"The Elders"

A Study of I Peter 5:1-5
For Church Leaders

Ken Stoltzfus
"The Elders"

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# The Elders

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Introduction

This study for servant leaders among God's people is based on I Peter 5:1-5. These timeless principles are for church leaders of any day, in any place. Further, while this text was written to *church* leaders it applies to Christians in any leadership position including the home, business, politics, and so forth.

In a unique way, I Peter 5:1-5 combines a look at the heart of a leader, his responsibilities, and leadership structures in the church.

There is a serious vacuum in today's church. Many have little understanding of the responsibility leaders are given. Frequently "elders" are called more on the basis of popularity or power, than because of their spiritual gifts, wisdom, discernment, vision and leadership ability. Many prefer to maintain favor with the people rather than representing the voice of God to the flock.

Not many men have the qualifications for, and the calling to, Biblical eldership. It is a special calling - - one which must be taken seriously by all. This gifting and calling is foundational for any church which is serious about fulfilling God's purposes.

This text might appear to challenge some of the church offices or titles we use today. Let's not focus on that. The important thing is to fulfill the *functions* of leadership. If we use a different term for certain functions in the church, it's not a problem. Call the office what you will - - let's just be certain we are fulfilling the *responsibilities* of leadership in a Godly way!

You are encouraged to make notes in the margins of these outlines. Please raise questions, and help me strengthen the material that is presented here. As we study the Word together and share insights with each other you can help make this workbook a more useful study tool! If you find something here that you really dislike, keep reading and be sure you understand what I'm trying to say. And let's talk about it. I can learn from you, too!

At various places you will find a number in parenthesis, such as (4850). This indicates the number used in Strongs Concordance and is given to help you in further study. I do not know Greek but find it stimulating and enlightening to do word studies in texts I am working on.

Ken Stoltzfus

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2) Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3) not lording it 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 will never fade away. 5) Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

*I Peter 5:1-5 NIV*
TO THE ELDERS AMONG YOU

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

I Peter 5:1

Let's Get Started!

Our text begins with "to the elders". To properly understand "eldership," we must understand the meaning and use of the word "elder." Here's how the word is used in our text:

- V1 To the elders (4245) among you, I appeal
- V1 as a fellow elder (4850)
- V5 be submissive to those who are older (4245)

The Greek word elder/elders (4245) above is presbuteros (pres-boot'-er-os). In a general sense, at the time the New Testament was written it meant "older" and is often used to indicate seniority of age as the elder of two brothers. Also to speak of an older man in general. Jewish leaders who were members of the Sanhedrin were called elders.

Here are some typical N.T. usages of the word "presbuteros" (4245)

- Mt. 15:2 the tradition of the elders
- 16:21 suffer many things at the hands of the elders
- 26:59 the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin
- Lk. 7:3 and sent some elders of the Jews
- 15:25 his older son was in the field
- Jn. 8:9 the older ones first
- Acts 2:17 your old men will dream dreams
- 14:23 appointed elders for them in each church
- 15:23 the apostles and elders, your brothers

In the N.T. church, "elder" probably described the spiritual maturity which helps qualify a man to serve as a leader.

Close Words

In the Bible, Sumpresbuteros (4850) is used only in verse one of our text, and means co-elder, or fellow elder.

Presbuterion (4244) is used three times (Luke 22:66, Acts 22:5 and I Timothy 4:14) It means "the order of the elders", such as the Sanhedrin. It is the source of our word presbytery, which is the governing body in some churches.

Clearly, the focus of the word "elder" is on years and maturity!

Observations

“Years” are respected in many cultures. It is recognized that the experience of years adds value to one's perspective on life. However, Americans often speak of older people in a way that implies more a sense of weakness than respect. The vitality and zeal of youthfulness are often more highly valued than the wisdom of years.

Americans often say people are "over the hill" when they are 40 or 50-years of age. To our shame, even in Christian circles there is much negative humor about that,
and the sense that older people don't have much to contribute to the church and society. The truth is that while they have less of one thing, they have more of another!

There is often a tendency to place greater value on knowledge, than wisdom. Certainly our highly technical society has fostered that emphasis. It is the young intellectuals among us who seem to have a bright future. They may be arrogant and self-centered, but the world is at their doorstep.

Knowledge is certainly important, but wisdom has to do with the application of knowledge. Knowledge is "about," wisdom is more "how to." Wisdom implies being able to view a situation; see the various long and short-term implications; and address it in the most beneficial way.

Wisdom is gained in several ways. Study and "book-learning" help, and seeking the counsel of those with greater wisdom is beneficial. Seeking the mind of God is very important. But even the ability to receive and process what we hear from others is handicapped if we don't have enough experience ourselves! There is simply no substitute for the wisdom of years!

If properly understood, the word "elder" is a good term for church leaders even today. It combines “years,” with spiritual maturity. Certainly age alone is not enough to qualify one to be a church elder. There are many older men who don't demonstrate godly wisdom, and who don't have the mark of God's call to church leadership.

But we must also guard against mistakenly assuming that zeal and knowledge imply godly wisdom and the call to church eldership! If "eldership" is to be life-giving, it must be properly understood as implying spiritual maturity - - a maturity which is first of all rooted in the wisdom of experience.

When for various reasons we use younger men in our eldership, they ought to at least manifest the "wisdom of eldership" by demonstrating humility toward those among them who have the wisdom of years. Anything else violates the very heart of the word "elder".

**Questions**
1. What did "elder/presbuteros" mean in a general sense in the N.T. era?

2. How was "elder/presbuteros" used in the N.T. church?

3. What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?
a) Be shepherds (b) of God's flock (c) that is under your care, (d) serving as (e) overseers - (f) not because you must, (g) but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; (h) not greedy for money, (i) but eager to serve. 

I Peter 5:2

BE SHEPHERDS (2a)

The KJV uses the word "feed" here, while the NIV and others use "shepherd." The Greek word is the verb poimaino (poy-mah'ee-no, 4165), which means "to tend", as a shepherd. It suggests the idea of being a supervisor.

Paimaino is used 11 times in the N.T. Some examples follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt. 2:6</td>
<td>who will be the shepherd of My people Israel (KJV rule)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lk. 17:7</td>
<td>a servant plowing or looking after the sheep (KJV feeding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 20:28</td>
<td>Be shepherds of the church of God (KJV feed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. 7:17</td>
<td>for the Lamb - will be their shepherd (read it all!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Close Word

The noun poimeen (poy-mane', 4166) is used 18 times in the N.T. Understanding this noun will help us understand it's verb form better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt. 9:36</td>
<td>like sheep without a shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lk. 2:8</td>
<td>and there were shepherds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jn. 10:2</td>
<td>the man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eph. 4:11</td>
<td>some to be apostles, some to be pastors and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 13:20</td>
<td>that great Shepherd of the sheep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We will use the word "shepherd" to mean "the overall responsibility of caring for the flock - or pastoring the church of God." Words which come to mind include tending; feeding; guiding; governing; protecting; healing the sick; seeking the lost, and so forth. It is much broader than just "feeding".

The focus of shepherding is on responsibility - a charge to be fulfilled. It certainly implies authority, but it is the responsibility side that we need to understand now.

Ezekiel 34

A good shepherd tends his flock well, caring for its every need. The sheep mean something to him. There's something warm in his heart toward them. It's more than responsibility that motivates him.

The scriptures often compare caring for God's people, to shepherding sheep. Read Ezekiel 34. Feel the heart of God in this text and look for the characteristics of both good and evil shepherds.

Let's list the responsibilities of the shepherd of sheep, as given here.

- Feed the flock, V2, 14, 15
- Strengthen the weak, V4, 16
- Heal the sick, V4
- Bind up the broken, V4, 16
- Bring back what was driven away, V4, 16
- Seek the lost, V4, 6, 8, 11, 12
- Make them lie down, V15

Now think about the responsibilities of a shepherd of God's flock, the church. Aren't they much the same? Meditate on that!
Read John 10:1-15 and note the characteristics of a good shepherd.
- He enters by the gate, and is welcome
- He goes ahead, and the sheep follow
- He is a "gate", a source of life to them
- He lays down his life for the sheep
- The sheep know him

Now read Ezekiel 34:2, 3, 8 and 10 again. They tell us what is basically wrong with the evil shepherds. They have fed and clothed themselves at the expense of the sheep!

