

THE LEVER

THE BI-ANNUAL JOURNAL OF BAPTIST EVANGELICALS TODAY



THE SCARLET PASTOR LESSONS IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

THE LEVER

lever (lee-ver) n. 1. a bar or other device pivoted on a fixed point (the fulcrum) in order to lift something or force something open. 2. a flat projecting handle used in the same way to operate or control machinery etc. – v. to use a lever, to lift or move by this.leverage. n. the action or power of a lever. (Oxford Paperback Dictionary)

The Lever aims to open up healthy and respectful reflection in our denomination on the Bible’s role in our identity and decision making. We want us all to be moved by the fulcrum of the Biblical Gospel – the unmoving centre of the Apostolic witness to Jesus – and to revolve around that centre, and derive our power from that centre. The journal aims to be a biblical, loving, robust lever for such aims.

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EDITORIAL

The Scarlet Pimpernel was the proto-typical masked crusader. The famous spy and devil-may-care troubler of all things French and revolutionary was a frustratingly slippery character for friends and foes alike. As Sir Percy Blakeney said in chapter twelve of the famous novel: *We seek him here, we seek him there. Those Frenchies seek him everywhere. Is he in heaven? Is he in hell? That demmed elusive Pimpernel.*

And that was the thing about him; he was hard to track down. He was so ‘demmed elusive’. I’ve thought about the Scarlet Pimpernel when seeking help on how to be a faithful pastor. When I search the shelves of Christian bookshops for the biblical pastor I discover he is a very difficult character to track down. Perhaps he is mingling in, covertly, among the great crowd of books on the pastor as CEO, as dynamic ‘change agent’, as vision keeper and vision caster, as supreme commander of all beaurecratic functions and possessor of 21 irrefutable qualities. These pastors are there in superabundance. But the pastor as preacher and theologian? As godly exemplar? As shepherd and watchman? As equipper and trainer? Perhaps he’s in amongst them, somewhere. Perhaps he’s just not out there anymore. Perhaps he’s fled the twenty-first century. What can I say? I seek him here, I seek him there. I seek that pastor everywhere!

So, in amongst the great mass of literature on leadership and pastoral work that seems to miss the main point I hope this Lever catches your eye. I hope it unveils something of the true work of the biblical shepherd in all its glory. I hope it may even feel cleansing for those of you mired in the bog of managerial pastoral literature so much in fashion today. These articles and expositions from three Australian pastors plying their trade certainly had that effect on me.

Matthew Arkapaw



WORKMAN UNASHAMED: THE PASTOR AS PREACHER-THEOLOGIAN

Do you best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Starting out as a high school teacher, I wondered how on earth I’d have enough to say to fill a lesson. That problem didn’t seem to last long. Beginning as a preacher, the question was a little different, and a lot more urgent: How will I find something worthwhile to say? Surely the congregation knows these things? What do I have to say about this text that is in any way consequential? There’s a nagging sense that I myself see nothing particularly impacting about the set passage, and so neither will they.

I still quite often experience this kind of doubt at the beginning of sermon preparation. That’s after years of preaching where I’ve seen the power of plain exposition, and been rebuked time and again for a lack of confidence in the simple preached word. Nonetheless, that doubt often resurfaces as I come at a new preaching assignment.

And it’s the territory of Satan, I think. Way before Sunday morning, before the preacher has even begun to unpack his text and apply his training to exegesis or his pastoral mind to the congregation, he is susceptible to some of the most devious and destructive works of the Devil. And a capitulation to these devilish lies has probably resulted in some of my most confused, impotent or even dangerous sermons. And I’d guess the same capitulation on the part of other ministers has been impressively used by the Enemy to ensure the apathy and unrepentance of whole congregations, lulled and soothed by

preaching devoid of the Spirit’s fire. Ears tickled.

Paul says to Timothy,

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Shame and approval. I’m never surprised to find these ancient motivators employed in human thinking, and neither are we surprised when Satan manipulates these famous dials of our egos. But isn’t it interesting to hear the apostle framing the ministry of the word as a pursuit of approval and avoidance of shame. Sure, it’s God’s approval, not man’s – but really? Shame and approval? Can the glorious task of preaching God’s wonderful gospel of grace be framed in such crass terms as reward and punishment?

Suddenly my sermon prep takes on a new urgency.

REWARD

Yes, for the Christian minister there is the genuine possibility of shame before God. Individual faithfulness will be reckoned, and those who presume to teach will be judged all the more harshly. But Paul’s word to Timothy is not a threat, but an encouragement to anticipate and seek after the reward of Almighty God - like a soldier pleasing his commander (2:4), an athlete coveting prize money (2:5), or a farmer looking for what is his by right (2:6). The soldier is commended for his focus, the athlete is honoured for his discipline, and the farmer is rewarded for his hard work. And the apostle himself seems quite sure that his suffering for Christ will place him in good stead for future reward in the face of God (2:8-13).

Frankly, I don’t think we’re used to that kind of reward language in our Christian thinking, let alone in the task of preaching. But I can’t think of a more potent answer to that devilish urge in me to seek the approval and affirmation of my congregation. Far more precious, far more lasting, and far more personally-rewarding than any compliment from a parishioner or any sense of being liked by fellows, is that crown of righteousness held out to the faithful by the righteous and eternal Judge (4:8).

So the wise minister of the word does his best, to present himself to God as one approved.

It’s as personal as that. This is between God and me. My work is in every way a presentation of myself in his sight (4:1). Frightening thought?

Apparently God listens to my preaching - and critically too.

WORK

Of course, outside the gospel of grace this could only mean disaster. We praise God that He is the one making promises (1:1), He is pouring out mercy (1:2), and it is He giving the help of the Holy Spirit (1:14). It’s the Lord himself who stands by our side to give us strength (4:17), and so to God be the glory forever and ever.

But God’s glory is no empty praise issued by some cosmic default to a notionally supreme being. His glory is actual, concretely derived, connected to his effort and achievement, and the fruit of his labour. He is evidently glorious. And so the gospel, which is the power of God (1:8), is a power seen in the transformation of the unholy to holy (1:9-10), a turning away of sinners from wickedness

(2:19), resulting in a genuine readiness among his people to do anything good (2:21). The great accomplishment of God in the gospel is, finally, a humanity that genuinely pursues good works (3:10-17).

Supposedly.

It seems the whole letter of 2 Timothy is written precisely because there always will be those who disconnect true belief from true holiness of life (1:13-18, 2:16-19, 2:22-3:17). And I wonder if those of us so well-taught in doctrines of sovereignty and grace, might at times be reluctant to acknowledge any real significance to human effort in the face of God. Perhaps because we fail to comprehend the reality of the rebirth and regeneration brought about through the gospel. Sincere faith (1:5) is accompanied by a spirit of power, love and self-discipline (1:7), and by God's strength, this is to be actively cultivated by us.

God's preachers are workmen. And because of his grace, because of his Christ, and because of his indwelling Spirit, he will take that work seriously.

However tightly we want to screw down the theological bolts on God's sovereign grace, it's precisely because of the effectiveness of God's sovereign grace that the preacher is made a genuine workman, and is thus solemnly called upon to 'do his best', with God himself looking over his work.

Notice that in the apostle's mind, the worker's commendation is not some random token of appreciation, but is concretely connected to his effort. A soldier's focussed endurance is what pleases his commander. The farmer's reward is the very fruit that he has worked hard to cultivate. The apostles preaching

of the unchained word for the salvation of the lost is actually prized by God (2:8-13).

In his sovereignty, God really is looking to use my workmanship in the saving of souls (1:9-10). I find that both a challenge and a comfort. It's a serious challenge because I can see more clearly how the weight of God's glory presses down on my preaching. If God's glory is in the gospel of Christ, it is to my utter shame to be found miss-handling that work. Should I not, along with the apostle, be rather found in chains, than see that work suffer? No, really. If my workmanship is so seriously consequential for the glory and honour of Almighty God, then shouldn't I get cracking with some deadly serious effort?

And of course with that weighty thought comes the equally weighty encouragement, that by God's mercy, my humble preaching really is so eternally consequential and valuable to him. That is astounding. I am his workman. And I will do my best. And I will do so in humble faith, trusting that God's Spirit is at work.

CUTTING

And so we get to the point. The shepherd of God's people is a workman for God, whose work is in 'handling the word of truth'. If there is shame to be borne by those responsible for shepherding God's people, it will be from their failure to administer the scriptures.

I don't think this means that a church pastor can't do other things as part of his employment. But he must be clear in his mind, and able to solemnly account before God, as to when he is and isn't doing this work of shepherding via the word. He may need to restructure his timetable, educate

the expectations of his congregation, or even re-negotiate terms of employment, but his conscience must be clear before God about the extent to which – and the integrity with which – he is this workman.

Once all duties of a 'full time minister' have been accounted for, his effective capacity as a word-handling pastor may in fact be significantly less than full time. So be it. The important question is, to whatever extent he purports to be a minister of the word, is that in fact the work he is doing? In view of the appearing of Christ Jesus as judge of the living and dead, is he doing this work of prepared preaching and careful teaching – is he in fact correcting, rebuking and encouraging with an open Bible?

In describing this work, the apostle's choice of verb is a complete one-off in scripture, but perhaps not in the tent-making trade. 'Orthotomeo' (cutting straight) is rendered pretty well in the NIV as 'correctly handling'. Given the gravity of scriptural revelation in the face of God (1:10-12), the concern is for faithful, able teaching (cf 2:2) in the face of those who trifle with words and with people (2:14, 2:16, 3:13-17). It is, in the end, a solemn charge to careful, earnest and urgent preaching (4:1-4).

First, 'cutting straight' nicely alludes to that activity of dissection, that brings about understanding. This workman is expected to work hard in his study - very hard. He must know and understand the Word of Truth, feeling its weight, discerning the centre, and comprehending the implications. If my teaching preparation is full of short-cuts and laziness then I must repent, or expect only God's shaming of me and my work. This is about getting it right.

The pastor must be theologian - actively reading, thinking, dialoging, joining dots. And he is a biblical theologian - his interest, in the end, is the word of truth. It will always be about coming back to the scriptures.

But watch the apostle and you see that this is never about mastery of the text for mastery's sake. This workman's work is not the Word itself, but his right handling of that Word. His work, in fact, is people work. It is presenting people perfect in Christ. (3:10- 4:8). It's the feeding of lambs – real, actual people, identified and prayed for and loved by name (4:9-22).

So secondly, in this view, 'cutting straight' is a picture, not of mere dissection and examination, but of dividing and apportioning. The Word is rightly handled when it is appropriately ministering to people. The pastors' work is not done with sermons written or studies prepared. His work is people work – people he knows and understands and loves and longs for in the Lord. I wonder if texts like this have been used too long to justify among clergy a scholarly habit, indulgent of bookish tendencies, driven ultimately by academic ego. Rather, let all aspirations for further study, all signing up for masters courses, all purchasing of shiny new commentaries, all reading and writing of blog upon blog – let these only and ever be, in clear conscience, for the guarding and shepherding of actual and individual souls, or not done at all.

And third, 'cutting straight' seems to say as much about the aptitude and integrity of the worker himself, as anything else. Clear conscience (1:3, 1:12) and godliness of life (3:22-26) are crucial to the correct handling of God's word (1:13-14, 3:10-17). I remember how it dawned on me as a learning pastor

that the more I preached and the more I dared make pronouncements about this or that, then the more I opened myself up to hypocrisy and judgment. That was a chilling realisation, and it made me want to pray all the more that my preaching should come out of genuine personal conviction and actual repentance.

When my conscience is not clear my preaching will have no cut. With my life not matching my message, I won't even believe the words coming out of my mouth, let alone my congregation. A friend of mine once confided in me that, rightly or wrongly, he could not take seriously the preaching of a particular pastor who was clearly a glutton. Just like there will be many a preacher who's very cleverly-crafted sermons may be politely tolerated but never really listened-to because he has not worked to master behavioural foibles or communicate grace in his relationships.

