

# Pastoral Rule Overview

Saint Gregory the Great (Pope Gregory I) (540-604)

## Book 1 - Who/What type of person should be a pastor

A person shouldn't be a pastor if...

1. You aren't living in a way that commends the gospel
2. You are seeking authority / recognition / glory
3. You don't have a call from God
4. You contradict by your life what you preach with your words
5. You seek favors and prosperity
6. You don't engage in self-examination / reflection
7. You don't feed the flock (and thereby show that you don't love the Shepherd)
8. You don't depend on God's strength / equipping / provision
9. You haven't, before being a pastor, learned humility

## Book 2 - How a pastor should live

1. Your behavior should be as far better than your people the way that a Shepherd's behavior is far better than the behavior of sheep.
2. Consider the example of others
3. Don't rejoice in your position, but consider that you are in the position you are in to do good to / for others.
4. Make sure that you are preaching to yourself (and you are living out what you are calling other people to do).
5. Live in a way that people like you, so that they will listen to God's Word through you; not so that you draw them from Christ, but you point them to Christ.

## Book 3 - How to pastor different types of people

This book is something of Haddon Robinson's dreams. Do you find it hard to think of ways to do application for your people? Do you find it difficult to consider different categories which might apply to your people? Look no further! Saint Gregory the Great lists 78 different categories!

1. For starters, when considering a category, you can instantly consider its opposite.
2. Here are some general (and arbitrary groupings) of categories, intended to be an example and not exhaustive:
  - a. Physical State

- i. Whole and Sick
    - ii. (Gourmands) and (Abstemious)
  - b. Emotional State
    - i. Joyful vs. Sad
    - ii. Impudent vs. Bashful
  - c. Hierarchical State
    - i. Subjects and Rulers (Prelates)
    - ii. Servants and Masters
  - d. Characteristic State
    - i. Kind vs. Envious
    - ii. Simple vs. Crafty
    - iii. Slothful vs. Hasty
    - iv. Etc..
  - e. Social State
    - i. Talkative vs. Silent
    - ii. Those at Variance and Those at Peace
    - iii. Successful and (Losers)
    - iv. Etc...
- 3. Some highlights:
  - a. Sin takes three steps: Suggestion, delight and consent (So you have two opportunities to flee before it is consummated).
  - b. It's possible to demotivate obedience through overemphasis on the lowest good.
  - c. "The slothful [must be reminded] that often, when we will not do at the right time what we can, before long, when we will, we cannot." (Book 3, Chapter 15, page 73)

## Book 4 - A pastor must have humility

If you do the job of pastor well, it is easy to become conceited, or to think that you accomplished the good in the lives of others. While God has graciously worked through you to bring about good, it is necessary to remember who you are - only a man whom God has called and enabled. He is the one who has brought about all the good in and through your life.

## Notable Quotes

**Book 1. Chapter 2.** Live it before preaching it.

There are some also who investigate spiritual precepts with cunning care, but what they penetrate with their understanding they trample on in their lives: all at once they teach the things which not by practice but by study they have learned; and what in words they preach by their manners they impugn. [...] For certainly no one does more harm in the Church than one who has the name and rank of sanctity, while he acts perversely.<sup>1</sup>

**Book 1. Chapter 5.** Those God gifts and calls must serve the flock.

If, then, the care of feeding is the proof of loving, whosoever abounds in virtues, and yet refuses to feed the flock of God, is convicted of not loving the chief Shepherd. [...] And so there are some, as we have said, enriched with great gifts, who, while they are ardent for the studies of contemplation only, shrink from serving to their neighbour's benefit by preaching; they love a secret place of quiet, they long for a retreat for speculation.

**Book 1. Chapter 9.** We lie to ourselves. We say we'll use our glory for good but really we just want praise.

For the mind itself lies to itself about itself, and feigns with respect to good work to love what it does not love, and with respect to the world's glory not to love what it does love. [...] For one can by no means learn humility in a high place who has not ceased to be proud while occupying a low one: one knows not how to fly from praise when it abounds, who has learned to pant for it when it was wanting:

**Book 2. Chapter 7.** As pastors we must be both compassionate and yet severe.

For care should be taken that a ruler show himself to his subjects as a mother in loving-kindness, and as a father in discipline. And all the time it should be seen to with anxious circumspection, that neither discipline be rigid nor loving-kindness lax. [...] But there ought to be in rulers towards their subjects both compassion justly considerate, and discipline affectionately severe.

**Book 2. Chapter 8.** Pastors can't be people-pleasers, which is really self-love.

Meanwhile it is also necessary for the ruler to keep wary watch, lest the lust of pleasing men assail him; lest, when he studiously penetrates the things that are within, and providently supplies the things that are without, he seek to be beloved of those that are under him more than truth; lest, while, supported by his good deeds, he seems not to

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from: Gregory The Great. The Book of the Pastoral Rule. Fig. Kindle Edition.

belong to the world, self-love estrange him from his Maker. [...] And in truth this self-love, when it has got possession of a ruler's mind, sometimes carries it away inordinately to softness...

**Book 2. Chapter 10.** Some sins should be tolerated so that when they are revealed, it will lead to deeper repentance (this reminded me of *The Prince*).

It should be known too that the vices of subjects ought sometimes to be prudently connived at, but indicated in that they are connived at; that things, even though openly known, ought sometimes to be seasonably tolerated, but sometimes, though hidden, be closely investigated; that they ought sometimes to be gently reprov'd, but sometimes vehemently censured. For, indeed, some things, as we have said, ought to be prudently connived at, but indicated in that they are connived at, so that, when the delinquent is aware that he is discovered and borne with, he may blush to augment those faults which he considers in himself are tolerated in silence, and may punish himself in his own judgment as being one whom the patience of his ruler in his own mind mercifully excuses.

**Book 3. Chapter 4.** Be careful when you judge those in authority over you.

For, when we offend against those who are set over us, we go against the ordinance of Him who set them over us.

**Book 3. Chapter 12.** Healthy people should use their bodies for spiritual good.

For the whole are to be admonished that they employ the health of the body to the health of the soul: lest, if they turn the grace of granted soundness to the use of iniquity, they be made worse by the gift, and afterwards merit the severer punishments, in that they fear not now to use amiss the more bountiful gifts of God . The whole are to be admonished that they despise not the opportunity of winning health for ever.

**Book 3. Chapter 16.** How to admonish the meek (Titus) and the passionate (Timothy).

For in admonishing Timothy he says, Reprove, entreat, rebuke, with all long-suffering and doctrine . Titus also he admonishes, saying, These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority . What is the reason that he dispenses his teaching with so great art as, in exhibiting it, to recommend authority to the one, and long-suffering to the other, except that he saw Titus to be of a meeker spirit, and Timothy of one a little more fervid? The former he inflames with the earnestness of zeal; the latter he moderates by the gentleness of long-suffering.

**Book 3. Chapter 17.** How to admonish the humble and prideful.

Let the humble, then, be told that, when they abase themselves, they ascend to the likeness of God; let the haughty be told that, when they exalt themselves, they fall into imitation of the apostate angel.

**Book 3. Chapter 25.** How to admonish the young but gifted ministers.

But, on the other hand, those whom imperfection or age debars from the office of preaching, and yet precipitancy impells to it, are to be admonished lest, while rashly arrogating to themselves the burden of so great an office, they cut off from themselves the way of subsequent improvement; and, while seizing out of season what they are not equal to, they lose even what they might at some time in due season have fulfilled; and be shown to have justly forfeited their knowledge because of their attempt to display it improperly.

**Book 3. Chapter 28.** How to admonish those who have experienced sexual sin and those who have not.

For those who have had experience of the sins of the flesh are to be admonished that, at any rate after shipwreck, they should fear the sea, and feel horror at their risk of perdition at least when it has become known to them; lest, having been mercifully preserved after evil deeds committed, by wickedly repeating the same they die. [...] But, on the other hand, those that are unacquainted with the sins of the flesh are to be admonished to fear headlong ruin the more anxiously, as they stand upon a higher eminence. They are to be admonished to be aware that the more prominent be the place they stand on, so much the more frequent are the arrows of the liar-in-wait by which they are assailed.

**Book 4. Chapter 1.** God makes great leaders and pastors imperfect so that they will see their sin, stay humble, and seek after God.

For it is generally for this purpose that Almighty God, though perfecting in great part the minds of rulers, still in some small part leaves them imperfect; in order that, when they shine with wonderful virtues, they may pine with disgust at their own imperfection, and by no means lift themselves up for great things, while still labouring in their struggle against the least; but that, since they are not strong enough to overcome in what is last and lowest, they may not dare to glory in their chief performances.