Do we have such shepherds today? If so, what is basically wrong with their service? Don't some church leaders use the flock to their own advantage? They are looking for money, power, prestige, and advancement. Certainly we all need to be alert to these temptations.

The above verses told us what was wrong with the heart and motives of an evil shepherd. Verses 4 and 21 tell us what was wrong with their leadership style. They ruled with force and cruelty, butting and scattering the sheep.

Do some "shepherds" have the same problem today? Certainly they do! Some pastors and elders are very harsh with the flock and boss them around. We can even be harsh and cruel in our zeal for their welfare! We can drive and force them instead of leading them.

What effect do the evil shepherds have upon the flock? Let's list what the scripture says:
- Scattered the flock, V5, 6
- Became food for wild animals, V5, 8
- Wandered, V6
- Weak and injured, V16
- Flock became a prey, V8
- Lost, V16
- Trampled food, muddied water, V19

What effect do such shepherds have upon the church? Wouldn't it be a similar list?

A Pastor's Heart
Sometimes we describe someone as "having a pastor's heart". By that we mean one who is kind, warm, and patient. He leads the people instead of driving them. He is able to work with them and gently bring them to life. Certainly he has a servant's heart, and is himself a diligent follower of Jesus.

It seems that some pastors don't really have "a pastor's heart". Why might that be so?
- Sin in his life, unable to hear God
- Ignorant of what it means to be a pastor
- Called to be an apostle, prophet, evangelist or teacher, not a pastor
- Personal struggles and anger which lead to a domineering spirit
- Proud, arrogant - unwilling to humble himself and lead as a servant

Let's list the most important qualifications for being a shepherd of God's flock.
- Living a Godly life, truly following Jesus
- Love the people
- Lead with a servant's heart
- Able to commune with God
- Demonstrate godliness in the situations of life
- Called by God, affirmed by the church
- Knowledge of the Word
- Having a vision for the church

What motivates a man who is a good elder/pastor?
- A love for the people
- Desire to see them healthy and growing, being built up in Christ
- Desire to please God and fulfill His call
- Desire to fulfill God's purposes in the church, both general and specific
OF GOD'S FLOCK (2b)

We are not owners of the flock. The sheep have merely been entrusted to us by the owner - - who is God Himself!

Consider these texts which confirm this point.

Mt. 16:18 on this rock I will build my church
Jn. 21:15-17 Feed/take care of my sheep
Acts 20:28 be shepherds of the church of God which He bought with His own blood

It is clear - - we are shepherding God's flock! None of us can rightly speak of "my church." We are only shepherds caring for the flock of another. We do not have the rights of ownership. We may not use the flock for our own purposes. We are servants, not masters.

Verse four of our text identifies Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. Obviously shepherds are accountable to the chief shepherd. Read Hebrews 13:17, which also suggests accountability.

Points to Ponder

1. What are church leaders accountable for? We are accountable:
   - For our motives in leadership
   - For how we lead
   - For the fruit of our leadership in individuals, and in the body
   - To be a good steward of the "talents" entrusted to us

2. To whom are we accountable in our leadership? We are accountable:
   - to God
   - to those over us
   - to those we serve

3. Really, what is God's attitude about how we carry out our shepherding responsibility? Does He really care - - or is this just some kind of impractical, pious discussion? How would we describe the concerns of the Chief Shepherd for the church?
   - He loves the church enough that Jesus left His home in glory, to come and give His life for us
   - He has a deep concern for the ongoing welfare of the flock
   - He provided fullness of life, and expects his servants to bring that life to the flock
   - He is watching carefully

4. How might the knowledge that God is watching, and that we are accountable, shape our leadership?
   - It creates some fear in me and an alertness to do well
   - I want to be a good steward of the ministry He has entrusted to me
   - I desire to see my service produce good fruit in others
   - I want to hear His final words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy Lord."
Questions
1. How have we used the word "shepherd" in this study?

2. What responsibilities are given to shepherds in Ezekiel 34?

3. What was basically wrong with the evil shepherds?

4. What was wrong with their leadership style?

5. What effect did evil shepherds have upon the flock?

6. What do we mean by one having "a pastor's heart"?

7. What motivates a good elder/pastor?
THAT IS UNDER YOUR CARE (2c)

Here the NIV says "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care," and the NAS, KJV and NKJV say "which is among you."

The Greek word is "en" (1722), which is also translated "among, in, with, through, by and at." It is the same word as in V1, "the elders who are among you."

Now I'm not sure there's a deep truth in this little phrase. Possibly Peter is just saying we are to shepherd those God has placed us among. But there's something on my heart that I want to say in that connection and this might be a good place. Maybe it really is what God is speaking through Peter!

A pastor can serve as a church administrator or congregational moderator to everyone in the church, but he can only "shepherd" those who give him that place in their life.

Too many Christians don't want shepherding. They think they know their needs and where to get the best food. They refuse the counsel that would bring the healing they so desperately need. Proud, self-willed and independent they see no need for the caring, equipping ministry of godly church leadership.

Attempts to reach into their life are met with suspicion and are often misunderstood. A flurry of accusations may follow. There is simply no place in their heart for Biblical pastoral care - - no matter how carefully it is expressed.

The core problem is the independent spirit of the flesh. It began in the "garden" with the rebellion against God's authority.

But this spirit is fostered in the feminist movement of our day. This voice is not only against the leadership of men - - it is against all authority.

Sadly, many in the church in America have given themselves to this in large measure. Rather than discerning between godly authority, and authoritarianism, they have rejected the whole concept of leadership authority. This leads to their dismissing the authority of the scriptures as well. It's all part of the feminist package!

Many of our seminarians have little sense of call to spiritual leadership. They are simply administrators, facilitators, or moderators. The church is paying a real price for her folly!

So what is my point? In the spirit of John 5:19, a pastor must look around himself and identify those who open their hearts to his pastoral leadership. He will see God working in this life or that, and their openness to a pastoral relationship will be evident.

They, and only they, are "the flock of God among you" whom he can hope to shepherd significantly. He will serve the rest organizationally but not as "shepherd". Assuming that he is walking in a Godly way, he is not responsible before God for those who refuse his oversight, and he must not accept guilt for the confusion and disorder of their lives.

Possibly this is what God is saying to us through Peter. Maybe it's not. In any case it's a matter worth considering! It might protect one from many disappointments in pastoral ministry!
Here the KJV says, "taking the oversight thereof." That might suggest a strong, aggressive "taking charge" and tempt one to lead as a ruler. Certainly the NIV is more accurate here!

The Greek word here is didomi (did'-o-mee, 1325). It means to give; bring forth; commit; grant; offer; bestow. Didomi appears 413 times in the N.T. Here's several examples which might be helpful:

- Mk. 4:8 other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop
- Lk. 2:24 to offer a sacrifice
- I Cor. 14:9 Unless you speak intelligible words
- II Cor. 8:1 the grace that God has given

The eldership is to accept the responsibility to give, produce or bring forth oversight in the church!

Two Sides to a Coin

There's always two sides to a coin. There is a problem in some churches with leadership being too aggressive - - too controlling.

A "shepherding movement" began in the U.S. in the early 1970's. God had spoken to the church about leadership's need to more diligently care for and disciple the flock. But after a few years the movement went astray, bringing great havoc to the church and shame to God's name.

The problem was that many pastors/shepherds became over-zealous. They became masters, exerting excessive control over the church. "Authority" was a key word for leaders in that era.

One after-affect is that even now when one speaks of "shepherds" in the church in America, many dismiss it because of fears of excessive authority. That, combined with the feminist movement, has helped create within the church a vacuum in visionary and authoritative leadership.

In many American television programs, any man who demonstrates confidence or leadership initiative is made to look like a blundering fool. The basic masculine leadership traits of courage; initiative; strength; boldness or confidence are mocked. The effect upon the church is significant.

In many cases today's American church is desperately lacking leadership initiative. Too often nobody will stand up to bring order to the turmoil caused by conflicting self-interests; or to express courage where a congregation is gripped by fear. Or to lead the church in her response to the evils of our day. Someone must be responsible for the life and ministry of the congregation! It is the elders who are to bring that oversight to the congregation!

