



THE JOHN MACARTHUR

Pastor's Library



PASTORAL MINISTRY

HOW *to* SHEPHERD BIBLICALLY

JOHN MACARTHUR

and THE MASTER'S SEMINARY FACULTY



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Preface

In keeping with the purposes of The Master's Seminary, the goal of this volume is to encourage and instruct this and the next generation of pastors, missionaries, and teachers to provide the kind of shepherd leadership for the church that God's Word requires. In a highly condensed form, this volume provides much of the pastoral theology curriculum of The Master's Seminary, the goal of which is to prepare men for pastoring the church, giving pastoral leadership on the mission field, and assuming pastoral functions in institutional teaching responsibilities. This work joins *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*¹ and *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*² to provide a three-volume pastoral resource library.

Pastoral Ministry targets both seasoned pastors and young men preparing for or just beginning ministry. It calls pastors back to the Scriptures as the authoritative basis for developing a philosophy of ministry. Since many of our generation's pastors have fallen prey to the consumer approach or market-driven philosophy of ministry, this volume purposes to recover, reaffirm, and restore a biblical approach to pastoral ministry. In this regard *Pastoral Ministry* is both prescriptive of guidelines to follow and proscriptive of dangers to avoid.

This is *not* an unabridged treatment of pastoral ministry. We have left many particulars such as church growth, church discipline, church membership, church polity,³ and the details of specialized ministries (such as, youth ministry, adult ministry) to be dealt with in other forums. Further, no single chapter exhausts its subject but rather furnishes a suggestive general treatment. The broad sweep of this work is its intended strength, as it deals with the biblical nature of what a pastor is to be personally and how he is to minister in the church.

More specifically, the threefold aim of *Pastoral Ministry* is:

1. To *validate* the biblical absolutes required by God for pastoral ministry, that is, to answer the question, "What is one's authority for establishing a philosophy of ministry?"

2. To *elucidate* the biblical qualifications for church pastors, that is, to answer the question, "Whom has God authorized to be undershepherds of Christ's flock?"
3. To *delineate* the biblical priorities for pastoral ministry, that is, to answer the question, "What does a scripturally based pastoral ministry involve?"

President John MacArthur, who has pastored Grace Community Church for over thirty-five years and has had a worldwide impact to the glory of God, has contributed a significant portion of this book. His colleagues on The Master's Seminary faculty, with an average of more than twenty-eight years experience each in pastoring and in the seminary training of pastors, have also contributed from the treasury of their particular expertise. The reader will quickly appreciate their varied but united affirmations on pastoral ministry that emerge amidst an abundance of individual expressions.

The reader will also note a diversity in the levels of style in treating the different topics. At one extreme are the chapters whose documentation is extensive, and at the other are those in which documentation is minimal. To some extent, this diversity is a consequence of the nature of individual subjects, and to a lesser degree, the choice of each contributor. Each has handled his phase of pastoring in the manner he deemed wisest.

The book outlines four broad categories that move from the biblical to the practical. They include: (1) the biblical character and essence of pastoral ministry, (2) the biblically required preparation of a man who would pastor, (3) the personal qualifications of a man biblically qualified to pastor, and (4) the biblical priority of activities involved in pastoral ministry. The underlying reason for this undertaking is the strong desire to answer the question, "How does today's pastor build a contemporary ministry in line with biblical mandates?" The hoped-for result of applying the ideas in *Pastoral Ministry* will be a pastoral ministry that majors in spiritual relevance to the body of Christ.

Because of the extreme importance of prayer in pastoral ministry, the section on "personal qualifications" has two chapters to emphasize that phase of the pastor's life. One deals primarily, though not exclusively, with the pastor's own prayer life, the other predominantly with prayer in the life of the church. Of course, it is impossible to make a complete distinction between these two types of prayer, but the dual treatment serves to give added attention to a very important subject.

In the "Additional Reading" section at the end of the volume, we avoided listing hundreds of books on pastoring that are no longer in print or do not make a significant contribution; instead, we have selected a sampling of the best available and affordable volumes on pastoral ministry. The inclusion of a work in this list does not constitute an endorsement of everything in that work but reflects the faculty's favorable impressions of its

general thrust. Conversely, the exclusion of a title does not necessarily reflect negatively on that work. We encourage the reader to make the listed works his first acquisitions in supplementing the material in *Pastoral Ministry*.

