

Shepherd The Flock

1 Peter 5:1 ESV (590) 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: **2** 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; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **5** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

- I. It seems that there are two predominant approaches to the task of pastoring in the 21st Century. (I’m sure that there may be many others I have not considered, however, speaking in admittedly “broad strokes”, this is what I have observed).
 - A. The first approach is primarily concerned with **Growth**, and the pursuit and facilitation of it. By that I mean when pastoral success in a given church is defined by growth; mainly numeric and budgetary growth.
 1. Obviously, growth is not a negative thing. It is true that “healthy things grow”. Sometimes smaller churches will take a jab at larger ones by implying that their size is only the result of a gimmick, a compromise, or a heresy. But growth is something to be desired and sought with prayer.
 - a) Jesus commanded his followers to preach the gospel to the entire world, thereby making disciples, and expanding the kingdom of God. Apparently he envisioned some amount of numeric growth!
 - b) Financial growth is definitely a good thing. We are still celebrating the fact that God released us from our years-long burden of debt. Retiring our debt makes able to use what is given for more ministry and outreach.
 2. But as Jared Wilson has pointed out, while it is true that “healthy things grow”, it is also true that “cancer grows too.”¹ A problem arises when the desire for growth causes us to adopt a purely pragmatic approach. In other words, when we find ourselves saying “whatever it takes to get another butt in the seat and another nickel in the basket, we’ll do it!” The buzz-words of the growth crowd are relevance, influence, attraction and appeal.
 - a) When the “how” of our growth becomes more important than the “why”, we are steering our ship straight for the icebergs!
 - b) We need a clear vision of **why** we must grow so that we don’t become counter-productive to God’s purpose in the world. Our highest motivation for any kind of measurable growth should for God to be glorified.
 3. God never set out to build an organization or an institution; but to ransom, redeem and restore individual people that collectively would comprise a living organism; a body. A big corporate, growth-dominated mindset is most likely not the best way to participate with him in accomplishing that end!

¹ *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto against the Status Quo* by Jared C. Wilson; 2015 Crossway

- B. That is why I prefer the **Care** approach to pastoral ministry more with than the “growth for growth’s sake” model. A care approach concerns itself with growth **only** as it can be measured by transformed lives, and the impact of those lives on the larger body and surrounding community.
1. Again, this is not an issue of size as much as it is an issue of mindset.
 - a) There are big, growing churches that provide great care to their people, and tiny, stagnant churches that are really gimmicky...and every combination in between! The difference is the heart of the church and the concern of the people for one another, and not so much the size.
 - b) Growth churches tend to focus on mechanisms, but care churches focus more on people. Jeramie Rinne says, “...the organization must always serve the organism. Programs and processes **at best** provide tools for accomplishing the mission of maturing one another in Christ.”²
 2. The vocabulary of care-oriented churches include words like shepherding, pastoring, watch-care, accountability and relationships. Successful Care churches pursue all of these concepts with an emphasis on God’s Word.
 - a) The fruit of “growth mindset” vs “care mindset” churches is whether you become a cog in the machine, or are being shaped and formed into a vital, functioning member of the living organism; the Body of Christ.
 - b) There may be some common ground shared in these approaches, they are not “different but equal”. At NRLC we have determined to minister with care in mind.
 - c) Our hope is that the care provided will result in both vertical growth (spiritual growth as people mature in Christ) and vertical growth (growth where we thrive as we engage with our culture and each other; seeing the Kingdom of God expand numerically).
- II. I’ve called “growth” and “care” **pastoral** approaches, because **pastors** are the people we think implement these approaches, but if pastors are the ones bearing the responsibility for providing care, definitions are really important! What are we talking about when we say “pastors”?
- A. “Pastor” is kind of a catch-all phrase for people in ministry. How often after his passing was Billy Graham referred to as “America’s Pastor”? But Billy Graham’s ministry would more accurately be described as that of an evangelist.
 - B. For most of us, pastor usually means the person who is tasked with the majority of teaching and leading in the congregation. Often compensation is implied, creating a line of distinction between “pastors” and “lay leaders”. But what does the Bible say?
 1. First, the word “pastor” is not found anywhere in the ESV Bible. It’s only found in two books of the KJV Bible - multiple times in Jeremiah and once in Ephesians. The Ephesians passage is where most of us get our understanding of what a pastor is. Let’s look at it in the original KJV:
 2. **Ephesians 4:11 KJV And he (Jesus) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, **pastors** and teachers**

² *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People like Jesus* by Jeramie Rinne; 2014 Crossway (emphasis mine)

