

# “O MAN OF GOD”

2 Timothy 3:16–17

## STATEMENTS OF FAITH: CHURCHES OF CHRIST, ACAPPELLA SINGING, THE ROLE OF WOMEN, AND PASTOR DESIGNATIONS



Jefferson Caruthers

### CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Churches of Christ, the ones traditionally distinguished by, if not limited to, traditions evident in Scripture, find their congregations again faced with emerging disagreements related to their teachings. It is not like they have not had to look at themselves in the past. What is concerning is that they are somewhat apprehensive about what they will see, particularly because many among them suggest that they are not looking well. And it is not just on the face of the body, but some suggest that their footsteps are unbalanced, that their standing is fragile, and their overall presentation weak. The church must determine whether these observations are just in the eyes of the beholder, or whether silent killer diseases are indeed ravaging the body.

Visiting the conception of churches of Christ, let it be understood that churches of Christ exist wherever assembling men and women have heard the gospel, believed on Jesus as the risen Savior, repented of lives contrary to his Kingship, confessed him as Lord, been buried with him in baptism for the remission of sins, and raised to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:1–6, 1 Corinthians 15:1–5, Colossians 3:12). These churches have no ties with or allegiances to faith groups asserting relationship with Christ different from what is evident in Scripture as it is related to salvation.

In the days of the apostles, for example, the twelve men Paul encountered in Ephesus, who heard of Jesus, repented of sin (John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance) and were baptized (Acts 19:4), would not be considered an assem-

bly of men who were the church of Christ. Although these heard of the coming Jesus, their baptism related to Jesus was not salvific until it was related to the risen Christ, and not simply the coming Jesus.

Believers today are the church, not simply because they have heard of Jesus, or because people have been baptized, nor because they are good people. They may have experienced all of the above, like the twelve, and still not be in Christ. Salvation is grounded on hearing, believing, and obeying the truth. And as difficult as it is for many to reconcile these teachings with what their salvation ideas are, the teachings are nevertheless true.

Teachings for the people of God come from Scripture. First century men and women could read of Paul’s respect for Scripture, even in those books of the Hebrew Bible. Paul assured Timothy that those scriptures were God-breathed, profitable for teaching (doctrine) reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:15–17). Paul believed his own writings revealed the mind of God as Paul was led by the Holy Spirit, assuring his readers that they could understand his knowledge in the mystery of God as they read his writings (Ephesians 3:1–5).

### ACAPPELLA SINGING, MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC, OR BOTH

Churches of Christ, examining and understanding Scripture, will always have the task of determining whether cultural norms and proclivities should factor into how seriously they implement what is revealed in Scripture. When the time comes that many people in a specific culture, era, and place find it more moving to praise God with instruments of music,

there will be at the same time someone who asks whether the practice is really what God required or requires. This is especially true when believers search for how to please God.

Churches of Christ are faced with this dilemma presently. The concern is not what a number of faith groups do; it is what preachers and teachers in churches of Christ are doing. And popularity, acceptance, and modern times are called to take the witness stand as to the veracity of the claim that instruments of music please the people. Their judges have concluded that this conclusion is true.

Preachers have landed on this conclusion. Elderships have come to this awakening. Memberships feel the warmth of the adjudication and celebrate the freedom. And somehow these preachers, elders, and members have convinced themselves that they cannot know what pleases God, as if it really mattered.

It is not possible to read the writings of the New Testament and arrive at the conclusion that the church was instructed in how to implement mechanical instruments of music in their praise assemblies. It is not even possible to read the history of the church and to find a collective push for the same. But visit many churches of Christ today and find preachers and elders quite content with, even willing to defend, their acceptance and practice of their desire. When it comes to mechanical instruments of music, and what God reveals, if it were at all possible, God would lose on this one. After all, who would or should resist the will, good times, and wisdom of the people? The truth is that for many God has no preference.

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It must be true that God has no preference, even for some believers who are strictly acappella in their worship assemblies. For these, God only requires acappella when the church meets to worship. The worship music I enjoy outside of the worship assembly is another thing. And God perhaps enjoys it away from the assembly also.

There are a number of believers who play many of the latest and popular religious artists in their homes, cars, and other places. They listen to these songs as devotional and religious songs. And what this demonstrates is that they believe that God can be honored and worshipped with the instruments, just not at church. These are indeed odd conclusions.

