

Lay Pastors Ministry

with



SUSAN CAULDER

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PACE

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PREFACE



Susan with Melvin

My name is Susan Caulder and I am a lay person. I was involved in the Lay Pastor Ministry for many years at my local church and served on the Lay Pastors Ministry Board of Directors for 5 years as well as being a long time friend of Mel Steinbron, the founder of Lay Pastors Ministry.

I have since moved to a new church and am no longer a Lay Pastor, but the things I learned about pastoral care during that time, are with me today. They help me see the church, my pastors and fellow congregants through the eyes of Christ and not my own.

In the year of 2026

-Susan Caulder
USA

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#1

Lay Pastors have a God-given assignment

Certainly, the start of any ministry is for God to do the calling. If you desire to serve the Lord as a pastor or lay pastor you must be called by God. We are all called to lead in the cause for Christ, but we all have different gifts and different callings to use those gifts.

If God has called you as a lay pastor, He promises to equip you. As you respond to this call, you will experience the Holy Spirit to lead you through all the ups and downs, joys and challenges that come with living in a fallen world.

In God's sovereign plan, He has called you to lead people to Christ and shepherd them where they are. As a pastor, your job is to train your flock. As a lay pastor, your job is to support your pastor, submit to his/her authority and learn how to care for the congregation.

Lay Pastors have a God-given assignment to be "love with skin on". As we know, this is easier said than done, but we must trust God's grace for the courage and humility needed as you provide pastoral care and remain fully dependent on God and His faithfulness as He equips you for this calling. Can the 'Pastor do it alone?' Is a question that is easily answered. A big NO. Pastors cannot be everything to everyone. And he/she cannot possibly know all the people in their congregation. Lay Pastors Ministry creates a culture so that the congregation does not expect a visit from their Pastor, but their Lay Pastor. It prevents those inevitable problems of people thinking that they must not be important enough for the Pastor to visit when they are sick. And hopefully prevents Pastor burnout as pastors try to carry the weight of an entire congregation on their own. Most of us get

overwhelmed with having a sick child or spouse at home, can you imagine if you were expected to carry the weight of 100's or 1000's peoples burdens? It's too much.

A Pastor of a church must be keen to discern who might make a good Lay Pastor. They must choose wisely. Certainly 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is a good list of qualifications for Lay Pastors as much as for Pastors (for that matter anybody in church leadership). A Lay Pastor is representing the church but is also a reflection of the Pastor. The Pastor must choose wisely based on prayer and discernment from the Holy Spirit. You want seasoned Christians, strong in their faith, practiced testimony, excellent reputation and with a heart for people. They must also be humble, teachable and trust God.

Ultimately, the Lay Pastor is answerable to God. If they are not called to serve, its best not to have them in the ministry. But if they are called to serve, God has a way of getting people's attention. There was one person years ago that was asked to be a Lay Pastor. She declined stating she was just too busy. One by one, her "busy" schedule opened up. A weekly meeting was changed to monthly. A commitment to watch her grandkids was no longer needed as a spot opened up for the kids to get into a preschool. The elderly neighbor she cared for died. And with much time on her hands, she gladly accepted the calling and absolutely loved being a Lay Pastor. She already had the gifts, but now, those gifts were being intentionally utilized through the Lay Pastor's Ministry.

Lay Pastors Ministry is a Biblically based ministry. Done correctly, can have a positive impact on a congregation. It provides those who have pastoral gifts to pastor and lessens the burden of pastoring on the Pastor!

#2

Lay Pastors – The P in PACE

I'd like to focus on the P in PACE today. Prayer is the cornerstone of all ministry and is the foundation of our relationship with our Lord. Jesus Christ was crucified, died and resurrected so we could have a relationship with the one true God. I believe we often underestimate the amazing privilege and responsibility of prayer.

But what is prayer? Prayer is simply talking to God. Believers pray to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:17, John 14:13 and Ephesians 6:18). We only can know God through prayer. There is no special formula. Although I am a fan of the acronym ACTS. Adoration Confession Thanksgiving and Supplication. This acronym is thought to be first published in the late 1800s. Following this pattern keeps me on track so I do not wonder off course or forget anything. Prayer does not have to be loud, long or poetic. It needs to be authentic. God can read your mind and knows your most inner thoughts. There is nothing you can hide from him. He will know if you are humble with genuine repentance when you pray. Remember the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. This passage highlights that outward piety is meaningless without a sincere heart. The Pharisee was rejected, but the tax collector was forgiven.

How Does Prayer work? Prayer is one of God's great mysteries. How does God listen to our thoughts, spoken words, anguished cries, and joyful praise? How does it reach from earth to Heaven? We may never know the answer to this question, but He no doubt does! One of my

sweetest prayers answered is this: I've been studying the Bible for many years through Bible Study Fellowship (bsfinternational.org). There are men and women groups all over the world. I prayed for years my husband would join a group. He gave lots of reasons why he couldn't go. Football was on Monday nights, he worked all day and didn't want to go out in evening, he didn't know anyone who was going etc. Every year I would ask him – for 10 years in a row. The 11th year I said a bit sarcastically – "Well guess you're not going to go this year too." He surprised me and said: "You know what, I think I will." He has not only gone for these past 5 years, but each year he invites more and more men to join him. This year he has 4 guys carpooling with him each week.

Persistence in prayer pays off! Although God is not obligated to respond to any prayer – He will always respond in a way that is for our good and His glory.

How about the prayer of an unbeliever - does God hear them? Absolutely! God is sovereign and omniscient. He can answer any prayer any way he wants to. His mercy and love for all people is boundless. He hears the prayers of those who seek him. Those who seek him are rewarded with the gift of eternal life if they earnestly repent of their sins and turn to Jesus as Savior.

The amazing thing about prayer is also how it impacts our relationships with one another. When you pray for someone, it's impossible not to fall in love with them. I think that's why we are to pray for our enemies. It's difficult, if not impossible to continue to see someone as an enemy when you pray for them. I remember when I was assigned my flock. Some of the people that were in my flock I didn't know well. I started praying for them. On Church days I'd see them and it would bring such joy to my heart. I would run up to

them and give a hearty greeting. They would look at me like – do I know you? I had to remember that I knew them through the lens of Christ, and they just knew me as the nice church lady.

To wrap this up, Prayer should always be our first line of defense, our first breath when we wake up in the morning and our last as we go to sleep at night. People fail to pray because people do not fully understand who God is and their need of His saving grace.

#3

Taking a look at your Bible

I live in the United States of America. It is said that close to 90 % of every American household has a Bible – actually on average up to 3 Bibles. I myself have at least 15 – Different translations, sizes, some are fancy, encased in leather with gold leafing and some look like a cheap paperback novel. Some are old and worn and some have never been opened.

Of course, its not how a Bible looks that makes a Bible – its what's on the inside! The Bible is a very unusual book in many ways. Of course its not just one book, its 66 books. There is not just one author, but over 40 authors. It was not written over a year or so, but over 1500 hundred years. There is no other book written that has had so many prophecies come true, so many historical events confirmed by other writings and archeology. Its really amazing.

The Holy Spirit inspired human authors such as Moses, David, Isaiah, Matthew, John, Paul and others to write God's true story. Each writer reflects his own personality and culture but records God's words and truth. Despite its many authors, the unity of the Bible theme reveals its authenticity and divine inspiration. God's divine oversight has preserved the integrity of the Scriptures through the ages. And Archeological discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the reliability of the scriptural text.

We have at our disposal the very words of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking,

correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. God didn't leave us without instructions and He didn't answer every question we have about nature and about Him, but as Deuteronomy 29:29 states 29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. He has revealed all we need to know – we must trust His word. For every Christian, Bible study is essential.

The Bible represents God's revelation of Himself, His Son and His sovereign plan for human history. From Genesis to Revelation, we have all we need to know. Biblical truth transcends time, generations, cultures and every human boundary. We have stories and messages that give us examples of how to live and how not to live, but also the Bible reveals ultimate truth about our sin and the salvation God has provided through the atoning sacrifice of His own son. Jesus and His work represent the heart of all Scripture.

In America – although 90% of those households have a Bible, only about 33% of them read it. The most wonderful book ever written. Seems crazy to me.

I usually read from my 365 NIV Bible. It has the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs readings for each day. I read approximately 15 minutes a day and finish the Bible every year. I've been doing this for 20 years. You would think I'd know it by now, but God's Word is alive and active, It's not just words on a page, it's alive! And so I approach my reading each day expectant for the Lord to speak to me. It amazes me that I feel like I'm reading some scripture for the first time, when I know I've read the words before. He always gives me just what I need and sometimes He gives me what I need to tell to others. I love God's word and am blessed to

have such easy access to it.

Today I just like to encourage you to take a look at your Bible. Open it with expectation of meeting God. He is always faithful to provide just what you need.

#4

How do you see Jesus?

How do you see Jesus? Do you think of Him as a babe in a manger? Is He your friend? Teacher? Father? Is He the angry guy that cleared out the temple? Is He the guy that cursed a fig tree that bore no fruit or the miracle worker that fed the 5000? Is He beaten and bloody hanging on a cross? Do you imagine Him, eyes like blazing fire coming on a white horse and leading the armies of heaven? Do you see Him as the Faithful and True King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

Jesus is all those people and more. When you think of who He is and what He went through for us. Who are we that the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings left heaven above to pave the way for us to be able to have a relationship with a holy God.

As we get closer to celebrating Easter – I think of the Risen Christ – the one we see in Revelation Chapter 19:11-16.

Let's take a closer look at 8 of these descriptive details given by John in the book of Revelation, starting with His fiery, blazing eyes!

Description #1W: When Jesus came the first time, He had eyes that wept tears over Jerusalem and over the grave of Lazarus. He had gentle eyes that welcomed children to His lap, compassionate eyes that looked at Peter. But when He returns, we see the powerful, piercing, penetrating, purifying, gaze of divine omniscience that sees all and judges rightly. Hebrews 4:13 says nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before

the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

Description #2 He is also described as having many crowns. When He came the first time, he wore a crown made of thorns, the very curse of sin. He wore the crown of thorns so we could wear His crown of righteousness. But at His second coming Jesus is wearing all the crowns. He is the supreme, undisputed authority overall.

Description #3: He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself.... When Jesus came the first time, we could not even begin to grasp who he was. His glory was hidden, But when He comes again, there will be no doubt. And, although Revelation includes names within this description "Faithful and True", "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" ...there is still a mysterious name only He knows. The wonder and mystery of the person of Jesus defies our comprehension. He is both known by us and utterly beyond us.

Description #4 . He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood. When Jesus came the first time His garments were soaked in His own blood. But here his blood washes the saint's robes white, and He now comes to spill the blood of His enemies. He is about to wage a righteous battle. Here we see both the price of redemption and the cost of judgment.

Description #5, "His name is the Word of God". This "word" is an active force, orchestrated by God to accomplish His purposes. John 1:14 tells us "The Word became flesh". When Jesus came the first time, He came to reveal God. He was God in human skin. But at His second coming, Jesus comes with a final word—the Word of God in judgment. God has spoken and revealed Himself.

Description #6. The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. These armies of heaven are also riding on white horses and dressed in white linen. None of them carried weapons. Is it the multitude of the redeemed?

or Angels? Is it both? In His first coming, Jesus was forsaken even by His friends, but when He returns, the armies of heaven stand with Him and for Him in countless numbers. He leads; they follow. He wields the power; they share the victory.

Description #7 "coming out of His mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty." When Jesus came the first time, He was pierced by a sword but now He wields the sword as conquering king. So total is His authority that His mere word brings instant judgment.

When He came the first time, He took God's full wrath upon Himself for our sins. But, at His second coming He exercises God's wrath against evil. The winepress pictures the harvest, the crushing of the grapes that causes the juice to flow and the crushing defeat of God's enemies that will cause their very blood to flow. A day of reckoning is certain, and we must live considering that truth. God will exercise His deserved wrath against those who have refused His offer of mercy.

And finally, description #8. "On His robe and on His thigh, He has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Like a banner accentuating His absolute power and authority, Jesus is King of the highest order. He is a Lord to which all lesser lords must surrender. At His first coming, a mocking but truthful wooden sign was posted over Jesus' cross that said, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews". But at His second coming, there is no doubt who Jesus is. He is the King...always and forever. Clearly proclaimed in a way all must acknowledge, Jesus comes to establish His eternal kingdom.

#5

ACCOUNTABILITY

Today, I want to briefly speak about accountability—what it means, why it matters, and how Scripture calls us to live accountable lives before God and one another. The Lay Pastors ministry is successful because each lay pastor is accountable to the ministry by submitting accountability reports and attending lay pastor training.

At its core, accountability is about responsibility. It's being answerable for our actions, decisions, and even our thoughts. But for the Christian, accountability goes even deeper—it's rooted in our relationship with God and our calling to live in community with others.

