

A Loving Eldership

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[0 : 00] I can't believe it, but if you can believe it, we're in 1 Peter chapter 5. It got here quick on me. I never lost hope that if the Lord gave me breath for life, we'd eventually get to the end of this book, and it's coming.

It's always kind of sad, but then we're joyful because we realize that we have, what, 65 others. To deal with still, right? The title of my message for this morning is A Loving Eldership in 1 Peter chapter 5.

A Loving Eldership. Before we go to 1 Peter 5 and read the passage for this morning, I want to take you to John chapter 21 and set the tone for what Peter's going to tell us.

So may I invite you to turn to John 21. You can just hold your finger there or your marker there in 1 Peter 5.

And we'll begin reading in verse, let's see, let's pick it up in verse 15.

[1 : 16] So when they had finished breakfast, that is, Jesus and the disciples, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

And Peter replied to Jesus, he said, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And then Peter replied to Jesus again, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said to him, shepherd my sheep. He said to him then a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Well, Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And then Peter said to Jesus, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you.

And Jesus said to him, tend my sheep. Well, this is maybe similar to Peter's denials of Jesus in terms of this scene is one of the more familiar to us from Peter's relationship with the Lord.

[2 : 31] Peter, in this context, he's still suffering from the humiliating and crushing personal defeat that he experienced with those three denials of the Lord Jesus.

And we will remember that one of the Gospels account that as he denied Jesus the third time and the cock crowed, Jesus looked directly into Peter's eyes.

They they locked eyes together because Jesus had told Peter you would do this. And Peter said, I'll never deny you. I'll never deny you. I'll die with you. This was crushing for him as a servant of Jesus.

He felt this very, very deeply. But here Jesus singles out Peter to restore him. That's what this passage really is. This is the tenderness of Jesus restoring this broken man in service.

Jesus to Christ. I want you to notice, if you would, church family, in verse 15, in verse 15, Jesus charges Peter with tend my lambs.

[3 : 40] The word tend is bosque, bosque. And it literally means to feed or to provide food for. Then in verse 16, we're just going to move through this quickly to get to our passage in Peter.

Then in verse 16, Jesus says, shepherd my sheep. He says that in response to Peter saying, I love you. Well, if you love me and I know you do shepherd my sheep and shepherd is the word poimaine.

Poimaine. It means to herd or to guide. And it carries the sense of watching over. Watching over. So you get the pastoral picture of a shepherd kind of standing up on a prominent place with his shepherd's staff.

And he has keen eyes. And he is watching over the sheep as they're down in the pasture, maybe perhaps the valley of green grass. And they're feeding.

And he is in a constant state of vigilance. He's not just looking at the sheep. He's looking all around the boundaries where the sheep are, making sure, guarding, having guided them to that place.

[4 : 58] That's the idea of poimaine. Poimaine then is the wider and more general term for the work that is shepherding.

And bosque is the narrower, more specific term for the care Jesus is charging Peter with. So look at this graphic. Poimaine, shepherding, covers the details.

Involved with oversight or watch care. And bosque feeding refers more specifically to providing nourishment to the sheep.

Now, interestingly, interestingly, in verse 17, verse 17, Jesus returns to bosque with his final charge to Peter.

Tend or feed my sheep. In other words, watch over my sheep and bring them to good pasture.

Now, these three charges, these three charges have the sense of God's under shepherds carefully watching over the welfare of God's people by feeding them with the good food God has provided.

[6 : 17] So the primary emphasis that Jesus is making in this three charge account with Peter. Peter, if you love me, show that love for me by primarily giving yourself to feeding my sheep.

And that would that would include then this overarching idea of feeding being part of the total watch care or over watch that shepherds provide for the sheep.

So it would involve protecting them as well. Now, let's turn back, if we could, to first Peter, chapter five and read these first few verses together.

And I think you'll see instantly the connection. Peter says in chapter five, verse one. Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

[7 : 46] And when the chief shepherd appears, this is why we are under shepherds. We serve the chief shepherd. When the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ, appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory, the unfading crown of glory.

Now, folks, as Peter was once charged, he now charges his fellow pastors to shepherd the flock. Of God.

Shepherd the flock of God. Exercising oversight. That's Peter's primary command in this passage. Everything else is subordinate to that command.

With it, he gives us three foundational elements of Christ exalting eldership among God's people. Is this all that the Bible has to say about pastoring?

Certainly not. This is Peter's emphasis, given the context of suffering that he's been speaking about. And we're going to make that connection with suffering here in just a moment.

[8 : 54] So that's what we're dealing with. These three charges come as a result of Peter's teaching about the suffering and persecution, the unjust way that the people of God are being treated because they're trying to be faithful to Jesus.

Now, you elders, take note of that. And let me charge you in light of that. So following your role, given the historical reality that these people are in now is his original readers terms of their suffering.

Three foundational elements of this. The first then that will outline for you is this one. Elders relationship to shepherding. Their relationship to shepherding.

I want to explain that. If you look at verse one again. Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

Now, why does he say all of that before he gives this charge to the pastors of these local churches where this letter is being circulated? Why does he do that? Well, the calling, the calling of these men to pastoral ministry as elders connects them, connects them with those who've cared for God's people in the past.

[10 : 20] Let me say it this way and see if it helps make the connection a little more clear. It's as if as if Peter is asking these pastors, do you love Jesus?

You know that I love Jesus, Peter. Well, then shepherd the flock exercising oversight.

Jeff. Do you love Jesus? I I do. I do love Jesus. Shepherd the flock of God exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily.

Jeff, do you love Jesus? You know that I love you. You see, it's as if Peter is bringing that same heart, that same challenge, that same charge, that same spirit over into the context of what he now tells these pastors as as these people are suffering.

And he knows we'll go on suffering at that. The suffering will intensify. Did Jesus know what the disciples were going to encounter as Jesus confronted Peter and asked, do you love me?

[11 : 33] Then shepherd. He absolutely knew he had told them that when he was crucified, the sheep would be scattered because the shepherds would scatter. Now, there's nothing worse than God's people being without a shepherd.

And I'm talking about the under shepherds, the human under shepherds that serve under the lordship of Jesus Christ as they serve God's people. I think this is the spirit and tone of what verse one is all about.

Another way that I could say this would be there is a biblical tradition. Now, this is a good thing. There is a biblical tradition, a biblical history of pastoral care.

We share together as pastors, as elders. We come in a long line of faithful men who've been called out by God to shepherd God's people sacrificially.

So even even in his unique position as an apostle, which sets Peter way apart from me or from Greg or for any other human servants of the Lord beyond the apostles.

[12 : 41] Even though Peter was unique in that position as an apostle, he can refer to himself as sharing in his fellowship of eldership with these men.

That's the key, I think. This fellowship of eldership in this wonderful, self-effacing, self-sacrificing tradition of men being called out by God to lay their lives down for God's people.

Elders have to know how to say no to themselves first and foremost. We have to know how to say no to many things so that we remain free to say yes to the highest things.

We're just like you. We face the same distractions that you do. Maybe intensified a little bit more only because we've got that target painted on our backs that says if we can take the shepherds out, what happens to the people?

That's very real. This is again, beloved, why Greg and I say to you over and over again and plead with you from our hearts. The greatest ministry you can have for us is to pray for us.

[13 : 56] Pray for your pastors. Pray for your pastors. Do ministry for your pastors by praying for us regularly and faithfully throughout the week. So we have this fellowship of eldership.

Let's dive into it just a little more before we go to the point number two because point two carries pretty much the heart of the passage. We'll spend more time there. But look at the word therefore. I don't know how your Bible begins. The New American Standard that I preach from begins therefore. There's your connecting word to the previous context. It helps us understand that everything that Peter is telling these elders at this time is connected to the previous context of suffering.

And all that he's been saying about suffering faithfully in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, Peter's instruction has repeatedly emphasized that sharing in Christ's suffering or suffering unjustly for doing what is right, for doing God's will is very, very hard to endure.

Suffering unjustly is a tough, tough thing for God's people. Being faithful to Jesus, remaining faithful to Jesus, staying in an attitude of persevering in persecution is hard.

[15 : 18] And Peter turns to how critically important pastors are to God's people as they endure sharing in the sufferings of Jesus together.

So pastor and people come together to move through their lives, dealing with the issues of our culture, whatever's going on, whatever the fad is at the time right now.

It's I'm not a man. I'm not a woman. I'm an it. And we need to help people understand the ludicrous nature of that and that God has a much, much higher calling for them as male and female.

Now, I'm not going to get off on that. I could. But we understand as Christians, God's teaching in Scripture, at least I hope we do, about what it means to be male and female.

And what a wonderful blessing that is that God's given us. This two sex reality for being male and female and all of the wonderful, beautiful things that come out of that.

[16 : 22] As we suffer through the culture together, pastor and people come together to honor the Lord and encourage one another to stay faithful to Jesus. While maintaining a spirit of joy and humility and focus about their lives.

In fact, I can take you and remind you, if you were here for last week, I believe it was we were in chapter four. We looked at verses 12 through 19.

Well, and here was the basic outline for 12 through 19. Peter is saying this to them. You'll remember, expect God to use suffering to test and refine you.

Don't be surprised. Expect it. Suffering is going to come. It's going to be unjust. And God's going to use it and design it for your life to refine you and purify you in your faith.

That's what it says. He also said rejoice. Rejoice in knowing that suffering for Jesus means you are blessed with God's spirit and God's glory on your life.

[17 : 26] In other words, the Holy Spirit lives in you and you have the great privilege of reflecting the character of God back to the world to glorify God, to reflect him. As a Christian, that's your honor and privilege.

So don't let unjust suffering disgrace you or shame you or put you down in the mully grubs. Don't do anything like that. Glorify God as a Christian.

And finally, as you suffer for doing God's will, entrust your life to him as the beloved of your faithful creator. That was last week.

And we spent some time fleshing that out. Now, this suffering that we're talking about will take a toll on you and your fellow Christians.

In other words, the church, Grace Church, if we're living faithfully to Christ, folks, we will feel and reel from this reality.

[18 : 30] So Peter comes along and says, pastors, pastor well. Pastor well. Peter wants us all to be well sobered then by God's wise design for pastors.

You need to know this. Number one, because it's in God's word. Number two, because you need to be able to understand the role and reality of pastors as they shepherd.

You need to better understand your role as sheep, our role as shepherds, and then understand that we are called to come alongside of you as a sheep.

You bet I bet. It's just when I function, when I bet it's just looks a little different than you. But I'm bang with you. And I'm under the same threat of the wolves as you are.