Perhaps there is nothing in the nature of God that requires that the artistry and skill of humanity be kept out of what is offered to God. Those reaching such conclusions would not find logic in God requiring altars built with stones upon which no chisel had come (Exodus 20:25). They would not understand why God required judgment in rough valleys that had not been eared nor sown (Deuteronomy 21:4). They would ask what is the big deal with God preferring what is natural over what is formed or crafted. Why is singing with grace in the heart preferred over the harp?

Even after considering such passages and practices, the people want instruments of music, and quite a number of preachers and elders are willing to give them to the people, declaring with no uncertainty, "you are fine," "it is alright," "you have not sinned."

Pray God that the children of God learn not to be so brash and bold about what they clearly cannot defend as an acceptable practice before God. If it is not sin, where is the proof of its acceptance? Better to affirm what is clearly truth.

## PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLES OF WOMEN

Horror stories abound about the experiences and roles of women in churches of Christ. Listening to many today, one

would conclude that women were at best a notch or two above pets, equal to man's best friend; or at worst, faithful robots.

From many corners, long time churchgoers disparage how they perceive women to have been treated. They could not lead prayer in the assemblies. They could not read Scripture. They could not lead singing. They could not preach. They could not become deacons or elders. And one wonders why they stayed with churches of Christ. They would have certainly been freed more than a century ago among our AME brethren, and to a lesser extent, among Baptists.

There has been an awakening in churches of Christ. God has sent us dreams and revelations. In the dreams, preachers have seen that activities once forbidden were only so because men had not evolved enough to see the God given potential of women. In another dream, God revealed that preachers misunderstood what appeared to be textual prohibitions.

In the category of revelations, God revealed that in Ephesus the instructions given Timothy were given because some converted prostitutes became loud, usurping misplaced authority (*authetein*) over the men. But that limiting who women should teach was only a temporary fix, perhaps until the prostitutes learned to behave themselves in the assembly.

Free now, women are the readers in the assemblies, they direct the worship services in song, they preach, serve as deacons and elders. And consistent with true egalitarianism, they are equal in leading worship in every way. Good thing that the many are putting so much trust in newly revealed bible scholars, rarely known previously as serious students of the text, but on this subject, finally renowned teachers.

Experiences in churches differ. I did miss the horrific experiences and ungodly mistreatment of women. I learned to have much respect and appreciation for those ladies who labored in very many ministries in the church. Their faithfulness was impressive. They modeled women who fel-

lowshipped with and encouraged the saints. At an early age, they were my instructors. Growing up in the church, I witnessed their great sacrifice during year after year VBS. They were like an army of troops as they scattered throughout the city picking up families and children bringing them to church.

They served to feed, to clothe, and to visit the saints. All works held in high esteem by the Lord. And why would they not be? After all Jesus also fed. The story says that as many as five-thousand men, beside women and children, were fed by him (Matthew 14:21). Jesus washed and dried. He towed himself and washed his disciples' feet (John 13:5). Jesus visited. He went into homes where the sick and infirmed were and healed (Mark 5:41). How can these works be disparaged?

Our times seem to suggest that there should be more. We should teach and legislate different from what Scripture reveals. Let it be stated clearly and plainly: no dream, no revelation, and no new understanding of either Scripture or women has altered, augmented, or given license to the roles preachers and elders are assigning to women today.

Men and women are the same today as they have always been, rebellious in the face of the teachings of God. No. God has not recently freed women to become elders and preachers in the church. God has not recently represented the assembly with women in the lead. And the explanation remains the same as to why we do what we do. Satan convinces us that God does not mean what he says in his word.

The practices now evident with women in churches of Christ is further proof that God is all knowing, that he is wise, that he knows his creation. Truth is, God still represents himself in the home and in the worship assembly by male leadership (1 Timothy 2:12-15).

This issue of "Man of God" does not intend to discuss this subject at length, but does note that those advocating these practices have much to prove. At end, God's revealed word must be recognized.

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ACAPPELLA SINGING,  
THE ROLE OF WOMEN, AND PASTOR DESIGNATIONS**

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The teachings addressed in this issue are of great concern in our brotherhood. They are not the only ones stirring controversy. But as we address a number of the new teachings in the weeks to come, we begin with music, women, and leaders as a start. Several of us know that agreement in the truth is necessary. At the Southeastern Teachers Workshop, brother Crusoe provided evidence of concerning practices among churches of Christ. As a result, Jefferson Caruthers, Michael Crusoe, Jack McNeil, and Derrick Franklin agreed that it is past time that preachers speak up. Brother Michael Crusoe was asked by brother Caruthers to begin the work of a statement of faith. He, along with Harold Redd and Jeff Caruthers have collaborated on wording. Brother Crusoe has worked diligently identifying persons sound in faith and unashamed to state their beliefs. Brothers desiring to be a part of the list have been recruited, have volunteered, and have sent in requests. The following is the progress from the initial ten to the present. Members of the churches of Christ are being asked to be diligent in being like those Bereans who searched the Scriptures when it came to matters of doctrine (Acts 17:11).

