

WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF PASTORS

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care. 1 Peter 5:2

It was He who gave some ... to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service. Ephesians 4:11-12

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WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF PASTORS

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!” (Matthew 25:23). These are words I long to hear when my life on earth is over and I stand before the Lord. Along with Paul, I want to be able to say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). I’m sure you do as well. I’m writing this book to share what God has been teaching me through a lifetime of pastoring. Its purpose is to guide you in your life and ministry so you can faithfully fulfill the work God has given you to do.

It is a great privilege and a special honor to be a pastor (1 Timothy 3:1). Helping people grow spiritually brings great pleasure.. God says we are blessed, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:15; Isaiah 52:7). Being a pastor is wonderful.

However being a pastor is not easy. The work is long and hard. There is more than we can ever accomplish. Many of our people have high expectations of what they think we should be doing. Often we have even higher expectations of ourselves. We look at other pastors and feel we should be doing what they are doing as well. This can put great pressure on us. We wonder if there are things God wants to do which aren’t getting done. Or maybe we are spending a lot of time on things which aren’t that important to God. It’s easy to stay busy as a pastor, but are we doing that which is most important? What really are the most important duties a pastor has? These are questions we all wonder about.

When someone is hired to work for another person he is told exactly what that person expects of him. Then he knows what he should be doing and not doing. In order to please his boss the workman does what is expected. The same is true of us as pastors. God tells us in the Bible what expects from us so we know exactly what we should be doing and not doing. Yet many pastors do not know what God does and doesn’t expect from them.

This book will show what God expects of us as pastors. He is the one we serve; He is the one we want to please. We represent Him. The people in our church are His sheep and we are taking care of them for Him. So we must do what He wants us to do.

I have been a pastor for over 40 years and God has been faithfully teaching me what He expects of me as a pastor. I have made many mistakes but God has been patient with me. When I travel to India I teach these things in pastor’s conferences. I’d like to write them down and pass this on to you in this book so you can learn what I have learned. This book is written especially for you. You have the most important work in the world and I admire the fine job you are doing. I pray God uses this book to bless you and help equip you for His service.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

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I. GOD EXPECTS US TO USE THE GIFTS HE GIVES US

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: When He calls you to be a pastor He also gifts you so you can pastor. He gives different gifts to each one of us. We aren't try to be like someone else. It's important to know and use the gifts He has given us. If you've been called you've been gifted.

Young men sometimes ask me how they can know if God wants them to become a pastor. When I started ministering I wanted to be sure that is what God wanted me to do and it wasn't just something I thought I should do. It is important to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God wants us to pastor. This is especially true when life gets difficult and we might wonder if we should pastor. How can we know for sure? Understanding how God calls us can assure us we are where He wants us to be. Understanding how He gifts us can help us see how He wants us to minister.

A. WE ARE CHOSEN

God chose those who would believe in Him for salvation (John 6:37-46; 15:16, 19; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11; Romans 9:23). He chose us even before He created the world (Ephesians 1:4; Jeremiah 1:5). Some time in our life the Holy Spirit shows us our need of His forgiveness (John 16:8-11). It is our free will choice to accept or reject His gift of salvation.

For some of us who have accepted God's free gift of salvation there is a second choosing, to pastor His sheep. In the Old Testament the priests (Hebrews 5:4) and prophets (Isaiah 6:9) were chosen by God. Paul was chosen by God (Ephesians 3:7-9) and so are we (Ephesians 4:11). We were chosen before the world was created. God lets us know we have been chosen when He calls us to the ministry. How do we know for sure we have been called?

B. WE ARE CALLED

FROM WITHIN: We first realize we have been chosen for ministry when we start to feel a burden and desire to serve God by helping others grow spiritually. The Holy Spirit puts this in us (Acts 20:28). This becomes so important to us that we feel we must do it; we aren't content unless we serve Him by helping His people grow. Paul says, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Women, too, receive this desire to minister to other women and children.

I was a young boy when this desire started growing in me. It was from God and something I did not want to turn away from. I tried other careers but wasn't content doing anything but ministry. I found satisfaction in helping others grow in their faith. God was developing a 'pastor's heart' in me. It is still there, the inner desire to spread God's truth and to help Christians grow in their faith. I get a great blessing from being able to help someone know more about Jesus.

FROM WITHOUT: As I started teaching the Bible and serving in small ways I found people asking me to do more teaching and serving. Some came to me for help and advice. I was able to give

them advice from the Bible. They listened and did what I told them. I started working with youth, and then as I got older began ministering to Christians of all ages. Other people recognized that God was working through me. This was a great encouragement and affirmation to me. God puts the desire to pastor in our hearts and blesses what we do as we serve Him.

There are many ways to serve God. He calls people to help in various ways. For those who pastor, though, He gives a desire to help Christians grow in their faith by teaching them and leading them. Similar to the way a father feels love and responsibility for his children, a pastor feels that for the sheep God gives Him to care for. Like children recognize a parent who cares for them and turns to that parent for help, so Christians recognize the pastors God has called as those who care about them and are there to help them. Like a parent, we feel great joy when our spiritual children grow and mature, but much sorrow when they disobey and rebel. That is a reflection of what Jesus feels, for His heart is touched the same way ours is.

C. WE MUST BE QUALIFIED

God chooses us and calls us. We know we are to be a pastor because we have that inner desire to lead Christians and they recognize that in us and follow us. All He wants from us is for us to be available to obey Him. This means we must live a life of holiness and obedience to Him. If we aren't a good representative of Jesus we aren't to pastor even if we are chosen and called. God expects us to live a holy life as an example for others.

These qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They are requirements, not suggestions. A pastor doesn't have to always have been like this, for we all have things in our past we aren't proud of. Paul himself was guilty of murdering Christians, but he was forgiven and used by God. These characteristics refer to how we are to be now, not how we always have been. Also, these qualifications have nothing to do with education or training, but with a life that sets a good example, a life like Jesus lived.

They can be summarized this way:

CHARACTERISTICS TO GOD

Not a new believer: Without growth and maturity a person can be more open to pride and error. It is important to have lived for Jesus and to have been growing as a Christian. This brings wisdom and better understanding about what others face.

Devout: We don't have to be sinless or perfect, but we must be committed to living for God no matter what. That is seen in a life of holiness. When we sin we will confess it to God and apologize to others who have been affected, then learn from it and do better next time.

Teachable: We must be open to learn from God and others. We can't think we know everything but must be willing to take advice from others. We must be open to God's leading and correction. We must have a hunger and thirst to learn God's Word and apply it to our lives.

Love what is good: Doing what is good is hard, but loving what is good is even harder for that starts inside us. We can't just be going through the motions and acting outwardly the way a pastor should. That is hypocrisy and God hates that (Matthew 22:18; 23:13-29). Some act like they care

about others because they want the power and pride of leadership. God hates that as well (2 Timothy 2:22-23). We must have an inner desire to want to do what is good.

CHARACTERISTICS WITHIN US

A sound mind: We must use common sense in our decisions and judgments. The advice we give must be sound and sensible. Our leadership must be wise and godly.

Temperate and self-controlled: We are to be well balanced in all things and have self control. We cannot be affected by alcohol or drugs.

Just: We are to be fair and honest. We must be able to make mature and proper evaluations and judgments in relationships with others.

Not materialistic: We can't be greedy or desire much money and material possessions. As pastors we probably won't have a lot of money, but we can still covet it and desire more. We can't let people who have lots of money impress us or cause us to show favoritism to them (James 2:1-4).

CHARACTERISTICS TO OUR FAMILY

Loyal husband: We are to be loyal to our mate and meet their needs. Our wife comes before our church (see chapter 9). We are to have the same kind of unconditional love for our wife that Christ has for us (Ephesians 5:25-32).

Good father: If we can't manage our own family we won't be able to manage God's church (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Our family won't be perfect, but there must be order, loving discipline and guidance. We must be a loving, consistent, humble leader who serves our family before we can lead a group of believers (see chapter 9).

CHARACTERISTICS TO OTHERS

Not quick tempered: We cannot be quarrelsome, quick tempered, angry, violent people. Our words and actions must be like Jesus. We must show the fruit of the Spirit: patience, gentleness and love. An impatient, angry shepherd is no good for the sheep.

Not self-centered: We can't be people who always want our own way, who are stubborn and not willing to give in. We must lead with a humble serving attitude.

Gentle: This is the opposite of quick tempered and self-centered. We must be considerate of other people's feelings. We must treat others with kindness, love and respect, as God treats us.

Hospitable: We must be generous in sharing with others in need. Our homes must be open to help others. We are entitled to privacy and must be good stewards of what we have, but like Jesus did, we must reach out to those in need and share what we have with others. This characteristic depends on the pastor's wife. Most pastors' wives I have met have been very hospitable women.

Good reputation: This summarizes all the other characteristics. It is mentioned first and repeated at the end of the lists in the Bible, showing how important it is. It doesn't mean we have to be perfect but we must have integrity in our relationships. When we are wrong we must admit it and

apologize. We must graciously forgive others. We must be known as a person of Christian character. This way others will respect us and the One we serve.

While God chooses and calls us for ministry, we do need to be a good example for Him by meeting these qualifications. This is something He definitely expects of us. We will never be perfect in all of them but must be growing and moving in that direction. God helps us by filling us with His Holy Spirit.

D. WE ARE FILLED

Without His Holy Spirit within us we wouldn't be able to meet His qualifications, nor would we be able to pastor His people. The Holy Spirit enables us to live for Him and to meet the needs of His people. Let's talk about the Holy Spirit and what He does for us.

We have one God who is three persons (the Trinity): God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:1-2). God the Father is the Sovereign One who loves us and controls all things. God the Son is the One who came to earth to pay for our sins on the cross and who now reigns in heaven and oversees His church. God the Holy Spirit ministers to us here on earth. These are some of the Holy Spirit's functions:

BEFORE SALVATION the Holy Spirit is the force that holds back sin in the world so that evil isn't worse than it is (2 Thessalonians 2:7). He works in the hearts of unbelievers to show them their guilt before God and their need of salvation (John 16:6-11).

AT THE MOMENT OF SALVATION the Holy Spirit leads us to turn to Jesus for salvation (Titus 3:5). He comes into our lives at the moment of salvation and brings new life (2 Corinthians 5:17; John 14:17). Our new nature is formed (Romans 7:7-25) and He indwells us (1 Corinthians 6:19). He seals us, securing our salvation and guaranteeing there is nothing that can happen to take it away (Ephesians 4:30; John 10:28-29). He gives each believer a unique combination of spiritual gifts as well (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 14:1-18, 37; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:11).

God does many wonderful things for us when we come to Him for salvation. He becomes our Father and we are His children (1 John 3:1-2; John 1:12), He has rescued us from slavery to sin (Galatians 4:4-7), He gives us an equal inheritance with His Son Jesus (Romans 8:14-17), we are seen as holy in His sight (Romans 1:7), we have passed from death to life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14), all our sins are eternally forgiven (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14), we are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossians 1:20), we are redeemed by Jesus' blood (Ephesians 2:13), we will never be judged for sin (John 5:24; Romans 8:1), every spiritual blessing is ours (Ephesians 1:3), we become a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; Colossians 3:10), we will reign with Him forever (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), we are in Christ and He is in us (John 14:20), we are free from the control of sin (Romans 6:7, 18-22), we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), and God calls us His friend (John 16:15-16). There are many others things as well, too many to list here. I mention these, though, to make sure you appreciate the wonderful gift salvation is. We are very special, very blessed people. Always remember all that God has done for you and what a privilege it is to serve Him. We are the richest of all people because of all God has done for us!

God wants us to enjoy all our blessings and to be all He created us to be. He wants us to develop our personality, to learn to make godly decisions, to be free to reach out and meet others and to advance in life in any way we can. He loves us and wants us to be the full creation He had in mind when He designed and planned us before the creation of the world.

AFTER SALVATION the Holy Spirit continues to fill us (Ephesians 5:18). He gives us power and authority to have victory over sin and Satan (Luke 9:1). He teaches us God's truth (John 14:26) and guides us in all we do (John 14:16).

Pastoring is not something we can accomplish in our own strength, only in His. Without His Holy Spirit guiding and using us we won't be able to accomplish what He needs us to do. Therefore we need to be filled with His Spirit as we are commanded in Ephesians 5:18. To be filled with the Spirit means to not have anything in our lives that would keep Him from fully guiding and using us. The word 'fill' means 'control.' He is willing to control us but He doesn't force Himself on us. The more of ourselves we open to Him the more He will fill. God filled all the empty jars the widow had in Elisha's day (2 Kings 4:6) and He will fill all of ourselves that we give to Him as well.

Sin and disobedience hurts God and makes Him sad (Ephesians 4:30). Not obeying what the Spirit tells or shows us keeps Him from being able to freely work in us as He would like (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Instead God wants us to live every moment of our lives in obedience to God and sensitive to what His Spirit says and shows us (Galatians 5:16). The result will be the Holy Spirit producing His fruit through us, making us more like Jesus. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) This is true for all Christians, but is especially important for those who serve as pastors.

E. WE ARE GIFTED

In addition to the Holy Spirit filling us to guide and help us as He does all believers, He gifts and enables those He calls as pastors to be able to do what He expects of us. God gives spiritual gifts to each one at the moment of salvation (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:11). Here is a list of the basic spiritual gifts God gives to all His people:

A. THE SENDING GIFTS

Apostle: 'Apostle' means "sent one, messenger." An apostle was someone who was an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus. They were chosen personally by Jesus and had special authority and ability to get the early church started. The gift of Apostleship didn't pass on after that first generation.

Missionary: The gift of missionary is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ, the church, to minister whatever other spiritual gifts they have in a different culture than the one they grew up in.

Evangelism: The gift of evangelism is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to proclaim the Good News of salvation effectively so that individuals or groups of people may respond to the claims of Christ in conversion and discipleship.

Evangelist: The gift of evangelist is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to share the Good News with unbelievers in such a way that men and women become Jesus' disciples.

B. THE SPEAKING GIFTS

Knowledge: The gift of knowledge is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to observe Biblical facts and make conclusions.

Wisdom: The gift of wisdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to receive insight into how given knowledge may be applied to specific needs arising in the Body of Christ.

Teaching: The gift of teaching is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the body and its members in such a way that others will learn the information and be able to apply it to their lives.

Prophet – Prophecy: The gift of prophet - prophecy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to proclaim the written Word with clarity and to apply it to a particular situation with a view to correction or edification. The word means to 'proclaim, to preach'. It does not refer to someone who can foretell the future but rather someone who proclaims (preaches) God's Word.

C. THE SERVING GIFTS

Service: The gift of service is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired results.

Mercy: The gift of mercy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals who suffer distressing physical, mental or emotional problems and to turn that compassion into cheerfully-done deeds which reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering.

Helps: The gift of helps is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to invest the talents they have in the life and ministry of other members of the Body so he or she can increase the effectiveness of their spiritual gifts.

Giving: The gift of giving is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to contribute material resources to the work of the Lord with liberality and cheerfulness.

Hospitality: The gift of hospitality is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to provide an open house and a warm welcome to those in need of food and lodging. It can also include sharing our possessions with those in need.

Encouragement: The gift of encouragement is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel to other members of the Body in such a way that they feel motivated and strengthened to continue on.

D. THE SPECIAL GIFTS

Faith: The gift of faith is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to exercise a supernatural capacity for believing God. Bakht Singh had this gift.

Intercession: The gift of intercession is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to their prayers. This is usually to a degree much greater than that which is experienced by the average Christian.

Discernment: The gift of discernment is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior or truth purported to be of God is in reality divine, human or satanic.

Exorcism: The gift of exorcism is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to understand Satan's workings and know how to stop the work of demons in people's lives.

Celibacy: The gift of celibacy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to remain single and enjoy it without suffering undue loneliness or sexual temptation.

Voluntary poverty: The gift of voluntary poverty is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to renounce material comfort and luxury and adopt a personal life-style of poverty similar to those they are ministering to in order to serve them more effectively.

Martyrdom: The gift of martyrdom is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to undergo suffering for the faith, even to death, while displaying a joyous and victorious attitude that brings glory to God.

E. THE SHEPHERDING GIFTS

Pastor: The gift of pastor is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers.

Leadership: The gift of leadership is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate these goals to others in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish these goals for the glory of God.

Administration: The gift of administration is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a particular unit of the body of Christ and to devise and execute plans for the accomplishment of those goals.

F. THE SIGN GIFTS

Miracles: The gift of miracles is the special ability that God gave to apostles or near-apostles to exercise God's power over Satan and nature in such a way that observers would know that God was authenticating the man and his message. (God still does miracles, but no one has the gift to

perform miracles whenever and wherever they choose. See the Appendix for more information on this.)

Healing: The gift of healing is the special ability that God gave to apostles or near-apostles to exercise God's power over physical ills or even death in such a way that observers would know that God was authenticating the man and his message. (God still heals directly, but no one has the gift to heal anyone and everyone. See the Appendix for more information on this.)

Tongues: The gift of tongues was the special ability God gave some in the body of Christ to speak in a known foreign language which the speaker previously had no ability to speak, as a sign of God's coming judgment on the Jews (which came in 70 AD and ended the need for the gift). (For more information about why this gift is not for us today see the Appendix.)

Interpretation of tongues: The gift of interpretation of tongues was the special ability God gave some in the body of Christ to interpret a known foreign language which the speaker previously had no ability to interpret, as God's grace for believers to benefit from tongues which were spoken mainly as a sign of coming judgment to the Jews (which came in 70 AD and ended the need for the gift). (For more information about why this gift is not for us today see the Appendix.)

EACH BELIEVER HAS A UNIQUE COMBINATONN OF THESE GIFTS: These are the basic spiritual gifts the Bible lists (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 14:1-18, 37; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:11). At the moment of salvation each believer receives a unique combination of gifts. Just like three colors, yellow, red and blue, are blended in various combinations to form thousands of colors, so these basic gifts are blended to form a unique combination in each believer. No two of us are gifted exactly alike.

God has gifted me, like all pastors, with the spiritual gift of pastoring. In order to be able to do this He has also given me gifts of teaching and counseling (knowledge and wisdom). I also have been given the gift of exorcism. I have some administration ability enabling me to organize projects and carry them out. My wife's gifts are in the areas of evangelism, helps, giving and hospitality.

HOW TO KNOW WHAT YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE: Basically the areas where you are gifted are the areas you enjoy and are good at. Some times others can see your areas of strength in ministry better than you can see them yourself. You know what parts of ministry you most enjoy and find yourself best at. That is where you are gifted.

F. WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF US

God chooses us for salvation and for the ministry. He puts a desire in our heart to serve God and His people by helping Christians grow spiritually. As we start ministering to others they recognize us and respond to our ministry efforts. We must live a life that brings honor and glory to Jesus, one that sets a good example for Him. We can't do it in our own strength. His Holy Spirit fills us to enable and guide us. He gives us a 'pastor's heart' for Christians He wants us to help. This is the spiritual gift of pastoring. In addition He gives us a combination of spiritual gifts to help us fulfill our duties as a pastor in the way He wants.

IT'S VERY, VERY IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT YOUR GIFTS ARE If you aren't aware of how God has gifted you then you may not be doing the very things He wants you to do. When I was a young pastor there was an older pastor I admired and respected. I wanted to be a pastor like he was. He was a very outgoing person, friendly and talkative. He was very good at going up to people he didn't know and talking about Jesus. I tried being like that but it was very, very hard for me. I have always been quiet and shy. I wasn't comfortable going up to strangers and talking about salvation, and I wasn't successful at it. Because I wasn't able to be like him I felt like I was a failure as a pastor. Then God started showing me that He hadn't gifted me to pastor in that way but He had gifted me in other ways. I've always really enjoyed studying the Bible and teaching it to others. The response to my teaching has always been very positive. Also, I found I could give good advice to people and enjoyed helping them. More and more came to me for counseling. Those are areas where God has gifted me.

I had to learn, though, to not compare myself with other pastors. I can't envy someone else's gifts or church ministry. My wife is great at evangelism but it is still difficult for me. That doesn't mean I don't talk to people about their faith when I have an opportunity, for I do. However I don't spend the majority of my time doing that. As I pastor I must do all the things a pastor must do, but I must focus on the ones at which I am best. God gifted me to work with a small group of Christians who want to learn God's Word and grow. That is the kind of church I pastor.

EACH PASTOR IS DIFFERENT Some pastors are gifted to lead large churches, others to spend much time in prayer; still others are good at music and worship. Some can help people in need; others are gifted to start churches while still other pastors do better with established churches. Some are good teachers, others work better one-on-one with people. Each one of us is different. What God expects of each one of us as pastors is to use the gifts He has given us. If we compare ourselves to others we will become discouraged and ineffective. God does not expect you to be like anyone else, He only expects you to be the person He created you to be – yourself.

EACH CHURCH IS DIFFERENT Some pastors are called to very fruitful ministries and lead churches that grow quickly. Other pastors struggle with the same small flock for many years. God uses us in the ministry where He wants us. Some pastors prepare the way for others who will come later and reap the harvest. There are those who prepare the soil, those who sow the seed, those who water the plants and those who harvest the fruit (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). If your ministry is preparing the soil or sowing the seed thank God for that privilege. Don't think you're a failure because your church grows slowly. If you have a fast-growing church don't take credit for that. Thank God for those who have gone before preparing the soil and sowing the seed where you are. Do what you can to encourage and help other pastors who are struggling with preparing the soil where God has put them.

In the United States much emphasis is placed on church size and numbers. But we don't know the size of any church in the Bible. We know how healthy they were spiritually, because that matters to God. However we don't know the size of any of the churches because that isn't important to Him. The church I pastor is small. It always has been. I've been the pastor there for 31 years and it's the same size as when I came. People move to other locations and new people replace them, but the total number stays about the same. That doesn't mean God hasn't used the church and its ministry for His purpose. Many people have been trained and great things for the Kingdom have been accomplished by this small group of believers. I can look back and see how staying small was His perfect will for us. The first few years were hard, though, for I felt like a failure and often wanted to quit. God taught me that each pastor is different and each church is different. I learned to be patient and to persevere.

It can be helpful if you can find an older pastor and learn from him, but find one whose has gifts and a ministry very similar to yours. Even then don't try to be like him but see what you can learn from him and apply that to your own ministry.

REMEMBER, GIFTS ARE JUST THAT – GIFTS An important truth I've learned is not to evaluate my worth or growth as a person just by my ability to use the gifts God has given me. It's important for me to realize that truth because if I don't I start thinking that somehow I am pretty good as a person because of what I do. It's easy for us, especially for men, to evaluate ourselves by what we do instead of who we are. Who I am as a person, though, is entirely different than what I've learned to do in using the gifts God has given me. I am not defined by what I produce but by who I am inside, separate from how I perform my ministry duties.

When God looks at me He isn't impressed by my last sermon or counseling session. He looks at my heart, at the real me. Judas was skilled in ministry, so much so that he was trusted with the money bag. No one suspected Judas when Jesus said someone would betray Him. Judas was probably one of the most talented and personable disciples. He could function very well. But none of that mattered, did it?

I am able to minister because God has gifted me to do that. Its all by His grace (1 Corinthians 15:10). It's nothing I could do without His help. I don't want to take credit for what God does, that would be stealing His glory (Romans 15:17). I don't want to use God's gifts to impress others, myself or God. I can enjoy what He has given me and does through me but I can't take credit for it myself and I can't evaluate myself as a human being just by what I can do as a pastor.

Neither can you. So if you are getting more effective and skillful in using the gifts and talents God has given you – great! But don't take credit for it. Don't think you are a better person because of what you do. Don't use that to evaluate your worth or your spiritual growth. Thank God for using you and doing those things through you, but don't take credit for them. They are what you do (by God's grace), not who you are!

MY ORDINATION POEM When I was ordained as a pastor I used the following poem because it summarized what I felt about being a pastor. I include it here as an encouragement to you.

I do not ask that crowds may throng the temple,
That standing room be priced; I only ask that as I voice the message,
They may see Christ!

I do not ask for churchly pomp or pageant,
Or music such as wealth alone can buy; I only ask that as I "voice the message,
He may be nigh!

I do not ask that men may sound my praises
Or headlines spread my name abroad; I only pray that as I voice the message,
Hearts may find God!

I do not ask for earthly place or laurel,
Or of this world's distinctions any part; I. only ask when I have voiced the message,
My Saviors' heart!

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT? God expects each pastor to use the gifts He has given them and not to compare themselves with others or try to be like someone else. God only expects you to be

yourself! God does not expect you to have the largest church or the fastest growing church. He does not expect you to be like another church. He does not expect you to have all the gifts, but He does expect you to use the gifts you do have. So make sure you know where you are gifted and focus on that area of ministry.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

What spiritual gifts has God given you?

What are you doing to use them to the best of your ability?

What can you do to better use your gifts?

Is there any person or church that you compare yourself to or envy?

Why do you envy them?

What can you learn from them?

Does your envy make you discontent where God has placed you?

Read 2 Timothy 2:3-7. "Endure" means to "bear with evil treatment." Paul is saying that pastors often have hardships and many difficulties. Why doesn't God remove all our troubles and make life easier for us?

Paul equates being a pastor to being a soldier (v. 3). What are some similarities?

What lesson from a soldier does Paul make for pastors (v. 4)?

Paul equates being a pastor to being an athlete (v. 5). What are some of the similarities?

What lesson from an athlete does Paul make for pastors (v. 5)?

Paul equates being a pastor to being a farmer (v. 6). What are some of the similarities?

What lesson from a farmer does Paul make for pastors (v. 6)?

Read verse 7 and spend some time praying and thinking about this passage. Ask God to give you insight into it. Write down what He shows you. Think about these verses and what God wants to teach you through them.

Pray and thank God for the gifts He has given you. Ask Him to help you faithfully serve Him in all you do.

2. GOD EXPECTS US TO CONTINUE TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to continue to grow in their faith, becoming more like Jesus in their thoughts and actions.

Babies are small and helpless when they are born, but they don't stay that way very long. Immediately they start growing. They eat, crawl and learn to walk. Every year they grow larger and larger. If they don't grow something is wrong, for growth is the natural result after birth. That is true of animals and plants as well. It is also true of Christians. If a new Christian doesn't grow but stays immature, weak and helpless that is a sign something is wrong. Can you imagine talking to someone who looks like a young child but finding out they are really 30 years old? You know immediately that something isn't right. Yet there are people who have been Christians for many years but have never grown in their faith. That is not what God expects. He expects all Christians to grow stronger as Christians, especially pastors.

A. WHAT GOD EXPECTS

GOD EXPECTS US TO GROW SPIRITUALLY In the first chapter we saw that God chooses, calls, gifts and fills us for the ministry. Serving as a pastor is a special privilege and honor. Sometimes it's tempting to think that we have reached a level of spiritual maturity above others and therefore we can stop growing ourselves and focus on helping others grow. That is not true. God expects us to keep growing (1 Peter 2:1-3).

He doesn't call us to the ministry because we are done growing. In fact, He often uses the ministry as His tool to stretch our faith and bring about more spiritual growth. For some it may be health problems God uses, or financial issues or relationship difficulties. But for those who are pastors God uses pastoring as His way of making us more like Jesus. I often think that God uses my church to mature me more than He uses me to mature my church! The difficulties and heartaches, the challenges and disappointments of pastoring give me opportunity rely on Him and trust Him to work in my life and church.

My spiritual gifts include teaching and counseling. I love to teach and help the people in my church. It is a small church and the people know each other very well. It is hard for me to talk to groups of people I don't know. That is uncomfortable for me and I really need to depend on God's grace in order to do that. Also I don't like to travel. I never have. I enjoy being in my home or small town but don't enjoy having to go far from it. But when God was looking for someone to send to India to work with pastors, He chose me! Why me? Why not someone who liked to travel and talk to new groups of people? It wasn't because I was any more able to do it than others, but that He knew I needed to be stretched in my faith. He knew I needed to trust Him more and so He chose me to come to India 4 times so far. In India I speak to many groups of people I don't know. It has not been easy for me. It is very hard. But God is teaching me that His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9).

There are parts of pastoring that are hard for all of us. What may be easy for me may be hard for you and what may be easy for you may be hard for someone else. God uses the hard parts to

help our faith grow so we trust Him more and learn to lean on His strength. If we can do something in our own strength we won't lean on Him for help, but if it is something we have a hard time with then we will lean on Him. That's what Paul means when he says that when he is weak (his strength) he is strong (God's strength) (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Pastoring others does not mean we can neglect our own spiritual growth. Instead, it is all the more important to keep increasing our faith in and dependence on God. Even before we can be concerned about the spiritual health of our people, we must make sure we are closely connected to God and our relationship is getting closer and closer.

GOD EXPECTS US TO RESPECT AND OBEY HIM Our relationship with God is more important than with our people, even than with our family. He is the One we serve. He is the One we are to please with all we think and do. That is our primary duty (Ecclesiastes 12:13). We can't expect our people to be doing that if we aren't doing it ourselves. We can't show them how to grow unless we are walking that path ahead of them.

GOD EXPECTS US TO LOVE HIM AND OTHERS This respect and obedience isn't just to be an outward action we perform. Any hypocrite can do that. It has to come from our heart. It must be something that comes from our love for Him and others (Matthew 22:36-40). Love only develops as we spend time talking and listening to God each day. God never makes us too busy to have special time with Him each day. He created us because He loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. He does not give us so much to do that we don't have time for Him! God gives us 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week. He doesn't give us more to do than we have time in which to do it. If we are too busy to have time with God then we are doing things He doesn't expect and neglecting some things He does expect. He expects us to have time with Him and time with our family.

GOD EXPECTS US TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIM Paul warned Timothy that pastoring would not be easy, it would be a battle (1 Timothy 1:18-19). Paul encouraged him to stay faithful (1 Timothy 6:11-16). He used himself as an example of someone who had given everything for the cause of Christ and who has stayed faithful (2 Timothy 4:6-8). It is my desire, as I am sure it is yours as well, to be able to say that when I come to the end of my life. We are not always perfect and we have our times of struggle and failure, but God forgives us and restores each time we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). God promises to bless us in this life and for all eternity when we faithfully live for Him (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Some times as pastors we think we should be exempt from the problems and difficulties others go through in life. That is not true. Sometimes we must face very hard times so we can be an example to others and so we can know from our own experience that His grace is sufficient. A servant is not better than his master and is not exempt from going through the things the master went through (John 13:16; 15:20; Luke 6:40). God does promise us that He will bring ultimate good out of all these things (Romans 8:28) and that He will work in us to make us more like Christ (Philippians 1:5-6).

Can you look back on your life and see how God has been working? Do you recognize the growth in your faith that has come from faithfully serving Him despite the struggles of life? God's goal for you and me is not to give us an easy life with a perfect church. His purpose is to make us more like Jesus. He does not need us to pastor our churches, He can do without us. We need our churches to help us keep growing more like Him. He is more interested in our growth in our relationship with Him than with the number of people or activities our church has.

B. WHY GOD EXPECTS IT

GOD EXPECTS US TO GROW IN INTIMACY WITH HIM Philippians 3:7-14 is a favorite passage of mine. Since I started in the ministry I have wanted to grow in my intimacy with God. I wanted to know Him better. I want to know Him, not just more about Him (Philippians 3:8, 10). It's not hard to know more about God, but it takes time and effort to know Him better, to grow in our relationship to Him. Yet that is why He created us. He doesn't need us to do things for us; He can do anything He wants without our help. What He does need is our friendship and love, our growing closer to Him.

Intimacy doesn't come naturally or easily for me. It's easier to hide behind my work and stay busy. However there has always been a deep desire in my heart to know God deeper, to really connect with Him in the fullest way possible. Early on in my ministry I made 'intimacy' with God my number one goal. Paul's words to the Philippians (3:7-14) about wanting to "know" Jesus have taken root in my heart. I want to know Him, not just about Him! I hope you do as well.

As I look back on my life I can see God slowly but surely answering that prayer. He has used my wife and children to teach me about emotional intimacy. It takes time, both quality and quantity, to develop real intimacy. That is true of any relationship, including our relationship with God. It is not easy. We must be humble, open and trusting. It is easy for a pastor to get so busy with his church work that he neglects personal time alone with God. We can think God is impressed by how busy we are and by all we do, but He isn't. He needs us and He knows we need Him.

I've found that nothing substitutes for intimacy with God. The time spent in prayer and worship, when His Spirit ministers to me, can become times of sweet fellowship which I desire more than anything else. My time spent with Him can't just be about work-related issues (what to do when, how, etc.). It must be about relationship – my need for Him, my love for Him and my worship of Him. It's the same in marriage. Relationships don't grow when communication is just about how to efficiently function together towards a common goal. Relationships grow when we listen to others, speak from our hearts, share our love and appreciation of them and let them love us in return.

Intimacy doesn't just 'happen.' It takes work. That means making it a priority, putting it before anything else we do. Without it life is empty. Without it we just go through the motions. Without it we eventually burn out or find ourselves pursuing some sinful substitute. There is no simple formula for closeness with God. It has to be something we desire more than anything else or it won't happen. It takes time, vulnerability and humility. But it is definitely worth it. It's what heaven will be all about! It's a taste of heaven on earth now. Sure, we'll be serving God in heaven, but it will be based on true intimacy with Him. Why wait until then when we can experience it now?

God expects us to grow spiritually. If we aren't strong and healthy we won't be able to help our sheep be strong and healthy. We must make sure we keep ourselves close to God and spend time with Him. God has high standards for His people, and especially for His leaders (1 Peter 4:17). He uses our financial struggles to show us He will provide. He allows us to be criticized, misunderstood and hurt so we will go to Him for healing. Issues too big for us come in order that we will learn to lean on Him. He is behind all this because He expects us to keep on growing.

C. HOW TO KEEP GROWING

DEPEND ON GOD'S GRACE Growth isn't something we can produce in ourselves. It comes as His Spirit ministers to us while we trust and obey Him. It is His grace that brings everything about (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). It is nothing for which we can take credit.

LEARN GOD'S WORD Getting to know God better comes from getting to know His Word better. The Bible is the answer to all we need (psalm 19:7-11). As pastors it is our tool, our spiritual food, our everything. We will talk about this in more detail in chapter 5.

TALKING TO GOD Prayer is not just something we do before we minister; it is the most important part of ministry. It is during prayer that battles are won or lost. Jesus Himself often sent people away so He could spend time in prayer. He got up early in the morning. Sometimes He even stayed up all night. If He needed to talk to God so much, we certainly need to as well.

Prayer isn't just to tell God what we need Him to do. It is much more than that. It is a time to communicate with Him. It is when we enjoy His presence and spend time in His presence. Our relationship grows when we spend time with Him. This is when intimacy grows as well. It takes time to get to know someone well, and so we must spend time with God to get to know Him better. The Bible says we don't have because we don't ask (James 4:2-3). God says we will receive when we ask (Luke 11:9-10).

LISTENING TO GOD Many good books are available on prayer so I won't say more about that here. There is another aspect to prayer in which I would like to go into more detail, though. That is listening to God. For many years I've made a personal study of learning to listen to God's voice as He spoke to me. I'd like to share some of what I have learned because I feel that is very important for pastors.

The purpose of prayer is not to give God information. He already knows everything anyway. It's not to tell God what to do, He knows what is best. The purpose of prayer is to connect with God, to grow in our relationship with Him. As in any relationship, that means both talking and listening. If I do all the talking when I am with my wife and never listen to her then our relationship is not growing. Being a good listener is important for husbands and pastors. We must listen when our people talk, but even more so we must listen when God talks. In fact, listening to God is more important than talking to God in prayer. After all, what is more important, what we have to say to God or what God has to say to us?

Bakht Singh is someone I have long respected. His life has had a great influence on mine. One lesson from his life is the importance of prayer. He would spend hours, even days in prayer. Often he would be up all night praying. He didn't need that much time to tell God what he wanted God to do; he needed the time to listen to God. He wanted to know what God wanted him to do or to preach. That's why God's power was behind what he did; because he spent time listening to God and doing what God wanted him to do.

In order to listen to God, though, we need to know what His voice sounds like. Sometimes we equate God's presence and revelation with great emotion or supernatural events. In 1 Kings 19:11-13 God taught Elijah what His voice sounded like. He wasn't in the earthquake, strong wind or fire from heaven. God spoke in a still, small voice. He speaks us the same way, in a quiet whisper.

God's voice to me is not something I hear with my ears, but with my spirit. It's a deep impression inside my soul, an idea I know is from God. It's not emotional nor is it part of some great moving experience. It's a thought inside that I recognize as coming from Him. I used to overlook it or think it was just an idea of my own, but since I've learned it is God speaking to me I know I must listen and obey. It may not be something you recognize yet, but listen carefully and ask God to show you what is His speaking and you will start to recognize it. As in any relationship, it takes time to know someone's voice. I can recognize my wife quickly and just from the tone of her voice know what she is thinking and feeling. The same is true when we learn to recognize God's voice.

One day years ago I was to marry a couple I had been counseling. The husband had been wrestling with sin in his life and it seemed he had victory over it until the day before the wedding when I found out he had fallen back into the sin again. All the plans were made for a large wedding and the bride wanted to go ahead with it but inside I heard God telling me not to marry them. I obeyed Him and told them I wouldn't marry them. They were very, very upset with me and found someone else to marry them anyway. But the marriage was not good and they soon divorced. Obeying God's voice is not always easy but it is always important.

Sometimes God's voice speaks thoughts to our mind. Have you ever suddenly gotten a very good idea, a thought that just popped into your mind? It feels right and you know it is just the solution you have been looking for or the idea you needed. That is God speaking. He puts thoughts into our minds. God's Spirit will put God's thoughts into our mind (John 2:22; 14:26).

I need God's wisdom when planning a sermon or counseling someone. When I come to India I must spend time listening to God, seeking His guidance in what I am to talk about. On my own I am not able to plan and lead the pastors' conferences. Who am I, a pastor in the United States, to go speak to pastors in India who face difficulties in their ministry and life which I will never face? What could I possibly have to say to them? How can I myself make good use of the time they spend to come and listen to me? I cannot do that, but God knows their needs and so He leads me in what to say and how to say it. As I speak He gives me the right words to speak His truth. When I am invited to speak in an India church in the evening or on a Sunday I must ask God what message to use, what to speak about. I try to find out about the needs of the people. Then I pray and am sensitive to His leading; I listen to His voice as He gives me the idea of what to speak about in that service. The only reason my messages are effective is because God guides me as to what to talk about then helps me with the words to convey His truth.

God's gentle whisper speaks thoughts to our minds, but He also speaks emotions to our heart. Instead of it being a thought or idea, this is more of a strong desire or burden in our heart (Luke 24:32; Psalms 39:1-3). This isn't just an emotional feeling; it's more of a stirring inside us, a deep desire to do something. It might be something to pray about or someone to speak to. It could be a burden to reach out to an unreached area with the Gospel or a desire to start something new in your ministry.

As I said in chapter 1, I do not like to travel. I like to stay home and teach the people I know in my church. Each year a missionary we helped support would come to our church to speak about the work in India. Each time he would ask me to come to India to teach the pastors there. I don't know if he asked everyone or just me, but each year I said no, I had no interest in doing that. One year, and I remember it clearly, it was in January of 2005, and he asked me again. I had every intention of saying no again, but I couldn't. God started putting a desire in me to go to India. I felt a burden to come help the pastors in India in any way I could. God didn't take away my dislike of

traveling or talking to people I didn't know, but He did give me a deep burden to help the pastors any way I could. He spoke to my heart to motivate me to come to India. This makes me want to pray for India, learn as much as I can about India, and even learn Hindi. It causes me to be involved in ministry to India in various ways year round. The church I pastor is small and we don't have much money, but God provides for what is needed through the gifts of His people.

God speaks to each one of us in His gentle whisper. Some times He speaks thoughts to our minds. Other times He speaks feelings and desires to our heart. What kinds of things does He say to us? Probably the first time we hear His voice is when He convicts us of sin and our need of salvation (John 16:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5). After salvation He continues to convict us of sin or warn us when we are about to sin (Psalm 139:23-24).

As pastors who are guiding His sheep He gives us guidance and direction, information we need to lead them as He wants (Acts 20:22-23; Luke 2:25-28; Mark 2:8; Acts 9:11-15; John 10:4, 16, 27). I need to listen to God to know what direction He wants me to lead my church, what programs to start, even what to preach and teach about.

Another way He speaks to pastors is when He gives us peace and encouragement (Philippians 4:6-7). He provides strength and comfort when needed. There were times when I thought it best to close my small, struggling church, but each time God gave me peace about continuing and encouragement to keep me going ahead. Despite lack of people and finances, He has continued to bless and use us for His glory.

As we saw in chapter one, God enables pastors to carry out the duties He assigns us by giving us the words or wisdom we need. He helps me to know what to say and how to say it when I speak in India or in the United States. He puts Scripture verses in my mind when I need them as I talk with people. He gives me courage to face situations that are dangerous and challenging. He gives me strength when I travel great distances and live in different places.

The final way He speaks to us is when He reveals Himself to us when we worship. He shows us His greatness and Jesus' majesty so we respond in praise and worship. Think of a time when your love and appreciation to God just grew inside you. That is Him speaking to you.

The most important part is to take time to quietly listen to Him. Learn to recognize His voice, and obey what He says. That is important to keep growing as a Christian. Remember, what God has to say to you is much more important than what you have to say to Him!

OBEDIENCE In order to keep growing we need to keep obeying God. This includes avoiding areas of sin as well as serving Him in ways He directs. When Jesus told Peter to get out of the boat Peter immediately obeyed (Matthew 14:29). It is a risky thing to get out of a boat and walk on water but if Jesus says to do it we must obey. Jesus calls pastors to do that which seems impossible to us so that we will keep our eyes on Him and learn to trust Him more. This stretches our faith causes it to grow stronger. When Peter got his eyes off Jesus and on the storm he started sinking, but then he reached out to Jesus and Jesus was there for him. Jesus didn't stop the storm but helped Peter through it when Peter obeyed Him.

WORSHIP As I've grown in my knowledge and understanding of Who and What God is, so I have grown in my response to Him in worship. As I have become more and more aware of God's love for me as an individual I find myself better able to reply to that love by loving Him back. That is the heart of real worship.

Worship is all about Him. It's not about me and how 'good' I feel – it's just about Him. In fact, the first two times "worship" is used in the Bible are when Abraham took Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him (Genesis 22:5) and when Job buried his children (Job 1:20). Those certainly weren't emotionally high times for either of them! Still, they kept their eyes on Who and What God was, and that is what worship is all about. As I grow in my relationship with Him and know Him better, so my worship of Him also improves. I find myself better able to thank Him, praise Him and love Him.

Giving thanks to God is good, but that usually is based on my understanding of what God has done and my approval of it. What about when, like Job and Abraham, I don't understand or approve? That's when praise and worship take over, for that is affirming the goodness of God Himself despite the circumstances in our lives. That touches the heart of God – loving Him when we don't understand or like what is happening.

Worship takes time and it takes effort. I schedule time to be by myself so I can worship. Music helps me worship as I respond to the goodness and greatness of God. I don't try to worship when I am in a hurry for it takes time to worship. Any relationship takes time to develop and it especially takes time for close, meaningful interactions to take place. They can't be rushed or they will be aborted. God isn't interested in being squeezed into our busy schedule. He wants (and deserves) the best of our time and energy. Do you give it to Him?

D. HOW TO MEASURE GROWTH

The standard we use to judge the success of a company or business today is the bottom line, the numbers that show how much profit the company made. Unfortunately sometimes we carry that standard over to the church as well. Many feel that the more people who attend a church and the larger the church budget the greater the church. That is not how God evaluates churches.

I have been pastoring the same small church for over 30 years. I often felt I must not be a good pastor because the church didn't get large. God taught me that the way He evaluates the health of a church has nothing to do with the number of people who attend or how much money it has. After all, we don't know the size of a single church in the Bible. We do know if they are healthy and growing spiritually, but we don't know their size because to God that isn't important. There is nothing wrong with large numbers. God wants everyone to come to Him so the more we can minister to the better. But just numbers alone don't mean God is impressed.

Then what does God expect from a healthy church? How can we tell if a church is healthy and growing? How do we know if we as individuals are healthy and growing? We are commanded to grow (2 Peter 3:18), but just what does that mean? How can we measure our growth?

When my children were young we measured their growth every 6 months. We had a chart we would put against the wall and draw a line showing their height. We could see how much they had grown since the last time. We don't have that kind of measuring stick to tell if we or our church is growing, but we do have some standards in God's Word which can help us measure growth. I want to give you 10 of them. See how you are doing compared to them, and see how your church is doing as well.

1. Do you think about and want to go to heaven more than you used to?

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:21-24; Titus 2:11-13

As you grow spiritually, you will think more about heaven and look forward to it more and more. When we are new Christians heaven is a nice but vague place, but the closer we get to God the more we look forward to being in heaven with Him.

As we become more like Jesus this world and the things of it are less important. The sin and suffering become more and more distasteful to us. We think often of heaven and being in perfection with God for all eternity. The things of this earth fade but our heavenly home becomes more and more real. Do you yearn more for heaven than you used to? That is a sign you are growing spiritually.

2. Are you becoming more loving in how you treat others?

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 4:20-21

Do you find you are becoming kinder to people, more patient and compassionate than you were? Are you more sensitive to the needs and hurts of others? Does your heart ache for the trials and difficulties others face? Do you find you are genuinely interested in others? That you are more willing to do what you can to help those in need?

As we become more like Jesus we love others as He loves – totally and unconditionally. That's how He loves us. It's only natural that as we grow to become more like Him we find ourselves loving people more like He does. Are you becoming more loving in how you feel about and how you treat others? That is another sign that you are growing spiritually.

3. Are you more aware of God's work in your life?

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 3:10; Galatians 2:20

As we grow we will recognize God's hand in our life more and more. At first we see the big things He does, but as we grow closer to Him we start noticing that everything that happens is because of Him.

Do you give Him credit for the little things as well as the big things in your life? Are you more aware that He is in control of all that happens, the difficulties as well as the good things? Are you less willing to give yourself credit for what you accomplish and quicker to give God credit? If God withheld His grace and help from your life, what would it be like? What could you accomplish for Him on your own, without His help? Are you becoming more and more aware of God working in all areas of your life? That is a sign of spiritual growth.

4. Does God's Word have a greater place in your life than it used to?

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 2:2-3; Psalms 119:9-11; Hebrews 4:12

Do you find the Bible is more important to you? Do you appreciate it and turn to it more than before? Do you remember God's promises and think of them during the day? Do you have an increasing number of favorite Scriptures you turn to in difficult times?

Is the time you spend reading the Bible more and more precious to you? Are the truths you read in the Bible having a greater influence in all areas of your life? Do you find your life changing to conform to what God says in His Word?

As we grow so does our appetite. That is true of children, and it's also true of Christians. All growing things need a source of food, and the Bible is the food source for our soul. Do you find your love of the Bible growing? Is it more influential in your life than it used to be? If so, that is a sign of spiritual growth.

5. Is your worship more God-centered and frequent than it used to be?

SCRIPTURE: Job 1:20-21; Psalm 100

Do you find yourself worshipping more than you used to? Does praise to God come to your mind throughout the day? Do you feel closer to God than you used to when you worship?

When we are new Christians we enjoy worship because it makes us feel good. Praising God is great and very enjoyable for us. But the purpose of worship isn't so that we feel good. It's so that God feels good! Worship is all about God, not all about us! As we grow our worship focuses more and more on Who and what God is. We worship when walking outside, sitting at home or lying in bed. Worship becomes a part of our every day life. It isn't just something we do when singing on a Sunday morning.

Do you find yourself thinking of God and His greatness more than you used to? Does worship naturally flow from you throughout the day when you think of His love for you or all He has given you? Do you feel more closely connected to God when you worship than you used to? This is a good sign you are growing spiritually.

6. Are you more sensitive to sin than you used to be?

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:1-2; 7:14-19

As young Christians we are aware of things that are sin, things we shouldn't think or do. But as we grow closer to God we begin to see sin in more and more areas of our life. We start recognizing that our selfish motives and prideful attitudes are sin. We become more and more aware of how far we fall short of God's perfection. When Paul was a new Christian he wrote that he was the least of all apostles. Later he wrote that he was the least of all Christians. Toward the end of his life he wrote he was the least of all people. Do you see the progression? As he grew he became more and more aware of his own sin and failure.

Are you more sensitive to sin in your life than you were? Are you more aware of when you sin and more bothered by it? Are you less apt to give yourself credit for things you do? Do you thank God more and more for His grace in your life? Are you more appreciative of His free forgiveness than you used to be?

Becoming more sensitive to sin in your life is a sign you are growing spiritually.

7. Are you quicker to forgive others who hurt you?

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Colossians 3:13

Do you find that you are quicker to forgive people than you were a few years ago? Are you less likely to argue or seek revenge against those who hurt you? Do you forgive people as soon as they hurt you and not wait for them to apologize first? Do you forgive them as soon as the offense takes place?

Jesus is our perfect example of forgiveness. He forgives us immediately and totally, even before we ask Him for forgiveness. As we become more like Him we will find ourselves being quicker to forgive others. They may hurt us on purpose or accidentally, but our first response is getting to be to quickly forgive them. Do you find yourself quicker to forgive than you were in the past? That is a good sign that spiritual growth is taking place.

8. Are you becoming more aware of how great and powerful God is?

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 64:8; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Philipians 4:13

Is God 'growing' in your life? We know God doesn't grow, He doesn't get bigger. He is as big as He can possibly be and He has always been that way. But when we grow in our faith we become more and more aware of what a wonderful, awesome, all-powerful God He is! As we see evidence of His sovereign control day after day our concept of Him gets larger and larger.

Does God seem greater to you now than He did in the past? Are you continually seeing more and more ways He controls everything? When God gets bigger in your life your faith and trust in Him grow as well. We have big faith in a big God, but only small faith in a small God. Is your faith and trust in God growing as well? That shows that God is becoming greater and greater in your life. If you are more aware than you used to be of how great God is, you are growing spiritually.

9. Is your prayer life becoming stronger and more personal?

SCRIPTURE: James 5:16; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Matthew 7:7-8

Do you find yourself talking to God more than you used to? Is prayer more natural, something you do throughout the day without even realizing it at times? Does talking to God come naturally to you, something that automatically happens? Are your first thoughts about asking God for wisdom or talking to Him about the problem you are facing? Do you find yourself talking to God about all kinds of things, not just asking Him to do things for you? Is your prayer more centered on God Himself instead of what you want Him to do for you? Do you feel more comfortable praying than you did in the past?

When a relationship grows people learn to communicate better. Do you find your prayer life becoming more personal and stronger? If so, you are growing spiritually.

10. Do you find yourself better able to recognize His voice when He speaks to you?

SCRIPTURE: John 14:26; 10:4, 16, 27; Acts 9:11-15

Do you find yourself more interested in listening to God, in wanting to hear from Him, instead of just being interested in telling Him what you want Him to do for you? Do you recognize that what God has to say to you is much more important than what you have to say to Him? Are you better able to recognize when God is speaking to you? Can you better tell His voice from your own thoughts and from Satan's counterfeits? Do you have a stronger and stronger desire to want to hear from Him and listen to what He says?

Do you give God credit for the thoughts and ideas, the wisdom and guidance, the conviction and comfort He speaks to you each day? If you are better able to recognize when God speaks to you then you are growing spiritually.

These 10 standards can help you see how and where you are growing. Look at each one carefully, pray about where you are at and if you are growing in this area. If you find one where you haven't been growing as you should than you can focus on that so you can grow in that area. If you see some where your church is weak you can preach some sermons about that topic. Use the verses I have with each question. Model the trait by your own life as well.

Remember, it is God who brings about the growth in us as we allow His Spirit to work (John 15:1-8) and produce His fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-26). Just as a parent oversees the maturing of his child, so our heavenly Father oversees our growth. His promise is that He will work in us as long as we are on this earth so that we continue to grow more and more like Jesus (Philippians 1:6). What a blessing and what a privilege that is. God expects us to grow, but He doesn't expect us to do it on our own. He will bring that about as we follow Him.

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT? : God expects each pastor to continue to grow in their faith, becoming more like Jesus in their thoughts and actions.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

How important is it to you to keep growing spiritually?

What are you doing to make sure it keeps happening?

Is there anything you should be doing but you aren't that can help you grow spiritually?

Read Philippians 15-6. Where is God working in your life right now to cause you to grow?

Is there a behavior of yours He is trying to change? What is it?

Is there something God is trying to teach you so you will grow more like Jesus? What is it?

Where does god want you to work in your life to become more like Jesus?

Pray and thank God for the way He has been helping you to grow. Ask Him to help you in the areas where you are weak.

3. GOD EXPECTS US TO LEAD HIS SHEEP

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to lead, guide and oversee the people in his church.

I was in the United States Army for 2 years when there was a war in Viet Nam. We had a platoon leader whom we followed. This was a man who had training and experience which enabled him to guide and direct us. On our own we would not have known what to do nor would we have been able to work together as a group. Without leaders a group of soldiers cannot effectively fight or carry out their duty. In fact, soldiers are only as good as their leaders, so good leadership is essential. The same is true of the church. We are God's army fighting a battle against sin and Satan. The church will only be as strong as its leaders. God calls us to be leaders and expects us to lead our people, but just what does it mean to lead a church?

A. THE PASTOR AS ELDER

So far we've seen that God expects us to use the gifts He has given us and not try to be like other pastors. We've also seen that He expects us to keep growing spiritually. Now we'll talk about what He expects of us as we lead our church.

NAMES FOR PASTORS: There are several names God gives to pastors and each shows a different aspect of what God expects of us.

PASTOR (poimen in Greek; Eph 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4) is a shepherd of sheep

It is the gift God gives us to lead, protect and feed His sheep

ELDER (presbuteros in Greek; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Tim 5:1, 17, 19) is a commanding officer

It is a description of what we do, a Jewish title for the head of a synagogue

OVERSEER (episcopos in Greek; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4) is the organizer and leader

It is a description of what we do, a Gentile title for someone who leads a group

MINISTER (diaconos in Greek; 1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 4:5) is a servant

It is an attitude of our heart; it is how we are to pastor, elder and overseer

Each of these terms shows something different that God expects of us. We will look at them in this and the next chapters.

ELDERS: In 1 Peter 5:1-4 Peter writes to the "elders" in the church and says that he, too, is an elder. Peter is writing to Jews who have gone to a synagogue all their life. Since they are familiar with what this man does Paul uses this term to describe their pastor (1 Timothy 5:1, 17, 19; Titus 1:5-6). The leader of their synagogue was called an "elder." The word in Greek, the language the New Testament was written in, is "presbuteros." The word 'Presbyterian' comes from this word. It refers to someone who is mature, respected and able to lead the group. The elder of the synagogue was the leader who planned and organized what would happen. He set the direction and was responsible for the group of people accomplishing what was planned.

The term elder is always plural, "elders." Elders are the men in the church who are responsible for the spiritual needs of the church: teaching, preaching, counseling, setting the direction of the

church, watching over the spiritual growth of the people. No one man should be alone in doing this unless a church is very new and very small. The term 'elder' refers to the pastor and other mature men who lead the church spiritually.

The term elder shows that God expects us to lead the sheep He gives us. We must plan and organize so the church functions properly and people grow spiritually.

B. THE PASTOR AS OVERSEER

A term for pastors that means the same as 'elder' is 'overseer.' It also is used by Peter (1 Peter 5:1-4) and Paul (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). The original word for this in the Bible is 'episcopos.' We get our word 'bishop' from this word. However an overseer was the same as an elder. Elder was a Jewish term and overseer a Gentile term. Some in the early church were Jews and so they understood the term 'elder', those who were Gentiles would understand the term 'overseer'. It referred to someone who was in charge of a group of people. The use of the word as 'bishop' today, referring to a pastor that is over other pastors, is not what this meant in the Bible. The pastor was the highest position there was.

The position of overseer in a church is like that of a principle in a school. The school principle makes the plans, decides what will be done in the school, organizes things so it happens and provides what the other teachers need to accomplish this. The principle doesn't do everything himself but plans, trains and provides the needed materials. That is what God expects of pastors as well.

In Acts 20:28-29 the overseer is described as someone who keeps watch over God's sheep. The picture there is of a night watchman keeping watch over a city, making sure everyone is safe and everything is under control. Pastors are to watch out for their people.

C. THE PASTOR AS LEADER

These terms for the pastor, 'elder' and 'overseer', refer to our role as leader. 'Pastor', which means 'shepherd,' also has this same idea. God expects pastors to be leaders.

I am not a natural leader. I am quiet, shy and don't enjoy being in charge of groups of people. But when God put it in my heart to pastor He also gave me a desire to lead the sheep He has given me. I don't lead because I am an outgoing, friendly, confident, talkative person. That make it easier to lead, but doesn't necessarily make the person a better leader. God has put me in a position of leadership so I must do that to the best of my ability with His help. I've tried to learn what it means to lead and would like to share that with you.

A LEADER MUST KNOW WHERE HE IS GOING: First of all, a leader is someone who has a vision, a goal, a direction in life in which he is going. I want to have Jesus first in all things in my life and to lead others to do the same. I want to help those who are Christians to grow in their faith. I want to show those who aren't Christians what Jesus has done for them and how they can have a relationship with Him. I know God wants me to do these. I need to follow His leading in

how I accomplish them. I must know what I want to accomplish with my life and how I want to lead my people.

A leader must know where he is going or he will never get there. If you are shooting at a target you must clearly see the target or you will never hit it. It can't be what I want to do but what God wants me to do. The vision God has given me for the church I pastor is for it to reach out to people who are facing major problems and struggling in life. By giving them lots of love, counsel, teaching and encouragement we help them become healthy spiritually and grow in their faith. I see our church as a teaching hospital. We get people who are hurting and in pain, help them heal with God's help, and then train them so they can help others. Because we are a small church we can know and help each person who comes. The people are loving and gifted in helping and serving. My gifts of teaching and counseling supplement their gifts. Together we work toward achieving this goal.

For many years my goal was to grow a large church but that never happened and I was very discouraged. Then I realized that, whatever the size, God has a different plan for each church. The church I pastor can do some things well, like helping people who are struggling and teaching people to grow. There are other functions we aren't as good at, like evangelism. As I sought God's plan for my church I was able to focus on what He wanted.

Our goal is to grow people, not grow a church. A growing church and its programs can be a way to accomplish what God wants, but they aren't the final goal. A large church with many people is great for a lot of people are being reached and there are many in need of Jesus. But most churches never grow into large churches and God has a plan and purpose for them as well. Just having more people attend our meetings is not a Biblical goal, but bringing people to Jesus and helping them mature spiritually is.

God expects us as pastors to know what He wants for our church. Too often a pastor will get an idea from another church or think of something he'd like to see happen and make this his goal. Then he prays for God to bring this about and wonders why it doesn't happen. We pastor His sheep and need to do so His way. He will lead and guide us as we seek His wisdom. We must know what He wants accomplished in our ministry and then we must make that our overriding goal for all we do.

Prayer is the key to knowing what God wants. Daniel, Nehemiah, even Jesus Himself spent much time praying for God's guidance and direction. They let God put His dreams and direction in their minds and hearts, and then they followed it. That's why it is important to learn to listen to God's voice (see chapter 2 for more information about this).

A LEADER MUST KNOW HOW TO GET WHERE HE IS GOING: When a leader knows where he is going, the next step is to know how to get there. In order for my church to help Christians who are hurt and struggling in life, we must know what to do to help them mature. I must teach the truth of God's Word so they understand and follow Him. I must disciple them individually to help with their individual needs. The people in the church must reach out in love and friendship to help them in any way they can. I need to keep encouraging and training my people to do this.

Having a vision is important to start, but then a leader needs to know what steps to take to move towards that vision. If God has put it on your heart for your church to start another church nearby you need to know what steps to take to do that. You need to plan a time and place to start

meeting and a plan to train those who will go to lead the services. Then you need to know how you are going to work with those who start coming to bring them along spiritually.

Remember that just because you have God's vision and how to get there doesn't mean it will be quick or easy. It takes patience and commitment to keep moving ahead. God will not remove all obstacles, for they teach and mature us as we face them. God uses them to help us grow, as we saw in chapter 1. A godly leader needs perseverance (Hebrews 12:1-2). We are like farmers who prepare soil, plant seeds and care for the plants. That takes patience and perseverance before a result is seen, and even then the harvest isn't always what we expect.

A LEADER MUST KNOW HOW TO TAKE OTHERS WITH HIM: When a leader knows where he is going and how to get there, then he needs to be able to take others with him. Some leaders are hard to work with because they push themselves and others too much. People don't follow someone who is harsh and demanding. There are many strong-willed men who know where they are going and how to get there, but they can't work well with others so they fail. This is true in business as well as in the church.

Others leaders are too slow to move ahead so people don't follow. They don't instill confidence in the people because they are afraid to step out and take a risk. A leader must be able to take others with him. He does this by what he says as well as what he does. Our teaching and our example should be leading others in the direction God wants us to go. We must be courageous and sure of what God wants us to do or others won't follow (1 Corinthians 14:8).

There are people who are natural leaders, who have confidence and an outgoing personality. They attract others to them and people are willing to follow them anywhere. If they aren't committed to doing God's will God's way, though, the attention of others will cause pride in them and they will use their leadership skills for their own ego. They enjoy the attention leadership brings and they want to be liked by everyone. Paul warns Timothy against this, saying leaders must be mature enough so this won't happen (1 Timothy 3:6). Sometimes immature people in our church are quick to run after any leader who seems attractive to them. This is hard for a pastor who loves his sheep. It is dangerous for them as well. Just being able to lead others isn't enough to be a good leader; we must lead them in the way God directs.

A LEADER NEEDS SKILL: To lead people in the direction God wants us to lead them takes skill. Those who do it just by their personality are often tempted to do what is popular instead of what is right. Also, people become dedicated to the leader instead of the goal and God Himself. So if leadership doesn't come naturally for you that is OK. Most of the leaders God chooses don't have natural leadership skill. That is certainly true of me also. He does this so we will have to depend on Him and He will get the credit for what He does through us.

There are certain skills any leader must develop. Being able to effectively communicate is one of the most important. All leaders can talk, but to say the right words to convey the direction we are going and to make sure people understand and agree with what we say is a skill that is developed over time. Plan what you will say ahead of time. Outline it so you say everything you need to say and in the right order. Let the people ask questions so you know what they don't understand. Be open to suggestions they may have, for God can speak through them as well.

Another skill is motivation, being able to bring out the best in each person. Let them know that each one is important, each one has a unique contribution that all need, and that each one is loved and appreciated. In my church I've found that my being able to honestly complement my people,

encourage them and build them up has caused them to trust and follow me as I lead. They want to follow because they know they are loved, they are needed and they are honored. All of us need to know that.

Organization is another skill a leader needs. We need to be able to share the load with others whom we have trained (see chapter 7). We need to be able to make and carry out plans to help us get from one place to another as we move towards our goal. Little details must be taken care of so things go smoothly. If a pastor isn't good at this God will provide a wife or another leader who can help with it. God expects every pastor must seek to keep improving his organizational skills.

A LEADER NEEDS CHARACTER: As a leader we need skill to function well, but we also need character. For what we do we need skill, but for who we are we need to be mature, spiritual men of God. Learning the skills of leadership is important, but they won't be any good unless we are becoming more and more like Jesus in our daily lives. In chapter 1 we looked at qualifications God has for those who would pastor (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Ability is something God gives us, but availability to serve is a choice only we can make. That's why it is so important for us to keep growing spiritually, which we also saw in chapter 1.

Any good building needs a solid foundation. That is true in our lives as well. A strong devotional life and godly integrity are foundational for all we do in our ministry. What we do as a pastor must grow out of who we are as a person. A leader who isn't totally honest and open, who doesn't put others before himself, will ultimately fail.

Those in our family and church can tell what kinds of people we really are. Often they can tell better than we can tell about ourselves. That's why being a leader at home is important before we can lead a church (1 Timothy 3:4-5). To follow us people must trust us. They must believe we are doing what we do because it is right and because God wants it. If they think we are doing it for our own pride they won't follow.

We need to genuinely love the sheep we care for, as a parent loves the children he or she cares for. We need to know the weaknesses of the people we lead so we can help them overcome them, but we must focus on their strengths to help them grow. If we are characterized by anger, fear, bitterness, lack of self-control or self-centeredness the people won't follow as they should. We follow Jesus because we respect Him and respond to His leadership in our lives.

Most leaders who fail do so because of pride. When they make a mistake they blame others instead of admitting it and learning from it. They aren't open to correction and don't have a teachable spirit. They don't have someone they are accountable to, someone more mature who mentors them.

True leadership demands that we be humble. Jesus washed the disciples' feet (John 13) and David led with integrity (Psalm 78:72). The higher up we go in leadership, the deeper down we must go in our character growth. As our ministry grows, our heart must grow even more. And if our ministry doesn't grow as we'd like, that causes us to turn to God and grow in character even more!

As a pastor and leader, we are in front of people where they can watch us grow. They see how we handle pressure, failure and the daily problems of life. These are opportunities to trust God and let people learn from our example. God doesn't promise it will be easy to be a leader for Him. We will go through hard things like He did so we must stay faithful no matter what.

A LEADER NEEDS PRIORITIES: There are many good uses for our time, more than we have time to do. To be a good leader we must choose which of these are most important and focus on them. Just because we can do something and it is good doesn't mean we should use time doing it. We must have wisdom to do what is the best for us to do with our time. Time, like money, can only be used once so make sure you use it wisely. That often means saying "No" to people and their requests. It may be hard to not do what others think we should do, but one day you will stand before God and have to give an account to Him for the use of your time and people. What He thinks is more important than what others may now think. Learn to say "No" to good things so you can focus on the best things – the things God expects, the things we are talking about in this book.

It takes time to become a good leader. It is a lifelong process. God will use our position as leaders to help us grow to become more like Jesus, the perfect leader (Philippians 1:6).

D. WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF OUR CHURCH

As pastors God expects us to oversee and lead our church. But in what direction? What does God expect of a church? A leader knows where he is going, but where does God want us to go with the church? Just what is a church to be like? What are the most important priorities for our time? In order to know what God expects of us as pastors we need to know what He expects of our church.

Just as each pastor is different, so each church is different as well. There are some basic functions that each church must have, though. Let's look at what God expects of a church.

DEFINITION OF THE 'CHURCH': The word 'church' is used two different ways in the Bible. One is to refer to all Christians, those who have come to God from the time Jesus was on earth until He returns again (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). This is also called the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12). This universal church is composed of Christians from any time since Jesus and from any and all countries. The other way the word church is used is to refer to a local group of Christians, like the church in Rome or Corinth. It is this local community of believers we want to talk about now.

Jesus said that when two or three come together in His name there He is in a special way (Matthew 18:20). It only takes two or three Christians to gather in Jesus' name for it to be called a church. God will provide a man to be the leader and pastor, the shepherd who guides this flock of sheep. In the New Testament some of the churches met in synagogues, but most were in homes and therefore quite small. If they got too big, more than twenty or thirty people, they wouldn't fit into the home so they would divide into two or more groups and keep growing that way.

HEAD OF THE CHURCH: Jesus is the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18). He is the real leader and planner. We are assistant shepherds who have the privilege of caring for some of His sheep as He would care for them. Jesus leads the church through the Holy Spirit who raises up church leaders (Acts 20:28), gives spiritual gifts to the church (Ephesians

4:11), empowers our preaching (1 Thessalonians 1:5), guides believers into truth (John 16:13), inspires worship (Ephesians 2:18) and prayer (Romans 8:26-27) and guides us in all activities (Acts 13:2; 16:6-7).

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH: In the Bible God clearly shows what He expects us to do. The early church had teaching, worship and fellowship together when they gathered (Acts 2:42). This is what God expects of us today as well.

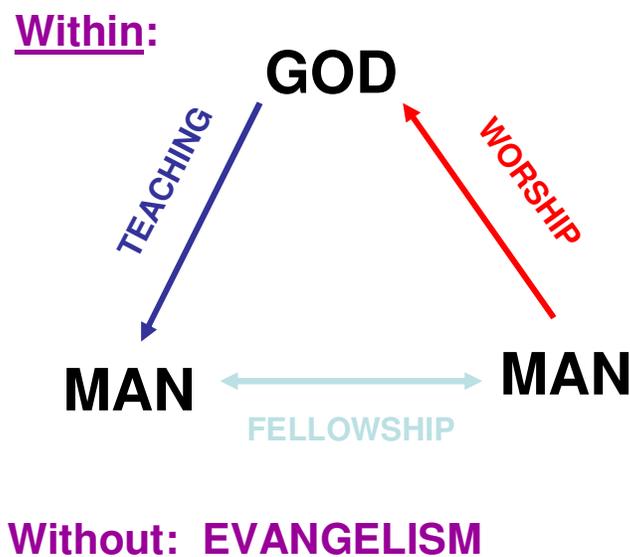
The church is to TEACH the Word for that is how God speaks to us. Jesus commanded us to teach His Word (Matthew 28:19-20). Eve was tempted through her ignorance of God's Word. Jesus resisted temptation by knowing and quoting the Bible. We'll talk more about how we are to do this in chapter 5.

God speaks to us through teaching but we speak to Him through WORSHIP and PRAYER. That is something God expects from His people when we gather. It is an important part of our time together.

God expects us to listen to Him and speak to Him, but He also expects us to speak to each other in FELLOWSHIP. Christians need each other for help, encouragement and support (Hebrews 10:25). Jesus needed fellowship with His disciples. Getting together as a church gives us opportunity to know and learn from other Christians.

So God expects us to have teaching (listening to God), worship and prayer (speaking to God) and fellowship (speaking to others) when we gather. We are also to reach out to those not part of our group in EVANGELISM (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

While each church must do all four of these, each church will be better at some and weaker at others. Often the church will be strong or weak in the same areas that the pastor is strong or weak. The church I pastor is strong in teaching and fellowship. My gifts are in the area of teaching so I do a lot of that. The gifts of most of the people are in the areas of helps, service and hospitality so they are good at extending true fellowship to others. We are weaker in prayer and worship, although we do try our best in these areas. Where we are weakest is in evangelism. We try to reach out but that is not where our gifts or strengths are. Other churches near us are much better in that, but they aren't always able to disciple or counsel people with large problems so we can help in that area.



When we looked at spiritual gifts we saw that each church is like a body that has a variety of different parts which work together to make the whole (Romans 12:3-8). God gifts people in different ways so they can work together, sharing their gifts for the benefit of all. That is often true of churches that are near each other. They will have different strengths and weaknesses. Together, though, they accomplish these four things of teaching, worship and prayer, fellowship and evangelism. That's why pastors must know each other well and churches must work together, not competing with each other (1 Corinthians 3:8-9). We are all part of the Body of Christ!

THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH: The Bible distinguishes two groups of leaders in the local church. Some give spiritual leadership and are called elders. This would include the pastor and other men who help with the teaching and spiritual needs of the people. Others take care of the physical needs in the church and are called deacons. They take care of the money, building and property (if the church has these), distributing food and clothing to the needy and helping in any way they can. These positions are to be filled by spiritual men (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Women can have these gifts and serve in these positions as they minister to children and other women. They can be very helpful to the male leaders and in many ways more effective with women and children than the male pastor. So allow and train women to serve women and children in the way they are gifted.

New leaders should be trained and appointed by those who are already in leadership positions. Some churches let everyone vote on who the leaders are to be. That's not how they did it in the New Testament. Other leaders know what is required and what to look for in those God is putting into new leadership positions, so it is best for current leaders to appoint new leaders. Always remember Paul's requirement that the new leader not be a new believer (1 Timothy 5:22) but instead someone who has been growing and maturing in their faith.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH: There are various forms of church organization today. The Bible does not give any one clear model for all churches. Each one must seek God's guidance as to what is best for them. These are some of the main forms of church government.

ONE MAN RULE is where one person rules one or more churches. Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Eastern Orthodox churches have this form of government.

REPRESENTATIVE form of government is where the people in the church pick several members to form a board and lead the church. Presbyterians and Reformed churches do this.

CONGREGATIONAL government is where each person has equal authority and everyone has a vote in every decision. Baptists, Disciples of Christ and Congregational churches operate this way.

NO GOVERNMENT AT ALL is practiced by a few like the Brethren.

While the Bible doesn't dictate what church government we should use, God does clearly say that all believers are equal in His sight (1 Peter 2:5) and that each one of us can and must go directly to God and not through another human being to contact God (1 Peter 2:9). Since I am a Baptist I believe that is the best form of government and the one that most closely follows the early church. However there is room for variety and differences among churches.

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR: The church is like a family, and the pastor is to be like the father of the group (1 Timothy 3:4-5). That means he is to treat each one with love and respect. He is to

lead and oversee all that happens for he is responsible for the family and accountable to God for each one (Hebrews 13:17). Jesus is our example. We are to treat our sheep as Jesus treated those who followed Him. Study His life and try to imitate Him. He is our perfect example in all things.

GIVING MONEY TO THE CHURCH: While the Jews in the Old Testament were required to give tithes (10 percent) of their money, the New Testament does not give an amount we are to give (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Paul says each one is to give as God leads them (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Jesus makes it clear that the attitude with which we give is more important than the amount we give (Mark 12:41-44). I personally use the tithe, 10%, as a basic starting place. Those who are able can and should give more, that that is a good place to start. Don't do it legalistically but out of love and appreciation for all God has given us. Some can't give as much as 10% and that is fine as well, God knows the resources and the hearts of each one who gives.

THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF PASTORS: God expects the people in a church to contribute financially to the support of the pastor. That way he has time to carry out his responsibilities without having to use too much time earning a living (1 Timothy 5:17-18; Deuteronomy 25:4; 24:15). Some churches are too small or too poor to do this and this is all right. However if people have money but don't give that is wrong. Pastors are not to be greedy (1 Peter 5:1-4). We are not to love money (1 Timothy 3:3; 6:10) but we do need it to provide for our family's needs.

A pastor should live on the same economic level as the people in their church. Some churches think the pastor should be poor and that poverty is an example of living by faith but that is not what God wants. Whatever standard God allows the people in the church to live at should be the standard for the pastor and his family as well. It can be very hard for pastors to teach this to their people and lead them to give so he can serve full time, but we must teach our people to be good stewards with their money and that includes providing for the pastor and his family.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM: Adult baptism by immersion in water is a picture of dying with Jesus and coming to new life in Him (Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:10-12). It doesn't bring salvation or add to it. Nothing magical or mystical happens. It is a way of acting out publically what has already happened in the heart of the person, which is dying to self and living for God. It is an important public testimony of faith. It needs to be done once in a lifetime, but only after salvation.

The word translated 'baptize' in the Bible really means 'immerse.' John baptized by immersion and Jesus was immersed when He was baptized (Matthew 3:6-16). The early church practiced immersion of believers as well (Acts 8:36).

In the early church when a person was baptized their Jewish family would disown them. They considered it shameful to be a follower of Jesus so the family rejected them, considering them as if they had died. They even had a funeral to bury their things. They never spoke to them or had anything to do with them again. It was an important public step of faith in the life of the one being baptized. God honors those who make this commitment and blesses them spiritually.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: Besides baptism, observing the Lord's Supper is also required of us. While baptism is done once in a lifetime, the Lord's Supper is to be done many times. Some churches do this every week, others just several times a year. The Bible doesn't say how often we are to do it. The early church observed the Lord's Supper every time

they met, but that seemed to be part of a fellowship meal they all ate together and not a pattern for us to follow.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial to Jesus' body which was broken and blood which was shed for salvation. As the bread and drink are received so is salvation freely received. It was paid for by another but we must receive it ourselves. It, too, is an outward picture of what happens inwardly. Nothing changes in the bread and juice, no special grace attained through doing this. Nothing magical or mystical happens here either. Everyone who has accepted Jesus' free gift of salvation should partake when this is observed for it helps us remember and worship God for His provision. Each one must be sure there isn't sin in their lives when partaking (1 Corinthians 11:23-32).

WHAT GOD EXPECTS: God expects each pastor to lead, guide and oversee the people in his church similar to a father in his home or a principle in a school. He expects us to know where He wants us to go and to know how to take others with us. He wants our churches to be characterized by teaching, worship and prayer, fellowship and evangelism.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

Where are your strengths in leadership? In what ways are you a good leader?

Where are your weaknesses in leadership? Where would you like to improve as a leader?

Where do you feel God wants you to lead your family? What is your goal for them?

Where do you feel God wants you to lead your church? What is your goal for it?

Which is your church strongest at? Which is it weakest at?

Teaching

Worship and prayer

Fellowship

Evangelism

Which area does God want you to focus on at the present?

Read Hebrews 13:17. The Bible says that each Christian will give an account to God for how we use what He gives us (Luke 16:2; Romans 14:12). This won't have anything to do with our salvation for that is secure (Romans 8:1; John 10). God will reward and bless us for all eternity based on our faithfulness to Him in this life (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Can you think of times you've been faithful when it's been hard?

When is pastoring a joy for you?

When is it a burden?

Pray and ask God to help you lead as He wants you to lead. Ask Him to guide and direct you in the direction He wants you to go. Thank Him for the privilege of being a pastor.

4. GOD EXPECTS US TO PROTECT HIS SHEEP

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to recognize that the people in his church are really God's sheep. He is to protect them from false teaching and false teachers, from Satan and demons, and from sin.

Monkey trappers in North Africa have a clever method of catching their prey. A number of gourds are filled with nuts and firmly fastened to a branch of a tree. Each has a hole just large enough for the unwary monkey to stick his paw into it. When the hungry animal discovers this, he quickly grasps a handful of nuts, but the hole is too small for him to withdraw his clenched fist. He doesn't have enough sense to open up his hand and let go in order to escape, so he is easily taken captive.

This is what happens to many Christians today. Temptation to sin, false teachings, false teachers and Satan's traps capture them and defeat them. Sheep need protection for they have no way to defend themselves. They can't fly, fight, hide or run fast. God uses us as pastors to warn and protect our sheep. It is one of the duties he expects of us

A. THE PASTOR AS SHEPHERD

In the previous chapter we looked at some of the names God uses to identify pastors. We are elders and overseers, terms which focus on pastors as leaders of the church. We will look at another name here – 'pastor.'

The most common title for those who lead a church is 'pastor.' The word means 'shepherd' and sums up what we do better than any other name. The people in Jesus' day were very familiar with shepherds and what they did so they understood the term very well. The concept was common in the Old Testament as well.

God says we are like sheep (Isaiah 53:6) and He is our shepherd (Psalm 23). He is the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14), the chief shepherd (1 Peter 5:4) and the great shepherd (Hebrews 13:20; Micah 5:4). As our shepherd He knows us (John 10:14, 27), calls us (John 10:3), gathers us (John 10:16; Isaiah 40:11), guides us (John 10:3-4; Psalm 23:3), feeds us (John 10:9; Psalm 23:1-2), loves us (Isaiah 40:11), protects us (John 10:28; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:10, Zechariah 9:16), died for us (John 10:11, 15; Acts 20:28; Matthew 26:33; Zechariah 13:7) and gives us eternal life (John 10:28).

Calling us sheep is very descriptive for sheep are helpless animals. They can't defend themselves when attacked. They have no sense of direction and get lost very easily. They can't find their way back to the flock without help. They can't even find water or food on their own and will starve without help. Without a shepherd they would not survive and without God as our shepherd we would not survive either (Isaiah 53:6).

B. THE SHEEP BELONG TO GOD

God divides His sheep into small groups and assigns us to take care of them. We are shepherds, but really we are assistant shepherds for the sheep really belong to Him and not us. He just allows us the privilege of representing Him to the sheep. Peter tells us to “be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care.” (1 Peter 5:2).

Always remember the people in your church are God’s sheep, temporarily on loan to you. You represent Him and treat them as He would, for each pastor must give an account to God for the people He has entrusted to us (Hebrews 13:17). One of my favorite passages as a pastor is Matthew 16:18 where Jesus says, “I will build my church”. It is HIS church, not mine. I don’t like it when people talk about “Jerry’s church.” I understand what they mean; it is just their way of identifying it. But it definitely is not my church, nor can I build it. Only He can do that. Only he can protect it against the ‘gates of hell’ as well – and He promises to do so.

Since He is the shepherd and we are His assistants, we must treat the sheep as He would. He is our example in how to pastor. We must treat our people as He treats us. He loves us and shows it. He forgives and restores us. He guides us and feeds us. He protects us and comforts us. He gently challenges us when we stray. He expects us to follow His example as we lead His sheep.

C. A SHEPHERD PROTECTS HIS SHEEP

We’ve already talked about a pastor leading and guiding his sheep in the previous chapter. This time we’ll talk about something else God expects of us, protecting His sheep. That is an important role for a shepherd for sheep can’t protect themselves. It is what Paul means in Acts 20:28-29 when he says we are to “keep watch” over ourselves and the flock. A watchman guards the city at night. A shepherd guards his sheep from danger. A principle protects his school from error and failure. A father protects his family from harm. A pastor protects his church from anything that would keep it from growing in a healthy way.

Sheep don’t always know when danger is near, so the shepherd must be ever watchful. Lions try to sneak in unnoticed so they can cause great danger. Satan does the same thing with the church (1 Peter 5:8). We must protect our people from Satan and demons, from false teachings and false teachers and from sin that would sneak into their lives.

PROTECTION FROM FALSE TEACHING

The best way to be protected against false teaching is to know and follow the truth. I won’t try to list false teachings for there are too many of them. If we know God’s truth well we will know what differs from it and know it is false. When the government trains workers to find counterfeit money it doesn’t show them many kinds of counterfeits. They are trained to be so familiar with real money

that anything that differs even a little will immediately be recognized. The better you know God's Word the quicker you will be aware of any teaching that doesn't line up with it.

I would like to share with you some of the basic truths of God's word that are essential truths for all of us. They are taken from the Statement of Faith I wrote for my church. It states what our church believes and stands for. It is our standard. Anything that differs is false and dangerous.

THE SCRIPTURES: We believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which we understand that the whole of the book called the Bible is true and accurate. The original manuscripts were inspired by God and were His very words to man. He has protected and guided translations of the Bible through the centuries so that what we have is a faithful, accurate record of His revealed words. (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21; I Cor. 2:13; Mark 12:26, 36; Mark 13:11; Acts 1:16; 2:4)

THE TRINITY: We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfection and worthy of precisely the same honor, confidence and obedience. (Mark 12:29; John 1:1-4; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 5:3-4; II Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4-6)

GOD THE FATHER: We believe that God is the Creator of all things. We believe that God, by the word of His power, instantaneously created the heavens and the earth just by speaking it into existence. We believe in creation, as revealed in the Scripture. (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3). We also believe that creation took place in six literal, twenty-four hour days.

CHRIST: We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, the second person in the Godhead, existing with the Father and the Holy Spirit, became man, without ceasing to be God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, thus to continue forever as both very God and very man, one Person with two natures, human and divine. (John 1:1; Luke 1:35; Philippians 2:5-8; Matthew 1:23)

We believe Jesus Christ is the true God-man, (John 10:30) uniting a perfect and complete divine nature with a perfect and complete, yet sinless, human nature. (John 1:14, 18; 1:4, 8:58; Philippians 2:6-7; II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:22) We believe in His literal, physical, bodily, personal resurrection from the dead. (I Corinthians 15:3, 4, 20, 21; Romans 3:21-26; 4:25) We believe that Christ is the Redeemer by His substitutionary death for redemption of sinners, on which He provided unlimited atonement for all sins of all times and thus sufficient for all men, but that this atonement is applied only to those who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior. (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 10:4, 5, 11-14; I Peter 2:22, 24; Isaiah 53:5-6; John 3:16-18; I John 2:2, I Timothy 4:10)

We believe that Christ ascended into Heaven to be at the right hand of God in order to intercede for believers as their high Priest and advocate. We also believe that as the Judge He will reward the works of believers at the Bema (judgment seat of Christ). He will judge unbelievers at the Great White Throne judgment. (Hebrews 7:25; 1:3; 4:14-18; I John 2:1f; John 5:22)

We believe that Christ will return to the earth and that there are two distinct phases revealed in the Scripture; the rapture of the saints and the Second Coming of Christ. These two phases are seven years apart. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-52) We believe the return of Christ for the saints (The Rapture) is imminent, literal, bodily and personal. It will be before the tribulation and

before the millennium. We believe this it may occur at any moment, and that no prophesied event stands between the believer and that hour. (John 14:2-3; I Corinthians 5:5-9; Titus 2:13; James 5:8-9; Revelation 3:10; 22:17-22; I Thessalonians 5:9)

THE HOLY SPIRIT: We believe the Holy Spirit is a divine, eternal Person, and that He is not just an influence. He has intellect, emotions, and will of His own. (Acts 5:3-4; Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:14; John 15:26; 16:13-14; I Corinthians 12:11; Eph. 4:30) We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accord with His own will, for the sick and afflicted. (John 15:7; I John 5:14f; James 5:14-16)

We believe the present ministry of the Holy Spirit is restraining sin in the world, convicting the world of sin and righteousness, and placing believers into the church, the body of Christ. He permanently indwells believer and seals them unto the day of redemption. He gives spiritual gifts to each one, and fills those yielded to Him. (John 3:8; 14:16; 15:26, 27; 16:7-15; I Corinthians 6:19; 12:13; Ephesians 4:30; 5:18; I Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 8:9)

SIN: Angels - Satan We believe Lucifer, who was the highest angel in rank, through the sin of pride, is the originator of sin, thus becoming the enemy of God and His people (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; I Timothy 3:6; Ephesians 2:2)

Fall of Man We believe that in Adam all mankind sinned. Man is now born in sin. He is sinful both in nature and in practice. Thus Adam's first sin may be called "original sin." All mankind is guilty of that "original sin." All mankind is totally depraved and justly condemned or under the judgment of God with no hope of salvation within himself. (Romans 5:12-21; 12; Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:1-3; Isaiah 64:6; I Corinthians 2:14; Genesis 3:6; II Timothy 3:13) We believe Jesus Christ alone was sinless by virtue of the virgin birth. Therefore, man not only does not possess any spark of divinity but is essentially and totally under the guilt and condemnation of sin.

SALVATION: We believe salvation is the gift of God offered to men by His grace and that His grace is the only basis of eternal salvation of man. Salvation is apart from any sacraments, good works, or human merit. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:18-19; Romans 6:23; Acts 4:12; Galatians 4:3-4)

We believe that salvation has been offered to all men, but is received only by those who repent and turn in faith to Jesus as their Savior. (Ephesians 1:17; Hebrews 9:22; I John 1:2; John 3:5-7; Romans 3:10-19; 3:26; Isaiah 53:5-6; I Peter 1:23)

We believe a sinner is immediately justified by God and receives eternal life at the moment of his conversion. (Romans 3:24-30; 4:5; 5:1; 8:30) We believe sanctification is the permanent "setting apart" of the born again believer from the domain of this world. The basic meaning of the word "sanctification" is "to set apart unto God for service." (Heb 10:10, 14; II Cor 3:18; Phil 3:21) We believe the Word of God teaches the eternal security of the believer which rests in the faithfulness of God, not the faithfulness of man. We believe that God's Word, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh. (Romans 1:16; 13:14; John 10:28; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-14)

THE CHURCH: We believe the church is a New Testament institution composed of people of all races, colors, and nations who are born again and united to the risen and ascended Son of God, and that through the Holy Spirit we are all baptized into one body, the Body of Christ. (Colossians 3:11; I Corinthians 12:13; Acts 13:1) We believe the local church is the visible expression of "The Body of Christ" and should therefore be open to people of all races, colors, and nations. We

further believe that God's program for this age is to be carried out through the local church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

We believe that when Christ founded His church on earth, He did it for four distinct purposes: 1. That the Church, the Body of Christ, might worship God the Father in Spirit and in truth by the offering of the sacrifice of praise to God continually. (John 4:23; Hebrews 13:15) 2. That through the Church, He might proclaim to the world salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ on Calvary. (John 3:16; Matthew 28:19-20) 3. That the saints might be edified and fully equipped unto the work of the ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-13). And that, through gracious and holy living, the church might be lights unto a lost and dying world, the salt of the earth, and living testimonies of the indwelling Christ to each other as well as to those without. (Matthew 5:13-16; Titus 2:10-14; Ephesians 5:1-17) 4. That loving, caring, close, sacrificial fellowship and support among believers is essential to support and encourage each other, and that each believer needs to give as well as receive this closeness with Christ at the center. (Matthew 18:20; John 13:34; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25; I John 1:3)

We believe there are two Scriptural ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe Scriptural baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, which pictures his identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. (Acts 2:41-42; 10:17-18; Romans 6:3-4) We also believe in infant and child dedication in which parents dedicate their child and themselves to God. We believe the Lord's Supper is the commemoration to the Lord's death and resurrection until He comes and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. (I Corinthians 11:24-32) We believe the Lord's Supper should be administered regularly by the local church.

We believe the local New Testament church is autonomous, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. (Acts 13:1-3; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Matthew 18:15-17; 28:18-20) We believe that every Christian is bound by Scripture to give his unhindered cooperation to the local church. (Matthew 16:16-18; I Corinthians 12:12-17; 2:42-47; I Timothy 3:15-16) We believe in the separation of the individual believer from all sinful practices that would dishonor the Savior. We believe in the separation of the church and state. (II Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 12:1-2; 14:13; I John 2:15-17; II John 9-11; Matthew 22:21)

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society and that government officials are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the Kings of the earth. (Romans 13:17; II Samuel 23:2; Exodus 18:21-22; Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Matthew 22:21; Daniel 3:17-18)

We believe church leadership to be composed of: -

- Pastors-teachers (Ephesians 4:11) - one man or a small team of men who have the responsibility of exercising leadership in the local body. He is also an elder, who presides over the Board of Elders.

- Elders (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; I Peter 5:1-4) - men who also work in the area of spiritual leadership, sharing authority and responsibility for the life of the church with the Pastor. Their position is under the Pastor, but they share equally all responsibility for the church.

- Deacons. (I Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-8) - men who have the responsibility of ministering primarily to the temporal and physical needs of the church. They are under the authority and oversight of the elder board.

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS: It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ. (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38;10:5; 13:18-30,37-43;16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Timothy 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; I Thessalonians 1:8; II Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3;11:39-12:2; I Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17)

PROTECTION FROM FALSE TEACHERS

The Bible warns that the greatest danger to Christians and the church does not come in the form of persecution from without, but from false teaching within the church. These people come appearing as if they were from God. They trick and fool others into believing they are godly believers, but they are wolves in sheep clothing. The Bible has stern warnings against them (2 Peter 2:1-3; Matthew 7:15-20; I John 4:1-3).

Don't be swayed by their friendly ways and good-sounding words. Make sure their beliefs and actions line up with the Word of God. When God's Spirit within you warns you against them listen to God and protect your people against them. Don't allow them to mislead anyone. Teach the truth from God's Word. If they aren't open to learning and won't change, make them leave.

PROTECTION FROM SATAN & DEMONS

Paul says "we are not ignorant of Satan's devices" (2Corinthians 2:5-11) but I was very ignorant about how to protect my church and family from Satan and demons when I first started pastoring. Since that time I have learned how to minister to those in need of spiritual warfare counseling. God has been teaching me and helping me learn how to help those who are attacked by Satan and his forces. My first book, Spiritual Warfare Handbook, goes into this subject in detail. If you don't have a copy of it go to the source where you obtained this book and ask them how you can get a copy.

The Christians Satan and demons oppose the most are pastors and their families. If they can defeat a pastor they can make his whole church ineffective and harm God's work in many ways. For his kingdom to grow, Satan knows he must stop the church. They will attack us from without and from within as well. For pastors it is especially important to understand how to have victory over Satan and his forces. God expects it of us and so do our people.

ORIGIN OF SATAN AND DEMONS: Being a pastor is a great privilege and honor, but it isn't easy. One reason it is hard is because we have an enemy who is determined to destroy us. That enemy is Satan and his demons. They were originally created as perfect angels (Ezekiel 28:12-15) but didn't want to serve God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Satan's sin was pride (self-centeredness) (Isaiah 14:12-15) so God threw him out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:15-17; Luke 10:18). About a third of the angels in heaven decided to leave and follow him as well (Revelation 12:4). Now their whole purpose is to oppose God so they get attention and worship instead of God. They especially want to destroy God's people so His truth does not spread (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Matthew 13:19). Satan and his demons are more powerful than us (Ephesians 6:12; 1:21; Revelation 9:3,10; Job 1:6,19) but God is much more powerful than them (Colossians 1:16; 2:10, 15).

WORK OF SATAN AND DEMONS: Satan and his demons especially oppose Christians because we bring light into the darkness (John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46). Since he can no longer attack Jesus directly he does so indirectly by attacking His children. He accuses us before God (Job 1:6-21; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Revelation 12:9-10; Zechariah 3:1-2) but Jesus is our defense attorney, our Advocate when accused (1 John 2:1)

Satan does all he can to oppose and hinder our service to God (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Corinthians 11:2-7; Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 13:19). He tries to infiltrate the church through false teaching (1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 2:9), false teachers (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1-2) and false 'Christians' (Matthew 13:38-40).

While not all temptation comes from Satan and demons, he certainly does all he can to entice us into sin (2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Timothy 2:26) as he did when tempting Jesus. He will use our sin nature (James 1:14-15), the world system (1 John 2:15-16) or attack directly through demons (1 Corinthians 7:5). He can cause and use anger (Ephesians 4:27), pride (1 Timothy 3:6; 1 Chronicles 21:1; 1 Timothy 3:6), immorality (1 Corinthians 7:5), lies (Acts 5:1-3), doubting God's Word and God's goodness (Genesis 3:1-5; Luke 4:9-12), 'miracles' to deceive (Mark 4:8-9; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3,9-11), hypocrisy (John 8:44; Acts 17:22), self-sufficiency (1 Chronicles 21:1-7), worry and fear (1 Peter 5:7-9; Hebrews 2:14; Psalm 23:4), lack of faith (Luke 22:31-32; 1 Peter 5:6-10), physical affliction (Job 1:6-22; 2:1-7; John 8:44; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20) and sin of any kind (1 Thessalonians 3:5; Matthew 4:3; 1 Corinthians 10:19-21, 2 Corinthians 11:3,13-15; 1 John 3:8).

Demons work against believers by frustrating and opposing God's perfect will (Acts 16:16-18), putting obstacles in the path of following God (1 Thessalonians 2:18; Romans 15:22), influencing believers to mislead other believers (Matthew 16:22-23.) and instigating things such as jealousy, pride and disunity (James 3:13-16). They seek to get believers to turn from God and not live for Him (1 Timothy 4:1). They can cause physical torment (2 Corinthians 12:7), and they try to get us to operate by our own strength and ability (2 Timothy 3:5). All this work will intensify as the return of Jesus gets closer (1 Timothy 4:1).

GOD IS GREATER: God is greater than Satan and his forces (1 John 4:4), so we need not fear them (Luke 10:17-19). We must humbly depend on God's strength, not our own (James 4:6-7; 5:16). Be aware of sins and temptations that Satan uses in your life (Psalm 32:5; 139:23-24), and confess any sin (1 John 1:9). Accept God's forgiveness and, with His help, turn from the sin (Amos 3:3; Ezekiel 20:43). In prayer claim back any openings Satan is using in your life (Acts 19:18-19; Matthew 3:7-8). Cover yourself with the armor of God each morning (Ephesians 6:10-18). Read and study the Scriptures (Psalm 1:1-3). The Word is a mirror (James 1:22-25) a lamp (Psalm 119:105) a cleanser (Ephesians 5:25-26) a sword (Hebrews 4:12) and food (1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 4:4). Use it for all these. Develop a life of continuous praise & prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Stay in close fellowship with other believers (Hebrews 13:5). Commit yourself to totally follow God (Ephesians 6:16).

God's plan is to bring light and life to His people, Satan instead brings death and darkness. Demons can put thoughts into a person's mind and feelings into their heart. The person usually thinks these are their own and so acts on them. These are thoughts and feelings of darkness, fear, anger, violence, revenge, lust and destruction. They lead a person to harm others and harm, even kill themselves as well. They love pain and want to cause all the suffering and misery they

can. They also put negative thoughts about God into a person so they blasphemy Jesus, doubt His deity and question if they have His love and salvation.

CAN BELIEVERS BE DEMONIZED? When we come to God for salvation our sins are gone and we will spend eternity with God, but that doesn't mean we can't still be afflicted by demons. The Bible makes no distinction between believers and unbelievers as far as demonizing is concerned. In fact, the Bible refers to many believers who were demonized: Paul's thorn in the flesh was a demon (II Corinthians 12:7), King Saul was a believer (I Samuel 11:6) and was obviously demonized (I Samuel 16:14-23), David was motivated by Satan to take a census of the people (I Chronicles 21:1ff; II Samuel 24:1ff), Ananias and Saphira were believers (Acts 4:32-35) but allowed Satan to "fill" them (Acts 5:3), and Peter was Satan's spokesman in tempting Jesus to not go to the cross (Matthew 16:23). Paul warns believers to not give Satan a "foothold" in their life (Ephesians 4:26-27), showing such a thing is possible. Jesus Himself called deliverance "the children's bread" (Matthew 15:22-28), meaning it was for His children. A Christian can receive another spirit (II Corinthians 11:2-4) and there are examples of believers being demonized (Luke 13:10-16; I Cor. 5:4, 5). Christians are warned to guard against this (I Peter 5:8-9; Ephesians 6:10-18).

A believer belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan cannot own him as he did before salvation (I John 4:4), but he can still attack the person. As long as we are in this body we still have a sin nature, a capacity to sin just the same as we did before salvation. Salvation creates a new spiritual nature within us. But the old capacity to sin still remains in us. It is in this area, this sin nature, this capacity to sin, that demons work. Our new nature is greater but doesn't take away our free will choice to still function in our sin nature. Paul's struggle as recorded in Romans 7 describes this well.

A Christian has every right and resource to be free from this demonizing, however. Property which you own can be trespassed on by another person, but you have every right and resource to put him off your property. You just need to learn how to do it.

OPENINGS WHICH ALLOW DEMONIZING: Why are some people more attacked demonically than others? What allows a demon to have great influence over one person than another? There are several factors which open the door and allow demons to work.

Sin In Life: If a person turns to another power other than God, a demon will use that desire to enter the person's life and counterfeit the power he is looking for. If someone worships idols the Bible says there are demons behind the idols that receive the worship and gain control of the person.

Sin In The Family Line: When a person opens themselves to a demon, the demon claims everything in the person's life, including children they may have. When those children have children they claim them as well. Thus the same demon does the same work from generation to generation in a family. That's why many children struggle with the same sins and weaknesses that that their mother or father struggled with.

Land Where We Live Or Worship: When a piece of land is dedicated to powers other than God then demons claim that land as theirs in a special way and attack anyone on that land who isn't serving them. All of India has been dedicated to evil and darkness, so Satan and his demons claim it in a special way. If you live on land or if your church is located on land dedicated to

powers other than God then those demons will attack you for being there. They will try to cause sickness, poverty, disagreements, confusion, anger or any form of sin possible.

Curses: If someone does not like you or your church because you are Christians and wishes something evil to happen, demons will take that curse as a prayer and it will empower them to work against you.

The good news is that God can and will break every one of those openings and free us from demonic powers which seek to control us. We have victory in Jesus.

JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE IN CASTING OUT DEMONS. At the start of His ministry He cast out many demons (Matthew 4:23-24; Mark 1:39, 34). In the Gadarenes He cast demons out of two men (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:20). He cast demons out of the daughter of a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21 Mark 7:20), and cured a demonized man (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-36). He healed a boy with seizures and demons (Matthew 17:14-20). He cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene as well as out of other women followers (Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9).

HOW DID JESUS CAST DEMONS OUT? Before casting them out He rebuked them (took their power away) (Matthew 17:18; Luke 9:42). Then He "drove" them out (Mark 1:39). He did it verbally (Matthew 8:16), not by a certain ritualistic procedure. He didn't let the demons speak (Mark 1:34; Luke 4:41), except Legion and that was just to give his name so others would know that no number of demons could defeat Jesus (Mark 5:9). He never let them say who He was (Mark 1:25; Luke 4:35; Mark 3:11-12). He told them to "be quiet and come out" (Luke 4:35; Mark 1:25). Other times He told them to "go" (Matthew 8; 32). Sometimes He was quite far from the person whom He was delivering (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). When He cast them out He forbid them to ever return again (Mark 9:25).

WE HAVE MANY EXAMPLES OF THE DISCIPLES CASTING OUT DEMONS, TOO. Jesus gave them power and commanded them to use it (Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:17; Mark 6:7; 16:17). They cast out demons as a regular part of their ministry (Mark 9:38; Luke 10:17). Paul cast out demons (Acts 16:16-18; 19:12) and so did Philip (Acts 8:7). When trying to do it in their own strength (without dependence on God) they failed (Mark 9:18, 28-29).

HOW DID THE APOSTLES CAST DEMONS OUT? Paul brought deliverance by a word, too. He said, "In the name of Jesus I command you to come out" (Acts 16:16-18). When God was proving that Paul was His spokesman there was a time when just touching a cloth that Paul had used brought deliverance (Acts 19:12). That was a special event, not a pattern to follow! When directed by God, Paul defeated the demons in Elymas (an unbeliever) by making him blind so he'd stop interfering with God's word (Acts 13:6-12).

AS WE ARE TO DO IT TODAY When one is surrounded the best thing to do is to attack. That is what God wants us to do, too, when seemingly surrounded by Satan's forces. We are to follow the example of the apostles. They did what they did following Jesus' example and in His power (Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 3:15; 6:7; Luke 9:1). We, too, are given power over the enemy (Luke 10:19; Matthew 10:1; Zechariah 3:15). We have the authority and power to bind demons and loose oppressed believers (Matthew 16:18-19). This must all be done in the power of Jesus' name (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:49) for that is the only thing demons will obey. Always refer to His full name: "The Lord Jesus Christ." We, however, must be a clean vessel for Him to fill and use for deliverance (Revelation 12:10-11).

PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE: If you sense there may be some demonic activity against you or your family you can pray the following prayer. It isn't the words that bring deliverance but your faith in Jesus and trust in His power. This is a good sample of how to pray for yourself, your family or anyone in your church. You can say these things in your own words; it is the thought that counts.

“Dear Jesus, we thank you for the salvation you give us in Jesus. We know you are greater than Satan and His demons. We know you have power and authority over them. We know you have given us that power and authority in Jesus' name. In Jesus name I forbid any demons to work against me or my family or my church. In Jesus name I close the door to any reason they think they can work against me. If I have committed any sin that they use to work against me I put it under the blood of Jesus. In Jesus' name I forbid them to work and to be gone. In Jesus' name I break any claim that comes down through my family line. I am a new creation in God's family. I forbid any claim against me through my name or family line. In Jesus' name I dedicate the land where my home and church are to God. I ask for His presence only to fill and use those places. In Jesus' name I break any claim demons may make through those places. In Jesus' name I break any curses any one has made against me, my family or my church. Jesus has taken my entire curse on the cross. His power has broken any power of the enemy against me. So in Jesus' name I forbid any demons to work against me or my family or my church. I commit myself and my family and my church only to God. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Surround me with Your angels. Use me for Your glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

My first book, *Spiritual Warfare Handbook*, goes into this subject in detail. If you don't have a copy of it go to the source where you obtained this book and ask them how you can get a copy.

PROTECTION FROM SIN

PREVENTION OF SIN AMONG OUR PEOPLE: By teaching the Bible and by our example we are to lead our people in holiness. We are to warn against sin and show how to have victory in Jesus' power.

GOD DISCIPLINES SINNING BELIEVERS: As Christians we know we will never be judged for sin (Romans 8:1). Jesus has paid for the penalty, shame and guilt of all our sin so we are forever free (Romans 6:18, 22). There is no judgment for us ever (John 3:18-19; 5:24; 4:7-8; 5:1; Galatians 3:13). However there is discipline if we live in sin. Just as a parent disciplines a disobedient child so they will learn and grow, so God disciplines His children if we don't turn from sin (Hebrews 12:3-11). This is proof we are His and He loves us. He loves us too much to allow us to live in sin. We won't lose our salvation, but God will allow suffering and difficulties into our lives so we will turn from sin and to Him.

WE ARE TO DISCIPLINE SINNING BELIEVERS. In addition, God expects His people to discipline each other when someone is in sin and doesn't repent. The steps to do this are found in Matthew 19:15-20. This is not an easy or pleasant part of pastoring, and for me is among my least favorite duties as a pastor. But it is important for the sake of the person in sin and for us to obey God.

First, we must be positive that there is sin in their life (1 Timothy 5:19). Then we are to pray for them to repent, for us to have wisdom, and for us to not get caught into sin ourselves (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 5:23-24). If the sinning person is still unrepentant we are to go to them in private and warn them of the danger of their sin (Matthew 18:15). If the person still does not repent then take

some other church leaders with you to show him the seriousness of his sin (Matthew 18:16; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6). If he still refuses to listen then announce the situation to the whole church (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20). This is so they can pray for the person, encourage him to repent, and be careful they don't fall into the same sin themselves. If even this doesn't bring him back then publically announce that he is to be treated as an unbeliever until he repents and returns (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:3-13). You can't take someone's salvation from them, but this is a way of showing the seriousness of sin and that sin separates us from God and others. Continue to pray for them but let God work in their lives in His way. He will bring pressure to cause them to repent as He disciplines them as well.

PROTECTION BY PRAYER

HOW TO PRAY Prayer is powerful (John 14:13-14; 15:7,16; Mark 11:24; 11:22-24; Luke 11:9-10; I John 5:14; Jeremiah 33:3). There should be six parts to your prayer life, all equally well developed.

1. CONFESSION (I John 1:9; Psalm 66:18; 51:1). To confess means to agree with God that the issue at hand is sin (not a mistake, someone else's fault, etc.). After you confess your sin make sure you accept God's forgiveness (Daniel 9:9,19; Psalm 130:4; 86:5; 78:30; 99:8; 103:3; Amos 7:2). Only God can forgive sin (Mark 2:7; 11:25; Luke 23:24; 5:24; Matthew 6:14; Colossians 3:13). God doesn't overlook sin, he forgives because it was paid for with the blood of Jesus on the cross (Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 4:32; 1:7; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; Luke 24:46-47; Colossians 1:14; John 19:30). This forgiveness is available to all (Isaiah 53:6; Colossians 2:13; romans 8:1). When you confess/admit your sin God forgives it. This means He blots it out (Isaiah 43:25; 1:18; 44:22; Acts 3:19; Colossians 2:14; Psalm 32), casts it behind His back (a place He can't see it - Isaiah 38:17; Jeremiah 31:34), forgets it (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34), makes it disappear where it will never be found (Jeremiah 50:20), has it vanish like the morning mist at noon (Isaiah 44:22; John 20:31; Matthew 27:51), and casts it into the deepest part of the sea (Micah 7:19) which will then be gone forever (Revelation 21:1).

2. PRAISE (Psalm 34:1-3; 48:1; Hebrews 13:15). Praise is glorifying God for Who and what He is. It is different than thanking Him for things He has done. We will be praising God for all eternity, so we should start now! God is pleased with our praise (Psalm 22:3; Hebrews 13:5). The Bible says there is power in praise (Psalm 22:3). Praise can be done by word or song. Make sure you develop a strong praise life (Philippians 4:4; Hebrews 13:15). Read the following passages and turn them into praise prayers: Exodus 15:1-2; Deuteronomy 10:21; 32:3-4,43; I Samuel 2:1-2; II Samuel 22:4, 50; I Chronicles 16:9,25,31; 29:10-12; II Chronicles 5:12-14; 20:21-22,27; Psalm 8:1-2; 9:1-3; 31:21; 44:8; 40:16; 47:1-3; 68:3-4; 72:18-19; 86:12-13; 104:33; 108:3; 117:1-2; 119:108,175; 138:1-4; 142:7; 149:1,3,6-9; 150:1-6; Isaiah 25:1,9; 38:18-19; 60:18; Daniel 2:20-23; Jeremiah 20:13; Habakkuk 3:17-19; Zechariah 9:9; Luke 1:46-47; Luke 10:21; John 4:23-24; Ephesians 1:3; Jude 25; Revelation 4:10-11; 5:5,12-13; 15:3-4.

3. THANKSGIVING (Psalm 116:12; Philippians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:18). Thanksgiving is thanking God for what He has done, is doing and is going to do in your life (as well as the lives of others). We all appreciate being thanked for things we do, and so does God. Be specific in your thanksgiving. Remember, everything comes from Him and is for our good (Romans 8:28) so we should thank Him for everything!

4. INTERCESSION (Psalm 28:9; James 5:14-20; I Timothy 2:1-4; I Samuel 12:23). Intercession is prayer for others. It is good to keep a list of prayer requests so you remember to pray for them and so you can mark down the answer, too. Then thank God for the answer. Remember God answers EVERY prayer. The answer is either yes (now), wait (later) or no (never). Every prayer gets one of these answers. God is able to do anything, but He isn't always willing to do what it is we think He should do (Daniel 3:17). Therefore when you pray for others first be sensitive to how God would have you pray. Don't be so quick to come up with a solution and make that your prayer. God may have another solution (better than ours). Don't pray solutions to God, pray problems and let Him come up with His own solution. You'll find prayers answered more often when you let Him figure out how to take care of something. Often instead of removing something He gives us grace to endure it (II Corinthians 12:7-10). Include that option in your prayers for others.

5. PETITION (James 4:2; Hebrews 4:15-16; John 15:7). Petition means asking God for things for yourself. This is legitimate. Some people pray only for themselves, others claim to never pray for anything for themselves. Neither of these is correct. Much of what I said under "Intercession" above fits in here. There are some things the Bible says we should ask for: an understanding heart (I Kings 3:7,9), fellowship with other believers (Philemon 4-6), forgiveness (Psalm 25:11,18,20), guidance (Psalm 25:4-5; 27:11), holiness (I Thessalonians 5:23), love (Philippians 1:9-11), mercy (Psalm 6:1-6), power (Ephesians 3:16), spiritual growth (Ephesians 1:17-19) and to know and do God's will (Colossians 4:12). As you pray for yourself think of a Bible promise to claim for it. God promises He will not forget us (Isaiah 49:15), not fail us (Joshua 1:5), will show us what to do (I Samuel 16:3), will help us (Isaiah 41:10) and will strengthen us (Isaiah 41:10).

6. LISTEN (I Samuel 3:10; Hebrews 1:1-2; 3:15; Psalm 62:5; 46:10) Good communication is a two-way street. Pause a few minutes and listen to God talk to you. You should do that throughout your day. After all, which is more important: you passing on information to God or Him passing on information to you? Be still in your mind, let Him put in thoughts, feelings, ideas, etc., that you need. Be sensitive to His leading. As with any relationship, the better you know the person the better the communication. Good, deep communication is difficult with a stranger, but the more time you spend with a person the better you can 'hear' them, and that's true with God, too. This is an art that takes time to develop. It won't happen if you don't work on it!

GOD EXPECTS US TO PRAY FOR HIS PEOPLE. They are His sheep and He wants us to talk to Him about them and their needs. We are commanded to pray for all Christians (Ephesians 6:18). We are to pray for special needs in the lives of the people as well as for them to grow spiritually. We are to pray for their protection. As Job prayed for his children, we are to pray for a wall or protection around them (Job 1:10; 1 Peter 1:5; Psalm 5:12; 34:7). I try to start each day by praying for my family and people, asking God to protect them from sin and the attacks of the enemy during the coming day. I also ask God to fill them with His Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit in them (Galatians 5:22-23). I even pray for the armor to be placed on them for the coming day (Ephesians 6:10-18).

It is good to have a standard time early in the day to pray for these needs, but also to pray about them as they come up or as they come to mind during the day. It is a privilege and also a responsibility to "stand in the gap" and intercede for our people (Ezekiel 22:30). Numerous times Moses prayed for the people, interceding with God on their behalf, and God heard his prayers (Numbers 11:2; 21:7). In fact one time when God was about to destroy the whole nation for their sin Moses came to God in pray for them and God spared them (Psalm 106:23). Prayer is a very powerful and effective weapon (Matthew 7:7, 11; John 14:13-14; Jeremiah 33:3; James 5:16-18).

It is a good idea to write down what you should pray for. When God puts something in my mind to pray for or someone asks me to pray for them, I need to write it down or I will forget. When people ask me to pray I always pray right then, even if it is just a silent quick prayer. We have written examples of Paul's prayers for others and we can use them, praying these same words for our people. These prayers are in Colossians 1:9-14 and Ephesians 1:15-23.

Some are gifted to pray and can pray for long times without getting tired or distracted. Thank God for those in your church who are gifted in that way (Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:12-13). I am not able to do that. My mind often gets distracted when I pray, or things come up and I put off praying. I have to battle that and ask God to help me focus. Many times when I pray I think of other tasks that need doing so I keep a paper and pencil nearby to write those things down. That way I don't have to keep thinking of them but can come back to what I wrote later. Often I do my best praying while walking, not sitting still.

WE ARE NOT ONLY TO PRAY FOR BELIEVERS BUT FOR ALL PEOPLE AS WELL. Paul commands us to pray for the government authorities so we may live in peace (1 Timothy 2:1-4). We should pray for the salvation of those who don't know Him as savior. There are many things to pray for. It is a privilege to bring these needs to God, but also a great responsibility. It is something God expects us to do.

PROTECTION BY TEACHING THE WORD

By teaching the truth of God's Word to our people we will help them avoid error. We can also correct those who believe things that aren't true. In the next chapter we'll talk about how to study the Bible and then in the following chapter how to communicate it to God's people. These are two important things God expects of all pastors.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

Are you ever tempted to see the people you pastor as YOUR sheep? Remember they are Jesus' sheep. He allows you to take care of them for Him.

Have you ever had someone come to your church who didn't teach the truth? What did you do? How did you handle it? If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?

How aware are YOU of the enemy's schemes against you, your family and your ministry?

If Satan were to oppose you or your ministry, what kinds of things might he use to discourage and defeat you?

What can you do to have victory over this?

Is there any sin in your life that defeats you and keeps you from victory? Go to another pastor and ask him to pray for you each day. Keep in touch with him as to how you are doing with it.

How is your prayer life? Is there anything God wants you to do to improve it? What can you do today to obey God in this?

5. GOD EXPECTS US TO FEED OURSELVES

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to study, learn and apply God's Word to their own individual lives.

When a baby is born the first thing it demands, after air, is nourishment. Babies need to eat often in order to grow. They have a strong appetite. The same is true spiritually. Those born of God find they have an appetite to learn God's Word. A new appreciation for and love of the Bible appears. The desire to read the Bible isn't just to fill an intellectual curiosity but rather to feed ones' soul and spirit. We sense from the very start that there is much-needed nourishment to be found there (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; 1 Peter 2:2-3).

A. WHY TO FEED OURSELVES

In addition to protecting his sheep, a shepherd is also responsible to feed his sheep. This is perhaps his greatest responsibility and the one at which he spends most of his time. Sheep need to be fed often. So do the people we pastor. God expects pastors to feed their sheep. But first we must feed ourselves on His Word. We must know it so we can protect our people from error. We must teach them so they can avoid error and so they can grow spiritually on the Word. In chapter 6 we'll talk about feeding our people, but first we must feed ourselves.

CORRECTLY HANDLE THE WORD OF TRUTH: Paul commands Timothy to be able to know and use God's Word accurately in order to be the pastor God wants Him to be (2 Timothy 2:15). He uses the analogy of a workman pleasing his boss by the quality of his work. He must use his tools skillfully in order to produce the desired result. As pastors we must use our tool, the Bible, skillfully and accurately to be able to serve Him. That means we must be very familiar with the Bible. We must learn it, memorize it and apply it to our lives (Psalm 119:9-11).

BE PREPARED: Paul also commands Timothy: "preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:1-2). To 'preach' means to proclaim. It is a Greek word used of an ambassador sent forth by a king to proclaim the king's message with the king's authority. That must be our burning desire as well (1 Corinthians 9:16).

It is the 'Word' we are to preach, God's truths in the Bible, not our own opinions or views. We are always to be ready and prepared to do so, no matter the circumstances (2 Timothy 2:15). Sometimes it will be easy and welcomed, other times God's word will be mocked and rejected. We must always be ready to share God's truth with individuals or groups of any size.

Paul also tells Timothy that we are to use the Word of God to 'correct' error and misunderstanding, 'rebuke' where there is known sin and 'encourage' those who are discouraged and struggling. We must do this with 'great patience' for people are often not quick to respond. Jesus is very patient and persistent with us and we must be with others also. We can't give up but must keep on sharing God's truth with believers and unbelievers alike.

Next Paul commands Timothy to keep on with ‘careful instruction’ for people need to know the Bible in detail. We must teach the deep truths of God’s word, not just easy and simple truths children can learn. We must teach all of God’s Word, not just some easy and familiar parts.

In order to do this God expects us to know His Word very well. We must read it, study it, memorize portions of it and know when and how to apply it. But it isn’t just something to learn in our mind like one would study engineering or science. The Bible reveals God and it must come alive in our hearts as well.

GOD’S WORD IN MY LIFE: In college and seminary I developed a great appreciation for the Bible as the living, inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). I came away with an awesome respect for it. It is the main tool of my trade. My knowledge of it and skill in using it has grown as I have grown. As I look back on my lifetime as a Christian I realize there has been a subtle change in my attitude to the Bible. I respect it more than ever, but I’ve also been developing a real love for it! I love it because it reveals God, and the more I know about Him the more I love Him.

No longer is it just a tool to help me accomplish my ministry, it has become my lifeline to God, my anchor and rock in life (Psalm 119:9-11). I not only like and appreciate it, I find myself totally needing it. The better I know the facts of the Bible the more I realize there is a depth to it that can never be plunged in this life. I am learning it with more than my mind but also with my heart. It has become very precious and special to me.

My third trip to India in 2009 was very difficult for me. I found myself turning to God’s Word in a deeper way than I ever had before. God’s comfort and promises were what got me through. God’s Word was the only thing that kept me going. I discovered a deeper need in myself for its truths than ever before. I held my Bible when trying to get to sleep at night. I kept touching it all night long. That physical contact was vital to keeping my faith and focus on God alone. I started reading a chapter first thing every morning and last thing every night. I read it as a love letter from God to me, not looking for ideas for messages or things I can use in my teaching. That has been very refreshing and keeps my focus where it needs to be. It speaks words of life to my heart, soul and spirit. I’m learning to listen with my heart and soul, not just my mind. This helped me on my recent trip to India as well.

My involvement in spiritual warfare ministry has taught me that it is only God’s Word that carries authority, not mine or anyone else’s (Hebrews 4:12). Satan and his demons must obey God’s Word when we use it. There is real power in the Word of God when we believe and quote it. That’s how Jesus overcame temptations in the wilderness. It’s the sword of the Spirit which Paul talks about – our only offensive weapon.

The Bible becomes more amazing to me as I go on in life. The more I think know the less I find I really know! It speaks to our mind, emotions and spirit all at once. The older I become the harder I cling to God’s promises, not just about this life but also about the future. I’m not as interested in covering a lot of ground in my reading and study (quantity) but in going deeper in just a few verses (quality). Don’t rush your reading, go slow, meditate, mull over a verse or phrase, ask God to speak to you through it and listen to what He says. God deep, don’t go fast.

Christians are known as “people of the book”. I like that. But I don’t just want the book in my head; I want it in my heart. I hope you have that desire as well.

B. WHAT TO FEED OURSELVES

As we saw (2 Timothy 4:1-2) it is God's Word that feeds us. Other books can teach us truth but there is no substitute for God's Bible. No book is anywhere like it. Devotional books, books of sermons and commentaries can all be helpful, but they should not be a substitute for God's Word in our own hearts and lives. We each need to study and learn the Bible, not depend on someone else to tell us what it means.

Ezra "devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). First he had to devote himself to study and apply the Bible. Only then could he teach it to others. God expects us to make the study of His Word more important than anything else we do in ministry.

Every growing thing needs to eat to live: plants, animals and people. Sheep eat, so do pigs. Yet they don't eat the same thing. They have different appetites because they have different natures. Before salvation we have appetites like the pig – any garbage will do. After salvation our appetite changes and we want nourishment that is safe, healthy and nutritious. We have an appetite for God's Word. Unbelievers don't have a desire to read and learn the Bible, only believers. We as pastors need to feed on God's Word so He can teach and mature us in our faith and so we can come closer to Him.

God then expects us to teach to others what He is teaching to us. There is a time and place to use commentaries and sermons others write, but for the most part we must prepare our messages ourselves. The Bible is nourishment for our spiritual souls and enables us to grow strong in our faith (1 Peter 2:2-3). There is no substitute for it. When babies are small we give them soft food that they don't need to chew, but as they grow older they can eat more solid food which has better nourishment for them. The same is true spiritually. When we are young we must be fed spiritual nourishment from others, but as we grow we learn to 'chew' God's word and digest it ourselves.

Which would you rather swallow: food that you have chewed yourself or food someone else chews and then gives to you to swallow? The answer is obvious! It is quicker and easier to let someone else chew our food for us so all we would have to do is swallow it, but we know that isn't good. Still many pastors do that with God's Word. They use what others have learned for their sermons instead of studying the Bible for themselves. Don't let someone else do your Bible study for you so all you have to do is use their results. Do your own chewing, study the Bible for yourself. It can be hard work and it does take time, but it is something God expects of us above all other things. Without regular healthy, nourishing food a body gets weak and sick. Our souls get weak and sick if we don't regularly spend time in God's Word.

C. WHEN TO FEED OURSELVES

How many times a week do you eat food? Probably every day, unless you are fasting. How many times a week does your soul need spiritual food? Every day as well. If you don't have an appetite for food it is a sign you are not healthy. The same is true of spiritual food. A healthy Christian will have an appetite for God's Word every day (1 Peter 2:2-3).

We need to feed ourselves every day. There may be exceptions when emergencies arise, but we need to make time with the Bible an important part of the start of each day. As we feed our bodies to start the day with strength, so we need to feed our souls the Word to have spiritual strength for the day. Satan tries to keep us too busy and distracted to have time in the Bible and pray. He doesn't mind if we are busy running around doing good things for people as long as we don't take time to read the Bible and pray. That is where our strength and power comes from, and without it we will be weak and ineffective.

It takes deliberate planning to have time each day to study the Bible but that is absolutely necessary. We can use some of this time to prepare our sermons and lessons, for it is far better to do them ahead of time and not at the last minute. Meals our wives prepare ahead of time are much more enjoyable than ones they just quickly put together at the last minute. That's how it is with the spiritual food we serve our people as well. Start early in the week and work on your message a little each day. However your personal Bible study should be time just for you to talk to and listen to God, not only for sermon preparation. Make sure God speaks to you first. Any message you preach to the people you must first preach to yourself and apply to your own life (2 Timothy 2:6). That won't happen if you do your messages the same day you present them, or even if you do them the day before.

So spend time in God's Word each day, learning about God and letting Him speak to you. You can use some of the time for sermon preparation if you make sure you apply the truths of His Word to your life before you preach them to others.

D. HOW TO FEED OURSELVES

Suppose you want to sit down and study your Bible. You open to a passage and read a few verses, wondering how to begin. Then you read a little more but you start thinking of things you need to do this day. Soon you close your Bible and get on with your list of duties. You haven't gotten much out of your Bible reading, but at least you've done it.

We won't get much out of our Bible study unless we know how to do it. Suppose a miner walks through a field looking for gold nuggets on the ground but doesn't find any, so he leaves empty handed. That doesn't mean there isn't gold there; it means he didn't know how to look for it. Instead of hurrying across the surface he must stop and dig down deeper. Only there will he find treasure. That's true of studying the Bible as well.

Bible study takes work. However that work must be purposeful and worthwhile or nothing good will come of it. That's what I want to help you with now. As I see it, Bible study is broken down into three main steps: Observation ("What do I see?"), Interpretation ("What does it mean?") and Application ("How should I respond?"). The Bible provides spiritual nourishment for our souls as food provides physical nourishment for our bodies (1 Peter 2:2; Psalm 119:103; Hebrews 5:13-14). First let's talk about observation.

Before you can swallow and use food that you are eating you must first chew it in bite-size sections. In fact, the better you chew your food the more you will benefit from it. That is where the work part of Bible study comes in. In order to see something new and deep in a passage you must know how and where to look. You must train yourself to see what you haven't seen before! A

doctor will closely examine you, gather facts and ask questions before interpreting them and coming up with a plan of action. Likewise a detective needs to look for things that aren't at first obvious. The same is true of a scientist. For all of these, the final application is only as good as the early observation. The better the discovery period, the more accurate and helpful the conclusion.

If you go to the doctor and he asks you to sit down, then looks up at you and starts writing a prescription you wouldn't like that. He must give a thorough examination and ask questions before he can apply what he has discovered. The same is true in Bible study. Too often we skip the observation period and right away try to find out what it means and how it applies. This always leads to shallow results that leave us thinking we can't get anything out of the Bible. Don't read a passage and then think about how it applies to you or your people. You must first see what is really there! So then, how are we to observe the Bible as we study it? Let me give you some steps:

OBSERVATION: The first thing you do when food is placed before you is to look at the whole, get an overview of what is there. When you feed on God's Word do the same thing. Read the passage or book through in one sitting. Do this several times for a short passage. Don't do anything but read it over and over. Do this for several days. It's like looking at a favorite picture or listening to a favorite song, you seem to notice new things each time. You never get it all the first time!

As you read keep a paper and pencil handy. After the first few times questions will start coming to mind, things you don't understand and would like answers for. Write them down! In fact, try to write down as many questions as you can. Don't worry about answering them now; many will answer themselves as you go along. However if you don't ask the question you will never notice the answer when it comes and will miss it! You won't answer questions you haven't asked, so make sure you are thorough, creative, and patient in writing down questions. Ask yourself, "If Jesus were here, what would I ask Him about this word/verse?" "If the person who wrote this were sitting with me, what would I ask him about what he wrote?" I cannot overemphasize the importance of developing well the skill of asking the right questions! No question is a bad question. Some may be very simple and easy to answer, others will be impossible to answer. Write down as many as you can. You can't skip this step or go through it too quickly or you will be like the doctor who prescribes without finding out all he can about your illness.

After you look at the whole and start asking questions then you divide it into parts. Keep adding questions the whole time you study, you never stop writing questions down. From the food on the table you divide it into portions and put some on your plate. You further divide that into portions to eat. You can't shove it all into your mouth at once! With your Bible passage start breaking it into major sections. These can then be broken into subsections. Eventually you will come up with a rough outline. An outline gives you word labels to make large sections easier to grasp and manage. It forces you to think through the flow of the passage and discover the relationships of the various parts. It makes you read between the lines, thus improving your observation. I'll show you how to use this in writing a sermon in the next chapter. Of course you keep adding to your list of questions whenever something comes to mind.

Now that you have the food broken down on your plate and are starting to eat it, you must make sure you chew it thoroughly. That is the next step, interpretation.

INTERPRETATION: After chewing our food we swallow it and our body digests it. Observation gathers the details: facts, questions, insights. Interpretation brings meaning and organization to these observations and some answers to your questions. You must continue to ask and write down questions during this stage, but now you start to answer your questions. As you interpret you will find many of the answers to your questions. Before you are done make sure you have answered all the questions you can. If you would have not asked the question you wouldn't have recognized the answer, it would have passed by unnoticed. With the question in your mind you will pick up the answer as it comes along in your interpreting. For a doctor this is the diagnosis stage when conclusions are drawn. The same is true of the detective and scientist who must make sense out of the information they have gleaned.

How do we do this in Bible study? The key to correct understanding of the Bible is to put yourself in the place of the writer and try to read his mind - what did he have in mind? Why did he write this? What would he say it means? If the man who wrote the Bible passage you are studying were sitting with you, what questions would you ask him?

In addition ask yourself how the original readers would have understood the passage. Suppose you were listening to a pastor read Paul's letter to you in Ephesus, or you are a Jew in Old Testament times hearing a prophet speak. What would you understand? How would you view it? Look at the Bible through the eyes of the original readers, for it is specifically and directly written to them. It applies to us today, but wasn't directed just to us. It comes to us through their historical context.

First of all, let's go back to our analogy of eating. After chewing, food is digested. The mouth and saliva start breaking down the food into small pieces, but the digestive system breaks it down into something useful for the rest of the body. Various foods are broken down by different enzymes. Some foods digest quickly (like carbohydrates) and others slowly (like fats). The process differs for different kinds of foods. So it is with Bible study. Interpreting history is different than interpreting doctrine, or poetry, or prophecy. It is a bit of a different process for each. We will look at these one at a time. We will first look at history.

Interpreting History: History refers to those portions of the Bible which give information about people, places, events, groups or time periods. Genesis through Ruth and Matthew through Acts are mainly history. Today we have historical books and novels and biographies. History can be thought of as being the food group called fats. It is composed of dairy products like milk, ice cream, yogurt, butter and cooking oils. These take longest for the body to digest, and to really understand all about Bible history takes much time because of the different customs and historical events. Fats give our bodies reserves to fall back on when needed. Lessons from history give guidance, encouragement, precedents, examples and principles for us to fall back on and use when necessary. Facts are basic to health and are the first thing babies need and eat. Learning basic Bible stories is fundamental for new Christians. Fats cushion and insulate and allow general good health. Knowing the historical events and lives of people in the Bible does this in our Christian lives. Fats are often mixed in with other foods, and history is in other sections of literature, too - like teaching (protein) and poetry (carbohydrates).

Suppose you received a letter from someone in a foreign country. In order to understand it properly you'd need to know who wrote it, when they wrote it and where they were when they wrote it. If it was written a few days ago from a neighbor in India or several years ago from someone you don't know in Great Britain makes a great difference to understanding what they say.

You must know these things to accurately interpret the letter. Here are some questions to help you understand the background of history events in the Bible.

WHO is involved?

WHEN in history did it happen?

WHERE was it located?

WHAT happened?

WHAT was life like then?

HOW did it happen?

HOW did it affect them?

WHY did it happen?

WHY is it recorded for us?

If you don't know the answer to some of these questions you can look through the passage in your Bible. The answer might be written earlier in the book or elsewhere in the Bible. If you have a Bible with footnotes or a commentary they can help give you the answers. Internet access can help as well. You can talk to someone who knows the Bible better than you, asking them the answer to some of the questions you haven't been able to answer. Try to find your own answers first, though.

Interpreting Teaching: Teaching, or doctrine, refers to any communication of ideas from one person to another. This would include Jesus' teaching, Paul's epistles, the preaching of the Old Testament prophets, and many other portions of Scripture. Literature today of that type would include study books, sermons, how-to books, lectures, educational programs on TV, and non-fiction books of any kind. It is quite a large area, and one that is very important for Bible study. It is the most direct means of communicating truth from God to man through His Word.

Interpreting teaching sections is a bit different than interpreting history passages. It is important to know who, when, where, why, what and how to understand the background of teaching passages, but then other steps must be taken.

To continue our food analogy, teaching can be thought of as the food group called protein. This is composed of products like meat, fish, poultry, cheese, eggs and beans. Protein is necessary for growth of tissue. Learning the teaching of the Bible is essential for spiritual growth. Protein is also necessary for repair and maintenance of the body. We need to keep falling back on what we have learned from the Bible's teaching to repair and maintain our own Christian life. Learning what the Bible teaches is very important to spiritual health. Protein is the key to a strong structure of bones and muscles and that is the framework for our bodies and all they do. The teaching sections of the Bible also provide for our spiritual bones and muscles, the inner structure for our Christian life.

One of the most important steps in interpreting a teaching section is to discover the main idea of the section. In effect, this is what you are doing when you outline and then title a section. The title should summarize the main idea. That is very helpful and important for all kinds of Bible literature, but for teaching sections it is a real must. Think of a good sermon or Bible study you heard recently, or a book you enjoyed -- you should be able to summarize it in one or two sentences. Now think of one which never got hold of you and still remains fuzzy -- there was no one main idea. Remember this when you are teaching or communicating. We'll talk about applying this to your sermons in the next chapter.

When you plan to preach or teach a passage first write down your main idea, what truth you want to convey. Stick to what your main idea is and don't add too much extra information. This is what makes the difference between a good teacher and a not-so-good teacher. A good teacher always has a clear main idea. If you don't discover it, you won't be able to correctly interpret the rest of the passage. Remember, you have direct access to the very mind of the One who wrote it all, so stay in constant contact during this process through prayer. Do not go further in your Bible study until

you can write the main idea of the passage you are studying in as few words as possible. You can and probably will adjust and fine tune this as you go, but you must work hard to make sure this is straight. It is the foundation for all you will build as you study the passage.

Interpreting Poetry: We hear a lot about carbohydrates today. Athletes load up on them before times of high output. We all need them. They supply energy for our bodies, and they are enjoyable and taste good. Grains, rice, fruits and vegetables provide carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates are among the quickest and easiest foods to digest and use. They are fast-working and productive.

God Word, our spiritual food, has something similar. There is a type of literature that is enjoyable and appealing to all. It is easy to digest and provides quick spiritual energy. Spiritual meals are made more exciting by it. It is poetry. Poetry is one of the quickest and easiest forms of Bible literature to understand and apply. It is full of emotion and life and speaks to our hearts. It provides the quick boost of spiritual energy we sometimes need. Poetical portions of the Bible include Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Song of Solomon. There is hardly a book without at least some poetry in it. Much of what the Old Testament prophets wrote was in poetical form. You'll never run out of this food item!

One literary device of special value in understanding poetry is the use of figures of speech. While these pop up in all forms of literature, they are especially common in poetry. These make reading more interesting and enjoyable. They include asking questions which really don't require an answer. The statement is made in question form to emphasize the answer. Similarities are shown by words such as "as" and "like." Something familiar is used to help us understand something not familiar. Exaggeration or understating something can be used to make a point. Objects can sometimes be referred to as having traits of living people to explain an activity or event. Each language has its own way of using figures of speech, and understanding how the Jews used them helps interpret the Bible, especially poetic portions.

Since Psalms are part of poetry, it is necessary to look at some specific forms of poetry involved in them. One is the way Jewish poetry rhymes. It does not rhyme words, like English poetry, or all would be lost in translation. God knew that, so His poetry rhymes thoughts and ideas. Basically it is the relationship of the 2nd line to the 1st that makes their poetry 'rhyme.' Look to see if the second line in a poetic section repeats, adds to, or says the opposite of the first line. That can go far in helping to understand Biblical poetry.

Interpreting Parables: Parables can be thought of as spices because both are used to bring out the main flavor of what they are served with. Parables bring out and illustrate a spiritual truth. Spices (curry, salt, pepper, sage, ginger, oregano, cinnamon, etc.) do the same thing. Over use, or trying to get too much out of them, will do more harm than good. Neither are they any good alone, and you couldn't live on a diet of just them, but when used correctly they are super! A parable is a short story used to illustrate a truth, like the story or illustrations a pastor uses in his sermons. Jesus used them often. There are many in the Old Testament, too.

Many of the skill you have been developing in studying the Bible are used in interpreting parables. Your history questions (Who, When, Where, What, How and Why) must be answered correctly. Also customs and practices of how people lived in the time & place the parable is about is of the utmost importance!

Interpreting Prophecy: Prophecy can be thought of as dessert at the end of a meal. It is like pie, cake, cookies, or other sweets. These are really part of other food groups, just as is prophecy is part of teaching. However, desserts have a special role in how they are used. Dessert is served last, and prophecy is the study of last things. They both give you something to look forward to. Again, neither are good as a steady diet of only them. Overuse undermines health. They are meant to supplement other, more basic food items. Dessert, like prophecy, is served in a special time and way, and thus there are some special principles that apply to eating it, too.

Besides the portions of the Bible we consider prophecy (Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, Matthew 24-25) we must keep in mind that much of what the Old Testament prophets said was prophetic when it was said.

Interpret prophecy literally, taking the words in their usual or normal sense. The same rules of grammar and language apply so don't make interpreting prophecy harder than it is. Interpret it in harmony with other prophecy. It must fit in with the rest of the Bible. Often one prophecy will refer to similar happenings (for example Old Testament prophets often talk about Jesus' first and second coming in the same prophecy). The purpose of prophecy is to focus on Christ and give Him the glory. As you work in the power of the Spirit, He will glorify Christ through it all.

Symbols can be more difficult to interpret. They made great sense to the Jews living when the Bible was written but often aren't things we understand today. Again, let the Bible interpret itself. Just use your common sense. When interpreting a symbol, look for the main characteristic the writer would have seen in it. Symbols are used the same way when used at different places in the Bible. If you aren't sure of a meaning, don't push. Just make sure your interpretation agrees with the rest of the Bible.

After having done this to interpret the passage you are studying, go back to your list of questions and see how many you have not answered. Try to answer them if you can, but some won't have answers, or at least not answers you will know until you get to heaven. That is all right, there are always things we don't completely understand about God and His Word. Recognizing what we don't know can be very helpful in itself.

APPLICATION: The final step in Bible study is applying what you have learned. This can only be done accurately after observation and interpretation have taken place. After the living food of God's Word is chewed (observation) and digested (interpretation) it is then sent to various parts of the body to be used. Some vitamins, minerals and calories go to the muscles, others to the bones, still others to whatever organ is in need. So it is with God's Word. The purpose of studying and learning it is to apply it to areas of your life where needed.

The application of food, as well as Bible truth, is a gradual but continual process. How much you get out of it depends on how well you chewed and digested it. You can't swallow food whole and expect it to do your body much good. Unfortunately many people read a passage and then think about how it applies to them. They don't come up with much, for they have neglected the first two steps. Much of what happens after swallowing is out of your hands. Your body does it. Much of how the Bible is applied is out of your hands, too. Only God's Spirit can really make it work in your life. We must be willing to submit to what God teaches us.

Application is a very important step as well. It is the culmination of the first two steps. From it comes spiritual health and strength - the goal of all eating. Application asks and answers the questions: "How should I respond?" and "What should I do with what I've learned?" During the

observation and interpretation stages of Bible study you study the Word of God; in application, the Word of God studies you! In the application process you look for principles, suggestions, commands and lessons that can affect your behavior and make you more like Jesus.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS: carefully apply the passage, looking for any:

COMMAND to obey

EXAMPLE to follow

CHALLENGE to heed

SIN to avoid

TEACHING to learn

ACTION to take

Something to PRAY about

PROMISE to claim

DIFFICULTY to explore

PORTION to memorize

Write your applications down on your Bible study papers - either on a separate sheet or with the verses they come from. Using a different color ink or pencil helps you see them more quickly. As God works in your life, record what happens and when this can be a real encouragement for you and others, it will increase your faith in God, and it can be very helpful in praising God. You can make a list of things to do or pray about to help you apply what you have learned. A spiritual diary is something good to get your children started doing, too.

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT? God expects each pastor to study, learn and apply God's Word to their own individual lives.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

Are you faithful in your study of God's Word?

Do you know the Bible better than you did a year ago?

James 3:1 says: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." What does this mean to you as a teacher of God's Word?

Why will God judge those who teach more strictly than those who are taught?

How faithful are you to 'practice what you preach'?

2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." Are you doing your best for God? That's all He expects, just do your best.

Are you learning how to correctly handle the word of truth, the Bible?

6. GOD EXPECTS US TO FEED HIS SHEEP

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to feed his sheep by teaching them the Word of God.

Some time ago I read a story about a man who died in deep poverty. In fact, he died from lack of proper food and housing. Among his possessions was found a Bible and in the Bible thousands of dollars were stuffed. The Bible was left to him by his parents -- but he never opened it! If he would have he'd have found that which would have met his needs. How often Christians are like that man -- our soul is starving and we are living in spiritual poverty while the provision for our needs lies between the covers of our Bible. We must get it and use it. As pastors it is our responsibility to open the Bible to our people so they become aware of the riches God has in it for them. The Bible has all they need and we are the ones to make it known so they can apply it to their lives.

A. WHY TO FEED THE SHEEP

We already saw that a pastor must protect his sheep. He must also feed them. Studying and teaching the Bible is perhaps our greatest responsibility and the one at which we spend most of his time. Sheep need to be fed well and often. So do the people we pastor. God expects pastors to feed their sheep.

A PASTOR IS A TEACHER: In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul lists the special gifts He has given to those who lead His people. He provided apostles who were with Jesus Himself and had absolute authority. This office ended when the last one died in about 90 AD. He also gave prophets, those who received information from God and passed it on. This office, too, stopped when the New Testament was written. Evangelists are those sent to minister to unbelievers today and pastor-teachers are sent to minister to believers today.

The term "pastor-teacher" refers to one person who fills both roles. Pastors are to be teachers. Shepherds (what the word 'pastor' means) are to feed their sheep. God gifts pastors to also be able to communicate His Word. Some are greatly gifted as teachers and that is their main gift, but all pastors are able to teach. The term 'pastor' refers to our authority to care for our sheep in all ways. 'Teacher' describes the specific function of teaching God word.

PASTORS DESIRE TO TEACH THE WORD: When Jesus talked to Peter by the seashore after the resurrection He told Peter three times what he was to do: "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Teaching means to convey information so the people understand it in their minds and can apply it to their lives.

God has given me a gift of teaching. It is something I love to do. I enjoy studying and learning God's Word, then developing messages to teach it to others and finally being able to communicate the truths of God's Word to people. All pastors have different abilities as to how they teach, but all share a desire to help others learn God's Word. Paul himself had this. He said "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

As pastors we must have a good knowledge of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Scripture equips us (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and we must pass this knowledge onto others (2 Timothy 2:1-2). This is what gives us and others strength and spiritual nourishment to live for God.

CHRISTIANS DESIRE TO LEARN GOD'S WORD: A healthy person has an appetite for food, and a healthy Christian has an appetite for God's Word (Acts 17:11-12) so it is our responsibility as pastors to feed them the Word whenever we can.

B. WHAT TO FEED THE SHEEP

A shepherd knows what healthy, nourishing food for his sheep is. Anything less would affect their health and production. The same is true with us and the people we shepherd. They need God's Word to be strong and grow. We are ambassadors for the King, and it is the King's message we are to spread. We aren't to focus on politics or our own ideas (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Corinthians 4:5). We are to preach God's Word – that is God's command to us (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Anything that is growing needs nourishment. All living things need food. People need food for their bodies. Christians need spiritual food for their souls (1 Peter 2:2-3; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2). When Paul started a new church he made teaching them the Bible his main responsibility (Acts 18:9-11). All the leaders in the Bible did that as well (Hebrews 13:7; Ezra 7:7-10).

It is God's Word that brings new life to us (1 Peter 1:23). It is God's Word that is our sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17-18). God's Word has power in it beyond any other words (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is inspired by God and is what we need to live and serve (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

C. WHEN TO FEED THE SHEEP

Paul tells Timothy that he must always be ready to preach the Word, when it's easy or when it's hard, because God will use His word to speak to hearts and change lives (2 Timothy 4:1-2). We are to use the Word to show sin, give encouragement to the hurting and strength to the weak. We are to do it patiently and precisely. We must carefully instruct our sheep (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

We do this in our sermons but also by example, when we counsel, and when we talk to our people. We must always be alert for opportunities to help people know what God says in His Word (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

D. HOW TO FEED THE SHEEP

I think most pastors would agree that teaching the Bible to their people is important. But not all know how to do so. Let's talk about how to feed our sheep.

TEACH THE BIBLE ACCURATELY: Make sure you are correct in what you say (2 Timothy 2:15). God is watching and we want to please Him by doing a good job. We want His approval, as does anyone working for someone else.

TEACH THE BIBLE THOROUGHLY: All the Bible is inspired and important to know (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We must read and learn all of it so we can teach all of it to the people. When we eat we like variety in our food, not the same food every meal. When we teach our people we must teach them the whole Bible, not just certain parts we know best. That's why preaching through a book of the Bible, verse by verse, is good. That way we teach everything that is in the book, often times truths we would have overlooked or skipped over. Instead of always preaching about a certain subject and finding Bible verses that talk about that, go through a whole book verse by verse. It may be hard at first but will be very good for you and your people.

TEACH THE BIBLE FAITHFULLY: We are given something very precious and special in the Bible. God's truth is something to handle carefully while making sure we don't keep it to ourselves. We are not given it just for us but to pass on to others (2 Timothy 2:1-2; Matthew 28:19-20). Passing on what we know is one of the things God most expects of pastors (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24).

TEACH THE BIBLE SKILLFULLY: We must be able to teach God's truths (2 Timothy 4:1-2). We must learn the Bible and also learn how to teach. A meal skillfully prepared and served is enjoyed much more than if the same food were just piled on a plate. We must become skillful in communicating God's Word. Here is how I go about preparing a lesson or sermon.

E. HOW TO PREPARE A SERMON

I want to share how I put together a sermon after I have studied a passage. My wife is very skillful in giving us healthy, nourishing food. But she makes it attractive and appealing. It looks good and tastes good. Thus we enjoy eating her food. God has given us healthy and nourishing food for our souls in the Bible. It is up to us as pastors to feed this to our people in a way that is pleasing and enjoyable for them.

TYPES OF SERMONS: There are two main types of meals we can feed our people, of sermons we can preach. One type of sermon is when we think of a topic we want to speak about and then find verses that talk about it. This is called a TOPICAL SERMON. For example, we might want to talk about the importance of prayer so we find verses about why we should pray and use them. There is nothing wrong with this, but if it is all we do then we will miss much of God's Bible.

Teaching or preaching a whole passage, verse by verse, is a better way to communicate God's Word. Go through a book in the Bible, or several chapters in a book, verse by verse, and you will include many important truths that often get overlooked. This is called a TEXTUAL SERMON. In a textual sermon your main idea comes from the passage you are using. In a topical sermon you think of the main idea first then look for Scripture to support it.

KNOWING AND DOING: Teach the passage but make sure you show the people how it applies to them in very specific ways. I am good at teaching a passage but weak at telling the people how this applies to their lives. I must work harder at that. Other speakers are good at motivating the people and telling them what to do, but don't teach the Bible so they have the foundation upon which to build.

Every time I speak I plan exactly what I want the people to KNOW when I am done speaking but also what I want them to DO because they know it. I want to put Bible information into their mind but also have it become part of their life. So I ask myself two questions about each message. First I ask myself what I want the people to know. Then I ask what I want the people to do? Think about these before you speak and it will help you better communicate God's Word.

HITTING YOUR TARGET: My son likes to shoot with a bow and arrow. He aims for a target and shoots. He knows what he is aiming at so he knows if he hits it or not. When I speak I must know what target I am shooting at. I must do my very best to hit my target with my words. The better I hit it the better the people will be fed.

The arrows my son shoots must be straight or they won't go where they are aimed. If they are bent or crooked the arrow will go in any direction. When I speak my words must be the same way. They must all be focused on the same target. We have all heard speakers who go from one subject to another and then another, finally concluding with something far different than what they started talking about. They may start talking about prayer, then talk about the importance of evangelism, say something about Jesus coming back, and then conclude speaking about the Holy Spirit or giving money to the church. They may be a good speaker and use interesting stories to hold everyone's attention, but people will leave confused and not really having been fed. There won't be anything specific they have been taught and trained to do. Whenever Jesus or Paul spoke they had one main idea, one straight arrow, and that helped them hit their target. Always plan what you want the people to know and what you want them to do before speaking.

THE TARGET: If you don't know what your target is you won't hit it! Before I speak in India I try my best to find out who I will be speaking to, what their needs are and where they are spiritually. Then I pray for wisdom and listen as I ask God what would be good to speak about with that group. But I always know what my target is, what I want to accomplish, what I want them to know and do. I don't just speak words. I use words to form ideas and truth in their minds that will help them become more like Jesus.

TAKING THE PEOPLE FROM WHERE THEY ARE TO WHERE THEY NEED TO BE: When I speak to people to take them to a goal I have, I must first start with where they are. I begin with what they know and what is happening in their lives, then by my words I start moving them in the direction I want them to go. If I want them to follow me I must start where they are at. You must know your people when you speak. You must know what their lives are like, what they know, what they are struggling with and where they are having victory. Talking to a group of mature believers is much different than talking to those who aren't Christians. We must start at a different place if we are talking to children, teens or adults. The same is true in counseling and speaking to people one on one. Always start where they are so you can bring them with you as you move them toward the target you have for them.

FIRST PRAY: Prayer is the most important part of our preparation, yet often we forget to pray or are too busy to pray. There is nothing more important than asking for God's help and wisdom, which He promises to us (James 1:5-7). Praying for insight, for God's leading and for God to use our message is the most important step. Bahkt Singh is a man I admire greatly because he always spent much time in prayer before speaking. That is important for all of us.

STUDY THE PASSAGE: Before we can prepare a message on a passage we must first make sure we understand the passage. In chapter 5 I talked about how we can study the Bible to make

sure we know what God is saying. Now let's talk about how to package and communicate what you've learned with your people.

START WITH AN OUTLINE: The best way to start with where people are and take them to where you want them to be is with an outline. I always use that when preparing a sermon. It is a framework to build on. It is like the skeleton of your body which holds the rest in place. I outlined this book before writing as well so it would be organized. I broke what I wanted to say into 9 chapters. Each chapter is broken into main parts and these into smaller sections. That way all the material is organized and flows in a smooth way.

When I walk across a room I start at one point and end up at another. How I get there is by a series of steps. Preaching is the same. We get from one point to another by a series of steps, first one, then another and one following that. They are all about the same size and all move in the same direction, one starting where another stops. When developing a lesson or sermon write down the series of steps it will take to get from where the people are to where they need to be.

OUTLINING TOPICAL SERMONS: When I moved into the house in which I now lived I got some boxes in which to pack my belongings. I got several fairly large boxes and put things in them. I wanted the boxes all about the same, none too much bigger or heavier than the others. I put all the kitchen things in one box, all the bathroom things in another box and so on. I put a large label on each box. I put a number on each box so I would know which should be opened first, next and even last. Inside each box I put smaller boxes, bags, etc. We can't pack too much in each box or it will get too heavy to move. The contents of my home were easier to move and put into place in my new home by doing it this way. If I would have thrown things from each room in each box it would have been very difficult to unpack.

This is how we can package and move thoughts from our minds to someone else's mind as well. When thoughts are grouped together, arranged in order and moved from one to the next it is easier for our listeners to understand and remember the things we are teaching them.

Here is an example of a sermon I did on the importance of husbands being servant leaders of their wives:

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Main Idea: TO KNOW: teach what it means to be a servant leader to our wives

TO DO: show how men should do this in everyday life with God's help and Jesus' example

Introduction

I. REQUIREMENTS OF SERVANT HEADSHIP Ephesians 5:25-31

- A. Servant headship assumes responsibility
- B. Servant headship actively initiates
- C. Servant headship leads by serving
- D. Servant headship gives, not takes 25
- E. Servant headship seeks to glorify the wife 25-28
- F. Servant headship communicates forgiveness 26
- G. Servant headship means loving unconditionally 28
- H. Servant headship loves even when hurting 28
- I. Servant headship means providing care for the wife 28-29
- J. Servant headship relies on the wife's skills, too
- K. Servant headship means the wife is first priority 31

II. REASONS FOR SERVANT HEADSHIP

- A. Obedience to god
- b. Blessing from god

III. RESOURCES FOR SERVANT HEADSHIP

- A. Close personal relationship with God
- B. Commitment to show sacrificial love
- C. Filled with fruit of the spirit
- D. Follow Jesus' example (wwjd)

Conclusion

OUTLINING TEXTUAL SERMONS: An outline is equally important when teaching a passage or book of the Bible. There we start where the writer starts the passage. We develop it as the writer does. We must see how he packed the boxes and what he put in each one so we can unpack them for the people listening to us. At each point we must make sure the people understand how it applies to them. If not they won't learn or apply it as they should.

GREATER IS HE WHO IS IN YOU (Mark 5:1-10)

Main Idea: KNOW Jesus can free demonized people because He is greater than Satan.

DO: Trust Jesus for victory over Satan and demons.

Introduction

I. JESUS MEETS THE MAN 1-5 (BACKGROUND)

- A. THE PLACE (where) 1 Gerasenes
- B. THE PEOPLE (who) 2 Jesus and the man
 1. Jesus
 2. The man (men)
 - A. Satan – the leader
 - B. Demons – the helpers
- C. THE PROBLEM (what) 3-5 man is demonized
 1. darkness & death
 2. anger & violence
 3. out of control
 4. pain & self-destruction
 5. sensuality, sexual perversion
 6. signs of demonizing

II. JESUS DEFEATS THE DEMONS 6-13 (TO KNOW)

- A. THE MAN COMES TO JESUS 6
- B. THE DEMONS LEAVE THE MAN 7-13a
 1. demons fear jesus
 2. demons must obey jesus
- C. THE PIGS DROWN IN THE LAKE 13b

III. JESUS GREETES THE PEOPLE 14-20 (TO DO)

- A. REJECTION BY THE PEOPLE 14-17
- B. RECEPTION BY THE EX DEMONIZED MAN 18-20
- C. RECEPTION BY US TODAY
 1. God provides authority
 2. God provides power
 3. we have authority & power

Conclusion

SERMON INTRODUCTION: Everyone listens carefully to the first few words a pastor says when he preaches, but many of the people will stop paying close attention if they don't become interested. Our first sentences show the people why they need to listen to what we have to say. We gain their interest and they get more out of the rest of the message. I've tried to start each chapter in this book with a story or illustration to get your interest so you want to read the rest of the chapter. That's how an introduction is in a sermon. It gets the listeners interested in the subject I am going to speak about so they will pay attention.

When my son shoots an arrow it sticks in the target because it has a sharp tip on it. That weight helps it fly to its target in a straight line as well. The introduction to the sermon points in the direction you want to go and gets people's attention. It helps them see the importance of what you are talking about so they will better listen. I use a story, an event in my life, an example from history, an analogy from nature or some current event. It gets everyone's interest, shows them they should listen carefully to what I am going to say, and helps introduce what I am talking about so we all start at the same place. An arrow's tip must be sharp to hit and stick and our opening words in a message must be right to the point and hit home.

SERMON CONCLUSION: The end of the sermon should be a short summary of your main idea: what you want them to know and what you want them to do. This helps make sure it is fresh in their mind and completely understood. It leaves them with their final thoughts on what you wanted to teach them. The conclusion isn't a time to introduce new material or make another point, just to summarize what you have already told them so they can clearly grasp it.

EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS: When Jesus taught He always used stories to make a point. These parables were from everyday life around Him and helped the people understand what He was saying. This keeps the teaching moving straight and to the target. Examples and illustrations are like the arrows on the back of the arrow. They help guide the arrow so it goes straight to the target and sticks in place. These, too, can be an event in life, an example from history, an analogy from nature or some current event. This is like showing someone a map or a picture to help them understand what you are saying. Be careful to respect people's privacy so don't use names or tell stories where the listeners know who you are talking about unless you first get the approval of the person. That includes talking about your wife and children as well.

Stories and examples can be a good way of showing how the truth applies as well. It can help with showing people what you want them to do. I like to use magic tricks to help emphasize the points I am teaching. They help the listeners see the point and remember it. It also gets the attention of the people and they listen more carefully. Everyone likes a good story so practice these and develop a skill in telling stories. Your messages will be better understood and remembered if you do.

EVALUATING YOUR MESSAGE: A cook likes feedback on her meal so she knows what people thought of it and if there is any way she can improve it next time. After you are done with a message and before everyone goes home ask someone to summarize what you were saying. You can see if they got the main point and if they know what you want them to know. Ask them if anything was confusing or hard to understand. A church leader or someone in your family would be good to ask for they should be honest and helpful. My wife is very helpful to me in giving good, helpful feedback so I can improve my preaching. It takes time and practice to become a good speaker, but just talking a lot won't accomplish that. You have to plan what you are saying and evaluate it afterwards so you can learn and do better the next time.

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT? God expects each pastor to feed his sheep by teaching them the Word of God.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Are you becoming thoroughly equipped through your knowledge of the Bible?

Are you equipping the people in your church by teaching them God’s Word?

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.” 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Write down a list of all the commands we are given in this verse.

This passage also tells us how we are to preach the Word. Write them down as well.

7. GOD EXPECTS US TO TRAIN OTHERS TO MINISTER

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to train Christians so they can live for Jesus and serve others in the way they've been gifted.

Moses was a great man of God and one of the best leaders in Israel's history. He was greatly gifted by God and well trained in Egypt. But he did have one weakness that limited his effectiveness. He tried to do everything himself. As a result he wore out and became ineffective. He wasn't able to do the important work that needed doing for he was too busy trying to take care of all the details. He wasn't able to work where he was most needed. He was tired, and the people weren't happy with him because a lot wasn't getting done. There was too much to do, but he was trying to do all. Then his father-in-law, Jethro, told him that he needed to delegate some of the work to others. "Train others to help with the load so you can focus on jobs only you can do", Jethro counseled (Exodus 18:17-23). Moses followed this wise advice and everyone was much better off because of it.

Jethro's suggestion still stands as good practice for pastors today. God doesn't expect us to do everything in our churches, but He does expect us to train others so they can minister as well.

A. THE COMMAND TO TRAIN OTHERS

PREPARING GOD'S PEOPLE TO SERVE: We already looked at Ephesians 4:11-13 where pastor-teachers are commanded to feed their sheep the Word of God. Paul says the reason for this is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). The goal of our teaching is to "prepare" or "equip" our people. This means we are to train them, get them ready to serve. It was a military term used of the preparation given to soldiers or sailors so they would be able to invade enemy-occupied territory and win it for their king. This is our goal as well. According to this verse it is our main purpose as pastors. We are to prepare our people to serve God.

We are not required to do everything ourselves but to train and prepare our people so they can minister and serve God, so they can take back enemy-occupied territory for our King. A shepherd is to make sure his sheep are fed. When they are then they produce wool and more sheep. The shepherd can't produce wool or new sheep, only the sheep can do that. The shepherd is to help the sheep be able to do that for which they were created. They aren't there to watch the shepherd do it all, but to do their part with the shepherd's help. This brings great satisfaction and joy to the shepherd, as it does to the pastor.

PASS THE TRUTH ON TO RELIABLE MEN WHO WILL TEACH OTHERS: Paul gives much excellent advice to Timothy, the young pastor he was training for the ministry. He tells

Timothy to entrust reliable men with the things he had learned from Paul. These should be men who would then teach these things to others (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Timothy is to “entrust” these truths to others. That word in Greek is a banking term with the idea of making a deposit. Paul has deposited the truth he learned with Timothy. Now it is Timothy’s privilege and responsibility to pass that on to others, and they will teach even more people. In this way the word spreads and grows. In the 2,000 years since Paul said those words God’s truth has spread to all parts of the earth and passed down from generation to generation until it has come to you and me today.

When someone receives this knowledge he is responsible to teach it to others (2 Timothy 2:2). This is the main responsibility of pastors, what God expects more than anything else (John 21:15-17; 1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24). We must learn God’s truth before we can pass it on, but what we do know we are required to share.

When I travel in India I hold pastors’ conferences so I can pass on the things I have learned to other pastors. Were I to try to teach each individual Christian the work would be impossible. But if I train pastors then they can pass it on to other pastors as well as their people. This way the truth multiplies over and over. This is the way God wants us to do His work.

Jesus commands His people to do this. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 He commands His followers, the pastors of the church that is starting, to make disciples of all nations. This is the main command in this verse. We are to do this by going, baptizing and teaching. Those 3 are means to an end. The end, the purpose is to make disciples. The goal of our teaching is to help people grow spiritually so they can serve God in their lives and pass His truth on to others. We are to go and tell others about salvation. Then we are to baptize them as they respond to God’s message and accept His free gift. When they have become believers we are to teach them, feed and equip them, so they can be healthy, growing sheep. This way they can minister and serve as well.

God’s plan is not for us to do everything that needs doing in a church but to focus on teaching and training our people. Then they can take part in the ministry and use their unique gifts to help in the ministry. Much more can be accomplished that way than if we are kept busy trying to do things others can do.

Nehemiah is one of my favorite Bible leaders. He worked in a quiet but thorough way. He was a man of preparation and planning. That is very important. He also was courageous in His obedience when He knew what God wanted Him to do. He was able to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, something no one else had been able to do for many years. He was successful because he got everyone involved; he didn’t try doing all the work himself. He divided up the work by assigning groups of people to various portions of the wall. Each was responsible to repair the wall near their own homes. That way they wouldn’t have to travel far to work, they would stay to defend that wall and their own homes if attacked, and they would do a better job knowing the welfare of their own families was at stake. He recognized their work by putting their names on the wall. He trained and expected everyone to share the load. That was the only way it could be done, and it worked (Nehemiah 3:1-32).

B. THE REASON TO TRAIN OTHERS

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO THEY CAN GROW SPIRITUALLY: Some people expect their pastor to come do everything for them, pray for them, give advice for every decision and help them in every way they need it. They seem to think pastors have nothing better to do than help them do things they should be doing on their own. If a pastor doesn't meet their demands they complain to others and may even leave the church. Often a pastor feels he has no choice but to give in to their unreasonable demands. But that isn't so. We must do only what God expects of us.

I have six children whom I love dearly. They have brought great joy to my life. They are now mature adults who are living for the Lord and leading their families to follow Him. But my wife and I had to train them as they grew. Many times we had to tell them 'no' and force them to do things they didn't want to do, things we could have done easier ourselves. What happens if you do everything for your children instead of making them learn to do things themselves? They would be spoiled, lazy, self-centered people who think everyone has to serve them. You and I don't want our children to grow up that way. Our heavenly Father doesn't want His children growing up that way either!

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO THEIR GIFTS CAN BE USED: As we saw earlier, God gives each of us spiritual gifts, but no two of us are alike (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). The Body of Christ, like our physical body, has many different parts which work together for the whole. We need our head, but without hands or feet it wouldn't be able to accomplish anything. We need all our organs, each part of our body is important and has its function. The same is true in the church.

When we as pastors try doing too much, more than God expects of us, we end up doing what someone else should be doing. Moses was preventing other men from using their gifts when he tried to do everything himself. We are to train and equip our people so they can use their gifts and serve in the ways they are gifted. It's not always easy to do because some people don't want to grow and serve. Often it is quicker and easier for us to do something ourselves instead of training someone else. Then perhaps they don't do as good a job as we would have done. But like with raising our children, it is very important they start learning and doing their best. They will mature and get better, and then they can train others as well.

When Paul started a new church he stayed awhile to teach and train the people until he found some who were gifted and mature enough to take over leadership. They were trained and put in place. Then Paul went on to a new ministry (Acts 14:21-23). Paul stayed in touch with the churches he started, checking on them and helping in any way he could, until they were self-sufficient. Then they started reaching out and starting new churches. This is the pattern God expects us to follow. We can only do it if we train others to use their gifts in His service.

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO THEIR FAITH CAN BE STRETCHED: When others start using their gifts and serving they will be stretched and challenged. Their faith will grow as they learn to trust God and obey Him. Like small children learn to walk slowly and eventually become very good at it, so it is when one starts serving. Their steps are slow and they fall down a lot, but unless that happens they'll never learn to walk on their own. That's how it is with the people we train as well. The process of practicing what they know is part of the way we teach and equip them.

Let's go back to Paul's words in Ephesians 4:11-13 one more time. Pastors are to teach God's people to serve so the whole church will mature (verse 12) but also so they will mature (verse 13).

He says when people learn to serve God it will help they reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Jesus. It will help them become mature, being more like Jesus. As they learn more about Jesus they will grow in intimacy with Him. They won't become perfect; none of us will ever be perfect in this life. But they will mature, they will keep growing, they will become more and more like Jesus in how they think and act. That won't happen unless we train and encourage them to serve God in their own lives each day.

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO WE CAN FOCUS ON USING OUR OWN GIFTS: The apostles in the early church found themselves doing good things (distributing food and clothing to needy widows) that they couldn't do the best things (study and teaching the Bible and praying). So they chose seven men, called deacons, to help the widows and free them up to minister in the areas where God has gifted them (Acts 6:1-4). This worked very well for them, and for the men chosen. As these men could use their gifts God stretched and matured them for further service (Acts 6:5-6) Stephen and Philip we among those five. Had the apostles kept doing things others could the church wouldn't have grown and neither would these men.

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO WE CAN PACE OURSELVES FOR THE A LONG TIME OF SERVICE: I enjoy running to get exercise and have been running regularly since my early teens. I don't go as fast as I did but I can still go as far, it just takes longer. I don't mind, though, for running is about the process of getting there, not about getting there fast. I've learned the same thing is true in life as well. As I approach my retirement years and look back on my life of ministry I better appreciate that life is a marathon, not a sprint, so it's important to pace ones' self. The ministry is about quality, not quantity. I know that's hard to practice when starting out with everyone watching and evaluating you by what you produce. Just remember God uses an entirely different yard stick to measure you by than most of those in your church. In order to be effective for years to come we must take time now to rest, enjoy life and do things we like as well as our pastoral duties. Sometimes that is hard for we think we need to use every minute for the ministry. God doesn't expect that because He knows that is not how we are most effective.

When the apostle John was asked how he justified a hobby of raising pigeons when there was so much that needed to be done for the kingdom, it is said that he got his bow and pointed out that, in order to be effective when needed, it couldn't be tightly strung at all times. A similar illustration goes back to whaling days. The harpooner whose job it was to spear the whale was not allowed to join in the rowing which got the boat in position. He has to be rested and prepared for the important work entrusted to him. All Christians must pace themselves so they are sharp and ready for key events in life.

That doesn't mean we are to be lazy or avoid hard work, but it does mean we are to pace ourselves so we can finish the marathon, not burn out before the end. We must be a good steward of the time, energy and opportunities God gives us. Even Jesus often said no to good things in order to be able to do the best. He paced Himself, despite only having a little over 3 years to accomplish all that needed doing (Luke 5:16). Those living for God today are often admired for their busyness, as if that means they are important and productive in what will count in eternity.

Anyone can be too busy, and there will be times when it is unavoidable, but as a typical life style it is not what God wants. He gives us 24 hours in a day so we know He won't give us 25 hours worth of work to do. If we have more to do than time to do it we are doing things He hasn't given us. He wants us to include play, fun, relaxation and enjoyment as well (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). God has created a beautiful world full of colors, sounds, smells and tastes for us to enjoy. Are taking time to enjoy the good things in life?

I'm nearing retirement age, but I don't ever want to stop ministering. Age and health may require I slow down a bit, but then I hope to focus on what I can do best and enjoy doing most in ministry. I don't ever want to stop everything completely. In many ways my most productive years are coming. I just need to pace myself properly to be able to keep going.

The turtle and the rabbit tale has always been one of my favorite stories and has shaped my life philosophy. The rabbit boasted he could beat anyone with his speed. No one accepted his challenge to race but the turtle who was tired of hearing him boast and brag. The rabbit got way ahead in the race and so he decided to play awhile. The turtle just kept slowly going on and on until he reached where the rabbit was playing. Then the rabbit took off at a fast pace again and got so far ahead he couldn't even see the turtle. He lay down to rest awhile and fell asleep. It wasn't until the turtle was about to cross the line that he saw what was happening and ran as fast as he could but it was too late. The turtle won because he persevered. He didn't move fast but he was steady. There's a lot of wisdom in that – consistency in a pace we can maintain over the long haul is the only way to complete the course. Run with perseverance, not with speed (Hebrews 12:1). Pace yourself. Don't go as fast as you can until you tire and have to stop for a while, and then go fast again. Keep a steady work load that allows for time off, time to relax and enjoy life. Jesus took time off, time to get away. He wasn't rushed or always busy and He only had 3 years to accomplish His work.

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO WE CAN HAVE TIME TO DEVELOP FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHERS:

When my wife and I travel outside our area it seems God always puts other Christians in our way. We look forward to our paths crossing with these friends whom we just haven't met yet! Recently we traveled to Puerto Rico and God sprinkled a steady stream of believers throughout our trip. When I go to India the help and support of believers there is essential. The further I am from home the more I appreciate fellowship with a brother or sister in Jesus.

Even when I'm not traveling, I'm still quite far from my real home in heaven. Here, too, fellowship with other believers is very important. Close contact with believers I have known a long time is a precious, valuable asset to my life's journey. The older I become the more I value Christian fellowship: with those I'm known a lifetime as well as with those I just meet in passing (Acts 2:42).

I'm been learning through the years how to let people get closer to me and how I can get to know them deeper as well. Instead of seeing them as assets (or stumbling blocks) to what I want to accomplish in life I am appreciating others more and more as fellow travelers who are making their way to the same eternal city I am. I enjoy their friendship, need their encouragement and learn from their example. A long, hard journey is always easier when in the company of faithful companions. That is why God gives us each other to help us through this life.

Have you noticed how an instant bond is formed when you find someone you just met is a Christian? It doesn't matter what culture or country they come from, what color they are or what language they speak. We share the same values and priorities. We have the same world view. Jesus in me connects with Jesus in them. We are children of the same Father – and that makes us brothers and sisters. We fight the same enemy. We'll spend eternity together, so why not start enjoying each other while here?

Jesus Himself needed human fellowship. He would withdraw from the crowds and get away with just the disciples. He needed them. Unfortunately they weren't always there for Him, like in Gethsemane before His arrest. However if He needed others we certainly do as well. The more I

progress in life and ministry the more I realize how much I need other believers and what a blessing it is that God puts them in my life (Hebrews 10:25). When I train others to minister I have close fellowship with them. Then as they help with the ministry I am freed up so I can enjoy friendships and fellowship myself.

WE TRAIN OTHERS SO THE KINGDOM WILL GROW: When you train others to serve God as He has called and gifted them the whole Kingdom of God on earth grows. They grow, you grow and the church grows. In fact, you can accomplish more when you make training others your first priority.

Suppose you feel God calling you to start a new church in an area without a Gospel witness. You can try doing everything yourself to win people, train them and start a church. But what will happen? You'll get very tired, you won't be able to do all that needs doing, and your family and home church will suffer. How much better it is to train your people so they can use their gifts of evangelism, hospitality, teaching and organization to help start the church. It will help them grow as well.

Instill into your people, and those in each church you start, the challenge to win others to Jesus and start more new churches. By teaching and example show your people the importance of looking for opportunities to reach those who don't know Jesus. When frogs eat they sit back all fat and lazy. They wait for insects to come to them. Lizards are entirely different. They are always on the go, moving from one place to another looking for insects. If none are present they soon move to a different location, always looking for anything that moves. Some churches and Christians are like frogs, just taking it easy waiting for others to come to them and ask about Jesus. Others are like lizards, constantly alert to any they can minister to. Which are you like? Which is your church like? It takes more energy and sacrifice to hunt like a lizard, but the results are well worth it. Jesus was always sensitive to the needs of those around Him, always looking for ways to serve.

Some in our church are gifted at speaking to others about Jesus and do it often and well. Usually for most, though, this isn't something easy for them so they avoid it. God expects us to train everyone, even those who are very hesitant to reach out. Remind them that God expects them to be witnesses, not lawyers. In a court of law a lawyer argues his beliefs and tries to get others to agree with them. All a witness does is tell what he knows, what he has experienced. God calls us to be witnesses, not lawyers. We don't have to argue or convince anyone of the truth. God doesn't expect that. He does expect us to tell others what He has done for us. That is being a witness. Anyone can and must tell others what Jesus has done in their lives. That is the best way to spread God's word and evangelize.

Always remember, though that it is Jesus' church. He will build it and nothing will stop it (Matthew 16:18). He gives us the privilege to be part of the work and to watch it happen, but it is not our church, only His!

C. THE WAY TO TRAIN OTHERS

We've seen that God commands us to teach and train others to serve. We've also seen why that is important. We know it is something we must do. No let's talk about how to do it.

WHAT MENTORING IS: When my sons were young boys they loved to play sports. When they joined a team I volunteered to help coach the team. As a coach my responsibility was to train

them to do their very best in the athletic contest to come. I taught them as much as I could and showed them the best I could. But I couldn't go on the field and play for them, that was up to them. I did the training, they did the playing. As pastors we are like a coach who prepares our people the very best we can to live the Christian life. Each Christian must be prepared for that. We call that discipleship. But beyond that there are a few that have special pastoral or leadership skills and they need training in those areas as well. We equip everyone, but those who are called to help with the ministry need extra training. That is usually called mentoring and I want to talk about it in this chapter.

OLD TESTAMENT MENTORS: The Bible is full of examples of mentoring and coaching. It records generation after generation receiving God's word and passing it on to the next generation. Much of this is done person-to-person in mentoring and coaching relationships as one person influences another. The greatest example of mentoring is God reaching out to tutor and guide mankind, as He continues to do today. He is the ultimate mentor, the perfect coach and developer.

On a human level, however, we see numerous Old Testament examples of mentoring. Moses is one of the best examples. During the first forty years of his life, Moses was mentored in the ways of the Egyptians. God mentored Moses during the second forty years, those in the wilderness watching sheep. That experience taught and matured Moses, preparing him to lead the nation of Israel. He developed a close relationship with Jethro (Ruel) during that time. Later, Jethro coached Moses in the importance of delegating work. Moses took his advice and his work load was lightened considerably. This was a great improvement for Moses and for the people who needed assistance. Moses then began to mentor others. He worked closely with Aaron, coaching him in what to say to Pharaoh. When Aaron stumbled Moses took over. Aaron was not as responsive to Moses' mentoring as he could have been, for when Moses wasn't with him he let others influence him (i.e. Golden Calf).

Joshua was another recipient of Moses' mentoring, working with him one-on-one and preparing him to take over leadership. Joshua spent years living with and assisting Moses. He learned his lessons well for he became a truly godly and wise leader. It seems Moses also worked with Caleb as well. He was another man who responded well to Moses' input and left a godly legacy. Perhaps Moses' mentoring influence is the reason these two were the only ones who believed God could defeat the giants and give them the land.

Samuel is another example of mentoring. From when he was very young on he was mentored by Eli. He was trained for the priesthood specifically but also for life in general. He became a faithful, godly man. Samuel is then seen mentoring others. He tried to influence Saul to follow God, and then when Saul sinned Samuel tried unsuccessfully to get him to repent. Samuel's life is quite closely tied to David as well. He not only anointed David as king but helped him through some difficult times when Saul was trying to kill David. Samuel gave David advice he followed. Earlier on Saul had tried to coach David in how to go about killing Goliath but David refused his offer of help.

In Jerusalem Nehemiah, the secular governor, and Ezra, the spiritual teacher, worked well together and in training other leaders among the Jews. There are many other examples as well.

JESUS' EXAMPLE OF MENTORING: No one is a better example of the perfect coach or mentor than Jesus Christ himself. The whole pattern of His life revolved around this: calling men to follow him, living and traveling with them day after day, and teaching them by word and deed. This was

the mentoring pattern every rabbi followed. Jesus didn't try to reach as many people as He could or gather as large a following as possible. The main focus of His ministry was gathering a few committed men around Him and training them to be able to go out and train others. This is God's pattern for us and what He expects us to do as well.

The gospels record example after example of Jesus mentoring those who followed Him. From all who followed He called twelve to a special relationship and training. From among those twelve He developed an extra close relationship with three: Peter, James and John. His coaching was different with Peter than with Nicodemus, with John than with Matthew, with Mary than with Martha. However in all cases he was clearly the guide and tutor.

Jesus was never too busy for His disciples. He often sent the crowds away or avoided them to have time with the twelve. That was His first priority. He didn't let Himself get so busy doing good things that He didn't have time to do the best things. Also He was never too busy for His own time with God. Often He slipped away to pray. Sometimes He got up early, other times He stayed up late. But He made sure His own relationship with God was strong and healthy.

There are obvious lessons to be learned from the way Jesus mentored His disciples. They went through stages that followers of Jesus today also go through. At first they believed in Him as the Christ and occasionally accompanied Him when it was convenient. Then they were challenged to travel with and learn from Him full time. Out of this large group a smaller select band were chosen and trained for specific future service. From the start Jesus was patiently working with them to have them unlearn their wrong ideas and misconceptions so they could base their lives on the truth He would give them. Their main assets were their devotion to Jesus and their willingness to sacrifice for Him. Jesus recognized these traits and patiently built on them. He helped each one develop their own spiritual gifts and skills. This is a good example for us as we coach others.

The early disciples were rustic, simple, sincere and energetic. Jesus taught them by ear and eye. They heard His words and saw His life and actions. This same pattern applies to us today. I mentor not just by what I say but also by how I live.

Notice the way Jesus sent the disciples out by two's during their training and didn't wait until after it was completed (Luke 10:1-20). While He didn't do this at the start but taught them the basics, He gave them plenty of opportunities to apply what He taught. I try to do that with men I mentor and train. They must be practicing what they are being taught. This is the way doctors, mechanics and farmers learn as well. Giving them opportunities to apply what they are learning as they progress reinforces what they learn and motivates them to learn more. When someone didn't respond and want to be taught Jesus commanded His disciples to shake the dust off their feet and move on to others who would respond.

"Come away and rest," Jesus said to His disciples time after time. Balance is important in my own life and in those I mentor. While I know this in my head, it is sometimes hard to apply it to my life when so many worthwhile things need doing. If Jesus, in just a little over three years on earth, knew He had to pace Himself and taught His followers to do the same, then I must follow that pattern. Coaching those I work with to have balance and take time to rest is important.

Jesus was sensitive to whom God wanted Him to work with. He didn't just look for educated or popular people. His calling of Matthew is a case in point. As a tax collector He was hated by the Jews. Simon the Zealot was unpopular for he was a terrorist. Several of the disciples were uneducated fishermen. Jesus looked at their heart, not their training or social status.

Jesus mentored by serving. We'll talk about that in detail in the next chapter but we need to make note here that He didn't expect the disciples to serve Him, He served them (John 13). He had a humble servant attitude which we must have if we are to be like Him.

EARLY CHURCH MENTORS: Examples of mentoring abound in the book of Acts as well, for the disciples followed the example of their Master in training others as He trained them.

As leadership roles developed, these functions were based on mentoring relationships as well. Peter and John became leaders in the early church and mentored the church as a whole. They worked together as peer mentors in this new and important responsibility. When their work load became burdensome deacons were chosen to help so the leaders could focus on their roles as advisors and guides. Local church pastors also followed the mentoring and coaching role as they ministered to the people in their care. They disciplined young believers and trained new leaders. The New Testament epistles are examples of Paul's teaching of those he was training and mentoring. His letters to Timothy and Titus clearly illustrate how Paul went about doing this.

Clear and specific examples of mentoring abound in the early church. God, in His mentoring process with Peter, sent him to coach Cornelius as he sought a relationship with God. Peter responded by obeying and taking the gospel to a Gentile, even though that was something entirely new to him.

Barnabas was an outstanding example of mentoring. He was chosen by God to take Paul under his wing in the early years and mentor Paul in the faith. He also mentored Mark and probably many others as well. Paul went on to be the great church-planter of the early church, and Mark to serve faithfully in addition to writing the gospel of Mark. What a great impact Barnabas has had on Christianity through his mentoring work with Paul, Mark and untold others!

Paul himself mentored many others: Mark, Onesimus, Philemon, Timothy, Titus and many unnamed local church leaders as well. Timothy, for example, traveled with Paul for quite a while and then applied what he learned to his ministry to the church at Ephesus. Titus, too, traveled with Paul for awhile and then pastored on his own. This mentoring process must have been one of the most rewarding and encouraging parts of Paul's ministry. Watching those we mentor move on to begin mentoring others is very rewarding. This was one of the basic principles of his life's work, as it was of his Master's. "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

From that time to today, the gospel has come down to us as one generation mentored the next. That pattern is ours to follow today as well. Jesus guides us through the indwelling Holy Spirit and the Bible. We are privileged to be used by Him to mentor and coach others. There can be no higher calling in life than this!

TRAITS OF A GOOD MENTOR: It takes commitment to be a good mentor. It means you must be willing to share your very life with someone else (1 Thessalonians 2:8). It can be hard work. We must make it a priority and sacrifice doing other things so we can build into the life of another man or men as we train them to minister.

It also takes perseverance to mentor others. It can be easy to quit when they don't grow as quickly as we'd like or when they cause more work for us. It means we must patiently stick with them,

encourage them, and let them grow at their own pace. It means telling them what to do, showing them by your actions, and then giving them opportunity to try it on their own. If they don't get it right we must keep helping them until they do. This refers to skills they need to learn as well as developing a godly character. We must work with them the same way God works with us.

Being a good mentor takes honesty. We must be honest about our own shortcomings and not try to impress them or have them think we are perfect. There may be personal struggles or past failures we don't have to share with them. We need to come alongside them as one man to another who is traveling the same path. We must let them know we understand and share how we faced some of the difficulties they are now facing. We must also be honest when we need to speak the truth to them in love (Ephesians 4:15). If there is sin in their life we must bring it into the open and help them deal with it (Galatians 6:1).

We aren't to try to make those we mentor into exact copies of us for each one of us is different. We are to help them grow to be the people God created them to be. They will be different than us. They will have some skills we don't and we will have some gifts they don't. Let them be themselves. Encourage them to be all God wants them to be. Do your best to build them up, encourage and support them. Be like a spiritual father to them. They may even grow to have a greater place of leadership than you do. Barnabas mentored Paul but soon realized Paul was the one God was gifting to lead so Barnabas was willing to let Paul lead and to support him in any way he could.

We must continue to grow as well, as we saw in chapter two. We must be willing to learn from those we mentor, for God uses them to help us mature as well. In fact, we should have someone we go to for mentoring as well. We always need someone more mature in the faith to train and help us. Paul, for example, mentored men like Timothy and Titus. He had been mentored by Barnabas and I'm sure that relationship continued through their lives. Paul also had someone he could go to as a friend, someone at his level in life. That was Luke. We all need someone younger than us to build into (Paul to Timothy), someone more mature in the faith to build into us (Barnabas to Paul) and someone near his own age to share life and learning with (Paul and Luke). Moses had Jethro as an older mentor, Joshua as someone he was mentoring, and Aaron as someone his age to find fellowship and support. Do you have all three of these? You should. Do your best to develop these relationships, even if it takes time from other parts of ministry. It is very important for you to be the person and Pastor God wants you to be.

Mentoring can be very rewarding and satisfying. I have a deep desire to help train men for ministry. God has given me a burden for this and gifted me to be able to do it. It helps me grow and I am blessed as I watch God work in the lives of others. It is amazing how God can use the things He has taught me over the years to help others. Perhaps they won't make some of the mistakes I have made. My gifts of teaching and counseling work very together when I coach someone who is learning to minister. I thank God for what He has taught me and for the privilege of passing it on to others. Ministering to the pastors of India is a great joy and wonderful blessing to me. I thank God for that privilege. I am greatly encouraged by their faithfulness and commitment to Jesus. I look forward to being able to spend time with each one of them when I get to heaven. I thank God, too, for the privilege of writing this book to help others in the ministry. If God has burdened you for this special work He will help bless you through it as well.

CHOOSING WHOM TO MENTOR: When you notice a man who strikes you as someone who would make a good teacher or leader, get to know them well. Challenge them to follow God as He calls them to leadership. They may become a pastor, an evangelist, a leader in your church or a

leader in another church. Only God knows what He has for them. I enjoy training men to serve in my church or to pastor their own church.

Before choosing the 12 Jesus got to know them very well. Their commitment was proven. They had given up their careers to travel with Jesus for a year. Living with them day after day helped Him to know them well. Got to know those you will mentor. Make sure their commitment is solid and will last. If they can't be with you full time just work with them when they are able. It can start slowly and build. If they are called and interested the relationship will grow. Be patient, though. God is very patient with us!

Jesus spent much time in prayer before choosing whom He would call to be the twelve to travel with Him. Seek God's guidance in this. Listen to what He has to say. Spend much time praying for God's wisdom as to whom you should mentor and then for God to bless and use them for His Kingdom. Pray regularly for those you are mentoring.

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to train Christians so they can live for Jesus and serve others in the way they've been gifted.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

Are you making it a priority to train others to minister? Are you disciplining your people so they are growing stronger spiritually? Is there anything you should do to help in this area?

Think of those in your past whom God has used to really help you on your journey. Who is your Barnabas? Pray for them. Thank them (mail, email or in person) again today for the role they played in your life.

Who has God put in your path for you to help and mentor? Who is your Timothy?

Who is a friend in ministry with whom you can share burdens as well as victories? Who is your Luke?

If you keep going at the pace you are currently going at, will you be able to last in the ministry or will you get tired and need to stop?

If you spend time in these mentoring relationships you won't have time for some of the other things you do. What are some of the 'good' things you can stop doing in order to have time for the 'best' things God expects you to do? If you aren't sure spend some time right now praying and listening to God as He guides you in the use of your time. He won't give you more to do than you have time for so listen to what He says He expects of you.

8. GOD EXPECTS US TO SERVE HIS SHEEP

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to lead by humbly serving God and His people.

Being a slave, or even a servant, is not something most people would like. If you ask a child what he wants to be when he grows up he may mention any number of things, but being a slave or servant won't be one of them. Talk to a college student and ask him what his career goals are and being a slave will never be mentioned. It is natural for us to want to have others serve us, to have honor and prestige, to be important and respected. But that's not what God has for pastors. Pastors are looked up to and admired by other people, and some men may even want to be a pastor for that reason. However God clearly says if we are to pastor as He wants then He expects us to be a servant or slave for Him. That is not easy.

So far in this book we have looked at WHAT God wants us to do. He wants us to use the gifts He gives us, to continue to grow, to lead, protect and feed His people, and to train others to minister. In this chapter we will not talk about what He wants us to do, but about HOW He wants us to do the things already mentioned. We are to do all these things with a humble servant attitude.

A. A PASTOR IS A SERVANT

We have seen several words God uses to describe pastors. We are called 'pastor' – someone who shepherds God's people by protecting and feeding them. We are called 'elder' and 'overseer' – someone responsible for managing the work and guiding the people. Now we will look at another familiar word for pastors – "minister." The Greek word for minister, 'diakonos,' is sometimes translated 'servant,' 'minister,' or 'deacon.' The root meaning of the word refers to someone who serves others. It came to be used for someone who waited on tables, a waiter. Paul uses this term to describe pastors in 1 Timothy 4:6 and 2 Timothy 4:5.

NEW TESTAMENT WORDS FOR A PASTOR				
Greek word	EPISCOPOS	PRESBUTEROS	POIMEN	DIACONOS
Transliteration	Episcopal	Presbytery	Poimen	Deacon
Translation	Overseer (bishop)	Elder	Pastor	Minister Servant
Literal meaning	Guardian	Commanding officer	Shepherd	Wait on tables Servant
Main Idea	Action Gentile title for head of group of people, policy-maker Father to family	Action Jewish title for head of synagogue – authority, personal dignity, maturity	Action Shepherd by leading, feeding, protecting the sheep	Attitude Servant, slave of God, attitude of humbly serving
As seen by	Others	Others	God	Self
Scriptures	1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4	1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:1,17,19; Titus 1:5-6	Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4	1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:5

In 1 Timothy 4:6-11 Paul gives detailed instructions to Timothy. He tells him what he needs to do to be a good servant (minister) of Jesus. He tells Timothy to reject all false teachings and nourish himself only on God's Word (verse 7). He reminds him of the importance of self-discipline and self-control to effectively serve God and others (verse 7-8; 1 Corinthians 9:27). Paul commands Timothy to teach God's Word (verse 11, 13). These must be done in a humble way with a servant attitude. We don't lead our people as if we were above them telling them what to do but as fellow learners and servants of God. This is done not only by our words but also by our actions (verse 12). Paul reminds Timothy to use his spiritual gifts to serve others (verse 14) for that is why God gives us these gifts. Paul concludes by challenging Timothy work hard and faithfully in these areas, to not quit but to be fully committed to doing them (verse 15-16). This is what Paul says a minister (servant) is and does.

B. PASTORS LEAD BY SERVING

When some people think of being a leader they think it means to have others do what they want them to do. That's not the way pastors are to lead. It's not the way Jesus led, either. He led His followers by serving them. He calls Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-13). A shepherd serves the sheep. He is there to meet their needs, not to have them meet his needs. He does what is right and best for the sheep. All he does is geared to keep the sheep healthy, safe and growing. That's how Jesus serves us and how we as pastors are to serve the sheep He has given us to care for.

Even more than skill or training, a shepherd needs to have a love for his sheep. He needs to know all about them and know them by name. He must know their needs better than they knew their own needs. If he wasn't willing to serve them out of love he wouldn't make a good shepherd. In fact Jesus said that if that is the case he will run away and leave the sheep unprotected when a wolf attacks (John 10:12). A good shepherd must put the wellbeing of his sheep before himself, as Jesus did by going to the cross for us.

If a shepherd uses his sheep to feel important and successful he isn't putting them first. We must serve them, not use them for our pride and ego. Sheep won't always follow their shepherd. They will rebel, criticize, fail to do what they should and cause much extra work and trouble. They will wander away and do what they want. God's people are the same way. They will not serve us, we must serve them. They can bring some joy and satisfaction to their shepherd, but only God, the owner of the sheep, can give us the real peace and meaning we deserve deep down inside. It is really God we are serving when we serve His sheep, and He richly blesses and rewards us for doing so.

Jesus had some very clear words about what it means to be a leader of His sheep. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 10:43-44) The word 'servant' here is the word we have been looking at, 'minister' or 'deacon' – someone who waits on tables, who serves others. That is what Jesus expects of us. Then He repeats what He is saying but uses an even stronger word, the word for a slave (the Greek word *doulos*). A servant may have some time that is his own, some personal property, and some amount of independence. But a slave has no

possessions, no time, nothing that is his. Everything belongs to the master and is done for the master. That's what Jesus says it means to shepherd His sheep.

This form of servanthood starts in our mind. It's not something we do but an attitude of mind we have. It is a desire to serve God and His people. Jesus came to serve, not be served, and we who are to be like Him must look at ministry the same way He did (Philippians 2:5-11). When James and John's mother wanted them to have the top places in Jesus' kingdom He told them that we become great by serving, not by being served (Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 10:43-44).

Servanthood is an attitude, the way we look at ministry. It applies to how we do all the things God expects of us. Everything must be done with a servant heart, remembering we are slaves of Jesus Christ and belong totally to Him. He doesn't owe us anything. We don't deserve anything. We are to serve Him by serving His sheep. Think of Mother Teresa pouring her life out to serve the suffering people in Kolkata. Think of a mother sacrificing herself to take care of her children. Think of a shepherd fighting a bear or a wolf to protect his sheep. Think of Jesus going to the cross for me and for you. That is what servanthood looks like (1 Corinthians 4:1).

A servant doesn't need to be first. He doesn't need to be honored, recognized, praised and rewarded. He doesn't seek popularity or high position. A servant lovingly cares for God's sheep because of what Jesus has done for Him. A pastor leads by serving, as Jesus serves us.

C. A GOOD LEADER IS A SERVANT LEADER

If you want to be an effective leader of God's people you must serve in love. Here are some principles I have learned to help me be a better servant leader. I don't claim to have become all I should be as a servant yet, but by God's grace I am more of a servant than I was a few years ago.

You can only lead to the degree you are willing to serve. When officers are trained for the United States army they are first taught to obey any and every command given them. They have no rights or privileges and have to do what any training officer tells them. It is very hard, difficult work. But by learning to take orders they then become men who can better lead and give orders. If you aren't willing to serve others you won't be able to be a good pastor who leads others.

The more you serve the greater you become. This is the opposite of the world's way of looking at things. The world says the more who serve you the greater you are, but God says the opposite. Jesus said, "He that would be greatest among you, let him be the servant of all" (Mark 9:25). Jesus Himself washed His disciples feet the night before going to the cross (John 13). Becoming a servant makes us more like Jesus, and the more like Him we become the greater we become in the ways that really matter.

A leader knows that he is inadequate in himself. If you think you can do a good job of being a pastor on your own, if you feel God is privileged to have you helping Him, then you will fail as a godly leader. You may make a good business man or politician, but you won't be the kind of pastor God wants and needs. If you feel, though, that leading God's people is something you aren't able or worthy to do, if you know that without His help you will make a mess of things, then you are a leader He can use. We must realize that apart from Jesus we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Maturity does not come with age but with the acceptance of responsibility. Just getting older doesn't make us godlier or better pastors. I have been pastoring for over 40 years and I've only grown when I've sought to live God's way and let Him teach and mold me. It is only as we strive to follow and serve Him that we grow. The passing of years along won't bring that unless those years are spent in humble service to God and His people.

Every leader must keep growing in faith and in their relationship with God. We never arrive as leaders. We are always in process. There is always more to learn. As we saw in chapter 2, we are always to keep growing. Don't look for the time when you will have finished growing and learning as a pastor or leader. That will never happen. Leading God's people will be a challenge as long as you live. God will use the ministry to stretch you and to grow your faith.

Serving God's people doesn't mean we do everything they expect. Some pastors think they must do whatever the people want so the people like them and come to their church. I have struggled with this in my life and it is still hard for me to have someone criticize me. But I have learned that it is God I serve first of all. If I do everything the people want to make them happy I'm not serving God but I'm serving myself. I'm not serving the people either for I'm not doing what is best for them. I'm just doing what is best and easiest for me. Serving my people means I would do what Jesus would do, what is best for them in the long run.

If you have children you can understand what I mean. Parents don't do all their children want. They do what is best for the child if the child understands and agrees or not. That is how we best serve our children and it's how we best serve our people as well. Sometimes the things we do to 'help' our people don't really help them, they just make the people more dependent on us. We can keep them from growing by doing too much for them. Any time we do something for our child that they can do for themselves we make them dependent on us. That is true with the people in our church as well. One day we must stand before God and give an account of how we raised our children. That is more important than having them always pleased with us.

As pastors we must stand before God and give an account for how we led our people (Hebrews 13:17). I don't want to stand before God and have Him ask me why I let some people in my church use my time to do things they could have done themselves. My only explanation would be that I did it because I wanted them to like me. I know I would never say that to God, that is no excuse for not doing what is right for the people. I have to make sure that when I serve my people I am truly serving them by doing what is right and best for them, even if they don't agree at the time. It is really God I am serving, for they are His sheep, His children on loan to me. Serving God's people doesn't mean we do everything they expect. It means we do everything God expects.

True leadership required humility. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Humility is a key ingredient to being a good servant leader. This is such an important principle that I want to devote more time to it.

D. A PASTOR MUST BE HUMBLE

When Paul lists qualifications for a pastor one of the requirements is that he not be a new believer so he isn't tempted in pride as Satan was (1 Timothy 3:6). Pride is a very subtle danger for all Christians, but especially for pastors. It's easy to recognize pride in someone else but impossible to see in ourselves unless God's Spirit convicts us of it.

Sometimes the best way to understand something is to look at its opposite. Instead of pride God wants our attitude to be one of humility, not taking credit for things He has done. He wants us to focus on the needs of others, not on our own needs. Selfishness and self-centeredness are sin. Do you think more about yourself or about God and the needs of His people? Are you more attentive to your personal interests or the interests of God and others? Are you more interested in pleasing God or in pleasing yourself? Are your prayers focused on seeking to better serve Him or to have Him do what you want Him to do to help you?

E. HUMILITY IS NOT EASY TO LEARN

I DON'T NEED GOD, HE NEEDS ME: When I started in ministry I was very excited at the opportunity to use my gifts and talents for God. There was so much I wanted to accomplish. I was "expecting great things from God and doing great things for God." I knew I needed His help to carry out these desires but I had no doubt that with God's assistance they would happen.

The older I get, though, the more clearly I see that I have nothing to offer. It's not a teamwork operation; it's all His grace and mercy. I feel like a little boy thinking he can hit a baseball a mile when it is really his father standing behind him, wrapping his arms around his son and holding the bat with him that is making contact with the ball. Without my heavenly Father's arms wrapped around me I'd miss it by a mile every time. Every once in a while, when I insist on doing things my way, God lets me see how unable I am to produce what I desire.

Truly it's not about me, it's all about Him! As I slowly but surely mature spiritually I find God keeps getting bigger and bigger. I, by comparison, keep getting smaller and smaller. And that's not a bad feeling! There's something freeing about "letting go and letting God." While I've how much I can accomplish in ministry, God is more interested in my doing a few things very well for Him. When I think I have nothing to offer but a bad example He does something to encourage me to keep on going.

There's a real peace that comes with letting God be God, with recognizing He doesn't need me to run His Kingdom down here, to humbly come to the conclusion that I can't do ANYthing without Him. When that becomes more than words but takes on reality in my life then I start listening to Him more. I spend less time asking Him to help me with what I am doing and more asking Him what He wants me to do. I see some of my biggest plans lying in ruins by the wayside, but I find He has used me to touch lives at times and in ways I didn't expect. I'm learning that people come before program. I'm here to serve my people; they aren't here to serve my program. I've got more peace and more patience because I know that if I am in His will then He will bring whatever results He wants whenever He wants them. God doesn't measure success by numbers (people, dollars, possessions, etc.) but by faithfulness. So I spend more and more time making sure I am doing what He wants and less and less trying to get Him to do what I want.

I'm sure you are already learning this and can add to what I've said. It's important to keep it foremost in your mind, though – God doesn't need any of us but each one of us totally needs Him! (Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2)

HUMILITY NEVER COMES NATURALLY: One of the biggest battles I have had in life has been my battle with pride. Pride can be a very subtle thing, but it is extremely dangerous! When I think I

have it licked in one area of life it pops up in another. Not only that, but it's very hard for me to recognize it in my own life! I can pick it out in others quite easily but am almost totally blinded to it in my own life.

I'm told I need to feel good about myself, have confidence in what I believe and enjoy who I am and what I've accomplished. When doing that I have to be VERY careful I don't slip into pride. Yet if I go to the opposite extreme and put myself down all the time that is still pride. It's an over-emphasis of self, self-centeredness and self focus. There really isn't any difference between saying I'm better than others and saying I'm worse than others. The focus is still on me. As you can tell, I certainly don't have these lessons down yet!

In soccer a team will start setting up what they feel can be a scoring play long before running that particular play. They do little things that will influence the defense so that when they run the special play they have the maximum advantage to make it successful. I feel like Satan does the same thing to me. Something said, then something else happens, and before I know it pride has scored on me again!

The best I can do is to keep asking God to show me pride in my life so I can confess it and turn from it. I truly don't want to be acting in pride. But I also am often unaware of it in its early stages. Daily I must ask God to keep me from it, to show it to me and to help me keep from it. I've learned to have a healthy respect for the damage it can do and the deceitful ways it can manifest itself. It's not a matter of 'if' it hits me but 'when' it hits, for it certainly will.

My wife has been my biggest help in pointing out pride to me before I recognize it. Wanting to always be right, reacting against constructive criticism, little critical things I say about others, attitudes to other ministries who compete with or do things differently than mine, these and others are subtle ways she can see pride before I see it. Admitting my failures without feeling like a failure is hard for me. Loving myself and letting others love me when I'm wrong isn't easy. That all comes from pride.

Pride is at the root of all sin. Self-centeredness is the opposite of God-centeredness and other-centeredness. It's such a large part of our 'flesh' that we will have to deal with it as long as we live in these bodies. Thank God for His patience and mercy with us! (Proverbs 11:1; Daniel 4:37; Proverbs 16:18)

THE MORE I GROW THE FURTHER AWAY I AM: A few years ago I started learning Hindi to help me minister in India. I thought if I could learn the alphabet, some simple sentence structure and a bit of vocab I'd be fine. Not so! I've learned far more than that, but I seem to be further than ever from where I want to be. The more I learn the more I realize I don't know and need to learn!

As I have grown spiritually over the years my awareness of Who and What God really is has matured.' Instead of feeling like I am closer to the goal of Christlikeness I feel like I am further and further away. I see more and more areas in my life that just don't measure up to His perfection. When I start getting victory in one area of weakness I then find five more places where work is needed! The more I grow the more I become conscious of how much I need to grow. The greater God becomes in my mind and heart the larger the gap between Him and myself grows.

It's encouraging to me to know that Paul experienced this as well. At the start of his ministry he wrote that he was the least of all apostles (1 Corinthians 15:9). Later he said he was the least of

all believers (Ephesians 3:8). At the end he recognized he was the worst of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). That's the way it works: the more we grow the more we know we need to grow.

For example, I used to be quite good at giving advice on raising children. I had all the answers, just ask and I'd tell you what to do. Then I had children of my own. Soon I realized I don't know nearly as much as I thought I did. Growth and experience has helped me realize the same thing spiritually: I don't know all the answers, in fact I have fewer and fewer as time goes on. But I know God has them and I am better able to trust Him through it all.

I look forward to the remaining years of my life, knowing God will continue to work in me. Despite all the work that needs to be done I can look back over the years and see where He has changed me. I know He will continue to do so. There will always be areas in my life that need work. Some need a lot of work while others have made progress over the years. It's like a sculptor carving a model. First he painfully removes large chunks of marble that aren't part of the final product, and then he starts sanding and finally polishing. Next he moves to another part and starts with the hammer and chisel again. Can you see Him working that way in your life? He removes anything in our life that isn't like Jesus for He wants to make us in His image. Think about it and you'll see His work. He's the master sculptor and is committed to making you into the image of His Son. His work may be slow and painful sometimes, but the product is always worth it! (Philippians 1:6; Romans 7:14-19)

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT? God expects each pastor to lead by humbly serving God and His people.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

If God withheld His grace and help from your life, what would it be like? What could you accomplish for Him on your own, without His help? How often do you try to do this?

Where or when is your biggest problem with pride? What can you do about it?

How do you respond to criticism? How critical are you of others who challenge you?

Ask your mate or best friend to honestly tell you where they see pride in your life. Ask them to tell you every time they see you reacting in pride so you can confess it and turn from it.

Where have you grown the most spiritually in the last year? Why?

Where is God working in your life now to help you grow?

Where is God working on you right now to stretch and mature you?

9. GOD EXPECTS PASTORS TO SERVE THEIR FAMILY FIRST

KEY THOUGHT IN THIS CHAPTER: God expects each pastor to be a godly husband following Jesus' example of loving leadership and to put his wife and children before his ministry.

Pastors represent Jesus Christ. Our lives are an example of what we preach. We try to be very careful about how we talk and what we do when others are around. However sometimes at home we aren't as godly as we are when we are out of the home and around others. In America the pastor is sometimes so busy taking care of his church that he neglects his wife and children. Many children leave the faith in bitterness because their father was too busy to spend time with them. Many pastors' wives suffer from loneliness and resentment because their husbands are so busy helping everyone else that he doesn't have time for them. God doesn't want pastors to neglect their family, he expects us to make our family our number one priority.

A. YOUR WIFE IS YOUR NUMBER ONE SHEEP

As pastors we are responsible to protect, guide, lead and feed our sheep. Our sheep are the people in our church. But do you know who your most important sheep is? Are you aware of the person in your church that comes first, before everyone else? It isn't the person who gives the most money or complains the most. It's your wife! She is your number one sheep (1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5; Titus 1:6; 2:6; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Genesis 2:23-24).

Pastors can easily be tempted to be busy with God's work and neglect their family. When helping other people we get praised and looked up to. That doesn't always happen at home. Our wives know what we are really like because they live with all the time, and sometimes we aren't good examples of Jesus in our own family. Yet our wives need us even more than our church members. You are the only pastor your wife will ever have. She will be with you the rest of your life. Others may come and go from your church but she will always be there for you. God clearly says that if a man can't be a good husband and father he won't be a good pastor (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

In his list of qualifications for church leaders Paul goes into detail when he says a pastor must manage his family well or he won't be able to take care of the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5). It can be harder to lead our own family than the church. God uses the relationships in our home, especially with our wife, to teach and train us to be more like Jesus. We learn love, patience and sacrifice in marriage.

