



Message **Transcript**

The Role of Elders

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Thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. And as we've continued our worship by seeking the Lord, by praising his name, let's pray and let's have our hearts prepared to hear the living and active word of the Lord this morning. Would you pray with me? Father God, we just thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, for your living and active word and for your Holy Spirit that helps us to understand who you are. Lord, as your word is open today, Lord, be helpful to me as I proclaim Your truth. And Lord, be helpful to us as we receive it. Lord, you gave us your words so that we could respond to you, so we would know who you are and put into practice the very things that you show us.

And so now Lord, our prayer is, speak Lord, for we are willing to hear. Lord, clear the distractions out of our mind. And Lord, if we're aware of any sin in our life, we just confess that before you now, knowing that your Word teaches us, that when we confess our sins, you're faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And so, Lord, our desire is to hear you. So now, Lord, be favorable to us and all God's people who are ready to hear his word, believe what he says, and put into practice the very things he shows you. Agree with me by very loudly saying the word, "Amen. Amen."

When Jesus was on planet Earth, before he died on the cross and rose from the dead, He promised His disciples that He would establish his church, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Then He went to the cross exactly like He said. He died for all the sins of the world. He rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven. And after a period of time, He sent His Holy Spirit to the church so that the church could be

His vehicle on planet Earth for propagating the Gospel, for proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord so that He can be glorified. And that the message of the Gospel would get out, so that those who are lost and dead in their sin could confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

But like any good leader, Jesus Christ established parameters for what the church was going to be like and He wanted us to know what leadership should look like in this vehicle called the church that He established. And so, today, we're going to take a look at it, what should leadership in the church look like? If you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up to first Peter chapter five, we're going to be in verses one through five today. If you don't have a copy of the scriptures, you can take one underneath every other chair and read along with me as we do that, and so that you can get your eyes on a copy of God's word.

As we've been talking about what it looks like for Christians who are being persecuted in times for their faith, we're taking a look for what leadership in the church needs to look like during those times. So, I'd like to read these five verses to you and then we'll take a look at four ways today that elders should be responsible in the church. Notice what He says, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness. Not yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be

examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders, and all of you, clothe yourself with humility toward one another for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

And here in that text, he really highlights for us what leadership in the church should look like and when leadership in the church is functioning well, and what God's expectation of leaders in the church should be. And so, he starts in verse five, and he says, "Therefore, I exhort the elders." Now, verse one is really introductory material and he is exhorting the elders. Now, notice what he says, "Therefore I exhort." Now, exhort means to come alongside, it means to give encouragement, it means to help take a step in a direction. If you have the gift of exhortation or you've been around somebody with the gift of exhortation, it's when you're around that person, they're not commanding you or telling you, "This is what you better do or else." It's that person that when you're around, they're able to discern things in your life, give you practical steps and you start stepping in a new direction after you spend time with this. And you say, "I really needed to go that way." That's the gift of exhortation.

And what Peter is doing is, he's coming alongside the elders of the church. And he says, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you as one of your fellow elder." Now notice this, first of all, you see elders being in the plural. Elders is in the plural every time we talk about the church. Why? Because elders need to be a plurality of leadership in the church. There should never be one man that runs everything in the church. There should always be a plurality of men that are serving in the church for the

purpose of glorifying God and doing what they want. Now, it's interesting here because Peter says, "I exhort the elders as a fellow elder." In other words, Peter saying this, "I'm one with you."

I mean, when the book started, Peter referred to himself as an apostle and certainly he was. He was sent directly by Jesus Christ. But here in the trenches, when he's talking to churches, he will say, "I may be an apostle, but here's what I really am. I'm an elder who's eldering along with you. I'm enduring what you're enduring. I'm getting what you get. I'm doing what you do. I'm one of you." Every church should have a plurality of elders that are doing what God wants him to do. And notice what he says, "As your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ."

Peter saw Jesus Christ suffered, didn't he? I mean, Peter was the one out of all the disciples that always put his foot in his mouth. And so, the night that Jesus was betrayed, he told Jesus directly to His face, the Son of God, here's what he told him, "Hey, even if all else fall away." In other words, I'm aware of who all my friends are Jesus, I know them, and they're probably not going to be cool like me. "Even if they all fall away. Don't worry about it. I never will. Even if I have to die for you. I'll do that." And what does Jesus say to Peter? "Peter, tonight before the rooster crows, you will betray me three times." And Peter did just that. And on the third time that he betrayed Jesus, his eyes met Jesus. And what did he do? He went out and wept bitterly because he knew the failure that he had been. He witnessed the sufferings of Christ. He saw the resurrected Christ. He saw the nails in his hand, he saw the scar in his side. He knew what Christ had endured for him, he witnessed that.

