



1 TIMOTHY SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK-PART 1 WEEK 7

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7; ACTS 20:28-32
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For the next several weeks, we will look at two specific offices that God has given to lead and serve the body of Christ. These two offices are given by God and distinctly serve different functions in the church. The first that we will look at is the office of the overseer. Several synonymous words in Scripture are used for this office, including elder, pastor, shepherd, and bishop. These words are used interchangeably in the Bible, but the one we are probably most familiar with in our church is pastor. It is important to note that words and titles hold meaning and should be kept from being thrown around and used carelessly. Recently, we have tried to structure our church staff with titles that speak to the function, responsibility, and role of a person in our church leadership structure. We have people who serve with titles of ministry directors and ministers, but few who serve as pastors. This is because the role of a pastor is very specific, and there are certain qualifications that must be met. We will cover this in two parts, the first speaking to the role of the pastor and the second speaking to the qualifications of those who would hold the office in the church.

Overseers are responsible for being servant leaders for the entire body of Christ. To me, the word given in Scripture that most clearly displays this function is that of shepherd. The pastors are to shepherd the flock of Christ, fulfilling very specific functions for the people of God. Today, I want to cover the primary ways pastors are to do this. It is important for you to know what to expect of us, while it also is important for those of us who serve as your pastors so that we may understand what God has called us to do.

In recent years, the idea of a pastor has been jaded by the notion of the modern church that functions more like a business than the NT example of the church. Add to this the model of many "mega-churches," and we find ourselves losing sight of the Biblical calling of the pastor to the congregation. Unfortunately, some liken the role of a pastor to that of a company's CEO. While some parts of the job can have similarities, that is not what a pastor is called to do. Other models have pastors as figureheads or personalities that represent the church and its "brand." While a pastor is responsible for representing the church well in its community, that is not what a pastor is called to do, as we are not simply the face of "our company." For a church to be healthy, we have to get back to the Biblical definition of a pastor, which is one who understands that he serves under the Lord as he shepherds and gives oversight to the people of God.

Who the Pastor is Responsible to -

Before we get into exactly what a pastor is to do, let's make sure we understand who he is accountable to. Pastors are entrusted with great power and responsibility but are not ultimate. First and foremost, the pastor is accountable to God. Hebrews 13:17 makes it

clear that pastors are “overseers of souls as those who will give account.” We will give account to Jesus, “the great Shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13:20), for how we cared for His church. This passage is sobering for me as I know that one day, I will stand before Jesus and not only answer for what I did with my life and how I led my family, but I will also give an account of how I led and cared for His church. I will stand before Him, look into His eyes, and give account to Him. Oh, how I pray I will be found faithful.

On top of that, pastors are accountable to the church. While overseers and leaders of the flock, pastors are not above the flock in terms of ultimate rule. Rightfully, we have to answer to the church at large for how we lead and shepherd you. This is important because none of us own the church. It belongs solely to Jesus. Both the pastor and the church will give an account of what we did with what God entrusted us with. I wonder, in our modern church era, how many pastors and churches are more concerned with building their kingdoms instead of the Lord's?

What the pastor is responsible for -

The pastor has many things that he must do for the body of Christ, but I will highlight the main ones. If we think of the pastor as the shepherd and the people as the sheep, we get a clear picture of what the relationship should look like.

The pastor/shepherd must:

Lead the Flock -

The most overarching responsibility of the pastor is to lead the flock. This is fleshed out in many ways, as we will see as we look at the responsibilities of the pastor. When pastors are called to “shepherd God's flock among you...” (1 Peter 5:2a), it is clear that the function of the pastor mirrors that of a shepherd, which implies leading the sheep. This verse not only gives the command to shepherd but reminds us of who we are to shepherd, that is the flock among you. I am not shepherding people on the internet. I am not shepherding people in other churches. I am called to shepherd the people God has entrusted to me as a pastor. If most modern-day pastors cared as much for the church among them as they did people they don't know on the internet, many of our churches would be in better shape. As we will see, part of shepherding is teaching/preaching, but that is not all. A shepherd must be willing to step out and lead the people in Christlikeness and Christ's mission for the church.

This is why I think church membership is important. It identifies who pastors are responsible for: those who consider themselves part of the body of Christ and those the church affirms as part of the body.

Feed the Flock—

Leadership involves teaching. A pastor must feed the flock of God through the nourishment of God's perfect word. A pastor must be able to teach, willing to teach, faithful to teach, and empowered by the Spirit to teach. Teaching is more than just the passing on of knowledge. It involves understanding the truth of Scripture so that you can present it to the body so they can live it out. This involves knowing the sheep and the needs of the flock so you can clearly present to them what God's Word says.

Protect the Flock -

The pastor has a responsibility to protect the people of his congregation. The flock of God will always face predators. As Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29, "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." This can come in the form of false teachers, worldly ideas and philosophies, sinful practices, those who would sow disunity, and many other forms. Sometimes, we have to be protected from ourselves as we are all capable of heading in a direction that leads to ruin. For the pastor to accomplish this, he must be on guard, being mindful of his own potential downfall.

Model Godliness for the Flock -

In 1 Peter 5:3, pastors are called to be "examples to the flock." Our life should bear witness to what it looks like to follow Jesus. Pastors are sinful and imperfect men, yet their lives should be like one who is pursuing Christ, faithful to the Word of God, and bears testimony to a life transformed by the gospel. This involves not only our actions of godliness and good works but also our reliance on God and His grace while being willing to repent of any wrongdoing. Pastors should be an example to the church and set a tone for godly living.

Care for the Flock -

The final thing that needs to be said, and is as important as any, is that the pastors should love and care for the flock. We are "overseers of souls" (Hebrews 13:7), meaning that every day, we care for people who are made in God's image. No one in the church is a number or an object but a valuable soul to God. Each member has been entrusted to us by God (1 Peter 5:3) to care for as He does.

For pastors to do this, they must be among the people. As I have said before, in our church, the pastors are not trying to herd cattle; we are shepherding sheep. That means we are not just trying to drive you in the direction we think you need to go, running you through our ministries, events, and services. We are trying to walk with you as we journey through life, pursuing Christ and His mission. Our pastors and staff take leading you seriously. A true pastor smells like sheep. That means that they are present in the body, leading the flock heavenward while leading them to fulfill Christ's mission for the church.

Pastoring the body of Christ is a great honor that comes with great responsibility, and as we will see next week, it requires that men holding this office meet certain criteria. The most important thing you can do for your pastors is pray for them and their families while seeking to encourage, support, and follow their leadership as long as they are leading you in the direction of Jesus while forgiving our shortcomings, as we, too, are sinners in need of a Savior.