

Shepherds of God's Flock

Why the Church Needs Pastors



Shepherd's of God's Flock

- In Ezekiel 34 we read a rebuke from God against the selfish, slothful “shepherds” of Israel—those who should have been leading and pastoring God’s flock into green pastures, but weren’t. As God’s mouthpiece, Ezekiel proclaims a day when God would be the Chief Shepherd of his people.
- Jesus tells us that *he* is that good shepherd (Jn 10:11). Throughout his ministry, Jesus shows his disciples how they too can shepherd people as he does. The apostles then help us to see that this role of shepherding is vital to the health of the church and the ongoing mission of God.
- Who are qualified to shepherd God’s flock? Why does the church need pastors? In *Shepherds of God’s Flock*, we will be challenged to think about the future of pastoral ministry.

Ezekiel 34:1-6 NIV

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

Matthew 9:35-38 NIV

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary.”

Jesus, John 10:11 MSG

John 21:15-17 NLT - Jesus Restores Peter for Shepherding

¹⁵ After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these [fish/fishing]?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.”

Paul, Ephesians 4:11-13 NLT – Five Primary Gifts

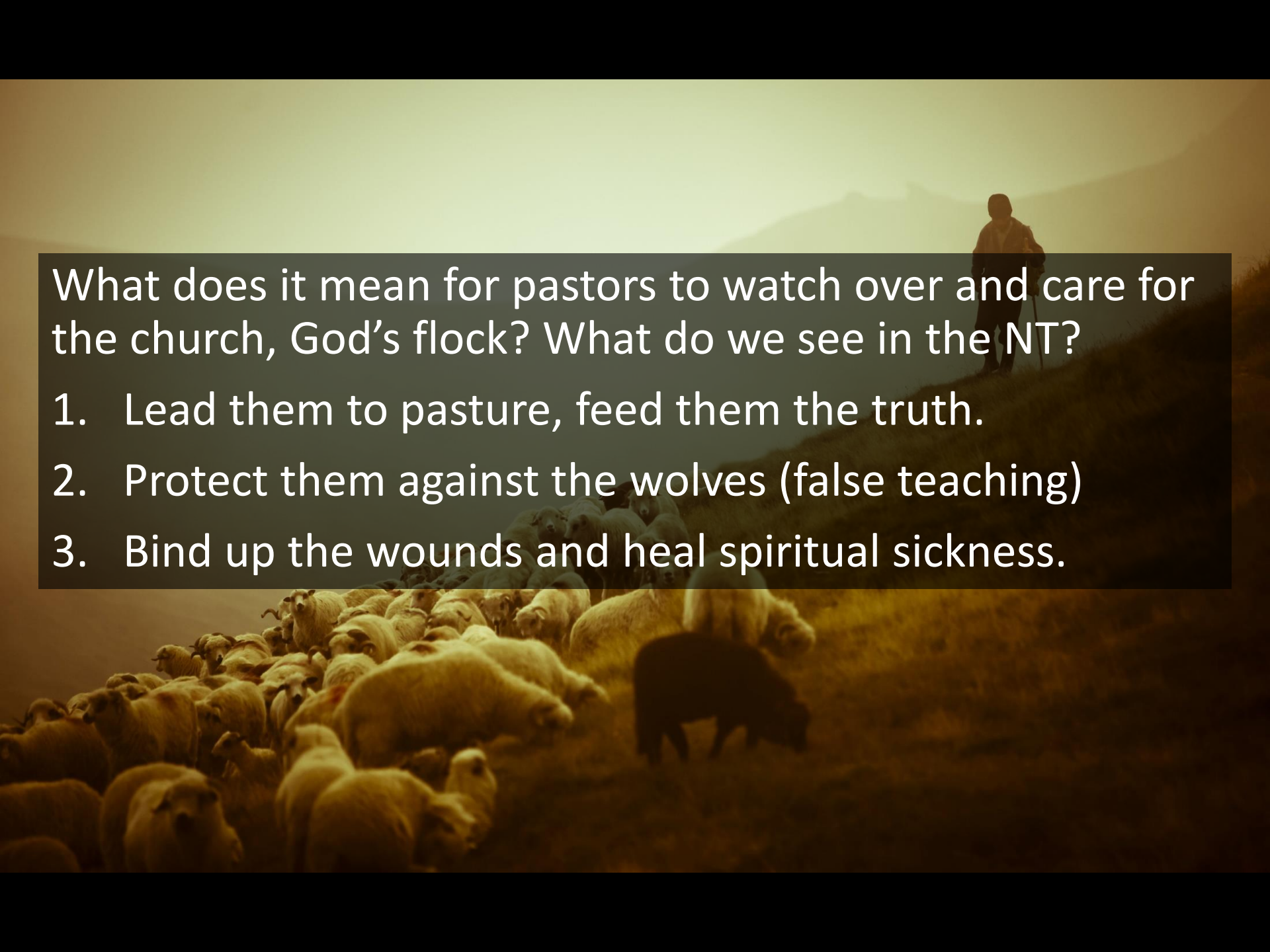
¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

1 Peter 5:1-4 NLT – Advice for Elders/Pastors

¹ And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: ² Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³ Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. ⁴ And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

“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.”

Acts 20:28 NIV – Paul to the Pastors in Ephesus

A shepherd stands on a hill, looking over a large flock of sheep in a hazy, golden landscape. The scene is bathed in warm, low-angle light, suggesting sunrise or sunset. The shepherd is silhouetted against the bright sky, and the sheep are scattered across the foreground and middle ground, some facing the camera and others looking away. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

What does it mean for pastors to watch over and care for the church, God's flock? What do we see in the NT?

1. Lead them to pasture, feed them the truth.
2. Protect them against the wolves (false teaching)
3. Bind up the wounds and heal spiritual sickness.

Paul, 1 Timothy 3:1-2 NLT – Qualifications for Elders/Pastors

¹ This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader [elder], he desires an honorable position.” ² So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach.

1 Timothy 3:3-7 NLT

³ He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. ⁵ For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

⁶ A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall.

⁷ Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap.

Who Are Qualified to Shepherd?

- Men or women who have a clear calling on their life
- Those whose lives have the marks of discipleship
- Those who have a teaching-level knowledge of the faith; they have intentionally walked with Jesus for a few years
- Those who are personal to all (i.e. “know each by name”)
- Those that can *step out and lead* sheep to new pastures
- Those who love and believe in the church as God’s chosen instrument of hope and salvation to the world
- Servant leaders who are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to build up the church, willing to take the heat

Why the Church Needs Pastors

- Jesus modeled the shepherding gift for his disciples; Paul includes it as a primary gift (1 of 5) for the church—capturing a major aspect of the person and work of Jesus
- Pastors serve as observable examples for disciples to follow—pertaining to belief, character, maturity, etc.
- Pastors are not only able to challenge the flock, but they heal and protect in a way only afforded by the Spirit
- Pastors teach sound biblical doctrine (mind-belief) and preach to inspire obedience (heart-practice); calling for a response from believers and non-believers alike
- Pastors are gifted to lead; without these leaders, the flock will not be able to move and grow in greener pastures

Hebrews 13:7-9, 17 MSG – Being Responsive to Leaders

⁷ Appreciate your pastoral leaders who gave you the Word of God. Take a good look at the way they live, and let their faithfulness instruct you, as well as their truthfulness.

There should be a consistency that runs through us all.

⁸ For Jesus doesn't change—yesterday, today, tomorrow, he's always totally himself. ⁹ Don't be lured away from him by the latest speculations about him.

¹⁷ Be responsive to your pastoral leaders. Listen to their counsel. They are alert to the condition of your lives and work under the strict supervision of God. Contribute to the joy of their leadership, not its drudgery. Why would you want to make things harder for them?

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Reflection questions for "Shepherds of God's Flock"

1. How have your elders/pastors been chosen in the past? How have you personally decided who qualifies?
2. Who among you is already exhibiting the proper qualifications, desires, and work of a pastor?
3. Do you recognize the need for those who can pastor and lead the church, not simply teach and preach?
4. How responsive do you feel you are (have been) to your pastors? Are you willing to follow as God leads through those he calls to shepherd the flock?

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Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org