

# What are elders?

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[ 0 : 00 ] The subject we're going to look at is entitled What Are Elders?! This follows on from we were looking at the Word of God,! we were looking at grasping the goodness of the Word of God, we were then looking at the proclamation of the Gospel and the various words that we use for that.

And we sort of move now to the ministries within the Church and looking at this subject, What Are Elders? So let's pray.

Lord, we ask that you've promised that as we meditate in your Word, we will be like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season and their leaf not withering.

And we pray that we may be able to meditate sweetly upon your Word, that there may be sustenance and encouragement and beauty that we see.

So we ask you, Lord, to be our teacher, and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. What are elders plural?

[ 1 : 16 ] Well, let's lay a couple of foundations thinking of the New Testament and about words.

The word elders, presbytery, assuming my Greek is any sort of, the pronunciation is anything like. Elder in New Testament Greek means, it just means, it means older man. It means more than that, but it's basically an idea of being older or more experienced or wiser, hence a wider use of it.

The Greek word I'm pronouncing presbytery is the word in English that we get presbyter, and therefore presbyterian, which is a sort of church denomination, grouping, that has presbyters.

So, Tim Keller's church be presbyterian? Yeah. It means more than that they have presbyters. It means they link in a certain way. But anyway, that's where the word comes from.

[ 2 : 34 ] There's another word, overseer, episcopacy. And that word is made up of two components, the epi being over, and the scopy being to watch or to see, hence overseers, episcopacy.

It's a little bit like bishop, because it's got an I and an S. Now, there's not much else going on there, is there? Perhaps a P is a bit like a B.

And in the days of the King James Version, episcopacy was translated bishop. So when I went to speak at the Chapel Royal some years ago, the dear Anglican man who was leading, Mark Redhouse, introduced me as the Bishop of Brighton.

And he thought he was joking. You see, I said, yes, I am. I'm one of the episcopacy. I'm not the only bishop in Brighton, but I am one of them. And so a third word, and I'm not quite sure how to pronounce this, Pimenez, shepherds.

It's just a regular word for shepherds. Shepherds. So when there were shepherds in the field, it's this word shepherds. Used 17 times. There's a verb that goes with it, to shepherd.

[ 4 : 12 ] So whatever shepherds do, to tend sheep, to feed sheep, that's the meaning of the verb. I've got a few examples of their use. Perhaps we'll look at those in a moment.

But what I'm going to put as a foundation is that these three words, when they're used in terms of church leadership, are interchangeable.

I thought of putting virtually interchangeable, but no, I think they are just interchangeable. I don't think there's any significant difference between elders, overseers, and shepherds.

I think there are three ways of saying the same thing. So shall we look at a couple of references? So 1 Timothy 3.2 is episcopacy. 1 Timothy 3.2.

1 Timothy 3.2 is about church officers, people who have a designated role in the church in this sense.

[ 5 : 33 ] And 1 Timothy 3.2 is a trustworthy saying. If anyone sets his heart on being an, episkopi, or episkopos, which would be the singular, he desires a noble task.

Now the episkopos, the bishop, the overseer, whatever, must be, and then he gives quite a long list of moral character references that the episkopos must be.

I don't think he's saying if somebody is these things, they must necessarily be an episkopos. But I think he's saying if they're not this, they definitely shouldn't be an episkopos.

So there's an example of episkopos. NIV says overseer. Has anybody got a different translation? Anybody got bishop?

Have you really? What translation have you got? Okay. So that's stuck to the politically skewed translation, which the...

[ 6 : 42 ] Because King James wanted his Bible to represent the interests of the established church. And the established church did not have overseers. It had bishops.

So that's part of the reason why it says bishop there. Sorry. It's not a personal attack. It's just... So there's episkopi.

And Ephesians 4.11 is one of the fairly rare uses of shepherd as a noun. Ephesians 4.

Is that right? I think... What did I put? 4.11. 4.11. Yeah, 4.11. Ephesians 4.11. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors, that's the word shepherds, and teachers.

So they're sort of linked together. To be pastors, to be shepherds, and teachers. So that is the use of shepherds there.

[ 7 : 57 ] Hopefully we'll light on a passage that does show that they're interchangeable. I haven't demonstrated that. I've just pulled it as a rabbit from a hat. So there are the words that we're thinking about.

Now, the original question was, what are elders, plural? Here's a related question. What about the elder, or the overseer, or the shepherd, singular?

Okay, now that's an easy question to answer. Of course, if you look in the New Testament for the episkopos, or the, whatever the single of Pimenez is, the shepherd, I can give you a very clear answer to who this person is.

And 1 Peter 2.25 describes him. 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 25.

1 Peter 2.25. Ray, could you read us that, please? 1 Peter 2.25. No, it's fine. Whatever you've got it in, read it in.

[ 9 : 18 ] Yeah. For you as ESV, for you astray and sheep, you will now return to the shepherd and overseer for your souls. Thank you. You were like sheep going astray.

Sorry, what did you, what we've got? The AV has bishop. Bishop, yes. The AV has bishop. The authorised version, the King James Version, says you have now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls, singular.

So, this is the person that you've returned to. The Av has bishop. Does it really? Really? Wow. I'm glad you pointed that out.

So, the question is, who is this person? Who is this shepherd? It is, isn't it? It's Jesus. Because it goes on, it has already said, when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.

When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.

[ 10 : 20 ] By his wounds, you have been healed. You were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to this person, the shepherd, an overseer of your souls. He is the overseer.

He is the shepherd. Let's look at Hebrews 13, verse 20. Hebrews 13, verse 20. Shall we take 20 and 21?

Hebrews 13, 20 and 21. Rachel, what have you got for us in those verses? Amen.

Yes. So here is the shepherd. He is the great shepherd. And who is the great shepherd? Jesus.

Yes, it's Jesus, isn't it? The one who is brought back from the dead. He is the great shepherd. And we could add to that John 10, verses 11 to 18.

[ 11 : 43 ] John 10, 11 to 18. This is Jesus himself speaking.

Bearing in mind that Psalm 23 says, the Lord is my shepherd. This is Jesus sort of putting himself into that space marked the shepherd.

John 10, verse 11. I, says Jesus, am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep.

So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. When the wolf attacks, then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he's a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I, says Jesus, am the good shepherd. I know my sheep. My sheep know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep.

[12:47] I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice. There shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again.

No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father. So Jesus, in a very full way, saying that he is the shepherd.

He is the one shepherd of his people and in particular he cares for his flock. He defends his flock so much so that he lays down his life for the sheep and he also talks about his bringing them together. He talks about the way that he knows them. He talks about the way that they know him. He talks about the way that he speaks to them and they listen to his voice and all those wonderful things. So if we had asked about the shepherd, we would really, to answer that question properly, we should be pointed to Jesus Christ.

[14:03] And I want to, anything that's said about human shepherds ought to fall into this, under this context, that the shepherd is Jesus.

So we would like to make a distinction between his shepherding role and whatever human shepherds might be. So he is the true provider for his people.

He's the one who leads his people to green pastures. He is the guide of his people. He's the one who leads them. He is the sacrifice.

He's the one who laid down his life for the sheep. No one else has done that. He is the healer of his sheep. It's his fingers and his touch that heals the people of God.

He's the protector. He's the one with the rod and staff to protect the people of God. He is the host. Well, that's slightly changing the metaphor, but in Psalm 23, he spreads the table and only he does that.

[15:09] He's the feeder, the one who feeds his sheep. He's the heart knower. He knows the hearts of his people. He knows his sheep and he is the voice to be heard.

My sheep, listen to my voice, says Jesus. And he's the great lover. He's the only one who loved his people so as to die for them and redeem them.

And that's Jesus. And we don't want anything or anybody to get in the point that they obscure that fact. And we don't want to expect of any human being that that person should replace Jesus.

I think that's a very important factor as well. So he is, by way of distinction, he's those things, but by way of example, he exemplifies what human shepherds, what might be expected of them.

Not that they're the provider, but through them the Lord makes provision. Not that their voice is the one to be heard above all others, but through their advice, the voice of the Lord Jesus could be heard.

