



BETHEL
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A Pastor's Heart, Part 2

Christ: Our Pattern

In 1 John we are instructed by these words:

1 John 3:1: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He Isaiah"

In 1 Peter 2 we read that Christ left us "...an example... to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21b). In Philippians 2 Paul exhorted:

Philippians 2:5: "Have this attitude [mind] in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Truly Christ was and is the goal of humanity. What He was in the flesh as a man is what we someday will be by grace. He is

- The Standard.
- The Prototype.
- The Pattern.

For what we must be if we are going to be human.

Now of all the things that characterized Him as a man in the flesh, “shepherd” or “caretaker of the souls of men” stands out prominently: “I am the good shepherd...” (John 10:11) and “the chief shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4).

Isaiah describes Christ work as a shepherd:

Isaiah 40:11, “Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.”

John speaking of the eternal state says:

Revelation 7:17, “For the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.”

Now, what is Christ? Nothing less than a Shepherd! This is what He was when He walked the earth, and this is what He will be for all eternity!

Now because He is our pattern, it should not be a surprise to discover that each and every one of us is called to participate in the ministry of caring for the souls of man. Paul commanded us to “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...”(Romans 12:10). Again he says, ““So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Romans 14:19).

Galatians 5:13, “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Colossians 3:16:, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”

Truly a Christian who is not about caring for the souls of man and so investing in the body of Christ is an aberration not known in Scripture. Each and every one of us is charged with the pastoral care of this body.

Yet what will this look like? If we become that which God has called us to be, what affect will this have on our...

- Outlook?
- Goals?
- Values?
- Heart?

The passage we are looking addresses these questions. After walking with Christ for 50 plus years, John had become what you and I are destined to be: a shepherd. Truly he could have related to the body of

Christ in a variety of ways, yet that which he emphasizes here was his pastoral calling.

2 John 1: “The elder...”- that is, “the pastor,” “the shepherd,” “the caretaker of people’s souls.”

Now because

- Christ is a Shepherd AND our prototype...
- John, over time, had become a shepherd and so here reveals the heart of a shepherd...

We have before us a tangible example of what someday our hearts will be as we grow in the faith.

A Pastor’s Encouragement

Last time we got about three fourths of the way through this passage so I want to briefly review what we saw and then finish this text. Accordingly I will start by looking at a pastor’s heart.

2 John 3, “I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth.”

John recently had received a visit from some of the members of the church to which he was writing and literally was “exceedingly rejoicing” over what he found. At a time when heresies were flourishing such that the hearts of many were growing cold for Christ,¹ before John stood faithful children of God “who had not bowed the knee to Baal” (Romans 11:4).

The knowledge of the fidelity of these Christians evoked exceeding gladness, rejoicing, and so encouragement in John’s heart. Now if you study the word of God you will find that which evokes joy, gladness, or happiness on the part of the Christian you will find that there are only two sources for this joy:

- The knowledge that God has forgiven you your sins such that you are reconciled to God.
- Beholding the progress of the Kingdom of God in the life of another.

Recall the words of Davids, Moo, and Yarbrough:

“...joy ha[s] always accompanied news of Jesus: There was joy at his birth (Luke 1:14; 2:10); there was joy among his disciples as they ministered (10:17); there was joy in the presence of the Lord after his resurrection (24:41, 52). Jesus had promised abundant joy to his disciples (see John 15:11; 16:20, 24). Jesus prayed to the Father that his followers would have joy after he left them (17:13)... True joy comes from participation in the kingdom of God...”²

That’s exactly what we see here, and hence the first element that we learn about a pastor’s heart! When it comes to the servant of Christ that which evokes encouragement is beholding the progress of the Kingdom of God in the life of another. With this we are challenged to evaluate the things from which we are seeking joy in life. And get this: if it is...

- Money.

¹ Compare Matthew 24:12

² 1, 2, & 3 John, p. 98.

- A job.
- Power.
- Respect.
- Approval.
- A relationship.
- Spending money.
- Food.
- Events.

Then you are striving for that which will perish and that which can NEVER give lasting joy. Christ said:

Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”

John’s Concern

Outside of Christ Himself, what is the Christian’s greatest treasure? It is participating in and so beholding the advancement of God’s Kingdom one soul at a time! Such is the source of encouragement for pastors and caretakers of the body of Christ! Now notice John’s concern.

