

# IV. Appreciating Our Responsibility for Wise Application



Taking into account  
our situation

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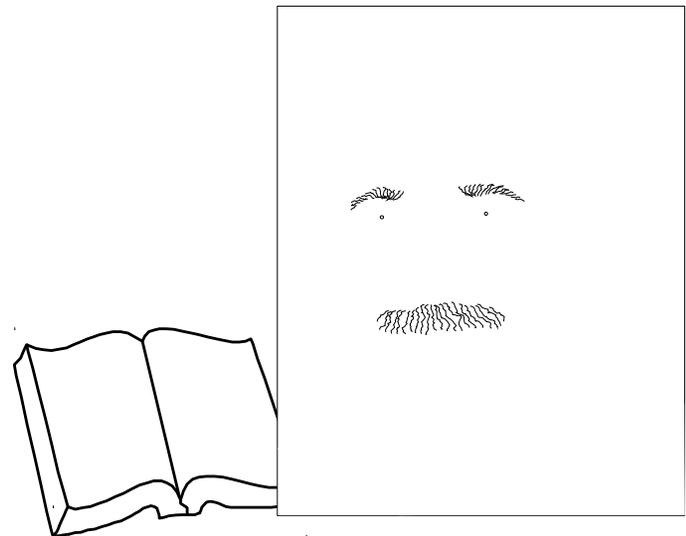
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# The Challenge

Sometimes I  
don't see how the  
Bible is relevant.

Let's look at  
modern idols.



# Reading Assignments

- Required: Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* chaps. 2, 4, 5 (pp. 6-17, 43-75).  
(hidden agenda for church life).
- Optional:
  - Stott, *Between Two Worlds*
  - Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*
  - Guinness, *No God but God*
  - Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*
  - Conn, “Theological Education,” *WTJ* 41 (1978-79) 324-363.
  - Zens, “Building Up the Body: One Man ...”

# Where Are We?

1. Preliminary acquaintance with the text
2. Exegesis in the original setting
3. Relations with other passages
4. Role in redemptive history
- 5. Application**

➤ Application stimulates other steps.

# Where Are We?

1. Preliminary acquaintance with the text
2. Exegesis in the original setting
3. Relations with other passages
4. Role in redemptive history
- 5. Application**

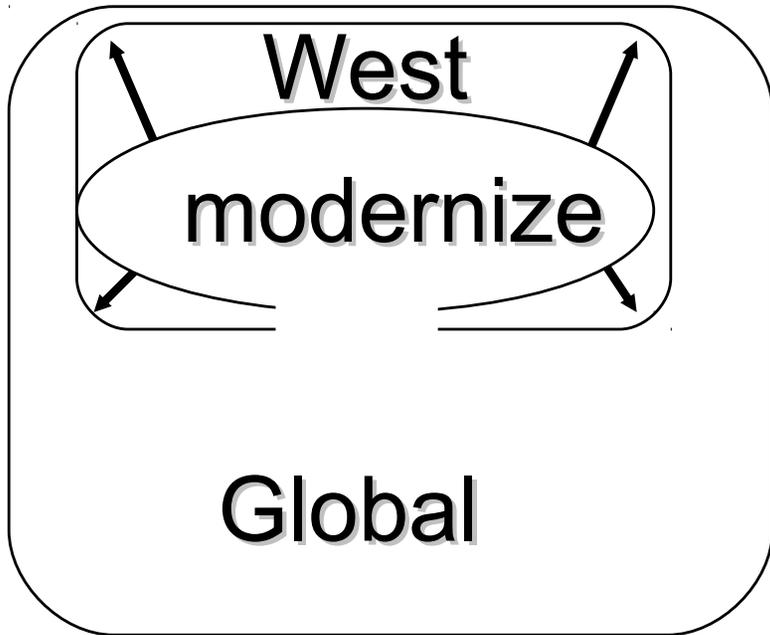
➤ A sense of where we are going in application can stimulate keen observation in all the other stages of research.

