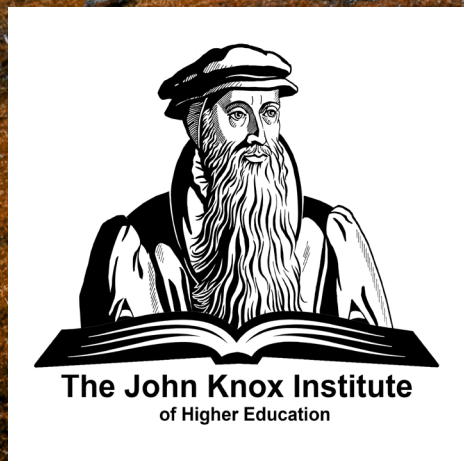


VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

PASTORAL THEOLOGY

by Rev. Harry Woods

LECTURE #13
Pastoral Leadership



John Knox Institute of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev Harry Woods recently retired as minister of Kilmorack & Strathglass Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in Beaully, Scotland, after having served as a minister of the Gospel since 1982. He was the editor of the monthly denominational youth magazine, *The Explorer*; for eleven years and taught Apologetics and Pastoral Theology at the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary in Inverness for eighteen years. He is married to Mairi, and has three adult children and three grandchildren.

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PASTORAL THEOLOGY

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Lecture #13

Pastoral Leadership

Our lecture today is on *Pastoral Leadership*. What is intended here is little more than a general statement of some principles and specifics that relate to the pastor's role as the under-shepherd of the flock.

1. The Goal of Pastoral Leadership

We begin by looking at *The Goal of Pastoral Leadership*, and we have to remind ourselves that the goal is always spiritual. Ultimately we are seeking the glory of God and the honor of Christ. More immediately, we seek the conversion and spiritual growth of men and women, until they come to the fulness of the stature of Christ—reference Matthew 28, verses 19–20, and Ephesians 4, verses 12 and 13. We are not in the business of maintaining denominational traditions, whether these are biblically-based or otherwise, but rather, we are concerned, as I've said, with the saving of souls, the expansion of the kingdom of God, the preservation and defense of the truth against its enemies, and the protection of the flock from ravening wolves—Acts chapter 20, verse 28.

2. The Biblical Pattern for Pastoral Leadership

Well, what is *The Biblical Pattern for Pastoral Leadership*? Firstly, there is *the Headship of Christ*. The New Testament insists that Christ is the only and supreme Head of the church, and that all in the church, including ministers and elders, are subject to him. The church is his possession, because it is blood-bought. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price, and that price is the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Ephesians chapter 5, verses 23 and 24 speak of the respective roles of headship and submission in marriage as being patterned upon Christ's relationship to his bride, the church. Colossians 1:18 reminds us that Christ holds the place of preeminence in all things. First Peter 5:4 tells us that he is the "chief shepherd" and that we are undershepherds who must give an account of our work. So firstly, we have *The Headship of Christ*.

Secondly, *Undershepherds*. The New Testament also shows us that Christ has appointed rulers over his church, and there is direct evidence for this, and we see also the designations that are given to those undershepherds. The direct evidence can be seen from Acts chapter 14, verse 23, where the apostles appoint elders in every church. Paul instructed Titus to complete what was lacking in the church of Crete (Titus 1:5). Ephesians 4:11 speaks of pastors and teachers, teaching functions of eldership, and says that these are the gift of Christ to his church.

Notice the different designations given to these undershepherds. They are called “elders” and they are called “bishops.” “Elders” is from the Greek *presbuteros*, from which we get the English word “presbyter.” The title suggests that we are to look for maturity and wisdom, and experience in spiritual matters in such. “Bishops,” the Greek word is *episkopos*, from which we get the English word “episcopalian,” but that word simply means “an overseer.” Also notice that these terms, bishop and elder, are interchangeable. A bishop is an elder; an elder is a bishop. They are not two offices; they are one office. Acts chapter 20, verse 17 and 28, and Titus 1, verses 5 and 7 show this to be so.

There’s only one ruling elder in the church today—the elder, of which there are two types. There are those who rule only, and those who rule and labor in word and doctrine. We might call these the ruling elder and the preaching elder, but we must remember that they have parity. All elders rule or pastor the congregation, and not just the minister—or preaching elder. The qualifications for such elders is the same as for a ruling and preaching elder. They’re not two sets of qualifications.

And the general responsibilities of these two bishops or elders—a preaching elder and a ruling elder—what are elders to do? Well, they are to rule; they are to defend; they are to feed and discipline the flock of God. Notice what Acts 20, verse 28 says, feed the flock of God. Titus 1:9 tells us to exhort and reprove them. Hebrews 13:17 tells us “they watch for your souls.” So they are to pastor the flock by visitation, by planning and leadership, by discipline, and ensuring continuity and promotion of the truth. Elders are not just figureheads with an honorary title. Their office involves real work.

3. The Minister’s Responsibilities to Other Elders

Let us consider the pastor’s, that is, the preaching elder’s responsibilities in connection with his other elders, the ruling elders, and with others. The preaching elder is responsible for instructing the congregation, including his fellow elders. The health of the congregation depends largely on an active, biblically-functioning eldership. So preaching elders should encourage their fellow elders to do their work well. How do they do this? Well, there’s a number of ways in which they can do this. Briefly,

By sharing and delegating. Often in circumstances that we face, the minister—the preaching elder—has to do everything himself. There may be few men. There may be a failure in his fellow elders. Maybe he has only himself to blame. He might be a man who doesn’t like to delegate the work—nobody can do it like he can do it, might be his thought. But we have to be careful, if we are preaching elders, not to think that we should be perfectionists; and not to be cynical of others. Remember that they have gifts that we must use.

Another way to connect with our elders, and others, is to *meet with them informally*—perhaps a meal at your home, or a time of prayer.

Avoid strife—that’s easier said than done. No one benefits from strife. We shouldn’t respond to personal hurt by speaking about it. Remember what James has to say on the use of the tongue.

Again, we will connect with them *by respecting their office*. Give your fellow elders their place in their ruling of the congregation. Some will be very mature and experienced Christians while you might still be a novice. They are a God-given resource, and you are to use them for your own and your congregation’s benefit.

Promote a catholic spirit and a wide vision, and by “catholic,” I mean a true catholicity, a true wide outlook or vision of the church. We’re not speaking about Roman Catholic—we’re speaking

about catholicity in the other narrower sense.

Again, *set an example to your elders and flock of a missionary concern*. Distribute material to them regarding missions, and have meetings in which missionaries speak.

Set the goal of being hospitable and having these men, and possibly their wives, in your home. Have fellowship with your fellow elders at times.

Reading—you should encourage your fellow elders to read; and we'll touch on that in a moment. We should be, indeed, encouraging all our congregation to read good books, but especially our elders. And this in order that we might train our elders apologetically, because they live in an age when they face decadent religion; they face social breakdown, entrenched materialism, skepticism and relativism, rampant Darwinism, and loose morality. Elders, and the congregation, need to be alert to the changed world view in which they live, and be prepared for conflict and how to witness to it.

In order that we might deal with our fellow elders, we should *promote respect for the eldership in our congregations*. We must teach proper biblical understanding as to what the work of the eldership is. Everyone has their own ideas of what elders should or should not be doing. Our people need to be taught what the biblical expectations are.

4. Biblical Responsibilities of the Congregation to their Elders

Consider these passages which speak of the congregation's responsibility regarding their elders. These ought to be brought before the people periodically, or as a series on the work of the eldership. We'll look at a number of texts here for a moment.

Hebrews 13—there are two text in this chapter. Hebrews 13, verse 7 is a reference to those who used to rule over you, and you are to remember them, and recall their wholesome instruction. You are to remember the good things about them. You are to remember their life, their beliefs, and their godliness. You're not to be dredging up the bad things about them. Remember those who ruled over you. Follow their faith. Imitate their strong faith. What was it?—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Follow their strong doctrine, their sound doctrine, and their fidelity to Christ and his cause. Consider their manner of life, how they behaved, how they thought, and their habits as Christians, and copy them, and seek the same goal as they did.

Hebrews 13, verse 17 refers not to the past leaders, but to those who presently rule over them. And firstly, they are exhorted to obey them. Do what they tell you, when they tell you in the name of Christ, in the authority of their office, not with slavish fear, blind obedience, but thoughtfully as serving the Lord. If they exhort and reprove you, you can ask, are they saying what Christ commanded? And when that is so, then obey them, even if it's unpalatable. It might be a matter of church discipline. They are not acting for your heart, they are acting for your spiritual good.

Secondly, submit to them. This refers to an inward state of mind. It's not just a question of outward conformity, like a child who has been asked to tidy up their room will do it, but all the while rebelling inside, and complaining inside that he has been asked to do so. This calls for humble acceptance of the reproofs of the eldership, the rule of the eldership, their rebukes and their decisions; and we are to seek to cooperate in their work amongst the congregation.

