

THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR—THE PASTOR'S RIGHT HAND

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PREFACE

INTRODUCTION TO EXECUTIVE PASTOR MINISTRY

After retiring as the Executive Director of an Association of Baptist Churches in central Texas and while serving part-time as the Church Health Consultant in that same Association, and while, at the same time, serving part-time as the Teaching Pastor in one of these Association churches, I thought that at age 73 my earthly future was to dwindle away into old age dementia and obscurity.

John, my son, who had been called from serving as an International Mission Board missionary in Madagascar to pastor a church in this Association, approached me *demanding* that I come on his staff as his Executive Pastor. I understood his need—John is an outstanding expository preacher and ministry visionary, but he has limited administrative skills and even less desire to acquire such skills.

In response to his “*demand*”, I scolded him for approaching me without any contact with the pastor of the church where I was serving—I considered his “demand” both inappropriate and unethical. At the same time, I was very skeptical that I could effectively function under the ministry supervision of my youngest son. However, he was adamant that I come to serve on his staff and told me that he would discuss the matter with my pastor.

At the time, my wife, Ruth, and I were planning a 4000-mile drive from Texas to Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia to visit every cousin and kinfolk to whom she ever thought she was related. Eventually, I realized that the trip had little to do with her relatives, but it was our opportunity to seriously pray and consider this *demand* from my son.

About halfway through this kinfolk journey, my son called to inform me that my Pastor agreed with him that I should serve as his Executive Pastor.

As I contemplated this ministry challenge, it occurred to me that in my thirteen years as a nuclear submarine officer, I worked with supervisors who, by their example, taught me most of what I knew about leadership—however, I had also worked for some “jerks” and did okay. After all, my son was certainly not a *jerk*, so why not?

After serving for the last eight years as his Executive Pastor, I can truly declare that my Pastor—my son—has never shown me more respect, deference, and love. It now seems the perfect way to conclude my earthly life in serving KING JESUS!

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS AN EXECUTIVE PASTOR?

Within Evangelical churches, the position of Executive Pastor can have two different purposes:

1. EXECUTIVE PASTOR AS “PASTOR-IN-WAITING”—with this understanding of an Executive Pastor, the position is identified as the opportunity for an associate pastor to exercise responsibilities that would prepare him for the Senior Pastor role, particularly as it would pertain to a larger church. In former days, this type training would have been gained by the individual serving as the pastor of a smaller church.

Larger churches are now trying to develop their next Senior Pastor by employing a younger pastor to intentionally prepare him to eventually replace the Senior Pastor. This process not only thoroughly indoctrinates the younger pastor in the routines and complexities of that church but also gives the church leadership the opportunity to assess the character, personality, and ministerial ability of the *prospective* replacement of the Senior Pastor before giving him that responsibility.

THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF EXECUTIVE PASTOR THAT I AM ADDRESSING!

2. EXECUTIVE PASTOR AS “STAFF PASTOR”—with this understanding of an Executive Pastor, the position would be filled in one of two ways:

1) The position of Executive Pastor could be filled by a mature, experienced pastor who had successfully served as a senior pastor, but who no longer had the desire nor felt the call to exercise Senior pastor responsibilities.

2) The position of Executive Pastor could be filled by an experienced staff pastor who had faithfully served in previous staff ministry

responsibilities, but who no longer felt led nor otherwise qualified to serve in such previous staff ministry roles (e.g., Children’s Pastor, Youth Pastor, Single Adult Pastor, etc.).

In either case, an Executive Pastor would have the experience, the passion, and the divine call to serve, assist, and unburden the Senior Pastor of designated administrative and/or supervisory responsibilities.

In this capacity, an Executive Pastor could provide the Senior Pastor the necessary time, energy, and opportunities to concentrate on ministering, praying, studying, visioning, leading, and focusing the church on vision, evangelism, and missions while the Executive Pastor could focus on staff administration and organizational problem-solving.

3) MY ASSIGNMENT AS EXECUTIVE PASTOR—In responding to my son’s *demand* that I serve as his Executive Pastor, my initial challenge was to determine what that *title* meant. I was confident that I could go on the internet, type in “*Executive Pastor*,” and get everything I needed to begin this new calling.

To my surprise, there was almost nothing on the internet that defined, described, or delineated this understanding of ministry. There were some online references under that ministry title, but they generally referred to staff individuals who were really “*pastors-in-waiting*”—men who were honing their skills to move into a senior pastor role (*see 1. above*). This certainly did not fit the role that my son wanted for me, nor the role in which I was interested. Earlier in ministry, I had served seventeen years as the Senior Pastor of a great church in Houston—that ministry responsibility was in my taillights and not my headlights.

I had also previously served as the Executive Director for two Associations of Churches in Oregon/Washington and in Central Texas, supporting pastors and churches in their efforts to fulfill the Great

Commission. As a result, I had both personal and partnering experience in addressing the challenges that various pastors and churches regularly face.

Therefore, I was left with the need to define and devise what I understood my son needed and to determine how I might be able to enhance his ministry, his leadership, and the mission of the church.

As I reflected on my own experiences in the pastorate, as well as my years as a submarine officer in the Navy, I begin to incorporate the philosophy and task of an Executive Officer in a Navy command with the administrative and ministry needs that a church pastor would have for an Executive Pastor.

4) THE NAVY PARADIGM—Generally, a Navy Commanding Officer (CO) serves as the ship’s commander, leader, and morale officer. While subordinate to the CO, the on-going administrative supervision of the ship’s crew is primarily the Executive Officer’s (XO) responsibility. With this command structure, the crew tends to admire the “Old Man” (CO) while “*fearing*” the “Exec” (XO) because he meticulously holds the officers and crew specifically responsible for their administrative and organizational performance. The XO *fre*es the CO to focus upon the ship’s operational performance.

Normally, the CO only gets involved in administrative matters when there is a significant problem to address or when there is a need to officially discipline a crew member for an offense that would require non-judicial punishment (*NJP*). The XO’s responsibilities for crew administrative supervision generally allow the CO to be the “*good guy*”—the morale officer—and the XO—the disciplinarian (*non-NJP*)!

In like manner, the Executive Pastor’s responsibilities enable the Senior Pastor to pastor all members—the good, the bad, and the ugly—while the Executive Pastor handles the administrative and organizational performance of staff/ministry leaders and volunteers.

This arrangement of responsibilities is important to church morale because whenever the senior pastor personally confronts or corrects a member, it often results in that member (*as well as family/friends*) leaving the church because the interaction tends to create an adversarial attitude of the member(s) toward the Senior Pastor.

The potential for such problems is significantly reduced if the matter is first addressed by the Executive Pastor/staff and only involving the Senior Pastor if the matter could not otherwise be resolved—even then the Senior Pastor could delegate the necessary authority to his Executive Pastor in resolving the issue.

5) THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR COMPLEMENTS AND STRENGTHENS THE MINISTRY OF THE SENIOR PASTOR. Like a Navy XO, an Executive Pastor is primarily responsible for administering the staff and shielding his “*boss*” from the details and busy minutiae of staff/ministry administrative functions.

At the same time, the Executive Pastor must keep the Senior Pastor completely informed about both organizational, ministerial, and administrative situations, particularly regarding any matter that could become problematic. His primary function is to free the Senior Pastor to focus on those matters which affect the church’s mission, vision, direction, and spiritual formation.

One of the most appropriate scripture texts to guide the Executive Pastor is found in Acts 6:1-7, which is usually identified with deacon ministry. Basically, the Executive Pastor’s function is to do all he can to provide the Senior Pastor with the time and energy to pray, prepare, preach, project, and implement God’s vision for the church. **Indeed, the Executive Pastor is the Senior Pastor’s “*right hand!*”**

CHAPTER 2

WHAT QUALIFIES THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR?

1. The Executive Pastor must sense a divine call to this ministry, such that he has no other agenda, motive, or ambition. He should always be prepared and personally disciplined to respond with encouragement and support for the Senior Pastor. He must discipline himself to always favorably regard the Senior Pastor's leadership, preaching, or the wisdom of his decisions, unless he believes that the Senior Pastor is experiencing "**A MELT down**¹."

2. The Executive Pastor must understand that he works for and reports to the Senior Pastor—**NOT THE CHURCH**—and must be completely loyal to and supportive of the Senior Pastor. In that regard, there must be complete trust between the Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor. Without this unique, personal, subordinate, and faithful relationship, members who may not support the Senior Pastor will be tempted to drive a wedge between the Senior Pastor and the Executive Pastor.

If the Senior Pastor asks the Executive Pastor for advice or opinion, his answer should be as supportive, positive, and candid, as possible. If he is concerned about the wisdom of an impending action, he should voice his opinion only to the Senior Pastor, but at the same time, he must indicate his supportive commitment regardless of the Senior Pastor's final decision.

3. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Executive Pastor should have significant pastoral experience so that he can understand and appreciate the divine call, selfless nature, organizational authority, and rigorous demands of the Senior Pastor's ministry responsibilities.

¹ See Chapter 4: "How the Executive Pastor Relate to the Senior Pastor."

4. Since the greatest danger facing most Senior Pastors is that the magnitude of ministry demands tends to overwhelm the time and attention that they give to weightier matters in their lives: prayer, Bible study, and their own family responsibilities.

Therefore, the Executive Pastor's primary ministry purpose is to help lift the organizational and administrative burdens so that the Senior Pastor can experience the joy of his calling, give quality time to the needs of his family, faithfully discharge the responsibilities of pastoral ministry, fulfill the needs of priority relationships, and effectively allocate his time and energy.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT DOES THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR DO?

Because the Executive Pastor has significant pastoral experience, he is qualified to address most administrative, organizational, and ministerial situations that can arise in the life of the church.

Therefore, he is a valuable resource to assist church staff and ministry leaders in understanding and responding to the challenges and problems inherent to their ministries. In addition, he is very familiar with the various ways that such problems can be effectively addressed in the context of scriptural, theological and relational principles.

The Executive Pastor's primary purpose is to serve and assist the Senior Pastor in organizing and administering the church to fulfill the **five primary functions of the church: Evangelism, Discipleship, Worship, Fellowship, and Ministry:**

Matthew 22:37-40 *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

Matthew 28:19-20 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Matthew 4:10 (Deuteronomy 6:13) *"...You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."*

John 13:34 *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

Acts 1:8 “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.”

According to a typical CHURCH CONSTITUTION/BYLAWS, *The Senior Pastor is the spiritual and organizational leader of the Church” who is responsible to “lead and supervise all church staff in providing leadership and direction to accomplish the various ministries and activities of the church.”*

To implement the ministry of the Executive Pastor, the CHURCH POLICY MANUAL, could state:

“Under the authority and supervision of the Senior Pastor and the oversight of his Executive Pastor, staff/ministry leaders are tasked to recommend/implement specific ministry programs and actions only after considering: the Holy Spirit’s leadership; relevant needs (as determined by church/community assessments); evaluation of the effectiveness of past ministry programs/events; and available resources (financial/personnel).

In his oversight responsibility, the Executive Pastor supervises and evaluates the performance of staff members/ministry leaders under the authority and supervision of the Senior Pastor.”

Formulation of and Management of Budgets

In planning the Church Budget, the staff/ministry leaders are expected to exercise fiduciary responsibility in implementing their specific ministry responsibilities under the authority of the Senior Pastor with organizational and supervisory oversight by the Executive Pastor.

Staff/Ministry leaders are expected to serve in a symbiotic relationship (“*body of Christ*”) whereby the overall ministry of the church exceeds the sum of the parts. Only with such cooperative effort can the “*five functions of the church*” be truly fulfilled.

CHAPTER 4

HOW DOES THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR RELATE TO THE SENIOR PASTOR?

The Executive Pastor serves, supports, and strengthens the ministry of the Senior Pastor. The Executive Pastor serves the Lord by helping the Senior Pastor fulfill responsibilities that do not require the Senior Pastor's specific and designated attention—mostly organizational and administrative responsibilities.

The Executive Pastor reports to the Senior Pastor and is primarily responsible for administering the staff, handling organizational problems, and relieving the Senior Pastor from the details and busy minutiae of routine staff/ministry leaders' functions.

At the same time, he must keep the Senior Pastor completely informed about organizational and ministerial situations, particularly regarding any matter that could become problematic. His primary function is to free the Senior Pastor to focus on those matters which affect the church's mission, vision, direction, and spiritual formation.

Since the Executive Pastor has no other agenda than to serve the Senior Pastor and is **only responsible** to the Senior Pastor, there is nothing that the Executive Pastor cannot share with the Senior Pastor.

The Executive Pastor should seek to be the Senior Pastor's servant, protector, confessor, confidant, and "*closer than a brother*" friend. In that regard, the Executive Pastor and Senior Pastor can serve as confidential *Accountability Partners*.

Of course, such a confidential, intimate relationship necessitates unquestionable **TRUST**. Since trust is primarily a function of three factors: *Time, Shared Experiences, and Proven Integrity*, the relationship between Senior Pastor and Executive Pastor must be intentionally fostered and closely protected.

The only time that the Executive Pastor should and must confront the Senior Pastor is if he believes that the Senior Pastor is in danger of experiencing **A M E L T-down**—an acronym for the following **types of ministry disqualifying failures**: **A**= Abusive; **M**=Moral; **E**=Ethical; **L**=Legal; **T**=Theological/Biblical.

The *suspicion* of any such failure must be immediately addressed in complete confidence but intentionally resolved with complete biblical and relational satisfaction. Resolution of any failure should follow the principles and process outlined in the Matthew 18:15 passage, as well as in accordance with applicable church policies.

CHAPTER 5

HOW DOES THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR RELATE TO THE STAFF?

The Executive Pastor must maintain a close personal and organizational relationship with all church staff/ministry leaders to address both personal and ministerial problems as they arise. In general, the best approach in addressing any perceived problems is through the *interrogative process*—**ASKING QUESTIONS!**

If a staff member or church ministry leader has a problem, the effectiveness of the answer is a function of who speaks “*the answer!*” We primarily believe and commit to an *answer* which comes out of our own mouths. Therefore, the Executive Pastor is most effective when he asks enough questions to draw the answer “*out of the mouth*” of the individual with the concern or problem.

The Executive Pastor should refuse to merely give an answer to any problem that arises in a ministry, even if the answer seems obvious. He should ask questions until the responsible ministry leader determines a “solution.”

Although the Executive Pastor might come to a problem with a preconceived “solution,” he is wise to employ the *interrogative process* rather than casually providing *his wise answer*.

When ministry leaders figure out *their* solution in response to questions, the Executive Pastor should commend, encourage, and support them. They will leave such conversations enthusiastic and committed—after all, it has become their solution, not his!

The Executive Pastor must have specific expectations for church staff/ministry leaders:

- Emphasize that they are *personal extensions* of the Senior Pastor’s ministry—he is the authoritative team leader. Although they serve the Lord, they work for and are responsible to the Senior Pastor! Remind them that

the Senior Pastor's responsibilities are basically three-fold: *care for* the church ("*pastor*"), *lead* the church ("*overseer*"), and *edify* the church ("*elder*") (cf. Acts 20:25-31).

Help them to understand that the Senior Pastor's biblical responsibility is to lead the church to do the RIGHT THING(S), as he is led by the Lord through His Word.

At the same time, the primary purpose for staff/ministry leaders is to assist the pastor in discharging his *biblical* responsibilities in leading and serving the church. This means that ministry leaders are **to help accomplish those RIGHT THING(S) in the RIGHT WAY(S) under the authority and leadership of the Senior Pastor.**

Therefore, the Executive Pastor's responsibility is to assist staff/ministry leaders as they serve to facilitate the ministry of the Senior Pastor in doing the ***right things* in the *right way*.**

In this regard, the Executive Pastor serves as the ***gatekeeper*** in supporting the Senior Pastor while observing, encouraging, motivating, and assisting the staff/ministry leaders, as they discharge their ministry responsibilities.

When difficulties arise, or when expectations are not met, the Executive Pastor assists the staff/ministry leaders in evaluating their ministry responsibilities and performance. In that regard, the Executive Pastor needs to have a strong personal relationship with the staff/ministry leaders so that he can help each establish appropriate boundaries and personal goals. In his relationship to the Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor must strive to be an advocate for the staff/ministry leaders.

For there to be cooperative, functional, cohesive ministry relationships, it is important that staff/ministry leaders incorporate **ten "right way" principles:**

1. BE REAL—Ministry leaders live out their faith. Their primary qualification as a staff/ministry leader is their commitment to the Lordship of Jesus, both in word and deed. They are spiritual leaders and models of discipleship in the church. Therefore, they must give priority to knowing and living out God’s will in their lives. Their ministry is both a calling and a lifestyle—if either is neglected, they will be disqualified to serve.

2. KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING—Leaders must not neglect the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of their families. Their ministry is never more important than the needs of their family. If family problems become so great that their ability to perform ministry responsibilities is negatively impacted, they must consult with the Executive Pastor to address and resolve the issue.

3. GET ONBOARD—Ministry leaders must know the Senior Pastor’s vision, purpose, and priorities to adopt them as their own. Their loyalty to the Senior Pastor, as well as to the other staff/ministry leaders, is their most *critical expectation*. It is NEVER their job to *second-guess* or *Monday quarterback* the Senior Pastor or other staff/ministry leaders. Their job is to help the team succeed!

If any staff/ministry leader suspects the Senior Pastor of abusive, immoral, unethical, illegal, or unbiblical behavior (**A MELT** down = Abuse, Moral, Ethical, Legal, Theological or Biblical²), the Executive Pastor must immediately be informed to help address the situation.

If a staff/ministry leader disagrees with the Senior Pastor on any issue, he must first consult with the Executive Pastor. If the problem cannot be resolved to the staff/ministry leader’s satisfaction, and if he cannot abide the Executive Pastor’s decision, he is instructed to follow the biblical guidelines of Matthew 18:15-20, as detailed in the “*Conflict Resolution Article*” of the Church’s Constitutional Bylaws.

² See Chapter 4

If he discusses his disagreement with anyone besides the Senior Pastor and/or the Executive Pastor, he will be temporarily discharged from his ministry position, and the matter will be reviewed by the *Administrative Leadership Team* (ALT) (i.e., the authoritative body of the church) for final disposition.

4. CONTEND BUT THEN DEFEND. In their specific areas of responsibility, ministry leaders should strongly advocate for their ministry ideas, but after the decision is made, they must then serve as strong defenders for that decision, **regardless!**

If they cannot attitudinally support a ministry decision, they must remain loyal to the decision and never undermine the Senior Pastor or other ministry leaders. They must never allow adverse personal opinions to be reflected in the performance of their ministry or in their relationship with other ministry members.

If a leader absolutely **cannot** support a ministry decision, he must quickly and quietly resign. It is critical to remember that they **do not work for the church**—*THEY WORK FOR THE SENIOR PASTOR* in discharging their ministry responsibilities (*refer to A MELT down in Chapter 4*).

5. BE A PACESETTER—Ministry leaders always look for ways to improve ministry! They must never be satisfied with an “OK” performance and result. They must strive for excellence to exceed expectations! They must seek to motivate their ministry teams to have the same performance standards.

Leaders are expected to identify and actively mentor others to prepare their own ministry *successors*. Anytime leaders becomes *indispensable* because they have not trained someone to replace them, they have become **liabilities** to the ministry of the church.

6. “STAY IN YOUR LANE”—Ministry leaders must serve in accordance with their job descriptions and ministry expectations. They must know what they are supposed to do and do it to the best of their ability.

They must be careful to respect the duties and responsibilities of other ministry leaders and not cross into their ministry territory. They must never criticize, minimize, or compromise the performance of other leaders—rather they should serve as cheerleaders and supporters of the ministry team.

7. PLAY TOGETHER—Ministry leaders are members of a TEAM. It is critical that the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, and ministry/staff leaders function as a cohesive team. It is always the *team dynamic* that wins. No ministry is more important than any other ministry—if one fails, the entire team fails.

It is essential that leaders support one another and strive to help each other succeed in accomplishing their ministry objectives. They should always consider how they can support other leaders in the performance of their ministries.

“*Hot dog*” performers may have a few flashy moments, but teams never win when someone takes the spotlight and leaves the rest in their shadow.

Never criticize other leaders to (*or in the presence of*) anyone else. If a leader has an issue with the performance of another leader, the matter must be discussed privately with that individual (cf. Matthew 18:15-20). If that does not resolve the matter, it must be brought directly to the Executive Pastor.

8. KEEP ON KEEPING ON—Ministry leaders persevere! They work hard! They play hard! They rest hard! They set appropriate boundaries! They don’t burn out! They do not minister in their own strength—they find their strength in the Lord! They must strive not to “*take work home*” physically, mentally, or emotionally.

If ministry responsibilities start to negatively affect a leader’s attitude or performance, talk with the Executive Pastor before “flaming out.” No one (and no job) is indispensable, and no problem is unfixable!

9. TAKE NO SHORTCUTS—Ministry leaders must never compromise biblical principles to get a quick fix. It may seem faster, cheaper, or easier to get

something done in a compromising way—**DON'T EVER DO IT!** Remember, *“the wages of sin is death.”* Whatever leaders do, they must strive to do it right the first time, every time!

10. LOOK GOOD! Appearance usually determines how someone is perceived and received. Leaders should work to be physically fit and should dress *appropriately*. Their appearance and attitude should reflect both the joy of their salvation and the importance of their ministry. Leaders must be both professional, as well as personal, in their relationships.

CHAPTER 6

HOW DOES THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR RELATE TO THE MEMBERSHIP?

The Executive Pastor serves as the “*floor manager*” at every church service to ensure that the various ministries are functioning appropriately and to address any problems that might arise. In that regard, he is highly visible to greet attenders, answer questions, provide directions, respond to disturbances or emergencies, locate seats for late arrivals, assist staff, and address any issue that might arise. In other words, the noticeable presence of the Executive Pastor at congregational meetings demonstrates his intentional availability.

In addition, the Executive Pastor is available to preach/teach as needed. In the regular display of His Biblical knowledge and ministry skills, the congregation gains enthusiastic respect for his theological expertise, ecclesiastical experience, and his personal support for the Senior Pastor and the Church. Because access to the Senior Pastor is often limited by his schedule and personal availability, the Executive Pastor can assist the Senior Pastor in addressing the needs of the congregational members.

The Executive Pastor helps the church to understand and support both the ministry and personal needs of the Senior Pastor and the staff/ministry leaders. He intervenes when he suspects that a church member is criticizing, bullying, gossiping, or abusing the Pastor or any staff/ministry leader.

His pastoral experience, his visibility to the congregation, and his relationship to the Senior Pastor and staff bolster the recognition and trust that the congregation has in the Executive Pastor. To the best of his ability, he functions as a servant to the members by presenting the persona of a gentle, firm, no-nonsense experienced *patriarch* for the church.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT DETERMINES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR?

Like all ministry assignments, the Executive Pastor must serve as a function of his divine call to this ministry. Obviously, the effectiveness of the Executive Pastor is primarily determined by his relationship to the Senior Pastor. As discussed earlier, the Senior Pastor must have complete confidence in the Executive Pastor as a friend, protector, confidant, and seasoned minister. Without that kind of relationship, the Executive Pastor can be little more than another staff member with little special access to the Senior Pastor.

The Executive Pastor must totally trust the Senior Pastor and faithfully commit to his authority, his vision, and his direction. The tendency of older, seasoned pastors is to believe that through their time and ministry experiences, they know best. The necessary challenge for the Executive Pastor is to submit to the Senior Pastor, to give advice **only** if requested, and to implement the Senior Pastor's orders without debate. The only exception would be if the Executive Pastor believed that the Senior Pastor was in danger of **A MELT down** (see chapter 4).

In many respects, the role of Executive Pastor is more challenging than any other ministry position. Most ministries are evaluated as a function of organization, quality of ministry, participation of members, and ministry effectiveness. However, the effectiveness of the Executive Pastor is probably best evaluated in terms of *what's not happening* rather than what is happening. For example:

- The Executive Pastor is to help protect, encourage, support, and befriend the Senior Pastor. However, if the Senior Pastor is healthy, happy, helpful, and faithful, the evaluation usually focuses on the personality of the Senior Pastor, and not the support of the Executive Pastor—though it may be

because the Executive Pastor is the *iron that sharpens iron* (Proverbs 27:17) and the *friend that sticks closer than a brother* (Proverbs 18:24).

- The Executive Pastor should encourage, assist, befriend, observe, and hold the staff/ministry leaders accountable. However, if the ministry leaders are organized, productive, developing, and successful, the evaluation focuses on their effectiveness, not on the ministry of the Executive Pastor. Although he is their accountability “cheerleader” who supervises, encourages, and inspires them to serve in symbiotic ministerial relationships, the evaluation is correctly directed toward the ministry leaders.

- The Executive Pastor serves the congregation to promote healthy relationships and wholesome fellowship. However, If the congregation is enthusiastic, friendly, evangelistic, and growing, the evaluation should focus on the warm, exciting, abiding presence of the Lord—certainly not upon the Executive Pastor. However, he should be a stable, visible, charismatic presence that inspires and stimulates the congregation to grow in genuine and wholesome fellowship.

In other words, the Executive Pastor’s primary task is to serve discreetly and sacrificially such that ministry leaders function effectively and lovingly, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and under the leadership of the Senior Pastor to faithfully fulfill God’s will for His church!

CHAPTER 8

WHEN DOES THE EXECUTIVE PASTOR COMPLETE HIS MINISTRY?

The Executive Pastor should continue in his ministry for as long as he senses the call and will of God—as desired by the Senior Pastor.

The Executive Pastor should receive on-going evaluations from the Senior Pastor regarding his performance. If at any time the Executive Pastor perceives that the Senior Pastor is not completely satisfied with their relationship or with his performance, the Executive Pastor should immediately offer his resignation without reservation.

When the Executive Pastor believes that his ministry is completed, he should tender his resignation to the Senior Pastor, understanding that his resignation is indeed God’s will, regardless of how the “*will of God*” might have been determined. It is always vital to remember that the Executive Pastor serves for and is responsible to the Pastor, NOT THE CHURCH. When the relationship with the Pastor is jeopardized, troubled, or compromised, the Executive Pastor’s ministry is effectively concluded.

The departure of the Executive Pastor must always be positive without any recrimination, accusation, or adversity toward the Pastor or the church. In fact, the Executive Pastor should view anything that redirects his life and ministry as an *act of God’s will* to another ministry opportunity, regardless of how the will of God is discovered or determined.

In that regard, the Executive Pastor must never become a party to, or cause of, church conflict. He must discover and **declare** how his resignation reflects God’s call to another ministry, without any reference to any circumstances other than the positive will of God. His scriptural understanding should be based upon Romans 8:28, “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose,*” and Philippians 1:6, “*For I am confident of*

this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

If the Senior Pastor concludes his ministry at the church, the Executive Pastor should only serve in a transitional role until the new senior pastor is called. Upon the new pastor’s arrival, the Executive Pastor should submit his resignation and ONLY continue in the position at the **insistence** of the new Senior Pastor.

As the Executive Pastor approaches the conclusion of his tenure, he should be willing to train his successor as desired by the Senior Pastor.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

As I have experienced the privilege to serve as both a Senior Pastor and an Executive Pastor, and as I have coached pastors in navigating both the joys and struggles of pastoral ministry, it is apparent to me that the greatest benefit and blessing a Senior Pastor can experience is a God-called, Spirit-led faithful Executive Pastor.

In most American churches, the Senior Pastor is the only “*trained minister*” on staff and is responsible for the planning, implementation, supervision, execution, and evaluation of the church ministries. In many churches, lay members have responsibility for those ministries that are necessary for the church to function: worship, education, administration, and corporate oversight (e.g., worship leaders and accompanists, teachers, treasurers, small group leaders, and elders/deacons).

Although these lay ministry functions supposedly fall under the authority of the Senior Pastor, he has limited ability to exact real supervision since he effectively works for those he *supervises*—as church members, they are his *employer*!

Unless such lay ministers demonstrate ministerial incompetence or have **A MELT down**, they have job security, regardless of the Pastor’s authority—his supervisory authority is effectively nullified by his lack of ability to exact discipline or dismissal. Thus, the need for an Executive Pastor!

The men who are most qualified and most effective to serve as an Executive Pastor are either retired pastors or experienced staff pastors, who have the physical and mental aptitude, the personal attitude, and the divine call to continue pastoral ministry with no desire to serve as the Senior Pastor. Usually, such men are either retired or have some form of supplemental income that they no longer need a regular paycheck and can often serve part-time, without the need for a significant salary. Of course, any expenses

or exceptional time that his ministry's responsibilities incur should be recompensed by the church.

Such experienced pastors have the spiritual maturity, pastoral experience, financial independence, personal influence, and congregational respect to protect, encourage, and assist the Senior Pastor as he faces the unending pastoral and ministerial responsibilities.

It can be difficult to find an experienced pastor who is called to such service and who will/can establish the necessary trusting relationship with the Senior Pastor. Of course, such trans-generational relationships hardly ever occur incidentally or accidentally—they must be formed purposefully and intentionally.

Such relationships necessitate an overt willingness and intentionality by senior pastors, as well as an expressed divine call and the desire to so serve by potential executive pastors. Before a formal Senior Pastor/Executive Pastor ministry relationship can be established, the two men must develop an uncompromising trust, as well as a mutual understanding of and commitment to the necessary role functions.

In addition, the potential Executive Pastor must serve and become a trusted/valuable member of the church. In other words, this ministry function requires his active participation in the church, as well as his uncompromising commitment to the Senior Pastor.

Since this is a new concept for most churches, it would require an intentional process of identifying and addressing the serious burden that Senior Pastors face, presenting the strengths and advantages of the Executive Pastor position in addressing that burden, and introducing the individual who is committed to serve as a friend, protector, and support to the Senior Pastor, and who will be valuable to the fellowship of the church.

In most cases, this would take some time to establish the necessary relationships, but the process itself would benefit, encourage, and bless both the church and the Senior Pastor.

I am convinced that Senior Pastors of every church, regardless of size, need to discover their potential Executive Pastor and lead their churches to implement this form of strategic ministry!

APPENDIX

SAMPLE EXECUTIVE PASTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

PRINCIPLE FUNCTION: The Executive Pastor is directly responsible to the Senior Pastor for leading and supervising the staff/ministry leaders in fulfilling their church organizational and operational functions.

REQUIREMENTS: The Executive Pastor shall have demonstrated extensive excellent ministry experience serving either as Senior Pastor or as a Staff Pastor. He must have the complete confidence and trust of the Senior Pastor.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 1.** Serve under the authority of the Senior Pastor to lead and supervise the church staff/ministry leaders.
- 2.** Liaison with other church leaders and teams/committees as authorized by the Senior Pastor (e.g., deacons, elders, trustees, ministry and support teams).
- 3.** Regularly review, evaluate, and update (as necessary) the various staff/ministry leader's job descriptions.
- 4.** Provide/coordinate leadership training for the church staff/ministry leaders.
- 5.** Provide accountability and encouragement for church staff/ministry leaders, as well as other church members who are experiencing conflicts and difficulties within the church.
- 6.** Coordinate calendar planning, budget planning, and ministry evaluation for the church staff/ministry leaders.
- 7.** Plan and lead weekly staff meetings and model/establish a servant leadership mindset for the church staff/ministry leaders.

- 8.** Manage church policies, organizational structure, compliance, and documentation.
- 9.** Provide oversight of the budgeting process and evaluate monthly ministry financial reports to ensure proper fiduciary compliance.
- 10.** Ensure that staff/ministry leaders comply with the church constitution/bylaws and church policy manual in the performance of their ministry responsibilities.
- 11.** Organize and plan the church business meeting(s) and assist the Senior Pastor in preparing to lead the meeting(s).
- 12.** Preach/teach as needed and scheduled by the Senior Pastor.
- 13.** Provide pastoral care and spiritual guidance as needed/assigned by the Senior Pastor.
- 14.** Be visibly present and an active participant at every all-church meeting and use such occasions to greet members/guests, as well as to visit/encourage/evaluate the staff and ministry leaders in the performance of their responsibilities.
- 15.** Serve as the protector, confidant, servant, and friend of the Senior Pastor.