

Roles of Elder

The Old Testament is a good place to start as we consider the Roles of the Elder. I Cor.10:11-12

¹¹ These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. ¹² So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

We will be considering the role of the Elder that encompasses all other roles; the role of SHEPHERD.

God is doubtlessly the Shepherd of shepherds. No other shepherd can compare to the Good Shepherd of both the Old Covenant (Ps. 23:1) and the New Covenant (I Pet. 5:4).

Jacob (Gen 48:14, 49:24), King David (Ps 23:1), Asaph a psalmist (Ps 80:1) and many others refer to God as their Shepherd.

God's People need a Shepherd (Numbers 27:17)

Throughout the Old and New Testament, God has appointed men to perform the function of Shepherd to His People. God in His wisdom determined that this was an absolute and indispensable role for the welfare of his people. Since the time of His Chosen People the Jews, until now the role has remained essentially the same, and is most comprehensively described in the 23rd Psalm.

Success or Failure in executing the office of Elder is directly related to the humility and obedience of the Shepherd to the Chief Shepherd. So the first responsibility of the Elder or Shepherd is **to be an example of submission and obedience to Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

Be An Example of Submission and Obedience to Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

At first blush, this may appear almost trite; but for the man who aspires to the office of Elder, he must revisit the scriptures and in particular the writings of the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and be awed by the enormous responsibility of a shepherd which found its full expression in Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for His sheep.

Some people mistake being soft spoken or not raising one's voice as evidence of humility. This is a very powerful deception for the unwary believer; for the most arrogant among us can easily use this behavior quite adeptly to deceive. Eventually one's true character will become evident as time and circumstances peel of the veneer of feigned humility. This usually becomes evident during conflicts, arguments and disagreements; for it is then that a deception is most stringently tested. So, as a true shepherd of Christ assays to follow Him and be an example of the believers, **he is seen to be submissive to the least of the brethren and sincerely apologizes if he fails so to do.** The key here is not *absolute perfection*, which is usually feigned; but humility to acknowledge failure and resolve to do better, in clear view of the flock. Sadly, it is this pretension that creates unfeeling and unkind churches, where those who do not match up to the **highest appearance of purity**, are politely asked to leave. So the truly humble shepherd will teach humility, not compromise, through failure as well as successes. Last week our Brother John, described submission to the shepherd as a scary word, and it may be so to some. However it is all about perspective; for who among us would stand in the presence of our Savior and display arrogance and not submit to Him in awe inspired fear? But we were exhorted to submit one to another in the fear of God, Eph 5:21. So a shepherd who displays this kind of submission to the flock will receive the blessing of having the flock submit to Christ in him, **without ever demanding it!**

Practice Faith Before The Flock

.2 Sam 5:2, Ps 78:72 - God made David shepherd of His People.

2 Sam 24:17, 1 Chr 21:17 – **Faithless shepherding can be devastating.**

David, insisted on numbering the armies, an act of **faithlessness**, even under the protest of his General Joab, and God punished them severely!

We may think that this is Old Testament stuff, that has no relevance to us today. But have we not heard? Have we not seen many congregations whose faithless leaders have led them to the brink of annihilation? Note Jesus' warning against the church in Thyatira (Rev 2:20). The leaders in that Church allowed Jezebel to teach evil and Jesus pronounces their judgment, vs. 23.

I was truly blessed last year in a shepherds meeting where we discovered that our budget exceeded the giving of the congregation, and one of our dear brothers exhorted us to trust the Lord to provide for his work. That is Faith!

Lead the Flock into Paths of Righteousness for His Name Sake

Woe to Shepherds who **destroy and lead God's people astray.** Jer 23:1, 50:6

Those shepherds who call truth lies and lies truth are actually leading God's people astray. The big difference between the Old Testament situation and the ours today, is that each and every child of God knows the difference, through the Holy Spirit who lives within us. And we must follow God, not men. Paul declared that we should follow him as he followed Christ. I understand this to mean that, no believer is obliged to follow a shepherd who does not lead them in the paths of Righteousness!

Acts 5:29

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to **obey God** rather than men.

Shepherds Must Push the Flock Into Righteousness

Shepherds **goad God's people into Righteousness.**

Ecclesiastes 12:11 (New King James Version)

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars^[a] are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

It is a sad thing when leaders allow the sheep to push them into faithlessness or complacency, when they should be stirring up believers to action and righteousness. Shepherds listen to the sheep but their role is to lead to them, not pamper their weaknesses and unwillingness to not follow our Lord faithfully in every area of their lives.

Shepherds Must Inquire of the Lord to Prosper

How can shepherds follow the Lord, if they do not seek his will?

Jeremiah 10:21 (New King James Version)

²¹ For the shepherds have become dull-hearted, And have not sought the LORD; Therefore they shall not prosper, And all their flocks shall be scattered.

Shepherds Must be men of prayer, moving only where the Lord leads!

Shepherds Must be Willing to Sacrifice even their lives for the Flock

Shepherds should care for the flock more than themselves. Ez 34:2-8, Jn 10:11 give his life for the sheep. Jude 1:12

Ezekiel 34:2-8 (New King James Version)

² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?³ You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock.⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.⁵ So they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.⁶ My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them*.”⁷ “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:⁸ “As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock”—

Acts 20:25-35 (New King James Version)

²⁵ “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*.²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.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^[a] 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.³³ I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.³⁴ Yes,^[b] you yourselves know that these hands^[c] have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.³⁵ I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Shepherds must save or protect the flock and woe to those who do not. Zech 9:16, 11:17

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Roles of the Elder
Shepherds search for the lost and bring back the strays.

Ezekiel 34:16 (American Standard Version)

¹⁶ I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice.

Shepherds save or protect the flock and woe to those who do not. Zech 9:16, 11:17
Back in Jamaica, a young man and his girl friend, in the church, indulged themselves in a sexual relationship which resulted in a pregnancy. Weeks later neither attended church. One day I met the young girl and asked her why she had stopped attending services. She asked if I did not notice that she was pregnant and not married. I said that this was not a reason for not attending church services. To which she replied, stating that people would talk about her. I then assured her that, those who would do that would not be displaying Christ-like behavior. I explained that there was nothing wrong with her pregnancy which was a gift from God; but the problem was the sin that resulted in her condition. And if she had repented of her sin, no child of God should be ashamed to have her in the Church; for which of us do not sin, and repent, but are still members in good standing in the Church?

As you know, not long ago I had the same situation in my own family and the body of believers here showed my family true Christian love.

Shepherds must be an example of the of Christlike behavior to the flock.

IPet 5:

¹ The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

² Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

³ neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock.

⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Shepherds Must Wipe away some tears from the eyes of the sheep
Rev 7:17

Jesus will wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people; but in the interim, with true love, tenderness and faithfulness and benevolence, true shepherds start wipe away some of the tears of the sheep, right now.