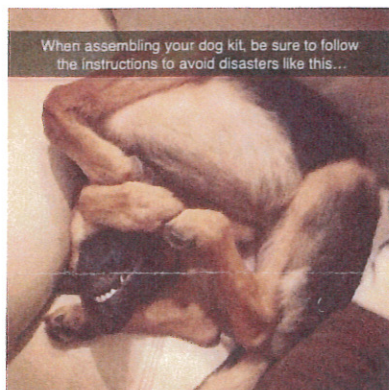


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SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

I saw a “funny” on FaceBook the other day. My apologies to whoever first took this picture – it wasn’t listed. But it did show a dog all curled in on itself. The admonition was to read the directions carefully before beginning assembly, lest you wind up with a disaster like this.

As you may know, I’ve had the privilege of serving as the transitional pastor of my home church since last October. I’ve been there long enough to work through both the “One Anothers” of Scripture, and the book of Ephesians, which I’m finishing this first Sunday of April (as an aside, if anyone is interested in listening to the series (The Economy of Grace) it’s posted on the Good News website www.goodnews-wi.org; that way, if you ever think of inviting

me to preach, you’ll know what you’re going to get!)

It struck me the other day that my candidating sermon at my very first church came from Ephesians 4. Later, while still at that church, we formed an external ministry to help other smaller churches called “Equipping Ministries”, again based on Ephesians 4. Can you tell I like that passage??

I like it because it paints a picture that is often ignored in our churches, but one that is a sure antidote to much of what bedevils pastors today. The goal, as stated in 4:12, is for the equipping of the saints. That’s a rich word, and in its Greek form is found in a number of places in the New Testament. For example, Galatians 6:1, where we are told to “restore” those who were broken, is the word for equipping. There are many other references, but suffice it to say that the job of the church is not simply to teach classes, it’s to take people however we find them, and help them grow until they look like Jesus (4:15).

That’s a tall order, and no one pastor can do it all. That’s why there are a diversity of gifts mentioned in 4:11 – apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. It goes beyond the space I have in this short article to explain why, but I believe all these gifts are operative today. Not in the “charismatic” sense, but in an operative sense. The apostle (“little-a”) is the “sent one”, the big picture, Kingdom thinker. The prophet tells the truth, irrespective of the consequences. The evangelists has a passion for the lost; the pastor has a passion to nurture and care for his flock. The teacher wants to see them all grown.

The problem is, we done away with four of the five. Apostles? Died out with Paul; prophets? Too scary to even contemplate; Evangelist? Billy Graham’s got it covered. I know! Let’s combine Pastor and Teacher into one...**and make the pastor do all five!** It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see that as a recipe for disaster!

The problem is, many pastors, especially solo pastors of smaller churches, feel the need to *do* all five, and consequently do them all badly. And in the process...burn out.

Are you holding your pastor to standards he or she cannot possibly meet? To be Elijah one minute, and Timothy the next, with a bit of Paul thrown in on the off days? If so, you’re setting them up for failure.

Have a frank discussion with *your* pastor and ask him how he’s wired, where his passions lie, and *then figure out how to augment that ministry so that all the gifts are covered.* Need help in that? That’s what Pinnacle is for; give us a call. And to those who support us – thanks! Your gifts help many pastors and churches, here and abroad.

Gary Harrison

Healthy Pastors, Healthy Leaders, Leading Healthy, Effective Churches