

## **Do Not Be Surprised**

1 Peter 5:1-4

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 10, 2017

You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the Book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that this morning, we're in a series called "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. We've been in this since April and we're coming to the tail end of it now. In fact, the way this is gonna work is that this week and next, we'll be in 1 Peter, and then we'll have our Christmas Eve service. I just want to say real quickly, you Canadians do a good job of Christmas lights. I've been very impressed by that. I come from Tennessee, the land where you see a small house with tons of lights and you wonder, "Where do they put those lights the rest of the year?" And they don't put them anywhere. They stay out there all year long. I haven't seen that yet. I've been looking around. I'll be looking in January and February and seeing if the lights are still up here in Chilliwack, but you guys do a great job of lights. But anyway, for two weeks, we'll be in 1 Peter, this week and next, then we'll have our Christmas Eve service. As Lourens mentioned, it's gonna be at 9:30. The Christmas Eve service will be, so keep that on your calendars. And after that, I'll be away for the holidays, and Lyndon Unger will be with us. He'll be ministering the Word to us. Some of you remember Lyndon. He was very helpful to our church when we were getting started and he'll be preaching for us on December 31st, so you'll want to be here for that. And then we'll be back the next Sunday to wrap the book of 1 Peter up. Does that sound good? Okay, alright. Two weeks in 1 Peter, Christmas, and then Lyndon'll be with us.

Which leads me to say, I want to say, I really appreciate your encouragement during this series. It seems like it's been helpful to you. I've gotten some positive feedback. I think it's kind of struck a chord with where some of you are at in life, and I appreciate that. When I first came to Grace Fellowship Church, I wanted to preach on something that was devotional, to show you how we're gonna do things as a church. We're gonna talk about doctrine from the pulpit. We're gonna talk about theology, and grammar, and background, and context, and all that good stuff. But we're gonna do it for the purpose of application. James said, "I don't want you to be doers of the Word only. I want you to be hearers as well." Jesus said, "My Father is glorified in this, that you bear much fruit," and that's how we're gonna do things. We want you to bear fruit. I want to see you be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.

You guys heard of the preacher that was so good in the pulpit, that nobody wanted him out of it, and he was so bad out of the pulpit, that nobody wanted him back in it again? You don't want to be like that as a church. You don't want to be so good when you're out there, that nobody wants you back in here, and that's how we're gonna approach things. You want to go deep in the Christian life. A man was once taken to the hospital with a deadly wound, and when they opened his shirt, he had a Jesus tattoo on his chest. And the doctor said, "That's great." And the nurse said, "Yeah, that's wonderful, if it goes deeper than that." And you want your life in Christ to go deep. You want it to go with you when you leave this building. And that brings us to the book of 1 Peter. 1 Peter is a book that goes deep. It's a book that goes beneath the surface. Peter doesn't just talk about doctrine, and history, and theology. He talks about those things, but he does it for the purpose of application.

And if you want to see this for yourself, let me just read our passage for today, and I'll say a few words about it. If you want to read in 1 Peter 4, starting in verse 12, we're gonna read down through chapter 5. But Peter says, he says,

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 "And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?" 19 Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

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, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Now, just to give you some background on this passage, if you've been with us for the past couple of months, you'll remember that 1 Peter is a letter. And what I mean by that is, Peter's not writing a textbook here. He's actually writing a letter to specific people with specific problems. And we don't know all of what those problems were, 'cause Peter doesn't say. But he talks about suffering and judgment in this book, so there was some of that going on. He mentions slander and persecution. He talks about threats and fear. But it all goes back to the point, and this is the point of the book: "God will take care of you in your suffering." That's the idea of 1 Peter: "God will get you through your pain." Chapter 1 says, "He'll protect you." Chapter 2 says, "He'll protect you in specific areas of life, with the government, and the workplace, and the home." Chapter 3:13 is a key verse in the book. Peter says, "Who is there to harm you, if you prove zealous for what is good?" And then you come to chapter 4, when Peter starts to apply all of this. Chapters 4 and 5 are really the application of the book. There're five "therefores" in 1 Peter 4 and 5, if you were count them all up, because this is how he ends the letter. This is a "therefore" from what all he said so far. And in chapter 4 he says, "Do not be surprised," in verse 12, we just read that. "Keep on rejoicing", in verse 13. Those are some of the "therefores". It says, "Do not be ashamed." In verse 16, "But glorify God in this name."

