

# Overview of Biblical Eldership: All Elders are Pastors

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Today, I actually am going to have you turn to Ephesians, but not to pick up our exposition of the letter, but rather to dive in in Ephesians 4 as kind of a launching pad for a sermon that's going to take us all over Scripture. But before we start, you can find that text, Ephesians 4:7 In fact, we'll read the text and then pray. Ephesians 4:7-13 Read along with me.

“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, (it says,) when He ascended on high, He led a host of captives (or He led captivity captive)...” And what Paul is specifically wanting to target right here from Psalm 68 is the fact that He gave gifts to men. - there's grace. It's given according to the measure of Christ's gift. - “He (Christ) gave gifts to men.”

Now there's a little aside here. The ESV has parenthesis. Because Paul's going to say a little bit here about the ascension and the descension before he gets back to talking about the giving of the gifts.

So, very quickly, these two verses in saying He ascended, what does it mean, but that He had also descended into the lower regions of the earth. Basically, He had come from heaven down to earth. He who descended is the One Who also ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things, and in having done that, He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers - and I will tell you, this message deals specifically with shepherds. V. 11, “the shepherds.” “He gave the shepherds.” Or your Bible may say, “the pastors.” For what reason? To equip the saints for the work of ministry. For building up the body of Christ. “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Now, I recognize, He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teacher to equip the saints for all of this, but I want to specifically target the shepherds, the pastors. That's where we're going today. Let's pray.

*Father, I pray that Your Word may it be a lamp unto our feet. Lord, my desire is that this church be guided by Your Word. I want to be biblical. I want our church to be biblical. I want our leaders to be biblical. Lord, we want to do things according to this truth that You've given to us. You've directed us. You've given us a great body of words put together into thoughts that show us the very mind and will of our God. And we pray, Lord, we know from 1 Corinthians 2 that we need help to properly discern and recognize the realities, to see and to understand and to comprehend aright, to feel in proper balance, to grasp truth. We need to be led by the Spirit. We need to be guided by the Spirit. We are spiritual people, and we pray that the Spirit would feed us with this spiritual food. We ask it in Christ's name, Amen.*

Now, I have three main points. Identity. The second one is equality and diversity. The third is humility. So, identity. We want to identify these shepherds. Second, we want to show that there is an equality, but there is also a diversity. And then I want to end by targeting humility.

# Identity

And under this first heading of identity, I have a number of subpoints. The derivation of this word, the definition of this word, the description of those who are these sorts of people. The origination of pastors. The designation of these guys. How are they called? Before we move on the second point. Derivation - I want to talk about that. Derivation. (Incomplete thought) Now, see, right from the beginning I want to tell you. You say, why are we looking at this? Well, we're looking at this for this reason: That we want to grasp properly what are pastors? Who are they in the church? Where do they fit? How do they relate to one another? Who are they? Where are they? Where are they in Scripture? Where are they in the church? We're in a season where we have multiple elders in the church. We're considering, and have considered, the possibility of more elders in the church. What are we talking about when Scripture says that Jesus Christ gave gifts to men and He gave shepherds? What are we talking about?

Well, we use the term pastor today. But there's a lot of traditional garbage actually, that is attached to the idea of pastor. Leaders in churches, they can be called doctor, people are called reverend, or even, ridiculously, the most reverend. But, people are called pastors. And a lot of times, we've kind of lost why we do that. It's more just a traditional thing that we throw titles around. We throw these tags around. And maybe not a lot of thought goes into it. Maybe it's more of a traditional thing that you're used to. Let me tell you something. The term "pastor" - what's its derivation? Where is it derived from? Basically, it comes from the Latin. In Latin, there is a word "pastor." What's that word? Well, it's basically shepherd. It's a herdsman. It's one who tends the flock. When we use the term pastor, you need to understand right away, what you are saying is shepherd. That's it. You see a shepherd out in the fields - when we were just over in Europe, we saw lots of sheep in the fields. A shepherd is one who tends the sheep. That's what a pastor is. The Greek word is poimen. The Latin word is pastor. The English word is shepherd. Yes, it has become pastor by way of pulling the Latin over. But I'm afraid that often when we use the term pastor, we don't think shepherd. We rather oftentimes think the guy that preaches most, he's got a designated parking place out here, he's got an office in the church - a lot of times we think that. It's like the one guy that heads up the church. But you don't want to think that way. The word means shepherd. And we need to think about this. This is a gift that is given to the church. What is the gift? The gift is a shepherd. This word pastor is not used in the Bible as a title for people; it's used as a description of the kind of gift that a man has who has been given to the church. This gift of shepherd has been given by Christ to the church to equip you. So let's think practically, what does this look like? Well, I think one of the best places - maybe perhaps two or three places that we can look at that really define shepherd for us in biblical terms is found in our Old Testaments. Perhaps one is in Isaiah - I don't want to look there right now. The two I want to look at - one is in Ezekiel 34, the other one in Zechariah 11. But turn to Ezekiel 34. Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 11 actually show us bad shepherds. They're both texts where God finds fault with the shepherds in Israel. And He's not talking about men who oversee literal sheep. He's talking about the spiritual leaders in Old Testament Israel. And they're called shepherds. The Latin hadn't come along yet. The term pastor was not used yet. Notice this. Ezekiel 34:1 And the reason I want to go through this is because the things that you find God fault these pastors for, it ought to tell you that the opposite, the thing that they're not doing, that they should be doing. Or the thing that they are doing that God labels as bad, if you're a good shepherd, you're doing the opposite. Right? That's why I want you to look at this. Because this is going to give you an idea about what the shepherds ought to be doing. I know, you've got this idea about a shepherd with sheep, and obviously lead them to

