

SERVANTS



IN THE KINGDOM

by Randolph Dunn

Pastors and Teachers (Teaching Pastors)

BibleWay Publishing

Topical Bible Studies

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BibleWay Publishing
BWP.Topical@gmail.com

Pastors and Teachers (Teaching Pastors)

In 1 Timothy and Titus Paul sets forth the character traits of pastors and teachers (teaching pastors). They are known as:

Elders (*presbuteros*) – an adjective to denote seniority, older man.

Overseer/watchman/guardian/sentinel (*eepiskopeés*) - one who alerts others of pending danger, watches over, guards, inspects, visits (with visit meaning to take care of their needs) and teaches. (Thayer)

Shepherds (*poimen*) – a provider of nourishment and protector against dangers (a feeder).

Is the shepherding function the most important function of the Body? NO – Every function is equally important; e.g., the human body will cease to function if the colon and intestines cease to function. So, Christ's Body will cease where the Gospel of Christ is not proclaimed, works abandoned or obedience becomes unnecessary.

Shepherding Sheep

Perhaps an understanding of shepherding sheep and goats will provide the key to understanding the function of shepherding God's New Testament servants.

A shepherd took on the responsibility of the wellbeing of his sheep and lived with them probably a far distance from his home. He was constantly with them calling them by name for they must recognize his voice and the various tones of his flute to trust him. His distinct voice and flute were signals for them to follow wherever he went. It is the shepherd's responsibility to locate pastures near still or slow-moving water but away from danger. He must have knowledge of and remove toxic plants in pastures so they won't be able to eat them and become sick and die. Each night he checked his sheep for cuts, and bruises and removed attached bugs, then anointed them with oil.

He must be physically strong to protect them from thieves and predators. It is not a job for anyone who just needs a job or money. Recall David's 23 Psalm *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ... You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."*

On the other hand, goats are independent, inquisitive and difficult to herd whereas sheep are followers and require continual care and protection.

As a young Jewish boy your father has decided it is time for you to assume the responsibilities of a shepherd. You have been with him or your older sibling while they were shepherding. Are you prepared?

- a. Do you know the sheep by name so they will follow you?
- b. Do you know how to lead or are you a driver; e.g., a cowboy?
- c. Do you know where to find green pastures and still water?
- d. Can you identify and remove food they must not eat?
- e. Can you recognize predators that are intent on killing or rustling?
- f. Are you physically strong enough to fend off the enemy?
- g. Do you have the tools necessary for tending the sheep and are you proficient in their use?

Shepherding Jews in the 1st century

Jews at the time of Christ lived in small villages of about 100 in several family units. Each village general had a synagogue where they read from available scrolls, worshipped and trained their children in the Torah and Tanakh. Traveling rabbis would visit occasionally to instruct, encourage and correct.

Shepherding in churches today (generalized)

Elders meet together regularly to make decisions for the church as a whole. They employ their pulpit preacher and the church staff. In doing so, they delegate the teaching and training functions.

Consider biblical shepherds

Biblical elder/shepherd/overseer/watchman/guardian need to have:

- a. A close relationship with God and Christians in his congregation.
- b. A good knowledge and understanding of the teachings of Christ and the teachings of His apostles to prepare Christians for ministry (serving) and to bring them to maturity into God's nature.
- c. Ability to recognize false teachings and provide opportunities for those under their care to learn, recognize and acquire the ability to refute such teachings. For example, in their time a prevalent teaching was all flesh is evil. Jesus could not have been in an evil human flesh; therefore, He was just a phantom – Gnosticism.
- d. Knowledge of the difference between an understanding/opinion and a false teaching.
- e. Ability to lead without forcing opinions on others.
- f. A clear understanding of the spiritual tools needed for performing the shepherding functions and proficiency in their use to defend those under his care, to lead fellow Christians to spiritual food, to mature them into the likeness of Christ and to defend them from spiritual predators.

If "qualifications" were viewed as "character traits" or tools to accomplish the shepherding work, then they take on a different meaning; e.g., not combative, not a loose cannon, not contentious; but gentle when expressing concerns.

Functions shepherds are to perform:

- a. Teach, feed, equip and bring to maturity.
- b. Exhort, admonish, edify and strengthen.
- c. Convict false teachers and their false teachings; such as:
 - 1) One who denies Christ as God in human body.
 - 2) One is saved without being cleansed by Christ's blood.
 - 3) Salvation is earned by what a person accomplishes.
- d. Promote unity and harmony.
- e. Comfort the physically but primarily spiritually weak and sick.
- f. Seek and restore those who have drifted or are drifting away.
- g. Pray for self, brethren under your care and the lost.
- h. Warn of dangers lurking in the pathway of life.
- i. Prepare God's saints for work of service (show & tell).

(1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-11; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Acts: 20:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-15; Ezekiel 34:2-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; James 5:14 and Luke 15:3)

"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap." (1 Tim 3:1-7) Some early translations have "office of a bishop" rather than being an overseer.

Begin "overseer" "office of bishop" Comments:

- a. Faithful and "Trustworthy" – (Thayer - one who is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and the atoning sacrifice; Strong - sure, true and faithful).
- b. "Overseer" or office of bishop is translated from the Greek word *episkopeés* meaning watchman, sentinel, guardian or one who watches over thus an overseer. Sentinels are to watch; guardians are to protect and another term is shepherds who are to feed. Bishop was a title for various government officials, later used for positions in the Catholic and Anglican organizations (etymonline.com). The word "office" is not in the Greek text.

- c. A “noble task,” a good work, is a function not an office. It is a work or task from the Greek word *érgou* - an act, deed or a thing done.
- d. “Overseer” is from the Greek word *episkopeés*, in biblical Greek it is the act by which God looks into and searches out the ways, deeds, character, of men, in order to adjudge them their lot accordingly, whether joyous or sad; inspection, investigation, visitation when he shall search the souls of men; i.e., in the time of divine judgment. (Thayer's)

End “office of overseer” Comment

God gave the character, qualifications, of men He desired to fulfill the functions of instructing, training and guarding His people. Paul addressed these in 1 Timothy and Titus as shown below. A personal understanding is provided in the column next to the Bible text.

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.	Personal understanding
hold firmly to the message	to know Christ and His apostles’ teachings
above reproach	not open to censure
good reputation, blameless	good reputation with outsiders
the husband of one wife	Not a polygamist,-not still married to his wife not given a certificate of divorcement
temperate, sober-minded	uses good judgment
self-controlled	disciplined, not a loose cannon
respectable	orderly, good behavior
hospitable	takes care of the needs of others
able to teach	powerful in communicating
not given to drunkenness	not drink excessively, no brawler
not a striker (violent)	not combative or quick-tempered
gentle	kind and considerate of others
not quarrelsome	not contentious – argue; e.g., “My understanding is from the Bible”
not greedy	does not put material things first
manage his own family	family lives within income not a spendthrift
not be a recent convert	needs to face trials as Christian

Paul wrote during the persecution of Christians by the Jews and Romans. Therefore, those desiring the work of shepherding were willing to put their lives on the line to protect his fellow brethren. The spiritual well-being of the brethren was more important than his physical body. It was not a position of honor, power or prestige but a dangerous work that requires:

1. The desire to protect your brethren even if it cost your life.
2. Able to teach means to communicate effectively (from the Greek word *didaktikos* skillful in teaching -Thayer).
3. Patience - not to fly off the handle or be quick to judge.
4. Compassion.
5. Men known by their intimate relationship as righteous men, not pretenders.

Warning to Teaching Pastors

The words spoken by Ezekiel long ago to God's shepherds of Israel under the Old Covenant are also applicable to His spiritual shepherds under the New Covenant who are not performing the tasks given to them by God.

"The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel (their leaders); prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not

- a. *strengthened the weak*
- b. *healed the sick*
- c. *bound up the injured.*
- d. *brought back the strays*
- e. *searched for the lost."*

Isn't this the work or function that New Testaments shepherds should be performing?

Christ made these decisions for all congregations – His Church.

- Be faithful to Christ and the Apostles teaching.
- Do good works that glorify Christ.
- Make disciples by teaching Christ crucified.

Decision Makers

If the above are the Shepherds' functions, then decision making is not included. The congregation as a whole has the decision function.

They should decide-

- What teaching is scriptural or false opinions?
- Who approves or authorizes where one can teach?
 - a. In a Bible class in the "church building"
 - b. Home Bible study
 - c. Using correspondence courses
 - d. Individual or one-on-one studies
- Where is the Body to assemble?
- Is assembling together for the purpose of edifying one another, fellowship, or is the purpose to conduct acts of worship as a "worship service?"
- Are acts of worship identified and commanded?
- Are examples of acts of worship required, if so, is there a specific order?
- Who is to take care of widows and orphans?
- Who decides how and where contributions are to be spent?
- Can one give to a specific work; e.g., a mission work rather than to the "church treasury?"
- Who exercises "oversite" (whatever that is) of a mission work?
- What should be done when one is caught up in a sin?
 - a. Excessive drinking
 - b. Divorcing
 - c. Forsaking assembling together
 - d. Fornication
 - e. Greedy, liar, drunkard, gossip, not providing for family.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders *"Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number (among elder/shepherds) men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!"* (Acts 20:28-31)

Comment: "Wolves," people pretending to be Christians for the purpose of betrayal and destroying faith. *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."* (Matt 7:15)

How could elders in sheep's clothing "from your number" come in?

- a. The process of selecting them.
- b. The body of Christians is not involved with each other such that their beliefs and opinions are unknown.

- c. The training and equipping method is faulty, insufficient or turned over to others.
- d. Not hearing the concerns of the spiritual meek and gentle while paying attention to voices of the vocal or are large contributors.
- e. Some men may campaign for the work they believe to be a position of power and honor.

Spiritual wolves are people within the assembly professing to be Christians but have a non-biblical agenda. How can they be prevented from drawing Christians away after their teachings? It is to equip and train the Body with knowledge by open discussion of prevalent teachings by comparing them to biblical truths. Christians need to be able to recognize their teaching as false. Christians must cease being hearers, “pew warmers” only and become serious students of God's Word while receiving and participating in much instruction, discussion and edification by their, watchmen/shepherds and others knowledgeable in the Word.

“You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So, they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.” (Ezekiel 34:1-6)

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.” (Ezekiel 34:7-10)

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so, hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself.” (Ezekiel 3:17-19)

“My people come ... to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.” (Ezekiel 33:31-32)

Questions

1. An elder/shepherd is a decision-maker for a congregation rather than one to teach and admonish.
 - True
 - False
2. Elders are church position not something they are to do, a work.
 - True
 - False
3. Spiritual wolves are people professing to be “Christians” who have a non-biblical agenda.
 - True
 - False
4. Only elders/shepherds are to be aware of Satan’s wolves.
 - True
 - False

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