And then he says, in chapter 5:1, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you," which sounds strange. If you've been reading this letter, you wonder, "Well, what do elders have to do with all this stuff that he's talking about pain and suffering?" And the answer is simple: when you're suffering, you need elders to get you through it. You need good leadership. Now, Peter's also just

mentioned the household of God in verse 17, and elders play a big part in that; they lead the household of God. They shepherd it, as we're gonna talk about just here in a moment.

And you can add to this, and say, Nothing can hurt churches like bad leaders, especially when you're suffering, especially when you're going through a hard time. That can be devastating. I remember listening to one of those faith healers, several years ago say that, "If you're suffering, it's because you don't have enough faith." See, that can ruin someone's walk in Christ. That can be devastating to hear that. I've heard other leaders, Christian leaders say, "Well, if you don't have a cookie-cutter family like I do, it's because you don't have enough faith." And that can be just as devastating. "If your kids aren't smiling and holding hands when they come into church, if your wife isn't happy and perky all the time, if your husband isn't successful and getting ahead, there must be something wrong with you. You must be in sin." When leaders send that impression to their people, it's devastating.

Just to add to this, I read an article several years ago. I want to share this with you. It was called, "How to be the Perfect Christian Parent on Facebook." It highlights this. I thought it was pretty funny. This is all in jest, so please don't throw tomatoes at me, if you've done any of these things. But it says,

How can you tell everyone that you're the holiest person on earth? How can you be the perfect Christian parent on Facebook? I'm here to show you how this scorecard will help you gauge your status, and compare yourself to others on the World Wide Web, because after all, isn't comparison and judgment what parenting is all about?

This is a joke. Please laugh and don't get mad at me. Here's what the scorecard says, it says,

You get four points, if you post a deep theological statement from your child. Example: "Wow, I didn't expect Bobby to use the word 'soteriology' at dinner. Where did he get that? Look out, we've got a little Jonathan Edwards on our hands." And you get two points, if you post the phrase with, "Oh, my heart." Two more, if you say, "Be still my heart." And you get four points, if Daddy completes the phrase with, "Oh, my heart."

Which, I'll go ahead and tell you, don't hold your breath, 'cause most men don't have that in their vocabulary, but...

Example: "Miles just gave half his candy to his sister, because he said he wanted to be like Jesus. Oh, my heart." You get seven points, if you post pictures of your child's sermon notes. Three points, if the sermon notes correct the pastor's sermon notes. [I would love to see that. I need some help.] Six points, if you post how excited your kids are to go to church. Minus six points, if you take your children to church in a straitjacket. And finally, 25 points, if you quote anything from "Shepherding A Child's Heart" on Facebook.

Anyway, that's all in jest. That's just a joke. But to be a little serious, if you see that stuff, you can get jealous, because your family doesn't look like that. You can get discouraged, because you're not the perfect Christian parent on Facebook, at least I can say, "I'm not." I remember

watching little Jason sit over there during a sermon, and I had these dreams of the Lord parting the heavens, and coming down, and saving my little boy at six months old. And basically, he cried and left, and that was the end of that. But the point is, that kind of thing can devastate you when you're suffering, so elders shouldn't do it. That's the point here. It can wear you out when someone has that kind of attitude: "We're up here, while you're down there. We've got it figured out, while you don't. You're hurting, which means you must be immature in the faith. Maybe you don't have enough faith." Listen, read the New Testament and tell me where it ever said that someone is immature because they're suffering. It's not in there. And when leaders send that impression, it devastates their people. An elder has to be able to accommodate suffering people and messy lives.

When Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a doctor in England in the 1930s, before he was called into the Ministry, and in his book, "Spiritual Depression," he says, "You can't give the same dosage of medicine to everybody, because people are different." He gave the quote, "Jack Sprat can eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean." And he said, "So you can't treat Jack the same way you treat his wife." And the Christian life is like that, you can't prescribe the same dosage for everybody. You can't tell everybody, "You've got to fit this cookie-cutter model or you're not saved," because we're different. We have different struggles.

Some people really struggle with depression, it's a constant battle for them. There are some people, you go to them, no matter what time of day, no matter what's going on, and they're gonna be down in the dumps, or they're gonna be wrestling with it. And you go to other people, and they don't breathe the same air, 'cause they live on cloud nine. And you ask them how they're doing, and they're always excited, and you wonder, "What kind of water are you drinking? Because I want some of that." You don't counsel them the same way. And leadership is knowing what that means. The medicine's the same. The prescription, the principles are the same. It's the same God, same cross, same Saviour, but how you apply that is different. And that's Peter's point here: you have to know how to help hurting people. If you're in ministry, you have to know when to build up and when to tear down. You have to know when to be hard and when to be soft with people. You have to know when to comfort and when to confront. It's part of being in the ministry.

When I was serving at Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, the property bordered several neighbourhoods, and we would have people from the neighbourhoods come in with their problems, and concerns, and things that they had. And one day, a lady came up to a seminary student who was really upset, 'cause her baby had just died. The baby had gotten sick, and out of the blue, just, he died. She was heartbroken. And she asked the student, she said, "Did God kill my baby? Did God kill my child?" And without skipping a beat, the student said, "Yes, God killed your baby." Now, I would say that man is not ready for ministry. He's not ready to lead. You can't answer that kind of a question like that. It's the same thing when you see... I've seen men get in fights, theological fights with people in nursing homes; it's not the place for that. Or to get into some confrontational discussion at a funeral; that's not the place for that. And an elder has to realize that; he has to know how to help hurting people. "He has to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn," as Romans 12 says. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says he needs to "Encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone." 1 Timothy 3 says he has to "be prudent and sober-minded." The idea of "sober-minded", is there's a balance

to him; he knows when to say things to people. "Sensible," according to Titus 1. Jesus says he has to be merciful. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." And this is what Peter says next in chapter 5. It's all background for our text this morning. As Peter's wrapping up this letter, and getting into the home stretch here, he gives some principles of leadership, and he says, "When things are bad in the church, here's what a leader's supposed to do." He says, "When people are suffering and hurting like this, here's how an elder should handle it." And he gives us four responses.

If you're taking notes this morning, in 1 Peter 5:1-4, here are four responses an elder should have to hurting people. If you're wondering what leadership should do when people are hurting, Peter just spells it out for you here: Four responses to hurting people. This is not a comprehensive look at eldership, just to let you know. This is not gonna answer every question you've ever had about this subject. That's not the point of it here in Scripture, but it does tell you what to do when someone is hurting, as a leader. And here are several responses. The first one is this: an elder should shepherd the flock of God. That's the first response to hurting people here. An elder should shepherd the flock of God. He should care for the church the way a shepherd would, the way a Pastor would. The word "pastor" comes from the same word as the word "shepherd". And he writes this in verse 1, he says, "Therefore" [there's the word "therefore" again] 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."

Just a few things to point out here in this verse. Peter starts off with the word "I". He says, "I exhort the elders among you." That's one of the only times in this letter, where he uses the word "I" or even makes a personal reference to himself. But it seems like this discussion of eldership really struck a personal cord with him, because he calls himself (he goes on and says) "As your fellow elder." If you think about it, a man like Peter could have called himself a lot of things. He could have called himself an "Apostle" or "The spokesman of the Apostles". He was the one who spoke up all the time, often saying things he probably shouldn't have. Some people have called him, "The Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth." But he could have called himself that. He could've said "I'm the rock upon which Jesus would build His church." He could've said he's the guy in charge. According to some groups, he was the first Pope. Which is not true. But instead he says, "I'm a fellow elder." I'm just one of you guys.

The word elder here is *presbuteros* in Greek. It means "one who is mature"; mature in age, mature in the faith. And the Bible doesn't tell us where Peter served as an elder, but it seems like he was an elder over the church in Jerusalem. That's a safe guess anyway. He was part of the leadership there. Some church history says he was an elder also at the church in Antioch after Paul and Barnabas left. And that could've been what's going on here. But either way, he goes on to say he was a witness to the sufferings of Christ in verse 1. Peter had seen Jesus suffer. He had seen the trial, seen Him in the garden. And as such, he says, he was a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed. The idea here is, I've seen His suffering, so I will see His glory. I've seen His punishment, so I will see His reward.

And so will you, but let me tell you what I really like, Peter says, "Shepherd the flock of God among you." He says, "When people are suffering like this, shepherd the church, care for the people." That's a play on words in Greek. In Greek, it is *poimainó ta to poimainó*. It's the same

word twice, it means "Shepherd the sheep." I just said this is the word for "pastor". "Pastor the sheep. Be gentle with them, patient with them, show them mercy like a shepherd would." Phillip Keller was a shepherd for eight years, here in British Columbia, I believe. Some of you might've heard of him. He wrote a book called, "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23." But he was on the Island for a couple of years, and then moved to the Okanagan. And in the book on shepherding, he says that the behaviour of sheep and human beings is very similar. He said, "Sheep do not just take care of themselves, as some might suppose. They require more care than any other class of livestock. In fact, they require endless attention and meticulous care." And he went on to explain that, "Sheep are not stupid animals, they just lack certain survival skills." For instance, they don't have a sense of direction. You'll never see a sheep leading another sheep in a good direction. They don't know where they're going. And if they get away from the flock, they can't find their way back. I've told you before, "Cats can always find their way back." I won't make any comments on that. I think cats, personally, love the woods, so if you ever take cats in the woods, I'd say, "I think they like the woods," but they always find their way back. Sheep can't do that; they don't know how to come back. They have no natural defences. They have no sharp teeth or claws. I believe they have teeth on the bottom row and no teeth on the top, so if they get into a fight, all they can do is pinch. It's pretty pathetic, actually. They can't run, 'cause of their wool. They can't hide, because of their wool. How are you gonna hide as a sheep? Interestingly enough, their skin secretes large amounts of oil that permeates the wool, causing dirt and grass to stick to them, and killing them with disease, if they're not sheared on time. And because of this, Phillip Keller says, "A shepherd has to constantly be on the lookout for his sheep. They are very high maintenance animals, you can't leave them alone." He has to be constantly on the lookout for predators, constantly on the lookout for disease, constantly on the lookout for everything. And he has to be gentle with them, because they're gentle animals. You never see a sheep picking a fight with another sheep. They don't do that. And Peter's point here, is that an elder has to do the same thing with the church. An elder has to protect, and guide, and clean the church off. And when they're suffering, he has to be gentle with them like sheep.

One author says this, he says, "There's a reason the Bible calls us sheep and not fish, because you have to be gentle with sheep. You can't rough them up." John Piper says, "If you're harsh, and brash, and angry all the time, you might earn a hearing with harsh, and brash, and angry people, but you won't earn a hearing with those who are hurting." And that's the point here. I've been a Christian for many years now and I actually grew up in the world of shouting Baptists. I don't know if you guys are familiar with shouting Baptists, but, basically, the sermon starts with a shout. Well, it's going like this, and then it starts to shout, and it shouts for about 35 minutes, and then it comes back down. That is the world I grew up in. But I can say that it wasn't the shouting people who had the biggest impact on me, as a Christian; it was the gentle ones. It was the ones who shepherded me, the ones who answered the phone late at night when I called them, or it was the ones who came over to visit me when I was down, or the ones who were patient with me when I didn't get it the first, and second, and third, and fourth, and fifth times. Those are the ones. I could list names to you, but you wouldn't know any of these people. They'll only be known in eternity, who made impacts on me. Since I've been in the ministry, I've had the opportunity to watch several older men, older pastors, and I would say the ones who had the biggest impact on their people did the same thing. They didn't argue with them all the time. They didn't shout at them all the time. Some of these men probably weren't the best theologians, but they were the best shepherds.

I remember watching a pastor in Illinois come into his office first thing every week. He took Monday off, came in every Tuesday morning. First thing, he would pull up the attendance roster of his church. The church had 300 something people there on a Sunday, and he would go through the attendance roster every Tuesday morning, and see who was missing, and where they were, and what was going on in their life. See, that's a shepherd. He cared about his people. I remember another one from Detroit, who roomed with me at a conference, and every moment he got, he was calling Mrs. Jones, or texting Brother Ray to see how they were doing. The phone was just ringing off the hook all the time. That's a shepherd. The Puritans called them "churchmen", men who lived for the church. They called them the term "minister", which actually means "helper". If you call someone a "minister", the word just means "helper, one who gives aid." This is what this is talking about. This is the kind of men you want leading your church. I think so many times we get it so backwards. We think the guy has to have the nicest suit and the best voice. I've heard men preach before and they said nothing the whole sermon, but they sounded wonderful. That's not what we're going for here. You want men who love you like a shepherd would, in leadership.

I don't know if you've heard the name Robert Chapman before, but Robert Chapman was a pastor in England in the 1800s, who was very good at this. He was one of those unknown people in church history, but his contemporaries called him, "The Apostle of Love," and they said his church was, "The University of Love." They said, "If you want to know how to love, you go to Robert Chapman's church." He pastored for, I think it was 60 or 70 years. He had an enormously long life. He pastored that long in a little country town in Barnstaple, England. They said the town was so run-down, that the whole town smelled like the slaughterhouse in the middle of the town. And one day, Chapman was walking down the street in this little town, when he saw a man on the other side of the street who had been thrown out of his church for adultery. Chapman's church had gone through the church discipline process with this guy. They had called him to repentance. He didn't repent, so they had to put him out over it. And when the man saw Chapman on the other side of the street, he started to run away. And Chapman ran after him. And he caught up with him, and he gave him a hug, and he said, "Brother, I love you and our people love you. Won't you come back to Christ?" And he did. The man repented of his sins on the spot, made it right with the church. And let me ask you the question, what would have happened if Robert Chapman would've gotten in an argument with him? Nothing would've happened. What would've happened, if he would've ran him down, and stuck his finger in his face, and said, "You know what, mister? You are wrong." You see, the hug changed everything. The approach won him over. He shepherded him, won him back to the fold.

And that's what this is saying here. Listen, there's a time for a shepherd to break the sheep's legs and there's a time to be tough with them, but there's also a time to bind them up. There's also a time to put them on your shoulders, carry them home, and an elder knows how to do both of these things. He knows when to rough people... "Rough people up," that's the wrong way to say that. He knows when to be hard and when to be soft. He should never rough people up.

By the way, this whole idea of shepherding, is one of the last things Jesus talked to Peter about before He left the earth. If you remember this, Peter has just denied Jesus. He has just turned his back on the Saviour. And in John 21, it says, "When they had finished having breakfast, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? And he said to Him, 'Yes,

Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my lambs.' He said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Shepherd my sheep.'" It's the same expression He used right here. "The Lord said to him a third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' And Peter was grieved, because He said to him a third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said, 'Lord, you know all things. You know that I love You.' And Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'" And apparently, throughout the years, Peter never forgot that, because this is what he says here: "This is the job of a pastor, of an elder, of a leader in the church." And it leads to another response an elder should have to herding people, and these other one'll go a little quicker.

The next one is to exercise oversight. An elder should shepherd the flock when his people are hurting, and he should exercise oversight. He should "scope over them", as the word indicates in Greek. If you read on in verses 1-2, it says, "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, exercising oversight." The word "oversight" there is the verb form of the word *episkopos* from which we get Episcopalian. The word in verse 1, "I exhort the elders," that word "elders" is *presbuteros* from which we get the word Presbyterian. This is *episkopos* from which you get Episcopalian. These are different words for "elder". This one, the verb form in a noun, means "to scope over something or to watch over it". You guys have all seen the picture of a shepherd holding his staff and watching his sheep at night. This is the image of the word. He scans the horizon and makes sure everything is okay. It's interesting, ancient shepherds would hold the staff, maybe a slingshot or something like that, like David had. Modern day shepherds hold a gun. But this idea, they're protecting the sheep.

When George Crawford was with us in September he said, "An elder is like a night watchman. He watches over his people to see how they're doing. He doesn't have to talk all the time. He doesn't have to butt into every conversation. He doesn't have to be seen or heard, but he has to watch and listen." This is what Peter is saying. And he says, "An elder does this several different ways." For one, he says, "They exercise oversight." If you read on in verse 2, "Not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God." In other words, "An elder should volunteer for the office. He should do it, because he wants to, not because he's drug into it, kicking and screaming." 1 Timothy 3:1 says, "It's a trustworthy statement: If any man aspires to the office of overseer," that's this word in verse 2, "If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it's a fine work he desires to do." In other words, "A man should aspire to it. He should want to do it."

In the fourth century, Augustine became Bishop of Hippo in North Africa by showing up to listen to a sermon, and the bishop in the sermon said, "We need more leaders." And the crowd shouted, "We want Augustine. We want Augustine." And they grabbed him by his clothes, and drug him up on stage. That's how he became bishop. Peter says, "You're not supposed to elect men that way. You don't drag them up on stage." He says, "That's not according to the will of God." Now, the church shouldn't say, "We need so many spots to fill on the elder board, so you, you, and you, go do it." They shouldn't say, "Well, we've got these guys over here and they're really good at the behind the scenes stuff, but we need a good public speaker. Let's throw this guy up there," or "We need some more money in the church, so let's get the guy with the most money and put him up there." A church needs a man who understands the office and desires to



do it. In fact, the church needs a man who understands the office, and in some ways, does it already. You want to see a man... You don't throw a guy into office and hope he's gonna rise up to it. You put him in there after you see him in action as a shepherd.

This leads to another way an elder gives oversight. "He does it," verse 2 says, "not for sordid gain, but with eagerness," or "with passion", as the word indicates. You should be excited about the job. You guys know there's nothing worse than a passionless leader. There's nothing worse than a leader who doesn't care anymore. You got to get a guy like that out. He's not to do it for money or Peter says, "sordid gain." The King James Version says, "filthy lucre." I like that word, "filthy lucre". It's fun to say. You can pay him. 1 Timothy 5:17 says, "An elder who rules well is worthy of double honor." You can reimburse him for his services, so he has more time to do the ministry. That's good. That's fine, but you need to make sure that he's not just in it for that. There was an old country song that said, "Would Jesus wear a Rolex on His television show?" I don't know how theological that is, but it's a good question. He's not supposed to be in it for the Rolex. And Jesus said this, actually, when he said, "I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. A hired hand sees the wolf coming, and runs away, but I am the Good Shepherd, and I will not run away. I lay down My life for the sheep." Shepherds lay down their lives for the sheep. They don't run away when danger comes. They don't run away when the money's not there.

A lady once asked a man applying to be her pastor (in the candidating process she said) "Would you die for me?" It's a fair question. Shepherds should be willing to die for the sheep. One minister said, "Brothers, we're not professionals. We don't work nine to five." Another one said, "God calls prophets, not politicians into the ministry." And I might want to say a few words about this before moving on, 'cause this can be a real challenge for the church. According to a recent poll, the average pastor stays at his church for only three years and most men don't make it past ten years in the ministry. And there's a lot of reasons for that, actually. Some men are on short-term assignments, so they only stay a few years, because that's the assignment. That's the arrangement they had and there's nothing wrong with that. There are some denominations where pastors are supposed to move every couple years. But some do that 'cause they're in it for the wrong reasons. Like I just said, "They're in it for the money, and when the money runs out, they leave. They're in it for the applause, and when the applause runs out, they leave." Peter says, "You don't want a man with that kind of motivation serving as an elder. You want him there for life."

After he wrote "Pilgrim's Progress" and became one of the most popular preachers in England, John Bunyan died after riding all night to help reconcile a family. I think I've told you this story before. But he heard that a father and son were fighting, and they weren't speaking anymore. And so he got up on his horse, and he rode all night in the rain to reconcile them. He caught cold and died. You want men like that serving your church. You want men who will die shepherding the flock. It was said Thomas Watson died in his prayer closet, praying for his people. He went from glory to glory. You want men like that, men who are passionate about the work. You don't want men to say... Thomas Watson or John Bunyan, they could have said, "Boy, I've written all the works. I've gone on a speaking circuit. I've done all I need to do. Now, I'm gonna kick back, and relax, and spend all my time in Florida or somewhere." You want men who are gonna be in it for life.

And it leads to another response an elder should have to hurting people, and I'm gonna go through this one quickly (I thought it was important enough to make it a separate category): he shouldn't lord it over people. That's the third response an elder should have to hurting people: he shouldn't lord it over others. He shouldn't abuse his privilege and leadership. Leadership, especially in the church, can be a very powerful thing. You guys understand, when you tell someone God says something, do you know what kind of authority comes with that? And if you get someone in there to abuse that, you could have all kinds of problems. Peter says, "You need to watch out for this." We'll start in verse 2, "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge..." And we'll just stop there with that phrase. That's another way an elder exercises oversight, not lording it over. Some of your translations say, "Not domineering," others... That's a good translation. We could say, "Not bossing them around." The idea is they've suffered enough, so don't make them suffer more because of your leadership. They've been through enough, so don't be a bully.

And he uses the term "lord" here, which is very interesting, 'cause that's about as far apart from the word "shepherd", as you can get. A lord says, "If you have a problem, I will send my servants to help you." A shepherd says, "I am the servant. I will help you." A lord says, "If something is wrong, I will descend from my throne." A shepherd says, "I'm already down here with you."

In the ancient world, people often thought shepherds were disgusting, because they would sleep with sheep, they would eat with sheep, they did everything with them. They had to watch them 24 hours a day, because of all those problems. If you remember, even back in the book of Exodus, or Genesis even, there were times when it's said that the Egyptians would not want to eat with the Hebrews, because they were shepherds, and that was disgusting to them; they smelled like sheep. That's about as far apart from a lord as you can get. A shepherd doesn't say, "Take three pills and call me in the morning." He says, "Let me pray for you and let's go through this together." He doesn't say, "Yes, God killed your baby. Now, go away and leave me alone." He says, "I don't have all the answers and I don't know the mind of God, but I know God. I know His character and His Word, and let's talk about that together." He goes through it with them. Paul Tripp says, "You can't get someone out of the mud, without getting mud on you, yourself." That's the idea here: A shepherd is willing to get muddy with the sheep. John Owens said, "It's not the windows, or the walls, or the roof that holds up a building, but it's the stones that get stepped on. And if you want to support people, and hold up the church, you have to be willing to get stepped on too. You have to be willing to pay that price." That's what Peter is saying.

You would think someone who had done everything Peter had done, could look at these suffering people in these provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and say, "I don't know you people." By all accounts, he may never have visited these people. "I don't know you. I don't have time to write this letter. You're nobody to me." But he didn't. He cared for them like a shepherd would.

And that brings us to one more response to hurting people. An elder, he shepherds the flock of God, he exercises oversight, he doesn't lord it over them, but he serves them, he gets them out of the mud. One more response is this: he sets an example for them. That's what all this boils down

to, at the end of the day. A final response is, an elder sets an example. People should be able to look to their leadership, and imitate them, and do what they do. They should be able to copy them on some level and that's what Peter says in verse 3. He says, "nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

The word "example" there is the Greek word *typos* from which we get the word "type". It referred to an impression that was made after a blow was struck on something, and the idea is that Jesus has made an impression on these men, and now, they need to go and make an impression on others. Christ has shepherded them, and now, they need to shepherd the church, which is what verse 4 says.

It says, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." That phrase "Chief Shepherd" is a good way to close this out, because after talking about shepherds, Peter reminds them who the Chief Shepherd is. After saying, "Don't lord it over others," he reminds them who the Lord is. He says, "You're gonna have to answer to somebody for this. And if you serve Him faithfully, you will receive a crown of unfading glory." That crown is called an "incorruptible crown" or a "crown of righteousness" in other passages of Scripture. James 1:12 talks about this crown when it says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life." Revelation 2:10 says, "Don't fear what you're about to suffer, for I will give you the crown of life." It's a reward given to those who serve Christ faithfully. Any Christian can receive this, but the idea here is, that elders will also receive it, if they're faithful, if they do all the things talked about in this passage.

Which leads me to tie it off this way. We're not at a stage in the life of our church where we have elders yet, but we will have them one day. And one day, we'll have a plurality of men to lead and guide us like this. And I think it's important, even now, to talk about what we're looking for. We're not looking for men to fill a board or hold an office. We're not looking for men who are good at business or public speaking, although those things are great. We're not looking for wealthy men or the tallest men, thank the Lord, 'cause I'm not very...By the way, the word "Paul" means "small", so I think I'm in good company. Paul was a small man. We're looking for shepherds. We're looking for men like this. Again, this is not the comprehensive account. This is part of the picture.

If you want to see other passages on eldership, 1 Timothy 3-5 talks about it a lot. Titus 1 says quite a bit about eldership. But in this passage it says, we want men who are willing to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn. We want men who are able to help hurting people. We want men who are ready. Like I said, we don't want to put someone in office and hope they figure it out. We want them to have some handle of it already. And what I want to ask you to do this morning, is will you pray for these men? Will you pray for the Lord to give us shepherds? Will you pray for the future leaders of Grace Fellowship Church? When he was training men for the ministry, John Wesley said, he said, "Give me 100 men who fear nothing, but sin, and desire nothing, but God, and they will shake the gates of hell." Can I ask you this morning, would you pray for men who will shake the gates of hell? Can you pray for men who will fear nothing, but sin, desire nothing, but God, and men who know how to love people? I pray for that everyday, because I think you deserve that. I've been a pastor here for almost a year

now. January 18th will be my one-year anniversary. And I would say you are a wonderful congregation to serve. I have been blessed out of my socks, being here this past year. All the smoke aside and all the rain, you guys have been great. And I don't think you deserve anything less than this.

And this is what I want to see for you, in the life of our church, so for the next year or so, I'm gonna be training up men for this office with the help of Grace Advance. Carl Hargrove, and Hohn Cho, and George Crawford are available to help us in this. We want to take the time to train men up for this ministry and get them ready. And you can help by praying, and even identifying the men who you see that look like this. You know what to look for, it's spelled out for you right here, so if you see men who are like this, you can let me know. You can also encourage those men who are serving in ministry here. We have a lot of men who are doing ministry here at Grace Fellowship Church. We're very busy for a church of our size. It's wonderful. And those men, who are in the ministry, doing the work of the ministry, are doing a good thing, and you want to build them up, and encourage them to excel still more. But in all this, we can pray and ask the Lord's blessings in the days ahead. Close with these words from Paul, he said, "It's a trustworthy statement: If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it's a fine work he desires to do." Let's pray for the men who will aspire to this in the future. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for this word here about Biblical leadership. It's very different from the leadership of the world, and in some ways, it takes the world's standard, and it turns it on its head. The world looks for lords. The world looks for people to talk from on high, on top of their horse, and yet, You say here You want men who will be in the trenches with their people. Lord, I pray for that for Grace Fellowship Church. I thank you for the saints here. They have made this last year a year of joy for me. And I know they'll do that for anyone who leads here, so we pray for that in the future.

Lord, I pray for those who are doing the work, men and women alike, who are doing the work of helping hurting people. I hear over, and over, and over again, from folks in the church who are suffering, that so-and-so reached out to them, and so-and-so cared for them, and so-and-so prayed for them. Lord, I praise You for that. I praise You for those who are doing this hard work of getting in people's lives, and getting in the mud, and getting in the mire, and in some cases, probably getting stepped on for Your glory. May that continue, Father. May we be a church who loves one another like this and may You receive all the glory for it. As we approach Your table, Lord, help us to remember what Christ has done for our sins, how He has died and rose again, that we may be one and we may care for one another, like this passage talks about. We pray this all in Christ's name. Amen.