Similarly, nothing cripples ministry fervour like guilt. Ministers harbour secret sins and preachers convince themselves that, after all, a benign patch of misdemeanours can be safely cultivated and privately relished. But watch their ministry lose focus and impact. See how guilt stops preachers from bringing God's word to bear with any weight on the hearts of others. Rather, with gospel-taught integrity and hard-won godliness comes a preacher's conviction – his capacity to 'remind' (2:14), to 'warn' (2:14), to 'gently instruct' (2:25), and to 'teach', rebuke' and train' (3:16) in season and out of season. It's straight hands that cut straight.

CONCLUSION

So this task of correctly handling the Word of Truth is a worthy work that calls for

great diligence and care in the handling of scriptures, of people, and of myself. As surely as the Devil still lies and deceives (cf 4:18), there will be church workers for whom the appearing of Christ will involve painful and devastating personal shaming. I can't imagine what that would be like – I just know that His praise and appreciation is what I want, and by God's grace and to God's glory I will work hard for that reward.

Meanwhile, here are three questions for pastors to consider:

1. Which aspects of my role are in fact word-ministry?
2. What does it mean for me to be God's workman?
3. What goals can I set for my study of God's word?

Timothy Blencowe
Pastor, Macquarie Baptist



THE PASTOR AS EXEMPLAR

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

1 Timothy 4: 11-16.

Writing a paper on 'the Pastor as Exemplar' is analogous to having a medical check up, both useful and usefully uncomfortable. There are many parts of Scripture I could plunge into but I have been asked to focus on 1 Timothy 4:11-16, a portion of Scripture I regularly read, not least because like Timothy I am a young Pastor. I am now 33 years of age and this is my fifth year pastoring at Mentone Baptist Church in Melbourne. It is something I love and yet you do feel the weighty responsibility of Shepherding a congregation of God's people.

In 1 Timothy 4 Paul is teaching Timothy what a 'good servant of Christ Jesus' looks like. This passage paints for us a portrait of a Pastor, and by extension a picture for every Christian.

There were two erroneous views of a Christian Pastor circulating in Ephesus – the first group are described in verses 1-6, as those who were perpetuating false doctrines and ungodly lifestyles. The second false view concerns 'perceived maturity'; some members of Timothy's Church took issue with him because of his youthfulness. We don't know Timothy's exact age, but for him

to be considered 'young' he would have been under 40 and quite possibly in his 20s. Paul exhorts Timothy to be a corrective to both those erring pictures, although his purpose is much wider than that, the manner in which Timothy serves as a Gospel servant has salvific goals (4:16).

PUBLIC NOT PROTECTIONIST

The first observation I'd like to make from this passage is that for a Pastor to be an exemplar to his Church he needs to be public. The point is rather obvious but it is worth articulating - Paul asks Timothy for a transparency in both doctrine and life that would send many Pastors squirming for a hole under the desk.

Protectionism isn't the model Paul paints; I know of Pastors who feel this unspoken compulsion to hide theological convictions from their people, sometimes because they do not trust their Church with that information, perhaps they think the congregation won't cope with a particular revelation, and perhaps even because he feels that he would lose his pastorate. And Pastors often endorse a policy of protectionism when it comes to life; we are prone to keeping family life so private that the people in our churches rarely see our daily living in action. Of course it would be irresponsible to so expose your family to public scrutiny that every time there's a fight at home the whole community know about it because of your twitter updates. Being a Pastor does not mean betraying your marriage and family and allowing them to become food for gossip, and yet it is impossible to model Christian living when the front door to our homes, hearts and minds is barely ajar.

EXAMPLE IN LIFE

We now come to the content of a Pastor's 'exemplar' – it concerns both doctrine and life. Paul first of all addresses life. Paul's exhortation to godly living is a given in Christian circles; that Pastors sometimes fail in extraordinary ways has brought Churches into the public eye in recent years and caused deplorable damage to the name of Jesus. I don't think I appreciate to what extent people's views of Churches have sunk as accounts of abuses continue to come out into the open. If only we took seriously what God is teaching Pastors here. Paul reminds Timothy to pursue godliness because godliness doesn't just happen, as though the moment God redeems us the Holy Spirit switches on auto pilot in our hearts so that from that moment on we are the Christian version of a Zombie. We have been forgiven, we have been given a new heart and mind, we now have a desire to please our Saviour, God has given us his Spirit, but God loves us too much to make us into lifeless creatures of godliness. Sanctification is a life-long process, even for us Pastors. It's analogous to pre-season footy training - *For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (v.8).*

At the moment the footy season is months away but the players are already working hard on the training track, doing weights, going for runs, kicking the footy. No player in the AFL (and you thought I was thinking League?) is going to turn up to a Round 1 match without hardship, sweat, injuries and a KFC free diet. Why should we think

godliness is any different (with exception to the KFC bit which is an essential key to ministry)?

We have to train. Even when the season proper kicks off players continue to train. We give up so easily. So often Christians are not willing to make the sacrifice, to sweat it out for God. We just give in – it's too hard to fight porn, it's too hard to remain sexually pure, I am feeling resentful and I want to let it out like everyone else, etc. Paul's answer to us is train. Get down and dirty. Get exercising.

Here are some useful training exercises for godliness:

1. Read your Bible every day. Stay fresh with God and read Scripture for just you and your relationship with God.
2. Keep working on your prayer life
3. Learn to enjoy God
4. Take your Sabbath every week
5. Limit seasons of great business and follow them up with a week of light duties. It's ok to not do everything all the time. Give yourself permission to drop the ball on some matters.
6. Enjoy life – spend real time with family and friends. We have a greater propensity to sin when we are tired, stressed and losing energy, so put in place a strategy to counter those things. Go to bed earlier, take the family away for a 24 hr holiday, take your wife out for dinner, go watch Carlton smash Sydney... again.
7. Allow people to minister to you

8. Be accountable to at least one mature Christian in your congregation (of the same gender) and someone outside your Church.

One quick reflection: much on this list has to do with sustaining health (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) and focusing life more broadly than on your ministry. Why? As Christian ministers we do love God and we want to honor him with our lives, but when we fail it is often when the tank is half empty and we're parched, but we're either too busy or worn down to pause and replenish our tanks. We need to learn to stop, take care of godliness so that we continue to be of value to our congregations and setting them an example of how to live Christ glorifying lives.

I won't unpack Paul's list of life examples in v.12, but it is interesting to note that most of them concern how one relates to others ('speech', 'love', 'purity'). This is not a list of 'look at me and how holy I am', but a life that gives expression to relating to others for their good. As our congregations see the genuineness of our lives toward them, Paul argues they'll get over any anxiety about our age or idiosyncrasies and bring about a greater sense of unity and serving together for the advancement of the Gospel.

EXAMPLE IN DOCTRINE

But of course Paul doesn't limit the Pastor's example to life, he's says, *life and doctrine*. Godliness without sound doctrine is false piety and results in creating communities of moralists rather than God-knowing, Christ honouring Churches. It is way overdue that we preach against this false dichotomy of life and doctrine. Doctrine does not stand opposed

to life, it does not distract us from life, true doctrine interprets life and helps shape our lives, leading us to Christ. Doctrine does not belong to the academy and the school of 'let me write another book that no one can understand'. The noun doctrine means teaching, and it is the body of teaching that Paul has passed on to Timothy from Christ himself; and it is the very same theology that Timothy is to pass on to the following generation of believers. It's nothing less than the Gospel itself. In fact Paul's understanding of doctrine is synonymous with Scripture (v.13). For Timothy to be an example to his church in doctrine is for him to: *devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. 14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.* Of all the ministries that exist in the life of the Church Paul singles out reading, preaching and teaching the Bible. This is the ministry Timothy must not neglect in his Church.

A few months ago a visiting preacher at Mentone shared with us his observations about Churches across Melbourne. He is someone who visits many churches, and his comment to us was that very few Churches are preaching the Bible, and many are not even reading the Bible in their services. In fact his observation is that the larger the Church the less likely they are to read the Bible and sometimes even pray. They fill the 1.5 hours with stories, jokes, music, and perhaps the preacher might make a reference to a Bible verse or two. You've got to wonder, what are these guys feeding their churches?

Biblical Christianity is Bible Christianity and inherent to Bible Christianity is reading and

teaching the Bible. How can our Churches know God and grow in him if we are not opening the Scriptures before them? It is strikingly clear in 1 Timothy 4 that a healthy church is a church oozing with Bible reading and preaching and teaching. It's programs ooze with bible teaching. I'll let you into a secret that I've shared with Mentone Baps, I want us to be known as a Church of the Bible. I'm sure that's pretty obvious to them by now – I want to be able to prick this body of Christ and for the blood to run with Bible. Paul wants Timothy's church to be marked by the word. Above everything we need to hear from God because it's only from God that we know the Gospel, that we know how to be his people. We need to hear God speak.

So Pastors, we need to be Bible men. At home, at Church, in growth groups, when visiting the sick, when mentoring the young open the word. As we do we are not only teaching them God's truth we are demonstrating our own need for God to teach us and allow his words to direct our paths.

In verses 15-16 Paul drives home the importance of the Pastor's life and doctrine. As Paul piles on the imperatives in quick succession it is impossible to come to any conclusion other than our lives as Pastors and our doctrine are extremely important. *'Be diligent...Give yourself wholly...Watch...closely...Persevere in them...'* Thankfully Paul isn't a member of the holiness movement, for he mentions 'progress'. Pastors fail, we sin, we make mistakes, and we shouldn't hide our fallenness from our congregations, 'let them see your **progress**.' Let our people see God's grace at work in our lives and comment on it. Our Churches are encouraged and inspired to godliness,

and to feeding from the lips of God in his Word, as they see us progressing.

CONCLUSION

What is the portrait of a good minister? He may wear a suit and tie, or have dread locks like a friend of mine. He may be 60 years of age or 20. He might wear clothes from Target or by Zegna or Mambo. He might enjoy Aussie Rules or even League (ok, I won't stretch the line that far). The portrait is about doctrine and godliness. Hold onto sound doctrine and live life in such a way that sets a good example to the Church. Why? Our lives and teaching have an eschatological goal (v.10 & v.16) – salvation.

At school I was a member of the athletics team. My main event was triple jump but I also represented school in running. As I runner (albeit very amateurish) I know that when you see the finishing line you don't slow down or stop, you push harder. The closer we are to the finish line the harder we run and push ourselves because we're eager to finish. I pray that we're like that; I pray that our Churches are like that, not slowing down or giving up, but running forward with doctrine in one hand and life in the other, holding onto them in Christ by the power of Holy Spirit until we finish the race. When will that be? When we're dead or Christ has returned. Our ministry is of salvific proportions, which often blows my mind, and helpfully reminds me to keep going to God for his grace and power.

Murray Campbell
Senior Pastor, Mentone Baptist



“FOR A LONG TIME I HAVE BEEN CONVINCED THAT I COULD TAKE A PERSON WITH A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION, GIVE HIM OR HER A SIX-MONTH TRADE SCHOOL TRAINING, AND PROVIDE A PASTOR WHO WOULD BE SATISFACTORY TO ANY DISCRIMINATING AMERICAN CONGREGATION. THE CURRICULUM WOULD CONSIST OF FOUR COURSES. COURSE 1: CREATIVE PLAGIARISM. I WOULD PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH A WIDE RANGE OF EXCELLENT AND INSPIRATIONAL TALKS, SHOW YOU HOW TO ALTER THEM JUST ENOUGH TO OBSCURE THEIR ORIGINS, AND GET YOU A REPUTATION FOR WIT AND WISDOM. COURSE II: VOICE CONTROL FOR PRAYER AND COUNSELING. WE WOULD DEVELOP YOUR OWN DISTINCT STYLE OF HOLY JOE INTONATION, ACQUIRING THE SKILL IN RESONANCE AND MODULATION THAT CONVEYS AN UNMISTAKABLE AURA OF SANCTITY. COURSE III: EFFICIENT OFFICE MANAGEMENT. THERE IS NOTHING PARISHIONERS ADMIRE MORE IN THEIR PASTORS THAN THE CAPACITY TO RUN A TIGHT SHIP ADMINISTRATIVELY. IF WE RETURN ALL TELEPHONE CALLS WITH TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, ANSWER ALL LETTERS WITHIN A WEEK, DISTRIBUTING ENOUGH CARBONS TO KEY PEOPLE SO THAT THEY KNOW WE ARE ON TOP OF THINGS, AND HAVE JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CLUTTER ON OUR DESKS – NOT TOO MUCH OR WE APPEAR INEFFICIENT, NOT TOO LITTLE OR WE APPEAR UNDEREMPLOYED – WE QUICKLY GET THE REPUTATION FOR EFFICIENCY THAT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING WE ACTUALLY DO. COURSE IV: IMAGE PROJECTION. HERE WE WOULD MASTER THE HALF-DOZEN WELL-KNOWN AND EASILY IMPLEMENTED DEVICES THAT CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE TERRIFICALLY BUSY AND WIDELY SOUGHT AFTER FOR COUNSEL BY INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY. A ONE-WEEK REFRESHER COURSE EACH YEAR WOULD INTRODUCE NEW PHRASES THAT WOULD CONVINCED OUR PARISHIONERS THAT WE ARE BOLD INNOVATORS ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE MEGATRENDS AND AT THE SAME TIME SOLIDLY ROOTED IN ALL THE TRADITIONAL VALUES OF OUR SAINTED ANCESTORS.(I HAVE BEEN LAUGHING FOR SEVERAL YEARS OVER THIS TRADE SCHOOL TRAINING FOR PASTORS WITH WHICH I PLAN TO MAKE MY FORTUNE. RECENTLY, THOUGH, THE JOKE HAS BACKFIRED ON ME. I KEEP SEEING ADVERTISEMENTS FOR INSTITUTES AND WORKSHOPS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY THAT INVITE PASTORS TO SIGN UP FOR THIS EXACT CURRICULUM. THE ADVERTISED COURSE OFFERINGS ARE NOT QUITE AS HONESTLY LABELED AS MINE, BUT THE CONTENT APPEARS TO BE IDENTICAL – A CURRICULUM THAT TRAINS PASTORS TO SATISFY THE CURRENT CONSUMER TASTES IN RELIGION. I'M NOT LAUGHING ANYMORE.)”

EUGENE PETERSON, WORKING THE ANGLES: THE SHAPE OF PASTORAL INTEGRITY, EERDMANS, GRAND RAPIDS, 1987, PP7-8.

THE PASTOR AS TRAINER AND DISCIPLE MAKER

BOOK REVIEW: THE TRELIS AND THE VINE, BY COL MARSHALL & TONY PAYNE, MATTHIAS MEDIA, 2009.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 Timothy 2: 1-2

With numerous glowing reviews from some 'heavy hitters' adorning the back cover, not to mention the first couple of pages inside, it would seem difficult not to be impressed. The book also has a sub-title which shouts major book - 'the ministry mindshift that changes everything!' Given the commendations and polemical title, I had high expectations and they were largely met. The authors Col Marshall and Tony Payne are well known writers, and have certainly written an engaging and challenging book with many helpful insights on what is the biblical model for ministry. I have given away four copies already, and it is one of those books that I think every pastor and elder should read. I plan to work through a number of chapters with our elders this year as part of our ongoing theological reflection together, and in my view it should be standard reading for every student pastor and ministry trainee. Having said all of that, I'm not sure that the model is quite as challenging or polemical for Baptists, at least in theory if not in practice - but more on that later.

It's a short, easy read, with the main body of the book being about 160 pages. It is broken up into twelve brief chapters, and there are three appendices. The first appendix

is the most useful as a number of frequently asked questions are used as a way of further defending the main principles, as well as extrapolating on how to apply them in an existing church. The chapters flow logically as their argument is developed. The starting point is the problem which besets many churches - that of administration trumping ministry. The first chapter, from which the title of the book is taken, helpfully uses the biblical metaphor of the vine (Psalm 80, John 15) to establish the main issue. The issue identified is the struggle to stay focused on gospel ministry, or the 'vine work' of discipling people, in contrast with the tendency for churches and pastors to be consumed by tending to the institution, or 'trellis', that develops around the gathering of believers. The governance structures, established programs and building assets can consume all of the time, so that the trellis gets all the attention, and the vine work of establishing disciple-making disciples withers. The image resonates with the experiences of many churches and pastors, at least those that I know, whereby much of the energy and time of the leaders is side-tracked into administering the existing structure. As Marshall and Payne note in chapter one, there can be an attraction to trellis work, so that it is not just the unwanted demands of the institution that see vine work diminish:

"And that's the thing about trellis work: it tends to take over from vine work. Perhaps it's because trellis work is easier and less personally threatening. Vine work is personal and requires much prayer. It requires us to depend on God and to open our mouths and speak God's word in some way to another person Trellis work also

often looks more impressive than vine work. It's more visible and structural. We can point to something tangible - a committee, an event, a program, a budget, an infrastructure - and say that we have achieved something. We can build our trellis till it reaches to the heavens, in the hope of making a name for ourselves, but there may still be very little growth in the vine" (pp.9-10).

This focus on the trellis can and does leave precious little time to invest in the gospel ministry of discipling. As the writers point out from the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), to be a disciple of Jesus is to be called to make other disciples, who will themselves disciple others. They state the goal of Christian ministry and summarize the threat to it as follows:

"Thus the goal of Christian ministry is quite simple, and in a sense measurable: are we making and nurturing genuine disciples of Christ? The church always tends towards institutionalism and secularization. The focus shifts to preserving traditional programs and structures, and the goal of discipleship is lost. The mandate of disciple-making provides the touchstone for whether our church is engaging in Christ's mission (p.14)."

Discipling believers, and training mature Christians to disciple others can easily get lost under the mountain of meetings and programs, and even crisis pastoral care for church members (as important as that is). Not only does the average pastor or church face the challenge of institutionalism, but also the pressure to see their church grow,

which often sees an emphasis on ministry methods or techniques other than discipling and training. Thus, in the first chapter they raise the issues and some of the answers which they go on to unpack in the remaining chapters.

The twin threats to the vine work of making and nurturing genuine disciples are asserted to be institutionalism, and church growth programs that focus on erecting and maintaining structures. Chapter two highlights the 'ministry mind-shifts' that they envisage, which further sets out the direction of the book before they develop their argument in detail from chapter three. The ministry mind-shifts involve moving: from running programs to building people; from running events to training people; from using people to growing people; from filling gaps to training new workers; from solving problems to helping people make progress; from clinging to ordained ministry to developing team leadership; from focusing on church polity to forging ministry partnerships; from relying on training institutions to establishing local training; from focusing on immediate pressures to aiming at long-term expansion; from engaging in management to engaging in ministry; from seeking church growth to desiring gospel growth. There are certainly a number of challenges in that list, which they flesh out in chapter two, but the heart of the biblical arguments behind these pithy phrases is found in chapters three to five.

In chapter three they outline how God's agenda is the salvation of souls through Spirit-backed gospel preaching. They follow the agricultural images of the vine and gospel growth from Psalm 80 and Hosea 10 and 14 through to John 15, Acts and Colossians 1 and 2. This

brief biblical theology of the metaphor is helpful, and leads them to three implications: we must abandon ourselves to the cause of Christ and his gospel; we must focus on growth in individuals; and God brings this growth through the power of God's Spirit as he applies his word to people's hearts. They note that the third implication could occur in a limitless number of situations (not just at church). Any concerns the reader might have about the author's viewing all growth as coming from a twenty minute sermon on Sunday is removed by the title of chapter 8: 'Why Sunday sermons are necessary but not sufficient.' Thus, they conclude chapter three with the very clear statement that speaking the word of God in the power of the Spirit is the essence of vine work - everything else is trellis. Here, as elsewhere in the book, they side-step the pitfall of offering another 'you-beaut' technique, and focus us on the foundational biblical principles which should shape the many varied ways in which vine work can be undertaken.

In chapter four they make it clear that every Christian is a vine-worker, notwithstanding the fact that the bible teaches that some are set aside to take the lead in vine work. Chapter five builds on the principle of the previous chapter seeking to answer possible objections that such a model expects too much of the 'average' Christian. Marshall and Payne helpfully summarize their point at the end of the chapter:

"... all pastors and elders are also just partners. They do not have a different essence or status, or a fundamentally different task - as if they are the real 'players' and the rest of the congregation are spectators or support crew."

Having widened the field of players from the priestly few, to all the Christians attending a church, chapters six to eleven then look at the pastor as trainer. There is much in these chapters about ministry apprenticeship as one way in which such training could take place, and there is also a very helpful discussion of three models of pastoral ministry in chapter eight. They contrast the institutional pastor (clergyman or service provider), with the church growth model (pastor as the CEO), and their model of the pastor as trainer. Though the models are stereotypical and in reality there is overlap between the categories, this is thought-provoking and very challenging.

I want to return to my comment in the opening paragraph - this outline of the nature of church ministry should not be that challenging or polemical for Baptists, at least in theory. I think the ideas expressed in this model of ministry are far more radical for our Anglican brothers and sisters, and other more hierarchical denominations. I don't intend that statement to be condescending or triumphal, for we have much to learn and to apply from this helpful book. However, here is the thing: we already say we believe in every member ministry; we do not have the sharp divide between the clergy and the laity that other systems of governance must work against; we don't have the level of institutionalism which is the straw man that they are knocking down. As Mark Dever, an American Baptist pastor says in his review of the book: "What Col and Tony have described here is exactly what I've been trying to do in my own life and in our congregation for years. According to this book, Christians are to be disciple-making disciples and pastors are to be trainers." Dever is highlighting that the book is excellent but is not a radical

mindshift for him, and neither should it be for most Baptists. Let me say again, Baptists in NSW don't have it all together - we're not at the finish line with nothing to learn, but our starting block should be some way down the track! Of course, our system of governance, and emphasis of the priesthood of all believers doesn't mean that we are immune to institutional pressures; that many of our pastors are not struggling with escaping trellis work so that they might get to the vine work. But we should have a head start in moving the culture of our churches towards discipling and training. Our bigger struggle should not so much be the mind-shift, but the practical culture shift required to implement the excellent practical advice that is offered in this book.

Rod Bayley
Senior Pastor, Wollongong Baptist

to whether we are promoting these values so that they are truly the culture of our church, and whether we have put in place mechanisms which facilitate discipling and training.



The church I pastor is just setting out on a number of the practical implications, and I found the book to be less of a radical re-think, and more convicting and challenging to follow through on what I already believe. I was greatly encouraged to keep working on a culture of training which includes ministry apprenticeships as a key outworking of our desire to raise disciple-making disciples. It's just one way in which such a culture can be fostered, but there are many insightful comments on such apprenticeships in chapters 6 to 11 which get you thinking about all the various ministries of your church.

I highly recommend it to anyone keen to think about their church's model of ministry. Hold it up as a mirror to your church's current thinking and practices. Though the theoretical challenges might not be as great in our congregational approach to ministry, the practical challenges could be quite steep. It constantly challenged me as

Our bigger struggle should not so much be the mind-shift, but the practical culture shift required to implement the excellent practical advice that is offered in this book.

RICHARD BAXTER ON THE NECESSITY OF PRIVATE INSTRUCTION IN THE GOSPEL TO ALL IN THE CONGREGATION, ENGLAND, 1656.

“IT WILL SHOW MEN THE TRUE NATURE OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE, AND AWAKEN THEM TO THE BETTER CONSIDERATION OF IT, THAN IS NOW USUAL. IT IS TOO COMMON FOR MEN TO THINK THAT THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY IS NOTHING BUT TO PREACH, AND TO BAPTIZE, AND TO ADMINISTER THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND TO VISIT THE SICK. BY THIS MEANS THE PEOPLE WILL SUBMIT TO NO MORE; AND TOO MANY MINISTERS ARE SUCH STRANGERS TO THEIR OWN CALLING, THAT THEY WILL DO NO MORE. IT HATH OFT GRIEVED MY HEART TO OBSERVE SOME EMINENT ABLE PREACHERS, HOW LITTLE THEY DO FOR THE SAVING OF SOULS, SAVE ONLY IN THE PULPIT; AND TO HOW LITTLE PURPOSE MUCH OF THEIR LABOUR IS, BY THIS NEGLECT. THEY HAVE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE THAT THEY NEVER SPOKE A WORD TO PERSONALLY FOR THEIR SALVATION; AND IF WE MAY JUDGE BY THEIR PRACTICE, THEY CONSIDER IT NOT AS THEIR DUTY; AND THE PRINCIPAL THING THAT HARDENETH MEN IN THIS OVERSIGHT IS THE COMMON NEGLECT OF THE PRIVATE PART OF THE WORK BY OTHERS. THERE ARE SO FEW THAT DO MUCH IN IT, AND THE OMISSION HATH GROWN SO COMMON AMONG PIOUS, ABLE MEN, THAT THE DISGRACE OF IT IS ABATED BY THEIR ABILITY; AND A MAN MAY NOW BE GUILTY OF IT WITHOUT ANY PARTICULAR NOTICE OR DISHONOUR. NEVER DOTHSIN SO REIGN IN A CHURCH OR STATE, AS WHEN IT HATH GAINED REPUTATION, OR, AT LEAST, IS NO DISGRACE TO THE SINNER, NOT A MATTER OF OFFENCE TO BEHOLDERS. BUT I MAKE NO DOUBT, THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD, THAT THE RESTORING OF THE PRACTICE OF PERSONAL OVERSIGHT WILL CONVINCEN MANY MINISTERS, THAT THIS IS AS TRULY THEIR WORK AS THAT WHICH THEY NOW DO, AND MAY AWAKEN THEM TO SEE THAT THE MINISTRY IS ANOTHER KIND OF BUSINESS THAN TOO MANY EXCELLENT PREACHERS TAKE IT TO BE. BRETHREN, DO BUT SET YOURSELVES CLOSELY TO THIS WORK, AND FOLLOW IT DILIGENTLY; AND THOUGH YOU DO IT SILENTLY, WITHOUT ANY WORDS TO THEM THAT ARE NEGLIGENT, I AM IN HOPE THAT MOST OF YOU WHO ARE PRESENT MAY LIVE TO SEE THE DAY, WHEN THE NEGLECT OF PRIVATE PERSONAL OVERSIGHT OF ALL THE FLOCK SHALL BE TAKEN FOR A SCANDALOUS AND ODIUS OMISSION, AND SHALL BE DISGRACEFUL TO THEM THAT ARE GUILTY OF IT, AS PREACHING BUT ONCE A DAY WAS HERETOFORE. A SCHOOLMASTER MUST TAKE PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF HIS SCHOLARS, OR ELSE HE IS LIKE TO DO LITTLE GOOD. IF PHYSICIANS SHOULD ONLY READ A PUBLIC LECTURE ON PHYSIC, THEIR PATIENTS WOULD NOT BE MUCH THE BETTER OF THEM; NOR WOULD A LAWYER SECURE YOUR ESTATE BY READING A LECTURE ON LAW. NOW, THE CHARGE OF A PASTOR REQUIRETH PERSONAL DEALING, AS WELL AS ANY OF THESE.”

RICHARD BAXTER, THE REFORMED PASTOR, THE BANNER OF TRUTH, EDINBURGH, 1974, PP178-179.

THE PASTOR AS PASTOR – A SUNDAY SERMON: WHAT IS ‘SHEPHERDING’ AND ‘PASTORAL CARE’?

Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Peter 5: 2-4

THE WRONG END OF THE STICK?

Our question this morning is this: what is shepherding or pastoral care according to the Bible? Our words shepherd and pastor mean the same thing, they translate the Greek word – *poimen*; ‘shepherd’ or ‘pastoral’ (to do with sheep). What is it to pastor? To be pastoral? What words or images come to mind? I wonder how you would answer?

Deborah and I will often have a conversation along these lines. We’ll be talking about a minister that one of us knows and has had a bit to do with. And I’ll say to Deborah, ‘Well, how is he pastorally? Is he *pastoral*?’ And by that I mean – is he caring? Empathetic? Good with people? Wise? And she’ll say, ‘Yeah, very pastoral’ Then I’ll say, ‘OK, but how is he at *teaching*?’ And she might say, ‘Oh, not so good. Preaching? Thumbs down.’ Isn’t that interesting? My questions show that I think of pastoral care as one thing, and faithful teaching as another thing. But I think I’ve had the wrong end of the stick on this. Maybe you have to. Today we use the word and idea of ‘pastoral’ to describe a type of warm and sensitive counsel, or advice for life – even schools today have ‘pastoral

carers’. But it’s very important for the church to see that this is not really what the Bible means when it talks about shepherding, or pastor-ing.

1 PETER 5

In 1 Peter 5 we learn several things. First, it is the church’s elders who are told to shepherd. V1 ‘to the elders among you’ v2 ‘be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care.’ In these verses Peter’s main concern is to tell us the manner and motivation of shepherding. In v2 he says the elders must shepherd not out of compulsion, but from willingness. Not out of greed, but wanting to serve. In v3 not by ‘lording it over’ people, but through the power of example. And, v4, in recognition of Jesus as the Chief shepherd, and, for a reward, yes, but the one he gives – not for any earthly reward. This is the character with which they must serve. But, what is their service? What will shepherding actually involve? What’s the key? What’s the heart of it?

There are hints here. In v2 Peter says the flock is ‘under your care.’ And they serve as ‘overseers’ (the word also means bishops). Both these words imply the exercise of authority; of leading. Even of, dare I say it, ruling. In fact v5 shows the leading and ruling nature of shepherding; it literally says, ‘Young men, in the same way, be submissive to elders.’ Using the same word for elders as in v1. The young are not told to submit to older people in general (though they should); they are reminded that those with the special role of elders/shepherds/overseers, are in authority over them. Pastor-ing is an authoritative activity. That’s important but it still doesn’t answer our question – what is the activity itself? What is the shepherding? What is the pastor meant to do for the sheep? Meant to

be for the sheep? What is their authority for? Let’s look at verses in the New Testament where this word ‘shepherd’ or ‘pastor’ appears. The consistency is striking.

JOHN 10

Observe **Jesus as the shepherd**. Turn in your Bible to John 10: 11-16. “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*”

The shepherd cares about the sheep; dies for the sheep. But why? To protect the sheep from wolves. *Protection*. What do the sheep need to do? To *hear* his voice. The shepherd protects from wolves. The sheep hear the voice of God. Notice that.

JOHN 21

Observe **Peter as a shepherd**. Look at John 21: 15-17. “*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus*

asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” he said “Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

How is Peter to care for the sheep? Feed them. How in the Bible are God’s people fed? What did the Old Testament, and Jesus, say? “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” The shepherd *protects*, and here, he *provides* the word of God. And the sheep, like before, must *hear* the voice of God.

ACTS 20

Come to Acts 20: 25-31. **The Ephesian elders as shepherds**. Paul said to the elders, “*Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw disciples after them. So be on your guard!*”

The elders are overseers and shepherds (just different ways of describing the same guys). To do what? *Protect* the flock from wolves. Wolves distort the truth – the shepherd must guard them with the true truth, as Paul had done, proclaiming the will of God and preaching. They protect them from the wolves (false teachers) they *provide* them with the word of God. Are you detecting a pattern here?

EPHESIANS 4

I hate to get monotonous but turn with me to Ephesians 4: 11 “*It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.*” Here the word pastor is joined to teacher by the word ‘and’ (*kai* in Greek) – it is what Bible scholars call a co-ordinate phrase – the two words are brought together. In English we might put a dash between them. It’s not talking about two people: pastors, and then teachers. It’s almost certainly talking about the one person, the pastor-teacher or the shepherd-teacher. The shepherd is a teacher. What is the *aim* of their teaching? To help the sheep be so strong in the truth of the gospel that false teachings will not hurt them: v14, “*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*” Protection from the wolves. Now who, in several of these verses have been referred to as shepherds? Elders. Will we find similar instructions for elders?

1 TIMOTHY 3 AND TITUS 1

Interestingly, when we look at how Paul describes elders in 1 Timothy 3:9-11, and Titus 1: 9-11 he focuses exclusively on their godly character as the requirement. Except for one thing. There’s *one* skill, one gift, *one other thing* about them they must be *able to do* – in 1 Timothy he says the elder must be able to...**teach!** In Titus, v9 ‘*he must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*’ He teaches sound doctrine and refutes false teaching. In teaching he feeds the sheep

the word of God and protects them from the wolves.

HEBREWS 13

Hebrews 13: 7 describes leaders this way ‘*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*’ V17 ‘*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you (there’s the shepherd metaphor again) as men who must give account.*’ Leading is speaking the word of God, and having a character worth imitating. This is how they ‘keep watch’ (over the flock) and why they are to be obeyed.

OLD TESTAMENT

Folks, it’s the same in the Old Testament but I’m not going to drag you through it! What makes a shepherd? They protect and provide. David was a good shepherd. Why? Because he killed lions and bears. In the Old Testament kings are called shepherds. What made David, the shepherd boy, a great shepherd-king of the people? Protection and provision – he killed the enemies of God. To be pastoral, shepherd-like, was to be a warrior-king. What did the *false* kings, those false shepherds, do? They killed the prophets! Don’t you see? They keep the word of God from the people, and the people cannot eat the word of God. They don’t provide.

When King Herod put the prophet John in prison, and killed the prophet John, when the false shepherd-king tries to shut down the word of God, it says Jesus saw the people coming to him and it says “he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” Their so-called king had failed; they needed a real king.

And what did Jesus do at that moment? He sat the sheep down on the grass, and he *fed* 5000 of them!

The shepherd kings of the Old Testament stood guard over the people to stop their enemies destroying their villages, crops and families. The shepherds of the New Testament stand guard over the people of God to stop their enemies who seek to destroy their very souls by taking away the true gospel from them. They provide the word of God and by doing so they protect the sheep. By *this* act, the teaching of the word of God, are congregations to be ruled by their leadership. They kill, as it were, the teachings of the wolves, and feed the sheep. The better they do that, the more pastoral they are.

CONCLUSIONS

Do you see where my thinking had become confused, in my conversation with Deborah? To ask if that particular minister was a good and faithful teacher of the gospel *was not* a separate question to asking if he's pastoral. It's the same question. That's what shepherds in the New Testament are; that's their most pastoral act. It's a natural enough mistake to make. We think of sheep and we think of cuteness, wool; we think fluffy, we think warm, we think tender, so we think pastoral care is essentially that. All that is good, and every Christian is called to love, care, listen, be empathetic, be interested in people, give counsel, be hospitable, be an encourager, a friend. But for me to think that was the essence of shepherding and pastor-ing was a terrible confusion. It's just not the way the Bible talks about pastoral care.

We are each shepherding only to the extent that we are providing sheep with the word of

God, and protecting them from the wolves who distort the gospel.

What do we expect of our paid pastors? Now pastoring and leading is broader than our paid pastors, but for the sake of argument let's ask what we expect of the people in our churches we actually call pastors, that is, our paid ministers, (our full time elders, if you will). If we think their shepherding is mainly in the giving of comfort, listening, and counselling per se, we will have missed something the Bible is at great pains to point out: that the pastoral act of the pastor *consists primarily* in the forthright, faithful, prayerful, authoritative teaching of the Word of God. That is, feeding and protecting the sheep like the faithful kings and shepherds of old.

George Barna writes books about pastoral leadership – and sells hundreds of thousands of copies to pastors. He argues the modern pastor will need a group of skills different from those Paul listed, namely, gifts of delegation, confidence, interaction, decision-making, visibility, practicality, accountability, and discernment much more than they need gifts related to teaching. What a disastrous idea. No wonder the word of God and prayer is abandoned by so many pastors who are so busy with so many other things, and no wonder then that there is such theological immaturity in so many of our people, and so many sheep are wandering away. Let's pray it will not be the case.

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