

1 Peter 5:1-7

1Pe 5:1 (NKJV) The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. ⁵ Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." ⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

When we come to the New Testament definition of spiritual leadership, the Scriptures use many metaphors. The most prominent metaphor is that spiritual leaders are “**shepherds**”, or someone who tends God’s flock. Andy, Larry, and myself are all “**shepherds**”. I do the primary teaching and preaching, but they are just as much “**shepherds**” as I am. Even the word “**pastor**” (*poimen*) means “**shepherd**” and is translated that way in the Greek Interlinear. It is interesting to me personally that the word “pastor” is not even used in the New Testament. The word “**pastors**” (plural) is used once in [Ephesians 4:11](#), but that is it.

Eph 4:11 (NKJV) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

However, the word “**shepherd**” is used 22 times, and it is the favorite metaphor of Jesus to describe Himself. For instance, in [John 10:11 and 14](#) He says,

Jn 10:11 (NKJV) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

Jn 10:14 (NKJV) I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own.

In [Acts 20:28](#), the role of the leadership of the church there in Ephesus was that they were to “**shepherd** (verb) **the church of God**”.

Ac 20:28 (NKJV) Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd (verb) the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

In [Hebrews 13:20](#), Jesus is called the “**great Shepherd**”.

Heb 13:20 (NKJV) Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Here in [1 Peter 5:2](#), the spiritual leaders are told to “**shepherd the flock of God**”.

1Pe 5:2 (NKJV) Shepherd (verb) the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

Let me give you the functions of a biblical leader, of a shepherd that God has given to the church. These are the specific functions that Andy, Larry, and myself have in this local congregation. We are to lead, feed, nurture, comfort, correct, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. I want to say it a different way. Leading a

church is a ministry. It is not management. As elders in this congregation, we are not monarchs who rule as they please, but servants to you who are willing to labor and sacrifice on your behalf and for God's glory in this place. Every elder, every shepherd must be an example of sacrifice, devotion, submission, and humility. If Andy, Larry, and myself do not exemplify those characteristics, then we should not be leading. We are not bigwigs in the church. If Jesus was willing to humbly wash the feet of His disciples, then we should also be willing to humbly serve you.¹

The qualifications for leadership in the local church are very, very high and are very difficult to satisfy. Very few men seem to really excel in the role of biblical leadership, and especially many pastors. Why do I say that? It is because many pastors are not good students. They do not really study the Word of God with any passion or intensity. Some men want to be teachers, but before anyone can be a teacher, they must be a student, and many pastors are very poor students of the Word of God. They are commentary constrained, internet constrained, entertainment constrained. Personally, I do not even think that they have a biblical perspective on what their real role actually entails.

The elders have to be godly, they have to be gifted, and they must have unusual character and integrity that is undeniable and very evident. They must follow the plan, they must follow the blueprints. As an architect, I fully realize that if a contractor does not follow my specific blueprints and specifications, that the results can be utterly disastrous. God's Word is the blueprint for our lives, and if the leaders of this church are ever going to be a benefit to your life, we must accurately, clearly, and understandably teach you God's Word with no reservations about what we are teaching. [Hosea 4:9](#) declares,

Hos 4:9 (NKJV) And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds.

Every congregation generally takes on the personality of their leadership, and generally their pastor. In other words, the congregation generally emulates the example of their spiritual leaders.² The stronger the leaders, the stronger the church. The more godly the leaders, the more godly the church.

As your pastor, I have to say that I feel somewhat passionate about this entire subject of elders and leadership. I find no personal comfort in anything other than excellence in the ministry and how the God-ordained leaders of this congregation handle both our lives and the life of this church. As a member, you have the right and the privilege to speak to our lives if you see things that are clearly wrong and unbiblical. You should feel a sense of responsibility to do so, and we should feel a sense of responsibility to be grateful for your concerns.

Now, in the first four (4) verses, Peter provides several very important admonitions to the elders. The first exhortation comes in the verb "**shepherd**" or "*poimaino*" which is in the imperative mood. This is a very important word relative to the function of the elders and it simply means to tend to the church as a shepherd would tend to his sheep. The primary task of a shepherd is to feed his sheep and to make sure that they are well protected from any kind of predators. It is a word that refers to the whole process of shepherding to include guiding, guarding, and providing spiritual food.³ If you study [1 Timothy](#) carefully, one of Paul's primary exhortations to Timothy was to guard the church from false doctrine

¹ MacArthur, 10.

