

Pastors are Coaches, Not Quarterbacks
Acts 6:1-4

From its very beginning the church has had to deal with administration. Administration is how the church takes care of business. The church learned very early that there are good administrative practices and bad ones. There are Christian forms of administration and there are unchristian forms of administration.

They discovered that when the apostles took care of all the business of the church the administration wasn't very Christian, simply because the apostles didn't have time to do what they were called to do, which was to preach and teach, and also to take care of all the other church business. Because they couldn't give the time needed to see that the food was fairly distributed among the church members, some weren't getting their fair share. That's the problem with poor church administration. People's lives are adversely affected, while good church administration enriches people's lives.

Peter and the Apostles realized the way they were trying to administer the church was hurting people. They changed their administrative model to share the ministry with others. So, they formed a team, a task group and gave them the responsibility and authority to distribute food to the church members.

Using a sports analogy, I have found that there are three kinds of pastors: First, there is the pastor who sees himself as the whole team. The members are the fans, who sit in the stands and root for him, while he plays every position by himself. It doesn't take long for most pastors to realize this doesn't work. If they don't figure this out, they burn out fairly soon.

Then there is the pastor who sees himself as the quarterback of the team. He is the one who calls all the shots, and the team is just to do as he says. The church members are just there to support the pastor, who is the star of the team. This is the model most pastors follow. It is the model most church members expect. There are two problems with it. First, Jesus Christ should be the star of the team, not the pastor. The church should not be built around a pastor. It should be built around Christ. The second problem is that most pastors are not gifted to be quarterbacks. There are people in the church who are gifted and trained administrators.

Then there are pastors who see themselves, not as the team or the quarterback, certainly not the star of the team, not even a player on the team. They see themselves as the team coach. Their job is to get the right members playing the positions where they can make the best contribution to the ministry of the church. They help the team develop an overall philosophy. They coach the members, helping individual members perform to their best ability and helping the church play together as a team. The leaders of the church call the plays and the game is played by the members, not the pastor or the staff.

That's my approach. And that is the philosophy underlying the new administrative structure we have put into place.

I have been called to preach, or, going back to the sports analogy, to give a pre-game locker room talk, and to prepare the team to get out there and play the best game

they can. The Church Council members are the quarterbacks and the members of the church play the game.

Let me close with this story. I once attended a retirement party for a pastor friend. He gave his retirement talk, which was a bit long-winded. When he got through, they asked his wife if she had anything to say. She said,, “Yes, I do.” She went to the podium and said one sentence, “For forty years my husband has been preaching the gospel, and for forty years I have been practicing the gospel.”

That’s pretty much what I am saying. I have been called to preach the gospel. You, the church, have been called to practice the gospel. You are where the rubber meets the road.

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