

JOHN CURRIE

*Foreword by Sinclair B. Ferguson*

*The*  
PASTOR  
*as*  
LEADER

PRINCIPLES & PRACTICES

FOR CONNECTING

PREACHING & LEADERSHIP



“*The Pastor as Leader* recovers the greatest need for our day and our churches—the pastor as a man of God who leads through preaching God’s word as God’s ambassador. Every page is convicting, and not a few times I was sent to my knees in prayer, ‘O Lord, raise up a generation of men of God who, filled with your Spirit and leading from their knees, faithfully preach your word.’”

**Alfred J. Poirier**, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary; author, *The Peacemaking Pastor*

“Good pastors lead and feed—all week long and especially in the pulpit. These two central tasks go together. In his church, Christ means for the rulers to teach and the teachers to rule. Separating one from the other would harm them both. By connecting principles and practices, John Currie helps preacher-leaders realize the ancient, enduring vision. I encourage not only individuals but leadership teams to read this book.”

**David Mathis**, Senior Teacher and Executive Editor, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org); Pastor, Cities Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota; author, *Habits of Grace*

“*The Pastor as Leader* is clear, deeply scriptural, and cogently written. While it reflects the best of the Reformed tradition and its pastoral riches, it is remarkably relevant for all pastors, regardless of denominational tradition or theological connection. This is because John Currie’s commitment to and exposition of the Scriptures engage the heart and mind of one called to serve Christ in ministry. This book will inspire both pastoral students and pastors who have served in ministry for many years. I highly recommend it.”

**Peter A. Lillback**, President, Westminster Theological Seminary

“This book fills a void in the pastoral-leadership literature and has quickly become one of my favorite books on the pastorate. It is filled with robust biblical exegesis, sound theology, affection for Christ, and helpful real-life application. Currie’s experience and expertise as a pastor and mentor to pastors shows on every page. Come sit at the feet of this pastor of pastors to be refreshed and renewed in ministry.”

**Jason Helopoulos**, Senior Pastor, University Reformed Church, East Lansing, Michigan; author, *The New Pastor’s Handbook* and *Covenantal Baptism*

“Often when pastors think about leadership in the church, they fail to take into account the strategic place of preaching. With biblical and theological depth, John Currie describes the many facets necessary for the man of God, in the power of God, to effectively lead the flock of God through the ministry of the word of God. This is a book that preachers and aspiring preachers need to read and digest.”

**Timothy Z. Witmer**, author, *The Shepherd Leader*; Professor Emeritus of Practical Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary

“Rather than relying on the latest secular leadership strategies, Currie has written a book that is rich in biblical exposition, careful in the application of theological categories, and informed by noteworthy pastors and theologians throughout the church’s history. According to Currie, leadership is an expression of a biblical ecclesiology, requiring clear convictions concerning the church’s mission, the purpose of preaching, and an appreciation of the varied gifts the ascended and reigning Christ has distributed within his church. Throughout this book, you will find encouragement to lead, starting with your preaching, with greater conviction and clarity.”

**Rob Edwards**, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Dean of Students, Westminster Theological Seminary

“A pastor is a leader. But where will he lead those who follow him? *The Pastor as Leader* isn’t just another book on leadership or preaching but a Scripture-saturated plea to lead God’s people by God’s word. This refreshing vision of pastoral ministry was helpful and humbling for me. I trust it’ll serve you as well.”

**J. Garrett Kell**, Pastor, Del Ray Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia;  
author, *Pure in Heart*

“What does it mean to be a new covenant minister of the Spirit, a post-Pentecost pastor now that Christ—crucified, resurrected, and ascended—is head over all things to and for the church? With sound handling of Scripture, enriched by his own experience as a seasoned pastor, John Currie explores the answer as he makes the compelling case that the pastor’s calling as a leader takes place primarily in the pulpit.”

**Richard B. Gaffin Jr.**, Professor Emeritus of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary

*The Pastor as Leader*



# The Pastor as Leader

*Principles and Practices for Connecting  
Preaching and Leadership*

John Currie

Foreword by Sinclair B. Ferguson

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
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*In memoriam*  
*Harry L. Reeder III*  
*man of God*





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## Foreword

SINCE CONFESSION IS SAID to be good for the soul, I should begin with one: John Currie has been both a friend and an encourager to me for many years. I have long appreciated him as a person and admired the quality of his preaching and the fruitfulness of his pastoral ministry in the congregations he has served. He has a spirit that colleagues, students, and pastors alike respond to, graciously combining considerable personal gifts with a deep and genuine appreciation for the gifts of others. In addition to this, I am also grateful for the special kinds of sacrifice he and his wife, Rhonda, have made to enable him to serve as a professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he invests himself wholeheartedly in preparing others for pastoral ministry. For while seminary teaching is truly a great work, it is a very specific kind of ministry, and for someone who loves the regular, multifaceted life of ministry to a particular church family, it can sometimes feel like a demotion!

In light of this level of affection for the author, readers will understand my necessary element of restraint in commending these pages. But I do commend them enthusiastically, for several

reasons. Books on the preaching ministry have become increasingly numerous in recent years. This one, however, has several features that make it distinct. They are almost immediately obvious; but perhaps the most obvious is that—unlike many other contemporary works on ministry and leadership—this one is not driven by the question *What works?*

A friend who pastored a megachurch once told me of a small, select, and by-invitation-only gathering of megachurch pastors to which he had been invited. At the first meeting the men sat round a large table and “the question” was posed for each to answer in turn: “What’s *working* in your church?” My friend told me he was very tempted to answer with the single but, alas, unexpected word—“Romans”! For if it is not God’s word that is “working” as the shaper and driver of a ministry, and of the life of a church family, the auguries for our eternity-long fruitfulness are not very hopeful. Sharing that conviction, the practical wisdom Dr. Currie provides for us here is very clearly derived from the pages of sacred Scripture and its sacred theology. We can be grateful that his students are in the safe hands of someone for whom Paul’s words about both the origin of Scripture (“breathed out by God”) and its usefulness (“for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work”—2 Tim. 3:16–17) underpin his own vision for ministry and the foci of his teaching.

Over the long haul, ministry that builds with materials that will last for eternity cannot afford to be shaped by the latest fad. Fad-driven ministry tends to create doctrinal light-headedness rather than lasting substance. So (to paraphrase some words the

great John Owen used to introduce one of his own works) “if you have picked up this book looking for a quick fix, farewell! You have had your entertainment!” These pages demand that you put on your thinking cap. This is a book for long-haul ministry. Its wisdom is based on the principle that the extent to which our minds are soaked in, and our lives shaped by, Scripture will determine the quality of our ministry. Sir Francis Bacon’s famous words are applicable here: “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.” *The Pastor as Leader* belongs to this last category, and there will be no other way to absorb and benefit from it than by chewing on what Currie writes and slowly and carefully digesting it. This is practical *theology* as well as theology that is *practical*.

Different readers will come to these pages from different contexts of ministry, needing or looking for different kinds of help, whether instruction, challenge, encouragement, or stimulation. All of these can be found here. But whatever our specific reasons for placing ourselves under Professor Currie’s tutelage, he strikes notes that should refresh and benefit us all. One is the way in which he sees the organic relationship between leadership and preaching; others are his emphases on union with Christ, on prayer, and on the ministry of the Spirit.

John Currie has mined deeply in Scripture, as will be obvious from the way in which, on some pages, biblical references seem to be as numerous as punctuation marks. He has also dug deeply in the quarry of the best exponents of pastoral theology, both in theory and in practice, and in doing so reminds us that gold and precious stones are still to be found in the literature to which today’s pastors are privileged heirs.

## FOREWORD

*The Pastor as Leader* is not a quick read, although it is worth reading through once quickly in order to be prepared to read it again slowly, page by page, reflecting on the helpful and probing questions with which each chapter ends. I very much hope that as you read, you will find that John Currie is a pastor's Barnabas, and that he will be as much of a son of encouragement to you as he has been to me.

*Sinclair B. Ferguson*

# Acknowledgments

I AM GRATEFUL, beyond words, to God, who has allowed me to serve as a pastor and a professor for pastors. The stewardship of the word in both capacities is a sacred trust. That this has now been extended to offering a book in the service of pastors is a privilege of indescribable grace.

In his providence God has used many to teach, mentor, and support me in order to bring this book to its readers. I am thankful for the faculty who taught me at Westminster Theological Seminary, some of whom have become my colleagues, for training me in the sufficiency of Scripture and the centrality of Christ for pastoral leadership and all of life. I am particularly indebted to Richard B. Gaffin Jr., my teacher and exemplar, who gave of his time to review this manuscript and provide his insights and opinions on its biblical and theological argumentation. Any weaknesses that remain in this regard are, of course, my own. Harry Reeder, my friend and mentor to whose memory this book is dedicated, was taken into the presence of the Lord before he had opportunity to review it, but his instruction, inspiration, and influence are stamped throughout its pages, as well as my life and ministry.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would be remiss, in a book such as this, if I did not express my thanks to the many elders and pastors with whom I have had the privilege of serving over the years. Their patience, encouragement, and iron-sharpening partnership have allowed the theory in these pages to be tried, tested, and improved in the context of pastoral ministry, I trust, to the edification of the congregations we have served together.

Thanks are also due to the trustees and administration of Westminster for providing me with a study leave to complete this book, and especially to Dr. and Mrs. Gregory Poland for their generous provision of the research grant to support the study leave in which this book was written.

I thank Crossway for believing this book was worthy of their investment, for their excellence of execution in bringing it to publication, and for providing the expert editorial skill of Thom Notaro. Uriah Renzetti also invested a great deal of time and skill in editing the manuscript prior to its submission, for which his former professor is deeply grateful.

Finally, I cannot adequately express my gratitude for and to “the redhead,” my wife, Rhonda. How does one say thank you in a few short lines for a lifetime of selfless love, humble and courageous wisdom, and unwavering support through the valleys and victories in service of Christ’s cause? The Lord has used you, more than anyone else on earth, and your trust in Christ, commitment to his word, integrity of life, and timely counsel to inspire and hold me accountable to be God’s man for God’s glory. I and this book would not be here without you.



*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. . . . Preach the word.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17; 4:2

*The pastor by definition is a shepherd, the under-shepherd of the flock of God. His primary task is to feed the flock by leading them to green pastures.*

WILLIAM STILL

## Introduction

# A Vision for Connecting Preaching and Leadership

PREACHING IS LEADERSHIP in Christ's cause. This book has been written to train pastors who will lead the church on its mission in the next generation to connect their preaching with leadership. I have become convinced, through the study and practice of pastoral ministry for over thirty years in a variety of denominational contexts, that an unbiblical divorce often occurs between the pastoral priorities of preaching and leadership more generally. When this happens, the church suffers from either stagnation on its mission or a downgrade in the pulpit. *The Pastor as Leader* seeks to equip pastors to effectively steward their responsibilities as leaders in Christ's cause while being unashamedly committed to preaching as the primary means by which Christ extends his church's mission in the world.

### **The Problem: An Unnecessary Disconnect**

Many pastors feel an irreconcilable disconnect between the priority of preaching and the pressing responsibilities of leadership, and

conclude that they must choose between the two. One end of the disconnect was illustrated for me by a pastoral candidate who was asked by a search committee considering recommending him for the leadership of a congregation, “What was the last book you read on leadership?” His answer was “Oh, I would never do something like that!” He assumed that being conversant in the principles and practices of leadership would necessarily compromise his commitment to biblical methods of ministry. The other end can be poignantly illustrated by the well-publicized case of a pastor who had, for many years, been using the sermons of others and passing them off as his own. When exposed, he responded that his church required so much investment from him as a leader that he could not afford the time to study the Scriptures to prepare sermons. Illustrations on each side could be multiplied.

Albert Mohler summarizes the division between what he terms “the Believers” and “the Leaders” this way: The Believers are driven by their beliefs and dedicated to learning, teaching, and defending truth but are not equipped to lead; they “are afraid that thinking too much about it will turn them into mere pragmatists.” The Leaders are “masters of change and organizational transformation” who are tired of seeing churches decline and “want to change things for the better” but “lack a center of gravity in truth.” Mohler observes that “the evangelical Christian world is increasingly divided” between these groups.<sup>1</sup>

This book addresses this problem where it manifests itself in the pastorate, between “the Preachers” and “the Leaders,” because this unnecessary division harms the church and hinders its mission. A congregation needs leadership to be faithful and fruitful in its

1 Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2012), 20.

Christ-appointed mission, and in Christ's kingdom that leadership must come through his word preached. If a pastor doesn't understand his identity and calling as a leader, that will disable not only his leadership but also his preaching, because he will lack holy zeal to take anyone anywhere with what he says. If he assumes the responsibility to lead without an immovable conviction of the primacy of biblical preaching, he will put the church at risk of being driven by voices other than the chief shepherd's. When the two essential pastoral functions of preaching and leadership become disintegrated from each other, the church suffers from either inertia on its mission or a decline in quality from its pulpit. When leadership is neglected, preaching can devolve into a mere intellectual and informational exercise, which lacks power to transform a congregation. When preaching is deprioritized, God's word becomes functionally subordinated to the authority of leadership trends and techniques, and faithful interpretation is negotiated or manipulated in deference to worldly leadership aspirations.

The unnecessary disconnect between these two essential pastoral responsibilities has multiple causes. One prominent cause is extrabiblical organizational theory undiscerningly imposed upon the church. Pastoral leadership is held captive by pragmatism.<sup>2</sup> The values and methods marketed as successful for organizations outside of the church are uncritically appropriated by leaders of the church in the pursuit of a ministry model that "works," as defined by the culture. The preacher assumes

2 *Pragmatism* as a philosophy, which says "the ends justify the means," must be carefully distinguished from the ability to be *practical* (put right precepts and principles into practice). The latter, as we shall see, is integral to pastoral leadership.

the role of ecclesiastical CEO, and little of his time is devoted to the earnest study and preparation of God's word as his main service to the church.

A second cause is a particular kind of theologizing about the status quo in the health of a church and its mission. A congregation's stagnation (or regress) in biblical indicators of ministry maturity is rationalized to insulate the pastor's or the congregation's comfort zone. In this system, leaders can repeat misapplications of doctrine to mask their loss of zeal for the extension of Christ's kingdom. The observable atrophy of Christ's body, the church, does not burden the preacher's heart or influence the disciplines of his stewardship, since he aspires to nothing more than the transfer of accurate textual and doctrinal information week to week.

A third cause is the sinful and harmful behavior by once seemingly effective preacher-leaders. Confusion and deep distrust can result from preachers' abuse of the authority that comes with leadership, and this erodes confidence that those who fill pulpits can be trusted with hearts, lives, and families. For some of God's people, the corruption of a trusted pastor has confirmed their fear that leadership is inherently "toxic," especially if that leadership wields God's word as its primary instrument. Disillusioned members are tempted to insulate themselves, spiritually and emotionally, from allowing the stewards of God's word to exercise the leadership influence and carry out the mission for which God has ordained them.

Whatever the reasons, the disconnect between preaching and leadership is both biblically unnecessary and unhealthy for the mission of Christ's church.

### **The Solution: A Biblical Connection**

This book will present what I believe is a biblical and therefore better model: pastoral leadership by appointment of Christ and in union with Christ that prioritizes preaching the word of Christ on the mission of Christ. There is a better way to lead Christ's church on its mission than atheological, pragmatic adoption of corporate culture; self-preserving complacency regarding the status quo; or self-serving, unloving lording over God's people. That better way is pastoral leadership stewarded under Christ's appointment, conformed to Christ's character, exemplifying and implementing Christ's wisdom as preached from Christ's word. As we will see, because Christ leads his kingdom through his word preached, *preaching is leadership* and preachers are leaders in Christ's cause. The question the gospel preacher must answer is not whether he will be a leader but how he will steward the leadership entrusted to him. The chapters that follow aim to equip pastors to steward this calling intentionally, earnestly, and competently.

### **What to Expect**

*The Pastor as Leader* is an apologetic for pastoral leadership through preaching. It presents biblical and theological arguments to persuade pastors that on Christ's mission they are called *to lead* and that they must lead *as preachers*. For this reason, the book is not primarily a how-to manual. Though it is practical and intentionally moves from principles to practices (most chapters include suggested steps for application), the goal is to show pastors *why* they must engage in leadership and *how* that engagement connects with their preaching. This does not mean multiplying leadership



tasks that compete for time with the preacher's stewardship of Scripture. It means, on Christ's mission, that preaching *is* leadership, and the best leadership practices should flow organically from a faithful stewardship of the Scriptures. The goal is to equip preachers to lead as a matter of conviction and from a sense of calling, rather than to bear leadership as a burden born of mere expediency, an adjunct to true ministry—or a substitute for it.

Given this book's brevity, I try to be concise with biblical and theological arguments and to provide further explanation or readings in the notes, where needed. I trust that readers will understand that, given the focus of the book, I have not addressed every issue (some important) that might be relevant to the arguments made.

### **How to Get There**

The first half of the book (chaps. 1–5) will address principles of pastoral leadership that are essential to the practices addressed in the second half (chaps. 6–10). Each chapter seeks to provide encouraging examples of pastoral leadership and succinct but substantive biblical foundations for the practical takeaways that follow. Because Christ leads his kingdom through his word preached, chapters 7–10 are dedicated to demonstrating and defending the functional priority of preaching (i.e., the Christ-centered exposition of the Scriptures) in core elements of pastoral leadership. But this is not another book on Christ-centered hermeneutics and homiletics. The focus here will be on how such preaching functions to lead Christ's church into his purposes. Nor will I directly address some of the vital leadership functions fulfilled by pastors, such as the private ministry of the word in pastoral care and counseling. This book proceeds from the conviction

that the pastor's leadership through preaching will fuel and form other necessary expressions of his leadership for the church. In other words, there is a lot of other vital ministry downstream from preaching. In fact, it is *all* downstream from preaching.

Early on I'll seek to establish that *man of God* is an important motif for understanding the pastor's role in leading God's people into God's purpose by preaching God's word. Not only was *man of God* used by Paul, at the end of his apostolic ministry, to orient Timothy to his identity and duty in pastoral leadership at Ephesus, but it reached back to Moses, the prophet God sent to lead his people out of slavery and into his service. In the Scriptures a man of God was God's man sent to proclaim God's word to lead God's people into God's purposes. He was a *preacher-leader*! However, this focus on the preacher as a leader does not imply a single-elder model of church leadership. A pastor is not an Old Testament prophet or a New Testament apostle, and he has not been entrusted with the unique, singular authority of either. The conviction throughout this book is that pastors steward their particular leadership functions as one among a plurality of elders, who together govern and lead Christ's church. The principles and practices advocated in these chapters are all designed to be practiced in a context where the pastor serves as one *on par with* other elders of the church.<sup>3</sup>

3 Consider John Murray's comments in his exposition of Rom. 12:8, "the one who leads, with zeal," where he disabuses the interpretation that singular reference to leadership suggests a single elder model. Murray writes: "It would be absurd to suppose that there is any allusion here to government as exercised by one man. The other passages imply a plurality of elders (*cf.* also Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5; Heb. 13:7, 17). The apostle uses the singular in this case after the pattern followed in the other four instances without any reference to the number of those who might possess and exercise the several gifts. Hence no support could be derived from this text for the idea of one man as president in the government of the church nor of one man

Nonetheless, because our focus will be on the pastor as leader, I will not directly address leadership roles exercised by others in the church or the leadership exercised by Christians in spheres beyond the church. These are high callings for Christ's people and are worthy of entire books dedicated to them. My hope is that this book will be useful to those who lead the church alongside their pastor or who lead for Christ's sake in other spheres. As I have said and we shall further see, all leadership in Christ's cause flows downstream from his word preached. When pastoral leadership is not stewarded competently (or not done at all), other leaders in kingdom stewardship carry the added burden of swimming upstream. When preachers are equipped to lead competently, the Christians they serve will be encouraged and better equipped for leadership in their own God-appointed callings.

*The Pastor as Leader* is written to equip pastors in their God-given identity as preacher-leaders with some best practices for leading the church through preaching in Christ's mission. If you have a heart for that mission, and you want to refresh and retool for the role Christ has entrusted to you in his church, I invite you to read on. We'll start by regaining clarity of vision for the mission on which Christ has sent us.

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as chief over those who rule." And "every infraction upon or neglect of government directly prejudices the witness to the truth of which the church is the pillar." John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2022), 449. Readers should keep Murray's conviction in mind as they read the rest of this book and attempt to apply its principles and practices in their ecclesiastical contexts.

PART 1



PRINCIPLES

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples.*

MATTHEW 28:18-19

*Our plans and efforts for promoting this object ought . . . to be large, liberal, and ever expanding. . . . When we direct our attention to the spread of the Gospel, our views, our prayers, our efforts are all too stinted and narrow. We scarcely ever lift our eyes to the real grandeur and claims of the enterprise in which we profess to be engaged. . . . We are too apt to be satisfied with small and occasional contributions of service to this greatest of all causes instead of devoting to it hearts truly enlarged; instead of desiring great things; expecting great things; praying for great things; and nurturing in our spirits that holy elevation of sentiment and affection, which embraces in its desires and prayers the entire kingdom of God.*

SAMUEL MILLER

# The Mission of a Man of God

## *The Greatest of All Causes*

ALEXANDER DUFF served as a missionary to India from the Church of Scotland. When he returned on furlough in 1836, he saw that the theological winds of modernism were beginning to drive the church, bringing an apathy toward the missionary task Christ committed to his church. So, Duff preached! In 1836 he preached for two hours before the General Assembly, and in 1839 he traveled from one congregation to another, preaching a sermon that Hughes Oliphant Old identifies as “one of the most significant sermons ever preached.”<sup>1</sup> The sermon was taken from Psalm 67 and titled “Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church.” Duff applied the gospel-promising logic of the psalm to the church’s commitment to missions, saying, “When a Church

1 Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, *The Modern Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 679.

ceases to be evangelistic, it must cease to be evangelical; and when it ceases to be evangelical, it must cease to exist as a true Church of God, however primitive or apostolic it may be in its outward form and constitution!"<sup>2</sup> He concluded with a sobering historical analysis:

What is the whole history of the Christian church but one perpetual proof and illustration of the grand position,—that an evangelistic or missionary Church is a spiritually flourishing Church, and, that a church which drops the evangelistic or missionary character, speedily lapses into superannuation [obsolescence] and decay!<sup>3</sup>

Duff connected the church's commitment to its Christ-entrusted mission with its ability to remain faithful to its apostolic foundations and spiritually vital. He saw that no matter how right its outward forms might be, when a church loses its sense of mission (in that case, through the sepsis of liberalism), it atrophies and eventually fails to be what Christ commissioned it to be in the world. So, he preached.

This book grows out of the conviction that Christ leads his church through his word preached; therefore, preaching is leadership in Christ's cause. And if the church is to be led on its Christ-

2 Alexander Duff, *Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church* (London: Forgotten Books, 2015), 12. For a similar sentiment, see Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "The Holy Spirit," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 1 (1980): 73, where Gaffin writes, "It cannot be stressed too emphatically, then, that the Spirit of Pentecost is the Spirit of *mission* . . . ; where the church is no longer a witnessing church, whether in the immediate, local or world-wide context, it has lost contact with its Pentecostal roots" (emphasis original).

3 Duff, *Missions The Chief End*, 30.

commissioned mission, pastors must be clear about that mission, committed to it, and preach in a way that leads God's people into God's purposes for them. Pastors must, as J. W. Alexander put it, be "yielded up to the cause of the Lord Jesus, in the spirit of sacrifice, with no limitation or evasion of his bonds."<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, preaching loses its leadership impetus, and the goal of preaching, Sunday after Sunday, can become merely to transmit accurate information or simply "not get it wrong" (the *minimum* threshold for faithful stewardship, cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). When weary, war-torn pastors stop longing and laboring to see the message they preach mature the saints in God's purposes for them and to see sinners won by God's grace, preaching becomes "all too stinted and narrow" and loses its sense of place and purpose in God's glorious plan. Heralds of the greatest message in all the world must steward their task with hearts and eyes fixed on the greatest cause in all of history, extending the redeeming righteous rule of God, through Christ their King, to the hearts and lives of multitudes of disciples, to the end of the earth until the end of the age.

Christ the King leads his church on his mission through his word preached. This is the foundation for the vital connection between preaching and leadership. In chapter 7 we'll see that Christ gave preaching pride of place during his earthly ministry and now still does from heaven. In this chapter we'll see that he did that as *the leader* of God's people on mission to establish God's rule in their hearts and lives. A survey of

4 J. W. Alexander, "Considerations on Foreign Missions Addressed to Candidates for the Holy Ministry," in *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry: A Collection of Addresses, Essays, and Articles by Faculty and Friends of Princeton Theological Seminary*, ed. James M. Garretson, 2 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2012), 2:67.



Luke's introduction to Jesus and his mission-defining sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–27) will show us that Christ prioritized preaching as Christ *the King, the leader* God sent to establish his promised kingdom.

### **The Leader and His Mission**

From the beginning of his Gospel, Luke is concerned to convince his readers that Jesus is the promised messianic King (1:4). Luke's account of Jesus's birth emphasizes that he was descended from "the house of David" (1:27) and was to be given "the throne of his father David," from which he was to "reign" over a "kingdom" that will have no end (1:32–33). Jesus was also revealed to be the holy Son of God, because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit as the "power of the Most High" (1:35). His royal identity is then emphasized once again in Zechariah's hymn of praise (1:69–70) and the place of Jesus's birth, "in the city of David" (2:11). Luke then recounts Jesus's baptism, when—according to his human nature—he was anointed with the Holy Spirit for his public ministry as the Christ, and the heavenly voice declared him to be God's beloved and well-pleasing Son (3:22). Jesus's genealogy then identifies him as the "son of Joseph" (3:30), a "son of David" (3:31), descended from Adam as "the son of God" (3:38), directly before Jesus's temptation, which has as its central issue Jesus's identity as *the Son of God* (4:3, 9) and the attainment of a kingdom and authority (4:5–6).

This background is foundational to our topic because "Son of God" was used by biblical writers not only to refer to Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, in his divine nature as *God the Son* (John 1:1, 18; 3:16; 17:5; Rom. 8:3; Col. 1:15–17, 19; Gal. 4:4;

Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:2–3)<sup>5</sup> but also to identify Jesus from the perspective of his singularly determinative place in redemptive history as the now incarnate Son, in terms of his *messianic office* (Luke 4:3, 9; Acts 9:20, 22; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 1:2, 4).<sup>6</sup> “Son of God” had been used previously of Adam (Luke 3:38), Israel (Hos. 11:1; cf. Matt.

- 5 John Murray emphasized that the priority is put on the divine nature: “The title ‘Son of God’ is one predicated of our Lord in virtue of his pre-temporal, ontological, intertrinitarian identity and relationship.” John Murray, “Jesus the Son of God,” in *Collected Works of John Murray*, vol. 4, *Studies in Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 63. Murray provides copious evidence to the effect that the “intra-divine Sonship is always *prior and basic* in the title ‘Son’” (71, emphasis added) and that the “eternal, intra-divine, ontological Sonship is *primary and basic* in the title ‘Son’ as predicated of our Lord.” Yet “the title ‘Son of God’ with its distinctly ontological import occurs in the context in which our Lord’s messianic office, commission, prerogative, and functions occupy a prominent place” (73, emphasis added). Geerhardus Vos concurs: “The Messiahship is in Jesus’ life *the secondary thing*, not merely in the order of being, but *also in the order of importance*.” Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus: The Modern Debate about the Messianic Consciousness*, ed. Johannes Geerhardus Vos (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 102 (emphasis added).
- 6 Brandon Crowe makes the point this way: “The contours of Jesus’s sonship are multifaceted, at once communicating Jesus’s ontological filial relationship to his Father, announcing Jesus’s messiahship . . . , evoking corporate Israel . . . , and recalling Adam’s royal-filial sonship.” Brandon D. Crowe, *The Last Adam: A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), 70. For an extended discussion of these uses of the title *Son of God* and their relationship, see Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, 105–225. Vos provides a survey of the “Biblico-theological” background for the various uses of the title *Son of God*. Among them he identifies “the official or Messianic sense in which it *describes not essential nature but office; as the heir and representative of God the Messiah could bear the title of Son of God* without explicit reflection upon His nature; in this official sense God declared to David that not only his Messianic descendant, but also the earlier kings of his line, would be sons to him.” Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, 141–42 (emphasis added). Bavinck also sees theocratic kingship in the Old Testament background: “The theocratic king, embodied especially in David . . . was a *son of God* (2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:6–7; 89:27), *the anointed one par excellence* (Pss. 2:2; 18:50).” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 244 (emphasis added). For a development of the Davidic, theocratic, and messianic background to the use of the title *son*, especially in Paul, see David B. Garner, “The Gospel of God concerning His Beloved Son: Further Steps on a Well-Traveled Text,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 84, no. 2 (2022): 257–79.

2:15), and Israel's Davidic king (2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:6–7; 89:27), not because they were divine but because they were appointed by God to bear his image and to serve as God's royal representatives on earth. These fallen and fallible representatives pointed forward to *the Son*, who would be the perfectly obedient and infallibly wise last-days ruler, the Spirit-anointed Christ (Isa. 9:6; 11:1–5). Precisely because Jesus is uniquely qualified by virtue of his divine nature to fulfill the office, “Son of God” is used of Jesus in this messianic sense in Scripture.<sup>7</sup> Through his narrative of Jesus's birth, baptism, and temptation Luke introduces Jesus as the promised divine and Davidic ruler, who has come to defeat God's and his people's enemies and establish God's promised eternal kingdom, Christ *the King*.<sup>8</sup>

This is important for understanding the connection between preaching and leadership in Christ's cause. When, in Luke 4, Christ delivered his mission-defining sermon in Nazareth (4:16–27) and disclosed his messianic identity (4:17, 21) and method (4:16–30, 43–44), we see him delivering his mandate as the

7 Vos writes: “Our Lord's eternal sonship qualifies Him for filling the office of Messiah. This office is such and implies such a relation of close affiliation with God, such an acting as the absolute representative of God, such a profound communion of life and purpose with God, that only a Son in the highest sense can adequately fill the office. Thus the office of Messiahship calls for a *Son*.” Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, 190. See also Herman Bavink, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2, *God and Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 275.

8 On the relation of Jesus's baptism to his messianic identity, Richard B. Gaffin Jr. writes: “The voice from heaven declares approval of Jesus in his identity as the Messiah. Since to speak of the Messiah is to speak of his kingdom, this declaration amounts to his kingdom commission. The voice of the Father addressed to the Son affirms the appointment of his Son as the Messiah on behalf of the kingdom.” Richard B. Gaffin Jr., *In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 82.

King, the promised *leader* of God's people.<sup>9</sup> We also begin to see the grandeur of the mission Christ came to lead through the response, tragic as it was, of the people who heard him (4:22, 28–29) and through Christ's open declaration of the purpose of his preaching (4:43). The congregation in the synagogue pivoted dramatically from astonishment (4:22) to attempted assassination (4:28–29). While Christ announced the good news of the arrival of the age of God's promised blessing for his people (4:19), the Israelite crowd marveled. But when he diagnosed the hardness of their hearts, which would result in their rejection of him (4:23), and used their own Scriptures to show that the favor of the Lord would be received by the Gentiles (4:24–27), they turned on him.

The King's mission and its blessings would be rejected by his own people (Israel) but received by the peoples (Gentiles). Blindness and hardness to the extent of Christ's mission was not only tragic but culpable on the part of God's people because God had revealed his purpose and promise to spread his blessings to all peoples in the Old Testament Scriptures, not least through Abraham (Gen. 12:2–3; cf. 13:3–16; 15:4–6). This promise would extend the recognition of God's rule (kingdom) to the ends of the earth (Pss. 67:1–7; 97:1; Isa. 2:1–3; Dan. 7:14) and be executed by the King (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Pss. 2:7–11; 110:1–7; Isa. 9:2, 6–7; 11:1–16) whom God would send as his servant (Isa. 42:1–4; 52:10; 61:1–2). Christ flatly stated this as the purpose for which

9 As Messiah and mediator, Jesus was and is not only King but also Prophet and Priest. While Christ as King receives particular focus in this book, and one or another office comes into view on particular occasions in his ministry, it must be remembered always and throughout this work that "essentially Jesus was at all times and places busy in all three offices simultaneously." Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), 314.

he had been sent and the end toward which he preached (Luke 4:18–19, 21; cf. Mark 1:15). When the people at Capernaum also attempted to keep his blessings for themselves, by keeping him for themselves (Luke 4:42),<sup>10</sup> Christ gave them his mission statement: “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose” (Luke 4:43).<sup>11</sup> Through his preaching, Christ the King was doing nothing less than announcing and establishing the promised *kingdom of God*.

We should understand what this means for the mission Christ came to lead. The kingdom of God is described more than defined in the New Testament.<sup>12</sup> But its description can be summarized this way:

The promised rule of God, for his glory, through his Son, by his Spirit, which is now established and extending in the hearts and lives of Christ’s disciples and is yet to be revealed in the outward-bodily creation at his return and the resurrection at the end of this age.<sup>13</sup>

10 See James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 148.

11 See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1, *1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 422.

12 Vos writes: “We must not expect to find anywhere in his teaching a definition of the kingdom. Jesus’ method of teaching was not the philosophical one of defining a thing, but the popular, parabolic one of describing and illustrating it. Paul, though speaking much less of the kingdom, has come much nearer to defining it than our Lord, cf. Rom. 14:17.” Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church*, ed. John H. Kerr, 2nd ed. (New York: American Tract Society, 1903), 81–82.

13 This summary is my own. For a thorough development of the concept of the kingdom of God that is assumed and foundational throughout this book, see Gaffin, *In the Fullness of Time*, 65–117; Hermann Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia:

God is King over all his creation all of the time (Pss. 22:28; 99:1; 103:19; 145:11–13). But he promised through his prophets that a time (an age) would come when his righteous rule would be revealed and received universally and unendingly (1 Chron. 17:14; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; 4:3; 7:14).<sup>14</sup> The coming of God's rule would mean redemption and renewal for God's people (Isa. 9:1–5; 40:1–2; 51:11; 61:2–7; Joel 2:32–3:1) and retribution and wrath for God's enemies (Pss. 2:5–6, 12; 110:1, 5–6; Isa. 61:2). Jesus's arrival as the Son of God meant that the promised kingdom had *now* come, though its inauguration awaited his death and resurrection, together with his subsequent pouring out of the Spirit, and its consummate realization *still* awaits his return in glory (Luke 16:16; 17:21; 22:16, 18, 29–30; 1 Cor. 15:23–28; Rom. 8:21–23). When Christ preached the good news of the kingdom of God, he was proclaiming that through him and his work of redemption (his representative obedience, substitutionary sacrifice, and life-giving resurrection) this kingdom was *now* present *in* those who would receive him through repentance and faith, but that its revelation in the rest of creation and its final judgment of those who would resist him had *not yet* occurred. Christ the King's mission was to establish (inaugurate) this promised age of

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Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 1–174; and Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> “It became possible for our Lord to subsume under the notion of the kingdom the entire complex of blessing and glory which the coming order of things would involve for the people of God, and yet to keep before men's minds the thought that this new world of enjoyment was to be enjoyed as a world of God.” Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus* (1903), 24. I am indebted to my colleague Jonathan Gibson in his unpublished lecture “Kingdom through Covenant” for some of the Old Testament background in this section.

God's rule and extend it through his church (Luke 24:46–49) to the hearts and lives of multitudes from all peoples.

### **The Mission of the King and the Mission of His Church**

Why spill ink describing the kingdom in a book on pastoral leadership? Because this is the mission on which Christ has appointed pastors to lead his church. When he issued his “Great Commission,” Christ grounded it in the fact that he is the risen King, who has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18), and the purpose of the commission was to extend his rule in hearts and lives, to make disciples who obey all of Christ's commands (Matt. 28:19). Christ had previously described the mission he would commit to his church as proclaiming the kingdom (Matt. 24:14; Luke 9:2), and his post-resurrection instruction to his apostles about their mission was focused on the kingdom (Acts 1:3, 6–8). When the apostles executed the mission Christ had committed to them, they understood it in terms of the kingdom (Acts 20:25; 28:23, 31).<sup>15</sup> The Great Commission is a kingdom-extending mission to spread the rule of God for his glory through his Son to countless hearts and lives until Christ comes again.<sup>16</sup> This is the mission that must capture the heart of a man of God and compel his leadership.

<sup>15</sup> See Gaffin, *In the Fullness of Time*, 79–80.

<sup>16</sup> R. B. Kuiper described the Great Commission, in light of Christ's rule over the whole universe, as commanding all men to “recognize him as king and observe whatsoever things he has commanded.” R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1966), 198. As Gaffin puts it, in applying the consequences of Pentecost to the mission of the church, the church has been given “responsibility and power to witness to the saving, new creation *lordship of Jesus Christ* over the *whole of life* throughout the entire creation.” Gaffin, “The Holy Spirit,” 73 (emphasis mine).

We should also be aware that confused or compromised visions of what the kingdom of God is in this age can distract or derail pastors from the mission they have been appointed to lead. Greg Gilbert has pointed out that the kingdom of God is not a category most Christians are conversant in or clear on, and too often it is appropriated by theological liberals in the service of “a certain political agenda having to do with broadened social services or a more robust welfare state.”<sup>17</sup> The recent years of chaos and conflict over social and political issues in evangelical and Reformed churches are evidence that we need clarity about what the kingdom of God is and is not. In this age, the kingdom of God and its extension come in the salvation of sinners (in all of its gracious blessings and benefits) rather than the transformation of societies.<sup>18</sup> To be sure, Christ’s disciples obey all of his

17 Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 115. Earlier, Edmund Clowney identified how the liberalizing approach reinterpreted the mission of the church as “the liberation of the oppressed,” defined in terms of “the struggle for political justice,” and had defined the kingdom and salvation in terms of “the doctrines of Karl Marx, accepted as social science.” Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church, Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 156.

18 See Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923; repr., Philadelphia: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), 156–60. Machen distinguished between the liberal and Christian understandings of the kingdom, pointing out that in Christianity the kingdom can be entered only by the “divine means of salvation,” which is to be found “at the foot of the cross” (38). For Machen, this was “one of the most obvious lines of cleavage between Christianity and the liberal church” (157). Following Machen, R. B. Kuiper accurately assessed the situation in his generation by writing: “The liberal social gospel does much talking about the kingship of Christ, but it denies so many cardinal truths of the Christian religion that it has forfeited every just claim to Christianity. One of its most fateful errors is the divorcing of the kingship of Christ from his cross. . . . It is a simple fact that no sinner will ever honor Christ as Lord who has not first found Him as Savior.” Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ*, 198–99.



commands by loving God and doing *whatever* they do, *wherever* they do it, for his glory in Christ's name in the spheres of society where he has sovereignly placed them (Matt. 22:39; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). This means they obey their King by also loving their neighbors and doing (biblically warranted) good works toward their neighbors as they live with them in the relationships that constitute societies (Matt. 5:16; 22:39; Luke 10:37; Eph. 2:10). But we should not equate the outward bodily *effects* of their good works on the institutions and systems of cultures in this age with the coming of the kingdom of God.<sup>19</sup>

To be clear, the kingdom mission of the church, which a man of God has been set apart and sent to lead, is this: to extend the rule of God for God's glory, by proclaiming Christ in his death and resurrection for sinners from all of Scripture, so that multitudes of disciples are made from all nations, through repentance and faith, who submit all of their lives to the rule of Christ and his commands (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:46–48). It is nothing less than extending the redeeming righteous rule of God, through

19 Because Christ the King lives and rules by his Spirit in the hearts and lives of believers, the kingdom of God has *now* come and is *now* present *in them* and the church into which he formed them (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith 25.2 and chap. 2 of this book). By obeying all that Christ has commanded them in all the spheres in which he has placed them, disciples of Christ serve as witnesses to their King and his kingdom. However, the coming of God's kingdom in the outward-bodily creation (of which the institutions and structures of society and cultures are an expression) is yet to occur at the end of the age (Rom. 8:21–23). To see this from the perspective of the kingdom and its relationship to the new creation, as Christians obey God's mandate to his image bearers to steward all their labors in creation as his representatives (Gen. 1:27–30), they testify to the reality that, in Christ, God has already begun the new creation in them (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24), and that the renewal of creation in its outward-bodily forms is yet to come; it will come at the resurrection of the body, in the new heavens and the new earth, when their King returns at the end of this age (1 Cor. 15:25–28; Rev. 21:1–8).

Christ the King, to the hearts and lives of multitudes, to the end of the earth until the end of the age. Its grandeur and glory are seen in the end of the mission envisioned by the apostle John:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” (Rev. 7:9–12)

However, like those who responded to Christ at Nazareth and Capernaum, the people of God today and their pastors can allow the creep of personal interests and the cares of this present age to make them, as Miller put it, “satisfied with small and occasional contributions of service to this greatest of all causes.” If the people of God are to be led into the great kingdom purposes of God for them, particularly through preaching, pastors need to be reminded of and refreshed in the *why* of what they do week after week. Jocko Willink, an ex-military commander who now trains leaders in other fields, recalls the need to have a mission and its cause clear in his own mind before attempting to lead others to execute it. In *Extreme Ownership* Willink writes that before he led a combat mission,

the most important question had been answered: Why? Once I analyzed the mission and understood for myself that critical piece of information, I could then believe in the mission. If I didn't believe in it, there was no way I could possibly convince the SEALs in my task unit to believe in it.<sup>20</sup>

Pastors have a far greater *why* than any military commander in history has ever had, and they must own it. The mission in which pastors lead God's people is history defining, global in scope, and cosmically significant. So they must have the great cause to which they lead crystal clear and compellingly in their minds, fueling their affections and aspirations in order to lead as Christ has appointed them.

The apostle Paul set the pace in this (1 Cor. 11:1). The leader of Christ's mission to the Gentiles was openhearted about his affection and aspirations on Christ's mission. In Romans 10:1, just after he disclosed and defended the doctrine of election (Rom. 9:6–24), he revealed what moved his heart: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved."<sup>21</sup> In 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 he expressed an entrepreneur-like zeal as

20 Jocko Willink and Leif Babin, *Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win* (New York: St. Martin's, 2017), chap. 3, Kindle.

21 Cf. also Rom. 9:2. John Murray's comments on Rom. 10:1 provide a corrective for those who would use Calvinism as an excuse for complacency on Christ's mission: "Here we have a lesson of profound import. . . . Our attitude to men is not to be governed by God's secret counsel concerning them. It is this lesson and the distinction involved that are so eloquently inscribed on the apostle's *passion* for the salvation of his kinsmen. *We violate the order of human thought and trespass the boundary between God's prerogative and man's when the truth of God's sovereign counsel constrains despair or abandonment of concern for the eternal interests of men.*" John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2022), 376 (emphasis added).

he repeatedly stressed his desire to win all sorts of people to the blessings of the gospel, even at the sacrifice of his own freedoms in custom and comfort (though never compromising the commands of God).<sup>22</sup> And in Acts 20:24, as he faced the certain prospect of suffering, he told the elders at Ephesus, “But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

In scriptures like these the Holy Spirit has given us a window into the heart of a servant Christ sent to speak for him. His conviction of and contentment with the sovereignty of God did not lead to complacency in the cause of Christ. He fervently aspired to more and more glory for God in the spread of his saving rule to more and more people (cf. 2 Cor. 4:15). Leaders of Christ’s church must return repeatedly to the glory, grandeur, and eternity-affecting significance of Christ’s cause in order to lead others on it. Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller’s colleague (and founding professor) at Old Princeton, wrote, “If the Christian Church felt her obligations to her Lord and Redeemer as she ought, the whole body would be like a great missionary society, whose chief object was to spread the Gospel over the world.”<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

Before we move on to the principles and practices of pastoral leadership discussed in the rest of this book, it is worth reflecting

22 See John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 186–89.

23 Archibald Alexander, quoted in David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary*, vol. 1, *Faith and Learning, 1812–1868* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 139.

on your understanding of and commitment to the mission Christ has committed to his church and has entrusted to your leadership. Do you need to revisit and recommit to the mission on which the Scriptures reveal Christ is leading his church? Does the glory and grandeur of the enterprise you profess to be engaged in still fill your gaze? It must if you are to faithfully steward the appointment Christ has given you as an officer and leader in his kingdom, and which you will find described in the pages that follow.

When George P. Shultz served as secretary of state for the United States, he would invite each newly appointed US ambassador to his office for a meeting. He would spin the globe located in his office and ask the ambassador to point to his or her country. Every time, the new ambassador would point to the country to which he or she had been assigned. Then Shultz would correct the ambassador and say: “*Your* country is the United States. Don’t ever forget it.”<sup>24</sup> As we will see later on, pastors are Christ’s servants sent to speak and lead for him. But, first, in the next chapter we’ll see that they have been appointed to their office not by any authority on earth but by the risen King of the cosmos, who is head of the church. The King’s method is to send servants of his word to and through his church, and their mission encompasses not any one nation but the entire kingdom of God. We must never forget it!

<sup>24</sup> Kate Bachelder Odell, “‘In the Nation’s Service’ Review: George Shultz’s Quiet Strength,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-the-nations-service-review-george-shultzs-quiet-strength-963162d8>.