

## Roles of Shepherds and Sheep to Each Other and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-8)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on October 7, 2012

[www.goldcountrybaptist.org](http://www.goldcountrybaptist.org)

### *A Shepherd's Prayer Requests [in light of Acts 20]*

**Humility** - that I would be constantly fighting personal pride and cultivating humility, and striving to spread a high view of God and low view of self [Acts 20:19].

**Dependence upon God** - that my prayer life would increase and deepen, and that I would prevail with God to give men faith and repentance so that I can prevail with men to believe and repent! [Acts 20:21]

**Compassion** - that I would be sensitive to and sincerely troubled by what troubles you [Acts 20:19b "with tears"], and have discernment to deal with real issues rather than symptoms, and courage to speak the truth in love [Acts 20:20 "did not shrink from declaring to you"]

**Balance** - that I would have God's grace to balance time and care to my wife and family [Acts 20:28a], as well as the vital shepherding of this church family, and that my life and teaching would never be imbalanced, as "the holy Bible is wholly taught." [Acts 20:27]

**Patience and Wisdom** - that I would have much of God's wisdom to guide my every step in leading this precious flock [Acts 20:28], and that I would have patience with those who disagree, as we grow together.

**Pure Motives** - that I would be motivated by the prospect of the glory of Christ and not by self-interest [Acts 20:24]

**Diligence & Hard Work** - that I would discipline myself for painstaking labors and hours deep in study, because God's Word deserves it and God's people need meat to grow [20:35]

**Doctrinal Stability** - that I would stand unwaveringly on sound theological truth, with discernment to avoid frivolous discussions, needless debates, and unprofitable [Acts 20:20b "whatever was profitable"] controversies that veil the beauty of Christ.

**Meekness Towards Men** - that I would have such confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture that I need not be quarrelsome or harsh [20:24 "gospel of the grace of God"].

**Zeal** - that the truth would affect *my* soul first before I ever present it to you and that my passion will be genuine and contagious [Paul's affections in v. 31 affected their affections]

**Clarity and Power of Teaching** - that I would have the Spirit's empowering [20:22 "bound by the Spirit"] to make clear the supremacy of God's glory by the exposition of His word, with accurate application toward life-transformation [20:32 "the Word ... to build you up"]

**Reverence** - that I would refuse to patronize sinners through entertainment but rather that I would preach under the judicial gaze of a holy and awe-inspiring God [20:21, 23-24, 26-27].

Adapted by Phil Layton from a fellow pastor  
(Originally from Richard Baxter)

1 Thess. 5:25 "*Brethren, pray for us.*" [leaders of v. 12]

Hebrews 13:18 "*Pray for us* [leaders from v. 17] ... *desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things*"

This is God's call to "elders" of a church (as v. 17 calls them), also called in v. 28 "overseers," whose role is "shepherd" also in v. 28. The word "pastor" is just an old English word for "shepherd," not a word for paid staff minister, it's one who teaches, leads, feeds (Eph 4:11). The latest ESV translation doesn't even use the word "pastor," just the literal translation "shepherd," which I also prefer, because the NT term has no clerical or professional connotations, and I think "shepherd" better communicates what God calls us to.

Our church is blessed to have 4 elders or overseers who shepherd or pastor the flock together as a team, with no one man as senior or pyramid hierarchy, but a pastoral plurality and equality of elders, which we see as the biblical pattern. It is the elders from v. 17 that Paul calls as a group in v. 28 to "pastor the church" (same root that some versions translate as "pastor" in Eph 4, idea is "shepherd"). I am supported full-time as an elder/shepherd on staff so I don't have to work an outside job and my other co-elders/shepherds have asked me to use my gifts as a primary preacher Sundays. But that doesn't put me in a different class or office in NT terms, I just have more time with their support to do what the NT calls all elders or overseers to do in v. 28, which is to "*shepherd the church of God.*"

John and Mark are elders/shepherds/pastors who work full-time jobs outside church but have the same biblical office as me (Paul had no less a title or position because he worked as a tentmaker so that the church didn't have to support him). Cliff Peppers, our 4<sup>th</sup> elder/shepherd, has retired from his career in law enforcement, and the elders have asked him to come on staff as a part-time pastoral assistant to help with shepherding and administration, which is a huge praise and answer to my prayers for another elder available in the office 20+ daytime hours a week to share the day-to-day load. At least for this year, we're not looking to hire externally, as we've re-focused on what God is doing among us and I'm excited about it.

