

Dear Pastor,

I apologize for my lack of correspondence, my friend. I have no excuse except that which always plagues me: the expenditure of perhaps life's most precious commodity...Time.

I expect you often feel as I do, that there is never enough of it. Never enough time to complete not only the task at hand but also the extra credit items that often are in our minds but don't reach the tips of our fingers. This expenditure of time is intended to discipline my natural urges of productivity, *into* a posture of submission, *unto* the greater good and health of both myself and you. If for no other reason than the opportunity of hope, I write this letter praying that it finds you well but concerned that it may not.

If I may, I'd like to catch you up on what's transpired in my life over these last 15 years. Rather than explain this entire period to you, to spare you *time*, allow me to use the following statement to reveal a thread that has been weaved into the life of the Vocational Pastoral Ministry that the Lord called me into for these 15 years...

Up until two months ago, I had not ridden in the same vehicle with my wife to Church since going into Vocational Ministry. For 15 years.

The only explanation I have for this is the task of ministry itself. There were countless worship sets to lead, doors that needed to be unlocked, snow to

be shoveled, prayer meetings to be attended. Chairs - tables - curtains - speakers - signs. Set up, take down. Unlock. Re-lock.

And of course...sermons...so many sermons. All the work of exegeting the scriptures and studying late into the night would finally pay off when Sunday Morning arrived and the glorious Word of God, upon proclamation would bless those who listened and bring forth fruit and encouragement in their lives.

Oh my friend, don't misunderstand: I LOVE Jesus and His Church! I make none of the preceding statements to diminish His Word nor His Work. I'm just being honest with you in this letter about something that I forgot to do for all 15 of those years:

I forgot to **ATTEND** my church.

I had missed something amidst my frenetic attempt to not waste the precious commodity of time. I deprived myself and thereby deprived the body of the necessary care that I need *FOR* myself, *FROM* the Body.

Consider what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in *1 Corinthians 12.12-26*:

¹² For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Indeed, the

body is not one part but many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. ¹⁹ And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. ²³ And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect, ²⁴ which our respectable parts do not need.

Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, ²⁵ so that there would be no division in the body, **but that the members would have the same concern for each other.** ²⁶ So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

You see my friend, I have lived as if the membership of my church did not include me. That like the ministry of Christ as the head of the body, the ministry which He has tasked me with ought to flow one directionally into others without any reciprocation or reception of that same flow into my own life. As if I was a second head that had grown out of the neck of the church and operated on its own level, flowing down into the church members but not being ministered or submitted to them so that I might receive the blessing and encouragement that God has given them for me.

But **I must** submit myself, even as a Lead Pastor to the ministry of the body, for my own humility, growth, maturity, and joy.

Probably something you already know and maybe have taught those around you recently. Perhaps not. There may not be an opportunity to hand off the responsibility to those around you right away, but it ought to be a goal we as Pastors are striving for. It's what Paul taught Timothy to develop as a Pastor within his church and thereby the Holy Spirit implores you to do so as well, from *2 Timothy 2.2*:

*What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.***

We are called to commit the teaching we have received to others so that they will teach what we have taught them. If this doesn't provide the ability for us to have a Sunday Morning where we are present in our church congregations with no other task than participation then I believe we are withholding an intended blessing that the Body of Christ can minister unto us.

My suggestion and exhortation for you my friend then is this: That we would faithfully begin to teach and train those in our churches whom God has gifted to exercise their gifts amongst the church gathering so that we might rhythmically, as Pastors, **Attend our Churches.**

Attending your church might include some or all of the following activities:

- Arrive with your family just before service starts.
- Check your children into Kids Ministry.
- Grab a cup of coffee.
- Hobnob with people in the lobby.
- Sit in a pew, (or chair), with your wife.
- Sing.
- Pray.
- Listen to the scriptures being taught.
- Seek to hear and apply them.
- Confess sin.
- Receive forgiveness.
- Take Communion.

Absorb and enjoy every moment of it being careful to not critique or criticize how the service flows....just **Attend**. Be a part of the Body and allow the Lord through His Body to minister to your weary soul.

I am convinced my dear Pastor, that we could experience a personal revival by attending our churches. Remembering that we too are sheep who are a part of His pasture. That we too need to be led by still waters and given the opportunity to graze in green fields.

It won't be the norm. You and I...we have a calling. A task given to us by the Good Shepherd. But I'm convinced that we need to be rhythmically reminded and humbled by this truth: **That we are still sheep.** We are still members of a Body. And we need the ministry of the Body of Christ to tend to our weary hearts.

I pray that you don't feel condemned by this letter, my friend. Rather I pray that it encourages development, strength, refreshment and endurance for the calling placed upon you. Where so many in recent years have burned out, stumbled, fallen, grown weary or have become disheartened; I pray that you will remain strong in the strength of His Spirit, knowing that He who began a good work in you....**WILL** complete it on the day of Christ Jesus.

Because of this great truth, you can rest. You can Attend your church. It doesn't exist because of you...it exists because of the Head, the Good Shepherd, our Lord and Savior, beneath whose wings we all find refuge.

Yes my fellow Pastor...that includes you and I.

Hoping that this letter finds you standing firm in Him, and encouraged all the more to remain in Him until Glory!

Your Friend,

Pastor Mike

