

Who is Equipping the Saints to do the Work of the Ministry?

A pastor recently told me that he tried for two years to get the members of his church engaged in evangelism and became extremely depressed because all his efforts to spur them on failed. Then he told me that he had not engaged in purposeful evangelism for several years. I told him that he should not expect the members to do something that he is not doing himself.

He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11 & 12).

Clearly, the leaders of churches have a responsibility to equip the members for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. Why is it that in most churches, the members are not being equipped to do their part in fulfilling the Great Mission that Jesus gave to us? It would “appear” that most of those in leadership positions are failing to do their job. (I use the word “appear” because it is judgment based merely on appearance and this judgment may be completely inaccurate.) I thank God for organizations that provide training for Christians who want to learn how to evangelize according to the biblical pattern. But in reality, they would not have to exist if church leaders would simply do their job. Church leaders should be equipping the members to proclaim the gospel to the “unchurched.” By unchurched, I mean those people who normally do not come to church. They are out in the community, not in church.

What should such equipping look like? In order for leaders to train their members to proclaim the gospel to the unchurched, they must first know how to do it themselves. They must have experience doing it and they must be doing it consistently and as a way of life. If they do not proclaim the gospel to the unchurched or do it only sporadically, then they really are not in a position to equip others. True leadership is leading by example. If a leader attempts to train others to do something he himself does not do, he becomes a hypocrite.

If the saints are going to be equipped to fulfill their role in the Great Mission of the church, leaders must step up to the plate and begin fulfilling their responsibility to GO and make disciples. They must not deceive themselves into thinking that their role does not include proclaiming the gospel to those outside the church. Unless and until they do so, they will not be leading by example and therefore not be in a position to fulfill their responsibility to equip the members to do this all important task Jesus gave to us. Put another way, many pastors must repent and begin doing their job to equip the saints to do the all important work of evangelism.

Lastly, I wish to say that I do not feel comfortable or happy writing an article of this nature. By doing so, I am putting myself in a dangerous position. (See Galatians 6:1.) But I am convinced that the Christians living in the 21st century U.S. are suffering and the kingdom of God is not being advanced as it should because of a lack of engagement in the Great Mission. If leaders who are currently not engaged in making disciples (among the unchurched) repent and begin doing so, they will be made fat spiritually and their flocks will begin to flourish with fruitful lives.

The next time I saw the pastor mentioned in the beginning of this article, he told me that he had been engaged in face to face evangelism and hopes it becomes a regular part of his spiritual diet. He was all excited and told me about one of his recent gospel conversations. I think the fire is lit in him and this type of fire spreads to others. I pray that more and more pastors get the opportunity to experience what he is now experiencing.