At the end of this service we will be doing a prayer for the ministry of Cliff with me, so I thought it a good time to go back to the Bible to remind ourselves of the biblical roles of shepherds to sheep, and sheep to shepherds (how you can support and pray for him and us). Turn to 1 Peter 5, which is a very similar passage and emphasis as what Paul shared with the Ephesians in Acts 20. We'll be back in Ephesians next week, but I want us to see how Peter highlights the same truths that Paul taught the Ephesians (timeless truths for all).

**1 Peter 5 (ESV)** *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

It seems both Paul and Peter had similar prayer requests for those who shepherd (humility, dependence on God, compassion, etc.)

Peter's basic structure and flow can be outlined under 3 headings:

1. The Role of shepherds to sheep (v. 1-4)
2. The Role of sheep to shepherds and each other (v. 5)
3. Their Relationship with the Chief Shepherd (v. 6-7)

### **1. The Role of Shepherds to Sheep (1 Peter 5:1)**

<sup>1</sup> *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder ...*

Wherever these chosen sheep of the Lord had scattered, they were not sheep without shepherds. Notice the phrase '*elders among you*' – wherever the early churches gathered, there were elders among the sheep to shepherd them, as v. 2 says, and as each church read this, they would know who the elders among them were who Peter is addressing. If you don't know who "the elders among you" are, you will see them at the end of this service as we pray, our pictures are also by the foyer exit, and our contact phones/emails in bulletin

"Elders" – doesn't mean "elderly," this was a term that came out of the Jewish faith, usually at least 30-year-old male spiritual leaders recognized and appointed to serve God's people. There's no higher role or rank above elder ("bishop" is just KJV word for elder), no hierarchy of a pastor above elders ("pastor" also just the word for the elder's role as shepherd), no presbyteries or synods above the local church, no prelates, priests, bishops, arch-bishops, cardinals, or pope. Peter was not the first pope and had no higher position to appeal to in v. 1. He says "*I exhort the elders...as a fellow elder*"

Peter's title and position was simply "elder." He didn't have a long title like the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria: "Lord Archbishop of the Great City of Alexandria and Patriarch of All Africa on the Holy Orthodox and Apostolic Throne of Saint Mark the Evangelist and Holy Apostle that is, in Egypt, Pentapolis, Libya, Nubia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and all Africa." That's the full title of the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria! Makes for a big business card! Even worse, he is called by them 'Father of Fathers, Shepherd of Shepherds, Hierarch of Hierarchs'

Peter's title is just elder in v. 1. There is no hierarchy above elders and no Chief Shepherd of Shepherds except our only Lord in v. 4. If anyone could pull rank, you'd think Peter could, but his rank or role was elder on the same level of fellow elders in local churches. Peter preached more than the others in the book of Acts but his gift in preaching didn't give him authority over the other shepherds of the church of Jerusalem, and neither does the fact that I preach up front more than the other elders shepherding this church. They don't submit to me, I submit to them, and we submit to each other.

We don't make significant ministry decisions if not in unanimous agreement as elders; we keep studying, discussing, praying till we have unity and clarity. We don't defer to the seminary-trained guys Phil and Cliff, or John as the oldest, or Mark because he has a gun. We are truly equal 'fellow elders' but have different gifts and areas our fellow elders ask us to give oversight to (Mark over H.S., John support WM/SS) but each of us shares v. 2: *shepherding the flock*. Cliff is in an 'assistant' staff role the elders have asked him to fill, so I have the support and time to study for the role the elders asked me to fill, but I'm not his or their boss, anymore than Peter

in v. 1. The ‘pastor’ all elders submit to is the Chief Shepherd in v.4: Jesus. Jesus once said to this same Peter: “*do you love me?*” Peter replied “*Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.*” Jesus said, “*Shepherd my sheep*” (John 20:16 NASB). Same Greek verb Peter uses in v. 2 as a fellow elder with this task from the Chief Shepherd Himself, to “*shepherd the sheep,*” or v. 2 “*the flock of God that is among you*”

What does shepherding include? I have to think Peter is thinking of the same day with Jesus in writing this chapter. Jesus repeated the same question 2 times “do you love me” and then gave 2 parallel commands: “*Tend/feed my lambs ... Tend/feed my sheep*” (v. 15, 17)

