

“Super Priest”–Fully Engaged (2 of 4)

Intro Video: Super Pastor!

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Many church-goes suffer from the “Super Priest” or “Super Pastor” mentality. What’s this?

Let me explain. Before Jesus came, God worked through a select group of men called, “priests.”

Moses’ brother, Aaron, served as the first priest and his sons carried on this line of priesthood.

The Old Testament priests served God and served the people by acting as a “go-between,” a mediator between God and the people. In order to do anything religious—like pray, give, confess your sins—you couldn’t go directly to God. You had to go through a priest.

But when Jesus came, he turned that system upside down. His death on the cross paved the way for each of us to have direct access to God. When the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost, he came to dwell in every believer. Suddenly, every follower of Jesus was a priest!

This means that, today, we each have direct access to God. You don’t have to call a priest or a pastor every time you want to pray, give, or confess your sins.

Not only that, but we have become priests to each other. That means that we can go to God not only on our behalf, but on the behalf of those in your life who are sick and hurting. You can go to God on behalf of those who are hurting and grieving. You can be a part of ministry!

Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: *“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”* Ephesians 4:11-12 (NLT) This means that God has appointed a few leaders of the Church to equip the many Members of the Church to do the work of God’s ministry. The end result is that the Church is built up and we reach unity and maturity in Christ. That’s a good agreement!

And in verse 16 he writes: *“He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”* Ephesians 4:11-16 (NLT) Each part has its special, God-given part to do.

Instead of the Old Testament temple with a few priests, we have a New Testament Church full of priests who are doing the work of God. That’s Pastors equipping Volunteers for ministry!

But somewhere along the course of Church history, something went wrong. Somewhere the Church lost track of what God had set up and reverted to the Old Testament model.

Here’s how it works today: A church of 95 people (that’s the average size church in the USA) get together and hire a “minister” to do the *Preaching, Teaching, Marrying, Burying, Visiting* people in their *Homes* when they’re well, *Visiting* them in the *Hospital* when they’re sick, *Counseling* them when they’re *confused*, *Evangelizing* them when they’re *Lost*, *Raising money* for the church. . . (And you wonder why the average Pastor only stays at a church for 2 years!)

That’s the model: a group of people pay a person to do the work they’re supposed to do!

This is how it is in most churches today. Why? Because many pastors feel that they have to be the one to do all of the ministry AND because many Christians are not interested in joining in.

Here’s the nugget of truth: God did not call me here as your pastor to do the ministry. He called me here as your Pastor to equip you to do the ministry. If you’re a Christian, you’re a priest!

Look at what the Apostle Peter wrote: *“And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God. . . You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”* 1 Peter 2:5, 9 (NLT) Somewhere in Church history, the concept of “the priesthood of the believer” was lost, and the Church suffers every day because of it.

This is what the Church desperately needs:

1) **Pastors** who are willing to let go of the ministry. (Illus: Lake Hazel & Mercy Team)

2) **People** who are willing to fulfill their ministry purpose.

3) **Pastors** who are able to equip the people for their ministry.

4) **People** who will rise up and do the ministry (the way God made them to do it).

Look at this quote from Bill Hybels: *“When those who are called to equip really do equip, and when volunteers show up to be equipped, trained, empowered, and entrusted with ministry, everybody wins—the equippers, those being equipped, the church, and the community. And God gets the glory because it was his incredible idea.”* Bill Hybels

Now, let’s be honest. People like to be needed! The pastors I have known who have not taken up the biblical model to equip the people to do the ministry have not done it for one very simple reason: They like doing it, and they don’t want to give it away. They *“like to be liked,”* and they *“need to be needed.”* And it’s a sickness that doesn’t stop with pastors. Everyone gets it at times. We sometimes forget that we are not “Super Priest.”

A lot of pastors need to stand up in front of their church and confess that they have been choking point for real ministry. And a lot of Christians need to stand up in front of their church and confess that they have expected a small group of people to do all of the work.

Somewhere along the line the church decided to hire a few professional Christians, and then passively watch them carry out their priestly duties—with everyone else sitting on the sidelines, sitting on their hands, sitting on their gifts, and spending their time reviewing the performance of the priest!

Somewhere along the line there was a line drawn between the “clergy” and the “lay-people.”

“After all, we’ve not been to Bible College!” and *“That’s what we pay you for.”*

And as a result, churches are limping along with exhausted Pastors and unfulfilled People.

But that’s not how God put his church together! That’s not what God had in mind for his church! God is smarter than that, folks!

Just imagine though, what would happen if a church community began to think of themselves (in a good way) as a superhero! What would happen if every church member—with a healthy sense of humility—discovered that they were a superhero. Wouldn’t that be cool? You’d be going, *“Here I come to save the day! I’m Lawn Mower Man.”* Or *“I’m Baby Holding Man!”* Or, *“Quick, hand me that pen. I am Encouragement Card Woman!”* Or, *“Step right up, I’m Volunteer Coordinator Woman!”*

What would it take for you to see that you’re not just an ordinary person? You’ve been given an extraordinary gift and calling to be used by God!

One of my sons’ favorite movies is Pixar’s “The Incredibles.” Have you seen it? It’s about this family of ex-superheroes who discover that they’ve still got it. Wouldn’t it be cool if everyone discovered that they’ve got it, too, and that we all understood, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are part of this incredible family of superheroes?

What would happen if we saw ourselves as supernaturally empowered by God, and what would happen if we saw ourselves as priests, and took that role seriously?

And what if everyone decided to pick up the towel and live beyond ourselves like we talked about last time? You talk about a church that would be incredible! The world would stand up and take notice!

Let’s go back to Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”* Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

The Apostle Paul says so clearly that “we have been saved to serve!” God has a purpose in saving you from your sins and bringing you into his family—In other words, when God saves you, that is not the end; it’s just the beginning! We are made “brand new,” and God continues to work in us to make us what *he* wants us to be. _____

My favorite artist is Vincent van Gogh (the Dutch Post-Impressionist artist). I’ve had the privilege of seeing much of his art in person. I’m moved by the emotion in the colors and texture of his paint. Some of my favorites include these paintings that I’ve had the privilege of seeing:

1) Vincent van Gogh: Self Portrait (Musée d’Orsay, Paris)

2) Vincent van Gogh: The Siesta (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

3) Vincent van Gogh: Wheat Field with Crows (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam)

4) Vincent van Gogh: The Starry Night (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) (June 6!)

Can I show you another masterpiece? You are not only a masterpiece shaped by God's own loving hands, but you are a unique work of divine art. Like an original painting, you are one of a kind. There is no one else like you. And you were created for a purpose: to bring glory to God by fulfilling his plans for your life. **GOSPEL**

If you live beyond yourself. . . if you let God use your life, you will be so fulfilled in this life living "*beyond yourself*." You were a priest! You are a supernaturally empowered person, created to make a difference in this world.

There's no way I can describe the "rush" that comes by knowing you're being used by God. But if you haven't discovered that yet, pick up the towel and join in the service. Let God fill you with joy and purpose like you've never had before—you are a masterpiece!

VISION, CONNECT, GROW, SERVE: (Helping Hands & the Outpost)

Sonrise Church is an amazing place—we have people who have picked up the towel and are serving with abandon. But I don't think we have any idea how amazing this place could actually become. Just imagine everybody serving with the *right gifts* in the *right place* with the *right people* and the *right passions* at the *right time*. We shouldn't be like the Marines: "*The few, the proud*." We should be, "*The many, the humble, doing their Father's will—just like Jesus*."

Wouldn't it be amazing if every single *person*, every single *priest*, could discover their purpose in life? Wouldn't it be amazing if every person could walk into a phone booth and take off their old, tired clothing and reveal themselves to be the superhero that God made them to be?

Let's Pray: