

A disciple making pastor

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God commands all Christians to make disciples. The Word of God specifically requires shepherds to train leaders, mentor others, and impart biblical truth to other faithful men. So how does one accomplish this?

There are four aspects of a disciple making pastor:

I. Preaching

The most fundamental way a pastor make disciples is by preaching the Word of God. If a pastor faithfully preaches God's Truth then he is in fact discipling His flock. The one thing that is biblically necessary for building the Church is preaching. A man neglects to do this and he has squandered his calling into pastoral ministry. Preaching disciplines. Preaching teaches. Preaching instructs. Preaching imparts biblical truth from God, through His Word, to another believer, allowing the believer to hear, apply, and implement that truth by the power of the Spirit.

Amazingly, one of the greatest ways that a pastor disciplines is by preaching and yet *the bulk of this requires him to be alone with God, His Word, and engaging in prayer*. In other words, churches must be taught that a main way that pastors disciple is by *their being alone with God* during the week. This is not to the neglect of shepherding visits, house to house catechizing, hospital visits, coffee shop meetings, or whatever. But this is to say that those "appointments" must not consume the shepherd's time so that he cannot pray, study, and prepare his sermons.

II. Prayer

If preaching the Word of God consists of the primary way that a pastor disciplines his flock, then prayer must be central in his daily life and ministry. This is the case because when the man of God preaches the Word of God he is utterly incapable of making the Word of God effective in the minds of his hearers. Thus, he must entreat God fervently and beg God to make the preached Word powerful and that it might fall on good soil.

The man of God can pray for the following elements.

1. *Pray for churches*. He should pray for his own church and for other gospel teaching churches in the area to faithfully preach the Truth of God. He should pray that the Church of Jesus Christ would be pure and have a robust fidelity to the Scriptures and to orthodox doctrine.
2. *Pray that preaching is faithful, accurate, and clear*. He should pray that his own preaching ministry would come with divine fire. He should entreat God to accompany his proclamation with power from on high. He should ask God to mightily save souls and devastate the kingdom of Satan through the heralded gospel that he shouts forth. He ought to pray that his words would be clear, penetrating, accurate, and articulate.

3. *Pray for the increasing maturity of the congregation (growth).* An element that must occupy a shepherd's prayers must include the growth of the flock of God. A pastoral heart will long for his people to know Christ more with an ever-increasing passion to increase in godliness. A pastor should bring his people to the Lord and ask that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God and in the application of holiness.
4. *Pray for sinners to be converted.* Every biblical shepherd longs for goats to become sheep. Every biblical preacher longs for the Spirit to save souls through the proclamation of the gospel. A pastor can and should pray for this frequently. He should pray for sinners to be converted as he preaches the Word weekly. Undoubtedly, every church has those who are not saved who attend (for, perhaps, a host of reasons) and it is the pastor's prayer and God-instilled passion to see God glorified in the saving of sinners.
5. *Pray for opportunities for self & other believers to evangelize.* The pastor who is faithful to disciple his flock should pray for God to provide many opportunities in *his own* life as well as the church that he pastors to share the gospel. This includes a constant awareness and a readiness to seize opportunities to present the gospel. This demands that a Christian should know the gospel and be able to articulate the fundamental realities of the gospel message. A pastor should pray for more opportunities for him and for his people to do the work of an evangelist.

III. Personal Discipling Relationships

When many hear of a pastor being a disciple-maker they will probably think of this point first. That is, the pastor should be actively engaged in personal discipling relationships. And of course this should be the case. Every pastor should take the truth of the Scriptures and pass them on to other faithful men who can then turn and teach others (2 Tim 2:2). He should meet with other Godly men to train them in knowledge, godliness, husbanding, parenting, and integrity in the workplace. He should endeavor to take faithful men and train them in biblical leadership and biblical manhood. He should take a believer and walk with him through the Word of God and show how to read and observe the word, interpret the word, and how to apply and implement the Word.

IV. Patience

Many pastors and young, energetic leaders may see a place where a ministry should change and he may in fact be accurate. But presenting those suggestions, implementing those changes, and tenderly shepherding the sheep along so that none are wounded is necessarily important. A man of God can disciple the flock of God by showing patience — a God-like patience. Paul commands Timothy to “preach the Word” and then later in that same verse he says to do all this teaching with “great patience” (2 Tim 4:2). First Thessalonians 5:14 says to be patient with *all* people. A man of God shepherds the flock of God as he patiently pictures Jesus Christ who shows daily patience with a pastor in need of daily grace. A pastor must not welcome the patience of God in his own life and yet refuse to act patiently toward the flock divinely entrusted to his care. May God grant that we be patient shepherds and tender leaders.

*The outline here is adapted from Mark Dever's sermon at the Desiring God pastor's conference 2013.