

LAY PASTORS MINISTRY

# Letters to Lay Pastors

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## CONTENTS

A preview of upcoming packet of Letters to Lay Pastors.....	3
1. Seven Habits of notably successful lay pastors.....	5
2. Three Great Mysteries with a purpose.....	11
3. As for me.....	15
4. Good Rapport.....	19
5. You have hands, offer them to God.....	22
6. You have a body, offer it to God.....	24
7. The church is the body of Christ.....	28
8. My personal connection with the three mysteries.....	32
9. What's this about you blowing your own horn?.....	36
10. Faith plus.....	41
11. Three more faith-plus qualities.....	45
12. What's in your mind.....	49
13. What's in your wallet.....	54
14. A Triptych worth billions.....	58
15. Ten shrewd principles to success.....	62
16. Let love and faithfulness never leave you.....	66
17. How will you be the remembered? .....	70
18. You may have an Oprah Winfrey in your flock.....	73
19. Three defining events.....	77

## **A Preview of my upcoming pocket of letters to lay pastors**

By Dr. Melvin J. Steinbron Founder, LPMI

A few years ago the Lord pressed a simple idea on my heart: Write a series of letters to lay pastors. Since that time I have been pecking away at it, filing ideas as they come, writing bits and pieces, completing a few. My extended time of fighting cancer is nearly over, praise God, and I am ablaze with a new passion for writing (Ps. 45:1). I have a lot to give lay ministers.

I want to pay you up to 50 ""visits"" (each one five minutes or so) via letters. Each epistle comes from my heart and 62 years of *clergy pastoral care* in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Hawaii and Ohio, the last 32 of them given mostly to *lay pastoral care*, crisscrossing the USA, Canada, The Bahamas and parts of Australia to give seminars, speak and preach. Via e-mail and phone, I am now consulting with Lay Pastors Ministry leaders in South Korea, Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Pakistan, and more. Each letter will be a useful and serendipitous visit about one of the following three categories of vital subjects:

**DO IT ALL:** *Discharge all the duties of your ministry* (II Tim. 4:5). I will write about what lay pastors are called by God to do in their ministry, give tips on how to do it, and what you can expect as you do it.

**BE IT ALL:** *Participate in the divine nature* (II Pet. 1 :4). You'll read about offering your body to God as a ""living sacrifice,"" what it is for your body to be a member of God's ""body,"" and how to have your Father's ""genes"" (Spirit) and word shape both your life and the lives

of those you P.A.C.E.

**RESPECT IT ALL:** *Remember your leaders ... their way of life-Respect all your leaders and all the ministries they lead. Obey your leaders ... they keep watch over you as those who must give an account"* (Heb.13:7 & 17). In case you wonder about *obey*, the Greek word is *peitho*, meaning assent, agree with or obey - take your pick. All human effort, Christian or not, needs leaders and organization. God calls *many* of his people to tend his flock, *but few* to lead – *We have different gifts ... if it is leadership, let him govern diligently* (Rom. 12:8). We'll have a lot to learn from Moses' leadership, he is one of our posthumous leaders (Ex. 18).

**#1**  
**SEVEN HABITS OF NOTABLY SUCCESSFUL**  
**LAY PASTORS**

Dear Lay Pastors,

The *Magna Charta (Great Charter)* of the Lay Pastors Ministry, I Peter 5:1-4, includes a crown of glory to notably successful lay pastors. You are earning your crown now, presentation will happen upon the Chief Shepherd's return. Don't let "notably successful" intimidate you. The point in one of Jesus' parables is that God takes note of those who are *good* and *faithful*. Matt. 25:21. Skills will not earn a crown or guarantee success, but God gives both to good and faithful lay pastors. The Bible says a lot more about character, gifts, and doing than skills.

I stole the idea of *Seven Habits* from Stephen Covey's, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Why seven? I don't know, but the Spirit is bugging me to offer you *Seven Habits of Notably Successful Lay Pastors*, a letter for ministry success.

**Habit 1: Be Willing** The Great Charter focuses us on willing—"Be shepherds of God's flock...not because you must, but because **you are willing, as God wants you to be!**" *Willing* is to "take ownership," make personal sacrifices and have authentic relationships. Understand willing by its antonym, **must**—dutiful, reluctant, servile. Jesus knew slavish hired hands make poor shepherds. When the going gets tough, they run away. Jn. 10:11-13 Three scriptures

teach that willingness is in a born-again person's DNA: 1) Jesus, whose Spirit is in us, said "*I am willing*" when the leper begged for healing; Mk 1:41 2) "It is God who *works in you to will and to act* according to his good purpose; Phil 2:13 3) The Corinthians' willingness and completion of the task are laced together. I Cor 8:11-12 God, pleased with your willingness, names you a notably successful lay pastor.

**Habit 2: Be Eager** The Great Charter shifts our focus: "Be shepherds of God's flock...not greedy for money, but **eager to serve**." Just as willingness is a divine-human blend, so is eagerness. Like most God-you blends, *eager* is understood best by observation, not definition. For example, to know what it is to be eager, watch a first-time mother stretching her arms out to take her baby from the nurse.

*Eager* gets fresh meaning from its antonym, **greedy**. (Lay pastors are not paid, so substitute awards for money.) My thesaurus has *eager* as a synonym for greedy, so read "not eager for money, but eager to serve." Let's admit it: we "feel" what eager for money is, therefore we can "feel" what eager to serve is. Noting your eagerness, God identifies you as a notably successful lay pastor!

**Habit 3: Be an example** The focus moves on: "Be shepherds of God's flock ... not lording it over those entrusted to you, but **being examples** to the flock." A distressed lay person, asked by her pastor to lead the group starting their Lay Pastors Ministry, phoned me about a serious problem. Her voice was shaky, "What can I do about one of my group who is adamantly against including Example? He is

convinced only Jesus is worthy of being an example, and warned me that he will speak out against it tonight, and he will!" Following the plan in *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* they came to the ministry description—PACE: Pray, Available, Contact, Example. He was fully in favor of PAC, his only beef was with E.

I referred her to I Peter 5:1-4, especially *being examples to the flock*. I cited other biblical support: Phil 3:17; II Thes 3:9; I Tim 4:12, and I Thes 1:7 which makes it clear we do not choose to *make* ourselves examples, we *are* unintentional examples whether we want to be or not. This habit calls us to give attention to the fact we are already examples and should intentionally grow into being better and better examples. This habit precludes our "lording it over others." Since God put example in the Great Charter, noting it tells he includes you in the notably successful lay pastors crowd. You will therefore receive the crown of glory.

**Time out:** These first three habits are so supremely important to the Church of Jesus Christ that they are included in the order to shepherd God's flock. This three-fold divine-human blend is indispensable to your working alongside Jesus as he continues building his Church—"so that the body of Christ may be built up...as each part does its work." *Eph 4:11-13* These three blends are, 1<sup>st</sup>, divine strategies to keep the gates of hell from overcoming it. Matt 16:18 (aka keeping members from falling through the cracks), 2<sup>nd</sup>, divine tactics to encourage Christian brothers and sisters to mature in Christ, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, our Father plans for the Church to be the "family of God," Eph 3:14-15 brothers and sisters in Christ who love and care *for* and *about* each

other. Actually, these blends flow, first, from Jesus' love for Peter, then Peter's love for Jesus —Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you." Jn 21:17 Think of it! Your source of love is Peter's source—Jesus—who was the first to take on the form of a willing, eager and exemplary servant. Phil 2:5-8 Loving marks a lay pastor as a notable success.

**Habit 4: Covet Integrity** It's not cleanliness that's next to godliness, it's integrity—"I know, my God, that you test the heart and are **pleased with integrity**. I Chron 29:17. What does God test for integrity? The heart (aka spirit), that non-physical, inner secret center of one's life, a little higher than man, a little lower than God. It is inaccessible to family, friends, science, philosophy, accessible only to God and you. It's where integrity and/or hypocrisy rule, where decisions and inner drives originate, finally surfacing in external behavior and attitudes. Integrity matches inner drives with external performance, something like the color and flavor of Reagan's Jelly Bellies (gourmet jelly beans) are the same inside as outside.

Though integrity can be defined as complete, incorruptible, and fixed adherence to values, it is best understood by seeing it. The more we "see" Jesus' life in the gospels and the Apostle Paul's in his letters, the farther we will move from *coveting* integrity toward *being* a person of integrity—"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you," Jn. 13:15 and, "Whatever you have heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice." Phil. 4:9 We know what the antonym, hypocrisy, is by "seeing" Judas kiss Jesus, Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde and Madoff's ponzi scheme. Hypocrisy = failure; integrity =



notable success in life and ministry.

**Habit 5: Be free with love and joy** After telling the sports reporter the best ad-vice she ever got, "Let go and let God," America's No. 1 college basketball player from the UConn 2009 NCAA winning team, answered his question about what she wanted her epitaph to say: "Here lies Renee Montgomery who loved life and loved everyone in it." Don't you just *love* a person who loves you! Jesus taught that love and joy form the core essence of life—"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another," and "...So that my joy may be in you and that your joy will be full." Jn. 13:34-35; 15:11 Edwin Markum said, "We have committed The Golden Rule to memory; let us now commit it to our lives." I say, "Let us now commit love and joy to our lives." Go for them! And share them!

**Habit 6: Think Pastoral Care** *Pastora!?* Certainly, because most church members would like their pastor to care personally for them as doctors care for each patient and teachers care for each student—**Pray** for them individually about their spiritual and physical needs; be **Available** for drop-in visits, emergencies and celebrations; **Contact** them (be in touch) occasionally; and know him or her well enough to have a helpful **Example** of how another Christian struggles with his or her life issues. Clergy *cannot* do this (you do the math). God calls them to pastor the congregation as a whole (preach, teach, train laity, and the like). Lay pastors *can* do this. God calls and gifts them to be "love with skin on it," to **PACE** the congregation...one person at a time. That's why the congregation needs dozens of lay pastors (scores in larger churches), but only one clergy pastor (or staff).

**Habit 7: Keep the end in mind** Jesus prayed to his Father near the end of his life, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Jn. 17:4 From the beginning, Jesus knew he was to preach, teach, heal and finally give his life for the sins of the world. To be able to say from the cross, "It is finished" he had to be doing these things each day through his years. Paul, near the end of his life, wrote "I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith." II Tim 4:7-8 For this to be true, starting with his conversion, he kept the crown of glory in mind each day through his years. Keeping the end in mind will keep *you* on track for the crown of glory to be presented to notably successful lay pastors!

Keeping at it, mjs

**#2**  
**THREE GREAT MYSTERIES**  
**WITH A PURPOSE**

My dear brothers and sisters,

Who doesn't like a mystery! Especially when an exciting event unfolds into a revelation previously unknown. A biblical mystery is what?—something God kept secret for ages, now revealed to his people"— Col. 1:26-27. He kept it secret until people were ready for it—"the fullness of time." Three mysteries are before us:

The mystery of life, death, and life again—**The Resurrection**

The mystery of God in Christ and history—**The Incarnation**

The mystery of Christ in you and the Church—**The Infusion**

**Mystery # 1: The Resurrection** – Job's issue—*If a man dies, will he live again?* Both he and Lazarus' sister, Mary (and myriads of people since) saw in the fog-shrouded distance *something* happening after death. But what? A general event of some kind—*After my skin has been destroyed, in my flesh I will see God... I know he (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection at the last day* – Job 14; 19 & Jn. 11.

Jesus' resurrection dispelled the fog, and his assuring words to Martha brought the distant future into the present: *He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die* – Jn 11:25. "He will live even though he dies," is how we

see at the cemetery. But we can't understand "he will never die" until we see this is how God sees it. The believer lived, then was taken to paradise, as was the thief, to await the resurrection of the body. This will happen upon the return of Christ, "the firstfruit of the resurrection," – I Cor 15:20. The purpose of this revealed mystery is to assure us of a seamless life after life.

**Mystery # 2: The Incarnation** – This is history's greatest mystery—God entered the world as a baby whose peasant mother was a virgin, engaged to an honorable young Jew. This unparalleled event—God in human flesh— was prophesied by Isaiah 700 years before it happened: *The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel, which means God with us* – Isaiah 7:14.

*How will this be since I am a virgin?* was Mary's shock-and-awe question to Gabriel after announcing she would give birth to a son. The angel explained, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you* – Luke 1:30-35. Later, Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be registered. While there, Mary gave birth. From the East, Magi came with their gifts. The record rapidly moves on to Jesus and his Twelve, teaching, miracles, crowds, opposition, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension with a promised return.

Suddenly, 20 centuries later it's Christmas again.. We followers of Jesus continue to celebrate his birth—the Incarnation, God in human flesh. I am writing this a week before Christmas 2008. It so happens the 60-voice National Lutheran Choir is in Minneapolis tonight to give

a Christmas concert with a timely title: *LOVE INCARNATE—God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself* - II Cor. 5:19.

While we who follow Jesus celebrate this one-of-a-kind mystery, our culture gets its jollies from its secular/material "Season," having hijacked the Jesus event, and down-sized humanity's greatest miracle to a Santa-type myth. Actually, Jesus' followers more than "double the pleasure, double fun" of Christmas by giving priority to Jesus and celebrating with all kinds of people – family gatherings, cards, decorations, gifts, lights, parties, Jingle Bells music, special food and more.

The purpose of revealing this mystery is so all nations know that God in Christ so loved the world (and continues to love it) that he died to save us from our sins.

**Mystery # 3: The Infusion** – *the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints...which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory* – Col. 1:26-27. Infusion will take some explaining because it's a new name for the great event of Christ coming into the Believer...like he came into the world.

Since naming is the first step in understanding, it's imperative to know that infusion is the act of introducing one thing into another so as to affect it throughout. An example is yeast in bread, it permeates the entire loaf. **The Infusion** of Christ in you permeates every part of you: body, mind, heart, and spirit—*Here I am! I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,*

*I will come in and eat with him and he with me - Rev. 3:20.*

Infusion is really another incarnation—as God is in Christ, Christ is in you, really *in* you. Jesus makes this clear in his prayer to the Father—*I in them and you in me....That the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them* – John 17:23, 26.

The purpose of this revelation is so you can live incarnationally, i.e. activating Jesus' love and power for your daily challenges and your PACEing ministry. As yeast makes bread delectable, Jesus will make your life and ministry successful.

Paul attributed his relentless passion for his ministry to the infusion event in his life. After writing to the Colossians about "Christ in you," he wrote, *To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.* I pray for you, that God will lead you to access the same energy and power in your ministry.

Successful pastoring, Mel Steinbron

### #3

#### AS FOR ME...

My dear brothers and sisters,

We live in a country where freedom to choose what we will be and do is a right. Of course, responsibility and consequence come with freedom. Near the end of his life, Joshua assembled the tribes of Israel to tell them they were free to make one of two choices:-Joshua 24:14-15.

*Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River in Egypt. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers...or the gods of the Amorites. But **as for me** and my household, we will serve the Lord.*

The Psalmist was also free to choose—*For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked....But **as for me**, it is good to be near God* – Psalm 73:3, 28.

A mini-drama of the Caesarea-Philippi experience would go like this:

Jesus to the Twelve: "Who do people say I am"?

The Twelve: "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others."

Jesus: "What about you? Who do you say I am"?

Peter: "[As for me]\* you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"- Matt. 16:13-16

The following mini-drama about Peter's boast—*[As for me], even if I have to die with you I will never disown you*, - Mark 14:31 may tell something about ourselves:.....A servant girl in the courtyard, looking closely to Peter warming himself at the fire: "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus.".....Peter: "**[As for me]**,I don't know or understand what you're talking about.".....The servant girl seeing him again: "This fellow is one of them."

.....Peter: Again he denied it.

.....Later, One standing near Peter: "Surely you are one of them, you're Galilean."

.....Peter, calling curses on himself: "**[As for me]**, I don't know this man you're talking about." The cock crowed; Peter broke down and wept\*\* - Mk 14:66-72

The Apostle Paul chose to serve God, suffer for Christ, and fight for the Gospel: *[As for me] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*. The consequence is awesome—*Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing* – II Tim. 4:7-8

\*Brackets indicate implied words. \*\*As noted above, responsibility and consequence come with freedom of choice. Peter recovered from his devastating implosion and is reinstated – John 21:15-19.



Jesus: "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

Peter: "Yes, Lord, you know that **[as for me]** I love you."

Jesus: "Take care of my sheep....Come and follow me."

Peter: "Lord,**[as for John]**, what about him?"

Jesus: "What is that to you? You must follow me." Peter followed!

On the Day of Pentecost, the words of Jesus still ringing in his ears, Peter, now filled with the Holy Spirit and therefore finished with two-faced duplicity for the rest of his life, stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice which had affirmed his belief that Jesus was the Christ, but which also had disowned Jesus, saying to the crowd (which had shouted to Pilate, "Crucify! Crucify!" now risking the same for himself)—**[As for me]**, fellow Jews, you, with the help of wicked men, put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross. But, God raised him from the dead because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him"- Acts 2:14-24.

Most of this letter is biblical record about the precipitant choice for all humans from the beginning (Eve, **[As for me]**, the apple)—"Choose whom you will serve." Many, if not all of us, identify with Peter's three Christian-life struggles: (1) choice and affirmation, (2) some form of denial and remorse, (3) reaffirmation and reinstatement. Most, if not all, of our choices are now being made in stage 3—(a) How long will you be a lay pastor and how far will I follow Jesus in my ministry? (b) Will I serve Jesus half-heartedly or with my whole heart (will I love him half-way or all the way)? (c) Am I giving the necessary time,

energy and spirit to my ministry or am I stingy with them?

Haven't I asked the right stage 3 questions? But you get the idea. The same Holy Spirit who managed Peter's life after Pentecost will put the right questions in your spirit. **As for me**, he questions as necessary (those I need to face up to, usually from stage 3). **As for me**, I have no problem with stage 1, and, **as for me**, only an occasional problem with stage 2. **As for me** I am helped in making choices by Jesus' wise words—*Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it*—Matt. 16:25—and I connect with the Holy Spirit for access power for live out right choices—*The Spirit who lives with you and in you*—John 14:17.

**[As for me]**, another follower of Jesus,

Mel Steinbron

## #4 Good Rapport

Dear Lay Pastor

A good rapport opens the door to good pastoral caring, the soul of Jesus' compassionate care for people. For lay pastor, *rapport* marks one-on-one relationships with harmony, accord and affinity. In the medical profession this is called "good bedside manners." I believe all lay pastors desire a good rapport with each member of their flock. But how can you achieve that?

A new wave in training medical doctors may tip us off. Medical schools began a movement to "humanize" doctors about ten years ago. Two-thirds of the schools are using actors to help young doctors perfect their bedside manners, stressing respect and empathy for patients as well as medical knowledge. The effort is a response to patient complaints that doctors are too detached and distant, some even arrogant, callous, abrupt, and abrasive (AARP Bulletin, Nov. 2006).

Church members make the same complaint about some clergy pastors. The reality is: many clergy do not have a passion for one-on-one caring because God gave them other gifts, e.g., preaching, teaching, administration, leadership, equipping, and the like. Those duties come easy for them, pastoral care of individuals is a chore. Don't think this strange for Ephesians 4:11-12 reveals God's plan for the care of his people — pastors are to equip church members to do the ministry of one-on-one, grass-roots pastoral care.

Moses learned from his father-in-law, Jethro, that his duty was to lead the whole body of Israelites, not the impossible task of caring for them individual — “Moses, what you are doing is not good; you much teach them the laws, show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. Select capable people to care for them in groups of ten, then you will be able to stand the strain and the people will be happy.” Moses did this. He was now able to be what God originally called him to do — lead the people as a whole.” (This is my paraphrase of Exodus 18:17-26).

As Moses was to shepherd God’s Chosen People as a whole, clergy pastors, according to Ep. 4:11-12, are called to shepherd the congregation as a whole, part of which to call forth, equip and commission pastorally gifted members to care for the congregation one member at a time. This kind of one-on-one attention is utterly impossible for clergy pastors.

But lay pastors can do it if assigned only five to ten families. A strategically essential unit of training is *Building a Relationship*, which could just as well be called *Creating a Good Rapport*. For both doctors and lay pastors this truism is really true: Any relationship worth having is worth working on. Both doctors and lay pastors maximize their respective kinds of care by train-ing. As doctors’ good bedside manners earn the confidence of their patients so lay pastors’ good pastoral care manners earn the confidence of their flock.

Lay pastors, you have a running star in forming good relationships because you have God’s Spirit in you and with you, hardwiring the

ingredients of love into your spirit (aka pastoral gifts) — compassion, empathy, warmth, respect, gentleness, kindness, thoughtfulness, and the like. And this is the same Spirit which energized Jesus to give himself and his love to people.

And example of this is in Mark 1:41. He was *“moved with compassion”* by the leper who came to him for healing (*“filled with compassion”* is another translation). These words not only tell what he did, they tell what he was — a person who truly was “love with sin on.” There are many accounts of his compassionate and loving actions which flowed from his spirit.

Are you ready for this — Jesus said, *Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing...and will do even greater things* (John 14:21). He is depending on you to build a good rapport with your people by loving and respecting them, by being real with compassion and empathy, by encouraging and helping them, and by being there for them. Our Chief Shepherd is our model — *Be kind and compassionate to one another...Be imitators of God, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us* (Eph. 4:32-5:1). Here is a formula for achieving, maintaining and improving rapport:

1. Anticipatory preparation — Set your mind on having a good rapport and ask God to teach you how to achieve it.
2. Make your contact (connect) — visit or phone.
3. Evaluate — In God’s presence, reflect on what and how you did in order to continue working on your relationship.
4. Discuss rapport problems or questions with your ministry leader.

## #5

### YOU HAVE HANDS, OFFER THEM TO GOD

You'll find three pearls of great value, one in this letter and one in each of the next two. Try this: put your hands 12 inches in front of your face and say, "I offer these hands to God as instruments of righteousness." It's as Annie Johnson Flint wrote, "God has no hands but our hands to do his work today." (*Hand*, in this three-letter series, is a metaphor for all body members.) Surely, early in your faith you offered your total body to God as a living sacrifice.

Sacrifice suggests fire, if what was once fire is now embers, now is the time to fan it into flame ... *NOW!*

Did you know as you use your hands for others, unless God infuses your efforts with the energy of his Spirit, you may accomplish what human effort can accomplish, but you'll come up short of making the kind of differences in people's lives God desires for them. *Without me you can do nothing*, is the way Jesus put it as he briefed his disciples while walking from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. Success in ministry is the you-and-Jesus partnership. It's as some one said, ""Without God, you can't do it; without you, God isn't going to do it."

**Pearl # 1: Your hands** - instruments of righteousness - Rom. 6:13. Now, let's think together how you might use this pearl in your lay pastoral care ministry: Hands: Place one on the shoulder of a

discouraged student or grieving spouse as you verbally encourage the one and comfort the other. Ears: Listen, intently focused.

This tells them you are there for them, happy or sorry for them, according to their present life situation. Arms: A man in a distressed state was being encouraged by a friend who slipped his arm across his shoulders as he prayed for him. The man was uphoric, "God put his arm around me!" His friend admitted, "It was me, but it was really God using the arm closest to you." Feet: You use *your* creative imagination, then try other body members This guy in a TV movie trying to make points with a girl said, "You've heard that we use only 10% of our brains, I believe we use only 10% of our *hearts*."

By using the members of your body-your heart especially-to laypastor your people you can count on God's Spirit to at least quadruple the Christian love-power of your caring initiatives. This prayer was included in our church this morning: *We thank you for hearts to love; we thank you for hands to serve.* When you love with your heart you "participate in the divine nature."-II Pet. 1:4 After your next pastoral contact, ask yourself, ""Did I heart-love them?" My next letter is about offering your body as a whole to God.

## #6

### YOU HAVE A BODY, OFFER IT TO GOD

Did you know God has a body, too? Trust me, you will discover the second pearl by standing before a mirror saying, "Just as this hand is a member of my body, my body is a member of God's 'body.'" The way you use your hand and other body parts as instruments of righteousness is similar to the way God uses you, intact, as an instrument of righteousness. The difference is God uses your *total life* as his instrument, its entirety; you use members of your body. As the hymn goes, "Take my life and let it *be* consecrated Lord to thee ... take my hands ... my feet ... my voice ... my lips ... my silver and my gold." (Some who are keeping themselves for themselves should sing only "Take my life and ... LET IT BE!") You have offer-ed your body-your total self-to God as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. He accepted your offer, don't keep him waiting for you to deliver.

**Pearl # 2: Your body** - God's instrument of righteousness. When your hands are physically and spiritually connected to a body offered to God as a "living sacrifice," two great things follow: 1) the affect of your hands as a laypastor is maximized; 2) the affect of your body, used by God in the lives of others as a member of his body, is also maximized. It's this way-you are a Christian bundle of character, reputation, persona, faith, church life, community life, job, marriage, family, singleness, values, goals-everything ... all you are ... all you have ... all you do.



God's reputation to your friends and acquaintances hangs on how they perceive you. You're more than the *parts* of your body, you're a ""bundle"" God uses to draw them. Like the skilled Counselor he is, God's Spirit, in the center of their lives, uses their perception of you to attract them to himself, his love and grace.

Wow! That 2nd Pearl is heavy! You may wish to re-read the preceding paragraphs and ponder them before reading on. It's hard to believe! Always in secret ways and most of the time unknown to you, God uses you (the whole bundle) to connect with individual members of your flock-also members of your family, relatives, neighbors, friends, co-workers, and more-in the private inner sanctuary of their hearts, a very sacred and secret place, accessible only to his gentle Spirit.

The source of this truth is God, *the Spring of living water*; Jeremiah wrote. For *example-Your bodies are members of Christ himself* - I Cor. 6:15; *We are members of his body* - Eph. 5:30; *Offer your [total] selves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life* - Rom. 6:13; *You are not your own; you are bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body* -I Cor. 6:19-20.

If you hold this pearl to the light, you'll see people as pragmatists, wanting to see for themselves what their lives would be like, should they turn them over to Jesus. For them, God needs observable living examples of what a Christian is and does. He needs flesh-and-blood models to support the written and spoken truth, in other words, people who walk the talk. That's you! You don't know who all is watching you, in fact they may not even be aware they're watching

you. They have no way of knowing God is using what they see in you to permeate their lives with his disarming love and grace. You know the biblical teaching, but you don't know how or when, or where God is doing what he is doing. "God is always up to something," someone said. That someone is right! What a mystique!

Now, realizing that knowledge is not the same as action-knowing is no substitute for doing-I need to release Pearl # 2 from this paper so you can see what it is in real life It's as President Bush told the leaders of the world's 20 richest countries at a meeting on the global recession, November '08: "Meetings will not get things done, only people get things done." You'll see how critical it is to live what you know by living out your Christianity in real life so God can do what only he can do - open people's hearts to his great love and give them a new life. Now, let's get on with liberating Pearl # 2 from this paper

**Be an example:** God plans for you, a member of his body, to be an example as Jesus was-I *have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you* - Jn. 13:15. People want to know whether they would be better off if Jesus were Lord of their lives. It's like a political candidate asking, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" People eagle-eye you to get an idea of what Christians are and do. God uses your example to woo them and win their hearts, or if he already has their hearts, to lead them to a deeper life in Christ. God needs total-life Christians. "Try it, you'll like it."

**Be a lover:** God plans for you to unconditionally love people so they "get a feel" for what genuine love is. The Greek word for love is

*agape* - wanting life to be good for another and a desire to help make it so, regardless of the cost to you. You must know a few people who need that kind of love, don't you? There's so little of it in our world. It's as David Iglesias, former U.S. Attorney for New Mexico alleged, ""It's becoming more and more uncivil and nasty and brutish."" God needs members of his body to be examples and lovers. Be good ones!

## #7

### THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

I know you are a member of your church, and I know it expects you to: "Confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," "Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,"" and then live out what you confess and believe - Rom. 10:9-19. (One wag gave his spin on church expectations: Join up ... Show up ... Pay up ... Shut up.)

I also know you're a member of another Church (it's written all over your faith) the Church Universal and Eternal (CUE), aka "the mystical body of Christ." Look at these five striking comparisons of the CUE with your church: (1) the CUE neither overshadows your church nor disparages it, but glorifies it and is mystically in communion with it; (2) the CUE is universal and eternal, yours is local and temporal; (3) Jesus is the "head" of the CUE, your pastor is the head of your church; (4) the CUE is invisible, yours is visible; (5) the CUE is spiritual, yours is corporeal. Summary: the two are separate but congruent. .. *amazing!*

The CUE is a supernatural wonder, rooted in Judaism, founded by Jesus Christ, overarching myriads of God's people past, present and future. Think of it as a transparent overlay on all believers of all ages, no matter what form the Church has or had in the PAST-Judaism, God said, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," PRESENT-church: mega, small, house) or FUTURE-who knows?

**Pearl # 3: The Church Universal and Eternal** The following biblical Church scape helps grasp the connectedness of your church with the overarching CUE: Jesus: *I will build my Church*. Just prior to the cross, with cup in hand, he said to his disciples: *This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* - Matt. 16:16-18; 26:27-28 *In Christ we who are many form one body* - Rom. 12:5. *Christ is the head of the church .... each part does its work .... This is a profound mystery -but I am talking about Christ and the Church* - Eph. 4:15-16; 5:32.

*I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth is named .... To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through out all generations, for ever and ever* - Eph. 3:14,21.

*To the seven churches ... I am the alpha and omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was and who is to come* - Rev. 1:4 & 8 *The blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ* - Titus 2:13.

The following six *Alphas* and *Ome~as* are the mountain peaks in the Church scape: Jesus is building his Church out of people whose sins are forgiven.

- Jesus loves his Church, he gave himself up for her.
- Jesus is the "head" of the "body," his Church.
- Jesus' Church submits to its "head," each part is to do its work.
- The true nature and future of the Church is a "profound mystery."
- Last but not least, the hope of the world is the return of Jesus

This is the Church of which your local church and all individual Christians past, present and future belong. What a special privilege! What a great joy it is to be members-simultaneously-of both your church and the CUE in your lifetime!

For the rest of my letter I'll focus on your church, the highly visible one with its spire reaching upward. Sociologically, your church is one among many institutions in our society, others are schools, government, banks, casinos, industry, and more. Some people are turned off by "the institutional church." True, "organized religion" is faulty. I know it is, I'm one of its faulty clergy. We're always in need of three R's-Repentance, Renewal and Reform. Only the Founder was perfect.

In spite of all its faults, in its 2000-year history no other societal institution comes close to the church as a force for good. For starters, the church founded public education at all levels, built hospitals, spawned charitable organizations, and most of the founding fathers who created our unique democracy were leaders in their churches. In spite of its own guilty conscience, it is the best "conscience of society" in existence, a sure "shelter in the time of storm." Our challenge is to be a part of our church's strength, not of its weakness. Your lay pastoral care ministry definitely includes you as a part of your church's strength! In some way you and the Apostle Peter have two things in common: You confessed your love for Jesus, and you stepped forward when he summoned you to ""Take care of my sheep."" Perhaps you can affirm the other laypastors by sharing this at your next meeting.

You may also want to share the following: Laypastors belong to something far bigger than themselves. Your church is both organization and organism~ at one level ... human, at another ... divine. It bridges the span from temporal to eternal. Jesus makes the difference-he infuses the organization with his life, making it an organism~ he himself is the bridge connecting the church (you know the church is people, it only *has* a building) to the Kingdom of God, granting dual citizenship to his followers. His bridging words are authoritative: "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me" (In. 14:6).

Know you are doing a great job by pastorally caring for those in the Way,

Truth, and Life!

Happy laypastoring,

Me! Steinbron

**#8**  
**MY PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH THE**  
**THREE MYSTERIES**

I'm connected to each of the three mysteries; these connections make my day...today and every day! Each individual you PACE is connected in their unique way. You may want to try this: as their lay pastor, ask God to help you discern each person's one-of-a kind connection so you may rejoice with them, or empathize, if that pastoral-care art of listening and loving is more appropriate.

