

How a pastor loves his flock.

Geoffrey R. Kirkland
Christ Fellowship Bible Church

The measure of a pastor's love for God is directly linked to his deliberate care for Christ's sheep. That's what the Lord told Peter after Peter affirmed his love for Christ. The Lord said: "shepherd my sheep" (John 21.16). So, how can a pastor love Christ? By loving Christ's church. How, then, can a pastor love his flock well? *In this essay, I'll provide 8 helpful ways.*

1. By preaching Christ to them.

A pastor's preeminent duty in the ministry consists in the regular feeding of God's people with the Word. A steady diet of biblical truth must exude from the pulpit of a healthy church. The pastor loves his flock well when he preaches Christ to them and constantly, prayerfully, and tirelessly points them *away from themselves and this world* to Christ Jesus, the Lord. No Christian should ever underestimate the divine power that attends the faithful heralding of the Word of God. If a pastor does all else but fails to feed his sheep, they'll die. So every faithful pastor must preach Christ -- the sum and substance and sweetness of Christ -- to His people relentlessly.

2. By praying constantly for them.

A pastor must give himself to the hard and holy duty of prayer. He must long to be alone when others are content to live without it. He must desperately plead the mercies of God, the power of the Spirit, and the illumination into the word of Christ not only for his own soul but also for each of his sheep. Let no Christian belittle the wondrous power of intercessory prayer. The providence and sovereignty of God propels the man of God to fervent and believing prayer.

3. By caring affectionately for them.

A pastor must have a shepherd's rod to fiercely ward off the dangerous wolves and he must at the same time care for Christ's people with a tender staff of guidance, love, care, and protection. Indeed, the pastor's heart should soar with affection for his people tantamount to that of a nursing mother for her children. O the heart-warming affection! O the constant attention! O the longing for their maturity and growth! He cares for them by communicating to them, ministering to their needs, speaking truth to them in love, encouraging them in Christ, reminding them of their union with Christ and the future hope of the coming and immediate presence of Christ.

4. By developing leaders within them.

A faithful pastor loves his people when he reduplicates himself. Wise is the man who replicates and replaces himself. The serving soldier seeks to find faithful men to whom he can invest himself and disciple them. With a towering trust in God's timing and sovereignty, he looks for faithful men who desire to grow and he holds nothing back in sharing his heart with them, ministering the Word to them, holding one another accountable, and equipping in practical godliness, family-worship, and church-related matters. He knows that the church of Christ will never rise above the spiritual maturity of the male leadership, so he gives himself happily and regularly to the training and shepherding of other men through instruction, example, and prayer.

5. By modeling holiness among them.

A pastor understands the power of example. He has read and understands why the Apostle Paul urges the believers to imitate him and follow his example. A minister realizes that verbal instruction is one (important) matter but his holy conduct is just as vital. He cannot preach one thing in the pulpit and unpreach what he has just said through his sinful conduct. A shepherd says to the sheep: follow me as I follow Christ. There must be a model of godliness and an example of the pursuit of Christ that the flock can find in their pastor. This above-reproach lifestyle is unquestionably necessary in every man of God.

6. By urgently man-fishing with them.

A pastor loves his flock well by teaching, leading, bringing, and *going out with* his people in evangelizing. Proclaiming Christ in the pulpit is undeniably crucial (and no faithful pastor would deny that) but urging sinners to repent of sin and flee to Christ before they die and go to hell is also important. Jesus said: "go!" Indeed, he said: go to the "highways and the hedges." One way a pastor can love the flock well is by teaching them to evangelize and *taking them* out to evangelize. He can proclaim the gospel with his people and go man-fishing together with them to equip them and energize them to do the same. A church rarely rises higher than the church-leadership in the area of evangelism. If the leadership isn't doing it, seldom is the congregation doing it. But Jesus said: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men!" Go man-fishing! Soul-winning is one of the chiefest tasks of the minister of the gospel.

7. By bringing scripture to them.

A pastor knows that as newborn babies mature and grow healthily through a regular intake of milk so the people of God mature and grow through the living Word that is brought home to their hearts. Pastors bring Scripture to the people knowing that it is the food by which the people of God live. Speaking the truth in love constantly defines his daily ministry. He speaks the Word. He encourages in the Word. He guides and counsels from the Word. He prays the Word. He reproves and exhorts with the Word. He directs the people of God to the Scripture so they rest upon the unchanging and unfailing truth of God.

8. By magnifying God with them.

A pastor directs the hearts and affections of the people of God to the grandeur and glory of God. He makes it his ambition to say with the psalmist: "glorify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together" (Ps 34.3). He leads the congregation of worshipers to say: "Let God be magnified" (Ps 70.4). He knows that herein lies the path of true gladness and joy when the people redeemed by the blood of Christ have one aim to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ.