

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP AS PASTORAL CARE

Bob Kauflin

I. Introduction

- A. The pastor's influence has changed significantly in recent decades.
- B. The rock concert culture has influenced us more than we're aware. We tend to value:
 - 1. Performance vs. participation
 - 2. Skill vs. character
 - 3. Musical experiences vs. truth experiences
 - 4. Singer-songwriters vs. pastor-theologians
- C. God has given pastors the responsibility to feed, lead, care for, protect, and be an example to their flocks.

So I exhort the elders among you...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1Pet. 5:1-3 ESV)

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions. (2 Tim. 4:2-3 ESV)

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. (Acts 20:28 ESV)

- D. Songs are but one more way to exercise pastoral care.
- E. Pastors are responsible to lead. Delegated leaders are responsible to serve diligently and follow joyfully.

II. Application of Pastoral Roles in Congregational Worship

A. Feed (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Jn. 2:17)

1. Songs teach. “We are what we sing.”
2. Our songs reflect and shape what we believe.
3. Both singing and preaching seek to magnify God’s glory through the word of Christ.
4. Make sure your congregation is getting a theologically balanced diet – sound the right notes.
 - a) Trinitarian
 - b) Primary emphasis on the Gospel, God’s works, God’s acts, God’s promises.
 - c) Equal but derivative emphasis on our grateful, faith-filled response.
 - d) Evaluate each week and over time.
 - e) Include some simpler, shorter songs for younger Christians. (See *Choosing Songs Wisely* from the WorshipGod 2004 conference.)
5. Know what songs really say as well as what they emphasize.

What am I doing to ensure a balanced theological diet in the songs we sing? How well do I know the content of our songs? In what areas or emphasis are our songs deficient?

B. Lead (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28)

1. Plan before meetings
 - a) Carefully, to insure theological weight and balance
 - b) Expectantly, because God wants to bless His people
 - c) Humbly, with a dependence on God’s Spirit
 - d) Purposefully, so that people know what to focus on
2. Lead during meetings
 - a) Directly or indirectly
 - b) Lack of musical gifting is no excuse for not leading
 - c) Transitions are key moments to exercise leadership
 - (1) Spontaneous elements must be monitored.
 - (2) Spontaneity isn’t always the best choice.

3. Teach on worship and the role of music
 - a) Worship is our God-enabled participation in the Son's exaltation of the Father in the power of the Spirit.
 - b) Music should be an offering of worship, but is not meant to "produce" worship.
 - c) Don't expect music to do what only the Gospel and the word of God are meant to do by His Spirit.
 - d) Expose your congregation to different styles.

How much time do we put into planning our gatherings? Where is pastoral leadership evident or lacking in our meetings? What can we do in the short and long term to help the church better understand what is happening as we gather?

C. Care For (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28)

1. We must help people connect the promises of God with the challenges they face. The key is faith.
2. People need to see their problems in light of God.
3. People need to apply the Gospel to their lives.
 - a) Many of our people's problems result from a deficient or inaccurate understanding of the Gospel.
 - b) We must explain what it means and accomplishes.
 - (1) Reconciliation to God (Rom. 5:10)
 - (2) Adoption into God's family (Rom. 8:15)
 - (3) Security in God's love (Rom. 8:37-39)
 - (4) Freedom from sin's power (Gal. 5:24)
 - (5) Victory over death (1Cor. 15:54-55)
 - (6) Release from condemnation (Rom. 8:1)
4. Hope for change during struggles against sin
 - a) There is a difference between being moved emotionally and changed morally
 - b) It is not singing, per se, that changes us, but trusting in God's word and the finished work of the Savior
5. Comfort and strength during trials
6. Faith during fear or discouragement

How well do the songs we sing specifically address the needs of our congregation? What areas are we deficient in? How can I make connections for people more obvious?

D. Protect (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Tim. 4:3)

1. From the errors of the world
2. From the vices of the world
3. From the pleasures of the world

How well do our songs teach the cardinal doctrines of the faith? How much do our meetings communicate God's standards of purity and holiness? How often do we draw our people's attention to the goodness, sweetness, and pleasure of worshipping God?

E. Model (1 Pet. 5:3; Acts 20:38)

1. The uninvolved or distracted pastor doesn't communicate that singing is unimportant, but that exalting God is unimportant.
2. People are unimpressed with the leader whose faith and joy in God is only evident on Sunday mornings.

How would people in the congregation evaluate my participation in and enthusiasm for parts of the meeting I don't lead? Is there any inconsistency in my private devotion to God and my public devotion? If so, what explains the difference?

III. The Result of Effective Pastoral Congregational Worship

- A. If our people are beholding God's glory in our meetings, they should experience true and lasting change. (2 Cor. 3:18)

Evidences of fruit include:

1. Humility
2. Holiness
3. Security
4. Unity
5. Gratefulness

- B. Meetings can't provide everything our people need to follow God. But let's make sure we don't give them any less than they can provide, by God's grace.