

The Charge Given by God to the Elders

A very important leadership question is:

How does a man prepare to become an elder of the church?

Have you ever wondered how a man makes the transition from being one of the sheep to being one of the shepherds? It does not happen automatically. Remember, Jesus chose fishermen and tax collectors, not shepherds, to become His apostles. They had to **learn** about shepherding people. After three years of training Jesus told Peter three times to "Feed My sheep" in John 21:15-17. The elders of the church in Ephesus had three years of teaching from the apostle Paul - Acts 20:31.

From a young age we often encourage boys and young men to prepare to become a preacher. Why don't we do the same thing and encourage our boys and young men to prepare to become servant leaders as elder shepherds of the church.

Even when a man is appointed to the eldership, it takes time to adjust and learn to do the work that God has charged him to do.

The purpose of our lesson this morning is to help us all understand what God intends for elders of the church to do **and** to encourage boys and men to prepare for that important work. The Bible has many Scriptures to help men learn to do that work. We will look at a few in this lesson.

The apostles Peter and Paul charged elders of the church with serious responsibilities.

1 Peter 5:1-4 - ¹The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:
²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;
³nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;
⁴and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

- v. 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you. It means feed, tend, guide, guard, and protect. Shepherding is a major responsibility of elders. They know all their sheep by name and the sheep must know them. They take the time to develop these relationships. They lead the sheep with love and treat them with kindness. They make their sheep feel safe and secure. They watch out for sheep who are hurt. They look for sheep who are lost. They are willing to die for their sheep. When persecution comes, the leaders are often the first to be killed.
- v. 2 Serve as overseers. It means to look after, look upon, or look over; to inspect; to care for. An overseer is a man charged with the duty of seeing that things done by others are done rightly.
- v. 2 Serve willingly not by constraint.
- v. 2 Serve eagerly but not with impure motives or for dishonest gain.
- v. 3 Do not act like a dictator lording it over those entrusted to you. Dictators love position power, control, and authority. They mislead and mistreat others.
- 3 John 9-10** - Diotrefes loved the pre-eminence and misused and abused his authority.
- v. 3 Lead by example. You are known by what you do. You influence others by what they see you do. Notice the leadership model that Jesus chose to lead His church. It is the servant leadership model of a caring shepherd. He did not choose the Roman military or government dictator model. He did not choose the business management model. He did not choose the democratic political model. And He did not choose the most popular person model. God intended for each congregation to be led by elders who serve like shepherds who care for their sheep. The Bible has many references to help us understand the role of shepherding.

v. 4 Elder/shepherds will be rewarded by the Chief Shepherd. This will be the greatest elders' meeting ever attended. It will be a celebration award ceremony for these servant leaders.

Acts 20:17, 28-32 - ¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

³² So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

v. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves. Grow in the qualities that qualified you to become an elder.

v. 28 Care for the church members among you. Take time to know each one and their family.

1 Timothy 3:5 - "Take care of the church of God." Know their needs and meet their needs.

Titus 1:7 - "A steward of God." One who is appointed to care for that which belongs to another.

v. 28 Oversee the church.

The Holy Spirit made them overseers. The church may recommend names to help select their elders. They may be appointed by a preacher. But elders should remember that they are Holy Spirit appointed based on the Word of God. They are accountable to God and Jesus Christ to oversee His church.

v. 28 Shepherd the church. Shepherds don't follow the sheep. God expects His elder shepherds to **lead** the sheep. They must know where they are going and how to get there by following the Bible. The church does not need the Christopher Columbus model of leadership. He sailed from Europe not knowing where he was going. When he got there, he did not know where he was. And when he returned, he did not know where he had been. God's shepherds must know where to lead the sheep.

v. 29 Remain alert for false teachers and deceitful members who can infiltrate the church.

Know the enemies of the Lord. Recognize false teaching.

v. 30 Guard against false teachers and corrupt leaders developing within your own group.

v. 31 Watch and remember warnings you learned from God's Word.

Do not let your guard down and become unprotected against attack.

v. 32 Elders are rewarded

Titus 1:9-11 - ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

¹⁰ For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain."

Hold fast the Word. Exhort with enthusiasm. Refute false teachers.

Hebrews 13:17 - "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they **watch out for your souls**, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

Elders are held responsible and accountable to watch over the souls in the congregation.

They receive the reward of joy on earth and in heaven because of the results of their good work.