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BOOK REVIEWS

OVERSEE GOD'S PEOPLE: SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK THROUGH ADMINISTRATION AND DELEGATION

*Brian Croft & Bruce Butler
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (2015)
Kindle edition, 120 pages*

Reviewed by ERNEST HERNANDEZ

Oversee God's People is a brief overview of how churches are supposed to be educated and nurtured regarding the day-to-day administrative chores and their delegation to lay leaders. This book was chosen because its authors are seasoned pastoral veterans (Butler was pastor of one of the top 50 churches in America) who get to the point, much like a ready "how-to" reference manual for the pastor and aspiring church leader.

The authors explain to us that by delegating administrative "chores" to lay members, the essence of true shepherding can then be realized (loc. 247). As Croft explains, the biblical model for this shepherding concept can be traced to a number of

events in the Bible. The most recent New Testament model of leadership occurs when the apostles decide to delegate administrative duties to deacons in Acts chapter six. Doing so provided the opportunity for the apostles to more effectively nurture and care for the needs of the congregation (loc. 303). A pastor who does not follow this shepherding model runs the risk of administrative overload, spiritual burnout and, ultimately, the frustrations of a spiritually untrained and immature church.

It is interesting that the term "shepherd" is used by the authors in the book's title. The image of a person leading a flock of dependent sheep comes to mind. While this might not be the image that we normally associate with a well-trained organization (like a SWAT team or an orchestra), the analogy is appropriate for the author's theme. God's people require a leader who knows how to walk side by side with them in daily interaction and care, all while teaching them self-sufficiency. As the church becomes more self-sufficient, the pastor gains greater freedom to function as a true shepherd. This appears to be the ultimate goal of Croft and Butler.

To achieve their goals, the authors spend the first seven chapters explaining why many pastors fail to understand the need to delegate responsibilities to others. Just as important, the pastor needs to know exactly what and when to actually delegate. Discipling and member care must become inseparable. A central calling is to protect the sheep from wolves (loc. 386), and this includes the wise stewardship of resources, both material and human (loc. 462).

From chapters seven to thirteen, the actual "how-to" part of what makes this book unique is brought to focus. Several very good tools born

out of the authors' experience are shared with the reader. The baseline of financial management (loc. 927) and the structure which he abbreviates "RACI" (loc. 1157), for example, offer the lay leader and seasoned pastor the tools needed to accomplish effective administrative management. In addition, the authors offer good advice on how to allow "God room" (loc. 738) in budget planning and attitudes about worship (loc. 797), as well as navigating the day-to-day responsibilities of providing security and recordkeeping (loc. 1019)—all of which are the nuts and bolts of daily shepherding.

In their final chapter, Butler makes a critically persuasive argument for his thesis and explains why this "shepherding" model is of vital importance. Modern clergy need to follow this model because the resources available today (internet resources, ready-made PowerPoints, sermons, seminars, bookstores, etc.) make it so tempting for him/her to function as a "one man operation." This, then, is where the authors make their final case: "There is a final reason (and maybe the most important one) a pastor should engage in this task. A pastor exercises oversight for the benefit of his own soul" (loc. 1261). The wise pastor/leader must provide the type of discipling that can translate into leadership sustainability. This way the leader preserves his strength and soul.

The authors spend little time addressing the pros and cons of their thesis. The theological aspects and the concept of "shepherding" are also not well developed, nor are they meant to be. The authors' goal is to look at all the different and essential areas where a church could work better by the use of sound administrative procedures and willingness to delegate to others. The reader is left

to wonder why administration and delegation necessarily translate to a more spiritually vibrant church. We have very few, if any, of the kind of success stories that usually accompany a book on church growth techniques. It would take more chapters to do that. . . and perhaps that would defeat the purpose of a "hands on" quick reference guide.

Due to its abbreviated and manual-like quality, one might think that this book has value for lay leaders more so than for the practiced professional (who might conclude that the authors are overstating the obvious). After all, they do not make a strong attempt to be theological or persuasive, something that professional clergy might have looked for in a book on shepherding. But sometimes it's not just the clergy who need to understand proper church leadership principles. The pastor, elders, deacons, and department heads should possess a basic resource, a how-to manual of good practices. For this reason, I recommend this easy to read book—especially to the overworked pastor and his lay leaders who aspire to understand shepherding through wise administration and delegation.

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