

Pastoral Theology: A Complete Guide to Biblical Ministry

A comprehensive exploration of what pastors must be and do according to Scripture. This foundational text examines the biblical conception of pastoral ministry, the divine calling, and essential training for those called to shepherd God's people.



What Must a Pastor Be and Do?

Be Humble

Following Peter's example in 1 Peter 5:1-3, pastoral leadership must be marked by humility, refusing to lord over God's people but serving as examples to the flock.

Shepherd the Flock

The pastor's primary calling is to feed God's people with the Word, supervise their spiritual growth, and provide exemplary Christian living as a model for others to follow.

These two fundamental principles, distilled from Peter's pastoral experience, form the essence of biblical leadership. They cut through the complexity of modern ministry demands to reveal what truly matters in shepherding souls.

The Pastor Must Be Humble

We live in a world that neither values nor desires humility. Whether in politics, business, arts, or sports, people strive for prominence, popularity, and fame. Unfortunately, this attitude has contaminated the church, creating a cult of personality where Christian leaders fight for glory.

The true man of God, however, seeks the approval of his Lord, not the adulation of crowds. Humility is therefore the trademark of any servant committed to God's work.



Biblical Examples of Humility

John the Baptist

Until his time, John the Baptist was the greatest man who lived (Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28). He had the privilege of being the immediate forerunner of the Messiah. Yet he remained humble, saying of Christ: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

The Apostle Paul

After Jesus Christ, Paul was the greatest spiritual leader the world has known. Yet he described himself as "the least of the apostles" (1 Cor 15:9), "the very least of all saints" (Eph 3:8), and "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim 1:15-16).

These giants of faith demonstrate that greatness in God's kingdom is measured by humility, not human achievement or recognition.

Five Marks of Paul's Humility

01	02	03
Content as a Servant Paul used the word "huperetes" for steward - literally referring to a lower rower in a warship. Such rowers had no name, recognition, or honor.	Willing to be Judged by God "He who judges me is the Lord" (1 Cor 4:4). Paul sought God's approval, not human approval or even his own self-assessment.	Content to be Equal Paul warned against comparing him to Apollos. He didn't want elevation above other servants of God.
04	05	
Willing to Suffer Paul suffered greatly for Christ's sake, fulfilling the Lord's prediction at his conversion (Acts 9:16).	Content to Sacrifice Reputation Paul was willing to become "the scum of the world, the refuse of all things" (1 Cor 4:13) for the sake of the gospel.	

Keys to Pastoral Humility

True humility flows from a correct perspective of God. The way a pastor lives and acts in ministry is directly related to his view of the Almighty. A humble man with the proper perspective of God will have specific characteristics that mark his ministry.



Confidence in God's Power

Paul's humble confidence in God's power expressed itself in the firmness and courage of his ministry, giving him strength and tenacity regardless of reaction or consequences.



Commitment to God's Truth

The humble pastor is dedicated to handling correctly the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15), avoiding the uncertain sounds of political rhetoric and popular psychology.



Consumed by God's Glory

It's impossible to seek personal honor and God's glory simultaneously. The humble pastor seeks God's glory above all else, following Paul's example in 1 Thessalonians 2:6.

The Pastor Must Shepherd

Of all the titles and metaphors used to describe spiritual leadership, the most fitting is that of shepherd. Like shepherds of sheep, pastors of churches must guard their flocks from getting lost, lead them to the green pastures of God's Word, and defend them against savage wolves who seek to attack them.





The Primary Purpose of Shepherding

"The pastor who does not feed the flock will not have it for long. His sheep will either flee to other fields or die of starvation. Above all, God demands that his spiritual shepherds feed the flocks."

The ability that distinguishes the elder from the deacon is that the elder must be "apt to teach" (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9). Jesus emphasized this when speaking to Peter in John 21, twice using the term "bosko" meaning "feed" (verses 15,17).

The pastor's goal is not to please the sheep but to feed them - not to tickle their ears but to nourish their souls with solid biblical truths as substantial meals.

How to Shepherd

1

Supervise the Flock

Peter challenges fellow elders to shepherd God's flock "exercising oversight" (1 Pet 5:2). Pastors will answer for the quality of leadership they exercise.

2

Lead by Example

Being a pastor means being close to the flock, leading from the front. The sheep see him before them and imitate his actions. The most important resource in spiritual leadership is the power of an exemplary life.

The effective pastor doesn't drive the flock from behind but leads it from the front, demonstrating through his life the truths he teaches with his lips.

How Not to Shepherd

Avoid Reluctant Service

The good shepherd does his work "not under compulsion, but willingly" (1 Pet 5:2). Sheep can be disagreeable animals, but pastoral work must be done spontaneously and voluntarily.

Avoid Greedy Motives

"From no one did I covet silver or gold or clothing" (Acts 20:33). The danger is allowing financial gain to become the motivation for ministry, which produces false and inefficient leaders.

While Scripture commands that pastors be paid (1 Tim 5:17), the problem arises when financial profit becomes the driving motivation rather than genuine calling to serve God's people.



The Obedient Pastor

Paul's instructions to Timothy in 1 and 2 Timothy provide a comprehensive philosophy of committed and active ministry. These epistles outline what faithful pastoral obedience looks like in practical terms, challenging contemporary practice with biblical standards.

Timothy faced severe trials leading the Ephesian church, battling fear, human weakness, and the temptation to soften his preaching due to persecution. Paul's response was clear: remain faithful regardless of cost.

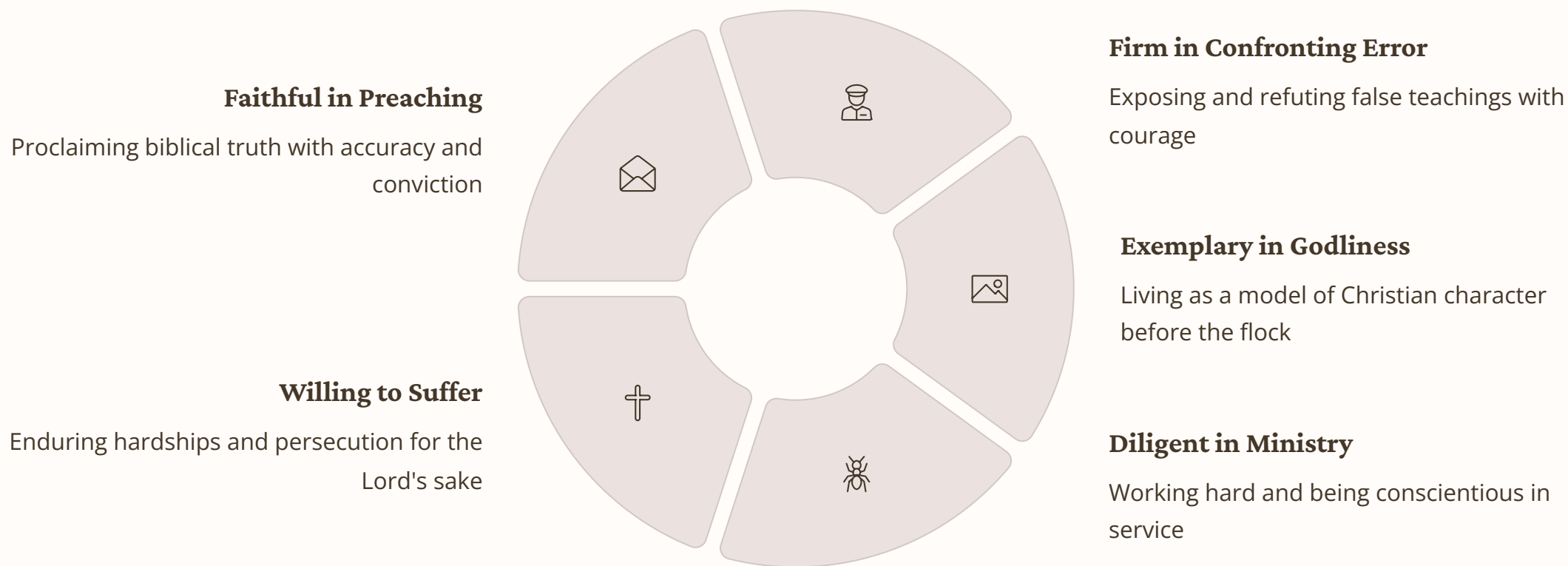
Paul's Commands to Timothy (1 Timothy)

