

Series: Rooted: Knowing Our Role in the Kingdom of God

Title: The Elder: The Role of the Shepherd Leader

Text: 1 Peter 5:1-5

Breaking the Ice:

OPTION # 1 – Do you ever participate in a bracket challenge? If so, how do you pick your teams?

OPTION # 2 – What are your thoughts on “springing forward”? If you could stop it, would you?

Discussion/Study:

1. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 (see also Titus 1:5) – As we see from Peter’s address, the common practice of the early church was to be ruled by a group of representative leaders, called “elders”, who were elected the local congregation according to the qualifications of God’s Word. In this way, God provided his church a pattern of government with a plurality of leaders who shared the responsibilities of shepherding and overseeing. What model of church government have you personally experienced before and how do they differ from the Biblical model of Presbyterian eldership that we see in passages like 1 Peter 5:1-5?
2. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 – One of the primary responsibilities of an elder is to share in the responsibility of shepherding the flock of God’s people. Using the metaphor of a shepherd, this includes five main responsibilities:
 1. Direct – Provide healthy direction [green pastures, still waters]
 2. Tend – To care for their wounds when they are hurting
 3. Correct – To lovingly and firmly redirect them when they are going astray
 4. Defend – To protect them from danger (such as wolves, bears, lions)
 5. Chase – To pursue them when they wander off or disappear

However, for each of these aspects of shepherding to occur it is essential that the Shepherd (“elder”) knows their sheep / members and every member knows their shepherd (“elder”).

Using the five aspects of shepherding above, what does it look like for you as a member to invite your elder in to exercise each one of these aspects? Is there a particular action you step you need to take to enlist the shepherding care of your elder?

3. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 – In addition to being responsible to shepherd the members of the church, the elders also share the responsibility of making decisions as “overseers / bishops”. This differs from other models of church government where every member of a church decides everything (congregationalist) or where there is only one person in the church who

ultimately decides everything (hierarchical). What is the benefit of having a representative group of leaders who are elected by a local church to make decisions? Likewise, what must be true in a church for this Biblical system to be effective?

4. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 – While being an elder is an enormous and beautiful privilege, it can also be hard. The challenges of leading in the church can cause elders to combat three temptations as leaders: (1) Leading because “somebody’s got to it”; (2) Leading because “you pay me”; (3) Leading because they take pride in telling other people what to do, i.e., “just do what I tell you.” In contrast, Peter reminds the elders that they should lead willingly, eagerly, and in humility as an example. Reflect on why it is so important for an elder to avoid these temptations. What will happen in the church if its elders lead out of these wrong motivations rather than a genuine love for Christ and his people?
5. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 – One of the greatest roles an elder can have on the people they lead is as an “example” to their flock. Michael gave a few concrete examples of ways in which he has personally learned from the example of his fellow elders at North Cincinnati. What are some ways in which you have personally learned from the example of your elder(s)?
6. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 – Peter also reminds us that every shepherd both “needs” and “has” a Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ who has suffered for His people. In this way, the motivation for every leader is the same as every member, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory He offers to His sheep when He returns. For this reason, Peter concludes in verse 5 by saying that the key for everyone - “members” and “leaders” - is humility. Why is it so important for both members and leaders to remain humble? Why is it that humility enables us to receive God’s grace?