

### *Biblical Parallels*

There are at least three significant biblical pericope that demonstrate roles parallel to the Executive Pastor. Two individuals, and one group, were in the place of implementing the policy and vision of others.

The position that Joseph was given under Pharaoh parallels the Executive Pastor. Genesis records that:

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’ ... He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, ‘Make way!’ Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The definition of the Executive Pastor is one who implements the vision of the Senior Pastor and the policies of the governing board. Joseph is similar that he implemented God’s vision given to Pharaoh of the grains of wheat.

The definition of Executive Pastor also includes the implementation of policy. Joseph implemented the policies of Pharaoh by gathering wheat into storehouses for seven years. Joseph was the manager of the palace and its workers, just as many Executive Pastors oversee the entire church staff. Joseph was identified by Pharaoh as the second-in-command, a common feature to Executive Pastors. Joseph was in charge of the whole land, just as many Executive Pastors are in charge of the whole church. The people did not confuse Joseph with Pharaoh, just as congregants rarely confuse the Executive Pastor with the Senior Pastor. While few would equate the Senior Pastor with

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<sup>1</sup> Gen 41:39-40, 43 NIV

Pharaoh, it has recently been done in a humorous *Youth Voice* poem selection by Micah McKee.<sup>2</sup>

A second figure in the Bible that shows biblical patterns for the Executive Pastor is Moses. In the book of Exodus, God instructs Moses that he can use Aaron as an assistant as needed:

Moses said to the LORD, ‘O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’ The LORD said to him, ‘Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.’ But Moses said, ‘O Lord, please send someone else to do it.’

Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses and he said, ‘What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it.’<sup>3</sup>

This passage indicates that Aaron will be the mouthpiece for Moses. A few chapters later, Aaron is recorded as the spokesman: “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the

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<sup>2</sup> Micah McKee, *On the Way to the Library I See the Reverend* [On-line] (Online Poetry Board Journal, 2001, accessed 23 July 2003); available from [www.itvs.org/poeticlicense/opj\\_archives/09\\_2001/youth\\_entries\\_05.html](http://www.itvs.org/poeticlicense/opj_archives/09_2001/youth_entries_05.html).

“Lord, Lord Let the Almighty Dollar be my sword!”

“Go down Moses to Egyptland in nothing less than a limousine and a 300-dollar tuxedo and tell ol’ Pharaoh to let my people go or God will buy out your pyramids and monopolize your empire!”

City lights flashing, neon crosses blinding green atop the new megachurch 4 stories high booming with hallelujahs and bursting with the aroma of dollar bills.

O Praise the Lord!

Praise Him with your checkbooks and credit cards and bank accounts!

Praise Him with cash (no bills smaller than \$20 please)!

<sup>3</sup> Exod 4:10-17 NIV

Israelites go out of his country.’ ... Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.”<sup>4</sup>

The main fact to be observed from the relationship between Moses and Aaron is that the younger brother was the leader. The book of Exodus is clear that Moses was the chosen one to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Though Aaron is older by three years, he is the assistant to Moses. Interestingly, few Senior Pastors would describe themselves as Moses did: “Moses said to the LORD, ‘O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’”<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the cultural differences of who is the spokesman, Aaron was to assist Moses. Moses was the spiritual leaders, as is the Senior Pastor in the modern church. In a similar fashion, many Executive Pastors assist the spiritual leaders of the churches in which they serve.

Later in the book of Exodus, Jethro recommends to Moses that he delegate leadership functions. Moses is over-working himself and needs help:

When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, ‘What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?’ Moses answered him, ‘Because the people come to me to seek God’s will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and laws.’

Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate

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<sup>4</sup> Exod 7:1-2, 7 NIV

<sup>5</sup> Exod 4:10 NIV

dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.’<sup>6</sup>

Moses as the spiritual leader has incorrectly concluded that he must intervene in every judicial decision. Jethro recommends a delegation of authority to competent judges, allowing for complex cases to rise in the hierarchy. In a similar fashion, the Executive Pastor is delegated authority, freeing the Senior Pastor to focus on issues that have significance for the entire church.

There are also similarities between the role of the Executive Pastor and Daniel. There are parallels between Daniel and two of the kings under which he served:

The king said to Daniel, ‘Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.’ Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.<sup>7</sup>

Daniel was placed in a high position, just as many Executive Pastors are in important positions in the church. Daniel was a ruler under the King, just as many Executive Pastors manage the church. Daniel oversaw wise men, just as many Executive Pastors serve as Chief of Staff. Later in Daniel’s life the Bible records:

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Exod 18:14-21 NIV

<sup>7</sup> Dan 2:47-49 NIV

<sup>8</sup> Dan 6:1-3 NIV



, and embraces practical love rather than the proclamation of the Word.<sup>11</sup>

This demonstrates a parallel to the role of the Executive Pastor. The apostles focus on the ministry of the Word and the appointed men focus on the ministry of the Table.

Kittle and Holzmann focus on the man as “organisers, dispensers and overseers of meals,” resulting in practical love. This is akin to the Executive Pastor who organizes the ministry of the church, dispensing funds, and overseeing practical ministry. The Senior Pastor is in the model of the apostle, serving the Word to a hungry congregation.

Another parallel relates to the size of church. The role of Executive Pastor began in larger congregations. In Acts 2:41 the church grew by three thousand in one day and in Acts 4:4 the size of the church is given as five thousand men. This number was not static, as Acts 5:14 asserts; “Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.” The pericope of Acts 6 ends with a continuing of the growth theme; “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” With five thousand men, one can assume a church of another five thousand women and fifteen thousand children. This brings the total size of the church of Acts 4 in the range of twenty-five thousand people. The growth given in Acts 5 and 6 are difficult to quantify, except that it was rapid. Could the size of the church have been thirty, sixty

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<sup>11</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. Electronic edition ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-1976), citing H. J. Holtzmann, *Apostelgeschichte* (1901), 51.

or ninety thousand?<sup>12</sup> What can be said is that the size was sufficient to require a delegation of responsibility away from the apostles. This parallels the role of the Executive Pastor where the church is of sufficient size to delegate church management to someone other than the Senior Pastor.

The relationship between Acts 6 and the Executive Pastor has disjuncture on several significant points. In Acts 6, there are men who are appointed to a church function. In the role of the Executive Pastor, generally there is one person appointed to manage the church. In Acts 6, the emphasis is on serving tables, hardly a term easily applied to managing the church. The scope in Acts 6 seems to be limited, or if not limited then not defined as broader.

A significant parallel in Acts 6 is the delegation of responsibility from the spiritually governing body to others. The one doing the appointing is greater than the one being appointed. The one appointed is accountable for the office back to the appointers. The apostles gave authority to the appointed ones to manage the tables. The apostles preferred to concentrate on their primary responsibility and delegated other jobs so as to maintain focus. The governing board delegates responsibility to the Executive Pastor so that it can focus on other tasks.

As with the Old Testament passages, in Acts 6 there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the original texts and the Executive Pastor. Rather, it is enough to say that there are significant parallels to the role of the Executive Pastor. These parallels give theological significance to the position of the Executive Pastor and help see

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<sup>12</sup> This discussion is not meant to be an historical endorsement of modern day large churches. It is an acknowledgement of the fact without judgment.

that the role has biblical heritage. In the Old and New Testament, there are three pericope that demonstrate roles parallel to the Executive Pastor. Two individuals, and one group, had delegated responsibility to manage and implement policy and vision.