

The Kingdom of God The Government of God – Pastors

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How is the character of a believer changed so that he or she may operate in power? Well God gave five gifts to impart various aspects of the character of God to the believer and these five gifts are gifts of His government. These gifts, working in a person, will usually transform how he or she sees the world. We've been speaking about these five gifts found in **Ephesians 4:11**. They are: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, and now we are at the point of talking about pastors. (Inserted – actual verse—**“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”** – Ephesians 4:11-13)

What's interesting, of course, is that the gift of pastor is the most commonly known gift but it is the least understood and least appropriately practiced. In the Scripture, the gift called “pastor” is the Greek word, “poimen” and occurs eighteen times in the Scriptures. Seventeen of the eighteen times it is translated “shepherd” or “shepherds”, in fact, the only time that it is translated “pastor” is in **Ephesians 4:12**. On one occasion I was in the country of Mexico and I was trying to explain that a pastor was a shepherd because if it is the same word translated seventeen times out of eighteen in the Scripture as “shepherd” or “shepherds” then the one time it is translated “pastor”, it could only mean “shepherd” or “shepherds”. I was trying to explain *that* in Mexico and I came onto a problem, because the word for shepherd, in Spanish, is “pastor”. So eighteen out of eighteen times, if you are speaking in Spanish, the word “poimen” means “shepherd” or “shepherds”.

Now a shepherd is someone who has been appointed to care for God’s people in the manner in which a shepherd

tends sheep in the natural, which means that you are overseeing and watching the growth of people. Here are some basic things about the analogy of sheep and shepherds: one of them is that Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they know me.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” – John 10:27** and **“ ‘I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me’” – John 10:14**) So with the respect to the dynamic of sheep and shepherd, the issue is *that* of caring for God’s people and there is an intimacy that is inherently implied and the intimacy is this: “My sheep hear my voice. The voice of another, they will not hear.” the Scriptures say. (Inserted – actual verse—**“The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” – John 10:2-5**)

In Middle Eastern countries—I made a trip once to Jordan and in the countryside I could see shepherds, pretty much as they were in the days of both the Old and New Testaments. And you’d see a man walking by the side of the road or standing out under a tree in a field, and grouped around him would be a hundred sheep, maybe a little more but not a whole lot more than that. And instead of using sheep dogs to herd them he simply walks around and they follow him. I’m told that when it’s time for him to sell the sheep he doesn’t simply go and make a deal and have the new owner—usually the one who is going to slaughter them—have the new owner come and load them up into a vehicle and take them away. Normally he, himself, will lead them into the pens where they are to be slaughtered because they wouldn’t follow anybody else.

That’s an interesting observation about sheep and shepherds but if we understand the analogy that gives rise to the word “poimen” we understand that this cannot function in any other context except one of intimacy. If you are talking about “administrator”, it can function apart from intimacy. If you are talking about “teacher”, it can function apart from the context of intimacy but “pastor” *cannot* because the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd and the shepherd knows who the sheep are and the sheep know who their shepherd is. What a far cry from today’s notion of “pastor” this is. The suggestion that a pastor would actually spend time on a regular basis with every member of the congregation, the suggestion that he would know, on a first-hand basis, every person in the congregation—he would know who were the family members, he would know what their problems were, he would know what gifts the people were, he would know what their ministry was, and their calling and he would encourage them to pursue their calling—*that* suggestion is off the charts because it simply does not happen.

The general rule today is that pastors believe that if you get into the pulpit and preach a message that in that way you are feeding sheep. Well if that's true then they ought to be blamed for the general condition of anemia that is characteristic of the condition of God's people today. God's people today, generally speaking, are Biblically illiterate. Generally speaking, God's people today have no faith—have little in the way of faith—they don't trust God. Generally speaking, God's people today are afraid; they are disillusioned, they are scared. If this is the result of their care then they are not being cared for. “My sheep hear my voice and they know me and I know them.”—simple statements defining the relationship that attends the word “shepherd”. Now if you are talking about some other word—other than the word “pastor”—then it is understandable that you might not be talking about “knowing” and “intimacy”, and “togetherness” and “awareness”. But if you are talking about the word “shepherd”, that's the only thing you can be talking about.

Now Jesus knew the twelve whom God gave Him. He said, on one occasion in **John 6**, “Have I not chosen you Twelve,” (that's **John 6:70**) “Have I not chosen you Twelve, and one of you has a devil.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Then Jesus replied, ‘Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!’” – John 6:70**) He knew every one of them. “And I say also unto you, Simon, that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” – Matthew 16:18**) “Simon,” he said on another occasion, “Satan has asked for permission to sift you, but I have prayed for you, and when you turn again help your brothers.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“ ‘Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.’” – Luke 22:31,32**)

That's why Jesus may be properly described as the Good Shepherd—He knew who the sheep were who were given to Him. He didn't claim any other, didn't take any other, didn't look for any other and in fact, when He gave an account to God, He said this, “Father, all those whom you have given to me I have kept, except the son of perdition, I could not, for Scripture had to be fulfilled.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“ ‘I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was**

with them I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.’” – John 17:6-12)

Jesus knew every one of them; He knew the ones God had given Him. He sought for no other; He was not close to and intimate with any other. He had twelve—that’s who God gave Him. Did He love the world? Of course He did, but He was not intimate with the world, He didn’t give an account for the world. He didn’t say, “Father, the whole world that you have given me I have kept.” He spoke of the Twelve when He gave an account. That’s because He knew that God would raise up others. In fact on one occasion, using a different metaphor—the metaphor of harvesting and grain—He observed that the fields were white unto harvest, but did not say to His disciples nor did He, himself, undertake the task of going to harvest them. He said, “But pray you,” (you pray) “to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest field.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’” – Matthew 9:37,38)**)

So He knew that there were twelve that He was given and for whom He was accountable and concerning whom He was responsible. Why is this so? Because the responsibility to raise someone in the Lord requires that you be intimately involved in their growth and development. Paul refers to Timothy as his son in the Gospel and Paul was there on the majority of the critical developments of Timothy’s life. For example, when it was time for Timothy to be acknowledged as an apostle it was Paul who laid hands on him and it was Paul who took him with him out of Lystra and Derbe, where he was previously attending the saints, to go on into Thessalonica and other places. So one of the critical factors relating to the care of another is that the one who has been set to care for them should know who they are “in the Lord”.

How are you going to raise someone in the way that they should go? How are you going to help someone take up their destiny and pursue their calling if you, yourself, have no idea who they are? If God has set you to watch over the soul of another and to help raise them up in the Lord, and you have no idea who they are, how are you going to know how to do that? So God assigns you the care of another with the intention that you seek the Lord and know what the ministry and calling of that person is and help them to come into that. If you don’t do that then it is no wonder that people have no idea what their calling is, have no idea what their gifts are, have no idea how to get into any of that. Frankly, what has happened today is that in the model of church that we have, this is the result. The pastor sees that he has a vision for how his life ought to be lived, serving God. So he has a vision for that and he recruits people to come and support his vision, whether by their time, their money, their giftings and the like.

He does not have a vision for *their* life; he has a vision for his own life and his view of what it takes to serve God as a pastor is to recruit people to serve *his* vision for *his* life. The very opposite is what is true Biblically, pastorally. If you pastor someone, you ought to know who they are in the Lord. “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they know me.” You ought to know them, know who they are—not after their flesh, but after their spirit—and you ought to watch over their souls as one who will give an account. (Inserted – actual verse—**“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.” – Hebrews 13:17a**)

Now what does that mean—what do these things mean? Well everyone has a destiny to be fulfilled but what keeps them from fulfilling it, what delays their walking in it is the condition of their soul. They might either be afraid, uninformed, without understanding and the like. So to simply say to some people, “For heaven sake, get out there and *do* something.” that’s folly; that’s mindless drivel because you, as the pastor, ought to know what their calling is because God assigned them to you. “Have I not chosen you twelve?” as Jesus would say, “And one of you has a devil.” Jesus knew each one of them. “Simon, I have prayed for you, and when you turn again, help your brothers.”

Jesus knew who each one was. If you don’t know who the people are under your care it is impossible for you to give them godly direction. You will give them *general* direction and usually that’s meaningless. You ought to know who that person is, *and* you will help them hear the Lord; you will help confirm that *they are* hearing the Lord and you will help them take the steps that they ought to take in moving on in the Lord. You may go with them—sometimes when they are starting out—or you may give them parts of your own work. You may help supply them with resources and so on and so on.

It’s not really very different from raising children. When my children have come of age I do not any longer rule them as if they are small children. I confirm their direction, I remind them of who they are, I remind them of their gifts, I remind them of their calling, I help confirm that they are supposed to take this step or that step and the like, so that they are prepared for life and when they are released to function they have an excellent chance of succeeding. *That* is what pastoring is. Pastoring is not any different from being a father. A spiritual father and a natural father, in the Lord, are not to be practiced in any different way.

