



At the age of eighteen I had an encounter with God that captured my heart. Immediately, life goals changed and a new path emerged. Shortly afterwards I linked up with a man thirty years my senior and we engaged in weekly prayer meetings. We both had the same heart cry to see a move of God touch the nation of Canada. During this time it was solidified in my heart that the call of God in my life would include standing in the nation and playing a role in a coming move of God. Shortly after these experiences, I began my training in a formal Bible Training Institution. Before I completed my degree, I volunteered to do four hours of weekly youth ministry at a church. There were only two teenagers in the church, so this was a big task! As I launched into this initiative, a movement began and quickly a youth ministry seemingly appeared out of nowhere. Young people were turning to Jesus and a vibrant group of teenagers emerged.

In the midst of this emerging work, I completed my degree and began the pursuit of acquiring my ministerial license and ordination. Upon completing a lengthy doctrinal paper, a group of individuals conducted an interview to ensure that my doctrinal positions were sound; and to recommend or reject me as a candidate at this point in the process. During the interview I was asked, "In the future, where do you see your calling in ministry leading you?" I easily answered, "I am called to the nation of Canada". The individual then said, "So you are called to be a pastor". I said, "No, I am called to the nation of Canada". The statement was repeated, "So you are called to be a pastor". Although I was frustrated in the moment, I felt the Lord was telling me to remain silent. The interview ended and my licensing and ordination process moved forward.

In my ignorance, I was unaware that, at that very moment, a seed was being planted and a false

expectation was forming within me. In that season of my life, I knew very little about the government of God. Yet I knew enough to know that the directive I was given that my call and gifting was to pastor was not in line with God's calling.

Our ministry grew quickly and it was truly exciting to see young people coming into the Kingdom and to be part of the development and establishment of something new. As my journey moved forward, I did, in fact, become formally recognized as a pastor and became employed full time in that capacity. With the remuneration came a whole bunch of expectations. I had no idea that I had begun a process of dying on the inside.

A prophetic sign of the death that was taking place is seen in this simple story. I spent one entire Sunday afternoon with a group of teenagers. We were just hanging out and playing hours of baseball. Included in this group were teens from our youth ministry and some who were being impacted for the first time by the love of God. By the end of the afternoon I was sweaty, dirty and as happy as can be. The real me loved to connect with youth in this manner.

Through the relationships that were built, we saw numerous teens turn to Jesus and dive deep into the Word of God. Then reality hit me that I had to shift my focus and go into an evening service and perform some religious routines. Since I was now paid to be a pastor, certain expectations had to be fulfilled. I stood in the parking lot, dirty and happy from the afternoon's engagements but also with tears in my eyes as I shared with a friend that I didn't want to go into the church building. Because of my job expectations as a pastor, I now had to perform and be something that I was not. I see now that I walked out a prophetic sign: there were no showers so I could not properly

clean myself up. So I went inside and put on clean religious clothes (clothes that I was expected to wear) over the dirt and sweat underneath. The clothes that people saw and expected me to wear on the outside covered the real me on the inside. I was losing myself as I was becoming what others expected me to be rather than discovering and aligning with what God had called me to be. I was ignorant of the fact that a death cycle in my inner life was taking place.

A few years later I was married, yet was in daily conflict. My ministry was barely existent; I lost everyone I had. I literally walked the community looking for young people. I was finding my significance in watering the lawn of our church which I did passionately every day. Then one day I found myself sitting on a park bench in a place of depression.

The irony of the moment is what happened on that bench. I had just come from a season of seeing a move of God among young people. Teens were leading teens to Jesus. I was doing what Jesus did by helping new disciples make new disciples. Now, I sat on that bench, the ministry lost and feeling



depressed. While sitting there, a car with four teenagers pulled up to the curb. One teen rolled down the window and said, "Are you all right"? That alone is a miracle from heaven as this is not normal teenage behaviour in the city of Toronto. That just shows how bad I must have looked sitting on that bench! But the irony of the moment was this. A few years previously, I was leading young people who were being used of God to impact their peers. We began to touch the schools in our region and things were rising up rapidly. Then, a few years later I'm sitting on a bench in depression. The very generation that I was helping now pull up and inquire of my need. My, how the table had turned!

