



Editor's Note

Recently a friend who was travelling overseas was reading the literature he had taken along on the trip, which included some materials from ESN. His host asked what he was reading, and after reviewing some of the articles for himself, asked if he might translate the material into the language of his own people. Shortly thereafter, I received a request from him by email, and was glad to encourage him in his desire.

Who can know how God may lead in such things? Of course we cannot make predictions, but we do know that the Lord has His ways of quietly bringing His word to

those who seek for truth. We'll keep you posted if more becomes known, but for those who pray regularly for this small ministry, here is a reminder that your prayers are heard by the Chief Shepherd, and the blessings that follow are direct answers to requests made in private. Thank you for praying, and do keep up the good work of intercession!

And take special note of the excellent mother - daughter article on page 4. It warms the heart to know that the Lord is raising up godly young people even in a godless society!



Practical Ministry

Recognizing the Elders God Calls

by Warren Henderson

Teaching gift and leadership ability are qualities easily recognized because of their obvious blessing to the local assembly. However, identifying those men with shepherding hearts requires more scrutiny. The fact is that many male teachers, exhorters, counselors, and administrators are not called to shepherding roles or to the more specific office of eldership. Just because a brother can clearly expound God's Word does not mean that he is an elder. Likewise, a successful businessman may have no shepherding wherewithal whatsoever. If skill and success are not criteria, how can a local assembly be sure to appoint a man that God has called to be an elder?

How is the church to know?

The Bible records many spectacular and specific calls of God's people into various ministries, some by the Lord Himself. Should believers expect a voice from heaven, a vision, or a prophetic utterance to confirm God's calling for their lives? During the early days of the Church Age, prophets were given to the Church as a check against false teachers – they confirmed the oral transmission of the Word of God by the apostles before it was written down. Since believers have a divine anointing to understand truth (1 Jn. 2:20, 27) and the Word of God is now complete (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 13:9-10), we should not expect prophetic confirmations of ministry today, at least in the normative sense. God may reveal Himself directly, but it should not be expected of Him to do so.

Furthermore, the book of Acts reveals a clear transition from "apostles" to "apostles and elders" to just "elders" (speaking of local

church leaders) through its record of early Church history. All of this is to say that today we should not expect specific revelation to confirm God's calling for us in ministry. Practically speaking, how would you know a supernatural sign or a prophetic utterance was from God, anyway? It might be from the devil to lead you astray. Moreover, we tend to read into situations that which we want to be true.

Principles from the Life of King David

Rather than waiting for some supernatural sign to divinely confirm church elders it seems wise to be guided by the scriptural pattern that God uses to recognize leadership. In the life of David, for example, three distinct stages of affirmation of his call as the leader of Israel are recorded in 2 Samuel 5:1-3.

The southern kingdom (Judah) had recognized David as their king seven years earlier, thus David had been reigning over them in Hebron. Now the northern kingdom of Israel had decided to anoint David as their king also. What led them to this decision? First, they recognized that David had a divine calling; he had been personally selected by God for the purpose of ruling over them. Second, they recognized that it was David who led them in the practical affairs of the nation even when Saul was king. Given this understanding, they prudently recognized David as their king. David had a **divine call**, an **internal call** (i.e. he had an internal compulsion to do the work of leading), and then he was **recognized by all**.

When God plants a divine call into a person, with time and with proper spiritual maturity this calling becomes actively lived out in his or her life and others take notice. A believer often gains a

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Leadership Principles

Encouraging Pastors

by Jack Spender

This is the second in a three part series on some of the gifts referred to in Eph. 4:11. The Scriptures often refer to God's people as sheep, and collectively as His flock. Church elders may oversee the order and activities of the congregation, but they must never forget that the Lord has provided gifted believers to help in the "work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). One very important gift is the gift of pastor or shepherd.

Elders must value, help to train, and encourage all who have hearts of love to care for the sheep. Here are some suggestions to encourage them in this good work.

