

THE TODDLER MINISTRY MODEL

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About 70 years ago the prophet William Branham was given a vision by the Angel of the Lord regarding something Brother Branham referred to as “The Third Pull.” The vision and wording had to do with fishing and thus the term “Third Pull” is a fishing term. In my younger days I used to do a lot of bass fishing for large mouth, small mouth and striped bass. My wife really likes fishing for sand bass and you can really catch a mess of them when you get among them.

During the 1980s the Lord spoke to me about studying the prophet’s office so I spent about 5 years doing this in addition to my normal Bible time in the Word each morning. During this time the Lord sent me to Cleveland, Tennessee, on several occasions to work with a pastor named Millard Littlefield who pastored Faith Memorial Church. He also had a Little People’s Church there on the property that was built to scale for kids and he gave me a remarkable testimony about how this came about when I quizzed him about the cornerstone name “The Little People’s Church.”

Brother Littlefield had a ministry to the poor and fed people every week at his church; he also had a radio program for 30+ years. At the time I felt that the Lord was sending me there to learn about helping the poor but as usual the lord always has much more planned for us than we can imagine—that is why we must always “walk by faith; not by sight.”

During my time with Brother Littlefield while discussing that the Lord was having me study the prophet’s office, he told me that William Branham had dedicated his church. Later on I was privileged to listen to the message Branham preached that day. This was before the days of even cassette tapes so everything was recorded on reel-to-reel tape. Being a spiritual scientist, I was intrigued by what Pastor Littlefield told me about Brother Branham. He said, “Brother Branham and I were bosom friends. He never missed it” (i.e., prophetically). This was something that contradicted what I had been taught—that New Testament prophets were not infallible.

As a spiritual scientist I wanted to know more about Branham's life, spiritual gifts, and ministry so I began a study of his life which took many years. The Third Pull was something that Branham thought was going to occur more often during the years before he died in the 1960s. He said it was a secret he would take to his grave in his bosom. Naturally I wanted to know what it was so I decided to find out and I did from the Holy Spirit, the Great Teacher of the Church.

If you go back and read about this—there's a lot of old transcripts of Brother Branham's messages on the internet—you will discover a lot of controversy about it along with whether or not it (The Third Pull) had ever occurred prior to that time because there are only about 5 instances where it occurred during Brother Branham's ministry. So let me just reassure you that it—this spiritual gift—is in the Bible and the Lord showed it to me in 1988.

But the purpose of this article is not to discuss the spiritual gift, although it is a gift reserved in greater measure for those operating in the Spirit of Elijah in these last days, but rather to call attention to what the Angel of the Lord—who worked with Brother Branham on the platform during the healing meetings—said to him when discussing fishing and The Third Pull.

Like Moses, Brother Branham was given two signs for his ministry gifting. These were referred to in the vision by the Angel of the Lord as the first and second pulls. During the discussion and vision Brother Branham was in he was made to know that both of these signs were given to catch fish (men) but Brother Branham had "tangled up his fishing line" in the vision and was never able to catch any big fish. The Angel of the Lord was telling him through the vision that he had messed up (tangled up the fishing line) by trying to explain his spiritual gifts to people. It had, in fact, brought out all sorts of imitators who were faking the same gifting in order to attract large crowds and money! I remember how shocked I was at the time to think that people would fake this type thing in order to draw their own crowds. Now I realize that it not much different than the Balaam Boys of today, isn't it? Jude refers to them as "clouds without water."

Listen, you can call yourself a prophet or put the title "Apostle" on your business card like everybody is doing today but that doesn't make you one. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can make a person a Five-fold minister because it's not the title it's the anointing that makes you what you are or are not. If Jesus actually calls you to be a prophet, apostle, pastor, teacher or evangelist then He will anoint you and if you are sensitive spiritually and have *The Eye of the Eagle* then you will know what, if any, Five-fold anointing a person has.

