

How Should Churches Be Led?

[1 Peter 5:1-4](#)

1 Peter, Day 25

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: 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; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- 1 Peter 5:1-4, ESV

Sadly, the history of the church has been littered with bad leadership - selfish, greedy, immoral pastors, priests, elders and bishops who have lied, stolen, and abused the church for their own wicked ends. In fact, you don't even have to look into history to see numerous examples of wayward shepherds leading sheep astray to their own destruction.

Thankfully, God still has some faithful shepherds in His flock. Of course, no human shepherds are perfect; only Jesus the Good Shepherd never fails us. But still, God does have some elders in His church who sincerely desire to serve well and lead well, encouraging and equipping the flock.

Peter addresses the elders of the church in chapter 5 as a fellow elder. Even though he is an Apostle, Peter is also an elder, a shepherd, restored lovingly to this position by Jesus in John 21. He exhorts the elders; he does not command them. He urges them lovingly to shepherd the flock, even as Jesus had commanded him to do - to feed the sheep and tend the lambs of the precious flock of God purchased by the blood of the Good Shepherd.

A key part of shepherding is exercising oversight - watching over the flock, caring for their health and well being and tending to them if and when they begin to go astray, helping them to walk in the right paths. But this oversight is not to be domineering, not commanding and controlling, but as good examples and faithfully patient encouraging guides.

How does an elder shepherd the flock like this? By praying for the sheep, feeding the sheep with the Word of God, pointing the sheep to Jesus and to a closer walk with the Good Shepherd, and speaking correction to the sheep when they go astray.

Consistently shepherding the flock is tiring, sometimes discouraging, and often thankless - not always of course, but often. At these times, elders need to remember that their Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, is watching over them. He supplies our every need whenever we are weak or prone to wander. And He is coming again, to judge the living and the dead, and to reward or judge the shepherds for their service.

If you're an elder, look to Jesus for the grace to shepherd well. If you're not an elder, pray for your elders to have the grace to shepherd well - that God may be glorified, His kingdom advanced, and His people blessed.