

Elders/Bishops/Overseers/Shepherds/Pastors

*“It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be **pastors** and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Eph. 4:11-13*

This is the second in our discussion of the pastors of Christ’s Church. Last discussion was in regard the Bishop/Overseer. **This discussion will center around the terms and meanings of the words Pastor/Shepherd.** As was said before, there is one Greek word that is translated in the Bible with two English words. They are Pastor and Shepherd. I cannot answer why the translators used two different words, but they did.

To repeat: **These are not offices or positions held in the church, but rather, it is work that is to be accomplished for the equipping of the saints.** (Note: It is interesting to note that, other than the Chief Shepherd – Jesus, the terms regarding this work are found in the plural form. God has provided multiple men to accomplish the work within each city or group of assembling Christians.) The Pastors/Shepherds are responsible for the spiritual well being of the church. Keep in mind that the Pastors/Shepherds of the church are to carry out the work that the Elders under the Law of Moses had failed to carry out. Let us consider four aspects of this work.

The Pastors/Shepherds are the Spiritual Physicians of the Church. Ezekiel 34:4 records for us the fact that the Pastors/Shepherds under the Law of Moses had failed in caring for the sick and the weak. Just as the physical body is susceptible to illness and even disease, so the spiritual body can suffer. It is the responsibility of the sheep to look to the Pastors/Shepherds, and it is the Pastors/Shepherds responsibility to check up on the sheep. Even James tells the church that if there are any sick among you to call upon the elders of the church. Have you had your spiritual check up lately?

The Pastors/Shepherds are the Spiritual Guardians of the Church. Again, the elders of old failed in this responsibility. There are many that would attempt to destroy the Church of Christ. They often begin by sneaking in and preying upon the young or weak in the faith. Someone needs to be paying attention to everyone in the church. Word of warning!!!! The Pastors/Shepherds are not to be Spiritual Police, Judge and Jury!!!! They are to be guardians of the sheep. Their work is to protect not to harm.

The Pastors/Shepherds are to be Spiritual Dieticians. They are called to feed the flock of God (Acts 20:28) Spiritual diet is extremely important to one’s spiritual health. God has given us physical bodies that help us to understand this fact. Three basic errors often occur in a Christian’s life.

1. They think they can continue to be healthy by only eating a little bit of Spiritual food at a time. They take a tentative bite of this or that and think they have enough to get them through. If they don’t like something, they refuse to eat it.

2. They think that only eating once or twice a week is enough to maintain Spiritual health. Which of us would be the first to complain if we only got to eat one time in a day? Yet, Spiritually, we only eat once a week!!!

3. They think that they can continue to be healthy by eating the wrong things. Many have it in their minds that it is ok to fill their life with things of this world. Yet their own children are not allowed to eat candy all week and have one real meal a week. It is equally important that the Pastors/Shepherds make sure that what is taught is the truth from God. NO! You can't go to any spiritual restaurant that you want to! If they are serving food that is not good for you, you are not to go there. You can't go to any "church" you want to and fool yourself into thinking it is ok. You must look at what is being taught, instead of how you feel!

The Pastors/Shepherds responsibilities include being Spiritual Trackers (my own wording). What happens if a Christian wanders off back into the world? Look at the example of the sheep in the Bible. Even Jesus is willing to go find them and bring them back. Pastors/Shepherds need to see the signs in a person's life so that they can track them down and bring them back to the safety and care of the Church.

This is not all the work that the Pastors/Shepherd do. However, it does help us to appreciate the work that God has given to them. This is a work of love and compassion. This is a work of submission and self-sacrifice. This work is not for the weak or faint of heart. This is work for real men of God. This is work that will equip the Church of Christ for every good work, till we all come to unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.