

“And He Gave Some To Be ... Pastors”

This instance, in Ephesians 4:11, is the only occurrence in the English New Testament where the Greek word *poimen* is translated “pastors.” However, its verb form *poimaino* appears in half a dozen different passages, including Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet. 5:2. It is joined with the word *archi* to form *archipoi-men* or “chief shepherd” in 1 Peter 5:4, a reference to Christ. Thus “pastor” and “shepherd” are translations from the same Greek word.

There is a gross misuse of the word “pastor” in our present day society. The world views a pastor as the preacher of the church who, varying with the denomination, has different degrees of authority, with some almost absolute. The New Testament presents an entirely different picture of a “pastor” than that generally held by denominations.

There are three different Greek words which are used of those called “pas-tors.” The first is *presbuteros*; translated “elders” and transliterated as “presbyter.” Timothy had had the hands of the “presbytery” (another form of *presbuteros*) laid on him (1 Tim. 4:14) This second Greek word used of “pastor” is the word *episkopos*, which translated means “overseer,” but which transliterated is “bishop.” The Greek word of “pastor” (as already noted) is *poimen*; which literally means “shepherd.” These three words are used of the same man which truth is borne out from Acts 20:17-28. Paul called the elders (*presbuteros*) of the Ephesian church to himself at Miletus where he gave a farewell address to them (Acts 20:17). These elders, among other things, were charged to take heed “unto yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops (*episkopos*), to feed (*poimaino*) the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit used these three words, elders, bishops and pastors, to describe the same man. As has been observed, they are “elders” because they are spiritually older or mature. They are “overseers” because they have a sphere of authority over a local flock; they are “shep-herds” because their works is to see that the flock is feed and nourished. The denominational world frequently makes these different words into differ-ent offices; the Holy Spirit uses these words to describe one man. The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth, which includes what Spirit has revealed about the three terms describing one man (Jn. 16:13).

Not only did the Holy Spirit identify elders as bishops and bishops as elders -- so that to make elders one office and bishops another is to go beyond things written -- the Holy spirit equally revealed that the New Testament church NEVER had just one pastor over a single congregation. From the pas-sages of Acts 20:17, it is clear that the Ephesian church had more than one

elder, or pastor, for Paul called to him "*the elders of the church.*" When Paul wrote the Philippian church he greeted "*all the saints in Christ Jesus that are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*" (Phil. 1:1). Again, bishops (pastors) are found in the plural in one church. When Barnabas and Paul set in order churches they had earlier formed, they "*appointed for them elders in every church*" (Acts 14:23). One looks in vain to read of the pastor of the church; there were always "*pastors*" in the church. To have "one pastor" is to change that which was ordained of God, which men are warned they must not do (1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18f).

The qualifications for elders (pastors, bishops, overseers) require that these men be married, fathers, not novices, along with other character qualifications (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). A single man DOES NOT scripturally qualify to be appointed an elder: preacher, yes; pastor, no. A young man whose children are all toddlers likewise DOES NOT scripturally qualify to be appointed as an pastor: preacher, yes; pastor, no.

God charged elders to "*tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight ...*" (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Scriptural elders are not figureheads; they have a work to do, in harmony with the work of deacons and preachers. Let all elders do the work God assigned to them. That is why God set them in the church!

Jim McDonald