical terminology. Paul instructs Titus as well. In MacArthur's commentary on Paul's letter to Titus regarding Titus 1:9, he says:

Antecho (**holding fast**) means "to strongly cling or adhere to something or someone." Speaking of spiritual allegiance, Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to [antecho] one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13; cf. Matt. 6:24). God's

¹⁵⁶ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2013), 154.

¹⁵⁷ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Timothy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 30.

preachers and teachers are to cling to **the faithful word** with fervent devotion and unflagging diligence.¹⁵⁸

Adams addresses this issue in 2 Timothy 1:13. He strongly emphasizes and reinforces the need to hold fast to the words of Scripture in his *Christian Counselor's Commentary*:

Counselor, if you would do truly Christian counseling, then counsel out of the **deposit** given by God, and out of that alone.

Indeed, Paul is so emphatic about this that he is concerned not only about the deposit, but the form (**pattern**) in which it is presented. Remember how I presented the message. Imitate it. Remember the terminology I used; you use it.¹⁵⁹

Words matter. Biblical words matter because they are God's words. They are final and authoritative, thus binding. They are sufficient, conclusive, and clear. One who is speaking about Bible truths must use biblical words, terminology, and phraseology. The form of sound words is the only way sound truth, God's eternal truth, can be presented, discussed, and understood accurately.

Paul emphatically states the importance of using right words to clearly explain God's truth. He urges the confused church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2:13 to use biblical terminology to discuss biblical issues. The *American Standard Version* phrases the last part of the verse this way: "Combining spiritual things with spiritual words."¹⁶⁰ In the *Christian Counselor's New*

¹⁵⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Titus* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996), 45.

¹⁵⁹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 56.

¹⁶⁰ Curtis Vaughan ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 730.

Testament, Adams translates the same phrase, “Combining spiritual teaching with spiritual words.”¹⁶¹

It is abundantly evident that clarity is achieved only when God’s Word is understood, taught, and discussed by using the terminology and phraseology God used. Once clarity is established, proper use and application of truth can be reached. Only then will discussions be helpful because they will be anchored in the truth.

Guidelines for Biblical Understanding and Profitable Discussion

Guideline Number One: *There must be a commitment to discuss biblical issues using biblical language.*

This concept has been established via the previous discussion of chapter three. However, it needs to become one of the non-negotiable guidelines under discussion here.

First Corinthians 2:13 says, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” What is Paul teaching in this passage? The context of this verse deals with God’s revelation of Himself to man through the inspiration of His authoritative and sufficient Word. If one is going to talk about the things of God, then the admonition is to do it with the language of Scripture. Since the words and language of Scripture are inspired, the only choice is to use those words and that language to discuss scriptural issues. A scriptural term or concept cannot be discussed without using the definition and description established from the same source—the Scriptures.

¹⁶¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s New Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 449.

This key phrase, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*, describes a crucial aspect of conducting and involvement in biblical discussions. The importance of it is displayed in the following various translations:

“Combining and interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language” (Amplified)

“Expressing spiritual truth in spiritual words” (NIV)

“Combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (NASB)

“We use the Holy Spirit’s words to explain the Holy Spirit’s facts” (Living Bible)

“Fitly joining the Spirit-revealed truths with Spirit-taught words” (Kenneth Wuest)

To discuss accurately a subject inherently biblical, the language of Scripture must be used. It is not just enough to use biblical words but to interpret them properly within their biblical and theological context.

It is dangerous to use biblical terms (i.e. “call”) without due regard to their proper place in Scripture, church history, or the local church. Therefore, when properly interpreting the term “call,” which is used in much of Scripture, where, when, how, and for what purpose it was used must be considered.

It is obvious many have been somewhat guilty of creating certain terms, phrases, and concepts by making them part of one’s own canon, complete with one’s own lexicon and dictionary. Phrases such as “called into full-time Christian work, the center of God’s will, the perfect will of God, the permissive will of God, God told me, God laid it on my heart, God showed me this or that,” and similar somehow have become part of Christian everyday talk to discuss topics not inherently biblical. Failing to use the language God gave to discuss theological issues creates a contemporary Tower of Babel—everyone speaking a different language and simply not understanding each other (Genesis 11:9). It is difficult enough to discuss biblical

theology with biblical terms, let alone, trying to stay focused when using unbiblical terms defined in various ways.

To add to this confusion, often Scriptures themselves are cited but misrepresented and misused by careless or faulty interpretation. Those passages are used then to articulate or prove something God never intended for them to address. The following three passages are prime examples of texts misinterpreted and misused in the general discussions of a ministry call of some sort.

The point to be made with these examples is to show simply, yet clearly and adamantly, how easy it is to misunderstand, misinterpret, and therefore, misapply a passage of Scripture. Right interpretation matters. Right understanding matters. Right application matters. This is an issue of integrity. The teacher, preacher, parent, or believer in general, must say what the Scripture has already said.

1—2 Peter 1:10—Peter says, “Make your calling and election sure.” This phrase has been abused and misused to indicate someone has been “called” to some type of Christian ministry (often to a non-ordained parachurch institution). The researcher sat in a church service and heard this text used to substantiate a missionary’s belief that he should go to a certain place of service. This text has nothing whatsoever to do with “calling” to an ecclesiastical ministry. This is referring to one’s redemptive election and calling to Christ.

In his commentary on 2 Peter 1, Ellicott explains this use of “calling” and “election”:
“Calling and election. —By God into the kingdom of heaven. ‘Calling’ and ‘election’ are two

aspects of the same fact, ‘calling’ referring to God’s invitation, ‘election’ to the distinction which this invitation makes between those who are called and those who are not.”¹⁶²

2—1 Thessalonians 5:24—Paul says, “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” The researcher was told by a long-time missionary in South America that she cited this verse on her prayer card as an indicator of God faithfully using her on the mission field. This text is not referring to mission work in any way. The reference is to the faithfulness and commitment of God to bring to full and complete sanctification what He began (5:23).

Gene Green explains simply the meaning of calling in this text:

If this goal seemed unattainable, the apostle added a note of confidence in the one who brings about this sanctifying work: *The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.* What God began in the election and calling of the Thessalonians (1:4; 2:12; 4:7; 2 Thess. 2:13–14) he will complete at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:30). They had received a call from God to sanctification, and the apostle expresses his complete confidence that God will continue this sanctifying work in them to the very end. The perseverance of the saints is founded on this divine initiative.¹⁶³

Lange clarifies the meaning of Paul’s words to the Thessalonian church. It is not some sort of calling to service. The emphasis is on what God has promised to do now that He has redeemed a sinner. He will complete the sanctification process, “having begun His work in us, He will also perfect it.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Charles John Ellicott, “2 Peter 1 Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers,” Biblehub.com, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/2_peter/1.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).

¹⁶³ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2002), 269.

¹⁶⁴ John Peter Lange, “1 Thessalonians 5 Lange Commentary on the Holy Scriptures,” Biblehub.com, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/lange/1_thessalonians/5.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).

Poole also establishes God’s commitment to fulfill His promise to work out completely the entire sanctification of the converted sinner: “**Faithful, and will do it.** Those that are effectually called are brought into God’s covenant, where perfection and perseverance are promised, and God’s faithfulness obligeth him to make good his covenant. It is an act of grace and mercy to call men; but when called, God’s faithfulness is engaged to preserve them, and perfect the work begun.”¹⁶⁵

3—Proverbs 29:18—Solomon says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Messages have been preached using this verse as a strong motivation to “get under the burden of missions, see the vision of the lost, and surrender to the call to go.” As compelling as that appeal may be, this text has nothing to do with what it is being used to say in that instance. It is not referring to getting a burden for the lost or surrendering to missions. It is about the Word of God; that is the vision. In this poetic section of literature, parallelism is a technique often used. Reading the second half of the verse itself would provide insight in further defining the concept of *vision*.

Where no Word of God is, there is destruction. Now, while there may be some application made to taking the Word of God to the lost, it is not a text given for that specific purpose and cannot be twisted to challenge a group of teenagers to “surrender to the call of God” before it is too late to get the gospel to the lost.

The word *vision* used in this text is the same Hebrew word used in 1 Samuel 3:1, “And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. The word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” Again, the Word of God is the focus; not a *mission vision*

¹⁶⁵ Matthew Poole, “1 Thessalonians 5 Matthew Poole’s Commentary,” Biblehub.com, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/poole/1_thessalonians/5.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).

of lost people needing to be evangelized. The English word *vision* is often misused in this way. It is cleared up by the following explanation. The author makes obvious the meaning of the word *vision*:

What makes a people very unhappy with respect to the concerns of their souls? The want of vision puts a people in very unhappy circumstances. By vision is understood prophecy. By prophecy is meant the preaching, expounding, and applying the Word of God. Doctrine: Though the want of the ministry of the Word makes a people very unhappy, yet it is not the having of it, but the right improving of it that makes them happy.¹⁶⁶

MacArthur also adds clarity to the point of this verse. As mentioned above, the quotes illustrate how easily and, sad to say, often passages are not handled with integrity. This lazy approach to God's Word has been responsible for many people being "called into the ministry" that otherwise *would not* be there, and probably *should not* be there: "**29:18 no revelation**. This proverb looks both to the lack of the Word (i.e., 1 Sam. 3:1) and the lack of hearing the Word (Amos 8:11, 12), which leads to lawless rebellion (cf. Ex. 32:25; Lev. 13:45; Num. 5:18). The proverb then contrasts the joy and glory of a lawful society (28:14; Mal. 4:4)."¹⁶⁷

Walvoord explains how, in this case, the King James Version translation has caused confusion. It is evident some have read this translation without much investment of time in the research. From a cursory reading, the *mission vision* approach can be drawn easily from the text:

29:18. The familiar KJV "where there is no vision" is misleading. The word "vision" is the **revelation** (*hāzôn*) a prophet receives. Also the KJV translation "the people perish" does not refer to unsaved **people** dying in sin. The verb *pāra'* means **to cast off restraint**. So the verse is stating that without God's Word people abandon themselves to

¹⁶⁶ S. Davies, "Proverbs 29 Biblical Illustrator," Biblehub.com, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/illustrator/proverbs/29.htm> (accessed January 22, 2018).

¹⁶⁷ John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 919.

their own sinful ways. On the other hand keeping (obeying) God's **Law** (cf. 28:4, 7) brings happiness.¹⁶⁸

This last brief note stands as a rebuke to all who would be slack to study precisely and understand rightly a text. The researcher spent less than three minutes discovering and confirming the point of this verse by quickly consulting one commentary. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown say it as simply as it can be said, “**No vision**—instruction in God's truth, which was by prophets, through visions (1 Sa 3:1).”¹⁶⁹ There is no excuse for slackers ministering God's truth to God's people.

In conclusion, the goal is to use biblical words *accurately* to talk about biblical issues. Therefore, because of preconceived ideas and opinions, misused Scripture, misunderstood application, and the traditional baggage accompanying the term “call,” it is imperative it be brought under the accurate scrutiny of Scripture and discussed with scriptural language. There is one body of revealed truth, given in inspired words, which was once for all delivered to the saints—that, and that alone, must be utilized!

Guideline Number Two: *The Word of God is our only complete, comprehensive, and sufficient guide for all teaching regarding ecclesiastical ministry. Therefore, whatever needs to be known is available in the Scriptures.*

The Word of God is the starting and stopping point for all of life and godliness. It is the believer's sole authority and resource necessary for knowing God and functioning in life to

¹⁶⁸ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 968.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 401.

honor Him. The reformation was characterized by the term *Sola Scriptura*. MacArthur explains the phrase:

The Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* has to do with the sufficiency of Scripture as our supreme authority in all spiritual matters. *Sola Scriptura* simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture. It is not a claim that all truth of every kind is found in Scripture. The most ardent defender of *sola Scriptura* will concede, for example, that Scripture has little or nothing to say about DNA structures, microbiology, the rules of Chinese grammar, or rocket science. This or that “scientific truth,” for example, may or may not be actually true, whether or not it can be supported by Scripture—but Scripture is a “more sure Word,” standing above all other truth in its authority and certainty. It is “more sure,” according to the apostle Peter, than the data we gather firsthand through our senses (2 Peter 1:19). Therefore, Scripture is the highest and supreme authority on any matter on which it speaks.¹⁷⁰

Both following passages, though cited earlier in the research, address the point *Sola Scriptura*:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, (3) According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:2-3).

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

These passages clearly show all that is necessary to discuss biblical issues is available. All God’s thoughts, commands, and admonitions regarding all subjects about which He wanted man to know are contained in the Scriptures. Discussions are limited to the Bible at every point regarding all biblical subjects.

¹⁷⁰ John MacArthur, “What Does Sola Scriptura Mean?” Ligonier.org, <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-sola-scriptura-mean/> (accessed March 30, 2018).

Guideline Number Three: *The canon of Scripture is closed. The Bible is complete. No more special revelation is being given. God's voice is silent apart from the recorded message.*

This theological reality has direct implications to this entire issue of “called.” From his commentary on the book of Jude, Adams reinforces the fact that the faith has been once for all delivered:

The faith had been given to the **saints** in a **full and final way**. Nothing more need be added; none dare say that God had given an insufficient revelation to His people. Yet you will discover counselees who are looking for “something more.” There is nothing more to be found. What they need is not something more, but more of the something that they already have in Christ...the faith (that we are to believe and follow) has been **delivered** in a full and final way.

The word delivered refers to the same deposit of truth to which Paul alludes when writing to Timothy (II Timothy 2:12-14). There it is referred to as a body of truth in a form that could be passed down through the ages. It is not to be altered but entrusted to able men who would preserve and proclaim it clearly. Whether it is Jude or Paul writing, the point each makes is the same: God has deposited with His church all that is necessary for life and godliness (see II Peter 1:3).¹⁷¹

Geisler and Nix attest to a closed canon, and, therefore, a complete revelation from God.

No more is being given. No more is necessary:

Theologically the canon is closed. God has inspired only so many books and they were all completed by the end of the apostolic period (first century A.D.). God used to speak through the prophets of the Old Testament, but in the “last days” he spoke through Christ (Heb. 1:1) and the apostles whom He empowered with special signs “(miracles). But because the apostolic age ended with the death of the apostles (Acts 1:22), and because no one since apostolic times has had the signs of a true apostle” (2 Cor. 12:12) whereby they can raise the dead (Acts 20:10–12) and perform other unique supernatural events (Acts 3:1–10; 28:8–9), it may be concluded that God’s “last day” revelation is complete (see Acts 2:16–18).

...*Historically* the canon is closed. For there is no evidence that any such special *gift* of miracles has existed since the death of the apostles. The immediate successors of the apostles did not claim new revelation, nor did they claim these special confirmatory gifts. In fact, they looked on the apostolic revelation as full and final (see chaps. 6, 16, and 17).

¹⁷¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1996), 339.

...So canonicity is determined by God, not by the people of God. The simple answer to the question “Why are there only these books in the Bible?” is that God inspired only these and no more. If God had given more books through more prophets, then there would be a larger canon. But, because *propheticity* determines *canonicity*, only the prophetic books can be canonical.¹⁷²

As discussed previously, MacArthur addresses the issue of a closed canon (see page 42).

This is absolutely crucial in establishing these guidelines for discussing *the call*.

Jude 3 is a wonderfully clear text addressing the topic of a closed canon. It provides three important points for affirming the finality and closure of the canon of God’s Word. MacArthur lays out the argument masterfully:

How the Biblical Canon Was Chosen and Closed...

Jude 3 is a crucial passage on the completeness of our Bibles. This statement, penned by Jude before the New Testament was complete, nevertheless looked forward to the completion of the entire canon: “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). In the Greek text the definite article preceding “faith” points to the one and only faith: “the faith.” There is no other. Such passages as Galatians 1:23 (“He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith”) and I Timothy 4:1 (“In latter times some will fall away from the faith”) indicate this objective use of the expression “the faith” was common in apostolic times. Greek scholar Henry Alford wrote that the faith is “objective here: the sum of that which Christians believe.” (Henry Alford, *Alford’s Greek New Testament*, vol. IV [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 530.)

Note also the crucial phrase “once for all” in Jude 3. The Greek word here is hapax, which refers to something done for all time, with lasting results, never needing repetition. Nothing needs to be added to the faith that has been delivered “once for all.”

George Lawlor, who has written an excellent work on Jude, made the following comment:

The Christian faith is unchangeable, which is not to say that men and women of every generation do not need to find it, experience it and live it; but it does mean that every new doctrine that arises, even though its legitimacy may be plausibly asserted, is a false doctrine. All claims to convey some additional revelation to that which has been given by God in this body of truth are false claims and must be rejected. (George L. Lawlor, *Translation and Exposition of the Epistle Jude* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972], 45.)

¹⁷² Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Rev. and expanded. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 217–219.

Also important in Jude 3 is the word “delivered.” In the Greek it is an aorist passive participle, which in this context indicates an act completed in the past with no continuing element. In this instance the passive voice means the faith was not discovered by men, but given to men by God. How did He do that? Through His Word—the Bible.

And so through the Scriptures God has given us a body of teaching that is final and complete. Our Christian faith rests on historical, objective revelation. That rules out all inspired prophecies, seers, and other forms of new revelation until God speaks again at the return of Christ. (cf. Acts 2:16-21; Rev. 11:1-13).¹⁷³

Cessationism is a term to describe the fact no more revelation is being given today. The gifts by which God revealed Himself are ceased. Wikipedia gives this definition:

Strong cessationism

The majority of cessationists subscribe to strong cessationism, which denies the possibility of a reemergence of the sign and revelatory gifts^{[4][5]}

Strong cessationism denies the possibility of a reemergence of the gifts on grounds of principle appealing to the principle of Sola Scriptura, insisting on three propositions:^[6]

1. The completion of the canon of the Bible
2. The infallible and sufficient authority of the Bible
3. The perfection of the Scriptures to guide the Church

It has been argued by Peter Masters and John Whitcomb that the original function of the sign and revelatory gifts has therefore been fulfilled and they are therefore now defunct.^{[4][5]} These authors also taught that the testimony of foreign tongues has been accomplished, as a warning to Jews and an invitation to Gentiles that the Kingdom of God is now accessible to all nations.^[4] The Holy Scriptures are now complete and wholly sufficient for all the needs of a Christian worker.^[4] The gifts were withdrawn with the death of the apostles and their immediate delegates, in their distinct function as witnesses to new revelation.^[4]

⁴Masters, Peter; Whitcomb, John, *Charismatic Phenomenon* (ISBN). Wakeman. Jun 1988. p. 113. ISBN 978-1-870855-01-3.

⁵Masters, Peter; Wright, Verna, *Healing Epidemic*. Wakeman. Feb 1988. p. 227. ISBN 978-1870855006.

⁶ Examples of Cessationists employing such argumentation is John F. MacArthur and Walter J. Chantry. John F. MacArthur's second chapter of his *Charismatic Chaos* is an appeal to the principle of Sola Scriptura and the closeness of the canon of the Bible as an argument for cessationism (*Charismatic Chaos*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1992). Walter J. Chantry's fourth section of *Signs of the Apostles* similarly devotes his attention to the cessationist implication of the closeness of the canon of the Bible (*Signs of the Apostles*, The Banner of Truth Trust Edinburgh, 1978).

¹⁷³ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 61-62.

Guideline Number Four: *The local church is the only New Testament, ecclesiastical institution God ordained for carrying out His commission.*

At the end of His post-resurrection ministry, Jesus gave the pastors whom He trained the mission of the church. At this time, He was not introducing new information but was reminding them of what He had taught them throughout their time together. That mission included the authority for carrying out the mission she was given. Jesus introduces the mission with the words *all authority is given to me*. He then presents the mission to them: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

This Matthew text, cited in five different locations by four gospel writers (at the end of each gospel and the beginning of Acts), is the marching orders for the church of Jesus Christ. This is given to the only ecclesiastical institution ordained by God. Therefore, it is the only institution necessary to carry out God’s mission. Paul explains to Timothy the significance of the local church functioning as the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). No other institution is given that privilege or responsibility.

The phrase “pillar and ground of the truth” is better understood by the variety of ways it is translated:

“...and buttress of the truth” – *The New Testament in Modern Speech* (Richard Francis Weymouth)

“...and bulwark of the Truth” – *The New Testament: A New Translation* (James Moffatt)

“...and stay – the prop and support – of the truth” – *The Amplified New Testament*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Curtis Vaughan, ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 972.

MacArthur further illustrates this in his commentary on 1 Timothy:

Hedraioma (**support**) appears only here in the new Testament and refers to the foundation on which a structure rests. Thus in Paul's metaphor the church is the foundation and pillar that holds up the truth.

