

Instructions for Elders

I Peter 5:1-4

Introduction:

- Peter is giving a word of exhortation now to fellow Pastors who are leading the Christians reading this letter.
- Peter identifies himself as an elder, not as a priest or a pope.
- The word “elder” denotes maturity and wisdom that is usually found in older men. In its application, it is more about wisdom and maturity than a specific age- The Bible never gives a specific age.
 - Interesting studies show the average age of pastors has risen sharply (55; and the percentage of church leaders 65 and older has nearly tripled)
 - Reasons for this include: people living much longer, but the obvious issue is the shortage of young men stepping in to fill the shoes of the older men after they pass on
- Elder, Bishop, and Pastor are used interchangeably in scripture- this is important when it comes to understanding God’s plan for the structure of His church.
 - Biblically, the titles of “pastor,” “bishop” and “elder” refer to the same office in the local church. The elders of Ephesus are charged by Paul to be bishops whose function is to feed (shepherd, pastor) the flock (Acts 20:17, 28). In 1 Peter 5:1, 2, Peter exhorts the elders to feed (shepherd) the flock and take the oversight. Paul admonishes Titus to ordain elders in each church (Titus 1:5) and stipulates that these individuals, also known as bishops (1:7), must meet certain qualifications.
 - The imagery of one shepherd- In 1 Peter 5:4 Christ is pictured as the Chief Shepherd Who has charge over His flock. In John’s Gospel He presents Himself as the Good Shepherd (10:11) and speaks of the fact that there is just “one fold, and one shepherd” (10:16). As Christ, the “one shepherd,” is the only Head over the universal church, “the one flock,” so the pastor as the undershepherd is the only shepherd over the local church and solely responsible for it (1 Pet. 5:2, 3). If

the symbolism holds true, as there is just one universal shepherd there should be only one local shepherd.

- I Timothy 3- Here are given the qualifications for the only two church officers mentioned: bishops (pastors) and deacons. Both the “office of a bishop” (v. 1) and the “office of a deacon” (v. 13) are mentioned in the singular. However, when these officers are related specifically to the local church, the bishop is mentioned in the singular (“A bishop then must be blameless” *v. 2+), while deacons are referred to in the plural (“Likewise must the deacons be grave” *v.

8-Paul sees each church as having one bishop but several deacons

- There is room for Assistant Pastors, etc.- but there is only one true Pastor, elder, bishop of a local church!
- We prefer the term “Pastor” to avoid confusion. Sadly, these other terms have been abused and may confuse people.

I. What an Elder does

- a. Feed the flock- The first job is to *feed* the sheep. Jesus emphasized this to Peter in [John 21:15-17](#). Another aspect of the job is to *tend* the sheep, which means protecting, guiding, nurturing, and caring for the sheep.
- b. The most important “tool” to shepherd the flock of God is a heart like the heart of Jesus, one that is willing to give one’s life for the sheep, and who genuinely cares about and is interested in them (John 10:11-14).
- c. Oversight of the ministry- Overseer-This word for leadership comes to the church from Greek culture, and it meant someone who watches over, a manager, or a supervisor (Acts 20:28)

II. The Elder’s motives and methods- v. 2-3

- a. V. 2- Not out of compulsion
- b. Not solely for monetary benefit

- i. “None of God’s soldiers are mercenaries or pressed men: they are all volunteers. We must have a shepherd’s heart if we would do a shepherd’s work.” (Meyer)
 - ii. However, the Bible also teaches in I Tim 5 that a laborer is worthy of his reward- so Pastors should be compensated for their labor- even if that is not their primary goal
 - c. Leading not lording- Shepherds should not do their job as lords, because the sheep do not belong to them. The sheep are entrusted to them. Therefore shepherds are to serve by being examples, not dictators.
 - d. Pastoral oversight must recognize jurisdiction- The Bible is clear that organizational authority is for the Pastor, and spiritual authority belongs to Christ. In other words, the Pastor cannot force spirituality- He must lead by example and members must be Spirit-led to be spiritual. Pastors must be careful not to resort to the abuse of authority that belongs to Christ.
 - e. The Pope can speak Ex Cathedra, the President of the Mormon Church- Thomas S. Monson, is considered by adherents of the religion to be a "prophet, seer, and revelator" of God's will on earth. Baptists have always held to individual soul liberty
 - f. “In the spiritual realm God entrusts shepherds with leadership (influence), but not lordship (authority). Shepherds must exercise spiritual watch-care, and the sheep should be careful to obey the Holy Spirit when He speaks to them through their pastor.”
 - Some, however, go too far and extremely limit a pastor’s leadership. Verse 3 shows that in the mind of Peter, shepherds do have significant authority in the church. If the office of shepherd was so powerless that a shepherd didn’t rule and lead, then there was little potential for being lords. The fact that Peter gives this warning shows this was a potential danger.
- III. Rewards for the Elder

- a. When the Chief Shepherd appears: Peter reminded shepherds in the church that they would answer one day to their Chief Shepherd, who will want to know what they did with His flock.
- b. It is important for shepherds – pastors – to realize that they lead Jesus' sheep. He is the Shepherd, He is the Overseer (1 Peter 2:25). In this sense, the Christian shepherd doesn't work for the sheep, he works for the Chief Shepherd. Ultimate accountability is to Christ! (apply to parents, all Christians, etc.)
- c. You will receive a crown of glory: Faithful shepherds are promised a crown of glory, but not like the crown of leaves given to ancient Olympic champions. This crown will not fade away.
- d. Crowns are not only for shepherds, but also for everyone who was faithful to Jesus and who did what He called them to do (1 Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12).

Conclusion:

- This is how J. Vernon McGee defined a committee: "A committee is a group of incompetents, appointed by the indifferent, to do the unnecessary."
- Here's another definition: "A committee is a group of people who individually can do nothing, and who collectively decide that nothing can be done."
- I truly believe the most noblest profession there is, is a preacher! There truly is no greater job than preaching the Gospel.