green pastures and still waters, and you want to make sure that they get fed. Yes. That's right. We have that imagery. But let's see it. Let's see what God expects. "The Word of the Lord came to me," says Ezekiel, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, even to the shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord God. (Oh, we don't want this said of us.) (Ever.) Ah, shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding yourselves. Should not shepherds feed the sheep?' We should feed the sheep. Especially feed them with the Word. But this isn't God saying, Oh, you're feeding yourself with the Word. You're in the Word everyday. You're studying Scripture, and you're not giving it to them. That's not what's happening here. What they're doing is they're using God's people for their own pleasure, for their own profit, for their own increase. "You eat the fat. You clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep." Brethren, whether it's Old Testament or New Testament, food - food is behind health. One of the primary functions of the shepherd or the herdsman is to make sure that the sheep are eating the right food. Nothing poisonous, nothing that's going to destroy them, nothing that's going to harm them, nothing that's going to agitate their whole system. Good food. Notice this, "The weak you have not strengthened." So a good shepherd should be strengthening the weak. The sick you have not healed. You know we always have spiritually sick people in the church. Always. The elders here see that all the time. "The injured you have not bound up." Obviously, God is speaking here in spiritual terms, and we should be thinking the same way too. People become injured spiritually. It's not just we're watching out for the physical maladies that take place, but this is a spiritual reality of injury. "The strayed you have not brought back. The lost you have not sought. And with force and harshness, you have ruled them." They don't care about the flock. It's forced. It's harshness. Because all they're concerned about is having the flock to do what they want the flock to do. And basically, that is feed them. Give to them. Make them great. "So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts." That's another thing. We are to protect from the beasts. And they're everywhere. "My sheep were scattered." There's wolves.

Brethren, there are wolves. And they come in sheep's clothing. But no matter how they come and how they're disguised, there's lions that go about. Roaring lions seeking to devour. "They wandered over the mountains and every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them. Therefore, you shepherds hear the Word of the Lord, as I live declares the Lord God, surely because My sheep have become a prey and My sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd..." Isn't this interesting? He's calling them shepherds and yet He says there was no shepherd. No true shepherd. You know, you can have churches where you call men "pastor," and there be no true pastor in that church. Names don't make people. They never do. "Because My shepherds..." Isn't that interesting - there's no shepherd, and because My shepherds "have not searched for My sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed My sheep." You see, they're living their life more concerned about their ease, their pleasure, their comfort, their stuff, their food, their house, their clothing, their cars, their retirement, their stuff, their money, their increase... and that consumes their mind and they're not thinking about the flock. And brethren, I can tell you this, all you have to do is look at a man's life and you can tell whether that's the case. "Therefore you shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord, 'Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds.'" And this is a fearful thing. "I will require My sheep at their hand." Brethren, you have this in the New Testament. You are to obey your leaders. Why? They keep watch over your souls, and they have to give an account. And God's going to require it. It's a fearful thing. It is a fearful

thing. Many men like to just charge right into wanting to be leaders in the church. But God's going to require it. It makes me tremble, brethren. And I know this, on that day of judgment, John isn't going to be there. David's not going to be there. James - not going to be there. Tawfiq's not going to be there. I'm going to be standing before the Lord by myself. You know it. And our work and how we built is going to be tested by fire. "I will require My sheep at their hand and will put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue My sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them." And I'll just say this, brethren, again, an Old Testament prophet Jeremiah says, "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them." How? Christ gives them to the church. That's what we saw in Ephesians 4. He gives real shepherds to the church of His own making who will watch over the flock and take care of it. "And they shall fear the sheep no more nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord." Now I want you to turn to Zechariah 11, just three verses here. Again, this is the negative. As you can see from the negative what the positive ought to look like. Zechariah 11 Right before Malachi. "Then the Lord said to me, (This is Zechariah now speaking) 'Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd.'" So already you see, this is not a good shepherd; this is a foolish shepherd. "For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young." You see what a bad shepherd does? He doesn't care for those being destroyed. Whether it's destroyed in this world or headed to eternal destruction, there's no care, there's no concern, there's no outrage. "Or seek the young." "Or heal the maimed." The ESV says here, "Or nourish the healthy." Even the healthy sheep need to be taken care of. "But devours the flesh of the fat ones." Do you see the issue again?

Listen, men are in ministry for a reason. It's either because God has called them or they're hoping some way or another to get something else out of it. Maybe just a paycheck. There was a day - you could go back and read about many men who went to seminary, who went to school to become leaders in the church - they did it because it earned good money. Not because they were called to it. "Tearing off even their hooves. Woe to my worthless shepherd who deserts the flock. May the sword strike his arm and his right eye. Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded." I'll tell you, better to never step into such a position than to step in it and not be faithful. God will require it of you. It is no small thing. So, origination. What's the source? Well, let's think more about this. Go back to Ephesians 4. We've mentioned that it comes from Christ. Christ gives these. But let's focus in on this a bit more. Ephesians 4:7 And brethren, I feel this. Every one of these descriptions - each one makes me feel smaller and each one just fills with a responsibility. Paul talked about who is sufficient for these things. And undoubtedly, he of all men had a right to say that with everything that was committed to him. But having God's people committed to you, what a thing that is. Ephesians 4:7 Now notice this, "Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." We see it. Christ's gift. "Therefore it says, when He ascended on high, He led a host of captives." Or He led captivity captive. That's the literal. "And He gave gifts to men." Now you need to see the picture here. "In saying He ascended, what does it mean, but that He also descended into the lower regions of the earth. He Who descended is the One Who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things and He gave..." these gifts. Which include shepherds. Now, what you want to notice here, when I talk about the origination, where do they come from? They come from Christ. But more than that, they come as a result of His ascension. And that is being emphasized. You know what Paul is doing? Do you know what used to happen when a general or a king would go off to war? And he would conquer? You can read about these things. These great generals. You read about

Titus who went and defeated Jerusalem. And he came home. And do you know what he came home with? He came back to Rome. And they would have this main highway, this main street where it was the street of victory. Oftentimes, you go to major cities, and they have these streets that lead up to their capitol building, or lead up to some great edifice of their national pride. (incomplete thought) And there was an arch in Rome. Was there not? Through which the conquerors would walk and they would come home and what happened? I'll tell you what - Titus, after he defeated Jerusalem, he came home with a hundred thousand Jews that were made slaves. Do you know what you would do? You would walk in and typically chained and naked behind the great conqueror would be the leaders, the generals, perhaps even the king of those who were conquered, and they would be walking and there would be people lining the street and they would be shouting out, that he's been victorious! Victory cries! And he's leading captivity captive. I hate the way the ESV has that. Because when you think about leading captivity captive, what are you saying? You're saying one of two things: Either those who were captive, I've delivered and they're now captive to me, which would be a picture of Christianity. But I think that's not the picture here. I think the picture of those who held others captive, He's now taken captive. You know, there's similarities between what we have here in Ephesians and what's over in Colossians. In Colossians, it says, "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in the cross." Or in Revelation 5:5, "Weep no more. Behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered." Who has He conquered? He's conquered the devil. And He's conquered death. And He's conquered sin. They held men captive. They were the captors. And He's taken the captors captive. That's what's happened. And He's coming victorious. And you know what was typical? To have the great general come, and he's got all the spoils of war. Because I guarantee you, you don't take Jerusalem without taking all Jerusalem's gold and silver and precious stones and all their art work, and all their riches. And you bring it home to Rome. And you know what they did? They shelled out lots of it to their soldiers, but they also gave it to the population in general. They bestowed gifts. That's what conquerors did. That's the picture of Christ. He soars through the heavens. He's ascended. Why? Because He died. He resurrected. And now He's ascended. And He's entering the gates of glory, and He's triumphant. And there's captivity captive. And He gives gifts to men. This is a picture of the triumphant general. What you need to recognize is this: Do you know why you have pastors? Because Christ paid the price. Yes, He went to the cross to redeem us. But He rose from that grave and He rose ascended that He might give gifts to men. And I'll tell you this, how does the gift come? The gift comes by the Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit makes us overseers. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts. But you know what Jesus said? He looked at His disciples and He said it is more profitable for Me to go - to ascend to My Father, because if I ascend, I'm going to send the Spirit to you. What you need to recognize is this: Jesus needed to ascend in order to send the Spirit, and in the sending of the Spirit, all the spiritual gifts that we have in this church. Do you recognize without the ascension there's no gifts? Do you recognize if He doesn't resurrect, He doesn't ascend? He died and He rose triumphant that He might give gifts to men. Pastors come at great cost to Christ. They don't just happen. They don't just come in off the streets. It cost Christ much for us to happen. That's where pastors come from. You know, there's a really faulty idea that pastors come from seminaries. That is so common in many circles. Not in this church, but in many places, that is a common mindset. Churches don't make pastors. Individuals don't make themselves pastors. They come from Christ. It's a gift from the risen, ascended Christ. Think about this. Men who are able to feed the flock, tend the flock, nurture the flock, to be an example, who pursue the sick and bring

