

ENTOURAGE - PART 1

Vimeo: Rebekah Liu (00.00-01:48 + 7:10-08:01)

1. Pastors are called (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; Jeremiah 3:15; Quotes)
2. To equip and build the church (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 5:12)
3. To love well (Ephesians 4:13-16)

An entourage, according to the dictionary, is a group of people attending or surrounding an important person. Within the church, some people, probably including some pastors, think that very important person is the pastor. Respectfully, I disagree. I am not the head of this church. Ephesians 4:15 says Jesus is. And this is not my church. Acts 20:28 says it belongs to Christ. Which means its not your church either.

The confusion comes when we forget Who the head is, Who the church belongs to, and what the Bible says our roles are in it. So in this two part mini-series, we will be focusing on what Scripture says about the pastor this week and the people next week. Both of whom combined surround a very important person. And that VIP is Jesus. Always has been. Always will be. We are His entourage.

The first thing I'd like to say today is that pastors are called by God. Ephesians 4:11 (NLT) says, "11Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers." The New American Standard version says it this way: "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers."

The Greek word *poimen*, translated as pastor in this verse, appears 17 times in the New Testament. Four times it is used of

literal shepherds caring for literal sheep. Eight times it refers to Jesus as the Great Shepherd of the church. Four times it refers to leadership of true believers, as either true or false leaders. And one time, this time, it is used of an office in the church.

In other words, God calls and gifts some people to be apostles, or eye witness sent ones, some to be prophets, to speak prophetically about the present and about the future from God's perspective, some to be evangelists, predominantly traveling around planting and raising up churches, but some Christ calls to be pastors or literally translated shepherds.

But what does a shepherd do? These days, the job description varies. One I read recently said: "The pastor preaches exactly thirty minutes and follows it with an invitation in which everyone is convicted but no one is offended. The pastor works from 7 AM to midnight in every aspect of work from counseling to janitorial. The pastor is 33 years old with 43 years of experience. Is tall and short. Thin and heavy set. Handsome but not overpowering. One brown eye and one blue. Hair parted on the side is straight and wavy with a balding spot on top revealing his maturity. Has a burning desire to work with teenagers and spends all his time with senior citizens. He smiles constantly with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously at his work. The pastor invests 25 hours a week in sermon preparation, 20 hours in pastoral counseling, 10 hours in meetings, 5 hours in emergencies, 20 hours in visitation and evangelism, 6 hours in funerals and weddings, 30 hours in prayer, 6 hours in leadership development, 12 hours in correspondence, and 10 hours in creative thinking. The pastor is always out visiting but always available in his office. Never misses a church board. School board or daycare board meeting. Acknowledges every birthday or graduation or anniversary. Has perfect kids. The spouse plays the piano. The pastor is talented, gifted, scholarly, practical, popular,

compassionate, understanding, patient, level-headed, dependable, loving, caring, neat, organized, cheerful, and above all, humble.

Christianity Today did a survey not too long ago about the average amount of time pastors spend on sermon prep. The average came to be 8-11 hours. And that is about right for most sermons I share with you. But did you know it takes me 24-28 hours to prepare an evangelistic topical sermon? With slides? For me, they are much harder! Reading widely and boiling the required history inside and outside the Bible, theology, current world events, and application into one topical presentation takes a ton of time and it is much more challenging!

And did you know, while I've been doing that the last three months, I've also been preparing five other weekly presentations? I teach teenagers for an hour during Sabbath School, I share two different chapel presentations with children 4-14 years old on Fridays, I lead a two hour study on Wednesdays and the last three months, I've also been teaching baptismal classes after Sabbath School and Church. If you add the semi-regularly scheduled marital counseling sessions on SAT evenings or the Sabbaths when I'm also teaching a Pathfinder honor or adding week of prayer presentations, I'm well over 30 hours preparation time before I leave the house!

And still some folks wonder what pastors do when they're not working for one hour once a week. Have you heard that joke before? Can I let you in on a little secret? Pastors don't think that joke is very funny. Thom Rainer recently posted seven myths about a pastor's workweek. Let me share them with you.

Myth #1: The pastor has a short workweek. Nope. 90% of pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week. The challenge a

pastor has is getting enough rest and family time. Sermon preparation, counseling, meetings, home visits, hospital visits, connecting with prospects, community activities, church social functions, and many more commitments don't fit into a forty hour workweek. When things pile up, prisoners don't get visited. Community Bible study interests don't get followed up. I could really use some people to help in those areas. Did you know while Dave is taking care of his dad, we haven't had a head elder for a year? And that some of the elders we do have are getting older or were never comfortable preaching? I'm grateful for the help i've been receiving in this area thank you.

Myth #2: Because of the flexible schedule, a pastor has a lot of uninterrupted family time. Most pastors rarely have uninterrupted family time. It is the nature of the calling. Emergencies don't happen on a pre-planned schedule. The call for pastoral ministry comes at all times of the day and night. Maybe that's why 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families and 80% of pastor's spouses feel left out and under-appreciated by church members.

Myth #3: The pastor is able to spend most of the week in sermon preparation. No good pastor can afford to do so. People come first. Nearly fifteen years ago, when I started caring more about people than my performance preaching on Sabbath morning, my headaches disappeared. I work hard during the week. But my Friday nights with God and the fam are enjoyable and now I sleep well. Even if that doesn't leave me the time to preach note free and TV perfect on Sabbath mornings.

Myth #4: Pastors are accountable to no one for their workweek. To the contrary, most pastors are accountable to most everyone in the church. And church members have a plethora and variety of expectations. Not only that, but with the internet, pastors are

accountable for every word we say for perpetuity. Take any position today, and people can hold it against you in the future. Sidebar re:my accountability: I meet twice a month with a leadership team from this church and once a month with pastor peers from other churches.

Myth #5: Pastors can take vacations at any time. Most people like to take some vacation days around Christmas. That is difficult for many pastors since there are so many church functions at Christmas. And almost every pastor has a story of ending a vacation abruptly to do a huge emergency, conflict, or funeral. We skip Spring Breaks to lead Easter services. We don't take summers off at the lake. Pastors plan their vacations around the church's evangelistic and outreach efforts. I'm never gone for more than two weeks in a row.

Myth #6: The pastor's workweek is predictable and routine. Absolutely not! I know of few jobs that have the unpredictability and surprises like that of a pastor. The pastor may be joyfully sharing the gospel or performing a wedding on one day only to walk into a room where they're pulling the plug off life support or officiating the funeral of a friend or hearing about four complainers the next day. Because the actual complainers rarely have the courage or courtesy to talk face to face, call, or write. Maybe that's why 70% of pastors do not have someone they consider a close friend.

Myth #7: The pastor's workweek is low stress compared to others. I believe pastors have one of the most difficult and stressful jobs on earth. Maybe that's why 50% of the ministers starting out will not last 5 years and that Dr. Dobson said hundreds leave their current ministry setting each month (<http://www.lawrencewilson.com/stop-saying-1700-pastors-leave-the-ministry-every-month/>) and (additional stats come from <http://>

www.expastors.com/why-do-so-many-pastors-leave-the-ministry-the-facts-will-shock-you/).

Pastors these days are expected to be great preachers, teachers, evangelists, historians, apologists, marketers, financial experts, counselors, social media experts, disciple makers, and youth leaders. How are pastors are supposed to preach every week while simultaneously training others to do so? How are we supposed to show up at every social, every committee, chair some, and travel to others near and far? How come everyone else gets to have bad days, short fuses, and unkind emails but pastors have to be calm and collected, grace based and thoroughly orthodox, great at outreach and nurture? And when we're not, even once, people leave the church. Or school. And withhold their tithe. Or threaten to do so. Am I making this stuff up or am I just being honest?

But as twisted as it sounds, regardless of the cost, as challenging as it is, most of the time, we love it! At least I do. I get paid to think, write, and talk about Jesus. When someone asked my kids when they were younger what their daddy did for a job, they replied, "He speaks about Jesus on stage. And shows people that God loves them like crazy." Yes! That's what I do. I think that's the best job description I've ever heard.

Pastors help people. We have freedom. Every day is different. These are some of the things we love about it. It is also true that some pastors burn out. Too many, in fact. But so do some doctors and politicians and chefs. Some mailmen go postal. Pastoral ministry is a unique role and not everyone will thrive in it. But if God calls, I haven't met many pastors who don't answer.

Someone asked me how many weddings have I done? I have no idea! How many baptisms? How many sermons? I have no idea!

This pastor doesn't keep track of that kind of stuff. Because we don't do this for records. We do this for the call. That came from God.

