

**I Peter 5:1-4**  
**July 16, 2017**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

All churches have a hierarchy when it comes to spiritual leadership. You'll hear titles like pastor, deacon, bishop, priest, and elders. Today we will first focus on "elders."

Q: What is an elder? [A spiritually mature believer who gives oversight to his assigned flock.]

Q: What is your understanding regarding the qualifications of an elder? [let people engage]

**Transition:** Having strong spiritual leadership is important, especially during times of persecution. You will recall last week that in I Peter 4:17 his message was, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and it begins with us." If judgment is to begin at God's house (1 Peter 4:17), then that house had better be in order, or it will fall apart! This explains why Peter wrote this special message to the leaders of the church, to encourage them to do their work faithfully. Leaders who run away in times of difficulty are only proving that they are not true shepherds (John 10:12-14).

Peter was concerned that the leadership in the local churches be at its best. When the fiery trial would come, the believers in the assemblies would look to their elders for encouragement and direction. This means that we have to be willing to be under their authority. But we don't want to be yielded to any Here's the thought I'd like to plant as we go through today's text. **All of us CAN appreciate our elders BY looking at the QUALIFICATIONS to be an elder.** Let's begin with the first four verses.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read I Peter 5:1-4]**

V.1:

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

V.2:

- Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, **servicing as overseers**—not because you must, but because you are **willing**, as God wants you to be; **not greedy for money**, but **eager to serve**;

V.3:

- **not lording it over those entrusted to you**, but being **examples to the flock**.

V.4:

- And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.1: Peter identifies with other elders. What does Peter have in common with them? [he was a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed.]

Q: Why do you think it's important that these elders were witnesses to Christ's sufferings?

Q V.2: What is the first QUALIFICATION that you see for an elder? [Be shepherds of God's flock – an overseer]

Q: When a shepherd oversees sheep, what duties does he have? [Feed, care, lead, guide and protect the sheep]

Q: What does shepherding or overseeing look like in the church? Is someone watching you 24/7? [Peter is referencing a spiritual guardianship.]

Q: When one is "shepherding their flock," it implies that the shepherd/overseer knows their flock. In a church our size, how do we manage to shepherd this many people? [Let people engage]

Q: What is another QUALIFICATION that you see for an elder? [Be a "willing" overseer]

Q: Why is it important for an elder to be "willing" vs "obligated" to watch over his flock? [Elders who serve with false motives care only for themselves. But an elder who has a heart for people will serve "willingly."]

Q: What is another QUALIFICATION of an elder? [They should not be greedy for money]

Q: This may seem odd to read in a qualifications list, but Peter brought it to his readers attention for a reason. What do you think was going on such that he had to state this negative idea? [Financial pressures should not be substituted for the pure motivation to do God's will and to serve Him freely and eagerly. Nor should an elder be a lover of money or devote himself to pursuing money]

Q: Paul also speaks to taking financial care of a pastor. Does anyone recall his teaching? [It is proper to pay a pastor well. A laborer is worthy of their wage. We ought to be as fair and generous as possible.]

**Observation:** Some church bodies have been known to get hung up on how much to pay a shepherd/pastor. Some members believe it should be little. But it's important for us to understand that if we are compromising a shepherd's financial ability to take care of their own family such that they need to become bi-vocational, we're the ones who lose out. Shepherding is hard to do if you are always concerned about financial pressures.

Q: What is another QUALIFICATION of an elder? [They are "eager to serve." If an elder doesn't have a servant's heart, then they shouldn't be an elder. X-Ref Acts 20:17-38]

Q: What is another QUALIFICATION of an elder? [They are not to lord it over the flock that has been entrusted to them.]

Q: What does Peter mean by “not lording it over the flock?” [Elders aren’t to be dictators but leaders. You can’t drive sheep; you must go before them and lead them.]

Q: What is another QUALIFICATION that you see for an elder? [Be examples to the flock]

Q: Why is it important for a leader to be a good example to his flock? [People are willing to follow a leader who practices what he preaches and gives them a good example to imitate.]

Q: Who is the Chief Shepherd? [Christ! X-Ref Heb 13:20-21]

Note: Peter is reminding his audience the promise of Jesus’s return, and when He comes, the elders should look forward to a crown of glory that never fades. So elders serve to ultimately please the Chief Shepherd, and there is a reward for those who serve with the right motivation and serve their flock well. Their goal needs to be to **please Christ**.