back the stray, and show mercy to the doubting. Men who can preach and teach and protect. They know the Bible. They can protect the people from bad doctrine. From wolves. Men like that. Men who are faithful. Isn't that what Timothy was told? He needs to seek out faithful men. Men that are faithful. What's that? When the wolves are coming, they don't abandon the flock. When times get hard, they don't run. They don't sit down. They don't stay in bed. When it's difficult, they don't flee. And I'll tell you, there's a thousand temptations to want to throw in the towel. But they won't do it. Why? Because they know, they are called to watch out for God's people. And because in God having His Son rise and ascend and give these gifts, and when that gift is given, that means that Christ - you have to see what's happening here - Christ is bestowing a measure of grace, enabling grace to men to be able to do these things. And He puts within them also a desire to do it, a burden to be responsible to do it. They're not going to run. They're willing to lay down their lives. Stay at their post. Shepherd the flock of God that is among them and exercise good, godly oversight. Such men don't accidentally appear. Christ went to the cross and He came forth the conqueror that He might bestow such gifts on the church. Now, here's the thing, I want us to think about designation. OK, so we know that Christ has given the gift of pastors to the church. But the question I have for you is this: Where are they? You say what do you mean? They're right there in Ephesians 4. Yeah, but where else are they? Who are they? Where do you find them in the rest of Scripture? Show me anybody who's called "pastor." Which remember, it's the word "shepherd." Show me anywhere where any man in the New Testament church is called a pastor or called shepherd. See, we do that traditionally. It's happening all over the United States today. Men are called, "Hey, Pastor." Show me one example of that in Scripture. Guess what? There's only one in the New Testament who is called "pastor." Do you know who that is? Christ said, "I am the Good Shepherd." The Overseer and Shepherd of our souls. That's how Scripture speaks. Designation. The truth is, no specific person in the New Testament is given the title of pastor. Paul isn't called a pastor. Peter is not called a pastor. James - I'm not talking about James the brother of John, I'm talking about James, the brother of Jesus, who became definitely a chief among the elders at Jerusalem, never is he called pastor. Nobody is called pastor. Jesus isn't only called Shepherd/Pastor, He's called the Good Shepherd. He's called the Chief Shepherd. You find men like this, Colossians 4:17 Don't turn there. "I say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." It's interesting. Scripture calls these men out. It gives them no titles, except two. And it's never pastor. That's interesting. Christ alone bears the title. So who are they? If Christ ascended to give these gifts to the church - the gift of pastor - where are they? They're here. They're in the New Testament. And there's two primary verses that help us see exactly where they are. Let's look at them. Acts 20:28 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and (implied) pay careful attention to all the flock." Now, that flock language ought to be a giveaway, we're dealing with shepherds. When you're told to pay careful attention to the flock, good indicator this is the herdsman; this is the pastor being addressed. The pastors being addressed. "In which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Now in Ephesians, the idea is the gift of Christ.

Here, the idea is that the Holy Spirit makes overseers. Who are the overseers? The ones who are to pay careful attention to all the flock. You see the different terminology that's being used. Overseers are to pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock to shepherd them. Now, your Bible may say something else. It may say to care for or to feed. Let me tell you this. This is the verb for pastor. We call men pastor. What they do is pastor the flock. There's a noun. There's a verb. This is the verb. This is the verb "to pastor" or "to shepherd." Who does it? The overseers. Pay careful attention to the flock. And they pastor the flock. The church of God, which He obtained with

His own blood. Now, I'll tell you these guys that are being addressed are also called something else. What else are they called? Look back up in v. 17. Acts 20:17 "Now from Myletus, Paul sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him." If you want to know who he's talking to from v. 18 down to v. 28 and beyond, he's speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus. So who are the pastors? You see it. It's the elders. The elders are responsible to pastor, to shepherd, to feed, to tend, to care for the flock. Now notice this: Is Paul singling out one man from among the Ephesian elders and telling him to pastor the flock? Does he say, OK, well, we've got this whole body, this council of elders, but you're the pastor. You - this individual over here - one man who maybe does most of the preaching. That's not the case. All the elders are overseers. All the elders oversee the flock. All the elders pastor the church of God. What do you call somebody whose responsibility is to pastor the church of God? What do you call them? Maybe pastor? What do you call men who are called to shepherd the flock? They're shepherds. If somebody is given a charge of overseeing the church, what do you call them? Overseers. Who are these overseers/pastors? They're the elders.

Brethren, what you need to recognize is this: Every single elder in this church has a responsibility to pastor this church. All the flock. Did you notice that? All is in there. Every elder has a responsibility to tend to, to take careful attention of, to oversee, to shepherd all the flock. Every single person in the flock. I think you can see that. Paul doesn't single out a certain man. He's speaking to every single one of the elders from the church at Ephesus and charging every single one of them to pastor all the flock. And the thing is, Paul isn't simply making a suggestion here or telling the elders, well, you know what, elder, you might be able to rise up someday sometime to be a pastor, although now you're just a lowly elder. That's not what is happening here. He looks at every single one of these elders and he doesn't single out one. Was there a possibility that one had been an elder there longer than the rest? Was there a possibility that one did more preaching than the rest? Was there a possibility that the man that made up that eldership were differently and variously gifted and they did different things? Yes, absolutely, but you need to recognize this, no matter who they were, no matter how they were gifted, no matter how long they had been elders or what their age was or what their giftedness was or their ability to handle the Word of God, or their ability to nurture people or whatever... he said this to all of them. You have a responsibility to pastor, to shepherd, to feed, to tend all the flock. The church of God which He purchased with His own blood. There's a high price on the line here. And this isn't Paul, this is inspired. You've got to go behind Paul. This is God looking at these men and saying, I bought these people with My blood. Brethren, what you need to recognize is this: Get away from using pastor as a title. Because Scripture doesn't do it. When you call a man pastor, which every elder in this church is, do you know what you're saying to him? You're saying "shepherd." And you're not implying so much a title - now you might traditionally imply things by that word, but if you're going to be biblical, you know what you're saying when you call a man shepherd? God has called you to watch over my soul. God has called you to feed me. God has called you to tend to me. The people who He's bought with His own blood. And there's going to be an accountability in the end. And don't miss that it's the Holy Spirit here Who makes overseers. You see it. These men did not apply for the position. Look, that doesn't mean that it's wrong for a man to desire. But you need to recognize that if somebody is an overseer, the Spirit of God made them that. If somebody is a pastor, they're a gift from Christ. This is not a man-made aspect of the church. They weren't put in this position because they had more money, or were more popular, or happened to be a family member of somebody who was already in the leadership, or was

more well-liked or successful in the business world. Only the Holy Spirit can equip a man for this work. Only the Holy Spirit can create the character, the gift, and the compulsion to qualify a man. By compulsion I mean with the gift and with the character, there needs to come a desire to want to do it. Just because a man may be exceptionally gifted and sound wonderful in the pulpit, if he's not going to be committed to the rigors of praying for and pursuing God's people and dealing with the problems. Brethren, a shepherd who watches over sheep understands something. Sheep don't have great defenses against enemies. They tend to stray. They have no offensive weapons. They don't have vicious teeth or vicious claws or high speed ability. They're vulnerable. And they tend to go astray and they tend to do stupid things. And the thing is, in all of this, even though there are shepherds and there's sheep, the shepherds themselves are sheep doing the shepherding. I read someplace where sheep will actually be together in the herd, and a wolf will come and tear one of them to shreds, and the one next to it won't even run. It just will stand there oblivious. Almost like it's wanting to refuse to accept the fact that his brother's being torn to shreds.

Now look, you have to recognize, in eternity past, God could have created things any way He wanted to. He created sheep the way He created sheep on purpose because they were going to be a picture of us. And so brethren, to pastor the flock, if you imagine it an easy thing, it's not. It's often a discouraging thing that draws forth sighs. It's a burden. It's a burden, because when you know that there's problems in the church or there's problems in people's lives - I know how it is with me and I'm assuming it's like this with the rest of my brothers who seek to lead this church - that every time there's a problem, it's another thing that you actually feel the weight of laid on your shoulders. It doesn't mean that we always execute a response that is perfect in accord with the burden that's been laid on us. Sometimes it's just a matter of we can't get to every single thing. But it is an incredible responsibility. Before any man pridefully or lightly runs, you just want to be real certain you make sure you know Who owns this flock. This church. Shepherd the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. God says take care of My people. So the other text is found in 1 Peter 5. Let's quickly turn over there. Why am I taking you here? Again, remember what we're dealing with: designation. How do you designate the men who are called to oversee you as sheep? Notice right off, "I exhort the elders..." Here it is again. We have the same three words that we had back there in Acts 20:28 and Acts 20:17. We have the term elder. We have the term overseer or oversight, rather. And we have the verb form for shepherd. Who is called to shepherd the flock? Here it is. "I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd..." Your Bible may say feed, but again, this is the verb form of pastor. Who is supposed to pastor? The elders. Not one of the elders. Not a lead elder. Not the elder above the other elders. All the elders. Equally. "I exhort the elders, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight." The overseer word. The episcopas word. We get Episcopalian from it. Oversight. "Not under compulsion." There is a compulsion. It's a willing one. It's not a compulsion of unwillingness. "As God would have you. Not for shameful gain..." Again, motive - why are you doing it? What do you hope to get out of it? And the shameful gain isn't always money. It's the respect you think you'll get. The notoriety, the appreciation, the pat on the back, there's lots of ways that we can describe shameful gain. "...but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge." Now listen, to say not domineering doesn't mean - when it talks about the overseers of your souls, the elders, they reprove you. They rebuke you. Scripture talks about that. Repeatedly, in the book of Revelation, it talks about Christ pastoring - that's the word - with a rod of iron.