1. Accountability to God

First, we are accountable to God, our Creator and Judge. Romans 14:12 says:

"So then each of us will give an account of ourselves to God."
(Romans 14:12, NIV)

This verse reminds us that nothing we do is hidden from God. One day, we will stand before Him and answer for how we lived our lives—not just our actions, but our hearts and motives.

That truth isn't meant to scare us, but to inspire holiness. God's grace doesn't remove accountability—it empowers us to live rightly.

2. Accountability to One Another

God also calls us to live in community, not isolation. James 5:16 says:

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

This verse captures the essence of Christian accountability. When we share our struggles and sins with trusted brothers and sisters, we invite healing, support, and growth. True accountability happens when there is honesty, love, and prayer.

Proverbs 27:17 says:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

We need each other. Accountability partners, mentors, small groups—these are not just Christian programs, but biblical tools for growth.

3. Jesus as Our Model

Jesus modeled perfect accountability to the Father. In John 5:19, He said:

"Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing."

Jesus lived in total submission to the Father's will. In the same way, we are called to live in obedient dependence on God, seeking His guidance daily.

Jesus also expected accountability from those he sent out -2 by 2 in Luke 10. When each pair completed their missions, they returned to Jesus and told him all they had done. They reported back their successful ministry, their experiences and they did it all with joy. Being accountable is not a hardship or difficult task, it's a way to encourage each other, support one another and rejoice in what God is doing.

A few questions for your lay pastors and your lay pastors ministry -
Are you living in a way that reflects accountability to God in your role as a lay pastor?

Do your lay pastoral ministers listen and support one another and point each other to Christ?

Are you open to correction, to growth, to being sharpened?

After Jesus heard the excited reports of casting out demons in His name – He acknowledges their successful ministry and the power they have been given, but gently rebukes them to rejoice that their names are written in heaven rather than demon submission. After all, that's what it's all about – bringing people to Jesus by loving each other – Love with skin on.

Accountability is not about judgment—it's about grace, growth, and godliness. May we walk in the light together, holding each other up as we pursue Christ.

#6

A in PACE - AVAILABLE

I want to speak briefly about something simple but deeply powerful in our calling as Christian lay ministers: availability. In a world of constant motion, noise, and distraction, one of the most Christlike things we can offer is our presence—our full, undistracted, caring presence.

Scripture tells us that God is always available to His people. In Psalm 46:1 we read:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

That phrase—"a very present help"—reminds us that presence is more than proximity. It's attention, compassion, and readiness to respond. As lay pastors, we're not called to fix every problem or have every answer—but we are called to be present.

Jesus modeled this ministry beautifully. In John 11, when Lazarus died, Jesus didn't rush to perform a miracle right away. First, He showed up. He wept with Mary and Martha (John 11:35). He didn't start with a solution; He started with presence. His availability allowed them to feel seen, heard, and loved in their pain.

Paul reminds us in Romans 12:15:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

This is the ministry of presence—being there when someone's world

falls apart, when they get the diagnosis, when the marriage is struggling, or when the loneliness hits hard. Often, what people need most is not advice or theology, but someone who will simply be with them.

We can't all be Billy Grahams, but He asks us to be available. One of my flock families had a daughter who suffered with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. I was their lay pastor for 10 years. This young lady died at age 30. Even though I had not been their lay pastor for close to 15 years (I had moved), I attended the funeral. Did I have to do that? No – did it make a difference to that family? – Yes. They treated me like a long lost friend, I was asked to sit with the family and I was introduced as their "special friend." I don't remember doing anything special while I was their lay pastor. I simply sent cards on holidays and birthdays, stopped by every now and then and on occasion made a phone call or delivered a plate of homemade cookies. I was intentional about reaching out to them and they remembered.

In Acts 3, Peter and John encounter a lame beggar. Peter says:

"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you..." (Acts 3:6)

What did Peter have? His time, his attention, his willingness to stop. And that's where God's power moved.

As lay pastors, we don't always carry resources, titles, or answers—but we carry the Spirit of Christ within us. We carry the capacity to show up. And that matters more than we often realize.

So I encourage you: Make availability an essential part of your ministry. Answer the text. Sit beside the hospital bed. Pause to pray

with someone in need. Let your time become someone's lifeline to God's love.

Because the ministry of presence says, "You are not alone." And in that sacred space, Jesus is there too!

#7

Living Love Through Intentional Contact: The “C” in PACE

Let us reflect deeply on the words of 1 John 3:18:

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

This verse is more than a gentle reminder, it’s a profound call to action. As followers of Jesus, we are not merely invited to speak of love but to demonstrate it with our lives. Words, while powerful, can become hollow without the weight of action behind them. Promises are easy. Intentions can be noble. But true Christian love, the kind that mirrors Jesus Christ, is not just spoken; it is lived out through action, consistency, and sincerity.

When we look at the life of Jesus, we don’t see a man who merely preached love from the pulpit or synagogue steps. We see a Savior who embodied love in every interaction. He touched lepers when no one else would. He fed the hungry crowds. He welcomed tax collectors and sinners. He wept with the grieving. He healed the sick. He forgave the fallen. And ultimately, He laid down His life for us all.

As lay pastors, this example should strike a deep chord within us. We are not professionals cloistered in church offices; we are shepherds embedded in the everyday lives of God’s people. And it is in that day-to-day context that the call to “love in action and in truth”

becomes urgent and essential.

Melvin Steinbron, a pioneer of the lay pastor movement, understood this profoundly. In his book *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?*, Steinbron emphasizes that the work of pastoral care does not rest solely on the shoulders of clergy. Instead, he casts a vision for every believer, especially lay leaders, to be involved in the spiritual care and shepherding of others. For him, lay pastors are not second-tier ministers. They are front-line agents of God's love in action.

One of Steinbron's core convictions was the importance of intentional Christian contact. That means not waiting for people to come to you with their needs, but actively seeking them out. It's about walking the extra mile to call, visit, pray with, or listen to someone. It's about checking in, not just during a crisis but consistently, because love is not a reaction, it's a lifestyle.

Loving "in truth" means our care is sincere. It is not for show. It's not to boost our image or reputation in the church community. It is rooted in the very character of God, who is love. It means we go beyond surface-level kindness and enter into the real, sometimes messy, lives of others with compassion and grace. We don't love people to earn their favor or to win approval. We love them because Christ first loved us.

And loving "with actions" means putting feet to our faith. It's easy to say, "I'll pray for you," and then forget. But when someone shares a burden, we stop right then, wherever we are, and pray with them. It means showing up when it's inconvenient, offering help when it costs us something, and being present when others walk through the valleys of life.

