

Why A Pastor?

Some of the earliest settlers in America from Europe quickly established a town site to serve the outlying farms. They elected a town council and a mayor the next year. One year later their mayor planned to build a road five miles west to open up more land. In the fourth year the people of the town tried to impeach their own mayor because many of them thought it was a waste of public money to build a road leading westward into the wilderness. Who needed to go there, they argued?

Here were people who once had the vision to go 3,000 miles across an ocean and overcome many trials and hardships to establish a new pioneering life –style, but had now lost that vision in self-concern.

Many years ago a young minister built a great church from nothing until it had congregations around the world, but as an old man he turned from what he had strongly preached against at the start, to establish a system of church government and dominion which badly abused the very people who had been so inspired by his early preaching. Many were so disillusioned that they left, and some were so upset that they rejected any kind of leadership from then on, and feared to commit to any other church.

We can learn that the vision which can drive us to achieve great things is both precious and delicate. It can be lost and it can be damaged. It can wither through self concern but it can be upheld by a faithful leader. Or, if the leader is unfaithful to the vision he inspired it can be damaged, or even destroyed in those he passed it to.

Sadly, that has happened many times in the past. After a tremendous start which inspires deep understanding of the bible and the Plan of God, excuses are found to introduce a form of church government the Bible condemns as the “image of the beast”, because it is patterned after the government of the Roman Empire, and Babylon, because it originated there.

As a result, today some no longer believe the church needs ministers at all; that the ordination of men into the ministry unnecessarily separates the ministers from the laity, providing a “them and us mentality, that is completely alien to the New Testament,” as one man wrote to me.

Well, let’s see what God’s word says. The bible records several prayers and statements that people without leaders are like “sheep without shepherds”. When the leaders falter, the church becomes dis-united. As the prophet Zechariah said in 13:7, ‘Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ Jesus also knew this, Matthew 9:36, ‘But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.’

One man who well understood that need, was a famous leader of God’s people – Moses. Numbers 27:16-17, ‘Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.’ This simple scripture holds much meaning. It shows that a shepherd or a pastor has 4 basic purposes.

1. **He goes out before them.** A pastor should provide guidance. He should lead God’s flock – survey the situation and figure out the best way forward. Then he is to lead by example.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:12, 'Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.'

The apostle Peter also understood this, 1 Peter 5:3, 'Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' As did Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.' God knows we all need examples, and down the ages He has not failed to provide them for His people. We all of us, hold vividly in our minds the examples of David, Moses and Abraham. It is interesting to notice that all of these men were at one time shepherds of real sheep, men who learned to care for and protect their flocks. As we go through their characteristics brethren, remember they are characteristics each of God's people should be developing. God is watching each one of you carefully, noting how much care and concern you have for His sheep, your brothers and sisters, because you too are a potential shepherd King and Priest in embryo! 'And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.' Revelation 5:10.

2. **He goes in before them.** A pastor must be the first to become aware of any threat to God's people – square up to the situation and confront it. Joshua was such a leader. His enthusiastic faith and courage allowed him, with Caleb, to bring a good report back when the other spies sent out by Moses to spy out the promised land were overcome by fear, and as a result he and Caleb led Israel into that land 40 years later. Numbers 14:6-8, 'And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.' And also Joshua 14:13-14, 'And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.' Similarly, God's pastors today are to motivate God's people to enter into life. They should set the tone of the church. If I come along with a glum face, never greet God's people, give a feeble rendition of the hymns when we are praising God, never share my life or my home or express any interest in God's people, how can I expect them to reflect those Godly characteristics? A pastor must display Godly confidence in leading God's people. If faith – trust in God, is not visible in his life he is of no use, and that is why he cannot be a novice. 1 Timothy 3:6, 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil,' because faith only comes with experience of God's intervention in our lives.
3. The third task of God's leaders according to Moses is to **"lead them out."** In any group, even if it is just as simple as getting things started or keeping the church in unison by preserving the vision that brought the group together, people need leadership. (Proverbs 29:18, 'Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.') Leadership does carry authority too brethren, though we tend to flinch at that today. With this kind of authority though, we should not flinch. It may be necessary for example, for a pastor to speak out and warn against those who attempt to bring into the church a false vision which contradicts that provided by scripture. At the risk of upsetting some brethren it is a vital part of the pastor's responsibility from which he must not flinch, even if it costs dear. Matthew 7:15-16, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.' Jesus Christ said in Matthew 10:11, 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' So, though all of God's people contribute in many ways to the fulfilment of the church's great commission, God holds his ministers responsible for ensuring Godly principles and priorities within the church. It is a

rather awesome responsibility. Turn to James 3:1, 'My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.'

4. The fourth task of a church leader is to **"bring them in"** – that is to cause God's people to find fruition and fulfilment. When Israel reached the Promised Land, every tribe and family, every individual, received an inheritance. So it is spiritually. Each of us has been given a spiritual gift. 1 Corinthians 12:28, 'And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' A pastor can help God's people to recognise their gift and develop it. Another word for a minister or pastor is bishop. It means to look out, or oversee, and that describes this particular role. A less enjoyable aspect of this role is to recognise wrongdoing within the church and correct it. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 'It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.' Thankfully for me it has come only rarely but it is part of helping a person achieve the ultimate goal of being in God's family.

So my brethren, we are told by God that there is a role for a shepherd, or pastor. 1 Peter 5:4, 'And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.' If Christ is the chief shepherd, pastors are under-shepherds. It is a good name for someone who provides meat in due season, suitable spiritual food at the right time, from the appropriate pasture in God's word!

Some have looked to the Kingdom of God as a pattern for the ministry. They know Christ will be a King and David a prince over Israel, while the apostles will rule each over one of the tribes. Individuals, according to the parables, may reign over a number of cities. There is no doubt that this is a hierarchy of a kind and it has been used to foist off hierarchical ruler-ship in God's church.

So, do we find evidence of this form of government in the early New Testament Church?

1 Peter 5:1-3, 'The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.'

A true shepherd in the ideal situation, does not need a dog. God's people cannot be driven into the Kingdom of God! We, like sheep, can recognise when we are led to nourishing pasture and we look to men who can provide that suitable spiritual food. John 10:3-5, 'To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.' There is no need of force, dominion or ruler-ship in God's true church. We are all encouraged by a man who strides out in faith based upon the word of God.

Acts 27:22-26, 35-36, 41,44. 'And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath

given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.'

'And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.'

'And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.'

As Peter said – take the oversight of the church, not by constraint, but willingly, because God's people willingly bow before the word of God. Replacing theocracy with a hierarchy, at this time, we have seen, brings bitter fruits.

Frederick W. Dillistone in his book *Christianity and Symbolism*, page 123, says of this tendency,

“ In all the great settled civilisations of the past the hierarchical principle has found expression. Up to a point it is imposing and effective. The pyramidal form is one of the most stable known to men. The danger which always arises ultimately, however, is that of the gap – the gap which separates the figures at the highest level of the hierarchy from those at the lowest level. It is all too easy for those at the top to lose vital touch with those of the lower levels, to rely inordinately on the support of those immediately beneath them, to exaggerate their own importance as occupying the position in the hierarchy nearest to the heavenly ideal, to come ultimately to believe that they belong to an entirely different order from that of ordinary human beings and are therefore worthy of a semi-divine status within the community life. Usually this process does not take place consciously or by deliberate design. Once begun, the upward movement towards ever higher hierarchical forms tends to continue until it finally comes to rest in the one who is the last link between earth and heaven.” Does that sound familiar ?!!

Instead, the New Testament reveals many autonomous, independent churches united by the rulership of Christ alone, served by local elders and occasionally visited by evangelists.

But how do pastors and elders come about? Who is to appoint them?

We talked about how a pastor has to watch over and develop God's flock. He must help grow the future leaders of God's church, and ordain them, which means to appoint them with the laying on of hands. His task though, is not to personally pick those leaders, but only to confirm what God has already done. Acts 6:3, 'Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.'

These men had already demonstrated leadership qualities. They had the well being of God's people uppermost in their minds, and the spiritual gifts enabling them to serve. Everyone in the congregation recognised this and when they were ordained they said “amen”.

That's how it worked then and how it works now. God reveals the evidence of His Holy Spirit in their lives. 1 Timothy 5:22, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.' They were not voted in but simply recognised for what God had done through them. Titus 1:5, 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.' Acts 14:23, 'And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the

Lord, on whom they believed.’ The Greek word for ordain here is ‘cheirotoneo’ (page 69 Vines). Another Greek word translated ordain in the King James is ‘kathisteme’ (page 67).

These men seem to have received the laying on of hands by the ministry to ask God to help them do their job. 1 Timothy 4:14, ‘Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.’

They did not rule in the church as kings will rule in God’s Kingdom, despite the impression the King James gives in verses such as Hebrews 13:17! ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.’

“Obey” here, in the Greek is *peitho* (page 124 Vines). “rule over” should be translated lead or guide, page 307.

The reason is, that rulers in the Kingdom of God will not be mortal men and women. They will have qualified for that kind of authority by proving to God in this life that they fully understand their purpose. Matthew 20:25-27, ‘But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.’

One special divine attribute will enable them to rule and judge righteously, 1 Samuel 16:7, ‘But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart,’ as will Kings and Priests in Christ’s Kingdom!

Until then brethren, I think we can safely gather that God’s church will include pastors!

Finally my brethren, remember that every pastor was once a new member in God’s church. If we are to become shepherd Kings and Priests we must all grow spiritually. All in God’s church should be aware of the church’s needs, and anxious to supply them, and by the church I mean your brethren. Only if you are such a person can you be of use to God, both now, and in His Kingdom!