
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Is your "pastor" really a "pastor" according to the scriptures?**

The word "*pastor*" is a Bible word translated from the Greek word ποιμήν. This word occurs 18 times in the New Testament and refers to one who cares for a flock of sheep. This word is most often translated "shepherd," but it is indeed translated "pastor" once:

Ephesians 4:11

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some **pastors** and teachers,

This word was not intended to be a religious title. The Lord never intended that certain ones should wear religious titles that would exalt them above other disciples. Jesus said:

Matthew 23:6-12

⁶ They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,

⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

⁸ But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

None of God's people should wear religious titles such as "*Rabbi*," "*Teacher*," "*Father*," or any such title (like "*Dr.*") that would exalt him above others. This is why we are opposed to preachers prefacing their names with the word "*Reverend*." The title "*Reverend*," like "*Rabbi*," "*Teacher*," and "*Father*," is a title that exalts one person above others. This is exactly what Jesus forbade in Matthew 23.

Matthew 20:25-28

²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave —

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Over and over again the Lord taught that His disciples were not to exalt themselves over one another. For this reason, we are opposed to using the word "pastor" as a religious title.

ONE MAN RULE FORBIDDEN

The next thing I want you to take note of is the fact that a "*pastor*" in the modern sense is the man in authority at a congregation. He is the chief decision maker in all vital issues.

However, the New Testament teaches that each congregation of God's people is to be governed, not by a single individual, but by a group of elderly men who are respected and experienced in leadership. These men are the true "*pastors*" of God's flock. These men are the true "*bishops*" of the congregation. Not a single man, but a plurality of men.

The New Testament scriptures are clearly opposed to one man ruling over a congregation. It is a sinful departure from the divine pattern for one man to be in charge of a congregation by himself.

Acts 14:23

²³ So when they had appointed **elders** [plural] in every **church** [singular], and prayed with fasting, they commended **them** [plural] to the Lord in whom **they** [plural] had believed.

Take careful note that a plurality of elders were ordained in each congregation.

Titus 1:5

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint **elders** [plural] in every **city** [singular] as I commanded you —

Again, each single congregation had a plurality of elders to oversee it. Never was there a single "*pastor*" trying to govern the church all by himself.

There is a reason for this.

- There is more wisdom available when there is more than one man ruling (Prov. 11:14).
- There is more safety when there are a plurality of elders rather than a single pastor.

If a window is made of one solid sheet of glass, a break in the glass means the entire sheet must be replaced. If the window is divided up into small pains, a break in one pain would not require replacing every single pain in the entire window.

Likewise, if one elder goes bad, the congregation is not led astray for there are other elders left to guide and watch over the flock. But if the congregation is overseen entirely, or primarily by a single man, the church is in great danger should that man ever stray from the truth.

In God's wisdom He ordained that a plurality of men should oversee each congregation, not a single individual. Furthermore, each man who is ordained as an elder must meet certain qualifications which are outlined in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1.

Many men today who claim to be "*pastors*" do not meet these qualifications. For example, a Bible "*pastor*" or elder must be a married man with faithful children. But many so-called "*pastors*" today are single men. Some so-called "*pastors*" have no children at all. Worst of all, some so-called "*pastors*" are women!

AUTHORITY IN ONE CONGREGATION

Finally, a true Bible "pastor," or elder has authority only in the one congregation in which he has been ordained. Notice:

1 Peter 5:1-2

¹ The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

² Shepherd **the flock of God which is among you**, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

According to this, the elders are to shepherd only the flock "*among them.*" That is, they take care of one flock only and only the flock they were ordained over.

Some so-called "*pastors*" today have oversight over several congregations. This is a clear and serious departure from the divine pattern.

The Bible speaks of "*evangelists*" (Eph 4:11) and "*preachers*" (Rom 10:14). Evangelists and preachers are not "*pastors.*" The Bible never calls them that. "*Pastors*" are pastors and preachers are preachers, but a preacher is not a pastor in the Bible sense.

Let us be careful to "*speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.*" It may well be that your "*pastor*" is no "*pastor*" at all in the Bible sense of the word. If he is no "*pastor*" in the Bible sense, he should not be called a "*pastor*" and he should not have the authority which Bible "*pastors*" have.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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