

Please read Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1 and 1 Peter 3:15. We are to weigh everything by the Scriptures and hold fast only what we have proved thereby. We are not to be gullible, easily influenced. We are to put all teachers and all teaching to the test. We are to be able and ready to give an answer, to make a defense in regard to what we believe and why we have the hope of eternal life.

Why do we refer to our preachers as preachers, as evangelists, as ministers of the gospel, but steadfastly refuse to call them “pastors” or to address them with the title “The Reverend _____”?

The word “preacher” appears only three times in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11 of Paul, and in 2 Peter 2:5 of Noah. It means “*proclaimer, publisher.*” The gospel was to be **preached** (verb form of preacher) in all the world (Matt. 24:14; 26:13; Mk. 16:15); it still is. The apostles (Mk. 16:20), Philip (Acts 8:5), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:2) **preached** (verb form of preacher). All first century preachers did not speak by inspiration; some did. Those who did were given what to preach by the Holy Spirit; those who did not had to preach what they learned from others who were guided by the Holy Spirit (see 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:14). Romans 10:14-15 refers to that time when the inspired word had not been written, but was to be found in those preachers who spoke by inspiration. Needed today are those who will learn and preach the will of God that has been revealed in the Scriptures.

“*Evangelist*” is from a transliteration of a New Testament Greek word. It is applied to Philip (Acts 21 :8-- the same Philip of Acts 8:5), Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5; remember he is told to “preach” in vs. 2), and others (Eph. 4:11). The word means “*one who brings good news*” or “*one who brings the gospel.*” The noun “*gospel*” appears 76 times in the New Testament. The word means “*good news.*” The verb (“*to give, deliver, bring good news*” or “*to preach the gospel*” appears 51 times. It is used of the apostles (Acts 5:42), of Philip (Acts 8:12, 35, 40), and of Peter and John (Acts 8:25). As for the expression “*minister of the gospel,*” Paul uses it of himself in Colossians 1:23 and Ephesians 3:6-7. The word for “*minister*” here is from the Greek word DIAKONOS, the same word being found in the expression “*minister of Christ*” in 1 Timothy 4:6. The word “*minister*” in the New Testament is not used in its popular sense today of a man being “*the minister of a church,*” and having entered “*the ministry*” by virtue of being licensed and ordained by some religious body. More than one Greek word for “*minister*” is used of all Christians. See Matthew 20:26; 25:44; Hebrews 6:10; 1 Peter 4:7-9, 10-11.

In the New Testament no one man is ever seen as “*the pastor of a church.*” The word “*pastor*” is found but one time in the New Testament in the various English translations of the Bible -- Ephesians 4:11 (please read it). There it is translated from a Greek word (POIMEN) which everywhere else is translated “*shepherd*” (17 out of the 18 times it appears; in at least eight of those instances it is used of a *literal* shepherd of *literal* sheep). “*Pastor*” is from a Latin word which means “*shepherd.*” Christ is a “*Shepherd*” in a metaphorical or spiritual sense (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25), but who are the “*shepherds*” (or “*pastors*”) of Ephesians 4:11? To answer that question please read Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In those passages we can learn that the “*elders*” of a church and the “*overseers*” of a church are one and the same, and that it is these men that are to shepherd the flock among them or the flock in which they have been made overseers. In the New Testament “*elders*” (or “*presbyters,*” appointed older men), “*overseers*” (or “*bishops*”), and “*pastors*” (or “*shepherds*”) all refer to the same men. Each congregation had a plurality (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1), and there is no such thing as “*a pastor*” of a congregation. And preachers are not for that reason (because they are preachers) pastors.

Nowhere in the New Testament is any man referred to as “*the Reverend _____.*” To honor and elevate a man with such a title is contrary to the principles found in Matthew 20:25-28; 23:5-12 (There Jesus condemns and forbids the use of religious titles such as “*Master,*” “*Rabbi,*” and “*Father,*” yet, men defy our Lord, and use them anyway.) and 1 Peter 5:5-6. The use of “*reverend*” as a religious title has opened the door to other titles that exalt even more, such as, “*the very reverend,*” “*the right reverend,*” “*the most reverend,*” and “*the most holy reverend.*” There could be no end to such. Children are to reverence their parents (Heb. 12:9; Eph. 6:1-2), and wives are to reverence their husbands (Eph. 5:33), but they are not to address them as “*reverend _____.*” And nobody is to take upon himself to parade around in special religious vestments and wear high-sounding titles.