- Warn those teaching false doctrines and call them to pure hearts, good consciences, and sincere faith (1:3-5)
- Fight for divine truth and God's purposes, maintaining faith and good conscience (1:18-19)
- Pray for the lost and lead church men to do the same (2:1-8)
- Call church women to fulfill their God-given role of submission and raising godly children (2:9-15)
- Carefully select spiritual leaders based on their gifts, godliness, and virtues (3:1-13)
- Identify sources of error and their teachers, presenting them to the church (4:1-6)
- Be constantly nourished by Scripture and sound teaching, avoiding myths and false doctrines (4:6)
- Discipline yourself for godliness (4:7-11)

Paul's Commands to Timothy (2 Timothy)

Character Development Don't be timid but strong (1:7). Never be ashamed of Christ or those who serve Him (1:8-11). Be strong in character (2:1).	Ministry Focus Teach apostolic truth to faithful men who can teach others (2:2). Handle Scripture accurately (2:15). Preach the Word in season and out (4:1-2).	Personal Conduct Be willing to suffer hardships and persecution (2:3-7). Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace (2:22).
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Five Categories of Faithful Ministry



Biblical Conception of Pastoral Ministry

A sensible approach to pastoral ministry begins with formulating a biblical philosophy or purpose statement. This philosophy depends on the biblical purposes of the church: to exalt the Lord, evangelize the world, and edify its members.

The pastor plays the principal role in helping accomplish these objectives. Without a clear understanding of these purposes, ministers serve in a fog, lacking direction and effectiveness.



A Biblical Philosophy of Ministry

01	02	03
Forces Biblical Foundation	Provides Practical Direction	Increases Efficiency
When we look to Scripture for reasons to minister, we stay on the biblical path. Ministers can gradually apostacize without realizing it.	We need a defined target. Paul expressed this: "I run not as one who runs aimlessly" (1 Cor 9:26).	Knowing the course of action allows concentration on essential ministry aspects rather than peripheral activities.
04	05	
Ensures Effectiveness	Demands Faithfulness	
Clear battle plans guarantee success. Ministers working under trial-and-error philosophy have little to show after faithful service.	One day we must give account to the Lord for the ministry entrusted to us (1 Cor 4:2).	



The Purpose of the Church

To understand one's place as a minister, one must understand the place of the church. The biblical philosophy of ministry must be founded on biblical ecclesiology.

Three Primary Purposes of the Church



Community of Worship

The church exists to exalt the Lord, magnify His character, and glorify Him before all creation. Worship is central to the church's existence.



Community of Witness

The church must evangelize the lost world, serving as a community that testifies to Christ's saving grace through the Great Commission.



Community of Work

The church must edify itself through interaction of various members of Christ's body, building spiritual maturity to honor God.

Community of Worship

The greatest purpose of humanity is to worship God and enjoy His creation. The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:36-40).

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:5,9).

The church is a redeemed community of sinners set apart to worship God in Christ. The minister is a worshiper who must worship first, then lead the community in worship.

Community of Witness

Great Commission Given

The Gospels unanimously record Christ's Great Commission to the church (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; John 17:18)

1

2

3

Expansion Continues

Evangelization is not optional but commanded. It's not limited to the gifted or church leaders but is a mission for all Christians

Commission Confirmed

Acts supports this commission (1:8) and records the church's obedience, going from Jerusalem to the remotest parts of the earth

The church's purpose remains the same today. Modern technology hasn't nullified the Great Commission. Pressing social needs haven't revoked it. Spiritual problems in the church haven't superseded its importance.



Community of Work

The third purpose of the church is to edify itself through interaction of various members of Christ's body. Each Christian's function is to build up fellow believers spiritually. The church must become a mature organism through the edification process.

Paul understood his pastoral ministry well, as he declares in Colossians 1:28-29: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."

Colossians 1:28-29 - Ministry Framework

The Purpose

"That we may present everyone mature in Christ." Paul's goal wasn't filling auditoriums or preaching great sermons, but helping each believer become like Christ.

The Plan

"Warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom." Paul preached Christ and only Christ, using his best abilities to create maturity.

The Effort

"For this I toil, struggling..." Like an athlete, Paul fought for a perfect mission. This wasn't a day job but demanded all his faculties.

The Power

"With all his energy that he powerfully works within me." No minister is adequate for this task without absolute dependence on Christ's power.

Ephesians 4:11-16 - The Pastor's Role

This passage provides an explicit description of the pastor's function in church edification. Four key observations reveal the pastor's vital role in establishing a working community.



Distribution of Gifts

Paul first discusses divine gift distribution - each church member receives a spiritual gift, including specific gifts for leadership positions.



Destination of Gifts

"For the equipping of saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (v.12). The pastor's function is to mature the saints.



Description of Edification

The church should be united in faith and knowledge of Christ, grow in stature from child to adult, and fill the measure of Christ's fullness.



Goals of Edification

A mature church won't be easily deceived by false doctrines but will grow in all aspects toward Christ, held together by love.

Seven Practical Ministries



Ministry of the Word

The preaching and teaching of God's Word was central to apostolic ministry. The Word is the basic means by which Christians are led to maturity.



Ministry of Fellowship

Christians must be involved with each other through acceptance, using spiritual gifts, and caring for spiritual welfare in community.



Ministry of the Lord's Supper

Regular participation in communion is centered on the Christian message and provides inspirational worship for the community.



Ministry of Prayer

The early church dedicated itself to prayers, both individual and corporate, for leaders, missionaries, the sick, and all concerns.



Ministry of Expansion

Incorporating education, involvement, and motivation to reach the lost community through personal evangelism and church growth.



Ministry of Missions

Faithful obedience to the Great Commission includes reaching regions beyond the immediate neighborhood through missionary programs.



Ministry of Inter-church Fellowship

Churches should maintain active relationships with other churches for mutual support, cooperation, and participation in the larger body of Christ.

The Call to Pastoral Ministry

God's call to vocational ministry differs from the call to salvation and the call that reaches all believers to service. It's a summons of selected men to serve as church leaders. Recipients of this call need assurance that God has chosen them to lead.



Four Criteria for Confirming the Call

1 Is There Confirmation?

Confirmation from others and from God through circumstances. Timothy received public testimony from brothers in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2).

3 Is There Desire?

"If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task" (1 Tim 3:1). This must be unselfish desire for service, not position or fame.

2 Are There Abilities?

God-given gifts for teaching, pastoring, and administration. Training can develop existing gifts but cannot create them where they don't exist.

4 Is There Integrity?

A lifestyle characterized by moral integrity. The Bible speaks more about what the leader should be than what he should do.

The Importance of Confirmation

Spurgeon wisely counseled: "The Lord's will concerning pastors is known through the pious judgment of the church. It is necessary, as proof of your gift, that your preaching be acceptable to God's people."

"Many churches judge according to the flesh, not all churches are wise, nor do all judge in the power of the Holy Spirit. Despite this, I would be more ready to accept the opinion of a group of the Lord's people than my own opinion on such a personal matter as my gifts and graces."

Divine confirmation also comes through opened doors and God's blessings. Paul spoke of "a wide door for effective work" opening to him (1 Cor 16:8-9), even amid adversaries.

Essential Ministry Abilities

Teaching Skills

The ability to "equip the saints" through preaching and teaching, handling God's Word accurately for the building up of believers



Pastoral Heart

Beyond teaching content, pastoring communicates life itself. Paul shared not only the gospel but "our own souls" (1 Thess 2:8)

Administrative Leadership

The basic function of oversight and supervision, governing as servant-leaders following Christ's example of humble service



Spurgeon noted that simple ability to edify and aptitude to teach are not enough. Sound judgment, gentle manners, firmness, courage, tenderness, and administrative gifts are all necessary for complete pastoral ministry.

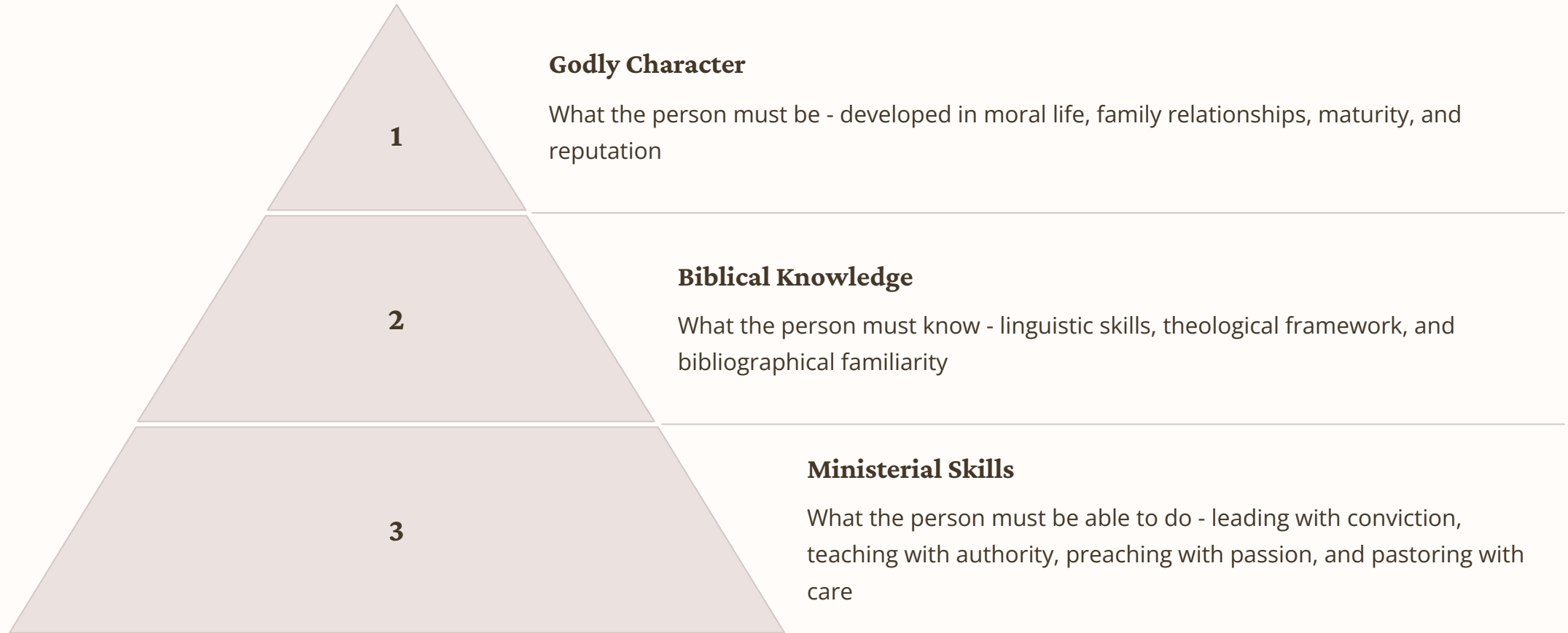


Training for Pastoral Ministry

Training for pastoral ministry is a specialized form of disciple-making directed at Christians. Three essential parts comprise this training: godly character, biblical knowledge, and ministerial skills.

This process combines academic knowledge with ministerial experience, requiring lifelong commitment to growth and development in all three areas.

The Three Pillars of Pastoral Training



Training for pastoral ministry is an arduous, lifelong pursuit requiring dedication to godliness, submission to disciplines for learning biblical languages and theology, and sharpening ministerial skills through years of humble service. The interaction between experience and learning is of utmost importance - both church and seminary are needed for complete preparation.