

SHEPHERDING GOD'S PEOPLE

MACARTHUR BLVD BAPTIST CHURCH

OUR BELIEF REGARDING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

There are three primary words to refer to church leaders used in the New Testament: Bishop/Overseer (*episkopos*), Pastor (*poimen*), and Elder (*presbyteros*). The New Testament authors do not consider these offices as distinct from each other. These titles are simply different ways of referring to the same office.

In Acts 20:17 and 28 Paul calls for the elders of the church but then later refers to them as bishops (overseers) and later again as pastors (shepherds). All three terms are used interchangeably. It's also noteworthy that the qualifications for an "overseer" in 1 Timothy 3 are the same as those for an "elder" in Titus 1:6-9. In Titus 1 Paul also uses both terms, "elder" and "overseer," to refer to the same man (1:5,7). 1 Peter 5:1-2 likewise brings all three terms together, commanding the "elders" to "shepherd" (using the verbal form of *poimen*) and exercise "oversight" (the verbal form of *episkopos*) over the flock. These verses demonstrate that there is no indication in the New Testament that there are more than two official offices in the post-apostolic church: Pastor and Deacon. At MacArthur Blvd, we choose to use the term "pastor" for the sake of consistency and clarity.

THE ROLE OF PASTORS

When considering the role pastors play within the church, it is helpful to begin by looking at the specific words in the Bible that are used to refer to this office. Each of the three titles used in the New Testament gives helpful insight into the role of pastors.

Overseer: This word means "bishop" or "guardian." It would have been the Greek (or Gentile) equivalent of the word "elder." This word would suggest two things to the first century mind: responsibility to a superior power and an introduction into a new order. This word emphasizes the responsibility the pastors have to manage the ministries and affairs of the local church.

Pastor: This word is used many times in the New Testament, but it is rarely translated "pastor." It is most often translated "shepherd." It emphasizes the pastor's role of teaching, protecting, and caring for his people.

Elder: This was not a new word for the church. It was the most common word used to describe the leaders of the Jewish synagogue. It was also a common word in the Old Testament to refer to those who assisted Moses, those in charge of judging the people, leading the Passover, and many other references. Primarily, this term seems to refer more to the man himself and his leadership over the church.

Responsibilities of Pastors

The metaphor used throughout the New Testament to describe the leadership of local churches is "shepherd." This metaphor informs us of the specific responsibilities of pastors and the role they play in the local church. Ultimately, Jesus is the Head of the church (*Eph. 5:23-24; Col. 1:18*). He is the "Good Shepherd" who ultimately leads the people of God (*John 10:11*). However, the Bible teaches that one of the primary means through which Jesus shepherds His people is pastors, whom He gives to each local body (*Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 20:28*). Christ, as Head of the church, mediates His authority in local churches through pastors who are responsible for leading the flock entrusted to them under the authority of Christ. Ultimately, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, but He gives each local church under-shepherds called pastors, through whom He leads the body.

Flowing out of the biblical metaphor of pastors who “shepherd” the flock of God, the New Testament describes at least four primary responsibilities of pastors in the church.

1. Pastors feed by ministering the word to the flock. The situation that arose in Acts 6:1-7 demonstrates that one of the primary responsibilities of pastors is to feed the flock through the “ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The ministry of the word takes on many different forms. This ministry certainly includes preaching and teaching in large group settings, but it is not limited to the pastors’ preaching responsibilities. Not all pastors have to engage in corporate proclamation. The ministry of the word occurs any time a pastor applies the wisdom of God’s word to the lives of people in the church. In this way, pastors may feed their flock during a counseling session, hospital visit, or even a brief phone conversation. Pastors must be men who know the word of God well enough to minister it to the people in an effort to lead them toward Christ-likeness and equip them for the work of ministry. Pastors feed the flock with the nourishment of God’s word.

Titus 1:7-11; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Jude 3; Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 6:4

2. Pastors lead by directing the ministries of the flock. Shepherds not only feed the flock, but they also lead the flock. Sheep do not lead themselves. It is the responsibility of the pastors of the church to set the direction of the church and manage the ministries within the church. Pastors, therefore, must be men who understand the word of God and keep in step with the Spirit of God so that they can lead the flock in the direction the Good Shepherd wants the flock to go. Verses like Hebrews 13:17 and 1 Peter 5:5, which call the congregation to submit themselves to the authority and leadership of the pastors, demonstrate that pastors have been given by Christ the responsibility to discern the direction Christ wants the church to go and lead the flock accordingly. Pastors are called “overseers” of the church, who “steward” (i.e. *manage*) the affairs of the flock (Titus 1:7). While there are a few crucial matters where the congregation has final authority (as we will see below), the overall direction of the church and her ministries is not determined by popular vote of the congregation but by the pastors whom the congregation calls to be their leaders. The shepherd-flock metaphor demonstrates

that God’s design for pastoral leadership is for churches to elect their pastors and then submit themselves to the leadership of their pastors. Shepherds lead the flock.

Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 16:16; Titus 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Acts 20:28

3. Pastors protect by guarding the hearts of the flock. Just as shepherds protect their sheep from anything that might harm them, pastors have the responsibility to protect their flock from potential danger. Pastors protect the flock from false doctrine and therefore must be men who know sound doctrine and can recognize errant teaching (Titus 1:9). They protect the flock by addressing sin that arises within the membership of the church, knowing that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). They protect the flock from the spiritual attacks of the enemy by interceding in prayer on behalf of the church. Pastors must be vigilant, always on the lookout for wolves in sheep clothing, false teachings that come onto the scene, and cultural ideologies that could potentially lead the sheep astray. Pastors “keep watch” over the souls of their people as men who will one day give an account to the Good Shepherd upon His return (Heb. 13:17).

Titus 1:9-16; Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28-31

4. Pastors care by engaging in the needs of the flock. Pastors must be men who genuinely care for the flock and are willing to engage in their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. While every member of the church has the responsibility to “do the work of ministry,” caring for each other’s needs (Eph. 4:12), pastors have the responsibility to see to it that these needs are met. Pastors do this through the ministry of the word, prayer, practical help, and organizing ministries within the church to meet specific needs. Pastors are to pray over those who come to them with illness (James 5:14), they “help the weak” (Acts 20:35), they must have compassion upon those whom Christ has entrusted them. The biblical model for pastoral leadership is not a CEO who directs the flock from a distance without genuine care for their wellbeing. Rather, pastors function as shepherds who know their sheep, spend time with their sheep, love their sheep, and oversee the ministries of the church so that the needs of the flock are met.

Acts 20:35; James 5:14; Psalm 23

Having clarified the role of pastors within the church, we now turn our attention to the role of the congregation in church governance and consider the relationship between the congregation and their pastors.

The Role of the Congregation in Relation to the Pastors

While we believe that the pastors of a church have been given by Christ the authority to lead, oversee, and manage the affairs of the church, we also affirm a belief called “congregationalism.” Congregationalism means that the congregation has final (human) say on certain crucial matters. We believe there are three areas where the Bible gives the congregation final authority.

- 1. Membership:** In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus gives the local church final authority in cases of church discipline, which remove a member walking in ongoing unrepentant sin from church membership. Paul does the same thing in 1 Corinthians 5 when he commands the church, not the pastors, to remove the sinful man from their midst. According to the Bible, it is ultimately the congregation’s responsibility to guard the purity of the church by assuring only believers are brought into membership and by removing from membership those who evidence they are not genuine believers through their ongoing sinful behavior.
- 2. Leadership:** There is also biblical evidence that the congregation should have the final say in the installation of church leaders. We see the congregation affirming new Deacons in Acts 6:3-6, appointing Barnabas and Saul for missionary work in Acts 13:2-3, and 2 Corinthians 8:19 says that Titus was appointed “by the churches” to travel with Paul. It is also the congregation’s responsibility to remove a pastor when he has overtly abandoned the true Gospel of the Christian faith or if he is found to be walking in significant, unrepentant sin. Paul says in Galatians 1:6-9 that the congregation is capable of even removing him—an apostle—if he teaches a wrong Gospel. 1 Timothy 5:19-20 teach the church should not receive an accusation against a pastor unless there are two or three witnesses, but if it is confirmed that the pastor is walking in significant, unrepentant sin, he should be rebuked “in the presence of all.”

One the primary differences in churches who affirm congregationalism (like MacArthur Blvd) and those who do not is that in non-congregational churches a board of elders, or some external governing authority, is ultimately responsible for installing and removing church leaders.

- 3. Doctrine:** It has already been mentioned in the previous point, but Galatians 1:6-9 demonstrates that it is the responsibility of the congregation to assure that the true Gospel is being proclaimed within the church. In these verses, Paul holds the church in Galatia responsible for allowing a false Gospel to infiltrate the body. The church members are ultimately responsible for assuring that the true Gospel is being preached.

In these three areas—membership, leadership, and doctrine—the congregation has final authority. Outside of these three areas, the Bible calls the congregation to “obey your leaders and submit to them” (*Heb. 13:17*). This is Jesus’ design for the local church: The congregation affirms God’s calling on certain men to serve as pastors within the church; these men have been given authority by Christ to lead the church, to direct the ministries of the church, and manage the affairs of the church. As long as these men stay within the moral and doctrinal parameters that are clearly set forth in Scripture, the congregation is to submit to the pastoral leadership of the church, trusting God’s design, which gives pastors the authority to lead the church. It is beneficial for the congregation to let the pastors lead “with joy and not with groaning” (*Heb. 13:17*) through their joyful submission, honor, and support. Further, pastors are commanded to lead the flock in a manner that corresponds to the Chief Shepherd: loving, sacrificial, and selfless leadership.

Biblical congregationalism is not a democracy. It is a mixed government—part monarchy (the rule of one), part oligarchy (the rule of a few), part democracy (rule of the many). Jesus is King through His word, the pastors lead, and the congregation has final (human) say on certain crucial matters.

NUMBER OF PASTORS

Plurality of Pastors

Although the New Testament often highlights one man as the primary teacher or leader of the church, every indication in the New Testament points to a plurality of pastors.

- The pastors of the church in Jerusalem united with the 12 apostles to discuss matters of doctrine (*Acts 15*).
- James instructed sick believers to call the pastors of the church to pray (*James 5:14*).
- Paul appointed a team of pastors in every city at the end of his first missionary journey (*Acts 14:23*). In *Acts 14* and in *James 5:15* the word “elders” is always plural while the word “church” is always singular.
- Paul summoned the “elders” of the church to meet for a farewell exhortation (*Acts 20: 17, 28*).
- When Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, he greeted the “overseers” (plural).
- Out of 18 references to church leadership in the New Testament, 15 of those are to a plurality. Of these 15, 7 of them are in reference to one local church having a plurality of pastors.
- There are also many other examples of shared leadership in the New Testament (*Acts 13:1; 15:23; 1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7*).

First Among Equals

Although the pastors are equal in their qualifications and authority over the church, there is great evidence in the New Testament for one man to serve as a Lead Pastor within the pastoral body as a ‘first among equals.’

- Among the 12 apostles there were 3 who were specifically called out.
- Among those 3, Peter was clearly the leader in the early church, and his name is most often mentioned first. Peter is the key figure in the beginning of the church all throughout the book of Acts.

- When Paul writes the Galatians, he speaks to Peter, James, and John as the “pillars” of the church (*Gal. 2:9*).
- Paul and Barnabas are equals, but it appears that Paul was the primary spokesman and the leader of the two.
- Although many elders were present in Jerusalem in *Acts 15*, James seems to be the clear leader.
- The Old Testament evidence for a primary leader is also overwhelmingly clear.

Paid and Unpaid Pastors

It is evident in the Bible that some church leaders were paid by the church where they served while others earned their living outside the church. *1 Timothy 5:17-18* says, “17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” The Greek word translated “honor” in verse 17 is *time*, which, as the context shows, refers to financial support. Paul also discusses the right church leaders have to receive financial support in *1 Corinthians 9:1-9*.