Right. My family's under the same threat. I live in the same places. I go to the same green pasture to eat. This is a together thing.

[19 : 36] So we need to understand this relationship that we operate in together as pastor and people. Pastors, I should say, because it's always plural.

So he goes next to this. He says, I exhort the elders among you. Therefore, that was all. Therefore, I exhort the elders among you.

Peter appeals to notice plural, the elders, the elders. Now, here's here's what we need to know about this. You see, you may this may be the first church that you've ever been a part of where the pastors are known as elders.

You hear people throw that term around our elders, our elders. Oh, what does that mean? I've never I've always heard them called pastors before or maybe in other faiths, bitch bishops, maybe less overseers.

Those terms are basically synonymous. They they each hold a little bit of a nuance that reflects some of the role, the function of pastoring. But they all mean about the same thing.

[20 : 40] So you could use any of those. All right. So look at this with me. Elders. Elders is presbyterous. Presbyterous.

It's the plural, the plural form of the noun presbyterous. That's the singular. So elder refers to older men.

Plural, always plural, a plurality of elders. When we say we operate by a plurality of elders, we have more than one. So this is not a CEO hierarchy.

Greg and I are not one here and then one down here. Greg and I operate on a parallel level to elder, to pastor, to shepherd as equals in our church family.

We are elders. Plural. It emphasizes the spiritual wisdom and maturity and credibility in life that these men carry.

[21 : 43] So an elder is it denotes exactly kind of what you'd think. An older guy doesn't have to have gray hair and a gray beard. But an older guy who's lived some life and has demonstrated wisdom.

Applying God's word in life. Peter uses it to refer to the spiritual leaders then. Spiritual leadership among God's people who, like Peter, are called and charged with caring for, notice, God's flock. These men will also share in the glory that is to be revealed with Peter. They have that in common. So Peter's identifying with these men and their responsibilities for shepherding. I'm a fellow elder like you. These are the same kinds of things I'm concerned with and that I deal with. Even as an apostle, which again sets him a bit apart. He's also speaking authoritatively here as God's apostle. It's brought out in the uniqueness of Peter. Personally witnessing the sufferings of Christ.

[22 : 58] Do you see that in the text? I am your fellow elder, he says. I want to exhort, to encourage, to urge you. So he hasn't received, put out the command yet.

That's about to come. But he's also a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Now that's something that Greg and I can't say. It's one of the reasons we are not apostles.

There are no apostles today. We're not apostles. We didn't witness Jesus' resurrection. We didn't witness Jesus' suffering. We didn't walk with Jesus and get personally taught by Jesus.

Those are a few of the characteristics of apostles. But Peter did. He witnessed the sufferings of Jesus with his own eyes. And here's a unique twist on what Peter witnessed.

Listen to this. Peter knows what it's like to suffer with Jesus, for Jesus, and against Jesus. Isn't that something?

[23 : 57] Now this is a man being restored to service for Christ. And he knows what it's like to actually speak against the Lord.

So given the difficulties then, the difficulties that Peter would have been personally familiar with, can you imagine the weight that he carried when he failed the Lord in that way?

He knows what it's like to suffer under persecution and cave. His knees didn't just bend. That man was taken to the ground.

He was taken to the mat and pinned. Three denials right in front of Jesus himself. He understands. I really believe that you need to get in touch with Peter's heart here.

This is a man just dripping with desire for these men to understand the soberness, the seriousness of their charge, to shepherd God's sheep at whatever cost.

[25 : 00] So given the difficulties of persevering faithfully through unjust suffering on behalf of Jesus, Peter then follows on Jesus' commands, and he, Peter, charges these pastors to shepherd the flock of God among you.

There's the charge. Boom. It comes right out. So here's the second one. Their role in shepherding. An elder's role in shepherding.

Verses 2 and 3. Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily. That is, according to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Here's the heart of the passage. At least these four verses. Once again, we see this related word. We see shepherd. Shepherd. It's poiminate.

Poiminate. Shepherd. Ten. Guide. It carries the sense of exercising pastoral watch care. We need to understand pastoral, pastoral, the whole idea of being a pastor comes from the idea of providing pasture.

[26 : 22] So a pastor provides pasture, and it has everything to do with what it means to shepherd. Pastoring is about shepherding, herding, guiding, guiding, feeding, protecting, protecting, watching over.

So Peter was called to show his love for Jesus by shepherding Jesus's people. So Peter's now commanding elders, shepherd, shepherd, and it's based on their love for Jesus.

Shepherd out of love for Christ. Let me say it this way for you. Let me say it this way for you.

Jesus's love makes us shepherds, and our love for Jesus makes us shepherd.

shepherd. shepherd, gentlemen.

Now we've already seen from John 21 that shepherding is mainly about tending or feeding the sheep. Feeding the sheep. Now I want to take you to another place and fill this in just a little bit more before we move to these characteristics that he outlines.

[28 : 03] Hold your finger here and go to Mark chapter 6 if you would. Mark 6. And I'll let you in on a little bit of what we studied in the men's fellowship yesterday morning.

We'll be very quick here. Mark 6 beginning in verse 30. The apostles gathered together with Jesus, and they reported to him all that they had done and taught.

Now let me just tell you for the sake of time that if you went back over into verse 7 of chapter 6 and read down through that, you would see that this is when Jesus commissioned the disciples to go out in pairs and preach and teach and heal and cast out demons.