**THE RESURRECTION** *He who believes in me will live [again], even though he dies* – Jn. 11:25. Charlotte, with whom I shared 62 years of marriage, lies in a cemetery a half mile from where I live. Her death was the most severe pain in my 84 years. My deep-seated bruising gave way to healing, bit by bit, as my ongoing relationship with Jesus, the first-fruit of the resurrection, began to replace my grief with a grief-joy mix. Praise God, the grief part is gone.

The words chiseled on the grave marker, I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE, witness to my belief the two of us will live again - Jn. 10:28. (My name is also on the stone.) Job's mystery, *If a man dies will he live again?* is now solved. My answer to Job is a booming YES! So is yours! You will bless those you PACE by sharing your answer with them.

Our connection with this mystery is faith in the resurrection, i.e. we'll live again.



**THE INCARNATION**     *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself* – II Cor. 5:19.     The doctrine, Christology, names the God-in-Christ event The Incarnation —*In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form* – Col. 2:9.     This is a simple truth but not simplistic, easy to see but not to perceive, easy to hear but not to understand.     Christology and The Incarnation have something in common with astrophysics and Dark Energy—a “mysterious essence which is causing the universe to expand at an ever-accelerating pace.”     It may eventually cause a “big rip and blow us to smithereens.”     Lawrence Krause, physicist at Arizona State University said, “We’ve discovered this incredible Dark Energy; we don’t understand what it is.”

Theologians and astrophysicists have three things in common: First, both are sure of what they believe by faith—theologians have faith in the Bible, astrophysicists, have faith in scientific theory.     Second, both admit knowing something exists that.. cannot be understood—theologians, Incarnation, astrophysicists, Dark Energy.     Third, both believe effect validates their claim—God-in-Christ has a two-thousand-year positive and measurable affect on individuals, families, communities, government, culture and more; Dark Energy is an observable force causing the universe to expand.     Personally, I’m not sure about Dark Energy (science has a way of moving on), but I stake my eternal life on the Incarnation—God-in-Christ, my Savior.     My connection with The Incarnation: *I confess with my mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in my heart that God raised him from the dead* – Rom. 10:9.

**THE INFUSION**     *The glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory* – Col. 1:27. Infusion necessarily follows Incarnation for the next phase in God's big plan is for Christ's followers to continue his ministry, *All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation* – II Cor. 5:18. He also gave us the task of caring for the reconciled. Jesus assigned it first to Peter—*Take care of my sheep* – Jn. 20:16. Later Peter passed the ministry on to lay successors, known to us as The Lay Pastors Ministry – I Pet 5:1-4.

Now, with Christ in you, God expects two things: 1) Carry on Christ's ministries of reconciliation and shepherding; 2) Remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross by The Lord's Supper—*Do this in remembrance of me....For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes* – I Cor. 11:23-26. Take special note of "until he comes," for the third phase in God's big plan is Jesus' return, not as Savior this time, but *KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS* – Rev. 19:16. Jesus teaches in one of his parables about our being held accountable to carry on his ministries, *[Do this] until I come back* – Luke 19:11-12.

Infusion is really another Incarnation. Incarnation was God in human flesh; Infusion is Christ in human flesh—the huge difference is God's flesh was Christ, and Christ's flesh in his myriad followers. Let me illustrate: *Christ in you* is something like *conscience in you*, both incomprehensible but real. Conscience, forged by "nature and nurture," is faulty and unreliable. Christ, by divine nature, is fault-less, reliable, and the inner source of love and light. He is full Diety:

Father (Creator); Son (Jesus the Savior); and Holy Spirit (divine power, truth and wisdom)—*In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives* – Col. 2:9. It's impossible to understand the Triune God, but we ply lots of things without understanding them, e.g. TV, computers and cell phones, and we experience lots of other things without understanding them, e.g. life, love, human nature, and things we're not aware of going on in our bodies, things our lives depend on.

For now it's enough just to know Infusion is real, that Christ is really *in* you! Two sure-fire ways of living out this reality and maximizing the experience *now* are:

1. Affirm what you know about Christ in you, how much of what you know you truly believe, and what you are doing with what you know.

2. Commit all you know about yourself to as much as you know about Christ in you, before waiting for more knowledge and understanding. I connect with Infusion by asking, what in my life proves that Christ is in me.

Perhaps in another letter I can share the insights that form the answers. Blessings! Me

## #9

### WHAT'S THIS ABOUT BLOWING YOUR OWN HORN?

My dear covenant-motivated brothers and sisters,  
This morning my pastor, David Lenz, preached on giving -- *How to Give Away Money*. You know how sermons about money usually go over, well, this one was a hit! It was biblically nurturing, super-interesting, and homiletically perfect. Preparation must have included praying this song: *Take your truth O Lord/ and let it be/ a river of love flowing out through me*. The river flowed!

As David approached the pulpit, loud blasts from a trumpet nearly jolted us out of the pews. All heads immediately turned to two men parading down the aisle, one blowing his trumpet, the other waving a sign, I'M GIVING; I'M GIVING! This action ignited my imagination, I saw myself pushing a dollar bill into the Salvation Army kettle slot and shouting to those pretending the kettle was not there, "See me, I'm giving." I was ready for the sermon. The Scripture was part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

*..... When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets..... to be honored by men ..... But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you openly (Matt.6:1-4).*

*Secret* and *reward* caught my attention. These two words of Jesus nailed down forever two major principles for Giving. David masterfully

(translate: "filled with the Spirit") sculpted his sermon out of them. I'm borrowing the Secret principle and the Reward principle for this letter, after all, he borrowed them from Jesus. But first, we'll hear two of Jesus' other teachings: the *act* of giving, the *treasures* to give, then the *principles* for giving.

The act of Giving -- "WHEN YOU GIVE." Note Jesus' three words: *WHEN*—not if you give; *YOU*—this is you, your self, choosing the purpose and amount; *GIVE*—divesting one's self of something tangible like food, clothes and/or money to the needy. Giving is a majestic feature in God's nature which seems to have survived "the fall" in better shape than many others. God must have considered giving as needed more than many other practical acts for the survival of the human race. One example of giving in our area is the annual Toys for Tots drive, carried out by the U.S. Marines. Close to Christmas (20 days from today) they will distribute thousands of gifts to needy children in the seven-county Twin Cities area. Though dire needs plague children all year long, the Marines act is significant. They surprise the children with hope as well as toys. Between Christmases, the Salvation Army, churches, and community organizations help families with food, clothes ..... and hope.

The treasures to give -- MONEY AND SELF. Two of the 26 issues Jesus preached on the Mount were on giving (no 15-minute three-point sermon here). If preachers are to fulfill their call to "Preach the Word," they will preach what Jesus preached. On this day Jesus included giving money and giving self. Because money and self are so big in our lives, giving money is giving self, and giving self is giving money. Consider Jesus' comment about the widow who put two

copper coins in the collection box—*All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on* (Luke 21:1- 4). (Now to simplify my wording from this point on, I'll use two words instead of five—"giving self" in place of "giving money and giving self.")

Many are in a Catch-22 dilemma (a situation presenting two equally desirable alternatives). It is spiritually, emotionally and psychologically impossible to give self to the true God while also giving self to the bogus god of self. For our own sanity and peace of mind we have to decide who is # 1 -- God or self. Tony Campolo tells about a troubled man who came for counsel, "I've got this terrible problem, it's tearing me apart: I love my wife and I love my secretary. It's killing me." Tony's counsel: "You don't have a problem, you have a decision."

His counsel applies to Christians trying to give their hearts to both God and self. When you give your heart to God, all other things, including self, are secondary. When lay pastors struggle between giving self to God to do lay pastoral care and giving self to *self* to do its own agenda, they have a huge decision to make. Let Jesus have the last word: *If your first concern is to look after yourself, you'll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you'll find both yourself and me* (Matt. 10:39 in *The Message*). Say, "Yes Jesus, you are Lord!" No more struggle.

The first of the two principles of giving -- THE SECRECY PRINCIPLE:  
*Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men to be seen by them..... So when you do something for an individual or family of your flock, do not announce it loudly with fanfare so that*

*giving your self may be in secret* (my paraphrase of Matt. 6:1-4). In other words, do not toot your own horn. If we do "acts of righteousness" for the purpose of being seen as a good guy, we'll more likely be seen as an egotistical guy. Jesus' acts were seen by thousands, but he didn't do them for the purpose of being seen and praised. In fact it was just the opposite, in Nazareth he was treated like trash (Lk. 4:14-30), and in Gadara the people asked him to leave, valuing their pigs more than the healing of a troubled man (Matt.8:28-34).

Two realities emerge at this point: First, about your motives, be sure you're not giving yourself to be seen by people so as to be praised, but giving yourself for the sake of your people and for the sake of Jesus whose sheep they are. Peter told shepherds to check their motives for willingness, eagerness, and humility (I Pet 5:2-3). Second, secrecy does not mean you don't tell anybody. You may need to share with a few Christian friends and other lay pastors—respecting the rule of confidentiality, of course—to encourage them and be encouraged by them. Jesus told his "friends," formerly called servants, what he did and what he was about to do (John 15:14-15). The principle of secrecy avoids the Jack Horner syndrome: "He stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plum and said, "What a good boy am I!"

The second principle of giving -- THE REWARD PRINCIPLE: Your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly. Being loving and faithful in Praying, Availability, Contacting and Example are not intended as ostentatious acts for admiration but are bona fide acts of giving self, which pleases the Father who sees your integrity and rewards accordingly. The "Great Charter" of the Lay Pastors

Ministry promises a reward -- *When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away* (I Pet.5:1-4). Receiving the crown assumes the covenantal motivations: *willing, eager, and humble*, which, because they are inner qualities, are secretive.

Your acts may not be secret (most of Jesus' were public because that's where the people were), but, if you blow your trumpet, i.e. believe you have "earned bragging rights," you expose egotistical motivations rather than covenantal. Of the egotistical, Jesus said, *You have received your reward in full* (Matt. 6:2). Of the covenantal, Jesus said, *Your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you*. Which of the two should we prefer, the one which *soon* fades away or the one which will *never* fade away (I Pet. 5:4)?

I believe most lay pastors shrink away from the idea of rewards. They don't give themselves to God, and his people to be rewarded. The joy and privilege of ministry is sufficient reward! However, to God, rewards are important for he wants to show how pleased he is with what you *are* and what you *do*. It took me years to learn how important it is to accept appreciation from people graciously with a sincere "Thank you." I learned that refusing the gift is refusing the person. Knowing God is a Giving God, we ought pray something like this: "God, the joy and privilege of making a difference in people's lives is enough reward for me, nevertheless I'll cherish forever your reward of the "crown of life." God's reward is given without our soliciting it by tooting our own horn.

Your covenantally-motivated brother, Melvin



## #10 FAITH PLUS

Dear Faith-Plus partners in ministry,

For my hayfever I take *Alka Selzer Plus*. To wash the little hair I have left I use *Pert Plus*. To flesh out my faith I use *Faith Plus*, a laundry list of seven spiritual add-ons from II Peter 1:5-8—goodness, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. “If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Wow! The apostle gives us a life-molding Faith-Plus challenge directly from six words or word clusters:

*IF YOU:* Do you want success in your ministry? Add “these qualities” to your faith.

*POSSESS:* It’s up to each lay pastor to “make every effort” to add these qualities.

*THEM...THEY:* These pronouns represent all seven qualities. Don’t avoid a one.

*IN INCREASING MEASURE:* It’ll not happen over night. Keep at it! Persevere!

*THEY WILL MAKE YOU EFFECTIVE & PRODUCTIVE:* Success is assured.

*IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:* Truly know and share him.

You already have a faith to add to—“Without faith it is impossible to

please God.”<sup>1</sup> You either leaped to faith in Jesus Christ or you crawled to faith inch by inch over a rugged terrain of doubts and delays. (The contractor who fixed my driveway told me his conversion was by microwave, not by crock pot.) However you obtained your faith, you have it!<sup>2</sup>

Because you have faith, God’s Spirit—who seems never to leave us to ourselves, for our own good of course—is ready to help you add these seven qualities. The fact is, if we expect to (1) “participate in the divine nature,” (2) “escape the corruption of this world caused by evil desires,”<sup>3</sup> (3) “keep from being ineffective and unproductive,” we can’t do it alone—we must seek his help. “Don’t put it off; do it now. Do this, and you’ll have your life on firm footing.”<sup>4</sup> Now, on to the seven *Faith Plus* add-ons.

**ADD GOODNESS:** *Be* good and *do* good. Being precedes doing. A tennis champion said, “If you don’t win the game in the locker room, you won’t win it on the court.” Goodness on one’s inside makes for goodness on one’s outside. The key to being good is to be filled with God’s good Spirit; the key to doing good is adding these doing-good qualities to your faith, starting with goodness. *Faith Plus* capacitates you to “discharge all the [good] duties of your ministry.”<sup>5</sup>

**ADD KNOWLEDGE** – There are two worlds of knowledge: (1) The tangible— the totality of reality (the world, its systems, and the endless space around it.) Learn all you can learn in one lifetime about the material world over which the Creator-God is sovereign. 2) The intangible—the Lord Jesus Christ who is also the Son of the Living

God.<sup>6</sup> ("All things were created by him and for him." He therefore is Lord over all that exists.<sup>7</sup> Knowing Jesus runs far beyond just knowing *about* him, it means personally and intimately *experiencing* him, as did the two people on their way to Emmaus who, after discovering it was Jesus who had been walking with them, asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us?"<sup>8</sup> We don't truly *know* Jesus until we experience him: first, as the LORD of our life; second, as JESUS our savior from the penalty and practice of sin; third, as CHRIST the Messiah who came to give his life as a ransom,"<sup>9</sup> and who is coming again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.<sup>10</sup> Knowledge is the engine driving your ministry, making it effective and productive. You need all eight cylinders (faith, plus all seven qualities) tuned up and firing at full power.

**ADD SELF CONTROL** – We often read of respected people (Christians included) going berserk, shooting or beating up on a friend, carrying on an affair, or some other bazaar form of spinning out of control. Often I've said, "If only they'd had *Faith Plus*—a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus, plus the self-control add-on—how different things would have been." In addition to controlling self destructive behavior, we need self control to mature our faith, sweeten our relationships, purify desires, pray earnestly, faithfully engage in personal & public worship, and to "make every effort to add to your faith in increasing measure" all seven qualities.

**ADD PERSEVERANCE** – This quality is one of the great themes of the Bible, one of the majestic features of God's nature—steadfast, unflinching, unchanging, faithful, trustworthy. Some OT words for this

quality are loyal, enduring, standing firm, continuing ever; some NT concepts: holding firm, patient, settled, secure, determined not to cave in to pressure. To persevere means not being distracted from moving steadily forward toward a chosen goal. Jesus taught perseverance when he refused to accept a wanna-be disciple, *but* who had to do something else first—“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”**11** Those who serve him must keep their eyes fixed on the task and their hand on the plow.

I’m about out of space and you’ve had about enough for now...so I’ll stop here and pick up the last three qualities in my next letter. Besides, both you and I need a breather to ponder the first four of the Apostle Peter’s heavy challenges.

Your *Faith-Plus* fellow aspirant,

1. Hebrews 11:6
2. Ephesians 2:8-9
3. I Peter 1:4
4. II Peter 1:10 The Message
5. II Timothy 4:5
6. Matthew 16:16
7. Colossians 1:17
8. Luke 24:13-35
9. Matthew 20:28
10. Revelation 19:16
11. Luke 9:62

## #11

### THREE MORE FAITH-PLUS QUALITIES

To my persevering colleagues,

This is a test! By continuing to read, you are scoring high in the seven Faith-Plus qualities which you are making "every effort to add to your faith." Congratulations! I'll see that you get the Pulitzer Perseverance Prize.

To the previous qualities—goodness, knowledge, self control and perseverance—now add godliness, brotherly affection and love. To the extent you add these seven qualities "in increasing measure" to your faith, you will unknowingly add them to your flock members' faith. How? They are transferable, first from God to you, then from you to your people, like one entity starts vibrating when the one at its side is vibrating. Adding these qualities to your faith makes your one-to-one caring a win-win ministry—you win and your people win.

One more thing before moving on, think of these qualities as links in a chain suspended from your faith—a faith anchored in Jesus Christ. As a child, I remember cutting colored poster paper into narrow strips to make chain-like links, pasting each one to form a circle after threading it through the preceding one. After linking several of them we hung the chain on the Christmas tree. Now, in my "second childhood," I am working with godly links, "making every effort" to attach them to my faith.

**ADD GODLINESS** — Godliness means exactly that, to be like God, It is the far opposite of Godlessness. God says, "Be holy (Godly) because I am holy."<sup>1</sup> Do we have a problem here? Yes...but the problem is more with *understanding* Godly, than *being* Godly. We can be like God even though always short of perfection. I'll illustrate: a 7-year-old boy can play baseball like his 30-year-old baseball-pro father. Both stand up to the plate, both hold the bat, both hit the ball, both score a run...each in his own league, of course (Little and Big). We and God are doing some of the same things, but in different leagues. Godliness is a process of "increasing measure,"<sup>2</sup> always making progress but never fully achieving it in this life. We falter...but we never quit. Between now and heaven we will always be "a work in progress." The Big League is the top league for us in this life, but we continue to make errors like Big League baseball players do. One day God will "call us up" to his MAJESTIC LEAGUE, then, immediate perfection, for "we shall be like him!"<sup>3</sup> The day Stephen was stoned to death, "he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Stephen said to Jesus, "Receive my spirit.... Do not hold this sin against them." Then he fell asleep.<sup>4</sup> Since then Stephen has been playing in God's Majestic League. Totally Godly! No more errors!

**ADD BROTHERLY AFFECTION** — *Brotherly kindness* and *mutual affection* are variant translations of *philadelphia*, a Greek word formed by combining *philos* (affection) with *adelphos* (brotherly). I translate it brotherly affection. Don't worry about brotherly being gender biased because *adelphos* means *sisters and brothers from the same womb*. Let's say the womb is the Church of Jesus Christ which offers

new birth to who will receive Christ. I hope this hasty word-study helps understand brotherly affection.

Brotherly affection—the kind of love Christians cherish for one another—is the kind of love lay pastors make every effort to add to their faith. It is a godly affection for the brother and sister church members who make up their flocks. It's a family love among blood brothers and sisters—the family is “the family of God,”<sup>5</sup> the blood is the blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> Galatians 6:10 names the lay pastors ministry as an in-house ministry—“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Your commitment makes this possible—No member left behind. You have gifts for, and a call to, congregational care. Other members have gifts and calls to ministries beyond the family of believers. No one can do it all.

**ADD LOVE** — *Love* is in the New Testament 158 times, most often translated from the Greek word, *agape*—love for all people. It's different from *philadelphia*—brotherly affection—the special love Christians have for one another. *Agape* is love in a moral or social sense, a matter of principle and duty. We don't have to like everybody, or even be fond of everybody, but we do have to seek the best for them, not counting the cost or personal sacrifice—even when we are neither thanked nor appreciated. Jesus taught: “Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”<sup>7</sup>

Jesus defined *agape* by his Good Samaritan story. This non-Israelite

was not motivated by brotherly affection to rescue the beaten and bloody man from the ditch, but by a self-sacrificing sense of duty to a helpless, perhaps dying, fellow human. The story was Jesus' reply to "Who is my neighbor?" after he taught "Love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>8</sup> God loves (agape) all people—"He makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."<sup>9</sup> Who are we not to love anyone whom God loves?! But we must realize that this kind of love is a perfect fit for the ministry of evangelism, while brotherly affection is a better fit for pastoral care.

If for our spiritual lives we do little more for the rest of our days than mature our faith by adding these seven qualities to it, we will be good ministers of Jesus Christ.

Still working on Faith-Plus qualities, -Melvin

- |                        |                        |                   |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. I Peter 1:16        | 2. II Peter 1:8        | 3. I John 3:2     |
| 4. Acts 7:54-60        | 5. John 1:12-13; 3:3-8 | 6. Romans 3:21-26 |
| 7. Matthew 5:44 KJV... | 8. Luke 10: 35-45      | 9. Matthew 5:45   |



## #12

### WHAT'S IN *YOUR* MIND?

Dear fellow dreamers,

You are a person after my own heart, dreaming of enlarging the place of your Lay Pastors Ministry tent and seeking ideas for stretching the curtains wide to make room for all the members of your church. For better or for worse the president of the United States signed the H C (health care) plan yesterday, providing medical care for every citizen. I say "for better or for worse" because no one knows how it will work. All we know for sure is the cost is astronomical.

When you sign off on the P C (pastoral care) plan offering adequate pastoral care for every church member, you also will not know for sure how it will work. All you will know for sure is that God wants it and you are ready to pay the price of work and prayer. You'll find out later how it works.

This letter is about Comprehensive Pastoral Care, a follow up of the preceding letter, *What's In Your Wallet?* I've been dreaming it for years. As I write I am excited because my dream now includes you. Please don't say, "Dream on, Mel!" I say, "Pray on, Michelle!" or Eric or whatever your name is. I'll use Home Depot's slogan, "You Can Do It, I Can Help."

Isaiah not only wrote, "Enlarge the place of your tent" and "Stretch

your tent curtains wide," the prophet also wrote in the same verse (Isaiah 54:2), *LENGTHEN YOUR CORDS, STRENGTHEN YOUR STAKES*. If you ever pitched a tent in a campground for you and your family like we did for six years of vacationing, you will know what lengthening cords and strengthening stakes mean—every member of the family will be covered. That's what Comprehensive Pastoral Care is.

You will want to consider these five essential steps:

**STEP ONE:** Accept the size of the mission. It's *God's Mission* size—comprehensive. It includes all your members by enlarging your plans and stretching your faith, lots of prayer, lots of commitment, and lots of work. You are on a grand mission!

**STEP TWO:** Help for the mission. Hear these words from God: "Whatever he does prospers" (Ps. 1:3). You do it, God will prosper it! You do your part, God will do his part. Bank on it! You can bank on this too: "All that we have accomplished, you (God) have done for us" (Isa. 26:12) God is an involved God! And he will be working at it while you work at it.

**STEP THREE:** Passion for the mission. Never lack zeal; keep your spiritual fervor (Rom. 12:11), but keep your excitement grounded in common sense and Scripture. For example, Jesus' advice in Matt. 7:24, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man..." Jesus joins practice and wise in the same breath. Look at John 13:17, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." Here Jesus joins know, blessed

and do.

**STEP FOUR:** A plan for the mission. There are three leaps, not just steps, in this plan:

1. The comprehensive plan assumes the existing Lay Pastors Ministry includes many but not a 100% of the members.
2. Inventory your church for ministries and organizations either (a) already providing some form of pastoral care for the people in these groups or (b) likely to be open to consider adding pastoral care to their purpose and schedule. Example: One choir had already appointed one member of each section—bass, tenor, alto, soprano—to be the leader for that section. For the first twenty minutes of the rehearsal, each section met separately, shared needs for prayer and spent the rest of the allotted time praying for each other. The leaders followed up during the week on those they deemed needing it. Two side affects were that the singing on Sunday was super joyful and the bonding of choir member's lives was unbelievable. You will need to visit the leaders of the organizations, ministries and boards to explain the mission, enlist their participation, train selected leaders, and support them.
3. People not actively participating in church groups and not pastored by lay pastors are assigned to a phone-care corps who will contact these people by phone at least monthly. The

corps will need to be enlisted, trained, supported and accountable. This is a good ministry for shut-ins, the elderly, and extremely busy church members.

4. Sometime between concept and implementation, you will need to present this plan to the senior pastor for acceptance, support and perhaps involvement. Then you and your pastor will need to take it to the ruling body for approval, support and perhaps involvement.

**STEP FIVE:** Manage and Evaluate the Mission. If plans are not made for ongoing management and evaluation of the mission after it has been designed and implemented, all the work will go down the drain, having been done for naught. Evaluation is only a useless exercise unless you use it to see what you are doing right and what needs to be changed or improved, then take action. God will provide leaders and lead you to them, or them to you. The Lay Pastors Ministry management team will have enough to do without also managing this Comprehensive Plan. However it would be good to have one or two members on both management teams so the efforts are coordinated and information flows freely.

When you begin to design the Comprehensive Lay Pastoral Care Plan by leaning on these five steps you will find how bare-bone they are. However, I discovered long ago that a group of lay people, committed to Jesus Christ, to their church and to this mission, will design a ministry which will work and be a love-and-care blessing in your

church.

As Jethro assured Moses, I assure you, "If you do this, and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain and all the people will be satisfied" (Exodus 18:23)...and you will have a model for other churches. If you are ready to do this or have questions about it, I would love to hear from you.

One final word—pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray, pray,

Amen!

Mel Steinbron

**#13**  
**WHAT' S IN YOUR WALLET?**

Dear soul mate,

Have you been annoyed by Capital One's TV ad featuring the antics of pre-historic men? Or am I the only one who switches the channel when it screens? To me the ad is a nuisance, a nonsensical interruption of the news...but it did its crafty duty—*What's in your wallet?* really got to me. I think of Capital One every time I take a competitor's credit card out of my wallet.

What does this have to do with you as the leader of your Lay Pastors Ministry? Lots! You'll see when I change the last word of the ad from *wallet* to *mind*. What's in your mind about (1) your leadership and (2) the ministry you lead? Take a moment to search your mind. Many leaders are yet to discover that their dreams and expectations are visions from God. "Dare to Dream ~ Trust Your Crazy Ideas" tickled me as I read it in a gift shop on a curio. Treat your dreams and ideas, not as crazy, but as from God. Believe me, they probably are!

Dare to dream about God's call to Israel through the prophet: *Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes : For you will spread out to the right and to the left.*<sup>1</sup>

Try to have a prayerful curiosity about whether your Lay Pastors Ministry is growing, has plateaued, or is declining, and how its future under your leadership will thrive as you dream the prophet's "impossible dream" and pray about God's daring challenge to you.

God located me during my time with him early this morning through this verse. Does he find you, too? He "spoke to me," about my vision ("visceral compulsion" psychologists may call it) for these *Letters To Lay Pastors* I'm writing. I see my "work in progress" as a useful tool for ongoing equipping of lay pastors, whether assembled or individual and alone. My vision includes Dr. Byeong Chea, Rev. John Ogilla, Rev. Daniel Patrick, and Rev. Chand Alnaser translating them into the languages of their respective countries: South Korea, Kenya, Ghana, Pakistan, and ministry leaders in the USA, Canada, Australia, Bahamas and other countries using the letters as they are. The words from God to Isaiah especially *Do not hold back*, rapidly displaced *What's in your wallet?* But this is *my* vision. Forgive me. Please allow me to help you (if you could use it) grow *your* vision with the pregnant ideas of God's call to Israel. We'll take it line by line:

### ***ENLARGE THE PLACE OF YOUR TENT***

Very few churches have their total membership under the lay pastoral care tent. And, after failing they settle for only a part of the congregation. Please dream about enlarging the place of your tent and making plans to stretch the curtains enough to include everyone as it becomes necessary. Jesus intended the care of the whole flock as he gave this assignment to Peter, *Take care of my sheep*. Peter

intended the care of every sheep in the flock when he passed the assignment on to the leaders of all churches, *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care*. Make *DO NOT HOLD BACK* the core imperative of your dream. Don't let it dim or die, don't think it crazy. Make it happen. God says, "You can do it! I will help."

### ***STRETCH YOUR TENT CURTAINS WIDE***

This line says your vision is to include a Lay Pastors Ministry (LPM) tent larger than needed for the number of people now in it. It's like grandparents giving a size 10 coat to a 6-year old to grow into. As you and your ministry leadership group, with the encouragement and possible participation of your pastor, face the challenges by troubleshooting, creative planning, faith to execute the plans, second-effort drives (like a football team makes to move the ball closer to the goal line) and pleading prayer, God will prosper all you do. (He can't prosper what you don't do.) The following paragraph will assure you I'm not trying to lay a guilt trip on you. I've been where you are. Rather, I want to help you with a creative plan which may enable you to include your total membership in your tent.

We had this challenge (a euphemism for *problem*), as most churches do, at Hope Church in Minneapolis where I spent 10 years, after officially retiring, in a very limited staff capacity, traveling most weekends giving LPM seminars and preaching across America and Canada. I knew of only two churches which had 100% of their members under their LPM tent. This challenged me. God gave me a plan for correcting this by enlarging the place of our tent and



stretching the curtains wide. My last year at Hope, I worked with a blue ribbon group and an associate pastor to understand, design, and implement this plan. I retired again. You've heard it—"Old preachers never die, they just go out to pastor."

This *Comprehensive Plan For Lay Pastoral Care* was about ready to go when the 43-old associate who was to lead from that point on, tragically and suddenly had a heart attack and died. So did the plan. But I'm out of time and space so I'll write the plan in my next letter, hoping you and/or others will try it.

Blessings and more blessings!

Mel Steinbron

1. Isaiah 54:2

## #14 A TRIPTYCH WORTH BILLIONS

My dear friends,

A triptych hangs on the right wall as you enter our home. It's a three-panel painting, scenes of trees and hills, each a separately finished work of art. Hanging next to each other, the three panels make one large picture with one synergistic theme: rural beauty—the total effect is greater than the sum of its parts. Triptyches can be dramas and writings as well as paintings.

The Magna Charta of the Lay Pastors Ministry is a written triptych. Its one theme is, *Shepherds of God's flock*; the three panels' sub themes are, *Willing, Eager, and Example*. We'll flesh out the theme by looking at the panels separately to discern shades of meaning and subtleties of nuances. But first, here's the Magna Charta:

*To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be **shepherds of God's flock** that is under your care serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are **willing**, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but **eager** to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being **examples** to the flock (I Peter 5:1-4, bold type added by me).*

**1<sup>st</sup> PANEL: WILLING**    *Not because you must, but because you are*

*willing. But* infers one may be doing the right thing for the wrong reason—lay pastoring only out of a sense of duty to the church’s pastor, to ministry leaders, to conscience, or because one feels uncomfortable saying “No.” I heard a lay pastor confess, “I volunteered ‘cause *somebody* has to help the pastor.” Those pastoring because they must, won’t do it for long, not be effective, or get out of it as soon as possible... and they should. Those who are willing usually keep at it and grow in fervor, skills and effectiveness. A divine call fuels one’s desire to be willing, *as God wants you to be.*

Peter appeals to *elders* (an office: lay shepherds/pastors) to do the right thing for the right reason. Jesus confronted his three disciples who did a right thing at the wrong time, falling asleep the night he was betrayed—*Could you men not keep watch with me one hour?* He put his finger on the reason—*the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*<sup>1</sup> True! Just when one’s spirit is willing, it gets stymied by unwilling flesh. Jesus told them how the spirit could trump the flesh—*Watch and pray.* This puts new life in an old cliché, “Where there’s a will there’s a way.” In other words, if one gets in sync with Jesus, spirit and flesh will likely be willing at the same time. Is it possible to live in sync with Jesus 24/7?

**2<sup>nd</sup> PANEL: EAGER** *Not greedy for money, but eager to serve.* All three God-like qualities in the triptych—willing, eager, examples—are preceded by demon-like qualities—must, greedy, lording it over those entrusted to you. *Eager* is preceded by *not greedy for money (...not calculating what you can get out of it* is Eugene Peterson’s translation in *The Message*). Lay pastors are not salaried, how can

they be greedy for money? Peterson suggests there are other kinds of illicit greed, perhaps coveting the praise of their leaders and their flocks

Regarding praise of people, there's a wide gulf between (1) humbly accepting recognition and legitimate praise for serving with excellence: *The elders who [do the work] of the church well are worthy of double honor,*<sup>2</sup> and (2) pridefully accepting recognition and praise as though we accomplished it by ourselves: *Not that we are competent in ourselves...for our competence comes from God.*<sup>3</sup> Jesus was teaching on bearing spiritual fruit when he said, *Apart from me you can do nothing* .<sup>4</sup>

*Eager* is such an emotionally active quality that it requires synonyms to flesh it out. *Zeal* and *fervor* are two—*Never be lacking in **zeal**, but keep your spiritual **fervor**, serving the Lord;*<sup>5</sup> two more, *Titus is coming to you with much **enthusiasm** and on his own **initiative**.*<sup>6</sup> Scripture tells us what to do should our efforts become spiritless, *If any of you lack [passion], he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him.*<sup>7</sup> Is it possible to be perpetually eager?