[16:27] Human shepherds don't make the one eternal sacrifice, but their service is sacrificial. Human shepherds don't have the healing touch that Jesus has, but through them the Lord is pleased to bring healing.

They are not the ones who have the spiritual power, the spiritual rod and staff, as it were, but through them the Lord gives protection and the instruments that the human shepherds use is very much the word of God, which I hope we'll see something of as we go through.

And the human shepherds, you can't say to the human shepherds, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly, but the human shepherds are meant to exemplify to exemplify something of the love of Jesus for the people of God.

And so, it seems to me that the human shepherds, which we're going to look at as we go on, are to be appreciated and respected, hopefully, but not idolized.

And I just put that as a warning, a caveat. It's not entirely unknown for human shepherds to become idolized and what they say to become, as it were, the word of God, and that's to get things out of kilter.

[17:59] So, you know, just to give an example, it's not unknown for people to say, the doctor said something, and when they say, the doctor, they can only mean one person, which is Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who was a very famous and very blessed Welsh preacher, but I'm sure the doctor would be the first person to say, don't put me in the place of Jesus.

I'm not the saviour of the church. I'm one of the servants of the shepherd. Okay, does that make sense?

Now, I'll show you an interesting, well, it might not be that interesting, I think it's a reasonably interesting slide here. So, this is Psalm 23, with some bullet points from that.

The Lord is my shepherd. He provides everything I need. He provides me with rest and enjoyment and sustenance. He gives inward spiritual healing and personal moral guidance.

and complete protection from all evil. And here's John chapter 10, where, following on from that is the discussion that Jesus has about himself being the good shepherd.

[ 19 : 12 ] He calls effectively to his sheep. They move from darkness to light. He leads his sheep. Verse 3, the sheep listen to his voice.

He calls his sheep by name and leads them out. So, the eastern shepherd would lead his sheep. You know the story about the visitor to the Middle East who saw a load of sheep with a chap behind pushing them on, driving them.

and he said to the guide, I thought it said in the Bible that the shepherd leads the sheep. And the guide said, oh, you're quite correct. In the Middle East, the shepherd always goes ahead of the sheep and leads them.

The guy you saw was the butcher. He was taking them on the way to slaughter. John chapter 10, Jesus, the good shepherd, sacrifices his own life, knows his sheep to the depths.

They truly know him. And in verse 16, he brings other sheep as well. Now, the reason that might or might not be interesting is that that's the slide I used.

[ 20 : 27 ] It was earlier than 2005. It might have been 1980 something because I look back in my file to see last time I'd written anything down about shepherding.

And I found this in my file and I think it's from about 20 years ago. And I think it's still okay, actually. I think that's right.

What did I put at the bottom? Jesus is the good shepherd. Elders are shepherds. They are also sheep. That's an interesting point to make. Jesus, Jesus is the Lamb of God.

But there is a distinction, isn't there, that shepherds in the church are themselves sheep. They need the shepherding of Jesus.

And somebody, I think it was Barbara, do you remember Barbara Doust? So I am going back quite a long way, aren't I? She said to me, and I've written it down somewhere, the best shepherds, the best under-shepherds, lead us to the great shepherd.

[ 21 : 32 ] And that seems like wisdom to me. So I am going back quite a long way because that's, Barbara was here in the 70s and 80s, wasn't she?

The best under-shepherds lead us to the great shepherd. So they point to Jesus and they are but the means. So I thought I'd see whether I'd written anything else down from those days and I had. And I looked it through and I think I agree with pretty much what it's saying. So here are four bullet points about human shepherds.

Let's look in Acts chapter 20. I notice, I'm just going to follow through what I wrote all those 20 years ago. I think I could have improved on the order but anyway, here we go.

Let's look at Acts chapter 20. In Acts chapter 20 in verse 13, no, in verse 17, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

[ 22 : 55 ] So he's on his way, I think he's on his way to Jerusalem. He's quite keen to be quick but he does want to meet these guys and he arranges, presumably he sent them a text, how else could you arrange things like this?

But he presumably must have sent them a text. And he says, I would like to meet you at such and such a place. I'm short of time, I can't deviate all the way but we'll meet together.