But when we read about witness in the New Testament, we're not just saying what we saw. Sometimes we'll talk about witnessing a car accident or for instance witnessing an event that took place. But witness has more to do than just seeing something that's been a part of something. So, being a witness will be like this. Imagine you flew out to Oakland this fall and you watch the Broncos play the Raiders, and you witnessed their fans treat Broncos people terribly. And you're a witness of that, because everybody knows what Raiders fans are like, right? So, you witnessed that. But if you're bearing witness to that, it's not just that you saw the fans shouting at the players and the coaches or throwing things onto the field. Because you were orange, they were treating you the same way they were treating the people on the field. You were bearing witness to the fact that you are taking this heat, right?

And that's exactly what Peter is talking about. He's talking about the fact of being an elder and the fact that he is a believer in Christ, and the fact that he's serving, he's bearing witness of suffering as well in his life. And here's the reality, every time you step out in faith for the Lord Jesus Christ, there is the potential of suffering more for His name. The more you step up and live for Jesus, the more potential there is for being persecuted for your faith. I remember my first day at Dallas Seminary, Chuck Swindoll was speaking and he told all of us who were sitting there, "Hey, just by being here today, you put a bull's eye on the front and on the back of you and you're going to get shot at."

And I didn't quite know what he meant. Now, some years later, I realized just by

stepping forward in faith, there is a persecution or a suffering that comes from standing up for the glory of Jesus Christ. And Peter is getting in the trenches with these elders of these churches saying, "I'm a fellow elder with you. I know what it's like to suffer. I personally witness Christ suffering and I'm witnessing suffering in my life. And that's just who we are, and that's who I am." And notice what else he says. He says, "Not only is he a fellow sufferer with Christ, but he's a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed."

In other words, why would he put up with all this stuff? Because he's looking forward to more than anything else, Jesus Christ bursting through the sky in all of His glory coming back to redeem all those who are eagerly awaiting for Him. And the reality is not just elders, but all of us who have confessed Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior are all partakers of His coming glory. He is coming back. And the Bible says He's coming back soon. And when's that? I mean, soon. That's what it means. And we don't know when that is, but it's soon and when He comes back, we're going to be partaking in His glory. So, why is Peter exhorting and encouraging the elders? Why is Peter eldering? Well, because he believes that the sufferings are worth everything that's going on for the glory of Jesus Christ that is going to be revealed.

And that's the background for what he tells us that elders need to be and the role of elders. Now, when we see this word, elder, there's really three words that are used interchangeably in the New Testament, right? One is elder, one is bishop or overseer, and one is pastor. And they're all three used interchangeably. When we talk about pastor, we're really talking about the preaching and teaching of the Word. And when

we talk about overseer, we're talking about the main responsibility of what that role is. And when we talk about elders, here's what we're talking about. We're talking about the character of the men that serve in that role, and that's what he's talking about here. So, he's exhorting the elders who are leading the church.

And here's the first one, that when it comes to eldering, the mandate of responsibility is shepherding Christ's Church. When it comes to eldering, the mandate of responsibility is shepherding Christ's Church. In other words, what's the leader supposed to do in the church? What's the elders supposed to do? He's supposed to shepherd Christ Church. Notice what he says, "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight." Now it's interesting, he uses the word shepherd. Why does he use the word shepherd? Because he sees us as what? Sheep. Now, sheep are a unique animal. There is no other animal in the world that needs a shepherd, is there? Lions don't have shepherd, they have lion tamers. They don't have shepherds. Dogs don't have shepherds.

They have owners. They don't have shepherds. Why do you need a shepherd for sheep? Can I tell you why? Because most of us didn't grow up on a farm. But let me tell you some about sheep. Sheep are needy. Sheep are defenseless. Sheep are helpless. Sheep cannot find food for themselves, they cannot feed themselves. Sheep are prone to wandering. If a sheep sees another sheep go off a cliff and it's following the sheep, all the sheep will go off the cliff until you put a stop to it. Sheep are not the brightest animal in the world. Sheep need to be sheared regularly. If they're not, their wool gets all sorts of dirt and everything around it. If they don't get sheared on their

backside properly, they can't use the bathroom. If sheep fall over, they cannot pick themselves up. Sheep are 100% dependent on their shepherd.