It is a tragedy today, because there are so many people who will go to a particular church but when they have problems they will find anybody who would have some wisdom or insight, and I have commonly been approached by people in churches in the day of their trouble and I will typically begin by asking, “Who is you pastor?” and

“Have you spoken to your pastor?” And the answer is—uniformly—“Ah, he’s too busy taking care of the rest of the church.” I think probably that’s the thing that upsets me the most about pastors... that they will give the excuse that they are busy taking care of the church. I read in the Scriptures where a man had a hundred sheep and one of them was lost. A good shepherd—one in the model of Jesus, the perfect example of the shepherd—would leave the ninety-nine and go and find the one. (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.’**” – Matthew 18:12,13)

Today... today, there is practically *no* chance that any pastor is going to put at risk the ninety-nine to try to go after the one. If that one requires an intensive amount of time, if that one requires a significant expenditure of other kinds of resources—financial, giftings and the like—there is a point at which, after some perfunctory efforts are made, that person is simply written off because, look, it’s easier to spend the same time and resources getting ten new ones to come in—that you intend to treat the same as this one—than it is to go look after this one. But Jesus would not have done that and He defines the model of shepherd. Today, because the model of church government is papal—the papa, the pastor, the father—it amuses me that someone can assume he has a worldwide flock of 500,000,000 close, intimate members. What madness is this? You have no clue as to who these people are.

If you are the shepherd, if God gave them to you, then God holds you accountable for them personally. But, see, that’s the model. And so men today—even if they have a hundred sheep—will place the institution ahead of the individual and if the individual begins to demand more time than they can afford... and here we’re not talking about somebody who has heard the counsel of the Holy Spirit and simply refuses and rebels. Here is simply someone who needs to be trained and raised. You take people coming into the body of Christ today from the world. In the world there is no concept of right and wrong anymore, no concept of responsibility. It’s going to take a fair amount of time and consistent effort to try and change the mindset of the people who are coming into the body of Christ today—that’s a fact.

One of the reasons why—after 9/11—the churches were flooded with people is that the people were looking for answers. But they left as soon as they came because they found no answers. These are the realities that are going on right now. A shepherd is supposed to take care of the sheep—basic, foundational stuff. Now the government of God, as it refers to the role of taking care of people, has multiple levels of shepherds—and I use the word “shepherd” being fully aware that there was a movement called The Shepherding Movement sometime back—I’m

using the word because it is found in the Scriptures, it's what it means, it's "poimen"—"shepherd", "shepherds". Even the word "pastor" means "shepherd"; it doesn't have another meaning. So unless we are wanting to invent another term we have to deal with this. The fact that the word has been poorly used and associated with un-Biblical things is no excuse for us not to deal with it.

So, to be a shepherd of God's people, foundationally, is to take care of people. Now the result of the gift—the five-fold ministry gift of "shepherd"—is that the people learn to take care of others, within the measures that they have been given to take care of others. So the word "shepherd" or "shepherds" implies a governmental order for the taking care of people that is beyond its limited use today. It is used limitedly today to suggest an administrator or a preacher or the principle figure in a congregational model. *The Kingdom of God is not a congregational model; the Kingdom of God is a national model—that is, we are a nation.* (Inserted – actual verse—**"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."** – I Peter 2:9)

This concept of pastor—or shepherd—though it has been applied in the congregational model and to the end of dividing the body—"These sheep are my sheep and they are not yours."—and the assumption is that since they are *my* sheep, I am to supply them with everything that they need. Well, unless you are *also* an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist and a teacher, they are really not your sheep. *The truth of the matter* is that they are not your sheep at all—they are the Lord's sheep—and if you are going to be faithful in the care of these people, they must be exposed to—and you must receive—the apostle, prophet, evangelist and teacher, flowing through their lives to give the impartations that will bring these people to maturity. But what keeps that from happening is the way that we view "pastor" today, that is: the chief administrator, the principle governmental figure.

In the next broadcast, what I want to do is explore the term "pastor" within the context of several other words. Other words like "elders", "presbytery", "bishop", and, of course, "pastor". We want to put the word "pastor" back in its context that will bring forth a more complete understanding of the government of God. And we will see how, in that framework, it is possible for everyone to touch the apostle, prophet, evangelist and teacher because no one is owned so exclusively as to deny that form of access necessary for the equipping of the saints. So I hope that you will study with me as we continue to pursue the government of God. I'm Sam Soleyn. God bless you, I'll see you again.

Scripture References:

Ephesians 4:11-13

John 10:27

John 10:14

John 10:2-5

John 6:70

Matthew 16:18

Luke 22:31,32

John 17:6-12

Matthew 9:37,38

Hebrews 13:17a

Matthew 18:12,13

I Peter 2:9