

The Pastor's Primary Responsibilities

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In this brief essay, I will set before you three primary responsibilities of every pastor.

I. Intercede for God's Flock

Pray

To neglect to pray is to neglect *the* power source in a pastor's ministry. For a minister to engage in many duties in his church and yet omit the regular practice of prayer demonstrates that he has no understanding of nor does he have any conviction of the importance of the ministry, his helplessness in the ministry, his humility in the ministry and God's sovereignty over his ministry. A pastor must pray. A shepherd must intercede for God's flock. Every Christian is a sheep that belongs to God and God has stated that every sheep in the fold belongs to *Him*. And God has entrusted His own blood-bought sheep to the care of His undershepherds — pastors. To lead is to model. And there is no greater way that a pastor can model Christlikeness for his flock than to show them how to pray; that is, to model a life of prayer for them. It is insufficient for a pastor to say his 'prayers'. The common statistic that the average pastor prays less than 10 minutes a day cannot describe a man who is radically in love with Christ, desperately in need of His power, and singularly awed by the gospel of sovereign grace. No one must coerce the pastor to pray. No one must check in to certify that the minister is on his knees. The godly minister has callouses on his knees that no one ever sees. He spends time with his God alone in the early morning when many people lay still on their beds. The minister has an overwhelming amount of items for which he can pray. He certainly longs to worship God in prayer: to adore Him, to bless Him, to ascribe glory and power to Him. The minister confesses his own sin to God. He repents of his sin to God. He begs for God to examine him and show him in the inner recesses of his heart and mind and motivations so that he will be spotless, blameless, and above reproach. The shepherd must pray for his flock by name. He must know them. He must bring them before the throne of God. Jesus prayed for His flock, so should every godly minister. The exemplary leader must take hold of God in prayer, giving him no rest, until God blesses the ministry, the preaching, the shepherding, the counseling, the discipling, the evangelizing, and the fellowship. Indeed, a teaching pastor must pray throughout the week and wrestle with God in prayer to come with power upon the preached Word. He must pray for the anointing of the Spirit. He must pray for the unction of the Spirit. He must seek the face of God throughout his days of studying, discipling, mentoring, resting. The godly pastor communes with God regularly. He prays urgently, passionately, warmly, daily, and believably. Christ modeled a prayer life, so should pastors.

2. Feed God's Flock

Preach

The Lord Jesus told Peter no less than three times to shepherd and tend His flock. A primary responsibility of a shepherd is to feed the sheep. If he has everything in the world and yet he fails to feed the sheep, eventually they will starve and die. The pastor is called to tend God's

flock. The sheep do not belong to the pastor; they're God's. And God demands that the man of God 'preach the Word' in season and out of season. Even when masses turn away to what their itching ears desire and turn aside from the truth, the man of God must be faithful to fulfill his calling and teach with all authority. To feed is to provide sustenance. A shepherd can feed the sheep poisonous food but the sheep will most certainly die. The shepherd can feed the flock food lacking nutrition and the sheep will be malnourished, unhealthy and they soon will become sick and eventually they will die. So it is with a pastor. A pastor is to teach and preach. He must feed God's flock. He must feed them the Word of God, the full counsel of God, biblical theology, and the unashamed, unflinching, unrestrained truth of Scripture. He must preach the Bible. This is what expository preaching means. The man of God expounds the meaning of the Word of God so that the people of God understand what God says in God's Word and how their lives must be affected because of it. The pastor must study to show himself approved so he feeds the flock of God with the food of God as it rightly comes out of the Word of God so they can live lives to the glory of God.

3. Tend God's Flock

Pastor

The man of God must care for *souls*. To pastor is to conduct soul-care. To care rightly for God's people, one must tend the flock with regularity and with compassion. The pastor is just called to do that, *pastor* the flock. Shepherds live with the flock, they care for the flock, they nurture the flock, they love the flock, they live with the flock, they ward off predators who could harm the flock, they know the flock by name and see them frequently. The pastor should live similarly among God's people. He should live and conduct himself among and with the flock. He must know the flock. He must enter their homes to visit the flock. He must avail himself to the flock for counseling, for wisdom, for prayer, and for guidance. To feed is essential, but it's not enough. Shepherds can feed the sheep, but good shepherds care for, protect, instruct in the way they should go, warn in the way they must avoid, and see how they walk. Shepherds must attend to those who are bruised and wounded. They must give must attention to the cast-down and the broken-hearted. Pastors cannot conduct this kind of soul-care only by preaching on Sunday with the flock. He must know them throughout the week. He must open the Word with the people with regularity. He must enter their homes and counsel them in the Word and he must open up his own home so as to model hospitality, godly living in the home, and family worship. This cuts to the core of the contemporary celebrity, traveling preacher who more often than not is away from the home, away from his flock, unable to meet with his people and thus unable to personally point them to Christ. May God's pastors shepherd the flock of God *among them*. May God's ministers teach God's people God's Word publicly and from house to house. If a pastor neglects this ministry, then he no longer is qualified to be called a 'pastor.' He may be a teacher, and he may be an expositor, but if he is not with his people then he cannot honestly be called a pastor of souls. He is to model for the flock Christlikeness. He is to point them to incessant and specific lives of prayer and communion with God. He is to instruct them in family worship, in godly living in the home, in marital unity, in parental duties, in the mortification of sin, and in the zealous pursuit of holiness. He should strive to win souls through fervent evangelism and model for the flock a compassionate heart for the lost. May God equip such men to fulfill their duties as pastors so as to glorify God by caring for His flock and serving them with God's strength.