

Theological Essay: **Philosophy of Pastoral Ministry** (NIV based)
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Countless men have held the office of pastor since the formation of the church. In the New Testament, there are guidelines for, and information about, the pastoral office in the church. From the information contained in the New Testament, the pastor can be defined as a man called by God, and appointed by the church, to oversee the spiritual growth of the members of the body of Christ.

The first step in understanding the role of the pastor is to define the terminology used in the New Testament to refer to the office of pastor. There are three titles that refer to the office of pastor: overseer, elder, and shepherd. In fact, the English word "pastor" does not appear in the New Testament because it comes from the Greek word "poimen" (Strong's #4166) that means "shepherd" (Klein 115). The clearest evidence that these three designations refer to the same office is found in Acts 20:17-28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2.

In Acts 20:17-28, Paul gives a farewell address to the elders of the church in Ephesus, "From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church" (v.17). Then in verse 20:28, while still talking to the elders, Paul calls them shepherds and overseers, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his blood". All three of these designations are used to refer to the same office.

In 1 Peter 5:1-2, Peter addresses elders and gives them instructions for their ministry. He writes, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers...". Here, all three designations are again used to refer to the same position.

Now that there is a basic understanding of the biblical terminology used for the pastoral office, the purpose of pastoral ministry can be addressed. The purpose of the pastor's ministry is to oversee the spiritual growth of the members of the body of Christ. Here is where the role of the pastor as shepherd becomes apparent. The job of the shepherd is to watch over his flock and take care of it. That perfectly describes the main responsibility of the pastor.

The responsibility of the pastor to oversee his flock can be based on three key verses. In 1 Peter 5:2-3, the elders are commanded to "be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care...", "those entrusted to you." In even more explicit terms, elders are commanded in Acts 20:28 to "keep watch over yourselves and all the flock." Finally, in Hebrews 13:17, believers are told that their leaders "keep watch over you as men who must give an account". It seems then that the basis for pastoral ministry is keeping watch over the flock, and (according to Hebrews 13:17) pastors will have to give an account for their oversight. Now the question is: What kind of oversight is the pastor accountable for?

The pastor as the shepherd of his flock is responsible for their spiritual growth. This is clearly laid out in Ephesians 4:11-13. "11. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12. to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13. until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

William W. Klein, professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, explains that in verses 12-13 is described why the leaders of the church were given to the church, using three prepositional phrases that literally mean: “for the preparation of the saints”, “for the work of service”, “for the building up of the body of Christ.” The last two phrases build off the first one; hence why the *NIV* translates it “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12). The main purpose then of pastoral ministry is to bring the body of Christ to maturity and unity in faith and knowledge, which is to be done by preparing them for “works of service” (Klein 116).

Before moving to how the pastor brings his flock to maturity, the question of how mature must the church become must be addressed. William Yount argues that the church must stop short of nothing less than the maturity of Jesus Christ, as it says in Ephesians 4:13. A sole focus on increasing the number of members of a church is not only opposite of biblically building up the church but also hurts the spread of the gospel. “When evangelism outruns discipleship, converts’ growth in the Lord is stunted” (Yount 19).

Now that the goal of bringing the church to a level of spiritual maturity that matches Jesus Christ’s is set, the topic of how the pastor works to bring this about can be addressed. The pastor fulfills his responsibility of bringing his flock to maturity through three different roles: Leader, Prophet, and Priest.

The first role of the pastor is leader. In this role, the pastor leads his flock to maturity through his example, authority, and protection. The life the pastor lives sets the precedent for all of those who are under him. In 1 Timothy 4:12 is the command for the pastor to “set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity”. The pastor is held to a high standard of living in every aspect of life as an example for the sheep. In Hebrews 13:7, the command is for believers to look to their leaders and “consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” The pastor is an example to be copied by those under him so that they may grow in their faith.

