

The Parchment

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Rev. Howard Chang
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What is the Pastor's Role?

One of the most common questions I receive as a pastor relates to what I do. Some people wonder if I wait around for Sunday to preach. Others may think I am very busy, but they aren't all that sure what I'm busy about. What I do comes from what I believe my role is as a pastor. So allow me to explore this role for a moment.

For many years the church saw the role of the pastor as primarily teaching God's Word, the Bible. Congregants would evaluate a pastor on his preaching ability and Bible knowledge. Seminaries focused on preparing the pastor to teach through rigorous study in theology, Bible, Greek and Hebrew. In recent decades the church saw the pastor as becoming the counselor or primary caregiver. If the pastor did not make hospital visits, pray for the sick, or counsel troubled individuals then he did not do his job. I attended one pastoral counseling class in seminary and no one taught me how to make a hospital visit. But I learned very quickly I was expected to be at weddings, birthday parties, and hospital bedsides.

More recently the pastor, especially the Lead or Senior Pastor, has been expected to be the CEO or manager of the church. He is thus judged on his ability to organize the church so it runs "smoothly." Some even expect the pastor to conduct all three roles of teacher, counselor, and executive/manager with equal skill and acumen. I struggled with these seemingly herculean expectations until I better understood my role from Ephesians 4:11-13: *So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

The underlined text points to the role of leaders, including pastors, in the church: *to equip the people of God to meaningfully engage in ministry and mission, resulting in unity and spiritual maturity.* My job is not done if I teach God's Word, counsel, or manage but you are not prepared to serve God's mission. Rather, as a shepherd and equipper, I desire to see each of you understand your life in Christ in such a way that He makes a difference in your life, so that you can make a difference in the lives of others both within and outside the church.

I believe my calling to serve as a pastor among you is not finished. That's why I'm taking the next weeks off where I can be strengthened and renewed through rest, reflection, prayer, study, and time spent with God and family. I look forward to returning soon to fulfill the role of shepherding and equipping you to mature in character as you fulfill His mission.