² MacArthur, 11.

³ Strong, 1322

and false teachers. Notice what Paul said to the elders at Ephesus as he was getting ready to leave them in [Acts 20:28-32](#),

Ac 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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. **29** For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. **31** Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. **32** So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Paul's major concern was never with what kind of music they sang, or what kind of programs they had, or how many people they baptized in a year. Paul's primary concern for the elders was that they would courageously guard the truth and teach the truth. For Paul, that one function overrode everything else. It was to be the major focus of the elders – for them to guard the truth. In the pastoral letters, Paul encouraged them to maintain a godly life, to reject vain teachings, to be an example to the flock, and to give great attention to doctrine and exhortation. He told them to pursue godliness, to fight the good fight of faith and to guard those things that had been committed to them. He told them to hold fast to sound doctrine, to be strong in the grace that God gives, to endure hardship, to commit the truth to faithful men who would do the same, and to present themselves to God as men who rightly divided the Word of God. He commanded them to reject false teaching and to reject foolish and ignorant arguments about the truth. They could not quarrel, but had to be gentle, able to teach, and patient. They had to correct people when they were doing things that clearly dishonored God. They were to preach the Word, reprove, and exhort. Now, all of that and more is covered in this simple little verb “**shepherd**”.

Notice what Jesus told Peter in [John 21](#). I think this dialogue had a tremendous influence on Peter's life after Christ was resurrected. In the time frame of this chapter, Jesus is having breakfast with His disciples after they had been fishing all night, and He specifically begins to talk to Peter beginning in v15. He asks Peter a very simple question and Peter responds. [John 21:15](#) says,

Jn 21:15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son of Jonah*, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

Notice that after Peter responded that Jesus told Peter to “**Feed my lambs**”. The word for “**feed**” there is the Greek word “*bosko*” in the imperative mood and of the nine (9) times that it is used in the New Testament it is translated as “**feed**” in eight (8) of those uses. Then we come to [John 21:16](#) which says,

Jn 21:16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son of Jonah*, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

The word for “**tend**” is “*poimaino*” and is the same word that Peter uses in [1 Peter 5:2](#) to express the function of the elders. Then in [John 21:17](#), Jesus asks Peter a third time to as to whether or not Peter really loved Him.

Jn 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

The word for “**feed**” in this verse is once again “*bosko*” which means to “**feed**”. All three verbs are in the present tense signifying that Peter is to always be feeding the sheep. In our terminology, he is to always be teaching the Word of God. That is his primary concern. It is not ministry, not administration, not serving, not programs, not music, not visitation. It is teaching. No wonder Peter told the believers the following in [Acts 6:3-4](#) when the ministry demands on the apostles began to take away from the actual ministry of the Word,

Ac 6:3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

What we glean from Jesus’ exhortation to Peter in [John 21](#) is really very simple. This is Jesus’ last exhortation to these men before He ascended, and it is specifically related to “feeding” the flock from the Word of God. Because the verbs are in the present tense, it meant that this calling on their life was to be a constant and regular necessity that could not be ignored, overlooked, or brushed aside.⁴ It was to have the absolute and foremost place in ministry – studying and teaching the Word of God with accuracy, with clarity, and with every ounce of due diligence that the apostles could muster. The primary difference between the two words “*bosko*” and “*poimaino*” is that “*bosko*” is literally concerned with the actual teaching of the Word and “*poimaino*” is a broader term that involves the total care of the church.⁵ The ultimate role of an elder, then, is to provide pastoral care, to teach the Word of God, to provide spiritual guidance, and to guard the church from false teachers and their very harmful teachings.⁶

One obvious caution that Peter gives to the leadership of a church is that they should never have money as their motive. So many of the false teachers are so wealthy that it defies description. In fact, one of the primary attributes of a false teacher is their obsession with becoming rich. The health and wealth gospel has spawned an entirely different generation of teachers – men who are clearly in the ministry for the wealth that they can accumulate. As I stated in the last message, I personally consider them to be religious thieves, money changers in the temple, and desperately lost. False teachers understand that religion is big business and has far-reaching implications for accumulating wealth. It all began with Oral Roberts and his seed-faith teaching, and it has escalated to a place that is so far removed from biblical Christianity that it is difficult to conceive how people are so blinded to what they are supporting.

