

# **DUTIES OF A PASTOR**

## **God's Job Description for Church Leaders & Their Wives**



**“Discharge all the duties of your Ministry.”  
2 Timothy 4:5**

**Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer  
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# WORDS ABOUT THE BOOK BY PASTOR ??????

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# PREFACE

When someone is newly hired, a job description is given to explain the duties and responsibilities expected to be filled by the employee. It is not up to a new employee to decide what he wants to do and then only do that. He is expected to fulfill the requirements of the job description.

That is true for pastors and church leaders as well. We do not write our own job description, for God has already written it for us. Like anyone working for someone else, we must make sure we know what we are expected to accomplish and then do it – nothing more and nothing less. Do you know what God expects of you as a church leader or pastor? Are you doing everything He requires, nothing more and nothing less?

When an employee does well what is expected of him, he usually is complimented for his work. Church leaders want to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21-23). Like Paul, we want to come to the end of our ministry and 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).

The purpose of this book is to help you understand the duties God has for those who are pastors and leaders. In my book, “What God Expects of Pastors,” I focus on what God expects pastors to be and do. The purpose of this book, “Duties of Pastors,” is mainly on how we are to carry those things out. We must understand our job description, the duties God has for us as pastors and leaders. May God bless you and teach you as you study and apply what this book teaches.

Knowing and fulfilling our duties as pastors are important. However these duties are only a means to an end, not an end in themselves. The end goal is for us, and those we lead, to become disciples of Jesus (Ephesians 4:11-12) and become more like Christ in all we think and do (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 2:5-11).

# INTRODUCTION

Being a pastor or Christian leader is an honor and privilege. Paul says it is a noble task (1 Timothy 3:1). It is a good, honorable position. However, it must be done right and done well. The purpose of this book is to help you understand your role and responsibilities as a pastor or leader.

**A pastor is like a father of a family.** The church is a large family of believers. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ (Romans 12:5; Matthew 12:50). God is our Father, but since He is not physically on earth with us He appoints someone to represent Him. That man is the pastor. A pastor’s role is to be an example of God (or Jesus) to those in his congregation, leading them and treating them as Jesus does us. Therefore, the first concern is to his own family; he is to lead by example through a Christ-like manner toward his spouse and children (1 Timothy 3:4-5) and then carry this Christ-centered attitude over to his congregation. Pastors are to care for the family of God and to carry out the duties Jesus Himself would if He were on earth. He works through us.

**A pastor is like a shepherd to sheep.** Peter commands: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3). Our duties, like a shepherd, are to lead, feed, guard, and care for the flock in whatever way is necessary. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4); we are under shepherds, caring for His sheep as He directs. Therefore, it is important for us to know what our duties are as shepherds of His sheep.

**A pastor is like Jesus to others.** We are to follow His example and treat others as He treats us. We are to minister to them as He ministers to us (1 Corinthians 11:1).

For you to more easily understand our duties, this book breaks them down into duties to self, God, family, church and those outside the church. We will start with duties to self first, because difficulties can arise that greatly hinder our being and doing what God wants if we are not healthy spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST** Imagine there is a bank that credits your account each morning with \$1,440. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening the bank deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course!!!! Each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME. Every morning, it credits you with 1,440 minutes. Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance to the next day. You are not allowed to spend more than you have. Each day a new account is opened for you. Each night it deletes the remains of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against "tomorrow." You must live in the present on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, meaning and purpose! The clock is running. Make the most of today. Today is a gift. That is why it is called the present!!

Time is our most valuable resource, much more so than even money. If we cannot handle time wisely, we will not be able to properly handle anything else in our lives. There are so many demands on our time today that it is hard to do all we think we should do. Despite all our 'labor-saving' devices, we are busier than ever.

How many people wish they had more time? Do you wish you had more time for devotions, time for work, time for family, time for self? We always need more time. Yet, we know God does not give us 25 hours of work to do in a 24 hour day. He does not give us more to do than we have time to do it. We have the same amount of time in a day that Jesus did and He was never rushed. So the trick is to find and do the things God wants us to do and nothing more. Then we will not feel rushed.

Still, it seems everyone needs our time: mates, children, extended family and friends, and of course our ministries. Learning how to properly recognize priorities is so important. When one takes a new job, he is not only given a list of duties, but also instructed as to which are most important: he is given priorities as well. So are we. Here is a guide to proper priorities:

**1. Self - basic maintenance.** If we do not take care of ourselves we will not have anything to give to others. This does not mean we spend most of our time on ourselves. It means we make sure basic maintenance is covered. It is like taking care of your car. You must put gas in it first or you will not go anywhere. However, you do not spend all day putting gas in – you do it and then get on to other things. Likewise, we must make sure we are filled spiritually at the start of each day (Galatians 2:20; 5:22-26). We must make sure that emotionally we are sound and growing as well (Mark 12:33). If we are controlled by fear, anger, lust, pride or any other negative emotion we will not be able to minister to others around us as we should.

We also need to take care of ourselves physically (1 Kings 19). Healthy bodies come from proper exercise, diet, sleep and relaxation. Our physical health affects all we are and do as well. Thus our first priority is to make sure we are healthy and growing spiritually, emotionally and physically. Jesus had these priorities. That is why He would slip away from the crowds, and even His own disciples, to spend time alone in prayer and meditation. He knew He had to take care of His own needs or He would not be able to meet the needs of others. This does not mean that He indulged Himself or just lived for Himself, but He did know that basic maintenance had to be done first. This is where we often steal time for other things, but the cost soon catches up to us.



2. **God.** When our basic maintenance is taken care of, then our first priority can be God. Anything put before Him is an idol. We must have time for devotions, worship, learning the Bible, spiritual growth and serving Him in whatever way He wants. Remember Mary and Martha? Jesus commended Mary for putting spiritual things before work and daily activity.

3. **Mate.** Our third priority is our mate. They rate before children, job or anything else (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Authorities on the subject say it takes 15 hours a week for a husband and wife to really connect. These hours are spent focusing on each other and the relationship, not just time working together in the same house or room.

4. **Children.** Before outside activities, hobbies or work, come our children. No one ever lies on their deathbed saying they wished they would have spent more time on their career and less on their family! God expects pastors and leaders to put their mate and children before their ministry (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

5. **Ministry, Job.** Our next priority is our ministry work. Work is a definite priority in our life, for God told Adam and Eve they would have to work to make a living on this earth (Genesis 3:19). The woman in Proverbs 31 is an example of the blessing and joy that work brings. It does come before self-serving pleasure, but not before children, mate or God.

6. **Self – pleasure, indulgences.** There is nothing wrong with wholesome activities that are done just for joy and pleasure. It is legitimate to enjoy the world around us. God made it for our pleasure. We do not always have to be working. He told us to take one day in seven for rest and refreshment. He also established periodic festivals and rest periods. For example, one year every seven years was to be work free for people, animals and the land. God knows that this is important. A bow works best if it is not taut all the time, it needs to be relaxed until needed. The same is true of us.

Using our time is similar to using our money. We only have a limited amount of each, and wastefulness will lead to regrets. Most is to be spent for worthwhile purposes. Some is to be invested for future benefit. We do this with time when we get away, relax, do things that are pleasurable and refreshing to us. This is an investment in the future because it paces us and assures us there will be resources available in the future.

Determine to line your priorities up with God's priorities. Pray for wisdom to know what these are and for strength of resolution to follow His lead. Getting your priorities right sounds great, but the price may seem high when that means saying "No" to some things that are very hard to let go: overwork, self, laziness, doing things to impress others, greed, etc. Time is our most valuable possession and well worth the price paid to leave openings in our schedules for God's purposes. This must be done as time can only be used once – so please use it wisely that you may do the duties God has for you.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Write a list of what God wants you to change in your life so you line up better with His priorities. What does God want you to do MORE of? What does He want you to do LESS of so you have time to do more of what He wants?*

## **I. DUTIES TO OURSELVES**

As stated before, we must take care of ourselves so we can carry out our duties to God and others. If our mental, spiritual, emotional or physical health is not what it should be then everything we do for God and others will suffer. We are not to focus on ourselves in a prideful way, but must be good stewards with what God gives us so we can be more effective in our service for

Him. A shepherd must be strong and healthy so he can be alert to guide and protect his sheep. Our duty to others starts with meeting our duty to ourselves (1 Peter 4:17).

## **A. PHYSICAL DUTIES**

God has given us one life and one body in which to live that life. While we have no desire to stay on this earth longer than God wants, neither should we leave prematurely because of poor health. We can impact the quality and quantity of our time here by being a good steward of our body and health. Eating healthy food is a must. Getting enough rest and sleep are also essential. Exercise is crucial, not optional.

Although exercise takes time, it results in better health and energy: we function more efficiently all day and sleep better at night; get sick less often, thereby saving money and time by not visiting doctors or being in the hospital. We also set a better example for others as we more fully enjoy life.

We should always eat a healthy diet as well (1 Kings 19:3-6). That, too, takes time and discipline, but it is also worth the effort. Our weight, our heart, our overall health is greatly affected by diet. We feel better, function more fully and enjoy everything more because of proper eating. The practicing of self-control is key to this (1 Corinthians 9:27).

In addition, we must keep up on our rest (Psalm 127:2). We should average about 8 hours of sleep a night to function at our best efficiency. Rest and relaxation, as well as hobbies and times of fun and enjoyment are also important to balance work and stress in life.

In addition, God commands that we rest one day in seven (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Leviticus 23:3). We are not under the Law to observe a Sabbath day as the Jews did, but God's principle of taking one day in seven to rest is still true today. It follows the example of God who created the world in six days and rested the seventh (Genesis 2:3). Pastors and leaders must take a day off from work each week so they can rest, enjoy their families and let God refresh their bodies and souls. Many pastors do not allow for this rest, but that is disobeying God's principle and will harm their health and their ministry in the future. Because He wants us to rest one day a week, God only gives us work to do for six days a week. If we find we need to work all 7 days then we are doing things He isn't expecting. We need to find what they are and stop doing them.

We owe it to our family and ministry, to ourselves, and especially to God to be a good steward of all he has given us, including our health and body. Would God say you are a good steward of the wonderful body He has given you?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Are you as good a steward of your body as you should be? Do you eat healthy food and keep your weight down? Do you get enough rest? Do you get adequate exercise?*

## **B. SPIRITUAL DUTIES**

In addition to keeping our bodies healthy, we must be healthy spiritually as well. When the leaders in the early church realized the ministry of service had increased beyond their ability to keep up the work, they chose deacons to take over that work so they would have more time to study the Bible and pray, because they knew that came first (Acts 6:1-4). If we are to minister effectively to others, we must make sure we are growing spiritually (2 Peter 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 13:11). This means spending regular time reading the Bible, talking to God in prayer and listening to God in meditation (see Appendix 2, Listening to God).

Some think that when they start ministering to others they are spiritually mature and have no need to grow spiritually any more. But we are to keep growing our whole lives, always striving to think and act more and more like Jesus (2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:15). The truth is that God does not need us to minister. He can do fine without us. It is a privilege and joy to serve Him by ministering. God did not need me to have the number of people in my church grow. Instead, He used ministering to others to cause me to grow to be more like Him.

Paul talks about his own spiritual growth in Philippians 3:7-14. In verses 8 and 10 he says, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death." Twice Paul says he wants to "know" Christ (Philippians 4:8, 10). He is not referring to knowing facts and information about Jesus. What he wants is a close, personal, intimate, heart to heart relationship with Jesus. I know you know about Jesus, but how well do you know Him? How close is your connection, how deep your worship, how meaningful your time with Him?

Knowing Jesus is a continual, lifelong process which takes quality and quantity time. It will not be complete until we get to heaven (1 Corinthians 13:12). Growing closer and closer to Jesus was Paul's lifelong goal, more important to him than the churches he started or the letters he wrote. It should be our first goal in life as well, even more important than any ministry in which He has allowed us to serve. Accepting His free gift of salvation comes first, and then we need to commit ourselves to living for Him moment by moment (Romans 12:1-2). First we meet Him as Savior, and then we get to know Him as Lord and Master. Have you met Him and made Him your Savior? Have you yielded your daily life and thoughts to Him and acknowledged Him as your Lord and Master? Do you know Him? Are you getting to know Him better and better each day of your life? That is our first priority in life, before any ministry duty we may have.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do you have a regular time with God when you pray, worship and read the Bible? In what ways have you been growing spiritually in the last year? What has God been teaching you about serving Him? Where is He working in your life right now?*

## **C. INTELLECTUAL DUTIES**

While knowing Jesus heart to heart is of the utmost importance, after that it is also important to get to know more about Him and His Word (2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 4:12; Joshua 1:8). The Bible gives us God's truth about Who He is and what He has done (Jeremiah 9:23-24), about the world and creation (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1) and about ourselves and where we came from, as well as why we are here (Genesis 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 10:31). It also shows that the world around us is sinful and dysfunctional (Romans 3:23; 8:7). Best of all, it gives the solution to the world's problems - Jesus (Titus 2:14).

The Bible is infallible (Psalm 19:7), without any mistakes (Proverbs 30:5-6), complete (Revelation 22:18-19), authoritative (Psalm 119:160), sufficient for all our needs (2 Timothy 3:15), effective for all we need (Isaiah 55:11), and eternal. It will last forever through all eternity (Isaiah 40:8).

The Bible produces godliness in those who learn and follow it (James 1:22-25; Psalm 119:9-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 17:17). It guides like a light (Psalm 119:105) or map (Proverbs 3:5-6; John 14:6). Knowing it helps us grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2; Psalm 119:103-104; Hebrews 5:13-14). As we study it, we will grow in faith (Romans 10:17), faithfulness (Psalm 1:1-3), prayer (John 15:7), blessing (Luke 11:28), power (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17), peace (Psalm 119:165), and joy

(Jeremiah 15:16). It helps us have victory over Satan and demons (2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 6:11-17), and temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).

Therefore, God commands that we study the Bible (Colossians 3:16; Deuteronomy 31:11; Revelation 1:3; Isaiah 34:16; Luke 4:16; Ephesians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Timothy 4:13). He also says we are to obey it (Psalm 119:9; 1 Timothy 4:16), pass it on to others (Matthew 28:19-20), desire it (1 Peter 2:2), preach it (2 Timothy 4:2), understand it (2 Timothy 2:15), live by it (Matthew 4:4), suffer and, if need be, die for it (Revelation 1:9; 6:9; 20:4). We are to apply it to every aspect of our daily lives (2 Timothy 3:16-17). (For more information about how to study the Bible see "Studying the Bible" by Jerry Schmoeyer.)

Intellectual health means more than studying the Bible, though. It includes reading and learning in other areas as well. Keep up with current events in your area and in the world. Reading Christian books and other good literature is also important to keep improving your mind and understanding of the world around you. Learning more about how to perform your God-given ministry is important, too. Reading books, as well as talking to others can help in all these areas.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How well do you know the Bible? What are your weak areas? What are you doing to learn the Bible better? What is your favorite book of the Bible? Why? Who is your favorite person in the Bible (besides Jesus)? Why?*

## **D. EMOTIONAL DUTIES**

Another aspect of ourselves that needs to be taken care of for us to serve God and His people is our emotions. To be like Jesus and represent Him to others we must be mature and have a godly character. Paul details what this means in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

**A LEADER MUST HAVE GODLY INNER QUALITIES.** Paul explains that a godly leader must have godly inner qualities like humility and sacrifice. We need to be dependable and responsible, have wisdom to make hard decisions, give good advice in tough times, know when to say no, not lose our temper or have sinful anger and have maturity and experience so we are not easily deceived.

Many of these demand humility; pride is a very dangerous trait in a leader. Some pastors and church leaders like to put themselves first, desiring attention and recognition from others. But James said we are to take the lower seats, and if we are to be promoted, let others do it (James 2:1-7). Pride was behind Satan's fall (Ezekiel 28:17; Isaiah 14:12-14) and it is a temptation to leaders today (1 Timothy 3:6). Pride brings destruction (Proverbs 16:18). God hates pride (Proverbs 6:16-17). A godly leader does not seek attention for his work, but puts others before himself to serve them as Jesus serves others. In this way he serves Jesus.

Being humble does not mean we think less of ourselves. We must recognize our own strengths and thank God for them, but also be aware of our weaknesses and be constantly striving for victory over them by Jesus' power. A humble person does not think he is better than others or even worse than others; we are to compare ourselves only to Jesus, not to others.

Pride can be very deceiving, subtle, and extremely dangerous! When we think we have it defeated in one area of life, it pops up in another. It is very hard for us to recognize it in our own lives! Often we can recognize pride in others quite easily, but are almost totally blinded to it in our own lives.

Whether I think I am better than others or not as good as others, the focus is still on myself. Self-focus is the essence of pride. Pride brings disgrace, but only humility leads to wisdom (Proverbs 11:1).

Daily we must ask God to point it out in our lives and to keep us from it. I have learned to have a healthy respect for the damage it can do and the deceitful ways it can manifest itself. It is not a matter of 'if' pride hits me but 'when' it hits, for it certainly will. My wife, who sees this more easily than I can, has been my biggest help in pointing out pride to me before I can recognize it. I trust her so I can listen and learn from her.

Pride is at the root of all sin (Proverbs 16:18). Self-centeredness is the opposite of God-centeredness and other-centeredness. It is 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!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *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. Write down a detailed list of where pride manifests itself in your life. Pray about this every day for the next week.*

**A LEADER MUST HAVE GODLY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.** When we have the kind of inner qualities described above, it will be seen in how we treat others. We must not be violent, quick-tempered, quarrelsome and always wanting our own way, but must be gentle and patient (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Others need to find us easy to talk to, patient, understanding, quick to forgive and the first to apologize.

We need to get along with everyone as much as is possible (Romans 12:18), even if we do not agree with them. We cannot have a reputation for being angry or getting into arguments or fights. We must make sure others do not feel rejected, put down or criticized by us. We can speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but it has to be done in a gentle way that heals and helps.

Because of the way we act, others should respect us even if they disagree with us. Everyone needs to feel comfortable around us: young, old, male, female, educated, uneducated, rich or poor. We cannot have secret sins even in our thoughts. We need to share our time and resources with those in need. Others must know we have integrity, are fair and honest, and that we keep our word.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Are you a good steward of your time and body? If you had to answer to God for how you take care of your health, could you stand before Him knowing you are doing your best to care for yourself? Are you still growing spiritually? Where would God say you are weakest in your spiritual life and growth? What does He want you to do about it? Are you studying the Bible regularly? Do you know more than you did about the Bible and ministering for Him now than you did a few months ago? Are you known for your integrity and honesty? Do all people respect and trust you? Would Jesus say you are doing a good job of representing Him? Where would He say you need the most work?*

We have looked at duties Christian leaders have to prepare themselves so they can be the people God needs them to be to serve Him. Now let's look at our duties and responsibilities to God.

## **II. DUTIES TO OUR GOD**

We have seen that our first duty is to take care of our health and grow spiritually so we can serve God to the best of our ability. God must work in us before He can work through us. Our duty to God comes before our responsibilities to our church (Philippians 3:10-11). We are in church leadership because this is God's chosen way to stretch and mature us.

Is He using you to help others become more like Jesus? I hope so – that's great when it happens. But here is the real question: is He using others to make you more like Jesus? That is definitely on the top of God's priority list for us. He uses the good (encouragement and support of others) as well as the bad (criticism and attacks by others) to make us more like His Son. Do not get so busy trying to change others you miss what God is doing to change you!

## **A. WE ARE TO HUMBLY SERVE GOD**

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. This is not a teamwork operation; it is 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 anything by my own strength.

It is not about me; it is all about Him (Galatians 2:20)! He does not need me, but I totally need Him! As I mature spiritually, I find God keeps getting bigger and bigger. I, by comparison, keep getting smaller and smaller. This is how it should be! There is something freeing about "letting go and letting God." When I think I have nothing to offer, He encourages me to keep on going.

A real peace comes to me when I let God be God and recognize He does not need me to run His Kingdom down here. It is freeing to come to the conclusion that I cannot do ANYthing without Him (Romans 12:1-2). When that becomes more than words, taking on reality in my life, I start listening more intently to Him. 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 had not expected. I have learned that people come before programs. I am here to serve my people; they are not here to serve me. I have more peace and patience because I know that if I am in His will, then He will bring whatever results He wants, whenever He wants them. God does not 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 agree to my plans.

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

## **B. WE ARE TO REGULARLY CONNECT WITH GOD**

Sometimes when I get busy, I put off eating good, healthy food. I may even skip a meal or two to have more time to do all that needs doing. Before long, though, I lack strength and energy to keep up with my plans and activities. The same is true spiritually. It is easy to become so busy that we neglect regular time alone with the Lord. We deal with spiritual things all day: plan Bible studies, pray with people, and give Biblical counsel. Without a daily intake of God's Word and a time of close personal connection with God, we will soon be spiritually empty (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). In being so

highly focused on what we DO, we start to neglect who we ARE. Then comes discouragement. We feel drained, impatient and frustrated - all from trying to operate without the proper fuel.

Let God fill you with His presence. This takes time, quality time - not just talking, but also listening – as does any worthwhile relationship. Do not allow yourself to become like the religious rulers in Jesus' day – so busy doing godly acts that they missed out on their personal connection with God. Remember, it is all about relationship, and that means your own relationship with Jesus comes before all else, that you may live life knowing you have served Him before anything else (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do you find yourself too busy to have regular quality devotional time with God? What gives you the most difficulty in spending regular time with God? Is it business, laziness, unconfessed sin, poor priorities.... ? When do you schedule regular time with God?*

## **C. WE ARE TO INTIMATELY KNOW GOD**

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!

Dallas Willard once said, "The greatest enemy of intimacy with God is service for God." It's so easy to get wrapped up in producing more and more. We start seeing others and even God in terms of how they can help us accomplish more in life.

Nothing substitutes for intimacy with God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). 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. Relationships cannot grow when communication is limited to how to more efficiently function together towards a common goal. Relationships grow when we listen to our mates, speak from our hearts, share our love and appreciation of them, and let them love us in return. The same is true of our relationship with Jesus.

Time, vulnerability and humility make up the cost you must be willing to pay for achieving closeness to God. You must desire this above all else, or it will not happen. But the sweetness of knowing Him is definitely worth it. It is what heaven will be all about! Yes, we will be serving God in heaven, and it will be based on true intimacy with Him. But, why wait until then when we can start experiencing that taste of heaven on earth now?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you say you are in your intimacy with God? Do you have a close, personal relationship with Him? Are you satisfied with it or would you like to be closer to Him? Honestly ask yourself what keeps your personal relationship with God from growing. What roadblocks are in the way? What can you do about them?*

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH COMES FROM STUDYING THE BIBLE.** When we are very young we are given simple food because that is all our immature bodies can digest. As our bodies mature, we are able to eat solid food. Something is wrong if an adult only eats food made for babies.

The same is true with us spiritually (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). The more we mature in the faith, the more we should want spiritual meat. Simple Bible truths are OK, but we need something deeper and stronger to feed our growing souls. God commands us to study and learn His Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Unfortunately, many Christians stick to the simple stuff. They read devotionals and use lesson plans that are about the Bible, but do not read the Book themselves. They let others chew their food for them instead of chewing it themselves.

There is no quick way to take in the truths of God's Word. It takes time to read and observe a passage of Scripture, looking for things you have not noticed before. There is no fast way to unearth the gems of the Bible which only come to those who do careful and thorough study. Only precise and insightful application can cause the truths we learn to become part of our daily lives.

Very little that we do in a day will be taken with us to heaven – but what we learn in the Bible and its application in our lives will be ours eternally. Take some time away from daily activities, invest some in eternity. Spend some quality time in the Bible today. (For more information on how to do this see "Studying the Bible" by Jerry Schmoeyer)

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *When is the last time you studied a Bible passage just for your own edification, not for use in a lesson or message? Have you ever tried journaling your Bible study, writing down the lessons and personal applications you come up with Try it today. The results you will reap will be worth the time.*

**THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATION** Meditation is something that should be part of our spiritual lives (Psalm 119:97; 1:1-2), taking time to think about God and His Word. Meditating is similar to praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). When you meditate, you express what is on your heart and reflect on what He says to you in the Bible through the Holy Spirit, like having a friendly conversation with a good friend.

Try talking to God out loud. It is good to put thoughts into words. We focus better and communicate more precisely. Also, try praying a Scripture passage. Read it out loud, think about it, read it again, talk to God about it and listen to what His Spirit tells you. Writing down your thoughts in a journal can help add to this experience. Yes, it takes time and effort – but any good relationship takes time and effort to grow and is definitely worth it!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *When was the last time you had a good, long time of fellowship with God, where you just relaxed and enjoyed His presence? What is the main obstacle to your having these kinds of refreshing, rejuvenating times with God? Take a few moments to meditate right now.*

**KNOWING GOD IS A LIFETIME PROCESS.** Several years ago I started learning Hindi to help my ministry time in India. I thought if I could learn the alphabet, simple sentence structure, and a bit of vocabulary, I would be fine. Not so! I have learned far more than that amount, but seem to be further than ever from where I want to be. The more I learn, the more I realize all I do not know!

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 (Romans 7:14-19). I see more and more areas in my life that just do not 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 far I still have to grow! The greater God becomes in my mind and heart, the closer I become to Him.

Knowing that Paul experienced this as well is an encouragement for me. 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), and at the end he recognized he was the worst of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). That is the way it works: the more we grow the more we know we need to grow.

It is like a sculptor carving a model. First, he painfully removes large chunks of marble that are not part of the final product, then 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? Think about it and you will see His work. He is the master sculptor, committed to making you into the image of His Son (Philippians 1:6). His work may be painful sometimes, but the product is always worth it!



**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Where have you grown spiritually the most in the last year? Why? Where is God working on you right now to stretch and mature you? What can you do to help with the work He is doing in you?*

We first looked at duties Christian leaders have to themselves so they can be the people God needs them to be to serve Him. Then we looked at our duties and responsibilities to God so we keep growing closer to Him and become more like Jesus. These must be done before we can serve others. After these priorities, the first people we are responsible to serve is our family (1 Timothy 3:5).

## **D. WE ARE TO FAITHFULLY LIVE FOR GOD**

When we become a Christian we desert Satan's army and join God's army. Satan and his forces do all they can to defeat us. When we become a leader in God's army Satan does everything he can to destroy us and our testimony. Pastors and other leaders draw spiritual attacks our whole lives. He tries to get us to sin, be proud or become discouraged. Therefore it is extra important for us to live holy lives of faithfulness to Him.

Sexual temptation is a tool Satan uses against pastors, often with great success. We are commanded to be sexually pure (Ephesians 5:3-5). There is to not be even a hint of anything inappropriate (Ephesians 5:3). I learned from Billy Graham the importance of never, never, never being alone anywhere with a woman other than my mother, wife or daughters. There can be no exceptions. I have followed that rule my whole ministry. It is something everyone in ministry should commit to.

In all ways we are to have the highest level of honesty and integrity. We are to have an excellent reputation with everyone, Christians and unbelievers. Our speech, the way we relate to others and how we treat people must be Christ-like. We cannot show anger in our actions or speech (except at sin – Ephesians 4:26). Paul makes these things abundantly clear in his list of qualifications for pastors and leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

This includes what we say about others. We must never, in any way, gossip or talk about others in a negative way, even if what we say is true and known by others. When someone tells us something personal or private, we must always keep it in confidence and never tell it to another. We can share some things with our wives when appropriate and when we know they will not tell anyone, but no one else. If we need her advice or opinion, or if there is something she can do to help the situation, only then can we share with our wives. People must know they can trust us or they will not respect us.

Pride is another strong temptation for pastors. It is how Satan fell (Ezekiel 28:17; Isaiah 14:12-14) and it characterizes him even now (1 Timothy 3:6). Pastors and other leaders are looked up to and respected by others and that can tempt us to pride. That's why Paul says pastors must be men who are mature and stable believers (1 Timothy 3:6). We can be tempted to ungodly ambition: wanting a larger church, TV program or being better known (Mark 9:30-34). Like the disciples, we can consider ourselves better than others (Mark 10:32-35; Matthew 20:20). Without knowing it, we can become insensitive and arrogant, thinking of ourselves before others (Luke 22:14-24). We can become overly confident in ourselves. The disciples didn't believe Jesus when He warned them they would deny Him (Mark 14:17-21). Pride is especially dangerous because it's a sin we recognize in others but not ourselves. We need to ask God and others we trust, to point out pride so we can remove it. God hates pride (Pride 6:16-17) perhaps above all sins, for it is the root of other sins. He brings judgment on those who are proud (Proverbs 16:18). We, like Jesus, are to humble ourselves

and wash others feet (John 13:1-17). Humility is shown in saying, “I’m sorry,” “I was wrong,” “Please forgive me” and “Thank you” when appropriate.

Another tool the enemy uses to defeat us is discouragement. It can be a great temptation to those in ministry. We give in to it when we get our eyes off Jesus and onto our circumstances. We must learn to faithfully trust Him and do our best no matter the results. Spend time in worship and read God’s Word. God promises He will help you through your fear and discouragement (Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 34:4; 112:7; 18:30; John 16:33; Joshua 1:9; Ephesians 2:19-22; Deuteronomy 31:6; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Chronicles 20:15).

Since we know we will be attacked in these ways, we must do all we can to be prepared. God has provided armor for our defense in our battle against Satan, the world and our flesh (Ephesians 6:10-20). Start each day in prayer, worship and Bible reading. Keep a close relationship with your wife and children. Have close pastor friends with whom you can be honest and who will hold you accountable if you stray. You will be attacked (1 Peter 5:8). Will you be ready?

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Are you still growing spiritually? Would your wife and children say you are humble, or that you sometimes act proud? Do people in your community think highly of you, or are there things about you that don’t reflect well on Jesus? Do people know that you do not gossip and will never share what was told in confidence? Do you ever give in to any kind of sexual temptation in your actions or thoughts? Would God Himself say you are living a holy life with His help?*

## **III. DUTIES TO OUR FAMILY**

In our priority of duties, our families come before our ministries (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1-6). When Adam walked and talked with God in Eden, he realized something was missing from his life. God met that need by creating Eve, a wife for him to love and share his life (Genesis 2:18-24). He didn’t create children for him to raise, parents for him to support or a church for him to pastor. After our duty to God Himself, our next duty is to our wives and children, even before our ministries.

### **A. DUTIES TO OUR WIFE**

God has blessed me with a wonderful wife or I would not 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 have seen it demonstrated through her. I more deeply understand God can and will forgive me, 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 were not for the needs of our mates and families. We can resent the time they take. Perhaps I could have spent more time in ministry without my wife and family, but it would not have accomplished as much, and the quality would have been far less. I am sure I would have burnt out or failed without her help.

God commands I serve her before myself or my church (Ephesians 5:25-33). In fact, He says if I cannot serve her first, I should not be a pastor (1 Timothy 3:2-5; Titus 2:6). Being a good husband is more important than being a good pastor (1 Peter 3:7). (For more information about Christian marriage see "Marriage and Ministry" by Jerry Schmoyer.)

God expects me to love her as He loves me (Ephesians 5:25). I am to serve her, not just have her serve me. I must show her love, help her in any way I can and always be kind and gentle to her.

Learning to meet her needs before my own does not take away from my ministry, but rather enriches it by maturing me. Whatever I put into her I get back many times over. Learning to put someone before myself has not been easy, but has been essential in marriage and ministry. It helps me become more like Jesus Who is characterized by putting others before Himself.

The main lessons I have learned in life and the greatest spiritual and emotional growth I have experienced in life have come through my marriage. Things have not always been easy for us. God uses our imperfections and our conflicts to teach about humility, service, apologizing, forgiving and accepting forgiveness. These things cannot be learned from a book, only from life.

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 (Ecclesiastes 31:10-12, 30-31). And so is a good husband for you wives reading this!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How much do you value your mate? Do you resent the demands they put on you? What do you sacrifice to meet your mate's needs? What more should you be doing? When is the last time you told them how much they mean to you? Do so today.*

## **B. DUTIES TO OUR CHILDREN**

As I look back on my life, I have a perspective that many of you who are younger do not have. My children are grown, married and raising children of their own. My impact on their life has largely 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 in my life, 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 wife and children.

Jesus' top priority while on earth was His 'family' of disciples, not the crowds, and not new programs and projects. He put them and their needs first, often withdrawing from the crowds or sending others away to spend time with the disciples (Matthew 8:18; 14:13-15; 15:39). His pattern is ours to follow today. There is no one you will reproduce yourself in more completely than your children. And you WILL reproduce yourself in them, for good or for bad. You cannot change the fact that you will totally influence their lives. The question is what the influence will be, not if you will have influence. Children are like soft clay which you are forming and molding into whatever image you choose (Proverbs 22:6). If you are too busy to be with them, that makes them feel rejected and unimportant. You represent God in their lives. How you treat them will lead them to or from Jesus. You are forming them and will form them more than anyone else in your ministry.

It is a shame that the children of those in ministry often have a reputation for rebellion and disobedience. Whose fault is that? God Himself says that if we cannot manage our families then we cannot manage His church (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Your children need you more than your church. Sometimes we get 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, even ministry.

They are precious to Him and He entrusts them to us. He will never give us so much to do that we cannot have time for them. That comes from our wrong priorities.

One of my greatest joys in life is watching my children 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. Make sure you see your children as of top importance in your ministry. Only your wife is more important.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *I am sure you would say your family is your number 1 priority, but would they agree? What proof can you present that shows you put your wife and children before your work? Would your wife say she is more important than your ministry or work? Can she give examples of when you put her before your own needs? Would your children say that they know they are more important to you than your ministry? Pray for each one individually, bringing their needs, their weaknesses, and their futures before the Lord in prayer.*

We have looked at duties Christian leaders have to themselves, to God, and to our wives and children. Now we will look at our duties to those in our church.

## **IV. DUTIES TO OUR CHURCH**

### **A. DUTIES TO SHEPHERD THE SHEEP**

**JESUS THE PASTOR** The word ‘Pastor’ really means ‘Shepherd.’ Jesus is the Great Shepherd (John 10:11; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Hebrews 13:20) and can also be called the Great Pastor. He is our pastor, the example every earthly pastor follows. As He cares for us, so we who are pastors of churches must care for the sheep He loans us. They are His sheep and we take care of them for Him, as He takes care of us. He is the Senior Pastor; we are His Assistant Pastors. We must do all we do for Him, talk to Him about everything we plan, and make sure He gets ALL the glory for what happens.

**WHAT IS A SHEPHERD** The word that best summarizes the role and duty of a pastor is “shepherd.” God commands, “Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek word for “shepherd (poimen)” is used for “pastor.” It is a term that covers all the duties of a pastor. God is literally saying, “Pastors, act like shepherds of sheep. Your duties to your people are the same as a shepherd’s duties to his sheep.”

If we are to be shepherds like Jesus, we must value people as He did. He went to them and they knew He cared for them (Matthew 9:9-12). He knew His purpose was to bring people to salvation and spiritual growth (Luke 19:9-10). Our purpose is the same. It is not to build a large church or a well-known reputation. It is to bring people to Jesus and help them grow. Jesus did this as a servant.

The work of a shepherd is not glamorous or exciting, but hard, dirty work. It is serving sheep or goats that are ignorant, defenseless and helpless. Yet it is important, honest work. David was a shepherd, so was Moses, Rachel, Jacob and Abel. It was shepherds who first heard of Jesus’ birth – and from the angels themselves! Shepherds knew their sheep individually, called them by name. Sheep would recognize and respond to the voice of their shepherd but not others. A good shepherd was committed to his sheep, even to sacrificing his life for his sheep. That is why God uses a shepherd to describe His care of us (Psalm 23), as does Jesus (John 10:11-13).

While the term “shepherd” refers to a pastor, it also describes anyone who is in charge of other believers. Anyone with a ministry to a group of believers is their shepherd. A father is the shepherd of his family, and a mother is the shepherd of her children.

Shepherds in Bible times worked for the person who owned the sheep. The sheep were on loan to them. God is the Master to whom all Christians belong. He appoints shepherds to represent Him, to do His work on earth for Him. The sheep do not belong to us, they are His.

In the Old Testament when God needed to get something done, He often laid hold of a shepherd. When He wanted to found a great nation, He called a shepherd in Ur named Abraham. When He wanted to give birth to the tribes of Israel, He turned to a shepherd named Jacob. When He wanted to protect his people in Egypt, He called a shepherd named Joseph. When He wanted someone to lead the Jews out of Egypt, He chose a shepherd named Moses. And when He wanted a man to be king, He found a young shepherd on the hills of Bethlehem named David.

That is why when Jesus wanted a metaphor to describe his relationship to the nation of Israel, He said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11). It was an image His hearers easily understood. Hebrews 13:20 calls him “that Great Shepherd of the sheep.” And 1 Peter 5:4 calls him “the Chief Shepherd.”

**A SHEPHERD IS CALLED BY GOD** How do you know if God wants you to be a pastor or church leader? How can you know He has chosen you to minister for Him? Doubting His call especially happens when we face difficulties in life and ministry. It is important we know He has chosen us to lead so we stay faithful no matter what we go through. God first calls us for salvation (John 6:44), then He calls us for service (Matthew 9:9; Acts 13:2; Mark 1:16; Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 1:1).

We sense that call to ministry as an inner desire to serve God by helping believers grow in their faith. The gift of shepherding enables us to help others mature spiritually.

I remember God putting that desire in my heart when I was a young boy. I did not aspire to building a career or making money, I wanted to serve God by serving others. When I have not been pastoring, I felt emptiness, a lack of purpose. Paul described this in 1 Corinthians 9:16, “Woe to me if I don’t preach.” As for myself, I knew ministering would be my only work. There are, however, many in ministry who must work part time to pay their bills, but the desire is still within them to minister when and how they can.

When God puts the gift and desire to minister within a person, others will soon notice. Opportunities to minister will appear. People will come for advice, counsel, information or guidance. You will be asked to teach or lead in some way. Sheep will recognize a caring shepherd, and that is true of God’s sheep as well.

Remember, God is looking for those who are available to serve Him and lead others as they grow spiritually. Whatever a person’s skill or ability is, He gives us the necessary gifts and wisdom to do what He wants. He does not choose the qualified, He qualifies the chosen.

Remember, too, that when God calls you, He calls you to love the people He loves. We aren’t called to a church building, but to the people who make up the church. You can know which Body of believers He wants you to lead by recognizing when He puts a love in you for a group of believers. He loves the people, and He puts some of that love in us so He can love them through us. If you don’t have love for the people you lead, it will be very hard to serve them. You can’t make a marriage be all it should be when there is no love between husband and wife. Ask God to give you His love for the people you minister to. A good shepherd loves his sheep, and a good pastor loves his people.

If God is calling you to ministry, then make sure you follow. I know of several men who knew they were called to pastor but never followed the call. They regretted their the rest of their lives.

They didn't say "no" to God, they just put off following to another day – but that day never came. The call to shepherd His sheep is not a suggestion or option, it is a command (Micah 7:14; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Was there a certain time you can remember when you felt called to be a pastor? How did you know that was His purpose for you? Have you ever doubted you should be a pastor? Why? What would you tell another pastor who doubted their call? Take a few minutes to thank God for choosing you to serve Him as a pastor. Recommit yourself to faithfully serve Him.*

**A SHEPHERD IS ORDAINED** The early church ordained those who were recognized and installed as pastors of local churches. Paul and Barnabas had a special ceremony recognizing God's call on their lives and setting them apart to it (Acts 13:3). The same happened to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Deacons were installed by the leaders laying hands on them and dedicating them to God's work in prayer as well (Acts 6:6). Those who do the ordaining are responsible to pray for the ones they ordain, and to hold them accountable if they stray from the truth. An ordained person is always able to go to them for counsel or help of any kind. Paul warns Timothy to not ordain new believers for they can be tempted to pride and sin (1 Timothy 5:22).

The Bible doesn't tell exactly how ordination was done, for there is no certain form to follow. Identification with and support of the person to be ordained is shown by the leaders over him placing hands on him. Pray is part of this as well.

Usually today this is done by a group of pastors as well as leaders of the church involved. They must know the man well enough to be able to affirm his calling, godly living and Bible knowledge. The ceremony itself should include these men and be done before the Body of believers involved.

**A SHEPHERD IS A SHEPHERD FOR LIFE** When a person becomes a shepherd of others, be it a man of a church or a women of other women and children, it is a life-time calling. They may not always fill the role of pastoring a church, but even in retirement they still have the gift and calling to pastor others to the extent they are able. Being a pastor is a life calling, not just a job assignment.

There will probably come a time when a man is not able to do all that is necessary to lead and feed his congregation. Stepping back and letting a younger man takeover better provides for the needs of the congregation. I pastored until I was 70. I was at my last church for 35 years. The time came when I knew I did not have the energy and stamina to do what was needed. God sent a younger pastor to work with me and eventually take over. I still do as much ministry as possible, but not nearly as much as I did when younger. I can use my experience and gifts to focus on areas where I can be effective. My ministry now is more one of quality than quantity.

For a man to stay pastoring beyond his ability to do all that is needed is not right for the people. Each church deserves the best pastor they can have to lead and feed them. Also, retirement can give the person more time to enjoy family and friends while he still ministers in ways he is able. We are to serve God to the best of our ability all our lives, but our strength and energy diminishes as we age.

**A SHEPHERD IS PRIVILEGED** Shepherding sheep or goats today is not the easiest job in the world, but being a pastor is! It has been said that if God calls you to be a pastor, you should not stoop to be a king. Shepherding God's people is a great privilege and honor (1 Timothy 3:1).

**A SHEPHERD IS GIFTED** Being a good pastor requires more than a God-given desire, but also skill and ability to carry out the duties. When God calls someone to do something, He also equips him or her to do it. When God calls us to lead sheep, He equips us with leadership or shepherding abilities.

At the moment of salvation God gives us many blessings and privileges. This includes a unique set of spiritual gifts we need to serve Him (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). These gifts are tools the Holy Spirit uses to enable us to have the wisdom and skills necessary to care for His people. Each believer has a unique set of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). The current gifts God gives include evangelism, teaching the Bible, serving others, hospitality, helping others, administration and various ways of helping others in their Christian life (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11).

Spiritual gifts are not talents. Only believers have spiritual gifts. These gifts are not for our enjoyment, but are to minister to others, to build up the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12). Each and every believer has a combination of various gifts which differ from others (Romans 12:6-8). Unfortunately, not all Christians develop and use their gifts. When this neglect happens, the whole Body of believers suffers the loss.

Those called to pastor are given the gift of shepherding so they can lead, feed and care for others (Acts 20:28; Jeremiah 3:15; 1 Peter 5:1-4). This gift includes the desire and ability to lead and guide God's people to maturity in their faith.

Not all pastors are gifted the same. God gives us a blend of several gifts in addition to pastoring. Some pastors are skilled in evangelism while others are better at teaching new believers. Some do well at starting new churches, others are better at pastoring churches already established. Still others are capable counselors, some are bold prayer warriors, and some are fervent worshipers. Each pastor and leader is different (Romans 12:6-8). All share a desire to pastor, but each one is gifted to do so in different ways. Because of this, God does not want pastors to compare themselves with other pastors; He does expect us to use the gifts He has given us. There is no greater privilege than serving God in the way He has gifted you.

There is a difference between the gift of shepherding or pastoring and the office of pastor. Many in a church will have the gift of shepherding. Those who minister to the elderly or children, those who counsel or disciple others, those who teach or lead in other ways—all can have the gift of pastor shepherd. Women can minister to other women and children. Young people can help others their age or younger to grow in the faith. Each church needs many with the spiritual gift of pastoring. If not, all the responsibility falls on one man. No one man can do everything, the load must be shared (Ephesians 4:11-12).

However, usually only one man fills the office of pastor. He oversees and sets direction for the church. Sometimes two men can work together as a team doing this and share the office of pastor over a group of believers. Other men can help, be assistant pastors, and can rightly be called "pastor." Leadership responsibility can be shared, especially in large congregations. But the final responsibility always falls on the man with the office.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *What spiritual gifts has God given you (be specific)? Where are you strongest in ministry? Where are you weakest? What are you doing to further develop your gifts?*

**CAN WOMEN BE SHEPHERDS?** Many women have the gift of shepherding and play a very important role in the church. They minister to other women and children (Titus 2:3-5). They can advise men, but not have leadership over them (1 Timothy 2:9-14). Ultimate spiritual authority in the church is reserved for men. Women can teach (Titus 2:3; Acts 18:25-26) and minister in many ways, but not lead men.

**A SHEPHERD IS STRETCHED** Shepherding sheep is a hard and often difficult job. It can also be dull and boring at times, and at other times be exciting or dangerous. Some parts are enjoyable, others very unenjoyable. God uses pastoring to stretch our faith and cause us to depend more completely on Him. God uses pastoring as His way to stretch us and increase our faith. He uses the

people we lead to mature us! He gets us out of our comfort zone so we grow and become more like Jesus. That is His purpose in our lives (Philippians 1:5-6).

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How do you handle criticism? When is it hardest for you to respond graciously when criticized? Is there anyone you need to forgive for something they said or did?*

**A SHEPHERD MUST BE CHRIST LIKE** When David was a shepherd, he killed a lion and a bear protecting his sheep (1 Samuel 17:34-36). God was using that to prepare him to fight Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-54). He learned to fight in God's strength and depend on God for victory. He used what we face as shepherds of His people to grow our faith as well. God allows things to come into our lives that we cannot handle so we will go to Him for help. When circumstances are difficult and we doubt if we can lead God's people, we need to remember God chose and called us, and we need to depend on Him. God is working ON us and IN us so we grow even as He works THROUGH us to help others grow (Philippians 1:6). His purpose is to make us more like Jesus.

**A SHEPHERD MUST BE FAITHFUL** Living for God can be difficult. Ask Isaiah or Jeremiah or even John the Baptist. Sometimes it seems our words and witness are not making any impact. Results can be slim. But often, seeds are planted and the results may not show until years later. Stay faithful anyway. Discouragement, that often-used weapon of Satan, can become a constant companion. God in His mercy does allow us to see glimpses of changes in lives we touch, and that is great. Often it seems that no one really understands and appreciates what we do except our mates, and they often have their own struggles to deal with. Remember; God knows what we strive to do, though we may not always seem to succeed.

We know that God wants us to be faithful in what we do and leave the results to Him. It is His job to change hearts and lives, not ours. We are to faithfully serve, to minister for Him. That is what He looks at – our faithfulness. God does not compare us with each other (thankfully!), He just compares us with ourselves. If we are doing our best to faithfully serve Him, then He is thrilled with us. God does not evaluate us by the results we produce, but by the faithfulness of our service. After all, the servant with 2 talents received the same "Well done" from the master as the servant with ten (Matthew 25:19-23)! Anyone can serve God when things seem to be going great, but to faithfully serve when we do not see the results brings greater pleasure to God and reward to us. Write that on a piece of paper and put it where you see it every day: "God evaluates me by my faithfulness, not by my effectiveness." Just do your best and leave the results to Him!

**A SHEPHERD IS REWARDED** God says He will bless and reward those who faithfully serve (Luke 12:37). We all want to hear Him say: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 5:21-23). When we come to the end of our lives we want to be able to say what Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." God promises a special crown for those who faithfully shepherd His people (1 Peter 5:2-4). What a great privilege to pastor His people. He blesses us in this life and then rewards us in eternity.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Are you evaluating your effectiveness by the fruit of your ministry? Are you discouraged with what external outcomes you can observe? Thank God for not appraising your effectiveness by visible results but by your faithfulness. Remember those in your own past whose faithful service influenced you (perhaps a thank-you to them would be greatly appreciated by them). Recommit yourself to faithfully serve Him even when there are no visible results.*

## **B. DUTY TO PROTECT THE SHEEP**

**SHEPHERD AS PROTECTOR** One of the most important duties a shepherd has is to protect his sheep. Sheep are defenseless and cannot protect themselves and fight, neither do they know to run



or hide. They need someone to defend and protect them. David's sheep needed him to protect them from lions and bears (1 Samuel 17:34-36).

As Christians, we are all like sheep (Isaiah 53:6). We all need a shepherd, and Jesus is our shepherd (Psalm 23: John 10:11-18). **God is a perfect example of what a shepherd is to be and do (Psalm 23). As our shepherd He meets our needs (verse 1). He leads us to places of rest and life-giving nourishment (verse 2). His sheep have peace because of His care (verse 3). He enables us to live holy lives (verse 3) and comforts us when death approaches (verse 4). He guides and disciplines His sheep (verse 4). As our shepherd He helps us have victory over great opposition (verse 5). He blesses us (verse 5) and fills us with confidence for this life and hope for the life to come (verse 6). As sheep that's what we need in a shepherd. That's what our sheep need as well, and God works through us to be shepherds who provide this for them.**

God divides His sheep up into small flocks called churches. He puts a pastor, or shepherd, over each group. God works through His shepherd to guard His sheep. Sheep need protection from danger, from wolves and lions and from those who would steal them away from their shepherd (1 Peter 5:8).

Christians need protection from Satan and his demons. Pastors must have a good knowledge of spiritual warfare and how to have victory over Satan and demons. They need to know how to apply the principles of spiritual warfare to their own lives as well as their church. They need to teach these things to their people so they, too, can have victory. They need to use these tools whenever they are needed in their ministry. (For more information see "Spiritual Warfare" by Jerry Schmyer.)

Christians also need protection from false teachers. Jesus calls false teachers "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15; Galatians 1:6-10). They pretend they are Christians and are teaching the truth, but really they are deceiving Christians and leading them into error and sin. God uses shepherds to protect His sheep from them.

We are also to protect sheep from their own errors and sin. Sheep are dumb animals and will wonder off and get lost. Christians are the same way and will wander away from God and His truth unless someone is there to watch over them. That is one of the jobs of shepherds.

**OVERSEER AS PROTECTOR** Besides "Shepherd," or "Pastor," there are other terms used in the Bible for those who lead God's people. Understanding them can help us better understand our duties and what God expects of pastors.

1 Timothy 3:1 says, "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task." The word "Overseer" is a word the Gentiles used for the leader of a group of people. Sometimes this word is translated "Bishop," but it refers to the same person as "Pastor" (Acts 20:28). The Bible never uses the term "Bishop" to refer to a pastor who is over other pastors, it is used of every person called to pastor.

The command given overseers (also called bishops and pastors) is to "keep watch" (Acts 20:28). This word is used of a night watchman who keeps watch over the city. The pastor, or overseer, is the one who keeps watch over a body of believers. He is their guardian.

The overseer/pastor protects God's sheep from Satan (1 Peter 5:8-10; Ephesians 2:2-3; 6:11-18). He understands spiritual warfare and knows how to guard himself and his people from Satan and his demons. (For more information see "Spiritual Warfare Handbook" by Jerry Schmyer.)

The overseer/pastor also protects God's sheep from false teachers (Matthew 7:15; Galatians 1:6-10; Acts 20:28-30). He must know God's truth in the Bible so he is not deceived by the lies of the enemy through those who pretend to be sheep but really are wolves.

The overseer/pastor even protects God's sheep from themselves. He points out sin and preaches God's truth. He teaches the Word to prevent people from sinning. He corrects, rebukes and encourages those who get caught in sin. Those are important duties of pastors.

Another title describing this work of overseeing is "steward" (1 Corinthians 4:1). The Greek word, "oikonomos," means "to manage" and is used of a manager of a household. Paul refers to pastors as "stewards" (1 Corinthians 4:1). The church is the house the pastor manages (1 Timothy 3:15), God is the owner of the house and the believers in the church are the household members (Galatians 6:10).

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do you know the Bible well enough to keep from being deceived by Satan's lies and false teachings? Are you continuing to learn more and more about the Bible. Are you aware of how Satan and demons work against you and your ministry? Do you know what to do to have victory over their attacks? Are you protecting those in your ministry from sin within and without?*

**CHURCH DISCIPLINE** God is holy and He wants His Bride to be holy as well (1 Peter 1:16). Satan tries to bring sin into the lives of those in the fellowship (1 Peter 5:8). This not only affects them but the whole church as well (1 Corinthians 11:30). God Himself disciplined Ananias and Saphira for their sin (Acts 5:1-11). In order to show the seriousness of sin, and to protect others from being misled, God commands us to warn those in sin. If they don't repent we are to take church leaders, and if even that fails we are to alert the whole church and remove them from membership (Matthew 18:15-17). Paul practiced this when he told the church in Corinth to remove from fellowship the man living in sin (1 Corinthians 5:5). Perhaps this man is the one who learned and repented (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

How this is handled should be spelled out in the church constitution so everyone knows the procedure. It can help to have it firmly in place if it is ever needed. If these things aren't handled firmly but with love more problems can occur. Always be prayerful in these situations. They take compassion, wisdom and courage.

## **C. DUTY TO FEED/TEACH THE SHEEP**

**RESPONSIBILITY TO FEED THE SHEEP** One of the main duties of a shepherd is to make sure his sheep have proper nourishment. He makes sure they are fed so they are healthy. That is a duty of a pastor/shepherd as well.

Your body needs nourishment to be strong and healthy. Your spirit needs nourishment to be strong and healthy as well. God gives us His Word to nourish our spirit. We must teach it to our people to feed them as well. Jesus commands it (John 21:15-17).

Paul refers to a pastor as also being a teacher (Ephesians 4:11-13). The term "Pastor-Teacher" is one word referring to the inherent teaching responsibility of the shepherd to teach the Bible. We eat several times a day, every day. We need God's word every day, throughout the day as well. We need to be sure to teach the Bible to our people. That is a very important part of the duty of all pastors. All a pastor does makes no difference if his sheep die of starvation. If the sheep are not being fed, a shepherd is not doing his duty.

Ephesians 4:11-13 makes it clear that pastors are to feed the sheep so they can carry out the ministry of the church. The pastor is not to do everything himself. Instead, he is to train others to do the work of ministry. A pastor is not expected to take every job onto himself, but he is responsible to oversee the work of the ministry. We are like a principal in a school, a boss in a factory, or a father in a family. We do not have to do everything ourselves, but we are responsible to see it is done (2

Timothy 2:2). Jesus trained His disciples to carry out the work of the ministry (Luke 10:1-20), and we must do the same.

**HEALING SICK SHEEP** Included in feeding our sheep is helping spiritually sick sheep heal and become healthy and productive. That is the job of all shepherds of sheep or of people. The word translated “equip” in Ephesians 4:12, “katartizo” in Greek, means “to make something suitable or useful.” It suggests making something work as it was designed to function, to make it effective again. This word is used of mending fishing nets (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). It reminds us that we deal with torn lives, those who aren’t functioning spiritually or emotionally as they should. Our job as shepherds is to help them mend their lives through God’s healing love and truth. The word is also used of restoring a sinning believer (Galatians 6:1).

**COMMAND TO PREACH THE WORD** Not only are we commanded to teach the Word, we are also commanded to preach it (2 Timothy 4:1-5) “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. ... Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

“Preach” means to “proclaim.” It is used of an ambassador who is sent by his king to proclaim the king’s message with authority and clarity. Carrying the king’s message is a great honor and privilege, and so he is a respected man. The same is true of us as pastors, for we are ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage commands us to proclaim God’s Word. We do this by our words when we teach or preach to individuals or groups. We also do this by applying God’s truth to our lives and setting an example for others.

We are commanded to preach “the Word.” We never give our own message, just the words the King has given us to pass on. We are not to talk about politics, give our opinions, or tell stories, but to preach the whole Word of God. In order to pass it on to others, we must study the Bible and know it well ourselves (2 Timothy 2:15).

This passage in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 gives several commands in addition to preaching the Word. These are all duties from our King. The second command, after proclaiming the Word, is to “be prepared in season and out of season.” We are always to be ready to pass on God’s Word at any place or under any circumstances. We must know God’s Word, stay spiritually close to God, and have a good reputation so others will listen to us. This must be done “in season and out of season.” That means when conditions are favorable or unfavorable, when it is easy or hard to proclaim God’s Word.

The third command, “correct,” refers to our duty to expose error and misunderstanding and put God’s truth in its place. Next, we are to “rebuke” where there is known sin. The Greek word is very strong, referring to a sharp, severe scolding. We are to point out sin that is present, but do so in love. It is like warning someone when their house is on fire; urgent, clear, and exact words are most important.

The next command in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 is to “encourage” others by what we preach/proclaim. We are to build up, not discourage. This is to be done with “great patience.” We must keep preaching and exhorting over and over, even as God works with us. Being a good shepherd takes great patience – for sheep or for people.

Along with this we must give “careful instruction” in the Word. We must teach and apply all parts of the Bible and do so in detail. There is too much error and false teaching in the church today, weakening Christians and the church.

While doing this we must watch out for ourselves. We are commanded to “keep your head in all situations” (2 Timothy 4:1-5). We must exercise self-control and not let anger or emotional reactions control us. This includes “enduring hardship.” Pastoring can be lonely. Others expect a lot of us and often are critical of us. As we face temptations and trials, God uses all of this to make us more like Jesus.

The next duty in the list in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 is to “do the work of an evangelist.” Not all pastors have the spiritual gift of evangelism, but we are all required to spread the good news and to point people to Jesus. The goal of all we say and do is to lift up Jesus as the solution to all our needs. We do this by our words as well as our life.

Finally, Paul summarizes by saying we are to “discharge all the duties of your ministry.” We are to faithfully do all the things God has commanded pastors to do.

**HOW TO FEED THE SHEEP** Feeding the sheep means to teach them God's Word. Some pastors are so preoccupied they do not take time to prepare a sermon. They stand to speak on Sunday, they read a few Bible verses, close their Bible and talk to the people, telling them the same thing they have already told them before. The people only hear their words, not words from the Bible. Is that feeding the sheep?

Suppose your wife is so busy doing other things she does not make good meals. She feeds you the same thing each meal, something left over from the day before. You would not like that! If she is a good cook, she spends time planning and preparing healthy, good-tasting meals. That is how we must feed our people.

As pastors we need to plan and prepare when we feed our people as well. When Paul preached he would take a passage of scripture and explain it to the people. Then he would apply it to their life. Ezra did the same thing.

You need to start early in the week to prepare your sermon. Pick a book you would like to teach the people and start studying it. Read the first verse and think about it. Pray and ask God to help you understand what it means. You can look up references in your Bible or use a commentary. Write down what He is teaching you. Then pray and ask God to show you how this applies to your life. Write that down as well. When you are done with one verse go on to the next verse and do the same thing.

Then when Sunday comes you use your notes to teach the people what the first verse means. You tell them how it applies to them. You can use stories or examples from the Bible or life to explain it. Then you do the same with the next verse. Be careful not to do too many verses in a sermon. It is better to do a few verses well than try to do too many. The next week you do the same thing with the next verses.

In this way they will be learning God's Word. You will be teaching God's words, not just your words. The people will learn new things, not just the same thing over and over. It will give them something to think about and practice during the week. They will grow spiritually. When you do this, you will be feeding your people. They will grow and become more like Jesus. (For more information on studying and teaching the Bible see “Studying the Bible” and “Preaching and Teaching the Bible” by Jerry Schroyer.)

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do you study God's Word regularly? Do you know it better than you did a year ago? Do you accurately teach and preach God's Word? Do others understand what you are saying and apply it to their life? Do you faithfully work hard to develop and present sermons that are accurate, interesting and potentially life-changing?*

## D. DUTY TO SERVE THE SHEEP

**TERMS FOR PASTOR** The Bible uses four terms for a pastor, - each showing a different aspect of our duties. PASTOR, or PASTOR-TEACHER, refers to a shepherd who leads and feeds his sheep as he teaches God's Word. OVERSEER is used by Gentiles for one who guards and protects the people. ELDER is the same as overseer, but used in the Jewish culture. Both overseer and elder refer to someone who plans for and guides a group. He does not do everything himself, but he makes sure it gets done. MINISTER, or deacon, is one who humbly serves others by doing what is best for them.

