

The following sermon was preached by Chris Hume in 2018. What follows is the sermon manuscript, edited lightly for readability.

Sermon Title: Why Pastors?

Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Introduction

It is a very good thing to often reexamine our views—to go back to the root, the foundation, and the core of any particular doctrine or belief. In doing so, if we notice anything amiss, we seek to have the Word of God guide us in reorienting ourselves in regard to the fundamental nature of what we are considering.

The word **RADICAL** deals with this. To be radical does not mean you have gone mad or believe zany things. It means you have gone to the root of your beliefs and found something that needs to be changed. So, let's do just that. Let's get radical with the office of pastor and really consider: what is the **FUNDAMENTAL ROLE** of this office? What is the **FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE** of this office? This can be helpful for a number of reasons:

- **So that men can understand the role of pastor** to determine if that is truly what they want to do. For how many today are in pastoral ministry and have not understood the basic nature of their office?
- **To have proper ecclesiology.** In other words, to have a proper view of the doctrine of the **CHURCH**. For to have a fundamentally flawed view of the officers in the church will undoubtedly skew our view of the church.
- **To know what should be the main considerations in selecting an elder.** I believe the Bible teaches that the church is to recognize the elders and therefore must understand the office.
- **And, finally, especially in the modern evangelical world,** examining the fundamental nature of elders is a **CORRECTIVE** against the system we now have—a system that gives the pastor a **TON** of duties, leading to a lessening of his **MAIN** responsibility and true authority, while causing burnout and a lack of edification.

Before we begin to look at the main role and reason for pastors, I want to remind you of a message I preached two months ago on Matthew 23:8. In that passage, I argued that Jesus attacked the system of unhealthy religious authority that the Pharisees had set up. It was a system which kept the people at the mercy of the religious leaders and promulgated the

view that the religious leaders were a special class that alone were responsible for knowing and applying God's Word.

I noted that that same system of clerical tyranny was alive and well in Europe at the dawn of the Reformation. Many of the heirs of the Reformation, especially the Puritans and even more so the Separatists (the Pilgrims), rejected this system and placed great emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Nevertheless, they did not reject the office of pastor, but they did radically alter the practice of it.

If Jesus demolished the false system of religious leadership that the Pharisees had set up, what shall be built in its place? Let's answer that question by answering two basic questions: What is the fundamental **ROLE** of a pastor, and what is the **REASON** for pastors? These two questions are interrelated but approach the issue from slightly different perspectives.

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR

The Bible highlights three main areas of responsibility for pastors. Those three areas are **(1) teaching, (2) setting an example, and (3) prayer**. These three things are the core of what a pastor is to be doing.

There are other things that could be discussed, but they would largely be applications of these three essential duties of the pastor. Of these three areas, teaching is the basic element of a pastor's role. The other two support that primary task. I will explain this shortly. (Note: While there may be a distinction made between preaching and teaching, for the sake of the subject today, I use the terms rather synonymously.)

I. Teaching

Let us then consider the first element, and the foundation, of a pastor's duty: teaching. The *sine qua non* of the office of pastor is preaching and teaching the Word of God. This is his main job.

As Ligonier Ministries states: "Feeding the Lord's people a steady diet of truth through the faithful proclamation of His Word is the pastor's chief job."

Jeramie Rinne further explains: "If elders shepherd Jesus' sheep, then their most basic task is to feed the souls of church members from the Scripture."

If we misunderstand this point, as many men entering into the ministry have, we will be bound to err when it comes to other aspects of the office of pastor. A man may enter pastoral ministry because he wants to be a leader, or wants to help people, or wants to

serve the church. However, a man considering the office of pastor must ask himself this question: Am I prepared to be given primarily and wholeheartedly to preaching and teaching the Word of God? Preaching to the lost. Preaching to seekers. Preaching to new converts. Preaching to backsliders. Preaching to mature, strong saints. Preaching, preaching, preaching.

I've been amazed at how some pastors, who supposedly are called to the ministry of the Word, are not at all interested in discussing the content of their sermons! It's almost as if they see their preaching as a necessary part of being a pastor but not the core part that they enjoy most! This is the main role of the pastor! If a man is not called to preach the Word of God, then he ought not be an elder in the church. If the beat of his heart is not preach-teach, preach-teach, preach-teach, then he ought not pursue the office.

It would be like a man pursuing a career in **THEATER** as an **ACTOR**. He loves getting dressed up, he loves how theater brings so many people together, he loves how the show involves so many aspects coming together. He loves all those things. But he doesn't love acting. He can do it decently well, but it is not what consumes his energy and attention. Why is he wasting his time pursuing that career? The man called to acting, loves acting. He'll do it for fun. He'll be immersed in practicing it.

And so a man called to pastor is called to preach and teach the Word of God. This is why Charles Spurgeon recommended that before a man be given to preaching and teaching in the church, he give himself to open-air preaching. Spurgeon said: "One of the earliest things that a minister should do when he leaves college and settles in a country town or village is to begin open-air speaking."

I agree with his advice. Such a practice will prevent many men from entering ministry because they will realize that preaching and teaching God's Word is not the main thing they are called to. If a man is called to preach and teach, then he can do it anywhere, anytime, to anyone. This is of course what Paul told Timothy: "*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching*" (2 Timothy 4:2).

To defend this assertion that preaching/teaching is the main role of the pastor, I will first read a portion of the Confession and then provide the biblical support for the claim. Chapter 26, Paragraph 10 of the *London Baptist Confession* reads: "The work of pastors being constantly to attend the service of Christ, in his churches, in the ministry of the word and prayer, with watching for their souls, as they that must give an account to Him."

The Confession states that the work of pastors may be summarized as "the ministry of the word and prayer." The phrase "with watching for their souls" modifies their main service of

Christ, which is the ministry of the word and prayer. The ministry of the word is teaching and preaching to the people from the Word. We will briefly address prayer momentarily, but for now, keep your focus on the ministry of the Word.

Let's look for further support that teaching is the essential element of a pastor's role in the church. Paragraph 11 of the Confession states: "It [is] incumbent on the bishops or pastors of the churches, to be instant in preaching the word, by way of office."

This word "incumbent" means that it is a most necessary part of their duty or responsibility. Just as it is incumbent on children to obey their parents—that is, it is the necessary duty of a child—so it is incumbent on pastors to "be instant in preaching the word." The phrase, "by way of office," demonstrates that it is core to the office that one be preaching the word.

Let's look now at one of the pastoral epistles, so called because in them Paul gives directions to Timothy and Titus as it relates to pastoral ministry. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul tells Timothy the following: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

In 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul told Timothy: "*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*" This preaching of the word, this reproof, rebuking, and exhorting, is more than simply reading the text. It is applying it to life. It is, as Joel Beeke says, "preaching [that] aims to apply divine truth to the whole range of the believer's personal experience, including his relationships with family, the church, and the world around him."

In Acts 20, Paul gives his charge to the Ephesian pastors, calling on them to have oversight by paying "careful attention" to themselves and "to all the flock." He gives his example as a model for them: "*For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27).

Of course, the biblical qualifications for pastors highlight teaching the Word of God as the role of the pastor: "*He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it*" (Titus 1:9).

There are many more passages we could cite, but for the sake of time, I will reference just one more. In Hebrews 13, the author identifies Christian leaders as those who declared the Word of God to the people—again pointing to preaching (i.e., the proclamation of God’s Word) as the core of pastoral leadership: *“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith”* (Hebrews 13:7).

The pastor is to be given to preaching and teaching. But you will notice another thing, even in that last passage from Hebrews. It is a theme that comes up again and again when considering the role of pastor: leading by example.

II. Leading by Example

Multiple passages cite the importance of the pastor’s example. The list of qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are largely moral, dealing with how a man conducts his life. The only exception, as we have just noted, is the requirement to teach. It is clear, then, that a pastor must set the example: he must practice what he preaches. The list of qualifications would be enough to prove this, but I was encouraged as I studied this more to see the importance of the pastor’s example throughout Scripture. Let’s take a quick walk through some of these texts.

Saint Peter gives perhaps the most poignant teaching on this: *“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock”* (1 Peter 5:1-3).

In this text, the elders are to watch over the flock by being examples to the flock. Turning again to the pastoral epistles, we see Paul affirming the same thing to Timothy: *“Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:11-12).

He tells Titus the same thing (the word being translated "model" being the same Greek word translated "example" in other texts): *“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in all your teaching, show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned”* (Titus 2:7).

Look at the connection in these texts: teaching and modeling, teaching and modeling. Over and over again, the role of the pastor is highlighted in Scripture as teaching and modeling. For one more nail in this coffin, look at the final two verses of the text we read this morning: *“Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a*

close watch on **YOURSELF** and on the **TEACHING**. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

There it is again! Pastor: watch yourself and your teaching. Your conduct and your doctrine. Your living and your preaching.

III. Prayer

Prayer is listed alongside the ministry of the word in Acts 6:4: *“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

The writers of the Confession recognized the summary of “ministry of the word and prayer” as an apt descriptor of the pastor’s role. There is much that could be said on this, but let me say this: given the duties of preaching the Word of God and setting an example in Christian conduct, it is most necessary for a pastor to be given to prayer. To preach and not practice is unacceptable. And to attempt either without prayer is unattainable.

WHY PASTORS?

Let us now move on to apply this doctrine. I want us to consider a couple of questions as we do this:

1. Why have pastors?
2. Why pay pastors?
3. What about the authority of the pastor?

Why have pastors?

Let’s begin by asking ourselves: Why are there pastors? Why have this separate category of “pastor”? Let’s look at the short answer and then expand it a little bit. The reason for pastors is clearly stated in Ephesians 4:

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

There is the most essential reason: to equip the saints. God gave the office of pastor in order to benefit the saints. The pastor is to be one whose labor in the Word brings benefit and edification to the saints.

Now let’s address an objection to the office of pastor. The objection is this: Since we are all called to exhort one another and edify one another, why do we need someone in the office

of pastor to do that? Now, let me say first of all, that as a Reformed Baptist and congregationalist, I am all about the priesthood of all believers and the importance of the church holding even pastors accountable. We addressed that concept in the Matthew 23:8 sermon and I will address it more when I have the chance to speak on church polity. The pastor is not a tyrant that simply makes decisions for the church—we saw that in 1 Peter 5. So, we do **NOT** need a pastor because we are unable to study the Bible on our own, unable to think for ourselves, or unable to govern the church as a congregational body.

The reason we have pastors is so that we might be edified and equipped, built up and strengthened, challenged and exhorted. It is so that we might have the whole counsel of God set before us week after week after week by a man given to the task of studying and preaching. Paul told Timothy to *“be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15, NASB). He told him to *“practice these things, immerse yourself in them”* (1 Timothy 4:15). You see, the pastor is to be a subject-matter expert in teaching (handling) the word of truth. He is to be given to the study, application, demonstration, and public proclamation of the Word of God. That doesn’t make him better than someone else; it simply means this is what he is called to and what he is gifted at.

Let me give a couple of examples to illustrate this. Let’s look at a vocation (calling): a **DOCTOR**. Why do we have doctors? The service provided is this: these people have immersed themselves in their calling. It doesn’t make them better, nor does it mean that they are always right! Nevertheless, a good doctor is one who is devoted to the study of medicine. He has immersed himself in medicine, reading the texts, researching new treatments, gaining experience in clinics. He is devoted to his field. A good doctor loves medicine (and I don’t mean pills, I mean the field of medicine). He enjoys his trade. He is called to do it.

I’ve been in to visit doctors and they just have no passion for their trade. It is discouraging and makes me feel like they haven’t put much effort into my situation either. It’s like talking with a pastor who has no inner calling and passion for studying, preaching, and discussing the Word of God. I find myself scratching my head: “Why are you a pastor if you don’t have an inner burning for teaching and applying and discussing the Word of God?” Did you do it out of a sense of obligation? For money? Why?

In the same way, a doctor who is not interested in making further progress in his field is a man who is doing his vocation out of duty, and not love for the field. Now look, a good doctor has some authority, right? He knows what he is talking about. Do you accept it blindly? I hope not. A lot of people do today.

Even the advice from the best doctor must be analyzed by the patient: for it is the patient that must decide if what the doctor says is a good route to take. Look, everyone should care about their health. Everyone should know about staying healthy because we have bodies that we need to care for. We don't discount doctors because we have to make the final decision. And so, just because Christians are required to watch their own souls and study the Bible, does not mean the office of pastor is not necessary.

The point is this: every Christian is called to study the Bible, apply the Bible, and even teach the Bible in certain contexts (fathers, mothers, etc.). Every Christian is to set a good example as every Christian has people looking to them (children, co-workers, etc.). But not every Christian is called to the office of pastor. Why? Because not every Christian is called to be immersed in the study and proclamation of the Word of God.

Consider also the example of a **PERSONAL TRAINER**. Why is their example so important? One of the reasons that I believe the example of pastors specifically is so important is that it is simply natural for new converts to **LOOK UP** to those preaching the Word. It is unavoidable. It is not that other Christians have a lower expectation on them for holy living in God's sight, it is simply that new Christians are going to naturally expect the teacher of the Bible to live out the Bible. I do not know if I can think of anything that has been more devastating to weak, immature Christians than a Christian leader that fails to walk in holiness but falls into immorality and sin.

So we have pastors in order to equip Christians to serve the Lord and fulfill the Great Commission. Pastors provide the service of ministering the Word of God to the flock.

Why pay pastors? (Compensation)

Since a pastor is to be immersed in Scripture, teaching, and exhortation, he is to be bringing valuable content when he teaches and preaches. The reason you pay a doctor is so that he can be immersed in his trade. It's not that many more people couldn't be doctors, but many don't want to be immersed in the medical field. Everyone is to know about their health and care for their bodies, but a doctor is to be immersed in studying the field. Everyone is to know and obey the Scriptures, but the pastor is to be immersed in this.

Then, when said pastor comes to teach and preach, there is a different product being presented. This is why the work of the pastor may be regarded as **LABORING**: "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and 'The laborer deserves his wages'" (1 Timothy 5:18).

It is not a charitable offering that is to be given to pastors. It is the wages of a laborer. A good doctor is happy to provide his services free when he can. But he could not survive, nor devote his time to progressing in his trade, if he is not paid most of the time. In the same

way, a pastor so loves preaching that he is happy to do it with no compensation, but he cannot devote his time to it or progress in it if he is not compensated.

“In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14).

What about the authority of the pastor?

We must start with the foundation of the office. I believe we have done that today. If the core of the office is teaching, example, and prayer, then I believe whatever authority the office of pastor is to have is going to be derived somehow from these three things.

The greatest authority that a pastor has is in proclaiming the Word of God. Jesus, who of course has **ALL** authority, amazed his hearers when he taught with authority (Matthew 7:29). When a pastor rightly handles the Word of truth, he too teaches with authority. This is why, I believe, Paul told Titus: “*Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you*” (Titus 2:15).

Comparing this with 1 Peter 5 and other passages, we cannot conclude that Titus simply had the “authority” to rebuke anyone for anything for any reason. Rather, Titus’ authority rested in his faithful proclamation of sound doctrine found in the Word of God. The authority of the pastor is in his faithful proclamation and application of the authoritative Word of God. John Hammett summarizes this point: “It is primarily by means of his preaching and teaching that the elder exerts the influence of leadership in the congregation.”

It is a sad reality that many pastors today have traded this authority for a pretended authority that lords it over the people. Now, we can address more of that subject another time. Suffice it to say that it makes perfect sense that if a pastor is to have authority and if a pastor’s main role is teaching, then his authority will be an aspect of that preaching and teaching.

CONCLUSION

Everything God gives to his people is for their good. The office of pastor, though prone to be abused as with any other good gift, must not be neglected. A man seeking the office of pastor desires a good thing. But let him consider what the office is. Let him consider if he is called to preach. If he is to be given to the study of the Scriptures. And let those men called to the office of pastor keep a close watch on their lives and their teaching, for in so doing they will save both themselves and their hearers.