



“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Hebrews 13:7).

Gifts for Pastoral Leadership

Central Truth: Believers must respect the leadership God provides for the church through pastoral gifts.

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Topic: Holy Spirit: Gifts of; Leadership; Pastor: Office of.

The New Testament church was instituted by Jesus Christ according to the design of God. He determined her nature, her offices, and the people who would compose her membership. He chose to set in the church the office of pastor/teacher as a permanent office and ministry in the body. Since then He has chosen, called, and gifted certain men to fill that office. That is why this week's study is on the subject of the gifts of pastoral leadership.

A primary gift required of pastors of the Lord's churches is called “ruling” or “governments” in the King James Version of the Bible (Romans 12:8; I Corinthians 12:28). The lesson text for this study deals primarily with the church's response to those who fill that office and perform that ministry.

God has made man capable of ruling everything except himself. He can control the beasts of the fields and the fowl of the air. He can till the soil to make it produce. He can dig the minerals out of the ground and use them for his purposes. But he cannot control himself. He must be set under the authority of human government in secular society. He must be set under the authority of spiritually gifted men in the church. That is why God gave pastors to the churches.

I. OFFICE GIFT

Attention here is not on the person who fills the office but upon the office itself. Jesus personally gave the office of pastor to the New Testament church (Ephesians 4:7-11). God the Father “set” (permanently established) that office in the church (I Corinthians 12:28). The Holy Spirit fills that office by calling and gifting chosen men to do the work (Acts 20:28). Thus all three persons of the Holy Trinity are involved in the pastoral office in your church

There is no record in the New Testament of a church “calling a pastor.” It may have been because of the spiritual immaturity of the new converts and because the biblical qualifications of the office had not yet been given (I Timothy 3:1-7). Pastoral leadership was given the new congregations by the appointment of the apostles (Acts 14:23). When a church assumes the responsibility of selecting her pastoral leadership today, she should do so with fear and trembling before God. Nothing less than His divine wisdom and infallible guidance can enable her to make a wise decision. She must be sure she selects the man of God's choice to fill that essential office.

II. PERSONAL GIFTS

Men who have been gifted for the leadership of the church are called “*elders*” and “*bishops*” in the King James Version of the Bible. The two terms refer to the same person. The pastor is an elder in view of his maturity in Christ and the authority of his office. He is a bishop in view of his work of shepherding the flock of God. The function of the man in that office is indicated by three different words used in the Greek text of the New Testament epistles.

A. “*Ruling*” is a description of the function of the pastor. The Greek word is *proistemi* (Romans 12:8). It means “to be over; to superintend; to preside over.” It is the ministry of giving attention to a people that they might live as they should and serve as they should before the Lord. The term indicates that the pastor is a protector or guardian of the church.

The pastor rules the church in the same way that the father rules his household as head of the wife and teacher of the children (I Timothy 3:4, 5). The Bible gives special commendation to the pastors who “*rule well*” (I Timothy 5:17).

When a church calls a pastor, she should realize the place God has given him. She should never call a man to whom she is unwilling to submit. If he is God's man, she need have no fear in following his leadership in the things of God.

B. “*Governments*” is a description of the function of the pastor. That

is the translation of the Greek word *kubernesis*. The term refers to the one who has authority (actually, princely powers) to direct others. It is used in secular speech to refer to the helmsman or sailing master of a ship (Acts 27:11; Revelation 18:17). Its verb form means “to steer.” That means the pastor is the one who steers the church. He determines before the Lord the course she should follow and guides her in that direction. As the ship responds to the helmsman, so the church should respond to her pastor. That places a solemn responsibility on both the pastor and the church.

C. “Rule” is a description of the function of the pastor. But this is a different word for rule from the one that was used before. This Greek word is *hegeomai* (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). It means to go before; to be a leader; to command; to have authority over as in reference to Joseph's position in Pharaoh's government (Acts 7:10). Pontius Pilate, a political ruler of the Jews during the ministry of Jesus, is called by that title seven times in the Gospel record. The leadership involved is more than the force of authority. It includes influence as well as power. It is controlling by counsel as well as by law.

I was surprised to discover such strong terms used in the Bible to describe the position of the pastor. Since we have put such emphasis on congregational rule and a democratic form of church government, it seems strange to realize the authority God has vested in the pastor of a New Testament church. But the Bible is quite clear on the point. We must agree with it.

III. PRACTICAL GIFTS

A. The gifts for a pastoral ministry are to fulfill a worthy purpose. The pastor is to guide the church as her “*overseer*” (Acts 20:28). He is to teach the church (I Timothy 3:2; II Timothy 2:2). He is to feed the church the meat of the Word (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28). He is to equip the church so that she will be able to serve God effectively (Ephesians 4:11-16). What a solemn responsibility and difficult assignment God has given to each pastor! He lives every day under the obligation of that ministry. He is responsible to do his part and see that the church grows to do her part. Pray for your pastor.

B. The church is to respond to the exercise of the pastor's ministry. She is to respect her pastor (I Timothy 5:17). She must protect him from those who would blemish his reputation or hinder his work (I Timothy 5:19). She is to keep him in mind in view of his labors on her behalf (Hebrews 13:7). She is to obey his instruction and submit to his leadership (Hebrews 13:17). She is to bless him with sincere good wishes (Hebrews

13:24). God himself set that standard. Blessed is the church which lives up to it.

C. The men assigned to the pastoral office by the Holy Spirit must be good stewards of their ministries (I Peter 5:1-4).

(1) They must assume the responsibility without hesitation or timidity. “Take the oversight” is God's command (verse 2). The pastor does not serve because he must but because he may. He has “*a ready mind*” of willingness to serve. So his ministry is a blessing to him and to his people.

(2) They must “*feed the flock of God*” (verse 2). The ministry of the pastor is a ministry to the people. Jesus' commission to each pastor is the same that He gave to Simon Peter: “*Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep*” (John 21:15-17). The Word of God is the diet which the pastor feeds to the people.

(3) They must be totally unselfish. He does not serve “*for filthy lucre*” (verse 2). A love of base gain or a desire for personal profit must never mark the man who leads the people of God. Demas might forsake the work because of loving the present world, but the true shepherd must not. Woe to those who “*serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly*” (Romans 16:18). They are false shepherds of the flock.

(4) They must have humble and tender spirits. Instead of being “*lords over God's heritage,*” they are “*ensamples to the flock*” (verse 3). The church need have no fear of following the pastor who meets God's standards. God ministers to the members through such a man.

What a comfort it is for your church to know that God has chosen and gifted the man He has placed over you as pastor. What a challenge that is for your church. Since your pastor is God's man, you must follow him in obedience to Christ. God has designed the church that way for our good and His glory.

Questions

1. What is the primary duty of the pastor of a church?
2. How is the spiritual gift of ruling related to his office?
3. Why does the church have the office of pastor?
4. In what sense does the pastor “*rule*” the church?
5. What New Testament words describe his leadership?
6. What is the purpose of the pastoral ministry in a church?
7. How is the church to respond to her pastor's ministry?
8. How does the pastor “*feed the flock of God*” in your church?
9. How is the pastor's rule tempered with tenderness?

10. How can you help your pastor to have a more effective ministry?