

~ Pastoral Leadership ~

Text: I Peter 5:1-2

Theme: God has given you a pastor for your spiritual care, protection, and growth.

Intro:

1. There are three terms used in the Bible to describe those we refer to as Pastors in the local church. These are men whom God has placed in the church as spiritual leaders, defenders of the faith, and shepherds and protectors of the flock.
2. We are going to look at the three terms individually and note the aspects of church leadership that each of these titles emphasizes.
 - I. **Elder** (I Peter 5:1)
 - II. **Bishop** (I Peter 5:2)
 - III. **Shepherd / Pastor** (I Peter 5:2)

Main:

- I. **Elder** (I Peter 5:1)
 - A. What does the word “elder” mean?
 1. An elder typically is an older person
 - a. The word “elder” is based on the Greek *Presbuteros*, which means, “Older or a senior.
 - i. We find this word used all through the New Testament to describe religious leaders during the Lord’s ministry.
 - **Mathew 27:41** *“Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.”*
 - ii. The elders were the lay leaders of Israel. They were influential heads of families, clans, tribes, and prominent citizens who exercised civil and religious authority.
 - “In Jewish society, age was associated with wisdom, experience, and authority. Over time, the term came to refer not merely to older men, but to those who held positions of leadership within the nation.”
 - b. An elder meant someone who was mature, and had enough wisdom to hold a position of leadership.

- i. I Timothy 3:1-6 describes this further telling us that a bishop must be *“Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”* (Vs 6)
 - Novice meaning: “Newly planted; a young convert.”
 - ii. Being an elder does not necessarily mean an old man, but rather, a mature Christian, someone who is not young and inexperienced in the faith.
 - The title elder (*Presbuteros*) describes the spiritual maturity of the man.
- B. What does an elder do?
 - 1. An elder set the example for others (I Tim 4:12)
 - a. An elder is someone who lives his life in a pattern that others might follow.
 - i. One reason why an elder or Pastor should not be someone who is very young is because we need men in the ministry who have had time to prove themselves to be stable in the Christian life and to be of good character.
 - **1 Timothy 4:12** *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”*
 - ii. Paul’s instruction to Timothy makes it evident that Timothy was a younger man and that people were inclined to think less of him because of it, however, Paul had trained Timothy for the ministry and encouraged him to be a living example of Christian faith and not to allow others to undermine him on the basis of his youth rather than respecting him for his maturity and good character.
 - b. The qualifications for an elder in I Timothy 3:1-5 are overwhelmingly about good character.
 - i. The dual focus for all men in leadership roles within the church is that they must be spiritually mature men and they must be of good character.
 - Elders need to be spiritually mature men so they can minister effectively to the flock.
 - Leaders need to be men of good character so that they can both set a good example for the believers and be a good testimony to the unbelievers.
 - **1 Timothy 3:7** *“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without;”*
 - 2. An elder brings stability
 - a. The good example of elders gives others a clear example to follow.

- i. If you've ever been walking with a group through dense vegetation, you will know that the person up the front of the group has the work of clearing the path for others to follow, but once the path has been cleared it becomes much easier for those following to see where they need to go.
 - ii. That is what spiritual leaders can be for others. As a mature Christian, you ought to be setting an example that you would be happy for other Christians to follow. If you would be concerned to find out that another Christian is following in your footsteps, then you're probably not living as a mature Christian ought to.
 - b. The doctrinal and practical stability of an elder brings stability to the church.
 - i. It is important that an elder isn't someone who is still finding his feet on doctrines that he ought to be settled on before he presumes to teach others.
 - It is wrong for a Pastor to take on the role of shepherding a flock when he still hasn't settled himself on whether or not he totally agrees with the doctrinal statement of the church.
 - And if a Pastor changes his mind on something later in the ministry, it is wrong for him to then try and convert the whole church to his new way of thinking. He should let the church know he doesn't agree with the statement of faith anymore and then leave.
 - ii. The same goes for any member in the church, by the way. If your position on things no longer lines up with the churches statement of faith, don't try and convince everyone else of you point of view. That is destructive behaviour and it is that sort of behaviour that leads to church splits.
3. An elder provides biblical counsel
- a. An elder needs to be able to provide biblical instruction and counsel.
 - i. The elder should be someone who as able to teach others the scriptures.
 - ii. It is important then that the Pastor be someone who both lives out a godly Christian life and is able to teach others to do the same. He teaches godly living by his words and by the personal example.

- b. An elder is someone who has the spiritual maturity and scriptural knowledge to provide counsel to those in the flock who are struggling.
 - i. Any one who has matured as a Christian ought to make themselves available to provide godly counsel to those who are young in the faith and to those who are struggling.
 - By the way, if you are a mature Christian, it is still appropriate for you to seek counsel from the Pastor God has placed in the church. Remember, God is the one who calls men to the ministry and God is the one who enables men to fulfill the ministry he calls them to.
 - ii. No one, including the pastor, is too mature to need godly counsel.
 - I know my own struggles in this area and it is always a blessing when I have the opportunity to get counsel from another godly man who is outside of my situation and who can see things objectively.
 - iii. The one who believes that they are above seeking counsel is proud and foolish.
 - **Proverbs 12:15** *“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”*
 - Pride and self-reliance are what lead us to believe that we don’t need help from anyone else, even if it is godly counsel from another Christian, and the Bible calls such people fools.

II. Bishop (1 Peter 5:2b)

A. What does the word “bishop” mean?

1. A bishop is someone who holds an office of responsibility.
 - a. The word “bishop” comes from the Greek word *episkopos* and is a compound of two words.
 - i. *Epi* = Meaning “over or upon.”
 - ii. *Skopeo* = Meaning “To take aim at; take head; aim.”
 - b. *Episkopos* means: “to oversee; by implication to beware: - look diligently, take the oversight.”
 - i. “Overseeing the flock is not a work into which men are coerced by election or appointment. The Holy Spirit provides the burden and ability, and the elders must respond with a willing heart. So, we read in 1 Timothy 3:1, “If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a

good work.” Coupled with divine enablement must be human willingness.¹”

- ii. A bishop is someone who has been separated unto the work of the ministry (Acts 13:2), and has willingly submitted to that call of God and embraced the role of overseer in the church God has placed him in.
 - Bishop (*Episkopos*) describes the office he holds & responsibility he bears.

B. What does a bishop do?

1. A bishop watches out for false doctrine
 - a. One of the primary areas of oversight for the bishop is this area of sound doctrine.
 - i. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy to take heed to himself and to the doctrine he had been taught.
 - **1 Timothy 4:16** *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”*
 - The word translated “take heed” is the Greek word *epecho* which means, “to hold upon, to retain, to pay attention to.”
 - ii. A bishop ought to have a good hold on sound doctrine and pay close attention to it so that he might uphold it.
 - So, careful attention to sound doctrine is one area of oversight for a bishop.
 - b. This means that one part of the Pastor’s job, as it were, is to ensure that the church’s statement of faith is upheld. That leads us to the second area of watchfulness for a bishop.
2. A bishop watches out for wolves
 - a. The bishop must protect the flock from wolves who would come in and seek to steal the sheep.
 - i. The Apostle Paul warned the local church about the threat of wolves and exhorted them to be on watch against such people.
 - **Act 20:29-31a** *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch...”*
 - ii. The bishop must be watching out for false teachers.

¹ William MacDonald, [*Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*](#), ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 2280.

- There is some overlap here between watching out for false teachers and shepherding the sheep. As a bishop, the elder seeks to faithfully uphold sound doctrine, and as a shepherd he watches out for those wolves who would “*draw away disciples after them(selves).*”
- 3. A bishop watches out for struggling sheep.
 - a. The bishop seeks to identify those in the congregation who are struggling.
 - i. Again, there is overlap between being a bishop and a shepherd.
 - The bishops watchful eye seeks out those who are struggling and then in his capacity as a shepherd he comes along and seeks to feed, encourage, and protect the struggling sheep in the congregation.

III. **Shepherd / Pastor** (I Peter 5:2-4)

A. What does the word “pastor” mean?

1. A pastor is a shepherd of sheep.
 - a. The word “pastor” “The word “pastor” derives from the Latin noun *pastor*, which literally means “shepherd”. Ultimately originating from the Latin verb *pascere*, the term reflects the spiritual and caretaking role of a spiritual leader who guides, protects, and feeds a congregation.”
 - i. The word used in the Bible is the word translated as “feed” in I Peter 5:2. It is the Greek word *Poimainō* which means the same as pastor: “To shepherd, to tend sheep, to pasture, to feed, to care for a flock.”
 - It was the common word used for a shepherd caring for sheep throughout the ancient world.
 - ii. While the terms “bishop,” “elder,” and “pastor” are used interchangeably in the New Testament, we prefer to use the term *pastor* (meaning “shepherd”) because the others have been given unbiblical ecclesiastical connotations over time.
 - b. A pastor is not a bishop in the modern ecclesiastical sense, but he is a leader and the Bible commands that those whom God has placed in this leadership role should be respected.
 - i. The Bible does make a distinction between those who are church members and those who are the spiritual leaders, the elder/bishop/pastor, in the local church.

- **1 Timothy 5:17** *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”*
 - Notice that the elder is one who is ruling well. That word “rule” come from the Greek *proistēmi* (pro-is-tay-mee) and means “to stand before, that is, to preside over.
 - This verse is very clearly teaching that the church leaders who exercise pastoral authority in an appropriate and effective way are to be counted worthy of double honour.
 - **1Th 5:12-13** *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”*
- ii. People who seek to reject pastoral authority will usually oppose the idea of calling their “under shepherd” Pastor, and will often point out that “Pastor” is the least used of the three terms elder, bishop, and pastor.
- However, they seem to miss the fact that pastor is the term that places the least emphasis on authority but rather emphasises servant hood, loving care, leadership by example.
 - A bishop is someone who takes the oversight. Not as a lord over God’s people, but as a spiritual leader.
 - An elder is someone who is a mature spiritual leader, who is fit to exercise the oversight of God’s people, and who rules well.
 - A pastor is a loving shepherd over the sheep and who looks to the welfare of the sheep to ensure they are fed and protected from wolves.
- B. What does a pastor do?
1. A pastor is a spiritual leader who cares for the spiritual needs of the flock.
 - a. The term pastor (*Poimainō*) describes the work he does and the way he does it.
 - i. The shepherd protects the sheep from wolves.
 - **Mathew 7:15** *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”*
 - ii. The shepherd feeds the sheep spiritually nourishing food.

- **1 Peter 5:2** *“Feed the flock of God which is among you...”*
 - **Acts 20:28** *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*
- iii. The shepherd provides direction and instructing to the sheep through the word.
- **2 Timothy 4:2** *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”*
2. To summarize the three titles given to this office:
- a. The term “elder” (*Presbuteros*) describes the character and spiritual maturity of the man.
 - b. The term “bishop” (*Episkopos*) describes the office the holds & responsibility he bears.
 - c. The term “pastor” (*Poimainō*) describes the work he does and the way he does it.
 - i. In the Old Testament we find that God expected different groups of people to fulfill these ministries.
 - Shepherd: Kings, priests, faithful spiritual leaders.
 - Elder: The elder men who were representatives from each family.
 - Bishop: Priests and chief rulers.
 - ii. In the New Testament, the pastor is not solely responsible for leading the people in spiritual matters, but he is given the responsibility of fulfilling all three of the leadership categories we have just studied.

Conclusion:

1. God has given you a pastor for your spiritual care, protection, and growth. It is wise to view your pastor, not as an ecclesiastical bishop, and not as a corporate manager, but as a spiritual counsellor, God-given leader, and a source of spiritual protection.
2. As an elder/bishop/pastor, I have no desire to micromanage the church or the membership. However, I do desire to properly provide leadership, direction, and protection for the people who God has placed under my care as an under shepherd of Christ.
3. I say all of this, not to put myself on some sort of pedestal, or to reinforce a position of authority, but so you can understand my approach to the work of the ministry and the desire of my heart as I seek to minister to you as God’s people.