2 John 5, “and now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

Again as the first word of exhortation from John, this is an amazing command. You’d think that with Docetism winning the day that John’s first word of exhortation to the church would be to make careful search and inquiry into God’s word that their doctrine might be well grounded. Now, this exhortation is coming, but the first word out of John’s mouth was NOT an appeal for more study of the word, BUT an exhortation to love.

Why is that? The end of all doctrine, orthodoxy, and struggle for truth is love; love for God and love for one another! Miss this and you’ve already compromised. Paul said this too:

Galatians 5:14, “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Romans 13:10b, “...love therefore is the fulfillment of *the law*.”

When Christ was asked to state the most important commandment of God, we read this:

Matthew 22:37-40: “And [Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Do you see why John first exhorted love on the part of the body of Christ? It is simple: if you care about God and His word, then love will be your highest priority! For love is the fulfillment/telos/end of all doctrine.

Now in this context we noted that love is NOT first and foremost a warm fuzzy feeling. RATHER at its heart is the sacrifice of self for the benefit and welfare of others... that's the end of all doctrine! A church therefore that gives itself to love; Biblical love, will be a church that glories in the sacrifice of self for others!

From this perspective you will note that there really are only two kinds of churches:

- Ones filled with *consumers* who look to be ministered to, cared for, and so receive from the body.
- Ones filled with those who are *being consumed* unto the glory of God and the benefit of the body.

As fellow pastors, we long for the latter when it comes to this body. Truly we long for Bethel to be a church, which loves!

Love INFORMED BY TRUTH

Now lest there be any misunderstanding here, John gives an important qualification to the concern which he has espoused here. Yes we must love the brethren, but our love must be informed by truth.

2 John 6, "and this is love, that we walk according to His commandments."

Truly we live in a day which has separated truth from love such that

- Knowledge is able to be attained and yet have no impact on our living.
- Love and truth do not always correlate.

From a Biblical perspective this is a contradiction. Biblically speaking you cannot say that you know a doctrine unless that doctrine is impacting your life. For example:

1 John 4:20a, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar..."

A profession of love for God will change the way you treat other people. If it doesn't, then your love for God either is immature or suspect. The same holds true when it comes to our faith.

James 2:14-17: "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself."

Do you see? In the Bible doctrine and ethics are inseparable. If you say you love God, you naturally are going to want to reflect that love in your life. Yet this is where it gets difficult. As fallen people we cannot trust our heart's inclination when it comes to expressing our love for the Lord.

Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

As ones who love Christ we are in need of direction on how to express that love. That is where God’s word comes in! Accordingly, to the one in love with Christ, God’s word is NOT law and so burden, BUT direction in how to give fruit to their love. And thus we read:

1 John 2:5, “Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.”

A mark of a mature love on the part of the child of God is that they uphold more and more of the word of God. In fact, the Bible is ignorant of the trend in many Reformed circles to call the Law a “burden” when it comes to the child of God. It is not our burden; it is our delight for it gives an avenue to our heart’s desire.

1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.”

Indeed! To the person saved by grace, God’s word is a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path! Thus it is not burden, but glorious direction! In the words of David,

Psalms 19:11, “Moreover, by [the law] Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

Psalms 119:45, “I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.” (NIV)

Truly the Law of God is that which directs the one who loves Christ to walk as a free individual! Accordingly, a maturing church is a body, which is growing in their ability to...

- Be in God’s word.
- Study God’s word.
- Handle God’s word accurately.
- Submit to God’s word.

I. Howard Marshall wrote this:

“The relevance of the elder’s point is obvious in the modern situation where we are sometimes told: ‘All you need is love.’ Such advice is meaningless if the nature of love is not defined and unfolded. Love expresses itself in following the divine guidelines.”³

Now as caretakers of the souls of this body, that is what we are after when it comes to Bethel Presbyterian Church. Hence when we gather together for fellowship, let us guard the conversations. Don’t allow your talk to drift to the typical extremes:

- Exclusive talk about the things of this world...

³ *The Epistles of John*, NICNT, p. 68.

- Its entertainments.
- Its problems.
- Its politics.
- Its games.
- God-speak...
 - Here we wax eloquently about doctrine, truth, passages of scripture, but never address the real person and so the impact that God's word ought to have in our lives.
 - Churches that engage in this discourse can be found saying when one of their own defects, "I never knew they were struggling with that!"

Our gatherings must be places where we discuss our walks and so the impact that God's word is having or ought to have in our lives. That means we are not so much interested in regurgitating the content of...

- A sermon.
- A quiet time.
- A book we're reading.

But we press the conversation into the realm of ethics and discuss what difference all of these things ought to have in our lives. And then during the week, we hold each other accountable!

Family of God, that is the passion and so the concern of the Heart of a Shepherd. That is what will become your passion and goal as you grow in your walk with Christ. In fact to claim maturation and yet to neglect this, again, is the heart of immaturity and the beginning of apostasy!

And so as caretakers of the souls of men, we want both... truth and love. The sooner the culture of Bethel Presbyterian Church revolves around these two things, the greater will be the impact of our ministry!

A Pastor's Compulsion

This finally brings us to a pastor's compulsion.

2 John 4, "I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father"

2 John 5, "And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another."

2 John 6, "And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. // This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it."

It should be obvious that John wasn't "shooting from the hip" when he exhorted this church. His concern did not spontaneously generate, rather, as would be expected from what we already have seen, John was being led and so driven in what he was writing here.

What is it that moved John? The word of God! Four times in three verses John makes reference to the

fact that the love to which he was calling them was rooted and grounded in Scripture. And that's exactly what we find. As far back as the Mosaic Covenant the exhortation was given.

Deuteronomy 6:5, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Leviticus 9:18b, "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Moses commanded Israel:

Deuteronomy 11:1, "You shall therefore love the Lord your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments."

Joshua, Moses' successor, gave Israel a similar charge.

Joshua 22:5a, "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you [what was the commandment?], to love the Lord your God..."

Though John is known as the "Apostle of Love" nevertheless you must see that Scripture compelled him to be so. Indeed! From that perspective John wasn't the "Apostle of Love" BUT the "Apostle Bound by God's Word!"

Now I hope you see this is rather significant for John wasn't any ol' pastor. He was an *Apostle* of Christ who beheld things into which angels longed to look. As such the temptation no doubt was there for John to speak authoritatively on account of what he had *experienced*. In fact, the church would have loved this. That is why so many at this time gathered in Ephesus. They wanted to hear the words and teachings of an eyewitness of Christ! It was the same in Colossae:

Colossians 2:18, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind."

Yet John refused to do that (i.e., speak from experience). In fact, if you look at the apostolic writings, you will note that ALL the apostles refused to speak/teach from their experience. Turn with me to 2 Peter 1.

In light of his impending death⁴ Peter wrote this epistle as a final exhortation to the church. What was his appeal? Among many things it was for them to stand fast in the word of God!

2 Peter 1:16-18, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty [he is talking here about the mount of Transfiguration]. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

⁴ Compare 2 Peter 1:14

As an eyewitness of the Transfiguration by which Peter, James, and John beheld a greater glimpse of Christ's deity, Peter had the credentials to speak on behalf of God. In fact, Peter had that which so many throughout church history have longed for an experience by which to claim authority in the church. Yet do you know how much weight Peter placed in this experience? In comparison to the word of God, it was as nothing!

2 Peter 2:19, "And [yet] we have the prophetic word *made* more sure [the word of God is much more reliable than any experience I could relay to you!], to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

Do you see Peter's point? Experience is a false guide when it comes to service in the Kingdom of God. Rather that which only ought to compel us/guide us/govern us when it comes to our service, worship, and love for Jesus is the word of God!

As Pastors this is so important. See everything we have seen this morning indicates that growth in grace will mean that eventually we will involve ourselves in the lives of people. That's a given. Now you must see that this can be a winding road with few streetlights. If you sit afar off and never really "bear the burdens" of another person, ministry will be easy. But if you genuinely grow in grace such that

- Your encouragement in life is Christ and the growth of His grace in the lives of others.
- Your concern for the body is that they grow in their love for Christ and each other.

