

Who Is Your Pastor? By Trey Sullins

We all probably heard the word “pastor” said by our friends and family before. Usually this word is used by the many denominations to refer to the preacher of the congregation. The phrase “my pastor said” is quite common when discussing religious topics with many. What exactly does the word “pastor” mean? Like all things we as Christians should strive to do and say only what the Bible authorizes. This includes the names that we use to reference each other. Let us find out what the Bible says about the word “pastor.”

The word “pastor” is actually not commonly found in New Testament translations of the Bible. The English word itself has its origins in the Latin language and the word means a herdsman or shepherd. The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language and so the Bible uses the Greek version of the word “shepherd” which is “poimén.” This Greek word is usually translated “shepherd” in English. Today, when people use the word pastor, they are simply saying the word shepherd.

In the scriptures there are different types of shepherds referred to. Jesus often referred to Himself using this word. In John 10:11 the same Greek word is used twice ““I am the good **shepherd**. The good **shepherd** gives His life for the sheep.” Hebrews 13:20 again refers to Jesus with this same word “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great **Shepherd** of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” Jesus is the spiritual shepherd of the righteous. Also, in Luke 2:8 there are shepherds of literal sheep “Now there were in the same country **shepherds** living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.” All of these verses help us to understand that the word was not a distinctly religious word but was simply used to denote someone who cared for a flock of sheep.

Many in the denominational world will often use this word in reference to the one who preaches or is the minister for the congregation. However, in the Bible this word is not used to reference these workers but rather to refer to those who shepherd congregations of the Lord’s church. This shepherd position is also called “elder” (Acts 20:17) and “overseer/bishop” (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1). This is the same role which has the job of ruling their congregation (1 Timothy 5:7). They also have certain requirements which are necessary so that a person can be an elder. (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Titus 1:5-9).

As with all things Christians should strive to live “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17). Everything we say and do should be found within the scriptures and that includes the names which we use for the church and its functions. With these things in mind how should we refer to our preachers and elders? With the same names that the first century church used! The one who stands behind the pulpit is called “preacher,” “minister,” and “evangelist” in the Bible. The one who shepherds the flock of God is called “elder,” “overseer,” and “bishop” in the Bible. As the old saying goes “Do Bible things in Bible ways.” We must ensure that this is always the way that we live each and every day.