Why was this where I landed? Why did I become something that I was not called to be? These are

challenging questions and certainly can't be limited to one or two simple answers. But, I want to spend the rest of this article addressing one significant factor. I believe there was one large reason for my struggles. I also believe that it is happening all the time to other pastors who are just like me.

Take a look at these statistics below.

### **PASTORAL BURNOUT STATISTICS**

This is taken from the New York Times, August 1st, 2010. Their research indicates:

"Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could."

- 13% of active pastors are divorced.
- 25% don't know where to turn when they have a family or personal conflict or issue.
- 25% of pastors' wives see their husband's work schedule as a source of conflict.
- 33% felt burned out within their first five years of ministry.
- 40% of pastors and 47% of spouses are suffering from burnout, frantic schedules, and/or unrealistic expectations.
- 45% of pastors' wives say the greatest danger to them and their family is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual burnout.
- 45% of pastors say that they've experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.
- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 52% of pastors say they and their spouses believe that being in pastoral ministry is hazardous to their family's well-being and health.
- 56% of pastors' wives say that they have no close friends.
- 57% would leave the pastorate if they had somewhere else to go or some other vocation they could do.
- 70% don't have any close friends.

- 75% report severe stress causing anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear, and alienation.
- 80% of pastors say they have insufficient time with their spouse.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 90% feel unqualified or poorly prepared for ministry.
- 90% work more than 50 hours a week.
- 94% feel under pressure to have a perfect family.
- 1,500 pastors leave their ministries each month due to burnout, conflict, or moral failure.

These statistics are staggering. But, when I think about my story at the beginning of this article, I can comprehend this as being true. So why is my story recurring again and again in so many lives? This is an important question that needs to be considered.

### **A DIFFERENT KIND OF CHURCH**

If we begin in the book of Acts where the church was launched, we could start with the title of the book. It is actually called THE ACTS of the apostles. Most times we reduce the name to The Book of Acts. In our thinking and vocabulary, this is typically how we reference the first book that teaches us about the launch of the New Testament church. Although we recognize the apostles and prophets in the early church, the traditions of man have taught that they have no ongoing function in the present church. The birth, movement and momentum of the first church were launched by the Spirit of God through the gift that is called “apostle”. The apostles were in close relationship with the prophets, working as a team to establish the first foundation of the church. That is why the title of the book is, THE ACTS of the apostles.

This provokes a serious question. Did man change something that God established? That is not a small question. Setting tradition aside, we can see this blueprint explained after the church had become more established.

In Ephesians we read,

**19. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household.**

**20. having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.**

Ephesians 2:19-20

As the church was emerging, Paul made it clear that the “apostles and prophets” played a significant role in the foundational establishment of the church. Paul didn’t declare the deletion or the removal of their function. Rather, he explained the parameters of their function. They were critical in the foundational establishment of the body of Christ right down to the individual local church.

A few chapters later, Paul expanded the understanding of what was needed in the ongoing function of the church.

He said,

**11. And He (Jesus) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,**

**12. for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.**

Ephesians 4:11-12



In this list, we have the addition of evangelists, pastors and teachers. To achieve the full, true success of the church’s journey, we need all five gifts fully functional in their true design.

It is important to see that Paul didn’t say, “Well, now the apostles and prophets are done so they need to be removed and now we need the pastors, teachers and evangelists”. No, he added the pastors, teachers and evangelists into the equation. There is a very important reason why he did this. To see this we have to read his instruction in the book of First Corinthians.



## GOD'S BUILDING ORDER

We read,

***28. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...."***

1 Corinthians 12:28

I want to break some things down in this verse. It is imperative that we grasp the meaning of "appointed" and "first".

### Appointed

We are told that God "appointed" a specific gift order in the establishment of His church. This word "appointed" comes from the Greek word "Tithemi" which carries the meaning, "To set in place", "put in prison" or "to set a foundation stone". This is powerful language and tells us important truth concerning God's intentions for the "apostle", "prophet" and then "teacher". Let's break down this word "appointed" into greater detail.