So to shepherd the Lord’s sheep includes feeding, teaching them, tending to them, and the mention of “lambs” implies special care to certain ones, and all of it flowing from a heart that loves the Lord. That was not just Peter’s task, all elders are to “*shepherd the flock*”

- v. 2 adds “*exercising oversight...*” (as overseers of the flock, this can include administration or coordination or support, assimilation of people in ministry, delegation)
- v. 2 continues “*not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly ...*” (i.e., an elder doesn’t serve because “he has to,” but “he wants to,” not because he’s paid to or it’s a job, but it’s his joy like Ps 100:3 ‘*serve the Lord with gladness*’)
- <sup>3</sup> *not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock...*(overseeing but not overbearing)

There *is* biblical authority (v. 3 does say “*those in your charge*”), but not *authoritarian domination*, as a cult leader does. Christ-like leadership is different (NKJV says “not being lords over those”). There is only one Lord, He’s in v. 4. I think Peter again may be remembering these words of his Lord: “*...the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant...*” (Mk 10:42-43). True greatness isn’t lording over, it’s coming under to serve and to give like The Lord. Lowly servant-leaders have a high reward in glory in v. 4, and a ‘*well done, good and faithful servant, enter the joy of your Master*’

How is the team of servant-leaders to ‘*shepherd the flock God...*’?

- Praying for those in physical and/or spiritual struggle (it says in James 5, call for the elders to pray over, and if you need help with sin, confess your sin so you can be healed. Cliff will be helping with visitation/shepherding but more than one of us can come if needed, just ask us)
  - o We pray every Friday morning as elders, and if you want us to pray for you specifically then, let Cliff or any of us know (staff prayer Wed. AM for all the public requests Sunday and at choir), but if you would like an elder visit, let us know
- In Acts 6:4 the shepherds of the first church said “*We will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.*” They couldn’t be distracted with running all the service programs to the neglect of prayer and ministry of the Word (study, teaching, counseling, etc.), so they appointed spirit-filled men to oversee the distributions to daily needs (pattern of servants later called deacons); we also have women who serve

- To “minister the Word” and “shepherd the church” in Acts 20:28, which we read earlier, wasn’t just public teaching but also “house to house” (20:20), in homes or smaller settings or studies, visiting, counseling. Part of the shepherd task is to watch for wolves disrupting the flock, to warn against teaching that draws away (v. 29f)
- In Eph 4:11-12 Christ gives a church “*shepherds and teachers to equip the saints to do the work of ministry*”
  - o So doing ministry is not my job or Cliff’s job or the other Elder’s job instead of your job, our job as shepherds and teachers is to equip you to do the work of ministry that God calls all Christians to do

## **2. Role of sheep to shepherds and each other (v. 5)**

<sup>5</sup> *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.*

This is true of younger people in general to older people, but the NIV doesn’t make clear this is the same word “elders” as v. 1, the shepherds who lead and feed the flock. You who are young need to put yourselves under, be submissive to the elders, and v. 5 says we all need to have this submissive attitude. But before we get to our relationship to each other, he says “*be subject to the elders*” or in the NKJV “*submit yourselves to your elders.*” Formal submission to elders is practically facilitated by becoming a member, and I’d love to see more young join as members (you don’t evolve to members automatically after X years, nor do adults!). Joining this church submits yourself to the elders here for their shepherding, accountability, care of your soul, which you’re not ashamed to express officially/publically you need that and want that in this flock.

Heb 13:17 “*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account*” (NASB)

For someone to say “I’m not going to put myself under a leader or do what anybody says; I don’t mind showing up on Sunday to hear a preacher, but I don’t want to communicate to him or anyone else ‘you are my leader who I submit to or commit to come under and obey as you bring God’s Word to me,’” my friend, you need some of the humility in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of v. 5 before you submit to elders as the 1<sup>st</sup> half of v. 5 says. If you’re unwilling to even begin to submit as a member on a basic level (which the leaders here would ask young or old who want to commit to and submit with this flock), you can’t obey Hebrews 13:17 very well. Leaders have to give an account for souls, and that accountability is higher with someone who I know considers us their “leaders” and has joined this flock as a sheep asking shepherds to help watch over their soul.