**STATEMENT OF FAITH  
(Update and Rationale)**

Preachers and teachers accept the responsibility of making clear the teachings of Scripture. It is a positive when they openly and unabashedly share those teachings with the world. And they should. Aware of very important concerns within churches of Christ, the following preachers have affixed their signatures below. This document serves the purpose of reassuring members throughout the brotherhood, a great many who have expressed confusion about present day innovations and teachings, that there are faith affirming preachers who are committed to teaching and practicing what is scriptural. And without hesitation, they affirm that to teach and practice what is not scriptural is to be in error.

As it pertains to Christian worship services, Scripture does not endorse:

The use of instruments of music in a Christian worship service.

The egalitarian position of women leading a Christian worship service through singing, praying, teaching or preaching.

The use of appellations and titles such as “pastor” for individuals not meeting the specific character, life qualifications and ordination installation prerequisites of an elder.

It is the position of these ministers of the gospel that congregational autonomy is connected to brotherhood accountability. Therefore, congregations or church leaders engaged in the practice and support of the above-mentioned practices and positions are in error as it relates to practicing Scripture.

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Bro. Jerrad A. Davis  
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**PASTORS—REFLECTION**  
**Greek Word Study**  
**FEEDING, “RULING” IN THE NEW**  
**TESTAMENT TEXT**

The purpose of this reflection is to review New Testament (NT) usage of the term, “pastor.” The study seeks to further provide for members a conception of how the word informs the work of a leader or leaders. The study seeks to determine whether it is within NT expectation that flyers, cards, advertisements, addresses of a singular person in a church leadership is “the pastor,” a way of referring to leaders within certain faith contexts.

Faith communities today find themselves grappling with many teachings related to church leaders and leadership. Among at least three of those groups, Southern Baptists, United Methodists, and Churches of Christ, the discussion centers on proper understanding, appointment, and use of the term, “pastor.” Notably, the largest denominational convention in America, the Southern Baptists, have dominated news related to this subject. Southern Baptists withdrew from Rick Warren and the Saddleback church, precisely because of their inclusion of women in the pastorate. They conclude that from their reading of the text (1) pastors were men (2) served in a plurality (3) usually among those considered elders in the New Testament text. Most recently, June 2024, they were unsuccessful in an attempt to cease using the word in reference to leaders called “youth pastors” and “women’s pastor,” falling short of the two-thirds necessary in a follow up vote to the year 2023.

The United Methodists have argued over whether persons from the LGBTQI+ community can be ordained to the ministry. Their inability to agree on a biblical position has resulted in the formation of the Global Methodist church, one of the largest denomination splits in the past one hundred years. Both the Southern Baptists and Methodists consider how one perceives and uses the term, “pastor,” a defining and serious discussion in their faith fellowships.

Churches of Christ have witnessed some upsurge in discussion on the subject. But a great number are dismissive of the discussion as a trivial matter given mountain status by some fringe conservative preachers. In truth, many headline preachers, both young and old, are so unconcerned as to not even discuss the matter or view it as having anything to do with what God has assigned church people to do.

The attitudes manifest in this time are quite different from decades previous when those within the tradition of churches of Christ spent considerable preaching and teaching time on what they perceived to be the misuse of the adjective, “Reverend.” They would explain the proper use of the term, “priest,” spoke of no person being a religious “father,” considered words like “prelates” and “pope,” as non-biblical.

On a subject that means so much to others, it would seem that teachers within churches of Christ would be leading the charge for correct usage of the term, championing a biblical view, and celebrating the advantage they already had in speaking as the “oracles of God,” or “calling Bible things by Bible names.”