Yet sadly today many if not most "pastors" have no Five-fold anointing. And I'm not talking about the phonies like the Balaam Boys who parade themselves up and down all the "non-inspirational networks"; I'm talking about genuine people who love the Lord and want to do something for the Kingdom of God. Generally speaking, most of these if they do have a Five-fold call have come out too early from their training—they didn't possess patience and "wait" on their ministry as the Scriptures implore us to do. Thus, they have a toddler anointing.

During the vision that Brother Branham had where he got his fishing line all tangled up the Angel of the Lord was explaining to him where he had messed up—by trying to explain it, i.e. his spiritual gifting. In the vision all these fisherman gathered around Brother Branham and he realized that they were ministers and were there to “learn how to fish” from him. In the vision, the fishing line turned into shoe laces. Brother Branham found himself holding a little baby’s shoe with eyelets about 1/8” in diameter while the “fishing line” shoe laces were about an inch thick. In the vision he kept trying to thread the too thick rope through the small eyelets and he became frustrated. The Angel of the Lord spoke to him and said, “You can’t teach supernatural things to Pentecostal babies.”

Unfortunately, like most of what Ev and I have been teaching on for the past 30 years concerning Five-fold ministry, the anointing, etc., it doesn’t seem like any progress has been made since Branham’s day. Sometimes I feel like we are just wasting our time here in America with Pentecostal babies when we could be winning thousands every week to the Lord in Africa.

THE TODDLER MINISTRY MODEL

If you have read my writings over the years or listened to any messages preached then you know that I’ve never ministered the same message twice in all these years. About 6 years ago I was lying in the living room floor at our house in Colorado praying one Sabbath morning before anyone else was up and the Lord said He wanted us to go to a certain state, dedicate a new facility for prayer and ordain and set a woman in the office of prophet. So we did. We ministered there all that week and the messages that the Lord gave me to minister were a series of ministry models.

Now I don’t know how much time you’ve spent in the Scriptures but when you are reading and meditating in the Word it’s always instructive to your spiritual development to ask yourself questions such as: 1) What spiritual gift is in operation here? (if there is one), 2) If a personal prophecy is given, when and how was it fulfilled for the person, nation, etc.? 3) If it refers to another person in the Scriptures, e.g., it’s a New Testament verse that refers to Joseph in the book of Genesis, go back and find what the Spirit is saying to you through these verses. For example, Jesus made two statements about the way things would be in the last days—that they would be like “the days of Lot” and “the days of Noah.” When He says something like that go back and read what things were like during Noah’s and Lot’s days on the earth and see if they apply to today.

When you do this and compare it with the Church today and how most churches are operated you will be astounded. They rarely resemble the Church in the book of Acts. And you will almost invariably discover that very few churches incorporate biblical ministry models.

Look at Elijah’s ministry model as an example—he came out of total obscurity and stood before the king to make a pronouncement concerning judgment and then disappears for 3 ½ years from the king. Not a ministry model you see today. How about John the Baptist, Joseph, or Paul? How about Jesus? Don’t see much of His ministry model in most churches today.

“Do you believe the Bible?” “Oh, yes, Brother Timmons, our church believes every word written in the Bible!” But don’t kid yourself, they don’t—one of the biggest problems in churches today is the same as when the Lord affirmed it to me in 1991. I found a church just this week named Bible Believer’s Church in a town but they don’t believe the Bible any more than I’m an astronaut. They are a cessationist theology type church that believe most of the New Testament passed away after the last apostle died. But of course they don’t understand anything about Five-fold ministers so how could they know anything about the apostle’s office.

“Do you believe in Five-fold ministry?”

“Oh yes, Brother Timmons, we certainly do!” Though we aren’t sure if it’s 5 or 4 offices.” This tells me that they are believing some text book definition of Five-fold ministry and not the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ version. That’s because a lot of “study” bibles are “studied out” and they will translate pastor and teacher as one office—pastor/teacher. But they don’t have the spiritual perception to know that there are separate and completely different anointings for a pastor and teacher and a person can be one and not the other (or can be both) by virtue of the anointing that they have.

Yet, sadly, even in most—not all but most—of these churches who claim to believe in Five-fold ministry it is not in operation in that church. It’s like the cessationist’s idea of the Gifts of the Spirit discussed in 1 Corinthians 12, they claim to believe that they exist, just “not here in our church.” In other words, they would say, “Yes, brother Timmons, we believe that God still calls people today to be an apostle, prophet, pastor teacher or evangelist.” But they don’t operate their church that way. In other words, they have made a conscious decision—for a number of reasons—to rebel against Jesus’ ministry model and do their own thing.

No, sadly, what you see for their “own thing” ministry model in most churches is the tired, old, unscriptural pastor ministry model. And more often than not today, this “pastor” is really operating in the Toddler Ministry Model. This ministry model is one where the “pastor” does everything himself—like a toddler, he doesn’t need (or want!) any help from other Five-fold ministers. He would rather take 10 years reinventing the wheel than have an elder—especially one with prophetic gifting—in ministry help him. And who suffers? The Lord Jesus and the people in that church who remain spiritual babies themselves because they have a toddler for a pastor. Just like Jesus told the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day, “Your man made doctrines have set aside the Word of God and made in no effect.”

Now if you spend some time meditating in Ephesians 4 you will learn some things about the Lord Jesus and why He called and ordained 5 (the number of grace) offices to “mature and train the saints for the work of the ministry.” While doing this in 2004 the Lord gave me a message titled, “Unity at What Price?” We all know that genuine unity brings strength and that is why Satan fights it; yet you learn from Ephesians 4 that genuine unity can only come about in the Church through the exercise of Five-fold ministry—it requires all 5 anointings to mature and train up the saints for the work of ministry. And according to Ephesians 4 it requires all 5 offices to mature a saint into the model of Jesus Christ.

Every month when I read the Book of Acts I always meditate on verse 1. We learn something that we also see quite clearly in the synoptic gospels about Jesus' ministry model and I've pointed this out to many pastors who almost always ignore the statement that Jesus both taught and did!

**“...of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
Until the day in which He was taken up ...”**

This was Jesus' ministry model from the day He began ministry after the desert temptations right through the 40 days He was on the earth in His resurrection body before Pentecost. Precept and example; precept and example—I'm going to teach you something from the pulpit inside the church here but then I'm going to go out with you and we are going to do it in the city today! How many times do you see that at your church? Yet that was Jesus' ministry model so why don't we see it today?

As a result of the fact that most of the churches are being operated not with Five-fold but with a pastor/toddler ministry model, the Church remains in chaos. The Lord told me this in October, 1996, and I don't see much improvement today right up to the present moment this first Sunday in September of 2018.

I've been praying and meditating for several months about this teaching because I don't want it to sound too harsh yet it must be truthful to promote a change. So don't get mad at me if you are one of those practicing this “pastor/toddler ministry model” because like a recent pastor we just met who is a fine man with a good heart I love you. But he wants to do it all himself and the fact is that this is arrogance and pride when you really examine it under a spiritual microscope.

If Jesus Christ Himself never tried to do it all by his lonesome and when He ascended on high He gave 5 anointed offices to “train and mature the saints for the work of ministry,” and to mature the saints “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” then who am I to think I can do it all by myself in the Church today? Is not that extreme pride and arrogance?

Now although I understand that originally Christianity was considered by many as a sect of the Jewish religion, the fact is that we see the first genuine Church of Acts functioning under the guidance of the apostles but with other Five-fold offices (elders) and deacons working together to build up the Church and there was great growth and new churches planted during this time. We would see the same thing today if we would return to Jesus' genuine ministry model instead of the ministry models of man.

Yet we also see many churches today continuing the pastor ministry model simply by changing the pastor's title from “pastor” to “apostle.” Now, we're scriptural, right?

For me, the question is not just whether those genuinely called and anointed to a Five-fold office desire to return to the ministry model of Jesus Christ and the one He set up for the Church but whether or not the churches of today will return to operating in the “fear of the Lord” that we see in the book of Acts. Let's face it, unless the Holy Spirit and fear of the Lord returns to the local churches Satan's control of most churches will continue just as it has for thousands of years through the doctrines and organizations of man.

MARANATHA

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7