

On Pastoring

1. As recently preached, a N.T. pastor has the office of elder/bishop/overseer/steward.
 - A. The rule of the church is committed to him. **HEB 13:7, 17.**
 - B. rule: To control, guide, direct, exercise sway or influence over...
 - C. control: To check or verify, and hence to regulate... 4. To exercise restraint or direction upon the free action of; to hold sway over, exercise power or authority over, dominate, command.
 - D. check: To stop (action, growth, exhibition of feeling, and the like); to stay the course of; to repress, restrain.
 - E. regulate: To control, govern, or direct by rule or regulations; to subject to guidance or restrictions; to adapt to circumstances or surroundings. b. To bring or reduce (a person or body of persons) to order.
 - F. Scripture, of course, is the supreme rule over all members, including the pastor. **PSA 119:128; MAT 4:4.**
 - G. There are many specific rules for the church's conduct and creed given in Scripture but there are times when a judgment call must be made as to how a specific rule or a principle should be applied and/or enforced.
 - (1) The pastor must decide on the order of the service: hymns, prayers, helpers, sermon topics, ordinances, etc.
 - (2) The pastor must decide on what is considered acceptable appearance (hair, apparel, body modification, etc.).
 - (3) The pastor must decide on what constitutes too many absences from church.
 - (4) The pastor has a say in church expenditure since he is the *steward* (An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household; supervising the service of the master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure; a major-domo.) .
 - (5) As your pastor, I am very persuaded that the church is God's heritage to be ruled in His best interests, not mine. **1PE 5:3.**
 - (6) I will lean towards liberty where to do so does not violate a principle of Scripture or promote *an occasion to the flesh*. **GAL 5:13.**
 - a. It is a maxim that liberty is best enjoyed and preserved by people who know how to restrain themselves.
 - b. "When liberty destroys order, the hunger for order will destroy liberty."
(Will Durant)
 - c. *Licitus perimus omnes* – These lawful things undo us.
 - d. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient..."
(**1CO 6:12**).
 - H. The elder is the N.T. counterpart to the O.T. teaching priest. **1CO 9:9-14.**
 - (1) The priest had the oversight of God's house as does now the pastor. **NUM 4:16 c/w 1PE 5:1-2.**
 - (2) The teacher must differentiate between holy and unholy, clean and unclean so the people may have discernment. **LEV 10:10-11 c/w EZE 44:23.**
 - I. There are judgment calls that a pastor must make *in good conscience* to direct saints away from unholiness and towards holiness. **1TI 1:18-19.**
 - (1) I may not have a specific verse for every situation but according to the knowledge I have gained from scripture and experience, I must make a call accordingly.
 - (2) There was a time when the culture in general could be depended upon to uphold good conduct and ethics but those days are slipping away rapidly. In the absence of

- a cultural mandate for good conduct and ethics, the church must establish its own. That is where a pastor plays a vital role in leading by good rule and example.
- (3) Whereas I do not have authority from God to make law (God only is the lawgiver, **JAM 4:12**), I do have authority to apply and facilitate the implementation of appropriate laws and principles of Scripture. This is *executive authority* as it ought to be used.
 - (4) Defiant resistance of this pastoral authority is *rebellion* (rising up against legitimate governmental authority), which is *as the sin of witchcraft* and merits church exclusion. **1SAM 15:23 c/w GAL 5:20.**
- J. One guideline that I have found profitable in setting rules for the church is to point us all to the pattern of God's house that He has given (**EZE 43:10-11; 1CO 11:2**). The closer we stick to the N.T. pattern for worship and service, the better.
- K. Those who are set in positions of judgment will never be 100% flawless.
- (1) However, this does not mean that their judgment is 100% flawed.
 - (2) If you question my judgment calls in discretionary matters, talk to me about it in private, reason with me, *intreat me as a father* (**1TI 5:1**). I am approachable but mind that just because I am willing to hear you out doesn't mean that I am obliged to see things your way.
2. A pastor is duty-bound to warn, exhort, admonish, correct, reprove and rebuke in both private and public contexts.
- A. "Instruction in righteousness" is the easy part of **2TI 3:16 – 2TI 4:2**.
- B. Do not ever get the idea that I get my kicks out of rebuking you as if I am "holier than thou" and just love to rub your nose in your deficiencies. I do not delight in trampling upon another person's sense of worth.
- (1) It is a constant struggle with me to determine if I even have a moral high ground myself from which to do battle.
 - (2) Like Paul, there are times when I have had second thoughts about rebukes I have issued. **2CO 7:8.**
 - (3) Like Jeremiah, I would rather have kept my mouth shut but could not. **JER 20:7-9.**
- C. But I MUST do this: for your good, for my good, for the church's good. **EZE 3:17-21.**
- D. (**PRO 28:23**) He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.
- E. "Reprovers may displease those at first who yet afterwards, when the passion is over and the bitter physic begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and perhaps have hard words, instead of thanks, for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort in his own bosom of having done his duty, but he also whom he reproveth will acknowledge that it was a kindness, will entertain a high opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound will yet pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it." (Matthew Henry)
- F. My boldness toward you is borne of both duty and love. **2CO 7:3-4.**
3. Concerning church attendance.
- A. I keep attendance records out of necessity. I am to give account to God for you in this area of Christian duty as much as any other, per **HEB 13:17.**
- B. I have striven to be considerate and accommodating to absences for work, sickness, family and personal reasons.
- C. I have a particular number of personal absences per year in mind that I consider to be the

- outer limit of responsibility to God's house. When you are getting close to that limit, expect to hear from me. Do not force me to make an absolute rule in this area.
- D. Personal absences from the service of God's house have jumped 78% between 2014 and 2015. What is going on?
4. Concerning Bible studies.
- A. I don't consider Bible studies to be mandatory as are church services. However...
- B. Interest in the monthly Saturday study has dwindled greatly and the interest in the biweekly studies for the "northern group" have fizzled out.
- C. There were two major monthly studies that I put together for church members who had asked me do so and then they never showed up for them.
- D. If I am not feeding you what you need, please tell me! If your zeal in general is languishing, repent. **LUK 8:14; REV 3:19.**
5. Concerning hair length.
- A. There are two major issues at stake here: the outward token of the woman's subjection to man and the need to steer away from blurring of lines of distinction between the sexes. **1CO 11:1-16; 6:9.**
- B. The woman's "...hair is given her for a covering" (**1CO 11:15**), i.e., a covering of her head (**1CO 11:5-6**), whereas the man's head in distinction to that should not be covered.
- C. The style of hair is not an issue; it is the length. Unless there is a biological, medical, or some other immutable characteristic that reasonably forbids a woman's hair to be longer than a man's and sufficient to cover her head, her hair should be longer and his should not cover his head.
6. Concerning dress code.
- A. Again, there are two major issues at stake here: modesty and avoiding the blurring of lines between the sexes. **1TI 2:9; DEU 22:5; 1CO 6:9.**
- B. Nakedness (buttocks, genitalia, women's breasts) is to be covered by garments that do not expose female breasts or cleavage, and should minimally extend to the knee in a standing posture.
- C. Whereas there remains a need to avoid "cross-dressing," I am rescinding a restriction I had previously made concerning blue jeans for women.
- D. Brethren: use good judgment here. "Judge in yourselves..." (**1CO 11:13**). Do not force me to mandate a rigid dress code which would have to apply in all areas of public life, not just in church attendance!
7. Concerning tattoos and piercings, etc.
- A. There is a principle from **LEV 19:28** that I am compelled to not discard. The current cultural trend for tattooing is not something that I can in good conscience permit. If you already have tattoos, do not add to them.
- (1) Satan puts marks in men in this world. **REV 13:16-17.**
- (2) God's writing in the saints' foreheads is spiritual and heavenly. **REV 14:1.**
- B. Similar regulations apply to body piercings, body modifications, etc.
- (1) Scripture speaks of nose jewels, ear piercings, and other minimal alterations.
- (2) Scripture also associates self-mutilation with wild-eyed superstition and devilish lunacy. **1KI 18:28; MAR 5:5, 15.**
- (3) Paul's bodily markings are acceptable. **GAL 6:17.**
- C. I do not intend to leave this door open for the church to become a freak show.
- D. My rule on this issue does not forbid minimal modification such as pierced ears.