First, "appointed" includes in the meaning, "To set in place". The Word of God is telling us that He, God, set something in place. In the heavenly realms, God has His set order. Whenever man on the earth does not align with what is already established in the heavenly realms, mankind will always fall short and miss heaven's true intentions. This applies to any kingdom truth.

God's true blessing and manifestation of His presence is directly connected to His established purpose and order. Just read how thoroughly detailed His instructions were to Moses in the building of the Old Testament house for His Glory. Exodus 25:8-9 starts with the instructions. Read the entirety to see the immense detail that God required Moses to obey. Then read Exodus 40:32-35 and see the results of Moses' obedience. Moses had no say in the details of the blueprint. He simply oversaw

the development of what God said was to be done and in the exact manner that He said it must come to pass. The conclusion is that God set something in place in the heavenly order and man is not permitted to change it.

Second, "appointed" includes in the meaning, "Put in prison". This is not a negative term. When God gives something that is meant to function in a certain way, everything is locked up until it moves according to His way. It is like someone put in a prison. An inmate only has freedom of movement within their cell or at specified times in various places within the prison. The inmate only has rights within the context of the rules of their incarceration. God set an order and He put this order in a prison. It is locked up and won't change. If we change His order, He doesn't accommodate us. We simply miss all that it could be if we had aligned to His order.

Third, "appointed" includes in the meaning, "To set a foundation stone". A foundation is something upon which everything else is built. This tells us about the absolute importance of the work of the apostles, prophets and then teachers. Every other intention that God has for His church springs from the work that is first done by these foundation-setting gifts. If the apostles, prophets and teachers are not doing their work, then all attempts to spring into God's fullest intentions will always fall short.

What is the summary and conclusion of the usage of this word "appointed"? God's Word is telling us that He established something and unless He changes it, it will never change. Man may change things, but God never changes. As we reflect on my personal story and the pastoral statistics, we must start asking deeper questions. Is it the fault of every pastor or their personal failures that puts them in a difficult predicament? Or, is it the fault of the people or the churches that pastors lead? Well, the answer is no and yes.

Regardless of the failures of people, whether leaders or congregations, it is not human fleshly failure that is at the root of the problem. It is a fact that when a church goes through numerous pastors in a few short years, they will cite specific failures of their pastor each time as the reason for the change. Or, as a pastor again leaves another church, they will cite the failures of the people. At the root, however, these failures are not the problem.

### What is the Problem?

It is the mindsets that have developed from generations of habitually doing things the same way. If you are like me, you have been trained under a "gift of pastor" led system and that is all that you can comprehend. Even

as we work to embrace the apostles and prophets, the mind of man reverts or defaults back to the only comfortable system that it knows. Doing a simple study in neuroscience will explain why this will always be the case. The brain develops a way of thinking or acting and then can go on autopilot. It requires a radical change to shift the brain into a new way of thinking. Everything is supposedly secure and fine until you challenge the present patterns in the brain that we don't even know exist.

Here is a church history example. Today we love our rich tradition of the truth of "justification (made right with God) by faith". But this was not the case in Martin Luther's day. He saw truth that the church and its systems did not know. He literally laid down and risked his life to get this truth restored. The mind of man was so comfortable with the way things were that the people of his day wanted to kill him for his radical ideas. He was the greatest enemy to the church of his day because he challenged false mindsets. Eventually, formed brain patterns were challenged by the ministry of Holy Spirit through Martin Luther. He was hated and ridiculed in his day, but today he is heralded as a hero as we reflect upon the history of the church.

So yes, there is flesh and problems in the leaders and within the people. But the never-ending pointing out of individual failure will never fix the issue. The greatest problem that we face is the way our minds have been trained. Unless this way of thinking is reformed or changed, the results will continue to be the same. The church will continue to struggle and the same pastoral statistics will carry into the next generation of leaders.

So what is the change that we need to embrace?

God "appointed" certain gifts to lead the development of the church into its full intent. Unless we align ourselves with what He appointed, and what must be "first", we will miss the mark every time.