As lay pastors, we must ask ourselves daily: How am I showing God's love today? Am I being intentional in connecting with the people God has entrusted to me? Do I notice when someone hasn't been around or is hurting in silence? Do I make the effort to reach out, or am I waiting for someone else to do it?

Christian leadership is not about being perfect; it's about being faithful. It's about allowing God's love to flow through us in real, tangible ways. Whether we're leading a small group, checking in with a church member, writing a note of encouragement, or having a cup of coffee with someone who's struggling, we are making the love of Christ visible.

In the end, our lives should echo the truth of 1 John 3:18. Let our love not be confined to words, but proven in action. Let us love in truth, not just intention. And let us commit, as Melvin Steinbron encouraged, to making intentional Christian contacts that reflect the heart of the Good Shepherd.

Today, ask God to show you someone who needs your attention. Ask Him to give you the courage to reach out. And then, go. Because real love doesn't wait to be convenient. Real love shows up.

#8

Being a Christian Example: The E in PACE

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to more than just belief, we are called to be an example. Not just in what we say, but in how we live. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul exhorts young Timothy, saying:

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."

This verse isn't just for the young, it's a call to all of us. Every Christian is being watched by someone: our children, coworkers, neighbors, or friends. And in a world where people are desperate for hope and truth, our lives may be the only Bible someone reads.

Of course, our ultimate model is Christ Himself. In John 13:15, after washing His disciples' feet, Jesus said:

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Jesus' humility, compassion, obedience, and servant-heartedness show us what it means to live a godly life. He didn't just teach truth, He embodied it. He fed the hungry, healed the broken, forgave the sinners, and spent time in prayer with His Father. If we want to be Christ-like examples, it starts with learning from the Master.

One of the most consistent parts of Jesus' life was His prayer life.

Even though He was the Son of God, He regularly withdrew to quiet places to pray (Luke 5:16). Before choosing His disciples, He spent all night in prayer. Before the cross, He prayed in Gethsemane. He taught His followers to pray, and showed them how essential it was.

If prayer was crucial for Jesus, how much more do we need it? Prayer keeps our hearts aligned with God. It fuels our love, sharpens our witness, and reminds us of our dependence on the Holy Spirit. Without prayer, we're trying to represent Christ in our own strength and we will fall short every time.

In Colossians 4:2-3, Paul writes:

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message..."

Prayer isn't just personal, it also opens doors for the Gospel. If we want to be faithful examples, we must start on our knees.

Few have championed everyday Christians living out their faith like Melvin Steinbron, the founder of the Lay Pastor Ministry. In his book *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?*, Steinbron laid out a vision that every church member could be trained and empowered to shepherd others, not just the professional clergy.

Steinbron believed that being a Christian wasn't a spectator sport. Every believer is called to serve, to disciple, and to be a spiritual example in their sphere of influence. Lay pastors are not theologians or seminary graduates. They are everyday people who pray, care, and walk with others through life's ups and downs. Living out the Gospel authentically and intentionally is part of being a successful lay pastor.

Being a lay pastor reminds us that the role of a Christian isn't confined to a Sunday pew. It's in homes, hospitals, schools, workplaces and wherever God has placed us. The body of Christ grows when ordinary believers embrace their extraordinary calling to reflect Jesus.

Being an example means letting our faith show in how we speak, how we respond to conflict, how we use our time and money, and how we treat people, especially those who can do nothing for us in return.

Philippians 2:14-15 gives us this charge:

"Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky."

We are meant to shine. Not for our glory, but so others can see Christ in us.

One Sunday, I drove 100 miles to reach 8 people who could not come to church due to various illnesses. It was a communion Sunday, so I got some of the consecrated bread and juice and went to hospital rooms, nursing homes and homes of those who missed communion. It took my entire Sunday afternoon. Had I viewed the visits as a task to check off a list, I'm certain I would have been grumbling by the end of the day, but I know the Lord was calling me to worship Him with these people. Instead of feeling cheated out of a Sunday afternoon, I felt the Lord's presence and was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude.

You don't need a microphone, a degree, or a title to make a difference. You need a surrendered heart, a commitment to prayer,

and the courage to walk out your faith, even when it's hard. Whether you're leading a small group, caring for a neighbor, praying for your coworkers, or simply offering a listening ear, you are a light in a dark world.

As a lay pastor, be intentional, pray, love, serve, and be grateful God has assigned this call and service to you.

And may we live in such a way that people are drawn not to us, but to Christ in us.

#9

Common Difficulties in Lay Pastoral Care and How to Overcome Them: Resistance

In his years of developing and guiding the Lay Pastors Ministry, Mel Steinbron learned that pastoral care is both deeply rewarding and often challenging. While the vision is clear, ensuring that everyone in the congregation receives loving, consistent care, the path is not without obstacles. Today, I want to focus on a common difficulty that arises, the parishioners who are resistant to lay pastoral ministry, and how we can respond in ways that honor Christ and build relationships.

One of the most common challenges in lay pastoral care is encountering people who don't think they need a lay pastor or don't want it.

Some say, "I'm fine. I don't need anyone to check on me." Others may fear that a lay pastor is there to pry into personal matters or to "replace" the senior pastor. Some simply prefer privacy, especially if they've been hurt in the past by church relationships.

In Mel Steinbron's words, resistance is normal, and it often comes from misunderstanding the lay pastors ministry. Many people have never experienced genuine, Christ-centered pastoral care from someone other than the clergy. They don't yet realize that this is not about invading their space, it's about extending God's love and presence.

When someone is hesitant or says "no" to lay pastoral care, it's

important not to take it personally. The key is to build trust, not push harder. Here are some approaches Mel often suggested:

Clarify the purpose: Let them know this isn't about judgment, control, or being nosy, it's about encouragement, prayer, and friendship in Christ.

Offer Low- Pressure contact: Instead of formal visits right away, send an occasional card, text, or friendly note. Show care without overwhelming them.

Be Patient and Consistent: People often soften over time when they see you're genuine and not going away.

Start with prayer: Sometimes, the first step is simply letting them know, "Even if we don't talk often, I'm praying for you."

That quiet faithfulness speaks volumes.

Mel Steinbron strongly emphasized that every person in the church, young or old, healthy or sick, active or inactive, needs pastoral care. It's not just for those in crisis. We all face spiritual battles, discouragement, and seasons of loneliness. Everybody needs a lay pastor.

Pastoral care keeps us connected to the Body of Christ. It reminds us we belong, that we are not forgotten, and that someone is lifting us before the Lord regularly. Scripture tells us in Galatians 6:2 to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Lay pastoral care is one of the simplest, most powerful ways to obey that command.

