



The Biblical Pastor: God's Shepherd vs. the Modern Hireling: Foundational Issues

Part 6 | KIB 540

Kingdom Intelligence Briefing



CHARACTER STUDY OF THE OFFICE OF PASTOR

1. A Biblical Examination of the Shepherding Ministry

Primary Text

Ephesians 4:11–12 (ESV)

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip

the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

INTRODUCTION

The office of pastor is one of the five ministry gifts that Christ gave to His Church to bring believers to spiritual maturity. While the apostle, prophet, and evangelist often have ministries that extend beyond the local congregation, the pastor's primary calling is to shepherd the flock entrusted to his care.

The biblical concept of a pastor extends far beyond preaching sermons. A pastor is a shepherd who feeds, protects, guides, nurtures, restores, and equips God's people while reflecting the heart of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

The Greek word translated "pastor" is poimēn, meaning "shepherd."

I. WORD STUDY

Greek Word: Poimēn (ποιμήν)

Meaning

- Shepherd
- One who tends sheep
- Protector
- Guardian
- Guide
- Feeder

The emphasis is not on authority but on responsibility.

Related Greek Word: Poimainō (ποιμαίνω)

Meaning

- To shepherd
- To feed
- To guide
- To protect
- To govern

Key Scriptures

John 21:16 (ESV)

16 He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

Acts 20:28 (ESV)

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

1 Peter 5:2 (ESV)

2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

II. JESUS: THE PERFECT PASTOR

Every biblical pastor is measured against the example of Jesus Christ.

Jesus declared:

John 10:11 (ESV)

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Characteristics of Christ the Shepherd

- a. He Knows His Sheep

John 10:14–15 (ESV)

14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

A pastor knows people personally rather than merely knowing attendance numbers.

b. His Sheep Know His Voice

John 10:3–5 (ESV)

3 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. **5** A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

A faithful pastor teaches believers to recognize God's voice rather than becoming dependent upon the pastor's voice.

c. He Gives His Life

John 10:11 (ESV)

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A shepherd sacrifices himself for the flock. A hireling works for wages.

Note: This does not mean that a pastor should not be paid. The Levitical Priesthood served as spiritual shepherds in Israel and received the tithe.

d. He Protects the Sheep

John 10:12–13 (ESV)

12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. **13** He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

One of a pastor's greatest responsibilities is protecting believers from false doctrine and spiritual deception.

e. He Seeks the Lost

Luke 15:3–7 (ESV)

3 So he told them this parable: **4** “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? **5** And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. **6** And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ **7** Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The heart of Christ continually pursues wandering sheep.

III. BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF A PASTOR

The New Testament uses several titles to describe the same leadership role.

Pastor (Shepherd)

Primary Function

- Feed the flock
- Protect the flock
- Guide the flock

Overseer (Episkopos)

Meaning

- Supervisor
- Guardian
- Watcher

Key Scriptures

Acts 20:28 (ESV)

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

1 Timothy 3:1–7 (ESV)

1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. **2** Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, **3** not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **4** He must manage his own household well, with all

dignity keeping his children submissive, **5** for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? **6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:7 (ESV)

7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,

Elder (Presbyteros)

Meaning

- Spiritually mature leader

Key Scriptures

Acts 14:23 (ESV)

23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

James 5:14 (ESV)

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

1 Peter 5:1 (ESV)

1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

These three terms describe different aspects of the same pastoral office.

IV. PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Feed the Flock

John 21:17

Healthy sheep require sound doctrine.

b. Guard the Flock

Acts 20:28–31

Pastors must protect the church from false teachers arising both inside and outside the congregation.

c. Equip Believers

Ephesians 4:11–16

Pastors are called to equip believers for ministry rather than performing all ministry themselves.

d. Restore the Fallen

Galatians 6:1 (ESV)

1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Correction should always seek restoration.

e. Care for the Weak

James 5:14 (ESV)

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Pastors minister to the sick, discouraged, elderly, widows, and struggling believers.

Note: It is also biblical for the deacons of the church to assist the pastor in meeting the physical needs of the orphans and widows in the congregation. The pastor is not a one-man show but must work with a team in the local congregation.

f. Pray for the Church

Acts 6:4 (ESV)

4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

James 5:14 (ESV)

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Colossians 1:9–12 (ESV)

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Prayer remains one of the pastor's greatest responsibilities. It is important that churches balance out responsibilities so that the pastor can spend the time in prayer he needs for his congregation.