We'll talk more about the responsibilities of eldership in the next section. But let's understand this! In every body of believers there is a need for leaders who accept the responsibility to see the needs of the flock, and take initiative to respond to them.

I don't care how we say it - - "taking the oversight," "bringing oversight," or "serving as overseers" - - let's be sure it gets done and in a godly way! If we are going to serve in the eldership, we must bring oversight to the church. We'll say more about that later.
SERVING AS OVERSEEERS (2e)

What does it mean to be an overseer, or to offer oversight? The word here is "episkopeo" (ep-ee-skop-eh'-o, 1983).

Episkopeo means to look upon; to look diligently; to contemplate; to look carefully. It is used only here and in Hebrews 12:15.

This "Episkopeo" is a function, not a position. It is a responsibility that must be fulfilled in the church, and this responsibility is assigned to the elders.

Aren't we often tempted to think of oversight more in terms of position and authority, than responsibility? But the focus is on responsibility! Obviously, appropriate position and authority must always be given to allow us to fulfill a responsibility, but it's important to have our focus in the right place. If we want to properly understand how to express it, we must approach it that way!

So What is It?

Let's pull things together now - - what is oversight?

First of all, in my mind's eye I see a shepherd standing near his flock, looking over it. His sight is "over the flock" because he is taller than they are. He is looking intently. What is he looking for?

- Danger, bears, wolves, thieves
- Danger, storm approaching
- Malnutrition
- Sickness, injury
- A ewe who is giving birth
- Wandering, lost sheep

Now I see a pastor kneeling before God, praying for the church. He is spiritually taller than they are. In his mind's eye he is looking over the flock. What is he looking for?

- Danger from outside, false teaching
- Danger from within, contention, striving
- Spiritual diet, possible malnutrition
- Weak or hurting people
- New believers who need special care
- Wandering, missing members

This prayerful "looking over" is the first part of eldership. What he sees there significantly shapes the pastor's service. It gives him direction. Oversight, then, means "to look over the church to see its needs, and then taking appropriate action to respond to them."

Think about this, too. If we don't shape our leadership around what we see when we prayerfully look over the church, what will it be shaped by? Options would include: the popular issues of the day; copying what others are doing; personal agenda; social agenda, and so forth. How do you decide what you need to be doing as a leader?

Getting Practical

Regardless of what some contemporary writers say, every group will have a leader. I once attended a conference where we were asked to divide into discussion groups. Whoever had a birthday closest to that date was to be the group leader. Someone in my group suggested that we didn't need a leader. We would just work together and come up with the answers to the questions. Guess who emerged as the leader!! She did, of course!

Sometimes a group only needs a facilitator - - someone to help us move together toward our common goals. There are many ideas and ways of doing things - even many good ways! Simply from that standpoint we need leadership to help us.
But then there's the problem of differences of opinion, each with a vested interest. Again leadership is needed, but now there will be a need for the expression of authority to keep things moving well.

Spiritual sickness may come to the church through an unbalanced diet, or through members who have the diseases of gossiping, complaining, contending, or refusing counsel, for example. Danger may approach the flock in the form of false teaching. Responsible eldership will be watching over the flock. They will see these needs and take initiative to deal with them.

Some needs then, are simply organizational. Others are of a definitely spiritual nature. But somebody needs to be responsible to see that they are being met! They need to know where we're going and how to get there. They must be able to look over the body and see its needs; have a plan for dealing with those needs; and take initiative to do it! That is leadership!

Many in the church can't do that. They may be real saints, but they are not leaders! Leadership is a gift that God places in the body, and it's not just a position that everyone gets a chance to fill!

Really, there are few men in most churches who qualify to serve as scriptural elders.
- They may be good men, but not leaders. They don't see needs and take initiative to respond to them.
- They may be a leader type of person, but not qualified according to the I Timothy and Titus standards.
- They may meet the Biblical standards, and be a leader, but simply not have the call of God upon their life for that service at this time and place.
- They may not be ready to seriously commit themselves to that ministry, and to do it with readiness.
- God may have other plans for them at this time.

The elder is alert to the needs of the individual, and the body as a whole. He is sensitive to the powers at work among them. His responsibility is to understand the heart of God and to respond in such a way that God's purpose is fulfilled.

Elders are to see that matters in the church are properly and adequately processed. In decision-making they need to assure that:
- accurate information is presented
- open discussion is encouraged
- discernment is brought to the matter.

They need to assure that persons placed in leadership positions in the church are qualified by virtue of their gifting, character and calling. Too often church offices are filled on the basis of a popularity contest, and sometimes on the basis of whom can be coerced into it, and the church suffers.

Eldership is responsible to deal with voices that would prevail in the church:
- Through the exercise of power (position, wealth, physical stature, family name, education, etc)
- Through manipulative language ("The Lord told me we should - .")
- Through manipulative emotional expression

When troubles arise, our leadership initiative is first of all in the spiritual realm, and secondly toward people. That is, we recognize a spiritual source in the situation and seek discernment and wisdom before confronting people.
Leadership initiative is expressed in many ways, depending on the situation.
- In prayer of inquiry to seek discernment; a word of knowledge; a word of wisdom, and so forth
- In offensive prayer, to do battle with the powers of darkness which are present
- In defensive prayer, to stand with and intercede for certain persons, or for the church as a whole
- Actively observing the situation for change
- Searching the scriptures for instruction
- Seeking counsel from fellow-elders, and possibly others
- Going to talk with certain persons to understand the situation better
- Going to certain persons with counsel or instruction
- Bringing needed teaching to the church
- As wisdom and discretion dictate, sharing needs with the congregation
- Exercising discipline
- Speaking counsel to the church when they are fearful or confused

Looking at this list it becomes clear that some of the responses of leadership will take time. And that's true. While leaders are action people, they also need patience. There are several possible benefits to giving a situation time. Taking time:
- Gives problem people time to hear, and change
- Gives the elder time to see things more clearly
- Gives God time to deal with the problem
- Gives others time to see the situation more accurately, and to support their elders

If the elders have these responsibilities in the church, they need adequate authority to fulfill their responsibility! They need freedom to exercise leadership in decision-making and problem solving. This authority may be expressed toward the body, or an individual. The church must respect her leaders, and submit to them.

**Passing It On**

It's also true that while leaders are responsible to take initiative, and to see that needs are met, they are not supposed to do everything themselves! They are to equip the saints for the work of ministry and see that the gifts of others are developed and used in the church. II Timothy 2:2 is a key principle in effective, Biblical leadership!

A great weakness of many church leaders is their reluctance to do this. There are several reasons why. Sometimes it's because they feel others can't do it well enough. And sometimes it's because they know others can do it better, and they fear that!

**Summing It Up**

Note that our text (I Peter 5:1-5) was written to the elders (4245, V1) - - the men of spiritual maturity who were called to be leaders. They were told to give oversight (1983, V2). See also that in verse two they are told to feed/shepherd (4165) the flock.

Consider too, Acts 20:17-38. In verse 17 Paul called the elders (4245) of the church. In verse 28 he says that God had made them overseers (1985), to shepherd (4165) the church of God.

Finally, in Titus 1:5 Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders (4245) in every city - - but in verse seven he refers to them as overseers (1985).

It seems that the overall responsibility of overseeing and shepherding is given to the elders (4245) - - the spiritually mature men who are called to leadership.
The offices we call elder, pastor, or bishop are all expressions of the biblical term "elder." Nothing forbids ranks or levels of responsibility/authority within this eldership based on maturity, experience, gifting/calling, administrative needs within the body, and so forth. In fact it's probably important.

**Points to Ponder**

What are the criteria for determining how we structure leadership?
- Biblical patterns (They are not very precise or rigid!)
- Needs of the body
- Resources (people) available
- Vision of the body we lead (Structures they will accept)

A friend once told me that in their church there were no men who met the Biblical qualifications for eldership. (I Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9) Their solution was to give the office another name, and appoint men to fulfill the responsibility of leadership under that name. What do you think?
- They completely missed the point. It is the function, not the title, which is important!

