

Our Church... A Mother or a Judge

Sometimes churches can sound like scolding parents—“Do this, do that, don’t do this, don’t do that!”—while more lenient churches might sound like libertarians—“We don’t want to be about a bunch of rules to follow.” While churches or pastors cannot tell you how to live your life, they are given the authority to exhort you about how *God* wants you to live your life. A church cannot claim to love people without explaining to them the biblical directives for living a godly life. The commandments given in Scripture are not a means to control us or keep us from having fun. Quite the opposite! They show us how to enjoy life without partaking in sin. God’s commandments are a structure that protects us and frees us from the grasp of sin.

St. Theophan the Recluse + "The goal of human freedom is not in freedom itself, nor it is in man, but in God. By giving man freedom, God has yielded to man a piece of His Divine authority, but with the intention that man himself would voluntarily bring it as a sacrifice to God, a most perfect offering. "

Christ has given authority to the leadership of our church in order to instruct and care for you. Your pastor is your shepherd. The one time we actually see the word “pastor” in the Bible is in [Ephesians 4:11](#). The Greek word *poimen* translated in this verse as “pastor” means “shepherd.” The other sixteen times *poimen* is used in the New Testament, it is translated as “shepherd.” Jesus used this term to refer to Himself several times, so the pastoral position should never be taken lightly since the pastor should model himself after Christ.

So what is a shepherd/pastor expected to do? The application becomes quite clear once we take a look at the responsibilities of a real shepherd. A shepherd takes care of a particular flock of sheep. He knows each one—what it looks like, how it acts, and even how it sounds. A shepherd knows who his sheep are. A shepherd protects his sheep from predators (i.e., false teachers, which Jesus called wolves in sheep’s clothing in [Matthew 7:15](#)). But in order for the shepherd to fulfill his calling of caring for the sheep, the sheep must learn to obey his voice. The shepherd keeps the flock together so that he may keep it safe. He makes sure the sheep are fed and watered. He keeps them healthy and goes after any that wanders astray, rejoicing over finding a lost sheep ([Luke 15:6](#)).

Once we realize what a real shepherd is willing to do for these fluffy bleating animals, it becomes easier to see and appreciate the role a pastor plays in our lives.

Today’s big idea: be humble and willing to obey godly church leadership.

What to pray: ask that you will always follow the biblical example set forth by our church leadership.

St. Cyprian + “No human being can take God as his Father unless he takes the Church as his mother.”