Some Basics about Pastors

Identify them—Believers do not come with name tags that say, "My spiritual gift is" Usually, a space of time elapses between early serving and the recognition that the person is genuinely gifted. Elders watching the involvement of young people can discern through experience the difference between simple helpfulness, and a person through whom the Lord continues to work out a special divine enablement.

In referring to Timothy, Paul said that he had no one of a similar mind who would "naturally care for" the believers. (Phil. 2:20). That is the essence of a pastoral gift, the desire to take care of the flock. In a growing assembly, there will hopefully be a number of saints with this gift. And just as when we received gifts on special occasions, we open them and let everyone see what was given, the same should be true as spiritual gifts come to be recognized.

Shepherd them—It may sound strange even to say that people with shepherd hearts need shepherd care, but they do. They may be gifted, but they are still sheep! A large part of gaining spiritual maturity has to do with proper discipleship, and in spite of our permissive society, accountability is a big part of discipleship.

This comes about when elders suggest opportunities for service, request help in caring for people with special needs, and then ask questions to see

what lessons were learned. There are times when the servant must limit his involvement in spite of a willing heart and a clear need. (Acts 16:6,7). Further, it is important for gifted servants, especially those with shepherding gifts, to learn to fit into the team and not function in a vacuum.

Protect them—Perhaps no spiritual gift has been more misunderstood and misrepresented than the gift of pastor. Many suppose that those who have this gift must become ordained as church officials, administrative leaders, and super preachers. In reaction to this, other groups ignore the gift or exclaim, "We have no pastor here." How can a sincere believer with a legitimate pastoral gift from God function in the church? Clearly the support and encouragement of elders is crucial.

The congregation must be taught that ordinary people may possess this gift, as well as some within the recognized leadership of the church. To please the Lord, they will do what shepherds do, care for sheep. They may also have some teaching or administrative abilities, but these are not necessarily required in pastors. In comforting, admonishing, visiting, encouraging, and feeding the sheep, whether one-on-one or to a large group, the pastor will be busy in any assembly. Should the Lord call, it may become necessary to enable such a brother to devote himself full time to the Lord's work, but he will always do so as a part of a team, never as the "man in charge."

One Important Reminder

There is a tendency to describe the leaders in the assembly by using three words, "elder," "overseer" and "shepherd" [or "pastor"], as if they are synonyms. They are not! The words "elder" and "overseer" are positions of authority given only to mature men of the congregation with carefully documented character qualities (I Tim. 3). The word "pastor" refers to a spiritual gift (Eph. 4:11), which may be given to any believer, and is received at the moment of conversion, before either maturity or experience is gained.

Scripture never confuses gifts and

office. Thus, any elder must be "apt to teach" (I Tim. 3:2), but not necessarily a gifted teacher; he must "feed [shepherd] the church of God" (Acts 20:28), but he may not have the gift of pastor; and he may "do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5) without being a gifted evangelist.

It is noteworthy that the word "shepherd" [or "pastor"] used as a noun is never applied to church elders, but to the Lord Jesus alone, Who is called "the Shepherd and Bishop [or Overseer] of your souls" (I Pet. 2:25).

Beyond the Basics

Eph. 4:12 goes on to describe the work of pastors as being given for the "equipping of the saints." Pastors naturally love to look after sheep, but it can be a great encouragement to them when they see others developing the same passion and taking up a share in that work. Elders, here is an opportunity to provide real encouragement for those so gifted. Be sure that in addition to exercising their gift in the assembly, opportunities are also made for them to train (equip) younger believers in the disciplines and skills needed to prepare others to "do the work of the ministry." This can be both passive ("we just watch them doing it"), or better still, active in whatever seminars, discussion groups or Q & A times are provided. Taking a younger person along on a visit is one way to be active in encouraging this gift.

In new outreach works, it is a good thing when the pastor, the evangelist, and the teacher can cooperate. Gospel outreach produces sheep who need to be cared for and taught the Word, and growth will be more vigorous if these God-given enablings (which necessarily do overlap) can work together.

