

DIVINE ORDER IN THE CITYWIDE CHURCH

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Managing Editor/Head of Publications: Valentina Hubert
Assistant Editor: Arthi Rachel Isaiah
Proofreading: Amy Raichur
Cover and Graphics Design: Karuna Jerome, byFaith Designz

Contact Information:

All Peoples Church
370, 11th Cross, 2nd Block
R. T. Nagar, Bangalore 560 032
Karnataka, INDIA

Phone: +91-80-2354 4328
Email: contact@apcwo.org
Website: www.apcwo.org

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version.

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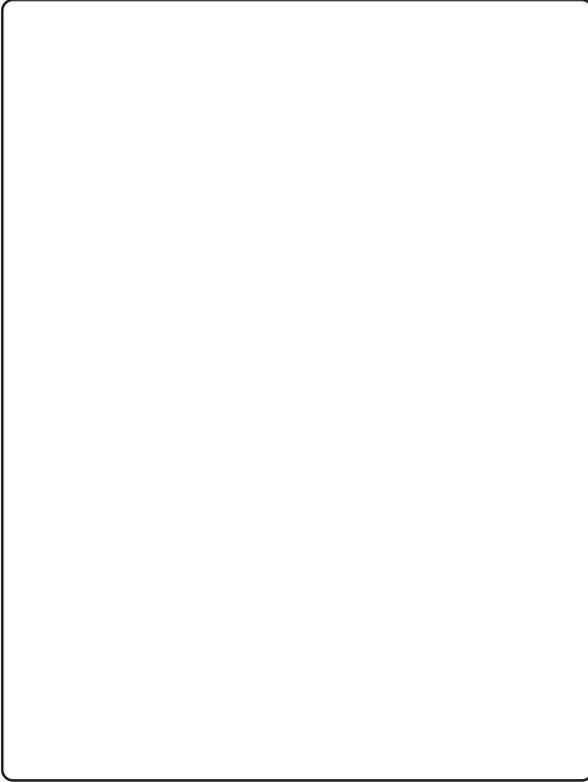
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INTRODUCTION



Having started preaching at the age of 12 and being full of zeal but not having much wisdom, I did several things in my early days of ministry that were not essentially in divine order. We can learn a lot from our mistakes and this was one of the ways by which I learnt how to conduct myself as a Christian and as a minister of God. I am personally guilty of violating several things that I share in this book, at some point in the early days of ministry. Each mistake I made taught me valuable lessons. I can still remember some of the valuable correction I received from my own dear wife Amy, in the initial years. After each mistake, I had to repent, pick myself up, wise up and move on.

Having continued in ministry now for about 25 years, one is sure to run into a lot of things. Ministering in various parts of India, the USA, and a few other countries like Albania, Ecuador, Malaysia, Indonesia and Fiji, I have had the opportunity to observe, experience and hear firsthand how churches, ministers and believers conduct themselves in different places. In almost all these places, we have observed several things among ministers, churches, ministries and believers that have revealed a lack of understanding of divine order. We, as ministers of God and believers, often say and do things that are not in divine order, inappropriate and in bad taste. Perhaps, if we come to an understanding of divine order in the Church, we would not be so callous about the way we conduct ourselves as ministers and believers.

We believe that if God's people learn to walk in divine order, we will have less strife, division and competition among churches, ministers, ministries and believers. Hence, this book is produced with much concern and a sincere desire to see divine order

established among ministers, churches and believers in our cities, communities and local geographical regions. In this book, we discuss issues from the perspective of the citywide Church. But the same things hold good for a community, town or any region, where churches, ministers, ministries and believers coexist and are collaborating. The guidelines presented in this book come from one single basis—to have all things done decently and in order.

We realize that there are several wonderful men and women of God who have many more years of ministerial experience than we do. They are definitely more qualified to address the issues we have presented here. It is with due respect and honor to such ministers of God that we release this work. Our desire is to see the citywide Church and the church in any community, be the kind of Church that Jesus wants it to be so that Jesus will be glorified in all things!

The army of the LORD is characterized by those who keep rank and march in order.

They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down (Joel 2:7,8).

The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His Word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

Divine order increases our effectiveness.

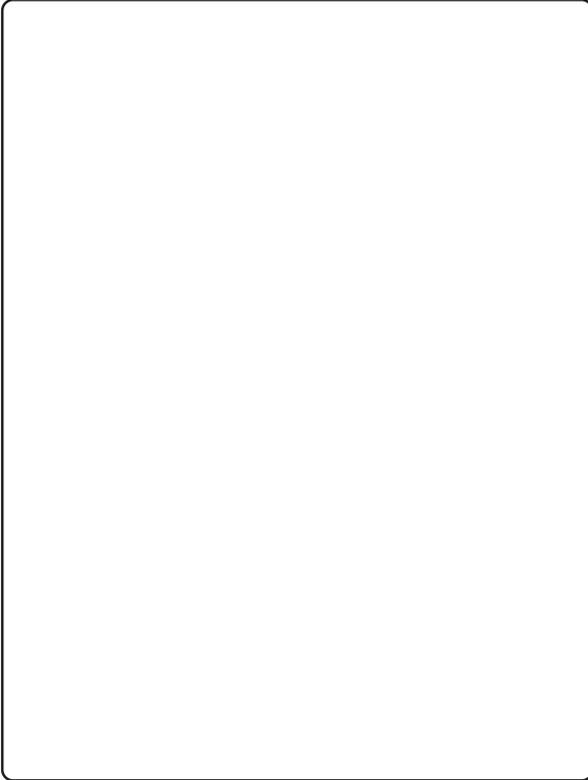
The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks (Proverbs 30:27).

Whenever we share our experiences, we choose not to disclose names of individuals or churches since our purpose is not to disparage anyone's reputation. Our purpose is to instruct, using these as examples, so that Scriptural truth can be made relevant to daily life.

If God's people learn to walk in divine order, we will have less strife, division and competition among churches, ministers, ministries and believers.

1

THE CITYWIDE CHURCH AND LOCAL CHURCHES



A View of the Citywide Church from the Throne Room

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and "what you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches (Revelation 1:10–20).

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands' (Revelation 2:1).

The Lord Jesus is in the midst of the local churches and walks among the churches. The seven stars signifying the "angels of the seven churches" are the pastors of these churches. The Greek word for 'angels' is *'angelos'* which means "a messenger; especially an angel; by implication a pastor." In several other places in the New Testament, the same word is translated as 'messenger,' referring to

human messengers (Luke 7:24; 9:52; James 2:25). Hence, we can state confidently that the “seven stars” that “are the angels of the seven churches” are indeed the pastors of the local churches to whom messages were to be communicated.

The Lord Jesus holds the pastors of the local churches in His right hand. The pastors of local churches are divinely protected and are agents of Christ on earth.

When we think about a city (which is essentially a large geographical region or area), we know that there are several local churches. Every local church that the Lord Jesus has raised up in the city is like one of those golden lampstands before Him. Every pastor whom the Lord Jesus has appointed in these local churches is like one of those stars in His right hand. The Lord Jesus is the supreme Overseer of the local churches as He walks in the midst of the lampstands. He holds the pastor of each church accountable for the life, work and ministry of that particular church (Revelation 2 and 3).

Christ has only one Body in the city. The Church in the city is essentially one Church, in that all believers belong to the same Church—the Body of Christ. We refer to this one Body and one Church in the city as the citywide Church. Although there is only one citywide Church, Christ has Himself raised up many golden lampstands (local churches) and appointed many stars (local church pastors) within the city to shepherd these local churches. Apostle Paul refers to local churches as “the churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16). All Christ-appointed churches belong to Christ.

Among these, Christ has also raised up many ministry gifts (apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists) and ministries that serve within local churches or minister to the Body of Christ at large or reach out to the unsaved world.

Rightly discerning the Body of Christ in the city is important. There should be a balance in viewing the Church in the city as One Church and One Body and at the same time viewing it as several Christ-appointed local churches with Christ-appointed pastors, various ministry gifts and ministries working together. An improper understanding and application of any one aspect could lead to improper conduct leading to harmful effects.

Understanding Divine Order

Christ desires divine order among ministers, believers and local churches so that they can function cohesively as one Body in the city.

Not too many ministers, pastors, believers and local churches understand divine order. Hence, each of them does whatever they please and think is right, and knowingly or inadvertently, violate divine order. This has resulted in division, strife and hurt in the citywide Church. This ultimately leaves the citywide Church too weak and ineffective to impact the city for Jesus.

There are several places in the New Testament, where we see reference being made to divine order in a local church or among local churches.

But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all churches (1 Corinthians 7:17).

The word “ordain” comes from the Greek word *‘diatasso’* which according to the Strong’s Dictionary means “to arrange thoroughly, that is, (specifically) institute, prescribe, appoint, command, give, (set in) order, ordain.” This reveals the Lord’s desire as expressed through Apostle Paul that things need to be arranged thoroughly and set in order in all of Christ’s churches. Things cannot be left to each person’s whim and fancy where everyone does what they think is right.

But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come (1 Corinthians 11:34).

Once again, in 1 Corinthians 11:34, Paul uses the same Greek word *‘diatasso’* expressing his intent to set things in order within the church at Corinth.

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33).

While the context of this verse is the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit, particularly that of tongues and prophecy, this verse makes a general statement of truth about our God. Confusion, disorder, chaos and lawlessness do not originate from God. These are not characteristics of God or the things He does. Hence, it is safe to state that confusion, disorder and lawlessness are neither acceptable in the local church nor in the citywide Church.

The word “peace” comes from the Greek word ‘*eirene*’ which means “(to join); peace (literally or figuratively); by implication prosperity: - one, peace, quietness, rest, set at one again.” Things have to be properly joined together, should be one and at harmony in all churches of the saints.

[Note: Keeping in line with the context of 1 Corinthians 14, we need to ensure that the use of tongues and prophecy also follow the divine order set forth in that chapter. One ‘disorder’ that seems to be prevalent these days is in forcing people to speak in tongues. Keep in mind that diverse tongues are a gift of the Spirit—a supernatural impartation of the Holy Spirit. It is not a language or ability to make strange sounds that one learns from someone else. So, let people receive by faith the wonderful gift of the Spirit without someone else forcing their words or sounds into them!]

Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

While continuing in the same context, Apostle Paul commands that all things that take place in church-life be done decently (honestly, courteously, considerately) and in order.

In this verse, a different Greek word is used for “order.” The word ‘*taxis*’ is used which means “regular arrangement, that is (in time) fixed succession (of rank or character), official dignity: - order”. Therefore, in the local church and by extension in the citywide Church, there has to be order in terms of:

- Arrangement—the way things are done.
- Time—the sequence in which things are done.

- Respecting post, rank or position—honoring those in authority and leadership.
- Conducting things with dignity.

For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ (Colossians 2:5).

In writing to the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse” (Colossians 1:2), Paul rejoices with them for the order (Gr. *taxis*) that they have established and are maintaining among themselves. Therefore, having order is a good thing!

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you (Titus 1:5)

Titus was made responsible for the churches in several cities. Apostle Paul was now instructing him to set those things that were lacking or things that were missing or absent in order. The Greek word for “order” is *epidiorthoo* which simply means “to straighten further, that is, (figuratively) arrange additionally: - set in order.” So, Paul saw the need for things to be set in proper order or alignment, in the way Christ would have them set. It was not sufficient to have churches and groups of believers established in cities. Things had to be set in order and spiritual elders had to be appointed.

Hence, from the Scriptures we have considered above, we need to become very conscious that Christ desires His local churches, ministers and His people to walk in divine order.

Divine order implies that:

- There are boundaries that we should not cross.
- There is spiritual authority that we must respect.
- There is a proper way to do things.
- There is accountability that we must maintain.

When divine order is not followed by ministers and believers, this eventually results in strife, division and a pulling away of local churches, instead of them coming together. This ultimately weakens the citywide Church, for “if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mark 3:25). The citywide Church therefore remains powerless and cannot have a lasting impact on the city.

Proper Conduct in the House of God

These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:14,15).

We need to realize that there is a proper way to behave in the House of God, which is the church. In many places, we ministers and believers have not been taught proper behavior in the church.

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 (1 Corinthians 3:10).

Paul, as a wise architect or chief constructor, laid the foundation of many churches including the church at Corinth. He exhorted those who came after him, who were responsible for building the House of the Lord, to make sure that it was built

properly. This implies that there are right and wrong ways to build the House of the Lord. If a person is not careful and does not follow divine order, this person could be attempting to build incorrectly. We will then have a House that is not in order, dysfunctional and filled with division and strife.

Spiritual Connection Between Shepherd and Sheep

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

Being a pastor and being a member of a local church is more than merely preaching good messages and going to a place where one can be fed spiritually. The Holy Spirit is the One who sets pastors or spiritual overseers over people. As believers who are part of a local church, we have been entrusted to the care of the shepherd who has been set up by the Holy Spirit among us. So there is a spiritual connection set up between shepherd and sheep.

As pastors, we have been given a serious responsibility by the Spirit of God Himself to watch over those entrusted to us. Our responsibility includes feeding, nurturing, equipping, caring for, guarding and ministering to the sheep. As members of local churches, believers also have a God-appointed accountability and responsibility towards their shepherd whom the Holy Spirit has set in their midst. Believers need to learn submission to spiritual leadership and commitment to the local body where they have been placed for as long as God has appointed for them to be there.

It appears that many of us pastors and believers have not understood the importance of the relationship between shepherd and sheep, in the context of a local church. We do not realize that the Holy Spirit Himself is involved in the whole process of setting up this spiritual relationship and therefore we need to handle this relationship in a way that is honorable and pleasing to Him.

Complementing Not Competing

Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them (Romans 16:16,17).

Apostle Paul refers to local churches as “the churches of Christ.” All Christ-appointed churches belong to Christ. The churches of Christ are called to complement each other and not to compete with each other.

Each local church has a specific calling, a specific vision and its own special ‘flavor.’ Each local church is tailored to meet the needs of certain kinds of people and is geared towards revealing Christ in certain ways. Some churches may be involved heavily in mercy ministry. Other churches may be more mission-oriented. Still others may be evangelistic, geared to reaching souls by the hundreds and thousands. Some others may be geared toward equipping and releasing, being apostolic in nature.

Christ does not desire competition between His churches. His desire is that each church complements the other, so that the overall citywide Church can fulfill its purpose of reaching lost souls and glorifying Christ in the city.

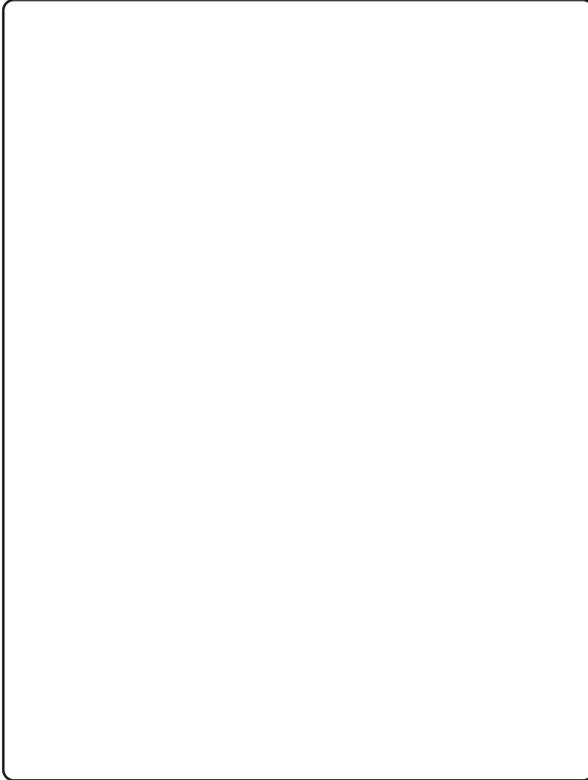
Understanding divine order becomes necessary if all churches in the city are to effectively complement and work with each other, thus fulfilling the overall purpose of the citywide Church.

THE CITYWIDE CHURCH AND LOCAL CHURCHES

- The Lord Jesus holds the pastors of the local churches in His right hand. The pastors of local churches are divinely protected and are agents of Christ on earth.
- Confusion, disorder and lawlessness are neither acceptable in the local church nor in the citywide Church.
- Christ desires His local churches, ministers and His people to walk in divine order.
- The Holy Spirit is the One who sets pastors or spiritual overseers over people.
- Each local church has a specific calling, a specific vision and its own special 'flavor.'

2

MINISTERIAL ETHICS



Having established the Biblical basis for divine order in the local church, among local churches, and the relationships between shepherd and sheep, we now begin to deal with real-life issues. How can we observe and maintain divine order among churches in the city?

We begin by addressing the ministers of Christ—the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers and other ministry leaders—who are called to operate within the city.

Ministers Must Set the Standard

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions (2 Timothy 3:10,11a).

Our lives have to be an example to other believers, of how God's people ought to conduct themselves. We are to allow people to see and learn not only from our doctrine but also our manner of life.

We ministers of Christ in the city need to be taught divine order which we must also practice. We need to set the standard and observe divine order. When we do not follow divine order, it is unlikely that the people we lead will do so themselves.

We need to remind ourselves and observe the following in our ministry:

- There are boundaries that we should not cross.
- There is spiritual authority that we must respect.
- There is a proper way to do things.
- There is accountability that we must maintain.

Principle to Practice: As a minister of God you must set the standard for observing divine order.

Edifying and Correcting, Not Abusing

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear (1 Timothy 5:19,20).

It seems to be a common occurrence where pastors use the pulpit to express their insecurity, ill feeling, jealousy and resentment towards well-meaning believers and other ministers. Imagine, during a Sunday sermon, the pastor vents out his ill feeling towards a member of his congregation who may have displeased him in some way. Of course, the pastor may or may not call the person by name but the congregation knows whom the pastor is referring to. Although the congregation may just laugh it off, an individual is left hurt and wounded with no opportunity to explain, even when he did not sin. He or she may have a personality difference with the pastor or perhaps did not agree with the pastor's views on certain matters. In some cases, the pastor may just be insecure about that person's capabilities and so on.

As pastors, we need to be bigger than this. We should never use our pulpit for such things! The pulpit is meant to be a platform from where we should carry out the ministry of Christ the Shepherd to edify, guide, warn and lovingly correct. We as ministers of God must not use the pulpit to abuse people.

For those who sin, we are to rebuke, only with the intent of correcting them and admonishing others, lest others also fall into the same sin.

Principle to Practice: Never use your pulpit for anything other than its intended purpose.

Guarding Not Controlling

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; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away (1 Peter 5:1–4).

Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand (2 Corinthians 1:24).

As shepherds, we have been given the responsibility of being the spiritual guardians of those entrusted to us. We are to be watchful over those in our responsibility and yet, we are not to lord over them. The Greek for “lording over” is the word *'katakurieuo'* meaning “to lord against, that is, control, subjugate:- exercise dominion over (lordship), be lord over, overcome.” As pastors we cannot control, manipulate or dictate things in the lives of people. We are to be spiritual guardians and not controlling manipulators.

If a pastor is dictating to people in his congregation as to who should marry whom, what job someone should take up, where they should and should not go and so on, to the point where people are not allowed to do anything without the pastor's direction, then something has gone wrong. A pastor is not to run people's lives and live other people's lives for them!

Taking this further, the pastor is not to control the personal spiritual life or ministry of the believer. As pastors and ministers we are to equip, guide and encourage God's people in their spiritual walk and development in ministry. We are not to control them in these areas. Consider this common situation where many of us pastors and ministers stumble and become a stumbling block. Let us say that a believer named Ramesh, even before he really settled into a local church, had so much zeal and passion for God that he started a weekly prayer meeting at his house. He was faithful in this and continued ministering to people whom God sent his way, through the weekly meetings in his house. After some time, he heard of a good local church that he visited and eventually decided to become a part of. At this point, here is what most pastors and churches do. They will move in and take over Ramesh's house prayer meetings or require that the house prayer meeting stop unless it is brought under the full control of the pastor of that local church. This is improper conduct from pastors and churches because, in most cases, this eventually ends up stifling the zeal and passion, which the believer once had.

Ramesh started his house prayer meeting even before he came to the local church. He should be given the freedom and encouragement to continue the good work he started. In fact, as

pastors we need to continue to equip Ramesh so that he can become even more fruitful in his ministry through his weekly house meetings. Whether Ramesh brings his weekly house prayer meetings under the covering of the local church and under the pastor's leadership should be left entirely up to Ramesh to decide. If he wishes to do so, then the pastor can provide whatever is needed to enrich the work. It is entirely acceptable if Ramesh decided to continue his weekly house meetings without the involvement of the local church or pastor. The church and pastor should continue to invest in and enrich Ramesh without interfering in his house meetings so that he can be more effective in his ministry.

Principle to Practice: Guard God's sheep without controlling them. Give them the freedom to grow and be fruitful for the Kingdom of God.

Counseling God's People

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Sometimes believers who are members of a particular local church decide to go to someone other than their own pastor for counseling. If believers, having discussed matters with their pastor, are directed by their pastor to receive counsel from someone else, then things are being conducted in proper order.

If members from another local church were to come to us for counseling, we would first need to ensure that they have discussed things with the one who has spiritual oversight over their lives, which is usually their pastor. It is their pastor who has been feeding

and shepherding them all this while. If they have come to us after having discussed things with their spiritual overseer (their pastor or elder), then surely we can add to what has been given to them. However, if they have not done so already, then it would be our responsibility to direct them first of all to go to the pastor whom the Holy Spirit has set over their lives.

However, we ministers are often guilty of not following divine order in this area. We give our counsel without considering whether or not people have discussed things with their pastor. When believers from other churches who have been under the oversight of a pastor come to us for counseling, our first question should be, "Have you talked these things with your pastor?"

A young man, from a certain church in our city, contacted me about some problems he was facing in his church where his pastor was apparently making remarks about him from the pulpit. I could have used this opportunity to convince him that his pastor was wrong, was abusing him, and that he should leave his church and join our church. But my counsel to him was simply to go back and talk to his pastor about the matter. He eventually did. Things have been resolved and he is happy in the same church.

Another young man came to meet me. He expressed his concerns and a lack of fulfillment in the church which he was presently in. My initial question to him was, "Have you discussed this with your pastor?" His answer was, "Yes." He went on to share his thoughts on his inability to relate to the pastor and the fact that in this particular church, pastors were transferred so often. So even if he did manage to work with this pastor, he did not know how

long things would last and then he would have to start all over again, when another pastor takes over. As a pastor I could have taken advantage of this situation and coerced him to come and join our church. I could have promised him opportunity, position and a lot of other things to convince him to leave his church and come over. But my counsel to him was that he must understand where he was in his ministerial calling, go back to his church, discuss things with his pastor and pastorate committee, and then make appropriate decisions. If he still felt that he should look for another local church to be part of, I encouraged him to visit several churches in our city and then make a decision.

I am not saying that it is wrong to counsel a member of another local church. What I am saying is that we as ministers need to walk in divine order when it comes to counseling people who have been placed by the Holy Spirit under someone else's oversight. These believers should first of all speak with their pastor or spiritual overseer. Having done that, it would be best to go to other ministers with the direction of their pastor. We ministers need to ensure that this divine order is maintained in counseling believers who are members of other churches.

On the other hand, many pastors control people so much that they prevent them from seeking suitably qualified and experienced ministers for counsel. This is also unhealthy. While pastors have to guard their sheep, they should love them enough to allow them to go to some other ministers who can help them at their point of need. Very often, we ministers, due to our own insecurities, keep God's people from receiving help by not pointing them to the right people who can give into their lives.

Principle to Practice: Follow spiritual protocol when counseling God's people. Do not overstep your boundaries. Be big enough to point God's people to counselors other than yourself.

False Claims, Exaggerations and Beyond

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another (Ephesians 4:25).

In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you (Titus 2:7,8).

Sometimes we ministers, who are supposed to be teachers of the truth are guilty of lying and exaggerations, especially when it comes to the fruits of our ministry.

I personally have been guilty of this in my initial years. Living in America, I began to adapt to the way missionaries there projected the work they were doing. Even if the work was small, by the time the glossy, full-color brochure was brought out and the presentation was complete, anyone was made to believe that this missionary was doing a great, big and wonderful work somewhere in a distant land. The way things were presented and projected was usually exaggerated many times over. I am not saying all missionaries were doing this, but this is what most of the brochures and presentations ended up being! I remember my wife Amy correcting me in this area, as I prepared reports of our ministry work. Amy helped me see the difference and the absolute importance of stating the simple facts without all the added spicing and sprucing up!

A minister once met me and shared about his recent ministry in another town. He talked about “a revival having started in the meeting” in which he ministered and that “the revival was continuing till this day,” which was about 2–3 months later. I had the opportunity of interacting with this minister just a few times and had sensed that he was not a man who spoke the truth. So when I heard him talk about revival breaking out in this other town, I sensed that he may not have been entirely truthful. The next day I called the pastor in the other town just to verify if what this minister had said was true. The pastor in the other town verified that indeed this minister had gone there and ministered 2–3 months back. There had been genuine results in that service with some salvations and deliverances taking place. But to claim that a revival had broken out, which was supposed to be continuing till the present day, was definitely an exaggeration. Would it not have been so much better if this minister had simply stated that in the service where he ministered, three people got saved and one was delivered from demon possession?

Ministers of God, we need to be men and women who will speak the truth and nothing but the truth. Let us state facts the way they are, without exaggerations and all the spicing up. If ten people got saved, then say ten people got saved instead of saying things like, “So many people gave their lives to Christ and there was such a great response!” If you visited the Middle East and preached in Kuwait and came back, just say that you went and ministered in Kuwait and came back, instead of saying, “I traveled to the nations and ministered to the nations of the world!”

Ministers of God, let us get rid of lying and exaggerations! Let us speak the truth and be people of sound speech.

Principle to Practice: Avoid exaggeration and untruth. Maintain sound speech.

Prophesying or ‘Prophe-lying?’

And the LORD said to me, “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart” (Jeremiah 14:14).

I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied (Jeremiah 23:21).

When a minister of God does not hesitate to lie and exaggerate about spiritual experiences, do you think that such a minister would hesitate to prophesy anything he imagines over people? It is not uncommon to see people proclaiming to be prophets and spouting all kinds of prophecies on believers.

It seems to be such a trendy thing to speak over believers, things like, “God will take you to the nations ... and give you a mighty anointing ... you will have visions of Jesus and of angels ... you will have dreams and revelations ... you will have a mighty ministry ... you will be used as a prophet ...” and so on. Tell me, which believer would not fall for such things! And tell me, who is going to wait and see if these prophecies will ever come to pass. The poor believer will be waiting year after year, encouraging himself with the prophecy that some day the visions, the revelations, the prophetic ministry and so on will come to pass! No one will be there to verify or hold that ‘prophet’ accountable. This is such an easy gimmick that any self-serving minister will not hesitate to pull on gullible believers!

Please understand that I believe in and desire the prophetic. I would pray to God that all God's people learnt how to prophesy. The genuine prophetic flow is so wonderful and is such a blessing. But the abuses in this area should be addressed and we ministers need to get things in order.

Ministers of God, we have been called to prophesy not 'prophe-lie!' If the Holy Spirit does not speak, we must learn to keep quiet. We must understand that the written Scriptures are the number one prophetic Word and we are to establish God's people in the written Word. The written Word is the sure foundation for every believer.

We need to ask recipients of our prophecies to judge and test what we have delivered. We need to encourage them to have their pastors or spiritual overseers evaluate the prophecy especially if it is outside the realm of edification, exhortation and comfort. We must make sure that as far as possible, we do not deliver prophecies in private places where other spiritually mature people are not there to judge what is being delivered.

Principle to Practice: Prophecy, do not 'prophe-lie.'

Put Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:1–5).

During a conversation between two ministers of Christ, one minister shared with the other minister that some people from the other minister's church had gone to him for ministry. This minister shared that, during that time, he had prophesied over these visitors who then told him that if they had known about him earlier, they would have gone to him and been part of his ministry instead of coming to the other pastor's church. Now just imagine, here is one minister in a very subtle way undercutting another minister in the face! This was indeed in bad taste!

But yet, I wondered how insensitive this other minister was, to make such a remark. It does not matter how gifted or anointed we are as ministers. We are all co-laborers in Christ. God will use us in ways that He has gifted and anointed, to meet people's needs. And yet, we cannot glory in this and tear down another minister who may not have been used to meet that person's need at that moment.

Ministers of God, may we never belittle each other. May we never say such things to another minister—"You are not as anointed as you were last year" or "God has not been using you mightily" or "Your church members came to me and I ministered to them and got everything sorted out. What have you been doing for them?" Such things are in bad taste and does not build up or edify others. It only promotes self. God in His mercy may have used you to meet a person's need at a certain point in time. But that does not mean you can tear down the confidence or inner strength of another minister who has not been used in that situation. Just put yourself in the other person's shoes and imagine how you would feel!

Once a lady, from another church in the city, called me and shared that she had bought a piece of land and was getting ready to break the ground and lay the foundation for the house that she was going to construct. She then said, "Pastor, I heard you are a man with clean hands. So I would like to invite you to come and do the ground breaking." This definitely was very flattering and inviting. But I politely declined the invitation for several reasons. Firstly, this lady is not under my spiritual oversight. While there would be no problem doing a ground breaking, first of all, how would the pastor who has been giving into her life feel if he was not given the honor to do so? Secondly, my time is limited and I would like to invest it in the people I am directly responsible for and for matters that are really important. Thirdly, if this person faced a difficult situation tomorrow, she would go to her pastor and not come to me. So, if her pastor is there to help her in her problems should not he also be there to enjoy her blessings? Now, if she came to me after having discussed things with her pastor and got his approval to have me do the ground breaking, there would be no problem. Otherwise, it is best to have things done decently and in order.

Principle to Practice: Be considerate towards your fellow minister. Do for them what you would have them do for you.

Watch What You Say About Your Brother

But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?" (1 Samuel 26:9).

The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed (1 Samuel 26:11a).

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so (James 3:8–10).

Sometimes we ministers, tear down, insult and defame other ministers, openly or subtly, in our conversations. It is amusing to see how when ministers are used of God, they immediately think the world is at their feet and do not hesitate to talk bad about other fellow ministers.

When we walk in divine order, we will learn to respect the uniqueness of each other's calling, gifting and anointing. We do not need to cut down another person's ministry to promote ours. If all of Christ's ministers watched what they said about their fellow ministers in the city, the enemy will have less opportunity to cause division and strife. The citywide Church would be so much stronger and healthier.

Ministers of God, let us walk with holy reverence. Let us always remember that the same Holy Spirit who anoints us also anoints our fellow ministers. Let us never speak ill of our fellow minister.

Principle to Practice: Never speak ill of your fellow minister.

Handling Criticism

Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord (Romans 12:16b–19).

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses ... by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true (2 Corinthians 6:3,4,8).

It is almost a foregone conclusion that every minister of God will have to face criticism, false accusations, defamation and the like. What is also strange and most hurtful is that sometimes this evil report or criticism may come from fellow ministers and God's people. Even when we do our utmost to live and walk honorably before all, there will always be someone who does not appreciate our work and will have something to accuse us about. Some of it may be done intentionally and some may simply be out of ignorance.

While we cannot prevent such things, we can definitely control how we react and respond to criticism, false accusations, defamation and so on. We have to be wise and remember never to repay evil for evil. We ought to do our best to maintain peace with all men without retaliating and trying to avenge ourselves. This is where the real test of character lies. How we react in such situations will demonstrate how far we have progressed in our growth towards Christ-likeness.

Principle to Practice: Learn to respond to criticism and false accusations with Christ-likeness.

Watch Out for Flattery

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and

say to the poor man, "You stand there," or "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors (James 2:1-9).

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure (1 Timothy 5:21,22).

One area that we pastors and ministers have to guard ourselves against is flattery from believers or being moved by the professional, social or financial status of people who come to us. Believers may intentionally or unintentionally speak things that sound so spiritual before us that tend to make us think that they are deeply committed to the Lord. In reality, their commitment could be no deeper than their words. They may behave like angels in front of us but there is no telling how they conduct themselves when the pastor or elder is not watching. Perhaps due to a lack of discernment, most of us begin to 'fall' for such things and place such believers in prominent places of ministry in the local church. We hastily give them spiritual responsibility without testing them to see what they are really made of. Sooner or later the truth comes out and, in some cases, too much damage has been done by such believers. Other believers are left hurt and abused.

In a similar tone, we pastors need to understand that just because a person may be very qualified professionally or may be

extremely successful financially that does not mean that they will be automatically useful for Christian ministry. Overseeing 50 people in a business firm is very different from overseeing 50 believers in a local church. While some leadership skills and people skills are transferable, it takes spiritual capacity to be a leader of God's people. This is something that is not developed in the business world. However, most pastors, without using much discernment assign spiritual responsibility to people based on their accomplishments in the business world. This is not a wise thing to do.

Principle to Practice: Do nothing out of partiality or without spiritual discernment.

Spiritual Covering or Spiritual Façade?

If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:23).

I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps? (2 Corinthians 12:18).

'Spiritual covering' is a phrase that has been thrown around so much that it seems to have lost its true intent.

The problem among us ministers is that, many times, we claim association with some reputed pastor or church but in reality it is no deeper than the statement we make. There is no genuine accountability to that pastor or church. It is more of a spiritual facade with no real practical value. In reality, we may be doing whatever we wish and just using the name of the other pastor or

ministry whenever it suits our convenience and works to our advantage.

Ministers of God, let us not make false claims of ministerial association or spiritual covering when in reality there is no substance to it!

In the New Testament, Titus had such a heartfelt, whole-hearted commendation from Apostle Paul for being a partner and fellow minister. If we cannot have such a recommendation from those whom we claim to be associated with or connected to, then we have no right to use their name! If we do so, we are guilty of stealing another man's honor! More important than bearing a ministry's name is the depth of relationship we share with that ministry. If there is no relationship, then the ministerial association is nothing more than a piece of paper. Titus' relationship with Apostle Paul was so genuine that Paul could say that Titus walked in the "same spirit" and in the "same steps" as the apostle.

Would to God, that we as ministers understand true accountability. True accountability begins by being accountable to God, to ourselves, to our own family and to the people we serve. If we fail in this, then being accountable to some other ministry that we only associate by name is unlikely to happen.

Principle to Practice: Do not steal another man's or another ministry's honor.

So Where Does the Money Really Go?

Another 'disorder' that we ministers are knowingly or unknowingly involved in is in the raising and using of money. Pastors and

ministers tell people that they need money for one particular thing. So God's people give money for that particular cause or work. However, very often that money or part of the money is used for other things, with no mention of its actual usage made to those who contributed. This is not the correct thing to do, no matter how we try to justify our actions.

If we tell people that we are collecting money for an orphanage and instead use it or part of it to buy musical equipment, then we have deceived the people. The full amount that was given for the orphanage must be used for the orphanage and for nothing else. If it becomes absolutely necessary to use part of the money for some other work, then at the least, the people should be informed about this.

Principle to Practice: Maintain integrity while handling money entrusted to you.

Churches Must Hold Believers Accountable

Every pastor desires to see his church increase numerically. Some of us do not care if we do it at the expense of other fellow pastors in the area. When visitors come from other churches we grab a hold of them and directly or indirectly convince them to 'transfer.' This is an unhealthy practice among pastors.

Some churches have a healthy practice where they make it clear to their visitors saying, "If you are already attending another church where the uncompromised Word of God is being taught, please remain faithful there. But if you are looking for a home church, we invite you to visit again and pray about becoming a part of this church." They make it plain and clear that they expect their

visitors to remain faithful to their home church. If they see visitors starting to attend regularly, then they try to determine and see why they have decided to attend this church and also encourage them to inform their former church about their decision to attend another church. This is a healthy practice that ensures that even church transfers are done decently and in order.

Churches should make it a practice not to influence or coerce people to leave their home church in the same city just to join another church. However, people may still decide to leave their former church and settle in another church and may have genuine reasons for doing so. In these cases, churches must encourage believers to inform their former pastors and churches about their decision to move.

The point we wish to stress here is that as pastors we should not encourage believers to ‘church hop.’ We need to teach believers the value of being committed in a spiritual relationship to a local church. If we pastors do not enforce this, we are going to raise up a generation of ‘rolling-stone believers’ who will never end up being living stones in a spiritual house through whom Kingdom purposes can be executed.

Principle to Practice: Do not be afraid to hold believers accountable. Teach them to follow divine order.

Entering into Other People’s Labors

Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” For in this the saying

is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors (John 4:35–38).

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? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God gave 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. For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, you are God's building (1 Corinthians 3:4–9).

It is a Kingdom principle that God often uses someone to sow, someone else to water and someone else to reap the harvest. When God sends us, in most cases, we are entering into other people's labors.

Therefore, we need to learn proper conduct on how to enter into other people's labors and how to allow other people whom God has sent to enter into our labors. And we need to teach God's people to understand this principle. Otherwise, this could cause division and strife, which was what happened at Corinth.

What happened at Corinth is interesting to examine. We read this account in Acts 18 and 19. Paul, Aquila and his wife Priscilla spent about two years establishing a church at Corinth. The team then went to Ephesus. Paul moved on from there leaving Aquila and Priscilla. There, Aquila and Priscilla met a man named Apollos who was instructed in the ways of the Lord. "And Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he desired to cross to Achaia (Corinth), the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive

him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace” (Acts 18:26,27). Apollos was sent to the church at Corinth by the recommendation of Aquila and Priscilla. So in effect, Apollos entered into the labors of Paul, Aquila and Priscilla.

At a later time, believers at Corinth began to take sides, some saying they belonged to Paul and others saying they belonged to Apollos. Paul reprimanded them for their carnal behavior. He brought out the fact that they, the believers, were “God’s field” and “God’s building.” Paul and others were merely co-workers whom God was using to work in “God’s field” and “God’s building.”

Believers are “God’s field” and “God’s building.” As ministers of God, we need to learn proper conduct as we enter into other people’s labors to work in “God’s field” and “God’s building.”

When entering into other people’s labors we need to keep several things in mind:

- Let us do it with the blessing and approval of those who have labored or are laboring in the same field and building. For example, we cannot just walk into a church where another minister is the pastor and take over. This is not proper conduct.
- We must try to learn what has been accomplished so far, so that we can build on what has been done. Let us not end up doing something that uproots the good seeds that have been sown or pulls down the stones that have been laid in a proper order.
- We must stay within our boundaries. Let us not overstep our authority or the work we have been called to do. For instance,

let us not go into a local church and tell the pastor what to preach, or how to minister. This is outside what we are called to do.

- Let us give honor to whom honor is due. If God sent us to reap, remember to give honor to those who have sown and watered. And above all, let us remember that increase comes from God.

Similarly, as ministers we need to be big enough to allow other people to enter into our labors.

- We are to guard the work that has been established till now. So we have to be cautious as to whom we allow to enter into our labors. We do not want the work to be destroyed.
- We need to make sure that those we allow to enter into our labors can genuinely build on what has been built. Sometimes pastors invite another person to co-labor in “God’s field” and “God’s building”—simply because of the other person’s reputation and so on—without discerning if the other person has what is really needed to build further.
- Timing is important. Let us not bring in a harvester if it is sowing season! Let us not bring in a sower if it is harvesting season! Know the season that “God’s field” is in.
- Once we know that the right person(s) have come to co-labor or enter into our labor, we must welcome them with a whole heart. Let us not be a hindrance. Let us stay out of the way as much as possible so that they can do what God has sent them to do.

Principle to Practice: Understand that God often uses one person to sow, another to water and still another to reap. Be a good steward of “God’s Field” and “God’s Building” without hindering or destroying what God is doing.

Ministering as a Guest Speaker

Another important aspect of learning how “to conduct yourself in the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15) is in understanding boundaries when invited to be a guest minister in another church. It is not uncommon to see that when a person is invited to speak in a local church, he begins to take charge of the whole service and begins to displace the local pastor, and starts providing direction and vision for the local church. This is totally out of place and not in divine order.

When the Lord Jesus desires to speak direction, vision and organization to the local church, He does so according to the divine order that He has set. In most cases, He speaks to the pastor or through people who have spiritual authority in that local body by virtue of either being part of the apostolic/founding team or those in spiritual oversight over that local body. The people in spiritual oversight of the local church are usually those whom the pastor has invited to provide oversight or those to whom the pastor goes for the same.

A guest minister should understand divine order and not overstep boundaries when ministering in a local church. The guest minister should operate in submission to the local pastor who is the head of the local church, under Christ Himself. The guest minister who does not have spiritual oversight over the church

should avoid providing direction, vision or organization to the local church. If anything has been revealed to the guest minister in the area of vision, direction or organization—he/she should first discuss it privately with the local pastor. The pastor could keep that word of knowledge or word of wisdom and decide to work on it at a later time or the pastor could encourage the guest minister to deliver that word to the congregation. The guest minister can then do so, having received the pastor’s approval.

We realize that we cannot quote chapter and verse for the guidelines we have set above. However, we are convinced that the above guidelines are in harmony with the whole essence of divine order. This leads to good behavior in the House of God.

As guest ministers, we need to be sensitive to where the local church is in its spiritual journey. We need to be sensitive to the current dealings of Christ with that particular church. We need to deliver a timely Word, which the Spirit is saying to the church.

We must also be careful not to undo what the pastor is trying to build into the life of the church. For example, a pastor may have been teaching his congregation about tithing and giving financially into God’s Kingdom. He may have spent several weeks teaching his congregation about this and encouraging them to practice this. Now just imagine if a guest minister comes right after this and preaches a fervent, stirring message on, “God wants you, not your money.” Well, what the guest minister preached is true in one sense. However, God has also instructed us to honor Him with our money because our money also represents us. So by being insensitive to what the pastor has been working on, a guest minister can undo in one service, what the pastor has been trying to build for months!

I remember, many years ago, I was invited to attend a retreat being held at a certain place in Bangalore. The theme of the retreat was something along the lines of soul winning. It was the end of, I think, a two-day retreat. I was a young, zealous fifteen-year-old boy who was burning with a passion for lost souls. At that time, I had just completed reading the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, and was filled with a passion to labor and travail for perishing souls. Jeremiah 9:1 was my favorite at that time. I was permitted by the coordinator of the retreat to speak for a few minutes towards the end, so I just poured out the urgency and necessity to labor and travail in prayer for lost souls. What a *faux pas* (blunder) this was!! First of all, what I had to say was totally not in line with the theme of the retreat. While they were trying to motivate people to go out and reach lost souls, my message was for them to stay and pray! Although what I preached was Scriptural, what I did was not in divine order and unnecessary. I received a good, well-deserved rebuke from the leader of the meeting and learned my lesson the hard way!

Principle to Practice: Follow proper spiritual protocol when invited to minister anywhere. Do not violate God-appointed boundaries or usurp authority that has been set in place.

Proper Conduct When Ministering to the Citywide Church

Very often pastors and ministers have the opportunity to minister to the citywide Church through special events, conferences, meetings and so on. Sometimes, this leads to publicity and an indirect ‘sales and marketing’ effort for a sponsoring/participating church or ministry. Very subtly, ministers try to coerce participants

to join their church or ministry. This is an unhealthy thing to do and is improper conduct when ministering to the citywide Church.

If an event is held and invitation has been given to the citywide Church, then this event needs to be conducted in a way that believers will be edified and encouraged, to take what they have received back to their own churches and become a greater asset to their home churches.

Citywide ministers and ministries should encourage believers to remain faithful to their local church. They should also encourage believers to give their tithes and offerings to their local church where they are being nourished and cared for. If believers wish to partner financially with citywide or global ministers, they can do so with offerings, after having given their tithes to their local church.

If an event is being conducted as an outreach by a local church to reach unsaved souls and bring them under their care, then this has to be announced publicly.

If we can conduct events, conferences and so on with the pure motive of building up the citywide Church, then we will begin to see greater participation and cooperation among the churches.

Principle to Practice: Conduct your ministry in such a way that it edifies and strengthens the citywide Church and furthers God's Kingdom in the city.

Watch What You Teach

Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you (1 Timothy 4:16).

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Timothy 4:1–4).

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment (James 3:1).

As ministers of God, we are to watch what we teach and preach since we are influencing and impacting the lives of many people. There is obviously tremendous pressure that we face as we minister the Word of God to people:

- The pressure to bring forth new revelations, insight and thoughts that the audience has not heard before.
- The pressure to sound scholarly and deeply thoughtful so as to gain the respect of the audience.
- The pressure to entertain so as to be liked by the audience.
- The pressure to sound prophetic so as to bring forth a ‘direct word’ from God for the audience.

While we need to do our best to teach, train, equip and impart into the lives of our hearers, we cannot allow the pressures and expectations of people to cause us to do things that are not in divine order.

As ministers of God, we can minister God’s Word with confidence knowing that His Word will produce. His Word will have an impact on the lives of people. We do not need to ‘entertain’

or always bring forth deep revelations or prophecies. Just teaching and preaching the uncompromised Word in simple practical ways will truly build the people of God up.

Another area where we need to be watchful is in teaching and preaching experiences and subjective revelations as though they were the Word of God. All of us have different experiences in life, and not all experiences are God's best or God's intent for all His people in general. Sharing experiences is good only to the extent that they help people understand the application of Scriptural truth. We cannot form any theology out of our personal experiences. In a similar manner, ministers of God tend to claim special revelations of truth not backed by Scripture or even without the general essence of what the Word teaches. They prefix such teaching with statements such as, "The Holy Spirit revealed to me" or "I had a special visitation from the Lord and He told me." We cannot preach such things to God's people if they are not in line with the written Word of God.

Principle to Practice: Rightly divide the Word of truth. Preach and teach sound doctrine.

He Whom the Lord Commends

Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips (Proverbs 27:2).

I do not receive honor from men (John 5:41).

How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? (John 5:44).

But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD." For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends (2 Corinthians 10:17,18).

Very often when we ministers share our testimonies or the things God has done, we very subtly end up promoting ourselves, instead of giving all glory to the Lord. The testimony is all about ‘I,’ ‘me’ and ‘myself’ instead of about the Lord who did things through us. We need to guard ourselves about such things and make sure that we truly glorify God. Let the Lord commend us, instead of we commending ourselves.

Principle to Practice: Seek the honor that comes from God above. Do not seek to promote yourself.

The Proof of Our Ministry

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved (Philippians 4:1).

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20).

As ministers, we tend to rely on a lot of unimportant things as proof for our calling and ministry. We use ministerial connections, other accomplishments such as books written, tapes produced, platforms we have preached from or size of audiences we have ministered to—to qualify or validate our calling.

However, a genuine proof of our ministry is in changed lives—lives that have really been touched and set to bear fruit for God’s Kingdom. If lives are not changed, enriched and established in the Kingdom of God, then other things hardly matter.

Principle to Practice: In ministry, focus on building people up. What is done in people’s lives is what really matters.

Giving No Offense

Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved (1 Corinthians 10:32,33).

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses (2 Corinthians 6:3,4).

As ministers, we need to come to a place where we hold our calling and responsibility with “fear and trembling.” It appears that many are not doing this. We are probably taking things too lightly. We are not being as careful as we should be, to ensure that we conduct ourselves in such a way that the ministry remains blameless.

People within the church and those outside the church are looking at us as ministers of Christ. We are to truly represent Christ. Our manner of life should be such that we can dare say, like Apostle Paul, “Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

- If we as ministers of God are unable to walk in love with our fellow ministers, how can we teach God’s people to walk in love?
- If we as ministers of God cannot walk in humility before God, how then can we teach God’s people to do so?
- If we as ministers of God do not hold ourselves with purity, integrity and honesty, how can we teach God’s people to walk in these?

- If we as ministers of God do not handle money properly or wisely, how can we instruct God's people to do so?
- If we as ministers of God are unable to love our spouses and our own children, and establish a godly home, how are we going to teach God's people to do this?

Principle to Practice: Hold your calling as a minister with utmost reverence. Conduct yourself in a way that will not bring any reproach to the name of Christ.

Praise Among All the Churches

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold (Proverbs 22:1).

And we have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches (2 Corinthians 8:18).

If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:23).

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem (Philippians 2:29).

We pastors, ministers and other ministry leaders should conduct ourselves in such a way that we will have a good name among all churches wherever we have had the opportunity to minister. We should be held with honor among all such.

Too often we take pride in the fact that we preached in a certain church, or in a certain conference or from a particular platform. The real test of our ministry is not so much in which church we preached or which conference we were invited to speak

at but in the manner we ministered and conducted ourselves, so as to bring praise and honor to the name of our Lord.

Will the hosts be happy to have us back or did we conduct ourselves improperly that our hosts were glad when we left? If we have gone to a certain church and conducted ourselves improperly, then definitely we have brought dishonor not only to our own ministry but also to the Kingdom of God.

If Apostle Paul were to witness our individual ministries today, would he be able to write about us as he did about Titus and his fellow workers, calling them, “the glory of Christ?” The Message Bible uses the phrase, “a real credit to Christ.”

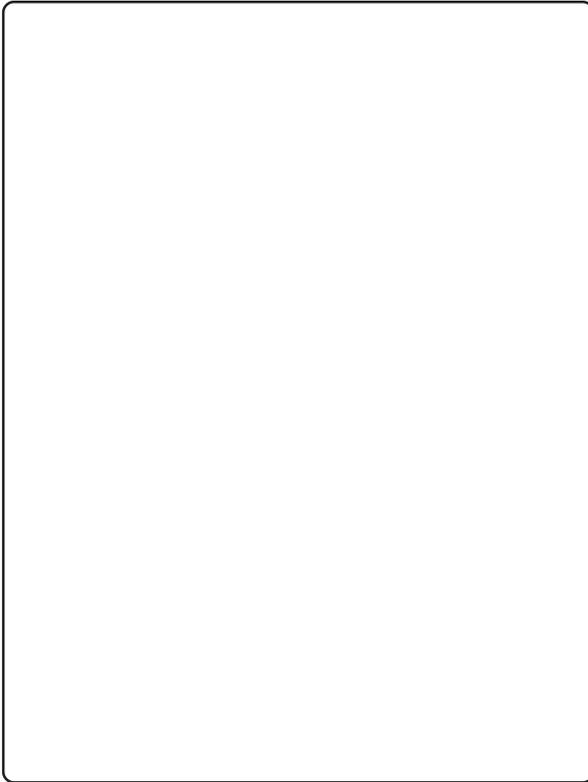
Principle to Practice: Conduct yourself among the churches in your city (or region) in a manner that is praiseworthy, where you will be a real credit to Christ!

MINISTERIAL ETHICS

- Set the Standard.
- Edify and correct, not abuse.
- Guard not control.
- Counsel God’s people.
- Make no false claims and exaggerations.
- Prophecy not ‘prophe-lie.’
- Watch what you say about your brother.
- Watch what you teach.

3

PROPER CONDUCT AS BELIEVERS



As believers, we are also expected to understand and walk in divine order. We must learn how to conduct ourselves within our local church and also among the local churches in our area, the citywide Church.

If believers conduct themselves properly, this will reduce much strife and division, and foster cohesiveness among local churches in the city. This will strengthen the citywide Church and enable it to have a strong impact on the city.

Shepherds and Guardians

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

As stated in the section, ‘Spiritual Connection Between Shepherd and Sheep,’ it is the Holy Spirit who places the shepherd in the midst of the flock to watch over them. The pastor of the local church represents Christ the Shepherd to that local church. Believers must therefore learn to be accountable to their shepherd.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out (John 10:1–3).

In John 10:1–3, Jesus illustrates His relationship to His people. One simple lesson we can learn in the relationship between

shepherd and sheep is that the shepherd leads and goes before the sheep, and the sheep follow the shepherd.

As believers, we must learn to stay committed to our local shepherd. The local shepherd is responsible for leading the local church in its spiritual journey and taking it forward in fulfilling its God-given destiny. As part of the local church, you are now a part of that spiritual journey. You need to be committed to the vision and calling of your local church. You need to give yourself to help fulfill that call and vision.

Being a part of the local church is being a part of the corporate body of believers where you have an important role and function. Every believer has a responsibility that exceeds just church attendance. You are expected to give into the life of the local church and receive from the life of that church. As a believer, you are a member of the body and you are to participate in the life of that local church. Do not just be a consumer merely looking for ways to receive from your local church. Instead, serve, give and strengthen your local church.

Principle to Practice: Being part of a local church is to be committed to your pastor, other members and to the corporate vision of that local body. Do not just attend church. Be a committed part of the local church.

The Shepherd's Rod and Staff

Most believers like the green pastures and still waters that the local shepherd (pastor) leads them to. However, not too many realize that their pastor carries with him a rod and a staff. The rod and staff serve to guide and defend the sheep.

The shepherd uses his rod and staff to align sheep that tend to go astray, back to the sheepfold. He may have to tap the sheep firmly to get them aligned. This may hurt a bit, but is done with good intentions and for the sheep's benefit.

As believers, we must learn to receive correction, rebuke and guidance from our pastor. Do not get upset and go looking for another local church, just because you had to receive correction. Receive correction, get aligned and keep moving forward.

With his rod and staff, the shepherd protects the sheep from raving wolves, bears and prowling lions that want to devour the sheep. Very few believers really appreciate the many battles their pastors have to fight to protect and keep them —the sheep. Pastors fight to guard the sheep from spirits of division and strife. They fight to protect their sheep from spirits of error and deception. They fight to guard their sheep from demons that try to steal, kill and destroy the blessings of God. Pastors provide this spiritual oversight over their sheep.

Learn to appreciate your pastor for what he is doing for you. You may not always see the battle-scarred hands or the many lonely hours spent fighting off demonic forces to protect you. Yet, that is what your pastor does for you. Appreciate him. Be committed to your pastor.

Principle to Practice: Be receptive to the correction that God may bring into your life through your pastor or spiritual overseers.

Sheep That Lead the Shepherd

God's divine order is that the shepherd leads his sheep. Every time the sheep try to lead their shepherd, things are not in divine order.

Growth and progress will be hindered. Confusion and strife will abound.

There are believers who are manipulative. Believers who know that their offerings make a sizeable portion of the church's funds tend to dictate terms to the pastor. Some other believers use their social standing, connections, influence and so on, to direct the pastor and tell the pastor what to do and not to do. And then there are believers who tend to use flattery to control their pastor.

Believers must realize that the moment there is a role-reversal of shepherd and sheep in the local church, there will be severe consequences.

Regardless of the advantage you have—money, age, influence, position, experience and so on—as a believer, you must operate according to God-appointed order in the local church. Yes, you are free to express your ideas, thoughts, suggestions and so on, to your pastor. In fact, it is important that you do. But you should not try to control or lead your pastor.

Principle to Practice: Never violate divine order and try to guide your pastor. Share your ideas and thoughts but never try to manipulate and coerce your pastor to do what you want done.

“I Do Not Agree with You, Pastor”

As believers, we have the opportunity to learn and grow in our spiritual understanding through several sources. Christian books, teaching/preaching tapes, Christian television and so on help in the sharing of spiritual knowledge. These are channels that are accessible to most believers in the city.

As believers grow and develop spiritually, there may be times that they do not entirely agree with their pastor in the understanding of certain spiritual truths. As long as this difference of understanding does not have to do with the core beliefs of the Christian faith, the believer can still cooperate with the pastor and function in that local church.

Minor differences in spiritual understanding are no reason for a believer to leave a local church. As believers, we need to be mature enough to respect each other's differences. We should stop wasting time majoring on minor things and instead focus on the main task of glorifying Christ and making disciples of all nations.

In a local church, the pastor has the full authority to teach and preach according to the spiritual understanding he has of the subject. If a believer, who has a slightly differing understanding on a particular topic, goes around circulating his ideas and belittling the pastor, this believer is conducting himself improperly. He is sowing discord and is not acting in divine order.

Principle to Practice: Even if you disagree with your pastor on certain things, love and submit to him as your spiritual authority. Do not go about sowing discord.

“God Told Me ...”

It is becoming the trend among believers to prefix almost every other thing they say with, “God told me.” It almost seems like these believers do not ever have any thoughts or ideas of their own and they almost continuously hear God speak to them. Obviously, this is not true.

God has given us a mind to use and there is nothing wrong in making use of the mind, especially when it is a mind that is renewed by the Word of God. Also, we need to learn to differentiate between the witness of the Holy Spirit, the voice of our own human spirit and our own natural desires or inclinations. If we have not learned to do this, how are we going to know for sure if what we think is God's Spirit speaking and not our own mind or emotions at work!

Often, believers prefix their statements with, "God told me" as an indirect way of telling their listener, "Do not question what I say." They are afraid that others might question them or ask them for clarifications about what they are saying. So, they think that if they prefix their statement with, "God told me," then no one would ever question them. However, people must be given the liberty to judge and evaluate what they hear.

Some, supposedly more spiritual believers tend to use the phrase, "God told me" to control, guide and direct the pastor. They may claim special visions, dreams or personal revelations and pass that on to the pastor so as to get the pastor to do what they feel is of God. Now, God may genuinely speak to a member in the congregation and give a Word to the church. However, that Word is to be submitted to the local shepherd for him to decide what to do with it. If the pastor and spiritual elders discern that a word or dream was just wishful thinking, they can decide to leave that word aside.

As believers, we must be very careful before we use the phrase, "God told me." Use it only when you know beyond a doubt that the Holy Spirit has spoken to you. Otherwise, just say, "I sense in my spirit ..." or "I feel strongly in my spirit ..." or "I think ..." or "I

have an idea . . .” There is nothing wrong in saying, “I thought” or “I had an idea.” After all, God wants us to use our renewed mind!

Principle to Practice: Treat the phrase, “God told me” with the reverence it deserves. Do not try to be super-spiritual claiming direct revelation from God for every little thing you say and do!

Giving Your Tithe Where it Really Belongs

If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? (1Corinthians 9:11).

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches (Galatians 6:6).

It is a Kingdom principle that those who are ministered to in spiritual things ought to give back in material things to the people who serve spiritually. This of course applies to the local church that is the spiritual House of God. The tithe belongs to the House of the Lord (Malachi 3:10) and should go to the local church where you are currently part of. Some believers who are part of a local church where they serve and receive spiritual nourishment from, send their tithes to some other place, another local church or another ministry or social outreach. This is not the correct thing to do. Your tithes must go to the local church that you are currently part of, where you are being ministered to and being cared for spiritually. Of course, you are free to send offerings to other ministers and mission organizations that you wish to partner with. But remember that your local church is the House of the Lord which you are part of and which is there to meet your spiritual needs at all times.

Principle to Practice: Give your tithe where it really belongs.

Learning How to Enter and Leave

As believers, we need to learn, if the situation arises, how to leave a local church and become part of another local church in a manner that is decent and in proper order. There can be several reasons why you as a believer would choose to leave a local church. Perhaps you are relocating from one place to another. Perhaps you are not being as spiritually nourished as you need to be. Perhaps your individual calling and gifting does not fit into the calling and gifting of your present church, and so on.

It is important, when you leave a local church for another local church, to inform the church that you are leaving. It is not proper to just “get up and go” and disappear. After all, the pastor, the spiritual elders and members of that local church have been involved in your life in one way or another. You have been part of the corporate life of the church, giving and receiving from that church. When you leave, do so with gratitude and appreciation for all that was imparted to you during your time there. When you leave, do so knowing that you and the church you are leaving are still part of the same Body, the Body of Christ. Leave with a good testimony and with good relationships with all members of that local body.

When you decide to become part of another local church, do so with humility and whole-hearted commitment. Regardless of what your spiritual experiences have been in the past, there is a lot to learn about your new church family. Align yourself to the vision, direction and calling of your new local church. Serve in the local church in whatever capacity that is given to you. Do not look for position and prominence. Your new pastor also needs to prove

you, test you and see what you are really made of, before he can release you into an area of service.

There are times when believers decide to leave a local church for not-so-pleasant reasons, for example, due to disagreements with another believer or disagreements with the pastor or spiritual elders. Even in such unpleasant situations, it is important that you settle matters with your local church before leaving. Otherwise you will be carrying ‘baggage’—of unforgiveness, of interpersonal problems and so on—with you wherever you go. In all likelihood, the same things will happen again and the cycle will keep repeating wherever you go.

Principle to Practice: If you have to leave a local church for another local church, leave and enter in a manner that pleases the Lord.

Do Not Be Gullible

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30).

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 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 (Ephesians 4:13,14).

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber (2 Peter 2:1–3).

Believers must learn to be cautious of new winds of doctrine or forms of teaching that tend to draw them away from the faith. If there is any new teaching, new doctrine and so on, check with your pastor or spiritual elders on its validity. Do not judge the validity of a teaching based on how many supporters that teacher has or how widely acclaimed that teacher might be. Always judge the teaching in the light of the written Word of God.

- If any teaching denies the Biblical understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ—who He is and what He has done, then avoid it.
- If any teaching displaces the Lordship of Christ in your life, then avoid it.
- If any teaching contradicts the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ and is not in harmony with the general instructions of Scripture, then avoid it.

On the other hand, there are those who may attempt to sow doubt and unbelief concerning the truth you are being taught in your local church. Even in such situations, discuss things with your pastor and spiritual elders. Apostle Paul admonished Timothy, “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:20,21).

There are those who with the pretense of being spiritual or scholarly, question and deny what the Scriptures plainly teach. Some of these even seem to be vehement “defenders of the faith” when in reality they are walking in doubt and unbelief, and hence discard the very essence of the Word and the nature of God.

Study the Word. Search the Scriptures. Let the written Word be the basis of what you believe.

As believers, we need to know that prophetic words spoken over our lives cannot replace the written Scriptures. Every prophetic word has to be tested in the light of the written Scriptures. God's written Word is the final authority in our lives.

Principle to Practice: Study the Word yourself and examine every teaching you are given with the written Word.

Do Not Sow Discord

Proverbs says that God hates those who cause fighting among brothers.

These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16–19).

As believers, we have to be cautious with the way we conduct ourselves and with the things we say, so that we give no occasion for discord to be created among God's people.

If by any chance, we say or do things that result in strife, then we need to act as peacemakers and bring restoration and healing.

Principle to Practice: Determine to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker, in the Body of Christ.

Receiving Through Citywide and Other Ministries

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

We need to realize that ministers and ministries that God has raised up have a citywide reach or even beyond. And then there are those ministers and ministries whose ministry extends globally. As believers, we need to receive from such ministers and ministries whom God has raised up and who are serving God with a pure heart. Take the good things you learn and use it to enrich the life of your local church. Let your local church be even more strengthened and enriched by what you receive through citywide and global ministries. You can also give offerings and partner with such ministries.

However, if you find that other citywide ministers and/or global ministers are controlling and manipulating you to leave your local church and go after them or give inappropriate amounts of money, you would need to exercise caution.

Principle to Practice: Learn to receive through citywide and global ministries and use what you learn to strengthen your local church.

Respect Spiritual Authority

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Timothy 5:17,18).

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct (Hebrews 13:7).

Part of walking in divine order is learning to respect and honor spiritual authority that has been set among us.

Violating spiritual authority opens the door to confusion and strife that give an entrance to the enemy.

In the context of a local church, in addition to the pastor/shepherd, there are spiritual elders and others to whom the pastor has delegated authority, responsibility and leadership. It is not uncommon to see members of local congregations rebel against such spiritual elders and leaders and yet, seem so obedient to the pastor. This is not an appropriate conduct in the House of God. To be submitted to the pastor also involves being submitted to the elders and leaders he has appointed in the House of God to help carry out the work of God.

On the other hand, those with authority and leadership delegated to them from the pastor should conduct themselves worthy of the trust placed in them. These spiritual elders and leaders should maintain the same spirit and walk in the same manner as their pastor. They should not abuse the authority entrusted to them to control and manipulate people in the local church.

Respect for spiritual authority should go beyond an outward form or show. It is not uncommon to see people show a form of respect for spiritual authority. They may use the correct words and so on. However, in a short while, if something goes wrong, all respect seems to disappear and the true condition of the heart manifests. This is a clear indication that respect for spiritual authority was not genuine in this case, but just an outward show. As believers we need to go beyond this!

Principle to Practice: Have genuine reverence for the spiritual authority that God has set in your life.

PROPER CONDUCT AS BELIEVERS

- Do not just attend church. Be a committed part of the local Church.
- Be receptive to the correction that God may bring into your life through your pastor or spiritual overseers.
- Never violate divine order. Do not try to control or lead your pastor.
- Love and submit to your pastor as your spiritual authority.
- Give your tithe where it really belongs.
- Do not sow discord.

4

**WHEN THERE IS ORDER THERE WILL BE
INCREASE**



Divine Order Brings Increase

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).

And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them (Acts 15:4).

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5).

At least in two instances in the life of the early Church (Acts 6 and 15), we see that when problems were addressed and things set in order, it resulted in growth and increase in the Church.

In Acts 6, the problem was in the daily distributions of food that was being made. The Greek-speaking Jews and Hebrew-speaking Jews got into strife with each other. When seven men were appointed to set things in order, Acts 6:7 says, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” giving us the immediate consequence. Of course, there were several other factors involved that resulted in the growth of the church in Jerusalem. But undeniably, setting things in order was one of these factors.

In Acts 15, we read about the strife and dispute caused over the issue of circumcising new believers. The Council at Jerusalem made a decision to set things in order and settle further controversies on this matter. This once again resulted in the strengthening and in the numerical growth of the church.

The Value of Unity

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forevermore (Psalm 133:1–3).

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand (Mark 3:24,25).

The objective of divine order is unity, harmony and peace. It enables local churches, ministers, ministries and believers to work together harmoniously with proper understanding.

Unity results in anointing, strength and blessing.

When the citywide Church is strong, anointed and blessed of the Lord, nothing can keep us from accomplishing our common objective of glorifying Christ and reaching the city for God's Kingdom.

Pastors and ministers of God have the wonderful opportunity to promote unity in the citywide Church. Most believers do not see beyond their own local church. However, as pastors we can encourage members in our local churches to look beyond our local church and seek the peace, unity and strength of the citywide Church. We can encourage believers to open their hearts to one another, share and serve one another in love.

Bonds of Peace

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and

gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1–3).

We are called to walk with lowliness, meekness, patience, and bearing each other with love. We must make every effort to keep the unity that the Spirit brings with bonds of peace.

Part of this effort, I believe, involves walking in divine order, doing things decently and in order.

Doctrinal differences do not have to cause strife and contention, so long as we agree on the core essentials of the Christian faith. Many of us use this phrase often—“In the essentials, unity. In the non-essentials, liberty”—and yet, we fight so hard over the non-essentials.

While we desire for all ministers and believers to come to enjoy the full blessings of the Gospel of Christ and experience the fullness of the Spirit’s power, we do not have to get into strife just because of individual positions on the manifestations of the Spirit, divine healing and forms of worship. It is okay if other fellow ministers do not clap their hands, dance, speak in tongues, prophesy and cast out devils, so long as they truly love the Lord Jesus and seek to glorify Christ in the city. We can still love each other and fellowship with each other.

Within Boundaries, Yet Totally Free

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Doing things decently and in order requires the understanding that:

- There are boundaries that we should not cross.
- There is spiritual authority that we must respect.
- There is a proper way to do things.
- There is accountability that we must maintain.

Yet, amidst all this there is liberty and freedom, which the Spirit of God brings. Every believer is free to grow and flourish in the call and purpose of God, doing things for building up the local church and the citywide Church, while doing things decently and in order.

Building Bridges Across Churches

Churches and ministries in the city need to build bridges that can strengthen ties among them and bring the citywide Church together, making it a powerful force in the city.

Bridges can be built in simple ways. Pastors and ministers sharing and having fellowship together are a tremendous bridge that strengthens ties across churches. There is a definite need for city pastors to build strong relationships/fellowship with each other. Usually, if two pastors have known each other from their early days, they tend to be good friends. However, such circles of friendships have to be opened up to include pastors across social, denominational, language and cultural lines.

Encouraging believers from churches to meet, share and fellowship with each other is another strong bridge that can be built. Believers ought to fellowship with each other to encourage one another and not with the intent of drawing believers from other local churches into their own church.

Resolving Conflicts and Strengthening the Weak

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23,24).

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

In all probability, conflicts between pastors, ministers and believers from different local churches in the city are likely to arise. In such situations city pastors/ministers who are spiritually mature and are able to counsel the two parties should intervene to bring resolution, restoration and peace.

Even pastors and ministers need people they can go to for counsel, encouragement and strengthening. The more mature and older ministers can provide this for the younger generation of pastors and ministers in the city.

If a fellow pastor or fellow minister in the city is overcome by a fault then the advice given in Galatians 6:1 has to be employed. Rather than completely destroying a weakened brother, those who are mature should step in and bring healing and restoration.

Nurturing the Citywide Church

Pastors, ministers, churches, ministries and believers need to work together to nurture the citywide Church.

- We nurture the citywide Church by walking in divine order.

- We become sensitive to each other's needs and are watchful that we do nothing to cause division or strife in the citywide Body of Christ.
- We pray for the unity of the citywide Church—the Body of believers in the city.
- We give into the life of the citywide Church, by encouraging and cheering each other on.
- We refrain from saying or doing things that generate strife, hurt and division.
- We are there to support one another—helping resolve strife, encouraging a weakened brother and so on.

Developing Kingdom Mentality

As pastors, churches, ministers and ministries, we need to pull down the walls of independence, isolation and individualism and come together with the focus of building the Kingdom of God in our city. We have to move away from individual church growth to the growth of the Kingdom of God in our city. Unity is not each church doing its own thing without troubling the other. Unity is when each pastor, each church, each ministry is filled with the same passion for seeing God's Kingdom established in our city and are actively co-laboring to see this happen. Each one's heart and focus is set on doing whatever it takes to see the city transformed by the Gospel—not in seeing if there is individual church growth or growth in personal ministry. When every servant of God has died to building his own church and ministry and is awakened to building the Kingdom of God, we will have unity. The growth of every local

church and ministry will be an obvious outcome of the growth of the Kingdom of God.

We need apostolic/prophetic leaders in our cities to provide solid foundational strength for the present-day citywide Church. These leaders will be able to lead the citywide Church into unity and Kingdom advancement in the city. These apostolic/prophetic leaders will have the heart, wisdom and ability to work across denominational, social and cultural lines. All of us regardless of denominational affiliation will be able to recognize, respect and flow under such apostolic/prophetic leadership. We will need several of these apostolic/prophetic leaders in the city, who will all be able to flow and work with each other for Kingdom advancement without competition and strife.

Let us reach the nations together!

DIVINE ORDER

- Divine order brings increase.
- Unity results in anointing, strength and blessing.
- Maintaining bonds of peace.
- Within boundaries, yet totally free.
- Developing Kingdom mentality.

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DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus performed many miracles on the earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **“For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23)**. Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world, when He died on the cross. Then three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and went back to heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43).

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing

for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, You shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins.

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

Publications from All Peoples Church

Teaching

A Time for Every Purpose
Breaking Personal and Generational Bondages
Divine Order in the Citywide Church
Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life
God's Word
Jesus Christ—Volume One
Kingdom Builders—Volume One
Our Redemption
The LORD is a Warrior
Understanding the Prophetic
Who We Are in Christ

Motivational

A Real Place Called Heaven
Being Spiritually Minded and Earthly Wise
Biblical Attitude Towards Work
Change
Don't Compromise Your Calling
Don't Lose Hope
Giving Birth to the Purposes of God
The Night Seasons of Life
The Power of Commitment
The Refiner's Fire

Gospel Booklets

He is Here
Love That is Deeper Than Love Itself
What Can Wash Away My Sins?



All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, India, has extended its ministry by launching its Bible College & Ministry Training Center (APC-BC&MTC) in August 2005. APC-BC&MTC equips, trains and releases faithful men and women to impact villages, towns and cities in India and other nations, for Jesus Christ.

APC-BC&MTC is a member institution of the Apostolic Council for Educational Accountability, Colorado Springs, USA, (www.acea-schools.org).

APC-BC&MTC offers 3 programs:

- The two-year **Bible College** program is for full-time students and provides spiritual and practical ministry training along with academic excellence. The program is designed to equip and empower students to successfully fulfil the call of God upon their lives. Students receive a **Diploma in Theology & Christian Ministry** upon successful completion.
- The two-year **School of Ministry** program is for working professionals. Students receive a **Diploma in Christian Ministry** upon successful completion.
- The **Practical Ministry Training** is for graduates from the Bible College who desire to undergo this training. Those completing one or more years receive a **Certificate in Practical Ministry** indicating the duration of involvement.

Classes are conducted in English. The faculty comprises of both trained and anointed teachers of the Word. All faculty and students have access to APC's Study Centre and Library (SC&L). The SC&L contains books, teaching tapes, videos, VCD's/DVD's and music CD's.

About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church, our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

This is a gift from us to you! It's FREE!

We trust you were blessed reading this book.

Thousands of copies are distributed free to many others like you. We would like to have you partner with us financially to help share God's Word with many people. Your regular financial contributions can help us take God's Word to others. As the Lord leads, become a partner with All Peoples Church. You may send your contribution by Cheque/Demand Draft/Money Order to "All Peoples Church, Bangalore."

When you write, please request for other publications. Also tell us how this book has ministered to you and include your prayer requests and comments. You can contact us at:

All Peoples Church
370, 11th Cross, 2nd Block
R.T. Nagar, Bangalore - 560 032
Karnataka, INDIA

Phone: +91-80-2354 4328

Email: contact@apcwo.org

Website: www.apcwo.org

This book exposes the lack of divine order among ministers, churches and believers in citywide churches. You will be challenged to rethink the way you conduct yourself as a minister of God or as a believer of Jesus Christ. This book is candid, open and straight from the heart! If you have the courage to face the truth and are willing to change—then read on!

If God's people learn to walk in divine order, there will be less strife, division and competition among churches, ministers, ministries and believers. This book is produced with much concern and a sincere desire to see divine order established among ministers, churches and believers in our cities, communities and local geographical regions. Issues discussed are from the perspective of the citywide Church but which hold true for a community, town or any region, where churches, ministers, ministries and believers coexist and are co-laboring.

The guidelines presented in this book come from one single basis—to have all things done decently and in order. Our desire is to see the citywide Church and the church in any community, be the kind of church that Jesus wants it to be, so that Jesus will be glorified in all things!

Ashish Raichur