And it is, you see, the elders, plural, of the church in Ephesus. And then he gives them this wonderful and actually very moving speech about their work.

and in verse 36, it says, when he had said this, he knelt down with them, with all of them and they prayed and they all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.

And what grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again and they accompanied him to the ship. And I just imagine this group of people really weeping as they say goodbye to Paul and the thing that upsets them is they'll never see this chap again.

[ 24 : 06 ] So he would have sung the same song that you sang this morning about meet you on the judgment day or something like that. But yeah, that's church life includes saying goodbye to people,

doesn't it?

So, Acts 20 and one of the key verses here is verse 28 in which Paul says to, who's he speaking to?

Just remind me again. The elders, the elders, the presbytery of the church in Ephesus. He's speaking to the elders and he says this, keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood. And then he goes on about protecting the flock. Let's hear that.

Has anybody got a version that has some different vocabulary in than that? Let's have a different version. Let's have Lindsay's version. What have you got? Lindsay, verse 28. Teach yourselves and to all walk on the language that the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased and he's over love.

[ 25 : 23 ] Okay, so you've got to shepherd. Yep, okay. So it's actually a verb. It's the shepherding verb. Anybody got another? Another? Yep, I think you've got the same, haven't you?

Oh no, maybe you haven't. Yes, what have you got, Maria? Yeah. Okay, so you've got to care for as a translation of shepherd.

Right, well what I drew from this, in this case it was pointing out that they have been made overseers by the Holy Spirit. It's one of a number of things that we can draw from this verse, but do you notice this?

They were appointed by God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you episcopacy overseers.

So let me wind back a minute. This is the key verse that links elders, overseers and shepherding. this is one of the key verses that does this.

[ 26 : 45 ] They are elders, Paul says they're overseers and he tells them what to do is to shepherd. So that's the basis, the sort of basis on which I'm saying they're interchangeable.

And my comment about this, having said they're appointed by God via a human call, is to say that these people that God has put there are not infallible but they are edifying.

I think that's a reasonable distinction. One doesn't have to be what's the word? What's the Pope supposed to be? Infallible.

Papal infallibility. Yeah, we're not replacing a Roman Catholic doctrine of infallibility by a Protestant one. I'm not saying that we just have a different form of infallibility.

The under-shepherds or these Ephesian elders are not infallible but they are edifying and God has put them there for a purpose.

[ 27 : 54 ] They haven't appointed themselves, no matter what, it doesn't tell us what voting procedure they went through and he says, well, it's only valid as long as you used a 51% or a 75% or something like that.

He's not concerned with that. He says, but if you're there in a functioning congregation and you're recognized as elders, please be aware that there is something of a divine appointment about that.

There is something of that divine seriousness. The Holy Spirit has made you that. It's quite a serious thought, isn't it? And I put here that there are many different personality types, different sorts of people, but God uses all of them and they have been appointed by the Holy Spirit.

And I repeated, or as I put this point, that these people are also sheep and I also put in that other black ink is from this afternoon, plural.

Nearly always, the Bible speaks of elders in the plural. It envisages that every congregation has a little team, perhaps a larger team, but a team of leaders, elders, and although I haven't revisited all the homework on this, I think it is actually quite difficult to find a passage in which an elder is thought of in place on his own.

[ 29 : 31 ] Okay, so that's number one. What did I have for number two? They shepherd, they do their shepherding work by the word of God. So let's look at 2 Timothy 4 verse 2.

2 Timothy 4 verse 2. 2 Timothy 4 verse 2. 4 verse 2. 2 Timothy Now this is Paul writing to Timothy. Timothy was a church leader, and his job was to appoint the next generation of church leaders, pass this on to faithful men who can teach the same sort of stuff.

I think it's not unfair to take the things that were expected of Timothy and to say this same set of things is expected of the people he would appoint in his turn.

So 2 Timothy 4 verse 2, Paul says in just a few words before, I give you this charge. This is what you're there to do.

[ 30 : 41 ] Preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage with all patience and careful instruction.

A time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine but instead to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. It seems to me what he's saying there is very much to do with word things. Preach the word, correct from the word, rebuke, encourage with patience, great patience or all patience and careful instruction.