Why are we to obey them and submit to them? Because they watch for our souls. They are called to that and they are commissioned by Christ. They have an account that they have to render. They must give an account for what they've done as elders. Think of the joy it will bring them if you obey and submit to them, because your obedience and submission promotes spiritual growth and joy.

The third passage to think about with respect to our elders is 1 Thessalonians 5:12. We are exhorted to know them, appreciate their true worth, and recognize their rightful position. They're not just those who are lording it over you, they are those who have been appointed by the Lord. We are to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And don't forget that they are frail, sinful, and vulnerable men. Remember that they are prone to temptation and falling into sin just as you are. And so, pray for them, esteem them, and seek that they are upheld, and be at peace one with another, and with them.

1 Timothy 5, and verses 17 and 19, speak about honoring them, respecting them and their authority. When they visit you, listen to them. Don't leave the television blaring if they come into the room and they're trying to speak to you spiritually. It is very off-putting if you're trying to have a spiritual conversation. Make it easy for them to labor. Don't resist speaking about spiritual matters. If they ask after the health of your soul, speak to them about your soul, and not about some football fixture, or some favorite pop group.¹ Don't avoid spiritual conversation. Don't accuse them wrongfully, or needlessly, or critically thus, 1 Timothy 5. James 5:14 gives two words of exhortation. The first is, inform them. Inform them if you are sick, or others are sick, and call for the elders that they might come and visit. They are not clairvoyants.² How often people assume that someone else will tell the elders that so-and-so is sick. You tell them, and you seek them to come and minister to you. And then use them. Use them as spiritual helpers. Confide in them. Seek their advice, their prayers, and their fellowship.

5. The Training of Others

And then, to conclude this talk on *Pastoral Leadership*, let's touch on *The Training of Others*. Now, elders, and particularly the preaching elder, does this largely through preaching and through the example both of himself and his elders. But there are other avenues open to them to train others. It may be the Sunday School. The church, as a principle, must indoctrinate its children under its care, or else someone else will. We shouldn't be afraid of seeking to indoctrinate our children with what is true and right. If we don't teach them what is true and right, there are many people who would be happy to teach them what it wrong. And support those who are engaged in this work.

You might think of an all-age Sunday School. This is really something for the whole congregation, or sometimes particularly for adults. It might be a meeting where a book is chosen, and a chapter is read each week, and there is a coming together, and a going over of the chapter what has been learned, and it is opened up. You think, for example, if there is activity in your area of some sect like the Jehovah Witnesses or the Mormons, you might read a book on these things, so that you will be better able to deal with these people as they come knocking at your door.

Again, you may have elders' meetings, and/or men's meetings. It's a good way of training men in essential doctrines by giving them the opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions. You might have, similarly, ladies meetings. Spiritually-minded ladies in a congregation are a great asset. Encourage fellowship among your ladies. Give them help with any pastoral needs that they may have as they meet together. Offer to come and speak with them, perhaps at the end of the meeting, or at the end of a term.

You think of another method dealing particularly with our young people—youth clubs. Here, a great deal of care needs to be had, because we need to make a distinction between our own

¹ "Pop group" is referring to popular youth music groups.

² "Clairvoyant" is one who can read minds or tell the future. He doesn't believe clairvoyants are real, but he is using this term rhetorically to make a point.

church children and local community needs. Great problems arise when you simply have one meeting, and you are bringing in many outside children into a meeting that should really be aimed at your own children in the church. And so, that is something to be considered. And a question I would ask, is this the work of the pastor of the church at all? That's something to ponder.

Youth fellowships give an opportunity to teach and harness young people in the congregation, but we should try and get them to be doing something in the congregation, not just listening. It is good that we are being instructed in Christian truth, but perhaps we should encourage them to do some practical things, like house painting, visiting the elderly, doing little chores for the housebound—these kinds of things, so that they are connecting with those in need, or with needs within the congregation.

And then we have to remember that training does not need to be formal. We can have informal training. For example, the elder, or the preaching elder, might take a young active Christian, or indeed, a retired saint of God, as they go around door to door, or visit the sick and housebound. You are, in effect, giving them an apprenticeship in leadership. If you have in your congregation a young man of serious piety, then this is an excellent way of seeking to interest him in and perhaps even prepare him for the work of the ministry. Amen.