



## Pastors: Following Jesus

(Installation service for Pastor Eric Nygren)

Titus 1:5-9

September 16, 2018

Today is a special Sunday in the life of our church. We are officially installing Pastor Eric Nygren as our new Associate Pastor. Therefore, I thought it would be good for us as a church to reflect on a few things that the Bible has to say about pastors. As I was

preparing my sermon, I thought, I should really take a look at every New Testament passage that talks about pastors. I figured that that would probably take some time, but it seemed like a good place to start. So, let me begin by asking YOU to guess how many times the New Testament uses the word “pastor.” (This is one of those good Bible trivia questions!) Would you guess that the word “pastor” is mentioned in the New Testament more than 10 times? 6-10 times? 2-5 times?

Well, actually none of these options are correct. In fact, the New Testament only mentions the actual word “pastor” 1 time, in Ephesians 4:11. The Greek word is Ποιμήν which means “one who serves as guardian or leader, shepherd.”<sup>1</sup> “Shepherd” is probably the best way to understand a pastor’s role and responsibilities in the church. This flows right out of the Old Testament concept of godly leaders who shepherded God’s people Israel. And, since the New Testament refers to Jesus as our Good Shepherd and our Chief Shepherd<sup>2</sup>, it’s more accurate for us to think of a pastor as an under-shepherd. So, **Pastor = “one who serves and leads as an under-shepherd.”**

Now, even though we view pastors as under-shepherds, we must remember that pastors are also fellow sheep. Certainly, they lead other sheep, but they themselves are sheep as well, who follow the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. They are human; sinners who’ve repented of their sins and turned in faith to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, just like every other Christ-follower.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, pastors are no better or worse than any other Christ-follower. They are equally in need of God’s daily grace and empowerment for Christian living.

Last week, Mr. Potato Head taught us that every part of the body of Christ is important and that the church needs EVERY part working together, to be a healthy body. Pastors have a particular role to play in the body of Christ and they have particular responsibilities in leading the church. We’re going to talk about this a little today. Please turn in your Bible to Titus 1:5.

Even though the New Testament only mentions the official title “pastor” once, it also uses the word “elder” when referring to “pastors.” And there is actually a lot more that we can learn about pastors, from the Bible’s use of the word “elder.”<sup>4</sup> In our church, we

<sup>1</sup> “of those who lead Christian communities/congregations/ churches...human leaders.” Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 843). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>2</sup> See John 10:11 and 1 Peter 5:4.

<sup>3</sup> In 1 Corinthians 11:1 the Apostle Paul urges other believers, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

<sup>4</sup> “Πρεσβύτερος” = “elder, presbyter.” “among the Christians (for their use of the word as a title one must bear in mind not only the Jewish custom, but also its use as a technical term among the ἔθνη [people], in connection with associations of the ‘old ones’ ... and to designate civic as well as religious

have an elder board, made up of lay elders who serve right alongside of our staff elders, whom we call pastors. There is a significant overlap here and we won't have time today to cover all the nuances. For now, suffice it to say that we recognize 10 official elders in our church, 7 of whom our congregation has voted in as lay elders and 3 of whom our congregation has voted in and hired as paid pastors.

The Apostle Paul teaches us some key principles about pastors in a letter he writes to a guy named Titus. In Titus 1:5 Paul says, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you." So...

**1) Churches should appoint pastors.** From today's text, it's not clear whether Paul meant for Titus to HIRE pastors or to ELECT lay elders. Quite possibly he had BOTH in mind. Regardless, appointing "elders" as spiritual leaders in each church has been going on for some 2,000 years now. This was something Paul saw as one of the natural and healthy steps for every local church, "in EVERY town." The Apostle Paul didn't consider his work finished once he'd evangelized a town. There were other things that needed to be "put in order." Appointing elders was a key follow-up function, for all of his missionary travels.<sup>5</sup> This word, "appoint" can "refer to direct appointment or to an election by the members."<sup>6</sup> As a local church body here in Bemidji, we voted to hire Pastor Eric as our Associate Pastor; we appointed him as an elder "in our town."

Paul goes on to explain some key necessities for pastors. Titus 1:6 says, "An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient." This means that...

**2) Pastors must lead their own households well.** This does NOT mean that pastors have to be perfect husbands and perfect dads. Nor does it mean that pastor's families have to consist of perfect wives and perfect children. That's way too much pressure and an unfair expectation that is NOT intended by this verse. Pastor's kids are normal kids (trust me, I've got 4 of them!), who struggle with peer pressure, doing their chores, and obeying their parents, just like everyone else's kids.

This verse DOES mean that pastors are expected to lead their own families well. They are to nurture their own wife and children and to lead them in loving God/people. This is part of the godly example they set and it is also one of the ways they prove, that they are fit for an office that requires them to lead our church family. It's been clear to us from the beginning that Pastor Eric is a man who loves and serves his family well. And, as much as we really like him, we may like his family even better!

Titus 1:7-8 goes on to say, "Since an overseer<sup>7</sup> manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not

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officials. Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 862). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>5</sup> See Acts 14:23. Consider also what may have been the very first Deacon Board in Acts 6:1-6.

<sup>6</sup> *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* text note on Acts 14:23 on p. 2250, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> The New Testament here uses yet another word for pastors, "overseer" = "ἐπίσκοπος." "In the Gr-Rom. world [overseer] frequently refers to one who has a definite function or fixed office of guardianship and related activity within a group... including a religious group... The term was taken over in Christian communities in reference to one who served as overseer or supervisor, with special interest in guarding the apostolic tradition." Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed., p. 379). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.” This means that...

