

# ENTRUSTED WITH ENTRUSTING

## The Church's Role in Raising & Training Leaders

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*May 24, 2009*

2 Timothy 2:2: "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Let's look at that first active imperative: entrust – a particular word that Paul chose that reveals his perspective about gospel ministry. He considered it a stewardship. He spoke of this many times in his letters. 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4. He says, "We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel." God has trusted us with this saving message. 1 Timothy 1:11: "In accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." He was given this precious truth and he himself entrusted it to Timothy. He handed it to Timothy to be its guardian and preacher.

And in 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul looks ahead to future generations. He charges Timothy from a prison cell in his last letter, "Timothy, you are not to bury this gospel. You're not to just protect it. I charge you to entrust it to reliable men who will also entrust it, teach it to others, and faithfully pass it on until the return of Christ."

And Christ's church, on a human level, is here today because Timothy and those reliable men were faithful. We have an ancient heritage of reliable men. That's why we study church history. We read it like we study our own family lineage because it's not lineage by blood, but by the gospel. We look at these men who stood for the gospel and preached it without compromise. We read of them with fondness because their faithfulness made it possible for us to be liberated from the sin of idolatry and to bear fruit in our church and throughout the world.

Now, take note of verse 2 – an important verse for our church because this is the mandate to reproduce leaders. The charge to identify, equip, and entrust this ministry of teaching to others is given to the pastors, leaders, and elders of the local church. It is a middle voice imperative. It is not passive, it is middle, meaning, "Timothy, you yourself do it," and telling all church leaders, "It is your responsibility and privilege to do this."

We are not to outsource this responsibility. We are not to pass the buck by idolizing dependence and independence and refusing to submit to this command as a church. The raising up of leaders, teachers, and full-time pastors is the joyful responsibility of the local church.

But we're just sharing our philosophy here. We're not saying that everybody's wrong and we're right. We're just saying, "This is what we believe." If someone could convince me from the Scriptures that we are in error, I would be the first to repent. But from all that I can see from the New Testament, there is no valid argument that we are to hand this responsibility of raising up leaders over to another institution. It

seems to me that the Bible is very clear that the best place to raise up leaders is in the context of the local church.

But the reality is that this is not happening in the church today. It seems almost audacious or prideful for a small church like ours to attempt to raise our own pastors. Are we being sober-minded or are we being proud by doing this when everybody else is outsourcing it to others?

I came up with a few reasons why I think many churches are failing to submit to 2 Timothy 2:2.

First of all, I think there are, again, the idols of dependence and independence. Institutionally, as a church, we can have this idolatry because we don't trust that the gospel is adequate for the local church. Instead of trusting in Jesus and His gospel to produce the fruit of a leader/teacher/pastor who will lead the church – we entrust other institutions like Bible colleges and seminaries to do its work.

Churches have an awful inferiority complex because of its idol of dependence. They are far too easily intimidated by the scholarship of these institutions and, so, they are abdicating this stewardship given to the local church.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this: “Our chief aim is to train preachers and pastors rather than scholars and masters of arts. Let them be scholars if they can, but preachers first of all, and scholars only in order to become preachers. The universities are the fit places for producing classical scholars – let them do it. Our work is to open up scriptures and help men to preach so that they will impress God's word into fellows' hearts.”

What he is saying is: if we are to raise scholars and academicians, the local church can't do it. We would need to go to universities or seminaries. But if the call is to raise up teachers, preachers, and pastors, the church can do it. We have no reason to be intimidated.

The second reason for the current outsourcing of this to these institutions is the professionalization of the ministry. Being a pastor is now a career. If you want to be a doctor, you go to medical school, and you come out with a degree and a diploma. All that debt you incurred is okay because, when you get a job, it'll more than pay for that school debt. And so you graduate and you have a career. The Christian church has conformed to this secular model.

A pastor is a shepherd. It's a blue-collar job, taking care of sheep. You don't need an advanced degree to take care of sheep. And that's the picture Christ modeled for us and the New Testament teaches us. But the model we see today is that pastors go to seminary, graduate, apply for jobs, negotiate their salary and benefits, and they get hired by a church. It's their profession.

I agree with Pastor John Piper. This is *killing* the church today. One of the major reasons for the weakness of the church is that pastors are looking for jobs and careers instead of the cross. They are looking for some kind of legitimate profession in this world rather than the menial work of humbly laboring in the local church.

E.M. Bounds said: “The preacher is not a professional man. His ministry is not a profession. It is a divine institution, a divine devotion.”

Pastor Piper wrote: “Pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the pastoral ministry. The mentality of the professional is not the mentality of the prophet. It is not the mentality of the slave of Christ. Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and heart of the Christian ministry. The more professional we long to be, the more spiritual death we will leave in our wake, for there is no professional childlikeness (Matthew 18:3). There is no professional tender-heartedness (Ephesians 4:32). There is no professional panting after God (Psalm 42:1). I think God has exhibited shepherds as last of all in the world. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but professionals are wise. We are weak, but professionals are strong. Professionals are held in honor; we are in disrepute. We do not try to secure a professional lifestyle, but we are ready to hunger and thirst and be ill-clad and homeless. When reviled, we bless. When persecuted, we endure. When slandered, we try to conciliate. We have become the refuse of the world, the outscoring of all things.

“Brothers, we are not professionals. We are outcasts. We are aliens and exiles in the world. This professionalization of the ministry is a constant threat to the advancement of the gospel and the offense of the gospel. It is a threat to the profoundly spiritual nature of our work. I have seen it often. The love of professionalism kills a man’s belief that he is sent by God to save people from hell and to make them Christ-exalting spiritual aliens in the world. God, deliver us from the professionalizers. Banish them from our midst.”

That is the prevailing mindset and the message in the church today. But it is killing us. It is devastating spiritual devotion.

The third and final reason why churches are abdicating this stewardship: because of the laziness of pastors.

I understand, having four kids, why people wouldn’t want kids. Why? Because having kids is a lot of work. If you choose not to have kids, it’s easier. You don’t have to wake up early and stay up late. You don’t have to change diapers. You don’t have to clean up after them. You don’t have to confront yourself because you see your own failures in their lives. When you’re single, you can be secure and confident. You can be less vulnerable. Once you get married, you become more vulnerable, and once you have children, you become completely vulnerable.

Tim Keller said, “Your heart is tied to your unhappiest child.” So if you don’t have children, then your heart is tied to yourself or your spouse – you’re happier.

It’s the same thing in ministry. We’d rather just do the work of ministering to the church and overlook the difficult work of working *on* the church and carrying out the stewardship of raising up leaders.

This is the charge given to pastors, but we don’t want to get messy. We don’t want to be vulnerable to other men and be exposed and sharpened. So we just send them to Master’s Seminary. Irv Busenitz has said, “We *want* to go out to business. TMS should not exist.” Irv Busenitz and Dick Mayhue said, “We

exist because churches are weak. We hope that churches one day will be so strong and mature, they will raise their own pastors and leaders and we won't be needed any longer."

But because we pastors are lazy, proud, and selfish, we just want to protect ourselves. We'd rather just send guys to seminary and let them do this work.

But we believe in 2 Timothy 2:2. We stand here humbly and say, "Our heart aspiration as the leaders of the church is to raise our own servants, ministers, small group leaders, and pastors." We believe that God has given us the Word of God to be able to equip the man of God for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16).

Here are four reasons why we believe we must raise our own pastors here in our church, without degrees or diplomas.

The first is this: I humbly believe that the classroom is the worst way to train a pastor. The worst way to train a pastor is to make him sit in class and regurgitate answers and then grade him and give him a diploma and a bunch of letters after his name.

At the inaugural service of Westminster Seminary, Dr. J. Gresham Machen stated that "a theological seminary is an institution of higher learning whose standards should not be inferior to the highest academic standards that anywhere prevail anywhere else."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones *vehemently* opposed this. He thought this opposed the whole approach of training ministers in the New Testament. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explained: "Training pastors and preachers is unlike every other kind of training. We are in an entirely different realm, here. Because of the spiritual nature of the education, there is a sense in which it is almost blasphemous that there should be examinations in connection with this knowledge with which we are concerned."

And my experience in ministry proves this. My GPA in seminary has nothing to do with ministry. Being able to study and process information has nothing to do with real ministry. They're totally distinct.

This occidental model of education has nothing to do with the biblical model of raising up pastors.

Secondly, it's the church's responsibility because a seminary can only transmit information. They cannot mentor or disciple. There's so much more to being a pastor than a degree.

The New Testament provides us with a clear biblical basis for how to train ministers. The apostles were taught by the Lord Himself. Mark 3:14: "He chose them that they might be with Him." There weren't office hours. They dwelled together for three years. And Peter and John, for example, are described as men who had no formal education that would be recognized by the world. They were ordinary men (Acts 4:13). They were like their master. People said of Jesus: "How is it that this man has learning when he has never studied" (John 7:15)? They were trained, life-on-life, by Jesus. They had the best mentor they could possibly have.

And Jesus didn't invent this. We see this throughout the Old Testament. Joshua had Moses, Elisha and Elijah, the apostles had Jesus, Timothy and Titus had the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul called Timothy his son in the faith. He said of him: "I have no one else like him." They labored together; they loved one another. Paul observed Timothy's life and approved him personally.

And that's what happens in the church. We see a man and we see how he conducts himself in his life. And through that, we see God affirming a man who is set apart for the gospel to be God's man for Christ's church to proclaim his truth to his people. A seminary is not built to do that. That's not the function of a seminary.

The third reason why I believe it must be the local church's responsibility is: the church approach destroys the professional approach to ministry.