### **LOOK:**

Peter was concerned that the leadership in the local churches be at its best. When the fiery trial would come, the believers in the assemblies would look to their elders for encouragement and direction. What are the personal qualities that make for a successful pastor?

- Those who are spiritually mature and are willing and eager to serve others
- Those who are not in it for the money
- Those who don’t lord it over those who are entrusted to them
- Those who are examples to the flock

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 427–431). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## **HOW TO BE A GOOD SHEPHERD**

### *1 Peter 5:1–4*

Times of persecution demand that God's people have adequate spiritual leadership. If judgment is to begin at God's house (1 Peter 4:17), then that house had better be in order, or it will fall apart! This explains why Peter wrote this special message to the leaders of the church, to encourage them to do their work faithfully. Leaders who run away in times of difficulty are only proving that they are hirelings and not true shepherds (John 10:12–14).

The New Testament assemblies were organized under the leadership of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3). The words "elder" and "bishop" refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28). The word "bishop" is often translated "overseer" (see 1 Peter 5:2, and note that this title is applied to Christ in 1 Peter 2:25). "Elder" refers to the maturity of the officer, and "bishop" to the responsibility of the office. The word "pastor" (which means "shepherd") is another title for this same office (Eph. 4:11). The elders were appointed to office (Acts 14:23, where the verb "ordain" means "to appoint by the raising of hands"). Apparently each congregation had the privilege of voting on qualified men.

Peter was concerned that the leadership in the local churches be at its best. When the fiery trial would come, the believers in the assemblies would look to their elders for encouragement and direction. What are the personal qualities that make for a successful pastor?

### **A Vital Personal Experience with Christ (1 Peter 5:1)**

Peter did not introduce himself in this letter as an apostle or a great spiritual leader, but simply as another elder. However, he did mention the fact that he had personally witnessed Christ's sufferings (see Matt. 26:36ff). The Greek word translated "witness" gives us our English word "martyr." We think of a "martyr" only as one who gives his life for Christ, and Peter did that; but basically, a "martyr" is a witness who tells what he has seen and heard.

It is interesting to read 1 Peter 5 in the light of Peter's personal experiences with Christ. First Peter 5:1 takes us to Gethsemane and Calvary. "The glory that shall be revealed" reminds us of Peter's experience with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–5; 2 Peter 1:15–18). The emphasis in 1 Peter 5:2 on the shepherd and the sheep certainly brings to mind John 10 and our Lord's admonition to Peter in John 21:15–17.

The warning in 1 Peter 5:3 about "lording it over" the saints reminds us of Christ's lesson about true greatness in Luke 22:24–30, as well as the other times that He taught His disciples about humility and service. The phrase in 1 Peter 5:5, "Be clothed with humility," takes us back to the Upper Room where Jesus put on the towel and washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1–17).

The warning about Satan in 1 Peter 5:8 parallels our Lord's warning to Peter that Satan was going to "sift" him and the other Apostles (Luke 22:31). Peter did not heed that warning, and he ended up denying his Lord three times.

It is interesting to note that the verb "make you perfect" (1 Peter 5:10) is translated "mending their nets" in Matthew 4:21, the account of the call of the four fishermen into the Lord's service.

In other words, Peter wrote these words, inspired by the Spirit of God, out of his own personal experience with Jesus Christ. He had a vital and growing relationship with Christ, and this made it possible for him to minister effectively to God's people.

The pastor of the local assembly must be a man who walks with God and who is growing in his spiritual life. Paul admonished young Timothy: "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress" (1 Tim. 4:15). The word "progress" in the original means "pioneer advance." The elders must constantly be moving into new territories of study, achievement, and ministry. If the leaders of the church are not moving forward, the church will not move forward.

"We love our pastor," a fine church member said to me during a conference, "but we get tired of the same thing all the time. He repeats himself and doesn't seem to know that there are other books in the Bible besides Psalms and Revelation." That man needed to become a "spiritual pioneer" and move into new territory, so that he might lead his people into new blessings and challenges.

Sometimes God permits trials to come to a church so that the people will be *forced* to grow and discover new truths and new opportunities. Certainly Peter grew in his spiritual experience as he suffered for Christ in the city of Jerusalem. He was not perfect by any means; in fact, Paul had to rebuke him once for inconsistency (Gal. 2:11–21). But Peter was yielded to Christ and willing to learn all that God had for him.

