

The Purpose Of The Ministry

Their Responsibilities

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

Given 21-May-94; Sermon #129

I have a question for us all: How are we taught? We who have been raised in this society understand the world's educational system and the various levels that we can attain to. For those students who are vocationally inclined, there are schools that will teach the trades such as air conditioning, plumbing, electrical, and things like this. For those students who wish to go on to higher education and professional careers, we have colleges for those who wish to pursue medicine, law, and that type of thing.

We also know that much of our education comes from our parents. How we view life, if we are Republican or Democrat, how neat we are, if we like sports and the other hobbies, are things we can learn from our parents. We are influenced by our parents, by our mother and father.

We are also influenced by the world around us. This is reflected in what is termed our "empirical self," meaning my world, my town, my city, my baseball team, my car, and my school. We think of our country and its position in the world as always influenced by where we live and by the history we learn.

Recently, John Ritenbaugh has been speaking on conscience and how we have to learn and that our conscience is a learned set of standards that will develop how we live and how we act, that governs our actions. When God begins to call us, we are instructed in several different ways. I have listed four ways today; there might be more.

In John 6, Jesus Christ had been answering the Jews. He said that He was the bread that came down from heaven, and they were murmuring, "Is not this Joseph's son?" and so forth. He really offended them when He said:

John 6:44-45 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; [Wow! Now He was saying the Father, the very living God, the Ancient of Days, was His Father.] and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

Here we can see one of the Father's jobs. I do not know if I have ever thought of it as deeply before, but the Father is the one that does the calling. Ancient of Days, the very

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living God, the Head of the universe, the Head of everything, has reached out and He has called you and me personally, and He has given us His Son. Later on I will show you what His Son does with us.

Do you remember when you were called? I do. Just looking back, I think I was called long before I was ever called. I think I was being called. I can remember reading a book. It was purported to be the second most popular book ever published called *What Would Jesus Do?* It was a story of a protestant church that had five or six hundred members. One day the pastor made the announcement, "I would like to ask to see how many people would like to do what Jesus Christ would do for one year."

You would have thought that the entire congregation would have raised their hands, but only six people raised their hands. One was a sheriff, one a newspaper publisher, and one ran a grocery store. Their concept of what God would want them to do was to not put any bad news on the front page, not to sell any liquor, and things like that. As I look back, it was really a little bit on the funny side, but the concept of what would Jesus Christ want you to do stayed in my mind.

Two years later I heard the *World Tomorrow* broadcast and that is how I was called. The term "draw," where it says "the Father who sent Me draws him," indicates that you do not really want to come. God the Father has reached out. This is, again, the Ancient of Days, and He has reached out to you and said, "I am going to call this person into My church."

He calls you and, at first, you start to pull back. The term "draw" here I have likened to a star drag on the fishing reel; it is a brake. The fish can run, but the star drag slows him down. You just have to drag so that he can pull away, but it tires him out.

God starts to call you and all of a sudden you find out, "Well, yes, I think I will come to church."

And then you say, "What? They meet on the Sabbath?" and then you run away. "I cannot play anymore; I cannot do things on the weekend; I always work on the Sabbath." So you leave, but then God slowly draws you back and then you say, "Okay, I think I will attend church. What? Tithing? First tithe? I cannot tithe; I cannot afford it." Then you run away again and then God brings you back and then you hear about second and third tithe. I even had one man say, "Is there a fourth tithe?"

God begins to draw you and you begin to see things that you have not seen before.

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I Corinthians 2:9-12 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Here is what begins to happen: God begins to call you and He begins to show you things. Maybe, at first, you start to notice that this world is not running right and this is not the right way to live. You are not happy. "Something is wrong with my marriage, something is wrong with my life," and you start to think and look, and all of a sudden God begins to get your attention. Very slowly He brings us to the point where we begin to see things. We are being guided by God the Father, by His Spirit. We are called and we are baptized, and from that time on God's Spirit takes over.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Here we see God's Spirit. He will teach you all things. He will guide you in all aspects of your life. He will nudge you when you pray and do not know what to pray. God's Spirit will intercede for you and make the prayer usable to God, and help you in that way. Here we see the first method that God teaches us is by His Holy Spirit.

The second way is by our study of God's word. It has been said that when we study the Bible it is God talking to us, and that is certainly true. Paul is commenting to Timothy:

II Timothy 2:14-15 Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit to the catastrophe of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

He was telling a fellow minister this; it should be for us as well. We should be studying to get the most we can out of God's word.

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He says we should not fight over words; it is a complete waste of time. He says to do our best and make haste to be zealous, be eager to study. We are to get into God's word, make every effort, so it is to not be put to shame. It is written to the ministry, yet it is for all of us. We are to be workers who are not ashamed when our work is inspected.

We should be rightly dividing the truth, holding a straight course, and seeing the true intent of what God is saying and what God is doing. The term comes from the farming and logging term. It means to plow a straight furrow, go from point A to point B. It also means if you are putting a row through a large forest, you go straight through the forest. You do not go around it. It is a straight path.

In Acts 17, you see that the Bereans had an attitude that all of us should have.

Acts 17:10-11 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The term "fair-minded" (in the Old King James Version) meant that they were more noble than the other group because their attitude was right. They were not worried about politics or the popular thoughts of their time. They wanted the truth and so they searched here a little and there a little to get all the understanding and intent on an individual subject. Because of that they were considered more noble. The second way is to study God's word.

The third way God expects us to learn is through observation and experiences in the world we live in. We have been placed here; like it or not, this is our classroom.

Romans 1:19-20 because what may be known of God is manifest in them [in the works He does], for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Here we can see all that God has created. It is tremendously awesome. We can see His nature by what He created, and also that He continues to make it all operate. That is astounding! We have all the water we ever had. It is still here, and it all goes to the rain,

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goes to the mountains, into snow and ice, gets melted down, and comes back through the streams, back to the ocean.

The spaceship we are on is truly awesome. Everywhere we look God is revealed to us—in our hands in how they move. He has revealed in our eyes that they can focus instantly, and the heart that pumps all the blood, day after day. And all through this we see the awesome creation of God everywhere we look, and when we reflect on that, it causes us to be awestruck.

I remember about seven years ago my granddaughter Jennifer, who was five years old at the time, said, "Grandpa, come out here quick and look." I ran out side to see what the trouble was and she was lying on her stomach on the grass and she said, "Look, Grandpa, here is how grass grows." I got down on my stomach too, and she was all excited about how grass grows. She reflected on that. (Now she is twelve and she is reflecting on how boys grow, but that is also part of God's creation as well.)

I think Psalm 8 will help us to understand the awe that David felt when he looked up at the heavens.

Psalm 8:3-4 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?

I do not know how many of you have ever lay on your back under the stars where there were not any lights around and looked up at the heavens on a clear night. It is absolutely awesome, and Jesus Christ is the One that made that. Why could anybody want us when He has done all this, all the planets, and all the heavens? It is just absolutely awesome.

Aside from just reflecting on the creation, God wants us to reflect on how we are living. He wants us to learn lessons from how we work, from our marriage, from how we deal with others, how we resist temptations of this world. This entire world is put here as a classroom and it is the classroom where we are to put in effect all the instruction we get. That is what the classroom is for—to help us develop godly character.

The third way is to observe and to learn from the world we find ourselves in, to learn the lessons that are there to learn, and to see the wonderful creation of God and see His Godhead; also to learn from the way we go through life, on our jobs, how we do as employees, how we handle our credit cards, our money. These all teach us lessons.

They are going to help us develop godly character.

God has given us a fourth way to learn. He has given us the ministry as a gift to His people. I do not know how you were when you were first called. I was just as green as grass and I came into church and I heard David John Hill speak and other ministers speak and I just stood there awestruck. I said, "How can they know so much?"

