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DOWN THE STREET**

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DOWN THE STREET**

Brother Calvin Allen

XULON PRESS

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Xulon Press
2301 Lucien Way #415
Maitland, FL 32751
407.339.4217
www.xulonpress.com



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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN-13: 978-1-5456-8146-6



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is a result of a team effort, not only during its writings, but also mostly throughout my education and career as a writer. The many influences and experiences I have encountered over the years helped to shape the writings of this book. Some of the people who (without their knowledge) influenced these writings are: Evangelist Dr. Desiree Evans (Let's Glory in the Lord Talk Radio), Dr. Trent Lambert (Theology Professor, Valor Christian College), Ronald K. Jewett, Ph.D. (Vice President of Academic Affairs), Professor Edward Ramirez M.S.O.L. (Pastor & Dean of Students), Bishop T.D. Jakes (Pastor, Mentor, Entrepreneur), and Apostle Raymond E. Younger (Pastor, New Testament Church of Jesus Christ). Without having knowledge of it, you have all contributed to the literary contents of this book. Thank you!



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction – Homeless Man Seeks Refuge
 From Church xi

Chapter One – Come With Me! You Are Too Loud 1

Chapter Two – Grace Vs Religion 7

Chapter Three – Leadership Limitations 15

Chapter Four – Prohibition of Women Overseers. 23

Chapter Five – A View On Roles Of Women In
 The Church 27

Chapter Six – The Five-Fold Ministry And
 Spiritual Abuse 31

Chapter Seven – Spiritrual Growth 37

Chapter Eight – Toxic Leadership 43

Conclusion 47

About The Author 49

Notes 53



INTRODUCTION

HOMELESS MAN SEEKS REFUGE FROM CHURCH

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked and you clothe me, sick and you visited me, in prison, and you came unto me” (Matthew 25:31).

All I ever wanted was to praise God and meet new friends. Did not Jesus come for the lost and hungry?



CHAPTER ONE

COME WITH ME! YOU ARE TOO LOUD

The elder exclaimed, “Come on! You have been drinking, and you are too loud!”

The God-praising man asked, “Can I stay to hear the rest of the sermon? I love you guy’s music.”

“No!” said the elder. “You are disrupting the church—you’ve got to go!”

Embarrassed by the treatment and the congregation’s attention to him, with the elder hands on him, he was taken away from the church.

I ran out of the church building to prevent him from leaving. “Come with me, let us go downstairs to talk!” I exclaimed. I could see the disappointment and hurt written all over his face. Once we had talked for a while, he was relieved to hear my apology for the ungodly behavior of the elder who had thrown him out of church.

Despite my apology, I was confused. I always believed the Word of God had said that Jesus came for the sinner, not the righteous (*Luke 5:32*). I could not help but to ask myself, would Jesus have behaved in this manner? Did He come for the righteous or the sinner? Needless to say, that, neither I nor the friend who was escorted from God's house are there any longer.

During a similar church encounter, a homeless man went into a sanctuary to sit down in the front of the church and was asked by the ushers if he would please sit in the back (*Godvine 2018*). He greeted people, only to be greeted back with stares, dirty looks, and people looking down on him. As he sat in the back of the church, he listened to the church announcements and such. When everything was completed, the elders went up and were excited to introduce the new pastor of the church to the congregation. "We would like to introduce to you our new pastor."

The congregation looked around clapping with joy and anticipation. The homeless man sitting in the back stood up and started walking down the aisle. The clapping stopped with all eyes on him. He walked up to the altar and took the microphone from the elders (who were in on this) and paused for a moment, then, he recited, "Then the King will say to those on his right, "come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (*Matt. 25:34*).

Jesus did not intend that any be lost (*2 Peter 3:9*). He gave His life as ransom for the whole world. Those claiming salvation by the baptism of Jesus's death and resurrection are

empowered to do greater works—to help the homeless, widows and orphans, and go into all the world with the gospel of the good news.

Some have said they would rather stay away from church settings, while remaining in a world system—a system that offers no refuge from the tragedies and troubles that encompasses living outside of God’s kingdom.

According to a recent article in *Christians Today*, “about 2 out of 3 American adults who regularly attend church or other religious services say they go for their kids, for personal comfort, or to become a better person (Weber 2018). However, the most important reason for going was to become closer to God. Yet 1 in 5 adults who attend monthly or more say they do not usually feel God’s presence; 1 in 4 doesn’t usually feel a sense of community; and 4 in 10 doesn’t usually feel connected to their faith’s history.”

Though the Bible describes shepherds of the church as “blameless,” (*Titus 1:6*), “upright” (*Titus 1:8*), and “above reproach” (*1 Tim. 3:2*), Americans—even Christians—take a much more pessimistic view (*Jackson 2019*). According to a new Gallop Survey, the country’s perception of pastors fell to a record low in 2018. Fewer than half of American Christians (42%) believe clergy have “high” or “very high” standards of honesty and ethics, according to breakouts provided to CT. Self-identified Christians were about as likely to rate clergy’s ethical standards as just average (43%), and about 1 in 10 (12%) considered them “low” or “very low.”

Among Americans as a whole, trust in the clergy fell to 37 percent, making it the eighth-most-trusted profession in the country—ranking below multiple medical professions, teachers, and police and just above journalists and building contractors.

In a world where the breakdown of our infrastructure is disrupted by a series of immorality, people are seeking the refuge of a culture that exhibits a spiritual foundational morality that will enhance the quality of their lives, and bring them to the knowledge of a God they have heard about but have never experienced.

The hope for a place where peace, love, and forgiveness of their sins is found has somehow diminished God's intended purpose for some churches. It is my hope that the traditional church will begin to acknowledge the truth—that, though, Jesus came not to destroy the law, his purpose for dying has become of no effect.

The contemporary church is in need of first-century power...power that manifests what Jesus proclaimed to His disciples in *John 14:12* when He declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

The greater works refers to bringing the lives of God's people into the kingdom of God, which do not manifest by turning away the very people Jesus came for, while reaching out to embrace those who are saved. Is God a respecter of

COME WITH ME! YOU ARE TOO LOUD

person? Does He choose family members only for positions in the kingdom? These questions will be answered in this book.



CHAPTER TWO

GRACE VS RELIGION

Dress codes, ancient philosophies, rules and regulations, and other religious ideologies encompass “The Big White Church down the Street.” There seems to be a trending doctrine in some churches that one has to work for their eternal salvation. A doctrine has developed that disregards what Jesus has already completed at the cross. We do not “work” for righteousness. We, who are saved, are the righteous through and by our faith in the finished work of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham. He served the purpose of fulfilling the Mosaic Law--the promise to Abraham and his Seed! That Seed is Jesus.

This will be hard for many to grasp, and many will continue walking in guilt and condemnation after falling short, having been programmed with religious philosophies which are devices of the Devil to steal our joy and kill our advancement towards the purpose of God. Some may adopt an attitude of, “What’s the use? I will never get it right!”

This attitude is where the enemy wants to take believers of Christ. Therefore, he has planted “tares” in many churches that preach guilt and condemnation, fire-and-brimstone doctrines, which is a doctrine that Jesus opposes.

In his letter to the church of Galatians, Paul admonishes the newly converted Galatians to oppose such religious doctrine, proclaiming,

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would “pervert” the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8)

Doctrines such as these are so dangerous that Paul exhorts the Galatians again, repeating his declaration, proclaiming, “As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9).

The Devil’s job is to “steal, kill, and finally destroy” (John 10:10). Apostle Paul addresses this issue at the Romans Church, which was attended by Gentiles. In chapter 11 of the Holy Bible, Paul categorically explains that the Israelites will be saved. The Romans were Imperial Soldiers that first took control over Israel (specifically Jerusalem) during

Paul’s life as Saul.

The Romans killed by crucifixion, while under the authority of Julius Caesar, and in the first century, Pontius Pilate gave Jesus over to the Pharisees for crucifixion. Crucifixion began in Old Testament, and continued through the first century.

However, Paul proclaims to them that Jesus had taken away and forgiven all their sins. Paul, at the time of the Roman takeover of Israel, was a Pharisee. Because of God's jealousy towards the Jews for all their sins, the Gentiles were grafted in. However, Jesus came to take away not only our (Gentiles) sins, but also those of the Jews, who would not restrain themselves against sinning. The Law of Moses became a curse, as no one could keep all of the commandments.

In the book of Judges, we see how many times sin took place by the Israelites. God appointed twelve judges to address the sins of the Israelites, and advocate between the Jews and the Gentiles. The first was Saul (Paul) himself. Saul was their first judge. However, the judge who made the greatest impact was also a prophetess, whose name was Deborah, who was later preceded by Gideon. These judges stood between the Israelites and their enemies the Gentiles. They kept righteous justice in the lands.

Today, we have a Judge who completely demolished sin, removing the veil, taking it to the cross, and burying it in the grave. That person is Jesus—King of kings, and Lord of lords! Jesus declared on the cross, "It is finished!"

Our sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven! However, many churches are teaching condemnation and guilt. They are proclaiming that one needs to do good deeds to pay for

their sins. If that is true, then, all Jesus did on Calvary would be considered null and void and of no effect. By grace, you have been saved through your faith in the finished work of Jesus!

In this book, we will acknowledge the damage religion and man's doctrine causes, the sect that portray these beliefs, reasons why such beliefs exist, and answers to how to establish right believing. You will read theological views on the subject from biblical scholars who have studied these misinformed entrapments and ways to recognize man's doctrines vs. Jesus' intent to bring liberty and salvation.

Also included are diverse methodologies by theologians who have developed theories supporting the Holy Bible and its literary contents, the rapid growing forces of demonic spirits that must be recognized, the process of transformation, and the moral deficiency that develops as a result of denying Jesus's good news, which are grace, mercy, and forgiveness of sin.

It is the truth anyhow is a phrase that is in agreement with truth. It is a metaphor, meaning "that is right." This phrase came to mind as I was researching a question that had formulated in my mind while studying the Holy Bible. The question was, "What do we mean when we use the word church?" Webster offers several definitions: "A building for public and especially Christian worship; a body or organization of religious believers: such as the whole body of Christians." The latter is a biblical definition of the church, however, the "Body of Christ" includes all believers whose character are in lieu of development—in pursuit of reflecting that of Jesus. Webster's definition makes no distinction to whether the believer attends

buildings built by hands. However, Scriptures declare that, *“The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands”* (Acts 7:48).

After much studying on this topic, I find there are more scriptures that leads to one’s faith in Jesus, and operating through that faith is the true definition of the “Body of Christ,” which is the church. This by no means should deduct one’s desire to fellowship with like-minded believers. However, as noted in scriptures, the focus of your salvation should not be the building. In fact, scriptures assure us that there will be as many entering into eternal salvation who do not attend a building of worship, as those who attend services religiously, while having no mind-renewal. This, seemingly, turns out to be as Solomon proclaimed in Ecclesiastes, “vanity of vanities” (*Eccles. 1:2*).

For instance, Jesus says to the Jews (Pharisees), *“Truly I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you”* (*Matt. 21:31*). Faith has no boundaries. God will take a prostitute and a drug dealer in, by, and through their faith. Our text tells us, *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed”* (*Heb. 11:31*). There are many examples of this truth.