V. QUALIFICATIONS OF A PASTOR

Primary Texts

1 Timothy 3:1–7

Titus 1:5–9

Biblical Qualifications

- Above reproach
- Faithful to one's spouse – Whether he has been divorced or not is not the test!
- Self-controlled
- Sober-minded
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Able to teach
- Not violent
- Gentle
- Not quarrelsome
- Not a lover of money
- Manages household well
- Spiritually mature
- Good reputation with outsiders
- Holy
- Disciplined
- Holds firmly to sound doctrine
- Able to refute false teaching

The emphasis throughout these qualifications is on godly character rather than giftedness.

VI. ESSENTIAL CHARACTER QUALITIES

Humility

1 Peter 5:2–6

Pastors serve willingly rather than seeking recognition.

Compassion

Matthew 9:36

Jesus viewed people as sheep without a shepherd.

Patience

Spiritual maturity develops over time. Faithful pastors remain patient with growing believers.

Courage

Pastors confront sin, deception, division, and false doctrine while continuing to demonstrate biblical love.

Faithfulness

1 Corinthians 4:2

Success in ministry is measured by faithfulness rather than popularity.

VII. SPIRITUAL DANGERS

a. Becoming a Hireling

John 10:12–13 (ESV)

12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. **13** He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

A hireling protects himself rather than the sheep.

b. Seeking the Approval of People

Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Truth must never be compromised for popularity.

c. Neglecting Personal Holiness

1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

A pastor must continually guard both doctrine and personal conduct.

d. Pride

1 Peter 5:5–6 (ESV)

5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” **6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

e. Burnout

Healthy pastors maintain rhythms of prayer, Sabbath rest, fellowship, and family life.

VIII. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

a. Moses

Strengths

- Intercessor
- Patient leader
- Sacrificial servant

Weakness

Numbers 20:7–13

Allowed frustration to influence obedience.

b. David

1 Samuel 16–17

Developed the heart of a shepherd before becoming king.

c. Ezra

Ezra 7:10

He devoted himself to:

- Studying God's Word
- Obeying God's Word
- Teaching God's Word

d. Timothy

1 Timothy & 2 Timothy

Paul instructed Timothy in doctrine, leadership, perseverance, and godly character.

e. Titus

The Book of Titus

Demonstrated organization, courage, correction, and doctrinal integrity.

IX. THE PASTOR AMONG THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY

Apostle

Primary Function: Builds Kingdom foundations.

Prophet

Primary Function: Declares God's Word and brings correction.

Evangelist

Primary Function: Reaches the lost.

Pastor

Primary Function: Shepherds and nurtures believers.

Teacher

Primary Function: Explains and establishes biblical truth.

The pastor uniquely emphasizes relationships, discipleship, protection, spiritual growth, and stability within the local church.

X. THE PASTOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER MINISTRY GIFTS

The Apostle provides vision and foundation.

The Prophet provides spiritual correction and direction.

The Evangelist brings new believers into the Kingdom.

The Teacher establishes believers in sound doctrine.

Together these ministries produce mature disciples according to Ephesians 4:11–16.

XI. GOD'S WARNINGS TO SHEPHERDS

Ezekiel 34

God rebuked Israel's shepherds because they:

- Fed themselves
- Neglected the weak
- Failed to rescue the lost
- Ruled harshly
- Failed to protect the flock

Ezekiel 34:10 (ESV)

10 Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

Zechariah 11:15–17 (ESV)

15 Then the LORD said to me, “Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. **16** For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.

17 “Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!”

The worthless shepherd serves himself instead of God's people.

XII. THE REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL PASTOR

1 Peter 5:4 (ESV)

4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Every faithful pastor ultimately serves under Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

XIII. CHARACTER PROFILE SUMMARY

The biblical pastor:

- Loves the flock (John 10:11–15)
- Feeds God's Word (John 21:15–17)
- Protects believers from error (Acts 20:28–31)
- Equips the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11–16)
- Leads by personal example (1 Peter 5:2–3)
- Prays faithfully (Acts 6:4)

- Restores the fallen gently (Galatians 6:1)
- Lives with integrity (1 Timothy 3:1–7)
- Serves with humility (Philippians 2:3–8)
- Endures faithfully (2 Timothy 4:1–5)

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The office of pastor is fundamentally the ministry of shepherding. Scripture consistently portrays the pastor as one who reflects the heart of Christ by feeding the flock with sound doctrine, guarding believers from deception, restoring the wounded, equipping the saints for ministry, and leading through humble example rather than domineering authority (1 Peter 5:2–3). Within the framework of Ephesians 4:11–16, the pastor functions alongside apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers so that the entire Body of Christ may grow into spiritual maturity and unity in the faith.

Every faithful shepherd serves under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, to whom every pastor will one day give an account (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:4).