



Ministerial Internship Program

Sanctifying the Mind

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Integrity in ministerial development and education is a missional concern. It is not an issue of competence, although it can become so. It is primarily an issue of credibility. In writing about the “fine work” of the *episkopos* (bishop, overseer), among other qualifications Paul insists that a leader in the church “must have a good reputation with those outside the church” (1 Timothy 3:7). The Greek word translated as reputation is *marturia*, that is, witness and/or testimony. In other words, the Christian leader must be a credible witness in the public square; the Christian leader must bear a credible testimony in the court of public opinion. If Christian leaders are to offer a credible presentation of the gospel to an unbelieving and cynical world, then Christian leaders must have credible credentials.

Throughout the nations of the world religious educational institutions are being challenged by national governments to embrace higher accreditation standards. Those institutions that resist are being relegated to insignificance, or they are being closed. In the USA, the church needs to send missionaries into the prisons, military, public schools, universities, hospitals, business, and government. In each one of these spheres the proper academic credential means credibility. Most Pentecostal churches have little or no presence among universities, a great field of harvest for reaching the young men and women of the world, because our ministers cannot function in that environment. If Pentecostal churches are serious about going into all the world, then Pentecostal churches (and ministers) must have a credible testimony and credible credentials that are acknowledged and respected by those in the world.

It should be noted that not all Pentecostals have been anti-intellectual. Early leaders of the Church of God encouraged ministers to be formally educated. The first General Overseer, A. J. Tomlinson, issued the first call for ministerial training in the Church of God. He declared, “There are some erroneous things creeping in occasionally that shows more plainly all the time that we need a Bible Training School, where our younger and inexperienced ministers can receive special instruction to enable them to rightly divide the word of truth” (*Church of God Evangel*, July 14, 1917). General Overseer F. J. Lee understood the passion of Pentecostals preachers to go into the harvest, but enjoined, “Study! Study! Beloved brethren, we can’t afford to be in ignorance any longer... Go ye, but wait...” (*Church of God Evangel*, April 23, 1921). A later General Overseer, the Reverend John C. Jernigan wrote, “There are many people who do not believe in going to school to study for the ministry. They say, “Open your mouth and let the Lord fill it.” ...I notice, however, that a good many of these people who depend altogether on the Lord to fill their mouths, generally tell the same old thing over and over. If the Lord were filling their mouths all the time, He would sometimes put new things in their mouths.” He continued, “I believe it is God’s plan to have a Bible School where a teacher can instruct and help young men and women in their preparation for the work of the Lord (*Church of God Evangel*, August 5, 1922).

Sanctifying the Mind

The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17) has poisoned the human mind. Even as humans are capable of astounding scientific discovery and ingenious feats of engineering, darkness clouds the mind and evil is an ever present reality. Reflecting upon the human condition, the Apostle John declared that humans “loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Jesus Christ is the Light that seeks to enlighten the human mind (John 1:9). However, as humanity rejects the light of Christ, their minds are darkened. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...” (Romans 1:21-22). So, when we speak of the salvation of humankind through the person of Christ, we must acknowledge that salvation includes the regeneration of the human mind.

In fact, the Apostle Paul expressed deep concern for the state of the human mind. Humans have “a depraved mind” (Romans 1:28; Colossians 1:21; Titus 1:15). The mind of the flesh is “hostile towards God” and the result is death; “but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:5-7). The mind must be transformed and renewed so that we can discern the will of God (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23). We are to “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5 NRSV). Just as Paul encouraged believers to sanctify their bodies (Romans 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3), he also encouraged the sanctification of the mind. The sanctification of the mind is the work of the Holy Spirit as the believer engages in prayer and the study of the word of God (John 14:26; 1 Timothy 4:5). A mind that is sanctified by the Holy Spirit will be informed and disciplined so that the sanctified disciple may be engaged in the mission of God (2 Timothy 2:15). In other words, Pentecostal believers must embrace the concept of *the anointed mind* – thinking in the Spirit.

The ancient prophets of Israel lamented the ignorance of God’s people. Isaiah declared, “Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge...” (Isaiah 5:13). As Western culture descends into the abyss of secular atheism, the church will find itself exiled because we have failed to hold to our theological traditions (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). Hosea cried out, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). These words should haunt every minister who resists formal training. We are now facing a biblically illiterate generation. Why? We have embraced a model of ministerial development that has been woefully inadequate to face the challenge of the twenty-first century. Jerald Daffe, professor of pastoral ministries at Lee University, has written that “it

is vital for believers to have answers for legitimate questions... When we aren't ready to give answers, more and more people in our emerging culture are getting the impression that Christians aren't too smart..." (*Crosses, Coffee, Couches, and Community*, 2013). We proclaim deep concern that this generation is forsaking the faith, but we are unwilling to be intellectually prepared for the challenge of engaging them. The young people of this generation are smart and if we are going to reach them we must offer intelligent and informed answers to their questions. Malachi reminds us of the purpose of the divine call: "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7).

The first article of the Church of God Declaration of Faith states that we believe "In the verbal inspiration of the Bible." Pentecostals traditionally hold to a high view of inspiration of Scripture, but a low view of formal study especially in regards to training credentialed clergy. Pentecostalism has been accused as being anti-intellectual, with good reason. Pentecostals have been suspicious of educated preachers. In a recent General Assembly of the Church of God one speaker passionately declared that educated preachers were "educated idiots." Even though most in attendance would not repeat those words, they share his sentiments as is demonstrated by their lack of formal study. It is ironic that even as Pentecostals tend to be suspicious of formal education, they nonetheless embrace fraudulent degrees and titles. Non-accredited degrees and diploma-mill certificates abound in many Pentecostal circles. Within the church we respectfully refer to each other as Reverend, Bishop, Apostle, Prophet, and Doctor. Even though we have resisted formal education we crave respectability and feign credibility. As it relates to ministerial development we have become the very thing we protest. In the words of Paul, we are "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these" (2 Timothy 3:5). In other words we hold to the form – the title; but we have resisted the very discipline of serious study that forms and sanctifies.

In the School of Christ

When the Peter and John were confronted by their well-educated and trained Jewish opponents they were thought to be "uneducated and untrained men" (Acts 4:13). Many Pentecostals have utilized this text to insist that formal education is unnecessary. While it is true that the confidence of Peter and John was due to the power of the Holy Spirit; it is not true that they were "uneducated and untrained." In fact, their opponents recognized them as "having been with Jesus." The Greek word for disciple is *mathētēs* and refers to one who is a student and "consistently implies an intellectual process that always has external effects and involves a conscious or unconscious intellectual initiative" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* s.v. manthánō, mathētēs). The young Saul of Tarsus was a student of the renowned Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Likewise, Peter and John had been a

disciple, a student of the Rabbi Jesus. These ancient Jewish schools – *bēt hammiḏrāš* – were not informal associations, but formal relationships, houses of instruction that included tuition, a specified curriculum and learning objectives (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* s.v education). As a young man, Jesus most likely had attended a *bēt hammiḏrāš*. Luke’s gospel tells us that a twelve year old Jesus sat “in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.” In fact, Luke’s point is not Jesus’ youthful age for in the ancient world twelve was the age of adult responsibility. Luke’s point is that Jesus was a brilliant student (Luke 2:46-47).

Peter and John were not “uneducated and untrained” as the Pharisees had assumed. Like most young Jewish men they had likely attended a *bēt hammiḏrāš* and were educated in the essentials of Jewish law and tradition. Also, Peter and John (and other disciples) were literate in a world of illiteracy. The fact that they could write demonstrates that they were of the educated class. After responding to the call of Jesus, they were educated by the master teacher of the Law. When Jesus began his ministry, it is likely that he adopted the Jewish *bēt hammiḏrāš* as the model of instruction for his disciples. The *bēt hammiḏrāš* was the model of instruction for new converts, and novice ministers in the apostolic church.

A Model of Ministry for Exiles

Christians are aliens and strangers in this present age (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13). As society continues to move into post-modernism, leaving a Christian culture behind and embracing a secular culture, Christians in the Western world will find themselves even more alienated. Even so, we are called to be witnesses to the Gospel, ambassadors of Jesus Christ. The great challenge is how do we fulfill the call of God in a strange land? A model for such ministry is found in Daniel. Daniel and his colleagues were refugees of war, exiled from the land of the covenant. Because of their apparent gifts – “showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge” – they were chosen to serve the court of the king of Babylon. In preparation to serve they were educated for three years in the literature and language of the Babylonian empire (Daniel 1:4). They were even given Babylonian names (Daniel 1:7).

But Daniel and his friends never forgot who they were – a people in covenant with Yahweh. Daniel sought permission to maintain his Jewish diet and demonstrated great humility. The Hebrews were granted favor and compassion by the Babylonians. Even as they lived and served in Babylon, Daniel and his friends were committed to their covenant with Yahweh. They would not be defiled by Babylonian culture, nor would they bow before Babylonian gods (Daniel 1:8; 3:18). For the duration of the exile, Daniel served three Babylonian kings and one Persian king; but he never ceased to be an ambassador of Yahweh. But the story doesn’t end there. Centuries later Magi from the East (Persia)

followed a star in search of the Christchild. How did Persian Magi come to anticipate the birth of a Jewish messiah/king? Because of witness left by an earlier Magi – Daniel.

Too many pastors are woefully unprepared for ministry in the 21st century and many churches are bordering on irrelevance. An entire generation will be lost because ministers cannot adequately explain the relevance of the Faith to their lives and culture. Too many are reading commentaries written in the 19th century, singing the songs of the 20th century, and offering answers to questions that no one is asking. Many ministers are affirming the faith of the faithful, but not challenging unbelievers to believe. If we are going to do ministry in this post-modern world; then we must be willing to wrestle with the difficult questions that are being posed by this generation – questions about human sexuality, religious pluralism, and scientific discovery. We can no longer simply proclaim, “Because the Bible says so.” This generation does not assume the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures. Just as the early Christians prevailed by offering an informed apologetic (an explanation of the Faith), post-modern pastors must be well informed so that our explanation of the Faith is challenging and compelling while holding to the historic Faith. Like it or not, in our world education matters. Formal education opens doors of opportunity in this post-modern world.

Jesus proclaimed that the most important of all commandments is “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, *and with all your mind*” (Matthew 22:37). God must be known. The mysteries of God must be proclaimed. We must do more than memorize scripture and prepare sermons. We must develop a theological imagination, a way of thinking about the Gospel that inspires and provokes people to believe. The antagonists of the Christian faith are highly educated in the secular universities. If we are to straightforwardly meet the challenge they present the soldiers of the cross must have the best trained minds.

If I’ve got the Spirit, Why Do I Need Training?

This is a common question among Pentecostals. In fact, many Pentecostals will gladly acclaim an inspired and gifted preacher who falls short on knowledge of the Word. This may sound somewhat patronizing, but it may be that Pentecostals would prefer to *feel* the Word, rather than *think* about the Word. The preached Word of God should provoke a range of emotional responses from lamentation to rejoicing. But, the authenticity of the emotional responses should correspond to the veracity of the preached word.

There are many Pentecostal ministers who have successfully built a following through the power of *charisma*. They are gifted by the Holy Spirit with a variety of gifts. They are gifted at presenting the milk of the Word, but because they are limited in their

theological training they cannot serve the meat of the Word and they are unable to develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ. The church at Corinth is an example. The Corinthians abounded in spiritual gifts, but were profoundly immature (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Think about that for a minute... it's possible for a church to be filled with the Spirit, but not growing in grace. How? Because they resist the meat of the Word, they oppose sound teaching.

Apollos was a successful leader of the church at Ephesus. He was “an eloquent man... mighty in the Scriptures... fervent in Spirit... teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus” (Acts 18:24-25). However, in spite of his gifts and success he was lacking in theological understanding. He had taught accurately about Jesus, but had failed to teach his disciples about the Spirit. When Paul preached in Ephesus, he asked, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). Because of his theological training, Paul was able to preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27 ESV). Because Apollos had never heard of Pentecost, he could not teach his church about the fullness of the Spirit. A pastor can't teach what a pastor doesn't know!

There are many Pentecostal pastors who are sincere, eloquent, and fervent in Spirit. But, like Apollos, they lack theological knowledge and they can't preach what they don't know. When Priscilla and Aquila came to Ephesus and heard Apollos preach they recognized his gifts and discerned his lack of training. So, “they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).

The church needs young men and women, like Apollos, with fire in their hearts and willing for their heads to be filled with the knowledge of the Word of God. The call to pastor is the call to teach the Word of God. The call to pastor is the call to life-long learning. Pastors should pursue theological education for the sake of the mission of God.

The Spirit has gifted the church with “apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists.” The Spirit teaches through Spirit-filled teachers. The church needs men and women like Priscilla and Aquila, learned elders of the church willing to discern the spiritual gifts in novice pastors and mentor them so that they may be equipped “for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Why do you need training? Because you're filled with the Spirit. Pastors need to be filled with the Spirit and the Word!

A Serious Task

Preaching is a serious task and preachers must be serious about the study of Scripture. Although most early Pentecostal preachers lacked higher education, many of them were self-educated and well read. They preached informed and inspired messages with such passion that hearers, under conviction, filled the altars with tears of repentance seeking the cure for their souls. The greatest Pentecostal preachers are serious exegetes, excellent expositors, and profound theologians. They preach with a prophetic zeal: “Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it” (Jeremiah 20:9). James wrote, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (3:1).

Paul charged Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15-16). Paul seems to be suggesting that some preachers of the gospel have been unprepared and ashamed because they were not diligent in their study. In fact, the mission of the apostolic church has suffered from unapproved workmen – false teachers – who have presented a false gospel (2 Corinthians 11:13; Philippians 3:2). Not all false teachers are evil; some are simply ignorant, or misinformed. But willful ignorance can result in sinfulness (Romans 1:21-22; Ephesians 4:17-18). The “word of truth” must be accurately taught, literally “cut straight.” Paul is using a metaphor that speaks to the surveying and construction of a road. In the ancient Roman world, only expert engineers would be assigned such a task. The engineer would have served as an apprentice for many years before being approved. The preacher’s task is even more challenging because the preacher must be an expert of the “word of truth” and be approved by God. In order to accurately teach the “word of truth” the teacher must understand the language, genre, history, and culture of the Bible. This cannot be discerned from a straightforward reading of the text.

The call to preach is a solemn charge because sinners need to be saved, believers need to be instructed in sound doctrine and godly living, marriages need to be restored, young adults need encouragement in sanctifying their bodies (sexual morality), and all believers need to be equipped for the mission of God. The call to preach is a solemn charge because Jesus is coming to judge the living and the dead, and he will begin with preachers and teachers (Matthew 7:15-23).