

# Show Me!

Every once in a while people feel it necessary to point out to me that I am not a scholar, and have no professional qualifications to interpret Biblical issues. Someone was once kind enough to tell me that, “you can’t even imagine that you have anywhere near the Biblical insight of [Dr. So-and-so] who has studied the Scriptures for forty years!” He did not appreciate it when I responded that there are Catholic theologians, Jewish scholars, Eastern Orthodox teachers and others who have studied the Scriptures just as earnestly and just as long (if not longer), and he would say that they have no real insight into the Truth. Some relatives have even discussed among themselves the idea that I have formed a cult! [Frankly, I would never join a cult with me as its leader. Cult leaders are supposed to be charismatic, for one thing, and I’ve never been accused of being charismatic (or a Charismatic, for that matter.) Also, what kind of cult leader in his right mind would tell anyone who would listen that they should study Scripture on their own, take every verse in context, and be sure to seek out everything the Bible has to say on a subject. Oh yeah, there are NO followers, and I don’t WANT any because I KNOW I’m an idiot! TAKE IT TO THE WORD! – Anyway, back to the topic...]

Of course, we all know that the average person is ill equipped to interpret Scripture on his or her own, don’t we? That’s what we have priests, pastors, professors and televangelists for, right? That’s why we run to “Christian Counselors,” or write to people like James Dobson whenever we have a problem of living, or at the very least, we make quick trip to the “Christian Bookstore” to find expert help for every conceivable problem that might trouble us. We trust that the “experts” will be able to navigate the incomprehensible Word of God and spoon-feed it to us in ways that will make it much more palatable. The professional Christians have the Biblical mandate to “pre-chew” our spiritual food and regurgitate it down our throats, and to do so with all the tenderness and affection of a mother bird feeding her chicks.

I have one small problem with this thinking: I can’t find it in The Bible.

What I do find is this:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

John 14:26

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

1 John 2:20

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

1 John 2:25-27

This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Now, I may be an idiot, but it appears to me that according to 2 Timothy, Scripture itself contains everything we need for teaching, reproof, and correction. The verse tells us that Scripture can make us adequate, and equip us for every good work. If we doubt this (hey, it's just words) then we find in Hebrews that The Word of God is living and active! Can any of the expert book writers claim that about their own works? Isn't it better to go to the living and active Word yourself and let it work on you? "But," you say, "We need someone to help us understand it all!" True! That someone is the Holy Spirit. It's HIS job! If we are believers—if we are *in* Him—we have an anointing from the Holy Spirit, and we have *no need for anyone to teach* us because He teaches us about all things! This is not something you will generally hear from a pastor or priest. Why? Because they want to be the intermediary between you and God (or at least God's Word.) How can this be justified when Scripture clearly says, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5)?

Even so, I'm willing to accept the need for experts if the Bible says we need them, but whenever I have asked a "professional" Christian to **SHOW ME** the mandate, all I've ever gotten is a **RUNAROUND!** They support their positions with tradition, appeals to so-called "Church Fathers," assuming things not specifically stated in Scripture, and circular logic. For instance, ask (yes, you – go on, you can do it!) your nearest professional, certified, bible school or seminary-trained Christian expert where you will find the position of the professional, paid Pastor (or Senior Pastor, or Administrative Pastor, or Youth Pastor, etc.) in Scripture. Ask for a chapter and verse and you will almost certainly get an explanation instead. Here is what I have been told:

The word for pastor is *poimeen* in Greek. This word means shephard, and metaphorically refers to the shepherd/overseer/manager of the congregation in Eph. 4:11, John 21:16 and especially Acts 20:28 and 1Peter 5:2. Timothy and Titus were two Pastors and Pastors are in view in the first three chapters of Revelation as those who bring the message to the congregations.

After this you might get references to Polycarp or Ignatius or other Church Fathers and their interpretation of these or other verses. You might be shown that Timothy is definitely a pastor, although not referred to as one, because of the things that Paul tells him to do (the circular logic comes in when you start hearing that the things that Paul tells Timothy to do are the job of the pastor because Timothy was a pastor.) Remember what you asked for? If you followed the simple instructions above, you asked for locations in Scripture that justify the **OFFICE** of pastor, the **PAID POSITION** of pastor. Now, so as not to be accused of building a straw man argument, I must say that I don't know if these are the verses that your friendly neighborhood professional Christian

will use. What I am saying is that you should apply the same discernment when determining whether the verses he gives you prove the case or not.

Let's just look at the example (which represents a real encounter, by the way.)

The Greek word in Ephesians 4:11 ποιμηνα\$ (*poimen* - Strong's 4166) in all its forms is used for feeding, tending, shepherding, and those who perform the function. When used as a noun in the New Testament, it is overwhelmingly used of Jesus—He is our Shepherd. Use an Englishman's Concordance for NT 4166 or use Strong's and look up pastor and shepherd. Let's look at the specific verses mentioned in the example, for these are often used as proof verses concerning the office of pastor.

Eph 4:11

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

[Firstly, read all of Ephesians 4, and you will see right off that Paul is talking about gifts given to *each one* who is a member of the one body (see verse 7.) Secondly, the gift is not just shepherd here but shepherd and teacher. So the gift would especially fit someone to tend and instruct the flock, but there is One Shepherd, and it is ALL His flock! (John 10:16.) Thirdly, just compare what Paul is saying here with 1 Cor. 12:27-31 and you will see the same formula; one body, diverse gifts. Finally, ask your professional why there is no paid position of prophet or apostle. After all, if this verse justifies one it should justify them all, right?]

John 21:16

He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."

[This should be a no-brainer. The verse simply does not refer to any office or position, but Jesus is telling Peter to take care of Jesus' sheep. Still, this was used to justify the office of pastor. The argument is that Peter was being appointed Pastor here. I don't see it. He didn't submit a resume. There was no search committee. Salary and benefits were not discussed, not to mention the parsonage and use of the church van!]

Acts 20:28

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

[Aha! Here you have a clear appointment, right? Well, just from the verse you can see the appointment is to "overseer" and not shepherd, but there is more. Who is Paul talking to? "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." (Acts 20:17) He's talking to the elders Acts 20:17 (presbuterou\$ - presbuterous - 4245), and these were appointed overseers (episkopou\$ - episkopous - 1985) that they may shepherd (poimaihein - poimainein - 4165) or feed the flock which GOD purchased with HIS OWN BLOOD. You can only make an official position of pastor or even Head Elder by reading in. Paul even goes on to say that *from their own number* savage wolves would arise to tear up the flock! Then what does he say? He reminds them how he *didn't* take their money or goods, how his example is to work to meet his own needs, and how Jesus himself said that it is more blessed to *give* than to receive! How can anyone justify a paid position from this section of Scripture? Does that make some of the them the wolves? Furthermore, the elders, bishops (overseers) and pastors are all the same people, and the words are descriptive of different functions!]

1 Peter 5:2

shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

[You should get the drill by now, right? What does verse one say? “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, “ (1 Peter 5:1) Peter is talking to the ELDERS (Presbuterou\$ - presbuterous - 4245) who have OVERSIGHT (episkopouante\$ - episkopountes – 1983 {Note: this word does not appear in many older texts!}) and saying that they should SHEPHERD (poimamate – poimanate - 4165) or feed the flock! Furthermore they should do so voluntarily and **NOT FOR SORDID GAIN!** Verse 3 says they are NOT to “lord it over” the flock but to lead by example! Does this sound like the paid, professional Christian that everybody calls “Pastor” or “Reverend”? NO! The three words appear together again, and the pastor or shepherd part is again clearly a verb!

OK, so what about all that, “the worker is worthy of his wages stuff? Isn’t that talking about a paid clergy? Let’s look at the verses:

Luke 10:7

"Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house."

(Here Jesus is talking to the seventy (verse 1) and he is saying that they should accept food and shelter where they are received with a blessing. 1) this is not a Christian pastorate and, 2) it is quite a stretch from this to salary, housing, and retirement plan!)

1 Tim 5:17-19

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

(Here I had to include the full context. What is Paul telling Timothy, exactly? He says that elders (presbuteroi – presbuteroi - 4245) who rule (proestwte\$ - *proisteemi* – 4291– could also mean protect) well are worthy of a double (diplh\$ - *diplees* – 1362) honor (timh\$ - *timees* – 5092value, honor). The most natural interpretation is that they are worthy of twice the honor—just like it says. Consider that when you do an Englishman’s search on Strong’s 5092 [timees] it most often is the “honor and glory” kind of honor, and only a few times it is used for “bought with a price” value. Next, look at the context: the elder is worthy of double honor, why? He gets honor like an ox gets the natural reward for his labor by not being muzzled during threshing, and the laborer gets the natural reward for his labor, which is his wage! It should therefore be the natural result of an elder’s labor that he receive honor, and if he guards the congregation well he should receive still more honor! The result of this honor, by the way, is seen in things like the not receiving an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. It really is the most natural reading of the passage.)

