

Contrast Between a Good and Bad Pastor

In **John 10:1-18**, God gives us the contrast between Jesus as the good shepherd and men as a bad shepherd. But God has appointed mature brothers to govern God's church.

The Entry. **John 10:1** speaks of how one comes into relationship with the sheep. There are two ways, those who enter through the door (chosen by God to be the shepherd), and those who enter through some other way. The only official organization of the flock of God is a local church. At this point, the official leader of a local church is the bishop (the position of authority), who is a true elder (and who meets the qualifications of a leader), and who shepherds (the action that makes an elder into the position of bishop). The only legitimate leaders are those who enter this way, by qualifying under the biblical requirements. If there is no examination of the individual, he is not legitimate. Many want to control the brethren, but do not meet the spiritual qualifications and requirements, and do not pay the price to enter correctly (**1 Timothy 3, Titus 1**). These are not to be accepted as leaders. Honor those who care for their spiritual life and dedicate themselves to ministry.

The Relationship. **John 10:3-4** teaches us that the true shepherd has a good relationship with the sheep. The good shepherd lives with the sheep in their daily lives and has sympathy and a personal relationship (friendship, he calls them by name). The word "leads" is to lead them out of something, and this must be from sin to righteousness, which is the object of all preaching. The good shepherd places them (through preaching) in the will of God, especially as it is expressed in the Holy Scriptures, as the central point of their life, which dominates what they do, believe, say, and desire. **1 Cor 16:15-16** commands us to submit to people who have dedicated themselves to the service of the saints, helping and working. Relationships and dedication count in identifying the good shepherd.

The Leadership. **John 10:4** speaks of the leadership and ministry of a good pastor, that he is exemplary. **1 Peter 5:3** *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

1 John 2:6 *He that saith he abideth in him **ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.***

The good shepherd is not a **cowboy**, who pushes his charge from behind cruelly pushing and whipping them. The good **shepherd** is exemplary and goes out in front of them, demonstrating in his personal life how everyone should behave. We can simply ask, **Is the shepherd's conduct like the example of Christ?** If the answer is yes, then he is probably a good shepherd. If not, then we have a hypocrite (who goes to hell **Matthew 24:51**), someone who pretends to be the example of Christ, but really is not. Be very careful when the spiritual leader uses double standards, one for himself, and another for others. But we cannot blame the shepherd just for being harsh, because this is what he must do, (**Titus 1:13** *This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;* **1 Timothy 5:20** *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* **2 Timothy 4:2**) Paul reveals to us the point in **2 Corinthians 13:10**, when he said he used severity "according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." The severity that the good shepherd uses is to aid a believer to Christlikeness, and not to destroy the life of the Christian under his charge. Paul saw an authority given to him by God for this.

1 Corinthians 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* Paul's concept of a good pastor is that he is an example of Christ. As a minister charged with responsibility for other Christians, Paul lived the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. If your pastor is not like this, he should leave the ministry to someone who is. These things happen because the very same church does not examine the pastor as to his moral character BEFORE they ask him to be their pastor.

Marks of the bad shepherd. In **Ezekiel 34** we see the marks of a bad shepherd. He feeds himself and not the flock (**Ez 34:1**), he takes personal advantage of his office (**Ez 34:2-3**), he does not seek the welfare of the flock (**Ez 34:4**), he does not give placement and direction in the lives of the sheep (**Ez 34:5**), he does not make it a priority to integrate every Christian into a local church (**Ez 34:6**), he

does not attack the spiritual enemies of the sheep (**Ez 34:8**). **Isaiah 56:10** *His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.*

In Jeremiah we see more marks. They rebelled against God, giving a message that did not originate with God (**Jer 2:8**), they did not seek God's message (**Jer 6:3**) but "became overbearing" (consumers). Finally, God's threat is against the bad shepherd, "Who is that shepherd that can withstand Me?" (**Jer. 49:19**). The good shepherd is a minister who presents himself as the example of Christ. **2 Thessalonians 3:9** *Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.*

The Contrast between a Sheep and a Goat

The Bible teaches us that there are people within the church who pretend to be saved, but really are not (**Matt. 13:24-29**). Many times, false doctrine and conflicts come from these "members" who hinder the flock of God. Their character is very different, because they are not subject to the authority of God. The authority of the Scriptures is not the resolution of everything (the rule) in their lives. They are a law unto themselves. What seems best to them is always what is right. Their ways and methods of working are what they like, such as joking, blasphemy, sedition, and lying. They do not care about the impact and consequence on the novice and weaker brethren (**Luke 17:1-2**). Whoever causes others to fall is accursed before God.

Titus 3:2 *To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.*

Galatians 5:15 *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

In church conflicts, ask yourself who is behaving like Christ? Many times, neither side is behaving like Christ. But note that no matter what, God does not bless any warrior if he does not fight legitimately, that is, according to God's commandments, form,

and norms (**2 Timothy 2:5** *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully*). If you do not behave as worthy of Christ, with courtesy and respect towards others, then you walk in sin.

Normally these false Christians do not respect the divine authority that God has given to the pastor.

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

There are churches with false prophets as pastors, but the rebellious members do not discern this. The bad members want to impose their will on the church, as if they were the pastor of the church. A good pastor does not allow them to do this, so they plot sedition and rebellion among the membership. If the doctrines are biblical, and the leaders are examples of Christ, then one should submit to these leaders even if one does not agree with every little thing they do. They will have to give an account to God for what they do right or wrong, and for their stewardship.

Colossians 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

The pastor is the one whom God has left in charge of the local church, to represent Christ in this group. The group should be subject to his judgment and discernment, and the pastor should lead by example, not by prodding (aggression). But having said this, we understand that pastors also make mistakes, and we must bear with them and forgive them. When we see elements constantly in the pastor of bad desires, purposes, goals, doctrines, and practices that disqualify him from ministry, the whole church should expel the pastor or make him withdraw from the ministry even if they are in the minority. The dismissal of a pastor is not something in which the pastor does not agree in doctrine or in his personal life, nor because he disagrees with somebody.

The Main Problem

The main problem in most church conflicts is that everyone involved are not seeking God's will, but rather they presume that their own ideas are God's will without having very clear verses to defend their position. Then the complicating factor is that few people in these conflicts are mature. Instead of giving preference to others and being humble, everyone is trying to dominate the faith of others. **Romans 12:10** *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;* **Hebrews 12:14** *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:*

When peace is not a goal in a person's life, conflicts are never resolved, but rather it is their vice, seeking more and more contention. People who are spiritual are not contentious. **2 Timothy 2:24** *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men... patient,* **25** *In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;* **26** *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

Discerning the Will of God

Satan wants to destroy the work of God, and the conflict, dissension, contention, and arguments without spiritual fruit are how Satan works for this destruction. We do not want to be part of the problem, but part of the solution.

James 5:9 *Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*

Psalms 133:1 *A Song of degrees of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

Bad Pastor or a Disobedient Sheep?

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Without a doubt, the Bible warns us of the presence of false prophets and teachers who want to destroy our faith (**Jude 1:4**), and what they do is a type of spiritual slavery, religious control, and by means of systems, doctrines, and practices, they cause us to fall into sin. But when there is conflict in a church, it is very difficult to know when we ought to fight for our faith (**Jude 1:3**), and when it is something not so important that we should just submit to the leadership even though personally we would do things differently.

If the matter is doctrinal, we must go to the Bible to orientate ourselves and not disobey the Scripture. But frequently, the conflict is not doctrinal, but one of preferences and matters in which no biblical principle can be found in it (neither for nor against), if there is one, it is not clear where the Bible stands on the issue.