

Chapter Five

THE PASTOR IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The office of Pastor is mentioned only once in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11). Some would equate the pastorate with the elder's office. It is true that the elders' main duties involved shepherding (Acts 20:17, 28; I Pet. 5:1-4). We would say, however, that though the pastor is part of the eldership or spiritual leadership of the church, he has more specific responsibility. He is the presiding elder in a local church.

From the epistles it appears that there were no single leaders in the churches. In fact, the history of the Church from the second century on shows the danger of exalting one man, the bishop ("episkopos") over the other leaders, who were called priests ("presbuteros"). The same kind of domineering and hierarchical structure can develop today if plurality of leadership is not maintained.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that one of the elders should take the initiative in leadership. Here are the arguments supporting this:

1. It is true the first churches did not have single leaders, but they did have strong and close apostolic supervision. When Paul was near, there was generally no question who had the spiritual authority. James was the recognized senior leader in Jerusalem.

2. Paul delegated this same leadership authority to Timothy and Titus. Tychicus may be another case in point (Eph. 6:21, 22; II Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12).

3. Near the end of the first century with the waning of strong apostolic oversight, a presiding elder may have been recognized in the local churches. Revelation 2 and 3 speak of “the angel of the church in ...” This angel or messenger may refer to the presiding elder.

4. As a pragmatic argument, co-equal authority has not proven effective. Often in situations of co-equal eldership there is one man who takes the initiative anyway. In other cases the leadership is bogged down and nothing significant gets done. In some cases there may be better results.

5. Examples from the Old Testament strongly support recognizing a single leader, within the context of a plurality of others: counselors, elders, judges, priests and prophets. When there was war or a building program single leadership was imperative, and so it is when decisive action is needed today. For this reason, recognizing a presiding elder or pastor is not contrary to scripture, provided he is part of a strong council of elders and also if there is mutual submission with other pastors and elders of nearby local churches.

The following is a study from both Testaments relative to the pastor and his responsibilities.

A. The Pastor in the New Testament

The office of Pastor (which is the word “shepherd”—”poimen” in Greek) is referred to only once in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11), however, the verb form “poimaino” translated “feed” or “tend a flock” or “shepherd” is found several times. Note the following facts concerning the spiritual shepherds of the New Testament:

- 1.** Jesus called Himself the “good Shepherd” (John 10:1-18). In Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25 and 5:4 He is called Shepherd or Pastor.
- 2.** Peter, the Apostle, was charged with pastoral responsibilities (John 21:15-17).
- 3.** One of the elder’s main duties was shepherding (I Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:17, 28).
- 4.** In John 10:1-9, Christ gives us one of Scripture’s most important teachings relative to the pastor. We have often assumed that Jesus is talking about Himself. Notice however, that Jesus does not call Himself the Shepherd until verse 11. Before this He refers to Himself as the Door through which the true shepherd and sheep pass. These verses are referring to the leaders of God’s flock.

The main point of this passage is that true pastors pass by Him. We could say that they are called by Jesus and submitted to Jesus. They have His character even to the point of sacrificing themselves for the flock, as Jesus, in verses 10-18. Those not so related to Him are false shepherds.

Jesus points out the beautiful relationship between the shepherd and his flock. He calls; they recognize his voice and follow Him. There is a confidence and intimacy that develops between the true shepherd and his congregation that the false shepherd cannot duplicate.

Notice also that the word, shepherd, is in the singular form. A church needs one leading elder, whom we call pastor, to lead the flock out and to bring them back in.

B. The Pastor in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the leaders of God's people were often referred to as shepherds. Since this was the only Bible early believers had, they had no problem understanding the office and its function. So for us also to understand this ministry, we should study the Old as well as the New Testament.

There are also many references to God or the coming Messiah as a Shepherd (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23; Ps. 80:1; Eccl. 12:11; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11-31; Ezek. 37:24; Micah 5:11; Micah 7:14; Zech. 11:4-14; Zech 13:7). These can also be studied to see the responsibilities of the pastor.

C. Five Duties of the Pastor

1. Leading (Numbers 27:15-23). Joshua was to be a shepherd leading Israel in and out. Note also II Samuel 5:2 and 7:7 concerning David. Ezekiel 34:15; Psalm 23:2; John 10:3 also show that shepherds lead. Pastors are leaders of God's people. Leading involves:

- a. Having a vision of what God wants the flock (Local congregation) to do.
- b. Making decisions, initiating ministries, and seeing they are carried out.
- c. Keeping the flock moving or letting the flock rest.
- d. Setting the example for the flock (I Peter 5:3).
- e. Handling administrative duties. Seeing to it that details are not neglected. Delegating responsibility. Securing helpers.

2. Feeding (Ezek. 34:2-15, 23; Jer. 23:4; John 21:15-17). The pastor feeds with the Word of God, through his preaching, teaching, and counseling. He feeds them with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). He needs to periodically invite other ministers to preach in order to have new presentation of truth for his flock. In preaching, the following needs to be considered:

a. **Content:** There needs to be a variety of spiritual truth presented. Don't get in a rut with only one or two themes. Don't neglect uninteresting, less popular truths. Make sure all the counsel of God is presented (Acts 20:20, 27; II Tim 3:16, 17).

b. **Presentation:** Truth can be presented interestingly, and it will be well received, or it can be presented poorly and poorly received. Good preaching is a skill, and the good pastor prays and works to develop his skill.

c. **Application:** This is part of presentation. Truth should not be given dryly, factually, objectively. It should be applied to people's needs and day-to-day situations.

3. Healing (Ezek 34:4). Strengthening the sickly, healing the diseased, and binding up the broken are duties of the Pastor in both the mental or emotional area and in the physical.

a. The emotionally sick need counseling and encouragement.

b. Those physically sick need bold prayer for divine healing (Matt. 10:1; James 5:14, 15). If there is not the faith for instantaneous healing, the pastor should aid in whatever way necessary to see that proper hospital treatment is received.

4. Seeking (Ezek. 34:4). This involves: 1) bringing back the scattered (false teaching from another has led that person astray); 2) seeking the lost (the person himself has gone into sin). The zealous and loving pastor will seek these straying (Luke 15:4-7). It takes wisdom, time, humility and gentleness (Gal. 6:1; II Tim. 2:24-26). Seeking the lost also means having a consistent evangelistic outreach.

5. Keeping (Jer. 31:10). The flock needs protection from false shepherds and Satan's lies (John 10:1-18; Acts 20:28-31). The wise pastor is on the alert to warn his people of error. There should be mutual commitment and trust between the flock and their shepherd. The shepherd should be committed to the flock likewise. People that do not want church membership in a local church leave themselves outside of the fold and vulnerable to wolves and thieves.

The true pastor is no hireling. Money is not a factor in his ministry. The shepherd's concern for his flock is his ruling motive. The pastor keeps his flock. On the other hand, the pastor recognizes that his flock is the Lord's. He is only the undershepherd. Protection is only guaranteed as the church member is committed to Jesus, the "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20, 21).

D. How Pastors Shepherd the Flock:

1. They shepherd with **gentleness** (Isa. 40:11). Pastors are not to lord it over the flock (I Pet. 5:3).

2. They shepherd with **integrity of heart** (Ps. 78:70-72). Inner purity of heart makes a pastor a success. “Skillful hands” are important also, but if the pastor is not rightly related to The Pastor, Jesus, his outward skill will be ineffective.

3. Pastors should be **conformed to the heart of God** (Jer. 3:15). (Cf. I Sam. 13:14). God is the Shepherd. He is the pattern for the pastors to emulate.

4. Pastors **lay down their lives for their sheep** (John 10:11). Contrary to earthly shepherds who live off of the lives of the sheep, the spiritual shepherd lays his life down for his sheep. In Jude’s epistle, verse 12 (King James), false teachers are said to be “feeding themselves” or shepherding themselves. The true pastor sacrifices himself for the well being of the flock. Compare Jacob’s example of dedication as a shepherd: Genesis 31:38-40.