# A. Discerning Cultural Idols

# 1. Secularization and Modernization

# 1. Secularization and Related Aspects of Modernization

# Setting of Secularization



Significant.



- Modernization in West.
- Penetrates other countries.
  - International relevance.
  - Terms: secularization; privatization, pluralization.
  - Terms from Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File* (building on Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*).

# Setting of Secularization

- Modernization is most intense in the West.
- But it penetrates into other countries. Significant.
- Hence, our reflections have international relevance.
- The key term is secularization, which goes together with privatization and pluralization.
- Terminology is found in Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File*, building on Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*.



# Secularization

~~Old  
worship~~

**New  
idol**

Not a  
vacuum.

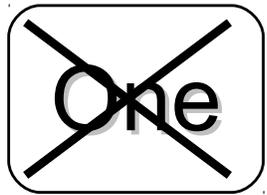


- Secularization removes force from religion.
- Comes from ideas and economy.
- Society has new idolatries:
  - Mammon, state power, self-fulfillment
  - Nature, humanity
- See Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*;  
Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*

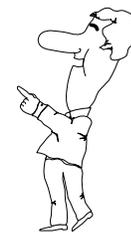
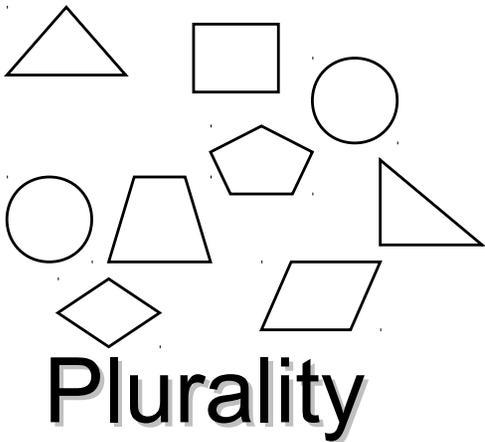
# Secularization

- Secularization is the removal of classical, overt religion as a determining, world-defining structural force in social consciousness.
- Pressure comes not only from philosophical ideas (Schaeffer's story), but economy.
- Secularization leaves society not with no religion at all but with idolatries: Mammon, nature, humanity, state power, self-fulfillment. See Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*

# Pluralization



- Many ideas compete for allegiance.
- No ideology controls the whole.
- People “shop” for a church.
- Churches “sell” themselves.



**Distortion.**

# Pluralization

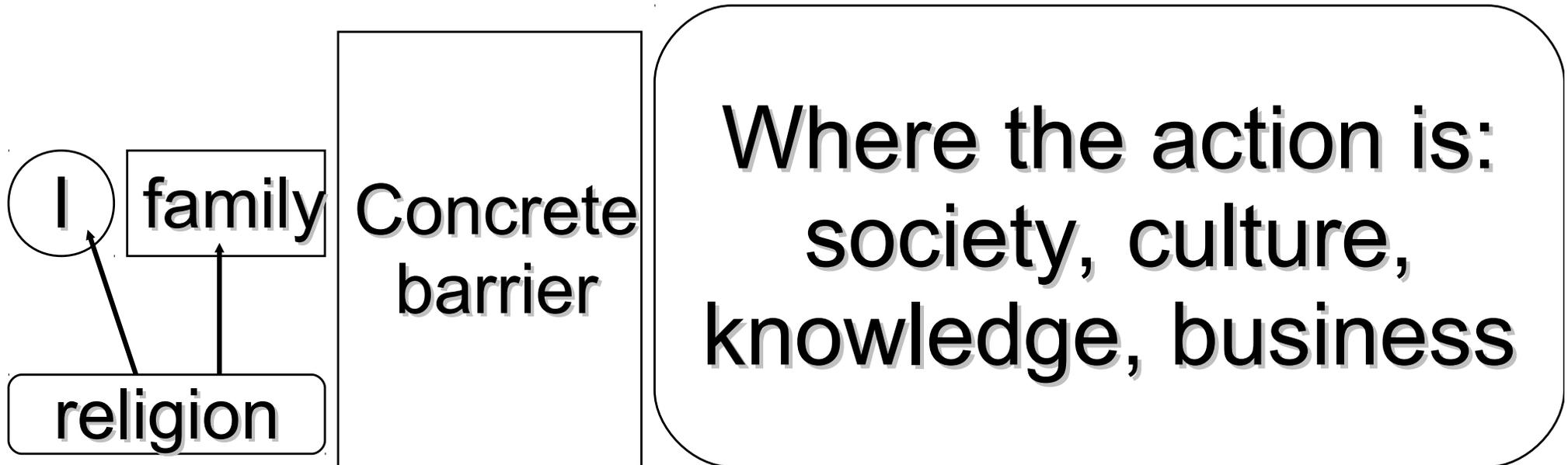
- Pluralization is the rise of social awareness of the fact that many religious groups and ideologies competing for ultimate allegiance.
- No religious group controls the worldview of a whole people.
- People “shop” for a church.
- Churches imitate business in order to “sell” themselves to people “shopping” for religious wares.



Distortion.

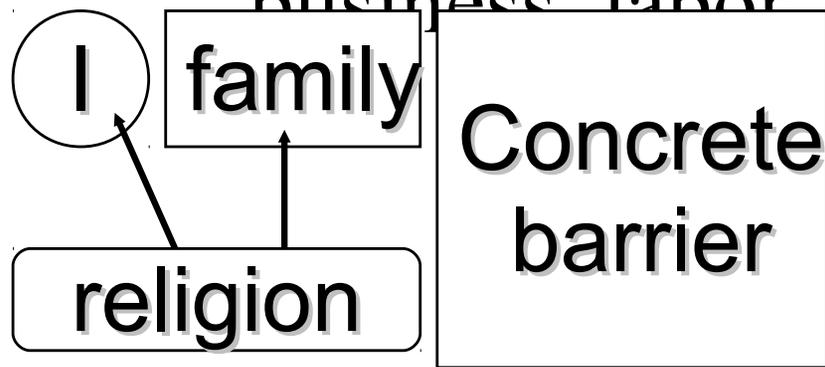
# Privatization

- Religion restricted to private sphere.
- Not “public”:
  - science, politics, education, business, labor, art, communications



# Privatization

- Privatization is the confinement of religious influence to narrowly delineated spheres: the family and the individual psyche.
- One must not bring up religious thinking in “public”: science, politics, education, business, labor, art, communication.



**Where the action is:  
society, culture,  
knowledge, business**

# Civility

- Remaining value is politeness.
- Builds on
  - pluralization (polite to religions).
  - privatization (keep divisions private).



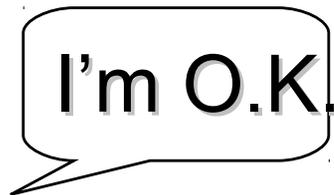
I'm O.K.



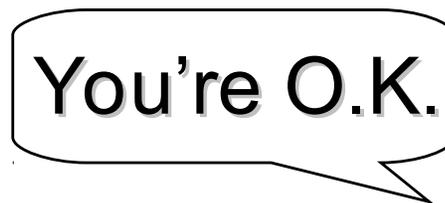
You're O.K.

# Civility

- The highest remaining ethical value is civility: public politeness to other people.
- Civility is closely related both to pluralization (be polite to other religions) and privatization (keep weird and divisive practices in private).



I'm O.K.



You're O.K.

# Effects of Civility on Evangelicals

- Downplay offensive doctrines.
- Downplay dogmatic certainty.
- Lose dynamism springing from certainty.
- See James D. Hunter, *Evangelicals: The Coming Generation* 183-184, 212.

You believe  
in hell??!

Uh ... well, you see, some  
people get the wrong idea.  
Christianity is about loving  
everybody.