Kurt Senske describes the modern pastor as a role model. He explains how modern churchgoers are “bombarded by less-than-useful role models in the media, at work, among their neighbors, and even sadly, in their congregations” (Senske 4). The pastor is needed to be a godly role model in today’s society.

Authority is also an important part of the pastor as a leader. “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority” (Hebrews 13:17). This verse indicates that pastors have authority, but it does not say where the authority comes from or what the authority is to be used for.

Walter C. Jackson, former Professor of Ministry at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, sheds some light on the source of pastoral authority. Authority in ministry primarily comes from two sources: internal and external. Internal authority comes from the character and personality of the minister. External authority comes from outside the pastor and includes most notably: the Authority of the Christian Message. “First, power and authority in ministry are directly related to the sense of urgency you generate to proclaim the gospel. Second, when one is able to look at human life through the eyes of the gospel, he or she is enabled to see clearly the...many ways in which humans have permitted their lives and activities to become continuous expressions of the demonic” (Jackson 289).

The authority given to the pastor is to be primarily used for commanding believers to do what is right, as described in 1 Timothy 4:11 and 5:7. In these two verses Paul tells

Timothy to command others to do what he is writing. The authority of the pastor is used to command the flock to do what is right. And the authority along with the leadership of the pastor is to be used to "direct the affairs of the church well" (1 Timothy 5:17).

Finally, the pastor is to be the leader of the flock by providing protection. In Acts 20:28-31, Paul warns the elders of Ephesus: "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!" (vv.29-31a). The pastor is to protect the flock from false teachers, who want to turn them astray.

The second role the pastor fulfills in order to lead the flock in spiritual growth is the role of prophet. This prophetic work includes teaching and preaching the Word of God. Teaching is explicitly linked to pastoral work in Ephesians 4:11, which lists different types of leaders in the church, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...". William Klein notes that the pastors and teachers are the only two positions connected by an article and therefore "probably shows that the terms are being identified in some close way - at least in this context" (Klein 115).

The preaching of the word of God by the pastor is also a prophetic work. John Koessler makes the point that the prophet's "chief concern is to arrest our attention and speak the truth" (Koessler 95). This should be the pastor's main concern in giving a sermon. Koessler also points out that the prophet's message should "remind us that God is in control and we are accountable to him" (Koessler 95). Even in this modern day and age, the pastor still takes on the role of prophet.

The final role the pastor takes is that of the priest through interceding in prayer, sermon, and gospel. James 5:14-15a illustrates the priestly aspect of prayer, "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well...". The pastor is to intercede on the sick person's behalf through prayer. This falls inside the job of the priest in the Old Testament who interceded on behalf of the people to God.

Preaching is not only a prophetic work, preaching is a priestly work as well. John Koessler writes, "The priest, however, differed from the prophet because he shouldered an additional burden, serving as the people's advocate.... Whenever we take our place before God's people to declare his Word, we also take upon ourselves this responsibility of advocacy" (Koessler 96). In this advocacy, the pastor looks at the Word of God and asks "the questions our listeners would ask" and "the questions our listeners would like to ask but dare not" (Koessler 96). The priestly role is key in preaching the Word of God.

Finally, the pastor assumes his priestly role in sharing the gospel. Paul writes in Romans 15:16 that he is a "minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Here, the connection is made that proclaiming the gospel is a priestly role that God uses in the process of making unbelievers into an acceptable offering, when they hear the gospel message and place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation from the consequences of their sins.

Christ is the example for the pastor to follow in his responsibility to oversee the spiritual growth of the members of the body of Christ by being a shepherd. Jesus calls himself the "good shepherd" in John 10:11 and is called the "Chief Shepherd" in 1 Peter

5:4. The pastor's roles of prophet, priest, and leader reflect the offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.

