

## **OVERSIGHT? OASIS OR MIRAGE?** By Pete Beck Jr.

IN SOME CASES IT IS A PURE MIRAGE, BUT IT CAN BE AN OASIS IN A DESERT SITUATION!

### THE MIRAGE:

A mirage is something that looks very real until you come right up to it, and then it disappears; for it was not there in the first place. I am told they are commonplace in the deserts of North Africa and other places, appearing as pools of lovely water to a thirsty traveler, only to disappoint.

Over the years I have had pastors stand in front of their churches on a Sunday morning and introduce me. It would go something like this. "Brother Pete is with us today. Most of you know him. He is my pastor and the apostle (or oversight) to this church. When we have a threat, or a problem we can't solve, we can call him." I always marvel at how easily these words come out of the mouth and how impressed many of the people are. Then a crisis comes. I am solicited by the pastor and/or one of the elders. The pastor does not agree with my assessment of the situation, or that I should have been called or the counsel given. Perhaps the pastor doesn't really want outside interference in the particular situation, but it is one which is filled with future problems for him and the unity of the church and really needs some interdiction. I am cut off and really excluded from that point on. I find out pretty quickly that the "oversight" is really a mirage.

It is sort of cool, and in vogue to seem to have oversight, but not always convenient when put into practice. We quickly find out if we really can submit to one another in the fear of the Lord and for the good of the church.

### WHAT IS OVERSIGHT?

"Oversight" is a noun describing the act of or the result of overseeing. It applies to leaders of a team; pastors, elders and fivefold persons who work together to lead and safeguard a church. It describes a trust relationship, an arrangement formed from true relationships built over a sufficient period of time to find out character, gifts, doctrine, manner of life, purpose, stability and faith in crisis. (2 Tim 2:10) In one respect it implies "ruling". Hebrews 13:17- "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

Another is the aspect of “shepherding”. Acts 20:28 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Another is serving. 1 Peter 5:2 “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;”

Ruling, shepherding and serving all imply a relationship. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 9:1-2 “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”

Jesus said the sheep know their shepherd. Oversight is a calling to service, not a position, and is really a result of being deeply involved and causing a relationship of trust as described above, usually by a called and proven five-fold minister.

If you do not fully trust someone and what the Lord has done and is doing in that person, then for heaven’s sake don’t proclaim to your church that that person is your pastor and apostle, or in oversight! This is tantamount to trying to validate yourself by association to what you think is someone else’s value in the Kingdom. When the crunch comes and you do not honor that proclaimed relationship, something goes awry in the Spirit. A really bad message of instability is sent to the church. You will probably also reap what is sown in this situation. It is far and away better to have no proclaimed oversight, than to put forth a sham to your people.

In Jeremiah 42 we see the sad story of when the leaders of the remnant left in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar wished to escape to Egypt. They submitted their request to Jeremiah and said, “Whatever the Lord says to us, we will do.” (Verse 5). After 9 days, the word of the Lord came. It wasn’t what they wanted to hear! They rebelled and went to Egypt anyway, and they all died there as prophesied! It was a case of swearing to their own hurt and then turning their hands away from the plow. This is being double minded. A double minded man receives nothing. It was wrong to ask Jeremiah to intercede and swear their obedience and then do the opposite, They had given him authority in the matter. They were free not to before they did it.

It is better to test men, go slowly and be sure of the trust relationship and that God is really in it, before inviting or claiming someone as oversight to you or your church. No relationship is proved until the test comes. If you have been unsure or deceitful in laying hands suddenly on someone, the Lord will eventually expose that, and not only you, but the sheep will suffer.

As a side thought here, how many marriages end up in divorce because a man or woman swears something at a wedding ceremony, either deceitfully or because of a lack of knowledge of the other person’s real character and intent.

Loyalty becomes a real issue without commitment, and commitment is difficult or even impossible without trust. Character is always a key to total commitment. That is why we can totally commit ourselves to Christ our Lord, because we know His character.

## OASIS

The classic idea of an oasis is a place of water and shade in the midst of a dry desert. If you are traveling and run out of water, you will probably die if you are unable to find help and water.

## SUBMISSION: BEING “UNDER” A MISSION TOGETHER.

The idea behind true oversight is better reflected in shepherding and serving. Submission (associated in the mind with “ruling” ) is a scary word to most American churchmen. Phil Cana from England, pointed out that the word “submission” really means at its basic root “under the mission” ! This is a neat way to say what ruling ought to mean in the Kingdom. **If my dedication is to the “mission” of Christ as expressed in a local church, and the pastor and elders have the same dedication to the same mission, then we are all “under the mission.”** We are therefore submitted one to another. This is what Paul meant when he said to follow him as he followed Christ. This is the very heart of oversight. If the pastor, elders and congregation trust that the oversight person only has Christ’s agenda, is trustworthy and has the church at heart, then everything flows. There will be personality differences and different ways and methods of arriving at a solution, but the solution that brings Glory to the Lord is always the objective and if we see that, and know and trust each other, we can survive a confrontation. A lot of what causes rifts is in the realm of flesh and pursuit of an agenda that doesn’t quite match up with the Lord’s and the principles of His Kingdom. A great commandment of the Lord Jesus which is gathered under the general commandment to love one another, is the command to “forbear one another”, especially as it applies to leaders:

Eph 4:1-3 “ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”

We tend to forget that Christ’s agenda (mission) and the particular mission of the local church as it coincides with His mission is where we all must submit one to another. It is pretty easy to discern when some one is swerving from “the mission”. When we address such moments in the Spirit is when we find out who is mature and who isn’t.

Again, trust is the key; trust in one's life orientation, manner of life, purpose (is it to follow Christ or something else?) as Paul wrote in 2 Tim 3:10 " But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me."

You may notice, that he mentions what he suffered at Lystra. (Acts 14:19) What a display of faith and dedication to mission. Paul was stoned and left for dead by the angry Jews. He probably was actually dead, as stoning was designed to achieve that purpose. The young men gathered and prayed and he, Paul, rose up and went right back into the same city. I don't know about you, but I could trust and follow a man like that. Faithfulness and steadfastness in crisis is a must for any leader. You must find out about him in a hard place before you can put total confidence in him. The same runs true in combat; ask any Marine! There is a great and desperate need for real fatherly oversight in churches. Someone to come along side local church leadership in times of need for good counsel and help in solving situations where the local pastor and elders may need some protection. Here I really hope you will stop and read my article on the need for relationships. You may download it from either of two websites; [mbfellowship.org](http://mbfellowship.org) or [apostlesheart.com](http://apostlesheart.com). It is the tragic story of the people of Laish who stood without help when the enemy came. They lost their identity and freedom.

Oversight should be viewed as trusted help and counsel: part of the leadership team of the church. They are not rulers in the sense of dictating to the church, but neither are they to be ignored or taken lightly in their counsel. If the relationship is what it should be, neither should they be discarded when their counsel is difficult to swallow. Where hearts are right, the wisdom of the Lord will filter into the whole situation and everyone who is not rebellious should be satisfied. In Master Builders we urge every church leadership team to work on building the necessary quality relationships with some five fold minister in Master Builders who displays oversight wisdom and proven trustworthiness and character and who has made the effort to become involved and to build a trust relationship with the leadership and members of the church. This may take some time (and should). But every church should be working toward this as a goal.