So, when Jesus pulling up in His boat sees the massive crowds and they look like a sheep without a shepherd, it was not a compliment. What He was saying is these people do not know spiritually where they're going. And when it comes to us spiritually, we have to see ourselves as sheep, that we spiritually are prone to wander, that we spiritually are prone to go our own way, that we spiritually we can't feed ourselves. God established the church for everything that we need. And so, the role and responsibility of an elder is to be an under shepherd of the chief shepherd, Jesus, that we're going to talk about to help all sheep get home. That's the purpose of an elder, right? The purpose of an elder is serving the sheep.

Now, we don't like the terminology sheep. We don't like it. Especially we as men, we hate it, right? When we do men's events, we will say something like, "We don't do a men's retreat. We do men's advance. We're taking ground, we're warriors for Christ. We're brave. We're this, we're that." I mean, so we'll read passages like Ephesians chapter six, verses 10 and following talking about putting on the full armor of God. And we'll talk about the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness and our feet fitted for the Gospel. And we'll talk about the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and the helmet of salvation. And we even have in bookstores, and I have a couple of these in my office where you get Roman clothing with all these armoring. "Look at us, we're men, we're this."

At best, Ephesians six is defining a girded-up sheep, right? I mean, that's all you are. I mean, apart from Christ, you can't take care of yourself. God established the church because it was so needed in our soul to have people shepherding and pouring into us so we could be who Jesus wanted us to be. Now, Jesus, of course, is the chief shepherd and Jesus when He was here said, "My sheep know my voice." But he was training the 12 to shepherd the flock of God. Now, let me just make one other point about this text in first Peter chapter 5:2. If you read this verse, get your eyes on it, in your own Bible, and it says, "Shepherd the flock of who?" Shepherd the flock, say it out loud with me, "Shepherd the flock of..."

God.

Okay. Say it really loud. Shepherd the flock of...

God.

Okay, so whose flock is it?

God.

God. Whose church is it?

God.

Is it Pastor Jeff's church?

No.

Say it louder.

No.

No. It never will be. There are no churches owned by pastors. Every church is Christ's Church. It belongs to God. Elders that serve, serve for a season for the purpose of elevating Christ. It's His church. He came and died for the church. He's coming back for His church. He loves His church, and it belongs to Him. There's no ownership of a pastor of any of the sheep. The pastor is serving under the authority of Jesus Christ to influence and encourage, and build and lead the sheep.

Now, Peter, after he betrayed Jesus three times, post resurrection of Jesus Christ, he meets Jesus on the beach and they have breakfast together. And in John chapter 21, Jesus begins to give him motivation for what he should do. And it says in John chapter 21, verse 15, when they had finished breakfast, Simon Peter said to him, "Simon, Son of John, do you love Me more than these?" And he said to Him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And He said to him, Jesus said to him, "Tend to my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, Son of John, do you love me?" He said, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And He said to him, "Shepherd my sheep." He said to him a third time, "Simon, Son of John, do you love me?" And Peter was grieved, because he had said this the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you." And Jesus said to him, "Tend to my sheep."

What do you hear? Tend to my sheep, shepherd my lambs, tend my sheep, shepherd my lambs. I mean, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what he's saying. He said, "Take care of My sheep." Tending My sheep means feed them, water them, encourage them, build them. Let me tell you something. I've heard people say

stuff like this, "Is it wrong for me to want to go to a church where I'm getting fed? Is that just selfish?" Is it wrong for you to want to go to a restaurant where they actually serve food? No. I mean, you need spiritual nourishment. If you don't go somewhere where the word of God is being taught, you're being spiritually malnourished, and it is hurting your growth with Christ.

It is not selfish to want to eat. It's an absolute necessity for you to do that, right? And so, feeding the sheep. Tend means to feed. Shepherd means to lead. Feed and lead the people of God. That's why at Brave Church we'll talk about it like this, "That the responsibility of elders is doctrine, discipline, and direction." Doctrine, discipline and direction. And doctrine means this, it's teaching. So, when we talk about doctrine, we talk about this. It's God's word. That's what we're responsible for.

So, this book, from Genesis one through Revelation 22, made up of 66 books is God's word. He spoke it. It's 100% true. It's all true. An elder's responsibility is to elevate this book and this word and say, we will not change one bit of it. "The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the Word of our Lord stands forever." Not one jot or tittle of it will change. It may be uncomfortable for God's people to hear at times, but we won't change any part of the word. One of the responsibilities of elders is holding up this book and saying, "This is what God says, therefore, we will not waver or we will not change what God says." That's part of the responsibility. That's what doctrine is. It's God's word. And then we have this. Now we have doctrine.

We have discipline. What's discipline? A lot of people think elder's job is to kick

people out of the church when they're really, really bad people. But here's the problem. We're all really, really bad people. I mean, we're all sinners and we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Discipline is God's ways. It means part of being an elder is that you're able to teach people how this book works in their lives. It's like, here's what it means to be a godly man. And here's what it means to be a godly woman. And here's how we're to get along in church. And here's what it looks like to forgive one another, even though that's uncomfortable, and here's what it looks like to steward your resources. And here's what it looks like to be part of a church. These are God's ways. That's discipline. That's the growth part of what elders are called to do and to come alongside and exhort the church to live out God's ways.

And then the third is God's direction, which is this, it's God's will. It's God's will. It's God's Word, God's ways, and God's will. What's God's will? Well, the only way you can know God's will is to seek God. Because God has unique things for each church in the body of Christ that he wants to accomplish. That's why as elders, we always spend the first part, like a half an hour, 45 minutes or an hour of every meeting that we meet on our knees declaring this to God. "God, you're the head of the church, we're just your servants. God, this is your church, you can do whatever you want. What do you want us to do? Where do you want us to go? How do you want us to lead? Lord, don't let any of us have our own agenda. What do you want to do?" That's God's will, because God has a unique way that He wants to use BRAVE Church unlike any other church in history to accomplish His purpose.

And so, as elders, we need to be spiritually attuned to what God is saying, so we

lead the church well. And why is that important? Because you know what we like to do as sheep? We like to sit in one place. We like to be [inaudible 00:18:09], come take care of me. And when elders are leading and moving, that's when sheep start, "Baa, why are we going that way? Why are we doing this?" That's what elders do. We're leading. And so, we need to make sure that we're hearing what Christ is saying, so that we're leading in the right way.

And just to be clear, because I want to let you know a little bit about our elders and how we work. Because one of the questions that came in after the family chat was, "Pastor Jeff, do you get most of the vote on the elder board? Don't you have a majority vote or something like this?" The answer is no. And let me tell you why. Because we've never voted and we never will vote. There's no vote on our elder board. There's consensus on our elder board, which means until we're united in what God is saying, we don't move forward.

Now, you're going to ask this question, "Well, Pastor Jeff, there's no way we could all think the same thing." No, we never do. So, what do we do? We seek the Lord. And there's times where we say, "Hey, listen, I'm listening to what you guys are saying, I'm the minority here. And you guys have heard me. We've prayed together. So, I'm trusting what you guys say, and I'm all in with you." Which means I'm going to be behind it, I'm going to say I'm for it, I'm going with you. We're still united. Let's go." That's how we do every single decision. That's who we are. That's why the character of an elder and their heart for God is so important, because that's how we come to consensus. And that's how we make decisions.

And when we do say, for instance, "We're going to remodel the Worship Center. We're putting another campus, it's going to cost us this to do." We as elders decide that if we're actually going to ask the body to do this, we're given first. We're going to be in, we're in this financially. So, I can tell you as an elder, because I've been an elder since we started the church, 100% of the time we've done a fundraiser, I've given 100% of the time generously. Because that's what we're called to do. How can we ask God's people to do something if we're not willing to do it, right?

That's what it means to be an elder. It's shepherding the flock of God. It's what we're called to do. It's leading and feeding God's People. Now, this is why this is important for you. Because you want to be in a church where elders take seriously the role of leading and feeding God's people. It's for your own nourishment and for your own good. And that's what Peter tells us. So, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight. That means leading very well.

The second thing He tells us of the mandate of elders is responsibility to shepherd in Christ's Church when it comes to eldering the model of readiness for being an elder is showing Christ's character. The model of readiness for being an elder is demonstrating Christ like character. It's showing Christ's character. Notice what He says, "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily according to the will of God and not for sordid gain but with eagerness, nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." Now, the model of readiness has everything to do with Christ's

character. It has to do with Christ's character coming in and through you. And notice what He says, here's how we should do it. Exercising oversight. How? Not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God.

It means nobody should elder because it's a have to, it is a desire to. First Timothy three says that, "Anyone who would desire to be an elder, desires a noble task." There should be a compelling that I want to do this, I get to do this. And I can tell you this, as hard as it's been at different times to lead the church, I'm still loving every part of it, even when it's hard, and I'm privileged that I get a chance to serve the Lord in this capacity. It should never be begrudgingly or "Oh, I have to do this. It's my job. It's my responsibility. I'm a man of God, I have to do it." No, no, no. It is by volunteer. God doesn't make somebody become an elder. God can put it on somebody's heart. Draw somebody in that direction and that's what he's called to do. All right? Not have to, but voluntarily.