Phillip Keller I remember there was a book that was written on shepherding from a shepherd's perspective.



He shepherded sheep in New Zealand. And I remember, I believe John MacArthur tells this story about the shepherd having to break the legs on one of the male sheep who kept wandering away and would lead others away. And finally he broke his legs. And then when he would come to feed him, it would try to bite him. So he left him there to starve until he was so famished that he would let him feed him. And he would feed him by his own hands. And then he would put him around his shoulder because he had broken legs, and he would carry him like that until he was healed and well. And then he was the most loyal of the sheep. I only spell that out because when it says not domineering, it doesn't mean that shepherds never have to be strong or rebuke or reprove or discipline people out of the church, do strong things which love demands. "...not domineering over those in your charge." Brethren, I'll tell you what domineering is all about. It's when the leadership begins to make its own rules not found in Scripture. Its own ways. It's when it oppresses the flock for their own purposes. Brethren, there's a time when love demands that we be strong with people. That's not domineering. "...being examples to the flock." Not like those Pharisees who do what they say, but you don't want to imitate them. We need to be examples to the flock. And we recognize this, rarely does a flock rise higher than its leaders. That's just a reality. "And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." The elders. Now, overseer is the episcopos word group. Elders - that's the presbuteros - we get Presbyterian from that. The elders are to exercise oversight, but they are to shepherd the flock that is among you. Again, I just ask you this, are the elders supposed to shepherd? Yes. Are they supposed to provide oversight? Yes. What do you call people who shepherd? Shepherds. What do you call people who pastor? (Same word) You call them pastor. That's where they are. You want to know where these pastors who are a gift from Christ, where are they in the New Testament? Nobody's ever given the title, except Christ. But if you want to know where they are in the local church, look at the elders. Not just the guy who you happen to notice is in the pulpit more than others. That's not it. It's every single man who is an elder. He is an overseer. He is to exercise oversight. And he is to tend, to feed, to shepherd, to pastor the flock. That's the reality. That's what we see here. The idea here is shepherd the flock. It's an aorist imperative. You're to do it. You're to do it effectively. You're not to delay. There's a sense of urgency. You can see it there. Certain men - they have this charge: To shepherd, to feed.

So let me ask you this: What's an appropriate term for any leader in the church? Elder, yes. Overseer, yes. Pastor, yes. Every one of them is suitable. Every one of them is biblical. Now, I just want to point something out. Many of you may not be aware of this. Any of you that have ever read the King James Version, you may be aware of this. The King James Version has subscripts at the ends of - and the ones I'm specifically interested in right now are the ones at the end of the pastoral epistles. Let me tell you something. They are not inspired. They don't have a verse number. They're tacked on. They're not inspired. And in fact, I would say they are erroneous. You say what are you talking about? Let me give you an example. The one at the end of 2 Timothy says, "the second epistle unto Timothy ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians. Was written from Rome when Paul was brought before Nero the second time." All you have to do is read your New Testaments thoroughly concerning Timothy, and you will find Timothy was no first bishop of Ephesus. Paul sent him to Ephesus to correct some things, but by the time you get to the second epistle, he is no longer at Ephesus. And in fact, what was he? He was an apostolic delegate, or an apostolic representative, much like some of the other men: Titus, Epaphras, men who were sent around to different places. Your New Testaments never call any specific individual by the title of bishop. Yes, they're called overseers. It's the same word - I recognize. But, it's never applied specifically to one man. Like that's Overseer

Paul. Or that's Bishop Peter. That kind of terminology simply isn't used in the New Testament. Listen, there's also a subscript behind Titus that says, "It was written to Titus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretans from Necopolis of Macedonia." Again, that is not right. All you have to do is read Titus to recognize Titus was not being sent to be the bishop of a single church at Crete or among the Cretans. He was sent specifically to ordain elders, appoint elders in all of the churches. And keep moving on. Again, an apostolic delegate. Those subscripts are not inspired. Listen, I'll tell you what they are. They are a little picture into the insight of an erroneous mindset about church leadership among the Episcopalian church years ago when the King James Bible was written. It is not biblical. There is not a single bishop in the churches. Now, I'll tell you, historically there did become that model and it's reflected in statements like this, but it is an aberration from the purity of the first and early church's leadership model found in Scripture. Let's be clear on that.

## **Equality & Diversity**

OK, very quickly, equality and diversity. I want to talk about equality very quick. What does Scripture say about this? First observation: it's equally true of all church leaders in the New Testament that none is ever addressed or identified as being the pastor. Now, I've already made the point: no specific individual is even ever called pastor, except Christ. But make sure you recognize this: since nobody's called pastor, it goes without saying probably that nobody is ever called "the" pastor. And yet, that is such common terminology today. And I know, brethren, that there are some in this church who regard me that way. But see the problem with that kind of terminology is "the" - that article is foreign to Scripture. And what it does is it makes it sound like I have a responsibility to tend your soul and the other elders don't. Somehow you're putting me into a category that you're not putting the other elders into. And that simply is not biblical. It's not right. There is an equality in authority among the elders. There is an equality in responsibility to pastor among the elders. There is an equality that the term overseer works with all of us. There is an equality that the term elder works for all of us. And there is an equality that the term pastor works for all of us. And that's what these verses help us to see. Brethren, if you just simply go - here's this historian Luke, and he gives us his two volumes. The second volume is all about the early church. Do you know what's amazing to me? It's almost like Luke goes out of his way to not specifically give men titles. Oh, there are places where he talks about the apostles or he talks about the elders, but you know when he talks about specific individuals, he doesn't give them titles. He just totally stays away from calling anybody pastor, anybody bishop... He doesn't even call anybody like "elder James." None of that. That ought to speak to us, that the very spirit of Scripture is one to not to seek to exalt by title, which I think Christ said something very specifically about, but we'll get to that in just a second. So, there's an equality here in that sense. On the other hand, is there diversity? Yes, there's diversity. What do I mean by that? Well, what does Scripture say? "Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." Did you catch that? The measure. It means Jesus measures out an amount of grace, enabling grace, that's what it says, right? "Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." Enabling grace. As He gives His gifts. Now this works among all of us. Some in the church have extraordinary gift of faith. Somebody else may have extraordinary gift of faith, but it may not be as much. (Incomplete thought) Have you ever noticed the Triune God loves diversity? There's one Spirit, but there's a diversity of gifts. There's one Lord, but different manners of service. There's one God Who empowers all of them, but there's different levels of ability; different levels of energy that are

given. That's just a reality. Do you know what?

Among elders, you may have some that are more compassionate than others. You may have some that are more approachable than others. You may have some that are more giving than others. You may have some that know the Bible better than others. You may have some that have a preaching gift that stands above the others. You may have some that have leadership above the others. Look, the reality is, that even when you go to those disciples, those first twelve, anybody stand out as probably having been a leader of sorts? You can see that Peter was. But, you know what? Peter is never given a title above the others. Have you ever noticed that? Now, he could say Peter, when you're restored, strengthen your brethren. There's a place where Jesus recognized that he would have a lead. He talks about the keys of the kingdom, but I'll tell you this, Scripture never calls him a bishop, it never calls him Pope, it never calls him anything else. It doesn't give him any title other than apostle, which is the same as the others. Never is he designated in a way that is above and beyond. If you look at James, the brother of our Lord, He became extremely prominent in the church in Jerusalem. All you have to do is read the book of Acts. You can see, he rose above the others. But I'll tell you this, he's never given a title above and beyond the other elders there at Jerusalem. Never. Yes, there's a place where one time it says James and the elders, kind of pulling him out. There's a place in Scripture in Galatians where it talks about certain men who are pillars. It's true. There are going to be diversity and some may rise with their leadership skills or their preaching skills - they may become more in the eye of the public, more prominent. Like in the Gospels, Peter was more prominent there than the others. But you know, it doesn't take away from some of those guys who you don't even remember their names, are also apostles. And there was an equality there. But there's diversity as well. That's just reality.

## Humility

Now, the last thing I want to say is with regards to humility. The Scribes and the Pharisees, they sit in Moses' seat. And you know what? They loved all the attention. And they loved people to make a lot out of them. And they loved the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces, and look at this, they loved being called 'rabbi' by others. But you're not to be called 'rabbi.' For you have one Teacher and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth. For you have one Father Who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Christ. Or master... The greatest among you shall be your servant. Now listen, this doesn't mean that titles are never appropriate. It doesn't mean that if your parents come in, it's like, well, that's my mother and that's... the man who begot me. Because I can't say father. Look, even in a spiritual sense, Paul himself could say to the Corinthian church, I have become your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. (gasp) Paul, what are you doing? You can't say that. That's to miss the point. What he's saying there is truth. I begot you in a spiritual sense. I fathered you. It's when we want titles given to us because we want to be regarded as superior to the others. That's the issue, brethren. It's not calling somebody father, even in a spiritual sense who really is a father. You remember Paul, he addressed Felix, "Most excellent Felix." It's like, whoa, you don't want to say that! Why? It exalts him. Look, there are times when it's appropriate to call people by certain things, but the idea here is that these Scribes and these Pharisees, they wanted it. They sought after it. Why? Because they loved the applause and they loved the approval and they loved being made much of. Look, what our Lord is forbidding is that seeking after and lusting after titles of superior distinction that show you have some kind of superior authority.

You know what our Lord approves of? Obviously: lowliness. Lowliness. The disciples - they were on a level with each other. That's a reality. They were equal in authority. They were brethren. Isn't that what Jesus says? You're all brothers. You're all brothers. You don't want to use titles that seek to make you out like you're the greatest guy. I'll tell you this. If people in the church call me "the pastor," and you don't regard the other elders in the church, you're basically doing that. You're basically creating a hierarchy that the Scripture never creates. You say, is it appropriate to call you guys elders? Yeah, it's appropriate. Overseers? Yeah, that's appropriate. Pastors? Yeah, that's appropriate. But you know what Jesus would say? It is totally OK to call them brothers. You're all brothers. That's the spirit - not to covet titles. Not to seek them. Anything that tends to make a distinction or destroy the equality, the parity. It's true. Peter, in a way, was a leader in that early church in an exceptional way. But what the Catholic church has done is an atrocity. They have done exactly what Jesus said they should never do. And they bestow titles: cardinals and bishops and father and Pope. (Incomplete thought) And they wear their big long clothes. Have you ever seen a more stupid looking hat than those guys wear? And yet, why do they do it? Because it's come to mean power and authority, and people bow down and they kiss their rings and they kiss their feet. Don't you get the feeling that is exactly the thing that our Lord Jesus Christ was forbidding. Exactly that! But, I'll tell you, there's a tendency in the pride of man even in churches like our own, to want those titles, to want that significance, to want those labels, to want to be called out, to want to be recognized as somehow standing a step above or two steps above, to somehow be superior. And that is what we need to abandon, brethren. Respect the leaders. Absolutely. The Scripture says that. Respect those who labor among you. Esteem them very highly in love because of their work. But brethren, you are not dishonoring any one of us, if you simply say, "hey, brother." Brethren, to be a brother of people who belong to the living God and have been bought by the blood of Christ, do you think title somehow it diminishes us? Somehow demotes us? Somehow dishonors us? It doesn't. To be a brother or a sister among the elect of God, that's it.

Well, brethren, it's important that you recognize the elders in our midst. That you recognize that we have an equality as far as authority. Maybe you don't know this, but when we have our elder's meetings, basically my mindset - and I think this is our mindset as elders - that it's not a democracy. Basically we are looking for one hundred percent unity. And there is that sense that any one of us can veto something or table something, because we have that respect among each other. But at the same time, I think you all need to recognize too that when we're looking for more elders, it's not always that - OK well, if we have eight elders we're basically going to try to split up all the duties by one eighth where every elder's going to preach one eighth of the time, and counsel one eighth of the people, because there's differences. There's differences of availability. There's differences in health. There's differences in age. There's differences in gift. There's differences in desire. There's differences in vision. There's differences, brethren, in all these things. And so, what we want to do is we want to constantly have this sense that we have a plurality of pastors with the responsibility to oversee your soul. But how each one of them functions is going to be determined by the elders together, as far as where the responsibilities and who's going to do what, and who should be doing what, for the greatest benefit of tending the flock. Alright, brethren.

*Father, my desire is that You would give us a biblical leadership in the church, and more Lord, more elders. We need in a church this size, Lord, please, You know. You know most of all what it takes to accomplish all these things that You call the men who You called to oversee and shepherd Your flock. Lord, to be faithful, You know how many*

*men that would take. All the flock? All the flock? Lord, it seems we need more laborers. And we pray that You'd give us - Oh, Lord, we want leadership that is a gift of Christ and made by the Holy Spirit to be overseers and pastors. We want the God-given gift, not just the self-made, or the church-made, or the seminary-made. We want the true God-wrought leaders. Men who have been raised up by You and equipped by You and given the character by You, given a compulsion by You to lead the church. Give us that, Lord, more of that, please. That the flock here might be well tended. Lord, we have to give an account. We want to be able to give a good account. We want to be faithful. Help us. Give us grace, Lord. Give us elders grace to be faithful to the flock that dwells among us and to properly exercise good, godly oversight of them. I ask in Christ's name, Amen.*