That's what it says. Timothy's to do. And I'm inferring from that that's what one of the things elders are to do, to instruct.

[ 31 : 58 ] And I wasn't, well I'm noticing that there is a degree of forcefulness in this. Correct, rebuke and encourage.

Correct, rebuke and encourage. I suppose different personality types are more prone to one or the other. Some people are always telling you off. Some people might find it difficult to tell you off because they prefer to be encouraging.

But he seems to cover the whole spectrum and he says that that's what's expected. complicated. Let's look at Acts 6, 3 and 4.

And I think if I'd been sitting in the congregation 20 years ago I might have said, well that's a bit of a dodgy reference. So it probably needs a little bit of explaining.

Acts 6, 3 and 4 is the time in the early church where an administrative matter wasn't being dealt with properly.

[ 33 : 07 ] The administration was the distribution of food and they were saying it's been done on a racially biased basis. So the Greek Jews, the Greek speaking Jews complained about the Hebrew speaking Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

That's Acts chapter 6 verse 1. Please notice the word distribution. This is a word which is diakonia which means the act of being a waiter.

deacon means table waiter. So taking food and dishing it out. And when this was happening, this diakonia, it wasn't being done properly, that's what they're saying.

So the apostles say it would not be right for us to neglect the word of God in order to diakonia, to wait on tables.

So choose seven men who are known to be full of the spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them. And we, verse 4, will give our attention to prayer and the diakonia of the word, the ministry or the distribution of the word.

[ 34 : 30 ] And you might say, well, nothing about elders there, which is true. and you might say that was a very limited problem of distributing food within the church, don't have that problem nowadays.

But I think we could draw a degree of a parallel from it in which he's saying there's an importance to what it was the apostles were doing, which was prayer and the ministry of the word, the distribution of the word.

And they were saying that that's so important that it shouldn't be squeezed out by this very practical and useful ministry of distribution of food.

And so what they're saying was let's get some other people, some trustworthy people, to do the food distribution and then the distribution, the deaconing of the word, can be can keep on going.

And that's the basis of the distinction that our sort of church would have between elders and deacons and to preserve that same idea of the ministry of the word needing time and needing to be safeguarded and therefore a team of other, in this case men and women or I think in the Bible men and women who can do those practical things like distributing food or like ordering toilet rolls or whatever it might be and I think that's the that's the that's the it's that text that gives us that idea of separating those two areas of ministry.

[ 36 : 25 ] ministry. Let's go back into Acts chapter 20. 20. So in Acts chapter 20 for some reason I picked on this verse to say that Paul, he's not saying this is what you elders need to be doing but he's saying this is what I did.

Acts 20 in verse 20 he says you know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.

The interesting point there being that his word ministry wasn't limited to standing up in public and doing a monologue although it did include that.

it seems that he was prepared to sit down with people and have a cup of coffee except they wouldn't have had coffee in those days I suppose but let's imagine that he sits down over a cup of tea then and would talk to people and present his teaching in conversation and that seems to be a useful thing to bear in mind that therefore by extension the work of elders is not just and limited to monologues but includes sitting with people in their home or at the back of the church or whatever and doing that work of correcting rebuking encouraging in that sort of way ok I'll just stop there is that making sense so far yep ok number three I'd put they lead mostly by respected example there's quite a bit to say on this but I'm not going to say all of it let's look at three verses

Hebrews 13 or three references Hebrews 13 Hebrews 13 now verse 7 it says remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever that's one of the references where leaders are given a very prominent position and a very respected position he says you have leaders they spoke the word of God to you and he's not here ticking them off or rebuking them he's saying these are men who by God's grace are worth remembering worth considering and worth copying consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith that's rather a big responsibility for these leaders but that's what Paul says there are such people as senior people that God has worked in and hopefully changed and not in a blind way but in a considered way it is worth looking at their lives and imitating the best features verse 17 says obey your leaders and submit to their authority they keep watch over you as men who must give account obey them so that their work will be a joy not a burden for that would be of no advantage to you again it's a very pro elder verse isn't it it doesn't actually say elders it's a different word those who stand before you is verse 17 your leaders and he says that there's a right way of submitting to their authority