Financial support is a right, but it is not a mandate. There are biblical examples of church leaders who earned their living in a vocation outside of the church they served. Paul at times served in churches in this way, choosing not to receive financial support from the church but rather in a secular vocation (*cf. Acts 18:1-4; 1 Cor. 9:12; 1 Thess. 2:9*).

A pastor’s authority is not determined by whether or not he is paid by the church. All pastors, paid and unpaid, have equal pastoral authority within the church. The New Testament makes it clear that while pastors have the right to receive financial support from the church, they are not required to do so.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PASTORS

The two places that list qualifications for pastors are *1 Timothy 3* and *Titus 1*.

Paul lays forth a high standard for leadership. Paul gives a list of non-negotiable qualifications for leadership in the church. When writing to Timothy, Paul insists that the men chosen

to be pastors “must” have these qualifications. It is such a serious matter to Paul that he instructs Timothy to make sure the men are publicly examined in light of these expectations. (1 Tim. 3:10; 5:24-25)

When we begin looking at the qualifications for leadership, we must recognize that there is one overarching qualification: blamelessness. All other qualifications only serve to amplify this primary idea. This idea is so significant that Paul repeats it twice when giving the qualifications to Titus (1:6, 7).

What Paul does in writing Titus is lay forth that primary qualification of blamelessness and then give three specific spheres that should be investigated. Paul felt that a man must be blameless in his family life, blameless in his character and conduct, and blameless in his doctrine.

A man need not and cannot be “without blemish,” but a man must be “without blame.” There are a few ways we can describe this.

- He must be a man of unquestionable integrity.
- He must be a man who is not open to public attack or criticism in any of the areas Paul mentions.
- He must be a man in whom no loophole for criticism can be found.
- He must be a man who is (as Calvin says) “marred by no disgrace.”
- He must be a man who is a worthy model of moral and spiritual character for other believers.
- He must be a man who not only teaches aright but also lives aright.

The implications of this are that a man is not chosen to be a pastor based upon his intelligence, his education, his talent, his popularity, or even his influence; He is chosen based upon the qualification of his character and reputation. Integrity is key.

Blameless in Their Marriage and Family

“Therefore an overseer must be...the husband of one wife... He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” –1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5.

Husband of one wife: The more accurate rendering would be “a one-woman man” or a “one-woman husband.” A few clarifying statements:

- Paul is not making a point about polygamy – although that is forbidden.
- Paul is not making reference to a widower who is remarried.
- Paul is not saying that a pastor must be married.
- Paul is not here specifically referring to the issue of divorce.

Paul here refers to “the singularity of a man’s faithfulness to the woman who is his wife and implies inner as well as outward sexual purity” (John MacArthur, *Titus*, pg. 28). He must be a man who is utterly single-minded in his devotion to his wife.

The primary point that Paul is making here is that a qualified pastor is one who is blameless in the church and in the community in every area of sex and marriage. He must not have a wandering eye, an addiction to pornography, a flirtatious spirit, or any other moral stain that would tarnish the reputation of Christ.

Children who believe and are not accused of dissipation or rebellion: Ultimately, God is sovereign and is the one who chooses whom he will save. This verse could also be translated, “his children are faithful,” meaning that they are not living openly rebellious lives that would bring legitimate biblical reproach against the father. Both the context of this qualification in Titus 1 and the way Paul states this same qualification in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, makes this latter translation preferable.

The primary point Paul is making here is that a man who cannot manage the children in his own household is not qualified to lead the church. If the children living under his roof, over whom he is directly responsible, are known as wild and rebellious children, he is not qualified as a pastor.

Blameless in Their Character and Conduct

In Titus 1:7-8, Paul gives a list of eleven terms, five negative and six positive, which are all single words in the Greek. What brings them all together is the thought, which occurs twice in verse 8, that a man must be the master of himself (self-controlled and sensible). So the pastor must be a man who shows evidence that he has been saved, filled with the Spirit, and is controlled by the Spirit. He must be a man who has learned how to make his body his slave.

The Five Negatives

Not self-willed: "Self-willed" means arrogant, stubborn, and proud. A self-willed person is one who seeks their own interests with a disregard for others. Being someone who has to get their own way, they fail to listen to criticism or advice. It has the idea of a proud man who is governed by his own flesh and not by the Spirit.

Not quick-tempered: "Quick-tempered" means to be irritable, impatient, or have a short fuse. The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God (*James 1:20*). A pastor must not be irritable or impatient since he will deal with many demanding and needy people.

Not addicted to wine: The pastor must be self-controlled, clear-headed, and in control of his senses and judgments at all times. If a pastor is addicted to wine, he shows that he does not understand moderation and is not able to practice self-control.

Not pugnacious: Pugnacious means confrontational, belligerent, or aggressive. In other words, Paul means that a pastor cannot be given to violence or violent outbursts. This can refer to both physical and verbal displays of anger. This is essential because of the difficult situations in which the pastors will find themselves. They must lead by example and not by force.

Not fond of sordid gain: This means that a pastor must not be one who is concerned for wealth or financial prosperity. He must not practice anything that would lead toward greed or dishonesty or would display a love of money. Pastors should be motivated by service, not financial gain.

The Six Positives

Hospitable: A pastor must welcome people into his home and be willing to entertain both church members and visitors. He must be one who gives practical help to those in need and does not live with an ungodly distance from the people to whom he ministers. He must freely offer his resources, time, and encouragement to those who need them.

Loving what is good: The pastors must love what God loves and hate what God hates. They must be known as those who support and love good causes and things which advance God's kingdom and encourage godly living.

Sensible: This refers to both a disciplined life and a sensible lifestyle. A person who is "sensible" is in command of his mind. He has control over himself and does not allow circumstances or immorality or foolishness to distract him and gain his attention or interests.

Just: This word is often translated "righteous." He must be a man who has a commitment to those things that are fair and right.

Devout: This is closely related to the word "holy." He is a man who is clear on the direction of his life and is devoted to that direction. He is someone who is genuinely pursuing God and is known for his devotion to those things which are godly. He is known for obedience.

Self-controlled: He must be a man who has mastered himself. He has control over his fleshly and sinful nature and is continually learning how to control himself. He makes his body his slave.

Blameless in Their Doctrine

In Titus 1:9 Paul moves away from the family life and conduct of a pastor to their necessary grasp of the truth. Everything Paul has mentioned so far concerns who a pastor is to be, but at this point he moves to what a pastor must be able to do. Namely, he must be able to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict sound doctrine.

Holding fast the faithful word: The word of God here is stated as being "faithful" because it is true and never lies. It is also referred to as "the trustworthy word as taught," meaning that it is the word that came from the apostles and is sound. Paul is saying that the men who lead the church must be men who cling to and hold tightly to the word of God. He is to "hold firm" this word. This means he is to hold it tightly.

Because the pastor holds the word tightly, he can:

- **Exhort in sound doctrine:** This means that the pastor must hold tightly to the Word so that he might be able to encourage, strengthen, and help people with the word. He is to strengthen people's understanding of doctrine and in turn to help them understand their duty. Since doctrine is the foundation of duty, the pastor must be able to exhort people with the word so that they will be able to engage in the work of the ministry. The pastor is to be a man who

uses the Word to encourage, motivate, and equip people. He is confident in the word's ability to do this work, and he uses the word to do the work.

- **Refute those who contradict:** The pastor also knows the word well enough that he can literally “overthrow” his opponents in an argument. The church will always be filled with those who will preach an unsound doctrine—a doctrine that is not according to godliness, a doctrine that appears good but is not genuine. The church will always have false teachers. Therefore, the church must be led by men who see those doctrines and can refute them before they destroy the church.

John Calvin wrote, “A pastor needs two voices, one for gathering the sheep and the other for driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means for doing both, and he who has been rightly instructed in it will be able both to rule those who are teachable and refute the enemies of the truth. Paul notes this double use of the Scripture when he says that he should be able both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers.”