

JANUARY 22, 2024

MINISTRY SUPPORTER QUOTE ..... 2

*Pastor Shawn Thornton*  
*Calvary Community Church*  
*Westlake Village, CA*

VERSE OF THE WEEK..... 3

*Philippians 1:9*

FROM OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

*Noah Webster*..... 4  
*Congress, 1854*..... 5  
*Samuel Adams*..... 6  
*Jonathan Trumbull*..... 8

ABOUT CAPITOL MINISTRIES ..... 8



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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

# How to Choose a Good Pastor



**Y**ou are very careful, deliberate, and wise about whom you hire in your office. The procedures you follow relative to employment help assure that you get what you are looking for.

In a similar way, do you closely examine the pastor and church wherein you and your family will obtain a proper spiritual diet?

Many legislative and governing authorities simply go to church where their family has always gone. But as illustrated in the first chapters of the book of Revelation, churches change—and so do pastors.

This study—*How to Choose a Good Pastor*—will aid your discernment in choosing a good, biblically-based spiritual coach for life.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

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*The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.*

## WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

**Governors:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom

**Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom

**Senate Members:** Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

**House Members:** Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Rm., Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served



## MINISTRY SUPPORTER QUOTE

### Shawn Thornton

*Pastor*

*Calvary Community Church  
Westlake Village, CA*



“God has revealed his views of who He is and how He views marriage, human sexuality, life, ethics, business dealings ... just look at the book of Proverbs. It gives us all kinds of views of how God believes wisdom should be played out in everyday life, even in a broken world. So, when we are doing a Bible study, it shouldn’t start with training in righteousness. So many ministries, so many churches, so many pastors want to run directly to training in righteousness. That is coming, but hold your horses. The application to life is coming, but first, with every Bible study, start with God. I say if people don’t leave our services in our church with a bigger view of God and a smaller view of man, we’re in trouble. Always start with God, Who God is and what His views are.”

*Pastor Thornton made his comments in a presentation to CapMin ministry leaders.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, many thoughts abound as to what a ***pastor*** is or should be like. Some view him as a nice, teddy-bear type who hugs and walks alongside you. Others see him as the Sunday morning event leader who is the good-looking CEO of a slick, market-driven outreach. Others view the minister as someone who can heal the congregants’ physical ailments via touching the tube (flat screen). Others can’t wait to get pumped-up from this week’s prosperity message. And then some view ministers as impersonal and removed, black-robed untouchables, i.e., outsider professionals.

In the midst of these varying perceptions of a ***pastor***, what does Scripture indicate he should be like? What are your thoughts on what makes a good ***pastor***? The answer to this question is gained by studying what are called the Pastoral Epistles of the New Testament (NT): the three books of 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy (the chronological order in which they were penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit).

## II. WHO IS QUALIFIED TO SPEAK FOR GOD?

In seeking a good spiritual leader, our first consideration should be who God’s Word says is qualified to speak authoritatively of the Bible. In other words, whom should believers listen to or consider credible?

In 1 Timothy 3:1–7, the Apostle Paul defines a calling into spiritual leadership: ***It is a trustworthy statement: if***

## How to Choose a Good Pastor

***any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.***

The first identifier of a good ***pastor*** is, ***if any man***. The Scriptures are repeatedly clear about the qualification that a ***pastor***, the senior leader of a church is male. The Greek word here for man is *tis*, which in fact, is an indefinite pronoun but it is used in parallel to and therefore matches the numerous masculine adjectives that follow in the passage. These masculine adjectives, which translate accurately into the English language as *he*, are numerous and are appropriately supplied no less than 10 times in English translations!

Further to this particular point, in verse 2, Paul said the ***overseer*** by definition must be ***the husband of one wife***. In verse 4, Paul stipulated that, ***he must be one who manages his own household well***. In those days, only men were the heads of their households. In woke Evangelicalism today,



this clear criteria of Scripture is often compromised, (and the work-arounds—those who distort the Scriptures—are quite amusing I might add) but the conscience of the Christian is bound by the clear teaching of God's Word; our convictions on this are a matter of obedience to what God explicitly says here.

### III. PRELIMINARY PASSAGES

By far the largest number of passages related to the *pastor* has to do with his injunction to teach and preach the Word of God. The sheer volume of those commandments far outweighs any other aspect of his God-given job description. This fact alone serves to indicate that the primacy of pastoring is related to teaching and preaching the Word of God. Note this emphasis as illustrated by the Holy Spirit in the following passages:

#### A. 1 TIMOTHY 5:17

*The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.*

#### B. ACTS 20:27

In Acts, relative to the Ephesian elders with whom Paul had labored in ministry for three years, he states: *For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*

#### C. COLOSSIANS 1:25

*Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from*

*God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God.*

In these three passages, the emphasis of the apostles' ministry was proclaiming the Word. And this same perspective on ministry was handed down from the apostles to the first-century church leaders as evidenced in and by the Pastoral Epistles.

### IV. PASSAGES EMPHASIZING TEACHING

One of the main texts underscoring the prominence of the *pastor* being a *teacher* is found in Ephesians 4:11. This verse reveals the kind of leadership that Jesus Christ has given and intends for the body of Christ in His physical absence (in between His first and second incarnation):

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastor and teachers.*

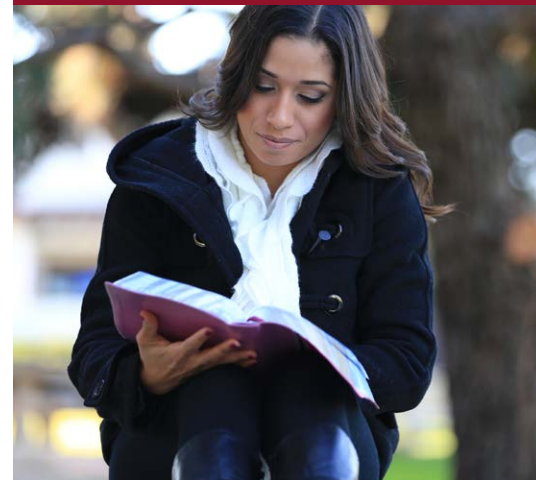
Listed are four different positions of leadership that God advocates to build His body (cf. 4:12). Importantly, in Ephesians and elsewhere in the NT, there is a distinction between spiritual gifts—gifts which all believers obtain at the point of salvation—and gifts God bestows to lead His body between the First and Second Coming of Christ. Spiritual gifts are given to each member of the body (Ephesians 4:16) over and above that fact He gives certain individuals as gifts to the Church to mature His Church: *And He gave some ....*

### VERSE OF THE WEEK



## Philippians 1:9

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.*

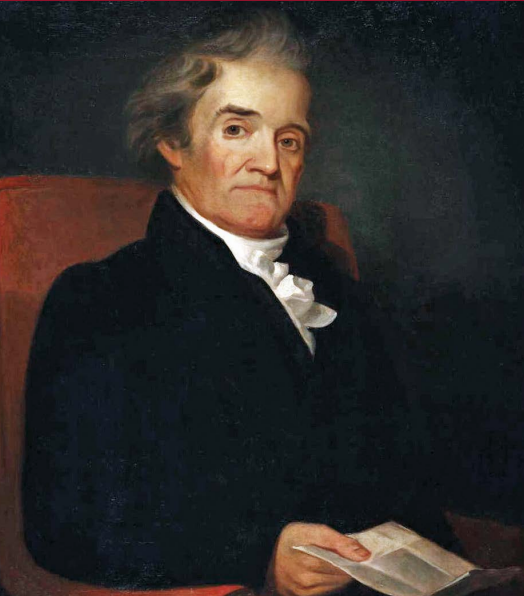


Similar to judging safety from danger is the ability to judge truth from error.





Noah Webster



“The virtues of men are of more consequence to society than their abilities; and for this reason, the heart should be cultivated with more assiduity than the head.”

— Noah Webster, American Revolutionary War soldier, judge, legislator, educator, “Schoolmaster to America.”

Noah Webster, *On the Education of Youth in America*, 1788.



*Marble statue of The Good Shepherd carrying a lamb, c. 300–350, from the Catacombs of Domitilla, Vatican Museums.*

Whereas the leadership positions of apostles and **prophets** primarily relate to the apostolic, formative years of the Church Age, and the authentication of those ushering in the Church Age (as chronicled in the book of Acts), the prevalent ongoing leadership positions given by Christ today are those of **evangelist** and **pastor-teacher**.

### V. ADDITIONAL PASSAGES EMPHASIZING TEACHING

The **pastor-teacher** is best understood as one person in Ephesians 4:11. Whereas some English Bibles translate

the Greek to mean **pastors** and **teachers**, a careful study of the NT on this subject (in my opinion, as well as others) supports the idea of one person and one office. In other words, Christ gifts His Church with a **pastor** who is a **teacher**, and a **teacher** who is a **pastor**; they go together. In a pragmatic sense, it is difficult to effectively **pastor** without **teaching** the Scriptures, and to effectively teach without pastoring is also difficult. Those who are **teachers** and not **pastors** should not be lead **pastors**; perhaps they would better serve by teaching in a seminary or writing books.



In addition to a pragmatic connection between *pastor-teacher*, many commentators also believe this is the case grammatically. The conjunction “and” (*kai*), which connects the two nouns, often means “that is” or “in particular” in the Greek language. Accordingly, if such is the intended usage in this passage, *teachers* (*didaskalos*) is descriptive of *pastors* (*poimen*), i.e., “*pastors*, in particular *teachers*.” On its own, this interpretation is inconclusive, but consider 1 Peter 5:1 and 2, which state,

*Therefore, I exhort the elders [presbuteros] among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd [poimen] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [episkopeo]....*

The three words used distinctively—*elders*, *shepherd*, and *oversight*—yet interchangeably, describe the same person and position. *Elders* and *overseers* are other titles used to describe *pastors* (translated here as *shepherd*). Notice the same usage in Acts chapter 20:

*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders [presbuteros] of the church* (v. 17).

Later in the chapter he states to these elders,

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [episkopos], to shepherd [poimen] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood* (v. 28).

Once again *elder* and *overseer* are descriptors of the same person as is the *shepherd* (*pastor*). Each name is a definitive aspect of the same person and office given by Christ to His Church. States one commentator, “These are different ways of identifying the same person.”<sup>1</sup>

Now add the following: in the Pastoral Epistles, specifically 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which reveal the qualifications for those who are called by Christ as leaders in the body of Christ, the shopping lists of qualifiers begin respectively with *An overseer* (*episkope*) then ... and appoint elders (*presbuteros*) (who are)....

Here’s the point: each passage continues to define and describe the *elder-overseer* as a person who is able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5). Follow the deductive conclusion here: if a *pastor* is another name for *overseer* or *elder* per the conclusion of the former paragraph, then it stands to reason that, per the latter paragraph, a *pastor* is one who is *able to teach*. These various passages, when combined, seem to conclude that every *pastor* is one who is *able to teach* the Word of God, i.e., a *pastor-teacher*.

Why all of this detail about a seemingly small point? Because this small point brings to light a huge insight relative to the subject of choosing a good spiritual mentor/coach (*pastor*) for yourself and your family:

**Some *pastors* are not Bible teachers, and some Bible teachers are not *pastors*.**

Congress, 1854



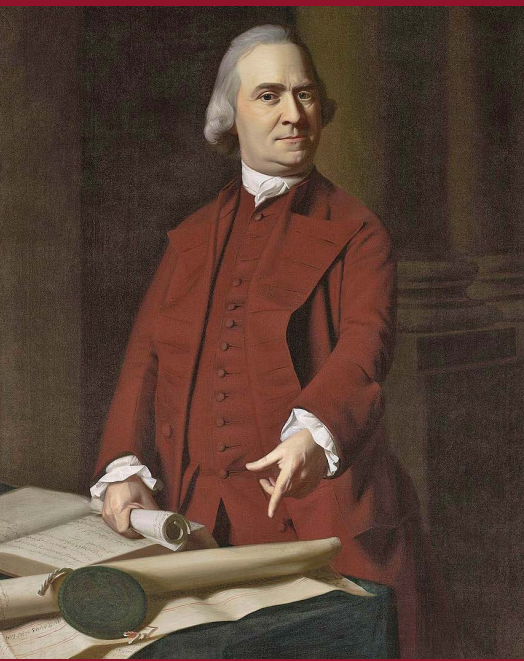
“The great, vital, and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and the divine truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Journal of the House of the Representatives of the United States of America (Washington, DC: Cornelius Wendell, 1855), 34th Cong., 1st Sess., 354, January 23, 1856; see also: Lorenzo D. Johnson, *Chaplains of the General Government: With Objections to Their Employment Considered* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1856), 35, quoting from the House Journal, Wednesday, January 23, 1856, and B. F. Morris, *The Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1864), 328.





Samuel Adams



“The public cannot be too curious concerning the characters of public men.”

— Samuel Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence, father of the American Revolution, ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, Governor of Massachusetts.

Samuel Adams, letter to James Warren, November 4, 1775.



## How to Choose a Good Pastor

Choose one who is both! Your spiritual coach needs to love and mentor you as he labors to teach you God’s Word! Don’t settle for less, my friend. You can see by my studies that I work hard at teaching in our capital; I want to work equally as hard at being a good personable *pastor* for you as well!

As seen in the previous passages and many others, the above are the primary interchangeable titles that God uses to identify those whom He has actually given (*and God gave some as ...*) to the body of Christ today. Given this intel, God expects you, as a believer, to cue in on this! Back at home in the district or state, or here in the capitol, don’t choose a *pastor* who is not a *teacher*. Equally unsound, don’t choose a *teacher* who is not a *pastor*!

### VI. PASSAGES REGARDING FALSE TEACHERS

Add to this counsel 1 John 4:1:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

A believer needs to discern if a spiritual leader is really sent from God by first of all asking: does he even teach the Bible? And secondly, if he does, to what degree does he teach it? Acts 17:11 states the following regarding the diligence of the Berean Christians:

*For they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.*

Jesus said regarding true belief in Matthew 7:20–21:

*“So then you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Wisely choose your *pastor*! Make sure he is teaching you the Word of God! Don’t settle for anything less—especially given the limited time you have!

### VII. APPLICATION

Is it an appropriate and/or a fair question to ask, “How do I rate my pastor?” I think so.

#### Three Descriptives of a Pastor (*Poimen*)

*Teacher* (*didaskalos*) emphasizes what the *pastor* does: he teaches.

*Elder* (*presbuteros*) emphasizes what the *pastor* has: he has character.

And ...

*Overseer* (*episkopos*) emphasizes how the *pastor* functions: he presides.

Properly rating another (like you do those seeking employment in your office) relates to good judgment. Whereas God condemns those who possess a self-righteous, judgmental spirit akin to the Pharisees (cf. Matthew 7:1), every believer is to possess



careful discernment especially concerning spiritual matters. In fact discernment is required in order to properly love. Philippians 1:9 states:

*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.*

Choose wisely, my friend, you are most loving to yourself and your family when you choose ***pastor-teachers*** who are biblically-defined at both ends of your geographically split-apart vocation.

**Similar to judging safety from danger is the ability to judge truth from error.**

Every believer needs to be discerning when evaluating good vs. bad pastors. Make sure too that you are not following a pastor who is simply flattering you; real shepherds will speak truth into your life at the risk of losing your friendship.

Too often believers incorrectly think, “I’m not to judge” as they follow after ineffectual pastors who fail to ever mature their congregants due to their serving-up a low-protein Bible diet. Non-discernment is simply another way of spelling naiveté or imprudence. Proverbs calls such individuals “simpletons.” “I am not to judge” can sometimes be a “spiritual cloak” covering a lack of applied biblical insight or necessary courage.

## VIII. SUMMARY

Believers should associate with a ***pastor*** who will stimulate spiritual growth

via ***teaching*** and ***preaching*** the Word. At the same time, associate with a ***pastor*** who will stimulate spiritual growth via ***shepherding*** your heart through the good times and the bad.

Your selection of a ***pastor(s)*** will make a huge difference in your growth over future decades! Hebrews 5:14 speaks about how learning the precepts of God develops spiritual maturity:

*But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*

Biblical laxity leads to spiritual naiveté. The ability to ***test the spirits*** (see again point VI: 1 John 4:1) implies that we are to possess theological acumen. Proverbs 1:22 states, *How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?*

States Proverbs 14:15: *The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps.*

Ephesians 5:17 adds some judicious advice: *So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

Be discerning! Ask judiciously, “Does the ***pastor*** I’m following really ***shepherd*** me? Does he possess a genuine love for people as well as the skill and commitment to ***teach*** the Bible?” Those questions are emblematic of the kind of thinking and decisions God expects from every believer.



NOW AVAILABLE

The book of Acts records how a small band of men—the apostles—in very short order ***turned the world upside down*** (Acts 17:6, KJV) during the first century in which they lived. This small team of uneducated, common men were not elite leaders, so how were they able to saturate the world with the gospel—changing lives, changing culture, and eventually changing the Roman Empire?

Scripture provides the answer: not only did they fulfill the Great Commission one soul at a time through a ministry of geometric evangelism and discipleship, but they succeeded *by concentrating on and impacting a particular element of society, specifically **kings and all who are in authority*** (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

*All in Authority: Reigniting the Bible's Top-Down Missions Strategy* provides the biblical exegesis for this missional strategy that is found in both the Old and New Testaments. The book provides a clarion call for the Church to make political public servants a priority mission field in our nation today. Request your complimentary copy at [capmin.org](http://capmin.org).



## Jonathan Trumbull



“The examples of holy men teach us that we should seek Him with fasting and prayer, with penitent confession of our sins, and hope in His mercy through Jesus Christ the Great Redeemer.”

— Jonathan Trumbull, judge, legislator, governor of Connecticut, confidant of George Washington who called him “Brother Jonathan.”

Jonathan Trumbull, *Proclamation for a Day of Fasting and Prayer*, March 9, 1774.

### ESTABLISHED MINISTRIES

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Atlanta **Georgia**  
Augusta **Maine**  
Austin **Texas**  
Bismarck **North Dakota**  
Boise **Idaho**  
Boston **Massachusetts**  
Denver **Colorado**  
Dover **Delaware**  
Carson City **Nevada**  
Charleston **West Virginia**  
Cheyenne **Wyoming**  
Columbia **South Carolina**  
Columbus **Ohio**  
Concord **New Hampshire**  
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Gitega **Burundi**  
Yaounde **Cameroon**  
Bangui **Central African Republic**  
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Yamoussoukro **Cote d'Ivoire**  
Kinshasa **Democratic Republic of the Congo**  
Quito **Ecuador**  
Malabo **Equatorial Guinea**  
Mbabane **Eswatini**  
Addis Ababa **Ethiopia**  
Brussels **European Parliament**  
Suva **Fiji**  
Libreville **Gabon**  
Accra **Ghana**  
Conakry **Guinea**  
Tegucigalpa **Honduras**  
Rome **Italy**  
Nairobi **Kenya**  
Monrovia **Liberia**  
Antananarivo **Madagascar**  
Lilongwe **Malawi**  
Mexico City **Mexico**  
Chisinau **Moldova**  
Maputo **Mozambique**  
Nauru  
Abuja **Nigeria**  
Port Moresby **Papua New Guinea**  
Brazzaville **Republic of the Congo**  
Freetown **Sierra Leone**  
Honolulu **Solomon Islands**  
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1. John MacArthur, <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/451016/answer-ing-the-key-questions-about-elders>.