Jesus says of a Roman Centurion in *Matthew 8:10-12*,

“Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of

heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The Centurion was of the Roman Imperial Army and had orders to kill criminals—ordering crucifixions for anyone who defied Roman Laws.

In the Old Testament, there was also Abraham, who lied to Abimelech, king of Gerar. However, the Bible says, “*Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him as righteousness*” (Rom. 4:3). Jacob stole Esau’s birthright. David murdered Uriah to espouse Bath Sheba. Moses killed an Egyptian. Peter denied Jesus and cut off a Roman Centurion’s ear.

What did all of these have in common? According to many human perspectives, these men should have been condemned for their actions. However, God has always shown mercy where mercy is not due. He chose the least of the least to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham—that Abraham’s seed (you and I through our faith in Jesus) will be blessed in the earth. The Bible informs us that, “*God has dealt to every man a measure of faith*” (Rom. 12:3). It does not matter if it is the “faith of a mustard seed,” every man has a measure of faith. However, when faith manifests action, the result is righteousness. The person will want to engage in righteous acts, just as Abraham’s faith resulted in righteousness, after he offered up Isaac as a sacrifice to God (Gen. 22:1-19).

The tragedy is when we forget that Jesus came for the unrighteous. He came for the sinner, the hungry, the poor, the

homeless, the drunkard, and the pimp and prostitutes-- those who many so-called Christians push away from the church. Believers are to seek out sinners, encouraging them through their acts of compassion, kindness, and love. This is the ultimate catalyst of faith. Sinners should never be looked down upon, nor should they ever be neglected the right to seek God to become a better person, a person of Christian morals and values. Faith is what matters to Jesus, and it has no boundaries. There should be no wonder why God blesses those who have the faith of Abraham, who have never seen the inside of a church building.

The thief on the cross at the right side of Jesus, the Good Samaritan, the woman at Jacob's Well, Mary Magdalene, and Rahab all committed great sins. One has to wonder how would many of the churches in our contemporary church culture have reacted to them.

After researching these questions, I am amazed at how little we know regarding the wisdom of God. Whether in the house or out of the house, people of faith's salvation is secure through the grace God has granted us.

Many run to the church building(s) to confirm their faith. "Look at me, I'm here every Sunday and Wednesday!" "I work hard for my God!" "I do just like the Bible says," "I wear long dresses, and no pants or ear-rings in my ears!" "I pay my tithes like clockwork!" "I'm a real Christian...not like that man who never show up for services!" "My pastor loves me because I am always there for him!" There is nothing theoretically wrong with this behavior. However, with this theology,

you are working for a liberty that Jesus paid for more than two thousand years ago. Gifts are not earned. They are free.

There are organizations and certain denominations that will attempt to bring condemnation on people to cause them to feel below whom God has called them to be, preaching fire-and-brimstone messages. “God is going to get you if you don’t do this or that!” Homes and marriages are being broken because of a wrong perception and a wrong authoritative position taken by the hierarchy.

Pastors are bodies used by Jesus to lead the people of God correctly, not with an authoritative attitude of superiority. For instance, if the pastor is knowingly encouraging a wife to neglect her family for the sake of cooking him a meal on Sunday. He and she are falling away from the truth of the gospel. However, as mentioned earlier, attending the building is not proof of our faith. Cooking to appease man will not get us into heaven. Our believing Jesus and acting on His word is the faith Jesus seeks from His church body.

Additionally, there must be a transformation of mind. Paul exhorts us to, “*be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom. 12:1).

There are people living in “remote” areas in South East Asia and Africa and Saudi Arabia, who may never see the inside of a church building, yet, these are whom Isaiah speaks about in the book of Isaiah who will come to the Mountain of Zion. Their faith in Jesus will bring them to the mountain.

The Body of Christ represents all believers, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” (Rom. 8:1).



CHAPTER THREE

LEADERSHIP LIMITATIONS

In his book *Organic Disciple*, Dennis McCallum (1997) offers this scripture pertaining to pastors and leaders of the church, saying, “*These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone ‘despise’ you*” (Titus 2:15).

For most of my life I have been a leader, in one capacity or another. However, the truth is, there are haters who will despise you regardless of how well you lead. On the other hand, this scripture is referring to the behavior of the pastor/leader and their approaches in leadership. Paul is saying, that as leaders, our lives must reflect that of Jesus. *Isaiah 53:3* says, “*He is despised and rejected of men.*” However, Jesus never retaliated but asked God to “*forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). A leader’s (especially a pastor’s) behavior should exemplify Jesus’s behavior.

The scope of the authority is limited to the area of the authority given to pastors by God. God does not require us to obey leaders outside the legitimate sphere of their authority. This is why wives are urged to “be submissive to your own husbands” - not to other men (*1 Pet. 3:1; Eph. 5:22*). For this same reason, it is inappropriate for parents to tell their adult children whom they must marry, or for civil authorities to tell their citizens which religious beliefs they must hold, or for church authorities to tell Christians what jobs they may take. Men in their homes are leaders of their home...not the pastor or any other authority.

In their book *Lead like Jesus*, Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges (2005) expound on the behavior of many of our contemporary leaders. In one statement, the book declares, “The world is in desperate need of a different leadership role model. Pick up any daily newspaper and you will quickly find examples of abandoned values, betrayed trust, exploitation, and manipulation committed by people of power and influence.” This influence ricochets down to lower level leaders and congregants in church cultures.

Corporate leaders exploit privilege and position, bringing ruin to employees and investors. Meanwhile, citizens in undeveloped countries languish in poverty and hopelessness in a leadership vacuum (p.3). However, the most harm manifests from leaders representing God; church leaders, who experience crises of integrity, compromising their churches and breeding skepticism and disillusionment. Family and personal relationships drift away from mutual commitment and head toward

battlegrounds of self-absorbed conflict over rights to individual fulfillment. The self-absorbed or self-serving leader thinks more about reputation and old ideologies than the people of God whom they represent do.

In another statement by Blanchard and Hodges (2005), it is clear that influence and power have their downfall. According to Blanchard and Hodges, “the leadership model that people often experience is summarized by the popular opinion, ‘It’s all about me.’ In many of our church institutions, the rewards of money, recognition, and power increase as you move up the hierarchy. Self-promotion (pride) and self-protection (fear) are the reigning motivations that dominate the leadership landscape. Many church leaders act as if the sheep are there only for the benefit of the shepherd.

In personal relationships, leadership expectations of mutual respect, loving care, self-sacrifice, and openness are often undermined when pride; fear; and, particularly, indifference replace intimacy with isolation. What does church leadership have to do with homelessness? The social message, *Homelessness: A Renewal of Commitment Evangelical Church in America* (2019) notes:

Homelessness persists as a reality for hundreds of thousands of people in the United States, despite its immense wealth and resources. The message states that housing is a fundamental right even though policies and practices of government and economic institutions are not adequately responding. It reminds us that in the Bible,

God heard the cries of the homeless and that working for justice with and for homeless people is doing God's will and work in the world.

Christian love does not provide ready-made, one-size-fits-all solutions to the crisis, but the message calls Christians to walk with the homeless in their struggles and provides guidance as together we pursue just, appropriate, and sustainable solutions that uphold human dignity. There is no question as to who has the ultimate power to direct and control behaviors in the church. God has given this power of leadership to the pastors, who in turn, delegate authority to other ministries in the church (*Eph. 4:11*). However, when delegated leaders' lives and behaviors do not reflect the life of Christ, the pastor's job is to follow biblical protocol, and if necessary, sit them down for a period to discipline the behavior.

MEMBERS' RIGHT TO DISSENT

Paul is the perfect example of how leaders should conduct themselves and respond to leaders who are ordained and assigned positions in the church. Members have the right to dissent wrong authority. According to author and co-author (*McCallum and DeLashmutt 1997*) in their book on leadership, titled *Organic Leadership*,

...any effort taken by leaders to harm the reputation or exclude legitimate dissenters from the life of the church would clearly be wrong.

Leaders must be mature enough to accept the fact that others may disagree on judgment calls, even within their own church, without reacting in hurt or becoming insecure.

God is the ultimate authority in the church (McCallum and DeLashmutt 1997; see also *Matt. 6:13, Rom 13:1, Dan. 2:20,21*).

There is no such thing as autonomous delegated authority. All delegated authorities are under God's authority. This is why when scripture addresses those under delegated authority, it also addresses those in delegated authority in the same passage and reminds them of their responsibilities before God. God's design for all delegated authority is to serve (*Mark 10:41-45; Rom. 13:4*). Even though God often permits wicked people to hold positions of delegated authority, the Scriptures condemn the abuse of that authority for the purpose of exploitation or oppression, and God will personally call them to account for their actions" (McCallum and DeLashmutt 1997).

While on the subject of church leadership, we must remember the elders. "Elders are called and appointed by God, confirmed by the church leadership, and appointed to the task of leadership. To them are committed the responsibilities of being 'examples' to the flock, giving the church direction, teaching the people, and in general, leading the congregation" (*Sematic*

Scholar 2019). Augustine, an early church elder, lived during the childhood years of the church (fifth century), caring and defending the people of God during many subtle and blatant attacks on the faith. Augustine was passionate about the biblical role of leading Christ's church. He spoke to the vital and often difficult aspects of being a spiritual leader. He writes,

Disturbers are to be rebuked, the low spirited to be encouraged, the infirm to be supported, objectors confuted, the treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught, the lazy aroused, the contentious restrained, the haughty repressed, litigants pacified, the poor relieved, the oppressed liberated, the good approved, the evil borne with, and all are to be loved.

The word translated “elder” is of Jewish origin. The primary Hebrew word for elder, *zaqen*, is simply a general reference for an aged man. For example, this term was used in *Numbers 11:16* and *Deuteronomy 27:1* of the seventy tribal leaders who assisted Moses. In these passages, the word “elder” refers to a special category of aged men who were set apart for leadership—much like a senate—in Israel. *Deuteronomy 1:9-18* indicates that elders were charged with the responsibility of judging the people on civil matters. Moses used elders to communicate to the people (*Exod. 19:7; Deut. 31:9*) and to administer the law of God. The Greek word for elder, *presbuteros*, is represented seventy times in the New Testament. Like *zaqen* and *sab*, our English word “elder” (*presbuteros*) is a reference to maturity.

For example, in *Acts 2:17*, Peter quotes *Joel 2:28*: “And your old men shall dream dreams.”

The Hebrew word used for old men in *Joel* is *zaqen*, and the Greek word used in *Acts* is *presbuteros*. Therefore, the use of the term elder does not constitute an official title or office; it simply means “an older man.” In *1 Timothy 5:2*, the feminine form of *presbuteros* is used to refer to older women. There, older women are in contrast with younger ones: “[Appeal to] the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.” In this context, the term again signifies only mature age, not an office in the church.

1 Peter 5:5 contains a similar usage: “*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders.*” There, as in *1 Timothy 5:2*, the word is used to contrast between age and youth. In such a context, *presbutero* is understood to mean only “an older person,” not necessarily an office holder of any kind.

The New Testament church was initially Jewish, so it would be natural that the concept of holding the office of elder was adopted for use in the early church. Elder was the only commonly used Jewish term for leadership that was free from any connotation of either the monarchy or the priesthood, since it sprang from a general understanding of contemporary leadership in the Old Testament. This point is significant, because in the church, each believer is a co-regent with Christ, so there could be no earthly king.

Unlike national Israel, the church has no specially designated earthly priesthood, for all believers are priests. Therefore, relating to the common understanding in the Jewish culture and

the backdrop of the structure in Old Testament times, of all the Jewish concepts of leadership, the term “elder” best transfers to the kind of spiritual leadership ordained for the church.

The elders of Israel were mature men; heads of families (*Exod. 12:21*); able men of strong moral character; men who feared God; men of truth and integrity (*Exod. 18:20-21*); and men full of the Holy Spirit (*Num. 11:16-17*); capable men of wisdom, discernment, and experience—impartial and courageous men who would intercede, teach, and judge righteously and fairly (*Deut. 1:13-17*).



CHAPTER FOUR

PROHIBITION OF WOMEN OVERSEERS

Throughout most of church history, women have been prohibited from serving as pastors and priests (see *Daniel Doriani*), “A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, eds. *Andreas Kostenberger*, *Thomas R. Schreiner*, and *H. Scott Baldwin* (*Grand Rapids: Baker*, 1995), 23-67). (*Schreiner* 2014). According to Schreiner, the view that women should not be priests or pastors has transcended confessional barriers.

It has been the view throughout history of most Protestants, the various Orthodox branches of the church, and the Roman Catholic Church. All of these groups could be wrong, of course. Scripture is the final arbiter on such matters. However, the burden of proof is surely on those who promote a new interpretation, especially since the new interpretation follows on the heels of the feminist revolution in our society.

Despite some of the positive contributions of feminism (e.g., equal pay for equal work and emphasis on treating women as human beings), it is scarcely clear that the movement as a whole has been a force for good. All interpreters are shaped by their previous experience and culture. No one encounters a text with a blank slate and without presuppositions. A detached objectivity is impossible, for we are finite human beings who inhabit a particular culture and a specific society.

On the other hand, we must beware of thinking we can never transcend our culture. Otherwise, we will inevitably read into texts what we already believe. If we are ensnared by our own histories and social location, then we can dispense with reading any books, though we may enjoy reading those that support our current biases. If we can never learn anything new and if we invariably return to our own worldview, then there is no “truth” to be discovered anyway.

TERMINOLOGY

A word about terminology is also in order. Even though I use the phrase “ordination of women” for convenience, the real issue is not ordination but whether women can function in the pastoral office. The language of ordination is not decisively used in the New Testament for those who serve as leaders in the church. Elders and overseers constitute the same office is evident from Paul’s address to the Ephesians leaders at Miletus (*Acts 20:17-35*).

In Verse 17, the office is appointed “elders,” while in verse 28, the same group is described as “overseers.” The term “elders” probably designates the office, while the term “overseers” refers to function—the responsibility to watch over the church. Verse 28 also contains a pastoral metaphor, for the overseers are responsible to *poimainein* (shepherd) God’s flock. Here we have an indication that pastors, overseers, and elders refer to the same office.

Titus 1:5-9 also supports the idea that elders and overseers refer to the same office. Paul charges Titus to appoint elders in every city (v. 5) and then proceeds to describe the requisite character (v.6). In verse 7, he shifts to the word “overseer.” The singular use of the word “overseer” (*episkopon*) does not designate another office but is generic. The “for” (*gar*) connecting verses 6-7 indicates a new office is not in view, since Paul continues to describe the character required of leaders.

Indeed, the very same word (*anenkletos*, “above reproach”) is used in both verses 6 and 7, functioning as further evidence that “overseers” and “elders” refer to the same office. Peter’s first letter (*5:1-4*) provides confirmatory evidence as well. Peter addressed the elders (*presbyterous*) in verse 1, calling on them to shepherd (*poimanan*) the flock. The participle *episkopountes* (overseeing) is also used (verse 2), and so I conclude that shepherding and overseeing are the responsibilities of the elders.

Nor is it the case that elders and overseers were exceptional in the New Testament. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church planted on their first missionary journey (*Acts 14:23*) – The appointing of elders in every church indicates a

plurality of leadership in local churches. So also, *Acts 20:17* refers to *presbyterous tes ekklesias*, showing that there were plural elders for a single church. This is the most plausible way of reading *Philippians 1:1*, as well as the other texts regarding elders.

Overseers and deacons (*Phil. 1:1*) comprise the two offices in Philippi. Leaders in the church at Jerusalem are “elders” (*Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4*). We have already seen that Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in Crete (*Titus 1:5*). The qualifications and responsibilities of overseers and elders are explained in *1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 5:17-25*. Peter’s reference to “elders” (1 Pet. 5:1) indicates that elders were appointed in churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bitynia (1 Pet. 1:1). When James refers to the leaders of the church, he calls them “elders” (James 5:14).

The brief survey reveals that elders and overseers were common in the New Testament church. Elders are not limited to Paul’s letters; however, they are also found in the writings of James, Peter, and Luke. Geographically, elders and overseers stretch from Jerusalem to Philippi to Crete. They were responsible to the *poimainein* (shepherd) God’s flock.



CHAPTER FIVE

A VIEW ON ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

According to *William (Bill) Davis (2013)*, who left the denomination of Pentecostalism after over fifty years, Pentecostal and charismatic churches believe in women pastors and teachers over whole congregations. They believe Joel's prophecy quoted by Peter in Acts two gives them the license they need. *Acts 2:16-18*, "*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.*"

According to Davis, they believe that when the text says "'daughters' and 'handmaidens' would prophesy" that it justifies women as pastors, as elders, etc. This, of course, is a gross

misunderstanding of the text. The significance of the pouring forth of God's Spirit upon all flesh is that the Gospel was to go to all humanity just as Jesus said in the great commission (*Mark 16:15-16*). Prophecy (inspired teaching) was one of the spiritual gifts during the first century (*1 Cor. 12:8-10*); but, once its purpose was served (the inspired, complete, perfect, written word delivered), it was/is no longer in operation—it ceased (*1 Cor. 13:8-10*).