Similarly, the pastor's flock is not his own but is ultimately God's flock. This is shown in 1 Peter 5:2, where pastors are commanded to be "shepherds of God's flock...", and in Acts 20:28, where pastors are commanded to be "shepherds of the church of God". There is a sense then that the pastor is taking temporary care of God's flock for the true shepherd: Jesus Christ.

Now that there is an understanding of what a pastor is and what his responsibilities are, the topic of who is qualified to be a pastor must be addressed. There are two key biblical qualifications for a pastor: The person must be a man, and the man must meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

The first qualification to be a pastor excludes women from the office of pastor. This biblical principle has become very controversial and contested in recent years. There are people that believe there should be equality in the pastoral office for men and women. Pamela Cooper-White describes this group as being liberal feminists, "In the context of the church and theological education, this strand may be seen in the [feminist] movement [as being] for the ordination of women; efforts to break through the "stained glass ceiling" of assistant and associate pastorates in those denominations that do ordain women..." (Cooper-White 20). The problem with this view is that it totally disregards biblical evidence and precedence.

It is clear in 1 Timothy 2:12 and 3:1-7 that the office of pastor is reserved exclusively for men. Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent", and then the reasons for this restrictive mandate are given in verses 2:13-14. John McArthur explains this verse as, "A woman is not to teach men in church. Since elders are the teachers in the church, women are not allowed to be elders" (McArthur 15). He also explains that the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are all in the masculine form and therefore cannot be applied to a woman.

The group of people who are qualified to be a pastor can be narrowed down even further to those who meet the qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In these two sections of verses, the criteria are given for the characters of elders to appoint. From these two almost identical lists, there are approximately 18 different criteria for a man to meet in order to be a pastor. This list can be broken down into three sections: Godly Character (1 Timothy 3:2-3), Godly Household (vv.3:4-5), and Godly Reputation (vv.3:6-7).

Before a man can become a pastor, he must have a call to pastoral ministry. A calling to ministry is composed of two parts: internal and external. The internal calling occurs in two parts. The calling begins with the choice of God to appoint, or call, certain people to be pastors. There is sufficient evidence in Scriptures that God appoints pastors. In Acts 20:28, the elders of Ephesus are told that the "Holy Spirit has made you overseers." The next piece of evidence is found in Ephesians 4:11, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." God gave these gifted people to the church. Implicit in this statement is the idea that God gifted these people and chose them to hold these positions in the church. It is then reasonable to say that God chooses and appoints people to be pastors.

The next step in the internal calling is a desire of the person, who is appointed by God, to be a pastor. 1 Timothy 3:1 says, "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task". 1 Peter 5:2 reaffirms this idea, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseer - not because you must, but because you are willing as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve...". A person must desire to be a pastor, but importantly desire to be a pastor for the correct reasons. In verses 5:2-3 is the warning that a person must not serve as a pastor out of obligation, a desire for monetary gain, or ambition to advance his career.

The final step in the internal call is meeting the qualifications and having the giftedness for the office. As already mentioned, approximately 18 different qualifications for a person to be a pastor are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In addition to the qualifications for being a pastor, God equips those he chooses to be pastors with the gifts that they will need. As explained in several places in Scriptures, God gives gifts of the Holy Spirit as He chooses, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to us" (Romans 12:6a), and "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). From these verses it can be reasoned that God gifts those he has chosen to be pastors.

The second and final part of a calling is the external calling, which is orchestrated by the church. The church's role is to finalize the calling of the candidate by confirming the calling and fitness for office, after which, to appoint him as pastor. The clearest example of this is in Titus 1:5, where Paul writes, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you." In the next verse, Paul lists the qualifications of an elder. Paul gave clear instructions to Titus, an elder, to appoint elders. This appointment is therefore the final step in becoming a pastor.

The main responsibility and goal of the pastor is to bring his flock to maturity and unity in faith and knowledge. This is the work he is called to, qualified for, and gifted to do by God. This is a high calling - to shepherd the flock of God until the Chief Shepherd's return. It is an honor to be called by God to this office.

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