**3<sup>rd</sup> PANEL: EXAMPLES** Serving as shepherds of God's flock requires eager, and willing examples. Lay pastors, you responded to God's call; you are equipped to fulfill the call; you have been commissioned by the laying on of hands; you are discharging the duties of your ministry; you are fine examples of those who lovingly and faithfully serve God and people. God is using you to PACE his

flock. Serving him with all your heart—willing, eager and exemplary—you have great satisfaction and joy. *And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*<sup>8</sup>

You are living triptyches, each a unique work of divine art, with one synergistic theme—willing, eager and exemplary shepherds of God's flock. You are worth more than a billion \$\$\$s, *more precious than gold, than much pure gold.*<sup>9</sup>.

Your brother in Christ,  
Mel Steinbron

1. Matthew 26:40-41
2. I Timothy 6:17
3. II Corinthians 3:5
4. John 15:5
5. Romans 12:11
6. II Corinthians 8:17
7. James 1:5
8. I Peter 5:4
9. Psalm 19:10

## #15

### TEN SHREWD PRINCIPLES TO SUCCESS

Dear people of the light,

At the end of his parable about the Shrewd Manager, Jesus made his point: "The master praised the crooked manager. And why? Because he knew how to look after himself. Streetwise people are smarter in this regard than are people of the light. They are on constant alert, looking for angles, surviving by their wits. I want you to be smart in the same way—but for what is right!"<sup>1</sup> Jesus wants lay pastors to be as smart (shrewd) in their Christian life and ministry.

I read a newspaper-like publication, *Investment Business Daily* (IBD), at the library yesterday. I was excited by its *10 SECRETS TO SUCCESS*. I saw them as 10 shrewd principles of the people of this world ("streetwise people") which, if used by lay pastors, would be their response to Jesus' request. Note: Three different styles of print will enable you to identify the three different messages in each of the following *10 Shrewd Principles*—First, THE CAPITALS are the "10 Shrewd Principles;" second, this regular print is IBD's comment on the principles; third, *the italics* are my spin for lay pastors on each of the principles.

**1. HOW YOU THINK IS EVERYTHING:** Always be positive. Think success, not failure. Beware of a negative environment. *My spin—(it is really Paul's): "Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful,*

*not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.”<sup>2</sup>*

**2. DECIDE UPON YOUR TRUE DREAMS AND GOALS:** Write down your specific goals and develop a plan to reach them. *My spin—the goal and plan of a famous painter, Vincent van Gogh: “I dream my painting and then I paint my dream.” Dream your ministry, then minister your dream.*

**3. TAKE ACTION:** Goals are nothing without action. Don’t be afraid to get started. Just do it. *My spin—I have a beautiful bronze-coated metal ruler in my desk drawer, a memento from a Time Management seminar I took some years ago with these classic words painted in black: GOALS–PRIORITIES–PLANNING. But...a fourth word is missing—ACTION! Without action the other three are only exercises in futility. ‘Nuf said!*

**4. NEVER STOP LEARNING:** Go back to school or read books. Get training and acquire skills. *My spin—Listening skills are needed most by many lay pastors. I can say this humbly as a clergy pastor because after 30 years in three different churches, I spent a two-week study leave at Princeton Seminary learning listening skills. I realized what an ineffective listener I must have been to many of those parishioners. Would you consider asking your library or book store for a good book on listening skills, or attending evening classes at a nearby school? Think grow!*

**5. BE PERSISTENT AND WORK HARD:** Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Never give up. *My spin again is Paul’s: “Work from the heart*

*for your real Master, confident that you'll get paid in full.... Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being Christian doesn't cover up bad work.*

**6. LEARN TO ANALYZE DETAILS:** Get all the facts, all the in-put. Learn from your mistakes. *Two spins:* 1. "Get all the facts." *In my last Seniors Defensive Driving workshop I learned to "give the other driver the benefit of the doubt." Example: If a driver doesn't get going soon enough after the light changes, don't honk or fume, there may be a health reason. Be patient.* 2. "Learn from mistakes." *A female rookie lay pastor, visiting a member with a problem pregnancy, thought she was making good conversation by telling about miscarriages she knew of. The member's friend informed the LPM leader of the emotional damage. The leader saw a teachable moment, called the lay pastor in, counseled with her, and salvaged her ministry by teaching her a valuable lesson from her mistake.*

**7. FOCUS ON YOUR TIME AND MONEY:** Don't let other people or things distract you. *My spin—Focus on your Lord, your ministry, your flock, not letting other people or things distract you. (I'm remembering you are a volunteer minister and do not have the amount of time we clergy ministers have to focus. Do what you can. Don't worry about what you can't do.))*

**8. DON'T BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE; BE DIFFERENT:** Following the herd is a sure way to mediocrity. *My spin—When you became a lay pastor you were given rule-of-thumb start-up expectations. Since you*



*are unique among all lay pastors in personality, temperament, maturity, life experiences, education, spiritual gifts and almost everything else, and your flock is also unique, a greater expectation is that you and the Spirit of God make your ministry your own— DON'T BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE; BE DIFFERENT.*

**9. DEAL AND COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY:** No person is an island. Learn to understand and motivate others. *My spin—Give yourself time to understand where your people are in their spiritual journey. As you trod this sacred road, don't forget the huge difference between being pastoral and being judgmental. There's no place for being judgmental, lots of room for being pastoral! If you learn of some things that seem negative, your only thought is "Except for the grace of God there go I." You will know better how to pray for this person (these people) and to ask for help from the Holy Spirit to motivate them to a closer walk with Christ. This will motivate you to a closer walk as well, one of the greatest premiums for your work, the crown of glory will be given later.*

**10. BE HONEST AND DEPENDABLE; TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:** Otherwise, Nos. 1-9 won't matter. *My spin—Since "honest, dependable, and take responsibility" are in sync with biblical qualities for life and successful ministry, be shrewd — Be honest and dependable; take responsibility.*

Your shrewd spinner, Mel Steinbron

1. Luke 16:1-9 *The Message*
2. Philippians 4:8
3. Colossians 3:23-25 *The Message*

## #16

### LET LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS NEVER LEAVE YOU

My loving and faithful friends,

I wanted to give a memento to the LPMI Board of Directors which would symbolize “the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love” and etch the core qualities of the Lay Pastors Ministry in their spirits forever. What I saw in a trophy shop clicked—a bronze pendant. I ordered 12 of them, had the LPM logo etched on one side and the words LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS from Proverbs 3:3 on the other.

The proverb gave two instructions: bind them around your neck (for this I threaded ribbons through each loop) and write them on the tablet of your heart (this would hopefully happen in a time of silence during my presentation). As it turned out, I was unable to be at the meeting. The pendants were presented by another member of the board. For the years since, my pendant has been suspended from the corner of the picture of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus which hangs on the wall two feet beyond my desk. I’m glancing at it as I write. The pendant reminds me of my board-member friends again today and to be loving and faithful. The picture tells me again to value highly “What a Friend I have in Jesus.”

**LOVE and FAITHFULNESS** are the two spiritual dynamos of I Corinthians 13 supplying energy to the inner-core of the larger action-core of all pastoral care, lay or clergy. They are like warm sunshine, so welcome on a chilly spring day and at the same time like powerful sun rays purifying infections, lighting up dark corners, and

warming cold homes and hearts.

**LOVE** is tough—not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs, and always perseveres.

**FAITHFULNESS** never fails—it is patient, not self-seeking, not proud, always trusts, and always hopes.

The prize for being loving and faithful is winning favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Let's get the total message of Proverbs 3:3-4 before us:

**Let love and faithfulness never leave you...**this will require prayer and intentionality.

**Bind them around your neck...**place them somewhere so as to see them daily.

**Write them on the tablet of your heart...**use as a mantra 20 days; will be in your heart for life.

**Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man...**your prize!

**LOVE?** What is it? Because it's so central to life, pursued by all, and grossly misunderstood, let's spend a couple of paragraphs on it. Definitions don't help a lot, in fact definitions of an unexplainable experience like love reduces a transcendent human reality to a

disappointing intellectual or theological exercise. The best answer may be, "You know it when you see it." Or better, "You know it when you experience it." When we love God, people and self we know it, and when we don't love God, people and self we know it.

Besides that, others know when we love God, people, and self. I saw Jesus artfully scripted on the bottom of an Olympic snow board. Under Jesus was printed, "I can't hide my love." I was awe struck and deeply moved by this witness. I'm sure people who know her, whether they've seen it on her snowboard or not, know she loves Jesus.

Additional love scriptures: Above all, love each other deeply<sup>1</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence. This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is another to set alongside of it: Love others as well as you love yourself.... You're God taught in these matters. Just love one another! You are already good at it.

Keep it up, get better and better at it,<sup>2</sup> "Get better and better at it"—I like that! God plans that we grow in love as a child grows into larger clothes, without intentionally trying. We grow in love, not by learning more about it, but by doing more of it.

**FAITHFULNESS?** What is what? Like love, you know it when you see it. We see faithfulness lived out by Jesus and taught regularly. In his parable of the talents (one talent = \$1,000), the master, about to leave on a journey gave three servants a trust of \$5,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000 respectively to invest. Upon his return he called for an

accounting. The first two increased their trust by investing wisely, "Well done, good and **faithful** servants! You have been **faithful** with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come, share your master's happiness." The third didn't fare that well, he was censured severely for being unfaithful.<sup>3</sup> Both love and faithfulness are fruits of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> In addition to practice, there are two ways to grow these qualities:(1) be filled with the Spirit who energizes us, and (2) read God's Word which tutors us. "It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."<sup>5</sup> Lay pastors, you are given a trust by your Master, "Take care of my sheep." In discharging all the duties of your ministry, let love and faithfulness never leave you.

With love and faithfulness,

Mel Steinbron

1. I Peter 4:8
2. Matthew 22:27-29 & I Thessalonians 4:9-10 (The Message)
3. Matthew 25:14-30
4. Galatians 5:22-23
5. I Corinthians 4:21

## #17

### How Will You Be Remembered?

Each week, for the Saturday issue of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, sports Reporter, Bob Sansavere, asks one stellar amateur or professional athlete several questions about his body, strength, health, etc. The final question usually has to do with some variety of, "How do you want to be remembered?"

Today Sansavere's athlete is the captain of the University of Minnesota hockey team, Ryan Stoa. His answer to the question boils down to what I would call two "spiritual values" ... *respect* and *goodness*. "I just want to be respected by my teammates, by the coaches, and by the fans. I'd like to be known as a good leader, as a good captain, first as a good person." What are spiritual values? They are personal inner assets that warrant respect and validate one as a "good person." These values outplay the glory of athletic excellence, outlast the athlete's college and professional sports, and permeate all of one's life: faith, behavior, ambitions, and relationships.

"Teammates' respect" "A good person!" Lay pastors, when you have the respect of your peers and are known as a good person you possess an "amazement quotient" (AQ) essential for your ministry. Jesus possessed a wondrously high AQ. "The people were *amazed* at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." 1

AQ does two things: it credentials a person who has few if any formal credentials, and it draws a direct line from amazement to authority (not *authoritarian*, which is dictatorial arrogance). Jesus' authority radiated from his love, truth, and genuine concern. Your "authority" radiates from the same.

The deeper a person's integrity, the greater the respect of others. The more generous the good, the higher the regard. Both integrity and good are deeply rooted inner-life qualities that surface in outer-life behavior. A lay pastor's integrity is the congruence of professed faith ("Jesus is Lord") and publicly-lived faith. A lay pastor's goodness is multi-dimensional: honesty in all things at all times, accepting all people at all times, loving, respecting, helping, befriending, cheerful, fair, optimistic, moral, and principled in all things at all times. These things I'm writing are biblical: "May integrity and uprightness protect me." 2 "Blessed is the man ... in whose spirit there is no deceit." 3 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." 4 God's grace is perceived in his warning to get our inner lives in order. "If you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the Lord; and you may be sure your sin will find you out ... do what you have promised," 5 Good character is as genuine as my solid gold wedding ring, a projected persona is as fake as the imitation gold of costume jewelry. The longer people know us, the more they get on to us, for better or for worse.

Respect and a good reputation are two of the best credentials lay pastors can possess. These qualities increase as we work on our inner lives. What you've heard many times. "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," underscores the

point just made. If you deserve respect you will win the respect of others, but if not, you will be satisfied with the respect you have for yourself. If you are a good person, you will be known as a good person, but if not, you will be satisfied by knowing you are a good person. Jesus is the prime example of a respectable and good person who often was neither respected nor seen to be a good person. He was rejected and nearly thrown over a cliff in Nazareth by those he taught in the synagogue. But he slipped past them and went to Capernaum where, upon teaching in their synagogue, the people "were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority." 6 One of the criminals crucified with Jesus hurled insults at him, the other defended him, "We are getting what our deeds deserve. but this man has done nothing wrong." The chief priests and rulers shouted. "Crucify him!" Just before breathing his last, Jesus, having no doubt about his true self, called out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." The soldiers who did the crucifying mocked and ridiculed him, but after Jesus breathed his last the centurion (the Roman officer in charge of 100 soldiers) who witnessed it all said, "Surely he was the Son of God!" It is written, "Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame ... " 7 Joy? Yes! Because he knew who and what he was. It's clear from this that the inner life has priority, that respect and goodness are in the life of the beholder, not in the eye of the beholder, and that the two desired remembrances are birthed by solid-gold integrity and goodness. Even if the eye of the beholder mistakes a person of integrity for someone trying to impress others, and a good person for a do-gooder, your solid gold life will outlive the disrespect. "Truth will come to light." 8 Lay pastors, may I ask, what is our answer to Sanseverino's question, "How do we want to be remembered?" We



are the ones to determine how we *will* be remembered. Yours, with  
great respect,  
Mel Steinbron

1. Mark 1:22
2. Psalm 25:21
3. Psalm 32:2
4. Mattbcw 5:8
5. Numbers 32:23-24
6. Luke 4:32
7. Hebrews 12:2
8. Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, Act 2

## #18

### You may have an Oprah Winfrey in your Flock

My dear lay-pastoring friends,

Surprised? Oprah Winfrey may be in your flock. Not in person but in type. She takes the last page of every issue of *The Oprah Magazine* to write "What I Know For Sure." In her recent one-page essay she wrote this:

"Moving with the flow of life has given me a supreme confidence because I know there's a Power greater than I, a natural rhythm to things that is a force beyond my own. I trust it and believe that no matter what, I will be okay. I know for sure that this is the ultimate confidence. I know that I am more than my personality, my body, and my body image."

If Jesus were to hear Oprah say this, I believe he would tell her with his inimitable love and respect the same thing he told the teacher of the law, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (Mk. 12:28-34) Oprah has these things going for her-(1) she believes in a Power greater than she; (2) she trusts that Power; (3) this "Power" is the *ultimate confidence* (i.e., there is no higher Power); (4) she is more than personality and body.

Oprah needs someone-probably not a clergy, more likely a lay pastor-who would lovingly and respectfully tell her something like Paul preached to the pagan Greeks in Athens: "You believe in a Power, but this Power is unknown. Can I tell you who this Power is? He is the

Living God, the Creator of life and everything else, who revealed himself by coming into the world in the person of Jesus Christ." And then tell how you began your relationship with Jesus and what he means to you at the moment.

You may have an Oprah type in your flock. In his little flock, Jesus had Peter who denied him, Thomas who doubted his resurrection, and Judas who betrayed him. It took some time for Peter and Thomas to truly believe. For Judas it was too late. Your Oprah type flock member is a member of your church, but church membership doesn't always equate with kingdom membership. However, she or he is only one step short of the kingdom - the decision to receive the Jesus in whom they professed faith when joining and by this decision, begin their life-long (eternal life-long) relationship with him.

It is likely that Lay Ministers of Pastoral Care (Lay Pastors) will have one or more in their flocks who are only *near* the kingdom- *near* but not yet *in*. Another flock member's biblical faith may be intact but is being challenged by secularism, atheism, hedonism, other pop religions, and/or New Age. (You may have recognized Oprah Winfrey's beliefs as New Age.) Such people need their biblical beliefs reaffirmed by their lay pastor and his or her living example of a Christ centered life before them.

Lay pastors, it is your privilege and even your pastoral duty- "discharge all the duties of your ministry" (I Tim. 4:5)-to try to discern where your people are spiritually by listening for their core beliefs, then seize the opportunity to share where *you* are spiritually.

**Achtung! Caution!** Please note that to *discern* is pastoral, not judgmental. There's a world of difference! Someone said, ""Pastoral is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."" Being pastoral calls for lots of humility to be positioned properly, and lots of prayer for seeking the Spirit's wisdom and guidance. It may be that the leader of your lay pastors ministry will want to build witnessing passion, sensitivity, and skills into ongoing pastoral care training because you may be looking for help with the Oprah (or the Peter or the Thomas or the Judas) in your flock. Faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love,

Mel Steinbron

## 19. Three Defining Events

*My dear brothers and sisters,*

There are three events which define us and determine who and what we are. "Quick, tell me! I am concerned about who I am, what I am doing, and how I got to where I am." Wow! That covers all of life. The three events, Hear, Believe, and Receive, determine everything we are and do from birth to death, from learning the alphabet to becoming a Christian. As you read about them you will recognize them and want to use them to your advantage all your life.

You and I became Christians by hearing, believing and receiving. We *heard* the gospel of Jesus Christ; we *believed* it was true; we *received* Jesus into our hearts. Romans 10:8-10 cites the three events: First, *hearing* "the word of faith" is perceiving its meaning, i.e., "you get it." Second, *believing* is to "confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,'" making sure it's from your heart, not mere words. We can learn the right words and recite them but only we and God know whether Jesus is really *our* Lord. (Recall Jesus' question, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?") Third, *receiving* Jesus into our hearts. "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified." (The Greek for *believe* is *pisteuo*, "giving one's self up to Jesus"). John Calvin came close to this three-event sequence in writing, "Doctrine is learned only when it resides in the heart and passes into the conduct, transforming you into itself in the process."

Here is a necessary sidebar: For Paul, BELIEVING and RECEIVING Jesus immediately after HEARING him speak combined the three events into one great event like an e-mail address, Hear Believe Receive@DamascusRoad.com. (The full story is in Acts 9:1-22.)

Unlike Paul, Timothy's RECEIVING event is known only to God. Without reference to the HEARING and BELIEVING events, Paul referred to Timothy's ""sincere faith"" which lived first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice."" (The full story is in 2 Tim.1-7.) This parallels the practice in churches which baptize infants of Christian parents, followed by their adolescent children confirming their own personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Here are Biblical examples of the keys which unlock these three life-transforming events:

**Hear** — Moses heard God from a burning bush, ""I've heard the prayers of my people and I have come down to deliver them. This is how I'm going to do it, I am sending you."" Moses believed it was God speaking and he meant business. Moses' reply was, ""But"" . . . then five sensible reasons why he would not go. But he went. He experienced all three events (Ex. 3-4).

**Believe** — The Rich Young Man started a conversation with Jesus about inheriting eternal life. He heard Jesus clearly when he said, ""One thing you lack. Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."" He heard Jesus and believed him but ""he went away sad."" He rejected Jesus. (Mark 10:17-30).

**Receive** — Jesus' parable of the two sons whose father said to them separately, "Go and work today in the vineyard," illustrates the difference between receiving and rejecting. The first son said, "I will not," but later he changed his mind and went. The second said, "I will, sir," but he did not go." Jesus asked his listeners, "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" It was a rhetorical question, of course. Jesus' lesson: Receiving is not what you say, it's what you do."

You who have never seen these three spiritual events packaged together may wonder why you didn't see it before. It's so obvious. Martin Luther also wondered why he didn't see "justification by faith alone." It was so obvious in Romans 1:17. It had been there since Paul wrote it nearly 1500 years earlier. But, better late than never. His discovery changed his life and Church history. Now that you have discovered Hear Believe Receive you can keep using it to your advantage in living Christianity every day. I became aware of this when I began to use the book of Psalms for my Time With God. Each morning I began to do what I read. This is what I mean—Psalm 105:1 says, "Give thanks to the Lord," so I stopped reading and took time to thank God in detail. The next words are "call on his name," so I stopped again to spend time calling on his name. I Heard, Believed, and Received God's Word (to *do* is to receive). Daily Hearing, Believing, and Receiving continue to power my life. I use them also for health principles and relationship tips.

I could write a whole book just on HEARING, but I've only space for one example now. The Magna Charta of the Lay Pastors Ministry, 1 Peter 5:1-4, includes three ways to do the ministry: willing, eager and

exemplary. Focus on *willing*— “serving not because you must, but because you are *willing*, as God wants you to be.” To help us Hear “willing” I have an item from the sports section of today’s paper. Two university teams, Connecticut and Butler played the championship game of the NCAA last night. Connecticut won 53 to 41. Their coach told the reporter, “The halftime speech was rather interesting. The adjustment [we made] was, we were going to *out-will* them and outwork them (the Butler team).” HEAR “willing” from 1 Peter 5:2, then BELIEVE and RECEIVE (DO). That’s what UConn did and they won. Try *eager*. Then consider practicing the three spiritual events with “Be shepherds of God’s flock,” also in verse 2. Happy Hearing, Believing, and Receiving,

Mel Steinbron