Some people believe that "real" pastoral care only happens in person,

but Mel taught that prayer is pastoral care. When you take someone's name before the throne of grace, you are engaging in one of the most loving acts you can offer. Prayer invites God to work in ways we can't see and often can't accomplish ourselves.

Sometimes, especially with resistant parishioners, prayer may be the only form of care you can give at first. And that's okay. In fact, Mel encouraged lay pastors to see prayer not as a backup plan, but as the central part of their ministry.

One of Mel Steinbron's well-known guiding principles is the "Maximum Prayer and Minimum Contact" formula. The idea is simple:

Pray for your people daily. Lift them to God, even if you never hear back from them.

Keep contact short and warm. A quick phone call, a short visit, a cheerful card, quality matters more than length or frequency.

This formula is especially helpful for busy lay pastors and for those serving people who don't want frequent communication. When prayer is consistent, even minimal personal contact can still create a sense of care and connection.

When we began lay ministry in my church, I was given several widows. They were sweet ladies but grew up in a time when only the pastor would visit, or one told me that she didn't need anyone to "confide in". I clarified the purpose of the ministry, and they were quick to accept prayer, but not so quick to accept the phone calls and visits.

But over time, being consistent with my contacts – cards, phone calls

and intentional face to face meetings a church (before or after service) the resistance fell away in a way I didn't anticipate. Not only did they allow my visits and phone calls, but they started to send me cards, and look for me before or after service. When they were in the hospital, they called me first! People need to know that someone cares for them and the lay pastors ministry does it in such an intentional way, the resistance can be chipped away at and given enough time and prayer completely melt away.

So I encourage you, if you're in lay pastoral ministry, remember that resistance does not mean failure. In fact, it's often just part of the process. Your calling is to be faithful, to pray, to reach out in love, and to let God open hearts in His timing.

Mel often reminded lay pastors: "You may be the only person praying for that one individual. You may be the quiet lifeline God uses in their life."

So don't be discouraged. Keep praying. Keep sending the card. Keep making that quick call. Your ministry matters more than you know.

Lay pastoral care is not about replacing the pastor, it's about multiplying care so that no one slips through the cracks. It's about fulfilling Jesus' command to love one another, not just in words, but in action and truth. Whether people are eager or resistant, God has called us to be faithful.

And as Mel Steinbron taught, prayer will always be the heart of that faithfulness.

#10

Difficulties making contacts

"Faithful Over a Little: The Call and Challenge of Lay Pastoral Care"

Greetings, Susan Caulder here, former Lay Pastor and friend of Mel Steinbron. My last message started a series about difficulties common to lay pastoring,

Today we will look at difficulties making contacts.

As lay pastors, we have a shared calling, a calling to care, to reach out, to love, and to shepherd God's people. As lay pastors, our role may not carry a formal title or an office in the church building, but it carries the heart of Jesus' ministry: presence. And with that comes both great blessing and some very real challenges.

One of the most common difficulties we face in this calling is simply getting in touch with people. You may have experienced this yourself:

- You call and leave a message, but no one calls back.
- You try to schedule a visit, but the person is busy, traveling, or just doesn't have time.
- You plan a drop-in or offer to stop by, but they politely decline.
- Sometimes, you might feel like you're bothering people.

This can be discouraging. After all, we're just trying to show care, to listen, to pray, and to be the presence of Christ in someone's week.

But here's the first reminder for us today: we are not responsible for the outcome, only the obedience.

Let's look at Luke 16:10:

"Whoever is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much..."

Jesus reminds us that what we do, even when it feels small or unnoticed, matters deeply. That brief phone call? That text message with a scripture verse? That card you mailed with a personal note? It may not seem like much, but it could be exactly what someone needs in that moment.

In Mel Steinbron's model of lay pastoring, the goal isn't to check a box, it's to build relationships. It's to offer spiritual friendship. And friendships take time. Sometimes, the person you're trying to reach might not respond right away. They might be going through a season of busyness, grief, or even spiritual distance. That's okay. We're not called to fix people, we're called to be there.

So what can we do when people don't seem available?

1. Respect their time and don't give up.

Romans 12:10 says:

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Respecting someone's time is an act of love. But honoring them also means being persistent in care, not nagging, but gently present. Try shorter connections: a brief phone call, a kind text message, a birthday or holiday card. Let them know you're thinking of them. Sometimes that consistent, gentle presence builds trust over time.

2. Adjust expectations, people are busy.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says:

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."

People may not be ready now, but seasons change. Your message today might prepare them for a deeper connection down the road. Be patient. The seed you plant now might bear fruit months later.

3. Pray more than you pursue.

Colossians 4:2-3 encourages us:

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door..."

Sometimes the best thing we can do is pray for doors to open, relational doors, spiritual doors, and opportunities to care. Prayer keeps our hearts aligned with God's will, not our own schedule.

4. Be faithful. Be patient. Trust Jesus.

Galatians 6:9 reminds us:

"Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

There is one woman I remember, she lived alone, and the one time I stopped by to drop a small gift on her doorstep, I could see through her windows, she was a hoarder. Her house was a disaster. She asked me not to stop by her house again. I was relegated to phone calls, cards and chance meetings on Sunday mornings. I felt terrible, that I had crossed a boundary I should not have by invading her privacy. I

thought she would never speak to me again. For 3 years I respected her boundaries and after 3 years of praying, sending cards, short phone calls, she actually called me! She needed a ride to the doctor's because her car was in the shop and her daughter was not able to get off work to take her. I was so humbled. I'm not sure how many people she called before she got to me, but I made the list!!

This work is long-term. You may not see immediate results, but your faithfulness is never wasted. Jesus notices your efforts, even when others don't. And as He said in Matthew 25:23:

"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much."

Being a lay pastor isn't about being impressive. It's about being available. It's about showing the love of Jesus in small, faithful ways, again and again.

So today, if you're feeling discouraged, let me encourage you: God sees your faithfulness. Jesus knows your heart. And even when it feels like you're not getting through, the Holy Spirit is at work in ways you cannot see.

Stay the course. Keep caring. Keep showing up however you can. Be faithful in the little. That's the heart of lay pastoring. And God will do the rest. Amen.

#11

Rekindle the flame

Challenge #3 About serving as a Lay Pastor: Rekindle the flame.

This is my 3rd talk about the challenges of being a lay pastor as laid out by Mel Stienbron in his book "Can the Pastor do it Alone?" Lay pastors ministry, at its heart, is shepherding God's people by being love with skin on. We answer the call to enter God's service as lay pastors and with good intentions, to proceed how we have been trained.

But let's be honest. Many lay pastors begin with enthusiasm, only to find themselves overwhelmed, distracted, or discouraged. The demands of life, whether it is work, family, church, friends, interruptions, disasters, or even fun times, creep in. Sometimes it's as simple as procrastination, you put off contacting your flock. The flock goes unvisited. Calls go unmade. And soon, the sacred rhythm of pastoral care is replaced by your busyness.

So we must ask: Are we truly committed? Are we taking seriously God's call on our lives?

Paul's words to Timothy ring loud and clear: "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you..." (2 Timothy 1:6). Lay pastoral ministry is a gift. Not a burden. Not a side hustle. A gift. But gifts must be stirred, rekindled, fanned into flame. Otherwise, they grow cold.

Let's clarify the problem. It's not that lay pastors don't care. It's that

we often lose sight of our priorities. We push God's call on our lives to a task to check off our list. It becomes a burden and not a joy. We focus on the list of things we have to do instead of the joy we receive when we faithfully serve the Lord. And once we have missed making regular contacts with our flock, we let guilt or embarrassment keep us from admitting we've dropped the ball. We say, "I'll call them tomorrow," but tomorrow becomes next week.

So let's review the job description. Mel Steinbron's model was simple but profound: each lay pastor is entrusted with a small flock, 5 to 10 people, to contact regularly, pray for, and be available to. Not to fix every problem. Not to preach. But to be present. To be a shepherd. That's it. Presence. Prayer. Pastoral care.

If we're too busy to make regular contact, then we're too busy to fulfill the call. And if that fits you, that's not a condemnation, it's an invitation. An invitation to renew our commitment. To admit where we've fallen short. To ask forgiveness from God, from our flock, and from ourselves.

James 5:16 says, "Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Healing begins with honesty. If you've neglected your flock, don't hide. Don't make excuses. Confess. And then recommit.

Some may feel embarrassed. "I haven't called in months." "I forgot their birthday." "I missed the hospital visit." But embarrassment can be the beginning of humility. And humility is fertile ground for revival.

So, what's the solution?

First, renew your commitment. Go back to 2 Timothy 1:6. Fan into

flame the gift. Pray over your flock. Ask God to reignite your passion.

Second, reduce your flock if needed. Jesus didn't call us to be heroes. He called us to be faithful. If ten people is too much, ask five shepherds. If five is too much, ask for three. It's not about numbers, it's about care.

Third, schedule your contacts. Don't wait for inspiration. Ministry is intentional. Set reminders. Block time. Make it sacred.

Fourth, ask for accountability. Share your commitment with another lay pastor. Check in monthly. Encourage one another. This is why attending lay pastors meetings regularly and completing accountability reports is important. We all work better when we are accountable.

And finally, remember the why. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). We're not just making phone calls. We're laying down our lives in small, holy ways. We're embodying the love of Christ.

So today, I challenge every lay pastor here: review your job description. Clarify the problem. Admit the fault. Renew your commitment. Reduce your flock if needed. Take seriously God's call on your life and the relationship you have with God. And above all else, pray. Pray for good time management, pray for a passion for Christ and compassion for His people, pray that you die to self and are willing to sacrificially serve our Lord. A friend once said to me, "If there is no sacrifice, are you truly serving the Lord?"

People need to know someone loves them and everyone needs prayer. Lay pastors are not perfect, but they can be faithful in their service.

Let's fan into flame the gift God has called us too. Let's make pastoral care a priority!

#12

Embracing Difficulty

Lay Pastors: Love With Skin On – Embracing Difficulty #4

One of the most profound truths we must embrace as lay pastors is this: we are not here to fix, we are here to love. In Mel Steinbron's book *Can the Pastor Do It Alone*, Difficulty #4 reminds us that some problems are simply beyond our ability to solve. And that's not a flaw, it's a divine invitation.

We feel the pull to rescue, to repair, to restore. But our calling is not to be saviors. That role belongs to God alone. Our mission is to be present, to be compassionate, to be "love with skin on." That phrase, coined by Mel, beautifully captures our purpose: to be a living, breathing extension of God's love.

We show up. We listen. We care. We pray. And we stay. That is our ministry.

We will encounter heartbreak: terminal illness, addiction, incarceration, spiritual torment, moral collapse. These are not problems we can fix. But that doesn't mean we are powerless. Even seasoned professionals: doctors, therapists, clergy, face moments where they must say, "I don't have an answer." And even God, in His infinite wisdom, sometimes chooses not to remove the trouble, but to walk with us through it.

Psalm 91:15 says, "He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble." Not remove it, be with us in it. Psalm 23:4

echoes this truth: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." God's greatest gift is not always deliverance, but presence.

And so, we mirror that divine presence. We sit in the valley. We don't drag people out. We don't slap verses on wounds. We simply stay. And that is holy.

Yes, the urge to "do something" is strong. But we must resist it. Giving advice we're not trained to give can do more harm than good. Serious issues must be referred to senior pastors or professionals. That's not failure, it's wisdom, humility, and love. It says, "I care enough to get you the help you truly need."

Think of the person with terminal cancer. You cannot heal them, but you can hold their hand and pray. Think of the person in prison. You cannot unlock the door, but you can write, visit, and remind them they are not forgotten. That is ministry. That is presence. That is love.

Jesus Himself didn't always fix things immediately. Sometimes He walked. Sometimes He wept. Sometimes He waited. And sometimes, He simply said, "Follow me."

In my years as a nurse in the medical ICU, I've stood at the edge of life and death. I've held grieving families. I've cried with them. I remember one man in his early 60s, his heart failing, awaiting a transplant. I helped him bathe, shave, and change his sheets. He lifted himself just slightly to smooth a wrinkle under his shoulder and that tiny effort was too much. His eyes rolled back. He was gone.

We did a full code. But he was gone. I was the last person to speak with him. To care for him. To share stories about family. You never

know when you'll be the last person someone sees. Take good care of those God places in your flock, they may need you more than they realize.

So let's release the pressure to fix. Let's embrace the sacred ministry of presence. Let's be okay with not having answers. Let's trust that God is working, even when we can't see it.

Lay pastors are not called to be extraordinary. We are called to be faithful. To be available. To be present. To be love with skin on.

So when frustration rises, when you feel like you should be doing more, remember this: Your presence is powerful. Your listening is healing. Your love is enough. And God is more than enough for all of us.

#13

Problem you can't fix

Lay Pastors and the Fourth Difficulty: Problem you can't fix

One of the most profound challenges lay pastors face is what Mel Steinbron calls the "Fourth Difficulty": people have problems you can't fix. This difficulty is not about lack of effort, compassion, or prayer, it's about the reality that some burdens are simply beyond our ability to resolve. As lay pastors, we must learn to live in the tension between wanting to help and recognizing our limitations.

We are not called to be fixers. We are called to be present.

There will be times when someone comes to you with a serious illness, a deep emotional wound, or a moral or spiritual crisis that requires more than listening, prayer, or companionship. These are moments when wisdom demands we refer the person to someone trained to help, whether that's a counselor, a doctor, or a pastor with theological expertise. Knowing when to refer is not a failure; it's a mark of maturity and love.

But even when we cannot fix the problem, we can still be with the person in it. That is the heart of pastoral care. Psalm 91:15 says, "He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble." Notice that God doesn't always promise to remove the trouble. He promises to be with us in it. Likewise, Psalm 23:4 reminds us, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." God's presence is the comfort, not the

absence of pain.

Even in death, God does not always rescue. That's a hard truth. But it teaches us something vital: the ministry of presence is not second-best. It is often the most powerful gift we can offer. Lay pastors are, as Steinbron beautifully puts it, "love with skin on." We embody the compassion of Christ simply by showing up.

I had a flock member whose husband killed himself. Suicide is one of those horrible life events that no words can help. I felt completely useless. I had no idea what to do or say. She was a neighbor of mine, so after a week or so, I walked over to her house. Her daughter was with her, but she was upstairs in her guest bedroom (unable to lay down in the bed her husband and her shared) and alone. She was lying there holding a small urn with her husband's ashes. I lay down in the bed next to her. We were silent for at least 30 minutes after we greeted each other. She then just started talking. She talked about her husband and their life together for over an hour and I just listened. I said nothing, except the occasional "uh huh." When she was talked out. I prayed with her and left. On the anniversary of her husband's death, I called her to let her know I was thinking about her. She said the in the blur of activity that followed her husband's death, she remembered how I just sat next to her and how much that meant to her. Never underestimate the power of being present in the name of Jesus.

We don't have to be problem solvers. We think we must do something. But being with someone is doing something. Sitting beside a grieving widow, praying with a man in jail, listening to a teenager who feels lost, these are sacred acts. You may not have the answers, but your presence says, "You are not alone."

Often, the greatest appreciation is reserved not for the one who solved the problem, but for the one who stayed. The one who didn't run away when things got messy. The one who didn't offer platitudes or quick fixes but instead offered themselves. That's lay pastors ministry.

Lay pastors must learn the reality of powerlessness while still giving what they can give, love. It's not easy. It's humbling. But it's holy work. When we stop trying to fix and start simply being with, we reflect the heart of Christ. Jesus doesn't always fix people's problems, but He also will never leave them nor forsake them.

So when you face the Fourth Difficulty, when someone's pain is too deep, too complex, too entrenched, don't panic. Don't be over thinking how you can fix the problem. Be present. Refer when needed. Pray always. And trust that your presence is enough.

Let people know you love and care for them just by being there. That's the calling of a lay pastor. That's the ministry of presence. And that, more often than not, is what people remember most.

#14

Acceptance—Loving Without Expectation

Lay Pastor Difficulty #5: Acceptance—Loving Without Expectation

One of the most humbling and challenging aspects of lay pastoral ministry is learning to live with the reality of varied responses. Mel Steinbron, in his wisdom and experience, identified this as Difficulty #5: Acceptance. It's the truth that not everyone will welcome your care, your prayers, or your presence. You may be assigned five families and three will love you, appreciate you, and open their hearts. But two may barely acknowledge your existence. They won't return your calls, they won't invite you in, and they may never say thank you. This is not failure.

The variances in acceptance are not a reflection of your worth or your effort. They are simply the realities of pastoring. People are different. Some are open, some are guarded. Some are hurting so deeply they don't know how to receive love. Some have been burned by church or relationships and have built walls. And some may never let you in. But as a lay pastor, your calling is not to be accepted, it is to love.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. In Luke 17, He healed ten lepers. Ten lives were restored. Ten men were given a new future. But only one came back to say thank you. Jesus knew this would happen. He asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" Yet He healed them all. He loved them all. He didn't withhold His grace because He foresaw ingratitude. That is agape love, unconditional,

sacrificial, and not dependent on a response.

As lay pastors, we must embrace this kind of love. Again, a common theme through all these difficulties as lay pastors is we are not called to be saviors, rescuers, or even problem solvers. We are called to be present. To be love with skin on. To show up, listen, pray, and care. And sometimes, that care will be met with warmth and gratitude. Other times, it will be met with silence or even resistance. But we do not withdraw. We do not become judgmental. We do not take offense.

If we become offended by rejection, we have misunderstood pastoral care. It is not about us. It is about Christ in us. It is about being a vessel of His love, even when that love is not received. In fact, those who seem the most aloof, the most unresponsive, may be the ones who need our prayers the most. Their silence may be a symptom of deep pain. Their distance may be a defense against past wounds. And our consistent, gentle presence may be the only glimpse of God's love they see.

This is where the ministry of presence becomes sacred. You may love a family deeply. You may pray for them faithfully. You may send notes, make visits, and intercede for their needs. And still, you may never get a response. No thank you. No invitation. No visible fruit. But don't give up. Don't let discouragement take root. You will not always get warm fuzzies. But you will always be planting seeds.

I had one woman in my flock that after a year of sending cards, leaving messages and dropping off small gifts at her home, she called the church office and asked that I stop contacting her, stop coming by the house, stop calling. So I did. But I did not stop praying for her. I prayed for her for almost 10 years. Did it make a difference? I

have no idea. She moved and that was that. For nearly a decade, her name remained etched on my heart. I lifted her up in silence, in tears, in faith. Did it matter? Did it reach her? Did it change anything? I'll never know. She moved away. No goodbye. No closure. Just gone. But love doesn't require a response and we don't always get to see how our prayers have been answered. Sometimes, we sow in the quiet and trust in God for the rest.

Psalm 91:15 says, "He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble." Notice the promise is not always deliverance, it is presence. That is our model. We may not be able to fix a family's pain, but we can be with them in it.

Acceptance is not guaranteed in ministry. But love is. Our role is to love without expectation, to serve without needing recognition, and to pray without requiring results. That is the heart of a lay pastor. That is the heart of Christ.

So when you encounter those two families who won't give you the time of day, remember: you are still called to love them. You are still called to pray for them. You are still called to be present. And in doing so, you reflect the heart of Jesus, the One who healed ten, knowing only one would return.

Let us not grow weary in doing good. Let us not measure our ministry by the responses we receive. Let us instead be faithful, available, and full of agape love. Because in the end, it is not about being accepted, it is about being obedient.

#15

Pastoring When There Is No Crisis

One of the most overlooked challenges in lay pastoral ministry is what Mel Steinbron calls Difficulty #6: what do you do when there is no apparent need, no crisis, no emergency? At first glance, it might seem like pastoral care is only necessary when someone is hurting, sick, grieving, or facing a major life change like getting married or having a baby. But Steinbron reminds us that pastoring is not just about crisis, it's about life.

In fact, noncrisis times may be the most important moments for pastoral care. Why? Because that's when trust is built, friendships are formed, and faith is nurtured in the ordinary rhythms of life.

Crisis ministry is straightforward. When someone is hospitalized, grieving, getting married, having a baby or in trouble, the purpose is clear, the time is urgent, you're notified, and the focus is obvious.

Noncrisis ministry is harder. There's no urgency, no phone call, no obvious agenda. That's why it requires intentionality and initiative.

Four Keys to NonCrisis Pastoring

1. Identify the purpose. In noncrisis times, the goal is simple: get to know people better, touch base, and gently bring spiritual matters into everyday conversation.

2. Set the time. Because there's no urgency, it's easy to procrastinate. But faithful pastoring means planning, setting an appointment, or simply deciding, "I'll stop by this week."

3. Take the initiative. Don't wait for a crisis to call you into action. Reach out. Send a note. Make a visit. A simple, "I just wanted to see how you're doing" can mean more than you realize.

4. Establish the agenda. Keep it simple: "I just stopped by to visit, to get better acquainted, to see how you are doing." That's enough.

Noncrisis pastoring often looks like loyal friendship. It's sharing small talk, laughing together, listening to everyday concerns, and taking seriously what's happening in daily life. These little conversations are not trivial, they are the glue of pastoral care. Bonding of lives happens in the ordinary, not just the extraordinary.

Jesus Himself modeled this. He didn't only show up in moments of crisis. He walked with His disciples day by day, sharing meals, conversations, and common experiences. That's how faith was formed, amid the ordinary.

Good pastoring represents Christ not only in emergencies but in the common circumstances of life. By being present in the ordinary, lay pastors help believers develop a life of faith that is steady, resilient, and rooted in relationship.

So when there is no crisis, don't assume there is no need. Pastoral care is just as vital in the everyday. It is in those moments that lives are knit together, trust is built, and Christ is represented in loyal friendship.

Difficulty #6 reminds us: although crisis care is important, noncrisis care is just as important. Lay pastors must be equipped not only to respond when the phone rings, but to take initiative when it doesn't. Because sometimes the most powerful ministry happens not in the valley of crisis, but in the quiet, ordinary moments of life.

#16

People do not feel pastored unless the ordained clergy pastors them

Today I want to address the final difficulty in Mel Steinbron's book, "Can the Pastor do it Alone?" Difficulty #7: "People do not feel pastored unless the ordained clergy pastors them."

This belief is sincere. It is shaped by tradition, by long held expectations, and sometimes by misunderstanding. But as the people of God, we must ask a foundational question: Do we truly believe what Scripture teaches about the ministry of the saints?

In Ephesians 4:11–12, the apostle Paul writes:

"And He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ."

This passage makes something unmistakably clear; God did not expect pastors and teachers to do all the ministry themselves. He gave them instructions to equip the saints to minister.

This means that the work of pastoring, caring, shepherding, encouraging, guiding, is not reserved for the ordained alone. It is the shared calling of the whole body of Christ. The Holy Spirit distributes pastoral gifts broadly among God's people, not narrowly.

And so, we must say honestly, no pastor, no matter how gifted or dedicated, can pastor an entire congregation alone. Nor did God ever intend for them to.

Scripture affirms that every believer has a role in shepherding others.

In 1 Peter 4:10, we read: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

And in 1 Peter 5:2–3, Peter exhorts the elders: "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you... being examples to the flock." This shepherding is not limited to clergy; it is a model for all who care for God's people.

We minister according to the gifts God has given us. Many in the congregation have genuine pastoral gifts, gifts of compassion, encouragement, discernment, and spiritual care. Our task is to help the church recognize that these gifts are real, biblical, and essential. In my experience, there are pastors who are amazing teachers, but do not have the gift of caring or they are amazing caregivers but have no administrative gifts. The pastor truly cannot do it alone!!

Moving a church from a "clergy only" model to a "ministry by all the people" model is not a small shift. It is a cultural transformation. And cultural transformation requires intentionality.

We accomplish this through preaching, teaching, and practicing.

- From the pulpit, we create a climate where lay pastoring is normal, expected, and celebrated.
- In classes and training, we teach what Scripture says about shared

ministry.

- In the church newsletter, we highlight stories of lay people who are already pastoring faithfully.
- In leadership, the clergy give full support, and the church board affirms that this is our ministry model.

When I was a lay pastor, I presented each quarter an update to the congregation about the Lay Pastor's Ministry. I would create graphs from all the reports turned in each month. And each month I would follow up to make sure each lay pastor turned in their reports (remember accountability!). I would extract the data and by doing so, I was able to create a colorful graph showing all the different contacts made, how the ministry was impacting the church and how much work was being done. By doing this, I believe I encouraged the lay pastors to continue their good work and to turn in their reports as they saw they were reviewed and used and the congregation heard about the ministry from someone other than the pastor. I would also share a story of a contact if there was one that stood out and I had permission to do so.

This is how we cultivate a congregation that embraces Ephesians 4 not just in theory, but in practice.

As leaders, we must be consistent and firm that our church takes Ephesians 4 seriously. We must be patient, because some will struggle with this shift.

We must be understanding, because for many, this challenges lifelong assumptions.

We must be respectful, because some will never fully accept it. But we continue forward because this is God's plan for His church, A church

where every believer is equipped. A church where every gift is used. A church where pastoring is not the responsibility of one or two, but the shared calling of the whole body.

Of course, there are exceptions. There will always be situations that require the direct involvement of the ordained pastor. But exceptions do not define the rule. Scripture defines the rule. And Scripture teaches that the saints, all of God's people, are called to use their gifts.

So let us continue working toward full acceptance of this biblical truth. Let us continue equipping, encouraging, and using our gifts. Because when the whole church pastors, the whole church grows. And when the whole church grows, Christ is glorified!