At that time I knew that ministers were perfect, that they could never sin, they could never get sick, they had every answer, their children were always the example to have your children follow, and they were the standard. And producing a sermon always seemed so easy to them. It just came out—I could not believe it. It was years later that I discovered that the ministry faced all the trials that we face, plus they had to prepare the sermons and take care of the people to boot, and it was not easy.

I think one of the things that really struck me was that Herbert W. Armstrong, while in Tucson, Arizona, had given a sermon. He had been preaching for fifty years. He had written the booklets. He was writing articles. I mean, if anybody knew about God it was Herbert Armstrong. He had given a sermon the day before and the Tucson paper did not care for it. They said it was rambling and so forth and things like this. He came to the ministry luncheon the following day and said, "Brethren, I feel so bad. I stayed up all night working on that sermon. I tried the best I could to make it come out right, and it just did not do what I wanted it to."

Now we all thought it was wonderful, but it just struck me there. I thought, here this man had been at this for fifty years, and he still struggles over producing a sermon just like the brand new elder who has to give his first sermonette. He struggles and groans over it. He knows all the scriptures, all the concepts, and yet it was just as much work to him to feed us as it probably was back when he started. It helped me to understand more of what the ministry has to go through.

I know when I was young and foolish and cocky I went to our full-time local elder and I said, "Why is it that some ministers are really interesting and some ministers are really boring?" That was a stupid question to ask, and he turned to me and said, "Mr. Reid, your problem is that you come to church to be entertained, not to learn." I remembered that after all these years and so every sermon I hear, even if it does not do all that I think it should, I try and get something from it, because that is what the sermon is for.

You might ask at this point, "How does John Ritenbaugh produce his sermons?" We hear his sermons every week and they come out and they are fantastic, and we are going to find out how he gets the information soon, but he has to work at them. He does

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not sit down and put his fingers on the keyboard of the computer and watch *Good Morning America* and his fingers automatically type the sermons. It takes work. It takes effort.

The ministry: Who put them here? Why are they here? Who teaches them? What are they to be like? A good place to start is with the organization of God. I truly hope you find this interesting and hope you find it to be helpful. At least it was to me. It added a great deal of weight to my life, but nevertheless I think you will find it to be interesting.

Ephesians 3:14-15 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

Here we see that God the Father is on top. He is the One from whom the entire family on earth came from.

Ephesians 4:6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

We see here that God the Father is above all.

Ephesians 5:23-24 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

We have seen here that God the Father is over all in charge of everything and that Jesus Christ is in charge of the church.

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Jesus Christ supplied the ministry. I think so many times we think that Jesus Christ is inactive in His church and that is the wrong concept, as you will see. In verse 12, we see that job description of a minister.

Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for

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the edifying of the body of Christ.

That is the job of the ministry. This is a job that God gave to the ministry. What did He give them? Now the term "for the equipping" (in the Old King James) means "be perfecting." The term is a medical term that would be applied when broken leg is set and the overall sense of it is to put something into the condition it should be in.

I want you to understand that. God the Father calls, He gives the person to Jesus Christ, who in turn gives it to the ministry, and the ministry is to help put that person into the condition that they should be in.

"Preparing the saints for the work of ministry." I do not think I ever saw that before until I got into this. In *Strong's Concordance* #1248, it means "preparing the saints for the offices of ministering in divine things." Do you begin to get the job that the minister has? He is to prepare you a little each week, Bible studies, etc., for the office of ministering in divine things. Do you get what is being said here? Jesus Christ has given you to the ministry, and the job of the ministry is to prepare you for service in the Kingdom of God. I find that rather staggering.

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions [positions]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

The term "prepare" in "preparing the saints" means "to prepare, to make ready." It is used absolutely as an object to prepare of those things ordained by God such as future positions. Jesus Christ is preparing a place for you to serve and to actually minister in divine things.

What are we going to be ministering in? The apostle Paul says:

I Corinthians 6:2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?

Do you see what you are being prepared for? You are to have the godly character to judge the world.

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I Corinthians 6:3 Do you not know that we shall judge angels?

That should stagger you. I do not feel worthy to judge any angels right now, but that is the level. This is the area that the ministry (which includes the pastor) is to teach you. It is time that we expand our minds and our thinking.

Hebrews 2:5-8 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." [The world we live in, the planet we are on.] For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

I was talking with a church member sometime back and he said, "I just looked through the brand new Hubble telescope and they discovered the universe continues to expand. It has not quit expanding." What does that suggest to you as to what is going to be taking place in your life? You are going to be ministering in divine things.

Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

I took time to look up the word "edifying." I want you to get the clear concept of what the ministry should be doing. Edifying means "to give edification or spiritual profit or spiritual advancement." There is an additional sense to the word edifying and that is "to build a building, to build something, to build up, the act of building up, building as a process over a period of time."

I Corinthians 3:4-6 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? [Here we begin to see where Jesus Christ is involved heavily.] I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

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A friend of mine—not called; not in the church—once said, "I have considered God and as far as I am concerned God is like a little boy with an ant farm. Every once in a while He comes over and shakes the ant farm and He watches them all run around, and then He walks off and leaves them." This man could not conceive that we could have the world we have and have an extremely loving, wonderful God. It did not make sense to him. He could not understand the concept. You see, God is not that way. He is deeply involved with those He is calling now.

I Corinthians 3:7-8 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

In other words, how he does the job of being a pastor.

I Corinthians 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; [Remember God gave the ministry to the church and now Paul is reminding us that we are God's fellow workers.] you are God's field, you are God's building.

This is where the term "building" comes in. He goes on to talk about the ministry.

I Corinthians 3:10-17 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you [the brethren, the church] are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? [That is one of the methods of teaching.] If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

How long shall we have the ministry over us?

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Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That is our goal, and it is the pastor's goal to teach us, to feed us, to get us there, and God is watching how he works.

What is the type of knowledge that the pastor is to give us? It is not general knowledge or fragmentary knowledge. The term is "exact knowledge," knowledge that we can count on and depend on. It is the kind of knowledge that he wants us to participate in because whenever we study and we work at gaining knowledge, and whenever we follow up on the sermons, the knowledge means something to us, because then we put the knowledge into action.

He wants to bring us into the perfect man, the perfect measure of Christ. The word "perfect" means that he wants us to come to the goal that we should be at, to the goal, to the purpose, he wants us finished and that means "that which has reached its end, its term, its limit," hence is completely full, wanting in nothing, specifically in persons being of full age, adulthood, full grown in mind and understanding and knowledge of the truth. This is the purpose of the knowledge; this is the purpose of the teaching that the pastor has to accomplish or has to work at it.

He is to bring us to the full measure, the stature and the fullness. The measure which is to be equivalent to the stature, full aged, having maturity, the fullness, the full measure of abundance, full of virtue and excellence in Christ.

To summarize, a pastor is:

To teach in a way that will perfect the members. To take them from the point of their calling and bring them to the condition they should be in to be of service to God.

To help his flock live a better life physically now, with the overall goal of preparing them for the office of ministering in divine areas, preparing them for rulership in the Kingdom of God.

To edify the body of Christ by giving them instruction for their spiritual profit and advancement. He is a builder, as was the apostle Paul in helping Jesus Christ build His temple, the church.

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To help the church be in unity of the faith and harmony with each other and with God and God's goals.

To impart clear and exact knowledge to the best of his ability so that brethren may grow to their fullest potential.

To help to bring each member to spiritual adulthood in helping them be sound in spiritual understanding and truth.

To help them to be the measure or equivalent of the stature, the maturity in mind and in action and virtue and in excellence and in the excellence of Jesus Christ.