But for a long time, I didn't want to answer that call. Because I grew up a PK - pastor's kid. I knew what it was all about. I'd seen the long hours and unrealistic expectations and hypocritical conclusions of both pastors and people. I'd already lived life in the fishbowl, and if I'm honest, I didn't like it. So I told God, when I started hearing that still small voice my junior year of high school no way!

So I ignored God and pursued medicine and then physical therapy. Until finally, God sent me over the Atlantic Ocean and arranged for me to be in a Greek classroom with a bunch of Norwegians taught by a German in England and I never looked back. God miraculously intervened every step of the way, from undergrad, to graduation, to youth pastor internship, back to seminary and then to pastoral ministry in Ohio ever since. God sent me somewhere where I can be myself. And fight in my own armor. Flaws and all. Where I don't have to pretend to be someone I'm not. Where I can be grace based and Christ centered and community focused and Adventist. Down with the Sadventists. Away with the Badventists. Up with the Christventsits! That's what I want to be. We need more of those!

And if you're a Christian, you're called to minister too. So we're gonna talk more about the people's role next week. When we break down the priesthood of all believers. There's a reason I don't sit in these chairs up here. Pastors do not have to be apostles and prophets and evangelists and the social committee chair. Sometimes, because we're all ministers, we stack chairs and lock doors and turn off alarms and shovel snow. But we don't

have to. Because verse 11 says pastors who do everything is not Biblical. God doesn't call us to play every role.

Maybe that's why Acts 20:28 says we should guard ourselves. "28 Guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders."

More pastors these days need to guard themselves. And pastor themselves. Putting the oxygen mask over their own face first. Before helping anyone else with theirs. But we don't always do that. This verse is also interesting because it combines 'shepherd' with 'elder' or overseer or in Greek episkopos. Which is why pastors in the Adventist church are often addressed as Elder so and so even if they're younger than you. Like Timothy in Paul's day. Another word Scripture uses for elder is presbuteros.

God's overseers called shepherds serve from their hearts. These elders are here to guide you with knowledge and understanding of God's word. Jeremiah 3:15 says, "15 And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will guide you with knowledge and understanding."

And in this shepherd's opinion, based on context, common sense, and the Greek that I was taught in seminary, the other thing this verse teaches us is that God calls men and women to be pastors because God calls men and women to be apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Humble women like Ellen White and my colleagues today don't make a big deal about ordination. But its time some of their male colleagues did. And I think Ellen White would agree.

Because in 1901, fourteen years before she died, she said: "It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of

God” (Testimonies for the Church, vol.6, p.322). Which sounds a lot like what she said three years earlier in Desire of Ages p.822: “All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”

Respectfully, headship theologians are wrong. Headship arguments from Scripture come after sin and refer to marriage not leadership of the church. If they don't, every man must therefore have authority over every other man's wife on earth! But in the image of God male and female we were created equal. Headship theology is based on a misunderstanding of Ephesians 5:22 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. Called and Godly women weren't silent in the first century and they need not be in the twenty first either. Context, common sense, and Greek says so.

Please look at the context of this one verse in Ephesians. Does it say anywhere in it that the gifts and offices listed are only given to the male gender? No. Instead, the larger Scriptural context has female examples of apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Romans 16:7 (NKJV) says, “7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

This manuscript for Romans 16 is dated from the 4th century. So three hundred years after Christ, the Bible speaks of a female apostle who was noteworthy. Early church father John Chrysostom had no doubts regarding Junia's sex or value when he exclaimed, “Oh how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!”

According to the Oxford Companion to the Bible, Junia was “The only woman called an apostle (Rom. 16:7) in the New Testament.”

Early church fathers including Origen (3rd Century), John Chrysostom (4th Century) and Jerome, identified her as a woman. Further, the female Latin name Junia occurs over 250 times in extra-Biblical Greek and Latin inscriptions found in Rome alone whereas the supposed male version of this name cannot be found. Context, common sense, and Greek tell us God calls men and women to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors.

Dr. Richard Choi, who is the head of the Greek department of Andrews University, says the Greek word used in Romans 16:7 is definitely feminine. He taught me that women were apostles, teachers, deacons, evangelists, and church leaders involved in every aspect of church life until papal attitudes towards women resulted in an exclusively celibate and male leadership in the church. How ironic it is that the proponents of headship theology are actually teaching Catholic theology! So the Bible has a female apostle. And every Adventist knows the Bible teaches there can be female prophets.

Joel 2:28-29 (re:Female prophet) says, “28 "Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. 29 In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike.

And Romans 16:3-4 (re:Female evangelist) describes a female evangelist as well. “3 Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. 4 In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. 5 Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.” Paul is saying these Gentile churches were planted and raised by his co-worker evangelists Priscilla and Aquila. Isn't that what Paul was, an apostle and traveling evangelist?

So if the Bible calls female apostles, female prophets, and female evangelists, why would God not also call female pastors like Rebekah Liu and give her the same Holy Spirit led gifts? And when God does, why should the church not recognize that call with ordination of both men and women?

It is illogical to conclude from Ephesians 4:11 that God would clearly call female apostles, prophets, and evangelists but not pastors. How can we say gender does not apply to the first three roles but does apply to the fourth? Show me any other spiritual gift or office anywhere else in the Bible that the Holy Spirit pours out only on one gender. It's not there. How can the world church say otherwise? But they might.

That's what they did in 1881 when the General Conference tabled the very first request for female pastors. And they've been doing the same thing ever since. Did you know that we've been discussing women's ordination for 134 years? Long before anybody ever heard of women's lib. This issue has nothing to do with feminism. It has always been about the pastoral calling of the Holy Spirit. And this summer in San Antonio, if our church says no again, in this shepherd's opinion, that will be another violation of context, common sense, and Greek. And an insult to the Holy Spirit.

There's a lot more I can say about that. Perhaps I will post a message entitled "Ordained to Serve" on our church website so you can read more about that and the serious hermeneutical flaws in headship theology incorrectly being taught by most Adventist preachers on TV.

The Bible says all apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors, male and female, are called and given to the church. It's time for the church to follow the Holy Spirit's lead. But...

1. Pastors are called (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; Jeremiah 3:15; Quotes)
2. To equip and build the church (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 5:12)
3. To love well (Ephesians 4:13-16)

What does God call these male and female pastors to do in the churches they shepherd? Ephesians 4:12 says, "2 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."

Once again, their job isn't to do all the work. Their job is to empower and equip and enable the church to do God's work. When the church gets to work about our Father's business, then the body of Christ gets built up. We're going to talk more about that next week. But for now, let's notice in the next verse the motivating "how" that is to happen.

1 Peter 5:12 says, "1 And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: 2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. 3 Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. 4 And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor."

How do shepherds lead? Willingly. Not grudgingly. Not lording it over people. Not by guilt tripping people and berating them but by

caring for them and setting a good example for them. By suffering with them. By encouraging them to follow His lead. This is why churches don't run like businesses. Who if they have a bad employee, fire them. Churches run on volunteers. Who have full time jobs of their own where they log 55-75 hours a week too.

So guilt tripping them into spending two nights a week at church for evangelistic meetings won't work. Lording looming business meetings over them once a quarter won't work either. I know because that I've tried and still its Marion, Dee, and me and a few others for church business meeting.

No, we need to lovingly remind the church of our roles. Because we are all ministers in it. Christ has called all of us to care for His church. The building and the people inside and outside of it. Christ's love must compel us. If we are out of our mind, it is because Christ's love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:13-14).

So Godly shepherds let our lives do the talking. We find ways to lead by humbly serving. We equip and build up the body by working with the body — whoever is willing. Pastors are called to equip and build the church to, point number three, love well.

1. Pastors are called (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; Jeremiah 3:15; Quotes)
2. To equip and build the church (Ephesians 4:12; 1 Peter 5:12)
3. To love well (Ephesians 4:13-16)

Ephesians 4:12-16 concludes: “13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when

people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

What I keep telling people is all pastors can do is to play the cards we're dealt. Which in retrospect may not be the best metaphor or maybe it is since some of you guys still play Rook or something like that on Saturday nights right? A little bird told me.

Loving well means we equip the willing. And available.

Loving well means we embrace unity not uniformity.

Loving well means we sincerely obey God's word.

Loving well means we don't abandon God. We abandon ourselves to God.

Loving well means we bring Jesus out of every doctrine. Even if nobody else teaches that doctrine.

Loving well means we embrace that truth is a Person. But loving well also means we embrace what that Person said about His Word which sanctifies us and is truth.

Loving well means we respectfully disagree. But assume the best about one another.

Loving well means we listen to one another.

Loving well means we speak the truth in love. Allowing the other person to decide if we did it right according to Ephesians 4:29.

Loving well means each part of the body does its own special work, and together, male and female, we glorify God.

Because in this entourage, Jesus is the only VIP. He said in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me."