However, even during New Testament times when spiritual gifts were exercised, women never assumed the position of preacher or teacher over a congregation. There is nothing in Joel's prophecy that indicates a woman can serve as an elder or be put in charge over a congregation. There is nothing any place in the New Testament that suggests women can serve in the eldership or leadership of the church. Actually, the opposite is true. Paul writing to Timothy said, "*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*" (*1 Tim. 2:11-12*).

This is only one person's view of the problems of women leading in the churches, who can contribute to the growth of the church, although God has not ordained that women should govern over man. Davis (2019) explains when he was in Panama City, a preacher friend of his called one day and asked him about this verse in Timothy. He wanted to know what Davis thought it meant. Davis's response was, "Some Pentecostals contend that Paul was dealing with cultural issues that had no bearing on today's society when he gave this prohibition. Of

course, to make such an assumption is to play fast and loose with the integrity of the text. Actually, post modernists use this ploy on any biblical text they desire to change.”

In a church I was attending, there is a female pastor and a female overseer. However, Paul cannot be addressing women who were in the ministry, but rather those in the congregation who were out of order. How do we know this? We have many such proofs, many from Paul himself. Here is a partial list of women who were all in influential positions of leadership in the early church.

Phoebe (*Rom. 16:1-2*): This woman was a deacon of the church of Cenchrea, who was “beloved of Paul” and many other Christians for the help she gave to them. She filled an important position of leadership. It would be a difficult stretch of the imagination to say that this woman fulfilled her duties without ever speaking in the church.

Priscilla (*Acts 18:26*): Priscilla and her husband Aquila are often mentioned with great respect by Paul (Miller 2011). Together they were pastors of a church in Ephesus, were responsible for teaching the full gospel to Apollos, and pastured the church together. In fact, Priscilla is listed ahead of Aquila when their name comes up. This has led some to speculate that, of the two, she was the primary teacher and Aquila oversaw the ministry. At any rate, we see here a woman in a very prominent position of teaching and pasturing. (Other references to Priscilla and Aquila are *Acts 18:2, 18; Romans 16:3; and 1 Corinthians 16:19*).

Euodia and Syntyche (*Phil. 4:2-3*): Here we see references to two women who were “true yokefellow-prisoners” who are of note among the Apostles. Junia is a woman’s name. In some modern translations, an “s” has been added (Junias) because the translators were so sure a woman could not be an Apostle, that they assume a copyist had accidentally dropped the “s.” However, the proper male ending would have been “ius,” not “ias.” There has not been any church commentator earlier than the middle Ages questioned that Junia was both a woman and an Apostle. There were other women throughout the Bible in position of leadership, such as prophetesses, evangelists, judges, leaders, etc., so the above references should be enough to establish that women were indeed a vital part of church leadership. In addition, let us not forget Mary Magdalene, who some consider the thirteenth disciple and was the first to see Jesus after His resurrection.



CHAPTER SIX

THE FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE

To clarify some of the previously talked about behaviors of the elder I spoke about earlier, research into the abuse and confusion in some charismatic Pentecostal faith was necessary. In somewhat of a long investigation by *Rev. Rafael D. Martinez, Co-Director of Spiritwatch Ministries (Martinez 2019)*, it was stated, “The five-fold ministry is a concept of church leadership based upon the ministry of men and women who have been supposedly divinely called and ‘anointed’ with one of five ‘ministry gifts’ listed in *Ephesians 4:11*.” Unfortunately, as in other corps of ministerial tribes across Christendom, there are also aberrant and unstable members of this five-fold ministry who have institutionalized imbalance not only in doctrinal but practical matters to the great ruination and shipwreck of Christian faith for those hapless believers who have submitted to their authority. However, I also contend that not all who

claim to be in a five-fold office are necessarily involved in such serious errors. That is the last thing I would believe about the five-fold ministry! Do not claim I have said that the next person claiming to be an apostle or prophet is necessarily and automatically in error, for I have said no such thing!

There is a *far greater* company of five-fold ministers, who are steadfastly doing their best to lead Christians, who they care for into deeper depths with God. They labor largely in obscurity and humility, seeking to serve the Christian Church wherever they go. Such men and women of God are not directly responsible for the frightful kinds of imbalance that can be too easily seen today. Sadly, their inestimable good is what is so tragically spoken evil of by the abuses that do take place, but it is a credit to their walk with God that they continue pressing on in their service of His flocks worldwide.

However, there is much spoken of and practiced concerning the five-fold concept nowadays that is biblical and Christ-centered, but not all of it is that spiritually healthy. That is the point that I need to make very clear: some of it is quite unbiblical, man-centered, and far more of it falls into this dangerous pit than you would want to believe.

I am not writing to argue for or against the five-fold concept as I have shared it – indeed, my own views on the subject would not be bought into by many in the Pentecostal and Charismatic cultures. Instead, the concept examined here is to help provide some insight on its function from a Pentecostal perspective. This is crucial in understanding the imbalanced application and the abuses of the concept that has adversely affected Christians

worldwide. We first need to understand how those of the five-fold ministry see themselves and how they represent their work to the Church at large. Listed below are biblical references, on why and how five-fold ministries are viewed.