[ 40 : 55 ] I don't think he means that every single whim they have must be your command there is such a thing I think they call it heavy shepherding don't they where the elders tell you what colour your bathroom should be and where you should go on holiday and things like that I don't think he's including that I think he's assuming what he said before they spoke the word of God to you and in so far as the things they're saying are the word of God you know take it on board don't be don't make it your mission in life to disagree with the elders at every conceivable opportunity people sometimes do have that as their mission in life and it's not helpful it's not helpful for the elders because it takes so my advice if you're in a church where you systematically disagree with the elders it's really better to find another church actually obey your leaders submit to their authority they're watching over you they're going to have to give an account which is a rather sobering thing for the elders but there we are 2

Timothy 2 24 and 25 so this is again to Timothy on his method of leading to Timothy 2 24 and I think I suppose 24 25 26 I started going on but I can't remember where I got to Adam could you kindly read us this 2 Timothy 2 24 25 26 thank you very much so this is the manner of the Lord servant there are people who when they are granted authority sort of become in the words that were ascribed to the deputy head of the school that I used to teach in a little tin god it was said at a staff meeting and the deputy head concerned said I don't know which I'm most offended by the tin god or the little part but anyway he says here that there's to be a degree of humility and gentleness about the leadership of the Lord servant verse 24 the Lord servant mustn't quarrel there's supposed to be a patience and a graciousness instead he must be kind to everyone apt to teach able to teach not resentful those who oppose him he must gently instruct so there's something there about the manner of the the elder it isn't you know

I've said it and therefore you jolly well do it it's more subtle than that 1 Peter chapter 5 1 Peter chapter 5 this again links elder overseer and shepherd 1 Peter chapter 5 to the elders among you I appeal as a fellow elder a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care serving as overseers not because you must but because you are willing as God wants you to be not greedy for money but eager to serve not lording it over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd appears you will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away so rather moving verses from

Peter about the manner of leading they lead mostly by respected example there's a willingness and not lording it over those entrusted to you but being examples to the flock and the Lord will notice that I've put in Titus chapter 1 from verses 5 to 11 Titus chapter 1 verses 5 to 11 one of the interesting features of this text is that it shows that elders as far as Paul's concerned elders are pretty much essential to the functioning of a church if the church doesn't have elders it is pretty much dead in the water but it's in a very vulnerable and incomplete condition so

[ 46 : 47 ] Titus 1 5 to 11 the reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you and then he talks about the character of an elder an elder must be blameless the husband of but one wife a man whose children believe or a faithful not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient since an overseer so there's elder and overseer presbyter is entrusted with God's work he must be blameless not overbearing not quick tempered not given to drunkenness not violent not pursuing dishonest gain rather he must be hospitable one who loves what is good who is self controlled upright holy and disciplined and refute those who oppose it so it's quite a comprehensive view of the elders there last point they love and care sacrificially and this includes challenge and warning so 2

Timothy 2 verse 8 is about suffering and again it's Paul speaking to Timothy and we apply it by extension to elders in general Paul says remember Jesus Christ 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 8 raised from the dead descended from David this is my gospel for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal where was the bit that says endure hardship not there verse 10 I endure everything well I'm not going to go and chase it but Paul endured suffering and he was keen to say to Timothy that's you know verse 3 endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ thank you very much he's he's saying don't become an elder as a career opportunity you know it's going to lead you onwards and upwards in promotion and up the finance ladder and you know before long you'll have your own yacht and your personal helicopter and hairstylist and things like that so that's just not the way it is it's not what it's about act 20

I think I've covered this 19 I serve the Lord with great humility and with tears says Paul and in verse 30 he warns that men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them and in verse 26 he says I am innocent of the blood of all men I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God so he's pointing out there that there is that aspect of a call to be faithful whether people like it or not sometimes people don't like it particularly moved by the testimony of some of the ministers in Anglican churches in the SGP who go to parishes where the gospel has never been preached and when they go and preach to their congregations what we think is perfectly normal that people are sinners that need to repent and turn to Jesus

Christ and trust in his precious blood these men are sort of summoned before the parochial church council and Captain Carruthers or whoever it is says no here look here young man you can't have you teaching all this sort of stuff it's fanaticism and they can have life made really hard for them and I think that's the sort of thing that Paul's warning that people might have to put up with 1

Thessalonians chapter 2 is the last reference and this is about Paul's method my heading was they love and care sacrificially this includes challenge and warning in 1 Thessalonians 2 Paul says of himself you know we never used flattery nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed God is our witness we weren't looking for praise from men not from you or for anyone else as apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you but we were gentle among you like a mother caring for her little children we loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of

God but our lives as well because you had become so dear to us surely you remember brothers our toil and hardship we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you you are witnesses and so is God of how holy and righteous and blameless we were among you who believed for you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children encouraging comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory and in there he says that he was like a mother caring for her children and he was like a father dealing with his children and there's an aspect of non-professionalism John Piper wrote a book with the title Brothers We Are Not Professionals it's actually the title of one of the chapters in the book but it's right the work that Paul envisages is not sort of nine to five then we've done that we've got to do something else it's not like that it's caring for people that's what he what he's talking about caring for people almost like a parent so there's

[ 53 : 03 ] Barbara Dowse quote the best shepherds lead us to the great shepherd stop anybody want to ask any questions raise any points that's quite quite long so I won't prolong it if not go for it Lindsay yes correct well the Bible does talk about elders it there are certain things that I think this rules out I think it rules out the idea of priests knowing the Anglican church people call themselves priests and they might well they might either mean that they are priests or they might mean it's just what it says on my contract and I have it might rule some things out

I don't really mind if people call themselves vicars pastors I'm sorry because a priest the main job of a priest is to offer sacrifices so a priest is somebody who's if he were to take or indeed if he or she were to take that literally then they would say their main focus of work is offering the sacrifice of the communion and they stand in a hierarchical position so you've got the laos the people of God God and the priest is in between that's the historical understanding of the priest and the protestant understanding flattens that out and says we're all on the same level as God Christ is the priest the great high priest and we're all on the same level and within that on the same level there are some who are elders overseers presbyters but they're not priests so I think it rules out the idea of priesthood but if somebody's called a vicar

I can't see the word vicar in the bible but if somebody's called a vicar or rector I think in fact they operate as an elder and they might well have other people on the staff who are called curates or associate workers or something like that and they might well operate in fact as a team of elders and in an Anglican church you might have a parochial church council or something like that and you might find that it's the people on the parochial church council who order the toilet rolls or order organised painting schedule or whatever and they're effectively working as deacons so I don't think the nomenclature is the issue I think it's how it functions and I think what we have in the bible is the closer we get to how it operates in the bible the more helpful it is does that answer the question what sort of accountability system are you referring to yeah yeah okay so this would be like the model where you have the pastor and perhaps a large church and then you have deacons and there's nobody on the same level as the pastor who's free to sorry yeah yeah well I don't think the bible holds that out as a model because it always says elders plural

I think God gives gifted people who who might well be the prominent person that people see and who might do most of the preaching I think it would be very unhelpful for that person if there was no one else in the church who could take them on one side and say look you're not seeing this right or you haven't got the right idea on that or whatever I think that makes the church very vulnerable and I think you'll find in most cases where even where there is a big name or whatever that there will actually be people around who are functioning as elders not always but I think it's the idea whether people use exactly the same words as the bible does does that make sense any

It does function in that sort of way. And in fact, really both in churches now do have more in-depth churches. You've got enough of large churches, you've got many other people.

[ 59 : 07 ] I mean... It's very small. You've got it together. Yeah, there's a dynamic, isn't there, of the gifts.

Everybody in the church has a gift. So everybody's doing something. And within that, there are particular gifts of, shall we say, teaching, leading, overseeing.

And that dynamic can be sort of a bit stretchy. So, yeah, I don't know a lot about brethren churches, but from what Ray's saying, there may well be, perhaps in larger fellowships, a sense that brother so-and-so and brother so-and-so are the people that you turn to and would pray together and make particular decisions.

Yep.