

Practical Theology  
Pastoral Priorities

What are the minimum Biblical qualifications for a Pastor? *1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9*

What spiritual gift(s) must a pastor have? *Teaching, Exhortation, Leading*

What spiritual gift(s) would be helpful, but not required for a pastor to have? *Administration, mercy, service, faith (of those specifically included in lists of gifts in the Scriptures) .*

What should a pastor do if he does not have one of these helpful spiritual gifts? *Learn the skills of those gifts from someone who is so gifted. All Christians learn the skills of the gifts they do not have from those they do. There are commands for all Christians to do the things (teach, show mercy, give, serve, etc.) whether they specifically have that spiritual gift or not.*

What priorities has God set for every pastor?

Ephesians 4:11-13 “**equip** the saints for the work of the ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ”

1 Peter 5:1-3, “**shepherd** the flock of God among you, exercising oversight” - “proving to be **examples** to the flock”

Acts 20:28-31, **Be on guard** for yourselves and for all the flock - **Oversee - Shepherd - Be on the alert** - for the wolves that may arise from among yourselves.

Matthew 28:16-20, **Make disciples** - going (evangelism, work of an evangelist), baptizing, teaching to obey all the Lord’s commands.

What additional priorities might be placed on a pastor? Who places those priorities upon him?

*He places them upon himself in consultation with the other elders / leaders in the church according to his particular gifts and specific needs within that church*

What is the relationship of his particular spiritual gifts with those additional priorities? *The particular spiritual gifts will direct him to ministries in which he would be most effective - and joyful in doing the work of ministry.*

What is the relationship of his job description to those additional priorities? *His job description is the church’s assessment of the specific ministries and responsibilities they will need / want the pastor to accomplish. Changes to or at least a clear understanding of what ministries / responsibilities the pastor will make as priorities should be made before the pastor begins ministry with the church.*

What is the relationship of congregational expectations to those additional priorities? *These are the unstated desires and demands of people in the congregation which may or may not be reasonable. The pastor is there to serve God by serving them, but the pastor’s boss is God so priorities are set by God. The pastor works in harmony with the other elders / leaders to apply wisdom in the secondary priorities set after God’s commands are fulfilled. Congregational expectations should be minimized by the priorities set in the job description and he should be defended to the congregation by the other elders / leaders if the Pastor is not meeting congregational expectations. However, there may be emergencies with the congregation in keeping with the job description that may elevate a particular ministry / responsibility above normal ones temporarily. Example: A death, serious injury or other crises.*

What is the relationship of pastoral priorities and the general priorities God gives to every man, to every husband, to every father? *None other than the Pastor is to be an example of godliness in all of these areas. That includes balancing ministry / work with family & personal responsibilities*

How should a pastor deal with people who have expectations of him that are either unbiblical or unreasonable? *With gentleness explain the priorities God has place on him as well as the priorities set by the other elders / leaders. Expectations beyond those will be met as able if they are reasonable. This is part of teaching the congregation. This needs to be done sooner than later otherwise meeting unreasonable expectations only sets them as priorities and they usually increase. Pragmatically, this will be either resolved with understanding or those with unbiblical / unreasonable expectations will either leave or cause trouble which could lead to church discipline or that pastor leaving in frustration.*

How should a pastor deal with people that are a danger to the flock? i.e. flagrantly and stubbornly ungodly; heretical; cause ungodly division in the congregation; etc.

*The process of church discipline - Galatians 6:1-4; Matthew 18:15-18. The flock must be guarded and the dangers quelled as soon as possible. This can be easier said than done depending on the support the dangerous person has within the church.*

## Scenarios

Your church leadership is concerned about how a pastor is spending his time. They do not have a specific complaint other than he does not do / accomplish the same things they know other pastors do. What should the attitude of a pastor be in responding? How can the pastor help them understand the priorities he believes God has given to him? How can he gain their help in areas in which he may be weak?

*Begin with a humble attitude. Seek from the other church leaders a clarification of what they want his priorities to be with specifics of what they would therefore want him to lower in priority so that when time runs out they will approve of what is left undone. The work list below is helpful in this process.*

The following list is typical of pastoral duties and normal activities in a given week. How many hours a week you would give to each in a normal week. Mark with a <sup>†</sup> those things which might become a temporary priority depending on the situation, and an \* those that might be reduced or eliminated if necessary. Be prepared to explain your reasoning

_____ Sermon preparation for Sunday morning.	_____ Personal Devotions
_____ Weeknight Bible study preparation	_____ Discipleship of new believer *
_____ Discipleship / training leaders	_____ Bulletin information preparation *
_____ Email / Mail correspondence	_____ Church Calendar (short term planning)
_____ Long term planning	_____ Music choices for worship services *
_____ On going Counseling *	_____ Church finances *
_____ Crises Counseling <sup>†</sup>	_____ Other church administration *
_____ Visitation *	_____ Family night / activity
_____ Funeral <sup>†</sup>	_____ Putting kids to bed
_____ Household chores & repairs <sup>†</sup> *	_____ Helping kids with schoolwork *
_____ Meeting with Deacons - church maint. *	_____ Meeting with Elders - church shepherding <sup>†</sup>
_____ Personal time with wife	_____ Sleep & Personal hygiene
_____ Exercise	_____ Recreation / Entertainment
_____ General Reading (including news) *	_____ Extended family function
_____ Other _____	

A pastor has planned a special activity with his family. An hour before he is supposed to leave, he gets a call from a woman in his church who is frantic because her husband is threatening to leave her. What would you do if you were in his shoes and why?

*I would seek to calm her down. Assess the reality of the threat and if there is any danger involved. Gain a commitment from wife to come for counseling. Seek to talk with husband and gain a commitment to come in for counseling. Try to get commitment of both to come in for counseling together. If husband refuses - then explain the actions that will be taken in the days and weeks to come if he refuses to work on the marriage. Same for wife. Explain that their current crises was not created in a day and it will not be solve in a day. You will deal with their crises appropriately at an appropriate time which is not at the moment as you have previous commitments. They will have come in for counseling at a mutually acceptable time.*

A pastor has planned a date night with his wife. Just before they leave he gets a call from someone in his congregation to let him know that their spouse had an accident and 1) is at the hospital to be checked out, 2) is in the hospital in serious condition, 3) has just died. How should he respond in each of these situations? How would you respond if you were in his shoes and why?

- 1) Pray with the caller. Ask them to keep you informed about the injured individual.*
- 2) Go with wife (if she is willing & able) to the hospital to pray with those gathered there. This could be a delay in the date night, or it could cancel it depending on the situation. Immediately set up a new date night.*
- 3) Call on the family first to pray with them and given them direction on what will need to be done. Depending on the reaction of the family, this may be just a delay in the date night - or may require rescheduling.*

What would a pastor respond to each of the following complaints / suggestions

You did not come to the funeral of my father held in a location several hours from here. *Apologize as appropriate. Express your sympathy. Ask what they would like in the present time.*

You did not visit me when I was in the hospital (Note: you did not know they were in the hospital) *Apologize as appropriate. Explain you did not know about it. Praise God they are doing better know. Ask they are getting the care they need and offer to have arrangements made for their care if needed. Pray with them.*

You did not come visit me at my home (without an invitation). *Apologize as appropriate. Explain your reason for not doing so (policy, attending to other matters, ?) And offer to come visit them.*

You did not meet the need of Mrs X who is poor and needs financial help. *Apologize as appropriate. Explain what you know of Mrs X's situation (unaware, aware & situation being assessed, aware and help not actually needed). Ask what efforts the complainer has made to help meet the need (James 2:15). Ask why the complainer believes it is your responsibility to meet such needs*

I had a conflict with Mrs ABC, and you did not take my side in confronting her. *Apologize as appropriate. Explain your purpose is to assess and bring godly instruction and wisdom to a conflict and not to take sides - only God's side. You may have to further explain your view of the conflict and who is right and wrong and to what degrees.*

You are too intellectual, my children do not understand your sermons. *Apologize as appropriate. Explain that your sermons and teachings are directed to the adults unless you are specifically teaching children. It is up to the parents to explain the Biblical truths taught to their children. Point them resources that will help them. You might even ask if you are speaking above their heads, in which case you can assure them you will strive to make your teachings understandable to them.*

Why can't you be more casual? Your wearing a suit when you preach makes me feel uncomfortable.

*First, ask why what you wear makes them feel uncomfortable? The church has no dress standards other than modesty. They do not have to wear a suite and tie. (You may be dealing with someone feeling guilty for dressing casually and they want the pastor to do the same so that they are appropriate). Explain you dress as is appropriate for both worship of the Lord and in serving Him as His spokesman in preaching. You do not dress to please men, but you do dress to demonstrate the importance of what you are doing. Assure the person they should do the same as the Lord leads them. .*

You should not spend your money on \_\_\_\_\_! That is wasting the Lord's money. *Apologize as appropriate - i.e. that perhaps there could be better ways for finances to be spent. Ask them for their suggestions about how they spend their money. Probe this area. Find out what is important to them and how they spend their money. You will probably easily identify things important to them which are not important to you and therefore perhaps they are wasting the Lord's money. Your purpose is that each person is to seek to use the funds entrusted to them as a wise steward, but the specifics on what is spent even in wisdom will vary from person to person.*

You should buy \_\_\_\_\_. You need it / You could use it / We have one / It's a good investment. *Thank them for their advice. Let them know you will consider it as you assess the other demands on your finances. You may have to tell them you simply cannot afford it even if it would be helpful.*

You take the Bible too literally / You are too conservative / You are too judgmental about sin. *Let them know that you believe that the Bible is God's word to man and therefore you must be very serious about understanding what God has said and what He means by it and then apply it to life. It is dangerous to receive a message from God and then discount it, ignore it or neglect it because God is judge - and neither do you want to miss His blessings. Ask how God will judge them?*

Why do you grow a garden? (I disapprove of your hobby. You should do something else). *Simply explain your hobby and what you gain from it that allows you to praise God.*

The ministry has been going well, but the pastor's family is showing signs of the stresses that it has placed upon him and them. What are some practical things you can do to protect a pastor and his family from ministry intrusions? How can he keep his own life properly balanced between God's priorities for him and his family and in sacrificially serving others in the church?

- 1) Let him know what you are observe him and assure him that you are praying for him and his family to walk in Godly wisdom in pleasing Him and not people.*
- 2) Ask for / offer practical ways you can help remove some of his burdens. This could be as simply as doing some his normal chores for him or as complex as equipping yourself to take on some of his ministry responsibilities.*
- 3) See if you can motivate others to do the same as 1 & 2.*
- 4) If you cannot do it yourself, get others to help you send him and his family away for a day, a couple of days, a vacation.*
- 5) Don't be a person adding to his ministry burdens and intrusions into his family. When talking with others, see if you can direct them to someone else to help instead of going to the pastor. This is church body life in action.*

*1) The balance for a pastor will always be found in making sure that the pursuit is actually of God and pleasing and serving Him and not pleasing people including self in trying to either build up an ego or earn God's favor. His favor is already there. We rejoice in it, not strive to earn it. 2) Constantly assess to make sure it is God's priorities according to His commands that are the actual priorities.*