Ephesians 2:20 - (the household of God) built upon the foundation of the Apostles, and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 4:8,11-13 - Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The problem with this reference to leaders in the five-fold ministry, is, these leaders, according to Paul instructions to Timothy, must have an exemplary lifestyle—setting an example for the congregation.

Paul's instruction to Timothy gives clear qualifications to pastors in choosing these members. Paul's instructions:

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not

greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them, which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre -- Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well (1 Timothy 3:2-12).

When the congregation that encompasses gossipers, backbiters, plotters, and/or schemers views a member of the five-fold ministry, there is a compromise of those instructions given by Paul. Members will find it difficult to follow anyone in ministry who has lost their integrity and trustworthiness. The scripture, “*Let not then **your** good be **evil spoken of**” (Rom. 14:16), has been violated. One would find it impossible to follow an elder who points a shotgun or rifle towards his son in-law.*

1 Corinthians 12:28 – “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

These verses are scriptures that five-fold ministers contend are biblical principles for Christian leadership and spiritual formation that directly mandate their calling and leadership. The “priesthood of believers,” a Protestant distinctive advanced by Evangelicalism’s emphasis on the interaction of the Christian community of faith to provide evangelistic and discipline influences (implicit in verses like *1 Corinthians 4:1* and *1 Peter 2:9*), is the basis for this innovative ministry approach. The five-fold ministry is to empower the church community to become active participants in the outreach and activity of the local church and to live in such a way that encourages congregants to follow them.



CHAPTER SEVEN

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

One of the goals of the five-fold ministry is the “perfecting of the saints” or the discipline, equipping, and spiritual maturation of Christian believers. As Ephesians 4 points out, the mature believer will be one no longer tossed to and fro by the currents of doctrinal falsehood but will instead be rooted firmly in the faith. Dutch five-fold pastor J.H. Koning concisely explains how the five ministerial “gifts” are to interact in the context of the local Christian church. “Let’s have a look at the five-fold ministry,” exclaims Koning.

As a father provides for the family, so will the apostle feed with the word. The prophet will then bring light, revelation, and the truth. The evangelist brings the salvation message, he directs to the Lamb. The shepherd ministry is the ministry close to the heart of God and finally the teacher will wash with the Word.

However, there is nowhere in the text that says anyone in the five-fold ministry will turn away a sheep—whether drinking or not. The house of God is a place of refuge—a place to praise and worship, a place where we fellowship and learn spiritual morality. It is a place of coming to know Jesus without the threat of abuse, intimidation, or authoritative injunction. Jesus dined with publicans and sinners, and when we, as Christians, oppose what Jesus came to do, we ourselves become biased and prejudiced in our perception of who Jesus is.

Those in ministry offices choose the elders; therefore, they have the authority over them. It is a simple delegation of authority. Who chooses the elders? The pastor does (Titus 1:5). Who has authority over them? The pastor does. We are not talking about authority in a natural sense of understanding. We are talking about DIVINE authority, which comes from the throne of God to the people through a ministry gift chosen and equipped by the LORD Jesus Christ. Therefore, the continuing, unacceptable behavior of elders depends on what the pastor allows. Though elders will be accountable to God themselves, pastors are accountable for the allowance of such ungodly behaviors. If there are no repercussions or disciplinary actions taken when elders are unruly, the stakes are high that the ungodly conduct will continue.

In a recent research study of The State of the Church (Barna 2016), the study showed:

Americans are attending church less, and more people are experiencing and practicing their faith outside of its

four walls. Millennial in particular are coming of age at a time of great skepticism and cynicism toward institutions—particularly the church. Add to this the broader secularizing trend in American culture, and a growing antagonism toward faith claims, and these are uncertain times for the U.S. church. Based on a large pool of data collected over the course of this year, Barna conducted an analysis on the state of the church, looking closely at affiliation, attendance, and practice to determine the overall health of Christ's Body in America.

Even though a majority of Americans identify as Christian and say religious faith is very important in their lives, these huge proportions belie the much smaller number of Americans who regularly *practice* their faith. When a variable-like church attendance is added, the majority becomes the minority. Why is church attendance down from the days of our ancestors? What happened to cause such a decrease in church attendance?

According to Barna's research,

Despite the enormous cultural impact of mega churches and mega church pastors like Joel Osteen and his 40,000+ Lakewood Church, the largest group of American churchgoers attends services in a more intimate context. Almost half (46%) attend a church of 100 or fewer members. More than one-third (37%) attend a midsize church of over 100, but not larger than 499. One in 11 (9%) attends a church with between 500

and 999 attendees, and slightly fewer (8%) attend a very large church of 1,000 or more attendees.

There are many theories on why church attendance in the USA is declining. One theory suggests that “our nation is shifting away from its Christian roots and thus the churches are declining as a smaller proportion of our country are believers in Christ” (Rainer 2018). However, my personal experiences speak from a broader viewpoint. The literary image above shows empty church pews. The church I attended was of the Pentecostal persuasion. As with others who have had bad experiences with the Charismatic denominational churches, I initially loved attending this particular church.

I became a “jack-of-all-trades,” multitasking in every area of the church functions and preaching every Wednesday night for a period.

At one point, the female pastor asked me if I would like to sing on the praise and worship team. I loved it! I began to believe that I had found my place of delegated purpose, until I was taken down from praising the Lord and had the keys to the church taken away, while never receiving an explanation to why. There were rumors of lies told against me (false witnesses) that led to the apostle of the church taking me down. I do not deal well with rumors, so I asked the apostle face-to-face, “why did you take me down?” His response was, “God shows you everything else, ask Him to show you why you were taken down!”

Shocked by the sarcasm and disappointed in such a response, I decided at that moment that I was in the wrong church. To date, there has not been an explanation given me as to why I was constrained from serving God in an area where I knew I belonged. As mentioned, I have a strong inclination of belief to why all of this happened, however, without substantial proof, I will not risk making false accusations.

My Christian roots are Baptist. I was born in the South where people said what they meant and meant what they said. The Pentecostal discovery was new for me. I never knew one had to stay in the “ready-position,” having their guns fully loaded. You had to be ready for insults. There was always an anticipatory wait to attack the other person with intellectual sarcasm. A spirit of competitiveness filled the air. If one was blessed with gifts and talents, someone could drive in the same lane, only better. If one’s gift was singing with and through God’s grace, someone else could sing better.

However, the irony of my story was that God had a “ram in the bush” for me. What was meant for harm, God turned into good. A short time after the rejection to continue singing with the praise and worship team, God began to anoint my voice with power. I began to hear melody in my spirit. In the early dawn of the morning, God would endow my spirit with music, melodies and sweet gospel songs would sound loud and clear. God is a just God. Since the day the apostle took me down, I have recorded two albums, one single, and one more album as I write this manuscript, with fifteen more songs awaiting composition.

What transpired was God's intended purpose for my life. Though there were many occasions where I tried to go back to make it work, God would not allow me to remain in a place where even visiting the sanctuary for private prayer was taken away from me. I was not supposed to continue there. Paul reminds us that, "*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*" (Rom. 8:28). Therefore, the apostle's disallowance of my singing on the praise-team worked out for my good, and today I am so very thankful that God responded to the misconduct for my sake.



CHAPTER EIGHT

TOXIC LEADERSHIP

In a message posted on his website, *Thom S. Rainer (2019)* listed fourteen symptoms of toxic church leaders. I have listed several of them here to further show why church attendance is declining and why many would rather stay far away from some churches to watch television evangelist preachers on mobile phones and social media platforms:

1. **They expect behavior of others they don't expect of themselves.** "Do as I say, not as I do."
2. **They see almost everyone else as inferior to themselves.** You will hear them criticizing other leaders while building themselves up.
3. **They show favoritism.** It is clear that they have a favored few while they marginalize the rest.

4. **They seek to dismiss or marginalize people before they attempt to develop them.** People are means to their ends; they see them as projects, not God's people who need mentoring and developing. I personally agree with Rainer's analogy. This was the case with my experience. The churches (some of them) seem to have become more of a "business," than a spiritual organization one attends for restoration of soul and spirit. When the emphasis focuses more on using one's gifts and talents to enhance the brand of a church than to bring one to the knowledge and understanding of the function of the church, leadership has taken a turn for the worst. People who attend churches are usually "sick and tired" of being "sick and tired." They come to church seeking something they could not find in the secular world.

Mentoring formulates between two people: the pastor and the congregant. If there is hostility and strife between an elder and a congregant, the issue will need resolution in a one-on-one atmosphere. If the issue cannot be resolved, the next step is mediating between two or three witnesses. If it still remains an issue, the pastor is then (according to God's Word) authorized to preach on the subject, informing the entire church (*Matt. 18:17*). If then, the issue between an elder and a congregant remains open, and if the offender cannot repent and say sorry, the matter remains opened, and he has not kept Jesus's command to forgive seventy times seven.

5. **They are manipulative.** Their most common tactic is using partial truths to get their way.
6. **They lack transparency.** Autocratic leaders are rarely transparent. If a member of the five-fold ministry is caught abusing their power, they may have to forfeit it.
7. **They surround themselves with sycophants.** Their inner circle thus often includes close friends and family members, as well as a host of “yes people.”
8. **They are self-absorbed.** In fact, they would unlikely see any of these symptoms in themselves.

Yes, toxic leaders are the distinct minority of Christian leaders. However, they can do harm to the cause of Christ disproportionate to their numbers, and they can get away with their behavior for years because they often have a charismatic and charming personality. Charming like a snake.

On a final note, “No true leader can boast of having his position merely because of superior talents, physical attributes, communication skills, or whatever” (MacArthur 1995). If God did not use homely, ordinary clay pots, there would not be any spiritual leaders at all, because there are not any people who are not beset with blemishes and human weaknesses.

The author of Hebrews makes clear that God’s priest have equal amount of fault as the congregation. Chapter 5 of Hebrews exclaims, “*For every high priest taken from among*

men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness” (Heb. 5:1-2). Many leaders are not afraid to display transparency. They are willing to admit their faults and weaknesses. However, at The Big White Church down the Street, honest disclosure for some leaders is not applicable.



CONCLUSION

Jesus answered His disciples saying, “*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved*” (Matt. 9:16-17).

The above scripture refers to living underneath the curse of the Law of Moses--the ideologies that are a result of cultural and family values and beliefs. The content of this book gives reference to inherited values and beliefs—a system of beliefs that devalues the Word of God. When family members and friends, a disregard for certain classes, filthy lucre (money), and total respecter of persons are the dominant factors in leadership, the church will suffer losses, and the people will seek refuge from other sources.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Minister Calvin Allen is compassionate about people of God who are abused in any capacity. His purpose and calling is to serve God in informing and helping people make wise choices in choosing a church that lives by the Bible in words and in deeds. Like Jesus, his focus is on the sinner, who, through bad choices and issues of life, has lost their way.

Minister Calvin is an author, minister, addiction counselor, and an award-winning gospel music artist, whom God delivered from two devastating deaths. He holds two associate degrees in theology and human services and is currently pursuing his Bachelors in Organizational Behavior. He hosts an Overcomers' Outreach Group weekly, while walking the streets in his community seeking those who are depraved and destitute. He volunteers on the Pastoral Team at the local hospital. Minister Calvin is a voice of hope for the lost—the sinner, who, seeks refuge in a societal structure that seems to be falling apart.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR





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