

The Pastor as a Mission Leader

Dr. Samuel Telemaque

Director of Adventist Mission/Sabbath School

Theoretical Framework

Pastors become mission leaders when their lives and ministries reflect who is God and what He has done. The transcendent and immanent natures of Jesus provide the theological basis for the discussion on the pastor as mission leader.

Theoretical Framework

Who is God gives us glimpses of who is a mission pastor. What Jesus does gives insights into what a mission pastor does. A mission pastor is a reflector of a missionary God.

Theoretical Framework

Mission begins with God. Mission leaders use the word “Miso Dei” to describe the origin of God’s mission to lost humanity. The phrase conveys the idea of a sending God. He is a missionary God.

Theoretical Framework

He sent Jesus to “seek and save” the lost. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to mediate His grace or represent Him in the world. The Holy Spirit sends the Church (mission leaders) into the world so that sinners may know that His “Father is full of Grace and truth.”

Biblical Foundation

What Jesus does reveals who He is. Who He is reveals what He does. Paul captures the transcendent and immanent natures of Jesus in these verses.

Biblical Foundation

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Biblical Foundation

The concept of the kenosis reveals the practical functions of the immanent nature of Jesus. Jesus incarnated Himself among us for practical reasons: to reveal that His “Father is full of grace and truth”, to identify with our needs and struggles and to redeem us unto God.

Biblical Foundation

He performed these practical ministries by emptying Himself of His Divine nature. The kenosis relates to the cruciform. The cruciform is the act of providing salvation for all peoples. On the other hand, the kenosis made Him Human but the cruciform revealed His divinity. The cruciform and kenosis interrelate to provide salvation for all people.

Biblical Foundation

This is mission at its best. It focuses on who is Jesus and what He has done. The pastor as mission leader works within this paradigm to accomplish God's mission in the world.

The Ethos of the Pastor: How to Develop It

Mission pastors focus on their ethos, logos and methods of communicating their message or logos. In this presentation, I describe how a mission pastor develops his ethos and how he applies the kenosis and cruciform to share Christ in diverse contexts to effect transformation in human lives, cultures, and worldviews.


Mission pastors cultivate qualities that enhance their ethos. These qualities include a growth mindset, virtues, capacity and environment. Let us examine how these qualities develop the ethos of a mission pastor.

The Environment

Mission pastors assess prevailing environment to become knowledgeable of existing realities. They ask such questions as: What is happening now? What issues occupy the minds of people at the present time? What are the gaps in their communities?

These questions increase their knowledge of existing realities. This consciousness challenges mission pastors to ask more questions. They may ask why are these things happening? How can these issues be solved or ameliorated? What would be the results of solving these issues?

The data gathered from such investigation enhances the credibility or ethos of mission leaders.



Virtues

Virtues further enhance the ethos of mission pastors. Virtues are moral standards, which influence how mission pastors live and work. If mission pastors cultivate these virtues, their ethos tends to grow steadily.

Effective mission pastors tend to cultivate “virtues of prudence (practical wisdom), courage, self-control (self-mastery) and justice, which constitute the foundations of leadership and the crowning virtues of magnanimity (greatness) and humility

Capacity

The capacity of mission pastors refers to growth in their cognitive, emotional and spiritual development and their abilities to manage complexity. This increased capacity allows the mission leader to expand his influence to multiple arenas.

Leadership Capacity

However, to expand his influence he needs to develop his capacity in multiple areas. First is leadership capacity. It is steady growth in his ability to plan, organize, schedule, monitor, lead, delegate, implement and inspire people to perform to the best of their abilities.

Adaptive Capacity

Second, is an adaptive captivity. The mission pastors learns to adjust to changing realities. He is open to new perspectives, he learns to manage complexities and he is a life-long learner.

Management Capacity

Third is management capacity. It refers to growth in managerial skills to increase his effectiveness and efficiency. The mission pastor increases his capacity to attempt more complex mission tasks. This increase capacity to manage complexity enriches the ethos of the mission leader.

Technical Capacity

Fourth is the technical capacity of the mission leader. It is an increased ability to use social media, to work in cross-cultural contexts, explain theories undergirding mission practice. The mission leader's ability to explain theoretical underpinnings of mission greatly enhances ethos.

Positive Growth Mindset

A growth mind set refers to a “belief that people, including oneself, can positively change their talents, abilities, and intelligence.” A mission leader is a life-long learner. He brings to his mission practices new principles, theories, and values. He lives a flexible and fluid life. However, he maintains core biblical values and beliefs. On the other hand, he is open to new methods, new perspectives and realities.

He lives a flexible and fluid life. However, he maintains core biblical values and beliefs. On the other hand, he is open to new methods, new perspectives and realities.

Application of Mission Principles

The mission leader's ethos relates to his logos. The logos is a message. In the context of mission, the gospel is the message. The ethos of the mission pastor influences how people perceive his message. However, the ethos of the leader is not sufficient to make the gospel effective in human hearts.

The kenosis and cruciform give power to the gospel. The mission pastor needs to know how to apply the principles from the kenosis and cruciform to communicate the gospel in cross-cultural contexts. The principle of identification forms the basis of kenosis.

The Incarnational Principle

The kenosis and cruciform give power to the gospel. The mission pastor needs to know how to apply the principles from the kenosis and cruciform to communicate the gospel in cross-cultural contexts.

The Incarnational Principle

Jesus dwelt amongst us. He emptied Himself of divinity to identify with us. The mission pastor first task is to incarnate himself among the people with whom he wants to share the gospel. The incarnational ministry enables the mission leaders to identify with the pain, struggles, fears, anxiety, cultures and values of their audiences.

The Incarnational Principle

This act of identification makes them an insiders, learners, researchers and participants. Incarnation ministry gives legitimacy to mission pastors to share the gospel. They gain the right to share the gospel. In a cultural sense, they empty themselves of old assumptions, and cultures to immerse into the culture of their target audiences.

The Incarnational Principle

The kenosis gives the mission leaders right to make Christ known to their audiences. They know their audiences and their audiences know them. The shepherds know the sheep. The sheep knows the shepherds. The kenosis principle prepares the people to hear the gospel. It also prepares the mission leaders to share the gospel from the perspective of the people.

The Reciprocity Principle

The substitutionary death of Jesus is the very essence of mission. It focuses on what God has done to save sinners. It also implies our indebtedness to Jesus.

The Reciprocity Principle

The reciprocity principle undergirds Jesus' substitutionary death. Isaiah describes the principle of reciprocity in these verses.

The Reciprocity Principle

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed ... he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:5, 12).

The Reciprocity Principle

The transcendent nature enable us to evaluate ourselves in light of His glory and majesty. On the other hand, His substitutionary nature evokes our indebtedness to God. This is the mission leader's first work. He needs to master these missional strategies.

Summary

The mission pastor works like Jesus by developing his ethos, incarnating himself among his targeted audience, and by applying the reciprocity principle to evoke his audience's indebtedness to God. This is the work of mission pastors.