

# The Resource Page

... creative and practical ideas

Brought to you this month  
by Dennis Foust



## Preparing God's people for works of service

Preaching, visiting, envisioning, leading, counseling, planning, studying, communicating, listening, calling, teaching, caring, meeting, reporting, clarifying, budgeting, interpreting, staffing, delegating, evaluating, facilitating, sensitizing, enlisting, deciding, managing, discerning, sensing, representing, nurturing ... This is the work of the pastor?

Eugene Peterson, in *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, offers these words in his epilogue: "Forty years ago I found myself distracted. I was being tossed about by 'every wind of doctrine' — except it was not winds of doctrines that were distracting me, but the winds of the times ... There was so much going on in the world, in the culture — so many important things to do, urgent voices telling me what had to be done. There was no 'one thing needful' — there were many things needful, all clamoring for my attention."

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul offers clarity by naming gifts Christ gives to his church. Paul's list includes "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11-16). These two functions, to be fulfilled by one person, are linked in language and in purpose. Paul teaches that Christ entrusts these gifts to his church for one purpose: "to prepare God's people for works of service" (NIV).

The church needs and desires pastors who will equip them for the work of ministry. While there will always be individuals who desire the pastor to coddle them and acquiesce to their pretentiousness, the majority of congregational members take seriously their discipleship to Jesus Christ and are looking for ways to connect their Sunday experience with their weekday lives. They earnestly want to make a difference in the world, but they need help. They do good deeds. They live ethically and morally. Yet, they still yearn for

spiritual fulfillment.

Pastoral joy is discovered (or re-discovered) in guiding people to find "ministry in daily life." Over time they see their world of influence as the context where the Kingdom of God is unfolding in silent and hidden ways. The role of the pastor is, according to Frederick Buechner in *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*, to remind people: "The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep sense of gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Christians who are equipped for ministry are not better than other people; they are simply prepared to live with a perspective that transcends temporal living. They understand themselves to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, involved in the mission of God, serving in the continuity of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Pastoral renewal may be found in ministering with one perspective: preparing God's people for works of service.

These five pastoral practices may prove helpful, as you pursue this one perspective:

1. Visit members of the congregation, in their workplace. Let them introduce you to their work space and co-workers; discuss their responsibilities, points of influence and issues presenting challenges. Pray with them, possibly over lunch, commissioning them to reflect the character of Christ in their context.

2. Gather people from similar vocational arenas (education, sales, finance, engineering, etc.) for "Ministry in Daily Life Conversations." Ask them to discuss questions such as: In what ways is the ministry of the congregation preparing or failing to prepare you for the work of Christian ministry in your workplace? What specific challenges do you face as

### Resources

- Brueggemann, Walter (ed.). *Hope for the World: Mission in a Global Context*. Westminster/John Knox, 2001.
- Edge, Findley. *The Greening of the Church*. Word, 1971.
- Guder, Darrell. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Eerdmans, 2000).
- Hammitt, Eddie. *The Gathered and Scattered Church: Equipping Believers for the 21st Century*. Smyth & Helwys, 1999.
- Kraemer, Hendrik. *A Theology of the Laity*. Westminster, 1958.
- Sider, Ronald, Philip Olson and Heidi Unruh. *Churches That Make a Difference*. Baker Books, 2002.
- Stevens, R. Paul and Phil Collins. *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership*. Alban Institute, 1993.
- Stevens, R. Paul. *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Trueblood, Elton. *Your Other Vocation*. Harper & Brothers, 1952.

you seek to reflect Christ's character in your work? Are we preparing you for ministry in the community?

3. Invite 6-12 people to participate in a gathering Friday evening through Saturday noon where you explore ideas related to ministry in daily life.

4. As you prepare sermons and teaching notes each week, reflect on what you are hearing and sensing during workplace visits and conversations. Consider how the text speaks to those who minister in the world each day.

5. In your daily reading program, include books focusing on equipping people for ministry. Every congregation is becoming what the pastor, pastoral staff ministry team and core leadership reflect. If the pastor is not reading and studying, the congregation is becoming shallow. As you read broadly and deeply, you will find many connections to "Ministry in Daily Life." **BT**

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