In v3, Peter gives what I believe is one of the most crucial of all of his exhortations. He says,

1Pe 5:3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

The little word “**nor**” is just as well translated as “**not**” (ESV, AMP, NIV, ISV, RSV) which makes it a very emphatic exhortation. The NASB says “**not as lording it over**”. The ESV says “**not domineering over those in your charge**”. The AMP, which I really like, says “**not domineering (as arrogant,**

⁴ Vine, 417-418.

⁵ Zodhiates, 345.

⁶ Wuest, 124-125.

dictatorial, and overbearing persons) over those in your charge". The NIV says "**not lording it over**". Every elder is forbidden to try and run the lives of those that God has placed under their care. The phrase "**lording it over**" (Greek Interlinear) is just one word in the Greek – "*katakyrieuo*". It comes from the preposition "*kata*" which can mean down, against, and many other things. The word "*kyrieuo*" means to control, to subjugate, and to exercise dominion over.⁷ It specifically refers to someone who exercises a very high-handed oppressive and domineering control over the flock. This is strictly forbidden by God. Please appreciate that this does not eliminate the God-ordained and properly exercised authority that should be administered through godly leaders. They are to be highly respected and honored as divinely ordained leaders in the congregation.⁸

My personal opinion is that the two worst qualities that a pastor can have is to be lazy with studying the Word of God and to try and control the people to whom he ministers. The word actually was used in classical Greek of someone who subdued someone else, similar to a king who subdued other nations. It is only used four (4) times in the New Testament, and never in a good sense.

Peter says that God has "**entrusted**" people into the elders care. I like that translation best. Some of the translations say something like "**allotted to your charge**" (NASB) or "**in your charge**" (ESV, AMP). For me personally, the word "**entrusted**" makes the entire issue much more personal. If you were going somewhere and you asked me and my wife to keep your children for several days, it would be much more than just allotting them to our charge. You would literally be entrusting them into our care, and on our part we would have the greatest responsibility that you could ever give to us – to guard your children who are your treasure with the deepest care possible. That is the sense of this word.

The ultimate role that elders have is that of "**being examples to the flock**" (v3b). The word for "**examples**" is a word that means to strike something with a blow so as to leave an impression. It means to be a model, a pattern, and a spiritual template that other people can follow.⁹ For those of us who are elders, we should be able to genuinely tell people that if they will just follow the pattern of our life that they will lead a meaningful Christian life. Paul consistently encouraged people to follow his example. He said the following in [Philippians 3:17](#) and [2 Thessalonians 3:9](#).

Php 3:17 **Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.**

2Th 3:9 **not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.**

In [1 Peter 5:5](#), Peter addresses the quality of humility in our lives. The word for "**submit**" is "*hypotasso*" and is generally seen by most people in a very negative way. However, the truth that is embedded in this word is not saying that people are to blindly follow others who are not living a consistent Christian life. In fact, I would say that it would actually be a very grievous mistake for someone to not question things within the leadership of a church that are obviously wrong. [1 Timothy 5:17-20](#) provides some

⁷ Strong, 1169.

⁸ Wuest, 125.

⁹ Wuest, 125.

very important guidelines that make it apparent that when those in leadership in a church fail that the church should identify and address those issues.

^{1Ti 5:17} Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

The primary issue in [1 Peter 5:5-6](#) is that of humility in the believer's life. The word "elder" was literally used to refer to older men and so Peter encourages the younger people to willingly allow their lives to come under the leadership of those men who should be a godly example for them to follow. He says that we are to be "**submissive to one another, and to be clothed with humility**". Now, for me personally, the real truth to which Peter is driving comes at the end of v5 when he makes the statement that God "**resists**" those who are proud, but He "**gives grace**" to those who are humble. In this context of Peter using that verse, he is clearly saying that humility is generally evidenced in how we yield ourselves to those godly individuals that God has placed in our lives to help strengthen and guide us in our life. It could be anyone – a husband, our parents, a teacher, those who lead us spiritually, and even a godly friend. The point that Peter makes is that grace is a very necessary attribute for the Christian life. Without humility, nothing that we do in the Christian life will be successful simply because God both opposes and resists that which is proud and arrogant in nature. Every one of us are subject to this admonition and must take it very seriously. Pride was the attribute that caused Lucifer to fall, and it will just as much cause any believer to fall who does not recognize the various levels of authority and leadership that God has placed into their life. These levels of authority are really designed by God to protect the believer, not harm them, and so once that is understood and appreciated, then God is able to fully administer his grace in a believer's life.

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