# Effects of Civility on Evangelicals

- Downplay offensive doctrines.
- Move away from claims to dogmatic certainty.
- Lose dynamism springing from moral and intellectual certainty.
- See James D. Hunter, *Evangelicals: The Coming Generation* 183-184, 212.

## 2. Response to Secularization: Critique of Modern Idolatries

# Kinds of Idols

- History
- Nature
- Humanity
- Mammon
- Power
- Ecclesiastical Institutions
- Sex
- Self

# Idolatry in Revelation

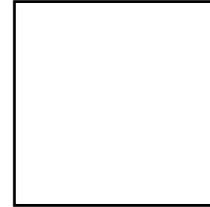
- Book of Revelation critiques idolatry.
  - idols of power and state (the Beast)
  - idols of pleasure and Mammon (the Prostitute).

# Idolatry in Revelation

- See the Book of Revelation for analysis of idolatry through all time.
  - Especially there is attention to idols of power and state (the Beast) and idols of pleasure and Mammon (the Prostitute).

# Non-Western Cultures

- Analyze idolatry in culture.
- Show God's presence in culture (Rom 1:18-21).



# Non-Western Cultures

- Communicating critically in non-Western cultures involves appreciation of the particular forms of idolatry and responses to God's unavoidable presence (Rom 1:18-21) in each particular culture.

# B. Biblical Interpretation in Communion with the Saints



# 1. Dialogue with Others

# Insights from Your Congregation

- Diversity in the body (1 Cor. 12).
- You are expert in Scripture.
- Others are expert elsewhere.
- Consult others for applications:
  - science, business, art, politics, education, medicine.
  - “What are the issues and struggles?”

# Insights from Your Congregation

- Remember the diversity of gifts in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).
- You are an expert in Scripture.
- Given the specialization in modern life, others will be experts in other areas.
- Consult others in attempting detailed applications to specialized areas: science, business, art, politics, education, medicine.
  - Ask others what are the issues and the struggles.

## 2. You Speak and Act

# Nature of Church Ministry

- We naturally notice sermons.
- Other acts supplement communication.

# Nature of Church Ministry

- We naturally notice the sermons.
- But other acts join with sermons in the total process of communicating the word of God to people.

# Christ's Ministry

- Teaching (as in parables)
- Working miracles (healing, exorcism)
- Fellowship with apostles and with “sinners”



Functioning  
together.

# Ministry of the Apostles

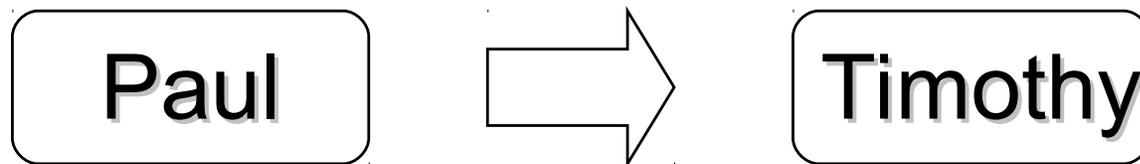
- Words, Acts 20:20.
- Example, Acts 20:19.
- Sharing, Acts 20:35.
- Miracles, Acts 19:11.



Functioning  
together again.

# Word and Deed in Paul

- Paul's message and example, 1 Thess. 2:1-12.
- Timothy must maintain teaching and example, 1 Tim. 3; 4:6-16.



# Word and Deed in Paul

- Paul appeals both to his message and to his example, 1 Thess. 2:1-12.
- Paul advises Timothy to maintain both teaching and example, 1 Tim. 3; 4:6-16.

# The Bias toward Word Only

Bias through one-sided reasoning:

- “Miracles are unique.  
Jesus does not offer a model.”
- We use only the word.

Deed

Word

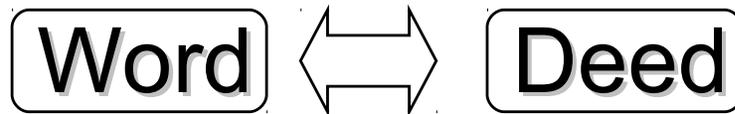
# The Bias toward Word Only

It is easy to introduce bias through one-sided reasoning:

- “We may not use Jesus and the apostles as our model in the area of miracles, because miracles were unique to their role in redemptive history.”
- Hence, nowadays, we carry on only word ministry.

# Maintaining Deed with Word

- Jesus' words are unique by inspiration.
- Jesus is an example by analogy.
- People understand word through experiences.



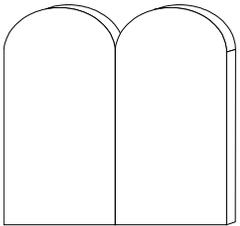
# Maintaining Deed with Word

- By parity of reasoning, we cannot not use Jesus and the apostles as a model for our words, because their words were unique in inspiration.
- In fact, they are an example in both areas by analogy, not by identity with our roles.
- God gives people ability to grasp the implications of the Bible partly through life experiences, as he comforts, answers prayer, and reforms their families.

### 3. Love in Interpretation

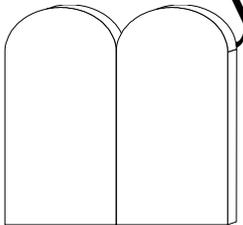
# Love as Hermeneutical Rule

- “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets,” Matt. 22:40.
- Summed up in one commandment, Gal. 5:14.
  - “Love is the fulfilling of the law” Rom. 13:8-10.
- Hermeneutics summed up in one rule:  
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”



# Love as Hermeneutical Rule

- “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets,” Matt. 22:40.
- Or summed up in one commandment, Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8-10: “Love is the fulfilling of the law.”
- Hermeneutics can be summed up in one rule: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”



# Violations of Love

You report true facts, but

- in contention.
- getting admiration of yourself.
- producing dependence on yourself.

# Violations of Love

If you report true facts, but

- in contention.
- or to build up admiration of yourself.
- or in a way that produces dependence on yourself rather than on the Lord.

## 4. Hidden Agenda

# Your Manner Vs. Your Doctrine

General principle:

- Your life may undermine your teaching.



Watch your life!

# Your Manner Vs. Your Doctrine

## General principle:

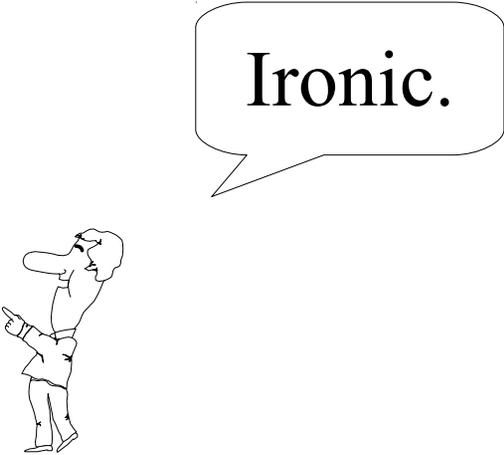
- Even though you do not realize it, your life or your manner of teaching may subtly give a message that undermines your teaching content.



Watch your life!

# Teaching on Spiritual Gifts

- Teach the diversity of gifts.
- You only are up front.
- People will not really grasp it.



Ironic.

# Teaching on Spiritual Gifts

- Teach the diversity of gifts, and that all have gifts.
- But you are the only one ever up front.
- People will not really grasp such teaching because what happens proclaims a contrary message in practice.



Ironic.

# Constant Correction of “Errors”

You constantly correct errors.

What bad results?

- Incompetence of laymen.
- Importance of minutiae.
- Fear of general priesthood of believers.
- Formal correctness better than embodied truth.

Uh oh.



# Constant Correction of “Errors”

What if you constantly correct supposed errors in attempts by laymen to express doctrine?

What bad might you communicate?

- Incompetence of laymen.
- Importance of minutiae.
- Fear of general priesthood of believers.
- Superior value of formal correctness over motivation and embodied truth.

Uh oh.



# Superiority of Reformed Doctrine

Teach the superiority of Reformed doctrine.  
What bad results?

- Spiritual pride.
- Security in your understanding of truth.
- Seminary-trained teacher as oracle.
- No fellowship with general evangelicals.

► Is Reformed doctrine superior?

Not if you make yourself superior through it.

# Superiority of Reformed Doctrine

What if you teach the superiority of Reformed doctrine? What bad effects could result?

- Spiritual pride.
- Security in your understanding of truth.
- Seminary-trained teacher as oracle.
- Inability to extend fellowship to general evangelicals.

□ Is Reformed doctrine superior?

Not if you make yourself superior by means of it.

# Teaching Infant Baptism

Teach infant baptism.

What bad effects result?

- People despise baptists.
- Exacerbate divisions in the body.

□ Teach the baptistic view as well?

# Teaching Infant Baptism

What if you teach the biblical basis for infant baptism? What bad effects might result?

- People despise and suspect those who do not agree.
- Enhance separation with baptists, further exacerbating divisions in the body of Christ.

□ Why not teach the baptistic view as well?

# Conducting Arguments

- See Roger Nicole, “How to Deal with Those Who Differ from Us.”
- John Newton, "On Controversy"
- We need zeal for truth.
- Combined with zeal for loving.

love

truth



You can win the argument and lose the person!

# Conducting Arguments

- See Roger Nicole, “How to Deal with Those Who Differ from Us.”
- John Newton, "On Controversy."
- We need zeal for truth in a relativistic and pragmatistic age.
- But it is to be combined with zeal for loving and binding together the body

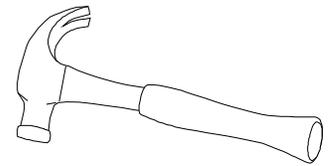


You can win the argument and lose the person!

# Encouraging Lay Ministry

- Risk mistakes from lay ministry?

□ Will a carpenter let his son hammer?



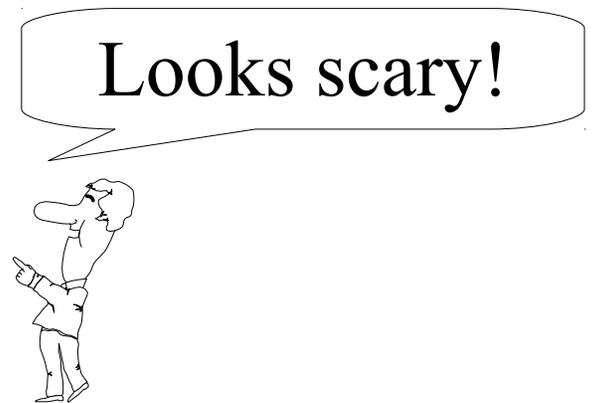
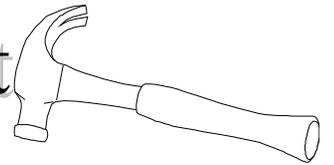
□ Humility, not errorlessness, gives health.

Looks scary!



# Encouraging Lay Ministry

- Will we risk seeing mistakes, failures, and aberrations through lay ministry?
- Compare it with a carpenter. Will he let his son use a hammer for the first time?
- Humility, not errorlessness, gives health to the church.



# Roland Allen's Challenge

## Typical desire for control

- We want zeal.
- But not too much.

## Allen's counsel

- Spirit's revivals escape human control.

Maybe my plans are not the same as the Holy Spirit's.



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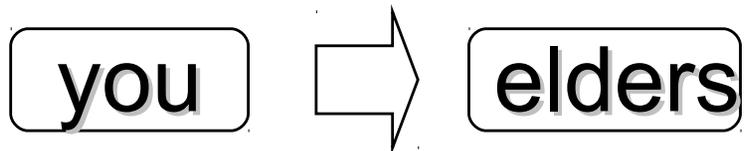
- Spirit's more vigorous revivals escape human control.

Maybe my plans are not the same as the Holy Spirit's.



# Lay Ministry through Training

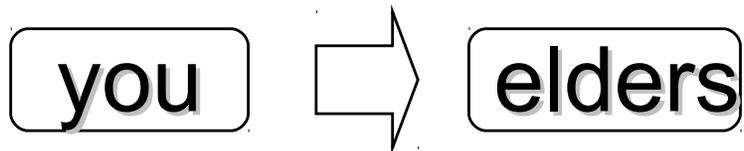
- You cannot train everyone.
- Train elders.  
They train others.
- Multiplication more important than skillful preaching.



Most pastors are  
not Superman!

# Lay Ministry through Training

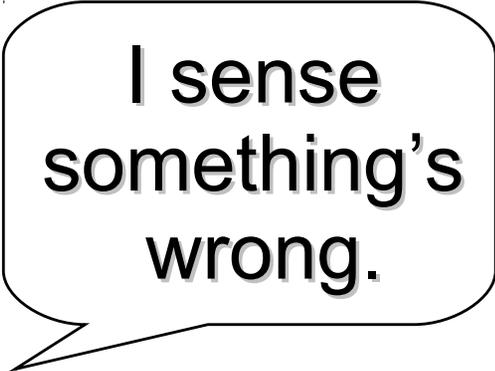
- You cannot train everyone.
- Train elders. If the Spirit works in them, they will become able to train others.
- In the long run, this multiplication of ministry is more important even than skillful preaching.



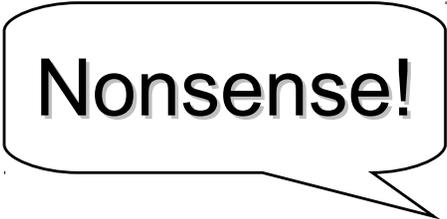
Most pastors are not Superman!

# Respecting Holistic Intuitions

- “Hidden agenda” beyond the overt.
- Intuition picks it up.
  - “Women’s intuition.”
  - Charismatic “prophecy” at best.  
(not claiming inspiration)
- Exercises of “discernment” (Phil. 1:10).



I sense  
something's  
wrong.



Nonsense!

# Respecting Holistic Intuitions

- We have seen that there may be “hidden agenda” beyond what someone says overtly.
- Intuition often picks up on this agenda.
  - “Women’s intuition”
  - Charismatic “prophecy” at its best (not to be understood as claiming inspiration).
- These may be exercises of “discernment” in the sense of Phil. 1:10.

# Earthly Static Security

- No security in a static church.
- You “feed the flock.”  
Also more sheep and more flocks.
- No security in institutions,  
doctrinal or ecclesiastical.
- Institutions can aid truth.
- The truth is infinitely deep.

Trust Christ!



# Earthly Static Security

- Beware of seeking security in a static church, in a maintenance operation.
- Your charge is to “feed the flock.” But remember that more sheep and more flocks are part of the total picture.
- No ultimate security in institutional systems, whether doctrinal or ecclesiastical.
- At best, these systems are aids to the truth.
- The truth is infinitely deep.

Trust Christ!



# Love among Calvinists

- Love God as Calvin did.
- “Reformed theology is like karate.”
- Are Calvinists unloving?

An on-going  
challenge!



# Love among Calvinists

- Love God as Calvin did.
- “Reformed theology is like karate.”
- Avoid the reproach that Calvinists are unloving.

An on-going challenge!



## C. The Hope for the Consummation

# Depth in God's Revelation

- Depth of truth, 1 Cor. 13:12; Eph. 3:17-20; 1:17-19.
- We will know fully later.
- Press on (Phil. 3:12-14).
- Example of Elisabeth Elliot.
  - “I am the LORD.”



There is  
always more.

# Depth in God's Revelation

- Depth is indicated by 1 Cor. 13:12; Eph. 3:17-20; 1:17-19.
- We will know fully only in the consummation.
- Press on (Phil. 3:12-14).
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