The way we treat our families is the way we will treat the church. If we are bossy or controlling at home we will be that way at church. If we give in to others out of fear instead of doing what we know is right we will do that at church. If we get angry when things don't go as we want we will respond that way in church as well.

It can be very hard for a wife to complain when her husband is busy serving God and helping others. If we were spend many hours in a business she could remind us of our responsibility to

her, but since we are serving God she doesn't feel she can complain. Often we take advantage of that and spend far more time ministering than God expects of us. God expects us to make our wife our number one sheep and not neglect her for our ministry.

It's important for your people to learn that your wife is your most important priority, even more than the church. This sets the example for other husbands to put their wives first. It teaches younger boys that their wives must come first and it lets women and girls know they deserve and can expect to be first in their husband's life. It is a very, very important example for your own children as well.

A GOOD WIFE IS WORTH MORE THAN RUBIES: God has blessed me with a wonderful wife or I wouldn't be where I am today. The longer I am married to her the more I appreciate the fine person she is and the more I thank God for such a special gift. Her behind-the-scenes work and faithfulness in my life and ministry is invaluable. Her faithful, deep prayer life accomplishes more for the Kingdom than my frantic business. She is my greatest prayer supporter.

Through her I have learned about God's unconditional love for me, because I've seen it demonstrated through her. I understand God can and will forgive for she has exemplified that time and time again. I can trust His faithfulness better because I see it lived out in her life.

Sometimes we think we could accomplish more in life if it weren't for the needs of our mates and families. We can resent the time they take. Perhaps I could have done more in quantity without my wife and family, but that wouldn't have lasted. The quality would have been far less, and even so I'm sure I would have burnt out or disqualified myself in some way without her.

Learning to meet her needs first doesn't take away from my ministry, in enriches it by maturing me. Whatever I put into her I get back many times over. Learning to put someone before myself hasn't been easy but has been essential in marriage and ministry.

The main lessons I've learned in life and the greatest spiritual and emotional growth I've experienced in life have come through my marriage. Things haven't always been easy or perfect, and they still aren't. God uses our imperfections our conflicts to teach me about humility, service, apologizing, forgiving and accepting forgiveness. These things can't be learned from a book, only from life.

Any time you take two people who are opposites and put them together there will be struggles. Males and females are opposites. Our personalities are often opposites as well. Add a fully active sin nature in each of us and you have a sure formula for conflict. The major lessons of life, love and growth which I've learned have come through my marriage and family, not my ministry. By comparison ministry is easier. Its easier to be a good pastor than a good husband and father. Others are easier to impress, they don't need as much from me and I can keep them at a safe distance. None of that is true of my wife.

I am amazed at how we continue to grow deeper and deeper in love daily, how we enjoy each other, how we are bonded together and all the memories we share. Our greatest pains are caused by each other, but so are our greatest joys. And the joys far outweigh the pain. The older I get and the further I go in life and ministry the more I realize that a good wife IS worth far more than rubies. And so is a good husband for you women reading this! (Ecclesiastes 31:10-12, 30-31; 1 Peter 3:7).

B. CHILDREN COME BEFORE CHURCH

Right after your wife come your children in importance. Don't neglect them, either, for the work of the Lord. You will impact their lives more than anyone else ever. They are your disciples to train and form for ministry. We talked about mentoring in chapter 7. Your children are your first responsibility and your best opportunity to mentor. Their needs for a father's love and attention must be met by you. The way you, their earthly father, treat them is the way they view their heavenly Father, God. Do you want them thinking they aren't important, that you have other things that are more important? If they get that message from you that will feel that way about God as well. You are forming a picture of what God is like in their lives by how you treat them. God expects you to meet the needs of your children no matter how many other things you have to do.

MY FAMILY IS MY FIRST PRIORITY IN MINISTRY: As I look back on my life I have a perspective that many of you who are younger don't have. My six children are grown, four of them married and on their own. My impact on their life has been made. I thank God that He convicted me at the start of ministry of the importance of making my family my number one congregation. Others have come and gone but my family is still my family. There is no one I have had more influence on or ever will have more influence on than my children and my wife.

Jesus' top priority while on earth was His 'family' of disciples, not the crowds and not new programs and projects. He put His close followers and their needs first, often withdrawing from the crowds or sending others away to spend time with the disciples. His pattern is ours to follow today. There is no one you will reproduce yourself in more completely than your own children. You will totally impact their lives, for good or for bad. You can't abdicate; you will totally influence their lives. The only question is what the influence will be, good or not so good. Children are like soft clay which you are forming and molding into whatever image you choose. If you are too busy to be with them much, that forms an image of rejection and unimportance in them. You are forming them and will form them more than anyone else.

It's it a shame that in America that pastors children and missionaries children often have a reputation for rebellion and disobedience. Whose fault is that? God Himself says that if we can't manage our families then we can't manage His church. Your children need you more than your church needs you. It's too bad we get our ego so wrapped up in our service for God and our 'success' in the eyes of others that we miss what is most important. God gave us our children to disciple for Him. Nothing is more important! He will never lead us to neglect our children for the sake of other things. They are precious to Him and He entrusts them to us. He will never give us too much to do so that we don't have time for them. That comes from wrong priorities.

Now that my children are grown one of my greatest joys in life is watching them serve the Lord and follow Him. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." (3 John 4). Each one of them has chosen to stay faithful to God and serve Him wholeheartedly. I take great pleasure in that, although I don't take credit for it. That is between them and God and there are too many factors involved for me to take credit for it. It is all His grace. I can rest in the fact that, as far as I was able at the time, I did my best to love them and teach them about God. I certainly wasn't perfect, and I did have church responsibilities that demanded time and attention, but I always knew they were my number one priority and I greatly enjoyed raising them for the Lord. God gets the credit for how they turned out, but I am thankful I don't have to live with too many regrets. As they say, no one on their death bed wishes they would have spent more time at work! Make sure your family is your first priority now and always (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6; Proverbs 22:6)

C. WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF HUSBANDS

President Kennedy of the United States once said, “Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.” That is good advice for marriage as well. Husbands, don’t ask what your wife can do for you; instead ask what you can do for her.

HUSBANDS ARE TO SHOW LOVING LEADERSHIP TO THEIR WIVES: God’s main command to husbands is to love their wives unconditionally (Ephesians 5:25, 33). This means to love her no matter what she says or does. It must be like Jesus’ unconditional love for us. Men are to be the leaders of their families (Genesis 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23) but the leading must be done in love. This kind of leadership is not dictatorship. It’s not self-centered where the husband gets to have things his way. Loving leadership means doing what is right and best for our wives, however hard it is for us. Women need love and security to be the wives God wants them to be. So God commands us to love our wives unconditionally and sacrificially.

	MAN	WOMAN
NEED		LOVE, SECURITY
DUTY	SACRIFICIAL LOVE	

Equal in God’s sight: Because the man is the leader doesn’t mean he is superior to the woman. Both are equal in God’s sight (Galatians 3:28; ‘joint heirs’ in 1 Peter 3:7). When you work for an employer he is your boss. That doesn’t mean he is a superior human being, it only means that his responsibility is different than yours. Someone must lead and others follow, but all are of equal worth in God’s sight. Some people have a hard time realizing that everyone, all men and women, are just as important to God. Husbands must remember this, though. Your wife is an equal person to you. She has a different role to carry out but she is in no way inferior to you. Some men think it brings them honor to act superior to their wives but to treat them with respect is shameful. This is not the way it is in God’s sight, though. Jesus treated women with the greatest respect and as equals of men. We must as well. God honors us when we honor our wives.

WHY A HUSBAND IS TO BE A LOVING LEADER: We are to provide loving leadership so our wives can have the secure foundation they need to grow as wives and Christian women. Peter says we are to live with our wives in an understand way because they are the ‘weaker’ partner (1 Peter 3:7). That means we are responsible to protect them and be their shepherd. We are to make the hard decisions with their suggestions to help us. Peter says if we don’t do this our prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7). In other words, not being a loving leader as God expects us to be will affect our relationship with God and keep us from growing spiritually.

HOW TO BE A LOVING LEADER: It is very important for us to be a loving leader because it is what God expects. Let’s talk about how we are to accomplish this.

Loving leadership means initiating like Christ. Paul says husbands are to love their wives “just as Christ loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25). Jesus reached out to us in love even though we didn’t deserve it. He didn’t wait for us to love Him, He loved us first. He still initiates by showing His love for us in many ways. When we drift away from Him He keeps loving us no matter what. His love for us is unselfish, humble and sacrificial (Philippians 2:5-8).

Loving leadership means sacrificing yourself. Not only did Jesus love the church but He “gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). He sacrificed everything for His bride, the church. As husbands we sometimes get selfish and self-centered. We think about ourselves first and feel our wives should be doing more for us. We complain when it doesn’t seem she is meeting our needs. This is not how Jesus is to us and should not be how we are to our wives. Jesus sacrificed everything for us because He loved us. He even gave His life for us. Our love for our wives will be shown by how we sacrifice our own convenience for theirs. He gave up everything for us, and that is the example we are to follow in loving our wives. Men, are you willing to die for your wife? Are you willing to die each day by putting her and her needs before your own? God expects that of us if we are to become like Jesus.

Loving leadership means leading by serving. In chapter 8 we saw that we as pastors are to be servants (Luke 22:25-26; Matthew 20:26-28). If our wife is our number one sheep then she is the first person we are to serve. We must serve out of love, not just because we have to. We are not to serve to bring honor to ourselves, but to bring honor to our wives. Serving means doing what is right and best for her, no matter what others think. Jesus gave up His honor by going to the cross and paying for our sins. We are called to give up all to serve our wives. T

his means we are to help them with the work they need help with. We are to spend time talking and listening to them. We are to know them so well we understand the concerns and burdens, the fears and joys they have. We are to be able to tell when something is bothering them and reach out to them in love. We serve by being considerate of their time and not expecting them to always be doing things for us and our ministry. We serve them by showing them our love and respect. We serve them by protecting them from criticism from relatives, people in the church and even our own children. We serve them by knowing what makes them happy and providing those things when we can. We serve them by taking time to have fun with them and to do special things they like. In other words, we serve them like Jesus serves us.

After washing the disciples feet He told them to go and do likewise (John 13:14). We wash our wife’s feet when we serve her. You might think this takes too much time, but God expects us to do it. God gives each one of us 24 hours in a day and He doesn’t give us 25 hours of work. He doesn’t give us more than we have time to do. The problem is that we are often too busy doing other things so that we don’t have time to do what God expects and He expects us to show loving leadership by serving our wives.

Loving leadership means showing unconditional love. We love ourselves unconditionally. If we make a mistake or do something wrong we feel badly, but we get over it and move on. We still accept ourselves, no matter what we do. That is how we must love our wives, as we love ourselves (Ephesians 5:33). It doesn’t mean overlooking our wife’s faults and weaknesses, for we are very aware of them. It means loving her anyway. God doesn’t command us to always like our wives, for some times we don’t like what they do. But God does say to always love them. He doesn’t always like what we do but He always loves us anyway.

Loving her unconditionally means we don’t compare her to other wives, nor to our mother. We wouldn’t like her comparing us to other men! We aren’t to compare her appearance to that of other women, nor her cooking or housekeeping. We are to love her as she is, unconditionally, the same way Jesus loves us. Loving her unconditionally means we don’t expect her to think and act like we do. Women are very different than men (“weaker partner” in 1 Peter 3:7). Their needs, especially emotionally, are very different. Don’t expect your wife to feel like you feel. Get to know her as she really is.

Loving leadership means being considerate. Peter commands husbands to be considerate of their wives (1 Peter 3:7). Would your wife say you are considerate of her? Are you more or less considerate now than when you first got married? What would she say you need to do to be more considerate?

Being considerate means we are to look at life from her perspective, not just our own. It means we learn to be as sensitive to her needs as we are to our own needs. It means praying for her each day, and praying we would better love and understand her as well. Being considerate means letting her talk when she wants to and to pay attention without interrupting. It means being gentle in how you treat her and what you say to her. If you must correct something she is doing do it in a loving way; "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Speak to her in a tone of voice you would want others to use if they were correcting you. Being considerate means you don't take your disappointments and problems in life out on her. You don't expect more of her than she is able to do and you don't blame her for things that aren't under her control. Being considerate means you do praise her, thank her for what she does for you, tell her you love her, encourage her, brag about her to others and complement her each day. Do these things and your marriage will be beautiful as your love grows stronger and deeper.

Loving leadership means being respectful. Peter also says husbands are to treat their wives with respect (1 Peter 3:7). That is very similar to consideration but adds the idea of thinking highly about her. Her life now centers on you, not her. Does she try to be a good wife? Does she love you and seek to make your life better? Is she a good, loving mother to your children? Does she support you in your ministry? Does she pray for you and with you? How would your life be different without her? Answering these questions should help you appreciate her for who she is and what she does. Do you respect her for trying to do her best in life? If so, do you tell her and show her that you respect her for how she lives and serves you and others? That would be showing her respect.

Do you respect her time and her feelings? Are you sensitive to when she is struggling and hurting? Do you seek her opinion about matters and listen carefully to her suggestions. Any husband who does not consider his wife's opinion is foolish for women have a wisdom and insight that men often lack. Do you have confidence in her and trust her? All these are ways of being respectful.

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH: When we first meet Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 11:27-30) nothing seems wrong in the relationship. In fact, Sarah doesn't seem to have any problem leaving her home and family to go to an unknown land when Abraham says to pack up and leave (Genesis 12:1-5). It might be this that Peter refers to when he talks about Sarah being submissive to Abraham and obeying him completely (1 Peter 3:1-6). But then problems arose!

When they finally get to the promised land a famine comes. Instead of staying and trusting God Abraham takes matters into his own hands and comes up with an idea. They go to Egypt to take care of themselves, but because Sarah is still beautiful despite being in her late 60's Abraham is afraid pharaoh will kill him so he can take Sarah into his harem. Thus he has her lie about their relationship to protect him by having her say she was just his sister (Genesis 12:10-20). How did this make Sarah feel? She was sacrificing to protect Abraham, when it should have been him sacrificing to protect her (Ephesians 5:22-33). Abraham was protecting himself at his wife's expense. He wasn't taking care of her so she needed to take care of herself. A woman needs to be protected and feel secure in her man's love. Sarah did not have that. Thus she built up walls

between herself and Abraham. She still should have submitted and trusted in God, who really is in control. Wives today must realize that it is really God they are submitting to and trusting when they do so with their husbands. I am not excusing or justifying Sarah's sin. However I do want to point out what happens when a man does not put his wife's needs first and have her feel secure and protected.

Could this have been a one-time slip with Abraham? I think not. Twenty years later he does the same thing when God gives him a retest. This time he fled to the Negev, but everything else was handled the same (Genesis 20:1-18). In fact, we see their son Isaac picked up this pattern and it continued in his relationship with Rebekah (Genesis 27:5-13) and even down to Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 30:1-3). I think this was a pattern in Abraham's life. When a man puts his needs first and doesn't make his wife feel like a precious treasure who means more to him than he himself, it really makes it necessary for a woman to take things into her own hands. That is just what Sarah did. Unfortunately years later their son Isaac did the same thing, saying he wife was his sister to protect himself.

She took control of her own life for her protection (just as Abraham did when he led them into Egypt). She told Abraham to have an heir by Hagar (Genesis 16:1-3), then when she was jealous of and hurt by Hagar she had Abraham kick her out (Genesis 16:4-6). How hard and bitter she eventually became is seen in her laughing at God's prediction of a coming son (Genesis 18:9-15). When Isaac was born it seems she used him to meet needs her husband wasn't meeting: feeling significant, needed and fulfilled (Genesis 21:1-7). This just taught Isaac to be submissive to a strong woman, a pattern he continued in and passed on down to his son Jacob.

Sarah also made Abraham send Ishmael away (Genesis 21:8-13). When God started working on Abraham about all this and told him to take Isaac and sacrifice him it seems certain he didn't tell Sarah (Genesis 22:1-3). Notice how this relationship had deteriorated, starting with Abraham's putting himself first. Men today can learn much from this. Would your wife say she can identify with Sarah? Does she feel you put her or yourself first? It's not too late to turn things around. Put her needs first so you earn her trust and respect. God holds us men responsible for our marriages. Learn from Abraham.

THE EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH AND MARY: Not all relationships are like Abraham and Sarah. One that was the exact opposite was Joseph and Mary. Joseph put Mary first. When he found out she was pregnant and they weren't married he could have sued for divorce and protected his reputation. Some say he could have had her stoned to death. She alone would have taken the blame and disgrace for the pregnancy. A 'good' Jew would have done that. Joseph must have been terribly hurt to find out about her unfaithfulness; still he didn't get bitter or try to take revenge. According to the law he could no longer marry her, but he intended to end it in the way that she suffered the least. He decided to protect her at the sacrifice of his own pride, reputation and finances (Matthew 1:18-25). For the rest of his life he was mocked and laughed at for marrying someone carrying someone else's baby (John 8:41 implies they thought it was a Roman soldier who got Mary pregnant). Now how do you think Mary responded to this show of love and sacrificial protection? Its no wonder God chose someone like Joseph to raise His Son!

We always see Joseph putting Mary and her needs first (Luke 2:1-20). No wonder she wanted to go to Bethlehem with him, even though pregnant. No wonder she quickly obeyed when God, through Joseph (not through Mary), told them to leave for Egypt in the middle of the night after having company (wise men) all day and then later to return to Nazareth where all the talk about them was critical (Matthew 2:13-23). I think Joseph is one of the finest men in the Bible, a great

example for all husbands today. He stands in direct contrast to Abraham. That's why Mary stands in direct contrast to Sarah, too.

Who are you more like? Maybe I should ask first of all who your wife is more like. If she's more like Sarah what do YOU need to do to have her feel secure trusting you? If she's more like Mary -- great! But wait a minute before taking all the credit. Is she like Mary because of your sacrificial love and protection, or because she is trusting God despite how you treat her? These are important things to think about, things we'd rather avoid. However if we are to be the husbands God wants us to be then these must be addressed and worked through. What can you do to make your wife feel more secure in your love? In what ways can you show your love for her more? What can you do to protect her better from too hard work, from criticism she receives from out or inside the home, from disrespectful children, from too much responsibility, and from other things as well? We'd all love to have wives like Mary. We can, too. The first step is for us to be like Joseph!

A woman is a responder. If she is treated with love and kindness she will respond in that way. If she is hurt and neglected that will show in how she acts. That's why God holds us as husbands responsible for our wives. If you treat your wife with love and respect she will respond in that same way. If she is treated with anger and neglect that will show in how she responds. As Jesus initiates by loving us first and reaching out to us so we can respond to His love, so we as husbands are to initiate by reaching out to make our wives feel loved and secure in our loving leadership. God expects us to treat them as He treats us. Then they will respond as we do to Him. Remember, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised (Proverbs 31:29-31), she is worth far more than rubies (Proverbs 31:10). "Ask not what your wife can do for you; ask what you can do for your wife."

D. WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF WIVES

(Men, pass this part of the book on to your wife to read after you are done reading it. Don't be surprised if she also reads the part about what God expects of husbands. Let her read that as well because it will help her know how to pray for you and will hold you accountable to practice the things you learned from reading it.)

The words of President Kennedy, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country," apply to wives as well as husbands. Women, don't think about what your husband should do for you, instead think about what you should do for your husband. He is to serve you, but you are also to serve him. We are to serve each other (Ephesians 5:21).

WIVES ARE TO SHOW A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT TO THEIR HUSBANDS: While God's main command to husbands is to be a loving leader, His command to wives is to have a submissive spirit (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1, 5). The Greek word for submit comes from a word that means to respond to authority. A woman is a responder. If she is treated with love and gentleness she will respond in the same way. If she is treated harshly she will close up and become hard. Paul says wives are to submit (respond) to their husbands the same way they do to Jesus (Ephesians 5:22). Man is created with a need to lead and provide, and that is what God commands him to do. In order to do that, though, the woman must allow him to lead. That is why she is commanded to submit. Women need unconditional love and security. That is why men are commanded to sacrificially love their wives. We can diagram it like this:

	MAN	WOMAN
NEED	LEAD, PROVIDE	LOVE, SECURITY
DUTY	SACRIFICIAL LOVE	SUBMIT, RESPECT

When God created Adam he was incomplete. He saw the animals had mates and he didn't. He needed someone, so God created Eve to be a helper for him (Genesis 2:18). This word means literally "to fill up the empty spaces." Man was incomplete without woman. What he was lacking she had and what she was lacking he had. Together they were complete. A wife's duty is not just to clean house and make meals, it goes much deeper than that. It is to fill the empty spaces in a man's heart.

God created men and women very different. Most men are logical thinkers who are interested in accomplishing things in life. Most women are more emotional feelers who put relationships first. Men want to accomplish things; women enjoy spending time with other people. Women talk more than men because that is how they connect with others. They can be open, sharing their feelings. Rarely do men do this. Men are more reserved and don't show their emotions as well. Men are created to fill their role of leadership and provider. They are good at these things. They aren't as sensitive to the needs and feelings of others; this is more what women are good at. Women are natural mothers. Men and women are both equal human beings in God's sight even though God has given them different roles. The man sees logically to make decisions to lead the family, but the woman emotionally senses the needs of those around them in order to help them. In a group of all men the softness and gentle love of women is missing. In a group of all women the desire to protect and lead is missing. God created each for their own role. So when God says the woman is to fill the empty spaces of man He is talking about the love, emotion, sensitivity, gentleness and motherly skills she brings into his life (Titus 2:3-5). She fills those empty spaces. But she isn't to be the leader, the one who protects and guides, that is his responsibility. That is where her empty spaces are and he is to fill them. God commands her to submit so he can fill her spaces by leading.

This submission isn't to be an outer act but rather comes from a submitted spirit (1 Peter 3:3-4), first submitted to God and then to her husband. That is the inner beauty Peter talks about in 1 Peter 3:3-4. Notice, too, the Bible says a wife is to submit to her husband. It doesn't say that all women are to submit to all men for that isn't true. This is part of a loving marriage relationship where the man leads and the woman responds. Women don't have to submit to all men but they do have to submit to their own husband.

WHY A WIFE IS TO HAVE A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT: When a wife responds to her husband by letting him lead she is following the example of godly women in the past (1 Peter 3:5) and she is allowing him to fill his duty of being the leader (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:23). The woman benefits because God will then guide the family through the husband. The woman helps her husband grow spiritually by setting a godly example for him (1 Peter 3:1).

When a wife has this attitude she will pray for her husband daily. It may seem he has it better than her because he is the leader, but for a man who wants to follow God this is a very heavy responsibility. It is very important for him to follow God and lead his family that way, not for him to do what he wants. Godly men realize this great responsibility. Pray God would give him wisdom and guidance. Being a godly man is not easy. Most men did not grow up with an example of a

godly man in their lives and that makes it harder for them. Pray God would help your husband be the man God wants him to be, for that is beneficial for both of you.

What if a husband wants his wife to sin? There are times when a wife is not to submit to her husband and that is when what he wants is sin. God gave the man delegated authority, the right to represent Him in her life. When he no longer represents God but instead opposes God he no longer has authority over her. God does not give man authority to command a woman to disobey Him. A soldier in the army must obey the orders of his commanding officer because that man has delegated authority from the government. But if the commander orders the soldier to do something against the government the soldier is no longer under obligation to obey for the commander has stepped out of his authority. The same is true of husbands who use their authority against God.

Vashti disobeyed her husband for moral reasons (Esther 1). Sarah went along with Abraham when he told her to say she was his sister and she suffered the consequences as well. Sapphira also went along with her husband and lied about the money they gave to the church (Acts 5:1-10). She too died for the sin. She wasn't exempt because her husband wanted her to do it. Abigail, however, didn't support her husband when he was in sin and God used that act to save many lives (1 Samuel 25). As Christians we are to obey our government, but when it tells us something against what the Bible says we must obey God instead of men (Acts 5:29).

If your husband is doing something you feel is wrong you have every right, as a fellow Christian, to talk to him in love (Ephesians 4:15). Even if it is not sin but just a difference of opinion you should make your opinion known as long as you do it in a loving way. Just say it one time, don't nag (Proverbs 25:24). Let God convict him where necessary. You can and must make your feelings and needs known or your husband won't know about them.

HOW TO HAVE A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT: How can a wife have this submissive spirit? God tells you how in the Bible.

A submissive spirit means responding to him as you do to Jesus. Paul tells wives to respond to their husbands as they do to Jesus (Ephesians 5:22). If your husband is trying to treat you as Jesus does that will be easier for you. He will never be perfect, but you can tell if he is trying. However even if he doesn't seem to be trying you must still respond as you to Jesus. Remember that God is in charge of your life and won't let anything happen that isn't part of His will. By submitting to your husband you are submitting to God who tells you to submit and who is the One who really is in charge of everything anyway. How do you submit to Jesus? You respond freely, willingly, lovingly and totally without criticism or complaint. That's how Mary submitted to Joseph. That's how godly wives must respond to their husbands.

A submissive spirit means living a pure life. Wives must live holy lives free from sin (1 Peter 3:2). You are to try to be like Jesus in all you think, feel, say and do. The fruit of the Spirit should be evident in your life (Galatians 5:22-24). If you are living a life of obedience to Jesus it will make it much easier for your husband to live as Jesus wants him to live. You set a good example for your husband and encourage him in His walk with the Lord. Submitting to Jesus means submitting to your husband as well.

A submissive spirit shows respect and reverence. Peter says wives are to live lives of reverence (1 Peter 3:2) and Paul says wives are to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). These mean almost the same thing. Every man needs the respect of his wife. Men need respect the same way women need love. Wives, think of how you feel when you think your husband

doesn't love you. That's how he feels you when he thinks you don't respect him. Men learn to hide their hurt, although some react in anger and hurt others. Men need respect. They need to know they are doing a good job in leading and providing for their family.

Notice the Bible doesn't command a woman to love her husband, that happens naturally and doesn't need to be commanded. But respecting a husband is often hard for women and can only be done with God's help. Show him respect by complementing him and not criticizing him. Brag about him to others. Appreciate how he tries to be a good husband and tell him so. Listen when he talks. Try to understand how he feels. Ask him questions if you don't understand what he is saying. Think about his needs before your own. Don't compare him to others; you don't want him comparing you to other women! Do all you can to encourage him. Say something kind to him every day. Let him know you believe in him and trust him. Don't assume he knows how you or the children feel about things. You need to tell him respectfully and with loving words. When you disagree with something do that respectfully as well. Abigail corrected David when he was coming to kill her family, but she did it carefully and gently (1 Samuel 25). Be very careful of the tone of your voice or how loudly you speak (Proverbs 18:21). You may not notice but men can easily pick up hidden anger. Make sure there is no anger when you speak. Pray about that and work it out with the Lord before speaking. Remember that when you argue everyone loses, the only one who wins is Satan.

A submissive spirit is gentle and quiet. No one likes a woman who is loud and bossy. Everyone knows she is not acting like Jesus. God says a woman should have a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4). Always be kind and gentle, even when correcting or disagreeing with your husband. Don't focus on his weakness. He knows he has them. It is much better to help him overcome them than to have you keep pointing them out to him. That is very disrespectful and dishonors him greatly. Treat him the same at home as you do when outside the home. Think about the good he does, not his mistakes and failures (Philippians 4:8).

A submissive spirit is not afraid. Don't be afraid to say or do the right thing. Don't fear failing or being shamed. Don't fear what others think as long as you know you are doing what Jesus wants and following Him. Don't fear what will happen to you if he doesn't follow God correctly. God is still in control of your life and family and all things will be used for His good (Romans 8:28).

Don't fear what will happen to you if your husband doesn't meet your needs. Take them to Jesus instead. No man can ever meet all his wife's needs. God makes sure of that! He wants wives to still need Him and to come to Him for things a husband can't provide. Pray, read your Bible and continue to grow spiritually. Live a godly life no matter what. Don't let the sins of another be an excuse for you to sin. Take your unmet needs to Jesus and ask Him to meet them.

Thank God for your husband. Pray for him. Pray for yourself. And remember, don't think about what your husband can do for you, think about what you can do for your husband! If you put his needs first and he puts your needs first then your marriage will be the way God wants it. You'll have a relationship that patterns our relationship with Jesus. That's why He calls Himself the groom and us His bride.

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT? God expects each pastor to be a godly husband following Jesus' example of loving leadership and to put his wife and children before his ministry.

THINK ABOUT THIS:

How much do you truly value your mate? How important is she to you? How often do you tell her?

What do you truly sacrifice to meet your mate's needs? What more should you be doing?

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for your wife and praying for her needs.

Would your wife and children say they are more important to you than the church? Do the people in your church know they are the most important?

What have you learned in this chapter that can help you become a better husband?

What should you do today to start practicing what you learned?

Pray for each person in your family individually, bringing their needs, their weaknesses and their futures before the Lord in prayer.

CONCLUSION TO THE BOOK

I am grateful for the opportunity and privilege of writing this book. It has helped me think about what God expects of pastors and will make me a better servant of His as well.

I would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions to improve this book, lessons you have learned about pastoring, questions for me or requests for prayer. I can be reached at jerry@schmoyer.net.

Thank you and may God bless you as you serve Him. If I don't meet you in this life I will see you in heaven and together we can share about the mercies of God in our lives.

Jerry Schmoyer