

Today we're starting a series of lessons on what it means to be a pastor. What qualifies an individual to be a pastor and what is a pastor supposed to do? To answer those questions, we're going to look at three passages of scripture.

1 Peter 5:2–4; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Acts 20:28

A shepherd is the most common illustration of what a pastor is found in the Bible. 1 Peter 5:2 says it plainly, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care..."

Something I've seen in Africa on a number of occasions that amazes me, is animals, whether it is goats or cattle wandering free with no one seeming to be watching them. I'm sure there's more going on than what I see, but at first glance there's no supervision. This is the opposite of how a pastor is to act. As a pastor, God has given you a portion of his flock to care for and it's your responsibility to watch over them. We'll talk more about what that means a little later.

Here's another characteristic. A pastor is to shepherd God's flock with a willing spirit. Pastoral ministry is not a duty which one is forced to do, but a willing service to God. A pastor's heart must reflect love for Christ and His people. You remember how in John 21:15–17, the resurrected Jesus spoke to Peter and asked him, Do you love me? Peter said yes, and Jesus responded by saying, Feed my sheep.

As a pastor, the attitude you have towards your calling is a direct reflection on your love for Jesus. If you allow your love for Jesus to grow cold, then your work as a pastor will become a burden rather than a joy. In the same manner, if your work becomes something which you do unwillingly, your love for Jesus will soon become cold. If you find yourself at such a point, it is better for you to step away from being a pastor, than to allow your relationship with Jesus suffer.

I'm speaking from personal experience here. When I left full-time pastoral ministry, my work had become a burdensome task that I had

to perform, not something that I wanted to do. It took about 3 years before I could once again do pastoral work with a sense of joy. And now it's been more than 9 years since I quit being a full-time pastor and I can tell you that I feel like I am doing more real ministry, the kind of ministry that I believe God originally called me to, than when I was working all the time as a pastor. And I can say that I love Jesus more now than I ever have in my life.

Here's a third characteristic. A pastor serves with humility Not for selfish gain, but to serve eagerly. This is a common problem among those who preach the prosperity gospel. Their lifestyles often appear to be based on selfish gain rather than humble service. Pastoral leadership is not about power, but service. Nor is it about gaining a great following. Rather it is about following the example of Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

The next characteristic may be one of the hardest to achieve. A pastor is to lead by example The pastor's life preaches louder than his words. The flock follows not just what he teaches, but how he lives.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:16, Therefore, I urge you to imitate me.

What would your congregation look like if everyone did what you do? Would it be known for its willingness to serve and humbly care for people?

There's an important principle in the Bible that teaches that a person becomes like the people he or she associates with. The people of your congregation are going to become like you. Does that excite you or worry you?

A true pastor leads through example — walking before the people in humility, purity, and love.

Let's move on to our next scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1–7

Pastoral work is a noble calling.

Pastoral ministry is a “good work,” an honorable and sacred task.

Paul goes on in 1 Timothy 3 to list the qualifications of a pastor

1. Blameless — living above reproach.
2. Faithful to his or her spouse — morally pure and devoted.
3. Temperate and Self-controlled — disciplined and sober-minded.
4. Hospitable — open-hearted and caring.
5. Able to Teach — grounded in Scripture and able to instruct others.
6. Gentle and Peaceful — not quarrelsome or violent.
7. Good Manager of His Home — leadership starts in the household.
8. Mature in Faith — not a new believer, avoiding pride.
9. Respected by Outsiders — a reputation that honors Christ in the community.

A pastor’s power is not in position, but in his character. God uses holy vessels to do holy work.

III. The Pastor as a Watchman — Acts 20:28

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock...”

A. Called by the Holy Spirit

Pastoral leadership is not self-appointed; it is a divine calling and trust. If you can do anything else, do it. When the Spirit calls you to be a pastor, there is a sense that you are compelled to follow. By that I mean, I can’t imagine doing or being anything else other than a pastor.

B. Watch Over the Flock

Pastors must guard against false doctrine and spiritual danger

Spiritual vigilance protects the unity and purity of the church.

What false doctrines and spiritual danger do you encounter? Unmute and share with everyone.

How do you go about guarding against these false doctrines and spiritual dangers? Again, share with everyone.

C. Shepherd with Compassion

The church belongs to God — purchased by the blood of Christ.

Pastors must care deeply for what God values infinitely.

IV. The Chief Shepherd's Example — 1 Peter 5:4

“When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

Christ is the perfect model of pastoral ministry — humble, sacrificial, and faithful to the end. The faithful pastor serves with an eye on eternity, not earthly reward.

Final Challenge:

Pastors and believers alike should remember: ministry is not about status, but service; not about power, but purity; not about recognition, but faithfulness.