

TEACHER'S MANUAL

BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP:  
RESTORING THE ELDERSHIP TO ITS RIGHTFUL  
PLACE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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# BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

TEACHER'S MANUAL

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Restoring the Eldership  
to its Rightful Place  
in the Local Church

— BER —

BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP  
RESOURCES

Biblical Eldership: Teacher's Manual

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## The Need for Training Elders

After speaking one evening at a church, a man asked if he could share his story with me. He hoped I would share it with other churches.

Shortly graduating from seminary, this brother was asked by a nearby church if he would fill in as an interim pastor until they found a permanent one. After that, he spent several years temporarily filling in for churches that were looking for permanent pastors. But in all his years as interim pastor, he did not find one church that was seriously preparing its men for long-term church leadership. He never saw any concerted effort to teach men to study Scripture for themselves so they could know and understand Bible doctrine. Men in the churches were not being prepared to teach others, or to be involved in the pastoral leadership. There was no true New Testament eldership in any of these churches.

As a result, when the pastor left, there was an immediate and gaping void because no one else in the church was prepared to continue the teaching and pastoral ministry. The men of the church were completely clergy dependent. They felt incapable and ill-prepared to do much of anything but find a replacement for the pastor. (To be fair, these churches had never seen an example of a biblical eldership, so it would be difficult for them to imagine pastoral leadership by a plurality of qualified, biblical elders.)

My friend saw this same situation over and over during his years as an interim pastor. His experience vividly demonstrates the widespread failure of churches to intentionally challenge and prepare its most qualified men for pastoral eldership.

Friends of mine who are elders in another church were discussing the need to train more men for eldership. As they sought suitable material for training potential elders, one reminded the others that, “No one ever trained us!” Unfortunately, this assessment could be echoed by too many elders and deacons.

A leading news magazine reported on the amazing strength of America’s family-owned businesses, estimating that “nearly 50 percent of the nation’s gross national product” was produced by family-owned firms. After enumerating many positive aspects of the family-owned business, however, the article reported that its chief weakness is its failure to train the next generation of family leaders: “On the whole, only a third of family-owned companies survive into the second generation because founders often are too busy to plan ahead or because they lack confidence in their young.”

The local church is an extended family that does God’s business. Like many family-owned businesses, local churches fail to train the next generation of leaders. Church leaders are frequently too preoccupied with the work of the church or lack vision for training future leaders. They have seriously underestimated both the need and their responsibility. Like flowers in spring, leaders who are ready to bless the flock will not appear without planting or preparation.

The lack of elder and deacon training is an extremely critical problem. We are not training the very men who lead and have oversight of our churches. We erroneously believe that our serving elders and deacons understand spiritual oversight and care, but in fact our churches are filled with elders and deacons who confess that they are unprepared and untrained for their work.

Kenneth O. Gangel, a biblically sound expert in church management and training, is right on target when he points out, “The key to reproducing leadership is to clearly plan for it.” “Church leaders,” exhorts Gangel, “need to produce leaders who will reproduce leaders precisely as it is done in the family through experience, instruction, and modeling.”

Training men for future leadership and ministry should not be a novel concept to the Christian who is familiar with what the Bible teaches. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ spent a significant part of his public ministry preparing for the future. He patiently poured his life into twelve men, training them to be the future leaders of the church. He was a master teacher and mentor. Scottish biblical professor and writer, A. B. Bruce, in his standard-setting work, *The Training of the Twelve*, writes:

“Follow Me,” said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, “and I will make you fishers of men.” These words . . . show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom he might train to make disciples of others. . . . Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve. In the intercessory prayer [John 17:6], e.g., He speaks of the training He had given these men as if it had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry. And such, in one sense, it really was. The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher’s influence on the world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial evanescent impressions on the minds of the many.

Like his Lord, Paul was also a discipler of men. He had his Timothy’s, and he expected his Timothy’s to train others: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul expected that when Timothy departed from Ephesus he would leave in place trained, faithful men who would continue the development of future teachers and leaders.

Local church elders are to be faithful men who are determined to train other faithful men. Elders must understand that the shepherding-leading task includes planning for ongoing leadership for the flock. As spiritual overseers of the congregation, elders have a special obligation to recognize, develop, and establish those to whom the Spirit has given the desire to shepherd God’s people.

The fact that the Spirit plants in some men the desire to shepherd does not eliminate the elders’ responsibility to prayerfully search for potential shepherd elders and to challenge, recognize, mentor, and appoint such men. The Holy Spirit uses people to help others discover and develop their gifts. The Holy Spirit also requires that elders protect the church from pushy, deceived people who think they are gifted and motivated by the Spirit when in reality they are not. Such people are in fact a detriment to the church. So, the elders must actively participate in the process of selecting, examining, and training prospective elders. Whether they intend to or not, elders encourage or stifle the development of new elders.

Furthermore, and significantly more important, if current elder councils intend to have doctrinally sound and competent shepherd elders to serve and preserve their churches’ distinctives in the future, then they must actively train, guide, and pray for quality men now.



<p><b>1</b> <b><i>Personal desire based on Spirit-motivation moves a brother to</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Study the Scriptures</li> <li>·Instruct others in the Word</li> <li>·Sacrificially care for and serve the congregation</li> </ul>	<p><b>2</b> <b><i>Elders observe a brother's</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Spiritual maturity</li> <li>·Godly character</li> <li>·Love for his people</li> <li>·Doctrinal soundness</li> <li>·Spiritual giftedness</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b> <b><i>Elders consult (either formally or informally) with the brother as to his desire for eldership and future life plans</i></b> <i>or</i> <b><i>A brother speaks to the elders about his desire to become a shepherd elder.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·If there is a positive response by both parties . . .</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b> <b><i>Elders agree to formally invite the brother into a mentoring-training relationship, looking to God for future direction, timing, and detailed plans.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·After a positive mentoring experience . . .</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b> <b><i>Elders, with the congregation, formally examine (1 Tim. 3:10) the prospective elder's</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Doctrine</li> <li>·Character</li> <li>·Capabilities</li> </ul> <p>If the approval to be a pastor/elder is given . . .</p>	<p><b>6</b> <b><i>Elders publicly appoint and install the candidate to the church eldership.</i></b></p>

## How to Use the *Biblical Eldership Study Guide*

The *Biblical Eldership Study Guide* is updated for the revised edition of *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to its Rightful Place in the Local Church* (2024).

This guide is designed for group study with facilitation by an experienced teaching or mentoring elder. A companion volume, the *Biblical Eldership: Teacher's Manual*, is available to assist the group facilitator and to ensure that the questions are answered consistent with the book. Please use this valuable tool for ensuring biblical accuracy. Most of the questions require the student to grapple with the texts of Scripture. The *Teacher's Manual* is free online at [www.biblicaleldership.com](http://www.biblicaleldership.com).

The *Study Guide* can be used by an individual for self-directed training in preparation for future pastoral leadership. This may be necessary if an experienced teacher is not available.

There are several ways to use this guide.

**Level 1:** A person interested in a brief survey of biblical eldership can read and answer the study questions from the Introduction and chapters 1 and 2, with only 32 pages of reading. This provides a simple overview of the subject. This can be done individually or in a group directed by a knowledgeable facilitator.

### **Introduction (pages 11–19)**

**Chapter 1** New Principles for Leadership (pages 21–30)

**Chapter 2** Pastoral Leadership (pages 31–42)

**Level 2:** A person who wants to know more about biblical eldership, and specifically about the qualifications and responsibilities of biblical elders, can read and answer the study questions from the Introduction and chapters 1–5, with 67 pages of reading. This can easily be done in six weeks, covering one lesson a week.

### **Introduction (pages 11–19)**

**Chapter 1** New Principles for Leadership (pages 21–30)

**Chapter 2** Pastoral Leadership (pages 31–42)

**Chapter 3** Shared Leadership (pages 43–59)

**Chapter 4** Qualified Leadership (pages 61–68)

**Chapter 5** Male Leadership (pages 69–77)

**Level 3:** A person seeking more in-depth study of the biblical doctrine of eldership can read and answer the study questions from the Introduction, chapters 1–5, and chapters 16, 17, 20, 23, 24. This provides the student with a sampling of key chapters of the book. This includes 112 pages of reading, and would be a good eleven-week study.

### **Introduction (pages 11–19)**

**Chapter 1** New Principles for Leadership (pages 21–30)

**Chapter 2** Pastoral Leadership (pages 31–42)

**Chapter 3** Shared Leadership (pages 43–59)

**Chapter 4** Qualified Leadership (pages 61–68)

**Chapter 5** Male Leadership (pages 69–77)

**Chapter 16** Worthy of Double Honor: Elders Who Lead Well (pages 167–175)

- Chapter 17** Worthy of Double Honor: Elders Who Labor in Preaching and Teaching
- Chapter 20** Appoint Elders as I Directed (pages 207–214)
- Chapter 23** Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine and Rebuke False Teachers (pages 233–239)
- Chapter 24** Peter’s Exhortation and Encouragement to the Elders (pages 241–253)
- Chapter 30** Summary Points (optional reading pages 317–322)

**Level 4:** A man actively pursuing pastoral leadership should complete the entire *Study Guide*. This is a good starting point for training a candidate for assuming the solemn responsibility of shepherding God’s precious flock, guarding the church from false teachers, and of teaching and modeling New Testament Christianity.

Further explanation and discussion of the material presented in the book *Biblical Eldership* and the *Study Guide* is available on a podcast conversation with Alexander Strauch and David Anderson for all chapters of *Biblical Eldership*. For auditory learners, an audio version of *Biblical Eldership* is available through Amazon. You can also find our online School of the Shepherds program and many more resources at [www.biblicaleldership.com](http://www.biblicaleldership.com).

**For sources of quotations in this guide, please refer to the full volume of *Biblical Eldership*.**

# Scriptural List of Qualifications

## 1 Timothy 3:1-7

1. Above reproach
2. Husband of one wife
3. Sober-minded
4. Self-controlled
5. Respectable
6. Hospitable
7. Able to teach
8. Not a drunkard
9. Not violent
10. Gentle
11. Not quarrelsome
12. Not a lover of money
13. Manages his own household well . . . children submissive
14. Not a recent convert
15. Well thought of by outsiders

## Titus 1:6-9

1. Above reproach
2. Husband of one wife
3. Children are believers [faithful]
4. Not arrogant
5. Not quick-tempered
6. Not a drunkard
7. Not violent
8. Not greedy for gain
9. Hospitable
10. A lover of good
11. Self-controlled
12. Upright
13. Holy
14. Disciplined
15. Holds firm to the trustworthy word as taught
  - Able to give instruction in sound doctrine
  - Able to rebuke those who contradict sound doctrine

## 1 Peter 5:1-5

1. Not under compulsion
2. Willingly
3. Not for shameful gain
4. Eagerly
5. Not domineering
6. Example to the flock

# Getting Started: Introduction

*“When most Christians hear of church elders, they think of an official board of directors, lay officials, or influential people within the local church. They think of elders as policymakers, fund raisers, decision-makers, or advisors to the pastor. I call them ‘board elders.’”*

...

*“Since the two most prominent apostles charged the elders—and no other person or group—to shepherd God’s flock, we can conclude that, in biblical terms, the elders are responsible for the pastoral oversight of the individual flock God has assigned to them (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3).”*

## Read the Introduction to the book

1. What is the point of the opening story of the author attending a music concert at a church?

- To illustrate how the church elders have been pushed aside to a scarcely visible position in the church. (p. 11)
- To demonstrate how the leadership structure displayed by this church does not represent the New Testament teaching on pastoral leadership by a plurality of qualified, Spirit-appointed elders. (p. 11)
- To demonstrate how the sole pastor at the apex of an organizational pyramid is not a biblical concept, although common in many churches. (p. 11)

2. According to the author, what is the purpose of this book?

- To help restore and accurately define the biblical doctrine of eldership as shared pastoral leadership by a team of scripturally qualified, Spirit-placed elders. (p. 12)

3. Briefly explain what the author means by the following statement:

Be prepared to discover teachings and principles that may be unfamiliar to you and that you might consider to be radical. You may learn new terminology and at the same time find familiar church vocabulary and common church traditions missing. This is intentional because my goal is, by God’s grace, to accurately represent the words and teaching of Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, and Luke as recorded in the New Testament.

- If we believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21), then Scripture must be our final authority for how our churches function and are led.
- We want to capture the spirit and practice of New Testament eldership.

4. Why do you think that some Christians think that pastoral eldership is “a new and subversive concept that threatens the very life of the church,” or a heresy to be avoided.

- o They have never studied eldership in the Bible.
- o People are blinded by their own denominational traditions.

5. Explain the difference between board elders and pastoral elders. Give one illustration of each concept.

- o Many people think of church elders as the official board of directors, lay officials, influential people within the local church. Elders are policymakers, fundraisers, decision-makers, or advisors to the pastor. (p. 11)
- o Many Christians don't expect church elders to teach the Scriptures or be involved pastorally in the lives of their people, although their own Bibles teach exactly that. (p. 11)
- o Biblical elders jointly pastor the church, teach the word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish believers in sound doctrine, visit the sick and pray, and judge doctrinal issues. (p. 11)
- o In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church. (pp. 11-12)

6. In short, how would you demonstrate to someone that pastoral leadership by a plurality of scripturally qualified elders is a thoroughly biblical doctrine?

From Scripture, we learn that the New Testament: (p. 13)

- o Documents the existence of elders in numerous churches.
  - The New Testament records evidence of pastoral oversight by a council of elders in nearly all the first churches. These local churches were spread over a wide geographic and culturally diverse area.
- o Gives instruction about elders.
  - The New Testament includes explicit instructions to churches about how to care for, protect, discipline, select, restore, obey, and call the elders.
- o Provides instruction to elders directly.
  - Paul, Peter, and James give instructions directly to the elders.
- o The New Testament offers more instruction regarding elders than other important church subjects such as the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, baptism, or spiritual gifts.

Author's Notes

The New Testament offers more instruction regarding elders than other important church subjects such as the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, baptism, or spiritual gifts.

7. What are the three distinguishing features of a biblically defined eldership?

- o Qualified leadership
- o Pastoral leadership
- o Shared leadership (plurality)

Which one of the three do you know the most about? Explain your answer.

Which one of the three do you know the least about? Explain your answer.

If you were to list the three in order of importance, how would you do that? Explain your answer.

- o The New Testament provides more instruction on the qualifications for eldership than on any other aspect of eldership. This demonstrates its importance to our topic of eldership. (p. 17)

Author's Notes

Timothy Witmer, author of *The Shepherd Leader*, is right on target when he states: "you will see that 'shepherding' is at the very heart of the biblical picture of leadership."

8. Because there is a crying need for more pastoral leaders, it is tempting to allow unqualified, unprepared men to assume leadership in the church. But this is a time-proven formula for failure and long-term problems. Specifically, what kind of problems would be created by appointing unqualified and unequipped men to "the office of overseer" (1 Tim. 3:1)?

- o They may be doctrinally unsound and thus mislead the church or cause doctrinal debate among the elders.
- o They cannot protect the church from false teachers. They may be false teachers.
- o Not having any experience in pastoral work, they may hurt people rather than help them.
- o Not being biblically trained they may have a different vision for the direction of the church. They will not be able to make sound biblical decisions because they do not know the Bible well enough. They will not be able to counsel people or guide people according to the mind of God revealed in Scripture.

9. From the Scriptural List of Qualifications on page iii, list five qualifications that you did not know were required of church elders.

Which five were you most familiar with?

Was there one qualification that especially stood out to you as significant? Explain.

**10.** A very important concept in this book is equality among the elders (= parity) and functional diversity within eldership. Do your best to explain what this means or what it would look like.

- Although all elders share equally the same office, title, and pastoral charge, there is at the same time diversity in Spirit-giftedness, life experience, and the Lord's leading of each individual elder. Not all elders on an elder council are equal in time availability, verbal skills, leadership ability, biblical knowledge, or degrees of teaching competency. (p. 16)
- Elders who lead well and above all those who labor in preaching and teaching are worthy of "double honor" which includes financial compensation. (p. 16)
- The Scripture allows for functional, gift-based diversity within the eldership without creating an official, superior office over fellow elders. (p. 17)
- The key verse is 1 Timothy 5:17–18: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox when it treads out the grain,' and 'The laborer deserves his wages.'" (p. 16)

**11.** From the book *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, edited by Chad O. Brand and R. Stanton Norman, which view are you most familiar with? Explain.

Which view are you most unfamiliar with? Explain.

**12.** From what you have read so far in this chapter, what one piece of evidence is most compelling to convince you that "The Plural-Elder-Led Church" view is most scriptural?

- No other view has as many direct statements from Scripture to support its claims as does the plural-elder-led view (Acts 14:23; 20:17–38; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 5:17–25; Titus 1:5–9; James 5:14–15; 1 Peter 5:1–5). (p. 18)
- The overwhelming scriptural evidence! The direct statements of Scripture repeated in the New Testament affirm the teaching of biblical eldership. (p. 18)

**13.** What is the fundamental principle of hermeneutics the author claims the seminary teachers and students violated regarding the subject of eldership.

- The clear, central, didactic passages take precedence over secondary, unclear, obscure passages. (p. 19)
- The students and teachers allowed obscure, unclear, secondary passages to take precedence over the core didactic passages. (p. 19)



14. In your own words, explain the experience the author had in a seminary class on church polity. What did you learn from this illustration?

- Even some seminary professors will not allow the Scriptures to speak for itself. Church tradition trumps biblical truth. Most churches either ignored or reinterpreted eldership to fit their own familiar denominational traditions. (p. 19)
- Since the professor had not seen pastoral oversight by a body of qualified elders, he could not imagine that it was true. (p. 19)



## *Jesus's New Principles for Leadership*

*"In the most unforgettable way, Jesus dramatically illustrated everything he had been teaching his disciples about humility, love, sacrificial service, and greatness by washing the feet of his disciples."*

...

*"The symbol of an authentic Christian leadership is not the purple robe of an emperor, but the coarse apron of a slave; not a throne of ivory and gold, but a basin of water for the washing of feet." (John Stott)*

### Read chapter 1

1. After reading the first two pages of chapter 1, list in bullet point form what you learned about Jesus Christ the Teacher.

- The writers of the four Gospels present to the world a perfectly perfect person. Jesus alone is without sin, any blemish of character, or fault. (p. 21)
- The perfect Son of God is the only perfect teacher ever to grace this earth. All other teachers are imperfect and teach some degree of error. (p. 21)
- Jesus never spoke a false word, gave inaccurate information, or engaged in error of any kind. (p. 21)
- For the people who actually saw and heard Jesus Christ teach, what amazed them most about Jesus was that his teaching was "new," and spoken with "authority." (p. 21)
- One of the most interesting and revolutionary of all Christ's new teachings was how he inverted the traditional leadership pyramid: the people at the base of the pyramid serving the leader at the apex. (p. 21)
- In Christ's kingdom, leadership positions and the exercise of authority entail humility, servanthood, brotherhood, and Christlike love. (pp. 21-22)

2. After reading A. B. Bruce's quotation from *The Training of the Twelve*, what did you learn about Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles? (quote on page 22)

- Jesus Christ spent a great deal of time training the disciples for their future work.
- Jesus attached supreme importance to this part of his work upon earth.
- Jesus wanted disciples who would make disciples of others.
- The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher's influence on the world should be permanent.

- o Jesus prayed for them.
- o Jesus gave us plurality leadership. He trained a body of men, not one man only.

Author's Notes

In Christ's kingdom, leadership positions and the exercise of authority entail humility, servanthood, brotherhood, and Christlike love. This new, countercultural teaching provides the foundational principles for our study of New Testament elders and Christian leadership in general.

**3. Explain the traditional leadership pyramid (whether secular or religious).**

- o It is a top-down organizational structure. The leader stands at the top of a leadership pyramid, with the people looking up to and serving the one at the top. (p. 21)
- o Most often, it is all about the leader and not the people. People are there to serve the leader, rather than the leader serving the people.

Explain how Jesus reversed the traditional leadership pyramid.

- o He taught a new set of virtues and principles for governing the leader-follower relationship. (p. 22)
- o He denounced the religious teachers of his day for their abuse of authority. (p. 22)
- o He forbade his followers from acting like the "rulers of the Gentiles." (p. 22)
- o He gave us plurality leadership in the twelve apostles. (p. 22)

**4. Explain what created continuous conflict among the twelve disciples.**

- o Pride and selfish ambition created conflict (Phil. 2:3-5). (p. 24-25)
  - They had a completely wrong set of values and an incorrect understanding of the kingdom of God.
  - They were continually arguing among themselves over who should be regarded as the "greatest" or "first" in their group.
  - They were competing among themselves for first place and the highest honors.

**5. Explain the meaning of the paradox, "if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." (See endnote 4 in the full book for help.)**

- o Jesus is the master teacher, and all good teachers use figures of speech to teach important truths. (p. 24)
- o By using this paradoxical figure of speech, Jesus is emphasizing how humility and servanthood are to be the defining characteristics of people who are leaders in Christ's kingdom. (p. 24)
- o According to this saying, the term "first" signifies the one who pushes himself to the front and asserts his high position of authority. (Ch 1, Endnote 4)

- The terms “last” or “servant” signify the person of no status or rank, one who assumes a position at the bottom of the social ladder of life. Not a position anyone would naturally choose. (Ch 1, Endnote 4)
- Jesus asserts that true greatness is not achieved by striving for prominence over others or by grasping for power but by exhibiting a humble, self-effacing attitude of service towards “all”—even the lowliest person without status or power, such as a small, socially insignificant, dependent child. (p. 24)
- Thus, in Christ’s kingdom, being great or first is a reward for humility, selfless service to all, and generous giving of oneself. (p. 24)
- What Jesus teaches here is countercultural and counterintuitive to this world. (p. 22)

**6. What was Jesus’s response to James and John seeking for themselves the chief thrones in the kingdom next to Jesus?**

- Jesus responded to the brothers’ request for thrones by saying: “You do not know what you are asking.” He could not promise them the highest thrones, but he could promise them suffering, death, and persecution. (p. 25)
- They did not understand that according to God’s plan, suffering precedes glory, the cross comes before the crown, loss before rewards, and serving before reigning. (p. 25)
- Jesus concludes that the supreme example of the paradox of absolute authority and humble “slave of all” is our Lord Jesus Christ; “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mk. 10:45) (p. 25)
- Jesus’s life and sacrificial death serve as the greatest illustration of the leadership-service paradox. Jesus’s death on the cross is the best expression of humility, servanthood, and love, and thus true greatness. (p. 25)
- Jesus, the Son of God and greatest leader to have ever graced this earth, makes himself slave to all and gives his life upon the cross for the salvation of lost sinners. (p. 25)

**In what ways do we, like James and John, seek higher status and positions for ourselves?**

- We push people out of the church who might threaten our position or ministry in the church. We want a separate religious title from everyone else (like: reverend or doctor). Demand that only I am qualified to administer the Lord’s Supper. I control the money and make the final decision. All other leaders are advisors or helper, not people on the same level of authority.

**7. Using bullet points, list what Jesus did that shocked the disciples regarding greatness in the kingdom.**

- To illustrate his teachings on leadership: (pp. 25-26)
  - Jesus took on the role of a household slave.
  - He took off his outer garments.
  - He took a towel and tied it around his waist.
  - He took a basin of water began to wash the dirty feet of the disciples.
  - He wiped the feet with the towel that was around his waist.

**8.** Read Luke 22:24–27. This is a significant passage for understanding our Lord's radical new teachings. What did Jesus say to correct the disciples thinking and sinful attitudes?

- Jesus prohibited his disciples from acting like the power-hungry “Kings of the Gentiles” who exercise lordship over people, or like those in authority who boast about being benefactors. Jesus said, “But not so with you.” (p. 26)
- Jesus stipulates that, in his kingdom, the one who is the “greatest” become as “the youngest” of the group (one with no status or power). The one who is the “leader” is to be like one who “serves” tables, that is, a waiter, a lowly table attendant. (p. 26)
- Then Jesus makes this astonishing declaration concerning himself: “For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” (p. 26)
- Jesus is the greatest example of voluntary subordination. He, the supreme Teacher and Lord, voluntarily serves the diners at table (see Luke 12:37). The disciples are to emulate the servant-waiter Jesus, not “the Kings of the Gentiles” or the rich “benefactors” of this world. (p. 27)

**Author's Notes**

A loveliness of spirit and a tenderness of heart radiated from the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so should his character radiate from us as well.

**9.** Read Matthew 23:1–12. What lessons can you draw from this insightful passage of Scripture to help you lead the Lord's people in truly authentic, biblical ways? Be specific.

- In contrast to the self-seeking religious leaders of his day, Jesus forbids his disciples from calling one another “rabbi,” and from elevating themselves in any way that would diminish their close brotherly relationships or usurp the unique place that Christ and the Father have over all believers. As Jesus said: “You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.” (p. 27)
- We are not to act like the hypocritical religious leaders that Jesus censured: proud, greedy, and abusive, elevating and separating themselves from the people. (p. 27)
- We are not to seek lofty, impressive titles (“the very reverend”), special religious clothes, or places of honor. (p. 27)
- Christ-like leaders are to relate to one another as equal brothers and sisters, not as lords over their servants. Brotherhood and sisterhood should guide us in how we should relate to one another. (p. 27)
- Carefully note that this passage may explain why the New Testament writers avoid lofty sacred titles for their leaders and teachers. (p. 27)
- As leaders, we must consciously choose to be humble and self-effacing. We, like Jesus, should be willing to serve tables.

In what ways do we imitate the religious leaders Jesus condemned by our own attempts to appear impressive to others?

- Assuming honorific titles.
- Wearing special clothes that separate us from everyone else.
- Claiming special religious powers we don't have.
- Imposing on people religious rules and regulations.
- Talking too much about ourselves and our successes.

**10. Define the New Commandment (John 13:34-35) Jesus gives his disciples.**

- Love is not a new commandment. It is stated clearly in the Old Testament. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. What is new about the New Commandment is it is a new standard of love. It is to love our brothers and sisters as Jesus loved. This is a selfless, self-sacrificing standard of love. Being willing to die for our brothers and sisters (1 John 3:16-18). (p. 28)

List two reasons why it is essential for an elder team to practice the New Commandment.

- You simply cannot understand Christian living, church life, or Christian leadership without thinking deeply about the “new commandment.” (p. 28)
- Jesus did not simply say “love one another.” He said something far more profound: Love one another “just as I have loved you.” Jesus sets his own example of selfless, self-sacrificing love upon the cross as the new standard of love. (p. 28)
- There is no way that a Christian leadership team can work together effectively or survive without God’s love flowing through each of its members toward one another. Love is the secret ingredient in all successful team efforts. (p. 28)
- The reason is obvious. Love “is not arrogant . . . It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable . . . bears all things . . . endures all things.” (1 Cor. 13:4–7) (p. 28)

Author's Notes "[The ten other disciples] were outraged because they wanted purple robes, ivory thrones, and golden crowns for themselves. They were all 'card-carrying members of the 'self-seekers' club'" (Lewis B. Smedes).
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**11.** Make a list of five characteristics of the strongman leader. Make a second list of five characteristics of the Christlike, servant leader. (p. 28-29)

Strongman Leader	Servant Leader
1. It is a self-oriented style of leadership. 2. It concentrates power in one person and rejects genuine transparency and accountability. 3. It seeks to control, dominate, and manipulate. 4. It is dictatorial and authoritarian. 5. It outright rejects the concept of shared leadership.	1. It means leading others, not lording it over them. 2. It is an others-oriented style of leadership. 3. The leader humbly serves the people—even the most insignificant ones—expecting nothing in return. 4. It is promoting and advancing the gifting of others. 5. It rejects all forms of worldly arrogance, hate, narcissism, and abuse of power.

**12.** Read 3 John 9-10. List several ways in which Diotrophes’s style of leadership contrasted with Christ’s.

- o Diotrophes: (p. 29)
  - The classic, autocratic church leader, the narcissistic pastor. He builds the church around himself.
  - He represents all those who abuse their pastoral authority.
  - He puts himself first and thinks highly of himself.
  - He was not gentle and humble. He is the typical strongman leader.
- o Jesus: (pp. 29-30)
  - Servant leadership. His style is leading others, not lording over them (2 Cor. 1:24).
  - “Others-oriented” leadership.
  - Leader humbly serves people, even insignificant one, expecting nothing in return.
  - A willingness to suffer for the good of others (washing the feet of others).

**13.** As you consider all that you learned about Christlike leadership, what changes do you need to make to your own leadership style?



## *Pastoral Leadership*

*"If a body of elders lacks certain gifts or dynamic personalities, the elders' Christlike love for the people can compensate for such deficiencies. But there is no substitute for a lack of personal love or warmth on the part of the elders for the people. Without a loving, caring relationship with the people, the elders are an empty shell."*

...

*"Spiritual laziness, as well as a lack of self-discipline, is a major reason why most churches never establish a biblical eldership. Too many men are more than willing to let someone else fulfill their spiritual responsibilities, whether it be their wives or the 'trained' professionals."*

### Read chapter 2

1. When you hear of the shepherd-sheep metaphor applied to the elders, how does this metaphor affect your understanding about biblical church elders?

- They should be loving and caring, present among their people, leading within the church, and examples to the people. (p. 32)
- They are to be shepherds who are out among the people feeding, guiding, and lovingly caring for the people's needs. (p. 32)

2. The biblical imagery of a shepherd and his flock has many dimensions to it. List what you think are the four most important characteristics of a good shepherd. Explain your answers.

- **The Shepherd's Presence:** The shepherd-flock motif is a highly relational one, showing personalized care. The shepherd and his flock form a close bond together. The sheep always know if the shepherd is present. When the shepherd is present, the sheep can rest comfortably and feed peacefully. (p. 32)
- **Love:** Ultimately, the shepherd must love the sheep if he is to succeed in caring for them. (p. 32)
- **Skill and Knowledge:** Shepherding requires a great deal of knowledge and many different skills: the management of land and water resources; healing of deadly diseases; delivering and caring for newborn lambs and their mothers, sheering sheep, and comforting old and dying ones. Leading a local church also requires a variety of skills in teaching and governing a community of God's people in God's way. (pp. 32-33)
- **Sacrifice:** Shepherding requires self-sacrifice on the part of the shepherd, as he must put the needs of the flock before his own. (p. 33)

One of the biggest sacrifices a shepherd leader makes is that the well-being of the flock is continually on the shepherd's mind.

Reread Derek Tidball's quotation: shepherding is "a subtle blend of authority and care," and "as much toughness as tenderness, as much courage as comfort." This is an excellent quote that you should expand on. (p. 31)

**Author's Notes**

Shepherd leaders are not "a board of directors," sitting in a meeting once a month making decisions and letting others do the work shepherding. They are to be shepherds who are out among the people feeding, guiding, and lovingly caring for the people's needs.

**3. In what Scripture passages do Paul and Peter use the verb shepherd to describe the elders' work?**

- o Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2. (p. 34)

What one important fact did you learn from each of the above passages that was most enlightening to you regarding the subject of biblical elders?

- o Answers will vary: The Holy Spirit places men as elders in the church. The urgency demanded to shepherd the flock of God in the midst of persecution.

**4. Some church leaders say that the shepherd-sheep motif is out of style for today. Hence, we should use the business CEO model and terminology. How would you answer someone who wants to replace the shepherd-sheep imagery for a more modern image?**

- o The time-honored sheep-shepherd image is still relevant today because people are still like sheep. (p. 32)
- o The work of spiritual leadership is basically still the same as tending sheep—feeding, leading, and protecting "the flock of God." The imagery of shepherding a flock communicates the right attitudes and work of the church elders. (p. 32)
- o The shepherd-flock motif is a highly relational one, showing personalized care for the people. The shepherd and his flock form a close bond together. The sheep know the shepherd's voice, and he knows his sheep by name. The business model is based primarily on financial profit. (p. 32)
- o Shepherd-sheep terminology is the terminology of the Bible and we do best to stay with biblical terminology as much as we can. (p. 32)

5. The author emphasizes the elder's visible presence among the people. He warns about being an invisible elder. What did you learn that will make you more visible and present among the people?

- o The work of the shepherd is to be with the sheep. The sheep always know if the shepherd is present. When the shepherd is present, the sheep can rest comfortably and feed peacefully. (p. 32)
- o You cannot be an invisible elder and be a good shepherd. Your consistent presence with the sheep is necessary to your work of shepherding. (p. 32)
- o Be out among the people, don't hide from them or act as if you are afraid of them, or too important to be with them. (p. 32)
- o Stand at or near the door of the church. (p. 32)
- o Greet with a friendly smile. (p. 32)
- o Work hard at remembering names. (p. 32)
- o Reach out by introducing yourself in a friendly way to new people. (p. 32)
- o Greet lonely widows, widowers, and the elderly. (p. 32)
- o Be attentive to the young people and children. (p. 32)
- o Display the joy of the Lord. (p. 32)

As a church leader, you have more influence over people than you realize. You are a spiritual influencer of people. Your personal life example is central to your leadership. You are to be, in the words of Scripture, "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). (p. 32)

Author's Notes

Shepherd imagery beautifully blends the concepts of authority and leadership with self-sacrifice, loving care, and intimate relationships.

6. Why should the teaching ministry (or feeding ministry) be of "first importance" to the elders?

- o If there is no food, there is no flock. The Bible is God's food for God's flock. If the people are not taught the word of the Lord, they will become weak, emaciated, and easy prey for the devouring lion, the devil. (p. 35)
- o Teaching fellow believers "the whole council of God" follows Paul's teaching strategy and example (Acts 20:28). It also follows the mandate of the great commission to "make disciples of all nations. . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). (p. 36)
- o From the very beginning, Christianity was a teaching-preaching movement with an urgent message from God concerning sins forgiven and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. (p. 36)
- o Only when people are taught the great doctrines of the faith are they prepared to do the work of building-up the church of Jesus Christ.
- o True believers love good teaching. (p. 37)

7. List several specific dangers that your local church needs protection from at this very time.

- The new sexual ethics
- The secular entertainment industry
- The temptations to worldliness and materialism
- The secularizing of the evangelical church
- The health and wealth gospel
- TV preachers
- Feminist theology
- Relativism
- Consumeristic motivation

The Old Testament Scriptures warned about false prophets, corrupt priests, idolatrous kings, and failed elders. We should never be surprised by false teachers, who are in reality agents of Satan and the archenemies of the Church of Jesus Christ. (p. 37)

8. Why is Paul so deeply concerned that elders be mentally and spiritually “alert” (Acts 20:28-31)?

- Paul knew all too well the human tendency to be oblivious to what is going on in the world, to be preoccupied with the wrong priorities, to be passive, to be minimalists, to be lazy, and to want the title but not the work. (p. 38)
- False teachers are very clever people. They can easily fool people. (p. 38)
- Paul knew that after he left his newly planted churches, false teachers would immediately invade his churches and preach a different gospel. (p. 38)
- He had seen the damage done to churches because elders were not alert to the false teachers invading their congregation. See the letters of Galatians 1:6-10 and 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

How would you practically prepare yourself to be mentally and spiritually “alert” in order to protect the church from the inevitability of “fierce wolves” attacking the church body?

- You have to make a deliberate effort to keep yourself informed about the newest and most crowd-followed trends in society and the Christian community. Eventually these new trends come into your church, often through the young people. (p. 38)
- To stay up to date on cultural shifts in society and trendy new ideas challenging Christians, you should utilize the many audio and printed resources available to help busy people stay informed of important changes in society and in the larger Christian community. (p. 38)
- These resources will help you to be more knowledgeable, discerning, and awake to the many cultural and theological dangers that face people in your local church.
- Most importantly you need to be consistently and persistently reading your Bible and good books that help you understand the Bible and Christian doctrine.
- You also need to listen to great expository sermons preached on the Bible. Many of these resources are free online.

Author's Notes

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15).

**9. In general terms, what does practical care for the people entail?**

- o Knowing people's name. (p.40)
- o Visiting the sick.
- o Comforting the bereaved.
- o Praying for all the members of the church, even those who are unpleasant to deal with.
- o Making phone calls to check on people.
- o Visiting recent attendees.
- o Providing counsel for couples who are engaged, married, or headed toward divorce.

When it comes to the practical care of people, where are you, as an individual, strongest?

**10. How would you answer someone who says, "You can't expect a man to work all day, raise a family, and help shepherd a local church."**

- o The real problem lies not in men's limited time, but in false ideas about work, Christian living, and life's priorities. (p. 40)
- o Spiritual laziness and a lack of self-discipline is the reason few men seek to serve as shepherd leaders. (p. 40)
- o Many men are more than willing to let someone else fulfill their spiritual responsibilities, whether it be their wives or the "trained" professionals. (p. 40)
- o Too many men are not committed to the biblical principles of discipleship, are not seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33) and have not presented themselves as living sacrifices to God and slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:13, 19; 12:1-2). (p. 40-41)

**11. R. Paul Stevens wrote:**

For tentmakers to survive three full-time jobs (work, family and ministry), they must also adopt a sacrificial lifestyle. Tentmakers must live a pruned life and literally find leisure and rest in the rhythm of serving Christ (Matt. 11:28). They must be willing to forego a measure of career achievement and private leisure for the privilege of gaining the prize (Phil. 3:14). Many would like to be tentmakers if they could be wealthy and live a leisurely and cultured lifestyle. But the truth is that a significant ministry in the church and the community can only come by sacrifice.

What is a “tentmaking elder.”

- Tentmaking elders are elders who support themselves financially and, at their own, expense serve the local church as pastor elders. The term “tentmakers” comes from Acts 18:3. Paul, along with a couple named Aquila and Priscilla, supported themselves financially by tentmaking and, at their own expense, preaching the gospel to the city of Corinth: “And [Paul] went to see them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.”

What specific contributions can you, as a tentmaking elder, make to shepherding a church body.

- A team of tentmaking elders can make a significant contribution to the shepherding ministry of a local church. Although tentmaking elders cannot contribute as much time as an elder who serves the church full-time, they contribute something equally important: their godly example of love for the people, sacrificial Christian living, biblical priorities, and their personal life experience and wisdom much of which they learn daily from working with other people at their employment. (p. 41)

**12.** Biblically speaking, what does a busy elder need to remember in order to protect himself from pastoral burnout due to overwork?

- No elder is expected to do all the work of caring for a church alone. Each elder is part of a team of qualified elders, sharing the pastoral oversight of the local church. (p. 41)
- Among the elders, some can serve full-time, part-time, or quarter-time at the church’s expense. (p. 41)
- God provides the elders with “assistants” (also called deacons) to assist them in the “care for God’s church” (1 Tim. 3:5, 8–13). The help of qualified, approved assistants relieves the elders of other demanding tasks and helps keep their focus on their primary responsibilities of teaching and leading God’s flock. (p. 41)
- The elders are not the total ministry of the church. Ministry is the work of the whole church. Ministry is not the work of one person or even one group of people. (p. 42)
- The elders are dependent upon the gifts and skills of others (some of whom may be more gifted than any of the elders in certain areas of ministry) for the overall care of the local church. (p. 42)
- The elders should learn to delegate, delegate, delegate, and thereby save themselves from pastoral burnout (Acts 6:1-7). (p. 42)

**Author’s Notes**

A healthy, growing flock of sheep doesn’t just happen accidentally. It is the result of good leadership and skillful management of the entire flock.

13. Using the list of the biblical qualifications for an elder, which five qualifications would be most needed in order to feed God's flock? Explain your answers. (See page iii for list of qualifications.)

- (Answers will vary) Sober-minded: A shepherd has to demonstrate sound judgment, be balanced, level-headed, and not an extremist, exhibiting poor decisions, or a lack of clear discernment. How a shepherd thinks will affect the sheep's well-being and how things are done or not done.
- Hospitable: A shepherd who loves people opens his heart and home to them. Hospitality is one of the most loving ways to connect with the people on a deeply personal basis. It is a great encouragement to people to be invited to an elder's home.
- Able to give instruction in sound doctrine: A shepherd has to feed the sheep. No food, no sheep. In the church, people need to be fed the word of the Lord. They will not grow or mature if they are not fed on sound doctrine. This also protects people from the many lies of our culture and false teachers of the gospel. A healthy church is a well taught church. And the content of our teaching must be the Bible.
- Not domineering over the people, but being an example of Christlike behavior and living: The people do not need domineering, controlling leaders. In the end, such leaders only hurt people and keep people in subjection. They need leaders who are a positive example of Christlike living. It is not enough to have the title of pastor or bishop. One must be a spiritual influencer and that is done by example and good teaching.
- Lover of good: This kind of shepherd enjoys being kind, helping others, and doing good things for people in need. Such a person has an eye for the needs of the people. A lover of good sets the right attitudes in the church of love and service to others.

In practical terms, here are some things a loving shepherd leader does:

- Know the people. Who is in the flock under your care? Know their names and family circumstances.
- Be friendly, smile more, hug more. Set a loving tone for the church. Don't be an invisible shepherd.
- Be with the flock, both individually and when gathered corporately.
- Be approachable and easy to be entreated.
- Be accessible
- Invite people into your home.
- Visit people in their homes.
- Use the phone regularly to connect with people and to check on them. You may not be able to visit them all, but you can call.
- Pray for the people regularly and systematically.
- Be attentive to the sick and dying.
- Be an encourager. Let people know you appreciate their work on behalf of the church. Don't be a silent leader. People cannot read your mind.
- Warn the people of aberrant teachings and hostile secular influences.
- Feed the people on the life-giving sustenance of God's word, holy scripture. Preach the word.
- Search for them if they wander away from the believing community.





## *Shared Leadership*

*“Undoubtedly, Jesus had no difficulty in teaching equality among the apostles and simultaneously acknowledging diversity of giftedness and leadership influence within the apostolic team.”*

...

*“For most people, pastors are different from elders. Most churches draw a sharp demarcation line between the senior pastor/minister and the lay elders. . . . Although the division between senior pastor and lay elders is a deeply entrenched tradition in the minds of most Christians, it is not a New Testament concept.”*

### Read chapter 3

1. Why do you think the author begins this chapter with looking at the equality and functional diversity among the twelve apostles? What is his point?

- It is important to understand the model of equality and functional diversity set by Jesus Christ among the apostles. (p. 43)
- Luke records that the twelve apostles met as a united leadership body, along with the council of elders. (p. 44)
- The twelve apostles model the equality and functional diversity within a leadership council. What we learn about the apostolic group was initiated by our Lord himself, who trained and welded them together as a team. (p. 45)

#### Author’s Notes

It was Jesus Christ himself who gave his followers plurality leadership when he chose and trained twelve apostles, rather than one apostle.

2. How would you explain Peter’s position among the twelve apostles?

- Peter is the most prominent among the apostles and even among the three leaders: Peter, James, and John. (p. 44)
- Peter is the natural leader, the chief speaker, the man of action. (p.45)
- Peter energized, strengthened, and ignited the group. (p. 45)
- Peter possessed no ecclesiastical or official rank above the other eleven apostles. They were not his subordinate, staff, or team of assistants, or temporary lay advisors. (p. 45)
- As one scholar who has written extensively on Peter puts it, “[Peter] is ascribed no leading position at all in relation to the group of the Twelve; on the contrary, he appears only as the most representative of the disciples.” (p. 45)

3. List two biblical proofs that demonstrate that all elders are equal on the eldership council (parity).

- Despite Peter being the most prominent among the apostles, the Gospels give Peter no special, exclusive title to differentiate him from the other apostles. (p. 45)
- Acts 20:28—All elders have been placed in the flock as “overseers” by “the Holy Spirit” for the express purpose of shepherding the church of God. This responsibility—and the authority to do this task—has been placed upon all the elders; all are involved in shepherding the church of God together. (p. 46)
- Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2—All elders are to “be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it.” (p. 46)
  - All elders should be equally knowledgeable in matters of doctrine.
- 1 Tim 3:10; 5:22; Titus 1:5-9—All elders are to meet the same biblical requirements and be publicly examined as to their biblical qualification before serving as an overseer. (p. 46)
- James 5:14—All elders are responsible to visit and pray for the sick. (p. 47)
- Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17—All elders share the designation “elder” and “overseer.” (p. 47)
- 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim 5:17, 19; Heb 13:17—All elders are to be appreciated, esteemed, loved, honored, protected from slander, and obeyed. (p. 47)
- Equality means that each elder is qualified to instruct in sound doctrine and defend gospel truth (perhaps to different degrees of competency), administer the Lord’s Supper, participate fully in decision-making and setting church policy, lead in public prayer, and anoint the sick with oil. (p. 47)
- All are equally accountable to one another and cannot act against the group’s wishes. (p. 47)
- Each can bear the designation “elder,” “overseer,” or “pastor.” (p. 47)

List four biblical proofs that demonstrate diversity among elders on the eldership council.

- 1 Tim 5:17-18—not all elders labor at preaching and teaching. Although all elders must be able to teach, not all have the spiritual gift of teaching or the same degree of proficiency at teaching or preaching the gospel. (p. 48)
- 1 Tim 5:17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28—not all elders have the same degree of leadership skills. Although all elders must be able to lead and manage their homes well, not all have the spiritual gift of leadership. Some elders will display more prominent leadership initiative and influence within the eldership body and church. (p. 48)
- 1 Tim 5:17-18; Gal 6:6—not all elders receive financial compensation, or the same amount of compensation. In other words, not all elders receive “double honor” from the congregation and its elders. (p. 48)
- Eph 4:11-12—what grows and matures a local church body is not eldership itself but the gifts of the Spirit, especially Spirit-gifted teachers and shepherds. (p. 49)

- o Diversity implies that not all elders have the same job description. Some may serve full-time at the church's expense, but most will be self-supporting. (p. 49)

**4. What is the problem with calling one elder the “senior pastor” and the other elders “the lay elders”?**

- o The division between senior pastor and lay elders is not a concept found in the New Testament, even though this division is deeply entrenched in the minds of many Christians. (p. 47)
- o This division undercuts and even contradicts the claim of biblical parity among elders. (p. 47)
  - When one church leader is designated the senior pastor, and the other leaders are called elders, or worse yet, lay elders, and the “senior pastor” serves permanently, and the lay elders have terms limits, the division become quite clear. (p. 47)

**Why is biblical terminology a big issue that always needs to be addressed?**

- o Biblical terminology always needs to be addressed in order to communicate consistently a clear message to the congregation of what eldership is as defined by the New Testament. (p. 47)

**Author's Notes**  
 The Scripture reveals a distinction among the elders without creating a formal hierarchy among them. If one elder is higher in position and holds greater authority over the other elders, or is the final decision-maker, true plurality is lost.

**5. Briefly summarize the warning concerning plurality given by John Murray:**

Strictly speaking there can be no plurality if there is not parity, [that is, equality]. If one is in the least degree above the others, then, in respect to that hegemony [superior authority], there is no longer plurality. There is not the slightest evidence in the New Testament that among the elders there was any hierarchy; the elders exercise government . . . on a parity with one another.

- o Scripture reveals a distinction among the elders without creating a formal hierarchy among them. (p. 50)
- o If one elder is higher in position and holds greater authority over the other elders, or is the final decision-maker, true plurality is lost. (p. 50)
- o Plurality without parity is simply hierarchy which the New Testament does not teach. (p.50)

**6. What is meant by the statement that there is no formal hierarchy within the eldership?**

- o This statement maintains that no one elder holds a higher position than any other elder. The differences among elders are functional, not formal. (p. 50)
- o Just as two of the leading apostles, Peter and John, bore no special title or formal distinctions from the other apostles, elders who receive “double honor” for their work form no special class and receive no special title. (p. 50)

Why is that important to understand?

- If there is any formal hierarchy within the eldership then there is no parity or plurality. Read together as a group Professor John Murray's profound quotation about plurality and parity and discuss this quotation. Some of the vocabulary is unfamiliar to people. (p.50)

7. What is meant by sacralizing one gifted elder over the other elders?

- To sacralize one gifted elder would make him in effect the Protestant priest, the ordained clergyman, the minister of the word, the one who alone can bless, preach the word, administer the Lord's Supper, wear clerical garments, and take the title of "Reverend." (p. 51)
- This represents the three-office view: the ordained minister (clergy) distinct from both the lay ruling elders and serving deacons. This view focuses all the attention on one sacred person.

8. What reasons would you give for rejecting the clergy-laity or priest-people division within the believing community?

- The clergy-laity or priest-people division places all its attention on one sacred person. This focuses not on the person of Christ but on a fallible individual in leadership. (p. 51)
- The model of leadership that Jesus Christ sets up with the disciples also does not place all of the power with a single clergyman. The clergy-laity model creates a hierarchy of leadership which is not present in Scripture. (p. 50)
- Even though Peter and John were recognized as leaders among the other apostles, even they bore no special title or formal distinctions. (p. 50)

9. List some reasons why genuine peer accountability among elders is essential to good leadership and character development.

- Collective leadership can provide an elder with critically needed balance against his faults and deficiencies. We all have our blind spots, eccentricities, and imperfections. (p. 53)
- Flaws or blind spots distort our judgment, particularly of multi-talented, charismatic leaders. (p. 53)
- In a shared leadership structure, however, different members complement each other and balance one another's weaknesses. (p. 53)
- There is a greater wisdom in a council of godly, qualified elders than in any one person: "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." (Prov. 15:22) (p. 53)
- When placed in a council of qualified elders, however, an elders strengths enable him to make important contributions to the church, and his weaknesses are mitigated by the strengths of others. (p. 53)

10. Read the verses below. After each verse write what you learned about the subject of accountability from each of these biblical texts.

“Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it.” (Ps. 141:5)

- Accountability should be welcomed and sought by those in leadership. Eldership will be healthier because of accountability.

“Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” (Prov. 9:8)

- A wise man appreciates and welcomes accountability from others. He recognizes the importance of accountability and loves the person who is willing to provide accountability.

“But he who hates reproof is stupid.” (Prov. 12:1)

- A man who does not welcome accountability does himself a disservice.

“The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.” (Prov. 15:31)

- Wise people surround themselves with accountability and consistently place themselves in situations where they will be held accountable and receive feedback.

“When a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.” (Prov. 21:11)

- Wisdom is also often paired with an increase in knowledge.

11. How would you answer those who say that “Timothy was the senior pastor of the church in Ephesus?”

- Timothy was not a permanent local church pastor in the modern sense of the term. (p. 54)
- He was an apostolic delegate on a special assignment. (p. 54)
- He served as Paul’s partner and coworker in spreading the gospel and strengthening the various churches under Paul’s care (Acts 19:22). (p. 54)
- To characterize Timothy’s leadership position as a pastor would be to misunderstand the role he played as apostolic delegate. He was an evangelist who did pastoral work but worked under the leadership of Paul. (p. 54)

12. What is the “Moses Model” of church government?

- Drawing from the Old Testament model of leadership where Moses was the sole leader of Israel (p. 55)
- Just as Moses was the sole leader of Israel with the elders serving as his assistants, so the local church pastor is like Moses, the sole leader of the church who does 98% of the teaching and makes all the final decisions. In this model, the elders are the pastor’s advisors. (p. 55)

Explain why the author rejects this form of church leadership as unscriptural.

- This model outright rejects biblical passages that teach plurality of elders: Acts 14:23; 20:28-31; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14-15; 1 Peter 5:1-5. (p. 55)
- Rejects Paul and Peter’s direct charge to the elders to pastor the flock of God. (p. 55)
- Using the “Moses Model” of church government arbitrarily rejects the New Testament and replaces with an Old Testament form. (p. 55)
- Moses was a unique, one-time deliverer to the nation of Israel. He was not a permanent institution. (p. 55)
- The “Moses Model” also provides little to no accountability for its leader. Under this structure, the governance of the church is in the hands of one man who may or may not want elders as pastoral advisors. (pp. 55-56)

**Author’s Notes**

The collective leadership of a biblical eldership provides a formal structure for genuine accountability. Only when there is accountability between equals in leadership is there any hope for curbing the pastoral abuse of authority that plagues many churches worldwide.

**13.** Some scholars claim that there were various house churches in each city and that together these house churches made up the citywide church. They further state that each house church had only one presiding elder/overseer. The elders from the various house churches met together occasionally to form the citywide eldership. Their point is this: There was only one elder/overseer per house church, not a plurality of elders in a single church. How would you answer this popular claim?

- There is no biblical evidence that a single overseer or elder presided over an individual house church. This view lacks any convincing New Testament evidence. (p. 56)
- To claim that a house church could only have one presiding elder is speculation. There is no reason that a house church could not have had two or three elders per church. (p. 56-57)
- The Bible says nothing about a relationship between the citywide church and the house churches. We are not given any information about this in the New Testament. (p. 57)
- The texts of scripture contradict this theory. (p. 57)
  - Acts 14:23—Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (plural) in each church (singular).
  - James 5:14—a sick believer is to call the elders (plural) of the church (singular) to come and pray.
  - Acts 20:17—Paul charges the Ephesian elders to call the elders (plural) to the church (singular).
  - Luke doesn’t speak of the churches in Ephesus but rather the church in Ephesus.
  - Acts 20:28—Luke refers to the flock not the flocks over which the Holy Spirit has placed the elders as overseers.

14. From the elder qualification lists (page iii), which qualifications are necessary for working in close harmony with one another on the eldership team? Explain your answers.

- (Answers will vary) Gentle: This person is forbearing, patient, understanding of others weaknesses and problems.
- Respectable: A person who is thought well of and one who people will listen to and follow.
- Not arrogant or quick-tempered: Arrogant people turn people off to relationships. Quick-tempered people scare people and eventually get in big conflicts and hurt people.
- Not-quarrelsome: Such people inevitably conflict with others. They have to be right.

15. Read the paragraph below about Bible interpretation (= hermeneutics). Explain the meaning and the importance of this principle to the whole book?

A central tenant of sound biblical hermeneutics is to build one's doctrine on the clear, core, teaching passages of the subject in question, and not on secondary, speculative, irrelevant, or obscure passages. In other words, let the clear didactic passages interpret the unclear and obscure, let the core teaching control the peripheral. As this study abundantly demonstrates, we have built the doctrine of plurality of pastoral oversight on the eight core didactic passages that clearly teach plurality: Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17-18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14-15; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

- This book bases its teaching on clear, core teachings rather than secondary ones which might speculate or be irrelevant to the topic of eldership and leadership. (p. 58)
- The practice is a critically important hermeneutical practice which prevents eldership from being derailed by unclear passages. Instead, core teaching passages allow for clarity and simplicity.

**16.** If you would like, this question can be done on an individual basis, not in a group setting. From your past experience working with committees or groups, indicate whether the following statements apply: use T for true, or F for false. Take time to honestly evaluate yourself before God. Ask your wife or a close friend to help you answer objectively. With your mentor's help, identify your areas of weakness as a team member. Give these weaknesses special prayer attention and peer accountability.

- I act impulsively and dislike waiting for others to make decisions.
- I generally trust the collective judgment of my fellow teammembers.
- I feel genuine concern for the interests and plans of my fellow workers.
- I often act independently of the leadership body.
- I make myself accountable to my fellow team members.
- I work hard to cooperate with my partners in ministry.
- I share my burdens, fears, and problems with my brothers.
- I am inclined to carry a grudge.
- I am easily frustrated by disagreement.
- I am afraid to speak honestly in a group.
- I feel free to correct and direct my fellow team members.
- I actively contribute to discussions and decisions.
- I tend to be bossy.
- I am too sensitive.
- I tend to dominate discussions.
- I have a hard time apologizing or admitting I am wrong.
- I love my fellow colleagues.
- I consciously try to be humble and serve my brothers.
- I pray for my team members regularly.

To be more precise you can use -T /+T or -F/+F in answering the question.



## *Qualified Leadership*

*“The qualities listed are essential to doing the work of shepherd leadership. Much of the weakness and waywardness of our churches today is directly due to our failure to require that church elders meet God’s standards for office. If we want our local churches to be spiritually healthy, then we need to require our elders to be spiritually healthy as defined by God’s written standards.”*

...

*“Essential to our topic of elders is the recognition that there is no separate list of qualifications for the ordained clergy and another list for the lay elders. The New Testament teaches no such division in the body of Christ between sacred clergy and common laity. Although this division is ancient in origin, it is unscriptural and unauthorized by God’s word.”*

### Read chapter 4

1. What did you find most surprising about this chapter?

2. Explain the nuances of each of the following three terms:

Elders (*presbyteroi* [πρεσβύτεροι])

- Communicates the idea of maturity, dignity, wisdom and an honored teacher of the community. (p. 63)
- People go to an elder for wise counsel and teaching (Ezek. 7:26). (p. 63)
- Emphasizes the honored position and respectability of a person. (p. 63)

Overseers (*episkopos* [ἐπίσκοπος])

- Word used by Paul to refer to elders. (p. 63)
- Designation for various kinds of responsible positions of management. (p. 63)
- Conveys the idea of one who is officially responsible for watching over someone or something. (p. 63)
- Emphasizes the leader’s work and official responsibility. (p. 63)
- Paul uses the official titles of elder and overseer interchangeably. (p. 63)

Steward (*oikonomos* [οἰκονόμος])

- In the ancient world, the household steward had a great deal of authority over household operations and those who served in the house. (p. 63)
- Steward is under the authority of the master, the owner of the house or estate. (p. 63)
- Overseer is the steward over God's household, the church. (p. 63)
- The steward of God's people must meet God's standard of moral character, behavior, and ability. (p. 63)

Author's Note

The overriding concern of the New Testament in relation to church leadership is the moral and spiritual character of those who serve the church as elders and deacons... The New Testament is emphatic on this point. A biblical eldership requires biblically qualified elders.

**3. Why are objective qualifications a necessary requirement for *all* elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)? List some reasons.**

- Titus 1:7: an elder is God's steward of God's family household. (p. 64)
- Elders are entrusted with God's dearest and most costly possessions, his children. (p. 64)
- He is entrusted with guarding the glorious gospel message of salvation. (p. 64)
- Elders are to be examples of Christlike attitudes and behaviors. (p. 64)
- Every church needs role models of Christian character and faith. (p. 64)
- Qualities listed are essential to doing the work of the shepherd leadership. (p. 64)

**4. Explain and elaborate on the following principle: "The best church constitution and most biblical form of church government are impotent without leaders of sound, godly character."**

- Character of a leader is emphasized over giftedness. (p. 65)
- It is essential for leaders to demonstrate and maintain godly character. A church with a biblical form of church government can be led astray and fall apart because of a lack of integrity and character from its leadership.

Describe an example of this principle in action.

Author's Note

Peter and Paul are in complete agreement about the identity and work of the elders. Peter is uniquely concerned about how the elders shepherd and oversee God's flock. Hence, he focuses on the attitudes and motives that should or should not characterize a true shepherd of God's flock.

5. What is the point that the author makes for why the full list of the qualifications are to be applied to *all* the elders, not just one special head elder? This is an important truth to understand and affirm.

- There is no separate list of qualifications for the ordained clergy and another list for the lay elders. (p. 64)
- The New Testament does not teach a division, therefore the full list of qualifications applies to all elders. (p. 64)
- This practice also supports the importance of the equality of elders. There is no reason to create hierarchy among the elders if each of them meets the same qualifications. (p. 65)

6. Read over the chart listing the biblical qualifications (page iii). Which two qualifications were new or surprising to you? Can you explain your choice?

7. Which qualifications best help you to understand the duties of the elders?

- Able to teach, able to rebuke those who contradict the gospel, hospitable.

8. As you read over the chart listing the biblical qualifications, which five qualifications best help you to understand what a biblical elder is to be like in godly character? Explain your answers. (answer will vary)

- (Answers will vary) Sober-minded: Balanced, sound in making judgments and decisions. Not an extremist.
- Respectable: Well thought of by people because of his character.
- Gentle: Forbearing with people, gracious, understanding of people's weaknesses and problems.
- Husband of one wife: A marriage that is above reproach.
- A lover of good: Ready to do good deeds for others. Show's mercy. Service oriented.
- Upright and holy: Fair and just and a devout Christian person.

9. Write a brief explanation of each of the following clauses:

“He must hold firm to the trustworthy word” (Titus 1:9).

- Elders must hold firm to the gospel message. (p. 67)
- The gospel message is absolutely trustworthy and reliable. (p. 67)
- Elders must be fully committed to historic, apostolic, biblical doctrine. (p. 67)

"as taught" (Titus 1:9)

- o The message of the gospel must not be changed or distorted. It is imperative to teach the gospel of Christ without adding anything or subtracting anything.

“that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine”

- o Elders must be equipped to teach the flock of God effectively and accurately.

“and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9).

- o Elders must be able to correct those who contradict the clear teachings of Christ and answer questions about basic doctrinal beliefs. (p. 67)

Author's Notes

All elders, even the best ones, have annoying traits, weaknesses, blind spots, deficiencies, and at one time or another will disappoint their fellow leaders or make bad decisions that hurt people. We are all a mixed package of wise and foolish, healer and wounder, strong and weak, flawed and sound, consistent and inconsistent, truth and falsehood.

**10.** Why is it required that a church elder be able “to rebuke those who contradict” the gospel message? (see Titus 1:10-16)? List a number of reasons for this.

- o Elders are both guardians and teachers of sound doctrine. (p. 68)
- o An elder who is unable to defend the word of God and doesn't know his Bible is like a shepherd without legs: he can't lead or protect the congregation. (p. 68)

**11.** Using the list of biblical qualifications for eldership, what differences do you see between board elders and pastoral elders?

- o Board elders serve as advisors to a lead pastor. They primarily perform a more passive function. The lead pastor gets final say in decisions for the church while board elders do not have such authority.
- o Pastoral elders serve as active, engaged members of the eldership. Each elder is adequately qualified as a pastoral elder and is capable of teaching, leading, and ministering to the flock. There is built-in accountability among the elders as they make decisions jointly and seek wisdom.

**12.** What does the author mean that “a number of the qualifications for elders are not simple 'yes' or 'no' questions”?

- o Qualifications for elders are not a simple checklist. Elders and congregations have to exercise fair and balanced judgment to assess whether a candidate meets a particular qualification. (p. 66)
- o For example, most people struggle with self-control to one degree or another. It is not a clear “yes” or “no.” People also have different conceptions of what self-control may look like. Countries and cultures of the world measure self-discipline differently. Most people have self-control in some areas of life but not in others. Very few would claim to have mastered self-control completely. (p. 66)

13. The author speaks of the “right temperament for shepherd leadership.” In five or six bullet points, what would that temperament look like?

- A right temperament for shepherd leadership would look like: (p. 65)
  - A faithful Christian husband.
  - Above reproach in his relationship with other women.
  - A responsible father who is respected by his children.
  - One who oversees his household well because it is an indication of his ability to oversee God’s household.
  - One who demonstrates self-control in the use of money, alcohol, and pastoral authority.
  - One who displays doctrinal and financial integrity.
  - He is just, fair, level headed, and balanced.
  - Even before unbelievers, he is morally above reproach.
  - An elder cannot be arrogant, quarrelsome, quick-tempered, violent, or a domineering leader.
  - He is gentle and forbearing.
  - He loves to help people in need.
  - He is hospitable.
  - He loves to teach the Bible and to teach the truths of Scripture.
  - He is a spiritually mature, time-proven disciple of Jesus Christ.

14. The author claims that “One of the most common mistakes made by local churches is that they do not adequately examine candidates for eldership according to the biblical requirements.” Why do you think this is true? What is the problem?

- Some churches may be impatient or lazy in the examination process and may rush the examination process and install a leader prematurely. Thorough examination takes time, discernment, and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

What is the problem?

- The problem is that after a while it may be discovered that person’s doctrine is out of sync with the church or that he has serious character flaws that make his eldership a problem for the church. (p. 62)

#### Author’s Notes

This is the big difference between board elders and pastoral elders, pastor elders are both guardians and teachers of sound doctrine, board elders are not.



## *Male Leadership*

*“If Jesus is the supreme egalitarian that some wish him to be, he utterly failed women at a critical moment in history (Gal. 4:4–5). As the hailed liberator of women, should not Jesus have chosen six women and six men apostles, or at the very least, one female apostle?”*

...

*“One of the most serious problems with evangelical feminism is that it undermines the authority of Scripture. Who wants a Bible that says one thing (and even defends it) but means the opposite? That is not a book worthy of our trust.”*

### Read chapter 5

#### 1. Could Jesus just as well have been born a woman as a man? Explain your answer.

- o Jesus could not have been born a woman instead of a man. Being born as a male was biblically and theologically necessary. Jesus had to be not only human, but a male human—a first-born, Jewish male from a certain tribe and family. (p. 70)
- o According to God’s plan of salvation, Jesus Christ is the counterpart to Adam, not Eve. Jesus is “the last Adam” and the “second man” of the new creation in Christ (1 Cor. 15:45-47). (p. 70)
- o Jesus is described as the bridegroom and husband to his people (Eph. 5:25). (p. 70)

#### 2. How do you know that Jesus didn’t accommodate his choice of all male apostles to the male dominated culture of his day?

- o Jesus did not fear the first-century, male-dominated culture, or the religious elite of his day. (p. 71)
- o Jesus frequently called out the hypocrisy demonstrated by the culture. (p. 71)
- o He did not accommodate his choices and actions to sinful traditions. Ultimately, it is an insult to his character to claim that the absence of female apostles was due to concessions to first-century Jewish customs. (p. 71)

#### 3. If someone tells you that Jesus failed women at a crucial moment in history when he could have made women apostles, how would you answer that person?