As to Timothy and Titus being pastors, show me where it says so, and I might believe it. The verses in Revelation, the references are to angels or messengers, as in, “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ” (Rev 2:1). The argument goes like this:

1. Letter goes to messenger.
2. Pastors bring the weekly message.
3. Pastors are the angels.

Fine, except: 1) This is a vision in heaven, and Jesus could very well be talking about the heavenly kind of angel! 2) Why wouldn’t Jesus say “pastor,” “elder” or “overseer,” the

established terms that John would have understood clearly. 3) I've yet to see where someone called a pastor is supposed to bring a weekly message, or where the so-called pastor is supposed to preach *at* people every week! I see preaching done before the unbeliever and dialog in the assembly. If it is otherwise, SHOW ME!]

The expert, professional Christian tells us, that in order to qualify for a position, like Pastor, one must have certain credentials. One prominent credential is the diploma from an accredited Bible College or Seminary. When I asked for Scriptural support for either institution I was told:

- 1) Greek and Hebrew teachers used to travel great distances from student to student, and the central location made more sense.
- 2) Church Fathers refer to schools.
- 3) There's nothing that says we shouldn't require schooling.
- 4) You can't tell me that it isn't necessary.
- 5) The "Sons of the Prophets" (1 Kings 20:35) was a school, according to tradition.

Why is this so difficult? The Church and its gifted members are gathered expressly for the equipping and building up of the saints! "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." (Eph 4:13) That sounds like all the training and work that needs to be done for a saint, doesn't it? The church seems to have abdicated its responsibility for doing this vital function to outside institutions (that people have to pay to attend!) SHOW ME where this is mandated in Scripture! Because the Church has turned its back on this responsibility, the future leaders of the churches are trained in very centralized locations, AND IF A HERESY INFECTS A CENTRAL LOCATION, ALL THE FUTURE LEADERS TRAINED THERE ARE EXPOSED TO IT! Moreover, these leaders defend the heresy because their beloved professor taught it to them! In Bible Church and Fundamentalist circles you will constantly hear the more mature believers bemoaning the fact that, "(Hard-knox Seminary used to be a good school, but then they started teaching (works salvation or something equally sinister.)"

To answer the statements (1-5) above: 1) What's wrong with people within the church learning and teaching Greek and Hebrew? Is it better to institutionalize and centralize all training, and give the "spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12) fewer and easier targets? History and logic tell the honest student that this approach has failed to produce much more than generalized apostacy! 2) So what? Were the Church Fathers *theopneustos* (qeopneusto - 2315 – inspired by God - lit. God breathed)? We saw earlier that Paul told the Ephesian elders that savage wolves would arise *from their own number*! These people knew Paul personally! Why should we trust so-called Church Fathers? 3) Because Scripture doesn't prohibit creating schools for Church leaders doesn't mean we should create them, especially when THE

CHURCH is given the responsibility to train them, and THE SPIRIT teaches us all we need through THE WORD! The mechanism is already in place, so who are we to reinvent what God has already invented? 4) Yes, I can say these institutions are not necessary, and I already have in point number 3. 5) Tradition may say that the “sons of the prophets” was a school for prophets, but Scripture does not! Pardon me if I keep a proper perspective on which (tradition or The Word) is more important. Even if they did constitute a school, isn’t that a very human response for the need for prophets? Also, it would seem to be a futile effort on the part of Israel because **NONE OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS IS WRITTEN BY AN ACKNOWLEDGED ALUMNUS!** Strange, isn’t it? People put out effort in their own power and wisdom, and God goes and chooses **other** people to do His work!

First Corinthians one may be a familiar chapter of Scripture, and I think it speaks directly to this kind of thinking. It says, in part:

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Cor 1:18-31)

Instead of trusting in God’s inspired Word, we think experts hold the answers that God has somehow left out. We seek for ourselves teachers and priests and pastors because we imagine that scholarship and worldly wisdom can somehow augment or amplify what God has already made clear. Even those among us who claim that the Bible is our only guide for life and godliness can’t help but often quote a “Church Father” or a Puritan Divine or a contemporary “expert” author. Everyone seems convinced that The Bible was written in such a way that only highly educated experts can read and understand it. Worse, some of us are convinced that it takes a special blessing or knowledge (gnosis?) to understand what God inspired. Why was the Spirit given, then?

Of course, we feel more comfortable with hierarchies and institutions than with the personal accountability and responsibility that Scripture forces us to face. We would rather sit in a “pew” while a professional speaks at us from a “pulpit” or performs rites from an altar, than to imagine that God might speak directly to us in His Word. It’s comforting to imagine that a professional has done the studying for us, and we’re off the hook. Even if we do study, the professional will lead us in the study, correcting us when we’re wrong. If “laymen” study together, you can be sure that they are using guides that ask questions like:

Because God loves the world, what did He do? (John 3:16)

In the spaces provided we can write, “He sent His Son,” because that’s what it says when we turn to the verse that we have thoughtfully been supplied with!

What does that mean for us?

Whoever believes in Him has eternal life.

How do you feel about that?

Happy!

Obviously, God doesn’t expect us to think much more about it, right? Oh, and if you’re Catholic, the teacher will have to explain salvation by faith *alone* really means faith and sacraments and church membership, and you still can’t be sure because that would be presumption. In those places, the Bible not only can’t be understood by common folk, but it doesn’t even mean what it clearly says! In fact, for centuries the Bible was denied the laity because it was thought to be dangerous! That’s what experts do, and it doesn’t hurt job security.

Still, for all that, I’m not averse to what organized churches do, with one caveat. SHOW ME where THE WORD tells us to do it that way! If you can, without resorting to your own reinterpretation of the plain text [And, by the way, the New Testament was written in Koine Greek, the *vox populi* of the time. It wasn’t written in a scholarly or secret language, but the language of the common man! Tell me it was written for experts!], or resorting to Church Fathers or tradition, then I’ll go along. Just SHOW ME!

- SHOW ME where we are told to model a Christian “worship service” after the Jewish temple rites OR the Synagogue!
- SHOW ME where Christians are told to build or buy special buildings to hold our services in!
- SHOW ME where Christians are to have *any* kind of altar to worship at!
- SHOW ME where believers are “preached to” instead of dialogued with (“Preaching” [as in 2 Tim 4:2 - *khrucon* – 2784 - to herald, proclaim – or Rom. 1-15 *euaggeliasqai* - 2097 - proclaim the gospel] is done with unbelievers. Teaching [as in Rom. 12:7 *didasqwn* - 1321 – teach] or Dialogue [as in Acts 20:9 *dialeqomehou* – think different thoughts,

converse, discuss {This is a passage usually pointed out and referred to as a tedious sermon! It was a discussion!}].

- SHOW ME where the average believer is relegated to a “pew” or bench, and made to observe as an audience rather than coming, as in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16, prepared with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Read 1 Cor. 14 to see how we are told to assemble!)
- SHOW ME where we are told to hire a priest or pastor from another congregation or right out of school instead of raising up leaders from within! (Like in Acts 15:22)
- SHOW ME where resumes and diplomas and other credentials are required for service (other than 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 qualifications.)
- SHOW ME the mandate for ANY “Para-Church” organizations! Missions boards? The Church is supposed to send evangelists out to preach!
- SHOW ME the priest in the New Covenant, other than THE BELIEVER and Christ
  - o Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him- 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. (1 Peter 2:1-5)
  - o but because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. (Heb 7:24-25)
- SHOW ME where Jesus’ sacrifice needs to be repeated EVER, like they claim to do in the Mass.

[SHOW ME – the man date to contradict numerous Scripture references that state clearly Jesus died ONCE FOR ALL:

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Rom 6:10)

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (Heb 7:26-27)

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Heb 9:11-12)

By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10:10)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; (1 Peter 3:18)

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. (Jude 3)

The Word of God is the ONLY book, about which it could be said, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.” (Matt 5:18). In the last chapter of the last book of the Bible it says: “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.” (Rev 22:18-19). People have been adding to and taking away from the Book for two thousand years, and using every device and excuse they could think of to justify it. I tremble at the very thought!

So, who is right? Who is wrong? You can rest on your traditions and scholarship, but I will rest solely on the plain, straightforward teaching of The Word. If you want to impress me, then what you say will be there, will fit the context, and harmonize with whatever the Bible says elsewhere on the same topic. If it is, I will listen, but there is one thing you will have to do:

**SHOW ME!**