3) Pastors must demonstrate godly character since they lead God’s household. Now, certainly this does NOT mean that pastors are sinless or that somehow, they are spared from temptations and weaknesses and from stumbling from time to time.<sup>8</sup> But, it does mean, that by and large, they have the spiritual maturity to resist sin and evil, to conquer temptation, and to walk uprightly in our fallen world. Once again, pastors must be people who set a good example for others and demonstrate what it means to know/love God and to love/serve the people around them. We’ve seen godly character demonstrated in Pastor Eric’s life and ministry.

The qualifications for a pastor are wrapped up in Titus 1:9, “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.” This means that...

4) Pastors must be qualified to instruct others in right doctrine. This is where a pastor’s personal faith and conviction come into play. Pastors should be people who’ve spent lots of time with Jesus, who know Him well and love Him deeply. They must love God’s truth and understand theology to the extent that they are able to protect God’s people, from the tricky schemes of false teachings that try to infiltrate the church. This is where thorough training comes into play.<sup>9</sup> Where time in Bible college, seminary, and the licensing process are vital to them becoming fully qualified, and competent to teach and defend God’s Word. Pastor Eric has a clear track record of being qualified to instruct others in right doctrine. We look forward to his Bible teaching here in our church. In fact, he will be preaching in our pulpit on October 7.

Let me conclude by simply saying this: In our estimation as a church body, Pastor Eric Nygren meets all of these qualifications. He is a sinner who has been saved by God’s grace. And he has been called by God, to help lead as an under-shepherd of this fellowship of Christ-followers.

As part of his installation service, we want to be clear what Pastor Eric’s role is on our staff. We have 3 pastors and we each have our own particular job description. Here is Pastor Eric’s:

## Associate Pastor

### 1. Qualifications:

- a. **Character/Doctrine:** The pastor shall exhibit the characteristics in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9. The pastor shall agree with the doctrinal statement of the church and abide by its constitution and by-laws. The pastor shall support the church’s mission to promote the supremacy of Christ.
- b. **Education:** A Master of Divinity or equivalent is preferred. Must be a licensed or ordained pastor, preferably credentialed by the Evangelical Free Church of America or willing to transfer there.
- c. **Experience:** Preferred 10-year minimum of full-time ministry experience, clear track record of organizational skills, and a “people person” with a demonstrated ability to work with church leaders and members. Basic computer skills are needed including MS Word, Email, and social media.

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<sup>8</sup> Consider Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) or his need to confront Peter (Galatians 2:11-13). Also, consider the warning that elders should be confronted publicly when they fail (2 Timothy 5:19-21).

<sup>9</sup> See 2 Timothy 2:2. But, also consider Acts 4:13.

2. **Principal function:** Lead the adult discipleship mission of the church and develop each adult's full participation in the life and ministry of the church.
3. **Accountability:**
  - a. Responsible to the Board of Elders through monthly reports and through the Lead Pastor.
  - b. Provide an annual report to the congregation.
  - c. Have an annual performance review with the Lead Pastor and review job description.
  - d. Work a salaried average of 50 hours/week and take at least one full day off per week.
4. **Ministry responsibilities listed in order of priority**  
(While some work may be delegated to others, the ultimate accountability for assuring that the following responsibilities are implemented rests with the Associate Pastor.)
  - a. **Congregational Connection and Discipleship** (50% ~25 hours)
    - i. Network and collaborate with all efforts of the church to ensure that adults are fully engaged in personal spiritual growth and service.
    - ii. Promote discovery, development, and usage of spiritual gifts and abilities, including conferences like Rekindle and the Global Leadership Summit.
    - iii. Develop and oversee a Small Group ministry that connects the adults in the church.
    - iv. Direct and train Welcome Ministry Teams (ushers, greeters, welcome table, prayer corner, etc.) as well as the literature we hand out. Follow-up with newcomers and infrequent attenders.
    - v. Promote church membership and baptism classes.
    - vi. Coordinate church fellowship events (game nights, picnics, potlucks, gym, etc.)
    - vii. Encourage and promote men's and women's ministries.
    - viii. Provide for marriage and family enrichment retreats and seminars.
    - ix. Chair the Christian Ed. Committee and meet with various boards and committees as needed.
    - x. Organize the intergenerational Summer Sunday School ministry.
  - b. **Community Outreach and Evangelism** (30% ~15 hours)
    - i. Organize and train for outreach to the unsaved (evangelistic events, etc.) and develop a follow-up plan for discipling new Christians.
    - ii. Promote congregational involvement with Native American ministries.
    - iii. Collaborate with the Global Connections Team.
    - iv. Promote involvement with community services (food shelf, homelessness, etc.)
    - v. Oversee the church website and social media accounts.
  - c. **Pastoral Care** (10% ~5 hours)
    - i. Visit the hospitalized. Officiate funerals, weddings, and provide pre-marital counseling.
    - ii. Provide other counseling and refer long-term needs to outside counselors.
    - iii. Coordinate use of the Benevolence Fund.
  - d. **Worship** (10% ~5 hours)
    - i. Participate in the primary worship services including their planning and evaluation.
    - ii. Preach occasionally.
    - iii. Carry Lead Pastor responsibilities during his vacation, illness, training, etc.
    - iv. Other duties as requested by the Lead Pastor.

In the New Testament book of Acts (20:28), Paul instructs the spiritual leaders of the church: "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."

**And now, may we be a church, filled with sheep who are well-loved and well-led by godly under-shepherds! Amen.**

*This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji  
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