

seconds

THE ROLE OF ASSISTING IN MINISTRY

Story by Margot Bass
Photos by Tom Price

Doorkeepers in God's House

Dale Goddard prayed for wisdom as he drove to the hospital to tell two young children whose family had attended church that their mother had died suddenly from a severe illness. "I kept wishing it was my senior pastor, Raul Ries, going," admitted the assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel Golden Springs in Diamond Bar, CA. "But I was trying to remember everything Raul had ever taught us about compassion and love. He wanted me to share the love of Christ with them, to open the Bible and give them the promises of God. I knew I had to do what Raul would have done, to care for the body of Christ the way my pastor would."

Dale, Raul's assistant pastor since 1989, described his role during a workshop at the West Coast Pastors and Leaders Conference in July. "I've never had a desire to be a senior pastor," Dale said. "My calling is to be the one to hold up Raul's arms like Joshua did for Moses." The late L.E. Romaine, longtime assistant pastor to CC Founder Chuck Smith, described the role as the "Second" in a classic book with the same title.

"An assistant pastor is there to support the senior pastor, full-on, full-out, without grumbling ... to take orders or even suggestions with eagerness," Romaine wrote. "You

are to be a Timothy, someone who does not seek his own interests, but those of Jesus Christ."

In 1991, Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain, GA, Senior Pastor Sandy Adams reminded his new assistant pastor, James Chapman, that taking this job would be a "demotion" after serving as an elder at the church. "He was right," agreed James, who has served as assistant for 27 years. On his first day on the job, following a reception in his honor, Pastor Sandy smiled and humorously told him, "Your first official job is to clean up the mess." This was a good way to start. It set the tone for what being an assistant pastor is all about, serving where you are needed.

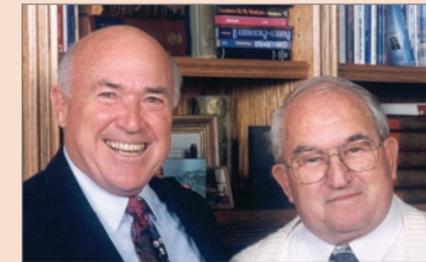
Psalm 84:10a says, *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God.* Dale said, "The role of the assistant is deep and important, the foundation of all churches, really. The

pastor can't do it all. I say, *Lord, just make me a gatekeeper, let me do whatever is necessary.*"

A senior pastor who teaches on most Sundays and Wednesdays can't accomplish all that needs to be done. "Our role as assistants is to make sure that anything the pastor can't do is done," Dale observed, comparing the assistant to a bond slave. "A bond slave's like an under-rower in a slave ship who had to row all the time; nobody knew who they were. We row all the time; we're there 24/7." He added that the Second needs to be a self-starter who doesn't punch a time clock. "When he sees something that needs to be done, he does it. He doesn't make an excuse or pretend it's not his job."

Trust and Loyalty

According to the pastors, there are two different types of assistant pastors. Both are needed and important: those



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ASSISTING THOSE IN LEADERSHIP

Top right: Calvary Chapel founder Pastor Chuck Smith pictured with his longtime assistant pastor, L.E. Romaine.

Left: Assistant Pastor Dale Goddard shares at the West Coast Pastors Conference about the proper role of one he calls a "Second."

training to ultimately become senior pastors and those who serve long-term as a Second. Jerry Paradise, associate pastor to Joe Focht at Calvary Chapel Philadelphia, PA, for many years, said his job as a Second is to “help Joe finish well as best I can. It requires great love for Christ and a servant heart.”

Years ago, Sandy offered to recommend James for a senior pastorate at a local Calvary Chapel. After praying, James confidently declined: “God’s called me to help you pastor this church.”



Sandy responded, “It’s great for me to have a guy who is content where he is. I can trust him to keep things in perspective. Because I trust him, it really frees me to look beyond the walls of our church to what can be done for the kingdom. He’s able to take care of the routine things so that I can seek the Lord in my Bible studies, seek vision for the church, and concern myself with the bigger picture.”

But I [Paul] trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly ... You know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.
PHILIPPIANS 2:19a, 22

“Do you have a good pastor? You’ve got to love him, be loyal to him, and be true. Your pastor depends on you to help him set a firm foundation [in the church],” Dale added thoughtfully.

Trust between the senior and assistant pastor works both ways, James declared. “One of my biggest challenges early on was to learn to trust my pastor and to earn his trust as well,” he explained. “There are many opportunities for an assistant pastor to be disloyal. Guys begin to enjoy the spotlight when given opportunities up front. They make the mistake of listening to people tell them how great they are. I want the congregation to know that my loyalty

is first to the Lord, but next, to my pastor. In 2 Samuel 15, Absalom, King David’s son, would sit at the city gate, trying to draw the hearts of the people to himself. This is a danger for any assistant pastor. You must understand that your job is to represent your senior pastor—not yourself.”

Like-mindedness and Submission

Dale emphasized the need for like-mindedness with the senior pastor. “We’re going to do ministry the same way he would have done it. Whether you think your pastor is right or wrong, you know the way he wants it done. When he leaves temporarily, don’t use it as an opportunity to put yourself in charge.”

James agreed that assistants must have a submissive spirit. “When the senior pastor is gone, I have to stand up and be the leader. That’s fun and a great feeling, but when he comes back, I have to step back to following and supporting,” James added.

Sandy cautioned that the senior pastor and assistant must regularly work through relationship issues. “There’s no question that James would handle some things differently than I do. There have been some ups and downs. But the guy in the Second spot can’t let seeds of doubt get planted in the pastor’s mind. And the senior pastor has to always make sure the Second definitely knows he’s appreciated and respected.”

James added, “I found that God doesn’t always reveal to the assistant pastor things he reveals to the senior pastor. Sometimes Sandy wanted to go in a direction I didn’t understand. I had to learn to say, ‘Okay, I’m with you here.’” Dale summarized the value of submission. “If you lay yourself prone before God with an open heart and a willing spirit for Him to do with you what He wants—without any desire at all for the spotlight to be on you—then God can do great and wonderful things.”

Recommended reading: *Second: Humbly Assisting Those in Leadership* by L.E. Romaine



CC Stone Mountain
calvarycsm.com

CC Golden Springs
calvarygs.org

Top left: Pastor Sandy Adams of CC Stone Mountain, GA, shares the importance of having an assistant who is content where he is, which frees Sandy to be more kingdom-minded.

Top right: Longtime Assistant Pastor James Chapman (right) interviews David Rosales at the CC Deep South Pastors Conference. After serving as a church elder, James has been an assistant pastor for 27 years.