

## Chapter 11

# How to release your people

We who are called to be pastors and elders in the church must understand some biblical truths about our ministry. We ARE called to equip the saints that they might do the work of ministry. We are NOT in the front line of the battle - they are! For too long we have taught our people to 'pray for your pastor as he is in the front line of the battle against evil and Satan wants to attack him!' The truth is that I can go day after day without rubbing shoulders with a non believer, I can spend quality time in the Word and in prayer, most of the people of my congregation cannot. I am called to be the refreshment tent, the nursing station, the armament supply, far behind the front lines, while they are in the trenches day after day. I must equip them well if they are to be overcomers in the battle. Not only does the Lord expect them to overcome, He also expects them to be His witnesses in this world. He has burdened (many of) them, gifted them and now waits to anoint them as they step out to serve Him.

I believe that every church elders' board meeting should have two essential components. Firstly prayer to commune with the Lord. This would involve both talking to God and waiting in quietness for Him to talk to us. Secondly, a time to discuss who in the church is expressing a burden, or is displaying the giftings to carry such a burden, or is now ready to be released into a ministry.

A typical situation might be like this:

*Pastor: Anyone you recognise as being ready to be released into ministry?*  
*Elder(s): We've been watching Mary a lot since our last meeting. She evidently has a great interest in missions and her prayers for the lost show a deep concern. She is a committed believer, faithful in her financial support and attendance. We'd like the board to invite her to express to us her burden with a proposal for us to see how we, as a church family, can respond to that proposal.*

When Mary appears before the elders with her proposal, it may be possible to develop a ministry to support her burden.

Another scenario:

*Pastor: How do you see John developing as a potential elder?*  
*Elder(s): He certainly has a great respect among most people in the church. I know that many of them go to him for advice and that his counsel is sound. He has a good grasp of the Word and lives a life in accordance with its precepts.*  
*Pastor: Does he 'qualify' as far as the Scriptures are concerned?*  
*(Titus and I Timothy)*  
*Elder(s): We believe so.*

*Pastor: Then let us invite him to the next board meeting and put him 'on probation' as an elder for the next six months. Jim, will you take him alongside you and be his mentor? If he proves his calling, we'll present him to the congregation at the next annual meeting.*

The possible scenarios are many - as many as the different people in your church whom the Lord would release into *His* ministry.

### **Listen**

It is essential that we who are pastors **listen** to our people as they express their burdens. We should be able to help them clarify their vision a little so that they can truly recognise and define that burden. Prompt them, encourage them but, above all, listen to them. It is their burden from the Lord that we are interested in, not our burden which we would like them to help us carry. Help them to verbalise the burden.

### **Affirm their giftings**

When the burden is clear, seek to know from others if the abilities, talents and spiritual **giftings** needed to carry that burden in ministry, are present in this member's life.. To assist in this, one could use one of the many questionnaires on *giftings and personality profiles* commonly available today. Of course, we should not expect to see anointing or maturity of leadership in 'an eagle who has not yet been released to fly'! They will be nervous and you will have apprehension, but what mother doesn't when she sees her children make those first feeble, stumbling steps? Does she then wrap her child up again and refuse to let them risk walking in case they stumble? Of course not! Neither should you, who are called to nurture *His* sheep.

### **Begin the release**

When a healthy believer has a clear burden and the evidence of abilities and giftings is present and confirmed by many, it is time to release the eagle. Set aside some quality time to be with him/her. You should have no preplans for this meeting and no intent to put your burden upon his shoulders. It is essential that this meeting should centre around the member and his walk with the Lord, not around the church and its programs. If your church programs are from the Lord, He is perfectly capable of preparing the leaders necessary by putting the appropriate burden upon them - *His* light burden. At the end of this meeting, both you and the member should have clear understanding of the burden and the ministry desire that is on the member's heart. It may not be possible to meet all his desires for ministry - they may be beyond what the church can do, or not practical in terms of personnel or finances. However, you both now have something to work with.

### **The Ministry Covenant**

If you see a possible ministry that be opened for the young eagle, discuss that with him/her to see if there is agreement.

I suggest that you then develop a *Ministry Covenant* in dialogue with the member. This could take a couple of weeks to formulate before both he and you (the elders) have full

agreement. You might well have a small group of people whose ministry is to write up such ministry covenants for yours, and the young eagle's approval. The *Ministry Covenant* should clearly state the ministry parameters, the delegated authority and accountability. A simple example follows:

Susan has been telling her friends that she wishes to go to a Discipleship Training School with Youth With A Mission (for example) and she is busy talking to individuals in the church trying to raise financial support for the anticipated six months she will be away. You are not very happy about this as you believe some people in the congregation may be transferring some of their offerings from the church's programs to support Susan. Do you go to them privately and tell them not to support her? Do you call her into your office and forbid her to ask members for support? Do you preach an even stronger sermon on faithful giving to your own church? Or do you ask yourself, "How can I help this young eaglet to fly?" Who knows, maybe she will become a great missionary one day, winning many for the Lord and bringing great honour to His name - flying like the eagle as the Lord planned for her.

You could call her into the office, give her quality time and listen as she unloads her burden. She doesn't really know much about missions nor about YWAM but she does have a yearning to serve the Lord in a missions setting and realises the need to be trained for that. It has become evident to you that Susan has a good education and is a dedicated believer with a heart of compassion for the lost. You might suggest that she makes herself more familiar with YWAM and other possible schools, while you seek insight into her personality and gifting. Then the following ministry covenant could be presented.

### **Ministry Covenant - Susan Smith**

Recognising that the Lord has called us to go into all the world to preach the Gospel, that missions is close to His heart and the fields are white unto harvest but the reapers are few, we, the elders of Westside Evangelical Church, Yourtown, make this Ministry Covenant with Susan Smith, member of this church.

Susan will attend a Discipleship Training School with YWAM in the city of Theirtown for the six months of January to June, 1999. We understand that the total cost of this school will be approximately \$5000, including accomodation, tuition, personal needs and outreach expenses.

Prior to attending the school, Susan will be given fifteen minutes at a Sunday morning service to tell the congregation of her plans. A love offering will be received for her at the end of that service. The church will add to this, sufficient funds to enable her to pay for her transport to Theirtown.

While at school, Susan will send an audiotape (or a letter) back to the church each month to keep us informed of her progress and prayer needs. A small part of that tape will be played to the congregation during the morning service once a month and prayer will then

be made on her behalf. Each church prayer group will be encouraged to make prayer for Susan a regular part of their meetings.

Any photos or newsletters that Susan sends home will be posted on the church missions board.

The church will send \$200 each month to Susan plus any monies collected for her through other outside-of-church activities conducted by our members.

We will not forget that Susan is still a member of our congregation though far away for these six months, and the elders pledge themselves to be available to her for any crisis or counselling needs she might have while away.

On completing her six months' school, Susan will return to this church before committing herself to any other ministry, with YWAM or any other organisation. She will be accountable to the pastor to demonstrate the progress she has made as a disciple through the DTS school. She will be required to meet with the pastor, or a delegated elder, once a month for the next six months. At the end of that time, this *Ministry Covenant* ceases.

Agreed: Signed: *Susan Smith*

*John Williams* (elder) - on behalf of the elders' board

*Peter Smith* (pastor)

\* Other sample Ministry Covenants may be found in Appendix 2

### **Continue to nurture**

When Susan leaves to go to her school - or subsequent ministry - the work of the pastor is not over. He must continue to mentor, to nurture her. His expressed interest in all she is doing will make a profound impact on her, and will build into her a healthy attitude to the church and its appointed leadership. There will be times when she will feel despair and will need the pastor to lift her spirit up again. She will need advice as she struggles to meet her burden. She may need a steady hand to stop her falling headlong into danger or foolishness. She *needs* her pastor - her father eagle - until she has learned to fly under the anointing of the Spirit. If at all possible, visit her at her place of ministry, observe what she is doing in her daily life, try to understand the battle she faces, encourage her, *wash her feet*.