The truth is the divine revelation, including the truth of the gospel, the content of the Christian faith. It is the solemn responsibility of every church to solidly, immovably, unshakably uphold the truth of God's Word. The church does not invent the truth, and alters it only at the cost of judgment.¹⁷⁵

Larson agrees with MacArthur when he emphasizes the responsibility of the church to guard, protect, and proclaim God's truth. Again, no other ecclesiastical institution has been given this divine task: "All that is true comes from God, and he has designated the church as guardian and proclaimer of the truth. The church provides the framework for safeguarding orthodoxy and living its claims. The church is 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone' (Eph. 2:20)."¹⁷⁶

The Holy Spirit described the local church as the "pillar and ground or support of the truth." Only the local church is given that inspired description. Another type of *Christian institution* cannot be established and claim ecclesiastical authority. Spiritual sounding phrases and altar calls must not be developed to manipulate young adults to consider "the call" to work at parachurch institutions (for example: If you *feel God is speaking to your heart* about being called to work at our Christian organization, just come forward; *I am called* to be a plumber at *XYZ Christian School*; I know God wants me to *stand in the gap for Him at ABC Camp*; I *feel impressed in my spirit* to start an orphanage in Zimbabwe, and so on). Ecclesiastical and authoritative sounding terms cannot be created or invented to justify pragmatically giving to

¹⁷⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 136-137.

¹⁷⁶ Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 190.

parachurch organizations authority belonging only to the church of Jesus Christ. Those terms, either intentionally or inadvertently, used to describe or discuss non-ordained institutions (thus, in some cases elevating those institutions to the same level of authority as the local church), must not be done.

This truth is predicated on Guideline Number One. All that needs to be concluded cannot be with one single guideline; therefore, several must be established.

Guideline Number Five: *Every sinner converted to Christ automatically becomes a “full-time” Christian worker.*

Paul transitions from the redemptive section of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) into the sanctification section (chapters 4-6). Ephesians 4:1 is the pivotal verse. It moves the reader from salvation to Christian living. It shifts the emphasis from a focus on what God did for the believer through Christ to how the believer is to live for God now that he is in Christ. This transition verse is not discussing some sort of call to professional ministry (which would be very difficult to apply across the gender spectrum), but it is the call to live for Christ full-time as a new creature, created in Christ: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1).

With nearly every attempt to discuss this topic, the phrase *biblical words matter* is important to remember. The term “vocation” clearly refers to what the converted sinner has been “called to.” It is not referring to a mission field, an office, a position at a school, a camp, a rescue mission, or any other parachurch organization. It is the call of God (Romans 10:17) to Christ and the “full-time” Christian life.

In the *Letter to the Ephesians*, Peter O'Brien clarifies the transition from Ephesians part one to Ephesians part two. The call to live the Christian life is the point of verse one of chapter four:

The admonition *to live a life worthy of the calling you have received* arises out of the gracious, saving purpose of God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20), which has been presented in the first three chapters. This appeal, like other Pauline ethical 'imperatives', is grounded in the 'indicatives' of God's saving work in Christ. It is a comprehensive exhortation (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 3:17) which covers every aspect of the readers' lives and stands as the 'topic' sentence over what follows.¹⁷⁷

In one other resource, the meaning of the phrase *the vocation you have been called to* is explained. It cannot be misunderstood. It is not a mystical, emotional, or even biblical call to some sort of official ministry capacity or position. It is the Christian life of this new converted sinner who is now in Christ. He does not exist in chapters 1-3 any longer. He now functions in chapters 4-6. Max Anders helps with his simple yet pointed explanation: “**Then** refers back to the entire first three chapters of the book. Because of all that God has done for us in providing salvation and making us into a spiritual dwelling place of God in the spirit, a dwelling place in which Jew and Gentile are united as one, we should live like the people we have become.”¹⁷⁸

One must take serious care when using the phrase *full-time Christian service* to refer to anything other than to what God refers. The first guideline is essential in this case—use God's words to talk about God's subjects. That point cannot be stated too often or too emphatically.

If “a call to full-time Christian work” is preached to mean something other than what God says, then the phrase is not only used incorrectly but is subject to the user's interpretation,

¹⁷⁷ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 274–275.

¹⁷⁸ Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 148.

definition, description, or imported theology. Being called into “full-time Christian work” is not a post-salvation issue for a few select individuals but a redemptive reality for every Christian!

Guideline Number Six: *Jesus Christ has ordained and limited the offices of His church.*

- **Pastor/teacher, bishop, elder, shepherd**

- **Evangelist/church planter**

Ephesians 4:11-12 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

1 Timothy 3:1 “This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

- **Deacon**

1 Timothy 3:8 “Likewise must the deacons....”

1 Timothy 3:12 “Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife....”

Tezar Putra provides ample proof the church has been given certain official offices in his article, “The Offices of The Church.” This fact not only means those offices have instructions regarding the qualifications and functions but it limits the variety of offices to those specifically ordained by the head of the church:

I cannot think of another conversation topic that has been greeted with more silent sighs than the topic of church polity. Discussion of this matter is often cast aside as petty and fascinating only to the hypercritical theologian or irrelevant pastor. Such a tendency overlooks the fact that throughout Scripture, the church is intimately connected to the person and mission of Jesus. This means that the study of the church is relevant to all. Jesus continues to work in and through the institutional church to preach His gospel and to care for those for whom He died. Let us therefore never detach our Lord from His bride; we should allow our love for one to influence our affection for the other.

Jesus continues His work on earth today through the church. He does so by governing the church through offices and by bestowing spiritual gifts upon the church.

Church Offices

For the sake of the church and those in it, Jesus has ordained what we call church offices. There are two kinds of offices: extraordinary and ordinary. The extraordinary offices are those of prophet and Apostle, and the ordinary offices are those of elder and

deacon. Each of these offices has its own tasks that flow out of its specific purposes and place in redemptive history.

The primary purpose of the extraordinary offices of prophet and Apostle was to lay down foundational normative truths for the church as superintended by God in the writing of the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, these offices, like the work of laying down a foundation for a house, need not be done repeatedly. These offices have ceased because the writing of Scripture has been completed, and nothing shall ever be added or taken away from it. Herman Ridderbos puts it like this:

When understood in terms of the history of redemption, the canon cannot be opened; in principle it must be closed. That follows directly from the unique and exclusive nature of the power the apostles received from Christ. ... The result of this power and commission is the foundation of the Church and the creation of the canon, and therefore these are naturally unrepeatable and exclusive in character.

The cessation of the extraordinary offices is confirmed not only by the closed nature of the canon but also by the absence of any provision in the New Testament for their succession. We see, however, that throughout the New Testament there is clear ordination and succession of the ordinary offices of elder and deacon.

The office of elder is one of governing and ruling the church. Elders govern and rule by ministering the Word of God and providing leadership for the church. The office of deacon is one of sympathy and service. Deacons serve by attending to the physical needs of the members of the church, freeing the elders up to minister the Word of God. These offices are part of the ordinary operation of the church after its foundations have been laid.¹⁷⁹

O'Brien rightly mentions the gifts of Ephesians 4:11 as being persons themselves. In doing so, he affirms the limited variety of these types of gifts given to the church. They are limited to the offices and the current gifted men still left to serve and lead the church today. Some of the gifts (meaning the gifted men possessing those gifts), even of this short list, have been discontinued. Ephesians 4 is focused on the ascended Christ, the Lord of the church, leaving these, and only these, gifts to the church: "While in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 the 'varieties of gifts' are the diverse ministries allocated by the Spirit and the ability to exercise them, here the

¹⁷⁹ Tezar Putra, "The Offices of the Church," Ligonier.org, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/offices-church/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

gifts are the persons themselves, ‘given’ by the ascended Christ to his people to enable them to function and develop as they should. Christ supplies the church with gifted ministers.”¹⁸⁰

In the *Pulpit Commentary*, Spence-Jones emphasizes the divine origin, and thus the specific, selected, and particularized nature, variety, and limitation of these offices/officers as he says, “The organization of the Church is not a mere human arrangement; its officers are of Divine appointment.”¹⁸¹

This guideline emphasizes the limitation God has placed on official biblical offices. God did not leave the issue open-ended. The canon is closed, and God said He wanted His church to have these three offices and officers. Therefore, offices cannot be created by developing and using unbiblical, traditional, or cultural terminology. Authority cannot be added to give the impression of biblical legitimacy to extra-biblical offices. The point is not that organizations or positions cannot be created along with corresponding titles and descriptions. However, the point is biblical authority and credibility cannot be imported into these man-made institutions that the Scriptures do not allow.

God delegated His authority to certain gifted men and one ecclesiastical institution only, establishing the limits and boundaries. Certainly, serving as a plumber or electrician in a Christian organization man has set up is not wrong, but God prohibits going beyond the texts of Scripture to define or describe the position or to determine how one makes the choice to take the position.

¹⁸⁰ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 297.

¹⁸¹ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Ephesians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 148.

Guideline Number Seven: *No other organization of an “ecclesiastical nature” is necessary to fulfill God’s plan. To go beyond the local church and her offices is to establish man-made institutions and offices with no biblical model or authority. Therefore, any organization of an ecclesiastical nature must be complementary and subordinate to God’s ecclesiastical institution.*

This certainly ties in with and complements guideline number four. The point is to emphasize that apart from God’s ordained institution and offices, nothing else is needed to accomplish God’s goal of identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing (ordaining) men to the ministry of a biblical office. Jesus Christ did not leave His institution ill-equipped to accomplish His will.

When establishing any organization labeled Christian, one runs the risk of also establishing rules and policies in competition with the local church. When this happens, the man-made organization tends to take on authority God never gave it. Because of a sincere desire to serve and minister, it becomes easy for the leadership of a parachurch institution to overlook commitments and loyalties that should be given directly to the local church (theological accountability, attendance, finances, expression of spiritual gifts, and so on).

With no specific instructions from God, or for that matter, even a mention of any ecclesiastical institution other than the local church in the New Testament, the parachurch organization is limited in what it can and cannot do. It cannot usurp any local church authority. It cannot assume authority it was never given. It cannot invent terms to describe itself or invent methods to serve that takes itself out from under the authority of the local church.

One can either agree with the last guideline and say God ordained all He needed, or one can disagree and in so doing indict God for leaving the church short-handed. If God has left the

church short-handed, then other organizations must be created, along with offices and positions to make up for God's oversight.

However, if God has ordained everything necessary, then one can use his or her skills and gifts to serve and minister in a complementary way by making sure they are directly accountable to the local assembly of which they are members. Therefore, they must acknowledge the centrality of the local church as God's ordained institution along with her authority and leadership.

One of the questions raised by this guideline is "Can someone be called to be a college professor or an accountant at a Christian organization?" The question is not, "Is it okay to serve in these capacities?" The question is, "If the term 'call' is added and used biblically, does it justify the answer?" How that last question is answered reveals one's view of the sufficiency of Christ, His Word, and His provision for His church.

Establishing and adhering to these biblical guidelines is non-negotiable for maintaining accuracy, precision, and clarity in the discussion of identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men to a biblical office. They are especially necessary when examining "the call" (for example, how God places men in biblical office ministry today).

Questions that Must be Answered

QUESTION ONE: *How was the term "call" used in the Old Testament?*

The answer to that question is very simple. The term "call" meant exactly what it sounds like it would mean. It was a verbal call. God spoke to people, and they heard what He said. God verbally called men to serve Him in various ways. God put people in places of service in the Old Testament using this method.

To further answer this question, consider a basic definition of the term “call” as it is used in the Old Testament. Two Hebrew words are translated “called” and “said.” It is obvious what each word means, but for the sake of clarity, a sound, simple definition of each is helpful:

Said (559) – The Hebrew word is *amar* and means: “to say, speak, utter, tell, declare.”¹⁸²

Called (7121) – The Hebrew word is *qara* and means: “to cry out, call aloud, to proclaim, pronounce, to call, summon, to invite, to implore, to call by name; it is the enunciation of a specific vocable or message. It is usually addressed to a specific recipient and intended to elicit a specific response.”¹⁸³

The purpose here is not to do an exhaustive study of the word “call” from the Old Testament but to establish the theology behind the method God used then for engaging men in His work. The following passages are typical of how God put men in His work in the Old Testament. In all situations, an external call, voice, or verbal communication of some sort was given clearly and directly to these men. The verses cited under each name illustrate this method.

Abraham

Genesis 12:1 “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”

Moses

Exodus 3:3-4 “And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. (4) And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, **God called** unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.”

¹⁸² Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, 1994), 2302.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2362

Bezaleel

Exodus 31:2 “See, **I have called** by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:”

Gideon

Judges 6:11b, 12, 14 “And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. (12) And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, **and said unto him**, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. (14) And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”

Samuel

1 Samuel 3:3b-4 “And Samuel was laid down to sleep; (4) That **the LORD called Samuel**: and he answered, Here am I.”

Eliakim

Isaiah 22:20 “And it shall come to pass in that day, that **I will call** my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.”

These passages are not a complete list of Old Testament characters “called” to serve but should be sufficient to demonstrate God’s methodology in the Old Testament. Moving into the New Testament, the term “call” will **appear**, be utilized obviously, but will **disappear** at a specific time in the first century.

The term “call” is legitimate to use when kept within the historical context of Scripture, but oftentimes it is used simply because it has always been used. It seldom is challenged or examined theologically as to when and how God used it. It is questioned rarely as to what it implies when used out of its historical context. Many preachers using the term to challenge

young men at altar calls seemingly do not really understand nor do they explain what they mean by using the term. It is assumed everybody just understands all about it. This is a failure leading to much confusion for both the individuals and the church alike.

QUESTION TWO: *How was the term “call” used in the New Testament?*

Here again, two words are translated *called*, *calling*, or *calleth* in the King James Version:

Called (2564) – The Greek word is *kaleo* and means “to call, invite; of the divine invitation to participate in the blessings of redemption.”¹⁸⁴

Calling (2821) – The Greek word is *klesis* and means “to call, a calling, condition or employment.”¹⁸⁵

Klesis (2821) and *kaleo* (2564) are both used in Ephesians 4:1. The condition, employment, or vocation to which Paul clearly is referring is that of “full-time Christian living.” It is the call of God by the Holy Spirit through His Word to come to Christ and be converted. When one is called to Christ, it is a call to a particular employment, a particular position, and a particular vocation—that being salvation. The following passages give examples of the term “call” as it is used in the New Testament.

To “call” sinners to salvation

Each of these texts illustrates the call of sinners to Christ for redemption. Several are cited to demonstrate clearly the reality of this legitimate use of the term at this time in biblical history.

Romans 8:30a “Moreover whom he did predestinate, **them he also called...**”

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 925.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 928.

Romans 9:11 “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, **but of him that calleth.**)”

Romans 9:24 “Even us, **whom he hath called**, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

1 Thessalonians 2:12 “That ye would walk worthy of God, **who hath called you** unto his kingdom and glory.”

1 Thessalonians 5:24 “Faithful is **he that calleth** you, who also will do it.”

2 Timothy 1:9a “Who hath saved us, and **called us** with an holy calling....”

1 Peter 1:15 “But as **he which hath called you** is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

1 Peter 2:9b “That ye should shew forth the praises of **him who hath called** you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

To describe a privilege, benefit, or responsibility of salvation

Heavenly

Hebrews 3:1 “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the **heavenly calling**, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

Holy

2 Timothy 1:9 “Who hath saved us, **and called** us with **an holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

High

Philippians 3:14 “I press toward the mark for the prize of **the high calling** of God in Christ Jesus.”

Unchangeable

Romans 11:29 “For the gifts and **calling of God** are without repentance.”

Holiness

1 Thessalonians 4:7 “For God **hath not called** us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”

Liberty

Galatians 5:13 “For, brethren, **ye have been called** unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”

Peace

1 Corinthians 7:15 “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but **God hath called us to peace.**”

Glory and Power

2 Peter 1:3 “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge **of him that hath called** us to glory and virtue.”

Eternal Glory

2 Thessalonians 2:14 “Whereunto **he called you** by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Eternal Life

1 Timothy 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto **thou art also called**, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

Walk Worthy

Ephesians 4:1 “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation **wherewith ye are called.**”

Make sure of

2 Peter 1:10 “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make **your calling** and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

To “call” apostles

Mark 1:17-20 “**And Jesus said unto them,** Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. (18) And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. (19) And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. (20) And straightway **he called them:** and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.”

To “call” an apostle born out of due time

Acts 9:4-6 “And he fell to the earth, **and heard a voice saying unto him,** Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (5) And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. (6) And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? **And the Lord said** unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, **called to be an apostle,** separated unto the gospel of God.”

1 Corinthians 1:1 “Paul **called to be an apostle** of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.”

Paul and Barnabas “called” to plant churches

Acts 13:2 “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, **the Holy Ghost said**, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”

Paul, Silas, and Timothy “called” to take the Gospel to Macedonia

Acts 16:10 “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that **the Lord had called us** for to preach the gospel unto them.”

Acts 13:2 and Acts 16:10 are the only two places where this term *proskaleo* (4341) is used to put men in the ministry. The term comes from *pros* (4314) meaning “to” and *kaleo* (2564) meaning “to call.” These two passages emphasize that this term, for a time, still was being used to put men in the ministry, but some historical observations must be kept in mind:

- The book of Acts is a transitional book – God’s methods are changing and developing.
- The Apostle Paul is a transitional character. He is the last man to experience this phenomenon—a direct call from God.
- Verbal messages, visions, and the like are still in operation because the canon of Scripture (also known as special revelation) is not complete.
- At this point in history, this use of the term “call” is still very legitimate. God is still verbally and audibly speaking.

As referred to in chapter 1 (page 9), 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 uses the word “called” several times. MacArthur affirms that this “call” is the call to salvation.¹⁸⁶

The Apostle Paul’s “call” to be an apostle was synonymous with his “call” to Christ for salvation. It is important to remember Paul is a transitional figure, and his office of apostle and

¹⁸⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2007), 171.

method of being called to that office died with him. Therefore, God's methodology began to change with Paul. The apostolic period was ending. The canon was closing. The method of putting men in ministry was beginning to change and shift. After Paul, the term "call" *is never used again* to explain how God engages a man for the ministry of a biblical office.

Some may argue, this is merely semantics. The fact of the theological matter is this: words matter; biblical words matter and must be utilized in any discussion that is, by its nature, inherently biblical.

Many young men have been confused by the lackadaisical and irresponsible way with which this entire subject has been dealt. For the cause of Christ, His Word, and His church, precision is paramount.

QUESTION THREE: *What kind of confusing ideas are imported into the term "call" when it is misused?*

Answer One: *It tends to authorize, legitimize, and spiritualize both the position and the means whereby one takes the position and its accompanying man-made job description. The tendency is to view that as biblically legitimate as the offices in Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8, 12; Titus 1:6-9.*

A man working in the business department of a Christian organization told the researcher, "I am just as *called* as a missionary to Zimbabwe." The issue is not whether he *should* be where he is or whether he *can* serve there joyfully and please God. Instead, the issue is how he views the *biblical legitimacy of the process* he implemented to acquire that position in a parachurch organization. The confusion is his view of how God placed him in the position he holds. When God's method is misunderstood (not to mention God's clear limitations for New Testament

ecclesiastical positions), an assumed inherent authority and level of spirituality accompanies the position being filled since it is with a “Christian” organization.

God has given specifically to the local church three offices. One cannot create an organization with its accompanying positions and then add a note of spiritual authority to it by using terminology discontinued in the early days of the church. According to Ephesians 4:1, the man mentioned in the previous paragraph is a “full-time Christian” serving God regardless of the place or position.

Answer Two: *It tends to imply a perceived level of spirituality that “non-called” plumbers, mechanics, teachers, accountants, nurses, or any other profession do not have and probably cannot attain because they do not have “the call” of God on their life.*

Does everyone who works for a parachurch organization think this way? Of course not. That is not even the point. The point is when a biblical term is taken out of its biblical and historical context and redefined by how it is used, the impact and gravity of 1 Corinthians 2:13 is ignored. It implies things that should not be implied. It leaves questions unanswered because biblical terminology, meanings, definitions, applied hermeneutics, and explanations are missing from the discussion.

Answer Three: *It tends to add an element of non-defendable authority and privilege to its claim.*

The assumed authority is non-defendable because the term is used incorrectly—out of its biblical context. It cannot be proven because it is claimed by using incorrect theology. The concept established in guideline number one cannot be over emphasized. The fact that biblical words matter cannot be overstated.

Answer Four: *It tends to place whichever institution the “called” person is involved in on the same priority level as the local church.*

Can organizations legitimately be created and substituted for the local church? The answer is obviously no; but, when wrongly applying an already misdefined, misunderstood term, it tends to produce that kind of thinking. When Scripture is not used to establish the boundaries for discussion, virtually any idea can win the day.

Answer Five: *It tends not to distinguish the differences between the three biblical offices and man-made positions.*

Scripture gives only three biblical offices, none of which are spoken of in terms of “calling.” An institution (along with accompanying positions in that institution, about which God says nothing regarding either), cannot be established simply because some individual “felt led” or “called” to do so. In addition to that, a methodology cannot be created for getting people to come work at that institution based on historically and theologically out-of-date terminology, then function as if it is as ordained of God as His church and her ordained offices (for example, “Are you ‘called’ to work here?” “Do you feel led to serve God here?” “Are you sensing the nudge of the Holy Spirit to surrender to the call?” etc.).

The burden of proof is not on someone to *discredit* a non-local church organization for existing. Rather, the burden of proof is on the leadership of that organization to *establish its right to exist theologically*.

Answer Six: *It may create great discouragement.*

This discouragement is expressed in statements like the following:

- “God called me to be a Christian school teacher, but He has not given me that ministry.”

- “God called me to teach, but I cannot provide for my family that way.”

The researcher was told by a teacher once that God had called him to teach, but in not so many words, God had not fulfilled His part of the deal. This man was very discouraged. This way of thinking puts God on trial for not being faithful to His promise to fulfill what He called the man to do. He “called,” but He will not provide the position to which the individual was “called.” God gets blamed.

Another implication to this way of thinking is it implies God’s will is some sort of mystical dot. Many believe they must do what God has “called” them to do or they will not be in the “center of God’s will.”

Answer Seven: *It tends to absolve the local church of her vital role in authorizing men to biblical ministry.*

If God has not made a methodological shift in how men are engaged in ministry in the New Testament, and if God still operates today as he has down through the Old Testament, then the local church gets a pass on her responsibility to identify, evaluate, prepare, and authorize men to the ministries of biblical offices. Men can keep thinking and functioning by some form of mystical, subjective means. Men can enter ordained ministry unilaterally, essentially authorizing themselves. They merely can inform the church when God “calls” them. The church simply accepts the testimony of the “called” one and superficially goes through the motions of an examining counsel and ordination service (which, most of the time, has been arranged already for the next day).

Again, the issue is not whether God is involved in men serving in ordained offices or whether God gifts men for that purpose. The issue is whether His method of placing them in that ordained office for ministry has changed. If God’s method has shifted, then leaders and local

congregations have significant implications. The research has shown the local church to be responsible and supplied sufficiently for the task. Therefore, she cannot be passive in this vital privilege given to her by her head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the criteria for a healthy discussion regarding the call is established robustly in detail. The Scriptures provide the necessary words for this discussion—discussing a Bible matter requires the language of the Bible or confusion will ensue immediately. Once guidelines for discussing the call are determined firmly, essential questions can be answered with clarity and confidence.

Now that proper language has been employed to discuss the topic, it is obvious pastors and congregations have some work to do—and yes, it is work. That work is using the biblical language to consider rightly, not only the biblical process of placing qualified men in the office of biblical ministry but determining who those men are and how they need to go through that process and be prepared biblically to minister. The next two chapters will lay out thoroughly a biblical perspective and pattern concerning what and how the church can fulfill her responsibility to identify, evaluate, prepare, and authorize the next generation of gifted shepherds for the church of Christ.

CHAPTER 4:
IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING MEN FOR THE ORDAINABLE OFFICE OF
BIBLICAL MINISTRY

Recognizing the Paradigm Shift and Accompanying Authority

A paradigm shift has been made. God is not placing men into ministry today the same way He did during biblical times. Since the Apostle Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus in Acts 9, no one else has been placed in an office of biblical ministry like that again. God shifted that process, privilege, and responsibility to the local church. Along with that shift, God delegated the authority to the local church to function on His behalf. The locus of authority now resides with the local church to identify, evaluate, prepare, and ordain men for ministry.

The following chart serves to demonstrate the shift from God directly “calling” men and placing them in ministry to the local church becoming God’s authorizing agency:

AUTHORIZING MEN FOR BIBLICAL MINISTRY

Text	Who Gave Authority?	To Whom Was Authority Given?	For What Purpose?
Acts 1:8	God	Believers	To witness
Acts 3:16; 4:10	God	Peter	To heal
Acts 4:34-37	God	Apostles	To handle and distribute finances
Acts 5:1-11	God	Peter/The Church	To discipline
Acts 6:1-7	God	Apostles (Pastors) and Local Church	To appoint deacons

Text	Who Gave Authority?	To Whom Was Authority Given?	For What Purpose?
Acts 8:1,4	God	Scattered Believers	To place servants where He will to do His bidding
Acts 8:14-15	God	Apostles at the Jerusalem Church	To send Peter and John
Acts 8:26ff	God	Philip	To go on a special mission
Acts 9:6ff	God	Saul – Paul	To redeem, prepare, and commission Saul (Paul)
Acts 9:11,15-18	God	Ananias	To baptize and minister to Saul (Paul)
Acts 10:19-20, 11:18	God	Peter	To take the Gospel to the Gentiles
Acts 11:22-24	The Local Church at Jerusalem	Barnabas	To carry out a mission of encouragement and completion
Acts 11:27-30	The Local Church at Antioch	Saul and Barnabas	To send relief money to the brethren in Judea [They returned to their local church after this ministry was completed (Acts 12:25).]
Acts 13:1-3	The Local Church at Antioch	Paul and Barnabas	To evaluate, recognize, authorize, and dispatch men to official biblical ministry [Acts 13 seems to be a decisive turning point in God's method of authorizing and dispatching men to official ministry. At the end of this first journey, accountability was demonstrated (Acts 14:26-27).]

Text	Who Gave Authority?	To Whom Was Authority Given?	For What Purpose?
Acts 15:1-3	The Local Church at Antioch	Paul and Barnabas	To send a delegation from Antioch to Jerusalem to resolve a theological problem.
Acts 15:22, 26,27,30	The Local Church at Jerusalem	Paul, Barnabas, and chosen men	To send a return delegation from Jerusalem to Antioch with an answer to the problem
Acts 15:23-24	The Local Church at Jerusalem	Men from Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas carrying an official letter to Antioch	To reject and expose non-authorized men [They had the authority to make a judgment call on the theology taught by those who had come from the church but had been given no authority from the church.]
Acts 15:33	The Local Church at Jerusalem	Judas and Silas were “let go” from the brethren	To send representatives back to their “sending” church (from Antioch back to Jerusalem)
Acts 15:35-40	The Local Church at Antioch	Paul and Barnabas	To begin the second missionary journey [Once ordained and dispatched, the church planters make some independent choices (assuming with no conflict or dispute with their original sending church). There seems to be some flexibility after the first trip is made, reports given. Maybe it was a testing phase, developing trust, experience.]

Text	Who Gave Authority?	To Whom Was Authority Given?	For What Purpose?
Acts 18:22-23 End of second mission trip	The Local Church at Antioch	Paul	To begin the third missionary journey [Is Paul just touching base, reporting, checking in for accountability? Since the pattern was set in 14:26-27, all the details of accountability are not laid out each successive time.]
Acts 16:1-3	The Local Churches at Lystra and Iconium	Timothy to travel with Paul	To recommend a second generation of young men to possibly travel with Paul [He was well-reported of by two churches.]
Acts 14:26-28 End of first mission trip Acts 15:40 Begins the second missions trip	The Local Church at Antioch	Paul and Barnabas	To commend someone to the grace of God [The same word is used in both passages. One passage ends the first missionary journey. The second passage launches the second missionary journey. He concludes the second journey with an extended visit back to his sending church—Antioch (18:22).]

God has given the local church the privilege and responsibility of playing a vital and central role in the authorization process. This responsibility of the local church obviously is different from the way God authorized men in the Old Testament and early New Testament. In those days, it was the direct “call” by God to an individual, placing him, in most, if not all cases, immediately in a ministerial role. Today, the local church is God’s instrument in authorizing men to the ministry. After Paul, men were not placed in the ministry apart from local church involvement.

A recognizable shift is seen in God’s method of authorizing men to biblical ministry between Paul and his disciples Timothy and Titus. As mentioned earlier, Paul was the last man to experience a direct call from God as a means of placing someone in the ministry. Through Acts 11-13, it is evident God “called” men directly to do certain things. Beginning in Acts 11ff, it is also evident things began to change. Paul, Timothy, and Titus are key figures in seeing this transitional and developmental change.

Paul

Acts 9:4-15—God spoke directly to Paul.

Romans 1:1—Paul is “called” to be an apostle.

Timothy

Acts 16:1-3—Two local churches recommended Timothy to Paul.

Nothing is mentioned about a “call” being required or needed as a prerequisite to be considered for a ministry office. The direct “call” by God to a man is phasing out. God is bringing the local church into the process. The point is not that God is not interested or involved intimately anymore, but that He is implementing a new method of engaging men in ministry.

1 Timothy 4:14—Two local churches evaluate Timothy (Acts 16) and church leaders ordain him.

Barnes' Notes speaks of Timothy’s giftedness/laying hands on (i.e. ordination): “The ‘gift’ then referred to here was that by which Timothy was qualified for the work of the ministry. It relates to his office and qualifications – to ‘every thing’ that entered into his fitness for the work.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Albert Barnes, “1 Timothy 4 Barnes’ Notes,” Biblehub.com, http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/1_timothy/4.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).

2 Timothy 1:6—The group of church leaders that ordained Timothy included Paul.

Titus

Titus 1:5—Paul, who still functions with apostolic authority, authorized Titus to go to Crete and ordain elders. Upon his arrival in Crete, Titus did not ask who was “called.” Instead he had to address the need that was lacking in Crete. Part of that task was to evaluate (Titus 1:6-9) and ordain (Titus 1:5) pastors for the churches. *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary* gives “appoint” and “constitute” as synonyms for “ordain” as used in Titus 1:5.¹⁸⁸

Titus functioned under Paul’s apostolic authority. Therefore, he could follow Paul’s instructions and set in order or complete the things Paul did not have the time to finish before he left Crete. Regarding the phrase, “set in order,” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown explain, “Set in order—rather as Greek, ‘that thou mightest follow up (the work begun by me), setting right the things that are wanting,’ which I was unable to complete by reason of the shortness of my stay in Crete.”¹⁸⁹

A significant part of Titus’s mission was to ordain (appoint or constitute) pastoral leadership in each church. Again, no mention whatsoever is made regarding any “calling” to that position. That method quickly is becoming history.

Paul is the key transitional figure. He still is directing the affairs of his protégés as they go through the process for authorization to ministry. Although Paul is exercising apostolic authority by sending Titus to Crete to ordain elders, he is at the same time submitting himself to

¹⁸⁸ A. R. Fausset, “Titus 1 Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary,” Biblehub.com, <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/jfb/titus/1.htm> (accessed January 22, 2018).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

his local church in Antioch. This is yet another indication of this major transition taking place—that of making the local church the locus of authority for commissioning official church ministry.

Church Planters

Acts 14:23—Even though Paul was directly “called” and authorized by God in Acts 9, he and Barnabas were authorized duly by their local church in Antioch to evangelize, start churches, and ordain pastors in the newly planted churches. Importantly, they did not ask who was “called.”

After Paul’s experience in Acts 9, things begin to slow down a bit. Things are not quite so obviously straightforward anymore. The time element for identifying, recognizing, evaluating, equipping, authorizing, and dispatching men to an Ephesians 4:11-12 ministry becomes much slower. It is now a **process** rather than an **act** as with Paul in Acts 9. Through Paul it was a “call” and an immediate authorization to go minister. Now the local church has been made a part of the authorization to ministry which causes this process to unfold a little slower.

Paul’s example shows us much about this transition that places men directly under the accountability and authority of God’s institution. Even the great Apostle Paul, appointed directly by God in Acts 9, submitted himself to his local church. He was a servant under the direction and authorization of his church. He had a teaching ministry through his local church (Acts 11:25-26), and he did works of mercy and relief as well (Acts 11:27-30). Authorization by the local church and only the local church is absolutely necessary for a man to be duly qualified to minister in an Ephesians 4:11-12 office.

The local church is the only institution to which God has given the authority to not only ordain and dispatch (Acts 13:1-3) but to require accountability from those ordained and

dispatched (Acts 14:26,27). Men cannot place themselves in the ministry. God has given the local church the authority to do this placing.

No one is above local church accountability for doing biblical ministry requiring ecclesiastical authorization just because they think they should be or because public popularity has accepted them without it. The local church is God's authorizing agency today—not mission boards, colleges, institutions, camps, rescue missions, or any other. Adams stresses this point in his *Christian Counselor's Commentary*:

The interesting thing is that Barnabas and Saul are said to have been **sent out by the church** (v.3) but also **sent out by the Holy Spirit** (v.4). In other words, the Holy Spirit works through the church, not apart from it. That is what needs to be emphasized to those who want to operate outside of it. There is no place for ministry that is not under the church's authority (either directly or indirectly).¹⁹⁰

Identify and Evaluate—What Biblical Criteria Must be Used in this Process?

The local church now has the privileged task to determine who is fit for placement into an office of biblical ministry. By what criteria does the church make this determination? What are the standards, qualifications, gifts, or skills necessary to be utilized in fulfilling this assignment with integrity? The local church's properly identifying, evaluating, and determining who should be eligible for biblical office ministry falls under three broad categories. Those categories are personal desire (1 Timothy 3:1), character qualities (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) and giftedness (Ephesians 4:11).

¹⁹⁰ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Acts* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1999), 81-82.

The Desire for the Pastoral Office:

Does a young man have a desire for pastoral ministry? What is the nature of this desire? First Timothy 3:1 uses two different Greek words that are translated alike as *desire* in one of the popular versions of Scripture. This difference must be made. The King James Version is one of the very few Bible translations translating the two different Greek words in 1 Timothy 3:1 by the same English word, which can be a little confusing. Jason K. Allen, in his blog post, “Do You Desire the Ministry?” helps distinguish between the two. He first gives an explanation of the word *aspires*:

Aspires. [*oregomai* – 3713 in Strong’s concordance—researcher’s clarification] This is an uncommon New Testament word. It means “to reach out after” or “grasp for.” We can think of this as the practical act of seeking the office of overseer. Common expressions of this in our day are applying for a ministry position, seeking mentorship from a pastor or elder, enrolling in seminary, or entering a ministry training program.¹⁹¹

The following two references add fullness to the Greek word *oregomai*. The first reference comes from Wuest’s *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* regarding the word *desire*: “The word ‘desire’ is orego, ‘to stretch one’s self out in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something.’ Thus the word means more than ‘to desire.’ It includes the idea of reaching after or seeking. The word ‘desireth’ is *epithumeo*, ‘to passionately long after.’”¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Jason K. Allen, “Do You Desire the Ministry?” Jasonkallen.com, <https://jasonkallen.com/2016/09/do-you-desire-the-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

¹⁹² Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, vol.2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 52.

The *New Testament in 26 Translations* also provides some insight in the various renderings of these two words. The word, *orego*, is used in the following variations:

“...If any man aspires to the office of overseer” – New American Standard Bible

“...If anyone longs for the office of bishop” – The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (John Broadus et al)¹⁹³

Allen goes on to explain the second use of the word, *desire*:

Desire. [*epithymeo* – 1937 in Strong’s concordance—researcher’s clarification] This word refers to the inward compulsion, or passion, for ministry. It is what’s taking place in your inner person that leads you to “aspire,” or pursue practically, ministerial service. These two words—aspire and desire—must go together. If you desire the ministry, you will aspire to it.¹⁹⁴

Abundant evidence of the difference between these two words is found by consulting a variety of Bible translations. The following translations distinguish them well:

“...Whoever **aspires** to be an overseer **desires** a noble task”—New International Version

“...If someone **aspires** to be an elder, he **desires** an honorable position”—New Living Translation

“...If anyone **aspires** to overseership, he **is desirous** of a good work”—Berean Literal Bible

“...If anyone **sets his heart** on being a bishop, he **desires** something excellent”—GOD’S WORD TRANSLATION

“...If anyone **aspires** to exercise oversight, he **desires** a good work”—Darby Bible Translation

“...If anyone **is eager** to have the oversight of a Church, he **desires** a noble work”—Weymouth New Testament¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Curtis Vaughan, ed., *The New Testament From 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 967-968.

¹⁹⁴ Jason K. Allen, “Do You Desire the Ministry?” Jasonkallen.com, <https://jasonkallen.com/2016/09/do-you-desire-the-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

¹⁹⁵ Biblehub.com. “Bible Hub.” Apple App Store, Vers. 1.0 (2016). <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-hub/id1090228108?mt=8> (January 22, 2018).

These few translations clearly distinguish the two different Greek terms in the verse. The obvious need for the distinction is because each carries a little different nuance and, therefore, clarity to the concepts. MacArthur gives needed perspective to the two words translated alike in 1 Timothy 3:1, as previously quoted in this work (see page 16).

Simply *desiring* the office cannot overshadow the *nature* of the office. The office is characterized by *work*. It is not the place for a lazy man, the faint of heart, or the one merely seeking the recognition and accolades of man—work is common for this man. At one point, Paul says this man works to the point of exhaustion (1 Timothy 5:17).

Zodhiates, in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, defines the King James Version word, *labor* (kopiao – 2872) as “fatigue ...to be worn out, weary, faint ...to weary oneself with labor, to toil.”¹⁹⁶

Paul tells Timothy to be a workman in the Word (2 Timothy 2:15 – do your best, work hard, make every effort, be diligent, strive diligently, earnestly seek). Earnest diligence, intentional effort, and laser focus is required to fulfill this pastoral roll! The *MacArthur Study Bible* defines the word *labor* this way, “Lit. ‘work to the point of fatigue or exhaustion.’ The Gr. word stresses the effort behind the work more than the amount of work.”¹⁹⁷

Allen reinforces the idea that the pastoral role is work—not merely a position or title—in his blog post speaking of 1 Timothy 3:1. He expounds on the phrase, “to do,” stating that “with this phrase, Paul puts the minister’s task on an active, energetic footing. Again, the wording is

¹⁹⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 877.

¹⁹⁷ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1869.

subtle but important. The office of the pastor is not merely a position to be occupied; it is a work to be done.”¹⁹⁸

Is the Desire for the Right Reasons?

One of the responsibilities of the church is determining whether this desire is not only biblical in nature, but it is for the right reasons. In his commentary on 1 Timothy, MacArthur observes that “some men seek spiritual oversight in the church because people they respect have encouraged them to do so. Others pursue it because they have decided the ministry is their best option.”¹⁹⁹

In *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, Richard Mayhue gives a sober and poignant warning:

Frequently, a counterfeit desire has come from human pride, the aspirations of others, misunderstand God’s will, or substituting formal education only for God’s complete ordination process. That is why the objective or external part of the ordination process is indispensable in confirming God’s will for a man’s life.²⁰⁰

An interesting perspective is in one of the South American countries where the researcher has ministered extensively in training men for the ministry. The church faces the challenge of dealing with the cultural concept that the Bible institute and possible local church ministry are only considered after the young man has been incapable of making it in the field of law or medicine.

¹⁹⁸ Jason K. Allen, “Do You Desire the Ministry?” Jasonkallen.com, <https://jasonkallen.com/2016/09/do-you-desire-the-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

¹⁹⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 96.

²⁰⁰ John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, TN: W Publication Group, 1995), 139.

These and many other wrong “desires” must be vetted vigorously and aggressively by the church to ensure, as much as is humanly possible, only those with the proper 1 Timothy 3:1 desire are considered for pastoral ministry.

From a very practical point of view, desire is the most subjective component of the overall subject under discussion. Some have characterized this desire as a raging thirst. This desire must be closely examined because of its subjective nature, both by the individual who claims to have it as well as the leadership of the church that has the responsibility to do so.

Having said that, should a young man who claims he has a 1 Timothy 3:1 desire be dismissed automatically because of his young age? Should some sort of minimum age be required for his desire to be taken seriously? No, of course not. The young man’s desire should be considered and vetted properly, seriously, and tenderly because it is somewhat subjective. If this desire is rooted in the gifts God has given him, then the church merely cannot put him off as being too young necessarily. As a matter of fact, young men should be encouraged to express their ministry interest (not manipulated into it, to be sure) for the consideration of the church’s leadership. It is a process, not an event; and, that process should be available. As that young man grows and matures, other aspects can better be observed and evaluated—qualifications and gifts.

The “Preliminary Questionnaire for Young Men Desiring Pastoral Ministry” (see Appendix A) can be adapted (or edited as needed) and used to provide help for the local church in the process of making these determinations. Although each item on the questionnaire does not include the word “desire,” the results of the completed form will be a great start to determine that.

The Qualifications for the Pastoral Office:

Two of the pastoral epistles provide concise lists of qualifications for the individual seeking to serve in the pastoral office (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:5-9). These lists have been explained and divided in a variety of ways proven very helpful in gaining clarity on these character qualities.

In his commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, David Platt offers the following help for discerning these qualifications:

Now we want to consider what is required of elders. You may be surprised to find that almost everything in the list in I Timothy 3:2-7 is expected of every follower of Christ. Other than being able to teach, these qualifications are intended by Christ for every member of the church. We might even say the qualifications for being an elder simply revolve around exemplifying the character of Christ. Leaders in the church are to be models in the church. This is why Hebrews 13:7 says to “imitate their faith.” This truth ought to weigh on anyone who aspires to lead in Christ’s church, since a man cannot lead the church somewhere he is not going himself. Here’s **the bottom line: What will happen if the church imitates this leader?**

Here are some questions to ask of a leader in the church. These questions have been taken from 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4, and they are grouped under four different categories.

In His Personal Life

- ...Is he self-controlled?
- ...Is he wise?
- ...Is he peaceable?
- ...Is he gentle?
- ...Is he a sacrificial giver?
- ...Is he humble?
- ...Is he patient?
- ...Is he honest?
- ...Is he disciplined?

In His Family Life

- ...Is he the elder in his home?
- ...If he’s single, is he self-controlled?
- ...If he’s married, is he completely committed to his wife?
- ...If he has children, do they honor him?

In His Social/Business Life

- ...Is he kind?
- ...Is he hospitable?
- ...Is he a friend of strangers?
- ...Does he show favoritism?
- ...Does he have a blameless reputation (not perfect but above reproach)?

In His Spiritual Life

- ...Is he making disciples of all nations?
- ...Does he love the Word?
- ...Is he a man of prayer?
- ...Is he holy?
- ...Is he gracious?

In the end no one will fulfill these qualifications perfectly. Each of us has numerous sins to confess daily. However, elders ought to live lives worth imitating, lives that reflect the character of Christ. They need to know the Word, teach the Word, and obey the Word so that others in the church will be instructed and spurred on to greater faithfulness. Who in your church do these qualifications bring to mind?²⁰¹

Paul goes to great lengths to lay out for both Timothy and Titus the character qualities for any man desiring the pastoral office. Platt rightly has observed these are to be the goals for all of God's men in the church. The elder is not held to a higher standard necessarily—he is held more tightly to the standard each is to strive for because he is to be the example to the flock.

The writer of Hebrews says to imitate the faith of the elders (Hebrews 13:7). Paul tells Timothy to be an example (1 Timothy 4:12). Wuest explains the word “example” is *tupos* and defines it this way: “‘The mark of a stroke or blow, a print, a figure formed by a blow or impression,’ in a technical sense, ‘the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made,’ in

²⁰¹ David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2013), 57-58.

an ethical sense, ‘a dissuasive example, pattern of warning, an example to be imitated.’ The last mentioned meaning is to be understood in our Timothy passage.”²⁰²

It is important to realize these qualities are to be observed by the congregation as well as the elders before any young man (or older man for that matter) begins any pastoral training. The training is not to create these qualities (though the training will enhance them certainly), but the training is for those who already exhibit them. These men are “qualified” already to serve as elders/shepherds by their character long before they actually do so. This is part of the evaluation component of the process.

Being qualified at this point is crucial. It determines whether the process of evaluation, training, and ordination continues or stops. Needless to say, desiring the office is only part of the evaluation. The one expressing a strong passion also must have a life worthy to imitate. Far too many men either have been allowed or encouraged even to pursue official ministry who are not qualified by character, not perfect, but above reproach. Desire alone does not qualify. Certainly, testifying of some sort of mystical call does not qualify either (which the research has shown in robust documentation), although this has been and continues to be a significant affirmation for many, who otherwise, were obviously disqualified by their character.

First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 provide the qualifications for church leadership. Some of these fall under pastor/teacher; some under deacon; some overlap. The point is not to cut a dividing line between which qualifications go with which office but to see the lists as important for each office (as well as for men in the church in general).

²⁰² Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, vol.2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 73.

Wayne Mack and David Swavely provide an extensive list of character qualities, accompanied with an explanation of each in their book, *Life in the Father's House* (see Appendix B). They cite twenty-five character qualities. The researcher has made a slight modification in the format of the list to create an instrument for personal evaluation of men ambitious for pastoral ministry. This can be used by the potential candidate himself. It can be used for training and accountability by the “equipping pastor.” All content is Mack and Swavely’s.

The purpose of this extensive evaluation list is not to *create leaders* or make an otherwise unqualified man into one who is now qualified. Instead, the list is to help those already identified as possessing those character qualities to develop them further. In addition to the tool cited above, there are many resources available to assist the “mentoring pastor” and provide direction for the one being mentored. (For three resources specifically recommended by the researcher, see Appendix C.).

The importance of identifying and evaluating men already displaying biblical qualifications, gifts, and desires is stated well by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander in their very helpful book entitled *The Deliberate Church*:

But it may be wise to *recognize* men who are already qualified and are already doing elder-type work rather than to “make” men elders simply by training them.

“The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their *sins* follow after. Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed” (1 Tim. 5:24-25). These words come in the context of appointing elders. Paul is teaching Timothy to recognize elder-quality men—as well as those who don’t qualify—by their behavior.

By *recognizing* elders before we train them, we’re simply acknowledging that a man is already living with elder-quality character and doing elder-type relational work without having the title. By *training* elders before we recognize them as such, we’re taking a man who may not have displayed any of these character traits or discipling habits and trying to mold him into a shape he hasn’t yet taken. Gathering elders by

recognition enables us to spot those men in the congregation who are actually proving by their lifestyle that they are elders in deed, even if not in title.²⁰³

Any man aspiring to pastoral office ministry in the church must demonstrate at home as well as in the market places of life, the character qualities set down by the Head of the church. To cut this requirement short or refuse to do the hard, and, in some cases, the necessary work to confront and evaluate candidly the men aspiring to this office is to dishonor the Word of Christ. It also dishonors Christ Himself, the Head of the church, Who determined the qualities necessary to lead His church effectively.

He is the Lord of the church. He determines how the church functions and who officially serves. No man has the right to water down, circumvent, or alter the requirements or the process necessary for identifying, recognizing, and evaluating the men leading these assemblies.

The Giftedness for the Pastoral Office:

Regardless of a man's impressive and passionate desire and his sterling character, if he does not possess the gifts for pastoring, he *should not* seek or be considered *by* the church for an official, ordained, ministry position *in* the church. He *cannot* fulfill that office without being equipped by the divine and sovereignly-given gifts. This is the third component for the process of identifying and evaluating men for local church ministry. To ignore this third component is to do so at the peril and safety of the local assembly.

Pastoral gifts provide pastoral perspective. They are the glasses through which an ordained leader sees, hears, plans, considers, and processes information about the flock; leads, prepares, thinks, evaluates the direction, emphasis, and goals for the assembly he shepherds.

²⁰³ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2005), 137-138.

Pastoral gifts are literally indispensable for accomplishing the pastoral task as God requires. For that reason, the Lord of the church has provided to each pastor/elder/bishop the gifts to function in that roll successfully. Elders/pastors are gifts to and gifted for the church by the Chief Shepherd Himself.

Three Titles Describe this Gifted Man

Allen outlines and explains the three titles in his blog post as follows:

Depending on your Bible translation, overseer may also be translated “bishop.” In the New Testament, overseer, bishop, elder, and pastor are used interchangeably. For example, here in 1 Timothy 3:1 the word overseer is the Greek word episkopos, which is sometimes translated “bishop,” and from which the Episcopal Church gets its name. It is synonymous with the Greek word presbyteros, meaning “elder,” and from which the Presbyterian Church gets its name. We see these terms, and the word pastor (Greek poimen), used interchangeably in places like Acts 20:17–38, 1 Peter 5:1–2, and Titus 1:5–7. The same scenario occurs in 1 Timothy 5:17 when Paul calls the overseers “elders.” Therefore, [Allen uses] pastor, elder, bishop, and overseer interchangeably, and in so doing [anchors] their qualifications and functions to 1 Timothy 3:1–7.²⁰⁴

The Elder—he is mature and wise. Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, describes the elder this way,

An adjective, the comparative degree of **presbus**, an older man, an elder, is used (a) of age..., (b) of rank or positions of responsibility..., (1) among the Gentiles...; (2) among the Jewish nation...; (3) in the Christian churches, those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches.²⁰⁵

Regarding the wisdom and maturity necessary for this office indicated by the title elder, Paul gives clear instructions regarding the inexperienced young man (1 Timothy 3:6). Paul says not to put a young convert—one who is newly saved or lacks maturity—into official local church

²⁰⁴ Jason K. Allen, “Do You Desire the Ministry?” Jasonkallen.com, <https://jasonkallen.com/2016/09/do-you-desire-the-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

²⁰⁵ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 2:20-21.

ministry. This young man lacks the fundamental requirement to function in the office. An ecclesiastical position of this magnitude, for an immature man, produces pride, as Paul explains. The church should not and must not make the mistake of violating this requirement. The damage will be devastating both to the young man as well as the church.

The Bishop—he is responsible to oversee, manage, and supervise the flock of God. Vine describes the bishop as “an overseer, whence Eng. ‘bishop,’ which has precisely the same meaning.”²⁰⁶

In *Called to the Ministry*, Clowney states, about the bishop’s roll of supervision or management, that “no pastor should despise administrative duties. They are included in his calling.”²⁰⁷ In Allen’s blog post, he says, “The term overseer refers to one who exercises spiritual leadership over a congregation.”²⁰⁸

Management, administration, and organization are terms amplifying the responsibilities of the bishop/overseer. The pastor must be able to see the whole picture, determine the needed areas, evaluate potential solutions, organize the gifts of the church, and dispatch (as well as hold accountable) them to meet those needs. He is the one responsible to do this. Without the supporting gifts of management, administration, organization, and even wise delegation, he cannot provide proper oversight to God’s flock. A disorganized flock soon can become a discouraged and, God forbid, a disconnected, disenfranchised flock. However, proper

²⁰⁶ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 1:128.

²⁰⁷ Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964), 57.

²⁰⁸ Jason K. Allen, “Do You Desire the Ministry?” Jasonkallen.com, <https://jasonkallen.com/2016/09/do-you-desire-the-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

management can and does promote unity and peace among the sheep. It is imperative these skills be in place. The church must take this responsibility seriously—is this young man adequately equipped to oversee the flock of God?

The Pastor/Shepherd—he feeds, tends, guards, guides, and is attentive to the needs of the flock. Vine describes the pastor: “A shepherd, one who tends or herds flocks (not merely one who feeds them), is used metaphorically of Christian ‘pastors,’ (Eph. 4:11). Pastors guide as well as feed the flock; cp. Acts 20:28, which, with [Eph. 4:17], indicates that this was a service committed to elders (overseers or bishops); ...this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence.”²⁰⁹

In an article entitled “The First Work of Elders: Feed the Flock of God,” Jack Spender, church planter and Bible teacher, plainly and succinctly states this clear responsibility of the pastor. He says the practical and public nature of the pastor’s primary task is to feed the flock of God:

If you listen in on a one-on-one conversation between an elder and someone in the assembly, you’ll likely hear godly principles - if not quoted Bible verses - sprinkled into the conversation. This is part of feeding the flock. Whether they preach and teach personally, or invite those who are gifted and able to do so, the elders are ultimately responsible for the spiritual diet of the assembly.²¹⁰

In his thoughtful article entitled, “An Urgent Call to Shepherd God’s Flock,” Alex Strauch makes some excellent observations regarding Peter’s charge to the elders. Strauch

²⁰⁹ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 3 (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), 167.

²¹⁰ Jack Spender, “The First Work of Elders: Feed the Flock,” New Testament Church, <https://newtestamentchurch.com/articles-of-interest-to-church-elders/index-of-articles-relating-to-church-elders/the-first-work-of-elders-feed-the-flock-of-god/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

presents a compelling case for and a poignant appeal to anyone desiring to be evaluated and authorized to be a shepherd over God's flock:

Since the elders are to "shepherd" the local church, those they tend are figuratively called "the flock [*poimnion*] of God among you." What makes this flock special is that it is God's flock. The flock metaphor signifies the Church's true ownership and recognizes its dependence and need for feeding, protection, and care.

1. Ownership

a) As Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, this flock is the one "He [Christ] purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Elders must never forget that the flock is not their own.

b) They should never be indifferent toward a single one of the sheep. The sheep are of immense value to God because of the price paid for them. It is a great honor to be under-shepherds of God's blood-bought flock. Do you see it that way?

2. Dependence

a) The Bible teaches that people are like sheep (1 Peter 2:25), and sheep cannot be left unattended. Their well-being depends on a great deal of care and attention.

b) As God's sheep, Christian people need to be fed God's Word and to be protected from wolves in sheep's clothing. They need continuous encouragement, comfort, guidance, prayer, and correction.

c) Elders, you are needed. The people need you to do the job that the Holy Spirit has called you to do – to shepherd them effectively. Don't let them down. Give your life, your time, your energy, and your efforts for the sheep. Give them your all.²¹¹

The titles described indicate components of the "gift package" of this gifted man. Each title, nuancing a different aspect of pastoral work, assumes the God-given wherewithal to carry out the office as God intends. The titles give a rich perspective of the broadness and depth to this man, his position, privilege, and responsibilities.

Stephen Hankins speaks of these gifts and the gifted man in his article in *Biblical Viewpoint* entitled, "Paul's Prescription to Timothy for Ministry Training":

The New Testament lists nineteen gifts of the Spirit in five passages. (Of course, some of these have ceased.) Two of these gifts are also offices in the church, the gift of the evangelist and the gift of the pastor-teacher. These gifts of God's grace are granted to men by the ascended Christ, through his Spirit. Once a man is gifted to serve in one of these offices, he himself then becomes a gift from Christ to the church to build up the

²¹¹ Alex Strauch, "An Urgent Call to Shepherd God's Flock, Part 3," Bible.org, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-urgent-call-shepherd-god-s-flock> (accessed January 22, 2018).

church for the work of the ministry as Ephesians 4:9-12 teaches. If Christ grants a man the gifts to serve in these capacities, the presence of those gifts will no doubt incline the man toward the work.²¹²

In his *Christian Counselor's Commentary* on Ephesians, Adams reiterates these gifts are given to certain men by the Holy Spirit for their work as leaders in the church:

Jesus, the conquering Hero, **gave gifts** to His followers though the Spirit He sent when He **ascended** to the Father's throne on high. He is the One who came down to earth to become a man, and, as the God-man, ascended to the Father's throne. There, He **fills** the universe with His rule.

The gifts that He gave to His Church are also thought of as the officers in the Church (vv. 11-16). He **gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers**. As may be clearly seen in the original (the English is deceptive), there are four groups here: **apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers**. The last group is expressed by two characterizations (the two works of the elder: teaching and ruling).

Two of these offices are extinct (**apostles and prophets**). As we have already noted, they were foundational offices, through which revelation was given. The foundation has been laid, the revelation is in the Bible; there is need no more for either.²¹³

Wuest examines and provides technical perspective regarding these gifts in his commentary on Ephesians:

In verse 11, Paul identifies the gifts spoken of in verse 7. They are gifted men, given to the Church. ...Evangelists are the travelling missionaries both in home and foreign lands. The word "pastor" is poimen, "a shepherd." The words "pastors" and "teachers" are in a construction called Granvill Sharp's rule which indicates that they refer to one individual. The one who shepherds God's flock is also a teacher of the Word, having both the gifts of shepherding and teaching the flock. God's ideal pastor is one who engages in a didactic ministry, feeding the saints on expository preaching, giving them the rich food of the Word.²¹⁴

²¹² Stephen J. Hankins, "Paul's Prescription to Timothy for Ministry Training," *Biblical Viewpoint* 34, no. 2 (November 2000): 100.

²¹³ Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon* (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 96.

²¹⁴ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians*, vol. 1 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 100-101.

God sovereignly bestows these pastoral gifts. This is abundantly clear from the text of Scripture and affirmed (though Scripture needs no outside affirmation to make it true or more believable) by these salient comments on those texts.

They cannot be gained by simply asking. They cannot be obtained through struggling in fervent prayer. They cannot be bought with money. They cannot be bartered for or stolen by subtly. They cannot be earned through a Bible college or seminary. They cannot be acquired automatically by receiving an honorary degree. They cannot be transferred from one man to another.

They cannot be exercised by a man if they are not possessed by that man. A shepherd cannot shepherd a flock of God's people without them. They are God's gracious gifts to certain men. MacArthur explains the phrase, "He gave" noting it "emphasizes the sovereign choice and authority given to Christ because of His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will."²¹⁵

Those men are given, in turn, to the church as gifts by the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. The church has the privilege to determine who in her midst possesses these gifts. This is accomplished through a process of evaluation.

Dever, in his book *Understanding Church Leadership*, answers the question, "What Do Elders Do?":

- Elders Pray – James 5:14; Acts 6:4
- Elders Preach and Teach – 1 Timothy 3:2
- Elders Shepherd – Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2
- Elders Watch over Themselves and Their Families – Acts 20:28
- Elders Exercise Oversight – Acts 20:28

²¹⁵ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 141.

- Elders Set a Good Example – Titus 1:7-9
- Elders Raise up Elders – 2 Timothy 2:2²¹⁶

The gifts given to the pastor/teacher by the Head of the church, Jesus Christ, fundamentally prepare him to serve the flock. The duties, goals, responsibilities, and priorities of the pastor are all marinated in and seen through the expression of these gifts. In their book, *On Being a Pastor*, Derek J. Prime & Alistair Begg present the following goals and priorities of the shepherd:

- Feed the Flock
- Proclaim the Whole Will of God
- Present Everyone Perfect in Christ
- Prepare God’s People for Works of Service
- Equip God’s People to be Fishers of Men and Women
- Keep Watch over Yourself and the Flock until the Task is Complete²¹⁷

The gifts of this man are vital and non-negotiable for him to be considered a potential candidate for this office. Are these gifts present? Are they evident for all to recognize and benefit from? Is he practicing them presently in the assembly? A man who does not possess these sovereignly bestowed gifts has no place occupying a ministry office of the church. The local church must evaluate and determine this.

Conclusion

The emphasis of this chapter has been identifying and evaluating men desiring the office of biblical ministry. The first issue established was recognizing the paradigm shift from the

²¹⁶ Mark Dever, *Understanding Church Leadership* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2016), 23-29.

²¹⁷ Derek J. Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004), 48-60.

method God utilized through Paul, and the new way He now engages men in ministry by delegating authority to the local church to accomplish this process.

The biblical criteria have been used to determine the desire, qualifications, and giftedness of men aspiring to pastoral office. The local church has an extremely important job to do. Since an ordained office has no unilateral entry, the church is accountable to make these determinations. The questions have been asked and answered—who are these men, what are their desires, qualifications, and gifts? Now the question becomes—how will the church fulfill her privilege and responsibility to prepare these men properly for the task ahead of them? This will be the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5:
PREPARING AND AUTHORIZING MEN FOR THE ORDAINABLE OFFICE OF
BIBLICAL MINISTRY

What Is the Biblical Context for Preparation?

The short answer to the question is: the local church is the context. When Paul told Timothy to identify faithful capable men who could be trained for the ministry, no ecclesiastical institution except the local church even existed (no local Bible colleges or seminaries, no conferences offered by big name speakers, no online courses available). No biblical experts (other than possibly some self-proclaimed false teachers) set up seminars. The only institution ordained by God for carrying out His mission (which included identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men for the ordainable biblical offices) was and still is the local church. Every other resource (be it an institute, college, seminary, online options, computer programs, or Bible app) must be considered either unnecessary or, at best, merely complementary to what the local church must offer and is to do.

Carl Trueman, professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary and pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Ambler, Pennsylvania, helps reinforce this truth: “The parachurch exists purely and solely to serve the church in a subordinate and comparatively insignificant way. This is perhaps not such a danger when it comes to publishing houses and seminaries, but it is an ever-present danger for groups that offer services which come close to churchly functions, such as preaching services and the like.”²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Carl Trueman, “How Parachurch Ministries Go off the Rails,” 9Marks.org, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalhow-parachurch-ministries-go-rails/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

The point of argument may not be so much with the fact parachurch organizations exist but with the skewed theological reasoning that brought them into existence in the first place. The authority to exist is self-claimed rather than God-delegated.

The right to exist for any and every parachurch institution should be if and only if there is “biblical room” to function and operate within the biblical boundaries and under the ecclesiastical authority established by Jesus Christ, the Founder, Builder, and Head of His one and only organism, the local church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41-42). Certainly, anyone involved with a parachurch organization would and should welcome an opportunity to revisit the reasons, purposes, and motives for which that parachurch institution began or continues. Following is a list of questions every parachurch should answer to gain clarity, purpose, and foundation for its existence:

- Where is your biblical authority to exist?
- From what biblical text did your commission to exist come? Cite and exegete it.
- What do you propose to do better, more efficiently or more effectively than the local church?
- What are the theological dots that connect you directly to any biblical injunction for your beginning (inception) or continuance?
- How do you trace your chain of authority directly to God’s only ecclesiastical institution?
- To which local church are you directly accountable? Do you consider that necessary? If not, why not?
- Have you determined that existence as a parachurch institution needs no direct biblical impetus? If so, how so?
- If there is no direct accountability to a local church, how do you argue that from Scripture? What is your theological/biblical validation for existence and function?
- How can you create an ecclesiastical type structure/organization and accompanying authority when this model is not in Scripture? Do you argue from silence to justify

existing? Do you reason, “since there is no direct biblical prohibition for a parachurch, to create one is not problematic”? What other creations could be *justified* by this process of pragmatic thought?

- Does the phrase “God called this organization into existence...” or the phrase “God laid the burden on my heart...” to start this parachurch explain the parachurch’s reason for existence? Does this type of thinking stand as answers to all the preceding questions? Is it the main defense against any who would question? If so, how does that logic stand the test of historical, contextual biblical terminology, and particularly the use of the term “call,” the doctrine of ecclesiology, a closed canon and the doctrine of cessationism?
- Who is the ecclesiastical authority within the parachurch? Does he take precedence over local church authority? If so, how is that argued and defended from Scripture considering Ephesians 4:11 and Hebrews 13:7, 17?
- From which local church did the parachurch come into being? In other words, what was the local church launching pad for this institution?
- Does the parachurch have a doctrinal statement? If so, what local church or group of elders crafted it? Who determines whether theological consistency is maintained by all the invited speakers? Is that important? Does the parachurch need the “pillar and ground of the truth” to help with this? If not, why not? If a board essentially holds ultimate say in how the institution is operated, how is that model biblically identified and defended?
- How is doctrinal purity maintained? How do the texts of Acts 20:28-30, 1 Timothy 3:15 and Hebrews 13:17 factor into this parachurch operation? If shepherds are the protectors of the flock (Ephesians 4:11-14), who are they and how do they function within the parachurch structure?
- Since parachurches are considered, organized, and administered without a biblical model, pattern, example, or precedent, does that not require revisiting and, at least, a fresh review considering some provocative questions?
- Does the fact that parachurches even exist not declare the local church to be insufficient in and of herself to accomplish all that God intended to be accomplished? If that conclusion is not reached, then what does the existence of parachurches proclaim about God’s institution, the local church?
- Since the Lord of the church has given certain specific tasks to the local assembly (i.e. preaching, teaching, counseling, mentoring, training, equipping, making and maturing disciples, observing the Lord’s table, baptizing new converts, guarding the flock from false doctrine, corporate worship, practicing informal and formal church discipline, and such like), how does a parachurch justify practicing some of, and, in some cases, most of, these local church responsibilities?

- Scripture is clear that the local church is the only built-by-Christ ecclesiastical institution (Matthew 16:18). It is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (the locus of ecclesiastical authority – 1 Timothy 3:15). All believers are to be connected to a local assembly (Matthew 28:19b; Acts 2:41-42), and all believers are to use their gifts for the benefit of the local body (1 Corinthians 12:7 and 1 Peter 4:10). How then can members of a parachurch justify serving (in other words, using their gifts and talents) at their place of employment while neglecting to serve the local church of which they are members? In doing so, are they not disobeying Christ by seemingly elevating a non-authorized institution above the one God ordained? Also, are they not withholding from their assembly the blessing, help, encouragement, and ministry their gifts are intended to bring?
- Does the parachurch assume the right to practice licensing or ordaining their students into ministry? If so, is that not a high-handed high-jacking of the privilege and responsibility given to the local church alone?
- When a conflict or offense occurs, is Matthew 18:15-18, Matthew 5:23-24, Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20 and Luke 17:3-4 followed? If not, why not? Why is the help described in God’s word not implemented? Does the organization “protect itself” by avoiding the discipline passages addressed to the local church and merely *handle the issue* internally? Does this not rob the offender from benefiting from all that God has provided for His people in and through the church? Are students, faculty, and staff enrolled, hired, fired, or disciplined apart from the process Jesus gave to the local church? It is difficult indeed, not to mention confusing, to claim to be a ministry, which implies ecclesiastical work of some sort, and then not function consistently with the principles and practices laid down in the New Testament for the ecclesia – the local church.

These questions, and many others like them, need to be addressed by and pressed on any and every parachurch organization. Not to embarrass and not in a condescending or arrogant way, but to provide loving biblical pressure for that institution to revisit its reasons, purposes, and motives for existence.

The only ecclesiastical institution built and *authorized* by Christ to authorize ministry should sit in the place of priority Christ intended it to sit. The local church is the *only* ecclesiastical institution with divine authority and the one to which every believer must yield (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 13:17). No parachurch group can be established and, afterwards, consider how it can connect to, complement, or, God forbid, do ecclesiastical work

better than the local church. God gave authority to one and only one institution to authorize ministry.

Trueman recognizes,

Thankfully, there is little chance of either type of parachurch organization being mistaken for the church. But I am profoundly hesitant about being closely associated with parachurch groups that wittingly or unwittingly might supplant the church or become more important than the church in the eyes of many. Once a group starts offering contexts for preaching and worship, we have a potential problem; and such outfits are, in the long run, more than likely headed for disaster.²¹⁹

To imply the local church may be able to benefit from some offerings by the parachurch organization may be somewhat palatable. However, to imply or say, “the local church needs or must have what the parachurch offers” to fulfill her mission is to accuse Christ, the Head of the church, of leaving her ill-equipped to function as He intended. It says Jesus failed to supply completely His Bride with all she needed. It further strongly implies, in some cases, for a young man really to be equipped as he should, he must leave the context of his local church, relocate himself and maybe his family as well, sit in a classroom under men (who may have never served as pastor themselves) for years. This scenario has been repeated hundreds and maybe thousands of times through the decades.

The parachurch leadership who say their institution exists to train men for ordainable ministry must heed the warning by Jon Saunders from his article entitled, “The Place and Purpose of Parachurch Ministries”:

Challenge to the Parachurch:

To my parachurch friends, I know you affirm the importance of the local church on paper. This is a good start, but it needs to be more than an affirmation on paper. The default mode of undergraduate students will be to treat your parachurch ministry like

²¹⁹ Ibid.

church. You must go above and beyond to make sure your ministry funnels students into the church, not away from it.²²⁰

Scripture is clear the local church is the only “built by Christ” ecclesiastical institution (Matthew 16:18). It is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (the locus of ecclesiastical authority—1 Timothy 3:15). All believers are to be connected to a local assembly (Acts 2:41-42), and all believers are to use their gifts for the benefit of the local body (1 Corinthians 12:7 and 1 Peter 4:10).

What ever happened to the commitment of the local church to fulfill her vital and irreplaceable roll as the equipper of the next generation of shepherds? How did this priority responsibility get delegated away? Where did this proverbial wheel fall off the wagon? Who said the local church needed anything in addition to what her Head gave her?

Carl Trueman, who himself is employed by a parachurch organization argues,

The New Testament makes it clear that the appointed custodians of the faith are the elders, men specially selected because of their qualities of character, ability, and reputation, who have a special duty to safeguard the faith and practice of the church. Parachurch groups have no such biblically sanctioned structure, and many of them have not thought carefully about the framework of accountability needed to remain orthodox. Further, they tend to be run by the self-appointed, or by people with money, or by those with a can-do attitude.²²¹

Has the local church willingly given away this grand privilege? Has it been hijacked by eager, aggressive parachurches? Saunders states the issue he has in this regard. He says his “concern with parachurch ministries on college campuses is that they often don’t simply come

²²⁰ Jon Saunders, “The Place and Purpose of Parachurch Ministries,” Thegospelcoalition.org, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/parachurch-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

²²¹ Carl Trueman, “How Parachurch Ministries Go off the Rails,” 9Marks.org, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalhow-parachurch-ministries-go-rails/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

alongside the church; they replace it.”²²² Concurringly, Mack Stiles, pastor of an international church in the Middle East, observes “when parachurch ministries begin to act like the church they often allow people involved in their ministries to substitute parachurch involvement for church involvement, which is an unhealthy exchange.”²²³ The local church, along with her God-given mission and God-ordained leaders is irreplaceable, and no one must attempt to do so.

Again, no other place is designed by God for identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men to ordainable local church ministry. The point is not to disrespect or ignore the potential benefit of sitting under other learned men outside a local church context (indeed, the researcher is doing that as he types this project). However, the point is it must be done as an auxiliary or complementary option. A general question helps address this issue. The question is not, *can a man* leave his local church, attend a parachurch institution, and benefit. The question is, *must he* do this to be prepared truly for ordainable, pastoral, local church ministry? The answer distinguishes two schools of thought: either Jesus fully equipped the church to fulfill her mission, or He did not.

Now, one might argue if the parachurch institution is staffed with believers, then *that is* the church. The simple response to that is: God delegated and vested His authority to and in the local church, not the global body of Christ as a whole. It is the local church that meets, provides soul care, visits the sick, observes the ordinances, enacts formal church discipline on unrepentant

²²² Jon Saunders, “The Place and Purpose of Parachurch Ministries,” Thegospelcoalition.org, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/parachurch-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

²²³ Mack Stiles, “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry,” 9Marks.org, <https://www.9marks.org/article/journalnine-marks-healthy-parachurch-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

professing believers, and functions otherwise according to the instructions given to the local church for function and order.

Jonathan Leeman, regarding the responsibility of the local church, and only the local church, to handle matters requiring any discipline of her members, pointedly comments,

Church discipline corrects sin and, if needs be, excludes the unrepentantly sinful. Jesus did not authorize seminaries, campus evangelism ministries, Christian publishers, Christian mercy ministries, or 9Marks to clean kingdom gutters. He gave that job to the local church.

...Jesus authorized the local church to exercise the keys. Every other ministry must understand, therefore, that it plays a subordinate role.²²⁴

The parachurch institution may have learned, kind, and passionate professors and classroom teachers imparting all sorts of biblical information. They fall short, however, in demonstrating and displaying how to use it in a local church context to correct, teach by word and life, and do pastoral ministry. His best offering for this is only suggestive and theoretical because they and their pupils are not in a local church setting. They are in a classroom where daily life does not unfold as it does when living daily, weekly, and monthly in the work-a-day world facing job layoffs, financial setbacks, family trauma, divorce, and hosts of other real-life issues. Now, obviously, a student can experience some of these things while in school; but, the point is in a classroom, those issues are the subjects of lectures, tests, research projects, and the like. Sadly, they are reduced often to simplistic, cookie-cutter answers. They are not explained or handled under the authority and oversight of the local church. No authorized ecclesiastical shepherd care is in the context of an academic classroom. That is not to say professors or

²²⁴ Jonathan Leeman, “How Church Discipline Will Save the Parachurch,” 9Marks.org, <https://www.9marks.org/article/how-church-discipline-will-save-parachurch/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

teachers do not care. They are, however, limited as to how far they can go in that care because of the lack of ecclesiastical appointment and complementary ecclesiastical authorization.

Regrettably, often the closest thing to the confrontational love and patient care of the Matthew 18 process is the school's disciplinary committee (which does not even resemble the context of that extremely important text), the dean of men or women, or the dormitory supervisor. The formula was set, the maximum was exceeded, and the handbook says what must be done. It is a formula of sorts rather than a process built on relationships. Then, to add insult to injury, those who leave said academic institution and enter an ordainable ministry know little more of true soul care than what they observed or experienced in the setting of spiritual academia. This certainly is an oversimplification and a bit tongue-in-cheek but makes the point nonetheless. If the institution is not a local church, it cannot and will not function as one. It is unable and incapable.

At best, it is confusing to exist as a ministry which professes to be Christian and produces a Christian commodity of some sort, (a Christian publishing company or Bible college, for example) but yet not operate based on the theological principles and practices laid down in the New Testament for the ecclesia—local church! Could this be a reason some men coming out of some parachurch organizations really do not know how to shepherd people seven days a week? Could this be a reason pastors ship their tough cases off to another church or to “the professional” and claim they are just too busy to counsel (the Scripture is clear, the hireling runs away when the wolf comes around rather than standing by, protecting, and watching out for the flock—John 10:12)? Could one of the chief reasons for local churches not functioning biblically be the fact so many pastors are trained in parachurch institutions (where principles and practices laid down for the local church are not and cannot be applied

consistently)? Do these young men come out of these parachurch institutions holding the student handbook in higher regard than the Bible they supposedly studied while a student? If this is the case, it may be because they are more familiar with the handbook than they are with their Bible.

The man who is not gifted by God as a pastor/teacher (Ephesians 4:11, 12) *cannot* think and function as a pastor/teacher, therefore *cannot* pass this on to the next generation clearly and effectively. Questions posed by the students may be given an honest effort, but ecclesiastical reality is missing if the local church is not the context and if the pastoral gift package of Ephesians 4:11 is absent.

To use a metaphor from the field of athletics, think of the confusion that would ensue if two completely different games were played using the equipment and rule book from each other's discipline. The game of volleyball cannot be played with a basketball and basketball rule book. The only thing in common is a ball. They both can be called "ball games," but everything about them is different.

The researcher visited his alma mater in the mid 1990's (having graduated in 1972). One of the places visited while on campus was a class in session. It was full of senior pastoral students. The professor was interacting and taking questions from the young men. The researcher sat and listened with interest. One young man raised his hand and posed a question: "What about the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage?" The implication was, "We are about to embark on an overwhelming task, and this issue is one of great, critical, and theological concern. What position should we take? What should we do regarding this issue and those affected by it?" This was a golden opportunity to bring help and hope to these young men. It was a very teachable moment. The professor, who happened to be the director of the entire ministerial program of the university, answered, "Well that is a difficult, touchy subject and you will have to work that out

when you get out in your churches.” Where was the hope? Where was the help? The point is clear: the academic classroom, apart from all the local church brings to bear on proper training, falls short.

It must be noted, this is not the complete fault of this man, or any man, attempting to do something he is unqualified to do. He does not have the gifts or the ecclesiastical responsibility to do this. Someone who thought this model of training was to be the preferred method of transferring theological and applicable truth hired him and put him there. Someone who assumed this model of training was the better way to accomplish the mission of Christ to His church (not to accuse all parachurch founders of being driven by ill motives) founded or helped build this institution to do it *his way*.

The context for *use and practice* by the ministerial student sitting in an academic classroom is *not* the academic classroom—it is the local church. That is why *only* an Ephesians 4:11 shepherd can do this because only he is gifted by God (and authorized by the local church) to do so.

Irvin Busenitz indirectly acknowledges this idea in MacArthur’s book, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*: “As a consequence, it is imperative that would-be pastors choose a training institution/setting where professors and mentors are pastorally trained and pastorally ‘brained.’ Instructors must bleed pastoral ministries and missions in their classes, in their own local church ministries, and their relationships. The impact will be phenomenal.”²²⁵

A high view of training is important. The task facing a gifted pastor is a bit foreboding. The local church is the context for shepherding people in daily life. Preparation for that cannot

²²⁵ John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, TN: W Publication Group, 1995), 132.

be underestimated as the following excerpt highlights. Busenitz quotes B. B. Warfield: “A low view of the functions of the ministry will naturally carry with it a low conception of the training necessary for it.... And a high view of the functions of the ministry on evangelical lines inevitable produces a high conception of the training which is needed to prepare men for the exercise of these high functions.”²²⁶

In his book, *Am I Called?*, Dave Harvey acutely observes:

Funny thing about us evangelicals: we take men who are *in* the church *out of* the church in order to send them *back into* the church to do ministry *for* the church. Is anybody else confused?

...Somehow we reached the point where the most commonly accepted approach to training pastors is to draw gifted men away from the local church and educate them largely outside it.

...Here’s another limitation of seminary: if we’re not careful, we treat the ministry like a skill set that can be memorized, drilled, tested, and graded—all in isolation from the people we want to serve.²²⁷

Mysticism is so prevalent among Christians in general, caution must be the watch-word when discussing parachurch organizations. The temptation is to invent terms, phrases, and spiritual sounding concepts not inherently biblical. These terms and ideas tend to take on a life of their own—independent from biblical theology. Definitions are created for the words inserted into the discussion. When non-biblical terminology is used, the discussion, by its very nature, cannot be biblical. Also, when biblical terms and definitions are needed but not employed in the discussion, clarity is absent. In other words, appealing back to guideline number one on page 122 to discuss a biblical topic, one must use biblical language (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Since the parachurch organization is manmade, the tendency is to use pragmatic or manmade language to support or, otherwise, defend its existence. For example, consider the

²²⁶ Ibid, 117.

²²⁷ Dave Harvey, *Am I Called?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 53-54.

following fairly common and often heard rationale. To work or serve in a parachurch organization, the assumption is one will be *called into full-time Christian work* or, more particularly, to a specific place of service (the question often asked is: do you feel called to this place of service?). To get *called into full-time Christian work* or to a Christian organization assumes youth pastors and fiery evangelists will preach messages to challenge teens to surrender to full-time Christian work. That young person (sitting in a Christian school chapel or a Friday night service at summer camp) must then *experience a call* to a parachurch organization to be trained (how else will these parachurch organizations fill their classrooms, or faculty positions for that matter?). Part and parcel of all this is the concern not to miss God's *perfect will* and to avoid the fearful position of being outside the *center of God's will*. However, these are all non-biblical terms adding chaos and confusion rather than clear, biblical direction for anyone desiring to serve God.

It is abundantly clear the local church is the context for equipping the next generation of shepherds for the churches of Jesus Christ. It is just as clear the "Ephesians 4:11 men with the gift package" must be the key instructors in this process. Pastors train pastors in the context of pastoral ministry.

The *would-be* place of the parachurch to do what God has commissioned the local church alone to do must be thought through biblically and considered seriously. Can the local church benefit from offerings of a parachurch? Yes. Is the local church beholding or obliged to the parachurch to make up what is lacking inherently in the local church? In other words, must the local church go outside herself to find resources she is lacking? The answer is a resounding no. The parachurch does not have the responsibility or authority to do what God has designed the local church to do in identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing men to ordainable,

biblical office ministry. Furthermore, terminology, as spiritual and convincing as it may sound, cannot create the need for, path toward, or rationale for a parachurch to ever take precedence over the local church.

What Is the Biblical Method for Preparation Process?

Two key principles are laid down for training people. They are simple but non-negotiable, nonetheless, if the church is to be effective in her mission.

With Him

Mark 3:14 “And he ordained twelve, **that they should be with him**, and that he might send them forth to preach.”

This principle of training and equipping demands closeness and involvement on the part of the pastor, mentor, disciple-maker with his disciples. It must involve more than occasional contacts. If someone’s *whole life* is going to be impacted, then it cannot be with just words. It must be with another’s *whole life*. What better way to learn than to observe a life being lived out in front of someone’s eyes and ears? Think of the multifaceted issues of life addressed by this model: family, finances, problem solving, use of Scripture in life’s contexts, time management and stewardship, responses to pressure, and many more.

Jesus wanted His disciples to be **with Him**. He wanted them to **see** and **hear** a functioning, living, breathing person who taught with His life as well as His words. He wanted them to observe, watch, and listen to truth fleshed out in life’s situations. Truth is not to be held hostage in a classroom or some other kind of artificial environment. It is to be personified in the milieu of life. It is to be taken right into the teeth of life. Truth is to be used and lived out in everyday circumstances.

Indeed, the disciples were **with Him** in all kinds of scenarios: handling ridicule, criticism, rejection, hypocrisy, sickness, death, self-righteousness, immorality. Jesus' desire to have His disciples **with Him** was a very calculated *means* to a very calculated *end*. That *end* is established in the second principle. The Great Shepherd of the Sheep is establishing *with* these men (the next generations of shepherds—the disciples/apostles became the leaders/elders/pastors of the first church—Acts 2-6) and *for* these men the most effective training model.

Like Him

Luke 6:40 “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect **shall be as his master.**”

This principle requires reproduction in kind. It states the goal for all teaching—Christlikeness. It is the calculated end (like Him) resulting from a calculated means (with Him). This is the stated purpose of redemption—the predestined goal for all converts.

Romans 8:28-29 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Jesus wanted His disciples to be **like Him**. He wanted them to imitate His attitude, character, thought process, priorities, goals, values, basis for action, and speech. This is God's goal for all believers (Romans 8:28-29). This was Paul's goal for those he served (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 4:9). Interestingly, God established this same basic training model to be employed with the parent/child relationship (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Proverbs 23:26).

The Great Shepherd equipped and mentored the first generation of pastors. It is clear how He did it—He ordained that they should be with Him. They heard and saw truth taught and lived

out by Him. His life dramatically impacted their lives! Since He is mentoring the men who will become elders in the first church, these questions must be asked. What *is* a pastor to do? What *is* Jesus really mentoring these men to become? What *is* the pastor's priority? The answer is very apparent as you survey the life of Jesus, the Great Pastor/Shepherd.

Jesus the Great Pastor/Shepherd Prayed

Matthew 6:5-9; 14:23; 26:36, 39, 41, 42, 44

Mark 1:35; 6:46

Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 11:1; 18:1

Jesus the Great Pastor/Shepherd Ministered the Word

Matthew 4:23; 5:2; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 26:55; 28:20

Mark 1:22; 2:13; 6:6, 34; 9:31

Acts 1:1

Did the future pastors get it? Did they truly understand this was to be their priority as they began to transition into their role as the first pastors/elders of the church? The answer is unmistakably clear. In Acts 6:4 the first generation of shepherds (taught, equipped, and prepared by Jesus Himself) made decisions based on the pastoral priority they learned (by watching and listening) from their mentor.

These two principles (With Him & Like Him) are vitally important and intimately tied to Christ, His disciples, His church, and her mission. The systematic study of *how Christ did it* should be seen clearly and pursued aggressively as the church attempts to emulate His training methods in her efforts to prepare the next generation of shepherds.

Did those being trained by this method really understand and embrace it as their model to train others? Did the Apostles understand the importance and necessity of these two dynamic training principles? If the disciples did embrace the method used to train them, does the Bible have a living example of that? Yes, and one need not go far to discover the answer.

The Apostle Paul (the second generation after Christ) uses this very method to equip those he trained: “And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been **with you** at all seasons” (Acts 20:18). Acts 20 seems to demonstrate this in the clearest of terms. Again, the questions are: Did the Apostles really understand these two principles of discipleship training? If so, is it demonstrated from a biblical text?

The word *with* (meta-3326) is the same word Mark used in Mark 3:14 in describing Christ’s ordaining purpose of his men. Zodhiates suggests “the word implies accompaniment, together, which expresses conjunction, union. It suggests close association, fellowship and involvement.”²²⁸ The following translations give further insight to this word:

“I was with you in close association for the entire time.” — Kenneth Wuest’s *The New Testament*²²⁹

“How I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia” — *The Reformation Study Bible (ESV)*²³⁰

“You know what I was like the whole time that I was with you, from the first day that I set foot in Asia” — *The Christian Counselor’s New Testament*²³¹

Can it be any clearer? This is powerful! Paul brought to the context of training pastors the discipleship model of Christ and His disciples. How can the church train properly and effectively

²²⁸ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 936.

²²⁹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 325.

²³⁰ R. C. Sproul ed., *The Reformation Study Bible (ESV)* (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 1594.

²³¹ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s New Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 379.

any other way? Paul intentionally gave himself to the task of equipping these men at the level of personal and intimate involvement in their lives.

The question is—*where did this training method originate?* Two passages give clear, insightful answers to this question.

I do what I saw my Father do—John 5:19-20 ESV “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father do...for whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”

I say what I heard my Father say—John 12:49-50 ESV “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has hold me.”

Text	Disciple Maker	Disciple
John 5:19-20	God	The Son
John 8:38	God	The Son
John 14:7-9	God	The Son
John 12:49-50	God	The Son
John 8:26-28	God	The Son
John 8:29-31	Jesus	Believers

The John 8:29-31 text shows a transition from *God as disciple-maker* and *Jesus as disciple* to *Jesus as disciple-maker* and *believers as disciples*. Jesus brought to this world the discipleship concept that flowed out of His intimate relationship with the Father. Jesus said and did what He heard and saw His Father say and do. This concept is at the heart of Jesus'

discipleship model. Reproduction in kind is the goal. Jesus makes disciples and concludes His earthly mission with the command for the church to do the same. Again, how can this training model be missed, let alone neglected, in the church's efforts to equip the next generation of shepherds? It is crystal clear the thoughts, words, and actions of the Son were the result of what He both heard His Father say and saw His Father do. That is an incredible thought!

The theological concept of discipleship is not arbitrary. It is the most effective method of impacting a person with truth for change and growth. Its goal is the imitation of the teacher. Of course, that is ultimately Jesus Himself. It was not invented by a sharp thinker. It was not created by a pastor looking for innovative growth methods. It was birthed out of the intimate relationship of God the Father and God the Son. The Son imitated the Father. Believers are to imitate the Son. They have been predestined to that goal (Romans 8:29).

Jesus taught His closest followers by discipleship. He trained a team of men, and they in turn were to minister to others through discipleship. Jesus commanded His followers to go and do what He had done with them—make disciples. Was that command obeyed and perpetuated by the next generation? Yes. In Acts 14:21, Paul is *making disciples* actively.

The *local church* (the God-ordained context for equipping) and *a pastor/elder/bishop* (the one qualified and gifted to equip) are crucial, indispensable, and irreplaceable in the process of identifying, evaluating, and preparing the next generation of church officers. Again, it is the local church and this *pastoral gift package* that alone can provide all that Christ wants provided, both the context (local church) and the equippers (qualified, gifted pastors), for theologically and practically preparing the next generation.

Has the church delegated away one of the most significant, important, crucial, and impacting ministries she has—that of observing, evaluating, recognizing, and preparing those

who are qualified and gifted to be dispatched by the church to plant, start, rescue, and shepherd assemblies of God’s people? How did the church get away from the very thing Jesus and Paul did—equip men to pastor churches?

The future flocks of God depend on the church today to get this right. Yes, it is HIS church, and He is certainly sovereign over her, but He has ordained means for propagation, perpetuation, and equipping. He has committed to the contemporary church a trust. Dare she be apathetic in this crucial, divinely-given task? The health, maturity, safety, and stability of the church depend on existing churches to accept the responsibility given her by her Head, Jesus Christ!

To implement a “life impacting life” concept in the pastoral training and equipping process, Jesus' model of discipleship must be considered. Having been intimately part of the intertrinitarian model of discipleship, Jesus brings to this planet a non-negotiable model for effective impact training. How can the church not follow this pattern as she embraces her responsibility to prepare the next generation of shepherds?

Now that Preparation is Under Way, By What Necessary Authority Does He Function in an Office of the Church?

Authority is required for preparation, and authority is required to be dispatched officially for official ministry. That was a large part of the problem in Acts 15. Unauthorized men (though functioning as if they were) came from Jerusalem to Antioch and taught heresy. It created havoc in the church. Paul and Barnabas had to go to Jerusalem for resolution of the problem. James says, in part, these men were not authorized by their church (Acts 15:24).

It is interesting Jesus sets the norm for “ministry accountability” in His ministry with the disciples (the first-generation pastors-in-training). It must be emphasized, though it has been woven throughout the research, no one has the right to enter official, local church ministry unilaterally. No one merely can announce, “I am called,” and begin to function in an Ephesians 4:11 ministry on that basis. Also, no local church should allow that to be done.

Where does this “ministry accountability” first emerge? In Mark 1:14-20, Jesus, the Great Shepherd, begins **evangelizing** sinners, **assimilating** the converts to be with Him, and **training** disciples once assimilated. Could this be the church in embryo? Is this the prototype of the church to be revealed fully and displayed soon? The church is here in embryonic form, emerging as the Great Pastor evangelized, assimilated, and begins training his first little band of converts (who, again, are the pastors-in-training for the next generation of leadership in the more fully developed church, to be observed soon in Acts).

One of the things emerging as part of this developing, embryonic church is accountability for ministry work. Jesus, the Great Shepherd, authorizes ministry (Mark 6:7-13). Jesus, the Great Shepherd, holds the authorized ones accountable (Mark 6:30). By the time the church has moved into Acts 13, there has been a significant, yet not-often-acknowledged, paradigm shift. The locus of authority has been transferred to the local church to identify, evaluate, prepare, and authorize men for ordainable ministry. The locus of authority has been delegated to the local church developmentally, transitionally, yet clearly.

It must be emphasized that Jesus is not disconnected from this shift and process. He is involved intimately in it. However, He has delegated authority to the local church (and no other ecclesiastical institution!). He is working in and through the church He built and is building still.

The church authorizes ministry like Jesus did (Acts 13:1-4). The church holds the authorized ones accountable like Jesus did (Acts 14:21-28).

To crystalize this point and say it succinctly, the authority to dispatch men for official mission work by the church at Antioch, required accountability from the dispatched ones for what was accomplished through their efforts. Therefore, the mission ended where it started—at the church at Antioch from where they were launched and commissioned (Acts 14:26). Simply put, the ecclesiastical authorization by which they were sent out now holds them accountable for their ministry while they were away.

In the *Christian Counselor's Commentary* on the book of Acts, Adams makes some insightful observations regarding ecclesiastical authority:

Consequently, after fasting and praying, the leaders of the church **laid hands on them and sent them off** (v.3). The official nature of the act is prominent. The early church did not simply act in a loose manner when conducting its affairs. It did things in an orderly fashion. There was organization, not mere improvisation.

One of the sad things in our day is that the church is being led by all sorts of persons who, unlike Barnabas and Saul, were never called or ordained by the church of Jesus Christ. They operate outside of church authority.²³²

Practically, ordination or authorization for ministry is the act of the church and her leaders recognizing the qualifications and gifts of a man expressing a “1 Timothy 3:1 desire” for official local church ministry. Edmund Clowney, in his book *Called to the Ministry*, indicates “when the church sees the evidence of Christ’s calling it not only may, but should recognize this publicly.”²³³

²³² Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Acts* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1999), 81.

²³³ Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964), 85.

Concerning authoritative appointment to an official ecclesiastical office, Dever comments about Paul's instruction to Titus regarding his trip to Crete:

Some people have concluded the word "appoint" means Titus could act unilaterally, in the same way a president fills certain offices by appointment. But that is not what the word means here. It refers instead to an act of final confirmation, as opposed to how the person is selected in the first place. The word could also be rendered "ordain." ...The various congregations in Crete, working with Titus, would probably have selected the persons. Titus was then charged with appointing, or ordaining, them...we must note the priority that Paul attaches to finding and installing such men. After all, this is the first thing that Paul tells Titus in this letter.²³⁴

Dever makes it clear—elders must be identified and ordained in the church. The church alone (not an individual by self-appointment to or unilateral entrance into ministry) has the authority to do so because it has taken (and in many cases, *should be taking*) her privilege and responsibility to evaluate men seriously, and because this man has submitted (and in many cases, *should be submitting*) himself to its scrutiny. The church can say this man has demonstrated, though not perfectly, (because the development of this man is an ongoing process), the following:

1. He has expressed a desire for official ministry in biblical terms and for unselfish reasons—*pastoral desire (1 Timothy 3:1)*
2. He can preach, teach, and counsel the Word effectively—*pastoral gifts (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11)*
3. He can organize, administrate, supervise, and provide oversight with wisdom—*pastoral gifts (Ephesians 4:11)*
4. He has demonstrated the mercy and compassion required of a shepherd to help, encourage, and serve the flock—*pastoral gifts (Ephesians 4:11)*
5. He can lead the flock with maturity—*pastoral gifts (Ephesians 4:11)*
6. He has displayed a life above reproach at home, at church, and in the community—*pastoral qualifications (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9)*

²³⁴ Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2005), 383-384.

7. He has submitted himself to the counsel, admonition, and instruction of the leadership of his church—*a man under authority* (*Acts 13:1-4; Acts 16:1-4*)
8. He has demonstrated faithfulness as a steward of God’s ministry—*pastoral character* (*1 Corinthians 4:2*)
9. He can articulate clearly, and defend adequately, the theological commitments of his church – *pastoral gifts* (*1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24; Titus 1:9; 2:1*)
10. He understands ecclesiastical authority and is willing to be held accountable for ministry—*pastoral/theological training* (*Mark 6:7-13, 30; Acts 14:26*)

Ecclesiastical authority resides with the local church. She is now the locus of authority for all things of an ecclesiastical nature. Christ, the Lord and Head of the Church, delegated that authority to her. The developmental process of that authority is seen in a panoramic sweep of the New Testament:

1. It began, in time and space, when the Lord of the Church announced he was building the church—Matthew 16:18
2. It continued as the Head of the Church evangelized, assimilated, and educated her first set of leaders as the embryonic prototype emerges—Mark 1:14-20
3. It is demonstrated as Jesus authorizes these *pastors-in-training* to do ministry with accountability—Mark 6:7-30
4. It transitions from Jesus to those *pastors-in-training* at the end of His post-resurrection ministry and is recorded by four gospel writers in five biblical texts, each one containing a little different nuance to the mission—Matthew 28:19,20 (the command to make disciples); Mark 16:15 (the extent to which you are to go); Luke 24:47,48 (the non-negotiable message); John 20:21 (the authority to function on his behalf); Acts 1:8 (the promised power to accomplish His mission)
5. It is transitionally displayed (as part of the paradigm shift) when Paul humbly submits himself (as a man who did, indeed, receive direct authorization from God for ministry) to the church’s service, authority, process and required accountability—Acts 11:26-30; 13:1-4, 26-28
6. It is exercised publicly and officially in Acts 13 by the church at Antioch when she recognizes, authorizes, and commissions gifted men for official church mission work (as well as requires accountability from them after the mission is complete Acts 14:26-28).
7. It is reported back to Paul’s sending church as part of his first mission tour; “he ordains elders in every church.” This, of course, is done by and under the authority of the church at Antioch—Acts 14: 23

8. It obviously is missing when renegade, unauthorized preachers came to the church in Antioch and preached heresy—Acts 15:1, 2, 24
9. It is displayed by two churches (Iconium and Lystra) in recommending Paul take Timothy and train him for official ministry work—Acts 16:1-3
10. It is referred to in Paul’s letter to Timothy as his public recognition for and authorization to ministry—1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6
11. It is included in Paul’s instructions to Titus to go to Crete, take care of what Paul did not have time to do personally which involved ordaining qualified, gifted men to the office of elder—Titus 1:5
12. It is implied strongly by Paul’s instructions to Timothy to find faithful, capable men in which to invest his life—2 Timothy 2:2. Interestingly, the *Reformation Study Bible* notes these “faithful men” in the 2 Timothy 2:2 text are “presumably bishops or elders.”²³⁵ The English Standard Version edition of *MacArthur’s Study Bible* offers these comments about the same passage:

Faithful men who will be able to teach others. Timothy was to take the divine revelation he had learned from Paul and teach it to other faithful men—men with proven spiritual character and giftedness, who would in turn pass on those truths to another generation. From Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others encompasses four generations of godly leaders. That process of spiritual reproduction, which began in the early church, is to continue until the Lord returns.²³⁶

The English word *ordain* comes from two Greek words. The first is *cheirotoneo* (5500). Zodhiates defines it this way: “To extend, stretch out. To elect or choose to an office by lifting up the hand.”²³⁷ The second is *kathistemi* (2525). Zodhiates defines this word: “To set, place. Trans. to set down, bring to; to place anywhere in an office, in a condition; ...to make somebody, something; to put in a situation or position.”²³⁸

²³⁵ R. C. Sproul ed., *The Reformation Study Bible (ESV)* (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 1762.

²³⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 1828.

²³⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992), 967.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, 924.

The first term (*cheirotoneo*—5500) is used by Luke in Acts 14:23 and by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:19. This King James Version English word is translated in the following ways: ordain, selected, appointed, chosen, and duly appointed. Marvin Vincent gives insight about this word: “**Ordained** (χειροτονήσαντες). Only here and 2 Cor. 8:19. Rev., more correctly, *appointed*.”²³⁹

The second term (*kathistemi*—2525) is used by Paul to give Titus instructions (Titus 1:5) regarding his task in Crete. It is used also by Luke to describe the appointment of the deacons in Acts 6:3. This King James Version English word is translated in the following ways: appoint, put them in charge, assign them, will hand over the task, establish, institute. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown add a note of affirmation to this list of optional translations of this Greek word, “**Ordain**—rather, ‘appoint,’ ‘constitute.’”²⁴⁰ Wuest provides this description of the word *ordain*: “‘Ordain’ is *kathistēmi* (καθιστημι), literally ‘to set down, thus, ‘to appoint one to administer an office.’”²⁴¹

When Paul sends Titus to Crete, he does so with a priority in mind. Leadership must be established and set up in the churches. Paul had to leave quickly, and some unfinished business remained. Titus was the man to fulfill this task in Paul’s place. Fields highlights this priority in the *Teacher’s Bible Commentary* when he states, “The first order of business for Titus is clear.

²³⁹ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 1:523.

²⁴⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 431.

²⁴¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 2 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 183.

He is to see that elders are duly appointed in every congregation (v. 5). ‘Every city’ implies the existence of churches throughout the island.”²⁴²

Regarding these two Greek words, in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, Mayhue explains, “On Paul’s first missionary journey, he and Barnabas ‘appointed’ (*cheirotonesantes*, “stretching out the hand to”) elders in every church (Acts 14:23). He also instructed Titus to “appoint” (*katasteses*, “put in place”) elders in every city (Titus 1:5)”²⁴³ Mayhue also confirms that “ordination is the process of godly church leaders affirming the call, equipping, and maturity of new leaders to serve God’s purposes in the next generation. Ordination validates/authenticates God’s will for a fully qualified man to serve God and His people.”²⁴⁴

Ecclesiastical authority is, without question, non-negotiable in identifying, recognizing, and placing men in official biblical office. It is necessary when representing or speaking for a church. The following observations are cited to reflect and affirm this theological position. The text under consideration is Acts 15:1-24.

As introduced on page 199, the problem in this passage is men from one church (the Jerusalem church) have come to another church (the Antioch church) on their own, without the identification, recognition, or authorization of the Jerusalem church out of which they came. They made a unilateral decision to come down, give teaching to the church they were visiting, and impose heretical doctrine on that church. They came under the guise of being sent by the

²⁴² W. C. Fields, “Titus,” in *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary*, ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972), 769.

²⁴³ John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, TN: W Publication Group, 1995), 137.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 136.

church to which they belonged (whether intentional or not, the appearance of “home church approval” was assumed by the “victim” church).

To highlight the required authority obviously missing in this visit, the problem, along with the men causing the problem, was dealt with by sending a delegation from the Antioch church back to the church of origin. Discussion among the elders/leaders ensued, and an authoritative declaration was put in writing and sent back to the troubled church of Antioch. Polhill identifies and addresses the necessary yet missing authority of these men to teach what they taught when he comments, “The Jerusalem leadership was obviously not happy with the wholly unauthorized Judaizers.”²⁴⁵

One of the most significant lessons from this text is: ecclesiastical authorization is necessary for someone to represent or speak for a church. Without it, churches can and will be devastated. In the twenty-first century, many churches have functioned apart from the structure, organization, and protocol God requires. These principles are all anchored in and flow out of ecclesiastical authority. The issue of ecclesiastical authority cannot be missed. Chalmer Ernest Faw, in his commentary on Acts, says it well, “The letter proper begins with a carefully worded review of the problem caused by some unauthorized persons who have been troubling Gentile Christians and unsettling their minds.”²⁴⁶

What are some of the textual observations gleaned that should raise awareness and cause the church to embrace her responsibility and privilege to thoroughly vet those coming to teach the church or going out of the church to teach elsewhere? Paul challenged and warned the elders

²⁴⁵ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 334.

²⁴⁶ Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts*, *Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 166.

from Ephesus to be alert to theological error from without and within the church (Acts 20:28, 29).

Observation 1: These men did represent (albeit, that may not have been their intention) the teaching, doctrine, and theological position of the church at Antioch (though inaccurately and incorrectly) by the fact they *taught another church theology* (though false). According to Polhill, “They may have come from Jerusalem, but they were in no sense official representatives of the church. In fact, the language of the letter expresses some dismay with this group.”²⁴⁷ The phrase used by Polhill, “official representatives,” is the point. In their minds they may have come as representatives but, in reality, were not.

Observation 2: Anyone “out of a church,” (who is either sent or accepts a teaching opportunity) who teaches, preaches, or ministers the Word in some way, is obligated to complement that church’s doctrinal position, especially any doing so as *official representatives*. These false teachers, in fact, did not represent their church’s doctrinal position. The *Teacher’s Commentary* notes, “...These teachers had not been sent by the apostles, and did not represent the official position of the Jerusalem congregation.”²⁴⁸

These men from Judea in Acts 15:1 came under false pretense. This is deceptive, sinful, and dishonoring to the church out of which they came as well as the God Whose Word they claimed to teach accurately. Robertson addresses this intentional entrance into the church by identifying the subtle doctrinal disguise with which these false teachers cloaked themselves. The men from Jerusalem were presumptuous. That presumption was used to gain entrance to and

²⁴⁷ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 334.

²⁴⁸ Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 781.

audience with the church at Antioch. They presumed to represent and speak for their church at Jerusalem. By sending them back to Jerusalem, the presumption was identified in the meeting called by the leaders there. Robertson says, “The Judaizers will be answered in their own church for which they are presuming to speak.”²⁴⁹ The issue Robertson points out is the secrecy by which they exited the Jerusalem church (without approval or authority) and the deceptiveness by which they entered the Antioch church.

Matthew Henry describes the pretentious way these false teachers acquired audience with the church at Antioch. He points out that “they came from Judea, pretending perhaps to be sent by the apostles at Jerusalem, at least to be countenanced by them. Having a design to spread their notions....”²⁵⁰

The theology these disingenuous pretenders brought and taught was not helpful at all, and it was distressful and destructive to the assembly. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown say, about the phrase “subverting your souls” in verse 24, that “such strong language is evidently designed to express indignation at this attempt, by an unauthorized party, to bring the whole Christian Church under judicial and legal bondage.”²⁵¹ It is evident these men did not represent the official doctrinal position of the church of Jerusalem.

Men without ecclesiastical authorization must not represent their church without the necessary authority to do so. This authority is not merely a simple, self-conferred title. It is a

²⁴⁹ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 15:2.

²⁵⁰ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2129.

²⁵¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 195.

process offered and monitored by the church whereby she identifies, evaluates, recognizes, and prepares these men. The authorized men must be the product of this process.

Observation 3: The general sweep of the passage demonstrates the requirement for ecclesiastical authorization by the church of origin. This requirement for ecclesiastical authorization is acknowledged and affirmed by many theologians. Barclay Newman and Eugene Nida, in their *Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, suggest “the final clause *they had not, however, received any instructions from us to do this* may be equivalent to ‘we did not, however, tell them that they should to this.’”²⁵²

The *Pulpit Commentary* reinforces, once again, the ecclesiastical authorization required for any who *speak for the church* when it discusses the phrase, “**To whom we gave no commandment**. Observe the distinct disavowal by James of having authorized those who went forth from him and the Jerusalem Church to require the circumcision of the Gentiles.”²⁵³

Observation 4: The false teaching presented caused chaos and theological confusion for the congregation. God’s people were disturbed unnecessarily. It is amazing the damage and devastation caused by false doctrine. Church members are thrown into turmoil and their lives are upended. A. T. Robertson’s statement from *Word Pictures in the New Testament* captures this chaos well:

Have troubled you with words (ἐταράξαν ὑμας λόγοις [*etaraxanhumaslogois*]). What a picture of turmoil in the church in Antioch, words, words, words. Aorist tense of the common verb *ταρασσω* [*tarassō*], to agitate, to make the heart palpitate (John 14:1, 27) and instrumental case of *λόγοις* [*logois*]. **Subverting your souls** (ἀνασκευάζοντες τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν [*anaskeuazontestaspsychashumōn*]). Present active participle of

²⁵² Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 300.

²⁵³ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Acts of the Apostles*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 4.

ἀνασκευάζω [*anaskeuazō*], old verb (ἀνα [*ana*] and σκευός [*skeuos*], baggage) to pack up baggage, to plunder, to ravage. Powerful picture of the havoc wrought by the Judaizers among the simple-minded Greek Christians in Antioch.²⁵⁴

Vincent concisely describes the turmoil created by these false teachers in his *Word Studies in the New Testament*. He notes, “The idea here is that of turning the minds of the Gentile converts upside down; throwing them into confusion like a dismantled house.”²⁵⁵

Observation 5: These false teachers also created a serious distraction for the leaders, causing them to set aside their main priorities (Acts 6:4—prayer and the ministry for the Word). Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 4:14 that from time to time elders must take the time and correct false doctrine. Spence-Jones comments, “The ignorant and inexperienced lie at the mercy of abler persons, and, when there is no regular ministry provided by Christ, are liable to be swept along by any plausible person that professes to be a Christian teacher....”²⁵⁶ This was the case here. Paul is fearful for the potential spiritual devastation of God’s people. Christ has given gifts, in the form of gifted men, to stave off the savage wolves who bring into the assembly false teaching. The *NET Bible First Edition Notes* explains, “He is fearful that certain kinds of very cunning people, who are skilled at deceitful scheming, should come in and teach false doctrines which would in turn stunt the growth of the believers.”²⁵⁷ God’s protectors are the elders of the church charged with teaching truth and detecting error.

²⁵⁴A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 15:24.

²⁵⁵Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 526.

²⁵⁶H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Ephesians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 149–150.

²⁵⁷Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Eph 4:14.

This theological confusion required the leaders of both churches to stop what they were doing, set aside whatever ministry/preparation they were involved in, and address the error created by unauthorized men.

Observation 6: These unauthorized teachers misrepresented God. In doing so, they disrespected and dishonored His authority, His Word, and His Church. Preaching *the Word*, not some personal, perverted version of it, is the task of all speaking for God and His church. In his *Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, Wiersbe suggests the phrase “‘preach the Word’ (v. 2) implies knowing the Word, rightly dividing it, and making it understandable and applicable to the lives of the people.”²⁵⁸ The pastor is to be consumed with this privilege and responsibility. He is to divide the Word of God accurately for His people (2 Timothy 2:15), and he is to labor diligently in the Word to do so (1 Timothy 5:17). The ministry is no place for the sluggard who cares for little but his own comforts and conveniences.

Observation 7: It seems the church at Antioch assumed, since these men were from Jerusalem, their teaching would be complementary with their own. It was not, though the men from Jerusalem obviously presented themselves as such. These false teachers were happy to enter the congregation and gain her favor by this disingenuous guise.

Matthew Henry notices how “they insinuated themselves into an acquaintance with the brethren, pretended to be very glad that they had embraced the Christian faith, and congratulated them on their conversion; but...*yet one thing they lack*, they must be circumcised.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 651.

²⁵⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2129.

Observation 8: The local church must know who officially represents them and who is responsible to teach God’s Word to them. That cannot be done without formal and official authorization. Any church receiving guest teachers must do some form of vetting for the sake of doctrinal clarity and continuity as well as the safety, protection, and spiritual health of the assembly. The leaders at Antioch possibly could have done a more efficient job of vetting these visiting teachers since it was their responsibility to do so. The following comment from Robertson clearly affirms this responsibility on the part of the “sending” church:

To whom we gave no commandment (οἰζοῦδιεστειλαμεθα [*hoisoudiesteilametha*]). First aorist middle indicative of διαστελλω [*diastellō*], old verb to draw asunder, to distinguish, to set forth distinctly, to command. This is a flat disclaimer of the whole conduct of the Judaizers in Antioch and in Jerusalem, a complete repudiation of their effort to impose the Mosaic ceremonial law upon the Gentile Christians.²⁶⁰

Failure to submit to the local church’s doctrinal position and refusing the process of theological evaluation by the church is sinful, rebellious, and potentially destructive. The process of scrutiny by the church was resisted intentionally, avoided deceptively, or neglected ignorantly.

Observation 9: The “victim church” held the church of origin responsible and accountable. Though thorough vetting by the “victim church” may not have been as strongly in place, the leaders (as well as the congregation) did have their theological antenna up to detect the false teaching—that is to be commended for sure. Once the false teachers began, it did not take long for the leaders to confront them about their error. Newman and Nida make this point by their observations on the phrase in verse 2, *no small dissension and dispute*: “In the present context the words translated *argument* and *dispute* are practically synonyms. It is important in rendering the expression *had a fierce argument* to indicate by the total context that this was not

²⁶⁰ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 15:24.

an argument between Paul and Barnabas, but with Paul and Barnabas on one side and the men who came from Judea on the other side.”²⁶¹

Robertson reinforces the fact that though thorough vetting may not have been done on the front side of this teaching, it certainly was dealt with on the back side. He notices “Paul and Barnabas were not willing to see this Gentile church brow-beaten and treated as heretics by these self-appointed regulators of Christian orthodoxy from Jerusalem.”²⁶² In addition, Matthew Henry speaks directly to Paul and Barnabas’ resolve to speak publicly to protect the church and defend God’s truth, saying, “They would by no means yield to this doctrine, but appeared and argued publicly against it...As faithful servants of Christ, they would not see his truths betrayed.”²⁶³

The “victim church” appealed to the right place—the church at Antioch (the church of origin) “determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church...” (Acts 15:2, 3a).

To add weight and sobriety to this trip back to Jerusalem, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown determine the phrase in verse 3a, “being brought on their way by the church,” to mean “a kind of official escort.”²⁶⁴ The church at Antioch took false doctrine seriously and were courageous to

²⁶¹ Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 289.

²⁶² A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 15:2.

²⁶³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2129.

²⁶⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 194.

confront the false teachers as well as the church from which they came. This indicates the desire and commitment to follow a biblical protocol for resolving problems, for comradery in ministry, and for the purpose to maintain unity in doctrinal commitments.

Observation 10: The failure to have proper authorization by the church of origin did not go unnoticed. A corrective, and more than likely public, reprimand of the violators must have been part of the discussion at Jerusalem. From the Jerusalem church, James makes this clear as observed in the *Pulpit Commentary*, “**To whom we gave no commandment**. Observe the distinct disavowal by James of having authorized those who went forth from him and the Jerusalem Church....”²⁶⁵

John Chrysostom comments about the charge brought against these men, noting, “Sufficient was this charge against the temerity [excessive confidence or boldness; audacity...researcher’s clarification] of those men....”²⁶⁶ This public discussion of and consequential address to the violators was probably a coordinated and unified remonstrance by the leaders from Antioch and Jerusalem. The unity of all assembled was without question as seen in these two translations: “being assembled with one accord” [New King James Version], “having become of one mind” [NASB] (Acts 15:25).

²⁶⁵ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Acts of the Apostles*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 4.

²⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. Walker et al., vol. 11, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 206.

The stern rebuke is warranted from the Jerusalem church. It was necessary. Matthew Henry identifies grounds for this rebuke, the two great violations of these false teachers—that of operating under false authority as well as teaching error:

Here is a just and severe rebuke to the judaizing teachers (v. 24): “*We have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, and we are very much concerned to hear it; now this is to let them know that those who preached this doctrine were false teachers, both as they produced a false commission and as they taught a false doctrine.*”²⁶⁷

These men dishonored their church as well as God’s truth. Henry maintains “they did a great deal of wrong to the apostles and ministers at Jerusalem, in pretending that they had instructions from them to impose the ceremonial law...nor given them the least occasion to use our names in it.”²⁶⁸

An official, authorized, public letter of retraction and clarification was crafted and sent back to the Antioch church along with two witnesses to affirm the contents of the written message. Both churches took their responsibilities seriously to leverage their authority in this entire process.

The church at Jerusalem intentionally clarified their official position both by written letter and word of mouth from two of their authorized men. *Faithlife Study Bible* notes “the letter from the Jerusalem Council codifies its conclusions. It aims to make theological unity within the church a practical reality.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2132.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ac 15:22–29.

The two authorized men sent from Jerusalem to add weight to the letter were Judas and Silas. Stanley Toussaint mentions the letter was carried “by **Judas and Silas**, the **prophets**, who encouraged the church still further and strengthened them by a lengthy message.”²⁷⁰ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown explain the purpose of these two official representatives from the Jerusalem church was, in part, “to give weight to the written decision of this important assembly.”²⁷¹

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes both the importance of the written message as well as the verbal confirmation of the same by Judas and Silas. In his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, John Chrysostom provides the following insight regarding both written and verbal messages:

See here a brief Epistle, with nothing more in it (than was needed), neither arts of persuasion (κατασκευὰς) nor reasonings, but simply a command: for it was the Spirit’s legislating. “So when they were dismissed they came to Antioch, and having gathered the multitude together, they delivered to them the epistle.” (v. 30.) After the epistle, then (Judas and Silas) also themselves exhort them by word (v. 31).²⁷²

Observation 11: The good news—when the process of theological clarification is done properly, it brings consolation, comfort, and clarity to those affected by the error (Acts 15:31,32). The false teaching affected the congregation so the correction was brought to the congregation (Acts 15:30). Kenneth Gangel addresses this result concisely, pointing out “the

²⁷⁰ Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 396.

²⁷¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 195.

²⁷² John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. Walker et al., vol. 11, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 210.

messengers arrived and read the letter. The people rejoiced! All was quiet on the northern front of the church.”²⁷³

When problems are handled biblically, God’s people are settled, content, and at peace again. The agitation created by false doctrine was checked, addressed by the leaders, and eliminated by, again, the authority of the church. It is a wonderful thing when church leaders take their responsibility seriously to protect the flock and maintain peaceful conditions within the body. Gangel points out “whatever caused the rupture, relations between Antioch and Jerusalem were restored.”²⁷⁴

Church leaders fulfill their responsibility to face courageously and handle biblically a doctrinal error promoted by unauthorized men. Two churches regain doctrinal unity and peaceful relations. *Faithlife Study Bible* brings to light “the church of Antioch [rejoicing] after reading the letter, which has encouraged their unity and love for each other.”²⁷⁵

Observation 12: Authority is displayed throughout the text. The Antioch church “sent/authorized” leaders to go to Jerusalem (Acts 15:2, 3) and the Jerusalem church “sent/authorized” leaders to Antioch (Acts 15:30). This ecclesiastical authority delegated to the local church by God for ministry begins to emerge clearly in this transitional section of Acts (11:22, 29; 13:3; 14:26; 15:2,3, 22, 25, 27, 30, 33, 40). Commenting on Acts 15:3, Utley says,

²⁷³ Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5 of *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 253.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ac 15:30–35.

“**The brethren determined that**’ This refers to “the church” (cf. v. 3).²⁷⁶ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown call it a “formal dispatch.”²⁷⁷

A determination was made for representatives from the Antioch church to go to the Jerusalem church. The church *determined* this needed to be done and *sent them* on the journey. The point is, as with the other texts listed above, ecclesiastical authority is clear and apparent. It is functioning well and consistently. Vincent adds the following description regarding the church’s authority *to send* in 15:3, “**Being brought on their way** (προπεμφθέντες). Lit., *having been sent forth*; under escort as a mark of honor.”²⁷⁸

The biblical basis for the local church’s authority is without question. The Head of the church has delegated that to her. The model of the church authorizing men to official church ministry is also without question—the textual evidence is overwhelming for this church function. The biblical criteria for examining a man expressing a “1 Timothy 3:1 desire” is objective and obvious as well. The criteria are the qualification passages (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:5-9) and the giftedness passage (Ephesians 4:11). Even the subjective component of this ecclesiastical privilege must be vetted by the church and her ordained leaders (1 Timothy 3:1).

The objective aspects of authorization laid out in the various texts are clear and apparent. However, the practical steps regarding “an ordination event” are not available. Obviously, the Holy Spirit had no ridged formula for the church to follow. This is left up to the church to

²⁷⁶ Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 181.

²⁷⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 194.

²⁷⁸ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 524.

decide. The point should be made, however, that the church must honor Christ by properly identifying, evaluating, preparing, and ordaining. For example, they officially set this man aside, appoint him to ministry, and acknowledge him before the assembly as one evaluated aggressively, rigorously, yet patiently and with sobriety. The details of that process should be informed by the very nature of the office being recognized, and the Lord of the church Who created that office and gave those gifts to that man by which to serve the church.

Mayhue rightly concludes in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, “Therefore, the church has the God-given liberty to design a practical process leading to ordination, so long as the process includes what the Scripture does dictate.”²⁷⁹

Conclusion

The Lord of the Church has committed the responsibility to identify, evaluate, prepare and authorize qualified, gifted men desiring official biblical ministry to the local church. His methods have evolved. No longer does He directly call a man to fill a needed spot. No longer does He communicate through visions, dreams, and burning bushes. He has communicated finally, comprehensively, sufficiently, and exclusively through His self-revelation—the Bible. The canon is closed. God’s Word is the only source of divine knowledge for life and godliness.

Since the canon is closed, any biblical discussions must be done utilizing biblical terminology. Paul made that clear to the church at Corinth—discuss spiritual topics with spiritual words. When this principle is not honored, ideas, vocabulary, thought processes, and conclusions become confusing, vague, random, divisive, and harms the church of Jesus Christ.

²⁷⁹ John MacArthur and the Master’s Seminary Faculty, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, TN: W Publication Group, 1995), 141.

Jesus said the church needs leaders. He chose and trained the first ones and left the church with the pattern to use from that point forward. He told the church what kind of men these leaders need to be. He *established qualifications* (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) and sovereignly gave gifts (Ephesians 4:8, 11) necessary to shepherd and a model for the flocks of God. Dockery explains, “Borrowing an illustration from Psalm 68:18, Paul described the gifts given to the church. God is both sovereign and generous in His distribution of the various gifts. The gifts in fact are gifted persons....”²⁸⁰

Wuest indicates these sovereignly bestowed gifts “are the gifted men mentioned in 4:11. Christ gave these gifts to the Church when He ascended to Heaven.”²⁸¹ This gifted man also has a *personal desire* (1 Timothy 3:1) for this office. This combination is crucial—he desires the office and is equipped to fill that desired office. Both are necessary for him to serve the church well.

The Lord of the Church has delegated authority to the church to accomplish this marvelous goal of identifying, evaluating, preparing, and authorizing qualified, gifted, desirous men to serve the church. This process by the church must be a vigilant one. Many things depend on this generation preparing the next generation properly.

The *health* of the church depends on this generation of churches taking her responsibility seriously. Godly *life patterns* established for the congregation are the result of the church taking her vetting task seriously. MacArthur stresses the importance of the leaders displaying a pattern for the people to follow: “**13:7** In addition to the roll of the faithful in chap. 11, the writer

²⁸⁰ David S. Dockery, “The Pauline Letters,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 579.

²⁸¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians*, vol. 1 of *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 98.

reminds the Hebrews of their own faithful leaders within the church. In so doing, he outlines the duties of pastors: 1) rule; 2) speak the Word of God; and 3) establish the pattern of faith for the people to follow.”²⁸²

Paul uses this same word in 1 Corinthians 11:1 to encourage his disciples to follow him as he follows Christ. Providing Godly *life patterns* for the congregation to follow is important. It is required inherently by the leadership role. Wuest adds this technical note regarding the Greek word translated *follow*: “The word ‘follow’ is the translation of *mimnisko* (μιμνισκο) ‘to imitate.’”²⁸³

The *safety* of the church depends on this generation of churches maintaining a fierce adherence to sound doctrine. The church must identify men demonstrating that same fierce commitment. Polhill calls attention to the roll of the shepherd as the protector of the flock. He says, “The shepherd imagery is continued in vv. 29–30 with Paul warning the Ephesian elders of a time to come when religious predators would ravage the flock of God. They would arise both from outside and inside the church.”²⁸⁴ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown also capture the vigilance required by any who would fill the role of shepherd of the flock of God, saying, “But

²⁸² John MacArthur, ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1922.

²⁸³ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 235.

²⁸⁴ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 428.

watchfulness against *all* that tends to injure and corrupt the Church is the duty of its pastors in every age.”²⁸⁵

The *testimony and honor* of the Godhead is at stake. The church is important to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each member of the trinity has a vital role and interest in the church. Wiersbe notes this in his *Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wiersbe not only calls attention to the Trinity but puts the pressure where it should be—on the leaders of the church:

Never underestimate the great importance of the church. The church is important to God the Father because His name is on it— “the church of God.” It is important to the Son because He shed His blood for it; and it is important to the Holy Spirit because He is calling and equipping people to minister to the church. It is a serious thing to be a spiritual leader in the church of the living God.²⁸⁶

The men Jesus trained changed the world at that time. The ministry goals and priorities He set should be the same ones the church instills in the men she trains today. The method He employed to equip His *pastors-in-training* should be the same method the church utilizes to train the next generation. The goals He set are of paramount importance. His methods work. Those methods easily can be and must be passed to the next generation. That method must be two-fold. It must involve *seeing* the mentor’s life lived as an example to the ones being trained as well as *hearing* his teaching. The focus is more than evangelizing the lost—it must be to identify, evaluate, prepare, and authorize faithful, capable men willing to invest themselves in the next generation of shepherds.

²⁸⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 210.

²⁸⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 487.

It is clear what must be done, how it must be carried out, and what is at stake. The need is of the gravest nature and obviously great—too great for any one or two individuals to accomplish alone in their own strength.

The key questions have been asked and answered from the research:

- How does God engage men in official local church ministry today—when, where, and how did the paradigm shift occur? (*The process was delegated to the Local Church – Acts 13 and 14 serves as a pattern of this shift. A closed canon forbids creating anything more or extra-biblical. God’s voice is silent apart from His Word*)
- What single resource must be used in this discussion? (*the Word of God*)
- What subjective and objective criteria determines who can and should be considered for next generation shepherds? (*1 Timothy 3:1 desire; Ephesians 4:11 gifts; and 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 character qualifications*)
- What/where is the context for training? (*pastors train pastors within the context of the local church*)
- What training methods must be employed to live truth and teach truth to the next generation? (*with Him so truth can be seen and heard, like Him*)
- Under what authority does this process function? (*The authority of God delegated to the local church*)

One question is yet to be answered. No church can do it for another church. No church can abdicate this great responsibility and please Christ, the Head of the Church. The local church is accountable. The responsibility rests squarely on her. The paradigm shift incorporated into the biblical and transitional model of Acts 13:1-4 cannot be avoided. The following authors call attention to this non-negotiable obligation. That obligation is the one the local church has been given to fulfill her role to identify, evaluate, prepare, and *authorize the next generation of shepherds* who will serve the churches of Jesus Christ:

1. Barnabas and Saul are sent as missionaries by the Antioch church.²⁸⁷
2. The placing of *hands* on Barnabas and Saul (traditionally known as “the laying on of hands”) refers to an act picturing the commission of God and the church for the task at hand.²⁸⁸
3. The modern mission board is only a “sending agency” to expedite the work authorized by the local church.²⁸⁹
4. The laying on of hands identified the church with their ministry and acknowledged God’s direction for them.²⁹⁰
5. Finally, after consecrating them with the laying on of hands (cf. 6:6), the church sends them off (13:3).²⁹¹
6. It is clear to whom *they* and *their* refer—most likely the reference is to the entire church community.²⁹²
7. In verse 3 we have less problem with the antecedent of **they**. Clearly by now Luke is talking about the entire congregation....This missionary commissioning service demonstrates a planned and orderly congregational project.²⁹³

That one remaining multifaceted question each local church must answer is: *Will she* take the challenge? *Will she* repent if necessary? *Will she* make the adjustments and revive her resolve

²⁸⁷ Wayne Dehoney, “Acts,” in *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary*, ed. H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972), 697.

²⁸⁸ Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ac 13:3.

²⁸⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 456.

²⁹⁰ Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 387.

²⁹¹ Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 149.

²⁹² Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 245.

²⁹³ Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5 of *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 210.

to the divine obligation and privilege to identify, evaluate, recognize, prepare, and authorize the next generation of shepherds for the churches of Jesus Christ? *Will she* do this for the health and protection of those future churches? *Will she* do this for the honor of and in obedience to Christ, the Head of the church?

Each local church, with her present leaders, must discuss and wrestle through this multifaceted question. *She must* answer it and then accept the challenge to fulfill her God-given privilege. The next generation of churches and leaders depend on it. God demands and expects it.

APPENDIX A

Preliminary Questionnaire for Young Men Desiring Pastoral Ministry

This is a key question: Do you want to pursue pastoral ministry? For what specific reasons? Briefly describe your understanding of pastoral ministry?

It would be helpful if Dad and Mom (if applicable) would respond to the same questions as you. The answers obviously would be based on their conversation with and the observations of you through the years. Some of the answers will involve their candid opinion.

Explain in detail your understanding of, desire for, and areas of interest in biblical ministry. Please include detailed responses to the following:

- Your reasons for wanting to be part of the *Equipping Men for Official Biblical Ministry* program.
- Your education goals.
- Your future ministry goals.
- Your thoughts about being mentored closely and evaluated by the leadership of at this church.
- Your thoughts about participating in a 12-18-month internship program through your church. This may include, but not be limited to the following:
 - Personal evaluation and directed work in the areas of character and biblical qualification development
 - Class time for theological training
 - Ministry projects
 - Reading assignments
 - Hands-on ministry involvement
 - Overall ministry philosophy development
 - Developing a detailed, personal, doctrinal statement and/or defending your church's statement of faith

- Your willingness to participate in this internship program at any point in your education and development the leadership believes will be most helpful (i.e., during high school, post high school but pre-college, during college, or post-college).
- Any additional thoughts, questions or concerns you may have about ministry.

When you have completed (please type) your response, turn this in to one of the pastors. Your responses will be read, evaluated, and discussed by the pastoral staff. At that time, an interview will be set up with you (and your parents or wife if applicable) to go over your response.

APPENDIX B

Qualifications for Biblical Leadership Questionnaire

Prayerfully evaluate yourself in each area of qualification. In the space provided, rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 in each area (1 – rarely true; 2 – occasionally true; 3 – generally true; 4 – consistently true; 5 – always true). In each case where you have a rating below 4, also list some specific things you can do to work on raising the evaluation.

1. **“Above reproach”** (probably a general heading for other qualities) means that I live a consistent life of growth in godliness over an extended period of time so that no one can legitimately question my salvation, sanctification, or sincerity.

Rating: _____

2. **“Husband of one wife”** (or “one-woman man”) means that I consistently express affection and devotion to my wife and never to any other woman. If I am single, it means that I practice sexual purity in mind and action.

Rating: _____

3. **“Temperate”** means that I am sober, careful, and controlled in my actions. I do not indulge in food, drink, or any pleasure beyond the limits of Scripture, conscience, or good sense.

Rating: _____

4. **“Prudent”** (also translated “sensible”) means that I am sober, careful, and control my thinking according to God’s Word. I am not subject to whims of thought or emotions, nor do I accept my own ideas or the ideas of others without biblical scrutiny.

Rating: _____

5. **“Respectable”** (or “orderly”) means that I live an organized and structured life in which I plan to make the wisest use of my time and can be depended upon to fulfill both big and small responsibilities.

Rating: _____

6. **“Hospitable”** (lit. “a friend of strangers”) means that my home and other possessions belong to God rather than me, and I am willing and ready to share them even with those who may never do anything for me.

Rating: _____

7. **“Able to teach”** means that I have learned enough biblical doctrine from my own study and from faithful teachers that I can instruct others accurately and effectively.

Rating: _____

8. **“Not addicted to wine”** means that I could never be considered as someone whose judgment is impaired by the use of alcohol or other substances.

Rating: _____

9. **“Not pugnacious”** means that I never resort to any form of physical or verbal violence in my relationships with family, friends, acquaintances, or even enemies.

Rating: _____

10. **“Gentle”** means that I respond to others’ shortcomings, and even their abuse, with loving concern rather than hurtful comments or any other kind of retaliation.

Rating: _____

11. **“Uncontentious”** means that the last thing I want to do is enter into a debate or conflict, though I know they will arise at times. I have repeatedly shown the ability to disagree with others without creating division in the body.

Rating: _____

12. **“Free from the love of money”** means that my motivations in my work and investments is never to get rich or even accrue more possessions for myself. I view money I make merely as a means to fulfill the scriptural duties of providing for myself and my family, supporting God’s work, and giving to those in need.

Rating: _____

13. **“Manages his household well”** means that I fulfill the role of a godly leader in my home in regard to whatever responsibilities God has given me there. If I have children, I must be such a good leader, example, discipler, and discipliner that they lead obedient and exemplary lives.

Rating: _____

14. **“Not a new convert”** means that I take pains to grow as fast as I can in Christ so that others can view me as spiritually mature. I also will be careful to cultivate humility in my life so that I do not fall into the pit of spiritual pride.

Rating: _____

15. **“A good reputation with those outside the church”** means that my conduct does not change when I leave the company of Christians; I am as conscientious, honest, and caring when I work, drive, and shop as I am when I am teaching a Sunday School class.

Rating: _____

16. **“Men of dignity”** means that I am serious enough that no one could accuse me of being frivolous or not recognizing the gravity of spiritual matters.

Rating: _____

17. **“Not double-tongued”** means that I do not say one thing to one person and the opposite to someone else. I also do not speak freely when something is better left unsaid.

Rating: _____

18. **“Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience”** means that I understand biblical doctrine, but I also live it to such an extent that I have no unconfessed sin or doubts about the righteousness of any activity in my life.

Rating: _____

19. **“Not self-willed”** means that I consider myself as less important than others and seek their good above my own.

Rating: _____

20. **“Not quick-tempered”** means that I do not “blow up” when I am mistreated or things do not go my way. I do not act a certain way in the heat of the moment that I have to regret later.

Rating: _____

21. **“Loving what is good”** means that I rejoice in my own obedience and growth and the obedience and growth of others, so much so that I will gladly do whatever I can to facilitate that growth.

Rating: _____

22. **“Just”** means that I do not show partiality to one kind of person over another, and that I can be counted on to act in a consistently biblical manner in my dealings with others.

Rating: _____

23. **“Devout”** means that I constantly worship God by setting myself apart from sin and the encumbrances that could tempt me to sin.

Rating: _____

24. **“Self-controlled”** means that I have developed the habit of fighting and overcoming my sinful desires rather than giving into them. I practice personal discipline even in non-moral matters so that I may be better equipped to defeat temptation when it arises.

Rating: _____

25. **“Holding fast the faithful word”** means that I study Scripture in enough depth to be able to “hold my own” in a conversation with any heretic or misled brother.

Rating: _____²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House: A Member’s Guide to the Local Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, December 1, 2006), 77-80.

APPENDIX C

Further Resources

Obviously, thousands of resources are available from which to choose for a variety of purposes. These three, however, specifically target the man, his character, his duties in his pastoral role, and the necessary perspective for shepherding well. It forces him to interact with Paul, the greatest mentor, second only to Jesus Christ.

1. *Fifty Marks of a Man of God* – This little booklet by Bill Elliff is a series of self-confrontation questions drawn from the texts of the pastorals. It is challenging, confronting and practical. It would keep the man being mentored in the text of the pastorals to rebuke, encourage and see the emphasis, passion and priorities Paul lays down for Timothy. This can be obtained from the Summit Church 6600 Crystal Hill Road North Little Rock, Arkansas 72118.
2. *Pastor's Self-Evaluation Questionnaire* – In this very provocative piece, pastors Tim Keller and David Powlison provide much by way of personally interrogative questions to pierce the soul of a man serving as pastor or to challenge strongly the man ambitious for pastoral ministry. There are scores of key questions and then further questions to better focus on others. It is very practical and laser aimed at the heart and life of any pastor or one seeking ordination. For example, under point I., sub point C., question 3. – *Are your family commitments a proper priority under the Lord? Then these are some that follow that key question...Do you give yourself to your family? Are you overcommitted to your ministry and under-committed to your family? Do you love your family in such a way that they willingly become committed to your ministry and really stand with and behind you?* This is just a taste. It has a complementary work sheet designed in a very user-friendly format. This tool appeared in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, volume XII, Number 1, Fall 1993. It can be obtained in a pdf format by googling the title and author's name.
3. *Pastors Train Pastors in the Context of Pastoral Ministry; Recovering the Pauline Pattern* – The pastorals are the target in this work as well. It is designed as a tool for mentoring (after all, Paul wrote the three epistles for mentoring). The book is focused on extracting principles to teach and instill into the heart and life of the young man, ambitious for pastoral ministry. The book can be used in a variety of ways to accomplish the goal of equipping. There are scores of principles designed to get the next generation of shepherds ready to lead the congregations for Jesus Christ. The author reached out to get input from Dr. Jay E. Adams, one of his respected mentors and prolific author. This book can be obtained by going to gracebiblefellowship.com and clicking on the link to Church Life Resources.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Jay E. *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus*. Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994.
- *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Acts*. Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1999.
- *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*. Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts 1994.
- *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude*. Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1996.
- *The Christian Counselor's New Testament*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980.
- *Fifty Difficult Passages Explained*. Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, October 2008.
- *Signs and Wonders in the Last Days*. Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, September 2000.
- *A Theology of Christian Counseling*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1979.
- Allen, Jason K. "Do You Desire the Ministry?" Jasonkallen.com. <https://jasonkallen.com/2016/09/do-you-desire-the-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Arichea, Daniel C., and Howard Hatton. *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1995.
- Barnes, Albert. "1 Timothy 4 Barnes' Notes." Biblehub.com. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/1_timothy/4.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Barry, John D. *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012.
- Biblehub.com. "Bible Hub." Apple App Store, Vers. 1.0 (2016). <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/bible-hub/id1090228108?mt=8> (June 28, 2017).
- Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*. Biblical Studies Press, 2006.
- Birdsall, J. N. "Canon of the New Testament." Edited by D. R. W. Wood. *New Bible Dictionary*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Blomberg, Craig. *Matthew*. Vol. 22 of *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.

- Bratcher, Robert G., and William David Reyrburn. *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1991.
- Brown, Douglas. "The Call to the Ministry." Faith Baptist Theological Seminary. <https://www.faith.edu/2008/01/the-call-to-the-ministry/> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Cabal, Ted. *The Apologetics Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007.
- Cairns, Alan. *Dictionary of Theological Terms*. 2nd ed. Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1998.
- Challies, Tim. "The 10 Questions Anyone Considering a Call to Ministry Must Answer." Challies.com. Entry posted September 26, 2016. <https://www.challies.com/sponsored/the-10-questions-anyone-considering-a-call-to-ministry-must-answer/> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Chrysostom, John. "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Acts of the Apostles," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*. Edited by Philip Schaff. Translated by J. Walker et al. vol. 11, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889.
- Clowney, Edmund P. *Called to the Ministry*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964.
- Davies, S. "Proverbs 29 Biblical Illustrator." Biblehub.com. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/illustrator/proverbs/29.htm> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Dever, Mark, and Paul Alexander. *The Deliberate Church*. Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2005.
- Dever, Mark. *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2005.
- . *Understanding Church Leadership*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2016.
- DeYoung, Kevin. "How Can I Tell if I'm Called to the Pastoral Ministry?" Thegospelcoalition.org. Entry posted February 15, 2013. <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2013/02/15/how-can-i-tell-if-im-called-to-pastoral-ministry/> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Dockery, David S. "The Pauline Letters," in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*. Edited by David S. Dockery. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998.
- Easton, M. G. *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1983.
- Ellicott, Charles John. "2 Peter 1 Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers." Biblehub.com. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/2_peter/1.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).

- Fausset, A. R. "Titus 1 Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary." Biblehub.com. <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/jfb/titus/1.htm> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Faw, Chalmer Ernest. *Acts*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993.
- Fesko, J. V. "A Pastor's Reflections: How Do I Know if I'm Called?" Valiant for Truth. Westminster Seminary California. entry posted January 13, 2015. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160403114131/http://wscal.edu:80/blog/a-pastors-reflections-how-do-i-know-if-im-called> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Fields, W. C. "Titus." In *The Teacher's Bible Commentary*. Edited by H. Franklin Paschall and Herschel H. Hobbs. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1972.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. "2 Peter." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Vol. 2. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.
- . *Acts*. Vol. 5 of *Holman New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998.
- . *John*. Vol. 4 of *Holman New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.
- Geisler, Norman L., and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Revised and expanded. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986.
- Gilder, Ray. "Five Elements of the Call to Ministry." Lifeway.com. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Five-elements-of-the-call-to-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Hankins, Stephen J. "Paul's Prescription to Timothy for Ministry Training." *Biblical Viewpoint* 34, no. 2 (November 2000): 100.
- Harvey, Dave. *Am I Called?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 1. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.
- Hollingsworth, Mark. "Called to Preach?" Preachology.com. <http://www.preachology.com/called-to-preach.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- . "Divine Call to Preach or Man's Call to Preach?" Preachology.com. <http://www.preachology.com/divine-call.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Houdmann, S. Michael. "How can I discern a call to ministry? How can I tell if I've been called to vocational ministry?" Compellingtruth.com. <https://www.compellingtruth.org/call-to-ministry.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

----- "How can I know if I am being called to preach?" Gotquestions.org. <https://www.gotquestions.org/called-to-preach.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

----- "How can I know if I have received a call to ministry?" Gotquestions.org. <https://www.gotquestions.org/call-to-ministry.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Hunter, Drew. "Book Review: Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry by Dave Harvey." Thegospelcoalition.org. *Themelios* Vol. 38, Issue 1. <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/review/am-i-called-the-summons-to-pastoral-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Vol. 2. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.

Johnson, Arthur L. *Faith Misguided: Exposing the Dangers of Mysticism*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988.

Kiker, Tommy. "Discerning the Call: Spurgeon's Lectures." Tommykiker.wordpress.com. Entry posted June 25, 2013. <https://tommykiker.wordpress.com/2013/06/25/discerning-the-call-spurgeons-lectures/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

Knight, George W. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992.

Lange, John Peter. "1 Thessalonians 5 Lange Commentary on the Holy Scriptures." Biblehub.com. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/lange/1_thessalonians/5.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).

Larson, Knute, and Max Anders. *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*. Vol. 9 of *Holman New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

Lawson, Steven J. "Martin Luther & Sola Scriptura." *Expositor*, November/December 2017.

Leeman, Jonathan. "Does a pastor have to be 'called' by God?" 9Marks.org. <https://www.9marks.org/answer/does-pastor-have-be-called-god/> (accessed June 28, 2017).

----- "How Church Discipline Will Save the Parachurch." 9Marks.org. <https://www.9marks.org/article/how-church-discipline-will-save-parachurch/> (accessed January 22, 2018).

MacArthur, John. *Charismatic Chaos*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.

- . *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
- . *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995.
- . *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Peter & Jude*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005.
- . *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Timothy*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995.
- . *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986.
- . *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Titus*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996.
- , ed. *The MacArthur Study Bible*. Electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997.
- . *The MacArthur Study Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- . *The MacArthur Study Bible: New King James Version*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997.
- . *Our Sufficiency in Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998.
- , and the Master's Seminary Faculty. *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1995.
- . "What Does Sola Scriptura Mean?" Ligonier.org. <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-sola-scriptura-mean/> (accessed March 30, 2018).
- MacDonald, Gordon. "God's Calling Plan: So what exactly is a call to ministry?" Christianitytoday.com. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2003/fall/3.35.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Mack, Wayne, and Dave Swavely. *Life in the Father's House: A Member's Guide to the Local Church*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, December 1, 2006.
- McNaughton, Ian S. *Opening up Colossians and Philemon*. Opening Up Commentary. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006.
- Merrill, Eugene H. *Deuteronomy*. Vol. 4 of *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.
- Miller, Kara. "Are You Being Called?" In "Seminary Grad School Guide," *Christianity Today*. <http://www.seminarygradschool.com/article/Are-You-Being-Called-to-Ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).

- Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008.
- Murray, David P. "Am I Called to the Ministry?" Thegospelcoalition.org. Entry posted June 7, 2010. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/am-i-called-to-the-ministry> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Myers, Allen C. *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Nelson, Juli. "Experiencing a Call to Ministry." Womenministers.ag.org. <http://www.womenministers.ag.org/articles/> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Newman, Barclay Moon, and Eugene Albert Nida. *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*. UBS Handbook Series. New York: United Bible Societies, 1972.
- O'Brien, Peter Thomas. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999.
- Olimb, Lance. "Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Is the Holy Spirit Pushing You Toward Preaching?" Amicalled.com. <http://amicalled.com/2014/11/is-the-holy-spirit-pushing-you-toward-preaching/> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Platt, David, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2013.
- Polhill, John B. *Acts*. Vol. 26 of *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992.
- Poole, Matthew. "1 Thessalonians 5 Matthew Poole's Commentary." Biblehub.com. http://biblehub.com/commentaries/poole/1_thessalonians/5.htm (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Prime, Derek J., and Alistair Begg. *On Being a Pastor*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2004.
- Pritchard, Ray. "21 Ways to Prepare for the Ministry." Crosswalk.com. Entry posted September 9, 2011. <http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/21-ways-to-prepare-for-the-ministry-11598759.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Putra, Tezar. "The Offices of the Church." Ligonier.org. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/offices-church/> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Ratcliffe, Ann K. "Brace Yourself, Jeremiah! Answering God's Call with Our Lives." Unity.org. <http://www.unity.org/resources/articles/brace-yourself-jeremiah-answering-gods-call-our-lives> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Richards, Larry, and Lawrence O. Richards. *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987.

- Robertson, A. T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933.
- Saunders, Jon. “The Place and Purpose of Parachurch Ministries.” [Thegospelcoalition.org](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/parachurch-ministry/).
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/parachurch-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Shumate, David. “The Unfolding of God’s Call.” *Sowing & Reaping* 149 (January-February 2000): 2.
- Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. *Acts of the Apostles*. The Pulpit Commentary. London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.
- . *Ephesians*. The Pulpit Commentary. London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909.
- . *Isaiah*. The Pulpit Commentary. London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1910.
- Spender, Jack. “The First Work of Elders: Feed the Flock.” [Newtestamentchurch.com](https://newtestamentchurch.com/articles-of-interest-to-church-elders/index-of-articles-relating-to-church-elders/the-first-work-of-elders-feed-the-flock-of-god).
<https://newtestamentchurch.com/articles-of-interest-to-church-elders/index-of-articles-relating-to-church-elders/the-first-work-of-elders-feed-the-flock-of-god> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Sproul, R. C. *New Geneva Study Bible: New King James Version*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., April 1995.
- Sproul, R. C., ed. *The Reformation Study Bible (ESV)*. Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005.
- Stiles, Mack. “Nine Marks of a Healthy Parachurch Ministry.” [9Marks.org](https://www.9marks.org/article/journalnine-marks-healthy-parachurch-ministry/).
<https://www.9marks.org/article/journalnine-marks-healthy-parachurch-ministry/> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Strauch, Alex. “An Urgent Call to Shepherd God’s Flock, Part 3.” [Bible.org](https://bible.org/seriespage/3-urgent-call-shepherd-god-s-flock). <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-urgent-call-shepherd-god-s-flock> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Trever, George Henry. “Entry for ‘CALLING’.” Bible Study Tools Online. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/calling.html> (accessed June 28, 2017).
- Trueman, Carl. “How Parachurch Ministries Go off the Rails.” [9Marks.org](https://www.9marks.org/article/journalhow-parachurch-ministries-go-rails/).
<https://www.9marks.org/article/journalhow-parachurch-ministries-go-rails/> (accessed January 22, 2018).
- Uteley, Robert James. *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*. Vol. 3B of Study Guide Commentary Series. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003.
- Vaughan, Curtis, ed. *The New Testament From 26 Translations*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967.

- Vincent, Marvin Richardson. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Vols. 1 and 4. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887.
- Vine, W. E. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966.
- Wiersbe, Warren W. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Vol. 1. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996.
- *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992.
- Wood, Dr. Bob. "God's Call to the Ministry." Lecture, Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC, Fall Semester, 1993.
- Wuest, Kenneth S. *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961.
- *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*. Vol. 10. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973.
- Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992.
- *The Complete Word Study New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, June, 1992.
- *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG publishers, 1994.
- *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1984.