

## **“PASTORING DIFFICULT PEOPLE”**

1 Corinthians 1:10-11/ 3:1-3

2 Corinthians 2:5-8

March 8, 2024

Intro: ‘LAW OF PIONEERING’...it goes like this....When you are pioneering the first people you get that come in are **psychos**...out of the closet/ full fledged out in the open psychos....then the second kind of people you get are people who **appear to be normal**...but in reality they are psychos....then after you work through those, you begin to get **people you can work with**.

- Whether that is completely true or not...it underscores the reality of pastoring...and the reality is **YOU ARE GOING TO PASTOR DIFFICULT PEOPLE...WHO PROVE TO BE HARD TO WORK WITH**.

- Not everyone that you pastor is going to be for you....not everyone is going to be responsive, *The blunder that many pastors make is thinking that you have to get rid of difficult people.....***don't position yourself to pastor them but to ease them out/ get rid of.**

*Ex. Lifeguards are trained to rescue difficult people. Not everyone your trying to rescue is going to cooperate...panic has set in and many times they will actually resist and make your job that much harder...even put your life in peril. But a life guard has to override.....these people still need a rescuer!....***have to breakthrough and rescue difficult people.**

- This is one of the great challenges of pastoring.

**[1 Corinthians 1:10-11] Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.**

**[1 Corinthians 3:1-3] And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**

**[2 Corinthians 2:5-8] But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.**

### **I. HOW YOU VIEW DIFFICULT PEOPLE**

#### **A. The rude awakening for the long term pastor.**

##### **1. THE FRUIT THAT YOU BEAR**

**a. You have been in your city for a number of years...vs. 2 or 3 years here...then move on, pioneer etc.**

- The rude awakening is that over the years **you are going to bear the fruit of what you have put into people's lives through your ministry.**

- Decisions you make/ judgement calls, have a cascading effect over time...and the fact is that some of the problems your dealing with in people's lives are the result of our own ministry.

- *Ex. First got to El Paso...decisions without having all the facts...things have a way of coming back and biting you.*

- The point is that some of the difficult people are your own fruit.

- Ex. David and Michael.

## **B. How you view difficult people.**

### 1. KEY TO FRUITFULNESS

#### **a. The default in our lives is to dismiss/ preach *at* them and not *to* them...constantly targeting and taking shots at....do everything but name them in your sermon.**

- Allow them to bring such a high level of frustration that you want to give up and quit.
  - **And the fact is that there is such a high level of attrition in the ministry *because of difficult people.***
- We obsess over them/ If everyone is not *for you*...responding the way you think they should you think your failing.
  - We think our ministry is ineffective/ don't see any change...or..you get encouraged by apparent advance...only to be frustrated by yet another reversal.
- How you view these people says a lot about you/ quality of your ministry and capacity for fruitfulness.

### 2. DIFFICULT PEOPLE NEED A PASTOR.

#### **a. This is where our real calling is seen.**

- Ex. 'Ghost Soldiers': *So emaciated/ mentally fragile...some insane...lost all bearings and reference points...when their rescuers finally broke through....they fought/ resisted/ ran and hid....but the fact is they still needed to be rescued....some had to literally be carried out...didn't get what was happening.*
  - Some of the people you are called to rescue/ pastor...just like this. Difficult/ resistant/ sometimes fight every step of the way.
- They need a pastor: Someone to speak for God into their lives...may not respond to *everything*...but they will respond to *some things*.
- They need someone to be an instrument of restraint so they don't *completely* destroy their lives.

### 3. GOD LOVES DIFFICULT PEOPLE.

#### **a. The Bible is a long lineage of difficult people that God loved...had patience with.**

- Ex. Jacob: *Difficult man to work with....lived up to his name.*
- Moses: *Prone to emotional outbursts that hindered the ability of God to work in his life. (Actually killed someone..had to flee...40 years)*
- Something in their character...that obstructed over the years....that made them difficult people to work with.
- Jesus pastored difficult people and loved them.
  - **[Matthew 28:16-17] "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but SOME DOUBTED."**
    - *'..some doubted'!!.....Talk about frustrating....resurrected Son of God is there before their eyes...'I'm just not sure about this...not convinced'!?'\*#*
    - Jesus didn't even deal with it/ went on and issued the great commission and disappeared into heaven.
- Apostle Paul..exhibits great love for difficult people. *I Corinthians..written to help address some of the problems that difficult people were creating.*
  - **[1 Corinthians 1:10] "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no**

***divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."***

- Difficult people were hindering that process....because of them...this wasn't happening to the degree that it should have been.

#### 4. GOD HAS A WILL/ PURPOSE/ DESTINY FOR DIFFICULT PEOPLE.

a. **They may not always be difficult...have to be able to see beyond the present dysfunction...and see them in the light of what God has for their lives.**

- *Have you ever thought that you might have been a difficult disciple?!*

- ***[John 21:17-19] "He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."***

- Jesus didn't see him in the framework of his present frailty and weakness....but in the context of having the moral fortitude to be a martyr for Jesus.

## II. WHO ARE THEY?

### A. The exercise of pastoring difficult people is what will develop your best skills as a pastor.

#### 1. PASTORING WILL STRETCH YOU

a. **Pastors that demand that everyone be a sycophant/ perfect loyalty, submission, responsiveness**

**...everyone else your going to dismiss, not take seriously...treat as a second rate citizen..are making a huge mistake.**

- You have to *learn* to pastor them. Many people, easy to pastor...thank God for them.
  - *That's the question; Can you pastor difficult people?...or...to small minded and narrow, thin skin/ easily offended/ take everything personally.*

### B. Who are they?

#### 1. THE REBELLIOUS.

a. **Varying degrees of rebellion: People that are contrary, they don't flow and gravitate to leadership and direction.**

- Some rebels are harmless/ don't have influence in the church, only hurting themselves.

- Then of course there is the overt rebel....who is out to hurt you.

- ***[2 Timothy 4:14-15] "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words."***

- The mistake is to treat everyone who is rebellious in the extreme.

- They need ministry and you have to figure out a way to speak for God into their lives...or at least attempt to.

- ***[Isaiah 65:2] "I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts..."***

- God doesn't write them off.
- We think that the only way to deal with the rebellious is to *label them and dismiss them*.
- Works in the context of their rebellion to try and turn them....*Sometimes judgement..but..sometimes patience/ mercy, when it's the last thing they deserve....non-reactionary.*
- **[Titus 1:10-13] "For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped...Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith."**
- The point is that there is a skill involved that you have to develop.
  - For the pastor there is a benefit....*rebels will keep you on your toes/ your edge sharp...vs...sycophants...who will overlook all your faults.*

## 2. THE CARNAL

### a. These are people that *may never become spiritual*.

- *Illus. 16% will never change....No matter what you preach, how long in your church...may never think/ behave in a spiritual framework.*
- **[1 Corinthians 3:3] "...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"**
- This can be highly frustrating....*Aren't they listening...don't they get it?...The answer is NO...they don't..and may not ever.*
- The reality is that while they may frustrate you....**they will draw out of you some of your best sermons...**Clarify issues/ make necessary challenges.
- Dangerous to assume that everyone in your church is going to be spiritual.

## 3. PEOPLE UNDER DISCIPLINE.

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

- Referring to the special care and attention that is needed....those who have to be put out of ministry/ out of the church...or under some level of discipline.
- *I Corinthians: "...therefore put away from yourselves that evil person...."/ TLB: '...deal with this man and put him out of your church....'*
- Not written off.....but referring to action taken for the purpose of redemption...means that you have to keep your hand on the pulse....determine when and if that person can return.
- They are put out in the hope they will repent, make a comeback.
  - In 2 Corinthians. The Apostle Paul appeals for his return.....wouldn't have done this if he didn't know his current spiritual state.

## 4. PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN TRAUMATIZED.

### a. **Good, co-operative people...the kind that are easy to pastor...can become difficult when they are traumatized by the events of life.**

- *'Ghost Soldiers'....these are good men....traumatized by life.*
- All of a sudden people can become high maintenance/ your searching for answers for them...calling you at all hours....they are in confusion, don't know what to do..coming to you.

## III. THE SKILLS THAT WILL SEE YOU THROUGH

**A. Pastoring is about developing skills that will facilitate your ability to shepherd the people of God.**

1. CAN'T PASTOR EVERYONE THE SAME.

a. **This is where many get stuck....only know how to pastor the good, co-operative, easy people.**

- Never make room to develop the skills necessary to pastor difficult people....can result in unfruitfulness and stagnation in ministry.

**B. Four skills**

1. LONG PATIENCE

a. **Have to be able to move on with things unresolved in people's lives....this is an amazing and necessary attribute.**

- Some things have to be left to God....You've done all you can do.
- God has a timing that He can resolve things and work them through.
  - Ex. David and Saul..."I'll not touch the Lord's anointed..."

2. HAVE TO TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

a. **Can't be a reactionary...You cannot offer a carnal response...allow people to draw you into their world.**

- *Wife much more vulnerable to getting drawn in....don't fill her head with all your frustrations over the difficult people in your church.*
- Can't allow your focus to be hijacked....don't lose sight of the big picture....don't forget there are people that are running with you.
- Have to learn to be *magnanimous: Generous/ forgiving with a rival/ less powerful person...someone who is difficult/ against you...has hurt you.*

3. COURAGE TO CONFRONT

a. **Can't live in fear of difficult people...what they *might* do.**

- *Have to hold their feet to the fire when judgement is required.*
- Quite often your fears never materialize.

4. FAITH AND VISION

a. **Difficult people can become your best people.**

- A/A....difficult, carnal, rebellious....Now one of the best couples/ families in the church.
- Ex. *Androcles And The Lion...one Aesops Fables...runaway slave, finds refuge in a cave...lion, wounded, removes large thorn from his paw, befriends...latter Androcles is captured sentenced to death...to be devoured by lions....one of them happened to be the lion he had befriended...life spared, set free.*
- Have no one to help you at critical moments because you always write off difficult people.
  - *Many would have tried to kill the lion.*
  - Ex. Paul, Barnabas and John Mark.....