Finally, pastors are encouraged when they can function in settings conducive to their work. Use them in visitations to the sick, or to families and individuals of the flock in general. In small groups, they pick up on family needs and problems, leading to fruitful one-on-one visits. They are skillful at going after straying sheep, and have found rich use in prison and nursing home ministries.

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sense of where he or she is going in ministry long before it happens – in some respects this can be a bit unsettling and may result in anxiety. In time, however, others will recognize what God is doing and validate the believer's call to service.

Application for the Church

This three-stage process of calling is the same for church elders: the Holy Spirit calls (appoints) them (Acts 20:28), the internal call is shown by active, selfless service (1 Tim. 3:1), and eventually the serving shepherd will be morally and spiritually scrutinized according to the requirements of Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 and then be publicly recognized as an elder. If a brother with a blameless testimony just cannot keep from doing shepherding work in the assembly, and is marked by faithfulness despite the personal cost to himself, he is likely God's man. The man who cries, "pick me" is most assuredly not God's choice. Rather, God's man respects the office and is often leery of the responsibility because he can already identify with the work and the cost of doing it.

Practical Insights

Besides the moral and character qualities of Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3, here are some practical aspects of shepherding to observe in a brother that might be called to be a church elder:

1. **He carefully handles and understands the Word of God**, such that he is able to both spot and refute false doctrine with humble maturity (Tit. 1:9). He is not to be "*a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil*" (1 Tim. 3:6-7). Good


shepherding requires more than knowing the truth; meekness and wisdom must guide every action.

2. **He speaks tenderly and often of the Lord Jesus.** The only motivation to faithfully serve God's sheep (who are often obstinate and troublesome), is genuine love and appreciation for the Lord Jesus (John 21:15-17).
3. **He is spiritually alert to spot danger and has the courage to fend off evil foes** (John 10:11-12). Fervent pleas to those in his care to steer clear of corrupting activities, music, friends, or teachings would be a modern day example of this quality.
4. **He shepherds well those in his care** (e.g., a young people's study group). Sheep need food, water, rest, correction, protection, etc. to flourish – how are the sheep doing in his care? Are they becoming more Christ-like? Are they committed to the meetings of the church? Are they participating in body life? Do they respect God's leadership and authority in the meeting?
5. **He is diligent in work.** There is no example in the Bible of God calling a lazy or irresponsible person into ministry. Rather, He uses those who have first been proven faithful in what they have been given to do. David, a young man, was tending his father's sheep when he was anointed king over Israel.
6. **He respects authority and does not push boundaries.** Elisha requested of Elijah that he be al-

lowed to first go home and inform his parents of God's calling for his life and to kiss them goodbye. Apparently, he was an unmarried man still living under his father's authority. It is a mark of a false teacher to despise authority and to speak evil of dignitaries (2 Pet. 2:10).

7. **He assists the elders as requested and encourages them in their work.** Elisha assisted Elijah in the Lord's work (1 Kgs. 19:21). After two years of working together, it would be Elisha, on behalf of Elijah, who would anoint Jehu and Hazael, the tasks given Elijah at Mount Horeb. Long after Elijah departed heavenward in a whirlwind, Elisha was still known as "*Elisha ... who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah*" (2 Kings 3:11).

Conclusion

Those who are elders and those who may be recognized as elders are not perfect men, but they should be blameless, and brothers of high moral character. A prospective elder exhibiting such qualities and demonstrating the above behavior is mostly likely the man that God has raised up from among His sheep to shepherd His sheep (Acts 20:28). Recognizing in haste a man who God has not chosen, will be one of the most painful mistakes an assembly can make. However, engaging in prayer and careful observation, while waiting on the Lord to make it obvious to everyone, will be the safe approach in recognizing those He has called to shepherd. 

Encouraging Pastors (continued from page 2)

If the gift is combined with some teaching gift, their ministry of the Word can be rich in insights about human relationships, not to mention the believer's relationship with the Lord. In any case, they can help the elders keep the church's Bible ministry relevant to the needs of the people. It is important not to suppose that this gift is confined within the eldership!


Conclusion

It's always a sad thing when good words are given distorted meanings.

Many good servants have left "the ministry" after becoming discouraged and exhausted because, as the "Pastor of the church," they were not able to perform the expected duties of being chief administrator and primary preacher. We know some personally!

What a wonderful opportunity Christian assemblies, seeking to follow the New Testament pattern, have to correct this misconception by offering a biblical example! Both within the eldership, and within the congregation,

saints so gifted can imitate the shepherd heart of the Chief Shepherd as they function quietly within the flock.

Wise elders will utilize the gifts residing in the Lord's people to help them in their work. This will spread the work load, and bring praise to the Lord for providing gifted saints to serve the assembly. And as always, such should be honored by all, thus bringing glory to God, which, of course, is the ultimate goal of all of God's gifts! (II Cor. 9:12). 

When I was a young woman, I would pore over portions of Scripture with awe regarding my role, eagerly anticipating my opportunity to live these verses out loud. This journey to womanhood, once my aspiration, is now my daily reality. If you're like me, you are in the throes of loving your husband and raising your family. As leaders' wives who are consumed with the demands of home life and ministry, it's easy to become shortsighted, and overlook the young women intently looking on. Sometimes we need to take a step back and see these verses anew, through the eyes of someone awaiting their fulfillment.

At the end of a recent Bible study on headship, my teenage daughter, Grace, expressed how delighted she was to learn from mature, godly sisters about her role as a woman. Grace was approached by someone who felt sorry for her, that she "had to sit through a study that clearly didn't apply to her". Grace's response: She loved every minute of it! And she wondered why people wait so long to instruct young women on something that is obviously greatly valued by God.

We have young women looking on who are saying, "Show me what motivates you, what inspires you, what you live for. Make my role attractive." And since God has asked us to be teachers of good things and to train the younger women, I decided to look at mentoring or spiritual mothering in reverse. What

are these young, aspiring wives and mothers looking for? What do they desire in their relationships with older women? I asked my daughter what she, and others her age, would want the older women to know. And so, the thoughts that follow are my daughter's, laced with her hopes and expectations, as she looks to more seasoned sisters to encourage her in the process of becoming a godly woman.

- Pray for us. Knowing that an older woman is thinking of me, and praying for me, is SO encouraging!

- I love watching you sing and pray during worship.

- If someone is condescending when they speak to me, it doesn't become a part of my heart.

- We know you're supposed to lead by example, but please, come alongside us. Display it up close, not just from a distance.

- It touches my heart when I hear another woman praise God.

- I feel like I need to behave more maturely when I am in the presence of a godly woman.

- Seek to really know me; it will open the lines of communication.

- Share with us your failures and what God showed you, how He helped you.

- Take our struggles seriously. This is where we're at. Please don't discount our struggle just because you've never

experienced it, or because it's not an "adult" issue.

- We are ALWAYS listening to what the ladies are talking about.

- Talk to us as you would an equal, sister to sister.

- We are curious to see how you interact with other women.

- We are impressed when you are discreet and kind with the spiritually immature.

- Spend time with us. We can't learn from you if we're always separate from you. Make sure there are opportunities for us to interact with you.

- We are ALWAYS observing you... what you say... how you act...

- Encourage our successes and godly qualities. Praise, especially from a strong believer, has a great impact.

- We love to see you encouraging each other. It shows us what it means to be a sister.

- I love it when all the Christian women get together. These days Christianity is more of a title than a lifestyle. It's encouraging to see ladies who actually live it.

- I desire to learn about my role. It's so exciting to be a godly woman, a wife, a mother. I need to prepare.

- Moms, we are watching you. We learn the most from you.

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." I Corinthians 11:1



THE SMALL PRINT

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Specific Bible versions used are indicated at the first quotation in each article.

Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.

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