

Shepherding God's Flock

1 Peter 5:1-5a

Theme

The church is not a “religious corporation” with the customary management structures of a modern business. The church is called to be a *priesthood of all believers* that respects the relational nature of the church as *God's family*. Neither a church nor a family can function in healthy fashion when its leadership is autocratic, authoritarian, or oppressive. Both need humble, nurturing, and empowering leaders. As a “fellow elder” in the church, Peter gives Spirit-guided counsel in today's text to church leaders about leading in the spirit of Jesus – *the Good Shepherd of God's flock*.

Dinner Table Questions

- Who are some of the best church leaders you have known? How would you describe their personalities? Their “leadership style”? Why do you respect what you saw in them?
- Why do you think the NT model of church leadership affirms a *plural leadership* model?

Open-Bible Questions

A good place to begin the study of today's text is to read John 10:11-18 very thoughtfully.

- How would you characterize the “leadership style” of Jesus?
- What do you hear in John 10 that is crucial for elder-shepherds in churches?
- Another background text to the study of 1 Peter 5 features the words of Jesus about how leadership in the Kingdom of God functions. *Please read Matt 20:20-28; cf. Luke 22:24-27.*

In addition to the “shepherd” imagery, Peter uses the term “elder” (*presbyteros*) here.

- What additional insight about church leadership comes from this term? (Does it refer simply to age and experience? Or is the focus on maturity and wisdom?)
- Peter describes himself as a “fellow elder” to his readers. He has already identified himself as an “apostle” (1:1a), so what is the point of using this second descriptive term?

The most important textual issue here involves the *three negative-positive pairs of elder duties* identified by Peter. Each is the “flip-side” of its paired item. Discuss the importance of each.

- “Not because you must, *but* because you are willing, as God wants you to be”
- “Not pursuing dishonest gain, *but* eager to serve”
- “Not lording it over those entrusted to you, *but* being examples to the flock”

For all the challenges that come with functioning as an elder-shepherd (and there are many of them!), what is the justifying reward Peter names for those who serve faithfully?

Why is *humility* the key responsibility of church members to their elders?

Monday Morning Questions

- Church leadership has been particularly difficult over the past couple of years – a global pandemic, polarizing political rhetoric, finding how to use effective electronic means of communication within churches, etc. *Please close your Bible study with a time of serious prayer for the elder-shepherds of the Harpeth Hills church.*
- How can you be more encouraging and helpful to our shepherds?