- o Jesus was not a male chauvinist. (p. 71)
- o Jesus did not sin against women by choosing twelve male apostles rather than six male and six female apostles as some claim he should have done. (p. 71)

- Jesus was comfortable around women and women were comfortable around him. Women felt secure bringing their little children to Jesus for him to lay his hands on them and bless them (Mark 10:13-16). (p. 71)
- The book of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles demonstrate how prominent women were in the early Christian movement because of Jesus and his chosen apostles. (p. 71)
- Women were consistently honored and elevated because of the teachings and actions of Jesus.

4. How would you prove to someone from the texts of Scripture that Paul is not referring to both men and women as elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7? Lay out your arguments from the text of Scripture.

- In 1 Timothy 2:8-13, which is part of the larger overall context beginning in 1 Timothy 2:1 and ending in 3:16, Paul restricted believing women from being pastoral elders. (pp. 71-72)
- Paul declared in unambiguous language: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." (p. 72)

Author's Notes

"Headship-submission in the marriage relationship is not culturally conditioned. On the contrary, 'it is part of the essence of marriage.'" (George Knight)

5. Explain how Ephesians 5:22-25 helps to interpret Paul's statements in 1 Timothy 2:11-14.

- Ephesians 5 uses the analogy of Christ and his church to bolster the statements "Wives submit to your husbands" and "the husband is the head of the wife." This is true in the home. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. The wife submits to her husband as the church submits to Christ. This is not a cultural accommodation to the Greco-Roman society. The local church is an extended family. The local church should support the male/female roles within the individual household, and the individual household should support the gender roles within the extended family, the church. You cannot have male headship in the home but female headship in the church.

6. Read 1 Timothy 2:13-14.

What does the passage say about Adam?

- Adam was formed first.
- Adam was not deceived.

What does the passage say about Eve?

- Eve was formed after Adam.
- Eve was deceived and became the transgressor.



What is Paul's grand purpose in mentioning Adam and Eve?

- Paul anchors his instruction in the Genesis account (Gen. 1:27-28) which lays out the timeless creation laws of Genesis. (p. 73)
- Paul uses the order of Adam and Eve to affirm the complementarian order. (p. 73)

Why do many people think they must explain away verses 13-14?

- People think they must explain away these verses because they do not conform to the values of modern culture. They are offensive to secular feminists who dismiss the Bible as patriarchal and demeaning to women. (p. 74)
- These verses are clear and authoritative about the order of Christian marriage. (p. 74)

Author's Notes

The apostle's instructions regarding Christian men and women in the gathered assembly (1 Tim. 2:8-12) are intimately connected to, and govern, his instructions for the overseers of 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Yet [women's] active role in advancing the gospel and caring for the Lord's people was accomplished in ways that did not violate male leadership in the home and church.

7. List as many reasons as you can for why the elders must be able to teach and defend the biblical teaching on manhood and womanhood.

- This biblical teaching is like Christ: Male headship in marriage is not cultural but of divine origin: the husband is the head of the wife, "as Christ is head of the church." Christ's headship is not a relic of ancient cultural patriarchy but of God's divine order. Scripture speaks clearly here of loving, Christlike family leadership, not selfish narcissism. (p. 74)
- This biblical teaching is like the church: In Christian marriage, the wife represents the church that freely and willingly submits to Christ's headship; the husband represents Christ. (p. 74-75)
- It is a qualification of elders to be able to defend the messages of Scripture which includes the biblical teaching on manhood and womanhood.

8. Read the statement below. In your own words explain the relevance and significance of this claim?

One of the most serious problems with evangelical feminism is that it undermines the authority of Scripture. Who wants a Bible that says one thing (and even defends it) but means the opposite? That is not a book worthy of our trust.

- The underlying issue is the authority of Scripture. Scripture can be undermined by reinterpreting or revising what the Scripture clearly, plainly states. (p. 75)

**9.** In regard to male headship, what is meant by the statement, “The home supports the church and the church supports the home”?

- The local church is an extended family. The local church should support the male/female roles within the individual household, and the individual household should support the gender roles within the extended family, the church. You cannot have male headship in the home but female headship in the church. The Bible is very concerned about the proper order of the home and church. We know this because the Apostle reaches back to the creation account for the proof for these roles between men and women.

**10.** How would you demonstrate that evangelical feminists (egalitarians) have accommodated their views on men and women to modern secular society?

- It should seem strange to us that the new reinterpretations of the biblical text on men and women turn out to be promoting the views of humanistic, secular society, which erase the gender roles. That should be a warning that something is wrong. Who is copying who?

**11.** What are some of the clever ways in which evangelical feminists (egalitarians) deny the straightforward biblical teachings on Christian manhood and womanhood? Give a specific example.

- Egalitarians attempt to neutralize the biblical texts. They contend that the specific passages on headship and submission are “obscure,” “isolated,” and “problematic.” They contend that these passages should be reinterpreted “in light of Galatians 3:28” which they consider to be the clearer, more theologically pertinent text. (p. 76)
- They dismiss by freely disposing of every objectionable text and calling it “cultural,” “temporary,” or “first-century custom” making these texts irrelevant for Christians today. (p. 76)

**12.** Why is this subject fundamentally important to your local church community? List several reasons.

- It is your God-given assignment to be alert, to guard the church, and to consistently teach the fundamental truth of Scripture. (p. 76)
- Any candidate for eldership should confidently affirm the divine design for marriage, sexuality, and gender. (p. 76)
- It is important for elders to be united on this subject so there is not confusion and disunity. (p. 76)

**13.** What would be the response of the people in your church if women were soon to be appointed as pastoral elders?

What does their response tell you about the leaders in your church?

**14.** This question is to be answered honestly before God personally and not within the group. What have you done to prepare yourself to teach and defend biblical manhood and womanhood? If you have done nothing, what will you do to prepare yourself to protect the people of your church.

## *The First Jewish Christian Elders*

*“Leadership by a council of men called elders (πρεσβύτεροι [presbyteroi]) was familiar to the Jews and to all readers of the Greek Old Testament. The council of elders was one of Israel’s oldest and most fundamental institutions. It was nearly as basic as the family unit. . . . Israel’s elders are mentioned approximately one hundred times in the Old Testament.”*

...

*“The Old Testament elders were preeminently men of counsel and wisdom. The qualities of wisdom and discernment are implied in the word elder itself: ‘Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days’ (Job 12:12, also Job 29:21; 1 Kings 12:8, 13).”*

### Read chapter 6

1. Why do you think the author found the book of Acts to be “most interesting and inspiring” as a new believer in Christ?

- o Because it tells the beginnings of Christianity with “vigour and vividness which often leaves the new reader breathless.” (p. 79)

2. Why is the book of Acts essential to our study of church elders?

- o It includes two of the most significant passages on eldership: Acts 14:23 and Acts 20:17-38. (p. 79)
- o Acts also includes examples of elders at work. (p. 79)
- o It helps us understand Paul’s church planting practices and his distinctive Christian teaching on shepherd-elders. (p. 79)
- o It provides a picture of elders in the church in Jerusalem. (p. 79)

3. What do the Old Testament Scriptures teach us about the overall concept of biblical elders?

- o Leadership by a council of men called elders was familiar to the Jews and to all readers of the Greek OT. The council of elders was one of Israel’s oldest and most fundamental institutions. (p. 80)
- o Israel’s elders were the people’s official representatives. (p. 80)
- o Elders were called “elders of the people” (Ex. 19:7; cf. Matt. 27:1) or the “elders of the congregation” (Judg. 21:16). (p. 80)
- o Elders are men of counsel and wisdom. The qualities of wisdom and discernment are implied in the word elder. To be an elder is to be a wise counselor. (p. 80)

List four key Old Testament texts that help explain the concept of elders.

- o Exodus 19:7
- o 1 Kings 12:8, 13
- o Judges 21:16
- o Job 12:12
- o Job 12:20
- o Lamentations 2:10
- o Lamentations 5:14

4. Why is the Old Testament concept of elders important to our study of the New Testament elders?

- o The first Christian church was in Jerusalem and solely comprised of Jewish disciples. They would have understood the concept of leadership by a council of elders. This helps explain why Luke did not think he needed to explain the concept of a council of elders. (p. 80)
- o The New Testament concept of elders was inherited from the Old Testament concept of elders and provides context for the understanding of leadership by a council of elders that the New Testament authors had. However, New Testament elders have their own qualifications and duties not seen in the Old Testament. New Testament church elders are not just reorganized Old Testament elders. (p. 80)

5. What do we learn from Acts 11:27–30 about the character and work of the first Christian elders?

- o The elders were the recognized leaders of the church in Jerusalem. (p. 81)
- o Paul and Barnabas acknowledged the authority of the elders in Jerusalem to receive and administer the charitable offering from the church in Antioch. (p. 80)
- o The elders were charged with this relief ministry. (p. 80)

**Author's Notes**

One significant aspect of their [elders'] work was to join with the priests to read the law of God to the people every seven years (Deut. 31:9–13; 27:1). How could the elders administer justice if they did not know the law of God? Therefore, the elders as well as the priests were responsible for the people's education in God's law.

6. Explain the theological issue that caused the church in Antioch to send an official delegation, led by Paul and Barnabas, to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders.

- o The Pharisaic Christians insisted that there could be no Gentile salvation apart from keeping the Mosaic law and the rite of circumcision. Eventually some of these legalistic Jewish Christians made their way to Antioch and spread the teaching. (p. 81)

Why was this theological issue so critical to the church in Antioch?

- This issue was critical because it was causing deep divisions within the church and was spreading a message which was counter to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (p. 81)

7. Why did the church in Antioch want their delegation to meet with both the apostles and elders? Couldn't the apostles themselves have resolved the issue of Gentile conversion without the assistance of the Jerusalem elders? Why were the elders a necessary part of the meeting of Acts 15?

- The false teachers were claiming the mother church in Jerusalem as their church and possibly the apostles and elders as their authority for what they taught. These false teachers in Antioch were claiming others as the authority for the twisted doctrine which they were spreading. (p. 82)
- The false teachers were under the authority of the elders so it was necessary for the elders to clarify their position on this critical gospel issue. It was essential that the elders be involved in correcting the error within their own church. (p. 82)
- The elders' close association with the apostles demonstrates their significant position and the role in the church at Jerusalem. (p. 82)

8. What do we learn from Acts 15 about the position and work of the first Christian elders?

- The first Christian elders were qualified to instruct, correct, and communicate sound biblical doctrine. (p. 82)
- The daily pastoral supervision of the church slowly shifted from the apostles entirely to the elders. (p. 82)
- The elders were guided by the Holy Spirit in their decision making. (p. 83)
- The Jerusalem elders did not have jurisdiction over other churches, only the apostles did. They were the authority over the church in Jerusalem, but their authority was limited to their local congregation. (p. 83)

9. List the significant points Michael Kruger makes in his historical assessment of the first-century churches of the New Testament?

But in the midst of all this transition and diversity, there are no indications that any one bishop/church was in a position of authority over another bishop/church in a different locale. For example, while the author of 1 Clement makes his appeal to the church at Corinth regarding the improper removal of presbyters, there is no indication that the church has any jurisdictional authority over the latter. 1 Clement is not crafted as a directive but instead is designed to persuade—a common reason why letters were written between churches in this period. . . . Likewise, Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, while offering numerous exhortations for the good of that congregation, does not call them to submit to himself or to any other church or bishop. The only authority to which the Philippians are to submit is their own "presbyters". Thus, we see that individual churches (and their leaders) were quite willing to collaborate, communicate and cooperate. Indeed, the extensive letter-writing between churches suggests that a high level of interaction was the norm. But in the midst of such interaction, there are no indications of an authoritative structure where one bishop/church rules over another.

Similarly, he goes on to say,

On the contrary, it seems that local congregations existed as independent units governed by their own leadership structure, but were nevertheless quite willing to cooperate, interact, and even to gather together for discussions about important matters.

- Extrabiblical texts affirm what is observed in Acts 15; the elders are the authority over only their local congregation. (p. 84)
- Each congregation was self-governing and independent, with the jurisdiction of its leaders limited to the local congregation (p. 84)
- There is no indication of an “authoritative structure” or hierarchy where one bishop or church rules over another (p. 84)

**10.** Why are Michael Kruger’s claims critical to a correct understanding of the Acts 15 account?

- The elders in Jerusalem did not have authority over any other church. This helps explain why the elders and the apostles were involved in the matter of Acts 15. Both had jurisdiction in the matter but their roles were distinct from one another.

**11.** Which of the elder requirements qualify elders to judge and resolve doctrinal conflict in a Christian manner? See the qualification chart on page iii. Explain your answer.

- Able to instruct in sound doctrine.
- Refute false teachers of the gospel.

**12.** According to the texts of Scripture, what can we say regarding James’s position and reputation in the church at Jerusalem?

- James was considered to be one of the “pillars” of the church, along with Peter and John (Gal. 2:9). (p. 85)
- James was one of the chief spokesmen of the council, but, as far as we know, he was not the official chief of the council. (p. 85)
- Luke did not show interest in the position or title that James held. He identified James four times in the book of Acts and never identified his position in the church. (p. 85)
- He was highly influential. (p. 85)
- He exhibited outstanding personal character and prophet-like teaching. (p. 85)
- James was highly esteemed among believers. (p. 85)
- James simply introduced himself as “a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1). (p. 85)
- It is possible that James was considered an apostle, but not a disciple, and an elder at the church in Jerusalem. James held a distinct position in the early church. (p. 86)

Why do the New Testament writers seem to have so little interest in naming James's official title and position in the believing community?

- Jesus warned his disciples against prideful obsession with honorific titles and lofty positions that characterized the typical religious leaders of his day: "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and *you are all brothers*" (Matt. 23:8).

13. What do we learn about the work of the elders in Jerusalem from the Acts 21:17-26 account?

- Paul and his traveling companions appeared before the church elders in Jerusalem to deliver the Gentiles' relief offering for the poor. (p. 84)
- The elders offered wise counsel and aided in resolving conflict. (p. 84)
- Paul respected the advice and authority of the elders. (p. 84)

Author's Notes

The letter and the key addresses are here now recorded for us in Scripture. The same troubling issues and debates concerning the gospel are with us today, and what Peter declared that day 2,000 years ago needs to be repeatedly affirmed: "But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they [Gentiles] will" (Acts 15:11).





## *Appointing Elders in Every Church*

*“Because he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, what Paul teaches is what Christ teaches. What Paul commands is what Christ commands. Paul’s authority to give written instructions to the churches is Christ-given authority and must be obeyed. Paul’s gospel is Christ’s gospel. Ultimately, then, Paul’s charge to church elders is Christ’s charge, not only to the first-century elders, but also to all undershepherds and for all future generations.”*

...

*“Their choice for multiple elders to govern their churches was not a thoughtless choice. Paul was a strategically-minded missionary. He chose and implemented this form of church government because it best harmonized with the nature of the local church as the household of God and the body of Christ.”*

### Read chapter 7

1. Are you able to identify on a map where the churches of Galatia were located?

2. What does the word apostle mean?

- o Special authorized messenger. (p. 89)
- o Emissary and envoy directly commissioned by Christ. (p. 89)
- o Directly chosen by Jesus. (p. 89)

What does it mean that Paul was “an apostle of Jesus Christ”?

- o He was Jesus’s unique ambassador, sent to define, defend, and proclaim the gospel to the nations. (p. 89)
- o Paul teaches what Christ teaches. (p. 89)
- o Given authority from Christ to give written instructions to the churches and must be obeyed. As if Christ was giving the same instructions. (p. 89)
- o Paul’s charge to church elders is Christ’s charge to church elders. (p. 89)

3. List four reasons why Paul is our authoritative teacher and trustworthy guide to the subject of church eldership.

- He is a commissioned apostle who has the same authority as Jesus Christ. (p. 89)
- Paul is the master architect of much of the vocabulary and theological concepts defining the gospel and the church. (p. 89)
- Paul's authority to give written instruction to the churches is Christ-given authority and must be obeyed. (p. 89)
- Because of Paul's special relationship to the gospel, how Paul established the organization of his local churches is of supreme concern to us. (p. 89)

4. What did you discover about Paul that was new and exciting to you?

5. What unique contributions does Acts 14:23 make to the subject of eldership?

- Only from this passage do we know that there were officially appointed elders in each of the churches. (p. 90)
- Appointed elder when they revisited these churches in their way home. (p. 90)
- Provides historical data for the study of eldership. (p. 90)

6. What does the Greek word for “appointed” **not** mean (χειροτονέω [*cheirotoneō*])?

- Does not mean “to vote” as determined by context and usage and not merely etymology. (p. 92)
- Does not mean ordination or laying on of hands. Luke employs a distinct Greek verb in Acts 6:6 to designate the laying on of hands, which is not used in this passage. (p. 92)

7. What grammatical, lexical, and contextual proofs does the author present to show that the Greek word for “appointed” means simply “appoint” or “install” or “choose”? (See also endnotes 4-8 in the book for help.) Be sure you understand these grammatical and lexical arguments. (If you do not understand the grammatical issues of this text, call on someone to help you.)

- BDAG, 1083, “This does not involve a choice by the group; here the word means appoint, install, with the apostles as the subject.”
- The assertion that the verb indicates that Paul and Barnabas merely presided over the election of the elders ignore the plain reading of the text. (p. 92)
- Paul and Barnabas are the subjects of the Greek participle “appointed,” not the church members. The pronoun *them* in this passage confirms this. Therefore, the grammar of the Greek text itself demonstrates that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them, and not by the congregation. (p. 92)

- Do not confuse the etymology of the word with the clear, accepted lexical and contextual meaning. (p. 92)
- F.F. Bruce points out that “The verb itself tell us nothing about the method of appointment.” (p. 92)

**8. In Bible interpretation, why is grammar important to always observe carefully?**

- Because the Bible is written with words, sentences, and paragraphs. The careful interpreter always has an eye on the grammar: the main verb, the subject of the verb, the object of the verb, and particularly prepositional phrases and transitional words. For the correct interpretation of a verse, the grammar must be carefully observed. See 2 Timothy 2:15
- Do not confuse etymology with the clear lexical and contextual meaning. (p.92)

**9. How does Acts 14:23 illustrate the above point?**

- The subject of the verb is Paul and Barnabas, not the congregation. The pronoun “them” following the verb “appointed,” also confirms this conclusion. Also, the context and usage, not etymology, determine the word's meaning, and in this case the context is conclusive that “appoint” is the only intended meaning. (p. 92)
- The correct interpretation of Acts 14:23 is answered by a correct understanding of the grammar and correct lexical meaning of the word “appointed.” (p. 92)

**Author's Notes**

The apostles knew better than anyone the seriousness of appointing the right people to leadership. They understood that the wrong elders would wreak havoc on a church. The right men must be chosen.

**10. In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul forbids a “recent convert” from being appointed an elder. How is it that here, in Acts 14:23, Paul can appoint recent converts to be elders?**

- These new converts were already well-schooled in the OT Scriptures and the life of the synagogue. (p. 93)
- These newly installed elders had the Septuagint which they would have been reading with bewildered understanding in light of the fulfilled scriptures by the coming of Jesus Messiah. (p. 93)

**11. What part would the Greek Old Testament, called the Septuagint, play in the new churches of Galatia and especially among the elders?**

- Sacred text available for study that Jewish believers would have been very familiar with. (p. 93)
- Old Testament scripture would have taken on new meaning for the new converts. (p. 93)
- Provides endless material for the study and teaching of the knowledge of God and his Messiah. (p. 93)
- NT was not written or available to the masses yet. The Old Testament was the sacred text available to the early church. (p. 93)

**12.** What is the significance (or meaning) of the Greek preposition *kata* used with the word church that the elders need to understand?

- Used in the distributive sense meaning “in each individual church” or “church by church.” (p. 93)
- Designation for each local community of believers to have their own set of elders. (p. 93)

**13.** Explain what it means that “with prayer and fasting [Paul and Barnabas] committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed”?

- Closely associated with committing the elder to the Lord’s gracious care. (p. 95)
- Fasting added to the urgency of prayer. (p. 95)

**14.** What fundamental spiritual lesson did Barnabas and Paul teach the new Galatian believers by their act of praying and fasting as they entrusted the elders to God’s care in the apostles’ absence?

- The apostles demonstrated their earnestness and dependence on God by putting aside their natural needs to concentrate on prayer. (p. 95)
- They demonstrated the power and primary importance of prayer. (p. 95)

## *Paul's Final Charge to the Ephesian Elders: Follow My Example*

*"Paul's farewell speech demonstrates his high view of the church's elders and their indispensable role of protecting God's flock from wolves. Any church elder who does not know the content of Paul's message to the Ephesian elders is ill-equipped to lead and protect God's people. Indeed, every new generation of church leaders needs to discover afresh Paul's instructions to the Ephesian elders."*

...

*"These elders lacked nothing in their theological education for teaching the gospel or living lives pleasing to God. To prepare and strengthen them for their shepherding task, the elders needed to know 'the whole counsel of God' (v. 27). This Paul faithfully declared to them. His teaching ministry was thorough and in-depth."*

### Read chapter 8

1. Are you able to identify on a map where Ephesus and Miletus are located in both ancient and modern times?
2. The author states: "Any church elder who does not know the content of Paul's message to the Ephesian elders is ill-equipped to lead and protect God's people." Using the Acts 20 passage, explain how the author can make this absolute statement.
  - Acts 20 is the only place in the New Testament in which Paul directly speaks to the church's elders, giving them their final marching orders. (p. 97)
  - Acts 20 serves as an interpretive key which sheds light on Paul's teaching on elders recorded in other letters. (p. 97)
  - If a church leader does not understand the content of Paul's message in Acts 20 then they will more than likely misunderstand and misinterpret the teachings regarding elders found in other New Testament writings.

3. Three times in his address, Paul says to the elders, you yourselves know my personal life example and teaching. Much of the Acts 20 sermon is a presentation of Paul's life example and teaching. Why is personal example so important to Christian leadership and teaching?

- Paul knew that one of the most important needs the elders had was for a Christlike role model to observe and emulate. Paul understood that his life example and character were to be a role model for others to imitate. (p. 98)
- Personal examples are so important because there are certain things in life that cannot be learned from books. We learn more by watching and emulating the real life examples around us like parents, peers, and heroes. (pp. 98-99)

What does question 3 teach you about your ministry to people?

- Not only do I emulate others but as a leader I should expect that others will also emulate me. This highlights the importance of not only teaching correct doctrine but of the importance of right living and maintaining personal integrity and being a Christlike example for the people under my care.

4. Why should a church elder/overseer view himself as a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ?

- Being a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ means to see yourself as an elder who is appointed by Christ and one who is entrusted with the care of his blood-bought people. (p. 99)
- Serving as a slave is also a mark of humility. Humility should permeate the actions, words, attitudes, and teachings of the church elder. (p. 99)

**Author's Notes**

I challenge you to make it your goal to master the content of Paul's prophetic, apostolic message—study it, memorize it, think deeply upon it, discuss it, teach it, and live it. This passage is essential for training future shepherd elders.

5. From the book, list ten character traits that would characterize a humble Christian leader.

- More teachable (p. 99)
- More approachable (p. 99)
- More receptive to constructive criticism (p. 99)
- Better able to see his own limitations and failures (p. 99)
- Better able to submit to and work with others (p. 99)
- Better qualified to deal with the sins and failures of other people (p. 99)
- Less defensive (p. 100)
- Less prone to fight (p. 100)
- Quicker to reconcile differences (p. 100)
- More at ease in personal relationships (p. 100)
- Enjoys promoting the gifts and popularity of others (p. 100)
- Is not jealous of others' accomplishments (p. 100)

6. What was Paul's purpose in recounting his tears and trials by persecution?

- Paul sought to prepare the elders for the heartaches and persecutions that they would inevitably face in their ministry. (p. 100)
- Like Jesus, Paul knew what it was like to “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). (p. 100)
- When you love people and are attentive to their needs, you will weep over the many heartaches, conflicts, and hardships they face. You will weep over broken marriages, divided homes, ugly conflicts among church members, untimely deaths, crippling sickness, and dreadful addiction to pornography, alcohol, or drugs. (p. 100)

7. In your work with people, what specifically has caused you tears, emotional distress, anguish of mind, or sleepless nights?

Author's Notes

“In reminding the Ephesian elders that he served the Lord with ‘all humility,’ Paul was also at the same time warning them of the universal temptations that church leaders face—pride of position, pride of title, pride of knowledge, and pride of giftedness. Pride is without doubt, the chief occupational hazard of the preacher,” remarks John Stott.

8. Do not overlook the significance of Paul's claim to the Ephesian elders: “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable.” Why is this statement so vitally important to our churches today?

- Paul did not omit any of the finer details of the faith, nor adapt the truth to the spirit of the age. (p. 101)
- The elders lacked nothing in their theological education for teaching the gospel or living lives pleasing to God. To prepare and strengthen them for their shepherding task, the elders were faithfully taught “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). (p. 101)
- This serves as a reminder that elders should be trained thoroughly in Bible doctrine and should be fully qualified to serve. (p. 101)

9. Paul makes a shocking claim: “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

What does verse 24 tell you about Paul's priorities in life?

- Paul valued nothing more in life than faithfully completing the task given to him by the Lord: “to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (p. 102)
- Paul saw that the need to finish his God-appointed gospel mission outweighed the value of his own life. He was so dedicated to Christ and the gospel that his own future, reputation, comfort, and security were of little account. (p. 102)

What does verse 24 tell you about what should be your priorities in life?

Explain “the gospel of the grace of God” that Paul was willing to die for.

- Grace is one of the most prominent words of the Christian faith and a major pillar of Paul's gospel. (p. 102)
- God's grace is his divine favor, freely given to the undeserving, which cannot be earned or merited. Divine grace is foundational to the understanding of the gospel. (p. 102)
- God's grace to sinners is provided by the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. (p. 102)

Explain how Paul's view of who "the Lord Jesus" is, compels him to say, "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself."

- Paul had such a high view of the Lord Jesus that he did not think much of himself in comparison. (p. 102)
- The theme of self-sacrifice for Christ and the gospel is a major theme which runs through Paul's teachings. (p. 102)
- This was not a lowly self-deprecating view of himself. Instead, Paul's high view of Christ acknowledged the majesty and glory of Jesus. Paul sacrificed his life for the gospel because he understood the primary importance of the gospel.

**10.** Explain the Old Testament imagery of the watchman and being “innocent of the blood of all.”

- This imagery comes from the Old Testament imagery of the watchman on the city wall (Ezek. 3:7-9; 33:1; 33:17-21). The watchman was responsible for watching and listening for any impending danger, and then to sound the alarm warning the people to take action. (p. 103)
- If the watchman was asleep or distracted when the enemy came and destroyed the people, he would be responsible for their deaths, and his punishment would be his own death. Their blood would be on his hands. (p. 103)

How does Paul's ministry illustrate the faithful watchman?

- Like the prophet Ezekiel, Paul had faithfully delivered and taught the Lord's salvation message to the people. Paul was a vigilant watchman who faithfully delivered the gospel and provided warnings of danger (false doctrine, false teachers, disunity within the church). (p. 103)

In what practical ways can you show yourself to be a faithful watchman over your church?



**11.** The phrase “the whole counsel of God” is a key statement in the speech. What does Paul mean by the “whole counsel of God”?

- The term counsel refers to the divine, sovereign “will,” “purpose,” or “plan” of God. (p. 104)
- Other translations render this phrase as “the whole will of God” (NIV) or “the whole plan of God” (CSB) or “the whole purpose of God” (NASB, NRSVue, NET). (p. 103)

Give some examples of the "whole counsel of God."

- The whole counsel of God includes the entire storyline of the Bible, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, and all major Bible doctrines. From Genesis to Revelation, from Adam to Christ, the Bible presents a coherent story: God’s master plan of his sovereign, redemptive purposes. (p. 104)

**12.** What can you personally do to increase your knowledge of the whole counsel of God? Take this matter seriously.

### Many Good Resources to Help

We are blessed that there are many resources available today to help Christians grow in their faith. Excellent books explain in simple terms the full biblical story of redemption.

Audio messages by outstanding preachers and daily podcasts by our best Christian leaders and thinkers are easily accessible. Make these resources readily available for yourself and the people in your church. Encourage your people to use these resources to grow in the knowledge of God and his Word.

You can get a free Bible school education over a five-year period if you will consistently listen to Spirit-gifted Bible teachers teach the books of Romans, Ephesians, Galatians, and Hebrews, as well as the other New Testament and Old Testament books. Listen also to the eminent Christian apologists for the faith that God has graciously given to his people.

Many churches all over the world have discovered that systematic, expository Bible teaching every Sunday morning is the very best way to ensure that the believing community is instructed in the whole counsel of God. Of course, home Bible studies, small group studies in Bible doctrine, and new believers' Bible classes are all needed as well to educate people in the knowledge of God and Christ.

The founder of what later became known as Methodism, John Wesley, wrote: "It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Wesley, *The Message of the Wesleys: A Reader of Instruction and Devotion*, compiled by Philip S. Watson (London: Epworth Press, 1964), 183.

## *Pastor the Church of God*

*“Do not miss this exceedingly significant point: It is to all the elders that Paul gave the responsibility to oversee and shepherd God’s church. He did not give this charge to the bishop, or the pastor, or the minister, but to the body of elders.”*

...

*“None of Paul’s warnings or exhortations to vigilance make sense unless there is a real enemy who seeks to destroy God’s household. Paul was not suffering from paranoid delusions, nor did he conceive imaginary adversaries. There really are ‘cosmic powers,’ ‘spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,’ ‘schemes of the devil,’ and ‘flaming darts of the evil one’ (Eph. 6:12, 16).”*

### Read chapter 9

1. We now come to the main exhortation of the speech. Explain all that you have now learned about the main verb “pay careful attention to yourselves” (προσεῆχω [*prosecho*]).

- The Greek verb for “pay careful attention” means to be in a state of alert, be concerned about, care for, take care, or take thought of. (p. 105-106)
- Some English translations include “be on guard” (NASB), “keep watch over” (NIV, NRSVue), or “take heed” (NKJV). (p. 106)
- It is an imperative verb of command in the present tense, indicating continuous action. (p. 106)
- This verb means “keep a constant watch over yourselves.” (p. 106)
- Don’t be inattentive or preoccupied with lesser things. Be watchful, attentive, and on guard. (p. 106)
- Reminiscent of the warning that Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 7:15 about the wolves in sheep’s clothing. (p. 106)

2. Since the elders are overseers appointed to pastor the church of God, why would their first duty be to guard their own spiritual health? List as many reasons as you can.

- You can’t guard the flock if you aren’t healthy. Be attentive to your spiritual growth, your daily walk with Christ, your moral integrity, and your biblical and theological beliefs. (p. 106)
- Just as the airlines instruct people to put on their own mask before assisting others, if we are to effectively shepherd the flock, we need to guard ourselves against the dangers of the world and the attacks of the enemy. So, we need to protect our walk with Christ and shore up our defenses against attacks from the enemy.

3. The local Christian church is metaphorically called by Paul, “the flock” of God." What does this particular metaphor of a “flock” teach you about the nature of the local church that you as an elder need to understand?

- Comes from a familiar Old Testament image. (p. 106)
- Communicates the ownership, dependence, value, and the need for continuous protective care. (p. 106)

What did you learn of importance from the little word “all” in Acts 20:28 that should guide your work?

- “All” indicates the importance of taking care of the whole flock. The whole flock, not just your favorites, your friends and family, or the people who agree with you. (p. 106)
- No member of the flock should be neglected, for all are precious and valuable to God. (p. 106)
- Each member is a potential meal for coming wolves. (p. 106)
- Guard each member and guard yourself. (p. 106)

4. Paul gives four motivating reasons to “pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock.” Of the four, which one most motivates you to serve sacrificially as a shepherd elder? Explain your choice.

If you do not understand these four motivating truths, what will eventually happen to you as a pastoral elder, and why?

- You will not last long as church leader. (p. 107)
- You will not have the right motivation to labor intently and endure hardships.
- The work is too difficult and the problems too overwhelming to endure without the right motivation. (p. 107)
- There must be a biblical rationale and motivation for devoting your life to protecting God’s flock of people. (p. 107)

5. What deeply valuable information do you learn about biblical elders from the mention of the Holy Spirit in verse 28? List your findings.

- The Holy Spirit is sovereign in appointing overseers to the local church. (p. 107)
- The Holy Spirit made these elders to shepherd God’s church. He empowered, motivated, and gifted these men to be overseers and shepherds. (p. 107)
- These men are overseers because of divine placement, initiative, and design. (p.107)
- Human means were involved in the appointment process but ultimately the placement of elders was made by the Holy Spirit. (p. 107)

6. Since the two terms *elders* and *overseers* refer to the same officials (see chapter 11), what does the term *overseer* add to our understanding of the elders' duties?

- The term *overseer* conveys the idea of one who watches, a superintendent, or an official guardian. (p. 108)
- The Greek word for overseer is *episkopos*. It communicates "one who has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way." (p. 108)
- In the Greco-Roman world, *episkopos* frequently refers to one who has a definite function or fixed office of guardianship and related activity within a group. The term was taken over in Christian communities in reference to one who served as *overseer* or *supervisor*, with special interest in guarding the apostolic tradition. (p. 108)

In what ways does the term *overseer* fit perfectly with the Acts 20:28-31 context?

- The idea of an overseer fits in perfectly with the idea that elders are meant to guard the flock of God.
- The elders are meant to "protect" and "safeguard."

7. What do you learn about the local church from the phrase "the church of God"?

- The word "church" here designates the local congregation/assembly of redeemed people. It refers to God's gathered people. (p. 109)
- The local church does not belong to the elders, the apostles, or any other person or group. It does not belong to a prominent figure or denomination. The church belongs to God, and God alone. (p. 109)
- It is "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." (p. 109)
- Köstenberger points out that the phrase "God's church underscores the sacredness and solemn responsibility of caring for God's people." (p. 109)

8. What do you learn about the local church from the phrase "which he obtained with his own blood"?

- Paul expresses the magnitude of the worth of the church of God with this phrase. (p. 110)
- God acquired this group of people by means of the shed blood of his one and only Son, Jesus Christ. (p. 110)

What does the word "blood" signify theologically?

- The word "blood" signifies death, specifically the shed blood or sacrificial death of Christ. It is the life violently taken from Christ at the cross, as the Old Testament system of sacrifice demanded. (p. 110)
- Blood is at the core of the Christian faith. The penal, substitutionary atonement of Christ upon the cross is the center of the Christian faith. (p. 110)

**Author's Notes**

The Holy Spirit appointed the elders as overseers for this purpose—to shepherd the church of God. This is why I refer to biblical elders as shepherd elders or pastor elders. . . . Shepherd leadership involves being with the people, loving them, teaching them Scripture, guiding them to spiritual maturity, seeking the wayward, caring for the sick, and modeling Christian character and conduct for them.

**9.** In warning the elders of imminent danger, Paul uses the metaphor, “fierce wolves.” If false teachers are like “fierce wolves,” what does that tell you about their character and methods?

- These “fierce wolves” are predatory intruders who are intent on devouring the flock. (p. 111)
- Wolves are strong and cunning hunters. They are persistent and seem to have boundless energy. They are insatiable and merciless if allowed to infiltrate the flock. (p. 111)

**10.** Even more subtle and frightening than wolves from outside the flock, Paul says that “from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (v. 30). Prophetically, the apostle warns the elders to expect the frightening reality: False teachers will arise even from within the believing community, or from within the eldership itself!

What does “from among your own selves” mean? Explain.

- False teachers will arise even from within the believing community, or from within the eldership itself. (p. 111)

What does “speaking twisted things” mean? This is an important point to understand. Explain why.

- Speaking twisted things means to distort and pervert apostolic, orthodox doctrine which is the standard of truth. (p. 111)
- They tie the true teachings of Scripture into complex knots that confuse learned scholars. They are experts at double-talk and diversion. It is impossible to have an honest conversation because they lack intellectual honesty. (p. 111)
- False teachers mix truth with error and confuse people with half-truths and complex ideas. They quote Scripture with great ease. They have a way of wearing people down with their arguments so that most people give in eventually. (p. 111)
- This is important to understand because these false teachers are very effective at distorting the clear truth of Scripture and are very effective in leading people astray. (p. 111)

What does “to draw away the disciples after them” mean? Explain.

- These pseudo-Christian teachers pull disciples away from Christ and his apostles in order to garner their own followers. (p. 112)
- These false teachers inevitably establish subgroups within the church. This erodes the unity and safety within the church. (p. 112)

11. We now come to the next major imperative of the speech. Explain all that you have now learned about the main verb “be alert” (γρηγορέω [grêgoreō]).

- The verb “alert” fits the pastoral imagery of Paul’s exhortation. A good shepherd is always conscious of and alert to hungry predators. (p. 112)
- In this speech, the verb is a present tense, imperative verb of command meaning to “keep on being alert, be constantly watchful.” (p. 112)
- This verb describes the mental and spiritual attitude of vigilance and preparedness. (p. 112)
- This is the second of Paul’s two principal, imperative commands. (p. 112)

12. Paul holds up his own example of vigilant shepherding leadership before the elders. List and explain what Paul reveals about his own comprehensive guarding ministry at Ephesus.

- Paul did not wait until his departure to warn people about the inevitable confrontations with gospel deniers. (p. 113)
- He admonished them “night and day” for a period of three years, giving them instruction and warning. (p. 113)
- Paul warned them of “fierce wolves” who would come to attack the church. (p. 113)
- Paul admonished everyone and never stopped warning them. No one was too insignificant for him to warn and care for. (p. 113)

13. In the list of qualifications for elders, which ones are necessary for protecting the flock of God from “fierce wolves”? Explain.

- Must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught: Unwavering in his commitment to the message.
- Be able to give instruction in sound doctrine: He knows the Scriptures and is able to communicate them.
- Able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine: Must have courage to stand firm against false teaching and teachers.
- Holy (devout): A person who is dedicated to the Lord.

14. Explain why it is necessary, as church leaders, to believe the biblical doctrine of Satan and his demonic hosts (Eph. 6:12-13).

- It is necessary to believe this biblical doctrine because elders must acknowledge the reality of Satan and his deceptive strategies to lead the church of God astray. (p. 113)
- There really are “schemes of the devil,” “cosmic powers,” “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,” and “flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph. 6:11-12, 16). (p. 113)
- As an elder team, you cannot prepare for and fend off attacks from the enemy if you will not admit that the enemy exists. (pp. 113-114)

**15.** The Holy Spirit appointed the overseers to shepherd the flock of God. The well-being of a flock depends primarily on the careful attention and skill of its shepherds. Look at the list of pastoral duties below. In your view, check the four most essential duties of shepherding. Can you explain your choices?

- Know who is in the flock under your care.
- Be with the flock, both individually and when gathered corporately.
- Eat with them; share meals together.
- Know their names and family circumstances.
- Recognize the cultural issues confronting them in their daily lives.
- Observe their spiritual condition; develop a keen eye and ask insightful questions.
- Pray for them regularly.
- Visit or call them.
- Encourage, comfort, counsel, and correct them when needed.
- Warn them of aberrant teachings and worldly influences.
- Feed them on the sustaining bread of life, Holy Scripture.
- Take responsibility for their spiritual welfare.
- Aid them in their daily sanctification.
- Search for them if they wander from the believing community.
- Love them as your own family.



## *God, Finances, and Care for the Weak*

*“Money did not motivate Paul to serve others. He did not see people as dollar signs. His work at Ephesus was not done for financial gain; on the contrary, it nearly cost him everything, including his life. Again, he points the elders to his personal example as a role model for them to follow.”*

...

*“If the church’s eldership practices financial transparency, genuine accountability, and sound money management principles, it will bring honor to our Lord and gain the respect of the people (see 2 Cor. 8:21). Make it your aim to have the same sensitivity to money matters as Paul did.”*

### Read chapter 10

**1.** As Paul departs, he entrusts the elders into the safekeeping of God. But who is this God? List ten descriptions of the God of the Bible as presented in this chapter.

- Infinite (p. 115)
- Personal (p. 115)
- Triune God of the Bible (p. 115)
- Sovereign Creator (p. 115)
- Sustainer of the universe (p. 115)
- Without him nothing exists or holds together (p. 115)
- He has absolute control over all life’s affairs and details (p. 115)
- Self-existing (p. 115)
- Self-revealing (p. 115)
- Almighty (p. 115)
- The One God (p. 116)
- The True God (p. 116)
- The Incomparable God (p. 116)

**2.** What do each of the passages below tell you about the God of the Bible and why you should trust him with your life?

Isaiah 46:9–10

- God has knowledge of the future, and the power to ensure all His goals in the past, present, future are met. We can trust in God’s knowledge and power to enable Him to accomplish good for His glory and for our benefit.

Exodus 15:11

- o God has no equal in all of existence. He is uniquely majestic, powerful, and set apart from anything else there is. God is the one to trust with our lives.

Deuteronomy 8:15–16

- o Just as God provided for his people in the past, so he will provide for us now too. It is important we remain humble and remember God is the provider of all our needs, down to the most basic—even food and water. Let us trust God with all our needs—big and small.

Deuteronomy 10:17

- o God is extremely powerful, but that power has not corrupted Him, like it often does to humans. God is just. He uses his awesome power appropriately every time, and He is worthy of being relied upon for his practice of justice.

Psalms 56:3–4

- o God is worthy of putting our trust in when we are afraid because he can protect us.

Psalms 121:3–5

- o God does not sleep like humans do. His concentration is never taken off of us. He is, at all times, aware of our situations. We can trust he has not missed anything we have experienced—we can talk to him about all these experiences.

Lamentations 3:22–23

- o God loves us and has compassion for us. He is willing to forgive each day, because he is radically committed to our flourishing. He is the one to trust in since he loves us so consistently and deeply.

Proverbs 3:5–6

- o God has insights into how our life should proceed that we do not. He alone is best able to see which path we should take. Asking him for direction is a much better plan than simply going it alone.

3. Why would Paul desire that the Ephesian elders have a strong theology of God?

- o Paul wanted the Ephesian elders to know God and to trust not in themselves, or even their church's missionary founder, but in God. (p. 116)
- o God is the best possible source of strength and safekeeping. (p. 116)

4. What does the author claim to be the fundamental principle of living the Christian life? Please explain your answer from Scripture.

- o The God of Scripture is absolutely trustworthy and faithfully keeps his covenant promises. The fundamental principle that every child of God must learn—and relearn throughout life—is daily, moment-by-moment trust in God. (p. 116)
- o Paul wanted nothing more than for the Ephesian elders to have a strong, biblical theology of God, to know his attributes, and to love and obey him. (p. 116)
- o He wanted them to know God and to trust not in themselves, nor even in their church's missionary found and beloved apostle, but in God. (p.116)

Can you give an example of living this way from your own personal life?

5. Paul also entrusted the elders to “the word of his grace.” What is meant by the phrase “the word of his grace”?

- The “word of his grace” refers to the gospel message, the word of God. (p. 116)
- It is the divine power of God working through the word of God that is “able to build” up the elders in their holy faith and to give them the eternal inheritance shared among all the saints of God. (p. 116)

6. What extraordinary results are displayed in trusting the “word of his grace”?

- We have the best possible source of strength and safekeeping—eternal, faithful God and the life-giving, soul-nourishing “word of his grace.” (p. 116)

Author’s Notes

Even though Paul would no longer be with the elders, they would know and be assured that he had entrusted them to the best possible source of strength and safekeeping—the eternal, faithful God and the life-giving, soul-nourishing “word of his grace.”

7. List as many features of Paul’s lifestyle in which he differs radically from today’s prosperity preachers.

- Paul imitated the Jesus way of life: selfless service to others. (p. 117)
- He had no desire for material profit from his converts, even in the form of clothing. (p. 117)
- Paul provided for his own livelihood through manual labor (tentmaking). (p. 117)

8. Explain why Paul was so deeply sensitive to financial matters.

- Paul felt strongly about communicating the teachings of Jesus. Jesus spoke specifically about financial matters on many occasions. (p. 119)
- Paul also used money to teach new Christians that their faith was in many ways countercultural to the norms of Greco-Roman society. In God’s eyes, there is no shame in working with one’s hands to provide an income while at the same time preaching the gospel free of charge. (p. 118)

9. What specific financial advice does the author give the elders?

- As elders, you need to teach and practice Jesus’s monetary principles of living. Primarily, Jesus’s advice is to invest your money (and time) in eternal treasures in heaven, not in earthly treasures, which are neither secure nor eternal. (p. 119)
- If the church’s eldership practices financial transparency, genuine accountability, and sound money management principles, it will bring honor to our Lord and gain respect of the people. (p. 117)
- If you want your church to be known for generosity and Christlike compassionate care, then you need to set the example of the blessedness of giving. (p. 119)

**10.** What lessons do you learn from Paul's life example in verses 33–35 that you can apply to yourself as a church leader?

- The importance of financial integrity. (p. 117)
- Never being too good or too important for manual labor. (p. 117)
- To support other coworkers in gospel ministry. (p. 118)
- Christians are not to be idle or lazy, waiting for others to support them. (p. 118)

**11.** What points does the author make regarding the Greek term “working hard” (κοπιάω [*kopiaō*])?

- It is a strong word which stresses physical exertion to the point of weariness. A favorite Pauline word. (p. 118)
- Christians are not to be idle or lazy, waiting for others to support them. (p. 118)

**12.** Who are the “weak” referred to in verse 35?

- The “weak” in verse 35, are those who cannot secure basic physical and material necessities due to age, sickness, disability, poverty, social status, or any other legitimate reason (pp. 118-119).
- This does not refer to spiritually weak Christians, but to those in the body who need financial, medical, or personal assistance. (p. 119)

What does the term “must” say about caring for the weak?

- Caring for the weak is a divine command. (p. 119)
- In this instance Paul is quoting Jesus Christ. This is a biblical and moral obligation, especially for the elders. (p. 119)

Author's Notes

Paul was not a lesser apostle for engaging in manual labor to support himself in the Lord's work. He was not so proud or self-important that he couldn't do manual labor or work with his hands.

**13.** What was Paul's purpose in quoting a beatitude given by Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”?

- The theme of giving generously to others in need was part of Jesus's overall teaching on money, which included warnings about the corrupting power of greed and hoarding wealth. (p. 119)

Why is it more blessed to give than to receive?

- God loves a cheerful giver, he wants his people to be generous and big hearted. It protects the believer from selfishness and greed. It is sin. God is a generous, openhanded God, he wants his people to be that way.

14. In brief summary form, what is Jesus's financial advice to his people?

- Invest your money (and time) in eternal treasures in heaven, not in earthly treasures, which are neither secure nor eternal. (p. 119)
- Be like Jesus—compassionate, gracious, generous, and self-sacrificial. (p. 119)

15. From the last part of Paul's speech (vv. 36–38), what do you learn about Paul as a Christlike leader that you should emulate?

- He was compassionate with those who are weak and in need of help. See Galatians 2:10.
- He was generous, giving of his own funds.

Author's Notes

The lonely leader at the top is a poor example of Christian brotherhood and Christlike leadership. . . . Paul loved those around him "with the affection of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:8). He was not distant or impersonal. He was a leader and teacher who developed close personal relationships with people.



## *Overseers and Deacons in the Church at Philippi*

“Who are these overseers in the church at Philippi? Who better to answer this question with complete authority than the founder of the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul? In Paul’s final meeting with the elders from the church in Ephesus, he reminded them that it was the Holy Spirit who made them ‘overseers’ for the express purpose of shepherding God’s church. Thus we have a clear identification of who the overseers are: They are the same ones elsewhere called elders.”

...

“From both Paul’s and Polycarp’s letters to the Philippians, we can conclude that in Paul’s day and for the next fifty years, there were only two recognized groups of officials at the church in Philippi: overseers/elders and deacons.”

### Read chapter 11

1. In his salutation, Paul singled out the overseers and deacons of Philippi for special mention. Why do you think he did this?

- One of the likely reasons is that they had a special part in initiating and organizing the church’s financial contribution to Paul. (p. 123)

2. It is important that you understand the meaning and use of the word *overseer* in the New Testament. List in simple bullet form everything you have learned in this chapter about this key term, *episkopos*. (See endnote 3 in the book for further help.)

- Well-known designation for various kinds of officials. (p. 124)
- Conveys the idea of one who watches over, exercising oversight, a supervisor, or an official guardian or protector. (p. 124)
- In ancient Greek society, it was broadly used to describe any official who acted as a superintendent, manager, guardian, controller, inspector, or ruler. (p. 328)

Why should we stop translating the Greek term *episkopos* as “bishop”?

- This rendering of the Greek term *episkopos* is misleading. (p. 124)
- This translation comes with the implication of a high ecclesiastical official responsible for overseeing numerous churches and clergy. It reads ecclesiastical traditions into the biblical text that developed after the time of the New Testament. This only adds confusion to the subject. (p. 124)

3. Explain how the two terms “elder” and “overseer” express different aspects of the one office of pastoral oversight, the eldership.

- Each term emphasizes different aspects of the same office. (p. 125)
- The term *elder* signifies maturity, experience, dignity, and wisdom as a community leader. (p. 125)
- The term *overseer* stresses the function of official oversight, guardianship, and supervision. (p. 126)

4. It is necessary that you understand the arguments for claiming that “overseers” and “elders” refer to the same office and that the terms are used interchangeably. List the two arguments that you think best prove that the “overseers” mentioned in Philippians 1:1 are the same group of leaders who are called “elders” elsewhere? Explain your answer.

- Acts 20:17, 28: Paul calls for the *elders* of the church in Ephesus but in his speech to the elders he states that the Holy Spirit made them *overseers* for the purpose of shepherding the church of God. Here all three terms are used—*overseer*, *elder*, and *shepherd* (verb). (p. 126)
- 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and 5:17–25: Paul lists the qualifications for *overseers* in 1 Timothy 3. But when he speaks of the *elders* who labor in teaching the word and who receive financial support for their labor, he mentions no qualifications whatsoever. Where are the elders’ qualifications? There is no problem when we realize that *overseers* and *elders* referred to the same body of officials. (p. 126)

5. Words matter. What happened to the terms “overseers” and “elders” after the New Testament period?

- These terms came to refer to two separate classes of officials. (p. 126)
- The overseer came to be known as the one person in charge of the local church, also known as a bishop. (p. 126)
- The council of elders became known as the presbyters or priests. (p. 126)
- Jerome, a writer in the early centuries of Christianity, affirmed that these two terms were used interchangeably to refer to the same office. Only in later centuries did the confusion about these terms come about. (p. 127)

6. What do you learn from the fact that the term “overseers” is plural?

- Indicates that there were multiple “overseers” and not one chief overseer, as some people would assert. (p. 127)

Why do you think that many people try to explain away the concept of multiple “overseers” in one church, but have no problem with multiple “deacons” in one church?

- In the end, church tradition trumps the word of God. People are accustomed to multiple deacons, but unaccustomed to multiple pastors. (p. 127)



7. What helpful contribution to our topic does Polycarp make?

- Polycarp's letter acknowledges multiple elders and multiple deacons. He also does not mention the presence of a singular overseer or elder governing the church. (p. 127)
- There were only two recognized groups of officials at the church in Philippi: overseers/elders and deacons. (p. 129)

8. What did the Philippian "overseers" do for the church? In other words, what was their function in the church?

- They were the Spirit-appointed shepherds to the church of God. (p. 127)
- The charge to the Philippian overseers was the same as to the Ephesian elders: to shepherd the church of God and keep it safe from sheep-eating wolves. (p. 128)

From what source can we learn about the responsibilities of the Philippian overseers?

- Paul's letter to the Ephesians contains many relevant instructions for elders/overseers. His writings are the original sources regarding the office of elder. (p. 127)

9. There is a great deal of confusion over the subject of deacons. The author lists 8 observations about New Testament deacons. Which two of these observations convinced you that he is correct in proposing that the deacons are the official *assistants* to the overseers?

- Deacons are always linked to the overseers and are subordinate to them. Deacons are to meet the biblical qualifications that are similar to those required of elders, although they are not required to be able to teach sound doctrine and refute false teachers, as is necessary for the elders. (p. 128)
- Deacons are subordinate to the overseers, as the term *episkopos* (lit. superintendent, overseer) and *diakonos* (lit. assistant) themselves indicate. (p. 128)

10. How would one argue that the overseers and deacons were not a special ecclesiastical class of Christians, like priests or clerics, "over" the congregation?

- The overseers were not rulers over the people. The people were not the overseers' subjects. (p. 130)
- Paul does not make a point of separating the leaders from the rest of the congregation. He addresses the entirety of the congregation in his letter to the Philippians. (p. 130)
- They were equally brothers and sisters in Christ as described in Phil. 1:12; 3:1, 17; 4:1, 8. (p. 130)

Author's Notes  
It is significant that only two separate groups of officeholders appear in Paul's salutation to the Philippians, not the three—overseer, elders, and deacons—as emerged in the second century.

**11.** Explain why Paul, after acknowledging the “overseers and deacons” (v. 1), addresses the rest of the letter (with its many instructions) to the entire congregation and not exclusively to the leaders.

- He addresses the congregation in his letter because all members of the church, including the elders and deacons, were equally brothers and sisters in Christ. (p. 130)
- The contents of the letter were equally relevant for those in leadership and those who were not. There was not such a strong demarcation between the leaders and those who they led. (p. 130)

**12.** From the letters of Paul to Philippi and Polycarp to Philippi, what significant conclusion does the author draw about overseers and deacons?

- Both Paul and Polycarp refer to the same two groups of leaders: overseers and deacons. (p. 129)
- Despite being referred to as “the bishop of the church of the Smyrnaeans,” Polycarp only ever identifies himself with the elders. This is strong evidence that there was no singular overseer in Philippi, only the council of elders/overseers. (p. 129)
- From the time of Paul to Polycarp, there were only two recognized groups of officials at the church in Philippi: overseers/elders and deacons. (p. 129)

**13.** After reading this chapter and answering the questions, what did you learn from the words, “with the overseers and deacons,” that will help you better understand the topic of biblical eldership?

- There was no strong demarcation line drawn between leader and led.
- The overseers were not rulers of the people. They were all equally brothers and sisters in Christ with some of them serving officially as the overseers to the others.
- Paul expects the the overseers and congregation to work in unity and love.

**Author's Notes**  
Although the overseers are not mentioned anywhere else in the letter, Paul expects them to do the work of overseeing the church and observing all the instructions of the letter. Paul also expects that the overseers and congregation will work in unity and love: “Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:2).

## *Above Reproach and the Husband of One Wife*

*“Hence, the singular term 'overseer' stands for all the overseers (plural) who are the same persons called 'elders' in 1 Timothy 5:17–25. As we learned in Acts 20:28, the elders were placed in the church by the Holy Spirit as 'overseers' for the express purpose of shepherding the church of God.”*

...

*“Paul knew that the devil would use any failing on the part of the church’s leaders to shame the church’s public image. So, to protect the credibility of the gospel and the reputation of the local church from public ridicule, Paul insisted that the church’s overseers and deacons ‘be above reproach,’ morally and spiritually.”*

### Read chapter 12

#### 1. Briefly explain why Paul had to write the letter of 1 Timothy.

- Paul was writing with urgency to Timothy and the elders and providing instructions on how to address the doctrinal heresy that had infiltrated the church. (p. 132)
- Paul was helping this eldership team “put the pieces back together” in the aftermath of a leadership crisis. (p. 132)

#### 2. Why would the New Testament writer give more detailed instructions on elders’ qualifications than any other aspect of eldership?

- Installing qualified elders is a matter of highest priority to the head of the church, Jesus Christ. (p. 132)
- God’s paramount concern is not with buildings or programs but with the moral and spiritual character of those who lead his people. (p. 132)

#### 3. What is the purpose of the “quotation-commendation formula” used with the saying in 1 Timothy 3:1?

- This emphasizes and commends the saying with which it is associated. (p. 132)
- These sayings merit our complete confidence. (p. 133)

4. In your own words what exactly is the saying that is trustworthy and reliable? You can use your own expanded paraphrase to explain the saying.

- This saying serves as a marker that the following statement is a firm, timeless truth and is a principle in which we can have full confidence.

5. Explain all that you have learned about the Greek word *episkopē* (ἐπισκοπή).

- This one word in Greek represents the phrase “the office of overseer.” (p. 133)
- It designates the official position and function of the overseer who is mentioned in verse 2. (p. 133)
- The office of overseer was established by God and is not an invention of Paul or the apostles. (p. 133)
- Overseers bear the official authority inherent in the office of church oversight. (p. 133)
- The limits of the office of oversight are set by Scripture. (p. 133)

6. Explain how Acts 20:28 and 1 Timothy 3:1 fit together.

- In his speech in Acts 20:28, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that it is the Holy Spirit who made them overseers while in 1 Timothy he focuses on the human aspiration for the work of the overseer. (p. 133)
- Both the anointing and appointing by the Holy Spirit and the human desire to pursue godly leadership are necessary. (p. 133)
- These passages highlight the sovereignty of God in all matters and the cooperation of mankind in fulfilling God’s plan. (p. 133)
- Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit which motivates and empowers overseers/elders to aspire to the work of leadership. (p. 133)

7. What are Paul’s purposes in emphasizing that “the office of overseer” is a “noble task” (a “good work”)?

- He provides a positive endorsement for the work of the overseers. (p. 134)
- Encourages the current elders to continue to pursue the work of the office of overseer. (p. 134)
- Encourages potential elders to also pursue this work. (p. 134)
- Encourages the congregation to honor those who sacrifice their time and skills to provide oversight for the church. (p. 134)

Give one good reason for why the “office of overseer” is truly a “noble work.”

- There is nothing more noble or honorable or excellent than to lovingly shepherd the precious flock of God. (p. 134)

8. How would you answer someone who insists that the singular form “overseer” demonstrates that there was only one overseer over the church in Ephesus, and that the elders were under the leadership of the overseer?

- In Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi, he uses a plural of the noun “overseers” which indicates that there were multiple overseers and not just a singular overseer. (p 127)
- Additionally, extra biblical sources such as Polycarp support that multiple elders were present in churches. (p. 127)
- The singular form does not necessarily mean that there was a singular elder. Instead, Paul is using the generic singular form. This singular form of the noun refers to the general category of *overseers*, or all *overseers*. (p. 134)
  - This generic singular form is used by Paul on multiple occasions to refer to different classes of people such as “woman,” “widow,” “the Lord’s servant.” Obviously there can be more than one woman, one widow, or one Lord’s servant. (p. 134)

9. Explain what you have learned about the verb “must” as used in this present context (1 Tim. 3:2).

- “Must” in this context is an impersonal verb meaning “it is necessary.” (p. 135)
- Paul is emphasizing how imperative it is that the overseers of a church are above reproach. (p. 135)

10. According to the author, what is “Paul’s fierce concern” that underlies the necessity for objective qualifications for overseers?

- Paul’s concern is for the public testimony of the local church and truths of the gospel before an unbelieving world. (p. 135)

11. In brief, what does it mean for a person to be “above reproach”?

- To be “above reproach” is to be free from any offensive or disgraceful blight of character or behavior. (p. 136)
- This means to live a holy and blameless life as all Christians are called to do and as a leader to live an exemplary Christian life. (p. 136)
- To live consistently with the truths of the gospel. (p. 136)

What does “above reproach” not mean?

- It does not demand perfection or sinlessness. This is not possible. Christian leaders are still human and are imperfect. (p. 136)

**12.** According to the author, what is the meaning of the debated phrase, “the husband of one wife”?

- Mostly likely it is a Pauline idiom emphasizing the positive virtue of fidelity in marriage. (p. 137)
- Marriage is defined as the “one flesh” union of one man and one woman. (p. 137)
- Encapsulates “the characteristic of being devoted exclusively to one’s spouse.” (p. 137)

What has been your view of this phrase?

**Author’s Notes**

In the Lord’s work, a leader’s moral character and public reputation are necessary requirements to carry out the task of overseeing God’s holy family.

**13.** The author says that marriage “is breathtakingly beautiful in its design.” List two of the elements of marriage that are breathtakingly beautiful.

- A “one flesh” relationship between one man and one woman, a monogamous, heterosexual union. (Gen. 2:18–25; Matt. 19:4–6) (p. 137)
- A sacred, covenant relationship witnessed by God himself. (Mal. 2:13–16; Matt. 19:6) (p. 137)
- A permanent union. (Matt. 19:6; Rom. 7:2) (p. 138)
- A sexual union for procreation and intimate pleasure of the man and woman in a loving relationship. (1 Cor. 7:2–5) (p. 138)
- An exclusive relationship in which “no other human relationship must interfere.” (1 Thess. 4:2–8; Heb. 13:4) (p. 138)
- A relationship symbolic of Christ and his church. (Eph. 5:25–32) (p. 138)

**14.** Why do you think marital faithfulness is the first requirement recorded in both lists of qualifications (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1)? Marital faithfulness immediately follows the overarching qualification, “above reproach.”

- The state of a leader’s marriage and family relationships is of utmost concern to God and to the local assembly. (p. 138)
- The destruction of the family unit is at the heart of spiritual warfare. (p. 138)
- Marital faithfulness is at the top of the list of qualifications because the faithfulness of a husband to his wife and family is a very strong indicator of how faithful he is as a man of God and how faithful he will be to the local congregation that he serves. If he is selfish in marriage, then he will be selfish in leadership.

15. How would you answer from Scripture someone who believes a single man cannot be an elder because the Bible says an elder must be “the husband of one wife”?

- The interpretation that an elder must be married is not a required interpretation of the text. (p. 138)
- Paul said that an elder must be a one-wife kind of man, not that he had to be a married man. (p. 138)
- This requirement speaks more about the character of the elder than of his marital status. (p. 138)
- Paul would have had to qualify his statements in 1 Corinthians 7 about the advantages of singleness for serving the Lord, because singleness would turn out to be a disadvantage and disqualifier. (p. 139)

Author's Notes

A key strategy in Satan's never-ending war on God's people is the destruction of the marriages of their leaders and the defilement of the marriage bed. . . . At the heart of spiritual warfare is family destruction.





## *The Biblical Qualifications: Sober-minded . . . Not a Lover of Money*

*“Elders need to work together in making wise decisions. However, only those who are level-headed, mentally balanced, emotionally stable, and self-controlled in mind and emotions are able to consistently make good decisions. Mentally and emotionally stable leaders make for stable churches.”*

...

*“For some, money can be a more powerful temptation than sex or alcohol. So we cannot be naïve about this particular temptation church leaders face. Embezzling church monies or misappropriating church funds is a widespread problem. It is reported that one in three churches will face embezzlement.”*

### Read chapter 13

1. What does Paul mean by the term “sober-minded.” Make sure you understand this character trait required of an elder.

- o Sometimes used to mean sobriety in the use of wine. (p. 141)
- o Can also refer to mental sobriety, balanced judgment, clear-headedness, self-control, and freedom from debilitating excesses, extremist thinking, or unstable judgment. (p. 141)
- o Mentally and emotionally stable. (p. 141)

2. The author says: “Few qualities are more important for a church leader than to have sound judgment.” What reasons can you give for the author’s emphatic statement?

- o Elders need to work together to make wise decisions. (p. 141)
- o It is essential for the health of the local congregation for elders to make sound, and balanced decisions. (p. 141)

3. Why do you think “self-control” is repeatedly emphasized in both lists of elder qualifications?

- o The quality of self-control is foundational to some of the other qualifications. (p. 142)
- o A person in pastoral leadership needs to be prepared to handle many conflicts and complaints, yet he must not lose control of himself or his tongue. (p. 142)

**4. What does it mean for an elder to be a “respectable” person?**

- Means “having characteristics or qualities that evoke admiration or delight, an expression of high regard for persons.” (p. 142)
- A respectable person has commendable character, exemplary behavior, disciplined life who has the admiration and trust of others. (p. 142)
- Highly regarded by those who know him for his consistent Christian life. (p. 142)

**Why would Paul require an elder to be a “respectable” person?**

- To maintain the integrity of the testimony of the gospel within the community and local congregation. A consistent Christian life is observable by others and it is essential that Christian leaders live respectably as this builds unity and trust within the congregation. (p. 142)

**5. An elder must be hospitable. The author seems to be quite passionate about this issue. What is so important about hospitality that it is made a biblical requirement for all elders?**

- Hospitality is a concrete expression of Christian love. (p. 142)
- Hospitality is the necessary byproduct of the highly relational nature of the local church. It is the responsibility of all Christians, not just leaders, to invite strangers and friends into our homes. (p. 142)
- Hospitality removes the distances between people and allows people to share their lives with one another. (p. 143)
- Elders are to love the church. Those who love people love hospitality. (p. 143)
- If the local church's elders are cold and inhospitable, the local church congregation will follow their example. (p. 143)

**Author's Notes**

In my work as a pastoral elder, I have found my home to be a special place to invite people so I can get to know them and they can get to know me and my family. Although the ministry of hospitality may seem like a small thing, it has a lasting impact on people.

**6. What reasons can you give for why all elders are required to be able to teach Scripture?**

- This distinction differentiates board elders from biblical elders. Biblical elders are qualified to teach while board elders are only meant to advise. (p. 143)
- The Christian community is built on and sustained by the word of God and the teaching of the truths of the gospel. (p. 144)

7. In practical terms, what does “able to teach” mean?

- A knowledge of Scripture. (p. 144)
- The willingness to study and teach Scripture faithfully. (p. 144)
- The ability to communicate the truths of Scripture accurately. (p. 144)

What does it not mean?