And so they've been doing that for some time now. Now they've reconvened. They've come back as a group. They're with Jesus, and they're going to give a report of all that they've said and done to Christ.

So this is a sweet time. Jesus is tenderly listening to them. He's very focused. So they're reporting everything that's been going on.

[29 : 18] Verse 31. And then Jesus said to the disciples, Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while. For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

So Jesus recognized these men are exhausted. This has been an exhausting time for them to go out and do this. So they went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. Or did they?

Verse 33. The people saw them going, and many recognized them, and ran there together on foot from all the cities and got there ahead of them. So you see the picture of the disciples with Jesus in the boat, and they're rowing across to another part of the lake, and the people discern where they're going to make shore.

And so they start running around the edges of the lake up to that point, and they converge, perhaps thousands and thousands of them, so that when they finally land the boat, the people are there waiting for them, so much for their secluded place, right?

But this didn't surprise Jesus. This was all orchestrated by our Lord. Look at verse 34. When Jesus went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he felt compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

[30 : 33] I told the men yesterday, this is Jesus' highest and most penetrating sense of discernment about what is most lacking or most wrong or most threatening with these people's lives at this point.

He didn't look at them and say, oh, bless their hearts, they must be starved to death, or they must be parched, or they must be exhausted, or bless their hearts, there's so many of them that are sick. Now, he saw all that, and he recognized all that, but what did he say? They're like sheep without a shepherd. That's their greatest need. That's the greatest threat that comes against them right now.

And Jesus steps in to do something about it. You know the rest of the story, most of you, that Jesus will eventually feed them physical food. But notice the first thing that Jesus does, out of this heart of compassion, seeing that they're like sheep without a shepherd, what does he do?

He steps into the role of shepherd, and look at verse 34, he began to teach them many things. What did he do? He fed them spiritually before he fed them physically.

[31 : 48] You know, when you hear the stories that we tell the kids in the Sunday school time for the children, it's always Jesus feeds the 5,000, and it's the miracle of him feeding, and it's truly astounding.

And it says so much about our Lord. But we skip over this little bitty part at the end of verse 34. He began to teach them many things. And that went on for a while that afternoon.

Then it got late, it says. And as it started to get late and get dark, the disciples came and said, hey, we need to disperse these people so they can find some food. And Jesus looked at him and he said, you feed them.

You feed them. Where are we going to get the money to feed these people? Where are we going to get the money? And I told the men yesterday, they forgot who they were talking to.

Didn't they? Just for a minute, they forgot. This is the Lord of glory. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. We do that. Do we whine? Where am I going to get it?

[32 : 47] Where am I going to? How am I going to? I don't know what we sound like to Jesus. I mean, that's what you sound like to me.

That's what I'm told I sound like. But you know, Jesus, he felt compassion. He felt compassion. That's the heart of our Lord, folks.

That's the love and the grace of Jesus. And so he began to teach them. All right. I just wanted to make the point while we were there in that text that we've already seen from John 21.

Now we've seen shepherding is mainly about tending or feeding the sheep. This is why when the situation arose among the Jews about the widows that weren't being cared for, being neglected unintentionally, they selected these men that might have been the forerunners of deacons, and they asked these men to help tend to this issue of physically making sure the food distribution was done well for these widows so that the apostles would not be pulled away from the word of God and prayer.

The word of God and prayer, because there is this feeding element that covers all of the different items and aspects of shepherding. As we teach and preach the word of God, we are fulfilling in the highest way our calling as shepherds.

[34 : 17] Because by teaching you sound doctrine, we help protect you. We offer watch care over our entire flock. We give you what you need to be herded.

That is to be brought together in a common mind and common heart. We call that unity. Sound doctrine brings you into unity. No truth, no unity. When you are unified and gathered together around sound doctrine and the lordship of Jesus as the high shepherd, you are far less likely to fall prey to the predators that want to come and hunt you down.

We don't have people out on the fringes sitting on the fences. We don't allow that here at Grace. You come to Grace, you become part of Grace, we get you off the fence, we get you into the herd. We put you in here bad with us. Doing with us, serving with us. If we are going to smell like sheep, we are all going to smell like sheep together. It is that kind of spirit.

We do not want anybody out there being made vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. That is why we are a flock. Now notice we are the flock of God. You are not my flock.

[35 : 28] You are not Greg's flock. You are God's flock. So following Jesus' example, his under-shepherds fulfill their pastoral role primarily by teaching God's flock, God's will from Scripture.

God's people need the bread of life to flourish. Jesus said, I am the bread of life. We need his person.

We need his priorities. We need his plan. We need his procedures. We need to do God's business God's way. That's why we turn to the Bible. That's why we preach it and pray it and live it and hold each other accountable to it.

I know people say, you're Bible worshipers. Well, I think that we're so, so keen.

We have such a high value of Scripture that it's hard for people looking in to see the difference between how much we love Scripture and how much we love its author.

[36 : 32] That's okay. That's okay. As he wrote it. And we show him our love by obeying it. What did Jesus say? If you love me, you will obey me.

Obey me. Something to think about. So the Bible is God's good pasture for spiritual nourishment so that feeding God's people through preaching and teaching is the paramount work that Greg and I do as faithful shepherds.

Now, who do we feed? Who do we teach? It's obvious, isn't it? It's the flock. It's the flock. Now, that's a tender description. It's just like the tender description that Peter used back in verse.

Let me get back to 1 Peter 5. If you look over in verse 4 or chapter 4, verse 12. Beloved. This word flock is a tender.

It's not derogatory. It's not meant to, you know, sheep bite, sheep stink, and all that's whatever. That's not what Peter's doing here. Flock is very tender.

[37 : 41] Very sweet. Just like beloved. Those who are cherished by God. It's wonderful. Elders are served well to remember that the people in their care are the flock of God.

You belong to God. You are God's precious treasure bought with His Son's blood. Wow. Now, I'll tell you, I don't think there's a man alive who would receive the call of God on their life to pastor who would run up to the front and say, Yes!

Finally! I've been waiting. Man! I was starting to wonder if you didn't recognize it. You know, you... It's a good choice. No!

Most men, in fact, every man that I've ever known who has been a faithful pastor and guys now that have been my peers for decades, we're all starting to look like this.

We're all starting to look wrinkled and gray. Those men that I talked to, when they were dealing with the call of God on their life, it tore them up.

[38 : 58] They really... Because there was this sober knowledge, God is calling me to minister His truth to His people, which means I've got to get past me.

Boy, that's really... That got me. Most of you who've been here a while know my story. I joined the military to escape. I was a coward. My calling scared me to death.

So I surrendered. I went to school. I did my diligence. And then when I graduated and it was time for me to step up and go to a church or whatever I was supposed to do, go to seminary, I was like, mm-mm. I'm going in the military and showing God that I'm a killer.

And, of course, asked me, how'd that end for you? Not well. Not well. So what did I do?

I came across this Lord full of compassion who restored me and loved me and graced me.

[40 : 06] And I thought, wow, if you would do that for me and you still want me after all that nonsense, you would trust the most treasured possession on the earth.

You trust me with that? And that's how he and I pastor. We don't do it because we think we deserve it. We do it because we love Jesus. And pastoring is a way that we show love to you, to him.

That's just what it is. And when you talk to guys, if it's really any more than that, they're not in it for the right reasons. To shepherd the flock of God among you.

This gets even more beautiful. That stresses an elder's focus on those in his immediate sphere.

Now, this is important. The emphasis here is that of caring well for that group.

Do you see that in the text? Shepherd the flock of God among you. That's there for a reason, just like all the rest of it. This speaks to the mutual relationship of pastors and people that I've been alluding to here.

[41 : 18] Greg and I are pastoring and shepherding you. We don't shepherd this church down that way or those churches over there. We're not being held accountable for what other churches are doing in this town.

But we are held accountable for what happens here in our shepherding among you. Now, look, this is one of the reasons that when he and I preach or teach, we preach and teach with you in mind.

We craft these messages with you in mind because we know you. Now, please don't ever let Satan tempt you to think you're targeted. If we're up here preaching and teaching and something that we share or we give out or whatever hits you between the eyes and you think, oh, he's up there talking to me.

Okay. Get over it. Because this is the truth. And this is God using us as instruments to speak to your heart.

And if you need to be rebuked, get rebuked and get past it and serve the Lord and don't make it about you. And if you ever see us falling short and making it about us, it's okay for you to come and rebuke us.

[42 : 37] We're not above that. Just be kind. It's okay to come and smile and put your arm around me and put me in a headlock and noogie me and say, you need to get over you.

And then walk with me and help me. Help me become a better pastor. Help Greg. This is, we're in this together. So we craft our messages with you in mind.

If I was to preach this same message at another church that I have in my mind right now, I might tweak some of this. Not in the essence of its truth. Not in the same, I'd use the same points probably.

But I might illustrate it a little differently and certainly I wouldn't be stopping to do what I'm doing now. Because they're not my congregation. You are. You are.

I've been charged to shepherd you and you belong to the Lord. I think you see what I mean. In return, as Greg and I shepherd you, in return, you are to know and relate to us as your pastors.

[43 : 46] Now, before I turn to a passage, I just want to give you a quick caveat. Please hear my heart in this. There are so many wonderful pastors out there and pastor teachers out there.

Oh my goodness. And today, we are so easily connected with those other pastors and their teaching ministries so that so and so said this and I read this and I did this, but I want to caution you, beloved.

We are your pastors. Maybe we're not as gifted as so and so. Maybe we don't say it as well as such and such a preacher or such and but if God's brought you here, he's made us your pastors.

Let us pastor you. Let us be your pastors. Please. Don't compare us to these other people. It's not fair. Just like it's not fair for us to compare you to a church down the road that's been going for 25 years and the guy's been there for 23 of them and you know, they're going to look different.

We need to be together in who we are. We're your pastors. So get to know us as your pastors and let us be your pastors. And if we don't do it like so and so, that's okay.

[45 : 03] That's all right. Let me show you in scripture where I'm getting this. First Thessalonians five. I'm just going to these places to help you connect a few dots.

We do that from time to time. I try to limit doing this but because I don't want to pull you off the point. Hopefully you'll see the relationship here.

The idea here is that as we pastor you, pastor the people among you, your group, that's a reciprocal relationship. So first Thessalonians five, 12, but we request of you brothers that you appreciate.

You may have a slightly different translation there that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.

That's your elders, your pastors, pastors, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

[46 : 09] You can't fulfill live in peace with one another without knowing each other. So to appreciate us and to highly esteem us in love, you got to know us. That's you making an initiatory effort to know your pastors.

It's incumbent on you to get to know us. Not to wait on us to make sure, you know, look at all of you and then I'll bring him up here and there's two.

Two and how many? Right? Again, it's just the beauty of scripture telling us this is a mutual effort that we've been put together to serve Christ, not ourselves, not even ourselves as a unit, but Christ.

Now, obviously, verses two through three form the heart of Peter's instruction to elders. They outline these verses outline Peter's focus on several do's and don'ts.

Now, he could say more, but he zeroes in on these characteristics and the first of these do's and don'ts brings out the quality and depth of the pastoral relationship I've been describing.

[47 : 20] Shepherding involves, as he says, exercising oversight. That's the first thing that he begins to talk about when he tells us with the charge, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight.

That's what he wants us to do. It highlights another function of eldering. Here's the word. Oversight. Episcopoeo.

It means to look upon or to take care. These are nuanced definitions. How do you know which one? The context. To look upon, to take care, to see to something, to see it through, to see it done.

The idea in this context then is to, here's where it comes in, to look over. Not to look past, to look over. Or we would say to provide watch care, to watch over, to oversee, or to have oversight.

That's the nuance that the grammar brings out in this context. Elders have the responsibility of providing oversight.

[48 : 38] That's the first thing he says we need to provide in the way of our shepherding guidance. Exercise and oversight. Now, this is where the ruling aspect, the ruling aspect of eldership is emphasized.

Don't let me lose you here. Stay with me. The ruling aspect of eldership. But it comes with some vital boundaries. And the first boundary that we see for elders is not under compulsion.

Don't exercise this oversight, this rule, under compulsion. That makes men bitter. You go into your eldership with a chip on your shoulder, and it's not against God's people, it's against God.

Because you feel like you're being coerced into this thing you don't want to do. No, I got to do it. I'm compelled to do it. If I don't do it, I get in trouble. That kind of an attitude, that won't wash.

So exercising watch care for God's people isn't from being forced to do something we don't want to do. We don't do it under a strong arm of constraint.

[49 : 50] So how do we do it? What does he say? Look at the next part. Exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily. It's just so interesting to me why he has to say this.

Obviously, there were some issues that he knew about going on in some of these churches this letter is being given to. Why do we need to do it voluntarily? Well, we do it because we love the Lord Jesus.

And we love most what he loves most. What does he love most? He loves you and he loves his word. So diligence, discipline, dedication, they all come together in how an elder provides oversight so that his life reflects the priorities of his watch care done for Jesus sake.

That done for Jesus sake is so critical in the heart of an elder because it keeps him from being dictatorial. It keeps him from making it about him. He is forever devoted to the Lord Jesus, loving

the Lord Jesus, and as he shepherds, his shepherding becomes an expression of that love and devotion to Christ.

Isn't that the way you're called to serve? Is that any different from how you're called to serve each other in Christ? Christ? Aren't you supposed to serve each other sacrificially out of love for Christ? [51 : 12] What's your greatest and highest motivation? Loving Jesus. That's why I do it. That's why I join grace. That's why I come here. That's why I do what I do at grace because I love the Lord Jesus.

And being here and serving here is one of the ways that I express that love. This is how I show Jesus that I'm about eternal things, the things he loves most. I chose to do it here at this church. Oh, I could have gone down to that one or that one or that one, but the Lord led me to this one. Great. Great. That's what we want. Now, it should go without saying that elders do all of this. Notice in the text, according to the will of God, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, voluntarily, according to the will of God. Well, of course, good night. You'd think that would just be right there. And well, it's not. It's not. It needs to be said and said again.

[52 : 17] And I'm sad. Sometimes even I'll confess angry. I hope it's a righteous anger about what pastors sometimes try to pass off as ministry done according to the will of God.

It has nothing to do with scripture. It has nothing to do with shepherding. It has everything to do with ego. You know it and I know it and I see it and boy, it's not easy. So doing business, God's business, God's way is a serious business.

It's one of the one of the qualifications of an elder is that he be sober minded and a temperate man that he have himself under control and that he looks at life in a sober way, a serious way. He's not a clown. He doesn't walk into a room and try to make everybody think he's all that. He's the guy getting the jokes and the laughs. He's the guy putting himself forward. No. No. It's fine that he be a lighthearted guy and know how to be with people. But he's not a clown. He's not an entertainer. You know what?

[53 : 19] You would have a hard time in the most difficult times of your life coming to a guy like that. You probably wouldn't seek out first and foremost a pastor who, oh, he's the life of the party, but he's fun.

But could you go to him and trust him to help walk you through one of the most difficult things you ever faced in your life? See, that's what you want in a pastor.

That's the guy that you want standing next to you when it all starts to fall apart. Let me say it this way. Elders are not free to make it up as they go or to try and build themselves up by using ministry as their private playground.

You are not a playground. God's truth is both the means and the measure of our methods here at grace. grace. Now, are we perfect?

No. But are we striving to honor the Lord Jesus in all we do? Yes. As elders, Greg and I are fully committed to know and to do God's will as he's revealed it to us in scripture.

[54 : 34] And we just bring you along as we try to do that. You help us. You sharpen us. You hold us accountable. All right. He says something else here that's interesting to look at this one.

Not for sordid gain. It's very simple. Not for greedy gain. Elders can't be in it for greedy gain. It means we're not in it for the money.

It's not that money is not important. It's money is as important in our life as it is in yours. You know how much it takes to live here. You know what your budgets are. You know how you spend, et cetera.

We have to buy groceries too. We have to pay our bills just like you do. But if we're in it for the money, it'll show, won't it? And it won't take long. They hide it for a little while, but it won't take long. How a pastor is paid should be according to the will of God. That's what it says. Exercise oversight, not under compulsion, voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sordid gain.

[55 : 40] That's covered in first to me. Go to first Timothy chapter five with me, please, if you would. Now, I just want to show you nothing's left out.

God, God sufficiently answers to these issues of pastor and people at every level for everything that we could possibly think of. even here.

Something as delicate as talking about money and all that. Verse 17 of chapter five in first Timothy. The elders who rule well.

Are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. What does he mean by double honor? Look at verse 18 for the scripture says you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing and the labor is worthy of his wages.

That's God's opinion about elders who elder well. And that's the church's responsibility. So as you look through scripture and you see the responsibilities that pastor that are laid out for pastors like in this list, you also understand that there are places in the New Testament where God covers the reciprocal idea of that pastor to people.

[56 : 56] And we need to know those as well. Now, folks, isn't it wonderful? God didn't leave anything out. Even in details like that, he didn't leave anything out.

There's no reason for men to be in the ministry for greedy gain. None. What does he say next? Loving Christ and loving his church has to be the heart motives that counter any hint of greed or exploitation of the sheep.

So he says serve with eagerness. Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness. It simply means to serve ready, to serve willing, to serve eagerly.

It's just what it sounds like. We are to elder in ways that show, here it is, intense desire to fulfill our calling.

So what you should see in your elders is focus. There's a focus about their lives. They're not easily pulled off the center line. They're walking the center line.

[58 : 04] And if you see them, you know, they're quick to put that foot back on. It's like a tether, like we're suspended over the Grand Canyon and we're walking. That gives me the heebie-jeebies thinking about it. But, you know, we're walking that thing and we're focused.

We're laser focused on that thing. And so if we totter, hopefully you guys are here to kind of help shore us up, you know. The elders have to be very, very focused about what they do.

One of the reasons for that is because of the seriousness of what's at stake. Elders just can't play at life. They can't. They can't be those kind of men. And I'll just tell you, not many men are willing to do that.

I remember hearing John MacArthur say one time, this has been years ago, he'd been in the ministry for decades and he said, I haven't done what I wanted to do in over 20 years. Now, he didn't say that like, oh, poor, pitiful me.

He was preaching from a text like this. He said, you know what? I just I don't live my life trying to figure out all the things I want to do and go do it. I do what Jesus wants me to do and I stay focused as a pastor.

[59 : 11] And there's a whole bunch of things I have to say no to in order to be to say yes to pastoring. That is the life. That's the calling. And if you're whining about it and you're having a hard time with it, that is your indication to get out of the ministry.

Because God's people are going to suffer for that. You're going to get bitter and resentful and it's going to show up. Here's what happens. You put that cold armor on and you try to relate to everybody through that armor.

And here's what they hear. They hear ding, ding, ding. When they try to get close to you, it's cold and hard. You don't want that kind of armor. Spiritual armor.

Very different. Very different. I've seen it too many times. It's not something to play with. So in verse three, I've talked about focus.

Verse three, nor yet is lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And I'll move through this rather quickly. This is interesting here again.

[60 : 13] This is Peter's sober minded instruction to help elders rule well to the glory of God and the good of his people. Elder led churches should never suffer from the egos of their pastors.

elders. This is one of the reasons that Greg and I do not refer to our position as elder rule. Let me just put this out here for all of us to hear while we're here.

You can help others who are not here relate to this. Please do not tell people we are an elder ruled church. We're not. You understand where I'm going with this?

You are not elder ruled. You are elder led. And there is a difference. It's not tomato tomato. For us, it's the difference in how we actually go about pastoring in this church.

We don't want to rule over you and we don't consider ourselves free to rule over you, but we do lead you. Somebody has to stand up and say, go this way, do this thing, and then be willing to take whatever comes.

[61 : 21] And that's us. That's what we do. And there's no apology for that, but we are an elder led church. You guys have elders at your church, right?

You have elder rule. No, we have elder leadership. And then help them see. You know, we're careful about that. We're an elder led church. So it's a straightforward choice for elders of savior over self.

Straightforward. Greg and I can shepherd or we can self. That's it. We have two choices. To lord it over is to dominate and intimidate.

To dominate and intimidate. And you can see there's no place for that in husbanding. There's no place for that in being a wife. Just think about any area of human life where we're trying to honor Jesus and then think about dominating and intimidating.

They don't fit. They don't go. That'd be sin. That's the model of the world's leadership. Instead, Jesus under shepherds. Look, prove to be examples.

[62 : 30] That's the text. Nor yet is lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. Elders follow the great shepherd of our souls.

And we do in shepherding. What is about following Jesus and his example as a shepherd, both in attitude and in action. Let me give you a little insider information on eldership.

This is a little insider elder info, if you would. All right. I'm letting you into the little to the little what the holy of holies are. I don't know. We meet at coffee shops.

So there you go. Look, proving ourselves to be examples to the flock is where the real influential power of ministry resides.

If you don't see it in our lives, it's just talk. You won't see it perfectly all the time. But you need to see it.

[63 : 36] You need to see it. Again, quoting from John MacArthur, I remember him saying, I preach a better message than I live. You understand that?

That's true. Greg and I don't want there to be terrible inconsistencies in our preaching and living out the truth that we preach. But you will see it from time to time because we live among you.

The very best way that we can influence you in the highest way is to live among you, trying to live what we preach, struggling in it, striving in it, but nevertheless doing it.

So the very best way to shepherd is to lead sheep. That's the best way. How do you shepherd sheep? The Bible says you lead them. You lead them.

You get out in front and you show them the way. That's how you do it. You're out front. You're scouting it out. The danger.

[64 : 40] You're charting the best path to green pasture. You know, if you have a choice where you can take them up on the precipice and lead them on rocky terrain with a steep drop or you see another way.

Oh, this way is safer. This way I can put more people and there's less. That's the way you take.

That's what elders do. Elders chart that course. If they ever are forced to take that way, then they lead the way and they tell the people step here, not here.

Go here and not here. You guys come over here and you shore up this area. Can I get the deacons up here ahead of us? We need you guys to build us a little footbridge across this. And so the deacons run off and build the footbridge and now everybody goes.

That's what the church does. That's what it looks like when the sheep are being well cared for because the elders can't do it all. So they bring the deacons in and the deacons help serve the elders in serving the people.

It's just beautiful. It's God. It's God. We don't have to be clever. We just have to be faithful. Be out in front.

[65 : 44] Lead the people. It's also an image of running to and fro as the sheep are moving to pasture to pasture because you have to move sheep. You know, they eat the grass down to the nub.

You ever seen that? They'll eat it to the nub. So you got to move them. Got to keep moving them. Right? So we're running to and fro among those allotted to our charge.

That is God gets to decide who's here and who we shepherd. And so what are we doing is Greg and I are running up and down the line of sheep to and fro. Now, not like chickens with our heads cut off, but like men with a purpose for heaven's sake.

We run up and down with the sheep and we're checking and we're listening and we're watching. Is anybody hobbling? We see anybody limping? Because, you know, move in there. As we do that, what are we doing?

Well, what does the scripture tell us to do as we move among the sheep like that? We admonish the unruly sheep. Right? We encourage the faint-hearted sheep and the fearful sheep and the unsure sheep.

[66 : 48] We help the weak sheep, the struggling sheep, the straggling sheep. No stragglers. If we see stragglers, we go out and get them, pull them back in.

You're vulnerable. The wolves are looking at you. Careful. You don't want to be back here. You don't want to be out there. So the example, the example that's spoken of in our text, the example we are charged with is that of Jesus caring for his sheep at the cost of his life.

And again, right now, Greg and I aren't being called on to sacrifice our physical lives for your betterment. What we are called on every single hour of the day is to know how to say no to ourselves so that we can serve you.

I think the latter is harder. Now, I've never had somebody point a gun and say, deny Jesus or I'll kill you. But every day. If we stay the course of this calling, elders will enjoy this final point, their reward for shepherding.

You see that in verse four. When the chief shepherd appears, you'll receive the unfading crown of glory. So, folks, while we share with you and because of you many, many wonderful moments of earthly joy and reward for our shepherding, our greatest and truest and most joyful motivation is the prospect of the chief shepherd, the Lord Jesus, receiving us to himself as elders, telling us well done and giving us the reward of eternal glory with him.

[68 : 23] Especially knowing that we're going to give a double account, whatever that means.

Believe me, that motivation shows up clearly in men who shepherd for God's glory and the church is good.

So here's the takeaway. Pray that your elders all fully embrace God's will for eldership. So that we'll all thrive in the good green pasture God provides for his people.

Takes pastors and people for that to happen. I hope this has been encouraging to you, instructive to your heart. This is why we are elder led in our church.

This is why we refer to us as elders or pastors. And this is why we have a shepherding emphasis that we pull from scripture as we do what we do.

Let's pray together. Well, Lord God. I think of all the people in this room right now, the two people who feel the most weight of conviction would be Greg and I.

[69 : 31] My my response to you this week has been what man is sufficient for these things. I'm certainly not. So I thank you that my sufficiency is in Jesus.

Greg and I thank you that you have put this calling on our lives, not because you thought we could handle it, but because you knew we could be faithful and persevere with joy as you give us grace. Thank you for giving us grace to be pastors. Thank you for the privilege that we share together as a as brothers. Shepherding this group of people, leading them to green pasture and feeding them well, giving them clear water.

Moving them away from the wolves and the poison water and all of the dangers that are living in this life, lurking in the shadows. Satan is a roaring lion prowling around, seeking whom he may devour. And we don't want to see any of our sheep devoured. So, God, give us grace. Father, minister to us in the love of Jesus, for the love of Jesus, all that we need, that we would pastor these people to your glory and that they would be greatly encouraged and that they would have a biblical pride in their church family, a good pride, a healthy respect and reverence that you are building this congregation up in sound doctrine and keeping them safe in the green pasture of loving Christ.

[71 : 05] We thank you for your goodness to us, Lord. We thank you for your truth. And I thank you. Greg thanks you for the attentive hearts of our people who expect us to preach like this and teach like this from the word of God.

May we continue to bring you glory as Grace Church Williamsburg. In Jesus name, amen.