What is the pastor's responsibility, besides preaching and studying?
Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1-4; John 10:11; Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:2-10
Code: QA126

The answer to your question lies in the title you used--pastor. That title is rich with meaning and sets out the chief responsibilities of your minister.

One of Jesus' favorite metaphors for spiritual leadership, one He often used to describe Himself, was that of a shepherd--a person who tends God's flock. A shepherd leads, feeds, nurtures, comforts, corrects, and protects--responsibilities that belong to every church leader. In fact, the word pastor means shepherd.

Peter wrote these words to elders who would have been familiar with sheep and shepherding:

I exhort the elders among you ... shepherd the flock of God ... exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:1-4).
To give you a more complete picture of your pastor's role, here's a look at the nature of sheep, the task of shepherds, and how they compare to the pastor's role among the church. Note the principles of church leadership it contains--they determine what should fill your pastor's schedule.

Shepherds Are Rescuers

A sheep can be totally lost within a few miles of its home. With no sense of direction and no instinct for finding the fold, a lost sheep usually will walk around in a state of confusion, unrest, and even panic. It needs a shepherd to bring it home.

And so when Jesus saw the crowds, lost, spiritually disoriented, and confused, He likened them to sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). The prophet Isaiah described lost people as those who, like sheep, have gone astray--each one turning to his own way (Isaiah 53:6).

Like lost sheep, lost people need a rescuer--a shepherd--to lead them to the safety of the fold. A pastor does that by pointing the lost toward Jesus, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Shepherds Are Feeders

Sheep spend most of their lives eating and drinking, but they are indiscriminate about their diet. They don't know the difference between poisonous and non-poisonous plants. Therefore the shepherd must carefully guard their diet and provide them with pasture rich with nutrients.

In His encounter with him described in John 21, Jesus drove home to Peter the importance of feeding the sheep. Twice in His command to Peter, Jesus used the Greek term *bosko*, which means "I feed" (vv. 15, 17).

The pastor's goal is not to please the sheep, but to feed them--not to tickle their ears, but to nourish their souls. He is not to offer merely light snacks of spiritual milk, but the substantial meat of biblical truth. Those who fail to feed the flock are unfit to be shepherds (cf. Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:2-10).

Shepherds Are Leaders

Peter challenged his fellow elders to "shepherd the flock of God among you" by "exercising oversight" (1 Peter 5:2). God entrusted them with the authority and responsibility of leading the flock. Pastors are accountable for how they lead, and the flock for how they follow (Hebrews 13:17).

Besides teaching, the pastor exercises oversight of the flock by the example of his life. Being a pastor requires getting in among the sheep. It is not leadership from above so much as leadership from within. An effective pastor does not herd his sheep from the rear but leads them from the front. They see him and imitate his actions.

The most important asset of spiritual leadership is the power of an exemplary life. First Timothy 4:16 instructs a church leader to, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Shepherds Are Protectors

Sheep are almost entirely defenseless--they can't kick, scratch, bite, jump, or run. When attacked by a predator, they huddle together rather than running away. That makes them easy prey. Sheep need a protective shepherd in order to survive.

Christians need similar protection from error and those who spread it. Pastors guard their spiritual sheep from going astray and defend them against the savage wolves that would ravage them. Paul admonished the pastors at Ephesus to stay alert and to protect the churches under their care:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your

own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

Shepherds Are Comforters

Sheep lack a self-preservation instinct. They are so humble and meek that if you mistreat them, they are easily crushed in spirit and can simply give up and die. The shepherd must know his sheep's individual temperaments and take care not to inflict excessive stress. Accordingly, a faithful pastor adjusts his counsel to fit the need of the person to whom he ministers. He must "admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with all" (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

The Good Shepherd and His Undershepherds

Jesus is the perfect example of a loving shepherd. He epitomizes everything that a spiritual leader should be. Peter called Him the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4). He is our great Rescuer, Leader, Guardian, Protector, and Comforter.

Church leaders are undershepherds who guard the flock under the Chief Shepherd's watchful eye (Acts 20:28). Theirs is a full-time responsibility because they minister to people who, like sheep, often are vulnerable, defenseless, undiscerning, and prone to stray.

Shepherding the flock of God is an enormous task, but to faithful pastors it brings the rich reward of the unfading crown of glory, which will be awarded by the Chief Shepherd Himself at His appearing (1 Peter 5:4).

If your pastor is faithfully carrying out the duties required in his job title, remember to follow this dmonition of Scripture:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

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