

Study 19

The Pastoring JESUS commanded



I think most Christians who have a concept of pastoring would be shocked if they compared their expectation with what the New Testament actually prescribes to the role of a pastor. I also wonder how long it would take for the average Christian to be offended by Christ if Jesus directly pastored them?

1. Consider the New Testament's description of how Jesus pastored His twelve disciples. Is there anything that surprises you about the way Jesus pastored?

How many would really want Jesus Christ Himself to pastor them? For people who have a problem with "control" I wonder how they would handle *Jesus* as their pastor?



The modern church has a strong emphasis on the ministry of the *pastor*. It is assumed that nearly every church should have a pastor to be Biblical. During the 1800s there arose a church experiment called *Brethrenism* where they taught against the concept of a local church being led by a pastor. Instead, they claimed, the Bible prescribed the church should be led by elders without any particular elder being the leader. They considered that each of

these elders were “brothers” (hence their name “Brethren”). They based this concept of church on Matthew 23:8.

2. Consider Matthew 23:8 and note its context. Is Jesus giving a statement on how churches should be structured in this passage? If so, explain. If not, explain.

The Brethren experiment is largely coming to end with many formerly Brethren churches (not to be confused with the cult- *The Exclusive Brethren*) appointing pastors and joining networks of churches.

3. Reflect on the story revealed through the pages of the Old Testament. Discuss the type of leadership that God seemed to consistently work through in the Old Testament period. What do we notice about it?

The word “pastor” does not occur in the New Testament! Only Ephesians 4:11 mentions “pastors”. There is not one church described in the New Testament as being led by a pastor! At this point the founders of Brethrenism might shout “Amen!” But they might be disappointed to realise that the New Testament *only describes churches being led by a leader.*

4. But what kind of quality should church leaders exhibit according to 1Peter 5:1-3?

5. How did Paul want elders to lead churches based on his instructions to the Ephesian church leaders in Acts 20:28-35?

It is believed that the Ephesian church had grown to around 6,000 members by the time of Paul addressing these elders. They clearly could not have met in one location. The various congregations may have had around 100 people in them and were led by an elder. It was these elders that Paul gathered together and later sent Timothy to them to be an overseeing coordinator. This was the occasion for the writing of First and Second Timothy.



6. In First Timothy 3:1-7 what qualifications does Paul list for those who would pastor a church?

The modern day role of “pastor” is referred to in the New Testament as an “overseer”, “elder”, “shepherd”, and even “bishop” (note Titus 1:7 in various translations). An overseer, or leader, of a congregation might be gifted with any of the ministry gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11. Therefore, Paul the Apostle pastored (led) churches; Philip the Evangelist pastored churches; Titus the prophet pastored churches; and no doubt there were teachers who pastored churches.

7. According to Ephesians 4:12-16 how is the primary role of the pastor/shepherd of a church described?

8. What characteristics does a Biblical “shepherd” have according to Jesus in John 10?

I have four children. When each of my children were around a year old they began to display their desire to grow by free-standing and taking steps. But this was a painful time for them! As they were learning to stand they fell many times and experienced pain. But as a caring parent I don't want my children to feel pain. I could have picked them up and carried them everywhere so that they would never feel the pain of falling down. But they would never have grown! Biblically, pastors are required not just to care, but *to help people grow*. And according to Ephesians 4:11-12 pastors are required to help their people to pastor. That is, the responsibility of caring within a church is not just borne by one person but by the entire church-family, and especially those in leadership. May God help us to be a pastoring church where people are both cared for and encouraged to grow.

Amen.