

PASTORAL AUTHORITY

A pastor should be not so much a ruler as a leader. He has no actual authority in himself other than as an interpreter of God's Word and as one who applies that Word to problems as they arise. The Word of God is the only authority. The pastor's function is that of a leader and adviser. Having received special training to enable him to determine exactly what the Bible means, he should endeavor so to lead his congregation that they will have great confidence in his ability rightly to interpret the Word of God and will therefore be ready to place confidence in his application of it to their lives.

It is only in the area of protecting the church from the entrance of false doctrine, and of excluding from its membership those who knowingly disobey the Word of God or whose lives are a scandal and thus would bring reproach upon the church that the pastor has a right and a duty to act forcibly.

In some areas the particular decision as to what should be done is not nearly as important as the effort to induce the congregation to work together to accomplish a definite objective. In such cases the pastor should so lead his people that they will be willing to work together, even if they are not all completely convinced of the wisdom of the course followed. In so doing he should be careful never to allow loyalty to his program to be considered as a test of loyalty to Christ, unless that program is specifically taught in the Scriptures.

Allan A. MacRae, Ph.D
President
Biblical School of Theology
Box 48
Abington, Pa. 19001

September 1, 1971