

I like Church... where the leaders shepherd God's flock!
Acts 20:13-38

Small Group & Personal Bible Study Lesson: Pastor Dennis Hadley



Daily Scripture Reading:

1. Acts 20:1-12
2. Acts 20:13-38
3. Acts 21
4. Acts 22
5. Acts 23

- **What has God revealed to you from the book of Acts this week?**

Follow Your Shepherd

When most Christians hear about church elders, they think of an official church board, lay officials, influential people within the local church, or advisers to the pastor. They think of elders as being policymakers, financial officers, fund-raisers, or administrators. I call these types of elders "board elders." People don't expect "board elders" to teach the Word or be involved pastorally in people's lives.

Such a view, however, not only lacks scriptural support but flatly contradicts New Testament Scriptures. A person doesn't need to read Greek or be professionally trained in theology to understand that the contemporary, church-board concept of eldership is irreconcilably at odds with the New Testament definition of eldership. According to the New Testament, elders lead the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine, visit the sick and pray, and judge doctrinal issues. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church.

Therefore, when Paul and Peter directly exhort the elders to do their duty, they both employ shepherding imagery. It should be observed that these two giant apostles assign the task of shepherding the local church to no other group or single person but the elders. Paul reminds the Asian elders that God the Holy Spirit placed them in the flock as overseers for the purpose of shepherding the church of God (Acts 20:28). Peter exhorts the elders to be all that shepherds should be to the flock (1 Peter 5:2). We, then, must also view apostolic, Christianized elders to be primarily pastors of a flock, not corporate executives, CEOs, or advisers to a pastor.

If we want to understand Christian elders and their work, we must understand the biblical imagery of shepherding. As keepers of sheep, biblical elders are to protect, feed, and lead the flock. *Excerpt from Biblical Eldership, Alexander Strauch*

Small Group Lesson: 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. What do you learn about the Shepherds of Christ's Church in this passage?

First, in verse 1 Peter considers himself an Elder. Elders are called to shepherd God's flock. Meaning we are to protect, feed, and lead. It also reminds me that it is not the elder's flock but God's flock. Elders are overseers. Elders must be willing to accept the calling. Elders are not to be greedy therefore money should never be the motivation. Elders are not to lord over therefore power should never be the motivation. Elders are to be examples to the flock which also indicates elders are also part of the flock. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and all elders are under His

leadership and guidance. Elders who accept and answer the call according to God's will and His ways have their reward awaiting in Heaven.

2. To whom are Shepherds accountable?

Verse 4 makes it clear that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and to Him all elders are accountable. This brings about an important understanding that the acceptance of the Eldership role should never be taken lightly.

Read: 1 Thess. 5:12-18, Hebrews 13:17 and James 5:13-15

3. Based on these scriptures, what type of relationship with the Pastor/Elders of our church should you be pursuing?

Elders who work hard among the flock are to be held in high regard and in love. The flock should live in peace to the benefit of the body of Christ and to the benefit of the elders. The flock is called to obey leaders and submit to their authority because they keep watch over the souls of the flock through teaching, protecting, and leading in Christ. The flock is encouraged to call the elders for anointing and prayer over physical, emotional and the spiritual sickness.

4. How can you help your elders shepherd the flock?

Let people share from the heart.

Read: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 to examine the qualifications of an Elder

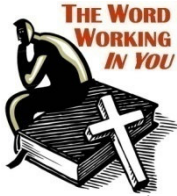
Ask people to list the qualifications they find in this passage. Discuss each of them and what they mean in regards to behaviors and attitudes. These are the biblical qualifications EVC uses to examine an elder candidate (It should be noted that self examination is the most important first step).

Biblical Qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (Titus 1:5-9 also has a list of qualifications)

- Above reproach
- Husband of one wife
- Temperate
- Self-controlled
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Able to teach
- Not given to drunkenness
- Not violent but gentle
- Not a lover of money
- Manages own family well
- Children who obey him with proper respect
- Not a recent convert
- Good reputation with outsiders

*Optional Message – **An abridgment of "Biblical Eldership"** by Alexander Strauch
Copies Available in Lobby (**Strongly recommended**)*

Action Step #8: Pray for Your Leaders



At the risk of sounding self serving, we are asking you to boldly pray for the pastor/elders of our church. These men carry a heavy load of shepherding Christ's flock. As you have seen from the passages in the small group lesson the shepherds have accountability to God for the flock. Small Group leaders are also God's shepherds and need your prayers and encouragement. Ministry directors such as our women's director and children's ministry directors also care for the flock in a shepherding role. Please lift these people up and encourage them in their calling and duty to shepherd God's flock.

Directions: This week pray for your leaders in the church everyday. Ask God to lay on your heart, one leader of the church. Find a way to express an encouraging word to one leader (small group leader, ministry director, pastor or elder, or even an unofficial person who is shepherding...) in the church this week. Please make it real and personal so as to impact them in a very meaningful way.

Action Step Follow-up

- I am praying for my church leaders' everyday.
- I am asking God to show me who and how to encourage one of our leaders.
- I have expressed my gratitude to one of our church leaders in a real and personal way.
- I'm helping someone be what God wants them to be.
- I working to meet a need in the world around me.
- I am getting to know the person I selected better.
- I am listing one good thing every week about my church sharing it with someone
- I am asking the Holy Spirit to help me identify pollution in my life
- I am prepared to meet with My King in worship this week
- I am praying the looking & listening with Jesus Prayer

Reflection: Write down how this study has changed the way you view the church.