- a) Notice that the Greek does not distinguish between pastors **and** teachers. It is a hyphenated job description; not pastors “and” teachers, but pastor-teachers. So there are perhaps 4 ministry gifts, not 5.
 - b) Secondly “pastors” comes from the Greek “poimen” (poy-MANE) meaning “shepherds”, (how it is translated in the ESV) This is an accurate rendering - literally what the word means. In Luke, the night Christ was born, it was the “poimen” that kept watch over their flocks by night.
- C. To understand what Paul wants us to see h, think about every shepherd you’ve ever seen, whether in real life, pictures, or film. Think about Psalm 23 - the Lord as a shepherd leading the sheep beside still waters and making them lie down in green pastures; protecting them in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Shepherds provide care. That is the definition of a pastor’s role.
- 1. A pastor doesn’t serve in this role because is superior to the other sheep! Only Jesus is the “Good Shepherd”!
 - 2. He is merely fulfilling the role that has been designated to him by the Good Shepherd. Isn’t that what Jesus meant when he told Peter in John 21 to “Feed **my** sheep”? Peter wasn’t to forget **whose** sheep they were! Pastors are (at best) under-shepherds (managers) caring for God’s flock.
- D. So what do pastor-shepherds do? They feed sheep, watch sheep, shelter sheep, correct sheep, protect sheep, pursue sheep and administer healing to sheep, imitating Christ in his delegated authority. What a shepherd does is what the pastor is to do; He won’t do it perfectly, but should do it faithfully.
- III. Some time ago, the elders and I recognized a great need to increase the level of care that we provided for you. Our church had undergone a transformation that had limited our ability to provide what was needed. Let me explain...
- A. Several years ago, the congregation that became NRLC was larger, with more resources. In those days, there were as many as 6 full-time pastors on staff to provide care for the sheep, and they worked hard to do so.
 - 1. By the time I was hired, the church was smaller and that entire staff had been dismissed. I was the only full-time pastor who could attempt to providing some level of spiritual care. I was blessed with a few willing, mature believers who were willing to shoulder some of that load with me.
 - 2. But like many pastors, I would find people I deeply cared about falling through the cracks because there weren’t enough hours in the day to care for 150 people in a congregation! I knew there had to be a better way.
 - B. I looked at what the Bible said about all of this and discovered many of the things I’ve shared this morning. But I also discovered that not only were “pastor” and “shepherd” interchangeable terms, but there were other words that, in the context of the scriptures where they were found, were synonymous with pastor as well, words like “overseer” and, more curiously, “elder”.
 - 1. I say “curiously” because I had always viewed church structure in such a way that the pastor was the CEO of the organization, and the elders were the “board of trustees”, guarding the purse-strings and keeping the staff in line.
 - 2. But when I discovered that pastors and elders were not distinct in scripture, but absolutely co-equal, it rocked my thinking! In fact, in the book of Acts,

not only is the word “pastor” never mentioned, but elders show up in the context of local churches a lot! AND it is always plural!

- a) This means that the elders’ primary role was really to be a co-equal shepherd (spiritual care provider) with the primary pastor-teacher!
 - b) I also saw that the CEO model of church leadership was unbiblical. God actually intended the oversight of the church to be handled by a team of godly men who were more concerned with souls than dollars.
- C. But because this congregation had been well-stocked with **professional** pastors, eldership had always been granted instead to very godly, Christ-loving men, yet men whose primary expertise was business and management, and not necessarily soul care. These elders served with distinction, faithfully praying and sacrificing, but together we acknowledged the need to adjust, bettering reflect the spirit of the New Testament church and the Apostles writings.
1. So we made a decision to prayerfully nominate two godly men with a proven track record of pastoral gifting and experience. The Spirit highlighted David Walt and Don Lytton to us in response to our prayers.
 - a) Dave has been a part of this congregation for close to 15 years and has faithfully served as associate pastor for the last 3. He is a mature Bible teacher and an insightful and wise counselor. He and Caty are friends that I would trust with my very life and I love them very much!
 - b) Don is a relative newcomer to our fellowship but I knew the day I met him and Kim that we were kindred spirits. They served as foreign missionaries in China for over 21 years. They have the highest esteem for the scriptures and demonstrate a disciplined, Christ exalting life.
 2. Don and Dave fully understand the transition that we are attempting to navigate, shifting the focus of eldership in order to be more biblical and serve you better. We have talked many times about our sense of what God wants to do here. I am excited about what God is planting in them.
- D. So let me be perfectly clear. I will continue to serve as the primary teaching voice at NRLC, Daryl will do what he does best - play the role of a Father in the Lord to this congregation; but Don and Dave are linking arms with us in complete equality from the start as elders, overseers, shepherds, and pastors.
1. As a team, we are going to be much less concerned with “noses and nickels” than we have ever been, and we are going to dedicate ourselves to vision, prayer, counsel, encouragement, correction, ministry and service to this congregation.
 2. We will no longer equate eldership to administering a school, running a company, commanding a warship, managing a project, direction operations, overseeing subcontractors, or serving on a board of trustees. We embrace the obligation of...
 3. 1 Peter 5:2 ESV ...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; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.
- E. And get ready! We are going to be looking to many of you and your unique gifts to step up and assist us as financial and ministry advisers and administrators;

people who will oversee systems and facilities so that we can devote ourselves to prayer, the word and service, like the Apostles in Acts 6.

1. The Bible calls men and women who support the church like this deacons. We're going to roll out a clear vision for a thriving deacon ministry in the coming months.
2. But just like eldership, being a deacon is probably nothing like you think, and has little to do with what you may have experienced with people who were designated as deacons in other churches. It is a very high calling.

IV. (Ask Dave and Don to come forward and address the congregation)

V. The Charge:

A. Don and David, having been examined by this church and its elders, and having met the qualifications of eldership laid out in the Holy Scriptures in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1; and having, together with this body, sensed your own calling to lead our church as the Holy Spirit empowers and guides, coupled with your own desire to do so; we solemnly place our hands upon you, setting you apart for the ministry of an elder for North Ridge Life Church, and charge you with the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy:

B. **2 Timothy 4:1-5 ESV (Pg. 579)** 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: **2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. **3** 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, **4** and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. **5** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

C. Daryl and Marc Pray

VI. Announcements:

A. Last Sunday to buy Men's ministry Tickets

B. Tom Hall - Preaching next week; special offering taken.