I was talking to a pastor who was raised at Sovereign Grace. He was saved there, grew up there, and he's a pastor there. And he said, "I heard that some guys go to seminary, get a diploma, candidate at different churches, and then get hired to be pastors of a church that they don't even know."

And I replied, "That's the norm! Your experience is the exception. Guys approach the pastoral ministry as a career. They are candidates at churches they don't know and they get hired. And then, within two years, the wolves come and they run because they're only hired hands. They don't know or care for the people. And that's the norm. What you experienced – growing in the church, loving her as a member, and then becoming a pastor – *that* is rare."

When you have church-based raising up of pastors, where there are no degrees or diplomas, it destroys this career mindset of ministry. It destroys what's happening so much, where guys kind of lay hands on themselves and then appoint themselves as ministers by going to seminary. The two easiest ways to become pastors right now are going to seminary or becoming a missionary. It's a backdoor way to become a pastor without any scrutiny of your character, life, or doctrine.

Finally, the fourth reason I believe it's the local church's responsibility is because of 2 Timothy 2:2. It is God's mandate, God's command. We *are* inadequate. We *are* insufficient. But that's why I believe He puts Verse 2 after Verse 1: God *will* give us grace. Don't look at yourself and, out of the idol of dependence, outsource this. Depend upon Jesus and you will see God's grace bear fruit.

Philip Eveson of London Theological Seminary wrote this: "It is common sense that doctors should be taught by doctors; nurses, by nurses; teachers, by teachers. It is, therefore, no surprise to find the biblical evidence supporting common-sense wisdom that those who are already in the ministry should teach those who are called to the ministry. Neither common sense nor biblical example has always prevailed in the Christian church when it has come to the training of preachers and pastors.

"Teachers with little or no preaching or pastoral experience have been given the responsibility of preparing people for the Christian ministry. Academics living in their cloistered world have often been the ones teaching the Bible and theology. Gardiner Spring was scathing in his criticism of such men, who know more of books than of men and more of theological holes than the pulpit. While it is necessary to

bring in men who are experts in their fields to give a lecture on some specific topic, the main part of the course should be in the hands of church men who have experience in the preaching and pastoral ministry.”

I want to speak to the whole church because it is *our* job to raise up these men. God’s given them to us and it’s *our* stewardship, it’s our joy to help these men grow and to nurture them so that they might be the Spurgeons of our generation, if God wills. So it is for all of us, but I want to speak specifically to the few men who feel that God might be speaking to you.

But, now, I want to focus on a small group of men that I believe God is moving to consider leadership – maybe even full-time ministry. To these men our counsel is first to consider 1 Timothy 3:1. “This saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” But consider what it does *not* say. It does not say, “If anyone aspires to the office of full-time vocational pastor, preacher, and teacher.” It’s talking about a *lay* elder, here. So, men, you ought to be aspiring, not to be a full-time elder but a *lay* elder.

It’s the elders’ job to see if you are ruling well (1 Timothy 5:17). It’s *our* job to anoint you and decide whether you’re more valuable to the church as a full-time pastor. That’s *our* responsibility, not yours. That’s where I think people get mixed up. They think aspiring to be a full-time pastor is taught by the Scriptures when it is not. It’s the office of the overseer or lay elder. A double-honor elder is 1 Timothy 5:17.

As you aspire to fulfill the qualities of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, make sure you’re aspiring to these qualities because of your love for Christ’s church and not because you love yourself. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic powers, understand all mysteries and all knowledge, if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but I have no love for Christians or the local church, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing.”

Second, you are to be motivated to pursue eldership – these qualities – because of your love for the church. If you are seeking to be a leader, pastor, or preacher but you are not motivated by love for the church, then you are wholly unqualified. The motivation must be Christ’s love for you. And, therefore, the first application is to love the church. And because you love the church, grow in these qualities.

Third, if you *do* love the church and you see it proven in your life, strengthened by the gospel and God’s grace, humbly endeavor to grow in the qualities outlined for us in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And as you are pursuing these qualities, pursue the pastors of our church. A relationship is so important. Glynn McKenzie said that Sovereign Grace has seventy church plants, and the ones pastored by private guys don’t do well. The churches that thrive have pastors who are open and transparent.

If you are a private person and don’t want to open your life to others, then you don’t want to be a pastor. But if you want to be a church leader and you desire to open up your life, then pursue us. Our hearts are wide open to you. We want to invest in future leaders. But that has to happen in the context of a relationship, not just Sunday morning and formal times.

Pursue the ways in which we are training the church. Be faithful as a member of Christ's church here. Be attentive to God's word when it's preached.

And finally: believe 2 Timothy 2:2. Believe this is the stewardship given to the local church. You will not miss out on anything by not getting these degrees and training outside the local church. What God has for you here is sufficient for every need that you have to be an able servant for Christ's church.

Let us pray that God would do this in our lives: 2 Timothy 2:2.