The footnotes document extensive literature related to pastoral ministry. For the reader who chooses to utilize it, this information can be a gold mine for further study. Those who prefer may, of course, read just the body of the text. The "Index of Authors" will be useful in locating all the references to a particular writer. The addition of an "Index of Scriptures" and an "Index of Subjects" provides for ready reference to two more categories.

The Master's Seminary faculty offer *Pastoral Ministry* with the simple prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ will be pleased to use it to encourage fellow pastors and to groom a new generation of shepherds who will feed and lead Christ's flock—the church—with the same passion the apostles had.

John MacArthur
Richard L. Maybue
Robert L. Thomas

Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry

Richard L. Maybue

Current changes beginning to overtake many congregations could distinctively mark the twenty-first century church. A growing number of respected evangelicals believe that the present redirection of the church toward being less biblical and more acceptable to man will ultimately lead to a Christ-condemned church. By using Scripture to answer the questions "What is a pastor to be and do?" and "How can contemporary ministry be shaped by biblical mandates?" the church can obediently realign herself with God's revealed purposes for the bride of Christ. In this manner, it is possible to achieve a biblically balanced, complementary relationship between understanding God's will for the church, engaging in pastoral ministry as defined by Scripture, and preparing a new generation of pastors for ministry as outlined by God's Word.

Crossroads. Transition. Crisis. Uncertainty. Restlessness. These words express the perception by many evangelicals regarding the status of the church and pastoral ministry. Few disagree that a call for redirection has come to the evangelical church in the twenty-first century.

For example, consider John Seel's 1992 survey of twenty-five prominent evangelical leaders.¹ The leaders expressed their views on the general state of evangelicalism at the end of the twentieth century. Eight dominant themes emerged from their responses:

1. Uncertain identity—a widespread confusion over what defines an evangelical.
2. Institutional disenchantment—a perceived ministry ineffectiveness and irrelevance.
3. Lack of leadership—a lament over the paucity of leadership in the church.
4. Pessimistic about the future—a belief that the future of evangelicalism hangs in the balance.

5. Growth up, impact down—a confusing paradox without immediate, clear explanations.
6. Cultural isolation—the post-Christian era has fully arrived.
7. Political and methodological response provides the solution—unbiblical approaches to ministry are emerging.
8. Shift from truth-orientation to market-response ministry—a redirection from preoccupation with the eternal to concern for the temporal in an effort to be viewed as relevant.

We acknowledge these alarming trends, believing that decisions made in this decade will reshape the American evangelical church for much of the century to come. Thus, the future direction of the contemporary church is a legitimate, preeminent consideration. Unquestionably, the church faces a defining moment.² The real contrast in competing ministry models is not the traditional versus the contemporary, but rather the *scriptural* compared to the *unscriptural*.

THE MOMENT OF DECISION

Having arrived at the proverbial “fork in the road,” evangelicals must decide between two alternatives. The first is an approach to ministry that is characteristically, but not necessarily exclusively, need-based, man-centered, consumer-driven, and culturally defined. These emphases generally depend on and change with the latest directions in psychology and sociology, which after attempted integration as coequals with Scripture, supposedly provide a scientifically validated, relevant ministry for the contemporary computer/media-oriented atmosphere.

The second option features a redemptively centered, God-focused, biblically defined, and scripturally prioritized ministry. In this book we champion this latter model, which looks to the sufficiency of Scripture as the revelation of past, present, and future works of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit that have the utmost relevance, now and forever. The church must look to the Scriptures and address the challenge of shaping contemporary ministry with biblical mandates.

Arguably, no time in church history has more closely approximated the first-century beginnings of the church than now. Our ancient brethren faced a pagan, pre-Christian, and premodern culture. Similarly, the contemporary church encounters a pagan, post-Christian, and postmodern world. The essential biblical model of ministry of the first century has never been more appropriate than it is today.

Pastoral Ministry attempts to balance the tensions between temporal and eternal considerations and between divine and human factors in ministry. God's character, God's revelation, and God's will have not changed although

time and culture have. How should a balanced ministry reconcile the two sides? We reason that the timeless should define any particular moment in time, not the reverse. Christ has been and will remain the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), and the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20). Pastors will always be His undershepherds and laborers in the church that He purchased with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28) and continues to build (Matt. 16:18).