Christianity has an attitude of submission, not because you agree with everything all the time, but to recognize and submit to authority structure God has set in place in a church for our good. 1 Thess 5:12 says “*recognize those who...are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and ... esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake*” (NKJV). Other versions say respect, appreciate them, and recognizing them as your leaders in that way can greatly encourage them.

Another application would be submit your prayers for your elders. Shepherds need prayers of sheep. Cliff needs your prayers in his role. A few verses later in 1 Thess. 5, Paul writes “*Brethren, pray for us.*” Heb 13:17 says “submit to your leaders” then a verse later, v.18 says ‘*pray for us...desiring to conduct ourselves honorably...*’

I pray you will use your bulletin insert to pray for your shepherds, not just me, all 4 of us, encourage and support Cliff, Mark, John, and recognize and respect and appreciate them as they shepherd. If you don't know 'em, get to know those who labor, invite 'em over.

1 Peter 5:5 moves from sheep-to-shepherds to sheep-to-sheep: *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Just like you all consciously put physical clothes on before you came to church to be around one another, we're told to consciously modestly put on the spiritual clothing of humility when we're around each other, *"for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

- Proverbs 6 gives a list of what God hates; pride is first on the list.
- The Lord says in Prov. 8:13 *"I hate pride and arrogance"* (NIV)
- Prov 16:5 *"Everyone who is proud is an abomination to the Lord."* God opposes pride, abhors pride, abominates and hates all pride.
- Prov 3:34 (NIV) says *"He mocks proud mockers [or "the scornful He scorns"] but gives grace to the humble"* [James 4:6 also quotes]

The one on his face who know his place is the one who God gives grace to. This takes us from the role of shepherds and sheep to our **Relationship with the Chief Shepherd (Point #3)**

The Chief Shepherd is from v. 4 is Jesus, the One who will appear in glory and exaltation for shepherds and sheep in relationship with Him. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd in v. 4 and look also at 1 Pet 2:25: *For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls* [both terms used of elders in other verses, but Jesus is a soul's ultimate Shepherd and Overseer or Guardian]

How do we enter this relationship with the Good Shepherd Jesus?

<sup>24</sup> *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [another word for the "cross"], that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. [all who die to sin and self, who repent and trust what Christ did for them on the cross, bearing their sin in their place, by His wounds their sin problem is healed]*

Nothing should humble us more than the cross and Christ the Chief Shepherd becoming a sheep, a lamb to the slaughter to be slain for wandering annoying sheep like us, the meek mighty Lord humbled himself for us. 1 Pet 5:6: *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you..."*

What are ways in context to humble yourself so He lifts you up?

<sup>7</sup> *casting all your anxieties on him for He cares for you* (#1 way: by prayer – motive to cast your cares on Him is His care for you, and the motive to humble yourself is that Jesus humbled Himself). This convicted me this week in my lacking prayer life because it reveals a lack of humility in me. When I don't pray and cast cares on the Lord, I'm basically saying "it's ok, I got this one."

James 4:6 should sound familiar: *Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."* ...

[Look at v. 10] *Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.* <sup>11</sup> *Do not speak against one another, brethren.*

So a 2<sup>nd</sup> mark of humility is not speaking against one another. The first mark of prayer, speaking to God, also flows out of this in v. 8 (in prayer, if you draw near to God, He draws near to you). It affects how you talk, to God, and to others, and about others. One of the ways you know you're growing in humility is when your prayer life is growing and deepening, showing your dependence on the Savior is increasing and depending on self decreasing (Jn 3:30)

<sup>7</sup> *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*

...

In context I think resisting the devil especially has to do with the temptation to pride. Pride was the devil's first sin and we are never more like Satan than when we're proud, and never more like our Savior than when we're humbling ourselves. You can turn back to 1 Peter 5 now, and Peter quotes the very same Proverb, that *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*, then says humble yourself and He will lift you up, and then he says pray, and then again just like James, Peter warns of the devil in context of pride in 1 Pet 5:8: *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

That's a warning to all of us sheep, there is a prowling roaring lion who seeks sheep to devour with pride. We need to resist him, be firm in our faith, v. 9, and James adds the devil will flee. So this is what the Chief Shepherd calls us sheep and under-shepherds to. As I close in prayer, I want to ask the shepherds of this church, fellow elders Cliff, Mark, and John to join me on stage for closing prayer. As Cliff's ministry as elder expands, he needs prayer. We all do. It says in Heb. 13:18 "pray for us..." And we want to do that publically to close this service.