

# Who's the pastor?

## discussion guide

(Linked to sermon from 25/9/22 which can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/a9MllhiKoRs?t=2593>)

*As always, adapt these questions for your group*

Intro: share an example of when you've seen or received good 'pastoral care'

The word 'pastor' literally means shepherd. What are some of the things a shepherd does for their flock?

Dan started by sharing his 'lack of ability' when it comes to pastoral care. Skim through Ezekiel 34.1-10, where the LORD castigates Israel's rulers (shepherds) for their failures to effectively lead their people. What parallels can you see to some Christian leaders today?

In what ways can people pin hopes or expectations on a human pastor which are unrealistic?

Read Ezekiel 34.11-16 What a wonderful relief! God himself will come to shepherd his people. You could also look at Micah 5.2 (you might recognise it from Christmas carol services!). Jesus obviously comes as the fulfilment to these prophecies – read John 10.11-15.

We often talk about Jesus being the good shepherd. What difference does it make thinking of Jesus as your *Pastor*?

Dan then talked about his 'lack of capacity' for pastoral care.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5.12-13, where Paul deals with how pastors and flock are to relate to each other. He's clearly talking into a situation where some in the 'flock' aren't acknowledging their God-given leaders. Can you think of examples where you have seen that happen? What damage (if any) has been done? It might be because leaders had been over-bearing or abused their position – which can be even more damaging.

How can we avoid a 'them' and 'us' attitude in church life between leaders and flock, but one where we live in peace with each other?

Read verses 14-15, where Paul shows how the flock are to care for each other – ie these verses apply to all of us, not just the leaders.

How can we 'warn the idle and disruptive' in a loving way? Try to give some examples. Dan quoted a pastor who wrote "Most problems in churches come not because Christians are too mean to each other, but because they're too nice to each other – they don't challenge each other as often as they should." Do you agree / disagree? Why?

How can we encourage the disheartened?

How can we help the weak? (Where 'the weak' might be those unable to look after themselves, those facing financial hardship, or those struggling with habitual patterns of sin)

Dan finished by sharing the 'all – some – few' model of church community life. In this case, he said All of us need to play our part in pastoring one another; Some of us have particular pastoral gifts which need to be exercised; a Few of us have a responsibility to oversee the pastoral ministry of the church. Where do you think you fit in?

Spend some time praying for the pastoral ministry of our church, in particular praying that God would release more people into their pastoral gifts at the 'some' and 'few' level, as well as the 'all' level!

Pray too for the pastoral ministry you each have in homes / workplaces / Street Pastors etc.

We know God is calling us to be courageous as a church. Pray that God would give us the courage to do the sort of pastoral care talked about here, including having difficult 'warn / admonish' type conversations.