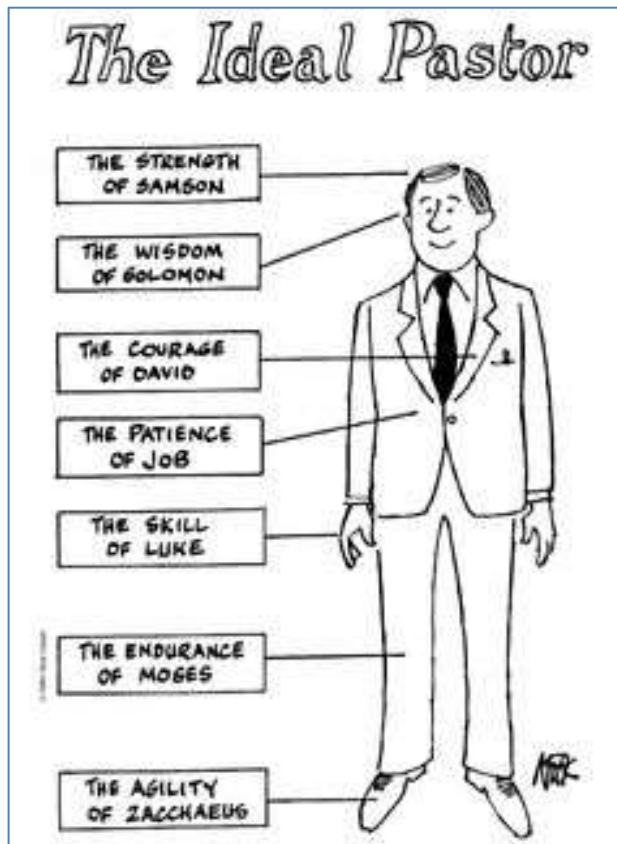


## Pastoring

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I have my graduate degree in Counseling/Psychology and my closest American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) friend, Dr. Paul Swanson (one of the few mainline, white ACLC pastors) taught pastoral counseling at the Lutheran School of Theology, so I have really gained a sense of the critical importance of pastoring to a struggling individual.

In the Unification movement, the “state leader” is usually called a pastor. But what is a pastor? And does the Unification movement actually have any in America?

In Acts 20:28, Paul refers to pastors using the verb form of the word, which is translated as “to feed or “to care for.” Pastors feed, tend to, and protect their congregations.

After leaving Oakland in 1982 (where I joined the Unification movement under Dr. and Mrs. Durst in 1976) my life has been mostly working with “state leaders, regional directors, and national leaders” of the Unification movement. One could compare those positions to the main job of a University President, which is, in reality, fundraising, rather

than taking care of the students.

For one short minute in the Chicago area, the Illinois “state leader” focused on the directions from the national HQ while the pastor was in charge of Sunday Service and local responsibilities. I felt that this was an excellent working arrangement.

On this past May 6th, I had an operation on my foot for a soccer injury that I sustained during the summer for my first year at the Seminary in 1982. My physical therapist son recently told me that if I failed to have my foot operated on now, that my wife would have to push me around in a wheel chair when I’m 85.

I was diagnosed with an “arthritic condition.” This meant I couldn’t play tennis or basketball (with those intense foot flexes). Every morning when I woke up, my foot was stiff for about the first 30 minutes. My ankle was fine, but my side to side movement was highly limited.

After my initial injury, I continued to play tennis every day, but at night I realized that I could not naturally bend my foot backward, although it never hurt. Then one day, just as I was about to deliver a sermon entitled, “Faith and Perseverance,” in homiletics class, I literally collapsed on the classroom floor. They took me to the local hospital, but nothing came out on the X-rays so the doctor told me to go home and take a couple of aspirins.

However, my foot continued to swell up and finally they drove me down to Poughkeepsie. The orthopedic surgeon told me that they still could not find anything on the X-rays, but that he was putting me in a cast anyway.

Although the seminary president, David S.C. Kim, had me resign from my position as Freshman Class President, there were few other consequences to my injury. I attended all my classes, continued to walk on trails through the woods nearly every day (albeit with crutches) and climbed up and down the stairs of the three-story seminary to my “hospital” room. Finally, the doctor said to me that I could continue this behavior, but I would probably never get well. Thus, I made a dramatic paradigm shift and began to really rest, elevate my foot and take serious care of myself.

By the next summer I could finally take off the cast, but I was bothered that no one ever correctly diagnosed what was wrong. So I ventured down to Manhattan to New York University and found the surgeon for the New York Islanders hockey team. He performed one of the nation’s first “cat-scans” (it was June 1983) and discovered what was wrong. I had suffered a hairline fracture of my sub-talar bone.

The sub-talar bones are 2 half-moons in your heel that move up and down when you walk on uneven ground so you don't fall down. Thus, whenever I walked these two parts rubbed against each other and my foot would swell up. When I asked the doctor what he was going to do, he laughed and said, "nothing." I said, "Wait a minute, when a hockey player blows out his knee on Thursday, you do arthroscopic surgery on him on Friday and he is playing again on Monday." He laughed again and said, "yes, but that is the knee. The foot has so many small bones in it that if I go in to fix one, I will probably mess up 5 others." He said that I would have to give up competitive tennis and serious basketball, but I could still walk and play golf and the like—which I have now done for the past 30 years. But again, every morning when I wake up, it takes about 30 minutes until I have any side to side movement in my foot.

Thus, when I recently traveled to Phoenix to see my physical therapist son, my foot was stiff after the 4-hour plane ride and I could barely walk after my son took me on a one hour walking tour of old town Scottsdale. The next day I was fine, but when he took me hiking, we walked around the mountain, rather than straight up. He skeptically said that if we had to call for a helicopter rescue, they would at least have a place to land. Then he told me that I had to go to the "miracle doctor" who had cured his football injury which came from playing college football.

This is how I found a great orthopedic foot surgeon and had the "simple" outpatient operation. However, when I regained consciousness in the recovery room I couldn't tell the nurses what month it was. So they did about 58 tests to make sure I hadn't had a mini-stroke. I'm not sure that I knew what month it was before my operation.

My prognosis was excellent; the operation went beautifully and the doctor said that it was a total success. The only thing was that I couldn't put any weight on my foot for 6 weeks. After struggling for 2 days with a walker and crutches I obtained a "knee scooter." Thus, I have been able to "fly around" (even take the train to work) during the 6 weeks of no weight bearing.

First I got a burgundy cast and then when it got wet I graduated to a green cast. After 6 weeks and another perfect X-ray, I can now walk in my boot for 3 more weeks. I still use my scooter to get to and from the train and I may continue to use it even after I am healed because people are so kind to me. Pregnant ladies open doors for me, men offer to carry my scooter (all 2 lbs. of it) up and down stairs and last week an old lady even stood up and gave me her seat on the bus—(happily an old man then got up and gave her his seat). The thing is – usually during the 20-minute walk from the train station to city hall, no one even looks anyone in the eye, as they are all listening to their headphones (Bob Dylan even commented on this phenomenon in Time Magazine).

But many people have been so nice to me, it's truly beautiful. My supervisor even sends me home early every day so as not to get caught up in the rush of going to the train.

Which brings me back to the point of this entire article. My wife often scolds me because she says that when I tell a story during one of my sermons, I often get distracted and don't come back to the point of the story or the point of the sermon. But I will not do this now. The central theme of this article is pastoring — remember Paul in Acts: 20-28, at the beginning?

The Unification movement can be puzzling. If my grandmother is having a wisdom tooth removed, there will be a note on our daily email asking everyone to pray for her. I sent an email to the community news letting them know that I would be having surgery on May 6th. From that date until our picnic on Memorial Day I did not get even one phone call, let alone a pastoral visit. At the Memorial Day picnic, I showed up on my scooter and was very moved by certain people (not necessarily my closest friends) who asked me about my condition in a very sincere and caring way that really moved my heart. But still, I received no calls or visits at home.

Even my closest friend, who walks his dog with me every Saturday, evidently forgot that I even had an operation and never called me to check on what condition my condition was in. In fact, the only Christians that have visited me are the guy I met while he was passing out bibles who came over with a friend to mow and weed-whack my back lawn, and the trumpet player who plays duets with my wife at local nursing homes (including the one where Barbara Vincenz lives), who brought me a bag of goodies.

Now, don't get me wrong, I am not negative, angry or resentful, but this experience has brought out the fact once again, that the Unification church doesn't take care of its own very well. Of course, all come out in force for anything serious; be it a funeral, a serious operation or medical situation, financial need, etc. I remember when I first joined the movement the elders (leaders) were always taking care of struggling new guests but had little time for the struggling slightly older members, and I guess things haven't changed much in these past 40 years.

The members of the movement are always praying about important events but don't seem to do very well in raising up younger members. I know, even myself, I turned down the opportunity to teach Sunday

school because I was always visiting or preaching in other churches. The greatest strength has been in fulfilling the ongoing directions coming from the movement's leadership.

As a result, my five children and so many others have drifted away from the institution. They still believe in the teachings of Rev. Moon and especially the sanctity of marriage and family. Originally, their best friends were all movement members—at least until high school, but now I find that many children of American parents often have little to do with “the church.” Many of the youth don't attend the programs and recently, I have found that it's even hard to get them to holiday picnics.

So what I am saying is this—it's quite simple—if we don't place value on winning the hearts of the youth (I know for some older youth this is coming awfully late) then as we get older there will be no one to inherit all that we have established.

I know in Chicago there are about ten “young professionals” who never attend Sunday Service and the ones who do attend usually sit in the back or the annex; in California they have what they fondly call “parking lot church” (the young people meet in the parking lot behind the sanctuary instead of attending the service). In my opinion, what is needed is “ownership” of the projects that people are involved in. In a recent community meeting, with some prodding, a few of the elder teenagers stood up and shared their thoughts. What they asked for was simply support from their parents in whatever they are doing (something that they have not felt through the years).

So, c'mon brothers and sisters—what do we have to market if the youth is absent? What good is the Unification brand if the children are not part of the mix? And what good is changing one's image if everyone is over 50?

It's time to put the word “pastoring” front and center! We must pastor the members before running out to recruit others. Brothers and sisters, let's join together and take care of each other.