Pastors assume a huge responsibility when they accept the unequalled task of exhorting and reproof on Christ's behalf (Titus 1:9). Paul's word about this stewardship to the Corinthian church almost two thousand years ago is sobering:

Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God (1 Cor. 4:1-5).

The twenty-first-century church in general and pastors in particular face the following crucial questions:

- What is the pastor to be and do?
- How should the church respond to a rapidly changing culture?
- What does God consider relevant?
- How concerned is Christ with the traditional and/or the contemporary?
- Are the Scriptures an adequate basis of ministry today?
- What are a pastor's ministry priorities?
- Under whose authority does a pastor stand?
- How shall we distinguish between the God-called pastor and the counterfeit?
- Who defines the need for ministry: God or men?
- What direction does Christ want for His church in the twenty-first century?

And foremost of all, when we stand before the Lord of glory and give account of our stewardship, what will be the answers to these two questions: *What will we say?* and, far more importantly, *What will He say?*

Ordination to Pastoral Ministry

Richard L. Maybue

Ordination describes the biblical concept of God's appointment of men to full-time ministry.¹ Today, the church recognizes ordained men when their ministerial desires, godly life, and giftedness for ministry match the biblical standards (both subjective and objective) that identify a man whom God has called to ministry. Scripture does not specify the detailed procedure by which a man qualifies for ordination; therefore, liberty prevails when outlining a practical plan. One proven method used effectively by a local church illustrates how to carry out the ordination process according to biblical milestones.

Adam, God made out of dust
But thought it best to make me first
So I was made before man.
To answer God's most holy plan

A living being I became—
And Adam gave me my name.
I from his presence then withdrew
And more of Adam never knew.

I did my maker's law obey
Nor ever went from it astray.
Thousands of miles I go in fear
But seldom on earth appear.

For purpose wise which God did see
He put a living soul in me.
A soul from me God did claim
And took from me the soul again.

So when from me the soul had fled,
I was the same as when first made.
I am without hands or feet or soul;
I travel on from pole to pole.

I labor hard by day, by night
 To fallen man give great light.
 Thousands of people, young and old,
 Will by my death great light behold.

No right or wrong can I conceive;
 The Scripture I cannot believe.
 Although my name therein is found,
 They are to me an empty sound.

No fear of death doth trouble me;
 Real happiness I'll never see.
 To heaven I shall never go
 Or to hell below.

Now when these lines you slowly read,
 Go search your Bible with all speed.
 For that my name is written there
 I do honestly to you declare.

If my kind you can identify,
 You for ministry will qualify.
 Who am I?²

Ordination candidates frequently fear embarrassment when facing obscure, Gordian-knot type questions, like the riddle just cited,³ from mean-spirited pastors and seminary professors. Congregations often perceive ordination as nothing more than a postseminary inquisition inflicted through irrelevant questions, designed to make the prospective pastor squirm just one more time.

Does ordination equate to a final moment of ecclesiastical hazing just prior to a man's admission to the ministry? Or, does it entail more noble, biblical purposes? What is ordination? Why should a man⁴ be ordained? Who needs ordination?⁵ How should ordination be conducted? These and other questions need solid biblical answers to make the ordination process stand for something more than a mere torturous final exam.

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF ORDINATION

The overarching concept of ordination to ministry appears in both the Old and New Testaments. Ordination is the process of godly leaders affirming the call, equipping, and maturity of new leaders to serve God's purposes in the next generation. Ordination validates/authenticates God's will for a fully qualified man to serve God and His people.

Old Testament

Moses "ordained" (מלאו, *ml 'yd*, "filled the hand of") Aaron and his sons to the priesthood of Israel (Ex. 29:9, 29, 35). He symbolically repre-

sented God's will for Aaron to serve as high priest by laying hands on him, thus authenticating or ordaining Aaron for priestly ministry. This same procedure appears also in Leviticus 16:32 and Numbers 3:3.

Put another way, ordination recognizes God's appointment of a man to ministry and is the leadership's way of commending him to the congregation. For example, the high priest of Israel was appointed (*καθίσταται*, *kathistatai*, "put in place") by God to minister on behalf of men in the things pertaining to God (Heb. 5:1; 8:3). Moses recognized this fact and communicated it to Israel by laying his hands on Aaron.

New Testament

The divine side of appointment to ministry comes first. Paul was "ordained" (*ἐτέθην*, *etethēn*) by God to the ministry (1 Tim. 2:7). Paul told the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit had "made" (*ἔθετο*, *etheto*) them overseers to shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28). Yet God used godly human leaders to communicate to the people His appointment of these men. Both the divine and the human side of the process are necessary.⁶ God sets leaders apart so that the current leadership can assimilate new leaders into the developing order of leadership.

Humanly speaking, Jesus "appointed" (*ἔθηκα*, *ethēka*, "set/placed") His disciples (John 15:16). He "appointed" (*ἐποίησεν*, *epoiēsen*, "made") the twelve to be with Himself to preach (Mark 3:14).

The apostles affirmed a new group of leaders in ministry at Jerusalem by laying hands on them (Acts 6:6). On Paul's first missionary journey, he and Barnabas "appointed" (*χειροτονήσαντες*, *cheirotonēsantes*, "stretching out the hand to") elders in every church (14:23). Paul also instructed Titus to "appoint" (*καταστήσης*, *katastēsēs*, "put in place") elders in every city (Titus 1:5).

Understanding the biblical idea of ordination is a partial answer to the question, "Who should be added to existing ministry leadership?" But it also raises a related question: "How do we recognize God's appointed leaders?"

THE PRACTICAL ESSENCE OF ORDINATION

From the biblical examples cited, it is obvious that ordination involves God's appointment of men to ministry, which appointment godly men who are already leaders subsequently recognize and authenticate according to God's Word. Appointment to ordained ministry in the church does not come by way of family inheritance, apostolic succession, or some sacerdotal investiture of authority by men. Rather, each generation of leadership receives its appointment from God through godly leaders, on the basis of whose recommendation the church can then verify the appointment.

Ordination is to church leadership as the bar exam is to the legal profession, the C.P.A. exam to accounting, or state board examinations to medical

The Pastor's Home

Richard L. Mayhew

As families in America grow weaker, so do an alarming number of pastors' families. However, Scripture establishes a strong exemplary family as a prerequisite to pastoral ministry. Even though the pressure in contemporary ministry is admittedly enormous, a marriage and family relationship characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and the love of Christ will be able to withstand the inevitable assaults of a pagan, postmodern culture and the intense demands of today's pastoral ministry. The pastor's home must be top priority in his ministry.

One recent bestseller on pastoral ministry contained a chapter entitled "Warning: Ministry May Be Hazardous to Your Marriage."¹ As shocking as that title is, it accurately reflects the potential reality in pastoral ministry today. A pastoral survey published in a prominent journal discovered the following significant difficulties that led to marital problems in the parsonage:²

- 81% insufficient time together
- 71% use of money
- 70% income level
- 64% communication difficulties
- 63% congregational expectations
- 57% differences over use of leisure
- 53% difficulty in raising children
- 46% sexual problems
- 41% pastor's anger toward spouse
- 35% differences over ministry career
- 25% differences over spouse's career

No one today questions the obvious fact that most pastors and their families are experiencing a growing pressure because of the climate of ministry during these times.³ When one ponders the nature of the ministry, it is not surprising. Consider these pressure points in the pastorate:

1. The pastor engages in the humanly impossible—dealing with sin in people's lives.

2. The pastor fills a never-ending role—solving one problem only to be faced with multiplied more.
3. The pastor serves with increasingly questioned credibility in the eyes of society.
4. The pastor remains on call 168 hours each week.
5. The pastor is expected to perform excellently with the widest range of skills—to be at any given time a scholar, visionary, communicator, administrator, consoler, leader, financier, diplomat, perfect example, counselor, and peacemaker.
6. The pastor is expected to produce riveting and life-changing messages at least twice weekly, fifty-two Sundays a year.
7. The pastor's work brigade is usually a volunteer force, not paid help.
8. The pastor and his family seem to live in a fishbowl where everyone can watch.
9. The pastor is often underpaid, underappreciated, underrefreshed, and overworked.
10. As a public figure, the pastor can receive the harshest criticism from both the community and the congregation.

No thinking person can deny that the ministry is potentially hazardous to a pastor's marriage and family. But should it be that way? Better yet, must it be that way? Most importantly, does God intend for it to be this way?

THE BIBLICAL BENCHMARK

Two key Scriptures furnish God's imperative that a man have a strong family commitment as a prerequisite to being considered for pastoral ministry:⁴ "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Tim. 3:4-5) and "Namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion" (Titus 1:6).⁵

At least three features of a pastor's marriage and family stand out:

1. He must be the husband of one wife—that is, wholly devoted to his present wife with no roving eyes or affections for other women (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6).⁶ He must demonstrate Christ's level of love for His bride, the church, by his own undistracted and uncompromised love for his own bride.
2. He is to lead his household (1 Tim. 3:4). He cannot delegate or lower the priority of his ultimate responsibility for the direction of his

home. Thus, it is not enough merely to lead, but the quality of his leadership in the home should be excellent.

3. Children in the parsonage should be living in harmony with their father's example and instruction (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6). This does not mean that the pastor's children will not have their moments. However, it does demand that the overall pattern of their behavior not be an embarrassment to the church, a stumbling block for their father's ministry, or a pattern of contradiction regarding the Christian faith.

God's logic for these high standards moves from the lesser to the greater. If a man cannot lead the little flock of his own family effectively, he certainly cannot fruitfully undertake leadership of the larger flock, the church: "But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5).

It is important to emphasize that these standards absolutely define one aspect of the prerequisites for the ministry. They are not culturally outdated; they are not optional or open for redefinition. These biblical imperatives are just as relevant today as they were when written by Paul two thousand years ago.

In this writer's judgment, neglect of these factors in qualifying men for ministry has significantly contributed to the crises that pastors face with their families after entering the ministry. The New Testament certainly does not ignore the potentially severe pressures of the ministry. However, it does demand the kinds of men and the kinds of families for ministry that can successfully avoid the damage that would surely come to the marriage and/or family of one who does not have a strong commitment to comply with the biblical standards.

It is true that biblical standards for the home are no different for a pastor's home than for any other Christian home. The difference lies in the responsibility that the pastor's home has to be an example of a mature Christian marriage and family as an encouragement to the other homes in the flock.

THE PARSONAGE UNDER SIEGE

Unfortunately, the age-old maxim, "As goes the culture, so goes the church," remains valid today. Little about the Corinthian syndrome has changed over the last two millennia. Although the church in general has not gained ground on the culture, both continue to move away from the biblical reference point at about the same speed. The church might not get any closer to current secular characteristics, but it always seems to move further away from God's absolutes.

For several decades some of the media have been alerting society regarding the decline of the nuclear family.⁷ Books galore chronicle the slow demise

Watching and Warning

Richard L. Mayhew

Guarding Christ's flock of believers from spiritual danger is one of the most neglected pastoral duties in today's church. In addition to commissioning spiritual sentinels to watch over His flock by directing them into truth and righteousness, God has charged these sentinels to protect the flock from doctrinal error and personal sin. Ezekiel 3, 33, and Acts 20 provide clear instruction on the *why's* and *how's* of being a *pastoral watchman*. Undershepherds of the flock will be good servants and obedient imitators of the Chief Shepherd when they regularly watch for and warn of encroaching spiritual dangers.

"Reengineering the Church" was the theme of a recent pastoral leadership conference on how to prepare the church for the twenty-first century. As I read the conference brochure, my initial response was, "Why reengineer the church when God designed it perfectly in the beginning? Shouldn't we inspect the church first and demolish only the defective portions, so we can rebuild the demolished part according to the Builder's original plan? Who can improve on God's engineering?" The solution is not reengineering, but restoration to the perfect original specifications of the divine Designer. The goal of any changes should be a return to the church's biblical roots if she will ever regain her former glory.

An inspection of the existing church should include such questions as: Have we consulted the *Owner* (1 Cor. 3:9)? Are we dealing with the *original Builder* (Matt. 16:18)? Does the church still rest on the *beginning foundation* (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20)? Is the *first Cornerstone* still in place (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4-8)? Are we using *approved building materials* (1 Pet. 2:5)? Do we employ the right *laborers* (1 Cor. 3:9)? Have we utilized the appropriate *supervisors* (Eph. 4:11-13)? Are the initial *standards of quality control* still in place (Eph. 4:13-16)? Are we continuing to work from the *original blueprint* (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

The biblical approach to keeping the church on track during the twenty-first century requires that the role of the *construction supervisors* (that is, God's appointed shepherds who keep watch over His flock) be one of the first areas for review. According to one biblical metaphor, the

supervisors in the picture of the church as a building are none other than the *shepherds* of the flock according to another figure. The remainder of this discussion will use the latter terminology.¹

Paul laid out the basic task of a shepherd with these words:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as *pastors and teachers*, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Eph. 4:11–16, emphasis added).

THE TRUE SHEPHERD

Scripture continually alerts its readers to watch for spiritual counterfeits.² Jesus warned of “false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). Elsewhere He characterized the false shepherd as “a thief and a robber” (John 10:1, see also v. 8).

Nowhere in Scripture is this more apparent than in the Old Testament prophets who incessantly warned Israel about false prophets, even rebuking the nation when they strayed by following a false leader rather than a true one.³ Though not as historically dramatic as the Old, frequently the New Testament also warns against deceiving, misleading spiritual leaders.⁴ Every succeeding generation of history has proven the need for this caution. It remains a preeminent concern of God that the church be led by true shepherds.

In the 1891 Lyman Beecher lectures on preaching at Yale, James Stalker insightfully cautioned, “The higher the honour attaching to the ministerial profession, when it is worthily filled, the deeper is the abuse of which it is capable in comparison with other callings.”⁵ Unfortunately, the genuine attracts the uninvited clever imitation. Realistically, the true shepherd must protect the flock from the spurious. Shepherds have explicit instructions from Scripture to warn the flock that not everyone who claims to be a true shepherd is speaking the truth.

Charles Jefferson, in his classic work, *The Minister As Shepherd*, listed seven basic functions of the genuine shepherd:⁶

1. to love the sheep
2. to feed the sheep
3. to rescue the sheep
4. to attend and comfort the sheep
5. to guide the sheep
6. to guard and protect the sheep
7. to watch over the sheep

This chapter treats Jefferson's last two categories in particular: guarding and watching over the sheep. No other aspect of contemporary pastoral ministry has fallen into disuse more than the lifesaving role of a *watchman*. It is vital for effective ministry to recover the aspect of shepherdly vigilance that guards and protects the flock from preventable spiritual carnage. The true pastor will make the safety of Christ's flock a top priority. In so doing, he will also help rid the pastoral ranks of pollution brought by unauthorized look-alikes.

OVERSEEING THE FLOCK

Each of the terms *pastor*, *elder*, and *overseer* describes facets of the shepherd's role. All three appear together in Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2. *Elder* and *overseer* link up in Titus 1:5, 7 while *overseer* and *shepherd* both describe Christ in 1 Peter 2:25. Because of its relevance to the present subject, *overseer* will be the focus of attention in the following treatment.

Thomas Oden in a brief word captured the particular characteristic of watchfulness inherent in the term *overseer*: "Bishop translates *episkopos*, which is derived from the family of Greek words referring to guardianship, oversight, inspection—accountably looking after a complex process in a comprehensive sense. *Episkopos* implies vigilance far more than hierarchy."⁷

A shepherd's *oversight* of the flock expresses itself broadly in two ways.⁸ First, shepherds provide truthful, positive direction and leadership to the flock. Second, they warn of spiritual dangers such as sin, false teaching, and false teachers, including Satan's assaults against the saints.

On one hand, the shepherd teaches truth, and on the other, he warns of sin and refutes doctrinal error. In leading the flock down the path of righteousness, the shepherd also watches for, warns, and even rescues the stray who has been enticed by false teaching and alluring sin. When shepherds exercise their oversight responsibly, they will have both a preventative and a confrontive side to their ministry. One cannot shepherd the flock with credibility unless he provides a corrective oversight of watching and warning.

PASTORAL VIGILANCE

American patriot Thomas Jefferson observed that "eternal vigilance is the price of victory."⁹ He spoke of political victory, but it is even more true

GOD'S SHEPHERDS

Where is ministry in America headed today? Dr. John MacArthur says, "I am concerned over a growing trend to produce strong natural leaders who know how to manage a business or enterprise but do not understand the church from Christ's perspective. Their leadership style and substance is earthly, not biblical or spiritual."

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