If I have any counsel for God's shepherds today, it is this: cultivate a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and share what He gives you with your people. That way, you will grow, and they will grow with you.

### **A Loving Concern for God's Sheep (1 Peter 5:2–3)**

The image of the flock is often used in the Bible, and it is a very instructive one (see Pss. 23; 100; Isa. 40:11; Luke 15:4–6; John 10; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:20–21; 1 Peter 2:25; Rev. 7:17). We were once stray sheep, wandering toward ruin; but the Good Shepherd found us and restored us to the fold.

Sheep are clean animals, unlike dogs and pigs (2 Peter 2:20–22). Sheep tend to flock together, and God's people need to be together. Sheep are notoriously ignorant and prone to wander away if they do not follow the shepherd. Sheep are defenseless, for the most part, and need their shepherd to protect them (Ps. 23:4).

Sheep are very useful animals. Jewish shepherds tended their sheep, not for the meat (which would have been costly) but for the wool, milk, and lambs. God's people should be useful to Him and certainly ought to "reproduce" themselves by bringing others to Christ. Sheep were used for the sacrifices, and we ought to be "living sacrifices," doing the will of God (Rom. 12:1–2).

Peter reminded the shepherd-elders of their God-given responsibilities.

***Feed the flock of God (v. 2).*** The word *feed* means "shepherd, care for." The shepherd had many tasks to perform in caring for the flock. He had to protect the sheep from thieves and marauders, and the pastor must protect God's people from those who want to spoil the flock (Acts 20:28–35). Sometimes the sheep do not like it when their shepherd rebukes or warns them, but this ministry is for their own good.

A faithful shepherd not only protected his flock, but he also led them from pasture to pasture so that they might be adequately fed. The shepherd always went before the flock and searched out the land so that there would be nothing there to harm his flock. He would check for snakes,

pits, poisonous plants, and dangerous animals. How important it is for pastors to lead their people into the green pastures of the Word of God so that they might feed themselves and grow.

Sometimes it was necessary for a shepherd to seek out a wayward sheep and give it personal attention. Some pastors today are interested only in the crowds; they have no time for individuals. Jesus preached to great multitudes, but He took time to chat with Nicodemus (John 3), the woman at the well (John 4), and others who had spiritual needs. Paul ministered to people *personally* in Thessalonica (1 Thes. 2:11) and loved them dearly.

If a sheep is too rebellious, the shepherd may have to discipline him in some way. If a sheep has a special need, the shepherd might carry it in his arms, next to his heart. At the close of each day, the faithful shepherd would examine each sheep to see if it needed special attention. He would anoint the bruises with healing oil, and remove the briars from the wool. A good shepherd would know each of his sheep by name and would understand the special traits of each one.

It is not an easy thing to be a faithful shepherd of God's sheep! It is a task that never ends and that demands the supernatural power of God if it is to be done correctly. What makes it even more challenging is the fact that the flock is not the shepherd's; it is God's. I sometimes hear pastors say, "Well, at *my* church ..." and I know what they mean; but strictly speaking, it is *God's* flock, purchased by the precious blood of His Son (Acts 20:28). We pastors must be careful how we minister to *God's* sheep, because one day we will have to give an account of our ministry. But the sheep will also one day give an account of how they have obeyed their spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17), so both shepherds and sheep have a great responsibility to each other.

***Take the oversight (v. 2).*** The word *bishop* means "overseer, one who looks over for the purpose of leading." You will notice that the shepherd is both "among" and "over," and this can create problems if the sheep do not understand. Because he is one of the sheep, the pastor is "among" the members of the flock. But because he is called to be a leader, the pastor is "over" the flock. Some people try to emphasize the "among" relationship and refuse to follow the authority of the shepherd. Others want to put the pastor on a pedestal and make him a "super saint" who never mixes with the people.

The effective pastor needs both relationships. He must be "among" his people so that he can get to know them, their needs and problems; and he needs to be "over" his people so he can lead them and help them solve their problems. There must be no conflict between *pastoring* and *preaching*, because they are both ministries of a faithful Shepherd. The preacher needs to be a pastor so he can apply the Word to the needs of the people. The pastor needs to be a preacher so that he can have authority when he shares in their daily needs and problems. The pastor is not a religious lecturer who weekly passes along information about the Bible. He is a shepherd who knows his people and seeks to help them through the Word.

Being the spiritual leader of a flock has its dangers, and Peter pointed out some of the sins that the elders must avoid. The first was *laziness*—"not by constraint but willingly." His ministry must not be a job that he has to perform. He should do God's will from his heart (Eph. 6:6). Dr. George W. Truett was pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas for nearly fifty years. Often he was asked to accept other positions, and he refused, saying, "I have sought and found a pastor's heart." When a man has a pastor's heart, he loves the sheep and serves them because he *wants* to, not because he *has* to.

If a man has no conscience, the ministry is a good place to be lazy. Church members rarely ask what their pastor is doing with his time, and he can "borrow" sermons from other preachers and use them as his own. I met one pastor who spent most of his week on the golf course; then

on Saturday he listened to tapes of other preachers and used their sermons on Sunday. He seems to be getting away with it, but what will he say when he meets the Chief Shepherd?

Next to laziness, the shepherd must beware of *covetousness*—“not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” It is perfectly proper for the church to pay the pastor (1 Cor. 9; 1 Tim. 5:17–18), and they ought to be as fair and generous as possible. But making money must not be the main motive for his ministry. Paul stresses this in his qualifications for an elder: “not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:3); “not given to filthy lucre” (Titus 1:7). He must not be a lover of money nor devote himself to pursuing money.

Because of family or church situations, some pastors have to engage in outside employment. Paul was a tentmaker, so there is no disgrace in “moonlighting.” But, as soon as possible, the members of the church ought to relieve their pastor of outside employment so he can devote himself fully to the ministry of the Word. Pastors need to beware of getting involved in money-making schemes that detour them from their ministry. “No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer” (2 Tim. 2:4).

The phrase “a ready mind” means “an eager mind.” It is the same word Paul used in Romans 1:15—“I am so eager to preach the Gospel.” It means a willingness to serve because of a readiness and an eagerness within the heart. This is the difference between a true shepherd and a hireling: a hireling works because he is paid for it, but a shepherd works because he loves the sheep and has a heart devoted to them. Read Acts 20:17–38 for a description of the heart and ministry of a true shepherd.

***Be an example to the flock (v. 3).*** The contrast is between *dictatorship* and *leadership*. You cannot drive sheep; you must go before them and lead them. It has been well said that the church needs leaders who serve and servants who lead. A Christian leader said to me, “The trouble today is that we have too many celebrities and not enough servants.”

It is by being an example that the shepherd solves the tension between being “among” the sheep and “over” the sheep. People are willing to follow a leader who practices what he preaches and gives them a good example to imitate. I know of a church that was constantly having financial problems, and no one could understand why. After the pastor left, it was discovered that he had not himself contributed to the work of the church but had preached sermons telling others to contribute. We cannot lead people where we have not been ourselves.

Peter was not changing the image when he called the church “God’s heritage.” The people of God are certainly His priceless possession (Deut. 32:9; Ps. 33:12). This word means “to be chosen by lot,” as the dividing up of land (Num. 26:55). Each elder has his own flock to care for, but the sheep all belong to the one flock of which Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. The Lord assigns His workers to the places of His choosing, and we must all be submissive to Him. There is no competition in the work of God when you are serving in the will of God. Therefore, nobody has to act important and “lord it over” God’s people. Pastors are to be “overseers” and not “overlords.”

### **A Desire to Please Christ Alone (1 Peter 5:4)**

Since this is the epistle of hope, Peter brought in once again the promise of the Lord’s return. His coming is an encouragement in suffering (1 Peter 1:7–8) and a motivation for faithful service. If a pastor ministers to please himself, or to please people, he will have a disappointing and difficult ministry. “It must be hard to keep all these people happy,” a visitor said to me after a church service. “I don’t even try to keep them happy,” I replied with a smile. “I try to please the Lord, and I let Him take care of the rest.”

Jesus Christ is the *Good Shepherd* who died for the sheep (John 10:11), the *Great Shepherd* who lives for the sheep (Heb. 13:20–21), and the *Chief Shepherd* who comes for the sheep (1 Peter 5:4). As the Chief Shepherd, He alone can assess a man's ministry and give him the proper reward. Some who appear to be first may end up last when the Lord examines each man's ministry.

One summer day, I stood amid the ruins of a church near Anwoth in Scotland. The building at one time seated perhaps 150 people. By modern standards, it would not have been a successful church. But the man who pastored that flock was the saintly Samuel Rutherford, whose *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* is a spiritual classic. His ministry continues, though today his church building is in ruins. The Chief Shepherd has rewarded him for his faithful labors, which included a great deal of persecution and physical suffering.

There were several kinds of "crowns" in those days. The one Peter mentioned was the athlete's crown, usually a garland of leaves or flowers that would quickly fade away. The faithful pastor's crown is a crown of glory, a perfect reward for an *inheritance* that will never fade away (1 Peter 1:4).

Today a Christian worker may labor for many different kinds of rewards. Some work hard to build personal empires; others strive for the applause of men; still others seek promotion in their denomination. All of these things will fade one day. The only reward we ought to strive for is the "Well done!" of the Saviour and the unfading crown of glory that goes with it. What a joy it will be to place the crown at His feet (Rev. 4:10) and acknowledge that all we did was because of His grace and power (1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Peter 4:11). We will have no desire for personal glory when we see Jesus Christ face-to-face.

Everything in the local church rises or falls with leadership. No matter how large or small a fellowship might be, the leaders must be Christians, each with a vital personal relationship with Christ, a loving concern for their people, and a real desire to please Jesus Christ.

We lead by serving, and we serve by suffering.

This is the way Jesus did it, and this is the only way that truly glorifies Him.

**Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 855-856). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## V. Charged with New Responsibility (5:1–11)

In the final chapter Peter emphasized new responsibilities within the church in light of the troubled times. He exhorted the elders to shepherd the people, the young men to submit to the elders, and everyone to stand firm in the faith.

### A. *Elders are to shepherd (5:1–4)*

Peter's charge to elders was given in three pairs of negative and positive exhortations. The exhortations reflect Ezekiel (34:1–16), where false shepherds were contrasted with the True Shepherd.

5:1. Peter, in addressing the **elders** (*presbyterous*; cf. Acts 11:30; 20:17), also used a word that identified himself as one who held the same office (*sympresbyteros*, "fellow-presbyter"). As an elder, Peter was speaking from experience. However, Peter's authority came from the fact that he was an apostle (1 Peter 1:1), and **a witness** (*martyrs*; cf. Acts 3:15; 10:39) **of Christ's**



**sufferings.** Peter also referred to himself as **one who ... will share** (*koinōnos*; cf. 1 Peter 4:13) **in the glory to be revealed.** Peter had just made the point that those who share in Christ's sufferings will also share in His glory (4:13). Peter further identified with his readers by referring to his own suffering for Christ's sake (Acts 5:40).

5:2. The command **Be shepherds** was also given by Jesus to Peter (John 21:16) The word *poimnate* means "to tend." Besides feeding, it includes caring, leading, guiding, and protecting—all duties and responsibilities a shepherd has for his flock. Related to the participle **serving as overseers** (*episkopountes*) is the noun "overseer" (*episkopos*, used five other times: Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25). "Overseer" seems to be interchangeable with "elder" and connotes both a spiritual and physical guardianship. ("Serving as overseers" is not in some Gr.)

Peter, through contrasting exhortations, presented both the motive and the manner of one's ministry. An elder's motive must be from willingness, not from a sense of external compulsion: **not because you must, but because you are willing.** Social or financial pressures should not be substituted for the pure motivation to do God's will and to serve Him freely and eagerly: **not greedy for money, but eager to serve** (cf. 1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:7, 11). Shepherds who serve with false motives care only for themselves and devour the flock (Ezek. 34:2–3).

5:3. The word translated **lording it over** (*katakyrieuontes*) includes the idea of domineering as in the rule of a strong person over one who is weak (cf. Matt. 20:25; Mark 10:42; Acts 19:16). Ezekiel indicted false shepherds: "You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd" (Ezek. 34:4–5). Peter exhorted the elders to be **examples** (*typoi*, "types or patterns"), to serve as models for the people to follow. They were not to drive God's people, but to lead them by their examples of mature Christian character.

5:4. Christ, **the Chief Shepherd** (*archipoimenos*), is "the True Shepherd" (Ezek. 34:11–16), "the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11, 14), and "the Great Shepherd" (Heb. 13:20). When Christ returns, His faithful undershepherds will share in His glory (1 Peter 5:1) and receive unfading crowns (cf. 1:4).