

Pastor-Teacher Harmony

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Robert J. Voss is president of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.]

Robert J. Voss

Wherever there are human relations, there will not always be harmony. Notes of discord are struck by the very nature — the sinful nature — of man. Notes of discord are evident among us also, that is, between pastors and teachers. Discord should be recognized for what it is — the result of sin. Discord among pastors and teachers causes the work of the Lord to suffer. To the end that disharmony may be recognized for what it is, to the end that there may be greater harmony, and to the end that the work of the Lord may not suffer, we present this essay on Pastor-Teacher Harmony.

Why There Ought to Be Pastor-Teacher Harmony

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11,12). Every member of the Christian church has been showered with the grace of God. Every member of the church belongs to God. He is their Lord, their Shepherd, their Friend, their Savior, and their Comforter. He has set them apart to be precious kings and priests — every one of them. For their perfecting, for their growth in faith; to serve them, to build them up and strengthen this household of God, to nourish the body of Christ, God has established various offices in the church, among them the offices of pastors and teachers. What a privilege God has bestowed upon those whom He has called into service as pastors and teachers! What a privilege to be a co-worker of God and serve God’s people! They are not our people whom we serve, but God’s people; they are not our congregations and classrooms, but God’s congregations and classrooms. His people need leadership, not dictatorship. They need shepherding, not herding. They need guidance, not caprice. The work in which we are involved as pastors and teachers is bigger than we are, bigger than any one individual. The privilege of all pastors and teachers is to be involved in God’s work in edifying Christ’s body.

In this work of God we have common goals and common objectives: to serve as God would have us serve; to serve Him and not ourselves; to build His church. How important for harmony among pastors and teachers to remember that we all have these common goals and objectives. It is well to remind ourselves, too, that there is enough resistance outside of the church without contributing resistance within. How disturbing and offensive it must be for those to whom we proclaim peace to be aware of no peace between a pastor and a teacher. And they are aware of it. “Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed” (II Cor. 6:3).

For pastor-teacher harmony we ought to bear in mind that God not only established the offices, but He also provides those who fill the offices. It is God who places us into our fields of labor. In other words, God made me a pastor of a flock, and God gave me the teachers who are my co-workers serving that flock. It is God who made me a teacher and gave me the pastor who is my coworker. In all human relationships attitudes are so vitally important, and our attitudes will change and be improved if we remember that it is God who gave us to each other. That ought to move us to get along with one another.

Furthermore, we are to get along with one another just as Christian brethren. How much more ought we not work in harmony as pastors and teachers, who in all things are to be examples of Christianity. The Biblical precept states that we are to love one another and in honor prefer one another. Romans 12:10.

There ought to be pastor-teacher harmony also out of respect for the call. God not only has established the offices of pastors and teachers, but God specifically calls both. In essence the calls of both the pastor and the teacher are identical. Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Ephesians 4:11, “And he gave some ...pastors and teachers.” I Corinthians 12:28, “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” The calls of both pastors and teachers are valid when they are directed, under God, by those who have the right to call. The calls of both are legitimate when they have been effected

and implemented according to orderly means. The teacher is no less called by God than the pastor, because he has been called by a group of Christians to whom God has given the ministry of the keys. The public ministry, of course, is the public ministration of the Gospel.

Now, while both pastors and teachers are called by God in the same way, there are, according to the orderly arrangement of the church, different areas of responsibility. The pastor is responsible for the whole flock, including also the teachers and the children. The areas of responsibility of the teacher are more limited, with defined responsibilities. To meet these responsibilities effectively, there are different training programs. The teacher is called by God for the purpose of carrying on the work ordained and commanded by the Lord to bring particularly children to Christ. Both are worthy of double honor. Both are to be esteemed highly for their work's sake. Both should work with joy and not with grief. While the calls are identical, the offices are not the same in scope. The pastor has the theological background in his training. The teacher has the educational background in his training — not to overlook, of course, that to carry out our educational philosophy the teacher also is trained theologically, although on a more limited basis. The responsibilities of both often overlap, and it cannot always be defined or delineated where the responsibility of one stops and that of the other begins.

While the foregoing may indicate wider responsibility for the pastor, it is not to imply that the pastor is to be a pope in the congregation, or the lord and master with the teacher as his servant. The relationship is not that of master and servant, but rather that of men of God who are workers together with God. For illustration we could use the picture of marriage and the role of husband and wife. The husband is the head of the house, and the wife serves her husband. Both of them are motivated by the love of Christ to love and serve one another. The one is not the boss and the other the servant. This wouldn't even be a Christian relationship. The same is true in the congregation. The pastor is the called head of the congregation, and the teacher serves in many ways to hold up his arms and to assist especially in the training of the young. But the teacher, too, serves the whole congregation, not just an isolated classroom. Pastors and teachers are motivated by the love of Christ to love each other and to serve the church.

To summarize, the pastor by his office is the administrator of the congregation. The principal is the administrator of the school. The teachers are instructors in the school, and the school is a part of the congregation. Teachers serve not only the school, then, but the congregation. While many duties often are spelled out in the call, it is an extremely dangerous tendency to find shelter in the call. For example, when a congregation decides to conduct a vacation Bible school which has as its purpose to edify the body of Christ among young children, the professional teacher ought to be involved in this and ought not say, "It is not written in my call."

To indicate more clearly what we mean about the administration of the school, I should like to define the roles of the principal and the pastor. The principal ought to be a person who is a man of God, who has taught successfully, who has advanced professionally, who is certified, who has a good personal appearance, who is cooperative, healthy, and has the parish viewpoint. As the administrator of the school he will execute policies of the congregation and of the board of education; give reports to the congregation and to the board on the work; conduct staff meetings; arrange evaluations of textbooks and teaching materials; complete reports required by the state and the Synod; keep inventory on equipment of the school; be responsible for school programs, projects, and activities; be responsible for monies and records, for public relations; approve admissions, transfers, and promotions; be responsible for hygienic conditions in the school, for guidance programs, cumulative records, the school calendar, the school handbook, the orientation of new staff members, the staff handbook; represent needs of the staff before the board of education and the congregation.

As supervisor the principal may visit classes and counsel teachers; be responsible for the playground, the lunch program; direct the testing program; be responsible for the library, the audio-visual aids, and the professional growth of the staff. Together with the other teachers the principal will suggest and direct activities, study the philosophy of the school, the curriculum, the school budget, and the school publications.

The pastor's role in the school, as I see it, is one of great concern for the Christian philosophy. He will promote the school and urge the members to use it and support it. He will promote the school as an effective agency of Christian education. He will plan the services, visit the classrooms, counsel the teachers, attend the

faculty meetings, maintain Christian discipline, teach religion, serve as spiritual counselor to the staff, and show a general interest in educational matters.

The fact that both pastors and teachers are called by God end that they have common goals and objectives in edifying the body of Christ should move them to live in harmony as Christian brothers and sisters.

Prerequisites Contributing to Pastor-Teacher Harmony

There are prerequisites contributing to pastor-teacher harmony, prerequisites whereby the pastor-teacher relationship will be one reflecting the Christianity we seek to further. The first qualification or prerequisite that I would like to emphasize I call *manliness*. In I Corinthians 16:13,14 we read, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity." Act like men! I believe that real manliness has many component parts. We'll call these components the "Big C." An important ingredient of manliness is courage. The prayer of the early Christian church for the apostles was: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29). The Christians prayed that their pastors might have the courage to speak boldly. Another ingredient of manliness is the ability to take criticism. We may well disagree with one another without being disagreeable. That's manliness. Both pastors and teachers should be men enough to give and take constructive criticism. To offer criticism there must be communication, and this is one of the real vital ingredients of a good pastor-teacher relationship. There must be frank, open, and honest communication. I believe that they should communicate with each other regarding goals and objectives. When a new program is to be placed before the board of education, for example, I believe that there should have been prior communication between the pastor and the principal and/or the teachers. Communication, then, includes consultation, and I want to be man enough to consult as a pastor with my teachers and as a teacher with my pastor. Another ingredient of manliness is courtesy. The common courtesies which we render to one another should certainly be rendered between pastors and teachers. Manliness also includes the thought of competence. Pastors and teachers should strive to be competent by keeping abreast in their field, competent in their ability to handle the tools which God has given us for the edifying of the body of Christ. One who is competent generally also is cooperative. Cooperation also is a part of manliness and leads to harmony. There should be a holding up of one another, a supporting of one another, and this can easily be done if there has been communication. Manliness also includes contentment. The grass may always seem to be greener on the other side of the street. We are all tempted to look at the physical aspects of a call, at the higher salary in another congregation, or better physical plant, and then turn green with envy. We shall work more harmoniously and more effectively, however, if we are content, if we realize that God has placed us where we are. Envy and jealousy are the causes of many discordant notes. In manliness there also are consistency and followthrough. As soon as we waver in our opinions or after decisions have been made and try to please everyone, we may be in trouble. Finally, in manliness there is the image of Christ. If we, under God, strive to reflect the image of Christ, our work relationships will not suffer.

The second qualification or prerequisite which contributes to pastor-teacher harmony is *honest workmanship*. II Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This prerequisite we shall call the "Big S." We ought to be workmen who study in an endeavor to grow in our proficiency in preaching and teaching the Gospel. The more we ourselves study, the less will we be inclined to steal from others and procrastinate. The primary object of our study is the Scriptures, the seat of every doctrine, the guide for every action, the motivation for all of our labor. The one whom we are working to overcome is Satan, the old evil foe who is constantly sowing tares among the wheat, who is constantly bringing resistance to our work, who is constantly sowing the seeds of discontent among those who are to be leaders in the church. To study diligently we, of course, have to be good stewards of our time, especially in these days of multiple ministries which are demanded of us. Time for study and self-improvement is essential. The goal toward which we are striving is to be honest, workmanlike shepherds, serving the needs of all Christians.

Another objective of our study is psychology, or the study of human behavior. We may understand our people better, we may understand our children better, we may understand each other better, if we know human

behavior as it is portrayed in the Scriptures. Not only should there be honest workmanship on an individual basis, but a working together to build an *esprit de corps* among the workers in a congregation, as well as an *esprit de corps* in the district and the synod. We are so used to boasting about our rugged individualism that sometimes this can be definitely detrimental to the work of the Lord and to pastor-teacher harmony. Rendering honest workmanship, we shall be of service to one another and to the congregations which have called us. Rendering such service, we shall be savoring salt with which a congregation and the community may be salted and given a better flavor in the mouth of God. Finally, in honest workmanship we share what we have — the greatest treasure the world has been given by God, the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

A third prerequisite for harmony among laborers of the Lord, and the most important of all because it is so basic, is *faith*. Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Psalm 116:10, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” In their faith pastors and teachers will make a strong confession, and they will speak their convictions. II Timothy 1:12,13, “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” I Corinthians 14:8, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” This also brings confidence, and we ought to go at our work confidently. Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” As pastors and teachers we ought to have faith and confidence also in each other. Where there is a lack of trust, where there is no mutual confidence, there will be problems. Faith also makes us courageous workers for the Lord. Faith will remove complacency and give us the consecration to be devoted co-workers of Christ. Where there are conviction and confidence, courtesy and consecration, there will be good Christian relationships.

The fourth prerequisite for wholesome pastor-teacher relationships is *humility*. Ephesians 4:2,3, “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This prerequisite we shall call the “Big P.” If pastors and teachers show true humility, they will not be filled with pride and try to usurp the role of one another. Neither will they be overly concerned about their position in the church. We know that James and John were concerned about their position, and Jesus admonished them and encouraged humility. Another ingredient of humility is prayer. It takes humility to swallow pride and rely on the power of prayer. Rather than biting at one another, pastors and teachers ought to be praying for one another. Humility will be engendered whenever we are mindful of the privilege which we enjoy as pastors and teachers. Humility will move us to show little concern for physical profit and personal gain. And this, too, is the source of so much discord. In humility we ought to be preferring one another. Romans 12:10, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.” To be avoided is pretended or feigned humility. The man who says, “In all humility I want to say...” boasts his humility. If he is humble, he doesn’t have to be proud of it. Humility will also move us to follow established procedures, and there are many established procedures in congregations which we may not always like, but which have their traditions. And, finally, in humility we shall follow the example of our Lord Jesus. “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14,15).

The final prerequisite which springs from faith and which really governs all is *love*. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Love to the Lord will bring a closeness to the Lord and to one another, a loyalty of pastor to teacher and teacher to pastor. Love is compassion; it moves men to be persistently kind and considerate of one another. Love is complete unselfishness. It is true that in the community of pastors and teachers there will be some overlapping of responsibilities, but consideration for each other will solve any problems that may arise. Finally, love is consuming. We ought to be ready to burn ourselves out for the Lord. If both pastors and teachers in a congregation are filled with a consuming love for the work of the Lord, they won’t have time to be at each other’s throats. Sometimes we may become worried that we are overworked and that congregations expect too much of us, but let them worry about that.

Practical Suggestions for Encouragement of Harmony

If we all had these prerequisites in abundant measure, there would hardly ever exist any difficulties between pastors and teachers. However, we know that men are troubled by shortcomings and failures, and therefore irritations are inevitable. In the early history of the Christian church there was a dispute between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15), and this contention became so strong that they parted their ways. Fortunately, we know that they were later reconciled. If such difficulties could arise between men like Paul and Barnabas, then they can also arise among us. In addition to the shortcomings common to all, there are different gifts among God's co-workers. Their talents may vary, and rarely do we find one who has all the gifts and all the talents. The teacher may be looking for the perfect pastor, but there is no such thing. And the pastor may be looking for the perfect teacher, but there is no such thing. What, then, are the solutions, or what are some practical suggestions for the encouragement of harmony?

1. Remember that we are a team. Teams never get any place when there is strife and controversy. Teams have to pull together. Members of a team will not trample one another.

2. Matthew 5:44: We are to love even our enemies. Could it be true that we could not love one another?

3. If an offense has been committed by one or the other, Matthew 18 dare not be forgotten, and here we get back to communication. If a problem arises, we ought to be able to solve that problem by applying Matthew 18. This means that we communicate with each other and not with everybody else. Professional ethics also demand that we keep our problems among ourselves and refrain from spewing them out before ears which have no business hearing them.

4. Hold staff conferences and talk it over.

5. Go back to the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule. When I cut down my teacher, do I want him to cut down me? When I have something bad to say about someone else, do I want that someone else to speak bad of me also?

6. A very practical solution is to promote a little levity. By this I am not implying that the work of the Lord is worthy of levity, but human relationships are. A little levity between pastors and teachers generally is a wholesome thing.

7. Still another practical suggestion is this that we each mind our own business. As pastors, we don't need our fingers in every pie. Besides, we don't have enough fingers.

8. Live the fifth petition: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

9. Guard your tongue.

10. A suggestion for teachers is to realize that the school is not an entity totally unto itself, but is a servant of the congregation. The teacher is called to serve the congregation.

11. Mutual respect should be furthered.

12. The final and most practical suggestion of all is to use the privilege of prayer. Let us pray for one another, that we may meet the qualifications which God requires of us, that we may serve the purpose which He has set down for us — the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ.