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The Shepherd's Heart

Framing the Flock, Part 2

1 Peter 5:1-2b-4

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

What are you willing to risk or give up for the sake of the Gospel? A life of ministry is one that requires sacrifice. The role of elder is not to be taken lightly. An elder has the awesome and heavy privilege of leading the flock, feeding the flock, and ruling the flock. It's a role that requires a willingness, enthusiasm, and selflessness. God calls an elder to this position. He not only calls him, but He empowers him to carry out his duties. To an elder, pastoring is not the end goal. It's the means by which he presents his flock to the Chief Shepherd. It's about bringing glory to the Lord. It's about living to please the Lord and not man. It's about caring for and loving the flock as Christ does. Pastoral ministry requires humility and a servant's heart. The position of elder follows the example of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus.

Discussion Points:

The elder is in a leadership role in the church. Peter made sure that the men looking to lead the flock knew what all was required of them and how big of a role it was.

- What does the role of elder mean to you?
- How do the elders that God has placed in your life help you in your spiritual walk?
- What are the biblical expectations of an elder?

Christ, our Chief Shepherd, is the greatest example of a humble servant-leader. He laid down His life for the flock and put their needs before His own.

- In what ways does Christ show humility in Shepherding?
- What are some key verses that talk about Christ as our Chief Shepherd?
- An elder must love the flock. What are the marks of pastoral love?

Discussion Guide cont.

The Bible is clear that Christ will return. We are to live each day in light of that truth. The return of Christ is not intended to produce terror in believers but hope.

- How does the return of Christ encourage one's heart?
- His return is imminent. How does that change the way one lives?
- How does God lavish His grace upon us? Upon elders?

Gospel Connection:

Understanding the role of an elder in the flock gives us a glimpse into the role of the Chief Shepherd in our lives. Our Shepherd loves us, guides us, leads us, and fights for us. All the while, He exhibits complete humility and selflessness. We cannot fully understand the Gospel without knowing who our Chief Shepherd is. We cannot live a life for the glory of God apart from Him. We cannot be ready for His return if we do not fully understand what He has done for us. Only Jesus can actually transform our lives based upon that knowledge. When we see Him face to face, He will perfect the work that He has already begun in our lives. When we receive our crowns (elders and lay members alike), we will gladly lay them back at the feet of Jesus. In light of the Gospel, we can see those crowns (and our salvation) as gracious and undeserved gifts from our heavenly Father.

Practical Implications:

- Think:** How can you pray specifically for the elders God has placed in your life? Are you willing to commit to pray for them?
- Pray:** Ask God to give you the desire to love and pray for the elders in your church. Ask Him to help you look past yourself and the idols of your heart. Ask Him to help you live in light of the Kingdom and not the things of this world.
- Do:** Be thankful for who God has placed in your life. Be excited to serve Him with whatever abilities He has given you. Share that with others.

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1 Peter 5:1-2b-4

Our world has been captivated in recent months with these kinds of stories: the failure of a law enforcement officer to step into a dangerous situation taking place inside a high school where a shooter could be heard firing his weapons.

Instead of rushing into the school, he remained outside, and he remained outside until it was virtually too late to save the lives of more than a dozen students who died.

Also in the news was the tragic story of a ferry that capsized off the coast in Seoul, South Korea. Hundreds of passengers died, most of them high school students who ended up drowning because they were awaiting instructions to abandon ship.

Instructions were late in coming because the captain had fled the sinking ship and was later found safe on dry land.

The public called was outraged. The teacher who organized the trip took his own life in despair and grief. Even the prime minister of South Korea offered to resign because of the tragedy.

These kinds of failures are considered so much more serious simply because the people responsible to protect lives abandoned their role, and lives were harmed or even lost.

I came across one report with contrasting bravery: a fire had broken out during an Air Canada flight from Dallas to Toronto.

The pilot began a dramatic and sudden descent, knowing he had but a few moments to land if any of them were to survive. As soon as he landed the plane and the door was opened for rescue, the whole aircraft, sucking in that oxygen, quickly began to turn into an inferno.

Because of his skill and commitment, along with crew members, almost all of the passengers were able to escape.

But what the news reports eventually focused on was the fact that this captain had been the last person to leave the burning airplane.

In fact, when he was eventually pulled out by rescuers, part of his own uniform was on fire.

He certainly deserved the commendation he received as someone who had put his life on the line – risking his own health and safety, for the sake of others.¹

If you could travel back to the middle part of the 1st century, you would have observed that the church was in the throes of experiencing everything from organizational and financial challenges to cultural marginalization and misunderstanding.

The fire of unrest and uncertainty would, in a matter of a few years, break out into an inferno of persecution against the church.

Much of the apostolic energy of the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter was devoted to developing, organizing, and teaching the church how to operate during difficult times.

And one of the leading questions was, who will be willing to serve as captain and crew of the ship – especially when it begins to take on water?

Who will pilot the airplane now that smoke can be seen – now that the flames of growing persecution and danger are growing more and more dangerous?

Both Paul and Peter urged men who wore the mantle of the shepherd to captain the vessel – to pilot the plane – or, in New Testament terminology, to shepherd the flock – to put everything on the line, including their own safety – for the sake of the church.

In our last session together in Peter's first letter – and I invite you to turn back there again – we uncovered the job description of the elder/pastor/bishop. That office of leadership in the church we discovered together, which was

known in the New Testament by those three terms. The term:

- Elder (presbuteros) related to his role in leading the flock
- Pastor (poimen) related to feeding the flock
- And the term Bishop (episkopos) related to ruling the flock

Now in this letter where Peter has been encouraging the church to stand strong in their faith and hope during difficult times, he pulls over—as it were—for a few choice, intimate, highly charged comments as he speaks personally to the elders of the early church.

Peter writes in *chapter 5 and verse 1*, *Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you* **1 Peter 5:1-2a**

Shepherd the flock of God. Tend the sheep. Care for the church. And what you might expect Peter to do next is get down into the nitty gritty of what it means to do the job. Rest on Monday, visit on Tuesday, disciple on Wednesday, study on Thursday, pray on Friday, and write your sermon on Saturday.

But instead of focusing on the particulars of calendars, Peter begins to address the elder's character; instead of focusing on the pastor's schedule, Peter begins to focus on the pastor's spirit.

He essentially lays out for the elder team of every local church, to this day, what I want to call three principles of shepherding the flock.

A. Three Principles of Shepherding the Flock:

Let me give you the first principle and then we'll read the text. Here it is:

1. Ministry does not depend on coerciveness, but willingness

Notice further in *verse 2b*. . . . *exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God.* 1 Peter 5:2b

Not under compulsion literally means, to be compelled by force or some kind of constraint.ⁱⁱ Pastors aren't drafted – they volunteer with a sense of divine calling – *according to the will of God*, Peter writes. No one is to be forced into this kind of ministry role.

In other words, this ministry role is something that God, according to His will, has planted in your heart. You don't make someone – you don't talk someone into becoming – a shepherd.

Even here at Shepherds Theological Seminary, hosted by our church on this campus, faculty members fully understand that Shepherds seminary doesn't make shepherds. We don't call shepherds into ministry.

Their training, their education, and their master's degrees don't make them shepherds either. We can't make someone a pastor/elder/bishop. God does that.

Wanting to become a shepherd is implanted in their hearts by the will of God. No one can make men into true ministers; we merely train them for the ministry for which God has made them.

And how can you tell that God is doing that in someone's heart? Well, for one thing – and Peter implies a volume of truth here – you discover in that man the fact that even though shepherding will involve a life of study, long hours, the bearing of other people's burdens, the heartache and tears as well as the joys and victories of ministry – you find these people actually, willingly, volunteering. They aren't forced into it. They are outfitted for it by the will of God.

By the way, just because elders volunteer for their role, that doesn't mean it's easy for them to fulfill it. For all of you who volunteer to serve in some way in the church, you know it as well – easiness and comfort have nothing to do with your service.

But people might be led to believe that for the pastor/elder/bishop, it comes easy. I'm reading from Charles Spurgeon's classic work entitled *Lectures to My Students* – just a few pages a week – which is a very encouraging reading.

You may be aware that Spurgeon had a college for pastoral training there in London, hosted by his church during the 1800's – an equivalent institution today to a seminary.

He taught the students every Friday, and eventually compiled a book on pastoring. One particular chapter he entitled, "The Minister's Fainting Fits," in which he transparently and candidly wrote to his students (and the church at large) these words,

Fits of depression come over most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise are not always prepared and the joyous are not always happy. There may be among us men of iron, but surely the rust frets even us.

Charles Spurgeon — 1834-1892ⁱⁱⁱ

Willingness doesn't mean easiness!

Peter is sending out a description and an exhortation for the faithful elder to remain at his post, not because he's forced to, but because he wants to; not because it's easy, but because he's willing to follow the will of God.

The first principle then is this: **ministry does not depend on coerciveness, but willingness**

Secondly,

2. Motives are not driven by greediness, but eagerness

Notice again at *verse 2. Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God . . .*

Now notice – *And not for sordid gain, but with eagerness. 1 Peter 5:2*

The term Peter uses for *eagerness* is a strong term that means enthusiasm and devoted zeal.

In this context, elders serve the flock with "enthusiasm and devoted zeal." They get out of bed in the morning ready for another day at it. Not like a teenager who stays up too late and can't get out of bed.

In his commentary on this text, Chuck Swindoll told the story about a young man who was sound asleep on Sunday morning when his mother burst into his room and said, "Get out of bed *now!*" With his face buried in his pillow, he muffled out, "Give me three good reasons why I should get up." She said, "Well for one: because it's Sunday and you know that we always go to church on Sunday." The guy just moaned. "And two: because we have only forty minutes until church starts and you haven't even showered." And three: Because you're the pastor of the church . . . now get up!"^{iv}

Peter effectively says here, we need men who get out of bed in the morning, ready to go.

And Peter contrasts eagerness with *greediness*. In other words, what fires up your engines? Feeding the flock or fleecing the flock?

- The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and warned that an elder must not be *a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:3)*.
- He wrote to Titus and described an elder as someone who is *not greedy for gain (Titus 1:7)*.
- Paul delivered his own ministry testimony by including that he had never *coveted anyone's silver or gold (Acts 20:33)*.

The question, "What's in it for me?" is the question of the hireling who's going to run away when the wolf appears, not the shepherd who remains to guard the flock.

If the boat tips over, we're out of here. If the plane catches fire, good luck to all the passengers. The pilot is the closest person to the exit, and he can be the first one out.

The term Peter uses for *sordid gain* is actually about more than money. It's an elastic word which can refer to greed for a following,

greedy for approval, hungry for fame or for comfort.

Pastor Henry Jowett wrote a 100 years ago on this text, “I am not sure which of the two is worse—he who hungers for money, or he who thirsts for applause.”^v

Peter is describing here a man to whom the Flock matters, ministry matters. It isn’t a job. It isn’t a paycheck. It isn’t the perks of power. It isn’t applause or attention. None of that is guaranteed anyway. Whether or not the perks, the applause, and the benefits ever come into play, he’s in this for life. He gets out of bed in the morning with an internal desire to obey Christ in fulfilling the will of God who fashioned him for this ministry.

And eagerness and enthusiasm for ministry, one author writes, is an indispensable characteristic for the elder to demonstrate.

Now, as we’ve already mentioned, this doesn’t mean that a pastor/elder/bishop is never discouraged or that he doesn’t have days when life is not so energetic or ministry is not so enthusiastic.

You need to understand that this is a big picture description from Peter. This is an over-the-long-haul-kind-of term that describes the overall, over time, spirit and tone and attitude of the elder.^{vi}

- **His ministry does not depend on coerciveness, but willingness**
- **His motives are not driven by greediness, but eagerness**

Thirdly,

3. His Mannerisms are not displayed through haughtiness, but selflessness

Notice how *Peter writes in verse 3. Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:3*

You’ll observe that the elders are indeed given a divine allotment of sheep – *those*

allotted to your charge; you can translate this, “those entrusted to you.” The elder is entrusted with the charge – the care of a particular flock – and he is to be devoted to that flock.

You can also observe in this text that leading the flock is not the same thing as lording over the flock. The word translated *lording over* is from a compound term made up of combining the verb, to control, to rule with the preposition translated “down,” to control down; to rule down.^{vii} The church is not a herd of cattle to be driven; it is a flock of sheep to be led.

General Eisenhower once demonstrated leadership with a simple piece of string. He put it out on the conference table and then he said, “Pull this string and it’ll follow wherever you want; but if you try to push this string, it will go nowhere.”

That’s an important principle of leadership and shepherding. Peter draws here from the Judean hillsides where he’s often seen shepherds customarily walking in front of the flock, calling the sheep after them.^{viii}

Yes, the flock sometimes needs to be challenged and nudged and disciplined and warned; it’s also true that the flock is never told to go wherever it wants to go, but instead to follow its shepherds to whom God has entrusted their well-being.

But the elder/pastor/bishop is out in front – why? Peter tells us: you’re out front so that you can provide an example, not of haughtiness, but humility.

Even when you get up to preach – it isn’t so much that you love to preach – it’s that you love the people to whom you preach.

Notice how Peter underscores that at the heart of shepherding is a ministry of modeling selflessness. He writes, *proving to be examples to the flock*. Paul wrote to Pastor Timothy and told him to *set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12)*.

Set an example for the flock. Be an example, like Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid aside His power and position – selflessly,

humbling himself to play the role of a humble servant (Philippians 2).

There's your model Shepherd; there's your model elder/pastor/bishop.

You see, Peter knows the danger of being full of himself; he knows the pitfalls when someone is given position and power and a pedestal of public ministry. They begin to face the dangerous temptation related to personal pride.

John Henry Jowett again wrote from years of pastoral experience a 100 years ago – proving, by the way, that some things never change – he wrote,

Pride lurks at the heels of power; even a little authority is prone to turn someone's walk into a strut.

John Henry Jowett — 1863-1923

Listen, there's no place in the ministry for strutting around. Even in preaching or teaching, a true shepherd doesn't just love to get up in front of people; he doesn't just love to preach; he loves the people to whom he preaches.

He's ever mindful that imperfect shepherds are leading imperfect sheep in the service of a perfect Savior who has a perfect plan.^{ix}

And with the future in mind, Peter now provides two incentives for the pastor/elder/bishop.

Two Incentives for Shepherding the Flock:

1. The Chief Shepherd's return

First, the Chief Shepherd's return.

Notice verse 4. And when the Chief Shepherd appears . . . 1 Peter 5:4a

It's interesting to me that although the elder isn't to be motivated by duty or greed or power, there is a proper incentive. In fact, the apostle's teaching throughout the New Testament often used the future appearing of Christ as a motivation for the way we live *now*.^x

But this wasn't some kind of scare tactic to keep shepherds in line. Like your parents who told you they were going to be out for a while and you were to get your homework finished before they got home, and they didn't tell you when that was going to be. You just did your homework in fear of their soon appearing.

That's not Peter's idea here. Peter is using this as an incentive for shepherds who no doubt faced their own failures and shortcomings, along with the failures and shortcoming of the flock; but this was the remedy. This was their encouraging anticipation to stay with the ship – at any moment the Lord will appear.

And Peter calls the Lord here; the only time this appears in the New Testament – *the Chief Shepherd* – why?

Because He's going to come and finish what none of his under-shepherds could ever finish; He's coming to perfect what no shepherd could ever perfect.

He is the *Chief Shepherd* who is coming to finish the job and complete the church and perfect and glorify the Flock as He calls her Home.

But that isn't all. Not only does Peter highlight **the Chief Shepherd's return**, he mentions secondly,

2. The Chief Shepherd's reward

. . . you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 1 Peter 5:4b

Keep in mind that every believer will receive a crown. Peter just wants the elders to remember they have one coming too.

Paul called it:

- an incorruptible crown (*1 Corinthians 9:25*);
- a crown of glory (*1 Thessalonians 2:19*);
- a crown of righteousness (*2 Timothy 4:8*);
- and a crown of life (*James 1:12*) –

Every believer is royalty yet to be crowned in the coming Kingdom, which is going to be one more demonstration of how God will lavish upon us His grace (*Ephesians 1:8*).

And here the elder is reminded that he too will be rewarded for his service to the Chief Shepherd with a crown, and Peter adds here where no other New Testament text adds it just in this way – ***you will receive an unfading crown.***

I find it fascinating that the verb here translated ***to receive*** – komizo – refers to compensation. It’s as if Peter reminds elders especially – for all they suffered and endured and carried in their hearts – you are going to be compensated like you never could have been compensated on earth.

And what is that compensation? ***An unfading crown*** – a stephanos in the original language.

This was the laurel wreath given to victorious military personnel, given to victorious athletes, made of woven olive or myrtle or oak leaves, sometimes interspersed with flowers like violets or roses.^{xi}

And Peter hints at these earthly crowns – what do they all have in common – they all fade away; they all crumble away, and all you’ve got left on your fireplace mantle is dried up twigs and leaves; and you can barely remember the moment.

But this stephanos is an ***unfading crown of glory*** – that is, throughout the endless ages of eternity, we – both sheep and shepherds – will enjoy the glory of what we know ***we do not deserve***, and we will forever relive the moment when Jesus, our Chief Shepherd, returned for us and robed us and crowned us with glory ***we did not earn***.

And because of that, perhaps the elders of the church will once again take the lead and provide the example and be the first to take our crowns and place them at the feet of Jesus, our Lord and Chief Shepherd, because we know that

- He enabled us
- He empowered us
- He gifted us
- He called us
- He entrusted His sheep to us
- He deserves the praise and the glory and the crowns we have received.

We will gladly place them at His feet.

Peter says, “Don’t forget that coming day . . .” When imperfect shepherds who lead imperfect sheep see them safely at the feet of the perfect Chief Shepherd.

What a wonderful way to end the ministry.
What a wonderful way to begin eternity.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 04/15/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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i Adapted from *Fatherhood’s Call to Duty*, Christianity Today (6/13/2014)

ii Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Regency, 1976), p. 765

iii Adapted and quoted by Charles R. Swindoll in *Hope Again* (Word Publishing, 1996), p. 226

iv Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter* (Zondervan, 2010), p. 237

v J. H. Jowett, *The Epistles of Peter* (Kregel reprint, 2007), p. 97

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- vi Adapted from David Walls & Max Anders, Holman New Testament Commentary: Volume II (Holman Reference, 1999), p. 89
- vii D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1992), p. 305
- viii Peter Davids, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation: Volume 4 (Zondervan, 2002), p. 147
- ix Adapted from Swindoll, Insights, p. 234
- x Adapted from David R. Helm, 1-2 Peter and Jude (Crossway, 2008), p. 163
- xi Adapted from Hiebert, p. 307