### **First**

We need to look at one more word. That is the word "first". We are told that "He (God) appointed first apostles..."! What does that mean?

In an earthly and worldly mindset that means, "The apostle is the boss". Sadly this faulty concept of

leadership is where many will default to in their brain. But this is not what God has said.

The word "first" is the Greek word "proton". This word carries the meaning, "*of place or order*", "*first of all*" and "*distribution as referring to a series or succession of circumstances*". This needs to be broken down and clarified.

First, this word "first" includes the meaning, "*of place and order*". This speaks to the reference of being in a prison. The apostle, who is closely linked to the prophet is placed in an important "*order*" of function. This is not a hierarchical function. This is not a, "I am gifted as an apostle so I am the boss" statement of reality. But the "*order*" is imperative if we are going to align with heaven. God is talking about a function that must be first before other functions. This will be more fully clarified at the end of the article. But the reason for this "*place of order*" is because of the function of what the gift of apostle is designed to fulfill.

Second, this word "first" includes the meaning "*first of all*". Because of what the gift of apostle does, this gift has to be first. The apostle is not more important than the rest of the gifts. But in the order of function the apostolic gift is massively important. Without the apostle first doing what they are designed to do, the second, third, fourth and so on will all fail to achieve the fullness of their gifts design.

Third, this word "first" includes the meaning "*...as referring to a series or succession of circumstances*". This definition is huge. Picture a bunch of dominoes set up in a creative way. The design is laid out so that when the first domino falls, it hits the second. The second hits the third and so on and so on. Eventually, all the dominos fall and you get to the end of the creative set up. The apostolic gift is the first because part of the true and



pure design of this gift is that the Spirit of God uses it to cause movement and momentum. This in turn causes the others in their appointed time to find their place

and function. If movement and momentum is not happening then all we have left to do is a dead work in the flesh. This kills everyone.

It is critical that we grasp the summary of this word “first”. God has not established hierarchical control freaks who rule everyone else. Emphatically no! The momentum and activation that comes from true apostolic ministry will move things to such a point that the apostle(s) loses control. That is the exciting point of this adventure. Imagine there being so much of heaven’s manifestation and the emergence of new things that no person can possibly control its reality. Welcome to heaven’s intentions for the church. We must have the gift that God has “appointed” in its rightful “first” placement to start this movement and momentum or we never arrive at God’s intended destination. There is so much at stake for us to embrace this.

### **WHAT GOD SETS WE CAN’T CHANGE**

So what does all this tell us as it relates to the church or body of Christ as a whole? For many it gives explanation as to why my story and the pastoral statistics exist. My story is now over twenty years old. But it has taken most of those years to undo all the error and brokenness from the first few years of ministry. Sadly it also caused damage in the lives of others while I worked through my own internal confusion. This should not be. Instead of my life being about advancing the kingdom of God, it became about trying to figure out what is wrong with me. Similar pastoral statistics were being cited when I was attending Bible College and Seminary. Clearly this was telling us then and is telling us now, something is wrong.

I see two co-existing problems.

*The first problem I want to identify is:*

There are individuals who are gifted and called primarily with apostolic or prophetic gifts but are working with all their might to fulfill the expectations of being the pastor. They are walking and wearing nice clean clothes on the outside while the true person on the inside is dying or perhaps even dead. These expectations exist internally in the individual because the calling to pastor is all that is known or modelled in the life of the church. These expectations exist externally as

this is typically the only lens by which people can judge someone as a success or failure. When you apply money and remunerate the individual, this is failure waiting to happen. Now, the money holds the person accountable to fulfill expectations that their gifts may not be designed to fulfill.

Do you remember the story of my license and ordination interview? When I was asked about my future calling, I knew nothing about the gift of apostle or prophet. But I did know that the nation was before me by God’s design. But immediately my calling was pushed into the box called pastor. Unknowingly, I was actually moving away from my true design. This eventually seriously damaged



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my life, my future leadership and because of this I hurt people along the way.

Despite my ignorance, my apostolic gifts began to be revealed when I was working in my first church. One major characteristic of the apostolic gift is that it brings order to anything that is not currently in proper alignment. I worked tremendously hard on a project to bring fresh order and alignment to our local church. After hundreds of hours, it was rejected by the leadership as they made it clear that no change was in our future. They refused to even consider the work that I had done. I produced written material to aid the process and because of the rejection, I had left over copies. I was devastated and confused. Later, in a regional leadership gathering I shared my work with other leaders and was surprised when they asked for copies of my work. Naturally I said yes. I excitedly shared this with the senior pastor in my church and was then quickly rebuked as he said, “Steve, what are you doing caring about those leaders and churches, we pay you to work here”.

Can you get a glimpse as to why leaders get so wounded?

My work to set things in order in our church was 100% rejected. Then the sharing my heart with other leaders was rejected again. A nail was driven through my heart as the real apostolic gifts from Jesus in me were arising and then the expectation of being the paid pastor shut

it down. I had no chance to discover the real gifts given by Jesus that were residing in me.

Some leaders are gifted and ready to run in their current situation. But a true re-alignment needs to take place where new expectations are framed around their true design. Both the leader and the people must be willing to give permission to the leader to go on this transformative journey of change.

So the first problem is that individuals gifted apostolically and prophetically are potentially working hard to be something that they are not. This in turn means that they can and do reject being who they truly are.

*The second problem I want to identify is:*

Individuals who are truly designed and gifted as a pastor try to fulfill what they know in their spirit should be taking place. Any truly called pastor (as is the case with every leader) begins their journey with a passion for God and His presence. But the mantle upon them, as important as it is, needs the “first” gifts to fulfill their function. Pastors need the work of the apostles and prophets to establish a foundation of order and momentum “first” so that their true pastoral function can arise into its fullness.

It is unfair to those gifted as pastors, as well as to their families, to keep trying to do the work that someone else is gifted to do. They work with all their might and in many cases burn out as a result. Their only solution is to leave the ministry entirely or continue to run to new situations to revive a honeymoon feeling again and again. As my story and the statistics reveal, the broken system is killing many in the position of pastor. This is not in any way meant to disdain pastoral gifts. But they are often unknowingly waiting for something to arise that their gifts simply don't or can't produce. They may have a heart's cry to see it, but unless they possess other gifts, they are not mantled to produce what they yearn for.

What we need is the re-establishment of those gifted as apostles and prophets. Any true pastor will be fanned into flame in the wake of what these first gifts functionally do.



## **DIFFERENT JOBS YET ALL ESSENTIAL**

The gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher have all come from Jesus. This means that not one of them can be diminished in their function or importance. So what are some simple and foundational differences between the apostolic gift and the pastoral gift?

Any true apostle despite their diversity will carry similar characteristics to other apostles. Similarly any true pastor despite their diversity will carry similar characteristics to other pastors.

So why then is the apostle gift first? The apostle through the abilities given by Jesus will see things that are out of order and be gifted to move them into order.

In my first ministry experience, I recall that the man leading our Sunday praise was clearly not anointed in his function. He loved Jesus big time. But that didn't mean that he was mantled by Jesus to lead people into encounters with His presence. He stood in the pulpit, said "Please turn to hymn such and such", the organ began and we all sang. He closed his eyes and smiled as he sang his heart to the Lord. It was precious and frustrating. It was precious because of the purity of his heart. It was frustrating because our praise was going nowhere. I approached the senior pastor about this privately and suggested that we help him see that he was out of order in his function. The pastor said, "He was in that position when I came so we can do nothing about it". At that time, I had no idea that my true design was apostolic in nature. But because of the unknown gifts in my life, it drove me mad as I clearly saw something out of order that needed to be put in order. This negatively affected the entire church. I thought, "How can we leave someone in a function who clearly is not called to be in it"? I was given no answers, nor was I given the freedom to do anything about it so it stayed as it was.



The pastor gift, in contrast, is anointed by Jesus to see the people. People and their need are the priority to the pastor. Even when order is so clearly off, the need of the people is still the priority.

Both the pastor and the apostle are correct. Why, because both have been gifted by Jesus. So why is the apostle a “first” gift? Had my apostolic gift been allowed in that praise situation, I would have worked with that man to help him see his lack of personal alignment. Then the pastor would have come alongside in that situation to ensure that this man was truly processing and hearing from God’s heart. One gift focuses on the order while the other gift focusses on the person and their need. But if the first doesn’t happen, we serve only the people and their need instead of the order of heaven. This is backwards from God’s perspective.

Another key characteristic of the apostle is to establish the order of our corporate and individual pursuit. The question is, “In all that the church does, what is its first priority”? From the apostolic perspective, it is to ensure that heaven is coming into manifestation upon the earth. Apostles make the pursuit of the manifested presence of God the first and main priority. Why? Because when



the presence of God is in literal manifestation, no need is left untouched. Apostles say, we need the manifested presence of God, Period!

A true pastor will have this same heart focus for the manifested presence of God. But, unless they possess other gifts, typically the pastor is not mantled to establish the presence of God as the personal and corporate priority. Why? Because Jesus in the pastor moves towards the people. They may love the presence of God, but Jesus in the pastor will always move back to the need of the people. It is Jesus’ nature in them to do

this. Apostles lead the church into the experience of the manifestation of heaven as an ongoing daily reality. Pastors move towards the people and then help the people connect with the manifested presence of God. This will mean that the true and full needs of people will be met right down to the root or core level of their lives. Why? Because only the presence of God can heal mankind from the broken condition called, “sin”.

If someone who is genuinely gifted as pastor is put out front as the “first”, we are all in crisis because the church will default again and again to catering to the needs of people. The church will wear out trying with all its might to meet the demanding needs of the broken in its midst. We will then be left with serving traditions, forms and expectations of man as the first priority of focus.

In conclusion then, the apostles guide the church into the living reality of the presence of God manifesting all the time. Pastors in turn guide the people into fresh encounters with the presence of God that is in manifestation.

### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE**

We will never even begin the journey of change until we first become honest about the problem. No gift is greater than another. But God’s order is absolutely essential.

If the pastoral statistics tell us anything, they tell us that there is a problem that we must honestly face and seriously ask the questions as to why.

Jesus made an incredible declaration in the Book of Matthew. He said,

***...and upon this rock (Jesus) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.***

Matthew 16:19

If this is God’s truth, then we have to ask why this isn’t the typical reality that we see in the church today. Jesus said that He would build His church. His order, His way is the only way that will cause it to prosper according to its design.







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Jesus has given Himself in gifts that are called, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. What He gives, no man can take away. Not only is He the giver of these gifts, He determines the order and the timing of their function.

We must question the systems that we have built. We must be willing to lay down things that are revealed to not be according to His way for the building of the church.

### **GOD IS REFORMING THE CHURCH**

The word reformation carries the meaning, “rescuing from error and returning to a rightful course”.

([www.audioenglish.org](http://www.audioenglish.org))

God is rescuing the leaders of His church by moving them into their rightful order. He is rescuing the church by moving the leaders into their rightful order.

It is my constant prayer for the Father to release those who are called to the apostolic and prophetic ministry to be restored to the local church. For some, it will be a re-alignment in the current place of their function. For others, it will be radical ministry shifts as we get clarity from Heaven.

God is reforming His Church. Do you taste it? Do you see it? Are you participating with it or fighting against it?

The world is desperately awaiting the release of Heaven’s authority in true, full manifestation upon the earth.

Join with me in the prayer for God to release the apostles and prophets into their proper function in the church.

The reformation has begun.



Dr. Steve McEvoy has his doctorate in Leadership and Organizational Development.

- Through his apostolic teaching ministry, Steve assists leaders in the church in *“helping activate their people in fulfilling the calling of God on their lives”*.
- In the marketplace, he works alongside Government and Business leaders and influences them in applying kingdom principles of leadership within their organizations. Steve *“assists marketplace leaders in creating a corporate ‘Who Am I Culture’”* in their current position of leadership.

To learn more about what Dr. Steve offers visit his websites at:

[www.bydesigngroup.ca](http://www.bydesigngroup.ca)



[www.stevemcevoyministries.org](http://www.stevemcevoyministries.org)

