

THE 5 Ms OF MINISTRY: A RENEWED SENSE OF CALLING

GFA Family Conference, Message #4

Example of Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor; Acts 20:17-35 (20:28)

Example: Richard Baxter (November 12, 1616–December 8, 1691)

Baxter was an English Puritan. The term, first used in the 1560s, was a term of derision, abuse, and mocking in the sense of “you’re a super-saint, a goody-goody” [also think of the terms “Christian, Anabaptist, Pietist”]. The Puritans wanted to PURIFY THE CHURCH in accordance with the Bible, for all of life was religious and must be brought under God’s scrutiny. Baxter was probably the best pastoral model of his time period, wrote many helpful volumes and wrote a pastoral classic, *The Reformed Pastor* [1656]—not about Reformed Theology or Calvinism but **a renewed or revived pastor, a pastoral reformation**. He was supposed to be the key speaker at an association of about 58 ministers. Because of illness he did not speak but published this enlarged edition based on ACTS 20:28. Baxter used this verse to “tease out” what could be called a “pastoral philosophy.” Emphases of the book and his life include conversionistic preaching, church discipline, purity of the pastor and people, effective sermons [make public preaching more easily understood], unity among pastors, catechize/catechesis in the homes of his people [see *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, eds. Kelly Kapic and Randall Gleason, chapter 12, 152–166]. Baxter desired personal and church and family and village renewal, and he knew this would happen only as God’s Spirit used God’s Word and God’s Means (the human element) in a mighty way!

M #1 MAN: Emphasis on **character**, the “stuffing” of the person. This is the foundation for all ministry. “To bear with the vices of the ministry is to promote the ruin of the Church; for what speedier way is there for the depraving and undoing of the people than the depravity of their guides? And how can we more effectually further a reformation, than by endeavoring to reform the leaders of the Church?” [p 39 in the Dedication of the book]. Acts 20:19 Humility: see Phil 2:8; Mt 11:29; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12. Humility is the opposite/counterpoint to pride, one of the so-called Seven Deadly Sins [see *The Death of the Deadly Sins*, ed. Daniel Doriani, chapter 4, 45–56]. Acts 20:19,31 Compassion: “tears.” 20:26 Pure/clean/guileless [see 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6–7].

M #2 MINISTRY: What is the basic nature of our work, our job description? 20:28 Shepherd the flock of God. “Of all the titles and metaphors used to describe spiritual leadership, the most fitting is that of **shepherd**” [John MacArthur, Jr., *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, 28]. “This (the pastor as shepherd) is no incidental, take-it-or-leave-it image for ministry. Consistently, it remains the overarching analogy under which all descriptions and functions of ministry tend to be embraced: the good pastor, whose vigilant caring is an expression of Christ’s own eternal caring.” “Pastor is our central paradigm.” “The Greek word for *shepherd* is *poimen*. This is why pastoral theology is sometimes technically called *poimenics*, or the systematic study of the office and functions of the *poimen* as pastor-shepherd” [Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 52]. Think of the mental pictures from this imagery: tender care, gentleness, feed, guide (lead), guard (defend), authority. There are many contemporary models that seek to usurp this calling: entertainment, business model, CEO and management, therapist/psychologist/counselor. “Six Essential Components of a Complete Pastor” [Jim Elliff, pp 152–166 in *Reforming Pastoral Ministry*, ed. John Armstrong]: (1) Pastoral INTIMACY [knowing our sheep]; (2) Pastoral TUTELAGE [instruction to increase character, skills, knowledge]; (3) Pastoral GUIDANCE [Biblical direction in conflicts, reversals, distortions, decision-making]; (4) Pastoral CONSOLATION [death, prolonged illness, deviant child]; (5) Pastoral GUARDIANSHIP [enemy assaults, warning, discipline]; (6) Pastoral INTERCESSION [pray for and with them].

M #3 MESSAGE: Evangelism and edification, salvation and sanctification, coming to the foot of the cross and then growing in the new life! 20:21 Testifying; 20:24 Testify; 20:25 Preaching. Thus, 20:32 I entrust you to God and the Word of His grace. 20:20,27 I did not keep silent because I feared a backlash or that I might offend someone. Truth is truth and can't be groomed or altered or watered down! "The preacher's job is to proclaim the faith, not to provide entertainment for unbelievers—in other words, to feed the sheep rather than amuse the goats" [J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*, 285]. Baxter's expression for preaching is "to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their affections" [70]. Do I have a plan/safeguards in place so nothing will divert me from the primacy of preaching? Do I feed the sheep a full Bible diet? [2 Tim 3:16-17; Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:6,11; see Ps 19:7-14] Do I neglect longer Books or more difficult Books? Is my preaching more "proof-texting" to produce "proof-text" lives?

Am I better known for **eisegesis** than **exegesis**? Do I want to be contemporary, so my preaching changes with the cultural winds and trends? "The basic problem with accommodationist theologies that try to restructure and reduce orthodox Christianity to dimensions presumably acceptable to the modern mind is that the 'modern mind' is notoriously changeable, A theology married to the modernity of one decade can be widowed in the next" [J.J. Davis, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, 157]. Or, "Today's sacred cow is tomorrow's fertilizer!"

M #4 METHODS: "The way, technique, process to do something; the means used to accomplish a goal."
"Methods are many—Principles are few; Methods always change—Principles never do!" 1 Cor. 9:22 is **Paul's Methods Statement:** "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

This does NOT mean: The end justifies the means. **Pragmatism:** if it works, do it. **Utilitarianism:** the most good for the greatest number.

But note Paul's varied Methodology:

- a. Preach/Teach
- b. Prayers
- c. Lifestyle adjustments
- d. Wrote letters
- e. Sent fellow workers
- f. Trained coworkers
- g. Return visits
- h. Adapted his message to the audience.

Acts 20:21,24,25,32 Preaching; 20:20 Publicly and house-to-house; 20:31 Night and day: persistent and consistent; 20:34-35 Not financially burdensome [because of all the religious "con artists"; Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"]. BAXTER is especially known for his **Catechesis or Catechizing** in the homes of his people. He spends over 80 pages detailing this key method [172-256]: Why, How, Benefits, Difficulties, Objections, etc. He placed a Catechism in every home and personally met with the people to discuss it and their spiritual welfare.

We must wrestle with our time and place concerning the methods we will use: Bible translation, Christian school, after-school Bible club, released time classes, Bible institute, medical and dental teams, sports camp, youth camp, aviation, VBS, door-to-door visitation, backyard Bible club, podcast, weekly email devotional to church family, church services on Youtube, in-home Bible studies, nursing home ministry, rescue mission ministry.

M #5 MOTIVES: A stimulus, incentive; “spur, goad, what makes us tick.”

Four False Motives include: (1) Financial Gain; (2) Shame/humiliation; (3) Just to get by; (4) Self-interest or self-aggrandizement.

True Motives include:

1. DOXOLOGICAL: the ultimate motive above all others [1 Cor 10:31]
2. SOTERIOLOGICAL: motives born out of our new life in Christ—saved from, present standing; saved unto! [1 Jn 4:19; 1 Cor 6:19-20]
3. ESCHATOLOGICAL: motives born out of our thoughts concerning the future [2 Pet 3:11; Phil 4:5; 2 Cor 5:9-11; Eph 6:9]. Acts 20:33 Paul was not in this work for financial reasons.

1 Peter 5:1-4 is perhaps the best summary comparing false and true motives for a pastor:

V1 Elders; VV2-3 Shepherd the flock of God.

NOT by constraint [have to or want to?]

BUT willingly [according to the will of God, or just as God shepherds]

NOT for filthy lucre [includes material advantage, personal popularity, and social influence]

BUT a ready mind [eagerly, an inner devotion]

NOT as lords over God’s heritage [heavy-handed intensity]

BUT ensamples to the flock [a model for others to pattern after]

“Peter mentions three common sins of preachers: laziness, greed, popishness. Peter demands voluntariness, unselfish devotion, models fit to be patterned after” [R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude*, 220].

Baxter also speaks a lot about motives. A glance at the “Table of Contents” will show you how often the word occurs, and for every major section he speaks of motives.

SONG: “Take My Life and Let It Be”

Frances Ridley Havergal is known as “The Consecration Poetess” because so many of her hymns dealt with this subject. Here she walks through a “self-inventory” and commits each thing to the Lord.