It is evident that Jesus himself had concern for how terms, phrases, appellations, and titles might indicate a disciple’s false exaltation of a teacher; or, on the other side, the lack of humility in the person being recognized by such terms as “father,” and “rabbi” (Hebrew) or “didaskalos” (Greek/English-Teacher). Notice Matthew 23:6–13,

<sup>6</sup> And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup> And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. <sup>8</sup> But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. <sup>9</sup> And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. <sup>11</sup> But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup> And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. <sup>13</sup> But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Interestingly in this passage, Jesus teaches against the use of certain exalting terms, then immediately uses some descriptive terms related to the men he decries as “scribes” and “Pharisees.” Every descriptor does not violate the terms of humility, but some certainly do.

The Greek word translated into English as “pastor,” is from the infinitive ποιμαίνειν (*poimainein*) to feed, or to nourish. In the English text, the words, shepherd (of English derivation) and pastor (of Latin derivation) are used to translate this word. In certain contexts, *poimaivein* is translated “rule” when referring to a king’s relationship to his people.

In addition to the infinitive, the word is found in the verb form, *poimainō*, and the noun form *poimēn*. When the word refers to those being fed, they are the flock, “*poimnē*.” There is also the word for little flock, “*poimnion*.” One should not assume that whenever the word or concept “feed” is in the text that it translates from *poimainein*. There are also the words *potizō* from *potizein*, *boskein*, and *chortazō* (χορτάζω).

Let me give a few examples of these other words. In 1 Corinthians 3:2, Paul says that he fed the Corinthians milk, but the idea is to provide drink is the word, *potizein*. In the conversation with the Apostle Peter, two of the “feed my sheep” texts are from *boskein*, John 21:15, and John 21:17. Only 21:16 uses *poimainein*. (As an aside, in the gospel of John, words are used interchangeably not necessarily indicating different meaning. In the gospel of John for example, *agape* (love) and *philos* (love) are not meant to describe two different kinds of love. But what is used in one context is fittingly used in another.)

**Contexts for the Verb poimainein,**

**Rule**

Inciteful to the use of *poimainein* is the translation rule, In Matthew 2:6, Jesus will rule (shepherd) his people Israel.

In Revelation 12:5, the woman brings forth a man

child who will “rule” all nations.

In Revelation 19:15, he who is faithful and true will “rule” the nations with a rod of iron. (Notice by contrast that when speaking of the saved, the translation, “feed” in Revelation 7:17, the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed (*poimainein*, instead of “rule” as interpretation).

**Feed/Feeding--Animals**

In Luke 17:7, Jesus speaks of a man plowing or feeding cattle.

In 1 Corinthians 9:7, Paul asks who feeds a flock and does not drink of the milk thereof (this text is not making and argument for “pastor.” It does not ask, “who is a pastor?”)

**Feed/Feeding the Church**

In Acts 20:28, elders (Acts 20:17), made overseers are to feed the church of God.

In 1 Peter 5:2, elders, are to feed the flock of God.

**Contexts for the Noun Poimēn**

**Gospels**

In both Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34, Jesus sees his people as sheep having no shepherd.

In Matthew 25:32, the Shepherd divides sheep from the goat.

In Mark 14:27, the shepherd will be smitten, and the sheep will be scattered.

In Luke 2:8 and 2:15–18, the reference is the shepherds in the field.

In John 10:2, 11, 12, 14, 16, Jesus is the good shepherd in mind.

**Epistles**

In Ephesians 4:11, the KJV translates the Greek as “pastors,” it is just as fittingly translated “shepherds.”

In Hebrews 13:20, Jesus is the great shepherd (pastor) of the Sheep.

In 1 Peter 2:25, Jesus is the Shepherd and Bishop of the believers’ souls.

**Conclusions on the Verb and the Noun.**

There are two church contexts for the verb, *poimainein*, in both those contexts the reference is to elders of the church.

There is one church context related to the noun *poimēn*. It is in the context of naming apostles, prophets, and evangelists, with pastors and teachers. And what may be asked is whether the use in this passage justifies our forwarding phrases like, “Pastor J Ralph C.”

There is no doubt that pastors/shepherds existed. The contexts usually have them among the elders. This would not justify the “one pastor” structure practiced in some faith fellowships. Even Baptists acknowledge that this would not have been a NT practice.

Because a person feeds, there is no justification for applying the title “pastor” as a person other than one who is also an elder. What sometimes removes this idea is to think in terms of the word, Shepherd, which from an Old Testament perspective, when speaking about shepherds of the people, the image is of an older person. What this study concludes is that the popular usage of the title “pastor” can violate Jesus’ admonitions related to how we exalt certain leaders as well as the need for leaders to demonstrate humility by refusing titles that have no Bible precedent or justification.