- It does not mean that an elder must be an eloquent orator, a dynamic speaker, or even a Spirit-gifted teacher or preacher. (p. 144)

In what ways can teachers be quite different from one another?

- Teachers can differ in their style of teaching and levels of scholarship. (p. 144)
- One teacher might be well-liked by one group of people and not by another. (p. 144)
- Teachers can thrive in different settings. One elder might be an excellent pulpit preacher while another elder might work best in a small classroom or even in a one-on-one setting. (p. 144)

8. A prospective elder must be examined as to his use of alcohol. (See chapter 13.) Give scriptural and practical reasons for why there are concerns regarding a prospective elder’s use of wine.

- Alcohol is the source of deep heartbreak causing emotional and financial distress for families. (p. 145)
- Elders must demonstrate moderation, self-control, and discretion in their use of alcohol (p. 145)
- Scriptural reasons:
  - Drunkenness is a sin. (Eph. 5:18) (p. 145)
  - Persistently drunken people require church discipline. (1 Cor. 5:11) (p. 145)
  - A Christian controlled by the flesh, not by the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:16-24) (p. 145)
  - There are many Scriptural warnings against the potential dangers of alcohol. (p. 145)
- Practical reasons:
  - Alcohol and addiction impair one’s judgment and connection to reality. (p. 145)
  - Enslavement to alcohol reveals a lack of Spirit-controlled living. (p. 145)
  - A functional alcoholic lives a double life, working very hard to conceal their alcohol consumption and leads a life of deception. (p. 145)

**9.** What are some of the character traits of a violent man?

- Fighter, bad-tempered, irritable, hostile (p. 145)
- Pugnacious, manipulative, abusive (p. 145)

**10.** What will inevitably happen if a pugnacious person becomes a church shepherd?

- A pugnacious person will exacerbate current problems and create new ones. (p. 145)
- They will be harsh and hurtful toward the sheep inflicting wounds on the same people they are meant to protect. (p. 145)

**11.** Of all the different terms for trying to define the beautiful Greek word “gentle” (*epieikes*), which ones best help you to understand this beautiful word?

- “Forbearing,” “conciliatory,” “reasonable,” “graciously amenable,” “yielding wherever yielding is possible rather than standing up for one’s rights,” “tolerantly though not weakly acceptive of the other person.”

**12.** Why is the virtue “gentle” so vitally necessary to an elder’s task of shepherding people?

- Gentleness characterized the life of Jesus on earth and should therefore characterize the people who seek to emulate the life of Christ. (p. 147)
- Gentleness exhibits a willingness to yield and patiently make allowances for the weakness and ignorance of the fallen human condition. (p. 147)
- Gentleness prevents an elder from retaliating for the wrongs that might be done to him by members of the flock. (p. 147)

**13.** What is the difference between an elder “not being quarrelsome” and Paul and Barnabas having “no small dissension and debate with” false teachers (Acts 15:1-2)?

- A quarrelsome leader is contentious and argumentative while a peaceable leader is the kind of person who brings healing and unity, not strife and division. (p. 147)
- Elders must be able to address conflict, falsehood, and sin in a peaceable way, not passively but for the sake of protecting the truths of the gospel. (p. 148)
- There are times when argument and debate are necessary for the peace of the church. (p. 148)

14. From 2 Timothy 2:24–26, list five practical principles for dealing with difficult people in a thoroughly Christlike manner:

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponent with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:23–26)

- o Do not be quarrelsome.
- o Be kind to everyone.
- o Teach them so they may come to repentance from a knowledge of the truth.
- o Patiently endure evil.
- o Correct with gentleness.

Author's Notes

A shepherd elder must be able to guard the gospel from error and confront sin, yet not be characterized as a quarrelsome person.

15. How would you identify and describe a person who loves money and thus is unqualified to be a church overseer?

- o A person burdened by serious or irresponsible debt. (p. 148)
- o A person who falls for get-rich-quick schemes. (p. 148)
- o Overly concerned about gaining material possessions. (p. 148)
- o An addicted gambler. (p. 148)
- o Someone concerned with getting money rather than giving it. (p. 148)

Author's Notes

In most cases church officials do not steal by stuffing actual cash into their pockets. Instead, they misdirect church funds to their own so-called "ministry expenses": meals, travel, vacations, sports activities, and car and home repairs. . . . Like a powerful drug, the love of money can delude the judgment of even the best people.



## *Managing One's Household Well... Thought Well of by Outsiders*

*"Managing a local church is more like managing a family than managing a business or the military. So, the home is a critical domain for a man to develop and display his abilities to lead God's family in a biblical way."*

...

*"An outsider's assessment of a Christian leader's character cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Nonbelievers have a right to expect a consistent correlation between what Christians believe and how they behave. Often the outside community knows more about what is going on in your church than you might realize. It is amazing how gossip spreads to the outside community about the inner struggles of a church, especially in a small community."*

### Read chapter 14

1. Why is the individual family household the first and best testing ground of a man's ability to lead "the household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15)?

- One's ability to lead his own household is indicative of the ability to manage "the household of God." (p. 151)
- The household included more than a man's wife and children but also relatives and household servants. (p. 151)
- A candidate for pastoral eldership needs to demonstrate good management of those who live and work under his leadership. (p. 151)

2. What is the main Greek verb employed in 1 Timothy 3:4-5?

- προΐστημι [*proistēmi*]
  - this verb means "manage" which denotes "lead," "direct," or "conduct" in the context of household management. (p. 151)

How does the family context of verses 4-5 help us to understand the meaning (nuance) of this verb in this particular context? (The same verb is used in 1 Timothy 5:17 of the elders.)

- By divine design, the father plays the central role in managing the household in a Christ-like manner. (p. 151)
- The family context reinforces the vital role that the elders play in managing the household of God just as their leadership is vitally important in their own households and families. (p. 151)

What does the adverb, “well,” added to the verb tell you about what is expected of a prospective elder?

- o A church elder must conduct his household competently, or “in the right way,” and in a manner which is above reproach. (p. 151)

Author’s Notes

A key measurement in evaluating a man’s management of his household is how he leads his children: “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive.”

**3. Explain the significance of the all-important clause “with all dignity keeping his children submissive.”**

- o Part of being a father is to exercise appropriate discipline over his children. (p. 152)
- o Exercising discipline “with all dignity” means to act according to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and with the biblical qualities of love (1 Cor. 13:4-7) and wisdom (Prov. 17:6; 20:7).

**4. From the following verses, what do you learn, both negatively and positively, regarding the role of the Christian father in the home? Be specific.**

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

- o A father should not act in ways that causes anger within his children. He should act in an honorable way, not in sinful anger, or abusive language or force.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (Col. 3:21)

- o A harsh father, who puts unreasonable expectations on his child will discourage and cause the child to become angry at the father. Often, this will lead children to reject God because of the behavior of a cruel father.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You should teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deut. 6:6-7)

- o A Christian father is to teach his children with gentleness and kindness. He is to talk about the things of the Lord in a manner that draws the child to both the father and ultimately to God. The home is to be a place of continual teaching, guiding, leading the family in the ways of Scripture.



5. What are some of the difficulties in fairly assessing a father's competency in managing his children well?

- o Different families have different ideas about what a competent father looks like. (p. 153)
- o Different families have different philosophies about raising children. (p. 153)
- o Assessing the inner life of a family is complex but comes with the overarching qualification of being "above reproach." (p. 154)

6. Explain Paul's logic in verse 5.

- o Paul asks a rhetorical question in verse 5. (p. 152)
- o Paul's argument here is from the lesser to the greater. If a man cannot manage his own household, then he is not capable of managing the church. (p. 153)

7. What does this interesting verb, *epimeleomai*, teach you about managing/leading the church of God?

- o This verb stresses the tender and compassionate personal attention to the needs of another person. (p. 153)
- o This is the same word used in Greek which describes the Good Samaritan who cared for the stranger. (p. 153)

What do you learn from the phrase "the church of God" that will help you to better care for the people?

- o This refers to the local congregation of God's redeemed people. (p. 153)
- o It is an enormous privilege and responsibility to care for God's people who he "obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). (p. 153)

Author's Notes  
 An elder's oversight of God's church is more like the oversight of a caring shepherd or a loving father than an executive over a large corporation or a military officer over those under his command. The kind of leadership/management required of a father and a church elder is a highly personal, relational, loving, caring leadership.

8. Explain what is meant by the following statement and how does it relate to the qualification, "must manage his own household well":

"The best fathers and mothers face problems and struggles with their children, all of whom are sinners and in the long process of maturing."

- o It is important to remember that every parent and every child is a sinner and still has areas to mature in. There is no perfect parent and no perfect child. Perfection is not the goal in family life. Parenting "well" is the goal. (p. 153)
- o There needs to be grace towards one another as families navigate difficult issues. (p. 153)

**9.** List as many reasons as you can for why a new convert does not qualify for being a church elder/overseer.

- A new believer is spiritually immature and therefore cannot lead the flock with the maturity required. Enthusiasm for the Lord should not be confused for maturity. (p. 154)
- A new convert might think that success in the business world will qualify him to be an overseer, which it does not. (p. 154)
- A new believer still has much to learn about spiritual leadership, Satanic warfare, and living a Spirit-filled life. (p. 154)
- Spiritual maturity requires time and experience which cannot be rushed. Experience as a believer also comes with being tested and challenged which often results in seasons of growth. This cannot be replaced or substituted. (p. 154)

**10.** What is Paul's purpose in mentioning the "devil" with this particular qualification (v. 6)?

- This serves as a warning. Paul was warning the elders at Ephesus as it seems that they may have appointed an elder prematurely. (p. 155)
- An ill-prepared leader will crack under the pressure of leadership and will fall into judgment causing personal disgrace and divine consequence. (p. 155)

**11.** Why does it matter what unbelievers think of our church leaders? Why should we care?

- Being a man who is "above reproach" refers to how a man is viewed by believers and non-believers alike. This includes neighbors, colleagues, relatives, and unbelieving friends. (p. 155)
- Maintaining a consistent Christian testimony is imperative inside and outside of the believing community. (p. 156)

**12.** What does it mean for an overseer to "fall into disgrace"?

- When a Christian leader falls into disgrace he has gained an unfavorable or sinful reputation among non-Christians. As a result of the discrepancy between Christlike conduct and the sinful conduct of the Christian leader, non-Christians will mock, embarrass, and scoff not only at the leader but at the people of God. (p. 156-57)
- The elder will be discredited and endanger the evangelistic mission of the church. (p. 157)

**13.** What does it mean for an overseer to fall "into a snare of the devil"?

- When a leader is entrapped by the devil, this is used to discredit the local church. (p. 157)
- This is a means for the devil to destroy the church. (p. 157)

**14.** What do you learn about the devil from verses 6-7 that you should keep in mind in order to protect yourself?

- The devil is cunning and seizes any opportunity to trap leaders and disgrace them. (p. 157)
- Consistency is critical in keeping away criticisms and attacks from the devil. (p. 157)
- Great harm is done to the local congregation and its public witness when a leader falls into sin. (p. 157)
- Serious sin, uncontrolled bitterness, retaliation, lying, hypocrisy, and stubbornness are all part of the trap that the devil lays for fallen leaders. (p. 157)

**15.** As you look back over this chapter, what did you learn that was most informative and helpful to your understanding of biblical eldership?

**Author's Notes**

Paul was keenly aware of "the schemes of the devil" (Eph. 6:11; cf. Eph. 4:27). He knew that Satan would seize any opportunity he could to entrap a church leader and ultimately discredit the local church, which the devil bitterly hates and seeks incessantly to destroy.



## *Qualifications Demand Examination*

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### *The Laying on of Hands by the Elders*

*“The proper examination of deacon and elder candidates is precisely where many churches fail. The process takes time and effort, and many churches think they are too busy with other matters to make that effort. Perhaps the church in Ephesus was also too busy to examine thoroughly its deacons and elders. In the end, churches that make excuses for not thoroughly examining prospective leaders demonstrate that their priorities are out of order.”*

...

*“It is understandable that Paul would remind the Ephesian elders of the Holy Spirit’s work in Timothy’s life and his calling to be Paul’s co-worker, a calling endorsed by the elders in Timothy’s home church. This reminder would affirm Timothy’s authority to rebuke, correct, and discipline the false teachers in Ephesus.”*

#### Read chapter 15

1. As a good Bible student, briefly explain the following words and grammatical constructions as it relates to our subject of qualifications for office:

“And . . . also”

- o These words connect the testing of the deacons with the implied testing of the overseers. Candidates for both offices must undergo testing to be appointed. (p. 160)

“tested” (*dokimazō*)

- o This verb mean “to make a critical examination of something, determine genuineness.”
- o This contributes to the idea that both prospective elders and deacons must be scrutinized and evaluated before taking office. (p. 161)

“first . . . then”

- o Indicates the proper sequence for becoming an elder or deacon. (p. 161)

“let them serve . . . if they prove themselves blameless”

- The verb “let them serve” is the verb form of the Greek noun *diakonos* which is where we get the term deacon. (p. 161)
- If a candidate has been found to be blameless and above reproach, then they are given the privilege of serving. (p. 161)

2. What is the author’s explanation for why the requirement for examination is placed only in the qualification list for deacons and not in the qualification list for overseers?

- Paul assumed that his readers would recognize the imperativeness of examining overseers and their qualifications for office. (p. 162)
- Paul demands that deacons are examined in a similar way to overseers. This stance implies that overseers are thoroughly examined. (p. 162)

3. The author states: “The proper examination of deacon and elder candidates is precisely where many churches fail.” Is this a false generalization? If not, why would churches not thoroughly examine their prospective elders’ and deacons’ qualifications for office?

- The process of examination takes time and effort which many church leaders think they are too busy to do. (p. 162)
- Church leaders might also think that it is not necessary because they know the candidate in social circles so they neglect to conduct a thorough examination of a candidate’s life. (p. 162)

4. What do we learn from Acts 13:1-4 that can help us understand Acts 16:1-4 and 1 Timothy 4:14?

- Acts 13:1-4 describes the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas for their special missionary work. (p. 162)
- This sheds light on the purpose of the “laying of hands” which is described in 1 Tim. 4:14. It sounds like Timothy was previously commissioned by the elders of his church for his missionary work. (pp. 162-63)

5. According to the author, what are the possible events leading up to the elders laying their hands on Timothy and his joining Paul’s gospel mission to the Gentile world?

- It appears that the events mentioned in 1 Tim. 4:14 took place at the beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey. (p. 163)
- Timothy was already educated by his mother and grandmother in the Old Testament Scriptures. He was a believer in Jesus for a couple of years before joining Paul’s missionary team. (p. 163)
- Timothy was spoken highly of by others. (p. 163)
- The Holy Spirit had revealed Timothy’s giftedness for ministry and his call to join Paul in full-time missionary work. (p. 164)

6. What specifically was Timothy's special ministry given by God and revealed through the prophetic utterances of the prophets?

- o His special ministry was the ministry of itinerant evangelism and teaching under Paul's apostolic authority and direction. (p. 164)

Author's Notes

In response to the prophecies concerning Timothy, the body of elders laid their hands on him. The picture of the elders laying their hands on Timothy demonstrated that he was officially "set apart" for or "commissioned" to his unique missionary calling.

7. What all did the laying on of hands by the elders symbolize or signify?

- o The church's blessing on Timothy. (p. 164)
- o The partnership between the church and Timothy in the gospel. (p. 164)
- o Entrusting Timothy to the grace of God for the dangerous mission ahead of him. (p. 164)

What did the laying on of the hands of the elders *not* signify?

- o Did not make Timothy the resident ordained pastor of a church. (p. 164)
- o Did not make Timothy the bishop over a body of churches.(p. 164)

8. Why was it important for Timothy never to forget this special event when the elders laid their hands upon him?

- o It serves as a reminder that he was "set apart" for this specific mission for the gospel. (p. 164)
- o Serve as encouragement and inspiration for the challenging task ahead of him as he confronted false teachers and restored order to the church. (p. 165)

9. What do you learn about the church elders from the fact that "the council of elders" laid hands on Timothy?

- o It was the council of elders who oversaw the local church. (p. 165)
- o It was not a singular elder or bishop who laid hands on Timothy, instead it was a group of elders acting in unison and full agreement. (p. 165)

10. How would the laying on of hands upon Timothy by the elders of Lystra and Iconium impact the elders of the church in Ephesus?

- o It would be beneficial because it signaled that Timothy was acting with Paul's full apostolic authority. (p. 165)
- o This would affirm Timothy's authority to rebuke, correct, and discipline the false teachers in Ephesus. (p. 165)

**11.** What do you find meaningful about the use of the laying on of hands for installing new elders and deacons for your own church?

- It is a very precious symbolic act that emphasizes the connection between those who commend and those who are being commended to the work of the Lord. It is something people will not forget. It also adds a seriousness to the event of commendation. If we do not use the laying on of hands, what do we do to emphasize the connection between the church and the appointee? It leaves the whole thing rather empty.

**12.** What did you learn from this chapter about biblical elders that you did not know before reading this chapter?



## ***Worthy of Double Honor: Elders Who Lead Well***

*“Paul, then, has two subsets of elders in view, and both are worthy of double honor: (1) those who demonstrate exceptional leadership, and (2) ‘especially’ those who labor at preaching and teaching. The difference between the two is a matter of the Spirit’s gifting and leading. Although two groups are marked out for special attention, there is only one ‘council of elders’ (1 Tim. 4:14).”*

...

*“But just as Paul did not avail himself of his full rights to financial support from churches (1 Cor. 9:12, 15, 18), so too elders are free to do the same and not avail themselves of all that ‘double honor’ might entail. A great deal of freedom exists for how ‘double honor’ is applied to particular individuals and church situations.”*

### **Read chapter 16**

#### **1. What is one of Paul’s overriding concerns in writing 1 Timothy 5:17–25?**

- One of Paul’s primary concerns is that the church will provide generously for its elders. (p. 167)

#### **2. What is the problem interpreters face with the Greek word *malista* (μάλιστα), pronounced MAL-is-ta?**

- There are multiple renderings and therefore interpretations of the Greek word *malista*. (p. 168)
- *Malista* can be rendered as “especially,” “above all,” “most of all,” or “in particular.” (p. 168)
- Some scholars argue that it should be rendered “namely.” (p. 168)

Explain how each of the alternative meanings of the word *malista* changes the meaning of the text.

- There are elders who should be considered for double honor, respect and material possession. Those who demonstrate exceptional leadership and those who labor at preaching and teaching. (p. 168)
- *Malista* as “especially”
  - When we give the Greek term, the common meaning of “especially” in this text emphasizes two groups, making those who labor in preaching and teaching deserving of special recognition and separate from those who lead well. (p. 168)
- *Malista* as “namely”
  - “This interpretation conflates these two groups of elders.” It results in one group of elders. Their leadership is further explained as laboring in preaching and teaching. (p. 168)

What arguments does Vern Poythress present for maintaining the traditional meaning of *malista* as “especially”?

- Maintaining *malista* as “especially” maintains a uniform rendering across other New Testament passages. (p. 168)
- If Paul meant to say *namely* then he would have used the unambiguous Greek expression *tout estin* (“that is,” “namely”). (p. 168)

3. It is important that you know and understand the Greek term *proistēmi* (προϊστημι). What are the problems with translating *proistēmi* as “rule”?

- Rendering *proistēmi* as rule in English is too strong of a rendering. (p. 169)
  - The notion of ruling is often associated in a sovereign or imperial context. (p. 169)
- The elders do not rule over the church as monarchs. (p. 169)

4. Why should we not use the term “elder rule”?

- The term “elder rule” gives the wrong impression about the nature of elder leadership. (p. 170)
  - Rulers demand to be served by others but Christlike elders willingly serve their brothers and sisters. (p. 170)

5. In bullet fashion, list the traits of an elder who leads well.

- Lead capably and proficiently (p. 170)
- Commits significant time and energy to provide pastoral oversight to the local congregation (p. 170)
- Conscientious worker (p. 170)
- Problem solver (p. 170)

- Decision maker (p. 170)
- Engaged in administrative, pastoral, or instructional activities (p. 170)
- Able to preach and teach the gospel while protecting it from heretical perversions (p. 170)

Author's Notes

Paul chooses vocabulary that aligns with Jesus's unique teaching on leadership and relationships within his church.

**6.** The word for “administrations” in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is an interesting word in Greek *kubernēsis* (κυβέρνησις). Explain all that is involved in the meaning of the spiritual gift of “administrations.”

- This Greek noun is derived from the verb *kubernao* which means “to steer a ship, to guide.” (p. 171)
- This word has a variety of translations including “administrating/administrations,” “guidance,” “gifts of leadership,” and “forms of leadership.” (p. 171)
- It is plural which implies that there are multiple types of “administration.” (p. 171)
- Includes the idea of guiding or directing others. (p. 171)
- Carries the imagery of a ship captain who guides the ship through storms and choppy seas. (p. 171)

**7.** In Romans 12:8, Paul lists the spiritual gift of leading (*proistēmi*). Paul adds to this spiritual gift the little word “zeal” or “diligence” (σπουδῆ [*spoudē*]). What significant fact or facts do you learn about leading from the additional word, “zeal”?

- Zeal is the “earnest commitment in discharge of an obligation.” (p. 172)
- Paul commends leading with zeal. Zeal is part of the antidote to spiritual laziness and minimal effort which people are prone to default to. (p. 172)
- *Proistēmi* is also translated as “to labor” indicating that leading others is hard work. (p. 172)

**8.** What lessons did you learn from the account of Mr. Herb Banks that would help you better understand biblical eldership?

- Strong leadership does not always mean being a public figure. (p. 172)
- Those who lead well and “steer the ship” diligently are worthy of double honor. (p. 172)

Author's Notes

A local church and its eldership is truly blessed if it has elders who can guide the congregation as skilled pilots through the choppy waters of conflict that crash around the ship daily.

**9.** How would you answer someone who believes that the term “honor” means only respect and not monetary aid?

- The word *honor* means “respect,” “consideration,” or “high regard” and in certain contexts includes the idea of monetary aid in the form of honorarium or compensation. (p. 173)
- As seen in 1 Timothy 5:3-16, the widows are given both respect and monetary support. (p. 173)
- There are several instances through the OT and NT which include material assistance. (p. 173)

**10.** What do you think is the strongest argument for “honor” meaning *both* respect and financial assistance?

- The strongest argument is found in the verses preceding verse 17 and addressing honor for widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16). The widow is both to receive respect and financial assistance. Both must be included. To give a widow honor/respect without meeting her physical, material needs would be hypocritical. (pp. 173-174)

**11.** List a few reasons why an elder who leads well truly deserves “double honor.”

- Elders who lead faithfully, skillfully, and diligently are of immense value to the health and growth of the flock and should be valued as such. This includes affording them “double honor.” (p. 175)
- Capable leaders are more and more rare and should be valued by their church and community. (p. 175)

**Author's Notes**

People often speak of "elder rule" when describing how a church should be organized and led, but the term "rule" is misleading. A better way is to speak of an "elder-led church." Rulers demand to be served by others, but Christlike elders willingly serve their brothers and sisters.

**12.** As you look back over this chapter, what did you learn that was new to you?

**13.** From the list of elder qualifications on page iii, what five qualifications are most applicable to an elder who leads well and therefore deserves double honor?

- Above reproach
- Holds firm to the gospel and is able to give instruction in sound doctrine
- Respectable
- Holy and upright
- Not a lover of money

**Author's Notes**

The general lack of available, capable leaders evident in every area of society, including the local church, highlights the value of church leaders who lead well.

## ***Worthy of Double Honor: Elders Who Labor in Preaching and Teaching***

*“Effective teachers and preachers work hard at long hours of concentrated study, lots of reading, sermon preparation, and demanding teaching situations. It is time-consuming work that requires a great deal of self-discipline. Teaching and preaching is labor intensive work!”*

...

*“Because the Bible can be a difficult book to understand and some doctrines of the faith are deeply profound, people need learned teachers to explain and defend the doctrines of Scripture. Thus, those who give themselves fully to teaching and preaching the message of the grace of God are truly worthy of the church’s financial support and esteem.”*

Read chapter 17

1. What point is the author trying to make with his opening story where he asked the famous seminary professor about his view of “double honor” in 1 Timothy 5:17?

- Many Christians, including seminary professors, have formed their views around eldership based on church traditions and practices and their own experience rather than what the biblical text reveals to us about eldership. (p. 178)

2. What are some of the differences between the terms “preaching” and “teaching”?

- Preaching is, in a broad sense, the practice of exhorting, admonishing, applying, and proclaiming the gospel. (p. 178)
- Preaching aims to persuade the heart and conscience of the listener. (p. 178)
- Preaching is for both Christians and non-Christians. (p. 178)
- Teaching is imparting information and skills. (p. 178)
- Teaching also refers to the act of communication analogous to the act of preaching. (p. 178)
- Teaching provides instruction and explanation. (p. 179)

What are some of the similarities between the terms “preaching” and “teaching”?

- o Both involve communicating the truth of the gospel. (p. 178)
- o Both involve long hours of study and concentration which is a true labor. (p. 179)

3. What is the meaning of the Greek word “labor” (κοπιάω [*kopiaō*])?

- o Describes manual labor. (p. 179)
- o Denotes toil, and strenuous work that results in weariness and exhaustion. (p. 179)
- o Envisages the kind of sweaty exertion and physical toll that manual labor takes on a person. (p. 179)

What is Paul’s purpose in using this particular Greek word to describe the elders who teach and preach?

- o Paul is describing the kind of work and strain that elders should feel as they preach and teach. It is not an easy task but rather an exhausting and laborious one. (p. 179)

4. Many people do not see teaching as labor. They may even think that teaching is an easy job. List the reasons why teaching truly is laborious work.

- o Involves long hours of concentrated study and reading. (p. 179)
- o It is time consuming work which requires a lot of self-discipline. (p. 180)
- o Requires the expenditure of mental, emotional, and spiritual energy. (p. 180)
- o An hour of teaching is supported by many hours of preparation. (p. 180)
- o A high view of Scripture demands conscientious study and painstaking preparation. (p. 180)

5. How do you explain the difference between all elders who must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:3; also Titus 1:9), and those elders who “labor at preaching and teaching” and receive “double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17)?

- o It is a requirement of all elders to be able to preach and teach. (p. 181)
- o Those who labor at preaching and teaching are Spirit-gifted and Spirit-driven to know Scripture by studying conscientiously, reading widely, and working tirelessly. (p. 181)
- o All elders must be able to teach but not all elders are Spirit-gifted teachers who love to labor at preaching and teaching. (p. 181)

<p>Author’s Notes Paul’s use of “preaching and teaching,” covers all dimensions of communicating the gospel as the message from God. With both words, a good deal of overlap exists.</p>
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6. How do 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11–15 reveal the importance of Spirit-gifted teachers and the teaching ministry of the elders?

- o Spirit-gifted teachers help to anchor the flock of God in the truth of the gospel. (p. 182)
- o Teachers are an essential part of building up the body of Christ and equipping/preparing the saints. (p. 182)

7. What is Paul's purpose in saying, "For the Scripture says . . ." (v. 18)?

- o He signals the ultimate voice of authority—God's word. (p. 183)
- o This phrase also indicates the unity that exists between the Old and New Testaments. (p. 184)

Explain the connection "for" between verses 17 and 18.

- o "for" supports Paul's charge that certain elders be considered for double honor. (p. 183)

What key points does Paul make in 1 Corinthians 9:6–14 that can help us interpret 1 Timothy 5:17–18 and especially Paul's use of Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7?

- o Paul highlights the injustice of refusing to support hard-working teachers. (p. 184)
- o This passage asserts that hard-working elders must receive material provision from those they sacrificially serve and teach. (p. 184)

Author's Notes

Refusal to provide for the work of proclaiming and teaching the gospel is an implicit rejection of its value and denial of appropriate honor. But if we capture Paul's passion and vision for the centrality of preaching and teaching the word of the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will gladly render double honor to those elders who labor diligently in preaching the gospel of our salvation and teaching the profound truths of Scriptures.

8. Why did Paul *not* assign a special title or status to elders laboring in the Word? Give some reasons.

- o Bestowing "double honor" does not create a distinct office or elevate certain elders above one another. (p. 185)
- o While certain men may be gifted in preaching and teaching it does not give them the exclusive right to preach and teach. (p. 185)

**9.** How do the following verses help us understand the scriptural view of elders who labor in preaching and teaching?

“For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants [lit. slaves] for Jesus’ sake.” (2 Cor. 4:5)

- Those who preach and teach are conduits for the message of Jesus Christ.

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” (1 Cor. 3:5-7)

- An elder may labor in preaching and teaching but ultimately it is God who stirs the heart of an individual to grow.

“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

- It is essential that servants of Christ remain faithful to the message of the gospel and to the work that God has entrusted to them.

**10.** From the list of elder qualifications on page iii, what five qualifications are most applicable to an elder who labors in preaching and teaching?

- Able to teach
- Above reproach
- Sober-minded
- Not a recent convert
- Disciplined

**11.** For the local church, what advantages are there to having one or two elders serve part- or full-time in evangelism and teaching?

- This helps to ensure that teaching remains high quality and faithful to the gospel.
- Provides an elder with time and space to focus on teaching and diligently prepare for preaching and teaching.

**12.** List some concrete ways in which Acts 20:17–24 can help the elders practically implement their teaching-preaching ministry in the church (1 Tim. 5:17).

- Teaching-preaching ministry should be led by the Holy Spirit.
- Teachers should not hesitate to teach things which are useful to the flock.
- Teachers should boldly proclaim the gospel even when faced with hardships which might result from teaching the truth.



- The task of a teacher is to “testify to the good news of God’s grace.”
- The gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles meaning that the gospel is for everyone and that anyone can repent and have faith in Jesus Christ.

**13.** Explain why 1 Timothy 5:17–18 is considered one of the most significant verses on the doctrine of eldership.

- This is one of the most significant verses because it discusses church government, the preaching of the word, the financial support of elders, the protection of an elder from false accusations, the discipline of a church leader, and the choosing of the right shepherd elder for office. (p. 177)



## *Protecting the Innocent; Disciplining the Guilty*

*"If you hate false accusations made against you and your family, then do not make them against others or even listen to them unless there is evidence from more than one person. It is the devil's work to make accusations against God's people, for he 'accuses them day and night before our God' (Rev. 12:10). Don't be involved in the devil's work!"*

...

*"Only when the discipline of a sinning church leader is made public is there any chance of controlling one of the most divisive forces in a local church: rumormongering, gossip, and the spread of misinformation. The public exposure and explanation of the matter, done properly, is the only way to bring a matter to a conclusion."*

### Read chapter 18

#### 1. Why would Paul hand over two of the teachers of the church in Ephesus to Satan for discipline?

- It was a loving act of church discipline because these teachers did not remain faithful to the gospel and would not submit to correction from Paul. (p. 187)
- It helped protect the church from being poisoned by false teachings. (p. 187)
- It gave these teachers the opportunity to repent and seek restoration. (p. 187)

#### 2. In what ways were the following godly men slandered or falsely accused of wrongdoing?

Joseph (Gen. 39:11–20)

- Falsely accused of sleeping with Potiphar's wife and was thrown in prison.

Moses (Num. 16:1–5)

- Falsely accused of exalting himself to the level of God.

Jeremiah (Jer. 37:13–21)

- Falsely accused of betraying his people and deserting to the enemy, the Chaldeans.

Nehemiah (Neh. 6:1–9)

- Falsely accused of planning a revolt and trying to make himself king.

Paul (Acts 18:13; Rom. 3:8)

- Falsely accused of encouraging people to worship God in ways that were contrary to the law of God.

**3.** The Scripture says, “Do not admit a charge against an elder.” Explain what this imperative command would look like in practice.

- Be wary of those who seek to slander leaders. (p. 188)
  - When people become angry at leaders they may lash out and say whatever they want.
- Do not accept an unsubstantiated accusation. (p. 188)
- Do not entertain a charge unless there is a credible witness ready to testify. (p. 188)
  - This ensures that elders are given the same due process as all others.

**4.** From the following Proverbs what do you learn about rumors and gossip?

Proverbs 6:16-19

- The Lord hates a lying tongue and those who use their words to sow discord.

Proverbs 10:18, 19

- It is foolish to spread slander. It is wise to hold your tongue.

Proverbs 11:9

- Ungodly talk will destroy those around you.
- Truth and knowledge of the truth will deliver justice.

Proverbs 16:28

- Dishonesty causes heartache and gossip causes division.

Proverbs 17:4-5

- Those who are wicked and evil will allow gossip to spread.
- Those who mock others and rejoice at the misfortune of others insult God himself.

Proverbs 18:8

- Gossip can be tempting but it is harmful to the soul.

Proverbs 21:23-24

- You can protect yourself from harm by keeping your mouth shut.

Proverbs 25:9-10

- Do not make your issues with other people public, deal with it quickly in private.

Proverbs 26:20-22

- Gossip is what fuels the fire of conflict. If you do not fuel gossip, then conflict will subside.

5. Why should the followers of Jesus Messiah hate unsupported accusations, petty gossip, juicy rumors, and scandalous tales?

- Followers of Jesus are supposed to be people of the truth and should hate false accusations, petty gossip, juicy rumors, and scandalous tales. (p. 188)
- It is important this kind of talk is silenced so it does not damage the church. (p. 189)

6. What is the principle that the author claims to live by?

- “No judgment without the facts.” (p. 189)
- Our judgments are to be governed by credible witnesses and evidence to establish the facts—not unfounded rumors. (p. 189)

As a church leader, why would this principle be an excellent principle for you to consistently practice?

- Prevents the lives of good people from being destroyed by false accusations. (p. 189)
- Allows you to collect all the facts and evidence from those involved before making a judgment. (p. 189)
- “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt. 7:12) (p. 189)

7. What does the Proverb mean: “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov. 18:17)?

- The person who shares their side of the story first is often the easiest to believe but it is important to examine all evidence, speak to witnesses, and look at all sides of the situation before making a judgment about an accusation.

**8.** Explain the legal principles taught in both the Old and New Testaments that should always guide you when dealing fairly with accusations of sin against an elder, or for that matter, anyone else: Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16–17; 2 Cor. 13:1.

- Protection from unsubstantiated accusations does not imply immunity from all accusations. (p. 189)
- An accusation of sin that cannot be verified by the testimony of witnesses must be dropped. (p. 189)
- But the accusation of sin that can be corroborated by two or three witnesses must be heard: it cannot be brushed aside or covered up simply because the person in question is a prominent church leader. (p. 189)

**9.** Explain the debate over the present active participle of the verb “sin.”

- There are two explanations among commentators:
  - Present tense participle indicates ongoing sin on the part of the accused elders. This does not include a past occurrence of sin. (p. 191)
  - Present tense participle should be rendered as “the ones who sin” rather than “those who persist in sin.” (p. 191)
- Although this issue is not clear, the first view is more in line with the normal usage of the present continuous tense of the verb. (p. 191)
- Neither interpretation eliminates the public rebuke of a sinning elder before the church. (p. 191)

**10.** What all is meant by the imperative verb “rebuke” (*elegchō*) directed toward a sinning elder?

- The imperative verb “rebuke” (*elegchō*) conveys the ideas of expose, correct, censure, confront, or reprove. (p. 191)
- “To show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.” (p. 192)

**Author's Notes**

It is "sin" that is the issue, not merely a leadership blunder or minor shortcoming. Witnesses are required to verify the charges of sin (vv. 19–20), and a public rebuke is necessary, which would not be required of minor offenses.

11. Why must the rebuke of a sinning elder be made public?

- Paul requires the sinning elder or elders to be rebuked in the “presence of all” (p. 192)
- Means public exposure and censure before the entire congregation. Ensures that an elder’s sin is not swept under the carpet but is dealt with. (p. 192)
- Sends the message that the believing community takes sin very seriously, especially the sin of its leaders. (p. 192)
- Making the sin public also cuts gossip and rumors short. It brings clarity and helps to eliminate misinformation. (p. 192)

What does the clause, “that the rest may stand in fear” mean?

- The discipline of one elder serves as a warning to all others and to the entire community of believers that God takes sin seriously and all sin has consequences. (p. 193)
- God uses the fear of public shame as a powerful deterrent to help keep people, especially leaders from sinning. (p. 193)
- The Law of Moses speaks to the fact that when sin is publicly exposed and judged, it causes others to fear and not commit the same evil. (p. 193)

Why should you always use the Scriptures when you need to rebuke, correct, or counsel someone (2 Tim. 3:16–17)?

- You should always use Scripture because it was inspired by God and is instructive in giving rebuke, correction, or counsel.

Author’s Notes

Paul’s concern is with sinning elders who have not responded in repentance to the accusation of sin by witnesses.

12. What were the unrepentant sins of Hymenaeus and Alexander (who were possibly elders and teachers in the church)?

- They were rebellious. (p. 191)
- They refused to repent like Paul asked them to and had to be put out of the church. (p. 191)
- They taught heretical doctrines. (p. 191)
- They were divisive, dishonest, and defiant toward the apostle’s warnings. (p. 191)

The author lists nine points to help guide the difficult process of corrective church discipline. Which three of these nine points would be most helpful or applicable in guiding you in the discipline of Hymenaeus and Alexander? Explain your answers.

- #4 Hymenaeus and Alexander were defiant and refused Paul's appeals for repentance, and thus had to be put out of the church, being handed over to Satan. (p. 194)
- #5 These men were no longer "above reproach." If an elder continues in unrepentant sin, he is disqualified as an elder. (p. 194)
- #8 Always seek guidance from more experienced elders. (p. 194)

**13.** What is meant by the following statement: "Restoration to church fellowship, however, is not the same thing as restoration to the office of overseer. That is a different matter."

- After repenting of his sin, an elder may come back to be a restored part of the congregation but this does not entitle him to reclaim his position as an elder. (p. 194)
- There are some sins which will disqualify him as an elder. It is essential that the elders examine him before a decision is made. (p. 194)

Why is the above statement a significant statement to understand correctly and to defend? What is the problem?

- Knowing how to handle the delicate matter of restoration is a key part of church discipline and should not be overlooked. (p. 194)
- Church discipline is not unloving, as some claim, but is intended to protect God's church and call the sinner to repentance. (p. 194)
- Do not make light of sin. These situations are a true test of your moral courage, leadership ability, and loyal obedience to God and his word. (p. 194)

**14.** If someone tells you that church discipline is unloving and hurtful to the local church, how would you answer them? What reasons would you use to answer?

**Author's Notes**

How you handle these kinds of heartbreaking situations is a true test of your moral courage, leadership ability, and loyal obedience to God and his word.



## *A Call to Courageous Obedience and Helps for Appointing Qualified Elders*

*“One can easily think of ten excuses for evading the discipline of a pastoral elder. This is particularly true if the elder is a friend or a prominent member of a leading family within the church. But if we can come up with ten reasons to avoid church discipline, there is one good reason to pursue it: because God commands it.”*

...

*“Investigating accusations of sin and disciplining elders are emotionally traumatic experiences that can even make a person physically ill (vv. 19–21, 23). One way to lessen the distress of these traumatic situations is by avoiding the hasty or even careless appointment of new elders: ‘Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.’”*

### Read chapter 19

#### 1. What five creative reasons can you give for refusing to exercise corrective church discipline against an elder?

- o Answers will vary: fear of retribution from the elder, concern over unity of the church, overly worried about being legalistic, lack of courage, etc.

#### 2. What is Paul’s specific charge to Timothy which he is strictly ordered to obey?

- o Paul charged Timothy to act courageously and impartially in the public discipline of sinning elders (vv. 19–20). (p. 197)

#### What is Paul’s main point in saying, “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels”?

- o Paul’s charge to Timothy was not spoken just “in the presence of all” the church body (v. 20) but...the eyes of God, Christ, and the angels are upon Timothy—and upon us as well. (pp. 197-198).

#### Who are the “elect angels” and why does it matter that they are included with God and Christ?

- o Angels are heavenly beings created by God as messengers to serve him and his people. (p. 198)
- o These elect angels were chosen by God from before time and did not join in Satan’s rebellion along with the other fallen angels. (p. 198)
- o Angels will assist Christ Jesus at his coming and on the day of judgment. (p. 198)

3. Explain what the author means by “the bigger picture” which is necessary for all Christians to understand and act accordingly.

- What we do in our local congregations as overseeing elders is accomplished, not just in the presence of people, but in the very presence of God, Christ, and the elect angels of heaven. (p. 198)
- This realization motivates us to obey the Lord’s commands, even the difficult ones like exercising disciplinary action against a sinning elder. (p. 198)

Author’s Notes Much more is involved here than the earthly discipline of a church leader—heaven is watching and judging.
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4. Explain each of the following key words and their significance:

“I charge” (*diamarturomai*)

- This means, “to exhort with authority in matters of extraordinary importance.” (p. 199)

“These things” (*tauta*)

- “These things” refer to the instructions given in verses 19–20 regarding the protection and discipline of an elder. (p. 199)

“Without prejudging” (*prokrima*)

- “Prejudging” refers to a judgment that involves taking a side beforehand, prejudice, discrimination. (p. 199)
- Timothy was not to judge someone guilty or innocent before learning the facts. (p. 199)

“Without Partiality” (*prosklisis*)

- The term “partiality” means “a relatively strong preference for something, inclination” (p. 199)
- Paul charged Timothy to avoid “partiality” because partiality distorts justice! (p. 199)

Author’s Notes Failure to publicly discipline sinning church leaders and those who cover up their sins, and not being transparent with the truth, demonstrates a grievous lack of integrity. It reveals that we do not fear God or his word.
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5. According to the context regarding elders (1 Tim. 5:20-25), provide an explanation for each of the following statements:

“The laying on of hands”

- The laying on of hands is a symbolic act for the public appointment or commissioning of a person to an office or a specific task. (p. 200)

“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands”

- This means do not appoint a person as an elder too quickly, too easily, hastily. (p. 200)

“Nor take part in the sins of others”

- If an unfit person is appointed to spiritual leadership and sins in that leadership role... those who appointed the leader too hastily share some responsibility for those sins. (p. 201)

“Keep yourself pure”

- The unwise or careless appointment of an unfit, sinful person to the pastoral oversight of the church could stain Timothy’s reputation. (p. 202)

Author’s Notes

There is to be no discrimination or favoritism shown when dealing with accusations of sin or carrying out discipline for an elder’s sin.

**6. What is the main point of verse 22 and why is it important for every local church to clearly understand and to put into practice?**

- With the need for more shepherd elders, there is a constant temptation to make hasty appointments. But rash decisions to appoint an elder creates more serious, long-lasting problems for the leadership of the church. (p. 200)
- If local churches do not put this into practice, unwise or careless appointment of an unfit, sinful person to the pastoral oversight of the church could stain the reputation of the church and its leadership. (p. 202)

Author’s Notes

The laying on of hands creates a bond—an observable, personal, and tangible sense of responsibility and fellowship between the parties involved.

**7. Specifically, what does the author mean that, “Time, testing, training, and prayer are still the best principles to follow when appointing elders”?**

- Time: Paul warned that a “recent convert” should not be appointed as an overseeing elder (1 Tim 3:6), but instead some time should pass for the individual to demonstrate his qualifications. (p. 201)
- Testing: In 1 Timothy 3:10, Paul says let the candidate for elder, “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” (p. 201)
- Prayer: Prayerfully examining all candidates, results in avoiding rash, hasty appointments. (p. 201)

**8. What interesting truths do you learn from Paul’s brief mention of Timothy’s “frequent ailments”?**

- Here is a tender example of Paul’s intimate knowledge of Timothy’s physical weaknesses and his loving concern for his spiritual son’s physical health. (p. 202)
- “A little wine” will not defile, although using much wine would. (p. 202)

- Timothy may have abstained from wine himself in order not to encourage drinking among others. (p. 202)
- This brief, personal digression expressing regard for Timothy's personal health is a clear example of the true-to-life nature of this letter and is an affirmation of its Pauline authorship. (p. 203)

**9. In your own words, explain each of the following statements:**

“The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment”

- Some people's sins are so obvious that no one would consider them eligible for office, thus no consideration for leadership is necessary. (p. 203)

“the sins of others appear later”

- The sins of some people are not immediately apparent, so action must be suspended until the person's character and conduct can be more closely examined. (p. 204)

“So also good works are conspicuous”

- People who do these works are easily identified as eligible for the work of pastoral oversight because they lovingly serve the needs of the church body. They are exemplary believers. (p. 204)

“and even those [good works] that are not [obvious] cannot remain hidden”

- Some people's good works are not immediately visible, but upon examination their good deeds become evident. (p. 205)

**10. In what ways does 1 Timothy 3:10 parallel 1 Timothy 5:24-25? “And let them also [like the overseers] be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).**

- Both 1 Timothy 3:10 and 1 Timothy 5:24-25 support the idea that candidates for elder should be publicly examined first before they serve in their respective offices, to let both their obvious, and not so obvious, deeds to become clear. (p. 201)

## *Appoint Elders as I Directed*

*“Although the churches in Crete were facing many serious problems, Paul’s solution was not to instruct Titus to appoint one strong man to take charge over each local church. Nor did he suggest that Titus adapt to the situation and do whatever would work best in Crete for establishing church leadership, as long as there is some form of leadership for the people. All the biblical evidence points to Paul’s deliberate appointment of a plurality of qualified elders to shepherd and oversee a congregation of believers. And we should think the same!”*

...

*“New Testament elders did not wear holy garments; they were not anointed with holy oil. They did not assume sacred titles or become a separate class of priests or reverend clergymen. All these kinds of sacred trappings evolved over the succeeding centuries after the writing of the New Testament and were a terrible misuse of the Old Testament priestly system imposed on the new humanity, the body of Christ, the new creation (Eph. 2:15–16; Gal. 6:15).”*

### Read chapter 20

**1. Who was Titus and what was his position in relationship to Paul and the churches? (See chapter 3.)**

- Titus was an apostolic delegate on a special assignment...special apostolic delegates traveled thousands of miles on behalf of Paul and the churches. (p. 54)
- He served as Paul’s partner and coworker in spreading the gospel and strengthening the various churches under Paul’s care. (p. 54)

**2. What kind of damage was done to the New Testament eldership model by conflating the Old Testament priestly system, and the religious and political structures of the Roman Empire?**

- Conflating the Old Testament priestly system with the religious and political structures of the Roman Empire, gave rise to a powerful priestly caste. (p. 207)
- This powerful priestly caste led to a vast hierarchical structure of clergy wielding unimaginable power over people, property, and politics. This power has historically often been misused. (p. 207)

3. What reasons would you give for why a local church cannot be careless or unconcerned about the governmental structure of itself?

- Because the Scriptures share a normative pattern of church government. It is government by a plurality of Spirit–placed, scripturally qualified pastoral elders. (p. 208)
- Because church government is a critical issue and has significant biblical, theological, and practical implications. (p. 207)
- Because some of the worst havoc wrought on the Christian faith has been a direct result of unscriptural forms of church government. (p. 207)

**Author's Notes**

Paul's letter to Titus is not strictly a private correspondence but was intended to be read in the churches (Titus 3:15). This letter, as well as his other letters, was a significant part of Paul's missionary work and strategy.

4. Read the following quote by George Ladd.

It appears likely that there was no normative pattern of church government in the apostolic age, and that the organizational structure of the church is no essential element in the theology of the church.

How would you respond to Professor Ladd if you had the opportunity to speak to him?

- There is a “normative pattern of church government.” It is government by a plurality of Spirit–placed, scripturally qualified pastoral elders. (p. 208)
- Paul gave Titus direct orders to appoint elders in local churches: “appoint elders in every town as I directed you. . .” (Titus 1:5). This is a direct command by the apostle to appoint qualified elders. This was Paul's normative pattern for church government. (p. 208)

5. How would you answer someone who agrees that the New Testament models the plurality of elders, but does not mandate its use for every church.

- The plurality of elders model is the only model given in the New Testament. Both Paul and Peter directly instructed the church elders, and no one else, to shepherd/govern God's flock. (p. 208)
- There does not appear to be a good reason to object to this model. The objection appears to arise from adhering to the claims of human church tradition rather than allowing the claims of Scripture to take precedence. (p. 208)

6. What did Paul expect to accomplish with his letter to Titus?

- Paul's letter would serve to authorize Titus to act as an agent with Paul's apostolic authority. (p. 210)
- The letter was also to provide continual, permanent directives for the churches long after Titus departed. (p. 210)
- Titus was to put in order what was left unfinished by Paul....the rest of the letter reveals what needed to be put in order or straightened out. (p. 210)

7. Explain or expand upon the following Greek terms. (Be sure you know what each word means.)

“Put in order” (ἐπιδιορθόω [*epidiorthoō*])

- to “set right” or “correct in addition (to what has already been corrected).” (p. 210)

“Remained” (λείπω [*leutō*])

- This conveys the idea of something lacking, “the things remaining to be done,” as I. Howard Marshall states. (p. 210)
- The New International Version renders the verb as “what was left unfinished,” and the Christian Standard Bible as “left undone.” (p. 210)

“Appoint” (καθίστημι [*kathistēmi*])

- This word is often used to express the act of formal appointment or installation of a person to an official position, such as the appointment of a judge or governor, see Acts 7:10. (p. 211)

List everything you just learned about the word *kathistēmi*.

- The same verb is used in Acts 6:3 in reference to the twelve apostles who officially appointed the Seven to care for the poor in the church at Jerusalem. (p. 211)
- The verb can also express appointment in an unofficial sense. (p. 211)
- As biblical commentator R. J. Knowling correctly observes, “The verb implies at all events an exercise of authority.” (p. 211)

8. A key statement in verse 5 is, “as I directed you.” Explain the importance of the personal pronoun “I” in this context.

- The “I” (ἐγώ [*egō*]) is grammatically emphatic in the original language, so it is an authoritative command from Christ’s chosen apostle, the “teacher” of the Gentile churches. (p. 212)
- Titus is not to act as he sees fit to install elders; he is to act in accordance with Paul’s instructions. (p. 212)

Explain the meaning and significance of the term “directed” regarding the topic of elders.

- The Greek verb “directed” (διατάσσω [*diatassō*]) here denotes “order,” “charge,” “command.” (p. 212)
- Paul gave specific, authoritative orders on this vitally important matter, explaining who qualifies to be appointed as an overseer. These directives are to be obeyed. (p. 212)

**9. What are some of the obvious differences between the installation of the Old Testament priests, and the installation of New Testament elders and deacons?**

- The New Testament does not shroud the appointment of elders in sacred ritual or superstitious notions of holy orders. There is no holy rite to perform or special ceremony to observe. (p. 213)
- New Testament elders were not instructed to wear holy garments or be anointed with holy oil as were the Old Testament priests of Israel. (p. 213)

**Author's Notes**

Titus is not to act as he sees fit to install elders; he is to act in accordance with Paul's instructions.

**10. Why is it important to use accurate biblical language when participating in biblical and theological issues?**

- Using accurate biblical language often helps us avoid making theological mistakes. If precise, clear, and biblically sound language is used, it is more likely profitable conversations about the Bible and theology will occur.

**Author's Notes**

"But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come" (Heb. 9:11) and "the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10) had arrived, all such external rules and regulations were done away with. In this new age, there is no longer a special Levitical priesthood. All believers are priests and saints. Thus, local church elders undergo no elaborate, sacred rituals in their appointment to office.

**11. What are the Greek words for the appointment of elders? Give definitions.**

- For the appointment or installation of elders and other officials, the Greek words used in the New Testament simply express appointment or commissioning: (p. 213)
  - Acts 20:28 "made" (τίθημι [*tithēmi*])
  - Titus 1:5 "appoint" (καθίστημι [*kathistēmi*])
  - Acts 14:23 "appointed" (χειροτονέω [*cheirotoneō*])
- The vocabulary of the Gospels is the same. Jesus "appointed (ποιέω [*poieō*]) twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach." (Mark 3:14).
- Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed (τίθημι [*tithēmi*]) you that you should go and bear fruit . . ." (John 15:16).



12. From a biblical perspective, what are some of the problems with using the terms “ordination” or “ordained”?

- The term has different definitions depending on which Protestant church tradition is using the term. (p. 213)
  - Some Protestants have a quasi-sacramental view of ordination, which in practice creates a Protestant priest who alone can preach, pray, bless, and administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
  - For others...ordination is the official, public recognition of a divine call on a person’s life to full-time gospel ministry or simply the installation of a person into church office.
- The author recommends avoiding the term because it is most often used unbiblically. (p. 213)

13. After reading and examining Titus 1:5, what new information did you learn about New Testament elders?

- Answers can vary: Church government is a critical issue and has significant biblical, theological, and practical implications. (p. 207)
- In the New Testament, there is a “normative pattern of church government.” It is government by a plurality of Spirit–placed, scripturally qualified pastoral elders. (p. 208)
- What is obvious is that the New Testament does not shroud the appointment of elders in sacred ritual or superstitious notions of holy orders. There is no holy rite to perform or special ceremony to observe. (p. 213)
- The process of installing elders must always be accompanied by the public examination of a candidate’s qualifications as revealed in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). (pp. 213–14)



## *Above Reproach as a Husband and Father*

“Requiring all children of a prospective elder to be confirmed as believers places an unreasonable demand upon a prospective elder. Even the most godly, competent Christian fathers cannot guarantee that all their children will be believers.”

...

“There are always many variables when judging these complex family issues. This is why it is essential that the elders and the congregation know the candidate’s character and family members. This is the only way that a candidate’s family life can be fairly assessed and declared ‘above reproach.’”

### Read chapter 21

#### 1. Why does a candidate for eldership have to be "above reproach" as a husband and father?

- o Paul’s concern is that an elder’s conduct not bring disrepute upon the church or the gospel. (p. 215)

#### 2. Explain the disagreement over the Greek word *pistos* in Titus 1:6?

- o This Greek adjective can be translated either as “believers” (ESV) or as “faithful” (CSB). (p. 216)
- o So the issue is whether Paul requires an elder’s children to be *believers*, or to be *faithful* to their father as the head of the family. (p. 216)

#### 3. List two reasons why some Bible commentators render the Greek word *pistos* as believer in Titus 1:6.

- o The first reason is that it is unlikely Paul is simply saying the same thing in Titus 1:6 that he said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:14. If Paul was making the same point, he would have employed the same Greek word for submissive (*hypotagē*) rather than using *pistos* in a more generalized sense. (p. 216)
- o The second reason is, the English translation of “faithful” in Titus 1:6 is still not synonymous with “submissive” (*hypotagē*) in 1 Timothy 3:4, so Paul is not saying the same thing in both passages. (p. 216)

4. Explain the argument that contends that the strong contrast between *pistos* children and *profligate* children favors *pistos* to mean faithful/trustworthy/dutiful in this context.

- The term *pistos* needs to be understood in contrast to the words “debauchery” and “insubordination.” (p. 217)
- The contrast in Titus 1:6 does not seem to demand believing children rather than unbelieving children. Instead, the contrast requires children to be faithful to their father’s leadership rather than children accused publicly by others of “debauchery” and “insubordination.” (p. 217)

5. Explain the argument that contends that the parallel passage in 1 Timothy 3:4 helps interpret the term *pistos* in Titus 1:6 as “faithful.”

- 1 Timothy 3:4 is the clearer passage and should help interpret the ambiguity of Titus 1:6. (p. 218)
- Significantly, the emphasis in 1 Timothy 3:4 falls on the submissiveness of the children; nothing is stated about their salvation status. It would seem that the same priority is reflected in Titus 1:6. (p. 218)

Explain why the argument using 1 Timothy 3:4 (the parallel passage) fails to help interpret *pistos* as “faithful/trustworthy.”

- The argument can be made that if Paul was making the same point in Titus 1:6 that he made in 1 Timothy 3:4, he would employ the same Greek word for submissive (*hypotagē*) rather than using *pistos* in a more generalized sense. (p. 216)

6. What are the dangers of requiring that all children of a candidate for eldership be born-again Christians by eighteen years old?

- It gives a natural temptation to the candidate for elder to pressure his children into professing the faith. (p. 219)
- Many years of effective ministry can unnecessarily be missed before the candidate for elder is deemed qualified to serve if his children are not old enough to profess faith. (p. 219)

Author’s Notes

A candidate for eldership must be a person whose character and conduct are free from damaging moral accusations or public scandal. Paul’s concern is that an elder’s conduct not bring disrepute upon the church or the gospel.

7. In this particular passage, Titus 1:6, what reasons would one have for choosing the simpler interpretation over the more complex interpretation.

- All the difficult and complex questions are resolved when Titus 1:6 is interpreted consistently with 1 Timothy 3:4, the clearer of the two passages. (p. 219)
- The simpler interpretation of faithful and dutiful children avoids this maze of complex issues and questions. (p. 219)

## Author's Notes

The father of the prodigal son could not assure his lost son's salvation, and may even have had reason to question the spiritual status of his "faithful" son who stayed home but lacked love and forgiveness (Luke 15:11–32). Salvation is a supernatural work of God.

**8.** In Bible interpretation, it is essential for accurate interpretation to watch for the little transitional words that help the reader follow the logic of the biblical writer's thinking. What does the inferential particle "for" tell you about the flow of Paul's thought in this passage (Titus 1:7)?

- It shows the continuous logical connection in subject between verse 6 and verse 7. (p. 220)
- Verse 7 provides a profound reason for the candidate to be "above reproach" as a husband and father (v. 6). An "overseer . . . must be above reproach" because he is "God's steward" of God's household. (p. 220)

**9.** How would you answer, from the text of Scripture, someone who insists that the "overseer" in verse 7 is a different official from the elders in verses 5-6 and possibly even over the elders in rank?

- As we have learned in chapter 11, the term overseer is best understood to be used by Paul interchangeably with the term elder. (p. 221)
- Although the terms *overseer* and *elder* refer to the same office, they are not exactly synonymous. Each term emphasizes different aspects of the office. (p. 221)
  - The term *elder* signifies spiritual maturity, experience, wisdom, and community leadership.
  - The term *overseer* stresses the ideas of official oversight, guardianship, and supervision.
- If verse 7 begins a list of qualifications for someone other than the elders of verses 5–6—someone over the elders—it is a most confusing and awkward subject change. Such a change ignores the force of the transitional word "for" that connects verses 5 and 6 to verse 7. (p. 221)

**10.** Why would Paul switch from the term "elders" in verse 5 to the singular term "overseer" in verse 7?

- Paul seems to have switched from "elders" to "overseer" in Titus 1:7 because the term "overseer" is better suited to match the imagery of the household "steward" (v. 7). (p. 221)

**11.** The Greek term for steward is *oikonomos*; this is an extremely important word and concept for understanding the position and duties of the elders. Write out your own definition of *oikonomos*.

- It means a household or estate manager or administrator. (p. 222)
- The steward was under the authority of the master, the owner of the house or estate. (p. 222)
  - The steward's job was to free the master from daily household responsibilities so that he could attend to other matters.

**12.** What does the designation “steward” teach you about the position and duties of an elder?

- The Greek term steward (*oikonomos*) means a household or estate manager or administrator. In the ancient world, this position held a great deal of authority over household operations and over those who served there. Even so, the steward was under the authority of the master, the owner of the house or estate. Anthony C. Thiselton explains:

This office normally included responsibility for overseeing a household budget, purchasing, accounts, resource allocation, collection of debts, and general running of the establishment, but only as instructed within guidelines agreed by the employer or the head of the house.

- Since the local church is called “the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15), an overseer who manages it can be rightfully called a “steward” or “administrator.” (p. 222)
- An elder is “God’s steward.” God is the steward’s Master and owner of the household. He has chosen the individual overseer to be his administrator; the overseer is responsible to care for God’s people and is accountable to God for his stewardship. He is a man under authority, and the person with authority, in God’s household. (p. 222)

List three common duties of a steward.

- He must run the household operations. (p. 222)
- He manages those who serve in the household. (p. 222)
- He frees the master from daily household responsibilities so that the master can attend to other matters. (p. 222)

**13.** What is the significance of the qualifying term “God’s”? Discuss this matter at some length. It is important.

- God is the steward’s Master and owner of the household. (p. 222)
- The overseer is responsible to care for God’s people and is accountable to God for his stewardship. (p. 222)
- The steward is God’s household manager, not the church’s. The household belongs to God, not to the overseer. (p. 222)

**14.** Why does “God’s steward” have to be “above reproach”?

- God requires that those to whom his precious children are entrusted be morally and spiritually fit. (p. 222-23)
- He will not have untrustworthy stewards caring for his children and the truths of the gospel. (p. 223)

## *The Biblical Qualifications for God's Steward*

*"A self-willed and arrogant leader is not a team player. This is a fatal flaw since the ability to work as a team is essential to shared brotherly leadership. Such men don't like biblical eldership. They don't prize true peer relationships, mutual respect and trust, or genuine partnership in the work of the Lord. Even more, they detest real accountability."*

...

*"A righteous steward does not cover up the sins of other church officials or friends who have spiritually abused people, sexually mistreated women or children, misappropriated church funds, abused their authority, or plagiarized other people's sermons. He knows that the best policy is to always do the right thing!"*

### Read chapter 22

1. What would be some characteristics of an arrogant, self-willed person, and thus, not qualified for the office of pastoral oversight?
  - o stubborn, self-gratifying, quick-tempered, a drunkard, violent, greedy for gain (p. 225)
2. Why do self-willed leaders avoid plurality leadership?
  - o They don't prize true peer relationships, mutual respect and trust, or genuine partnership in the work of the Lord. (p. 226)
  - o They detest real accountability from true peers. (p. 226)
3. Briefly explain the story of Korah and Moses and how the author uses this account to protect church leaders from false accusations (Num. 16:1-50).
  - o In the Old Testament, some of the Levites led by Korah organized a rebellion against Moses, accusing him of exalting himself above the people and abusing his authority, but that was completely untrue (Num. 16). (p. 226-27)
  - o The accusers of Moses were the malcontents, and for their rebellion God punished them severely (Num. 16:35). (p. 227)

**4. List some practical reasons for why a quick-tempered person should not be a steward in God's household, the local church?**

- Uncontrolled anger distorts the mind's judgment; it is self-justifying, accentuates problems, causes division, and hurts people at a deeply emotional level. (p. 227)
- A quick-tempered elder can short-circuit elders' meetings, hinder honest discussion of difficult issues, and prevent constructive, problem-solving conversations. (p. 227)
- With an angry look and ugly words, the quick-tempered person frightens and intimidates people, making problem solving and peacemaking far more difficult than it should be. (p. 227)

**Author's Notes**

A godly leader must exercise authority and at times rebuke, confront, discipline, or persuade people to change. Doing so does not make one a Diotrephes-like leader.

**5. List some practical reasons for why a greedy person should not be a steward of God's household?**

- God's stewards often have access to church funds and financially vulnerable people, so a greedy steward can cause much harm in this context. (p. 228)
- An elder could use his titled position and the church's trust to gain access to people's homes, bank accounts, inheritances, or insurance policies to enrich himself. This must be avoided. (p. 228)

**6. How would you be able to identify a candidate for eldership to be "a lover of good"? Be specific.**

- A lover of good is a practical person, a doer of good deeds. (p. 229)
- He is the kind of leader who prizes hospitality, ministries of mercy, loving community, and all that is virtuous, honorable, and kind. (p. 229)
- A lover of good greatly values Jesus's teaching on servanthood, humility, and love. He cares for the widow and elderly, and ministers to the sick. (p. 229)
- He will look for ways to help those in need; he will encourage others who do good works. He will be generous and kind and will not sink to evil, retaliatory behavior. (pp. 229-30)

**7. Why does an administrator in God's church have to be an upright/righteous person?**

- Leaders gain credibility when people see that they are just and fair-minded. (p. 230)
- To protect from spiritual abuse, sexual mistreatment of women and children, misappropriation of church funds, abuse of authority, and plagiarizing other people's sermons. (p. 230)
- An elder must be just and righteous because God is just and righteous and his people are to imitate him. (p. 230)
- God's grace teaches all Christian believers to be morally and spiritually upright, especially leaders. (p. 230)



8. How would you be able to identify if a candidate for eldership is a devout Christian?

- o A devout Christian does not steal church funds, lie to people, watch pornography, plagiarize, get drunk, manipulate people, or compromise with sin and the world. They are examples of authentic Christlike living. (p. 231)

Author's Notes

As Paul wrote to Titus: "And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14).

9. Why is it necessary that a church elder be a devout/holy Christian?

- o A devout elder is the kind of Christian leader people will trust and follow. (p. 231)
- One who is "holy" or "devout" takes his faith seriously, is firmly committed to God and his word, loves God and his neighbor, fears God, walks in step with the Spirit, and seeks to be pure and undefiled from the world. (p. 231)
- To be holy/devout is to live a life pleasing to God. (p. 231)

10. Explain Solomon's analogy of a city without walls as applied to the qualification for an elder to have self-discipline (Prov. 25:28).

- o Solomon likens a person's power of self-control to the walled fortifications of a city, which were a strategic part of an ancient city's defense system. (p. 232)
- o Without self-control, a person is unprotected from every lustful thought, distorted emotion, or excesses of various kinds. (p. 232)

11. What do the following verses teach you about the virtue of self-control?

"Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty [warrior], and he who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city." (Proverbs 16:32)

- o Self-control is extremely valuable.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

- o Self-control emerges from the Spirit of God at work within believers.

"For the grace of God has appeared . . . training us . . . to live self-controlled . . . lives in the present age." (Titus 2:11-12)

- o Self-control comes from the grace of God in our lives.

"Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. . . I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified." (1 Corinthians 9:25-27)

- o Self-control requires practice to acquire and maintain.

“Train [discipline] yourself for godliness.” (1 Timothy 4:7)

- o Self-control requires disciplined training.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control . . . For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5–6, 8)

- o Self-control allows for effectiveness and fruitfulness in ministry and in our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

**12.** What did you learn from this chapter that was new regarding the biblical qualifications for eldership?

## *Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine and Rebuke False Teachers*

*“This ‘word’ is the authentic, authoritative, apostolic body of teaching to be believed. This word is recorded for us today in the Bible. In short, the purity of the gospel message must be taught and guarded by the elders of the church.”*

...

*“The rare Greek term for ‘silenced’ has the idea of gagging, muzzling, or shutting the mouth. In other words, the false teachers must be stopped from speaking against ‘sound doctrine’ and the ‘trustworthy word.’ If not confronted and stopped, their perverse teaching will cause doctrinal chaos for whole families and spread like a flesh-eating bacteria through the church, slowly consuming the body until it is dead.”*

### Read chapter 23

1. Give three reasons why the qualifications in verse 9 are particularly important to one’s understanding of biblical elders to their work.

- Neglecting this qualification can lead to spiritual and doctrinal catastrophe for the church. (p. 233)
- A failure to examine a candidate’s doctrine and commitment to the gospel message is negligence, irresponsibility, and disobedience to the explicit word of the Lord. (p. 239)
- Missing this qualification can cause a church to be intellectually and emotionally vulnerable to the “newest and truest” counterfeit doctrines. (p. 239)

2. It is essential that you understand the meaning of the verb “must hold firm” (ἀντέχω [*antechō*]). A candidate for eldership “must hold firm” to the “trustworthy word.” What are some other similar terms to use in order to help explain an elder candidate’s close relationship to the word?

- The Greek verb translated “hold firm” (ἀντέχω [*antechō*]) means “to have a strong attachment to someone or something, cling to, hold fast to, be devoted to.” (p. 233)
- The verb implies unshakable conviction and fervent commitment. (p. 233)

3. What does Paul mean by the term “word” (*logos*)?

- The term “word” (λόγος [*logos*]) signifies the original preaching or oral proclamation of the gospel message. (p. 233)

What does the adjective “trustworthy” (*pistou logou*) tell you about the term “word”?

- “Trustworthy” means it is “reliable,” “dependable,” and “faithful.” (p. 234)
- Here it is called “trustworthy” because it is in full agreement with what was “taught” by the apostles themselves, in bold contrast to the false teaching. (p. 234)

What does the prepositional phrase, “according to the teaching,” add to your understanding of the term “word”?

- The teaching (διδαχή [*didachē*]) here denotes the whole of the content taught by the apostle Paul, not the act of teaching (2 Tim. 4:2). (p. 234)
- This “word” is the authentic, authoritative, apostolic body of teaching to be believed. This “word” is recorded for us today in the Bible. (p. 234)

#### Author's Notes

A candidate for eldership cannot suffer from doctrinal ambiguity or be unsure of the message. There can be no compromise on this requirement. A biblical elder must demonstrate unwavering commitment to the gospel of God as revealed in Scripture.

**4. List as many reasons as you can (both positive and negative) for why an elder “must hold firm to the trustworthy word.”**

#### Positive

- To guarantee an elder preaches and teaches the “the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13)—a message of divine origin from God—and not anything that contradicts this. (p. 234)
- To ensure the purity of the gospel message is taught and guarded. (p. 234)

#### Negative

- Ignoring this qualification in an elder has led to spiritual and doctrinal catastrophe for innumerable churches through the centuries. (p. 233)
- To avoid teaching merely “the word of men,” as Paul would say, and not “the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). (p. 234)

**5. Explain the meaning of the term “exhorting” (*parakaleō*).**

- The verb translated “instruct” (παρακαλέω [*parakaleō*]) is a common New Testament verb that has a wide range of meanings: “exhort,” “encourage,” “comfort,” “entreat,” “urge,” “summon,” “implore.” (p. 235)
- To exhort is to urge, appeal to, challenge, persuade, and even command. (p. 235)

6. Explain the meaning of the term “teaching.”

- Teaching and exhorting are closely related ideas....The meanings of these words overlap. (p. 235)
- “Teaching concentrates more on the content of the tradition,” states Thomas Schreiner, “while exhortation summons others to action and stirs them from lethargy.” (p. 235)

7. Explain the Greek term “sound” and how it uniquely fits the letters of Paul to Titus and Timothy (the Pastoral Epistles).

- The word “sound” comes from a Greek verb meaning “to be in good health, be healthy” (ὕγιαίνω [*hygiainō*]). (p. 236)
- Andreas Köstenberger aptly comments: “If false teaching is rightly understood as the main problem faced across the three letters, it would make sense to say that ‘the fundamental interest of the Pastorals would appear to be “healthy” or “sound” teaching.” (p. 236)

8. Why is the word “teaching” such a dominant word in the Pastoral Epistles?

- The reason for this emphasis on teaching or doctrine is because false teachers had already infiltrated Paul’s churches to an alarming extent. Thus, Paul knew firsthand *the urgent need for sound teaching/doctrine*. (p. 236)

Author’s Notes There is a constant need for exhorting believers with wholesome teaching in the life-giving and life-sustaining truths of the gospel.
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9. The last clause in verse 9 (“also to rebuke those who contradict it”) is often overlooked as to its importance as a qualification for elders. Why, however, is this an extremely important requirement for a biblical elder? List your reasons.

- Standing up against false teachers is difficult. It is easy to flee in fear, quit in frustration, or stand down in defeat, but the gospel is too important to fail defending. (p. 237)
- As masters of subtlety and novelty, false teachers mix truth with error, and confuse people with half-truths and complex ideas. Biblical elders need to be skilled in seeing through the otherwise potentially persuasive tactics of false teachers. (p. 238)

10. Why must there not be any compromise with the false teachers? List several reasons.

- If not confronted and stopped, their perverse teaching will cause doctrinal chaos for whole families and spread like a flesh-eating bacteria through the church, slowly consuming the body until it is dead. (p. 238)
- As the apostle Paul says in Titus 1:11, these false teachers often are “teaching for shameful gain,” and thus cannot be compromised with since their goals are selfish and not aligned with the truth or the benefit of the church. (p. 238)

**11.** Like hungry wolves, false teachers wanted to devour the fledgling churches on the island of Crete. What does Paul say that Titus and the elders must do to these false teachers? (In fact, Paul commands them to do this.)

- In Titus 1:11, Titus and the elders are charged by Paul to silence the opponents. (p. 238)

**12.** Explain what the author means by the extraordinary statement, “Here is a matter in which many churches fail miserably”?

- Many churches fail to examine if a candidate for pastoral eldership is committed to the truths of the gospel, exhorting sound doctrine, and silencing the mouths of gospel opponents. (p. 239)

**13.** How does the qualification in verse 9 defend parity among the elders?

- Verse 9 makes it clear, although not all elders are Spirit-gifted teachers or labor in preaching and teaching, all elders need to be able to exhort in sound doctrine and silence false teachers. (p. 235)
- In other words, all elders must know their doctrine! (p. 235)

## *Peter's Exhortation and Encouragement to the Elders*

*"Whether it be the first century or the twenty-first century, there will always be the need to exhort shepherd leaders to do their work. This is necessary because there is a natural tendency, at least for some, to be lazy and to skate by with only the minimal amount of work necessary. Too many shepherds become disinterested in improving their shepherding skills or learning better methods of caring for sheep."*

...

*"What a time of victory, vindication, glory, and joy Christ's appearance will bring to lowly, unnoticed elders who have faithfully shepherded God's flock! Hard-working, selfless shepherds may not have many earthly goods to show for a lifetime of toil, but some day the chief Shepherd will come and fully reward his undershepherds. Their work will no longer go unnoticed or unappreciated, for he will reward them publicly before the hosts of heaven. He will bestow on them heavenly honor and glory. All elders are to keep their eyes steadfastly fixed on his appearing, for reward day is coming!"*

### Read chapter 24

#### 1. List 3 ways in which Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-2 are similar.

- o Both apostles affirm the elders' mandate to pastor the church of God. (p. 241)
- o Both speak of the plurality of elders. (p. 241)
- o Neither places a singular "overseer" above the elders as Ignatius did fifty years later. (p.241)
- o Although Peter's appeal to shepherd God's flock is similar to Paul's in Acts 20, Peter provides additional instructions for elders and the glorious promise of future reward for faithful elders—"the unfading crown of glory." (p. 241)

#### 2. Why is it significant to our topic on elders that Peter wrote to churches throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (consult a map)?

- o The fact that Peter's letter addresses the elders of churches over a wide geographical area and to many local churches indicates that the elder structure of church government was standard practice. (pp. 241-242)

Why is it significant to our topic that Peter does not mention the term *overseer*?

- Notably, Peter does not use the title *overseer* (*episkopos*) or *overseers*. But he does use the verbal form *overseeing* here to describe the duty of the elders. This is another biblical indication that *elders* and *overseers* are the same officials. (p. 245)
- In the second century, the *overseer* became a separate “office” from the elders, thus, overseer, elders, and deacons. Peter knows of no such division.

3. What does Peter seek to accomplish by calling himself a “fellow elder”?

- Peter establishes a special bond of affection and solidarity with the church elders. By calling himself “a fellow elder,” he secures their attention, displaying both Christian humility and brotherhood. (p. 243)
- This was more than a figure of speech, however. At one time, Peter served as a local church elder. He served with a team of eleven other men during turbulent times of persecution in Jerusalem. Even though the twelve apostles were not called elders, they were the infant community’s first body of leaders, sharing together the pastoral oversight of the church. (p. 243)
- As a fellow elder, Peter fully sympathized with the dangers the Asian elders faced. (p. 243)

4. By charging the Asian elders to “shepherd the flock of God,” what specifically does Peter expect them to do?

- Peter’s charge encompasses the full shepherding task, which can be neatly summarized as: “provision, protection and guidance.” (p. 244)
- In times of intense crisis, believers need their shepherds. They need to be led, encouraged, protected, loved, and fed the life-sustaining word of God. Without such leadership, the people would be scattered and left vulnerable to every kind of sheep-eating predator. (p. 244)
- (To review detailed descriptions of the shepherding task, please see chapters 2 and 9).

5. Why will there *always* be a crying need for the imperative command—“shepherd the flock of God among you”?

- This is necessary because there is a natural tendency, at least for some, to be lazy and to skate by with only the minimal amount of work necessary. (p. 244)
- Too many shepherds become disinterested in improving their shepherding skills or learning better methods of caring for sheep. (p. 244)
- So all elders need this word of exhortation: Be all that a shepherd elder should be; teach, lead, protect, and care for the practical needs of the people. Even the elders who personally worked alongside of Paul needed the exhortation to shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28–31; see also Ezek. 34:1–10; Jer. 10:21; 23:1; 50:6; Zech. 11:15, 17). (p. 244)

#### Author’s Notes

[Peter] knew the challenges of the work and was well-acquainted with the many pitfalls and temptations of leadership. . . . His instruction wells up from a deep spring of life experience gained by shepherding God’s people for more than thirty years.



6. Peter refers to the local church metaphorically as “the flock of God.” What does the metaphor “flock of God” tell you about the nature and importance of the local church?

- In the ancient world, flocks of sheep and goats were highly valued for their wool, milk and cheese, meat, bones, and skins for leather goods. (p. 245)
- A flock represented wealth. What makes this flock exceedingly valuable is that it is God’s flock, his precious possession. It is the flock he bought, cares for, and loves. (p. 245)
- Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that this flock is the one “he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). It is “the flock of God.” So God expects the elders to care for his flock accordingly. (p. 245)

7. By adding the participle, “exercising oversight,” to the main verb “shepherd,” what valuable information does Peter add to:

(a) his overall exhortation in 1 Peter 5:1–4?

- In this passage, *overseeing* is equivalent to *shepherding*. (p. 245)
- *Shepherding* is the figurative expression for governance, while *overseeing* is the literal term, which can be used to clarify the first. (p. 245)
- To shepherd a flock entails the overall supervision and watchful care of the flock. (p. 245)

(b) and to the overall subject of biblical eldership?

- We see that *overseeing* is the work of the elders. Thus, elders can be called *overseers*, or *supervisors*, or *managers*.

Author’s Notes

Elders must remember that the flock is not their own—it is God’s flock. But God has committed that flock to them, so they must never be indifferent toward a single one of God’s sheep.

8. Explain the negative and positive sides of the qualification,

“not under compulsion”

- Reluctant shepherds don’t have the necessary motivation or drive to do the job. They will do only the minimum amount of work. (p. 246)

“but willingly as God would have you”

- Those who oversee the church “willingly” do so because they desire to serve in this way. Shepherding is a “joy” to them (Heb. 13:17). (p. 246)
- The willing spirit that Peter describes is literally, “according to God.” Glad, voluntary service is God’s standard. This is what God is like. It is the way God expects things to be done. (p. 246)

9. In brief terms, explain the negative and positive sides of the qualification,

“not for shameful gain”

- God’s shepherds should not act like predators feeding on the flock in order to enrich themselves. (p. 247)
- The prophets condemned this very sin among the shepherd rulers of Israel: “Ah, shepherds of Israel . . . You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep” (Ezek. 34:2–3). “Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shredding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain” (Ezek. 22:27). (p. 247)
- Nor should Christ-appointed shepherds tend God’s flock just for the money. This is the motivation of the hireling. Jesus warns about the hireling who “sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” (John 10:12–13). (p. 247)

“but eagerly”

- “Eagerly” emphasizes, even more than the term “willingly,” the shepherd’s personal desire and passion. It is this kind of eagerness—a strong desire and motivation. (p. 247)
- Eager elders are motivated to care sacrificially for the flock. The welfare of God’s people is a deep concern to them. Hence, they are not overly concerned about personal sacrifices or their own financial gain. (p. 247)

Author’s Notes

Pride ruins brotherly relationships and divides churches. Thus, Peter offers the best possible counsel for elders, younger ones, and all members of the congregation: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Pet. 5:5-6)

10. Explain for all elders the significance of the following statements:

“not dominating over” the flock

- The third unworthy motive is a far more subtle and widespread temptation than that of greed. It is love for power. For people in positions of authority, greed and power have always been strong enticements to do wrong. (p. 248)
- Biblical elders are not lords and rulers over their subjects. They are not to be autocratic leaders, intimidators, or oppressors; instead, they are to be approachable, gracious, loving, and brotherly. Peter would have known how God condemned the shepherds of Israel for their ill treatment of his sheep: “with force and harshness you have ruled them” (Ezekiel 34:4). (p. 248)

“but being examples to the flock”

- In contrast to lording one’s authority over God’s people, elders are to be godly “examples” that the people want to follow. (p. 249)
- Never underestimate the power of an exemplary life to inspire others to live the Christian life and serve others. (p. 249)
- Paul fully expected his converts to imitate his example: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1); “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us” (Phil. 3:17). (p. 249)

11. Explain the significance of the phrase, “those in your charge,” or literally, “the portions” or “the allotments.”

- The “portions” (*klērōn*) correspond to “the flock” mentioned at the end of verse 3, and the “flock of God” mentioned in verse 2. (p. 248)
- “Portions” or “allotments” are something given, not earned. In this context, it is not land, money, or inheritance that are the portions, but a specific local gathering of believers over which a group of elders is responsible. (p. 248)
- Peter is saying that God has sovereignly allotted specific portions of the whole flock of God to various groups of elders. This term strengthens the concept that the people are not the elders’ possessions to be ruled over or oppressed. The people do not belong to the elders; they belong to the One who assigned them to the elders’ care. (p. 248)

12. Peter calls Jesus the “chief Shepherd.” What does it mean practically to the undershepherds (the elders) that Jesus is their “chief Shepherd”?

- Because Jesus is “chief,” all other shepherds are his undershepherds. (p. 250)
- As such, elders are under the authority and leadership of the one chief Shepherd. This implies accountability to the chief Shepherd who, in this case, actually owns the sheep as his possession (1 Peter 2:9). (p. 250)
- The undershepherd is always responsible to the owner of the sheep. (p. 250)
- Therefore, the elders’ shepherding work must be done in obedience to the chief Shepherd’s instructions. (p. 250)
- Like their chief Shepherd, elders must care for the flock willingly and eagerly, as role models of godly virtue. (p. 250)
- Shepherding elders are not free to speak or lead the people in any way they wish, for they must answer to the chief Shepherd. (p. 250)
- Everything the elders do will be judged on the basis of faithfulness to the chief Shepherd. In the words of New Testament scholar and commentator I. Howard Marshall, “Christian leadership is thus a sharing in the leadership of Christ under His direction.” (p. 250)

13. In bullet-point style, explain all that you can about the statement, “the crown of glory.”

- In this context, “crown” is used symbolically to represent reward or special honor received from Christ. (p. 250)
- The reward is for faithful, honorable achievement as undershepherds of God’s flock. (p. 250)
- This reward is as sure to be “received” as is the promise of Christ’s return. (p. 250)
- This crown is unlike any earthly crown made of precious metal or ivy because it is “unfading.” It will never wither like a laurel wreath or tarnish like gold, all of which are temporary. “Joys of royal pomp, marriages and feasts,” writes Robert Leighton, “how soon do they vanish as a dream . . . ! But this day begins a triumph and a feast, that shall never either end or weary, affording still fresh, ever new delights.” (p. 250)
- The reason for this crown’s unfading quality is that the material used to make it is divine, heavenly glory. (p. 250)

- The adjective “glory” tells us of what the crown consists. In Greek, “glory” is in the genitive case, here a genitive of apposition, meaning that the crown consists of glory. The glory is the reality, and the crown is the metaphor. (p. 250)
- This glory is Christ’s glory that will be displayed at his appearing. The crown he will give to his faithful undershepherds surpasses any earthly reward. (p. 251)

**14.** List several reasons for why an elder must put on the garments of “humility.” For more information on the virtue of humility in the life of a Christian leader, see chapter 8, pages 99-100.

- Knowing that if the elders act pridefully and the younger men operate out of arrogance, there is going to be an ugly clash of wills resulting in ill feelings toward one another.
- “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). (p. 252)
- Pride ruins brotherly relationships and divides churches. Thus, Peter offers the best possible counsel for elders, younger ones, and all members of the congregation: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” (1 Peter 5:5). (p. 253)
- Only when each and every member puts on the holy garments of Christlike humility will peace and unity prevail. “Smooth relations in the church,” writes Thomas Schreiner, “can be preserved if the entire congregation adorns itself with humility. . . . Humility is the oil that allows relationships in the church to run smoothly and lovingly” (p. 253)

**Author’s Notes**

Being examples fits well with the image of “flock,” for the ancient shepherd did not drive his sheep, but walked in front of them and called them to follow.

## *If Sick: Call the Elders of the Church*

*“The elders are to be called to the sick person’s bedside not because they are particularly gifted as healers, but because they are the spiritual leaders of the local church whose task is to care for the hurting. In a world full of physical pain, disease, and sickness, visiting the sick and praying for healing are basic responsibilities of shepherd elders. This requires on the part of the elders Christlike love, empathy for the sick, and the sacrificial use of one’s time.”*

...

*“James specifies that the oil is applied ‘in the name of the Lord.’ There is no magical, curative power in the oil, or in the elders. All power and authority is in the name of Jesus Christ exalted in heaven at God’s right hand of power. Jesus is Lord! Within his sovereign will lies the absolute power to heal; nothing is too difficult for him. So the elders act and the sick are healed in Jesus’s name alone. All trust is placed in the Lord. All glory goes to him, not the elders!”*

### Read chapter 25

**1.** Explain what you have learned about biblical elders from this passage from James 5:14–15.

- The leaders are called “elders.”
- There are multiple elders in a church.
- These early Jewish Christian churches were governed by elders.
- James provides one of the earliest recorded references to Christian elders.
- James clearly assumes that all churches of the dispersion have an official, recognized body of elders to call upon.
- According to James, the elders were to be called in times of serious illness for prayer and anointing with oil.
- James specifies that the sick person is to “call for the elders of the church,” not for the pastor, or deacons, or friends, or miracle workers.
- It is also noteworthy that the official body of elders is required, not a single elder. In the same way the elders governed jointly, they pray jointly for the sick.
- Visiting the sick and praying for healing are responsibilities of the elders. Part of the shepherding task is caring for the sick and diseased.
- The elders are to be men of faith and prayer.
- Elders have to be able to counsel people regarding sin and divine discipline. (p. 253)

## 2. What does the book of James say about prayer in the life of the believer?

- James declares that “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16).
- When facing “suffering” or happy times, James prescribes prayer and praise: “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.” (v.13) (p. 256)

## 3. Describe in detail the scene that James envisions in verses 14–15.

- The person in crisis is instructed to summon the official body of elders to come to the home to pray.
- This seems to be a serious situation requiring action on the part of the eldership.
- It appears that the person is unable to go to the elders. (p. 256)
- The picture of the elders praying “over him” (ἐπ’ αὐτὸν [*ep auton*]) suggests a scene in which a person is bedridden and several elders stand or kneel around the person praying for the Lord to “raise him up” from a sickbed and “save [physically] the one who is sick.”
- Finally, it is “the prayer of faith” by the elders, not the oil, that “saves” the person, and “the Lord will raise him up.” (p. 257)

## 4. Explain the debate over the Greek word *astheneō*.

- Some scholars contend that the Greek word in verse 14 for “sick” (ἀσθενέω [*astheneō*]) should be understood as spiritually weak or distressed, not physical sickness.
- The Greek term for “sick” is a broad term that can mean weak in conscience, in spiritual health (1 Thess. 5:14), in material necessities.
- But the word, *astheneō*, is also the common word used for physical sickness, especially in the Gospels and Acts.

What are the main reasons for rejecting the view that James is referring to a spiritually weak Christian, and not to a sick person?

- The context needs to guide our understanding of how the biblical writer is specifically using this verb.
- The person in crisis is instructed to summon the official body of elders to come to the home to pray. This seems to be a serious situation requiring action on the part of the eldership. It appears that the person is unable to go to the elders.
- The picture of the elders praying “over him” (ἐπ’ αὐτὸν [*ep auton*]) suggests a scene in which a person is bedridden and several elders stand or kneel around the person praying for the Lord to “raise him up” from a sickbed and “save [physically] the one who is sick.”
- The only other time the phrase “anointing with oil” is used in the New Testament, it is associated directly with healing the sick (Mark 6:13). Why would oil need to be rubbed or poured on a spiritually weak person? The application of oil on the body implies a physical condition. (p. 257)

- The “if” statement (“if he has committed sins” v. 15) shows that spiritual weakness is not the main issue, but could be a possible cause of sickness, and thus the elders need to inquire about the person’s spiritual walk with God.
- Finally, it is “the prayer of faith” by the elders, not the oil, that “saves” the person, and “the Lord will raise him up.”
- Most biblical commentators also translate *astheneō* as sick. (p. 257)

Author’s Notes

“The habit of prayer should be, and indeed is, one of the most obvious features which differentiates a Christian from other people.” (R. V. G. Tasker)

5. Why do you think few people call for the elders of the church to come to their home for special prayer for healing?

- Most people don’t call for the elders of the church when they are seriously ill because they have never been taught to do so. (p. 257)
- They have never seen it done. Simon Kistemaker assesses the situation accurately: “the practice of calling the elders of the church to pray over the sick seems to belong to a bygone age.” (p. 257)

6. What practical advantages are there to having the elders pray at the bedside of a sick person? List as many advantages as you can for both the sick person and the elders.

- The faith of the elders to ask God for healing may encourage the faith of the sick person. (p. 258)
- This kind of personal, physical touch comforts the sick and fuels the fire of prayer. Prayer in the presence of suffering and pain comes alive and is endowed with a great deal more passion. (p. 258)
- Of particular note, read the quotes by Tasker and Mitton. (p. 258-259)

7. What purpose, or purposes, is there in anointing the sick person with oil?

- In the Old Testament, oil was used to set people or things apart for a special purpose, particularly for God’s use or attention. (p. 259)
- The sick individual may be experiencing considerable fear, isolation, and pain. Physically applying oil with the touch of an elder’s hand is itself comforting and reassuring of divine help.
- Applying oil to the sick person “in the name of the Lord” would help the sick person remember that he or she is the special object of prayer and the Lord’s attention.
- All healing is done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 3:6, 16; 4:10). The oil may also suggest the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit of God (Zech. 4:6). The entire action is symbolic and highly meaningful to the one suffering from physical illness. (p. 260)

8. Medicinal vs. Symbolic use of oil: There is a long-standing debate over James's meaning of the use of oil with prayer. What are the reasons for believing that the oil was used for medicinal purposes?

- Some commentators think the oil was to be used for medicinal purposes as was practiced throughout most of the ancient world (Luke 10:34; Isa. 1:6).
- They conclude that the point is that good medicine and prayer work together. (p. 260)

What are the reasons for believing that the oil was used symbolically for aiding prayer and the sick person?

- It is unlikely that James intends to comment on medicine or to encourage elders to act as physicians.
- James certainly is not so naïve as to believe that olive oil is curative for all diseases.
- We can assume that if oil or another kind of remedy was needed for medicinal purposes, it would have been applied long before the elders' visit.
- It is because medicine did not work that the elders are called.
- According to the Gospel record, anointing the sick with oil was practiced by the apostles during our Lord's earthly ministry, presumably at his instruction. (Mark 6:13)
- Some commentators believe that the apostles anointed people with oil for medicinal purposes, but that is doubtful. Applying oil for medicinal purposes would have obscured the apostles' unique, miracle-working ministry which was intended to supernaturally confirm their messianic message (Luke 10:9). (p. 260)
- James's use of *aleiphō* is insufficient evidence for adopting the medicinal viewpoint. Biblical commentator Douglas Moo rightly concludes:

And while *chriō* is usually used in these texts, James has probably chosen *aleiphō* because he refers to a physical action that the elders are to carry out. As the elders pray, they are to anoint the sick person in order to symbolize that that person is being set apart for God's special attention and care.

- The clause, "in the name of the Lord," suggests a spiritual significance to the anointing rather than a medicinal one. (p. 261)

9. How would you explain the phrase, "the prayer of faith"?

- The prayer of faith is prayer inspired by sincere, unwavering confidence and trust in God (James 1:5–8; also Matt. 21:21–22; 17:20). (p. 262)
- The prayer of faith is confident that "for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
- The prayer of faith truly believes in God's power to heal and Christ's loving compassion and mercy for his hurting people (James 5:11).
- The prayer of faith is confident that God hears and answers prayer (1 John 5:14)! Prayerless, worldly-minded, and spiritually impotent elders cannot offer such a prayer (James 1:5–8; 4:3). This places a solemn responsibility upon the elders to be men of faith and prayer.



10. What do you learn about prayer from:

Jesus's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39)

- From our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane we learn that all prayer must include the words: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:42). (p.262)

Paul's prayer for relief from his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7–10)

- Paul did not receive what he asked for (2 Cor. 12:8–9). That didn't mean Paul lacked faith. God, however, had his perfect reasons for answering in a different way (2 Cor. 12:7, 9). Paul did receive from God "grace" to live with his thorn in the flesh in order to keep Paul humble and trusting in God's grace. (p. 263)

Ephroditus's near death experience (Phil. 2:25–30)

- Even apostles could not heal indiscriminately. Paul writes that "God had mercy on him" (v. 27). Epaphroditus recovered but not, it seems, by the spectacular means we might have expected. The means of healing is not revealed. What is revealed is that God had mercy on Epaphroditus and Paul. We can be sure Paul prayed earnestly in faith for his healing. (p. 263)

Author's Notes

"We are creatures of flesh and blood, as well as spirit, and when love for us is proved by the readiness of Christian friends to give their time to come to our home in our need, we are more immediately aware of that love. Its effectiveness in prayer is increased by the fact that we have been made aware of it." (C. L. Mitton)

11. Verse 15 says, "And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." What does this statement have to do with praying for the sick?

- James leaves open the possibility that sin may have caused the sick person's illness. God does chasten his erring children with the rod of physical sickness. See 1 Corinthians 11:30-32. (p. 263)
- Sinful behaviors in the church at Corinth brought God's disciplining hand down upon the transgressors in the form of sickness, and even death. (p. 264)
- Although sickness may occur because of sin and divine chastisement, we should emphatically state that not all sickness is a result of personal sin. (p. 264)

What does verse 15b teach you about the work of shepherd elders?

- The ministry of the elders of the church includes prayer for those who are seriously ill and spiritual counsel for those dealing with sin and divine chastisement. Pastors shouldn't assume sin is the cause but can use the opportunity to ask about any on-going bondage to sin that may be in the background.
- The visiting elders may need to deal with far more than sickness. Their visit may turn out to be a time for spiritual counsel, confession, encouragement or restoration. (p. 264)

Author's Notes

Prayerless, worldly-minded, and spiritually impotent elders cannot offer such a prayer (James 1:5–8; 4:3). This places a responsibility upon the elders to be men of faith and prayer.

**12.** How do board elders differ from the kind of elders James envisions? (See full book, pages 11-12.)

- A person does not need to read Greek or be professionally trained in theology to understand that the church-board concept of eldership is irreconcilable with the New Testament teaching on eldership. (p. 11)
- Elders jointly pastor the church, teach the word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish believers in sound doctrine, pray with the sick, and judge doctrinal issues. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, manage, and care for the local church. (p. 11-12)
- Board elders don't go to the bedside of those who are sick. Nor do they deal with people's spiritual condition or the need for confession of sin.

**13.** Using the elder qualification chart (see page iii), which three qualifications would be most relevant to the elders' dealing with the sick? Explain your choices.

- A lover of good: Would most naturally be interested in helping hurting people.
- Upright: this is essential to the prayer of faith. "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16).
- Holy: The same as above.
- Gentle: In dealing with people sins one needs to be gentle.
- Example to the flock: The kind of elders you trust and want in your home. They are examples of godliness and Christlikeness.

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When our congregation's elders are called to a home or hospital to pray for a sick person, these are specific aspects of our practice:

- We take songbooks along and sing appropriate songs. This establishes a good atmosphere for prayer and seeking the Lord's intervention.
- Each elder shares from the word and gives encouragement and counsel to the one who is sick and his or her family, if present. At this time, one of the elders lovingly asks about the person's relationship to the Lord and if there is unconfessed sin. We have not experienced any adverse reaction to this question. Most sick people who call for the elders are willing to face honestly their relationship to the Lord.
- One of the elders explains the significance of the oil and applies oil to the sick person.
- We all kneel and pray. Each elder prays at least once.
- While they pray, one or two of the elders will lay hands on or hold the hand of the person who is sick, communicating our love and affection.

## *Esteem The Elders Highly*

*“Church leaders who fail to admonish God’s people because they are afraid that people will leave the church or stop giving financially, dishonor God, disobey his word, and fail miserably at shepherding God’s people.”*

...

*“The relationship between a congregation and its leaders involves a delicate tension that can create ill feelings or unexpectedly erupt into conflict. This is true of all churches. So, in a context exhorting the Thessalonian Christians to recognize and highly honor their leaders, Paul appropriately concludes his instructions aimed at both leaders and led: ‘Be at peace among yourselves.’”*

### Read chapter 26

#### 1. Why should 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 be included in our study of biblical eldership?

- The passage refers to a plurality of leaders, not a single leader. (p. 265)
- Working hard for the church, providing leadership, and admonishing the saints are what elders do (1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 20:31, 34–35). (p. 265)
- These leaders are to receive honor from the congregation: “esteem them very highly in love.” In 1 Timothy we read that the elders who lead well are to receive “double honor” from the congregation (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17). (p.266)
- As modeled on his first missionary journey, Paul would formally appoint men, like these hard-working leaders, as elders upon his return visit to his newly planted churches (Acts 14:23). As this was a new church in Thessalonica, elders may not yet, have been formally appointed. Perhaps that is why these leaders were not yet called elders in our text. (p. 266)
- Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would gift certain men to be “shepherds,” “teachers,” or “leaders.” Indeed, he acknowledges that the Holy Spirit was at work in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:5; 5:19–20). Paul would look for those men who showed evidence that the Holy Spirit had made them “overseers” to shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28). Such men as these, Paul or Timothy would appoint as elders. (p. 266)
- There is nothing in this passage that contradicts Paul’s teaching on elders, and much that complements it. (p. 266)

2. What do we learn from the fact that Paul addresses his letter to the whole congregation, and not just the leaders?

- Paul begins this new section of the letter with the petition, “we ask you, brothers.” This is a friendly appeal directed to the entire congregation. (p. 266)
- Although Paul and Silas were apostles (2:6), they viewed their new converts as surrogate siblings. They were now all equally brothers and sisters in the family of God, not the subjects of the apostles. (p. 266)

3. Why would Paul have to exhort the congregation to “acknowledge” their leaders?

- The new community of brothers and sisters is asked to acknowledge their leaders even if they do not yet have official status. (p. 267)
- To better appreciate Paul’s request to acknowledge the work of their leaders, we need to remember that there were at that time no distinctions between clergy and laity, and there were no priestly garments or titles to distinguish certain leading members of the church from the rest of the congregation. (p. 267)
- We should not assume that those who served the congregation were financially supported for their labor. Therefore, these humble servant brothers or at least some of them, could easily be overlooked and their service underestimated. (p. 267)

4. Explain the grammatical structure of verse 12b.

- Those who deserve the congregation’s recognition and esteem are identified by three present tense participles governed by one definite article (τοὺς [*tous*]), and joined by the repetition of the conjunction “and” (καὶ [*kai*]): the ones laboring and leading and admonishing. (p. 267)
- These are not three different kinds of leaders, but one group described by three activities.

Why is it necessary to correctly understand the grammatical structure of this text? What difference does it make?

- The plural forms of these three participles should not be overlooked. A group of men labored at leading and admonishing the congregation.
- James Denney writes: “At Thessalonica there was not a single president, a minister in our sense, possessing to a certain extent an exclusive responsibility; the presidency was in the hands of a plurality of men.” (p. 267)

5. What does the Greek verb *κοπιάω* mean? (See also chapter 10, page 118; chapter 16, page 179.)

- The verb “labor” (κοπιάω [*kopiaō*]) often describes manual labor (Luke 5:5; 1 Cor. 4:12; Eph. 4:28). (p. 268)
- This strong term denotes toil and strenuous work that results in weariness and fatigue. (p.268)
- It is a favorite Pauline word for describing Christian service. (p. 268)

In what ways were these Christian leaders laboring among their fellow believers?

- These elders most likely supported themselves financially by working a job, as Paul did (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:6–10) .
- In addition to their employment, they toiled at serving the church (“labor among you”).
- They studied and taught Scripture, prayed with the sick, helped the weak, provided wise counsel, visited homes, evangelized, and comforted the church in facing persecution. (p. 268)
- These unnamed brothers were laboring in loving service for the welfare of the Lord’s people. (p. 268)

#### Author’s Notes

A few of the Thessalonian believers possessed the spiritual gift of leadership and were using it to provide needed leadership for the church (Rom. 12:8).

**6.** Explain why the author insists that the Greek verb *proistēmi* be translated “lead,” and not “care for”?

- *Proistēmi* rendered as leading fits nicely between laboring and especially admonishing. (p. 268)
- The subject of the entire passage is recognition and esteem of those in leadership. (p. 269)
- What the church needed most was leaders to lead, not be caretakers. It seems best, then, to stress the nuance of leadership and authority in *proistēmi* more than the general care of people. (p. 269)

**7.** What does the phrase, “in the Lord,” tell you about these leaders and their work?

- The phrase, “in the Lord,” defines the elders’ unique sphere of leadership authority—not in civil government, but in matters that pertain to the Lord and his people. (p. 269)
- Those who lead must also not forget that their authority is “in the Lord.” Everything they do must be done in accordance with the Lord’s authority and in agreement with his teachings. The church is not their kingdom; they are not lords over the people to subjugate and bully. (p. 269)

**8.** What is the meaning of the word “admonish” (*noutheteō*)? (See also chapter 9, page 113.)

- “Admonish” translates a Greek verb (νουθετέω [*noutheteō*]) which means to warn or correct improper behavior or change attitudes. (p. 270)
- To admonish is to exert a corrective influence in a positive, caring way. (p. 113)
- Christian admonition, then, is not angry scolding or criticizing others for their faults, but loving correction and warning based on God’s word for the purpose of protecting, correcting, and maturing the Lord’s people (1 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15). (p. 270)

Why is the work of admonition an indispensable part of leading and caring for a congregation of believers?

- Shepherd leaders deal with people's sins and bad behaviors. This is not a part of the shepherding task that elders naturally enjoy, but it is an indispensable element of true spiritual leadership. (p. 270)
- Church leaders who fail to admonish God's people because they are afraid that people will leave the church or stop giving financially, dishonor God, disobey his word, and fail miserably at shepherding God's people. (p. 270)
- James Denney writes: "We are certain to bring a good deal of the world into the Church without knowing it; we are certain to have instincts, habits, dispositions, associates perhaps, and likings, which are hostile to the Christian type of character; and it is this which makes admonition indispensable." (p. 270)

**9.** What important point is made by the Greek intensive adverb *hyperekperissou*?

- The magnitude to which the church is to "esteem" (or consider; ἡγέομαι [*hēgeomai*]) its leaders is expressed by the intensive adverb "most highly," or "superabundantly" or "most exceedingly" (ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ [*hyperekperissou*]). (p. 271)
- Biblical commentator George G. Findlay speaks of this exuberant word as "the strongest intensive possible to the language. So deep and warm should be the affection uniting pastors and their flocks." (p. 271)

**10.** What lessons does the Old Testament illustrate about God's people and their leaders?

- God gave Israel some of the greatest leaders in human history—men like Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Daniel. Yet during difficult times, the people were ready in a moment to stone both Moses and David. Due to our basic ingratitude and complaining spirit, Scripture directs us to highly honor our spiritual leaders. (p. 271)

In order not to be naïve about Christian leadership, what can shepherd elders (at times) expect from the people they love and lead?

- Even the best elders are inevitably accused of pride, wrong judgment, doing too much or too little, moving too slowly or too quickly, changing too much or not enough, and being too harsh or too passive. (p. 272)
- Difficult situations can arise in which elders cannot avoid angering some part of the congregation. (p. 272)

**11.** How would "love" for one's elders express itself in practical ways or in hard times?

- In love, believers will view difficult situations in the best possible light.
- In love, believers will be less critical and more responsive to the elders' instruction and admonition. It cannot be emphasized enough that the best thing a congregation can do for its leaders is to love them.
- Love suffers long (1 Cor. 13:4). Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). (p. 272)

Author's Notes

Our natural tendency is to take our leaders for granted. We forget what they do for us, complain rather than be thankful, accentuate the bad, and disregard the good, and take out our frustrations and anger on them.

**12.** Why is the phrase, “because of their work,” indispensable to understanding the instructions of verses 14–15?

- Leaders are not to be highly esteemed because they hold special religious titles, or stand in high social status, or have winning personalities. (p. 272)
- Leon Morris ably captures the idea when he states: “A special kind of love within the brotherhood is love for the leaders; they are to be loved because of their work, not necessarily because of their personal qualities.” (p. 273)

**13.** What are some of the responsibilities of the congregation towards its elders?

- People need to understand that leading a church is hard work. Only a few people are able or even desire to bear this weighty responsibility. (p. 273)
- When people realize how hard the “work” of shepherding a congregation is, they will have more understanding and sympathy for their leaders and not be so critical. (p. 273)

**14.** Why did Paul feel it necessary to conclude his instructions with “Be at peace among yourselves”?

- The relationship between a congregation and its leaders involves a delicate tension that can create ill feelings or unexpectedly erupt into conflict. (p. 273)
- All members of the local church are responsible to work for the peace of the church, not just the leaders. Each individual makes a difference as to the outcome of any conflict in a church. (p. 273)
- Peacemaking is necessary work that demands deliberate thought, committed effort, and personal sacrifice. (p.273)
- In the hostile environment in which the Thessalonian Christians lived, peace within the believing community was essential to their survival and spiritual wellbeing. (p. 274)





## *They Keep Watch Over Your Souls*

*“Whoever the author was, we see on bold display a highly skilled teacher of Scripture, an alert watchman, and a proactive leader. In other words, he is an experienced shepherd—warning, encouraging, instructing, and guiding his struggling brothers and sisters in Christ.”*

...

*“A healthy, flourishing church is always a combination of diligent leaders and an active, spiritually healthy congregation. Good leadership is dependent on good followership.”*

### Read chapter 27

1. From the information we have from the Letter to the Hebrews, how would you describe the author of the letter?

- Highly skilled teacher of Scripture.
- An alert watchman.
- A proactive leader.
- Experienced shepherd.
- Knows the scriptures well. (p. 275)

2. What do you learn from the author of Hebrews that would help you be a better shepherd elder?

- Know the scriptures well.
- Teach my congregation the centrality, supremacy, and superiority of Jesus Christ. (p. 275)

3. What can you explain about the Greek term “leaders” as used in our passage?

- The Greek word for “leaders” in these verses is a broad, general term like our English word leader. (p. 276)
- This term can be used to describe military, political, or religious leaders. (p. 276)
- It is not a specific title but a description of a prominent leader. (p. 276)

**4. What justification do we have for including Hebrews 12:7, 17, 24 in our study of elders?**

- Although the term “elder” does not appear here, the exhortation to obey and submit to church leaders would include elders who keep watch over the congregation.
- The author does not say “obey your leader (singular) and submit to him,” but says, “obey your leaders (plural).”
- The work of these “leaders” is described as “keeping watch over your souls.” (p. 276)

**5. What three important facts were the readers of the Letter to the Hebrews to remember about their former leaders? Explain each one.**

- Remember the godly example of their original leaders. They were word-centered leaders. Their Christ-centered teaching was in contrast to the Jewish ritual-centered teachings which the readers were tempted to return. (p. 277)
- Take time to consider their former leaders way of life, how they conducted their lives. The way they loved the Scriptures and sound doctrine. By reflecting on their lives, it would inspire greater devotion to Christ, the gospel and provide a standard for Christian living. (p. 277).
- They were to emulate their former leader's “faith” and faithfulness. They are to prayerfully recall and intentionally imitate their former leaders' Christlike way of life. (p. 277)

**Why does the author claim the third point to be the most important?**

- The baton now passes to the present generation to maintain the standard of Christian living set by their original leaders. The former leaders had preached to them the word of God in all its purity and lived out the implications of the message in daily life. (p. 277)

**6. Explain why obedience and submission are major issues for the Christian life?**

- Obedience and submission by the church to its God-appointed leaders is an urgent issue for the inspired writer of Hebrews and for every church. (p. 278)
- Obedience and submission to authority is necessary for the proper ordering of society, and the church of God is no exception. (p. 278)
- Submission is the fruit of genuine humility. (p. 278)
- True submission and obedience to God naturally expresses itself in obedience to earthly authorities. (p. 278)

**Author's Notes**

Obedience and submission by the church to its God-appointed leaders is an urgent issue for the inspired writer of Hebrews and for every church.

7. Why must the elders especially exemplify a life of obedience and submission to God, Scripture, government, and other leaders?

- They are shepherds under the direction of the chief Shepherd (Heb. 13:20; 1 Peter 5:2–4).
- Elders are men under strict authority. (p. 277)
- As stewards they must obey and submit to the Master who gives them the authority to manage the household. (p. 278)

8. When is it acceptable to disobey the elders?

- For a leader who psychologically and spiritually abuses people or teaches false doctrine, the congregation and its leaders have the biblical obligation to declare that leader (or leaders) biblically unqualified for office and possibly deserving of church discipline. “As for those [elders] who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” (1 Tim. 5:20) (p. 280)
- Submission to one’s elders, or to any human authority, is never to be understood as blind loyalty or unquestioning obedience. “As for those [elders] who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” (1 Tim. 5:20) (p. 280)

Author’s Notes  
As stewards they must obey and submit to the Master who gives them the authority to manage the household. So all Christian leaders perform their duties under God’s authority and the binding authority of the Bible. In addition, elders are to submit one to another in order to work harmoniously together and to be an example to the church of mutual submission.

9. What does the Greek term for “keeping watch” (*agrypneō*) mean?

- The verb “keeping watch” means “keep oneself awake,” “to go sleepless,” and is used here to mean “watch for,” “be alert,” “look after,” or “care for.” (p. 280)

How does the metaphorical term “keeping oneself awake” help explain (in a literal and practical sense) the work of an elder?

- Like the ancient city watchmen or shepherds of a flock, leaders need to always be spiritually awake, keenly alert, conscientious, prayerful, and vigilant to sheep-eating predators.
- Watchfulness requires tireless effort, self-discipline, and selfless concern for the welfare of others.
- At times all leaders literally do lose sleep over problem issues within the church. (p. 280)

**10.** What are the reasons the writer of Hebrews gives for why the congregation owes obedience and submission to their leaders?

- Spiritual leaders should be obeyed precisely because of what they do sacrificially for the people: “they are keeping watch over your souls.” (p. 280)
- Keeping watch over the “souls” of the people is a solemn responsibility. (p. 281)
- They are spiritual leaders “who will have to give an account” to God for their service. (p. 281)

**Author's Notes**

Tragically among some Christians there is a dismissive attitude toward the elders' pastoral authority.

**11.** What exactly is the “joy” Paul refers to here that church leaders long for?

- When believers properly submit to their leaders, the result is satisfying joy on the part of those who keep watch over the precious souls of God's people. (p. 282)
- This joy, which every leader longs for (2 Cor. 2:3), is possible only when the congregation cooperates by submitting to their God-appointed leaders. (p. 282)

What exactly causes church leaders to groan in emotional pain.

- When church members refuse to listen to their leaders' warnings of aberrant teachings, unacceptable behaviors, and disrespectful attitudes, the leaders groan in distress. (p. 282)
- They groan or sigh as if they are carrying a heavy weight upon their backs. (p. 282)

What specifically caused Moses deep emotional grief?

- Moses groaned many times because of the folly of the people's complaints and blatant unbelief. (p. 282)
- “I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.” (Num. 11:14–15)

**12.** What are the possible consequences for a believer who refuses to heed the elders' warnings and instructions?

- God may severely chastise the disobedient believer (1 Cor. 11:29–34), the devil may delude the mind (2 Cor. 11:3), or a bitter spirit may set in, halting all spiritual growth and Christlike maturity. (p. 283)

13. List five key principles (or truths) that you have learned about biblical eldering/shepherding from these three passages of Scripture (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

Answers will vary.

- By means of the letter of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews is an excellent example of watching over the people and protecting them from spiritual atrophy. The letter itself is an example of how to watch over the Lord's people.
- Leaders are important examples for the people to see and follow.
- Elders watch over the spiritual condition of their people. "Watching over" means keeping oneself awake to the many dangers that can encompass God's church.
- Elders will have to give an account to God for their safekeeping (or lack thereof) of God's people.
- When an elder is joyful in the work of shepherding God's people, it makes the difficult work of shepherding more rewarding and more meaningful.

14. Of the five key principles you have learned, which one was most important or illuminating to you? Explain.

Author's Notes

Greetings were to be made to "all your leaders"—not one leader in charge of the church but a plurality of leaders. As we have seen, this is consistent with the rest of the New Testament (Phil. 1:1). The author of this inspired letter does not identify himself, nor does he describe his official position, but what he does do is exalt the many descriptions and works of our Lord Jesus Christ whom he worships and serves.



## *Understanding the Relationship between Elders and Congregation*

*“Elders who understand the sacred nature and dynamic energy of the Spirit-empowered local church know that they must work together in harmony with the congregation to protect and build up the church. The elders’ work is always collaborative, not dictatorial.”*

...

*“Elders and congregation are connected in ways that at times are hard to explain with precision. Tensions and ambiguities may exist in the elder-congregation relationship that are not directly addressed in the New Testament. . . . As administrators of God’s household, the elders can organize the relationship between themselves and the congregation so that they can effectively work together to solve problems, exercise church discipline, make key decisions, raise money to start new mission projects, live in peace with one another, and present a good testimony to the unbelieving world of Christian unity.”*

### Read chapter 28

**1.** In your opinion, what three descriptions of the local church help you better understand the glorious nature of the church of Jesus Christ?

- o Answers will vary: “The household of God.”
- o “A dwelling place for God.”
- o “God’s holy people . . . separated from evil and consecrated to fulfill God’s purposes.”

Explain your three choices?

- o We are part his God’s family. This is a special relationship like no other relationship. The creator of the universe allows us to be a part of his family.
- o God is with us. He is present in our church. He is not some far off “god” that is not involved with his people.
- o We have been made holy by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are freed from sin to do his work.

**Author's Notes**

The local Christian church is no ordinary gathering of people. Scripture describes it as “the church of God” (Acts 20:28), “the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19). . . . The gathered believers “are God’s temple,” and “God’s Spirit dwells” within them (1 Cor. 3:16).

**2. Concerning the relationship between the elders and the congregation, what important facts do you learn from both the Letter to the Hebrews and the Letter of First Peter that will help you better understand the elder/congregation relationship?**

- The writer of Hebrews directs all his in-depth teaching and weighty exhortations to the entire believing community. However, at the end of the letter the writer exhorts his readers “to imitate” the faith of their leaders and “to obey . . . and submit to them,” and to greet them all as well as all “the saints” (Heb. 13:7, 13, 24). (p. 286)
- Peter reminds his readers that they are all responsible for using their spiritual gifts to serve one another. Near the end of the letter, he writes to the elders to, “shepherd the flock of God . . . exercising oversight” (1 Peter 5:2). (p. 287)
- Paul also expected the overseers and church members to work together in Christian unity and love (Phil. 1:27; 2:2). (p. 286)

**3. If someone did not believe that the council of elders had the God-given authority to pastor the local church, how would you best prove to them this claim? Give at least five proofs for your answer.**

- The Holy Spirit authorized the elders/overseers to govern and care for the church of God. (Acts 20:28). (p. 288)
- Elders have the God-given authority to oversee the local church (1 Pet. 5:2). (p. 289)
- Elders have the God-given authority to “lead” the local church (1 Tim. 5:17). (p. 289)
- Elders/overseers are God’s stewards of God’s house (Titus 1:7). Take special note that the overseers are “God’s” stewards, not the church’s stewards. (p. 289)
- The leaders/elders keep watch over the souls of all who gather as God’s people (Heb. 13:17). (p. 290)

**Author's Notes**

The elders are to receive special recognition and honor that not everyone else receives.

**4. How does the author use the analogy of the husband’s proper use of authority over his wife to help elders to understand the proper, Christlike use of authority over the local church? (Ephesians 5:22–27)**

- It is unbalanced to tell a man he is the “head of the home,” but not tell him he must love his wife “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” It would be unbalanced and distorted. Just like the elders are the “overseers” of the church but they must govern in a Christlike manner. (p. 290)
- The elders are not a special priestly or clerical caste over the congregation. They are brothers, gifted of the Spirit to lead the family of God.



5. Explain why the author advises people not to use the term “elder rule”?

- “Rule” has too strong of a connotation for biblical elders. (p. 291)
- Paul never used the common Greek term “ruler” for the elders (ἀρχων [*archōn*]). (p. 291)
- Paul did not view elders as the rulers of the congregation. Only Jesus is Ruler. (p. 291)
- Peter expressly disallowed the elders from lording their pastoral authority over the people entrusted to them by God (1 Peter 5:2–3; also Matt. 20:25–28). (p. 291)

6. Why do some Christians vigorously reject pastoral church leadership by a plurality of elders?

- In some denominations and cultures the elders have absolute authority and need not answer to the congregation or involve them in any kind of major decision. (p. 291)
- There is little or no regard for the congregation’s wisdom and giftedness. (p. 291)
- These leaders want to have total authority and do not want to involve other leaders or their congregation in any decision.

7. What three passages of Scripture most clearly explain the elders’ position and authority in the local church? Explain your answers.

- Acts 20:28: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, [to shepherd] the church of God.” (p. 288)
- Hebrews 13:17: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.” (p. 288)
- 1 Peter 5:2-5: “Shepherd the church of God...exercising oversight of the church...not domineering over those in your charge, but being an example to the flock.” (p. 288)

8. What four passages of Scripture most clearly explain the congregation’s obligations to its elders? Explain your answers.

- The local church is to “submit to” and “obey” its leaders (Heb. 13:17). (p. 292)
- The congregation is “to respect” its leaders and “to esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (1 Thess. 5:12–13). (p. 292)
- Younger members are to “be subject to the elders,” and relate to the elders in the spirit of “humility” (1 Peter 5:5). (p. 292)
- The congregation is to show “double honor” to the elders who lead well, but especially to “those who labor in preaching and teaching.” This “double honor” includes financial compensation as well as respect (1 Tim. 5:17–18). (p. 292)

Explain how a congregation can act toward the authority of the elders in unhealthy, passive ways and do much harm to itself.

- Some churches are too complacent or too trusting of their leaders in an unhealthy way.
- The congregation is responsible to hold its spiritual leaders accountable to faithful adherence to the truths of Scripture.
- All members have a voice in assuring that what is done in the church family is done according to Scripture. (p. 293)

**9.** Explain how the apostles and congregation in Jerusalem worked together in harmony to solve a serious problem. (See Acts 6:1–7.)

- The apostles prescribed the necessary qualifications to guide the congregation in its selection of the Seven.
- The congregation was “pleased” with the apostles’ plan and set out to select seven qualified men.
- The apostles, as the acknowledged leadership body of the church, addressed the crisis.
- They communicated well with the congregation.
- They proposed a fair solution.
- They strategically included the congregation in selecting the right people “to serve tables.”

**10.** What reasons can you give for why the congregation needs to be involved in the examination of a candidate for eldership?

- The offices of overseer and deacon are public offices in the church, and the qualifications are stated in Scripture for the entire church family to know and enforce. (p. 299)
- Some of the qualifications for office require the knowledge of other people to assess the candidate’s fitness (1 Tim. 3:7).
- People within the congregation often know vital information about a candidate that the leaders may not know.

**11.** Why should the elders care about what the congregation thinks about a candidate for eldership or deaconship?

- How would the church’s leaders know if a person is “above reproach” or “respectable” unless they inquire of relatives, friends, and fellow brothers and sisters? (p.299)

**12.** What specific clarification did you receive from this chapter regarding the elder-congregation relationship?

Author's Notes

Different procedures can be used to involve the congregation in examining a potential elder's qualifications for office.

**13. Who makes the final decision as to whether or not a candidate for eldership is qualified and ready to be officially installed into office?**

- o These responsibilities belong to the council of elders. (p. 300)
- o Since the elders are God's stewards of God's household, they exercise authority to administer most issues and to make many decisions for the local congregation (Titus 1:7).

Author's Notes

What is of interest to us is that "the apostles and the elders" reached a unanimous decision (v. 25) regarding the law-keeping demands of certain Pharisaic believers (vv. 1, 5, 24). They did this by means of good decision-making principles: through open discussion, reasoned arguments, debate, special presentations by key leaders, and a wise solution proposed by James, one of the most respected members. The apostles and elders unanimously concluded that the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised to be saved but are "saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus."



## *Making Pastoral Eldership Work*

*"If one elder acts like Diotrephes, who loved to be 'first,' there will be fighting for control and ugly division (3 John 9–10). But if the elders will submit themselves one to another; patiently wait upon one another; genuinely consider one another's interests and perspectives; defer to one another; love one another as Jesus loved, then in such an atmosphere, leadership harmony and unified decision-making will flourish."*

...

*"One of the most important factors in shaping an effective pastoral eldership is training, training, training! Educating, mentoring, and developing future leaders and teachers must be a priority."*

### Read chapter 29

1. What three factors does the author name that will contribute to different eldership experiences? In what ways would the experience of elders in a 500-person church differ from that of elders in a 75-person church?

- Size (p. 304)
- Location (p. 304)
- Giftedness (p. 305)
- The organizational structure of the smaller church is more simple. It has a more family feel and the elders have far more interaction and the body has more input.
- A larger church needs more elders and often has more full-time staff. The numerical size of a church makes a significant difference in how an eldership organizes itself for effective pastoral oversight.

2. The author writes: "The fact is many men have a difficult time working with other men as equal colleagues in the service of God." Why is this true? List several reasons.

- They act independently. (p. 305)
- They want places of honor. (p. 306)
- They like to put themselves first. (p. 306)
- They can become angry and put themselves first. (p. 306)

By what biblical principles (or virtues) can a team of elders work together in harmony?

- Elders should submit themselves one to another. (p. 306)
- Elders should patiently wait upon one another. (p. 306)
- Elders should genuinely consider one another's interests and perspectives. (p. 306)
- Elders should defer to one another. (p. 306)
- Elders should love one another as Jesus loved. (p. 306)

3. List five reasons why a shepherd eldership needs to be well organized.

- Disorganization frustrates people. (p. 306)
- The congregation's spiritual gifts will be squandered. (p. 306)
- Confusion and conflict will erupt within the body. (p. 306)
- People will be hurt by their leaders lack of oversight.
- Jobs will fail to get done and sometimes get repeated when not clearly articulated.
- Lack of organization is a poor testimony to outsiders.

Author's Notes The numerical size of a church makes a significant difference in how an eldership organizes itself for effective pastoral oversight.
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4. List five essential reasons why a church eldership always needs to be improving its communication with the congregation.

- They are not to be a secret society. (p. 307)
- They will create confusion among the congregation if they don't communicate. (p. 307)
- The church is to be a close-knit family. (p. 307)
- Effective leadership is participatory leadership where your people are involved. (p. 307)
- The congregation should be well-informed. (p. 307)

5. Why is confidentiality among the elders necessary to build trust among the elders and with the congregation?

- To betray trust can ruin an elder's reputation and discredit the entire leadership body. (p.307)
- Revealing information destroys the congregation's trust in the elders. (p. 308)
- To build trust with the congregation and among elders, the elder council needs a policy of confidentiality. (p. 308)

6. How is the author applying 1 Corinthians 14 to our topic?

“God is not a God of confusion but of peace. . . . But all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

- o People are frustrated when their elders don't seem to know who is responsible for specific ministries in the church, or whom they can go to for help. (p. 308)

Author's Notes  
An elder is in a position of trust. He is privy to sensitive information about people, so he needs to understand the responsibility of confidentiality.

7. Explain why elders' meetings are necessary to the success of the elders' leadership of a local church. List several reasons.

- o A significant part of the elders' work can only be accomplished by meeting together as a council. (p. 309)
- o Meetings are an indispensable feature of their work and have a significant function that cannot be replaced by anything else. (p. 309)
- o Elders' meetings help to build close relationships among the elders. (p. 310)
- o Helps keep one another accountable for one's responsibilities. (p. 310)
- o Helps with group planning and decision-making. (p. 310)
- o Helps the elders learn proper Christlike behavior that will carry through conflict. (p. 310)
- o The meeting of godly elders must emphasize prayer together. (p. 310)

Author's Notes  
Effective church leadership is participatory leadership (Acts 6:1-7; 15:6-7, 12, 22, 30) in which the members of the congregation are well-informed and involved in decisions affecting the whole family.

8. What is the meaning of Psalm 141:5?

- o David wanted his wise counselors to teach and correct him because it was blessing upon him. He did not want to fight against it.

How does the author apply Psalm 141:5 to the church elders?

- o Genuine accountability helps protect elders from the tendencies toward procrastination, laziness, misdirection, lack of follow-through, and forgetfulness. (p. 310)
- o We should welcome and seek group accountability. (p. 310)

**9.** Explain the “friendship-relationship aspect” of eldership. Why is it important to the success of the team?

- The friendlier and closer that elders are to one another, the better prepared they are to handle the pressure and disagreements that occur in leading a church. (p. 310)
- An eldership group that is focused solely on its duties is imbalanced. It is missing out on the team dynamic where friendship and relationships play a key role in healthy church leadership. (p. 310)
- According to Neil Summerton, this will build bonds of love that will be an example to the congregation. (p. 311)

**10.** What are some practical ways in which an elder’s wife enhances his reputation and work?

- An elder’s wife shares her unique womanly intuition and wisdom with her husband.
- She is often aware of various needs, relational tensions, and other pastoral issues that need to be addressed.
- She frequently reminds her husband of people in need and people to contact.
- A wife may join her husband in counseling a couple in crisis or accompany him on a home or hospital visit.
- She helps make their home hospitable to visitors and friends. (p. 311)

**Author’s Notes**

No elder can do his work without the consent and help of his wife.

**11.** How do Jesus and Paul illustrate training future leaders?

- A large portion of Jesus’s time and ministry was devoted to personalized training of the twelve apostles. (p. 312)
- As a result of Paul’s teaching, the Ephesian elders lacked nothing in their theological education for teaching the gospel or living lives pleasing to God. (p. 312)
- By simply being with Paul and observing his daily life and character, the elders would have begun to imitate his example. (p.312)

**Author’s Notes**

The shepherding task itself includes preparing future shepherds for the ongoing work of caring for God’s flock. In practical terms, this means that the elders need to be on the lookout for “faithful” men who are capable of teaching others the profound truths of the gospel of God. The elders should take the initiative to identify potential leaders and teachers, speak with them about their future, and be prepared to train them over time.



12. Explain the full meaning of 2 Timothy 2:2. Be sure you understand this significant passage of Scripture.

- o As elders, you are to watch for (1) men who are dependable, reliable, and can be trusted with the precious truths of the gospel, and (2) men who are “able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). These are the ones to invest your time in to train. (p. 312)

13. What are some of the negative effects on a local church if its leaders are not consistently growing in the knowledge of Scripture and in devotion to God?

- o When you stop growing and learning, you will not only become spiritually stagnant, but you will also lose your spiritual influence on others as a church leader. (p. 313)
- o You may even aid in the demise of the eldership within your local church. (p. 313)
- o Without elders who are growing spiritually and firmly committed to shepherding the flock, the eldership itself naturally becomes irrelevant to the church body and can gradually disappear altogether. (p. 313)

14. What arguments does the author give for rejecting term limits for elders?

- o Having term limits demeans the biblical status of qualified, Spirit-placed elders. (p. 314)
- o It further separates, in practice, self-supporting elders from the full-time paid elder(s) who serve on a permanent basis. (p. 314)
- o Term limits seriously undermine the equality aspect of eldership. (p. 314)
- o Limits also send an unscriptural message to certain elders that they are only temporary officials. (p. 314)

What is your response to these arguments?

Author's Notes

The main point is this: If you want an effective pastoral group of elders, they need continual biblical and theological education, spiritual and character tutelage, and training in the skills of shepherding a congregation of God's people. All this is abundantly provided in God-breathed Scripture.



An Invaluable Online Training Program for  
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“One of the most important factors in shaping an effective pastoral eldership is training, training, training! Educating, mentoring, and developing future leaders and teachers must be a priority. Yet, many times elders have lamented to me, ‘No one ever trained me!’ That is tragic because biblical Christianity clearly emphasizes the roles of teaching, modeling, imitation, and discipleship. Training needs to be in the DNA of every local congregation.”

Alexander Strauch

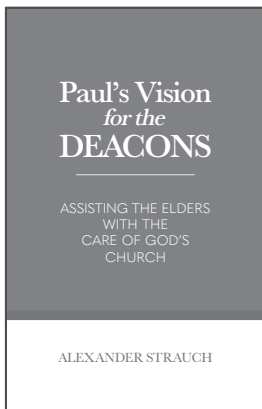
Working with a team of shepherd elders, Alexander Strauch has been instrumental in launching an online tool for training and equipping elders within local churches. Biblical Eldership Resources offers systematic training in order to develop present and future generations of local church elders.

All the instructional material on the website is rooted in Bible exposition. This unique website, combined with the publishing ministry already has a widespread influence throughout the world and can have a long-term, lasting impact on leaders and churches in the future.

The website offers a structured curriculum called *School of the Shepherds*. The videos and other curriculum available on this website are designed to be used by individuals or by small groups. Visit the website and choose the resources that best fit the needs in your church or your personal ministry.



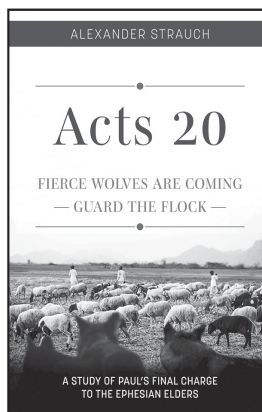
# *Resources for Church Leaders*



## **Paul's Vision for the Deacons** by Alexander Strauch

Views on the roles of deacons vary widely among evangelical Christians. What does the Scripture actually teach about deacons and their role the church?

A separate study guide is also available, making these resources an excellent training program for deacons, as well as the elders who lead them.



## **Acts 20: Fierce Wolves are Coming; Guard the Flock** by Alexander Strauch

God has given us a special gift in Paul's farewell message to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. There is nothing else in the New Testament comparable to this passage and it's message is urgently needed today. Indeed, every new generation of church leaders needs to discover afresh Paul's instructions to the Ephesian elders.