

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PASTOR

EPHESIANS 4:11-14

Introduction:

You are preparing to make an important decision as a congregation. You will soon make a decision about a new pastor. Your search committee has been at work for more than a year, and they are now ready to make a recommendation to you. They have approached their task prayerfully and faithfully but you must decide whether you agree with their recommendation. Our system of making decisions places heavy responsibility on the individual member of the congregation.

Two different men in the congregation have expressed concern about your calling of a pastor. Their concern is that maybe you do not have a mature understanding of the role and calling of the pastor. They have expressed this concern to me and I have taken it seriously. I have had my heart drawn to this basic passage about the work of the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus, and the role that He assigns to the pastors of the congregations.

Based on this passage, there are five basic things that you need to know about your pastor.

I. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT HE SHARES YOUR HUMANITY, INCLUDING YOUR SIN.

“It was he who gave some to be....” The implication is that He “gave some” of you to be His gift to the churches. He did not assign angels to this task, but redeemed men.

1. He is a brother—not a father.

Jesus emphasized this: “But you are not called ‘Rabbi’, for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father, for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ.” (Matthew 23:8-11) Nothing could be clearer. The church has always suffered when it attempted to put its ministers in another class, and forgot that they are brothers.

2. He is a fellow-struggler.

This you must never forget. He is gifted by the Lord, and should be full of the Holy Spirit, but he is still a fellow struggler. He is still subject to temptation and struggle. He is still capable of failure and disappointment to you. If even our Lords was tempted in all points like you are, it is reasonable to expect that your pastor will share the same plight of humanity. His humanity will be real.

He is in trouble if he forgets it, and you are in trouble if you forget it.

II. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT HE IS A GIFT FROM GOD.

This is the truth of our text. The focus of this passage is the continued involvement of the ascended Lord in the life of His church. Even though our Lord is exalted in heaven, He still plays a part in the life of His people on earth. These could be called “celebration gifts” since they are closely identified with His ascension to His exalted position.

1. The risen Lord called him.

This is where it all begins. The Risen Lord is sovereign in His relationship to His servants and his churches. He reserves the right to call from the body some members for special assignment.

In our day we have depreciated the place of the call—and made ministry more of a profession. But any man who is going to serve your congregation as pastor should have a story to tell. It should be one of how the Lord called him to ministry, not a story of how he chose the ministry. The pastor has been chosen and called by the Lord of the church for this assignment.

2. The risen Lord has prepared him.

Those the Lord calls, He prepares. You will probably be concerned about this theological preparation, and how many degrees that he has. But let me assure you that preparation for ministry involved more than academic training. I want to know what the Lord has taught him.

He sends a Saul of Tarsus to the Arabian desert for an extended period before he assigns him. He doesn't send every one to a desert, but He does design for them his own schedule of preparation. I want to know what God has been doing in the life of a man. How much has the Lord revealed to him of Himself and the depth of his own heart.

3. The risen Lord places him.

Then the Lord places him. My view of ministry is that the Lord assigns a specific man to a specific place for a specific time. This is what God does. He places men in the body as it pleases him. Now admittedly the Lord works through men—a pastoral search committee and a congregation—but it is still the Lord who does the placing.

This is a right that He gained when He was exalted by the Father.

III. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
SHEPHERDING YOUR LIFE.

The word translated “pastor” is the word for “shepherd.” Other words are used more frequently in the New Testament for the office than “pastor”, but with us “pastor” is a favorite. The verb for shepherding is used more than the noun. It is the work of the shepherd that makes the term so dear to us.

1. As a Shepherd, he watches for your soul.

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Hebrews 13:17) The King James Version translates it that “they watch for your souls”.

Is this not a wonderful thing? God assigns someone to be in this congregation who is accountable to Him for watching over your soul.

2. As a Shepherd, he leads your congregation.

Of the Good Shepherd it is written, “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” The idea of the sheep following the shepherd is prominent in the passage where Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd.

Another word used for the pastoral office is that of “bishop” or “overseer”. These words emphasize the oversight aspect of the office. The Hebrews passage gives emphasis to this idea. If the pastor is to lead, then the people must follow his leadership.

Since he is a man, they do not follow him blindly—but they do follow him with the assumption that he is walking and leading under the direction of the Lord.

IV. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TEACHING YOUR CHURCH.

Jesus instructed Peter to “feed my sheep.” This is a reference to the preaching-teaching ministry of the pastor through which he sets forth the things of the Word of God. This is a primary responsibility of the pastor. He is the teacher of the things of God.

1. He must have time for prayer and study.

“So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose twelve men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’” (Acts 6:2-4)

2. You need to be a teachable people.

Nothing will keep a pastor going like a people who are hungry to hear the word of God!

V. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EQUIPPING YOU FOR YOUR WORK AS A MINISTER.

You cannot do ministry by proxy. Each member of the body has a ministry, and the pastor's task is to help you grow as a Christian so that you will find that ministry and become effective in the performance of that ministry.

1. The members of the body are the ministers.
2. The members require equipping so they can be effective.

Let me share a secret with you. Some of you are anxious about your new pastor. Will he be effective? Will he lead our church properly? This depends upon you as much as it does him. I have watched churches have tragic experiences with new pastor after new pastor. The primary reason was that they did not know how to relate to their pastors. They loaded them down with unrealistic expectations. They crippled them with criticism and condemnation. They neglected praying for them. They did not value them as men of God.

If you will be who God wants you to be, I confidently expect that the Lord will make your new pastor the very pastor that you need.