

A Ministry from God

Tyndale Theological Seminary
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January 2012
PM 525

I. The Call Defined

Our vocation is our calling to serve Christ; our occupations are the jobs we do to earn our way in the world. While it is our calling to press our occupations into the service of our vocation, it is idolatrous to equate the two.

—Ben Patterson¹

The calling is a ministry given from God to certain individuals within the local congregation to care for His people. The calling is a call to be a shepherd.

***For the purposes of this class I am using the term pastor and elder interchangeably.

A. The biblical image of a shepherd

The bible is full of rich illustrations of God as the shepherd relating to His people. The shepherd who is loving and yet tough at the same time. The shepherd is the one who is making sure the sheep are safe and healthy. This is a good image of the New Testament role of pastor.

Ps. 23 Here the Lord is our Shepherd. It gives us a picture of what the true shepherd does.

Eze 34 In this chapter Israel's leaders are referred to as shepherds. They were failing miserably at their responsibility. They have made several errors.

1. Put themselves first. Vv. 2-3
2. Treated the people harshly. V. 4
3. Failed to protect the sheep. Vv. 5-6

¹ Cedar, P. A., Hughes, R. K., & Patterson, B. (1991). *Mastering the pastoral role*. Mastering ministry (25). Portland, Or.: Multnomah; Christianity Today, Inc.

B. A Shepherd of God's Church

Whose church is it? I hear pastors say "at my church" and I wonder if indeed it is their church. While we feel a great deal of responsibility and ownership of the congregations God has placed us in as pastors we must always remember it is not our church, it is God's church. The ministry that we have is a stewardship of shepherding his people.

18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18

2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;
1 Peter 5:2

C. A shepherd of God's people

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,
Ephesians 4:11

1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;
1 Peter 5:1–2

17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17

1. Protecting the Flock
(See Strauch chapter one)

A major part of the New Testament elder's responsibility is to protect the church from false teachers.

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care 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. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.” (Ac 20:28–31)

A pastor is to have enough knowledge of the bible to be able to refute false teachers.

5 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—” (Tt 1:5)

9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Tt 1:9)

Protecting the flock includes seeking the lost, straying sheep. Some times pastors neglect this vital responsibility.

Protecting the flock is important because sheep are defenseless animals.

Spiritual alert

Courageous

2. Feeding the Flock

Jesus tells Peter “feed my sheep”.

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” (Jn 21:17)

9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” (Tt 1:9)

3. Leading the Flock

17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” (1 Ti 5:17)

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,” (Tt 1:7)

II. The Character of those who are called

Use 1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9 & 1 Peter 5:1-3

What is there in II Timothy that would lend itself to an exhortation of godliness?

See Strauch page 73 for a chart comparing the above text.

<i>Comparison of Elder Qualifications</i>		
1 Timothy 3:2-7	Titus 1:6-9	1 Peter 5:1-3
1. Above reproach	1. Above reproach	1. Not under compulsion, but voluntary
2. The husband of one wife	2. The husband of one wife	2. Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness
3. Temperate	3. Having children who believe	3. Nor yet as lording it over...but proving to be examples
4. Prudent	4. Not self-willed	
5. Respectable	5. Not quick-tempered	

III. The Call Issued

A. Examples of God's calling

Moses
Isaiah (Chapter 6)
Paul

The caution must be issued that God does not call everyone in the same manner. The examples I have given were of men singled out by God to lead major movements of change within the coming of his kingdom.

B. Recognizing God's call in our lives

How do I know if I have been called of God to be a pastor?

1. Call versus career

Much I do not understand, but there is one thing I am solidly convinced of: a call is not a career. The pivotal distinction between the two may be the most important thing we ever understand about the call of God, especially in these times.

The words themselves immediately suggest one difference. Our English word *career* comes from the French *carriere*, meaning “a road,” or “a highway.” The image suggests a course one sets out on, road map in hand, goal in sight, stops marked along the way for food, lodging, and fuel.

Looking back, we can speak of one’s career as the road one took in life. But more often we speak of it as we look forward, as the path one chooses and plans to travel professionally, an itinerary charted and scheduled. The destination is primary. The roads are well-marked. The rest is up to the traveler.

A call, on the other hand, has no maps, no itinerary to follow; no destination to envision. Rather, a call depends upon hearing a Voice. The organ of faith is the ear, not the eye. First and last, it is something one listens for. Everything depends upon the relationship of the listener to One who calls.

Careers lend themselves to formula and blueprints, a call only to a relationship. A career can be pursued with a certain amount of personal detachment, a call never.

When Moses heard God call him to free the slaves in Egypt, he first responded as though he were presented with a career decision. Was he qualified? Did he have the proper experience and unique skills required by such an undertaking? He talked to God as though he were in a job interview: Who am I to do such a thing? What if the people don’t follow? And doesn’t God know that I am a poor public speaker?

All of this was irrelevant to God. All that mattered was that Moses believe God could be trusted when he said, “I will be with you.”

In short, all that mattered was the call, and that Moses bind himself to the one who issued the call. There were no road maps, only the Voice.²

I like the way Buechner concludes: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

Without both, you fail. I see too many people in church, in virtually every church I’ve been in, doing things that “ought to be done.” But they don’t like it, and it’s just wearing them down, and there’s a joylessness about the whole thing.

² Cedar, P. A., Hughes, R. K., & Patterson, B. (1991). *Mastering the pastoral role*. Mastering ministry (26–27). Portland, Or.: Multnomah; Christianity Today, Inc.

It's a failure to do something that "needs to be done" but to do it without joy; there's no gladness about the whole thing. Gladness isn't necessarily emotional bubbles as much as it is significance, meaning, purpose, seeing it as worthwhile. You can suffer and sacrifice and still be glad about it.

I think it's just as wrong to do something that needs doing and hate it as it is to just do something that you like but that doesn't really need to be done.

So my working theology of a call includes this sense of gladness, trying to find the common ground between my deep gladness and the needs I see around me.³

2. It is an internal desire

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 1 Timothy 3:1

ὀρέγομαι: to eagerly desire to accomplish some goal or purpose—'to strive to attain, to aspire to, to eagerly long for.' εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται 'if anyone aspires to be an overseer' 1 Tm 3:1⁴

3. It is externally confirmed

22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.
1 Timothy 5:22

Much discussion has been given to the identifying of our spiritual gifts. While we can take various test to help point us in the right direction the ultimate confirmation is the confirmation by the people ministered to that indeed they have been equipped to do the work of the ministry.

³ Cedar, P. A., Hughes, R. K., & Patterson, B. (1991). *Mastering the pastoral role*. Mastering ministry (28–29). Portland, Or.: Multnomah; Christianity Today, Inc.

⁴ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (290). New York: United Bible societies.