	<b>POIMEN</b>	<b>PRESBUTEROS</b>	<b>EPISCOPOS</b>	<b>DIACONOS</b>
Transliteration		Presbytery	Episcopal	Deacon
Translation	<b>Pastor</b>	<b>Elder</b>	<b>Overseer</b> (bishop)	<b>Minister</b> (servant)
Literal	Shepherd	Commanding officer	Guardian	Wait on tables Servant
Main Idea	Gift, Duty Shepherd by leading, feeding	Office Jewish title for head of synagogue – authority, personal dignity, maturity	Office Gentile title for head of group of people, policy-maker	Attitude Servant, slave of God
FROM	God	Others	Others	Self
	Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4	1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:1,17,19; Titus 1:5-6	1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4	1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:5

**MINISTERS SERVE THEIR SHEEP** We have seen that, as pastors, our duty is to protect and feed the sheep. Another duty we have is to serve the sheep. The term “pastor” refers to our duty to shepherd and feed the sheep. “Overseer” focuses on our responsibility to protect the sheep. Another term, “minister” (1 Timothy 4:6), focuses on serving the sheep. This same Greek word is translated “deacon” in Acts 6:1-15. It refers to a servant who waits on tables.

Pastors and leaders are servants of the people. Some pastors think the sheep are to serve them, and so expect the people to do everything according to their pastor's wishes to create an impressive looking church with a pastor to match. In their pride, they think they are more important than others. But the Bible says we are to serve our people, not have them serve us. Sheep do not serve the shepherd, the shepherd serves his sheep.

Jesus was a shepherd who served His sheep. Jesus did not come to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28).. He washed His disciples' feet and said we are to do the same thing. We are to serve our sheep. But that does not mean we do everything they want from us. Serving our sheep means doing what is best for them.

It is the same as we do with our own children. What if we did everything our children wanted us to do? Would that be good for them? A parent serves his children by doing what will help them mature, not by doing everything the child wants. Sometimes the children may get upset or not like us. But we know it is more important to do what is best for them to grow. Sometimes our people may get upset with us or not like us. They may tell others you are not a good pastor, or even leave to go to a different church. But we must do what God expects, even if they do not understand.

We are servants of God. We serve our people as He serves them. We can only lead to the degree we are willing to serve. Jesus is our example of service in washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17). We are servants of God first, then others.

To be true servants of our people, we must be humble servants like Jesus. Pride is a common temptation and danger for pastors. True leadership requires humility (Proverbs 16:18). We are humble because we know we are inadequate in ourselves and can only do things with God's help. Satan attacks with pride – we must be aware of the danger and stay humble.

To be an effective leader who serves God and leads His people we must have a love for Him that spills over to a love for His followers. We need to be motivated by a genuine care and concern for their well-being. Like a loving parent, we must be more concerned about those we are responsible for. We need to be self-sacrificing like Jesus who washed His disciples feet (John 13) then went to the cross for them.

***APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** When do you most struggle with pride? What should you do to stay humble? In what ways do you serve others? When is it hardest for you to serve? How should Jesus be your example in serving others?*

## **E. DUTY TO LEAD THE SHEEP**

Pastors are also commanded to lead their sheep, as shepherds do with their flocks. Sheep need leadership. God provides direction through those He chooses to shepherd His sheep. (For more information about leadership see "Leadership Lessons from the Bible," by Jerry Schroyer.)

### **1. Leaders Of The Church**

**ELDER & OVERSEER AS LEADERS** One of the terms for the pastor/shepherd, "elder," focuses on this role. The term "elder" refers to the same person as "shepherd" and "overseer" or "bishop." Peter uses all three terms in one verse referring to the man we call the pastor (1 Peter 5:1). The term "elder" referred to the man who oversaw the functions of a synagogue. "Overseer," also translated "bishop," was used by Gentiles. It referred to the man who oversaw the purposes of a group of Gentiles. When Paul writes to Gentiles he uses the term "overseer." When Peter writes to Jews he uses "elder" instead. But they both have the same meaning and refer to the commanding officer of a group of people.

His role was to make sure everything functioned smoothly in the group. He didn't have to do everything himself. But he did have to make sure everything got done. He is like a school principle overseeing the work of others. He doesn't do all the work in a school, but he does plan, delegate and supervise all of it. This is what David did as a shepherd and then the leader of Israel (Psalm 78:70-72).

Remember when the people would come to Moses with their problems? All day long they came. There were so many people, Moses couldn't help them all and couldn't get anything else done. Do you know what his father-in-law told him to do? He said he should recruit some other men to help (Exodus 18:13-26). That also happened when the early church was very busy giving out food and clothing to the widows. The apostles didn't have time to read the Bible and pray. What did they do? They got deacons to do the work instead. They said "It is more important for us to study the Bible and pray" (Acts 16:1-5) so they trained others to help the widows. Training others to help is one of our duties as a pastor as well. We lead them by overseeing their work.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the best, how would you evaluate yourself as a leader? Where are you strongest as a leader? Where are your weaknesses in leadership? What can you do to help improve them? Do others respect and follow you as a leader? Do you train and delegate, or try to do everything yourself?*

## **2. Description of the Church**

The Greek term for a group of people gathered together is “ekklesia.” It refers to an assembly or a community of people. It means literally those who are “called out.” The “overseer” was responsible for an “ekklesia,” a group of people. In the New Testament the word is translated “church.” That became the name for the flock of God’s sheep. It was used in two ways.

**THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH** The whole group of believers from the crucifixion to when Jesus returns before the tribulation (2 Thessalonians 4:13-18) is called the universal church. It is composed of everyone who puts their faith in Christ for salvation, Jew or Gentile. Other names for this group include the Bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2; 22:17), the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 5:23; Romans 12:5), branches of the one true vine (John 15:5), fellow citizens with God’s people (Ephesians 2:19), members of God’s household (Ephesians 2:19), a holy temple built together (Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5) and a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9).

There are three groups of people today Gentiles (unbelieving Gentiles), Jews (unbelieving Jews) and the church (believing Jews and Gentiles together). In Old Testament times there were just two groups: Jews (believing and unbelieving) and Gentiles (believing and unbelieving). The church is something new and different in God’s dealings with man. It does not replace Israel. God’s promises to Israel are still true. The church, which is the Bride of Christ, will rule and reign with Him for all eternity (Revelation 2:27-28; 5:10; 1 Corinthians 6:2). Jews or Gentiles who put their faith in God for salvation before the crucifixion, or after Jesus returns to take us to heaven (the rapture) are called “servants of God” (Genesis 26:24; Numbers 12:7; Joshua 24:29; 2 Samuel 7:5; Isaiah 20:3).

**THE LOCAL CHURCH** The whole flock of God’s sheep from when Jesus died and came back to life until He returns for His church is called the Universal Church. However God breaks that large flock down into smaller groups of believers who live in the same area and calls those small flocks’ local churches. The term “church” is also used of these small communities of believers. In the Bible ‘Church’ refers to a group of believers, not the building where they gather. In Bible times they met in homes, not special buildings. It’s OK to refer to a building as a “church,” but always remember the word really refers to the group of believers who gather there. It is the people who are important, not the building (Matthew 18:20). The organized church is a practical way of grouping people, but it is always the individuals who are important, not the organization. The organization exists solely to serve the individuals. The individuals do not exist to serve the organization. People always come before plans or programs. That’s the way a local church should function.

Jesus is our Shepherd (John 10:11-18). A local church pastor is a shepherd who works under Him, caring a small group of His people as He would.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH** Fifty days after the crucifixion, which was on Passover, was another Jewish festival called Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus had promised He would be with His disciples and in them through the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity (John 14:16, 26). The believers were gathered together when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4). In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon some believers for special purposes and for limited times (Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:14; Psalm 51:11). But now every believer in the church age receives the Holy

Spirit at the moment of salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13; Romans 8:9) and is indwelt by Him for their whole lives (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19).

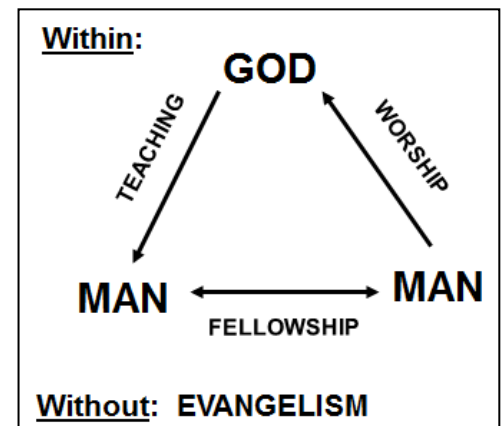
The Holy Spirit is the real leader of the church, working through the pastor and in the hearts of believers. He raises up church leaders (Acts 20:28), leads Christians in worship (Ephesians 2:18), inspires us in prayer (Romans 8:26-27), guides in our activities (Acts 13:2; 16:6-7), gives spiritual gifts to pastors and each one in the church (Ephesians 4:11), guides us into truth (John 16:13) and empowers our preaching and teaching (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

### **3. Purpose Of The Church**

God works through Pastors and other church leaders to guide the church in the direction He wants it to go. It is His church and He builds and directs it (Matthew 16:18). (For more information see "What God Expects of the Church," by Jerry Schmoyer.)

God commands us to regularly gather together with each other (Hebrews 10:25), but what are we to do when we gather? The purpose of the church to itself, inwardly, is clearly given in Acts 2:41-42. It is to provide teaching, worship and fellowship.

**Teaching** is one of the main responsibilities of pastors and churches (Ephesians 4:11-12; Matthew 28:19-20). Sheep need to be fed to be strong and healthy. Eve was tempted through her ignorance of what God had said (Genesis 3:4). Jesus resisted Satan's temptation by knowing and quoting God's Word (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus trained His disciples by teaching them (Matthew 11:1; 16:24; Mark 4:34; Luke 12:1).



God speaks to us through the teaching of His Word. We speak to God through prayer and **worship**. Worship is all about Him. It's not about us and how 'good' we feel – it's just about Him. 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 heard the news that all of his children were killed (Job 1:20). Those certainly weren't emotionally high times for either of them! Still, they kept their eyes on Who and What God is, and that is what worship is all about.

Giving thanks to God is good, but that usually is based on our understanding of what God has done and our approval of it. What about when, like Job and Abraham, we 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 (Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18).

Worship is not based on loud, emotional singing or preaching. Worship is focused on how great God is, not how I am feeling. To evaluate the worship in our church by how it makes the people feel is all wrong. Worship is not for us, it is for God. It is all about Him, not us!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How do you define worship? How much time each week do you spend in real worship? When do you worship best? Schedule an extended period of time this week when you can get away from distractions and focus only on Him. Take time to sit where you are and worship Him now.*

The third purpose of the church when gathered is **fellowship**. Love for each other is shown when we are together (1 Corinthians 13:13). Jesus Himself needed time with His disciples. He needed human fellowship. He would withdraw from the crowds and get away with just the disciples



(Mark 3:7-19). He needed them. Unfortunately they weren't always there for Him, like in Gethsemane before His arrest (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42). If He needed others we certainly do as well. The more I progress in life the more I realize how much I need other believers and what a blessing it is that God puts them in my life.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How much time a week do you spend in Christian fellowship, having fun and closeness with no agenda but to enjoy each other? When do you most need the support and fellowship of other believers? Do you really appreciate other believers in your life, or do you just see them as tools to use in helping you accomplish your ministry goals? Think of those in your past whom God has used to help you on your journey. Pray for them. Thank them (mail, email or in person) again today for the role they played in your life.*

We must know where God is working in the people in our church and community and then join Him in that work. There must be teaching, worship, fellowship and outreach to unbelievers. We must set goals for our church to move ahead in all these areas. (For more information on setting goals see Appendix 1: "Setting Goals.")

## **4. Organization of the Church**

The pastor is the spiritual leader of the church, but he isn't to be a dictator. Any group of people needs organization. The Bible doesn't give clear details about how to structure a group of believers. That can be accomplished in a variety of ways. However we can glean information from the Bible which can help us plan.

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP** Believers in local churches committed themselves to that fellowship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Hebrews 10:25; Philippians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1). The Bible says nothing about church membership, but there is a practical usefulness to it. It encourages commitment to a local group of believers. Membership also allows a group to hold each other accountable to grow and stay faithful. Membership helps people feel they are part of a group. They feel part of the group and care for others in it. It helps making decisions that affect the whole group easier. The constitution of the church I pastored said all major decisions in the church were to be made by a vote of the members, so having qualifications for membership was important. It was also necessary to have the people informed about all that was happening for they had the final say about the finances and other things.

It's been said that it is easier to get into heaven than join a church. Unfortunately that is true. We get into heaven just by freely accepting salvation. But for church membership we have to be baptized, talk to the leaders and agree to what the church believes. That is not a criticism of the church. It is the way it must be here on earth. God knows the hearts of everyone, we don't. We must make sure the person is truly a believer. If not granting church membership gives false security of salvation. Also if those who aren't believers can join a church they can have a bad influence on others.

It is good to meet several times with those who want to join to make sure of their salvation and to help them grow spiritually. (For more information see "Spiritual Growth and Discipleship" by Jerry Schroyer). They should be trained in what the church believes and made sure they can accept and follow those beliefs. When people want to join is a time when they are open to learn and grow so it's good to take advantage of that. We are to train others (Ephesians 4:11-12) and this is a very good way to do that.

**CHURCH GOVERNMENT** Again, the Bible has nothing to say about what kind of government a church should have. That is open to the individual group. In some the pastor has the final say (Lutheran, Pentecostal, etc.). In others the leaders guide and make suggestions but each person has

an equal vote (Baptist, Mennonite, Independent, Congregationalists, etc.). Some denominations have one person who has absolute authority over all the churches in that denomination (Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Eastern Orthodox). Still others have a representative form of government where people choose several representatives who form a group to govern the church (Presbyterian, Reformed, United Church of Christ). There are even those who try to have no form of government at all (Brethren).

The Bible does say that each believer is a priest and all are equal to each other and equal in God's sight (1 Peter 2:5-9). Having one person with final authority over a local church or a whole denomination puts that person above others and that is not Biblical. It is my opinion, after having studied the New Testament and church history, that the people in the church should have a final say (a vote) in all matters of importance. When they respect and trust their leaders, they will follow their guidance and suggestions. But if there is a problem with poor leadership the people can use their vote to steer the church back in a godly direction. Leaders need to trust and respect the people as well; knowing God speaks to them and works through them, too. This has worked fine for me my whole ministry. God can, and does, also work in other forms of government.

**CHURCH CONSTITUTION, STATEMENT OF FAITH** It is good for any group of believers to put in writing the government they choose to follow and how it will work. Governments and businesses do this. A constitution explains the duties of each one working in the church. It details how the church will function and how its government works. This keeps people from challenging or changing how things are done.

It should clarify when the church will meet, how and how often they will have the Lord's Supper and where, who and how they will baptize. It defines how a person joins the church and the process to move their membership to another church. Church discipline must be spelled out. The way the church is governed is detailed. How they choose a pastor, what the qualifications are, and how to remove a pastor if necessary is also included. The responsibilities of the pastor, and the limits to his power, are written down. The same is done for other leaders like assistant pastors, deacons and deaconesses and women and children's leaders. The way decisions are made need to be stated. Does the pastor, the pastor and other church leaders, or all the people have the final say in major issues arising in the church? These things are important to plan ahead of time and have in writing so everyone knows and understands how the church is run.

A statement of faith is also necessary. This written document states what the church believes about the basic doctrines of the Bible. This is a good way to teach new members. It also assures that error does not enter for everything must be in line with the statement of faith.

This document should include what the group believes about the Scriptures, God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, sin, salvation, the church, prophecy, evangelism, missions, spiritual gifts and other such issues.

Each pastor should take time to write his own statement of faith to help him affirm his beliefs about these things. He can use it when questioned, when doubts arise or when letting others know what he believes. It is a very good discipline to do when someone starts in the ministry.

**DEACONS** The New Testament speaks of two groups of leaders in a local church. The spiritual leaders take care of the oversight and the spiritual needs of the church. They can be called pastor, shepherd, minister, elder, overseer or bishop – these all refer to the same person. The spiritual requirements for these are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9.

In addition, there are those who are appointed to oversee the physical needs of the church building and those who attend. These are called deacons (Acts 7). They take care of the material,

physical and financial needs so the spiritual leaders can have more time to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation. Their requirements are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The New Testament also talks about deaconesses, female deacons who assist the male deacons by ministering to the physical needs of women and children (1 Timothy 3:1). This can be a great help to the male leaders as well as the women in the church. Deaconesses function under the authority of the deacons and report to them.

**DISOBEDIENT SHEEP** Sometimes a sheep will attack the shepherd or other sheep. They may think they know better than the shepherd and try to lead other sheep astray. Or they may become disobedient and leave the flock. A good shepherd needs to lovingly but firmly deal with such sheep. They need to be warned by the leaders and, if they don't change, eventually removed from the flock. It's not a pleasant job for a pastor but sometimes a necessary one (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 1:13; Galatians 6:1). This is done for the sake of the rest of the flock, but also gives the errant sheep a chance to see his errors and repent (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). (See also "Church Discipline" under "B. Duty to Protect the Sheep" above.)

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Which form of church government do you think is best? Why? What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? How can you overcome the weaknesses? What do you believe should be the requirements for church membership? How can you support this from the Bible?*

## **5. Ordinances of the Church**

**LORD'S SUPPER** There are two ordinances each body of believers is to observe: the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper the night before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:17-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30). He commanded His followers to do continue doing this after He is gone, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). It is done to remember Jesus' blood shed for us and His body broken for us (1 Corinthians 10:16).

The Bible does not tell us how often to do this. The early church observed this every week when they met (Acts 20:7) but it isn't commanded for us to do so. Nor does the Bible tell us what elements to use. Jesus was having the Passover with His disciples so they used wine and matzo (unleavened bread). Each church can choose which elements are best for them in their time and culture. What matters is that this is done in loving memory of Jesus – when and how it is done isn't the main focus. We don't gain anything simply by doing it. The only benefit is in our hearts when we give praise to Jesus for His work on the cross for us.

Pastors should lead their congregations to observe the Lord's Supper regularly (weekly, monthly or whatever works best for their church). The Bible does not say that only a pastor can administer the Lord's Supper. There is nothing wrong with a father leading his family in worship in this way. Any individual or group of believers can observe the Lord's Supper. The only requirement is that ones participating are believers and not living with known, willful sin in their lives (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

Observing the Lord's Supper is not a ritual that earns blessing or removes our sin. It is not a meritorious act whereby we earn something from God. The drink or bread do not change form, they remain just bread and drink. The significance is in our hearts. It is simply a way of remembering Jesus' work on the cross for us and thanking Him for it. It is a memorial to Jesus' body broken and blood shed for salvation. As the bread and drink are freely received so is salvation freely received. It was paid for by another but it must be received in faith.

**BAPTISM** Baptism, too, it an outer act whose purpose is to show an inner belief. It is not the act of going under water, but rather the heart attitude that matters. Jesus Himself was baptized to show He was identifying with mankind (Matthew 3:13-17). Our baptism shows our identification with Jesus (1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:3). Jesus died, went into the grave and came out alive. That is what is pictured when we go under the water and up come – we died on the cross with Jesus and came back to a new life with Him (Romans 6:1-7; Galatians 2:20).

Like the Lord's Supper, baptism is commanded for the believer (Matthew 20:19-20; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Unlike the Lord's Supper, which is to be done over and over, baptism is a one-time act showing we have died and come back to life in Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). Salvation is a one-time event and so baptism, which outwardly shows what happened inwardly, is also a one-time event and does not need to be repeated later in life. If a pastor feels there is good reason for someone to be baptized again, and after prayer he feels he can go ahead with it, that is all right. But that is only for special circumstances. If a believer has been baptized once, he shouldn't have to be rebaptized just to join a different church.

**Baptism Not Necessary For Salvation** Baptism is not necessary for salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith alone (Romans 3:22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:9, etc.). Some verses like Acts 2:38 say, "Repent and be baptized," and some include baptism with salvation. But Greek, in which the New Testament was written, makes it clear that there is only one command – repent. Baptism is the natural expression of repentance and comes afterwards as a way of showing others what has already happened in ones heart. In Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 3:12-26) he makes no reference to baptism. Paul never made water baptism any part of his gospel presentations (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul states that "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel," thus clearly differentiating the gospel from baptism.

The Bible clearly states that we receive the Holy Spirit at salvation, not at baptism (Acts 10:47; 1 Corinthians 12:131). The Holy Spirit brings salvation, the new birth, at the moment of faith.

The Bible tells of those who were saved apart from baptism. The penitent woman (Luke 7:37-50), the paralytic man (Matthew 9:2), the publican (Luke 18:13-14), and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) all experienced forgiveness of sins apart from baptism. Cornelius was clearly a believer before being baptized (Acts 10:44-48). So was the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Water baptism is certainly important and should be administered whenever possible. However, the New Testament does not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. It is an outer testimony to an inner cleansing by Jesus' death and resurrection.

**Baptism by Immersion** Some today 'baptize' infants, or sprinkle water on an adult and call that 'baptism.' However what the Bible commands is full immersion for those who are mature enough to accept God's free gift of salvation. There is much Biblical support for this.

"Immerse" is the primary meaning of the word baptizo. It is used of a ship that sank or a garment submerged in dye. If "pour" or "sprinkle" was meant other Greek words which clearly signify these acts would have been used.

Additionally, the prepositions which are used with it in the New Testament ("into" and "out of") make greatest sense if the person is being dunked "into" the water and then being brought up "out of" the water. Immersion better pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and the Christian's death to his old ways and resurrection to a new life in Christ (Romans 6:1-4 and Colossians 2:10-12).

Christian baptism grew out of the Jewish practice of submerging someone who converted to Judaism. The difference between the Jewish practice and the Christian practice is that Jewish

proselytes dunk themselves, showing their desire to identify with Jews. Christians are baptized by someone else showing it, like salvation, is not of themselves but something they freely receive.

Immersion was practiced in the early church and all the examples of baptism in the New Testament either demand or most assuredly permit immersion. The Ethiopian Eunuch made the statement, "look, here's water" (Acts 8:36); then it says they went into the water and came out of the water. Obviously there was enough to dunk him in it. Why go into it if it wasn't to get immersed?

It is interesting to note that the Eastern Orthodox churches - who have been using Greek continuously since the first century, baptize by immersion rather than sprinkling or pouring.

**Baptism Not for Infants** There is no Biblical proof for baptizing infants, just those who can make a decision for Jesus. It is only those old enough to make a commitment to Jesus, who are baptized (Acts 10:48; 8:36-38; Luke 3:21-22; Matthew 28:19-20). It is done as a response; a testimony of salvation so can only be done by those who have accepted salvation.

As with the Lord's Supper, there is no requirement as to who can baptize. It makes sense for the spiritual leader, the pastor, to administer baptism. In the case of wives or children, some today have the father do the actual immersing of the person while the pastor explains what is happening. Since the father is the head of the home this is a good practice to follow. It encourages him and his family to together follow Jesus. I followed this practice and found it very meaningful to all involved.

**Baptism And Church Membership** Many churches make baptism a requirement for church membership. This is a good way to make sure the person understands salvation and has made a personal commitment to Jesus. However, baptism and church membership should be separate decisions. Just being baptized doesn't mean someone automatically is ready to commit to the duties and responsibilities of church membership. Baptism just requires a committed life and desire to show one has salvation.

Baptism is a requirement for adults to join our church, but I would also baptize people who were not yet ready to make the commitment at that time. I wanted them to see these as two separate commitments. Profession of salvation to everyone by baptism comes before commitment to a local body of believers. A new believer may be ready and wanting to be baptized to show they have salvation, but there may still be issues in their lives they need to work through before being able to commit to living a life fully devoted to God. Baptism looks back and symbolizes dying and coming to life with Jesus. Committing to church membership entails being willing to do their best to live a holy life as a disciple of Jesus. Church membership requires more: a life lived in obedience to Jesus and willingness to commit to a local body of believers. It is better to keep them separate steps. These are separate commitments and shouldn't be confused or blended together.

The pastor or another mature Christian should meet with the person requesting baptism to help them understand salvation and following Jesus. This is a good time and opportunity to begin discipleship training. It is good to have a series of meetings with those interested in being baptized to make sure of their salvation, teach its significance and meaning and disciple them in the basics of Christian life and church membership. Many churches have classes for this whenever there is a group of people interested in learning more about it. It can explain baptism to those who are curious but don't completely understand it.

**BABY DEDICATION** Dedicating babies or children is not an ordinance. It is not commanded by Jesus, but it is a good practice which most churches follow. Dedicating a child does not bestow salvation – that only comes when they are old enough to accept Jesus' free gift of salvation. God has no grandchildren, only children.

Encouraging parents to dedicate their children to God in front of a body of believers is a good practice. It gives the pastor time to visit the parents and teach them about salvation and how to help

their children grow to know the Lord. When the child is dedicated in church it sets a good example for others in the church and gives the pastor an opportunity to talk about raising godly children. It is also a good time to encourage all present to accept Jesus as Savior. As children get older and learn they were dedicated to God, a solid foundation is set for further spiritual growth. The awareness of being dedicated brings security and purpose into a child's life.

Dedication is usually done by the pastor speaking a few words describing what is happening. Passages such as 1 Samuel 1:20-28; Psalm 103:17-18; Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16 or Luke 18:15-17 can be read or used as the focus of the morning sermon.

While the child is committed to God's care by their parents and the church, this is also a time of dedication of the parents to raise the child to live for Jesus. Therefore it is only Christian parents that can do this. If one parent is a believer and one is not and they want to dedicate their child, it is a good time to explain salvation to the unbelieving parent. For the sake of the child, and the believing parent, we should still dedicate the child. When one parent is a believer God honors that and so should we (1 Corinthians 7:14).

When both parents are unbelievers we should talk with the parents to find out why they want their child dedicated. That is a good way to talk to them about the truth of the Gospel. I would pray with the parents before leaving, asking God to show them their need of Jesus. I would also do what they wanted and pray for God to take this child as His own and bring it to a saving knowledge of Him when old enough. I'd ask Him to use the child to serve Him all of its life. I would make sure the parents understood that salvation is the child's personal decision later in life. I would not pray for the child in a church service, for this might give the wrong message to people there and it might give false assurance to the unbelieving parents. They must know that Christianity is a personal relationship with God, not a set of rituals or traditions to follow.

**Age for Salvation** The Bible does not give a minimum age at which one can recognize their sin and accept Jesus' free gift of salvation. Many young children, ages 4 or 5, have made a profession of faith and followed Jesus faithfully their whole lives. Salvation comes when a person gives all of themselves that they have to all of Jesus that they understand. There is no holding back. This is true for those with mental or emotional issues as well. God only holds us accountable for what we know and understand, and if we give all we have and believe all we have heard about Jesus that act of faith is enough for salvation. As they grow they will learn more about Jesus and more clearly see their need of Him. They will continually keep recommitting themselves, as we all do (Romans 12:1-2) but salvation only occurs once – the first time God's gift is understood, even imperfectly, and accepted. Jesus Himself said adults are to have faith like a little child, He didn't say children had to have faith like an adult (Matthew 18:2-4).

**Age for Baptism** Another question arising from this is at what age to baptize a child who is a new believer. Some insist on waiting until they are older so they better understand the commitment they are making, and there is wisdom in that. I, personally, chose to baptize children as soon as they requested it if they are able to clearly affirm their salvation and state why they want to be baptized. I, personally, feel it is not right to tell a child he can't make this step until he is older. Jesus clearly accepts children just as they are (Matthew 19:14). Jesus criticized the disciples for turning children away from Him (Mark 10:14). I certainly don't want to be guilty of that. I tell parents not to push their young children into baptism, but to wait until they ask about it. Then we can explain its significance and if they want to be baptized we know it is a genuine decision.

**Age for Partaking in The Lord's Supper** It is my practice to allow children who understood Jesus' provision of salvation to partake of the Lord's Supper. I certainly don't think Jesus minds when young children take that step of love and faith. When they want to reach out to Jesus I do not want to interfere. Jesus said those who cause young children to stumble in their faith would be better off

having a millstone hung around their neck and cast into the sea (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 9:56 – note that this is recorded in 3 gospels). It is important for parents to use the Lord's Supper as a training time to teach the meaning and significance of what is happening (Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19). It is my belief that much more danger can occur by denying children the elements than by letting them partake. I would never want them to think there are any requirements before they can come to Jesus. I certainly don't want to communicate to them that they are too young to follow Jesus.

**Age for Church Membership** In my ministry I baptize a child when they understood salvation and the meaning of baptism. Young children can be baptized, but the constitution for my church states that they can't be voting members until 18, the age at which they became voting members in the United States of America. This is a good compromise so they can be members with the responsibilities and benefits, but also not be involved in adult decisions which entailed voting.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How old were you when you put your faith in Jesus? What is your personal belief about the age a child can become a Christian, when they can partake of the Lord's Supper and when they can be baptized? It's important for you to come to your own decision through prayer and Bible study. Don't wait until you are faced with the situation, form your convictions now.*

## **6. Services of the Church**

The church provides many services to the people in the congregation as well as others in the community. Some of these occur when the church gathers, others are on an individual basis and still others are behind-the-scenes duties which no one sees but the pastor. He, or someone he trains and assigns, is responsible for all of them. Let's look at these duties.

**WEDDINGS** There is no command in the Bible for Christians to get married in a church or by a pastor, but it stands to reason they would want God and their fellow believers to be part of such an important step. Marriages performed by legal authorities or others are binding and valid in God's sight, but Christian marriage with Christians present is special. Jesus supported marriage in God's sight by attending the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11).

As Christians we are required to obey our government and follow its requirements, and this is true in performing marriage as well (Romans 13:1-2). Find out what the legal requirements are of your local government and follow them. To marry someone in God's sight but not the government sight is not allowed (Romans 13:1-7). If a couple does not follow the prescribed standards of the government where they live, they cannot be married in God's sight either.

It is a great privilege and wonderful opportunity to counsel a couple before marriage. The more time we can spend with them the better. We must help them learn what God says about love and marriage (for more information see "Marriage and Ministry" by Jerry Schmoyer). It is also a good time to disciple them (for more information see "Spiritual Growth and Discipleship" by Jerry Schmoyer). (For sermons to use for weddings see "Preaching and Teaching the Bible," by Jerry Schmoyer).

Christian couples must clearly understand and accept the Bible's teachings about the meaning and purpose of marriage, the role of the father and husband and the role of the wife and mother. It is our responsibility as pastors to make sure they know these things. To assure this, without using a lot of the pastor's time, they can be required to read a good book about marriage, such as my book "Marriage and Ministry." While it includes principles for those in ministry, it is a good general book for all getting married.

The Bible gives clear guidelines about who Christians can marry – another growing Christian (2 Corinthians 6:14). We are not to perform a marriage between two who do not share the same love

for and commitment to Jesus. We are not to marry a believer and an unbeliever. We are not to marry a committed, growing believer to someone who claims to be a believer but has no desire to grow or follow Jesus 100%.

I have married two unbelievers, for they are equally yoked. It gives me a great opportunity to share Biblical truth with them. I explain to them that to have God's blessing they must follow Him and since they are not doing so I cannot tell them they have God's blessing. I am careful in what I say in the wedding ceremony so they don't think they have God's blessing because a pastor is performing the wedding. I have had good experiences ministering to unbelievers in this way. It also gives me an opportunity to tell the people attending the wedding about Jesus.

I will not marry a couple where one has put their faith in Jesus and the other has not (2 Corinthians 6:14). I don't think any Christian pastor should do this. I have married several Christian couples who were living together. I believe they should do the right thing and get married, and I have a open opportunity to counsel them and help them grow in their faith. I will not marry them in a church building because I don't want to give the impression God is blessing their marriage when they reject Him. I make it clear to them God wants them married, but sex outside marriage is sin. I say nothing in the ceremony to let the people think their living condition is all right in God's sight. I don't embarrass them and talk against it, either.

It is against God's law, as well as man's law, to marry a person who is still married to someone else. Polygamy is a sin. Marriage is to be one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6).

Marrying a person who has been divorced is a controversial subject among Christians. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:14-16). He only allows it because of sin (Matthew 19:3-9). The Bible allows divorce for sexual unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) or where an unbelieving mate deserts the believer (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). The innocent Christian partner is free to remarry, but only another believer (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39). If the divorce occurred before the person became a Christian they are free to marry, no matter the reason for divorce – but only another believer (1 Corinthians 7:20-27, 39; 2 Corinthians 6:14). If a person becomes a Christian after a divorce and remarriage, they should stay with their current mate and not leave that relationship to try to go back to their first mate (1 Corinthians 7:20).

That still leaves the problem of the Christian who is at fault in a divorce and later wants to remarry. Often it is hard to determine just who the 'guilty' party really is. Things can get very complicated. If a divorced Christian is truly repentant and shows they are following Jesus and growing spiritually, I will spend time getting to know them and their situation. If God has forgiven them and they are restored, I do not feel I should do any less. God shows mercy. He has shown great mercy to me in my life and I know He does to others as well. He forgives and restores murderers like David, Moses and Paul. He used all of them greatly after their murders.

I personally do not see divorce as an unforgiveable sin. Jesus paid for all sin (1 John 1:7-9; Titus 2:14). No sin is unforgiveable. It is my conviction that I show the grace and mercy of Jesus to such people (Luke 6:36), so I will counsel them and, if all else is in order, perform a marriage if they are marrying another believer. God shows me mercy beyond what I deserve, and wants me to show mercy to others (Matthew 5:7; 18:33). I am not saying God will lead every pastor in this way, nor am I telling you that you must do this. That is between you and God. I share this with you to encourage you to show mercy as God does. God is a loving, forgiving God, as we see in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). His father restored him to the same position he had before his unfaithfulness and "wild living."

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *What qualifications do you have to determine if you will marry a couple or not? What do you believe about divorce? Prayerfully study Scripture to determine how God is*



*leading you. Come to firm, detailed convictions about these things before being faced with them in ministry. What training for marriage do you provide before performing the marriage? How do you minister to the couple? How do you share the gospel with those who attend?*

**FUNERALS** There are no Biblical commands about conducting funerals. A lot depends on local custom and the needs of the ones attending. Funerals are for the living, not those who have died. They don't influence the eternal destiny of those who are dead but they can be great opportunities to minister to others and share the gospel. It is also a good time to bring God's comfort to believers who are mourning. People attending funerals are faced with the temporariness of life and the certainty of death. It is a good time to talk to them about their need for salvation.

Before the funeral service, meet with the family to pray and encourage them. If it is a Christian family you can give them assurance of their loved one being in heaven. If the dead person was not a believer you can still point them to a loving, compassionate God who will help them if they turn to Him. In either case, also talk about what they would like to have done in the funeral: favorite Bible passages, eulogy about the deceased, etc. Help them plan the details of the funeral and burial. Talk to them about moving ahead in life after their loss. Always show compassion and love. Be sensitive to their loss and give hope in Jesus.

The funeral sermon should be short and clear. It should focus on Jesus and His provision of salvation. The dead person can be referred to as an example of how Jesus can change a life, but the focus needs to be on Jesus. If the person was not a Christian I don't mention their eternal destiny or give assurance they are in heaven (for they are not). Neither do I point that out to those who are grieving. Scriptures to use include: Psalm 23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-44, 54-57; John 14:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; Psalm 116:15. (For sermons to use at funerals see "Preaching and Teaching the Bible," by Jerry Schroyer).

I made it a practice in my ministry to encourage people to make plans for their own funeral ahead of time in order to make it easier on those left when death comes. I ask them for favorite passages from the Bible, words they would like to write to be read to loved ones during the service, favorite Christian songs and so forth. This can minister to those who are left and make it easier to have a meaningful service. It can also be a way to have the person writing out their desires to think about their future in heaven. You can assure them and remove any fears of death they may have.

**GRAVESIDE SERVICE** It is the tradition in some places to have a short service when the body is put into the grave. This can consist of a few words of hope and encouragement, a Scripture or two (same as listed above), some closing remarks and closing prayer. The same can be done when ashes are buried, brought home or sprinkled somewhere.

After the funeral service and after the graveside service always make sure you spend time with the family, offering compassion and prayer. A few days later, visit them again to see how they are doing and how you can minister to them. I write down the date of death and the next year at that time contact them. Others won't remember the date, but if you do it can be a great encouragement and opportunity to minister to them.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *What are some of the opportunities you have to minister when asked to do a funeral? What, for you, is the hardest part of performing funerals? What can you do to make it less hard?*

**WORSHIP SERVICE** The purpose of the worship service is to worship, to praise God for Who He is and what He does. The music, message, testimonies and collecting money are all to be focused on God and His greatness. Too often churches focus on the church and its ministry, or the pastor. But the emphasis in worship must be on God.

**SERMONS** We already talked about how a pastor is to feed his sheep, so let's look at the important duty of preparing and presenting sermons. For detailed information about this see "Studying the Bible" and "Preaching and Teaching the Bible" by Jerry Schmoyer. Much useful information is given in these books.

Our duty is to feed the sheep God's Word. It is the Bible we are to study and preach. Pastors shouldn't get involved in politics (2 Timothy 2:4). They can preach the truth of God's Word as it involves political issues but the pulpit is for teaching God's Word.

Sermons are to train, build up and encourage the people. Never scold or criticize. Sin and failure can be dealt with by focusing on the correct way to live, not focusing on the sin. It is the solution we need to share, not the problem. People come to church carrying the burdens and hurts of life. They need hope, assurance and the promises of God to carry them through the next week. You can talk about what is wrong but focus on the correct solution. Speak to their head so they learn new truths to help them daily. Also speak to their hearts to motivate them to faithfully trust and serve God. That is what Jesus did. He didn't scold and condemn those who were following Him, He always gave hope and encouragement. He told them to not sin but also gave His assurance of forgiveness (John 8:11).

Always develop your own sermons. Don't make it a habit of copying or using sermons other develop. Pray for wisdom and guidance as you prepare and before you deliver the message. Prayer is our most important tool. If you come to God with a humble heart, seeking His guidance and leading, He will provide it (Jeremiah 29:10-14).

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *If Jesus attended your church one Sunday, what would He say about the service and the message? Would He be pleased because the focus was on Him, or were other things more important? Pray daily to ask God to help you make your time of worship all about Him. What would He say about your sermons? Would you be pleased for doing your best or ashamed because you don't work as hard on them as you should? Would He like the way you speak to your people? Would He commend you for training and encouraging them in their faith?*

## **7. Ministries of the Church**

**DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING** Jesus commands us to "make disciples" of those who come to Him for salvation (Matthew 28:18-20). This means, in Jesus' own words, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). That's what Jesus did with those who followed Him. Paul did that with his converts as well (Acts 14:21-23). (For how to do this see "Spiritual Growth and Discipleship" by Jerry Schmoyer)

**COUNSELING** One of the most important duties of a shepherd is guiding the sheep. A pastor guides his sheep as a group when he preaches and teaches. Sometimes sheep need extra guidance from the shepherd, or they need to have wrong behaviors changed. A pastor does this when he counsels his sheep. Teaching conveys truth; counseling applies truth to specific situations. Teaching prevents error, counseling corrects error. Everyone needs advice from time to time, and the pastor is the one they know and trust to guide them correctly (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Jesus gives counsel through His shepherds, for He is called the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6). God's Word is to teach truth, point out error, correct wrong beliefs and behaviors and train in godliness (2 Timothy 3:16). The pastor uses God's Word to give guidance and advice when needed.

We all err and are prone to wandering from the truth (James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:15-17) and so we need someone to give wise counsel and advice (Proverbs 1:5; 11:14; 15:31-32; 19:20; 23:18). God will give pastors and others who counsel wisdom (James 3:17; Ephesians 6:11-17). These

words of direction must be based on the Bible (Proverbs 19:21; 3:5-6). God's Spirit will help us apply this wisdom to meet the needs of others (Ephesians 1:17; Isaiah 11:2; 1 Corinthians 12:8). Don't rely on the world's wisdom, what others might say or what is the easiest and most popular solution. Everything you say must be supported by the Bible and led by God's Spirit within you.

When counseling another, pray for patience, compassion, understanding and wisdom. Never be impatient, critical or judgmental. Treat them as Jesus treats you.

First, listen carefully and gather the facts. If possible, take notes about what they say so you remember important facts. Ask questions to help understand better. If two people are involved you must hear both sides before giving advice. You can never get the full picture just talking to one person. There is always another side. Keep the conversation on track so it doesn't wander and get off on other subjects. Focus on the issue at hand in what the counselee says and what you say as well.

Look for the problem behind the problem, the root problem. Doctors don't treat symptoms; they seek to find what is causing the problem. Ask God to give you wisdom. If you just treat the symptom the root problem will keep coming up in other ways. Most problems have fear, hurt, pride, unforgiveness or feelings of rejection at their root. These must be dealt with to bring real healing.

Don't give quick, simplistic answers like, "Just trust God more," or "Pray about it." Help them see the root problem and show them from Scripture how to have victory over it. Always point them to God. Give them Scriptures to read when the conversation is over. Pray with them. Encourage them and give them hope. Give them specific directions as to what they should do (or not do). Make sure they understand the steps to take. If possible, write them down and give them the paper. Don't give a lot of advice, just focus on the steps to take or they will be confused and overwhelmed.

Check with them later to see how they are doing and if they are applying your advice. Make sure they are following your direction before giving them further advice. Always keep everything said to you in confidence. Never tell anyone what was told you in private. If a situation seems too difficult for you to give good advice, refer them to someone else. Or talk to someone knowledgeable and get their opinion before giving advice to the person. You are influencing someone's whole life so make sure what you say is the right thing for them. Sometimes physical problems can cause emotional distress as well, so you may need to refer someone to see a doctor to deal with the physical symptoms.

Counseling others is a wonderful privilege and great opportunity for pastors to teach and disciple others. It's one-on-one teaching which makes a great impact on the lives of others. (For more information see "Biblical Counseling" by Jerry Schroyer.)

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do people feel comfortable coming to you for help and advice? Do you have patience, compassion and wisdom when speaking to them? Do you keep confidences and never share what is told you in private? Do you pray with the people you counsel, and then pray for them regularly? What can you do to become a better counselor to others?*

**VISITING PEOPLE** Pastors should spend some of their time visiting others. Jesus promised a special blessing for those who visited and helped the poor, widows, those in prison and those with other needs (Matthew 25:31-46). God condemned shepherds who did not spend time with their sheep (Jeremiah 23:1-2). In the early church pastors went to people's homes to teach (Acts 5:42). Paul did this as well (Acts 20:20).

Visiting people in their homes, or making arrangements to meet them at another location, shows them they are important and you care about them. Remember, we represent Jesus in their eyes. This exemplifies Jesus' love for them as well. In doing this you can get to know them and their needs better. This can help you minister to them more effectively.

Some visits will be to bring comfort or encouragement. Others will be to seek out those who have stopped attending, or to help those struggling. People who have started visiting your church should be visited as soon as possible. Aged or sick that can't get out should be visited. Those who come regularly, help with the work of ministry, and are growing spiritually should also be visited. This helps them know they are appreciated and important. Everyone needs encouragement. Pastors who visit find themselves receiving encouragement as well as giving it.

The visit doesn't have to be long, but it shouldn't be so short as to seem rude. Make sure you do more listening than talking. You learn about the person when you listen, you don't learn anything when you talk. People enjoy a visit much more if they do the talking. They enjoy your visit less if you do all the talking. Ask them questions about themselves and their life. Be interested in what they say. Don't interrupt to tell them something, just listen to them talk. Never ask for money or hint that you should be given a gift. If offered something out of love, accept it graciously.

When you visit women you must take your wife or a male from the church with you. Never take a woman who is not your mother, wife or daughter. Never be alone with any female who is not your mother, wife or daughter. If possible, take a younger male from the church that shows promise of becoming a leader and train them so they can visit on their own. That way they will grow and you will have someone with whom to share the load.

**VISITING THE SICK** As seen, visiting the sick is very important to Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46). Your purpose is to show Jesus' love and concern for them. Let them know they aren't forgotten. Don't overstay your visit, ill people tire quickly. You want them to enjoy your visit, not endure it. Checking before coming to make sure it is a good time is also a good idea. Always pray with them before you leave. If possible, read a comforting Scripture while there. You are representing Jesus so show His love and compassion.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *How comfortable are you visiting people in their home? What should be the purpose of a visit? How can you tell when you have stayed long enough and it is time to go? What would you do if someone doesn't want you to visit them?*

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT** It is good to get involved in community activities that benefit those in need. But remember, the good news we offer is the ultimate cure for all of mankind's ills. Helping with social causes and getting involved in community projects is a good way to meet unbelievers and bring Jesus to the community, but our first and foremost responsibility is to shepherd God's sheep. We have the good news of eternal life, so we can't get sidetracked on other things. Helping people have a better life on earth is important, but making sure they go to heaven is much more important. The apostles turned over the duties of distributing food and clothing to deacons so they could focus on the more important duties of prayer and Bible study (Acts 6:1-4). Don't ever be so busy in other activities that your work for the Lord is affected!

**POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT** While it is important for Christians to be involved in political processes and activities in their community, pastors with a flock to shepherd should not be politically active. Running for office or spending a lot of time supporting a candidate for office or a political party is not what God calls shepherds to do. The call to pastor is higher than any other call and should not be neglected to do anything else. God can lead a person out of the ministry and into politics, but make sure that is the care if you feel that call. Do not try to do both at once. The church will suffer and that is not good.

**PRAYER** The pastor, and others in the church who are so motivated and/or gifted, should keep the people and needs of the church in prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-4). This is an important ministry. Learn who the people are in your church who are prayer warriors. These gifted and motivated people do more for your ministry than you can imagine. Encourage them. Share with them prayer needs – but never

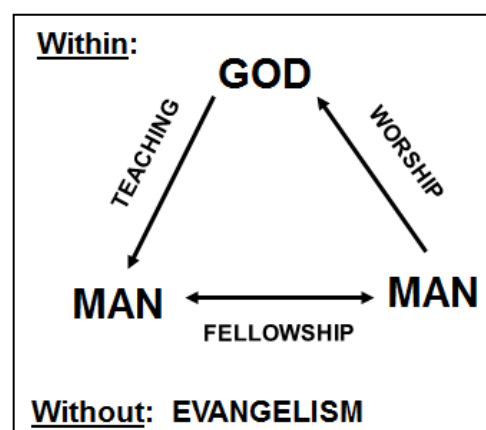
anything private or personal. Don't tell them anything that isn't already common knowledge. Pray for them, for they will be attacked by the enemy to hinder their important ministry.

**ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES** A pastor does not have to do everything in the church. He must train others and share the duties (Ephesians 4:11-12). This especially applies to things others can help with, like the physical work of the church (Acts 6:1-4). Paul always brought others with him to assist with the details of the ministry. Still, there are some duties that the pastor is responsible for and must do. If he doesn't do them himself he must work closely with the person given the responsibility. This includes organization and administrative work.

Pastors should keep a current list of members with the dates of their baptism and church membership. He should also keep a list of marriages and funerals. He does not have to personally keep other records or reports but is responsible to make sure they are done efficiently, neatly and on time. This is an important part of being a good steward of what God has provided.

## **V. DUTIES TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH**

We have seen our responsibility to those within the church, but as shepherds we also have a responsibility to those outside the church. We should minister to them in any way we can and help as we are able. The purpose and main focus is to help them come to Jesus for salvation. The function of the church within is teaching, worship and fellowship. The job of the church to those without is to bring them to Jesus. Those who become believers must be either added to an existing church or formed into a new church.



## **A. DUTY TO GROW OUR CHURCH**

Jesus commands us to take His message to others (Acts 1:8) and when a person responds we are to disciple them and teach them God's Word (Matthew 28:19-20). Some churches excel at evangelism; others are better at training and discipline believers. All churches are to do both, even if they are better at one or the other. God gives gifted believers to the church (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:28). He gives different gifts to different believers and churches, so no two are exactly alike (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Some people have stronger gifts in evangelism and outreach, other have gifts that train, disciple and minister to those who are already believers. Both are necessary for a healthy, growing church.

The church I pastored for 35 year was gifted in teaching and training Christians. Hurting and struggling Christians would come to us for counsel, help, love and support. We would train them and help them grow in their faith. Most of the people in our church had spiritual gifts that contributed to this ministry. A few, but not many, had the gift of evangelism. Spiritual healing and discipleship was the focus of our ministry. Near us was another church that did very well in evangelism. God used all the churches in my area to build the Body of Christ. Like individual believers, each church had its own strengths and weaknesses, its own blending of spiritual gifts. No one church had it all. But together the churches ministered to our area.

**GROWING IN NUMBERS (QUANTITY)** Each pastor, Christian and church body is responsible to share the Gospel with those around them. Some churches feel that is the job of the pastor and expect him to do all the work of ministry, including evangelism. This is not true. Each Christian is responsible to tell others what Jesus has done for them. Some pastors are gifted at evangelism, but all pastors are responsible to share their faith. Every Christian is commanded to spread the good news (Matthew 4:19-20; 28:18-20; Romans 1:16; Philemon 6; Mark 16:15-16; 13:10). Pastors must equip and motivate the people in their church to share their faith, even if it isn't something they do well. Each one must look for opportunities to talk about Jesus.

Frogs and lizards both live on insects, but there is a large difference in how they hunt them. A frog will sit still and wait for an insect to come within his reach and then grab it. Lizards, however, dart everywhere, searching every crack and corner for an insect. They are active and alert, moving fast to capture a meal. Some Christians are like the frog. They wait for unbelievers to come to them and initiate a conversation. Others are like the lizard, they are active and alert, looking everywhere for a possible opportunity to speak about Jesus. Which is your church like? Which are you like? Do your people know how to explain salvation to others and lead them to faith in Jesus?

**GROWING IN MATURITY (QUALITY)** Church growth does not just refer to growth in numbers (quantity) but also for each person to grow in maturity (quality). Paul makes it very clear in Ephesians 4:11-12 that pastors are to help others grow in their faith. Evangelists are specially gifted to spread the news about Jesus and lead people to accept His free gift of salvation. That gift is very important. But those who pastor churches are not always gifted in evangelism. Even if they are, their responsibilities to pastor take precedent and use much of their time. Pastors, called pastor-teacher by Paul (one word in the Greek), are to train others to do the work of ministry. As "pastor" we are to shepherd, care for, protect, guide and lead our people. As "Teacher" we are to feed them God's Word so they are healthy and grow spiritually. We aren't to do everything that needs to be done in a church, but we are to train others to do it. This includes reaching out to bring others to Jesus for salvation. It is the work of each one in the church.

The focus of Jesus' ministry was training His disciples to carry on for Him (Luke 10:1-20). Paul did the same with Timothy, Titus and others (2 Timothy 2:2). We can do this in formal settings of teaching or informal times of taking someone with us when we minister so they can learn from us. Jesus and Paul did both of these.

Do not make the mistake of defining church growth just by the number of people who attend services. God does not define our success by numbers, either number of people or amount of money the church has. We do not know the size of any church in the New Testament, but we do know which are healthy and which are not. The church I pastored was small when I became pastor. When I retired 35 years later it was still the same size. But it was a healthy church for many came to salvation and grew in their faith through its ministry. Much was accomplished for the Kingdom, locally and throughout the world. (For more information see "What God Expects of Churches" by Jerry Schmoyer.)

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Are you gifted in evangelism? If so, how do you use that gift without neglecting the people in your church? If not, do you still do your best to share the good news of Jesus with others? How can you tell if the people in your church are growing spiritually? What can you do to ensure that your people know how to share their faith with others? How can you better train them? How can you motivate people to be more active in sharing their faith?*

## **B. DUTY TO START NEW CHURCHES**

Whenever possible, God wants churches to multiply. Instead of growing larger and larger in one location, it is good for churches to send out groups of people to start new churches in their home areas. Then as these new churches get larger they can split and start still more churches. This is the best way for the church to grow.

Teach and preach the importance of starting new churches so your people know and accept the idea. It is the responsibility of the whole church, not just the pastor, to plant new churches. Jesus did that when He sent out His disciples by twos to go to new areas and minister to the people living there (Luke 10:1-20). It is better for a pastor to train others to start churches than just doing it himself. He can take men with him when he plants new churches and so they can learn and do it themselves (2 Timothy 2:2).

Not all pastors are gifted with the necessary skills of starting new churches, but they can enable others in their church that have those gifts to use them. When you recognize a family, or several families, that have interest and skills that are useful in starting a new church, train them and help them begin speaking to people in their area. When there is a small group, encourage them to start meeting regularly. Keep closely in touch to encourage and guide them.

Starting new churches requires lot of hard work, perseverance, patience and prayer. It can be heart-breaking and discouraging work, but can also be very rewarding and uplifting work. Just remember Jesus' words in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do you have spiritual gifts or skills that are useful in starting a new church? How can you use them to plant new groups of believers and help them grow? If you aren't gifted in the area of church planting, what can you do to train and prepare those who are? How can you support and encourage them?*

## **VI. DUTIES TO OTHER PASTORS**

As pastors we not only have duties to ourselves, our families and the people in our church, we also have responsibilities to other pastors. We are on the same team, working for the same Great Shepherd. There can be no competition, jealousy or criticism of other pastors (1 Corinthians 3:9). We are to evaluate and pass judgment on false teachers, but not fellow pastors and their ministries (1 Timothy 5:19-25; Romans 14:4). We must support each other, not compete with each other (1 Corinthians 3:8-9). We are one Body working together (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4). When body parts work against each other the body becomes weak and unhealthy. That happens to the church as well when pastors and churches are jealous or compete with each other.

We need to pray for each other, help each other, encourage each other and together work against our common enemy. Fellowship and cooperation with other pastors is very important. We can share concerns, provide insight and wisdom, encourage during difficulties, and hold each other accountable when necessary. We can share our gifts and strengths to help others when needed. We need each other. I think one of the reasons so many pastors struggle today is because they do not have other pastors who can help them when needed. Timothy had fellow pastors like Titus to share the work. He also had Paul as a mentor. Paul had Barnabas as a mentor and Luke as a friend who traveled and ministered with him. Jesus had His disciples, and especially James, John and Peter.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Who can you go to when in need? Who can you share struggles and difficulties with? Who will seek you out if you struggle? Who holds you accountable if you slip? Who*

*is your mentor? Who are you mentoring? What young pastors are you training and helping? What are you doing for them?*

## **VII. PASTORS' WIVES**

Addressing the duties of a pastor wouldn't be complete without including his wife as well. A pastor is not required to be married, but for those who are, this chapter can be helpful. It is also good for single men considering marriage.

The pastor's wife develops her relationship with God and her husband the same as any Christian woman. She does this for her own benefit. A pastor's wife benefits as she follows the Bible's principles as a Christian and wife. The Bible gives character traits of a godly woman and wife.

### **A. HER RELATIONSHIP TO GOD**

Like her husband, she is created in God's very own image (Genesis 1:26). She is uniquely and specially made (Psalm 139:1-16). She is God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10). She is loved by God the same as her husband. In God's eyes they are equal (Galatians 3:28). She needs to grow in her own personal relationship with God through regular times of prayer, worship and Bible study. Time with God is a priority.

Some pastor's wives feel a special calling from God to minister while other do not receive this special calling. Even if a woman isn't specifically called to full time ministry as her husband is, she still has unique spiritual gifts to offer in service. The church family views her differently because of her position as pastor's wife.

Many women have faithfully served Jesus for His glory (Luke 8:1-13; 23:49, 55-56; 24:1-6, 10). The main priority is not to neglect your own walk with the Lord or spiritual growth. If you are younger in the faith, it can help if find a mature, godly woman to mentor you. Meet regularly for Bible study, fellowship and prayer. If you are an older, more mature woman find someone younger to build into her life. This takes time but is well worth it.

### **B. HER RELATIONSHIP TO HERSELF**

A pastor's wife is, first and foremost, a daughter of God. Her identity is in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17-18), not being married to a pastor. In order to be all God created her to be, she needs to take care of her health by eating healthy, getting proper rest and balancing home and ministry. Life in ministry has many demands. She has responsibilities to her husband and children, plus needs of the church. She is responsible do her best to keep her herself and her husband healthy.

God commands us to take a day of rest to restore (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13-14; 56:1-8; Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4, 11; Luke 4:16; Mark 2:27-28; Matthew 12:10-12; Hebrews 4:1-11; Genesis 1:5, 13-14; Nehemiah 13:19). Time to rest and enjoy the family is essential for managing problems as they arise. A wife can help encourage her husband to take a day of rest. If he is not cooperative, she still needs to find a way to pace herself and schedule times of rest and refreshment. God only gives us work to do for 6 days a week. If we find we need to work all 7 days then we are doing things He isn't expecting. Prioritize, delegate and relinquish some things.



Here are some character traits of a godly woman that are especially important to develop as a pastor's wife.

**SHE HAS A GENTLE AND QUIET SPIRIT** It pleases God when a woman has a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:4). Pastors need that from their wives. It doesn't mean she keeps quiet or is mute but she speaks in a kind, loving manner (Ephesians 4:15). She speaks respectfully (Ephesians 5:33; 5:21-32; 1 Peter 3:1-7). Solomon says it is better to live alone in a corner of the housetop than in a house with a quarrelsome wife (Proverbs 21:9, 19). A gentle and quiet spirit shows respect. Men need to be respected as much as women need to be loved. A quiet spirit also means "inner quietness" or inner peacefulness rather than fear or anxiety. Godly women have inner confidence knowing God loves them and is present in their lives and ministry.

**SHE KEEPS BALANCE IN HER LIFE** One of the important duties of a pastor's wife is to maintain balance between ministry and marriage. Sometimes the pastor is overly busy helping and giving to others and neglects his family and wife. Christ had balance in ministering to the large, demanding crowds, spending time with just the disciples and then time alone with the Father. It is to a wife's benefit to take time for personal, private family time and husband-wife time. Relationships need to be fed so they grow. Invest time and energy in your marriage and encourage your husband to do the same. Prioritize time to join your husband for relaxation and to talk during the day.

**SHE IS TEACHABLE** God is continually working in a pastor's life so he grows to be more like Jesus (Philippians 1:6). This is true of a pastor's wife as well. She needs a teachable spirit, an open mind and a heartfelt desire to learn and grow (Proverbs 13:18; 4:5; 9:9; 1 Peter 5:5). This requires humility. (Matthew 23:12; Job 22:29; Psalm 25:9; 1 Peter 5:6). She needs to be willing to apologize or change her opinion when necessary.

## **C. HER RELATIONSHIP TO HER HUSBAND**

Her main responsibility as a wife is to support and help her husband (Ephesians 5:22-24, 33; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6). God created the woman as a helper for her husband. (Genesis 2:18) Married men need a supportive, helpful wife. Her role is crucial. Abigail was a good example (1 Samuel 25:39-42). A wife helps by encouraging, praying, advising and protecting him from those who try to defeat and discourage him.

**SHE IS PART OF A TEAM** The husband and wife form a team in ministry. The wife does not function in the same work or authority in the church as her husband, but they are yoked together in ministry because of marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14). Sadly, some pastors' wives view pastoring as "his" ministry and do not participate with him. Also, some pastors relegate to her the jobs no one else wants to do. This is not loving or appropriate.

A godly wife is to be an encouragement to her husband. She can see things he doesn't and give him good advice when needed. She can listen when he needs to talk and offer suggestions. When he struggles, she can assist him and if he sins, she can pray for him (Galatians 6:2-12). She knows him better than anyone. She knows his strengths, weaknesses, temptations and challenges. She knows how to best help him.

She is in a unique position to help him as he ministers to women. She can understand the needs and problems of other women, address sensitive subjects best handled by women, and accompany him when he counsels or visits with women. A man should never, ever, for any reason be alone with a woman who is not his wife, mother or daughter. That is essential for a pastor's reputation and temptation. His wife can be available to help insure this.

She is not an assistant pastor and shouldn't be treated as such by her husband or the people in the church. She brings her own unique perspective and set of gifts to use for her husband and the church. Priscilla, wife of Aquila, was a good example of a wife who used her gifts to minister and work as a team with her husband (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19).

**SHE PRAYS** Prayer is an important part of any wife's responsibility to her husband. Pray for wisdom, guidance, perseverance, courage and purity. Pray for a hedge of protection to be around him and the whole family (Job 1:10). Pray God will place guardian angels around about, protecting and guarding against all evil or hindrances that may cause harm to him (Matthew 18:10; Daniel 10:21; Psalm 91:11; 34: 6-7; Acts 12:1-10; Hebrews 1:14).

Pray with him. Make yourself available to pray with him before he leaves for special duties or functions. Pray with him at the start and end of each day. Pray together for your family and his responsibilities. Some things are only accomplished by prayer (Mark 9:29). I can look back on my ministry and see my wife's prayers often did more for the kingdom than all my busy working.

**SHE LOVES HER HUSBAND** God requires a church leader to be a faithful, loving husband. That is the literal meaning of "husband of one wife." In the Greek it means "one woman man" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). A pastor needs to be a faithful, loyal, loving husband. The wife responds to his love with loyalty and love. Many pastors do not have close friends to share their problems. A pastor's wife provides companionship to encourage him in ministry even when he feels like quitting. I am blessed with a godly, faithful wife who helps me and stood with me through many difficult years. I would not be the person I am or have the ministry I have without her sacrificial love and service. Her unconditional love for me is a reflection of God's love for me and I thank her, and Him, for it. Praise God for godly wives (Proverbs 18:22; 31:30-31).

## **D. HER RELATIONSHIP TO HER CHILDREN AND HOME**

**SHE IS THE SPIRIT OF THE HOME** After God and her husband, but before the church, a pastor's wife is to be a godly mother (Psalm 127:3-4). Her husband is required to "manage his own household well" in order to be a pastor (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). This means leading his wife and children to live godly lives of love and respect for each other. A wife can make this easier or harder for him. She has great influence on the children and sets the emotional mood for the household. If she is happy, hopeful and joyful, the home will be also. If she is angry and critical, that will impact everyone else as well. She needs to work with her husband to create a loving, faithful family. She is his partner and his team mate, in family life as well as ministry.

**SHE HELPS WITH HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT** Much of the day-to-day management of a pastor's household is carried out by his wife. She can greatly enhance her husband's ministry by freeing him from the burdens of keeping the home (Titus 2:5). She creates an environment that is both a great testimony to outsiders and a peaceful haven to which he retreats at the end of each day; a place where he can feel his burdens lightened. She creates an environment that is a welcoming place for ministry and discipleship. This includes hosting others when needed. A godly woman has a high calling, as seen by the Proverbs 31 woman. She builds her house on God's Word and principles (Proverbs 14:1).

**SHE TRAINS HER CHILDREN** Along with her husband, the wife trains her children to know and follow the Lord (Proverbs 22:6; 1:8-9; 6:20-22; Deuteronomy 6:7-8). She does this by words and example. The enemy tries to destroy the marriages and children of Christian leaders. Parents must be extra alert to these attacks and pray together to defeat the enemy.

**SHE IS A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF RESOURCES** A church is required to pay the pastor (see section IX. Duties of Sheep to Shepherds). A pastor is not greedy or materialistic, but should be able to provide for the needs of his family. A godly pastor's wife can be a great help in keeping a balanced view of finances – not greedy or demanding. She should pray and ask God to provide. She needs to be a good steward of what the family has and use their resources wisely. When sacrifice is necessary, she does it with a humble attitude as unto the Lord. She is not jealous of others who have more. The true riches of serving in ministry are unseen in this world but rewarded in the next.

The woman in Proverbs 31 was clearly a godly woman active both in her home, place of worship and in the community (Proverbs 31:10-31). Helping and ministering to others is part of being a pastor's wife. Considering all she does, what about a career outside the home or church? The Bible does not say. It is up to each pastor and his wife to know what God's will is for their family. Working outside the home will require extra skill in time management at home and church to discern what activities are most important and what will need to be delegated to others.

My wife worked as a nurse when I pastored. The income was needed and provided health care insurance for the family. It was also a good opportunity for her to meet new people and share the gospel. Some people turned to Jesus and continue to be good friends today. God created her with nursing skills and put a desire in her to use those gifts for His glory. Each couple will have to pray and decide what is best for their family.

## **E. HER RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE IN THE CHURCH**

Women are often defined or identified by their husband's job or role. A woman married to a pastor will inevitably face expectations about her role in the church. People will assume things about her abilities that may not be true.

**SHE IS SIMILAR TO OTHER WOMEN** The role of a pastor's wife is basically the same as any other wife in the church -- to honor and support her husband. As a pastor's wife, some may assume she should do the jobs others don't want to do. That is not true, and it is not Biblical. A pastor's wife should serve in the church as God leads. Like other women, she should pray and use her talents accordingly.

In some ways she is like other women and in other ways she is not. She will be seen differently because of her relationship with the pastor. This is good because it can provide extra opportunities to minister in the church and community. It can be bad because inappropriate expectations can be placed on her. Sometimes it can make it hard for her to have friendships with other women in the same way she would if she was not the pastor's wife. She needs to exercise discretion when she shares personal and family needs with others. Friendships with other pastors' wives may be a good option. Again, test the trust before disclosing too much. Trusted relationships with other pastor's wives is a good source of support (Titus 2:3-5).

**SHE IS NOT THE ASSISTANT PASTOR** Church members need to be gently taught the pastor's wife doesn't know everything about issues in the church, nor should she be expected to. She shouldn't be expected to fill a role just because a previous pastor's wife filled that role. Ideally, church members should bring ministry related questions and concerns to the pastor or another church leader and not the pastor's wife.

**SHE SERVES USING HER GIFTS** As with all Christians; the pastor's wife has special gifts God gave her to serve the Body of Christ (Romans 12:6-8). She is God's gift to the church to fill those needs (Ephesians 4:10-12). God expects her to use those gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11). If she doesn't then the whole church suffers. If she is busy doing other things she won't have time or energy to do what

God has equipped her to do. Anna in Luke 2:36-37, Dorcas in Acts 9:36, Lydia in Acts 16:15, Priscilla in Acts 18:26, Philip's daughters in Acts 21:9, Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2, and the widows in 1 Timothy 5:3-10 are all examples. Prioritize your time in areas of giftedness first. Add other areas as God leads you.

**SHE HAS THE FREEDOM TO BE HERSELF** Don't try to live up to the expectations of others but gently be yourself. People need to know she is human with weaknesses and strengths just like theirs.

**SHE SHOULD ASK GOD TO PUT LOVE IN HER HEART FOR THE PEOPLE** A pastor's wife needs genuine love for the church and people entrusted to the care of her husband. A deep love for the people will prevent resentment. She needs to forgive the people for their insensitivity and criticism. Her love sets a good example for her husband and children.

**SHE HAS GOOD CHARACTER** 1 Timothy 3:11 says, "Women must be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything." She demonstrates high character in the areas of her public conduct, private conversations and overall management of information and responsibilities. This focuses on what she says and doesn't say. Information is shared with her in confidence and it needs to stay private. She has access to private information about people. This also needs to remain private. She cannot gossip, or even listen to gossip (Proverbs 11:13; 16:28; 10:18; 11:9; Ephesians 4:29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Negative criticism or observations should not be discussed (Philippians 4:8). Simple expressions of a servant attitude show she cares for others and seeks their interests above her own. See the example of Phoebe, a deaconess in the early church. (Romans 16:1-2.)

**SHE SHARES WISDOM WITH OTHERS** A virtuous woman "opens her mouth with wisdom" (Proverbs 31:26). She gives good counsel to others within the church. She can mentor younger women individually and as a group (Titus 2:3-5). Elizabeth provided spiritual and life training for Mary (Luke 1:41-45).

**SHE IS APPRECIATED AND RESPECTED** The pastor sets an example of praising his wife and respecting her (Proverbs 31:29-31). This happens in the home as well as in public. He sets the example of valuing and respecting all women, as Jesus did (Luke 13:12-16; 17:11-17; 8:3-11, 43-48; 7:36-50; John 4:4-42). Paul did as well (Romans 16:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

**SHE SHOWS HOSPITALITY** Even when resources are sparse, a pastor's wife can offer very simple hospitality including a welcoming open home (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9) (Colossians 4:15). Peter's wife is a good example (Mark 1:29-34; 1 Corinthians 9:5). While some women are gifted in the area of hospitality, all are to offer it.

**SHE WILL BE REWARDED** While the wife serves a role in the background, she will share in her husband's reward from God, Who rewards all faithfulness equally (Ephesians 6:7-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). God rewards for faithfully using what He has given, like the widow who gave her two mites (Luke 2:1-4). This is true for pastor's wives as well.

## **F. HER RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH**

Pastors' wives are public figures within their church and community. This can be a burden if they crave privacy, but it is an opportunity to minister outside the church. Pastor's wives are seen as Jesus' ambassadors that can open doors to service and conversation about Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:20). Active participation in community affairs is a way to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). It also

shows the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him (John 13:35). Of course, priorities must be set to make sure the needs of husband, family and church are also being met.

**CONCLUSION** “He who finds a wife finds a good thing” (Proverbs 18:22), and a pastor who finds a godly wife willing to love him and the people he serves is worth more than rubies (Proverbs 31:10, 15). A church with such a pastor and wife has also found a treasure from God. A wife can make or break her husband’s ministry. Ask any fruitful pastor about the strengths of his ministry and he will include his wife who has faithfully loved and served him and the church because she loves and serves Jesus above all others. I continually thank God for my wife. I couldn’t have done it without her!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS:** *Do you allow your wife to make full use of her gifts and talents? Do you show her honor and respect privately and publically for all she does for you and the church? Do you protect her from those who take advantage of her? Do you put her and the children first, making sure their needs are met before you minister to others?*

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS’ WIVES:** *Are you growing spiritually? Do you make time alone with God a top priority in your day? Do you serve with a good attitude, out of love for your husband, Jesus and the people in your church? Do you pray regularly and faithfully with and for your husband? Do you ever listen or pass on gossip? Do you help your husband by having a peaceful, organized home?*

A FEW WORDS FROM MY WIFE.....

## **THE PRIORITY AND PRIVILEGE OF A PASTOR’S WIFE**

### **THE PRIORITY**

After 40 years of marriage and ministry my encouragement to wives of pastors is simple: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’... ‘Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:50-51).

First things first: “**Love the Lord.**” Do all things as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:17, 23). Love for the Lord needs to motivate all you do or caring for your husband, family, church and neighbors will become burdensome. If you know you are doing your work primarily because God first loved you, then recognition, reward and success here on earth becomes less important. You know you did it for Him in love and obedience.

Next the text assumes you will “**love yourself.**” This implies a healthy understanding and acceptance of who you are in Christ and seeing yourself as He sees you – a redeemed child of God that He adores, loves, provides for, sees and cares for totally (Galatians 3:26; Psalm 23:1; Matthew 10:30-31).

You are His beloved (Romans 1:7; 9:25). He rejoices over you (Zephaniah 3:17). He craves your attention, fellowship and praise (1 Corinthians 1:9; Psalm 50:14,23). He cherishes you. Do you grasp the depth and totality of His love for you? Then you can be confident and secure. He loves a peaceful, not fearful and gentle spirit, not angry and bitter (1 Peter 3:4). This is pleasing to Him. When you are secure in Christ it frees you to confidently serve others: first your husband, then children and family and then believers and unbelievers (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Loving yourself implies you care for yourself. God doesn’t want or expect you to sacrifice your basic need for rest, quiet time and physical restoration for ministry and family on a continual basis. There may be a season of life when the children are very young and this may be different. No one expects a car to run without gas. You serve better when you take the time to care for yourself and

prevent physical problems and emotional exhaustion. Even Jesus drew away from needy crowds to recharge and spend time alone with His father (Luke 5:16).

God commands, not suggests, a day set aside to physically and spiritually recharge and rest. You are disobedient and will suffer if you do not embrace this principle and command.

Lastly, “**love your neighbor.**” Who is your neighbor? Jesus illustrated the answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Your neighbor is anyone God puts in your path, believer or unbeliever. We are to be “wise as a fox and innocent as a dove” (Matthew 10:16). We are to listen to the Holy Spirit guide us into serving people. We can’t help everyone, so pray and be sensitive to who, when and how much God wants you to help.

Focus on helping others in ways you are specifically gifted or in ways no one else can help. You don’t need to provide for all their needs or do everything yourself. Recruit and delegate to others to join in the work. Share the work with others so they will learn how to serve in a balanced way. Jesus said, “the poor you will always have with you” (Matthew 26:11). Prioritize our help and resources.

You are the only wife your husband will have. After the Lord, he is your priority. Then your children and family followed by believers and unbelievers. Serving them matures your relationship with the Lord and improves your own well being. Keep yourself strong spiritually and physically to minister in a balanced way for others.

## **THE PRIVILEGE**

It is an honor to have a pastor husband. You see firsthand lives transformed and God’s hand work in ways others do not. Pray for him daily. Support him in love (gentle spirit) and without fear (peaceful inner spirit) (1 Peter 3:4). When problems arise, be a good listener, not critical and blaming him or the believers. Be a part of the solution, not adding to the problem by talking, gossip, criticizing or complaining. Take that to the Lord alone.

Do not discuss private family matters concerning your pastor husband to those in your fellowship. If necessary, speak with a trusted, confidential, older wise woman believer. If deep concerns need attention such as physical or verbal abuse, direct your issues to a trusted elder.

Do not expect your pastor husband to always be right or respond in a godly manner. He, too, is “in process.” Extend grace to him. He needs it as well as you do. Forgive quickly to prevent a root of bitterness. Complement him; ask him about what concerns him and what encourages him. Be actively engaged in listening to his response. Be a safe listener.

In an orchestra, the first violin carries the melody and gets all the attention. But the second violinist makes the harmony and creates the musical beauty. Pastors’ wives are the second violinists. We don’t get much attention but we create the beautiful harmony.

Enjoy. Be blessed. Get eternal rewards. Be the best Christian woman you can be and you will automatically be a good pastor’s wife.

By Nancy Schmoyer

# **VIII. DUTIES OF SHEEP TO PASTORS**

Sheep can make a shepherd’s work easier or harder, depending on how they respond to his leadership. That is true of God’s sheep as well. Christians are commanded to honor their leaders (1 Timothy 5:17-25). They can do this by recognizing them for their faithful service and showing them

respect (1 Thessalonians 5:12). It is important to show them love, for leaders need it as much as anyone else (1 Thessalonians 5:13). People need to help their pastors any way they can. They must pray for them daily.

Never gossip or criticize a leader (1 Corinthians 4:3-4). If there are biblical concerns pray for the person. If it continues go to an appropriate leader to express your concerns about this person and let them handle it. If it does not resolve and God leads you to leave the church do so quietly without gossip or criticism (Proverbs 16:28; 11:9,13; 10:18; Psalm 15:2-3; Ephesians 4:29).

Christians must encourage their leaders by thanking them for their service, encouraging them when facing difficulties and helping in any way they can. Regular attendance at church services encourages a pastor as well.

Believers are to pray regularly, specifically and lovingly for their leaders. The church I pastored for 35 years was excellent in their support of me and prays for me. I cannot know the difference their prayers made, but I would not have wanted to be without them.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT** I believe it is a mark of shame on the church that so many do not financially support their pastors in a way that enables them to live at the same level as the average person in their congregation. Pastors don't have to be among the wealthiest in a church, but they shouldn't be among the poorest, either.

Paul warns Timothy, who he was mentoring in ministry, to be aware of the dangers of loving money (1 Timothy 6:10-11). He urges him to be content with what God provides (1 Timothy 6:8-9; Philippians 4:11-13). Greed can be a temptation to pastors. Pride can lead to higher expectations than are reasonable. We are called to serve God, not money. Still, a pastor has a duty to provide for the financial needs of his family. It is the church's responsibility to make sure that is done.

Paul commanded early churches to have regular offerings (1 Corinthians 16:2). God told the Jews in the Old Testament to give 10% of their wealth to God's work (Genesis 14:20; 28:22) and Jesus approved of tithing (Luke 11:42). We are no longer under God's Old Testament Law, so those commands do not apply to us. Still, that can give us a guideline as to how much to give. Paul said we are to give as God has prospered us (1 Corinthians 16:2), which for most of us will be beyond 10%. Paul devotes two chapters, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, to writing about the importance of financial giving.

If people don't have money to give, they can provide food or something else useful for the pastor's family. When the church I pastored didn't have money to pay me, individuals in the church gave us food. It was much appreciated and greatly needed.

Some of the money given to the church should go to providing a pastor with an adequate salary, for the workman is worthy of his pay (Deuteronomy 24:15). The picture in Deuteronomy 24:15 is of an ox working to produce food for the owner by pulling weights to thresh the grain. It's only right he be allowed to benefit from his work so he has energy to keep working. Paying a pastor enables him to have time to keep studying and pastoring.

Paul adds that a pastor is worthy of "double honor" (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Not only should he be respected and honored as God's representative, but he should receive financial support to help him have time to minister.

Pastors must teach these truths to the people so they know the importance of giving to the work of the Lord in the local church. If they don't give what God wants them to give they are robbing God (Malachi 3:8). Giving is part of worship and should be treated as such during a worship service. We give our time, love, voice (singing) and return some of the financial blessings He gives us. It's all part of showing praise to Him.

Pastors should not ask individual people for money but trust God to provide through the church offerings. If someone offers a gift feel free to take it. If you sense it is a bribe to influence you in some way then do not take it. Do not take money from those who aren't Christians. It may give them the wrong idea about being right with God, or getting salvation by good works (Ephesians 2:8-9). We have something to give them for free – salvation. We shouldn't be taking from them. God's people are to support God's work.

A church must keep a record of how much money is given and what it is used for. This is the job of deacons, not the pastor. The pastor should not collect or carry the money unless there isn't a qualified man in the church. It is too easy for someone to think the pastor is just trying to get rich.

If your church keeps records of who gives how much money, this should be done by mature, godly men in the church and not the pastor. There should always be two who count the money and oversee its use. This way no one man will be tempted to be dishonest, nor will he be accused of misconduct. These men must be trusted to not tell anyone the amount of money someone gives. The pastor should not even know this. I never knew who gave how much money in my church. I didn't want it influencing how I felt about the person if he gave a lot or very little.

A church that collects money should have a budget planned each year. This is an estimate of how much money will be received and what it will be used for. Make sure the bills are paid in full and on time. A church must have a good reputation with others. Keep the people in the church informed about how much money is given to the church and what it is used for. Just as people give a portion of their money to the church, so the church should give a portion of what it received to mission efforts outside their church. Each local church should support local, national and foreign missions in any way it can (Acts 1:8).

The Bible forbids Christians to go into debt and a church should do its very best to stay out of debt of any kind (Romans 13:8; Proverbs 22:7; Psalm 37:21; Luke 14:28; Hebrews 13:5). It may be necessary to buy a building, but cost should be as low as possible and paid off as quickly as possible.

Thank God for His financial provision and always use it for His glory. It is His money you are spending, in the church and in your family.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *Do you train your people in the Biblical use of money? Do you teach or preach about the importance of them contributing financially to the support of the church and its pastor? Do you treat others with respect and kindness, setting an example of how they should treat you?*

## **CONCLUSION**

Remember, God doesn't call a pastor to fill a church building; He calls him to feed and lead His sheep. Jesus promises, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). Our goal is to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23). If we faithfully perform these duties to the best of our ability and do it out of love and devotion to Jesus, we will have His approval. In addition, He will reward us for our service (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

**BENEFITS** Everyone who works for someone else wants to know what benefits come with the job. Some jobs have many, others only a few. As pastors and church leaders we work for God and His benefits are tremendous. We have all the blessings and privileges of salvation that all Christians have, in this life and in all eternity. In addition there are special privileges that only pastors have.

One of my favorite privileges is having a front seat watching God work through me and in the lives of others. I have the joy of watching people come to the Lord for salvation and grow in Him. I



am close to them during special times of joy as well as sorrow. I counsel, teach and pray with them. I get to watch as God provides for their needs and their faith grows. It is a joy and privilege I greatly cherish.

Representing Jesus to others is exciting and humbling. We speak on behalf of Him at births, deaths, marriages and graduations as well as other special times in life. We partner with the Almighty in all we say and do. We are entrusted with His glorious gospel (1 Timothy 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:4). God reveals His special truths to us (1 Corinthians 4:1) and delegates to us the privilege of preaching His Word (Titus 1:3; 2 Timothy 4:2). We are literally co-workers with God as He works through us to shepherd His sheep (Titus 1:7; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1). He entrusts the care of His precious children to us (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Another benefit is that the people we pastor become friends, even extended family. They are there to help us, encourage us and pray for us. They love and teach our children. My children found the support and love they received from church people very essential to their growth. The friendships formed still continue. Many of these people still pray for my children, and for my wife and myself as well. It's a privilege beyond what words can describe.

The church even provided many opportunities for my children to learn to get along with others and to minister to people. They led in worship, taught children and helped me in many ways. They even assisted in cleaning the church and doing whatever service was needed.

Working for Jesus instead of an employer gives pastors more freedom in our day. We can set our own schedule. We can make time to pray and study the Bible and therefore we can grow in our own faith.

When we leave this life and go to the next, there will be extra reward for us if we serve faithfully from our hearts (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). God doesn't reward us for the size of our ministry, our popularity with the people, or the things we accomplish. He serves us for faithfulness to Him, no matter how we compare to other pastors in our outward works (1 Corinthians 4:2). He looks at our heart, not the results of our labors. After all, the results are up to Him, not us.

I'm sure you can list many more privileges and blessings that come from ministering. Thank God for them. Remember them, especially when the ministry gets hard and people hurt us. The benefits for faithful service in this life are great. The benefits for the next are out of this world!

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** *As you think back on what you have learned from this book, what stands out in your mind? What does God want you to remember and apply to your life and ministry? What steps must you take to do so (write them down now)? With whom can you share this book and the things you have learned?*

## **APPENDIX 1: SETTING GOALS**

### **ARE YOUR LIFE GOALS GODLY?**

When she looked ahead, Florence Chadwick saw nothing but a solid wall of fog. Her body was numb. She had been swimming for nearly sixteen hours. Already she was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. Now, at age 34, her goal was to become the first woman to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast. On that Fourth of July morning in 1952, the sea was like an ice bath and the fog was so dense she could hardly see her support boats. Sharks cruised toward her lone figure, only to be driven away by rifle shots. Against the frigid grip of the sea, she struggled on - hour after hour - while millions watched on national television. Alongside

Florence in one of the boats, her mother and her trainer offered encouragement. They told her it wasn't much farther. But all she could see was fog. They urged her not to quit. She never had . . . until then. With only a half mile to go, she asked to be pulled out. Still thawing her chilled body several hours later, she told a reporter, "Look, I'm not excusing myself, but if I could have seen land I might have made it." It was not fatigue or even the cold water that defeated her. It was the fog. She was unable to see her goal. Two months later, she tried again. This time, despite the same dense fog, she swam with her faith intact and her goal clearly pictured in her mind. She knew that somewhere behind that fog was land and this time she made it! Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel, eclipsing the men's record by two hours! Keeping your goal in sight makes all the difference!

What is a goal? In sports it's easy to know what your goal is – to win by scoring the most points. Often these points are even called 'goals' because that's the goal of the game. In life, however, it isn't as easy to know what our goal is, nor is it easy to meet it. A goal is a response to a need. It's something that can be accomplished. It's a statement of God's will for you. It's a future objective. Goals are like stake posts in the distance which a farmer will keep his eyes on while plowing so he can plow a straight line.

Why have goals? If you don't have a goal you will wander. One day Alice (*Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll) came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. Which road do I take? she asked. Where do you want to go? was his response. I don't know, Alice answered. Then, said the cat, it doesn't matter. Any road will do. We must set goals in order to attain them. If we don't have a target, how will we ever know if we hit it or not? Goals motivate us. Goals give us purpose and direction. Goals help us focus. Goals help us know what our priorities need to be. Goals measure how well we've been doing. When we focus on God's priorities we will adjust our priorities to match.

Jesus had a goal in mind throughout His whole earthly ministry (Luke 13:32; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Philippians 3:14).

One night, a group of thieves broke into a jewelry store. But rather than stealing anything, they simply switched all the price tags. The next day no one could tell what was valuable and what was cheap. The expensive jewels had suddenly become cheap, and the costume jewelry, which had been virtually worthless before, was suddenly of great value. Customers who thought they were purchasing valuable gems were getting fakes. Those who couldn't afford the higher priced items were leaving the store with treasures. Application: In our world someone came in and switched all the price tags. It's hard to tell what is of value and what is not. Great value is given to the accumulation of material wealth and the power that goes with it. The world puts a high price on popularity, prestige, beauty, and fame. But Jesus taught that such things are virtually worthless in the only "jewelry store" that matters: the kingdom of God. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:19, 20).*

Jesus gives us guidelines for setting godly goals: *Luke 12:29-31 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

Everyone has goals, if they realize it or not. Everyone has things they want to achieve in life. Everyone has goals, but not everyone acts on them. We all set goals, perhaps even without knowing it. We don't start out on a vacation without knowing where we are going, don't plant a garden without knowing what we want to grow, or build a house without giving the builder any instructions. The more

intentional we are in setting our goals, the more likely we will be to achieve them. And for the Christian, when we include God in the process, we are assured success.

*When you die, how do you want to be remembered? What do you want people to think of when they think of you? How do you want them to finish the sentence, "He/she was \_\_\_\_\_."* Take some time to write down 3 lifetime goals, things you want to accomplish in life and be remembered for.

## **SETTING GOALS THAT ARE WORTH ACHIEVING**

The Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful and costly tombs ever built, but there is something fascinating about its beginnings. In 1629, when the favorite wife of Indian ruler Shah Jahan died, he ordered that a magnificent tomb be built as a memorial to her. The shah placed his wife's casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple literally began around it. But several years into the venture, the Shah's grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project. One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over a wooden box, and he had some workers throw it out. It was months before he realized that his wife's casket had been destroyed. The original purpose for the memorial became lost in the details of construction. This legend may or may not be true, but its theme is a familiar one in the lives of people. How many of us set out to build dream castles but lose our focus along the way? We realize too late that it is loved ones and our children that really matter.

Another classic example of misplaced values occurred in the life of J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men of this century. He wrote: "I've never been given to envy, save for the envy I feel toward those people who have the ability to make a marriage work and endure happily. It's an art I've never been able to master." While we're building our Taj Mahals, let's not forget the purpose with which we began building.

How can we set correct goals? Godly goals come from God, therefore we must spend time with Him. It's only His goals that will ultimately succeed (Proverbs 19:21). God's goals for us are beyond our human ability and necessitate us relying on His strength alone.

Write your goals down in words on paper. That way you can state precisely what you feel God wants you to accomplish with your life. Don't use fuzzy generalities such as 'be more spiritual,' 'be a better husband,' or 'read the Bible more.' To be more spiritual or a better husband is not a goal but a statement of purpose. A goal would be to spend 15 minutes in prayer and Bible reading the first thing every morning. A goal would be to take my wife on a date every week and initiate a conversation about how I can better serve her.

To be a good goal remembers that it must be measurable. It must have a time factor and description of what is expected in that time. "Travel to the Caribbean for our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary" and "become a Christian school science teacher within the next 7 years" are measurable and attainable goals. Then intermediate steps to get from where you are to the goal can be set.

These intermediate steps are goals, too – lesser goals along the way to help us achieve our main goal. To travel the Caribbean as a long-term goal would mean having short term goals of saving so much money each month. It would be gathering information about cruise lines and making a decision about which one to use one year before the sailing date (by your 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary). It would mean having passports by a certain date, etc.

While goal-setting is important, just having words written on paper does no good. The story of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 is a good example. David had a clear picture of his goal – to kill Goliath. His goal wasn't to win the king's daughter in marriage, to make a name for himself or to impress others. David had a clear motive for this goal – to glorify God. He did it because of God's

testimony and reputation. He had a consuming desire to reach this goal and not even the criticism by his brothers or the doubts of King Saul could keep him from it.

Despite how impossible it seemed humanly speaking, David had the utmost confidence that, with God's help, he would achieve his God-given goal (I Samuel 17:37, 45-47). After, if this is what God wanted him to do, and God would be with him, how could he fail?

David didn't just sit around, though. He worked to bring about the achievement of his goal. He developed a course of action. He wouldn't use the king's armor but would use a sling instead. His long-range goal was to kill Goliath, but he had short range goals: collecting rocks, practicing with his sling, being ready as if each day was the battle.

It was important for David to keep his eyes on his goal and not be drawn away by others who would sow doubts in his mind, discourage him, or interfere (as his brothers tried to do). He didn't let fear, anger, pride, discouragement or doubt sidetrack him. We, too, must keep our eyes focused on God's goal for us (Proverbs 4:25-27). Paul did this (II Corinthians 11:22-28). Now you work on your goals, using the chart on the following page. Pray first, then get to work!

*Write down your life-time goals (see the last blog) then set some intermediate goals and even daily goals to help you meet. Remember, be specific. Your goal must be measurable and attainable.*

## **APPENDIX 2: SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

### **SO YOU'RE GIFTED**

So you're gifted – at least that's what they tell you. You've done some reading about spiritual gifts and seem to have a good grasp of the concept, at least as it applies to others. But unfortunately God doesn't send out spiritual gift evaluations, so you are a bit unsure just what spiritual gifts you have or don't have. How can you better understand and make the most of the gifts He has given you?

Learning about spiritual gifts is a good first step. There are many fine books and web sites that offer insightful and practical information. This can be a good start, but it is only a start. You must practice using your gifts. That means functioning in the role God has assigned to you, doing what you are burdened to do and ministering as best you can in ways that are available to you. Even the most accomplished swimmer wasn't world-class the first time he got into a pool.

One of the best ways to find out where you are gifted is through the feed-back of others. What are you asked to do? For what reasons do people come to you? Where do you get positive reinforcement about your contribution? These are good ways of discovering how God is working through you. A spiritual gift is something you enjoy doing (have a desire/burden to do) and something you are able to do – maybe not as well as you'd like but certainly better than the average Christian.

Don't limit what God is doing in you. God gives us a variety of spiritual gifts, a special 'mix' that is unique to each of us. There are 3 basic colors but thousands of combinations can be made from them. That's how it is with spiritual gifts. We each have a unique combination of gifts that blend with our personality and spiritual development. That makes each of us unique. Still, it can be good to try and find someone who has at least some of the gift mix you see in yourself and have that person mentor you. If it is a local person you can spend time with them. If it is someone in the Bible, church history or on the national scene today you can still study their life to see what you can learn to apply to your own growth. Remember that God will gift you, but He will also stretch you. My primary spiritual gift is teaching, but I've always been shy and uncomfortable speaking to groups of people.

God didn't make a mistake, He's stretching me, just like He's stretching you. Anyway, the best advice I can give you as to how to develop your gift is to use it. Focus on it in your ministry. Be alert to opportunities to use it for God's glory. Remember it is His gift for His glory. We use it for Him, not for ourselves.

READ: 1 Peter 4:10; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 12

*If you were describe your gift mix, what spiritual gifts would you say you have? What is the balance between them (which is the main gift, which supplement other gifts, etc.)? What would your mate or close friends say about the list you have written? What can you do to further develop the gifts god has given you? Is there any way you are holding back in using your gifts, any way you are resisting the way God is stretching you through using your gift? Apologize to God now and make yourself totally available to Him.*

### **IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE THE GIFT OF TEACHING...**

Good! At least I think it's mostly good. Shepherds are responsible to feed their sheep, and God gives many the ability to do this by teaching. So being a teacher is good. The 'bad' part is that God holds us accountable for all we learn and pass on to others (James 3:1). Along with the privilege there is a responsibility to use it and an accountability to apply His truth to our own lives.

How do you know if you have the gift of teaching? When you communicate biblical truth to others, do they seem to grasp what you are saying? Do you enjoy trying to make a biblical concept understandable to others? Do stories, illustrations or examples of what you are talking about come to mind when speaking? Do you have a desire to learn the Bible better and to help others learn it as well? Have people responded that you have helped them better understand the Bible? Then teaching is part of your spiritual gift mix.

The gift of teaching is the special ability God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the listeners in a way that they will learn and be edified. Feeding the sheep is a wonderful privilege. Like the farmer who first benefits from the crops, so we who teach benefit most from the information God is passing on through us. Don't take credit for God's gift, don't let pride get in the way. Always make Jesus the One in focus, not yourself or your gift. Say as John said, "He must increase, I must decrease." We are not trying to impress others so we can build our kingdom, we are trying to feed others so they can grow and increase God's kingdom. Thank God for those who fed you, and ask Him to use you to feed those He brings into your life.

READ: Ephesians 4:11; John 21:15-17; 1 Corinthians 12:28

*Do you feel God has given you teaching as part of your spiritual gift mix? What are you doing to develop your gift? (reading about teaching, taking teaching or speaking classes, attending workshops, learning from someone with the gift of teaching, etc.) Do you work hard at your teaching, doing original research and developing good lesson plans? Or do you wing it and coast on your 'gift of gap' to make your lessons interesting? Do you in any way steal glory from God by using your gift to bring attention or focus on yourself? If so, confess it and humble yourself before God.*

### **MUST YOU HAVE THE GIFT OF LEADERSHIP TO WORK WITH OTHERS?**

Like many other pastors, I first cut my teeth in ministry by being a youth pastor. While God has graciously gifted me in several ways, leadership and people skills are not among them. I am not a good motivator, nor do I easily draw people to me and my cause. That made it quite hard to lead the

youth in the church where I worked. I attracted the serious ones and could disciple them, but I envied those who could be cool with all the kids and attract their admiration and loyalty. Maybe you understand how I felt.

Is leadership part of your spiritual gift mix? Do you enjoy inspiring and leading others for the sake of Christ's work? Are you quick to sense when a group needs direction and then able to step up and do something about it? Do others look to you for leadership and guidance? Are you able to motivate others to strive for goals you feel are important? Do you think of future accomplishments and how to bring them about? If so, you have leadership gifts.

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 communicate those goals to others so that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish them for the glory of God. Often administration/organization accompanies this gift so the leader is better able to move forward in his plans. As with any privilege God gives, however, there is a responsibility to use it for Him and an accountability factor as well. 1 Timothy 3 lists characteristics a leader must have: without fault, sober, self-controlled, orderly, welcoming of strangers, gentle and peaceful, not greedy, able to manage his family and children, mature in the faith and respected by others. This gift must always be exercised under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We must at all times remember they are HIS sheep, not ours. We are just the under shepherd. But isn't it a great privilege to be on God's leadership team?

READ: Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; John 21:16

*What is your plan to keep your focus on Jesus and not let your ego needs rise to the surface? How do you keep from using your leadership ability feed your own pride? Who is your example as a leader? Find someone in life, in the Bible, or in history whom you admire as a leader and study their life. What are you doing to further develop your leadership abilities? There are many fine books, web sites and workshops available. We are responsible to develop our abilities, not coast on them. Ask God to show you how you can be a better leader to those who follow you. Sit quietly for a few moments and listen to what He would say to you.*

### **WHAT IF I'M NOT GIFTED LIKE BILLY GRAHAM?**

Everyone is required to share the good news of Jesus with those they come in contact with, but some seem to be much better at it than others. These few are relaxed, positive, motivated and seem to enjoy each opportunity to share. What makes them different than the rest of us? God has included evangelism as part of their spiritual gift mix.

Do you like to talk to people about Jesus, especially those who don't know Him? Are you able to share the gospel in a way that is clear and understandable for others? Do you look for opportunities to share the plan of salvation? Has God used you to help bring unbelievers to salvation? Do you come away from times of sharing the gospel with great encouragement and enthusiasm? If you do, evangelism is part of your spiritual gift mix.

The gift of evangelism is the special ability that God gives to believers to present the Gospel to unbelievers in a clear and meaningful way which calls for a response. Remember this must be done in love. If you don't feel love for the person but are just looking for another notch on your spiritual gun handle for making another 'kill,' you aren't truly representing Jesus. Witnessing isn't a game or a challenge to see who 'wins.' The best way I've heard it put is that it is one beggar showing another beggar where to get bread. Some are just better at this than others because they are gifted by God.

What if you don't have this gift? Can you still minister with youth and others? Of course! If God didn't give you this gift He didn't want you to have it! No gift is better than any other gift. We thank God for those with the gift of evangelism for they are the spiritual obstetricians that bring new life into the church. But we need pediatric doctors, family doctors, etc., to help these new ones grow. If evangelism isn't your gift don't feel left out. Still, we are responsible to share the gospel with others. I find the best way to do this is to be just what God tells us to be – a witness. A witness doesn't argue a point, he just relates what he knows. He shares personal experience. When I realize that is what God wants me to do then I find it is much easier than acting like a lawyer trying to argue people into the truth. I share what Jesus has done for me and God uses that in mighty ways. After all, He does promise that He will use His Word for His glory.

READ Ephesians 4:7, 11; Matthew 28:18-20

*Do you have evangelism as part of your spiritual gift mix? If so, what are you doing to develop it? (do you attend seminars or conferences, practice using it whenever you can, read about great soul winners in the past, find a present day mentor who can help you, etc.) If you don't have the gift of evangelism, are you using that as an excuse to not share the gospel as often as you can? If you struggle with this, write out your testimony (your witness) so you can say it in 2 to 3 minutes. God will take it from there. Write down the names of several people you have spoken to about Jesus in the last year. Pray for them now and continue to remember them when you pray. If you have the gift or not, ask God to give you opportunities to speak for Him this day. Then be alert for them.*

### **DO YOU HAVE A SHEPHERD'S HEART?**

One of my favorite titles for a pastor is 'shepherd.' The term speaks of tender, loving care, of responsibility and oversight for those who would not prosper without it. A shepherd's is someone with a caregiver's heart, someone who has others they oversee and build into spiritually. It could be a pastor, youth worker, children's helper, mother or father.

Are you concerned about the spiritual needs of the people around you? Do you long to see them grow in the Lord? Do you have a burden and desire to help them, encourage them, rejoice with them, love them and assist them in any way possible? Do you give of yourself because of a concern for the ones you are ministering to? A shepherd must love his sheep in order to lay down his life for his sheep, and youth pastors lay down their lives for their teenage sheep every day.

The gift of pastor or shepherd 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. So yes, youth pastors are definitely pastors. The Greek word translated 'pastor' refers to the caring, protecting feeding and leading of sheep. Jesus calls Himself the "Good Shepherd." Since He is not physically on earth, he calls some of us to be assistant shepherds to help care for His sheep. This is a great privilege and a wonderful calling. There is none higher. But it also entails responsibility and accountability. After all, they are HIS sheep, not ours. He owns them, not us. He brings growth, we are just the channel He sometimes uses. When they rejoice, we rejoice. But when they stray or are in pain, we hurt with them and for them. In that way we represent Christ and show in a very real way just what Jesus is like. Those we shepherd should see a glimpse of the Great Shepherd in us. What a wonderful privilege and great challenge that is!

READ: Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2-3; 1 Timothy 4:12-15

*Take some time to identify the gift of pastor (shepherd) in your life. Write down your thoughts and burdens for those around you. What can you do to be a better shepherd, to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ in how you care for your sheep? Every sheep needs a shepherd. Who is your shepherd? Who do you look to and go to? If you're trying to function without a shepherd of your*

*own, you are like a sheep trying to make it on his own. That just doesn't work for long. Spend some time thanking God for the wonderful privilege He has given you of being a shepherd of some of His sheep!*

## **WE CAN'T EVALUATE OUR WORTH BY THE USE OF OUR GIFTS**

I've been sharing some of the lessons I've learned in a life of ministry: God doesn't need me but I need Him, the more I grow the further away I am and intimacy with God is still my number one goal. Another 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. My spiritual gifts are mainly teaching/preaching and counseling. As I've practiced them for four decades I can see that there has been growth and improvement in these areas. My wife says I'm at the top of my game now in ministry. I should be, since I've spent thousands of hours over the years honing these skills. It's nice to look back and see the improvement made and efficiency attained in these areas.

I thank God for this, because it is His grace and His Spirit that has brought these about. However I've no illusion that I could have done this on my own. I know what these 'skills' would look like should He withdraw His Spirit and His help from me. On my own I would be a real failure in these areas. He gets the credit for them.

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. Does that make sense? Are you following me here? I hope so for I believe this is very important.

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 enjoy teaching, preaching and counseling. I have a great desire to do these things and do them well. I feel great when that happens. However hardly a Sunday goes by when, standing at the door after the service listening to people complement the message, I don't remember Howard Hendrick's description of that event as the "glorification of the worm." It helps me remember where the credit really belongs. I don't want to take credit for what He does, that would be stealing His glory.

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 how I can perform.

And 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 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), now who you are!

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:10; Romans 15:17

*How much emphasis do you put on the successful use of your spiritual gifts? Are you tempted to take pride in them? If God removed His grace and power from your life, what would change? How do you measure your spiritual growth? How does God measure it?*