What else did He say about elders? Notice this one, "And not for sorted gain, but with eagerness." Not for sorted gain, but with eagerness. Sorted gain. What does that mean? I mean, I was reading the King James Version this week. It doesn't use sorted gain. It uses filthy lucre. Not for filthy lucre. I don't even know what filthy lucre means. Here's what sorted gain means. It's beyond just being motivated by money. It's when a pastor or elder is fleecing the congregation for their money. It means when they're using their position of authority to get your income. It means I need this and I can stand up here and give examples over the last 25 years of people and things I've seen. I'm not going to do that. You'll see it but when it goes off in your

heart that, "Hey, he's just asking for my money so he can get more rich." That's bad. That's not the motivation of an elder.

It doesn't mean that an elder can't get paid. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that it's okay to pay our elders. I did a sermon on this from First Corinthians chapter nine, if you want to go back and listen to it. But first Timothy chapter five says this, first Timothy 5:17 says, "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor." That's income, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing, and the laborer is worthy of his wages." There's nothing wrong with paying a pastor.

Nothing biblically wrong with that. What sorted gain is beyond paying a pastor. It's when the pastor has a greedy heart and is using his influence to fleece the flock because he wants to profit of anything that the congregation does. That's wrong. It's 100% of the time wrong. You should not be ever motivated by money nor should you be looking at sheep as people that you can get money from. You should always be serving the Lord first and foremost, looking to Him for what He wants to do, and be grateful that you get to serve in that position.

And then finally, He says this, verse three, "Not as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." Now, Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be great, he would become a servant." And in Mark 10:45, Jesus even said, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." Narcissism as an elder is one of the most dangerous things ever. When a pastor or elder feels like you, as a congregation, owe me something, that's a

danger. You need to run away from that. I've seen things over the last 30 years or so where pastors have different people mow their grass because they tell them, "It's your job as a congregant to do that for me."

Now, if you want to mow my grass, come see me, do it voluntarily. But the point is, you don't owe me anything. You don't have to do anything for your pastor. Pray for me, love me, encourage me. You don't owe me anything. And when somebody sees their position as lording it over you and telling you, "Here's what you need to do for the church and here's what you need to do for me," and it come across as bossy and controlling and manipulative, like it's their church, danger, danger. It's not their church, it's Christ's Church. They're an under shepherd of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What you should hear in the heart of an elder is a love for Lord Jesus Christ, and a love for his authority in the church. Amen. And this is what He's talking about in this text. And we don't have time, you can write these verses down today. I'd encourage you to write down first Timothy chapter three verses one through seven, which will give you the character and qualities necessary for an overseer. But I'm going to read through Titus chapter one, verses five through nine, just so you can get a feel for elders' character and what they should be. Now, here's what he says.

Paul writes to Titus and said, "For this reason, I left you in Crete, that you would set an order, what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you. Namely, if any man is above reproach the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion, for the overseer must be above reproach as God's

steward, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious which is quick to fight, not fond of sorted game, but hospitable, which means welcoming, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-control, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able to both exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict."

I mean, that's character qualities. And what you see here is above reproach. What you see here is a man who is stewarding his family well. What you see is a man who has genuine character qualities. But this does not mean is that the elder never ever sins. It doesn't mean that the man's kids are perfect. It doesn't mean that the man is the perfect husband. It means if you were to poke at his character, there would be a consensus all the time of his character reflecting the glory and the love of Christ, and who he is. Which means this, because there's no one that can do that apart from Christ, what is it an invitation for congregational people to do? It means pray for your pastor. It means to pray for your elders that they would represent Christ well in their character.

Now, both in First Timothy chapter three and in Titus one, he talks about an elder being a man and being a husband of one wife. So, in two different ways, that's what he says. So, if you believe in Christian marriage, which is the only kind of marriage there is between a man and a woman, then in order to be an elder, one of the requirements is that you are a man. That's why men serve in the position of elders. Why? Because God's Word does not allow women to serve in that capacity. It doesn't mean that women aren't good leaders, it doesn't mean that women aren't good teachers, it

doesn't mean that women aren't good servants. It doesn't mean that women don't have capacity and greatness with which to lead, but God because of the authority that he set up in his church wants men to be in the role of elders.

Now, here's what you're going to ask, "Well, then, Pastor Jeff, how come some churches don't have elders? And how come some churches that do have women elders?" And here's my response, I don't know. I don't know. I know at BRAVE Church, we're going to be obedient to the Word of God. And so, we're going to have men that have the right character that serve in that capacity, because that's what God teaches us to do. Amen. And that's what he's called us to do. And so, men have to have character.

Let me just say this, by the way, there's no way that every man in our church that has this kind of Christ like character could serve in the role of elder at any given time or we'd have too big of an elder board to get anything done. It means that every man in this church should aspire to the character of eldership. And that we should have a plethora or myriad of men that had the character of Christ that could serve in the capacity of elder if they were called on it. And in the meantime, because they're not serving in that capacity, they're living and leading in the capacity of the character that Christ would have in this season.

And at BRAVE Church, we have a number of men like this. We have a number of men that we could tap on the shoulder and say, "We need you that could serve in that capacity." And I love that about our church, that people aren't just looking for a position or a title. And why is it so important? Because God takes the shepherding of His

people so seriously. Did you know that? I mean, all throughout the Old Testament, He refers to His priests as shepherds over His people. All throughout the New Testament, he refers to shepherds over His people. And Jesus Christ takes this exceptionally seriously.

In Jeremiah, oftentimes God would raise up a prophet when the priests weren't doing what they were supposed to do. And in Jeremiah chapter 23, He's raised up Jeremiah to speak to the priests of the day, the shepherds, and say to them this, I mean, just see how serious Jesus says about this. In Jeremiah 23:1, "Woe to you shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture." In other words, whose sheep are they and whose pasture are they? It's God's world, and it's God's people and woe to those who take God's people in God's world and lead them astray. Jesus woe to you.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who are attending my people, "You have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not attended to them. Behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds." In other words, recompense is coming to you because you haven't done what I've asked you to do. He says then prophetically, "Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I've driven them and bring them back to their pasture and they will be fruitful and multiply." And then He says this, "And I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them. And they will not be afraid any longer nor be terrified, nor will any be missing."

What is God saying? "I'm going to raise up good shepherds. I'm going to raise up people that actually care about the sheep." I'm going to be in churches where they're shepherding the sheep, where they're building the sheep, or they're teaching the Word of God, and they're teaching God's ways, and they're teaching God's will, and they're training God's sheep to go in the way that He wants. Why? Because time on this earth is so short. And the most important thing that you can do in your life is have your soul in alignment with the Lord Jesus Christ for His return. Amen. And Jesus saying, that's what my shepherds are called to do. That's what my shepherds are called to do.

When you hear an elder, teach the Word of God, you should hear the Word of God. This should not be reference material. What the pastor says should be reference material to this book. This is what you need, because the shepherd's job is what? To lead you home. That's his job. And he's going to be held accountable to Jesus someday for how well he did his job. Amen. And if the responsibility is shepherding well and the readiness is showing Christ's character, then when it comes to eldering, what's the motivation? Here's the motivation. The motivation of rewards for an elder is seeking Christ's commendation. The motivation for every elder should be Christ commendation. It shouldn't be what does the sheep think of me? It should be, what does Christ think of my service to Him?

Notice what it says in First Peter chapter five in verse four. "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading Crown of Glory." Don't you love that? Chief Shepherd, Chief Shepherd. I'm just a shepherd. I'm an underling of the Chief Shepherd. He's in charge. He's ruling the reign. He's the good one. He's who we're all

going after. A good earthly Shepherd is just leading you and putting you in touch with the Great Shepherd. That's all He's doing. Because a good shepherd knows he can do really nothing for you other than to point you to the Great Shepherd. That's his job.

That's my job as a pastor is to let you know that the Lord Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And there's one way to have salvation and through Him and Him alone. And my job is to declare that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised according to the Scriptures, and when we repent of our deadness and trust Jesus Christ in life, and we exchange our sin for His righteousness, we have life in His name forever. That's the job of an elder is to guide people to Christ.

Why is that important? Because he's the Great Shepherd. He doesn't have any flaws. There's nothing wrong with Him. One of the greatest texts in the entire Bible is Psalm chapter 23, which talks about his character as a shepherd. It's one of the first ones I ever memorized in the Bible as far as chapters go. And in Psalm chapter 23, we hear about Jesus and what He's like. It says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." What does that mean? Jesus provides for everything I ever need. I'm never left wanting. He gives me everything that I need for life and godliness. "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters." What does he do? He gives me lush places to eat. He leads me beside still waters. Why is that important for a sheep? Because if you put a sheep in white water it will get washed down the way. I mean, Jesus knows how to lead you and get you to where you go and can do it in a

gentle way.

"He guides me in the path of righteousness for His namesake." Everywhere Jesus leads me, He's doing it in a way so that He can get glory through my life. He says this sheep that can't protect yourselves. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me, your rod and your staff comfort me." Even when I'm in the most dangerous of places and know I can't take care of myself and I feel evil and wickedness all around me, I'm not in fearing, because, Lord, I know you're my shepherd, and you're guiding me through there, and you can protect me from any evil that's coming my way.

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You have anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows." Even in the presence of my enemies, you abundantly give to me in such a way that they see your goodness in my life. And he closes by saying, "Surely, goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." In other words, surely I know, goodness and mercy chase me down, because you're a good shepherd. And I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever. You're leading me home. And that's the purpose of this. And the commendation that we should be seeking is that of Christ, not earthly rewards. What we want is when Christ comes back for him to look at us as elders and say, "That's the way I would have led the church. That's what I wanted to do. Good job." That's the commendation.

And there's all sorts of crowns mentioned in the Bible. I mean, talk about the unfading crown of glory. In the first century, crowns were what were given instead of

trophies. And oftentimes, these crowns were like perishable reefs that they wore on their head when they won. I mean, instead of trophies, that's what they got. So, when we read about crowns in the Bible, we're really reading about rewards or trophies to be handed out. And first, I'll just tell you about a few of them. In First Corinthians 9:25, when Paul was talking about running the race. He talks about an imperishable crown for leading a disciplined life that was going to be awarded to him. In First Thessalonians two and 19, we read about a crown of exaltation where Paul is talking about the people of Thessalonica. And the church being his joy and his crown because he's done evangelism and discipleship. He's led people to the Lord there and grown them up, and he says, "That's my crown of exaltation." There's a crown of exaltation coming.

At the end of his life, in Second Timothy 4:8, he says, "I fought the good fight, I finished the race. I've kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness for me and all those who love His appearing." For all of us who are loving the appearing of the Lord, there's a crown of righteousness that will be given. Then in James chapter 1:12 and Revelation 2:20, we read about a crown of life for enduring trials and dealing with that. And here in First Peter 5:4, we read about the crown of glory for shepherding faithfully. Now, I personally believe the real crowns, I also personally believe I don't think we wear all these crowns around heaven, because I don't think heaven is about us. I don't think heaven is about us walking around with how many crowns. "Oh, you only got two?" "Yeah, I got five."

I mean that I don't think that's heaven. I read in Revelation 4:10 that, "We cast

our crowns before the Lord." And what we do is, as we're rewarded, we're giving them back to Jesus saying, "You're worthy of all this, because I'm nothing apart from You. Because apart from you, I can do nothing." And these crowns are rewards that we get are just opportunities to glorify Jesus Christ even better. And that our yearning and our motivation and the reason for doing what we're doing on this planet is so that we'll have more to bring Jesus in the life to come. And that should be the motivation for why we do what we do. Not because someone says, "Hey, great sermon." Not because someone says, "Oh, you're really good." We're not yearning for that. We're yearning for Christ saying, "You did it my way. Well done, good and faithful servant." And that's the motivation that we should all have.

Now, it begs the question for you here, because some of you may say, "Well, I'm a lady, so I'm never going to be an elder. So, what's the point? I'm a young guy, so I'm not going to be an elder now. So, what's the point. I may be in the church for the rest of my life and never be an elder. So, what's the point?" That's why God's word is so good, because He answers that question for us, right? I mean, what's my responsibility in this and here's what I would say when it comes to eldering, the manner of responding to elders is submitting with humility to Christ's servants. When it comes to eldering, the manner of responding is submitting with humility to Christ's servants. Notice what He says in verse five. "You, younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders." That's being in submission to your elders. "And all of you, clothe yourself," that's everybody, "Clothe yourself with humility towards one another." Why? "For God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble."

We have a responsibility as a church, to support and pray for and love and obey our elders. Now, listen to this. Here's why. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17, says it this way. "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Here's why. "For they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." Do you think that's a lot of responsibility? What is an elder's responsibility? To give an account for every soul that's under your charge. That's the responsibility. No, parachurch organization gets that charge. The church gets that charge. Elders get that charge. So, the call to the church is, obey and be submissive to your leadership.

Why? Because they're caring for your soul. Now, if you're in a place that's not upholding the Word of God or not holding God's ways, or not following God's will, find a place that is because there's other places out there that are, and then get involved in that, because that's for the betterment of your own soul. We're sheep, we need the church, we need one another. And when you find a place that's like that, pour yourself into that place, because it's the best thing that you can do for your own soul.

And He says, "Do this in such a way," he tells us how to do this. He says, "Do this in such a way, let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this will be unprofitable for you." In other words, as a sheep, don't make shepherding you a pain in the rear. Do it with joy. Submit with joy, be in humility with joy. Be thankful that you have elders and leaders who love you and support you and want you to be your best for the Lord Jesus Christ, who want to turn you loose with the gospel, who want to see all you gets flourished, who want to see you edified, who want to see you built up.

Praise God, that you're in a church like that because everybody needs to be in a church like that. And we are a church. We're not the church. There's a lot of churches that are doing it like that. But it's important for our soul that we are.

And then how do we do it with humility? Well, we look to our Savior who was the most humble of all, right? Who, although He existed in the form of God did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped but became a man. He humbled himself. He emptied himself and He became a man. And He humbled himself to death, even death on a cross. I mean, that's what Jesus did. He submitted himself to His father for His entire ministry. That's what we're called to do as well. Why? Notice this verse that he takes from Proverbs 3:34, "For God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble."

What does it mean that God opposes the proud? When we're proud, and we think, "Well, I know how to develop my own spiritual life. I watched Chris Tomlin's podcast and I watched this podcast and I do this. I do it all myself. I don't need anybody else." When we're proud and we think we know everything our own way, it's not that God just kind of let you go. God's opposed to that. God's opposed to individuals and churches that don't want Him to be in charge. He's opposed to the proud. But what does he do? He releases and extends grace to who? The humble.

Now, let me just ask you this question. Help me out. I need a verbal response to this. Just because elders pray together, seek the Lord together, ask God to lead together, does that mean 100% of the time, they'll always make the right decision?

No.

You didn't say it loud enough.

No.

No. Parents, just because you get together and you pray together for your kids, and you make a decision, that doesn't mean you always make the right decision. There's going to be times we don't. Being in a church does not mean that submitting means you can't ask questions. It doesn't mean you can't engage with elders. It doesn't mean you can't ask, "Hey, I don't understand why we did this." There just may come a time where we tell you what we did, and you're like, "I totally don't agree with that." That's okay. That's okay. But by submitting to elders and praying for elders, what has God had the opportunity to do? When you have humble elders who are seeking the face of God, God has the ability to turn the heart of the elders and lead in the way that we need to go.

And when we have a whole church that says, "Lord, we're trusting them." And we have elders that say, "Lord, we're trusting you and we want what's best for them," and we got this symbiotic relationship going on, great things can happen in the church, and our love for one another can soar. And God can do beyond what we could ever ask or experience according to His glorious power that's at work within us. That's why eldering is so important. That's why he puts this in His word. It's rarely ever taught on. I know, this is more of a teaching. But it's important that we understand this because to not understand this hurts our own walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. God wants us to be

with good elders, God wants us to be raised up as elders, and God wants us to do that for him.

So, how are we going to respond? God wants us to be a church that says, "Lord, this is your church. These are the men for the season that you've called to serve. And Lord, I want to submit to them." And so, the way I thought we could end our service today, and I think the best way to do this is when we think about how am I going to submit and how am I going to be humble? It's by thinking about what Christ has already done for you. Amen. I mean, we think about Christ giving His life and Christ giving His blood for each one of us, it gives us an opportunity to remember just how humble we are, and the depths that God crossed for us.

And so, we want to end by taking communion today. And in a minute, when I pray for us, our ushers are going to be passing out the elements. I'd encourage you to take two cups. They're stacked on top of each other. The bread is underneath, the juice is on top. Hold them in your hands. I'll come up here. We will take communion together as one body in just a few moments as you listen to the singing of the song. But let's pray, and let's prepare our hearts for what God wants to share with us during this time.

So, Lord, we give You all the glory, honor and praise for who You are. And Lord, we ask that in this moment, as we seek Your face that You would remind us of Your humility, that You would remind us of your sacrifice, that You'd remind us of Your submission to your Heavenly Father, and You would remind us how far You've come and what You did on our behalf to forgive all our sins. And Lord we are so grateful for

that. We're so thankful for Your body and blood. And Lord, we pray in this moment that You would be glorified, honored, and praised as we reflect on all You've done. In Jesus' name, amen.