

## The Biblical Case for Simple Church Outline

### Week 2: The Biblical Case for a Church without a Pastor

- 1) What we have made the role of pastor
  - a) The modern day pastor
    - i) Mega-church vs. Small church
      - (1) Executive, Care, Worship, Teaching, youth “pastor”
    - ii) RECENT STATISTICS AND REASONS FOR BURNOUT
      - (1) <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-quitting-ministry/>
        - (a) 29% seriously considered quitting in Jan. of 2021, 42% seriously considered quitting in Mar. of 2022.
          - (i) Stress of job (56%)
          - (ii) Lonely and isolated (43%)
          - (iii) Role this has had on family (29%)
          - (iv) Vision does not match churches direction (29%)
          - (v) Not optimistic about the future of my church (29%)
        - (2) Fewer and fewer young pastors
          - (a) Median age of pastors in 1992 (44), Median age of pastors in 2021 (57)
      - iii) Expectations of congregants toward pastor
        - (1) Need to be fed, Care for sick, Counselor, Emergency responder, Evangelists, Apologists, Organization Leader, Charismatic
      - iv) Has the role of pastor helped?
        - (1) Has it helped people become mature?
        - (2) It has led to pastor burnout
    - b) History of Pastor
      - i) How did we get to “pastor”
        - (1) This title of pastor was used to give a distinction between “priest” or “bishop” as the Protestant alternative to a church leader.
        - (2) The priest largely was meant to administer their 7 sacraments: Baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, marriage, holy orders and anointing the sick.
        - (3) “In Scripture, a pastor was NOT a guy who stood behind a pulpit, in a church building, holding a Bible, preaching to a crowd. There were no church bldgs until the 4th century No pulpits until the 9th century No printed Bibles til the 15th A pastor was a small group (house) leader!” - Rick Warren Tweet on Jun 8, 2023 .
  - 2) Gift of Pastor/APEST
    - a) Difference between gifts and offices
      - i) Gifts are spread among the body
      - ii) Offices are for the few within the body
      - iii) APEST is primarily for equipping
    - b) Two offices - acknowledged and set in place.
      - i) Phil 1:1 - elder and deacon
        - (1) Greeting - Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:
    - c) Eph 4:9-14 - the only place that is interpreted as “pastor” and only in some versions.

- i) Eph 4: 10-13 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ
    - ii) Shepherd is just someone who is gifted in caring for others. There are very few examples of people who are gifted in shepherding.
- 3) Role of Elders vs. Modern Day Pastor
  - a) Modern Day Pastor
    - i) This position has become a religious professional who oversees a religious service and leads a religious institution or organization.
    - ii) So what is the role of a pastor compared to the role of an elder?
  - b) Early Church Example:
    - i) The pattern we see in the NT is very different from what we see today.
    - ii) We don't see one person as the sole leader of a church.
    - iii) An apostle starts it in a new area then they leave.
    - iv) THEY NEVER APPOINT A PASTOR! No one is called a pastor in the NT church!
    - v) Paul appoints elders or has others appoint elders as the church grows when he returns or has someone else do it on his behalf.
    - vi) **Acts 14:23** (ESV): And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.
    - vii) **Titus 1:5** (ESV): This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you
      - (1) Plurality of elders
      - (2) Elders over a city rather than in each home.
      - (3) What could this look like in a network of simple churches in a city?
      - (4) But what is an elder?
  - c) Biblical case for why elders lead the church and how elders, pastor, overseer are the same.
    - i) 1 Peter 5:1-5
 

*1 Peter 5:1–5 (ESV): So I exhort the elders (presbuteros) among you, as a fellow elder (presbuteros) and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd (poimen) the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight (episkepeo), not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*
    - ii) We see three different terms used for the role of elder – elder, shepherd, and overseer. These do not refer to three different roles but different aspects of the same role of an elder. These are the three main roles of an elder.