**Questions**

1. What does "episkopeo/oversee" mean?

2. What do we mean by "oversight," in the church?

3. What do we mean by "When troubles arise, our leadership initiative is first of all in the spiritual realm, and secondly toward people?"
NOT BECAUSE YOU MUST (2f)

Here the KJV says "not by constraint." This is the adverb "anagkastos" (an-ang-kas-to'ce, 317), which means, not compelled; not forced; not unwillingly.

No man ought to serve in the eldership unless he desires that office, and can cheerfully give himself as a servant to the church to fulfill those responsibilities.

Eldership is a serious position involving much time and energy. It carries the risk of alienation from friends and misunderstanding by those who don't respect the position. And some men are simply not able to take initiative to deal with needs in the church.

No man should be placed in the eldership unless he understands the role he is called to; hears God's call to that office; and freely gives himself to it. Too many men have accepted the office reluctantly, at the encouragement of others, and both they and the church have paid a price.

In the last several years that I was a pastor I determined I would not call a man to the eldership unless he had already felt the call and had the desire. I also wanted to see him already functioning in the body as one whose judgment the people trusted, and whom they respected for his spiritual maturity.

BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE WILLING, AS GOD WANTS YOU TO BE (2g)

The word here is hekousios (hek-oo-see'-oce, 1596), an adverb meaning to act voluntarily or intentionally. Obviously the meaning here is that we are to serve of our own choice, not because we think we have to.

(We will skip over "not for sordid gain", (2h) for the moment, and go to "but eager to serve" (2i).

BUT EAGER TO SERVE (2i)

Here the KJV says "but of a ready mind". I like that! The word is prothumos (proth-oo'-moce, 4290), and it is used only here. It is the adverb form of 4289, and means with cheerful readiness; predisposed; forward in spirit.

So what is the scripture saying here? We are to have a cheerful readiness to serve God's people. We look forward to it! We consider it a privilege to fulfill the calling of eldership. And we don't do it for the sake of dishonest gain, we do it because we find "life" in serving God in this way!!

There's no deeper satisfaction in this life than to be used of God to perform His purposes in the lives of others. None! There's nothing that brings deeper joy. Nothing! The privilege of serving; the joy of seeing His Word bear fruit in the lives of others; the satisfaction of God's "Amen!" as we serve and the confidence of his final "well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord" motivates one to be ready to do more. He serves "eagerly!"

Certainly one who serves for dishonest gain is motivated too. But his labors always produce disappointment. He doesn't feel fulfilled. Often the reward of his service hardly seems worth the effort. He serves because of self-interest, and self-interest is not a source of joy!

Let me illustrate this "readiness". I enjoy going to a restaurant with my wife and friends. I have a readiness toward that! If someone says "Say, why don't you and Elaine, and my wife and I go to a
restaurant for an evening out together," I don't need to think about it very long. I have a readiness to go, and all we need to do is set a date. I'm predisposed toward this kind of an evening! It's that spirit which Peter is calling elders to in their service!

I Timothy 3:1 - -
I Timothy 3:1 says, "- - if a man sets his heart on being an overseer he desires a noble task."

"Sets his heart on" is the Greek word "oregomai" (or-eg'-om-ah-hee, 3713). It means to reach or stretch out, and is used here, in I Timothy 6:10 and Hebrews 11:16. Vine says it means "The mental effort of stretching oneself out for a thing, or longing after it, with the stress upon the object desired."

"Desires" is "epithumeo" (ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o, 1937). It means a craving, and is often translated covet or lust. It stresses the inward impulse rather than the object desired.

Clearly it is acceptable for one to desire, even strongly desire and reach toward, the responsibility of oversight/shepherding before he is called to that office! Our I Peter 5:1-5 text confirms that by saying that one ought not to serve in that office unwillingly, I.E. without a desire for the office.

Points to Ponder
I've heard it said that one should never desire a church office. That's evidence of pride or striving, they say. I disagree! According to Paul in I Timothy it can be appropriate to desire an office.

If a Christian desires a certain office, what are some criteria he/she can use to be certain they experience that desire in a Godly way?
- Do they insist on it, and try to force themselves into it, or are they willing to give God time to bring it about?
- We need to search our hearts about our motivation. Do we want to serve? To rule? To be recognized?

Does that desire mean that the office is to be given now? If not, how ought one to interpret the desire in his heart?
- The office may be given now, or in the near future, or the distant future!
- Read "The Prophetic Call," page 25

Is it wise to express that desire? If so, how and to whom should it be expressed?
- It ought to be expressed in humility to church leadership
- It might be expressed to a trusted older brother or sister, or another close friend who can help you judge the desire

What is the responsibility of church leadership toward those who have a desire to serve?
- To hear with an open mind and heart
- To seek the mind of God
- To give a response
- To disciple and train, as God directs

Is it evidence of pride to enjoy preaching; or praying in public; or counseling; or serving among God's people in the various ways leaders do? Is it acceptable to enjoy being a leader?
- Certainly it is acceptable. It is even desirable!
- God will give us joy in exercising the gifts and ministries He calls us to
What are some criteria to help us judge our own hearts about whether we are proud in our service?

- Do we feel superior to others?
- Do we feel we must be allowed to serve?
- Do we need praise from others?
- Do we rejoice in the successes of others?

- Can we accept counsel, and even correction?

We ought to have a desire for the service we are rendering - an enthusiastic desire. We need to have a clear sense of God's call. He would have us experience joy in our service. This is true when we begin our service, and as long as we continue. Why might a leader lose joy in his service?

- Sin in his life
- God wants to move him to another ministry
- Getting worn out - needs a break!

Acts 20:38 says a man is made an overseer by the Holy Spirit. What do you think of these statements?:

- A man who is called to the eldership ought to have already sensed God's call to that office.
- Our call to a man to serve in the eldership is merely recognition of God's call upon his life. We have observed this by his Godly living; by the way he walks among God's people; and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Questions

1. How and to whom should one express the desire to serve?

2. List three criteria that can help us judge if we are proud in our service.

3. List three reasons why a leader might lose joy in his service?

4. Which O.T. characters did we name, who felt the call of God upon their lives many years before they walked in that calling? (See “The Prophetic Call” below)

5. Why might God place a call upon a person’s life many years before that ministry is given?

6. Complete this sentence. "Unless one is already mature in character and proven in ministry, the call is - -"
"The Prophetic Call"

The Call!
There's nothing more like an unbroken stallion than a person recently saved and filled with the Spirit, and with a prophetic call to ministry!

This call might come through the prophetic word, dreams, visions, or a special anointing upon some scripture. Often this "word" is misinterpreted as a "now" call, leading to confusion, striving, disappointment or set-back, and even a turning away from God.

Let's remember the words of Paul to young Timothy in I Tim. I:18-19, and 4:14. Timothy was to be motivated by the memory of these prophecies, and stirred up to fight the fight. He was, of course, already discipled, proven trustworthy, and commissioned to serve!

We also need to remember Moses and Joseph. Moses had a clear sense of God's call upon his life. It was only his timing and method which were wrong when he killed the Egyptian in Ex. 2:11-15. He was acting to fulfill "the call of God" on his life, but God's people languished another 40-years while he received further training in the land of Midian.

Joseph, too, felt God's leading in his life. He even had dreams that he shared with his brothers, to their consternation. He ended up in a well and was finally sold into slavery in Egypt. (That hardly seems like the fulfillment of God's call on his life!) He spent many years there as God built in him the character and skills he would need when his ministry truly came of age.

Both Joseph and Moses received the inner call literally decades before it was to be walked out! Why does God do this, if it so often produces premature efforts and seemingly disastrous results? Let me suggest several reasons.

The Reasons Why God gives the call early:
1) To motivate one to deliberately prepare for the envisioned ministry. This may include college, Bible school, a discipling relationship, field experience or other training.

2) To motivate one to persevere through the time of preparation. Certainly this will include the agony of having the rough edges knocked off as character is formed. There might be the pain of alienation from certain friends and family too. And times of learning to trust God for financial provision. A keen sense of God's call helps one "hang in there", as we say.

3) To shape choices which are made in life, such as work, buying a house, church to attend, financial debt to be accepted, marriage and family questions and so forth.

4) To strengthen us then, when the time of ministry actually comes. The "word" is deepened in us through this preparation and we now serve with a more mature vision. When hard times come, we look back over the years of God's faithfulness and are encouraged to persevere!

Very often then, unless one is already mature in character and proven in ministry, the "call" is more a call to preparation than to actually enter into the specific ministry at that time.

A Wise Leader
A wise leader will respect this call in a young, unshaped, unproven vessel and will give himself to the formation process. He will also counsel the brother in how to understand his strong sense of calling.

In the event the younger one refuses oversight and insists on plowing ahead, he may need to release him to "do his thing," even knowing the inevitable consequences.

He will remain a friend and encourager, knowing that the chosen path has been beaten down by countless hundreds of other sincere but unbroken men and women who have gone before him. Many of them, including Moses and Joseph, eventually developed into leaders whom God used to shape history in spite of their rather precarious beginnings. In fact, many of the very best began that way!

Probably one of the ministries which most pleases God is for a man of God to help shape a rough stone into a gleaming diamond. He will be tempted with disgust, impatience and an almost overwhelming compulsion to take the stone into his own hands and shape it. But if he can be a smiling friend and loyal brother, touching the stone but not breaking it, he can work with the Master Artisan to prepare another vessel for service.

God's "Amen!" in his own soul and the joy of seeing another enter into fruitful service for his Master will be ample reward for his patient efforts.
NOT GREEDY FOR MONEY (2H)

Here the KJV says "not for filthy lucre," and the NKJV "not for dishonest gain," which is misleading because of the way they lean our thinking toward money.

The Greek word is an adverb, "aischrokerdos" (ahee-skhro-er-doce', 147). Aischrokerdos is a combination of two words:
- Aischros (150) means shameful; base; filthy. It is used only in Titus 1:11, "for the sake of dishonest gain".
- Kerdos (2771) means, "gain, pecuniary or general." Pecuniary relates to money, but the meaning of kerdos is not limited to money, it has to do with gain in general. Here are some other places this word is used in the N.T.
  - Titus 1:11 for the sake of dishonest gain (KJV, filthy lucre sake)
  - Philip. 1:21 For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain
  - Philip. 3:7 But whatever was to my profit - -

What kind of gain was Paul speaking of in Philippians 3:3-7? It was the confidence in the flesh that he could have because of his zeal and his legalistic righteousness! Obviously he was speaking of personal instead of monetary gain.

Kerdaino (2770), the verb form of kerdos, is used sixteen times in the N.T. It simply means "to gain." It frequently speaks of winning others to God and only four times refers to anything monetary.

Let's agree that the broader meaning of aischrokerdos is "shameful gain of any kind, monetary or otherwise!" In our text Peter is speaking of one who is motivated by desires for power, recognition, or special favors or privileges. Sometimes we even have mixed motives!

A Risky Place To Be
Leadership places one in a very risky position. Every leader needs to know he will be sorely tempted to use the power of his position to satisfy the flesh, and to seek "sordid gain" in various ways.

- Especially if he is a confident leader, he may be attractive to women who have a "weak" husband. This creates vulnerability.

- He may put a lot of time into his work, or be very "successful." This can lead him to think he can write his own rules about morality, standards of living, or how to exercise authority. There may be the sense that God would allow him to indulge in otherwise shameful things because of his service. (By "writing your own rules" we mean that one thinks that he would be entitled to make rules for himself which he knows would not be acceptable for others.)

- His godly, effective service can foster affection toward him in the heart of those he serves. This is appropriate. It is also risky! It can tempt him to do things to please them so they continue to like him, so his position among them is secure!

- His leadership skills may be helping the church grow at a tremendous rate. His Godly wisdom may be producing good fruit and his counseling gifts setting people free. He can continue to build God's kingdom in a good way for many years. Or - -

- He can begin to feel he can do nothing wrong. He sees the evidence of God's anointing in His life. He draws into himself, becoming arrogant and closed to the counsel of others. He is now a target for deception and every kind of evil. Or, - - - -
- He may try to do the work himself because he thinks no one else can do it as well as him. He soon becomes weary from the battle. He may feel disappointed in God. With his defenses down he is vulnerable to many temptations.

Leaders have a particular vulnerability to these temptations because of the weakness of the flesh and the opportunities which leadership position and power offer to satisfy the flesh.

I once saw a video teaching of a famous American teacher and prophet. At the end of the service he was up front praying for people and prophesying. Other men were also ministering to people near him. This man said something like: "Everyone be quiet and listen. Every word that comes out of my mouth is from God." This sounded to me like arrogance that would make him vulnerable to deception.

He then prophesied that before a certain date many who were killed in a big Mexico City earthquake would be raised from the dead. He said we would know about it because it would be on national news. It never happened. I believe he was so taken up by his own "spirituality" that he spoke false prophecy!

Every leader needs to know that others are affected too, when he gives himself to fleshly expressions.
- It weakens the protection he can bring to the church through his spiritual headship
- It discourages others, even leading some to fall away
- It defames the name of God

Protecting Ourselves
Let's face it, we're all vulnerable. Any of us can hear the voice that tells us we are invincible, or that we deserve "this or that." What can we do to build a good measure of protection into our lives, so we don't follow the many who fell while in ministry?
- Humbly recognize our vulnerability
- Search our heart
- Have a committed and open relationship with peers
- Remain open to counsel
- Avoid tempting situations such as counseling persons of the opposite sex, alone

After The Fact
What should we do if we realize we have "crossed the line", and have fallen for the enemies tricks?
- Confess it. The confession must reach to those the sin has touched
- Repent. Turn from it. Deal with patterns in relationships, vulnerable situations, etc.
- Establish a peer relationship with accountability
- Possibly take a leave of absence

Those Who Went Before Us
Accounts are given in the Bible of several men of God who served Him well, and then failed. Read about Uzziah in II Chronicles 26:16-21.

Consider also Saul and David - - their service to God; the nature of their sin; how they got to that point; and how they responded.
Saul (Read I Samuel 13, 15, 28 and 31, and I Chronicles 10:13,14)
- Successful, powerful leader
- Jealousy comes into his heart - - he attempts murder
- He "wrote his own rules" in dealing with the Amalekites
- God rejected him as king
- He consulted a medium
- God killed him and turned the kingdom over to David

David (Read II Samuel 11 and 12, and Psalm 51)
- Successful, powerful leader
- Close to God
- Probably thought he could write his own rules
- II Sam. 11, lust, pursuit of sin, sin, attempt at deception, murder
- II Sam. 12, Nathan's confrontation
- Psalm 51, David's confession and repentance

These stories deserve much more analysis than they are given here. Observe that both Saul and David were God's man and were blessed by Him. They became powerful, and careless - - and both sinned. David repented and was restored, Saul did not.

That these famous men of God could serve so well and then fall so badly should be a sober warning to us. One only needs to look at the number of fallen Christian leaders today to be convinced this is also a contemporary problem.

It is easy for us to subconsciously slip into patterns of thought and rationalization that will lead to failure. The prayer of Psalm 139:23-24 should frequently cross the lips of every leader!

A Sobering Thought
Read II Samuel 12:14. Observe why the child died who was born out of David's sin with Bathsheba. It was because David's sin gave the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme Him! We need to be aware that our sins can cause unbelievers to mock God.

Let's remember the truth of God's forgiving grace, as demonstrated in Matthew 1:6b (God's grace is shown in allowing Bathsheba to be included in the genealogy of Christ). But let's also remember the terrible price of Saul's sin. And don't forget the cost to David as recorded in II Samuel 12:10-14, and his deep contrition as recorded in Psalm 51!

What Motivates Us?
Think about it - - what motivates us to keep our life pure? Here's some suggestions.
- A love for purity and righteousness
- The desire to please God
- The desire to be a more useful vessel
- Don't want to disappoint others
- Fear of getting caught and facing consequences
- Don't want to bring shame to God's name
Questions
1. What is the broader meaning of "aischrokerdos," translated "greedy for money" in the NIV?

2. What do we mean by "writing your own rules?"

3. Why are leaders so vulnerable to the temptations we listed?

4. What effect can a leader's sin have upon others?

5. What five steps did we give, to help protect ourselves from the pursuit of sordid gain?

6. What four steps did we list, to deal with failures in this area?
NOT LORDING IT OVER (3a)

Katakurieuo (kat-ak-oo-ree-yoo'-o, 2634) is the Greek word for "being lords over." Its meaning implies; to lord against; control; subjugate.

Mt. 20:25 the Gentiles lord it over them
Acts 19:16 then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them, and overpowered them

Certainly we need leadership with authority in the church, but there's something in particular being expressed here. What is it? Try to feel the spirit of katakurieuo.
- It means to lead in a way that does not benefit those we lead.
- It describes "high-handed" leadership whose effect is against the best interest of those it leads!

Can this kind of leadership be expressed only through a vile man, or is it possible for any of us to find it in our life?
- We need to understand that it can happen through any of us! Even good leaders can do bad things and can lead in a way that is hurtful.

Is it possible that a leader would find this in his life, even though he sincerely loves his people and wants the best for them? If so, how could this possibly happen?
- Yes, he might exercise excessive authority to try to control them and force them to come to the right place in their life, rather than leading them there in a more Christ-like way.

What are some expressions of katakurieuo that a sincere leader might find in his leadership?
- Keeping leadership to himself
- Controlling the personal life of others
- Use power to silence valid criticism
- Telling people what to believe
- Forcing people to be at every meeting
- Manipulating them into giving, especially when it benefits him personally
- Refusing to "hear" church members
- Demanding unrealistically high standards

The Call Of Jesus
Jesus spoke to this issue very clearly in Matthew 20:25-28, where He called the disciples together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26) Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you, must be your servant, (1249, KJV minister) 27) and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- (1401, KJV servant) 28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Let's consider the meaning of two important words!
Servant (1249) means an attendant, or waiter at tables
Slave (1401) is a bondservant, which implies a sense of subjection

In a few words, Christian leaders are servants/slaves, not masters/lords! In Christian leadership we serve the needs of those we lead! The spirit of our leadership is as a servant, not a master!

The "higher" we move in church leadership circles, the "lower" we must bow ourselves because we must subject ourselves to the needs of more people!

The Short Cut
Many times it is easier to lord it over people than to disciple them. If we can get a strong enough place in their life, we can just tell them what to do and manipulate them into acting in a fairly Christian way! It might look good!
But that's not making disciples! It's not forming the presence of Jesus in them. It's simply shaping them to conform to a religious culture.

In the greatest sense, we walk beside the sheep. We shepherd them in their walk with Jesus. In a certain way we are over them, but we are never between them and God. We are God's servant, and their servant, in their walk with Him.

It's hard - believe me I know it's hard - to give people time to grow in the Lord. You can see into their lives and you know what they need. It's all so simple to you! Wise disciples will receive your counsel. But others won't, or they may need more time, and we're tempted to try to force them to do well.

Many well-meaning leaders lord it over the flock. Their heart is in the right place but that's not the way God wants us to lead. It cannot produce the lasting fruit of maturity in the believer.

**Don't Kid Yourself!**

Many leaders want to be masters and bosses. They crave power and recognition. One of the church's greatest needs is for more humble, servant leaders. Men who would rather serve than be served. Who will take up their cross, deny their flesh, and lead as Jesus led. This Matthew text lays down the foundation for that kind of leadership!

Let's not play games about this. Each of us has the capacity to enjoy lording over others! We don't need much power before we are tempted to control others or to manipulate them.

Let's know this too. Because of the two voices within us, it's very possible for us to express mixed motives in our leadership. Sometimes we try to hide our fleshly ambitions under the guise of leadership concern. Or we use the power of our position to silence those who see through us. Hardly any leader can truthfully say that he never abuses the sacred trust of office!

Let's determine to walk in humility; to deal honestly with fleshly expressions; and to pursue righteousness in life and service as long as we live.

**Points to Ponder**

Do we find it easy, or difficult, to express the kind of leadership Jesus calls us to? Would we rather be masters, or servants?

- Let's be honest - - the "flesh" wants us to be masters!
- Our new nature wants to serve

Is this something we need to deal with once in our life, or is it ongoing?

- We will always need to be alert to these temptations. In fact, the more successful we become in ministry the more strongly we will be tempted and the more subtle the temptations will become!
The Responsibility of Authority

In this series we have frequently used the word "authority." That’s appropriate in a discussion on leadership in the church, home, or elsewhere.

But sometimes I hear what appears to be an inordinate interest in authority. For some, a primary concern of leadership is the level of authority a leader has "over" those he leads. I have even been asked, "How can I make the people obey me?"! Let's talk about it!

The First Question
The first question should relate to responsibility, not authority. We cannot define the level of authority one has until we know his level of responsibility. You see, authority is given to allow us to fulfill a responsibility we have been given!

How much authority does the husband have in the home? Well, how much responsibility does he have? What charge has God given him?
How much authority does a leader have in the church? Again - how much responsibility does he have? What will God hold him accountable for?

What Is Authority?
Authority is the power one is given to enable him to perform a responsibility he has been given! It gives weight to his words or actions.
A policeman standing along the road can stop a big bus by simply raising his hand. He has authority!

Where Does It Come From?
As we are using the term, authority is delegated. The one who gives a responsibility must also give appropriate authority. Responsibility without authority produces frustration and confusion.
God gives the state authority, and they give it to the policeman. God gives it to a church leader, and the church affirms it. Likewise God gives a husband authority in his home, and his wife gives him that place in her life when she marries him.

The Fruit of Authority
The fruit of properly exercised authority is righteousness, peace and joy. We might broaden that by adding security, well being and safety, for example. The point is, it brings "life" to others!

A policeman is given authority to protect citizens, assuring their safety, and freedom from attack, for example. He may need to deal with reckless drivers, thieves, drunkards and similar persons in order to do that. He probably has a badge, weapon, and uniform that symbolize his authority.

Church leadership must help the body move together toward their God-given goals. They are to maintain an atmosphere in which persons can grow in the Lord, and the church can reach out to the unsaved. God has given leaders a responsibility for the health and welfare of the body.
They will need to protect the flock from attacks of the enemy, from within and without. There will be spiritual disease and sickness to deal with. It would be unreasonable for God to give them that responsibility, without appropriate authority! And He hasn't!
There may be contentious persons in the body, or false teachers. Elders may need to deal with emerging or would-be leaders within the body who become competitive and create disorder. The list goes on and on! They need authority to enable them to fulfill their responsibility in the church!

Husbands are accountable to God for the general welfare of their family. Children deserve to grow up in a godly, stable atmosphere. The wife should not need to worry about finances in the home. The husband has "oversight" of his home. He is to "look over" it, see its needs, and respond to them. The quality of life in his home is his God-given responsibility. God would not give him that responsibility, without appropriate authority to carry it out!

The Spirit of Authority
A godly leader will be a servant-leader. He will exercise his authority in the best interests of those he serves. That's why it was given!
An honorable policeman will use his authority to protect the public. Godly leaders and husbands use theirs to bring life to those they lead, realizing that is why it was given! That sense alone does a lot to protect them from temptation to abuse their power.
This spirit shapes the style of leadership, as well as its fruit. A servant leader will lead the sheep rather than driving them. He respects their voice and their limitations. He is patient and gives them time to change. He would rather use his authority toward their enemy than toward them. In fact it hurts him when he needs to use his staff against them.

**Perverted Authority**

We have all seen abuses of authority. Policemen can use the power of their position to seek favors or personal gain of various kinds.

Some husbands are bosses in their home. They use the power of their God-given position to make decisions for their own interests and pleasures, rather than for the welfare of their family. Many have used their position as a guise to ignore the wisdom and insights of their wife.

Too many church leaders have used the power of leadership to control and manipulate the church, becoming masters instead of servants. Their own advancement and reputation, and being "right," are top priorities. They have the power to silence others, and they do!

Authoritarianism is when we use authority for our own fleshly purposes. When we exercise power over others for a selfish end, we capture and diminish the very ones God entrusted to us. His purpose was to set them free and enlarge their spiritual life through us.

What a terrible perversion of a sacred trust, and a defamation of God's name!

**Questions**

1. What kind of leadership does "katakurieuo" (being lord over) describe?

2. List three of the ways we gave in which a good pastor might find katakurieuo in his ministry.

   -
   -
   -

3. Complete this sentence. "We will always need to be alert to these temptations. In fact, the more successful we become in ministry the more - -

4. What is authority?

5. What is the fruit of properly exercised authority?
THOSE ENTRUSTED TO YOU (3b)

The word here is kleros (klay'-ros, 2819), and it appears 13 times in the N.T.

Kleros means a portion; a part; a lot. It might be used of a dice that is thrown to draw a winning number, or to designate the portions of land allotted to various persons to be cultivated.

Here's some examples of how kleros is used in the scriptures:
- Mt. 27:35 divided up his clothes by casting lots
- Acts 1:17 and shared in this ministry
  1:26 they drew lots
  8:21 you have no part nor share
  26:18 and a place among those who are sanctified
- Col. 1:12 to share in the inheritance of the saints

An owner of sheep will entrust portions of his flock to various shepherds. He trusts the shepherd to care for them, in the interests of the owner.

God has allotted portions of his flock, the church, to various elders. He has entrusted to them the responsibilities of overseeing and shepherding that portion. His expectation is that they will be responsible for the nurture and care of the flock and help it multiply.

Sobering Thoughts
According to Hebrews 13:17 the elders will give account to God for how they care for those allotted to them.

It is a sobering and awesome responsibility that may not be taken lightly. It is a very important position of spiritual service in the church. The life and vitality of the church is directly related to the life and vitality of the eldership.

The spiritual qualifications for elders given in I Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:6-9 must be taken seriously. Any significant variation from that will weaken the eldership, and the church. Too often the church treats these texts lightly, to our detriment. Only those who are truly qualified can fulfill the responsibility of eldership in a life-giving way.

For further thoughts see V2b "shepherd the flock of God", and V2c "which is among you".

BUT BEING EXAMPLES TO THE FLOCK (3c)

The word tupos (too'-pos, 5179) is used 16 times. It is generally translated "example," but has some interesting variations.
- Jn. 20:25 Unless I see the nail marks in his hands
- Rom. 5:14 Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come
- Titus 2:7 set them an example

The elder is to be an example, a pattern, model, print, or form for the church to follow.
Whether he likes it or not - - whether he wants to admit it or not - - by virtue of his position the elder is a pattern the church will follow. The standards he accepts for his own life will often be the standards they accept for themselves.

The church will probably be no more spiritually minded than her elders. The level of personal integrity that characterizes the eldership will likely characterize the church. Let's remember that in I Timothy 4:12 Paul tells Timothy "Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” Read Titus 2:7-8 too.

The elder ought to expect to see his reflection in those he leads - - especially those whom he shepherds in a close way. He will experience the joys and sorrows of a parent who sees both his strengths and weaknesses displayed in his child.

As in parenting, the spirit of the leader will be detected and followed - - not just the outward things he would like them to take as examples. They will follow what he is, not just what he says.

His ways of relating to people, handling difficulty, and managing finances for example, will speak to the church. So will his use of power, his interests in the things of the world, and his handling of his sexuality.

Elders must be an example of integrity, sincerity, servanthood and diligence. They should not tell the church to gather at a certain time and then be late themselves, or lay burdens upon the church which they are unwilling to carry themselves!

Some of the flock will have strong enough values of their own and will be able to sort out the strengths and weaknesses of a leader. But unfortunately, too many in the church do not. They are followers, having little sense of discernment. They don't have a strong sense of righteousness in their own hearts and will follow the righteousness, or lack of it, of their leader. Modern history holds many examples of this truth.

Read the book of II Chronicles and observe how God's people followed their leaders. When they had a godly king such as Josiah (chap. 34, 35), they followed God. When they had an ungodly king, they did badly. The people will follow their leader!

Courage evokes courage. A leader's love for righteousness will be reproduced in his followers. Honor for God's Word is contagious. On the other hand, superficial leaders will tend to produce superficial followers. Elders who practice deception or manipulation should expect to see other church leaders follow those patterns.

Many in the church are looking for a pattern or example. A tremendous responsibility rests upon the eldership to walk in such a way that those who follow them will truly walk in Christlikeness!

**So Who Can Be - -**

So who can be an elder? None of us is without fault. Each bears scars of his old nature. We all find ourselves humiliated at times by the weakness that lies within us.

Obviously a man may not be in violation of the I Timothy and Titus texts on this matter. These are to be taken seriously.

Still, God does not require human perfection of us. But He does require sincerity and humility.

- **Sincerity:**
  - in pressing toward Christlikeness in our personal walk
  - and in our service to others
- Humility:
  - to acknowledge our frailty and weakness
  - to receive counsel and correction from others
  - to confess our sins and demonstrate repentance
  - to submit to God's leading and equipping for service

**WHEN THE CHIEF SHEPHERD APPEARS**

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.  
I Peter 5:4

The work of eldership is not an easy task. There are many spiritual battles to be fought. By their lack of insight and wisdom well-meaning Christians often make the work more difficult for their leaders.

Fine Christians who simply lack discernment can misunderstand the actions of the eldership, and complicate things. Otherwise sincere believers who don't understand or respect the role of leadership yield to suspicion or imagination, and find themselves working against those who serve them as leaders.

Fulfilling the scriptural role of eldership requires much diligence and perseverance. The Holy Spirit is reminding us through Peter that there is an eternal reward for those who serve faithfully. These temporary difficulties will one day be replaced by an eternal "crown of glory" which will never fade away.

Yes, there are disappointments. Sometimes the fruit seems to fade away. We disciple one, and just when it seems he would be useful to us he goes to another church. Or we invest ourselves into a brother, and after a while discover that he has deceived us in some area.

Do we really believe Mark 8:34-38, that we have real "life" by laying down our life? Has Philippians 2:3-11 soaked into our hearts, that we will be honored by God as we take on the servant heart of Jesus? Do we stand with Paul in Philippians 3:7-14, where he counted all earthly things as nothing because of the worth of investing oneself for Christ and receiving "the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ."

Many church leaders who dedicate their life to kingdom service are strong people who could have done well in the business world or another profession. When finances are short, or even when we are disappointed in people, it's easy to think about that!

But then we remember I Peter 5:4, and we persevere! And we remember the truth of Matthew 6:19-21, that in serving God we are literally laying up treasure for ourselves in heaven. There we can enjoy it for a million billion years - - and that's just the beginning. The "good things of life" here are enjoyed by most for seventy years or less. What a bargain - - to invest oneself into God's kingdom - - even if we do without some things here! Read I Peter 1:3-9 also, and be encouraged!
Questions
1. What is God's purpose in entrusting portions of His flock to elders?

2. What is the meaning of the Greek word "tupos", translated "example" here?

3. In what ways does Paul call Timothy to be an example in I Timothy 4:12 (NIV)?

4. If God does not require perfection of leaders, what does He require?

5. What is the truth in Matthew 6:19-21 that might encourage us when things are difficult?
(a) Young men, in the same way (b) be submissive (c) to those who are older. (d) Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, (e) because "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble".  

I Peter 5:5

In a sense this verse is secondary to our study because most of it does not speak directly to the eldership. It is important in any discussion of this topic however, because it speaks to some of the authority issues related to leadership and body life.

Since we will not spend a lot of time on each phrase we'll structure the breakdown of this verse differently than the previous four.

(a) YOUNG MEN, IN THE SAME WAY
The Greek word for younger is neoteros (neh-o-ter-os, 3501), which is used 11 times in the N.T. It means, new; youthful; young. Here are some examples:
- Mk. 2:22 no one pours new wine into old wineskins
- Lk. 15:13 the younger son got together all he had
- I Cor. 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may have a new batch
- Col. 3:10 and have put on the new self which is being renewed

In most or all cases, neoteros is used to speak of one person or thing being new/younger relative to another. It is just the opposite of the meaning of the word "elder." Certainly in our text Peter is speaking to those who are younger of age and/ or spiritual maturity.

As stated earlier in this study, there is a tendency today to place greater value on the vitality and zeal of youthfulness than in the wisdom of years. Here younger persons (younger in years of age, and/or in spiritual maturity) are called to respect the benefit of years and spiritual maturity.

Certainly our youth should have a voice in the life of the church. Often their creativity and zeal will bless the body. But this voice must be given in humility, and it must stand the test of the wisdom of years. I cringe when I see youth given too much voice in church circles, although sometimes it is a refreshing relief from visionless and courageless leaders.

Many American churches allow their youth to fully plan and carry out youth activities with no oversight from church leadership. There are several possible benefits to having the vision and plans of the youth processed with the eldership. They include:
- Helping the youth move in harmony with the vision and direction of the church
- Help safeguard against unwise programs
- Help keep balance in program
- Establishing patterns of respect toward elders

(b) BE SUBMISIVE
This is certainly not one of the more popular themes in scripture, but it's an important one.

"Submit" here is hupotasso (hoop-o-as'-so, 5293), and it appears 40-times. It means to subordinate; to obey; put under; or be subject to. The younger/newer Christians are to submit themselves to the elders.

Application of this principle can be a bit touchy. Certainly it addresses the matter of our walk together in the church as we discussed in a previous section. The eldership has authority there.
But it's more than that. Wisdom and humility would dictate that younger persons (age wise, and/or spiritually) seek counsel from their elders (formal and informal elders), and give themselves to that counsel in various areas of their life and service. This would save themselves and others much heartache. The authority of the eldership is not as broad here as in matters of body life.

There is something to the wisdom of elders! Sometimes younger people simply need to trust the counsel of their elders, even when it doesn't make sense to them! They may need to "take up their cross," to be able to do that!

(c) TO THOSE WHO ARE OLDER
We have the word presbuteros (4245) here (as is verse 1), which means the more spiritually mature among us. It may be speaking of the elders who lead the church, or the older men in the body.

Many young people, even young leaders, would be surprised by how much wisdom and insight they could receive from the older people around them, even those who are not in positions of leadership!

(d) CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY TOWARD ONE ANOTHER
Here Peter is moving away from calling only a certain part of the church to submissiveness. While there are appointed leaders who have responsibility and authority, it's not a matter of masters and servants. There is still a measure of accountability between all members of the body.

There are several possible misunderstandings on this matter. One is that this call to mutual submission forbids the exercise of authority in the body. Let's try to correctly understand that!

This phrase does not diminish the responsibility/authority of the leaders as it relates to the life of the body. It does mean that those leaders also need to walk in humility, and keep their hearts open to hear God through those they serve. There is no place among God's people for one who thinks that because of his leadership position, he is above hearing God through even the youngest of the flock.

Much disorder has also been brought to the church through a similar misinterpretation of Ephesians 5:21 and on, and Galatians 3:28. And the "priesthood of believers" concept in I Peter 2:5-11 seems to some to violate the principles of positional authority in the church, but it does not.

We need to understand that the spirit of humility and submissiveness that is addressed in this verse militates against the self-rule and self-interest of the flesh. We may need to wrestle with the flesh, taking up our cross and saying "no" to its voice. But we must learn to do this if we want an orderly, healthy church.

The literal rendering of "clothe yourselves" is "gird ye on". It suggests initiative and responsibility on our part to see that we walk in humility toward one another. This speaks to all, including the eldership.

We have the word tapeinophrosune (tap-i-nof-ros-o'-nay, 5012) here, and six other places. (Go ahead - - pronounce it!) This speaks of humility or lowliness of mind.

This humility of mind is a major ingredient for healthy congregational life. It shapes how we respond to the advancement of others in the church, how we relate to the broken people God brings to us, and much of our life as a church.

It also shapes the communication process in the church. This humility of mind means that we bring our insights/opinions/feelings and convictions with the awareness that those of our brother or sister might be more accurate or better than our own. Ideas presented in this spirit will be offered for the discernment of others. They may be accepted or rejected without vested interest.
We might have felt deeply about something, but when we shared it with others they didn't agree with it. Humility of mind will allow us to hear another, and will help protect us from the blind defensive-ness that shapes so many of our exchanges of ideas.

This humility of mind must also shape the way the eldership leads. Wisdom and humility dictate that they hear the church well on many matters before a decision is made.

Looking back they might see that they did not make the best decision in a certain case, or carry it out in the best way. They have limited knowledge, and it's still possible for them to move from self-interest. They are not perfect! This lowliness of mind will allow them to come back to the church to correct things as needed.

But this humility of mind must also shape the way the church follows! Often the church is (and must be) ignorant of certain details upon which leadership decisions are made. Some members are short-sighted and don't understand a decision for that reason. Others lack faith and vision. And of course self-interest can shape the church's response to leadership, too! Tapeinophrosune is indispensable in the life of the church!

Philippians 2:1-9 gives some important instruction on this matter. This lowliness of mind deals with selfish ambition and conceit, and helps us esteem others better than ourselves. It also helps us look out for the interests of others. That spirit would do a lot to strengthen many of our churches!

(f) BECAUSE "GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE".

God stands against the huperephanos ( hoop-er-ay'-fan-os, 5244). Huper (5228) means to be over; above; beyond; superior to; or more than. Phaino (5316) means, to appear; seem; be seen; or think.

The point is clear - God opposes those who think they are better than others. Certainly that relates to the exchange of ideas we discussed in the last section, and it speaks to life in general. We can be sure it applies to the whole body, including its eldership.

Sometimes elders are tempted to think that because of their position, their ideas are always superior. This arrogance can lead to an inability to receive wisdom from the body.

This is a very subtle thing, because men in the eldership ought to have wisdom, insight, and discernment beyond that of many in the body. It's part of their gifting to the body. But if this leads to arrogance, which produces insensitivity toward others, it will result in trouble.

The other side of the coin is that if we walk in humility, God releases measures of grace (benefit/favor/joy/pleasure) upon us. Our own life, and the life of the church, is enriched.

What a fitting conclusion to a text on eldership! In this office lies the power to build up or diminish the church, depending on the spirit in which it is given and received. May God help each of us to walk in humility, and to know the pouring out of His grace upon us personally and in our walk together.
Questions
1. What is the meaning of the Greek word "neoteros - younger"?

2. What is the meaning of the Greek word "hupotasso - submit"?

3. What is the meaning of the Greek word "tapeinophrosune - humility"?

4. What is the meaning of the Greek word "huperephanos - proud"?
CONCLUSION

Nothing in life holds greater potential for both joy and pain than walking as a servant-leader among God's people!

There are joys beyond description in seeing them receive His Word, with the resultant "life!" The indescribable blessing of studying and delivering the Word can only be known to those who have that privilege.

Walking with God's people through times of tragedy and hardship is an honor. Seeing them reach out to Him - - and watching Him release His grace upon them - - is more than worth the pain one finds in this service.

And there is pain! Incredible pain. There is that which comes when believers refuse the Word, or godly counsel, and insist of going their own way. And the pain of seeing the church torn from within by jealousy, striving and contention. It can bring even a strong man to tears and tempt him to discouragement.

If he is at all candid, there is also an intense pain as a leader sees his own weaknesses play into his service. He needs to feel that. It gives him opportunity to deal with them and to advance in his own spiritual pilgrimage.

There is none among God's people who is more responsible to walk in Godliness. Various scriptures present the need for a leader to be an example, and James 3:1 offers a very sober word.

There's nothing a leader needs more than to deepen his own walk with God. But often when the pressure is on, and when we most need to be close to Him, we allow ourselves to be drawn into busyness. What a contradiction of wisdom!

A leader needs to give careful attention to his family. If he wins the world to Christ but fails to win his own family, he has not succeeded in life's highest calling. His family - - the care of his wife and children - - is his first line of responsibility. Many leaders overlook this and wonder why the blessing of God is not more pronounced on their "ministry."

Our text, I Peter 5:1-5, combines a look at the heart of a leader; his responsibilities; and leadership structure. The emphasis is on the first two. If we follow that pattern in our desire to be successful leaders, we will most certainly succeed!

Unfortunately, much of the focus of leadership training today is on technique and structure. That is surely to our detriment! If we look at the life of Jesus it's not hard to see that the success of His ministry emerged from His godly heart and His walk with the Father. If we were to take that truth seriously, it would shape our life and ministry and assure our success more than any fifty books on seminary shelves!

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