Why is the pastor to do all this?

Ephesians 4:14-15 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—

We can begin to see the job of the pastor, of the ministry and, I might add, everyone who gives a sermonette. The topic should be helpful. They should be teaching us how to grow and build godly character, to build spiritual principles in us and keep adding to it like layers on a shell, as a shell grows.

There is a tremendous amount of responsibility that God puts on the pastor. This is not the pastor's idea. This is what God calls the pastor to do, and I might add, all the ministry is called to do. God gives a variety of gifts to His church. In Romans 12, we will see that God shapes His church.

Romans 12:4-8 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function [God selects the functions that He wants the congregation to have], so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with

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cheerfulness.

We see the various attributes that God wants in His church. This is part of what God wants. Seeing, then, that God has given His church ministers, how does He put doctrine and teaching in to the church?

Galatians 1:1-10 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), [Here we see the apostle Paul was called by God] and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. [Here is the reason for the letter:] I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

This points out that the ministry cannot always please men, but that they always have to please God.

Galatians 1:11-12 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. [Man did not discover this.] For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Was the apostle Paul an ignorant man? He was not; the man was a genius, biblically. He understood scriptures. He understood the traditions of his Father. But you know

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even the apostle Paul could not understand until God revealed it to him. We have to understand this because the apostle Paul was persecuting the church.

Galatians 1:13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.

Here the apostle Paul did not understand, as brilliant as he was.

Galatians 1:15-16 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood . . .

We see that the apostle Paul had to be shown, as brilliant as he was.

II Peter 1:19-21 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Did you get that? God put prophecy here by His Holy Spirit, and the men were moved so to do this.

II Corinthians 5:18-19 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

God has given the ministry the word of reconciliation. To reconcile means to make friends again, such as when one has been estranged.

II Corinthians 5:20-21 Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

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II Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

The apostle Paul shows that he and Jesus Christ are working to help us not receive the grace of God in vain.

Ephesians 3:1-5 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.

Here the revelation was made known. How was Herbert W. Armstrong taught? Herbert Armstrong was taught the same way as every other apostle or pastor was taught, by the revelation of God. How was John Ritenbaugh taught? How is he being taught now?—the same way.

We have a question to ask. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, and as the Head of the church, has He changed His way of doing things? I think this is important for us to understand. In Hebrews 13, we will see it with our own eyes.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Jesus Christ has not changed; He still works the same way. He is concerned for His church greatly. He has given His life for it and God the Father has called you. Does this mean that He would not be concerned about it? So many times we think that perhaps He is not concerned, but He is and He is in charge.

Malachi 3:6-7 "For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances [Who changed? It was the people who changed.] and have not kept them. Return to Me, [change back, come under My authority and My jurisdiction.] and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'"

Can we fully learn without the ministry? This is a question I think has to be answered as well. I would not be the person to say that if you were marooned on a desert island with a Bible and you prayed fervently to God that you would not understand. That is not the case. But there are some very intelligent people out here that are trying their best, and they do not understand.

Acts 8:26-27 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship

Here is a man who today might be called the Chief Financial Officer. This man was in charge of the entire realm's money. He knew where all the provinces were and how much they should give. He probably knew how to invest the money. This was a brilliant man and God wanted him talked to. So it was Jesus Christ who sent Phillip to catch him.

Acts 8:28-31 was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:34-35 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

Of course the result was that eunuch was baptized. What a wonderful thing! But you see God was instrumental in this entire thing. This brilliant man could not understand Isaiah. He said, "Who is he talking about here." So Phillip told him and expounded because Phillip had been given God's Spirit and the inspiration to do this. Here in Romans 10, the apostle Paul is talking to the two church eras, and he says:

Romans 10:1-4 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for

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God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end [Christ is the goal; Christ is what it is all about, and we are to be like Jesus Christ.] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Romans 10:11-17 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

It is by faith we are saved, and unless we are taught we will not build that faith, and coming together is just what God wants. Here is a quote from our booklet "Guard the Truth." It is on page 2 in the upper right hand corner. "The biblical *ecclesia*, the church, is a body of people, not so much assembling because they chose to come together, but assembling because God called them to Himself [this is God the Father], not assembling to share their own thoughts and opinions, but to listen to the voice of God."