- (1) Elder - just means older person. It refers to the spiritually mature in the church who serve as an example to the rest of the church. It does refer to those recognized into this specific role, not just generically older people.
  - (2) Shepherd – a task given to refer to the task of shepherding that elders are given. Refers to the task of caring, teaching, and leading them to feed themselves in the pasture, and protect from false teachers/wolves.
    - (a) Not a title! The only person given that title is Jesus in 1 Peter 5:4.
  - (3) Overseer – It is the title that captures the task of elders to exercise oversight of the church. Elders are to know what is going on in the church and make sure things are done properly and in order.
- iii) Other examples:
- (1) **Titus 1:5–7** (ESV): This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint **elders** in every town as I directed you— 6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an **overseer**, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,
  - (2) **Acts 20:17** (ESV): Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders** of the church to come to him.
- Acts 20:28–30** (ESV): Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **care** (shepherd) for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the **flock**; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.
- iv) Summary: Elder/shepherd/overseer are the same thing. A pastor isn’t a separate role.
  - v) Jesus is the only Senior Pastor listed in the Bible!
- 4) Role of Elders - What does this look like?
- a) This isn’t just about what we call this role. It’s about how this role is meant to function.
  - b) Not about shifting expectations of a pastor to a group of elders.
  - c) 3 major aspects of eldering:
    - i) **Elder** -
      - (1) They are to be a model for the others as the spiritually mature ones - implies being in relationship with others. Not in a back room making decisions. Modeling a life of following Jesus.
        - (a) If a model then need to be in relationship with people.
        - (b) Relationship can happen better in a smaller, simpler context
        - (c) No wonder why most people don’t know the elders of larger churches. It’s very difficult!
    - ii) **Shepherd**
      - (1) We are told they need to feed the sheep. This doesn’t mean they bottle feed the sheep forever.
      - (2) Jesus is the example in John 10 - he leads them to the pasture. He doesn’t feed them.

- (3) It's ultimately helping others listen and obey Jesus the chief shepherd.
- (4) Feeding has become synonymous with preaching
- (5) **1 Timothy 5:17** (ESV): 17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

(a) Preaching

- (i) "Preach" is actually the word "logos" which is translated "word"
- (ii) This translation make sense in light of what we are saying the role of an elder is - those who
- (iii) Preaching - proclaiming the gospel to an unbelieving audience - evangelism.
- (iv) Teaching - helping believers understand the Word. To a believing audience.
- (v) Preaching is not what we have made it to be in our culture - a 20-40 minute monologue often three points. To inspire, teach, and make people laugh.
  - 1. Preaching is not a set format. It's not even what we've made it.

(b) Teaching - there isn't a set way to teach. We can open this up and get more creative.

- (i) We have made it where a person named a pastor preaches a certain way during a church service.
- (ii) There are so many ways to teach that are more effective than we do now.
- (iii) We hope to see many people step into the gift of teaching.

(c) What does this look like to be the church without preaching?

- (i) Can be devoted to the "apostle's teaching" without preaching or teaching.
- (ii) People gathering around the Word. Holy Spirit teaching them.
- (iii) People can come with a teaching - **1 Corinthians 14:26**. Could be long. Could be short.
- (iv) People are listening and obeying Jesus.

iii) **"overseers"** not "overdoers"

- (1) General overseeing - they aren't making the decisions for everyone.
- (2) Throughout the NT you see people listening and obeying Jesus.
- (3) You don't see them coordinating or controlling church services. 1 Cor 12-14 speaks to everyone operating in an orderly not to the elders being in charge of it.

d) Rebuttal -

- i) What about Timothy? Wasn't he a pastor? Paul told him to preach the Word.
  - (1) 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus called pastoral epistles
  - (2) Paul calls Timothy many things but he never calls him a pastor.
  - (3) "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." (2 Timothy 4:1-2, ESV)

- (4) He is sent on Paul's behalf to many cities to encourage and teach the church there.
- (5) This is an apostolic role, not a pastoral role.
- (6) He is also told to do the work of an evangelist which is to preach the gospel.
- (7) Titus never called a pastor - he is told to appoint elders, the work of an apostle.

e) Summary:

- i) The modern role of pastor is not found in the Bible. Not just in title but also in function.
- ii) Elders are to shepherd, be an example, and oversee but not over do
- iii) Preaching is not the central part of a gathering in the NT like we have made it today.
- iv) Believers can be devoted to the Apostles' Teaching in many ways other than a monologue by one person every week.

5) Summary-

- a) Jesus did an amazing work to see that the role of the temple and the stewards of it was changed. The temple was destroyed, the curtain was torn, the temple was raised.
- b) John 2:17-19 - **17** His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."**18** So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" **19** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
- c) Matt: 27:51 - **51** And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.
  - i) The imagery and practice as an institution ordained and stewarded by specific people was intentionally changed to a people / body of which he is the head.
- d) We need to diffuse the role of Pastor and disperse the work where the scripture show it: among elders (overseers), and Priesthood of all believers (doers)
- e) Envisioning what this could look like
  - i) A More equipped body
  - ii) A more resilient body
  - iii) A more diverse body
- f) This is why we are called pastor to pioneer
  - i) We are looking for people to step from a limiting system, and learning to pioneer new examples that truly empower the priesthood of all believers
    - (1) Some of the best practicers of this right now is the persecuted church. They are forced to operate in this framework. We need to choose what is forced upon our brothers and sisters.
- g) Invitation - if you want to learn more about living this out... please connect with us.