

3. The Leader Who Serves – the Pastor

Two topics ago, we gave a basic foundation for the leader who serves. In our last topic, we talked about the leader who has the gift of evangelist. Today, we will build on that foundation as it relates to the pastor. Then, in the next topic, we will build on that foundation as it relates to the teacher. In Ephesians 4:11-12, we see that Pastors are to, “Equip the saints for the work of the ministry”. Today, we will see that Christ has equipped certain spiritual leaders called pastors to equip all the saints to do the work of ministering to one another.

The word that is translated “pastor” in Ephesians 4:11 is used eighteen times in the New Testament. The other seventeen times it is translated by the word “shepherd”. Part of these uses speak of the fact that Christ is the Good Shepherd or the Great Shepherd. In Luke 2, it is used several times to talk about the shepherds who came to visit Christ at His birth. In John 10, Christ uses the word shepherd several times as He describes the ministry of the shepherd. However, John 10:16 makes a very important statement when it says, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.” In this verse, Christ makes it clear that He is the One Shepherd which means that all other shepherds are under-shepherds.

It is in this larger context that we must interpret the parable that Christ gave His disciples about the shepherd in John 10:1-5. Those verses tell us, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

In this parable, we learn several very important lessons about how under-shepherds are to care for a part of the flock. Under-shepherds:

- Enter into the sheepfold by the door (relationship)
- Call the sheep they lead by name (fellowship)
- Lead the sheep rather than drive them (leadership)
- Go before the sheep (protection)
- Are followed by the sheep, because they know his voice (caring)
- Are easily distinguished by their difference from strangers and hirelings – John 10:12-13 (commitment)

This brings us back to the work of under-shepherds, in Ephesians 4:11-12. In those verses, we see that under-shepherds (pastors) are to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That ministry is to care for one another. In fact, the New Testament gives us a list twelve things that we are to avoid in our ministry to one another and thirty-one things that we are to learn to do in our ministry

to one another. Of the thirty-one positive one anothers, the one that is mentioned most frequently is given as our new commandment in John 13:34-35, where we read: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We are told to love one another in fifteen different verses. In other words, the most important work of an under-shepherd is to show us how to love one another.

If we take the thirty-one one anothers in alphabetical order, the first two are to accept one another and to admonish one another. We will take those two to illustrate how under-shepherds help us learn to do these two things.

First, Romans 15:7 says, “Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.” (NASB) The word that is translated “accept” or “receive” means *to take to oneself, to take into one’s home to show kindness to or to grant one access to one’s heart*. In this verse, we see that we are to accept one another in the very way that Christ accepted us. That kind of acceptance does not come naturally, because the world is more likely to judge one another than to accept one another. Instead, that kind of acceptance must be taught from the Word of God and modeled by example. As a result, under-shepherds will only be effective at teaching others to accept one another as they provide an example of loving acceptance.

Romans 14:1-3 tells us how to model that acceptance by contrasting acceptance and judging. Those verses tell us, “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.” The particular problem in these verses was whether Christians should eat meat that had been offered to idols.

In these verses, we see that some Christians felt it was all right to eat meat that had been offered to idols, while others felt that it was wrong to eat such meat. In these verses, Paul did not tell them whether it was right or wrong to eat such meat. Instead, Paul taught the much more important principle about how we are to accept each other, even though we may disagree about what things are right and what things are wrong. We see that we are to accept the one who is weak in faith, not pass judgment on his opinions. At the same time, we are not to judge or have contempt toward a person who has different opinions than we do. We see that God accepts both the Christians who have many self-imposed rules and those who have few self imposed rules.

This is illustrated very clearly in Acts 21:20-24, where we read: “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were

informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law...” In this verse, we see that thousands of Jews who had become Christians still abstained from eating unclean animals (many rules), but Paul accepted them in the same way he accepted the Gentiles who ate such animals (few rules).

Second, Romans 1:7 tells us, “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints.” Then, Romans 15:14 tells us, “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” In these verses, we see that Romans was written to all of the Christians that were in Rome. Then, we see that all of these Christians were able to admonish one another (give instruction that is primarily a warning). Here, we see that the under-shepherds in Rome had equipped the Christians so they knew how to admonish one another. This is an effective illustration of how the under-shepherds are to equip the saints to minister to one another and not to try to do all of the admonishing themselves.

Just as evangelists are to equip all of the saints to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians, pastors (under-shepherds) are to equip the saints to minister to one another. As we have seen with both evangelists and pastors, their work is not primarily to do the work of the ministry, but rather to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That does mean they do plenty of ministry, because they are taking others with them as they minister so that they can train others by their example. However, their primary work is showing other Christians how to minister rather than doing all of the ministry themselves.

It is the desire of Christ that every Christian be equipped both to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians and to minister to other Christians. That will only happen as spiritual leaders take the other Christians with them as they minister. Christ has given each of us who are spiritual leaders the opportunity to help all Christians grow in knowledge, godly character and ministry as we minister together both to non-Christians and Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip other Christians to minister by your example as they go with you.