

**Studies in Church Leadership: Discussion 4**  
***How The Elder Leads***

**I. As we begin** our discussion on the topic of Church Leadership, I want us to begin with a few moments of review:

**A.** Our **first** area of conversation centered on the reasons behind appointing Elders:

- 1.** First and foremost, is the plain fact that God has commanded it to be so: It is not a suggestion, or merely a worthy goal to work toward, but is made abundantly clear by multiple passages that Elders are God's plan for the Church:
- 2.** Second, is that Elders are for our own benefit: God's people have always flourished under the guidance of godly men, and have always withered spiritually when afflicted with wicked leaders, or when they try and have each man go their own way.

**B.** Our **last** study together began our examination of what the work of an Elder is: In looking at passages like Ezekiel 33 and Acts 20, we explored this from the perspective of the Watchman:

- 1.** Elders carry out this solemn charge over God's people today. Diligently searching with open eyes for approaching threats, ready to sound the warning when they see someone straying from their path; they keep watch over God's people as well as each other.

**II.** Our study today will continue to address more aspects of the Elder's work; As we begin I want to call to mind something that we made mention of last week from 1 Peter 5:2; that the position of Elder is a position of Authority; descriptive terms such as overseer make that point very clear;

**A.** And Peter is not alone in making this point: Paul would describe the Elders in 1

**Thess. 5:12** as those who "have charge over you in the Lord", and would speak to Timothy in 1 **Tim. 5:17** of Elders as those who "rule".

**B.** Again the Hebrew writer in chapter **13:7** would also describe the Elders as those who rule over you, exhorting them to obey and be submissive;

**C.** Not only are they in a position of Authority, is it one that is given to them by God: Paul would speak to the Elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:28 telling them to be on guard over the flock “of which the *Holy Spirit*” had made them overseers:

**i.** But there is a point of distinction that we need to make clear in our study: What God has given them is not the authority to be dictators: He has given them the authority to be Leaders:

**a)** A man is not given the position of an Overseer so that he can promote his own agenda or push through all of the ideas that he’s had over the years; They are not to abuse the fact that Christians are told to submit to them by seeking to opportunities to “flex their muscles”

**b)** There is a great deal of differences between this mindset we’ve just described, and one who views themselves as a Leader in the way God intended:

**(1)** We point this out because this is a real struggle: I imagine that it is a struggle that comes when anyone is given any position of authority:

Whether that be head of a large company, a teacher in a classroom, or the head of a household: How am I going to “rule” with the authority given to me? Am I going to bully and push my way through every decision or circumstance, or am I going to try and lead?

**(2)** God in His wisdom knows that this balance is a difficulty and has not left us without scriptures to address the issue:

**III. We’ve already** mentioned 1 Tim. 5 and Hebrews 13 as passages that describe Elders as those who rule: what exactly does it mean when it use the term rule?

**A.** The word that we’ve translated as rule, means to “to be placed in front” and carries the idea that what has been placed in front, is “standing or going before someone or something in protection

**i.** This definition is very different from what the average person on the street might say today; essentially, you get to tell everyone what to do; Elders stand before God’s people and they in turn look to them for direction:

**B.** There are other passages that discuss what exactly it means to “rule well” as Paul would mention to Timothy:

### **I. Read I Peter 5:1-4**

a) Verse 3 in particular should immediately banish any pictures of the macho man who is going to rule by throwing his weight around:

(1) I think it is worth pointing out that in verse two that it states Elders are to serve.. “according to the will of God”-- It seems that would exclude anyone else’s will!

(a) While it also says in v 3, that one aspect of their leadership is the example they set:

b) Elders are not set up as a a branch of the Church that enacts Laws, They are men who make sure that God’s laws are carried out:

c) He is a man whose high moral character, history of service, and great love for God’s church, encourages submission to those who are looking to his example:

(1) But simply having elaborated on what it means to rule well, is not the same as answering how one can get into that frame of mind: That is what I want us to spend the rest of our discussion on:

(2) Because as we’ve stated, this is not the natural tendency for most; the common danger is allowing authority to go straight to one’s head;

(3) And again, I believe that God knowing we would need instruction left us with some patterns that those who desire to be an Elder must strive to mold themselves into: The one that I want to discuss this morning is that of the shepherd:

**IV. I think that** the trend is starting to reverse in many places, but for a long time in many places, there was a great imbalance on this issue; There wasn’t a lot of thought given by many on Elders in their role as shepherds; Instead, they were looked on more as a board of directors:

A. Bro. Max Dawson in his book *Kingdom Leaders* shares the story of a preacher who gave a sermon and said that the primary work of the Elders was to shepherd the flock of God, that they were not to merely be decision makers for the Church: There were members of the congregation who confronted him and said that he was preaching

“some new thing” That there was surely something wrong with this because they had never done it that way before!

1. “What an amazing thing! we advocate shepherds doing God’s work in God’s way-- making sure that we follow the Bible-- and someone thinks that something is wrong! replied the preacher:

B. But Elder’s primary job being to Shepherd is not **some new thing**. As we’ve already seen in previous lessons, God’s great desire in all of the history of His people is that they would be blessed with, and accept the guidance of, righteous Shepherds. Men Like Joshua whom God appointed so that his people would not be scattered, or David who is described in Ps 78 as having been chosen to Shepherd God’s people. As Paul encouraged the Ephesian Elders in Acts 20, and as Peter in 1 Peter 5, Elders are to be appointed over the Flock, to Shepherd the Church of God.

1. And as men who would be Elders look to the scripture for Guidance, and as we who would appoint them look as well; The example that Jesus set as the good Shepherd must be the example that Elders labor to adopt as their own: