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The ADC Disciple

Anabaptist Disciples of Christ is an affiliation of Conservative Anabaptist churches seeking likeminded fellowship, instruction, and accountability in church administration and congregational life in the Biblical pattern of the Apostolic church.

Your Ministry Will Take a Lifetime

My Counsel for Younger Men

by Ray Ortlund

Some of us can read a text like "The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day" (Proverbs 4:18) and wonder why our light still feels so dim.

The verse teaches that if you are walking with the Lord, your life is dawning more and more with "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). The passing years of his care are making you more compelling, more relevant, more fruitful — not less. And someday soon your glory will blaze like the noonday sun, never to fade.

This article is for every young man who feels that his glory is taking too long to become obvious. This is for every young man in ministry who feels restless and eager and ambitious (with godly ambition) for more opportunities to make his mark for Christ. Yes, you have mixed motives. Who doesn't? But your desire to cut a wide swath of gospel harvest is of God.

He did not create you to be a zero. He created you in his image, as royalty, to advance his purposes in this world (Genesis 1:26). You are a man of destiny, and you feel it. So let's think about your life trajectory — what to expect, how to navigate it well. I offer my thoughts as an older man, who respects how you feel. Let me offer you three words of counsel, prompted by Scripture, for when your ministry seems to be growing too slowly.

Give Yourself Time

First, "Let them also be tested first" (1 Timothy 3:10). The apostle Paul required that of prospective deacons. But a young man being tested, giving him time to prove his readiness for leadership, is implicit in the requirements of an elder too. A future elder must be faithful in marriage, able to teach, manage his own household well, not a recent convert, and well thought of by outsiders (1 Timothy 3:1–7). No one gets there quickly or easily.

You might feel more ready than you really are. Maybe you've looked at an older Christian leader in action and thought, "I could do what he's doing — and maybe better." But what that man is doing is harder than it looks. When a senior leader is performing well and people are responding and the ministry is flourishing, the reality is this: Hidden deep within that man, nuanced understandings and finely-honed skills and mature disciplines are converging, moment by moment, to make him compelling.

All those inner strengths and assets of his were hard won over many years — and through some failures too. When a pastor, for example, makes the ministry look easy, you can be sure of one thing: it isn't. He was tested first. He is being tested now. Even in a man's mature years, ministry is always extremely demanding. Joyful and satisfying, but demanding.

I am not exalting him or diminishing you. I am only saying that a man in his sixties, if he has walked humbly with God and striven to keep growing and growing, is a more profound man than he himself was in his thirties. How could it be otherwise? So, give yourself time. God is faithfully investing in you, more than you can see. He values you. He is preparing you for the final, climactic mission of your life and your death. Don't resent his maturing process along the way.

His plan, his timing, his methods are well suited to get you ready for the greatest moments of your life still out ahead. But if your pride can't stoop to being tested first, you are blocking the very future you long for. Humble yourself, be patient, go deep. And don't forget to enjoy it along the way. The Lord is with you and for you. Obviously, he isn't in any hurry. Why should you be?

Embrace His Power in Weakness

Second, "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Here is why this familiar verse is in the Bible. In our foolishness, we all want to be formidable, impressive, noteworthy, with super-powers to "wow" the world. But how can men like that preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1–5)? Only men with scars can preach a Savior with scars to sinners with scars. So, in addition to the many insights and skills God will impart to you, he also will wound you. A.W. Tozer wisely said, "It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply."

At some point in your life, God will injure you so extremely that the self-reliance you aren't even aware of, the self-reliance you've been navigating so consistently by that it feels natural and innocent, will collapse under the loss and anguish. You will start realizing, "Oh, so this is what it means to trust the Lord. I need him now with an urgency, a desperation, a seriousness of purpose deeper than ever before."

And then God will come through for you. And you will emerge from that suffering a deeper saint. You will be a better preacher and pastor and leader and counselor and teacher and friend, because you will be a better man — more like the wounded Christ himself.

But if you "succeed" early, and crowds of people are flocking to you, and the undiscerned cockiness you grew up with isn't

broken, you may be in danger. I have seen highly gifted young men crash and burn and lose years of fruitful ministry, or even leave the ministry altogether, because their platform exceeded their character.

Don't envy that "rising star." He might be more precarious than he appears. You just stay low before the Lord. Humbly receive the buffetings, disappointments, and insults coming your way. Receive them "for the sake of Christ" (2 Corinthians 12:10). They are how his power will come to rest upon you (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Don't Grope at Your Destiny

Third, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me" (Psalm 138:8). You never have to get pushy, because the Lord has a purpose for you, and that purpose belongs to him. John Burroughs, the poet, was not a Christian. But his poem "Waiting" says a very Christian thing:

> Asleep, awake, by night or day,
> The friends I seek are seeking me,
> No wind can drive my bark astray
> Nor change the tide of destiny.

Because the Lord is committed to his purpose for you, the friends and the opportunities you seek are seeking you. They are on their way toward you this very moment. Believe it, and rejoice as God tells the story you were born for. The best way to get ready for your future is to walk humbly, fruitfully, and cheerfully with Christ right where you are. Through the years, he will give you a front-row seat for watching him fulfill his purpose for you.

Seek the Lowest Place

Francis Schaeffer, in his prophetic sermon "No Little People, No Little Places," warned us all,

"Jesus commands Christians to seek consciously the lowest room. All of us — pastors, teachers, professional religious workers and non-professional included — are tempted to say, "I will take the larger place, because it will give me more influence for Jesus Christ." Both individual Christians and Christian organizations fall prey to the temptation of rationalizing this way as we build bigger and bigger empires. But according to the Scripture this is backwards: We should consciously take the lowest place, unless the Lord himself extrudes us into a greater one."

Schaeffer went on to explain that, in a lower, less intense place of ministry, we face fewer distractions away from our own intimacy with God. And it is only in personal quietness before God that we can do anything that is truly spiritual in power. It is only as we remain quiet before him that we contribute to the real battle being fought in our generation.

Settle into the place where you are. Deeply accept your present moment. It is where Jesus is nearest to you. It is where his endless resources open up to you, moment by moment: "Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you!" (Psalm 31:19).

Used with permission. Ray Ortlund (@rayortlund) is president of Renewal Ministries and a council member of The Gospel Coalition. He founded Immanuel Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and now serves from Immanuel as a pastor to pastors.

ADC Church Profile —

Harmony Christian Church, located in Millington, Maryland, was founded in 1955 when five Amish families moved from Lancaster, Pennsylvania and joined with several families from Dover, Delaware. At that time, they were a part of the King Church before joining the Beachy Amish Fellowship. Their desire was to have a more spiritual, Biblical church.

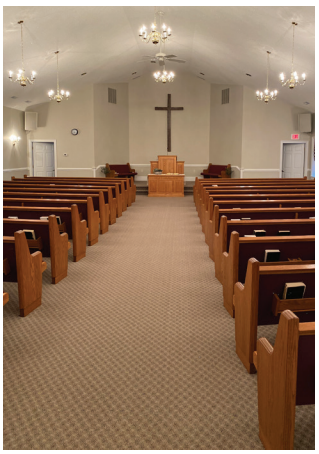
The current pastoral team consists of Steve Stoltzfus (Bishop), Tim Yoder, Mahlon Stoltzfus, and Kedrick Yoder. Currently, there are fifty-one members with attendance around eighty to eighty-five.

The church is located about eighty miles southeast of Lancaster, Pennsylvania on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and about fifty miles from the Atlantic Ocean. The area is very rural with a slightly rolling terrain. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries cut through the area as well. Local industries are farming and some manufacturing. Most of the men in the church are self-employed in industries like farming, construction, masonry, excavation, feed store, and logging.

A few men are involved in a Bible Study at a local prison while a few ladies are involved with a Pregnancy Center. There is a sewing circle once a month and an annual supper for local widows.

Interesting trivia: there are two sets of identical twins in the church: two brothers - age fifty - and two sisters - age one!

Thank you Pastors for giving us a "glimpse" of your church!



PASTOR SPOTLIGHT

Mike and Joy Yutzy of Sugarcreek, Ohio are serving at New Covenant Fellowship in Mt. Eaton, Ohio. Mike was ordained as a minister in the Bethel Fellowship Church in September 2013. They have five children – Michelle (24), Julissa (22), Will (19), Adrian (17), and Kayla (15). He is employed as a metal fabricator at Mast Farm Service.

Mike serves on the Blue Ridge International for Christ mission board and would recommend the Faithlife Study Bible app – "It's a pretty decent free smartphone app to start studying with anywhere, anytime."

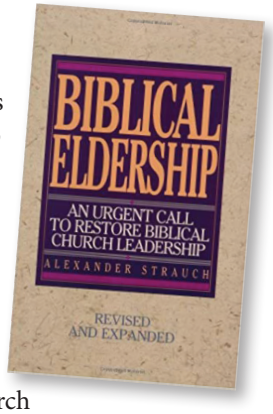
Mike reflects on his pastoral journey: "In reflecting over the past 6 years since I've been ordained, I can truly say it's been a blessing. No, it's not always been easy but it's drawn me closer to God. Being bivocational like most of us are puts some real strains on our time and resources, which in turn forces us to become more adept at managing both of these. I would like to share some tidbits that help me along my journey.

- Don't be overwhelmed by the big picture. i.e., the number of messages you'll be preaching in the next year, etc. You can only live one moment at a time and God will give you grace for each moment.
- People - relationships are extremely important. I didn't use to enjoy people nearly as much as I do now. Do I truly serve in the best interests of the "sheep"?
- Personal time and family time are both very important. Am I keeping my priorities in order?
- At a minimum, participate annually in a Pastor or leadership training event.

Let's have a clear focus in mind so at the end of our journey here we can say like Paul – 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'" 2 Timothy 4:7

Thanks Mike and Joy for your service to the Church!

Book Review



The practice of calling church leaders from within the congregation is foreign to most bible-believing churches today. Yet this very concept is seen repeatedly in the New Testament when we pay attention to what is actually being said.

Alexander Strauch calls churches to embrace the biblical pattern for church leadership in his book Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership (337 pages). He makes a comprehensive biblical examination of the role and function of elders (also known as pastors & bishops).

This book is divided into four parts.

Part One focuses on biblical eldership and what that means. He elaborates on five primary features of eldership that are important and distinguishing characteristics present in biblical church leadership: pastoral leadership, shared leadership (plural ministry), male leadership, qualified leadership, and servant leadership. These five principles are absolutely essential to biblical church leadership. These chapters are practical and eye-opening. They revealed truths about my own misconceptions and biases about church leadership in a refreshing way. These are the very principles being attacked today by both the secular society as well as from within the so-called Christian community.

Part Two is a defense of a Bible-based leadership structure. Generally, the congregation gives little thought about an appropriate leadership structure of the church and may even consider it unimportant. However, the structure of the church influences how people think and act within the church. I don't believe it is a coincidence that "the New Testament offers more instruction regarding elders than on other important church subjects as the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, baptism, or spiritual gifts" (page 103).

Part Three -- about half of the book -- is an in-depth exposition (and some word studies) of all the scripture texts related to biblical church eldership from the book of Acts, the pastoral epistles, and throughout the New Testament.

Part Four gives some practical insights on the appointment of elders and the relationship between the congregation and the elders.

This is a book I would highly recommend for any church leader – and would encourage ministry teams to read parts one and two and then discuss it collectively. As with any book, there are elements in which we may disagree. At the same time, I believe the author gives a biblical assessment of an important and neglected subject. I believe there is much to learn and contemplate about how we intentionally develop leaders in our churches in an ongoing manner… and perhaps rethink our typical ordination process.

In addition to the book, the website www.biblicaleldership.com has many useful and free resources available. These include more than 100 short videos (about 15 minutes each) in the section on Effectiveness.

Amazon link to the book: https://www.amazon.com/Biblical-Eldership-Urgent-Restore-Leadership/dp/0936083115.

- Contributed by Dave Nisly, Catlett, Virginia
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Why Houston?

"Why Houston?" This is a question I have heard many times over the past year. And a question that deserves an answer, since it was being asked of a group of "Holmes Countians" who decided to leave the rolling hills of Amish Country and move to the flat, sprawling metropolis of Houston, TX to establish an urban church plant. I'll attempt to answer that question as I share our vision for building the Kingdom of God in Houston. It's intriguing how God moves and orders our lives in ways that direct us toward His goals, even when at the moment, we may fail to see the path He has placed us on.

Last summer, June 2019, our group of three families and one single sister made the move from Ohio to Houston. Most of us had felt God leading us toward urban ministry for quite some time. So several years ago when our church, Crosspointe Mennonite in Baltic, OH, began discussing the possibility of a future church plant, a group of us who felt a call for an urban church plant presented our vision to the pastors, who gave us their blessing. We then began earnestly seeking God for direction in choosing a city. Before I explain how and why we chose Houston, TX of all places, let me back up a bit and share how God was leading us in the months prior to making that decision.

God had been leading us on a journey of re-examining the call Jesus gave to not only His followers as individuals, but also to His bride, the Church. Jesus came to this earth proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Jesus was establishing a Kingdom, over which He would be King, and this Kingdom would be expressed through His Church. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God on earth is essentially an offensive move to retake territory from the enemy, but we have given a defensive connotation to it. His call to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city on a hill all paint a picture of the citizens of the Kingdom of God attacking the kingdom of this world and bringing true life and light into Satan's darkness. Jesus' confident proclamation that his church will storm the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18) again portrays this offensive battle. The apostle Paul repeatedly urges Timothy to offensively engage the enemy - "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy...wage the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). Also, "share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:3). Just like a military soldier is commanded to engage the enemy on the front lines, Paul's appeal is to have the same military resoluteness as we engage the enemy on the front lines in the battle for eternal souls. Growing up in a quiet community, shielded from much of this world's darkness, we asked ourselves, "Is this quiet, defensive posture actually God's plan for His Bride the Church? Is this really what Jesus meant when he called us to be a 'city on a hill?' Would Jesus plant his churches only in quiet rural areas, and retreat to a largely defensive position? Or would he engage the enemy head-on in the darkness of the cities?"

What is the offensive mandate given to the citizens of the Kingdom of God? The very first command Jesus gave to his disciples was "follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Jesus' very last command to his disciples was "….go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This begs the question: what is the mission of our churches today? Is the mission of our churches to make disciples? If so, are we being successful? Is the Church storming the gates of hell? Are our churches gaining ground against the kingdom of this world? Or are we content if we "maintain" our churches, as long as we only drift slowly toward the world? Recognizing that the Kingdom of God is a present reality where Jesus is King, and that our church is essentially to be an embassy of this Kingdom here on earth gives a renewed purpose and mission to the church that, at its core, is an offensive mission. This also gives renewed purpose for the church to be a close community of Jesus-followers who intentionally disciple each other for the express purpose of shining a pure light into the darkness around them.

"Am I a part of 'bringing heaven to earth?'"

Jesus taught us to pray for His kingdom to come to earth and for the Father's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. When we pray like this it begs the question, "Am I a part of 'bringing heaven to earth?'" Are my interests, my pursuits, and my dreams in line with the interests of heaven? Do the things that bring me pleasure here on earth also bring pleasure to my Father in Heaven? If the answer is no, why am I following after these things? Why am I wasting my life pursing them? Verses like Luke 14:27, 33–"Whoever

does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple….So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" – demand the questions, "Have I died to my own self, my pursuits, and my ambitions? Am I with singular focus following Jesus? Or am I attempting to gain ground against the kingdom of this world while at the same time sharing the pursuits, goals, lifestyles, and pleasures that this world offers? Has the 'American Dream' become the 'Christian's Dream?' Does 'I am king' or 'Jesus is King' more accurately portray the way I live my life? Is how I live, where I live, and the way I live singularly and intentionally being lived to bring the message of 'Jesus is King' to this world? Is this my life's ultimate pursuit?"

As we as a group looked as these, and other questions, we had to admit that much of our lives were lived primarily for ourselves and that ultimately there were far too many areas of life where "I was king" instead of Jesus. I am so thankful for the patience and grace of God and for His Spirit that can actually change our hearts and make us desire the things He desires. Seeing that the heart of God is to spread the good news that Jesus is King into the darkness of this world, and that God has entrusted His followers with His message of redemption - "….entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20) – we began seeking God's direction in choosing a city.

Our area here in Houston is covered with mosques, temples, and every sort of worship building.

As we began discussing possible locations for this church plant, two of our main criteria were 1) a city with an ethnically diverse population and 2) the financial affordability of the city. After looking at several options we felt God calling us to Houston, TX which fits all of our criteria. Houston is one of the largest and most diverse cities in the United States. It is a gateway city that welcomes a large amount of immigrants. The opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with religions from all over the world is available and exciting.

As a church, our mission is simple: "to be a Christian church that proclaims the Kingdom of God, making disciples who love and obey King Jesus." Our church services are held in our homes and our vision is that when our church grows we will divide and meet in separate homes instead of acquiring a large building for the entire group. Our goal is for our church to resemble a family. We believe the size of our groups will directly impact our ability to disciple each other effectively.

In the short amount of time we have been here, it has been exciting to see the opportunities that surround us. Our closest interaction has been with Hindus and Muslims, some of whom have become our dear friends. Having the privilege of showing the love of Jesus, especially as a church body, to these friends has brought into sharp focus John 13:34-35 – "just as I have loved you, you are also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." In many ways we are still settling into life here in Houston. Learning how to homeschool, starting businesses, and learning all the ins and outs of a new area has had its challenges, but through it all God has been very faithful.

Our area here in Houston is covered with mosques, temples, and every sort of worship building. We covet your prayers as we continue to seek God as to how we can bring His true light into this world's deceptive darkness. Our prayer is that we could be faithful "messengers of reconciliation" for our loving God, and that we could be faithful citizens of the Kingdom of God by bringing a message of life, purpose, and hope to those in bondage to the kingdom of this world.

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