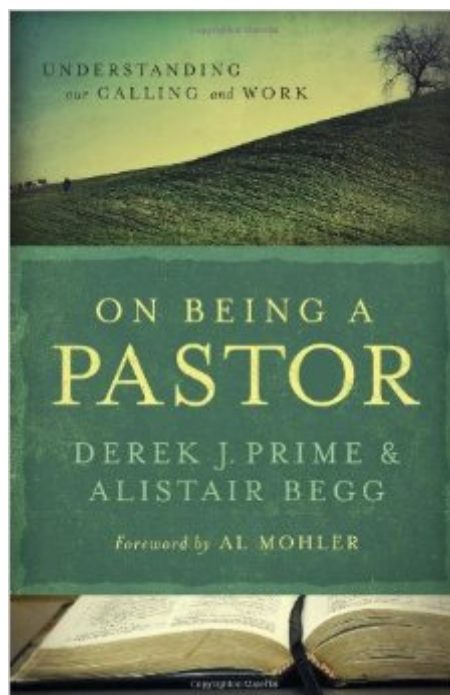


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On Being A Pastor: Understanding Our Calling And Work



Synopsis

The ministry of pastors is not simply a job; it's a vocation and a lifestyle. A pastor's responsibilities are unique, demanding that he not only nurture his own spiritual life but also the lives of those in his care. What a challenge this can be! Derek Prime and Alistair Begg provide practical advice for both the spiritual and practical aspects of pastoral ministry. They delve deep into topics such as prayer, devotional habits, preaching, studying, and specific ministry duties. The result is an essential tool for those in pastoral ministry.

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Customer Reviews

While books on preaching abound today, books on the broader duties of pastoring are few and far between. Here is one to fill the gap. A revised and expanded version of Derek Prime's earlier book, *Pastors and Teachers*, this book is a comprehensive, yet remarkably personal, study of the art of pastoring. Five basic convictions govern the content of the book, as outlined in the introduction: (1) "Christ's special gift to His Church is the gift of pastors and teachers;" (2) "The pastor and teacher is an elder among other elders in the local church" (regardless of whether the term elder is used or not); (3) "The work of elders - by whatever name they are called - need to be encouraged and developed;" (4) "Whatever the pattern is for shared leadership in the local church, there must be a leader among leaders;" (5) "Both the pastor and teacher himself and the church fellowship of which he is a part need to be clear as to his function and place in the body of Christ" (p. 14). The authors then devote close to three hundred pages to clarifying that function and place. Virtually everything is

discussed: Call and Calling (chapter one), Life and Character (chapter 2), Goals and Priorities (chapter 3), Prayer (chapter 4), Devotional Life (chapter 5), Study (chapter 6), Preaching (chapter 7), Pastoral Care (chapters 8-9), The Conduct of Worship (chapter 10), Leadership (chapters 11-12), Family and Leisure (chapter 13), and "Perils Tempered by Privileges" (chapter 14). One of the unique aspects of the book is the inclusion of personal insights from each of the authors.

This book presents a bold and beautiful picture of the character and spiritual life of a pastor. Originally written by Derek Prime as *Pastors and Teachers* (1989), Alistair Begg's contribution serves as an incredible enhancement to the book. Both authors of this revised, expanded edition of Prime's work are seasoned pastors. And their wisdom is strewn throughout every page. While it is a rich treat to be able to walk beside these men as they wander through what the Bible says a pastor is to be and do, it is an added privilege to be let in on the relationship that these men have with each other. At times, this reviewer felt as though he were transported into a living room with a warmly lit fire, listening to these old friends chat about the task that God had called them to give their lives over to. While the book moves through the biblical descriptions of a pastor, it is laden with entire pages where it is either Prime or Begg writing, commenting on what has already been said, making current application of the principles in each of their own lives. In these special parts of the book (which occur throughout), it is the seasoned wisdom of godly pastors that readers are able to observe. Moreover, they speak as men who have lived out the principles they are writing about. It is not theoretical pastoral musings, these men are authentic shepherds who know their calling and want to discharge their duty to the best of their abilities, by grace. Most often when the writers interject their personal thoughts and comments, Prime is followed by Begg. The comments made in this order marvelously show forth a symphonic order, granting glimpses into the authors' relationship, showing Begg like a student, carefully learning from his former pastor and mentor.

Derek Prime and Alistair Begg share helpful information about how they conduct their pastoral ministries. They discuss their personal devotion habits, their commitment to regular reading, and the preparation of their sermons. They also talk about how the demands of pastoral ministry often rob them of valuable study time, and that some weeks are more hectic than others. They also candidly discuss how they prioritize time with their families. There is even a helpful discussion of whether or not a pastor should study at home or at the office (Alistair works at the office, Derek works at home). There is also a chapter about hospital and home visitation, though neither one does much of either unless there is a crisis. Alistair pastors a church where the members are scattered over a 60

mile radius, and finds that home visits would be an imposition for many busy families. They also acknowledge that in their multistaffed churches, they do not make as many visits as they might be making if they were solo pastors of small country churches in the USA. Before Alistair started pastoring at Parkside Church in Bainbridge, Ohio, he was Derek Prime's assistant, and Begg repeatedly mentions how amazed he is that his former mentor can be so well disciplined and organized. You get the impression that Alistair feels like a spiritual lightweight in the company of Prime. But it is obvious by the compassionate and humble way Alistair writes that he has spent many hours basking in the presence of our great God. He and Prime are especially fond of the Puritans, particularly John Owens, D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, and modern Anglican pastors John Stott and J.I. Packer.

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