You necessarily will entangle yourself in messy lives which will pull on your "heart strings" in a thousand different ways.

What is it that ought to guide you in this endeavor? On what basis will you speak, act, or move?

Listen carefully, for every pastoral model is based on a paradigm (or a set of assumptions which guide the minister as he endeavors to help another person). And today, there are many different paradigms.

- There's the "group therapy" paradigm, which believes that venting is a crucial part of self-healing. Accordingly, all you need to do is allow another person to open up and talk. Eventually they will arrive at the truth.
- There's the "I'm O.K. You're O.K." paradigm which presupposes that most everything another shares with you is acceptable, true, and ought to be encouraged and supported. Through your encouragement healing will come.
- There's the "Jesus Told Me" paradigm that during a conversation with another Christian blames their "thought association" on God.
- There's the "Preach and Run" paradigm, which listens long enough to uncover an error. Then once an error is discovered, ears are closed and the minister begins sermonizing.

Brothers and sisters, I could go on describing how many in the body of Christ approach ministry. If we are going to be effective ministers, our service **MUST BE GOVERNED BY THE WORD OF GOD!** That means- I'm going to build with you now a Biblical paradigm for pastoral care.

- First, you believe that as much as you care about people, God cares more. That's fundamental! By virtue of creation and redemption, God has a claim on His children (Revelation 4:11). Such

when we minister to others, we do so mindful that they are the possession of God and so precious to Him. Accordingly, we “entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right” (1 Peter 4:19).

- Secondly, growth in grace will NOT occur merely as a person *feels* supported or encouraged, BUT as they become subject more and more to the reign and rule of Christ as described by the Word.
 - A life of faithful reliance upon Christ and His grace (cf. 2 Peter 1:9).
 - A life of submission to God’s providence (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8-10).
 - Support is a means to an end, but it is not the end.
 - Via support, the minister earns the right to address the real needs of another.
 - Thus to stop with “support” is to short-circuit any attempt to help another.
- Thirdly you realize that man’s ill always is the result of rebellion to the word of God.

1 John 3:4, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”

Every time a person sins, he falls short of God’s word and so His will for their life. Do you see? While one of the purposes of God’s word is to bring us to a recognition of our need for Christ, it also was given to instruct us in the good and proper way.

Accordingly we understand that

- The word is a manual on “living, moving, and having our being” (Acts 17:28).
- Where we fall short of the specifications as outlined herein, we will struggle.

And so when I minister to others

- I do so with the presupposition that any and all struggle that a person has is the result of that person being out of accord with God’s word.
- In light of this, helping, encouraging, edifying someone is not difficult. It simply involves loving them enough to...
- Compare what a person is saying to the principles, commandments, and teachings of God’s word.
- And then coming alongside of them to help them in their calling to keep it.

Finally you understand that the platform for all ministry is a relationship.

John 10:14, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me.”

If the person I am seeking to minister to suspects that you don’t care about them, you won’t have much of an ability to minister to them. As we’ve said many times, 90 percent of influence is relationship. Thus if we are going to be effective in our ministry to this body, we must enter into a relationship with one another that is why we have structured our ministry as we have here.

This afternoon each and every one of you can attend a fellowship meal in one of four homes. The purpose of these meals is to provide an environment in which we can get to know one another and so fellowship with each other. You say, “I’ve attended, and the talk usually revolves around the mundane things of life.”

So, are you a consumer or a minister?

We can't dictate how you spend the day if you attend one of the meals. Just know that the purpose of these meals is to provide a platform in which to take someone aside and...

- Get to know them.
- Inquire as to their walks.
- Endeavor to bless them.

We could go on and on outlining a Biblical Paradigm for ministering to the souls of people. Yet you get the point. That which must compel us, govern us, guide us, and so direct us in our shepherding of the souls of men is the word of God. Thus

- Neglect the word and you impede your ability to minister.
- Submit yourself to the word, and you will be able, in the words of Galatians...

Galatians 6:1b, "...[to] restore [another] in a spirit of gentleness..."

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word is published regularly.

VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon (the last few minutes were not recorded because of a power outage during the sermon) and these notes can be found at [Love Instructs Truth](#). The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on March 15, 2009. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.