That might sound like too much, to tell me that what I am hearing is the voice of God? I know I do not personally feel that way; it is almost too awesome to understand. But yet, at the same time, God inspires the ministry. He puts His words, His teachings, in the minister's mouth and it is for our edification, and that is why the ministry is here.

Can and will God take away His Spirit and His inspiration away from a pastor? The answer is yes, He can. In Psalms 51, we know King David said, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and please do not take your Spirit from me." In Matthew 7, we get a further idea of what can take place here.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

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And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

A minister can go off the deep end if he is not careful.

Matthew 10:32 Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

We see that the pastor stands for what is right and correct. He does not bend and he does not yield and he does not compromise, and he reports God correctly and fairly to the congregation. God will honor him and He will mention his name to His Father.

Matthew 10:33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

This applies to all of us. You can see what God wants of the pastor, and to have the pastor to deny that, it puts him in a bad relationship with God. I know that God is extremely merciful and He will work with everybody, because all of us slip from time to time. I have concerns for friends who are not with us now.

Any minister can, as can any member, compromise with God's truth. He can let down, and cause God to take away His protection and His Spirit. God does want all to be saved. Adam Clark wrote, "Whosoever prefers the worldly interest to his duty to God, such a greater value on earthly than on heavenly things and prefers the friendship of men to the approbation of God." In other words, he preaches to please men.

Now, do God's ministers have, from time to time, the responsibility to correct the church? Yes, they do. It is part of the territory. In Isaiah 58:1, God tells Isaiah to cry aloud and spare not, and to tell Israel their sins. It is important.

In I Corinthians 4, we can see an example of something like this, but it was a problem with incest.

I Corinthians 4:17-21 For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord

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wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

I Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported [I am hearing of it everywhere!] that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!

He is saying, you are putting up with it, you are not doing anything about it, and you are puffed up about it.

I Corinthians 5:13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

He put the man away, and then the man came back, which everyone rejoiced over. For what purpose should the correction be used?

II Corinthians 10:8 For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction .
..

That is what the authority is for, for your edification.

II Corinthians 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

Any kind of correction should help the individuals involved. Sometimes that may mean some severe type of correction, but still it is for their edification, to help them in the long run. Sharpness, or correction, should always be used for edification and for not causing destruction of the person.

Can a member have a different opinion than the pastor? Yes, he can, because all understanding does not come to all of us at the same time. How should the difference be handled?

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We left the Worldwide Church of God because they were changing the doctrines we held to be true and precious. Since we have formed the Church of the Great God, there have been over forty requests for doctrinal changes. Some of the requests regard tithing, some regard marriage, divorce, how often to offer offerings during the year, questions that I do not even know, but there have been over forty requests for change.

How do we handle something like that? I have picked something that I hope will remain innocuous. Perhaps I have been doing a study on this and I really got something out of it that was not intended.

Leviticus 19:19 You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.

I do not have any livestock and I am not sowing any field, but I do wear clothes. It says here not to wear clothes of mixed fabrics. I have studied into this and I have looked at it and I have come to the conclusion that God wants us to wear a garment of just one fabric because it pictures oneness in mind with Christ. It indicates that we are not mixed with the world, that we have purity before God.

This is just in my mind and I have thought about it and so I submit my study to the pastor and I pray about it and I ask God to guide his answer because I know that God is in the church. He reviews it and he informs me the instruction to not mix fabrics was given because the fibers of different strength will cause the garment to wear out prematurely. The stronger fibers will cut through the weaker fibers, causing the garment to fail.

Even with this answer, I still feel there is a lot more to it than the pastor is seeing. I feel the pastor is still missing something. What should I do? Knowing that God works with His pastors and that I prayed about it, I have to ask the question, first of all could the pastor be right? That is the question I have to ask. And the second question is, could God have guided him with the answer? Then the third question is a personal one, could I be wrong? Perhaps that is the toughest one to ask.

But even so, I am still feeling unsettled about it. What should I do? I get on my knees and I ask God to show me where I could be wrong, or to show the pastor where he could be wrong, because sometimes pastors can miss things as well. This way I do not draw back from serving. I do not involve others. I have preserved the unity in the church, and I have also pleased God by showing patience.

I have asked God to show me what the answer is and I know God is involved in His church. The exciting part is that I am giving myself a chance to see how God is going to answer me. The answer may come that day, it may come the following week, it may take two years, but I have asked God the question and God will show me the answer. It may take a period of time.

One of the biggest mistakes that we can make is to think that God is no longer answering questions or that He is not involved intimately with His church. Remember the process: God the Father calls, gives the Spirit, gives the person to Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ gives the person to the church, and the pastor is to get the person ready for the Kingdom of God. God is intimately involved with His church.

If we have honestly and humbly asked God to help us to understand, we can trust Him to do it. Again the answer may come quickly or it may take time, but God will not fail you. He will give the answer.

Luke 21:19 By your patience possess your souls.

This is an important principle.

Many of us have had bad experiences with pastors in the past; some pastors have been autocratic, ordering us about, interfering with private lives. Is that how pastors should be? No, it is not. What should a minister be like?

I Peter 5:1-3 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

What was the apostle Paul like? Was he gentle and kind and loving?

I Thessalonians 3:8 For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

The apostle Paul said that we live. We are excited and we are thrilled. The apostle Paul gave up everything for the calling that he had. He gave up position, prestige; he lost

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everything. You can read that in Philippians 3:8.

He gave up everything he had because he pursued Jesus Christ as his goal. He says we live, if we stand fast in the Lord. That is what it is all about. That is the reward of the minister.

I Thessalonians 3:9-13 For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

I Thessalonians 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.

That is how a minister's attitude should be for the people that he pastors. You might also ask the question, who does the pastor work for? Does he work for the Church of the Great God? No, he does not. Who called him? Who is his boss? Jesus Christ. Therefore God's ministers should reflect Jesus Christ. God is love and God serves.

This gives you an idea of what God's ministry should be like, therefore God's ministry should reflect love and patience in preaching, counseling and even in correction as much as possible. But do we fall short sometimes? Yes, we are all human, and so we all have to strive to grow to the maturity and stature of Jesus Christ.

We have looked at the four ways that God teaches us. We found that He has used His Holy Spirit to draw us and to lead and to guide to inspire and to move us in living and growing in righteousness. That is one way that God teaches us.

He speaks to us through the Bible, and He has given it to us to study diligently, work that shows us how to change our lives, to make the changes that will give us happiness and prepare us for the Kingdom of God. It shows how God's purpose is for all of mankind, and for us as well, and it shows the history of His people: their failures that warn us, and their courage, and their wonderful deeds that inspire us, like those in Hebrews 11.

He has made the awesome creation. I think that many times we do not think about the world we live in, that this was put here as a classroom, as a school, as a place to house us to develop godly character. He has made this awesome creation for us to learn from by seeing the mind of God at work and the order and intricacies of what has been created, and we also realize that this world is the workshop that God has placed us in to develop godly character as we go through life.

Finally, He has given us His ministry to guide and to teach us, to help us to become what God the Father and Jesus Christ intended us to be; that we will become the very family of God, able to serve and to rule as priests and kings in justice and in love. You see that is what it is all about. That is what the four methods of teaching are here for. I hope we appreciate these.

All four of these methods of teaching combined were designed for our spiritual understanding, growth, and character. Be thankful that God has provided this wonderful instruction for us.