

The Exiled Life: 1 Peter 5:1-4

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[0:00] Peter assumes you know what eldership is, who elders are.! And so because of that I'm going to have a little bit of a longer prelude! The health of a church is largely dependent upon the health of its elders.

All throughout the Bible God has chosen people to lead His people. Sometimes in the Old Testament we begin, we see the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

We see some judges, people like Gideon to kind of lead God's people. We see prophets of God sent to the nation of Israel to warn His people.

We see kings that God has raised up, David and Solomon, to lead His people. All throughout the Old Testament we see God has appointed people at specific times to lead or warn or shepherd His people unto Himself.

That was their goal. That was their aim. That was their purpose. We get to the New Testament though and we see an interesting phenomena happen. Acts records the history of the church.

[1:32] And early in the history of the church it's vitally important that there is some group of people that is given the charge to shepherd the flock of God's people. We find this in the book of Acts.

Acts chapter 14 verses 21 through 23. We read this. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many trials we must enter the kingdom of God.

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. This is on Paul's first missionary journey. Paul preaches and what's interesting is Paul does a switchback. He goes out on his first missionary journey and he ends up in the last city and then he returns.

And what he has done already in all of these cities is he's proclaimed the gospel. He has proclaimed, repent. You need the Lord because you are in sin.

[2:45] Jesus Christ in his life, death, and resurrection has paid the penalty of your sin. Repent and believe in him for your salvation. And people place their faith in Christ.

So in all of these cities and all of these towns, they have preached the gospel. People have come to faith in Christ. And then Paul makes a switchback. He comes back.

He ends his first missionary journey or he is halfway through his first missionary journey. And he goes back through those towns. And one of the things he does in all of those towns is he asks people or he had appointed elders.

We see this in verse 23. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

And so in every town, it was incumbent upon Paul, I'm not done with my first missionary journey unless there's a group of elders to shepherd each flock that is in each of these cities that I just proclaimed the gospel in.

[3:50] And that's the pattern we see in the New Testament. We see this now later acts as a history of the church, the early church. In Titus 1, verses 5 through 9, we read this.

This is why, this is Paul talking to Titus, this young elder. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders into every town as I directed you.

This is your task. Titus, I want you to appoint elders in every town. This is why I've left you in Crete. Go throughout the island of Crete and appoint elders in these towns where people have believed in

his name.

Then, Titus may be wondering, well, who am I looking for? What are the qualifications of an elder? Paul is gratefully asked, and so he answers that in verse 6.

If anyone is above reproach. So these are the character qualities of who Titus is supposed to look for as to one who qualifies themselves to be an elder. These are basic requirements.

[4:59] If anyone who is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery and insubordination, for an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.

He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or drunkard or violent or greedy or for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. And then, Titus may have asked, okay, that's the character quality I'm looking for, but is there any competency that this person must also have?

Paul would say, and thank you, will you ask, Titus? Let me answer that. Verse 9. He must hold firm the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

You are responsible in all of these cities that were appointed by Paul and Titus throughout the island of Crete, appoint elders.

And what is one of the tasks? They are to be of incredible character. And in addition to the character, they must be able to teach. This is one of their competencies that an elder is to have.

[6:09] And what is it that they're supposed to do? Have sound doctrine, teach sound doctrine, and rebuke those who have false doctrine. So that's what the role of an elder, and that's one of the functions of the elders in the local church.

And this is the pattern that we witness as God cares for his church. And this is the pattern that even continues to this day. This is how God cares for his church.

He is the chief shepherd. He asks men, elders, to shepherd, be under shepherds, under the Lord, to shepherd a local flock of God's people who localize in one place, who gather in one place to the worship of the Lord.

That's one of the tasks of the elders. So what I wanted to do today is just quickly kind of give you some information that may be helpful. Lauren, if we can go to the first slide.

There's three Greek words that are for the same office of eldership. So they're on the far left there. The presbyteros, this is where the Presbyterian denomination gets its name.

[7:20] It's from, they are an elder-run church from the presbyter. They are overseen by the presbyters who are the elders. And so you have the Greek word for the elder, you have the English translation, and then you have the emphasis of that word.

So presbyteros is an elder. It literally is to be an older or mature person. And the idea is we know that age does not necessarily mean wisdom or godliness.

However, with age should come some perspective and some wisdom and some godliness. And so we also know that age is not necessarily a requirement. We have Timothy who is this young elder. And Paul says to Timothy, let no one look down upon your youth, but in these ways prove yourself. And so, but presbyteros, the emphasis is on someone who is mature and godly, who has perspective in life.

Episcopos is an elder who is an overseer. The English translation may say bishop or overseer, like in this, the case that I just read in Titus. So if you are around Doug Iverson, who is a retired pastor, sometimes he will greet me and say, good morning, bishop.

[8:30] And what he's doing is he's just using this word for elder. And poimen is the last Greek word that I want to focus on. This is elder. This, this, this, the emphasis here is on someone.

The English words can be shepherd, shepherd the flock among you, pastor the flock among you.

This is, the emphasis is on the care, the feeding, and the protecting of the flock of God's people.

So these are the words that are used for the same office of elder that we find in the New Testament.

What I would like to do now is, elders are often also mentioned in the plural.

There's a very rare occasion where it's singular. Elders are often in the plural, and so we, we say that there's a plurality of elders. That it's good for in every, in this case, town in the New Testament, or in every church here, to have a plurality of elders, not just one.

And so I have a, the next slide will share with you who our elders are here at 4th. So there's Matthew, Rob, Ryan, Kamash, Sushil, Pat, and Brett.

[9:38] Scott and Jay. These are the elders currently serving at 4th. There is a plurality of them. One distinction I'm going to make now, though, is this plurality of elders is helpful to diminish what I would say is like a celebrity culture.

We see it in the New Testament. In the, the book of 1 Corinthians, we, we see some would say, I'm of Apollos. I am of Paul. I am of Peter. And so they, they are followers of these elders, if you will, in the church.

But Paul condemns that. He doesn't want that. No, no, no, no, no, no. We don't follow men. We follow Jesus. There is, though, a plurality of elders. I also appreciate a plurality of elders because it applies a wisdom and perspective to complex shepherding concerns.

Sometimes the, within the body of Christ, in any local church, there is a complex shepherding concern that rises, and we need wisdom. And so I like having a plurality of elders where we say, help.

Let's help me. Let's help figure this out. How does God's word apply to this circumstance? It also provides accountability for what is taught.

[11:00] Even in this sermon, I sent an email to the elders sharing them where we're going in our message today, and an elder wrote back discouraging me from using a certain word that may lead to some unnecessary confusion.

And so there's an accountability in a plurality of eldership that's good and healthy. There is a concession in the New Testament for the ability to pay someone or to financially contribute, to financially support an elder.

We see this in 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy 5 reads this. Let the elders who rule well be considered of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

In that world, double honor has to deal with financial compensation or to support them financially in some way. So there is a concession in Scripture.

It's not necessary, but there is a concession in Scripture to say, hey, it's okay to have paid elders, if you will, or staff elders. But it's kind of relegated to those who especially labor in preaching and teaching.

[12:18] So oftentimes, there's a distinction made between those who are elders who all serve the same function. But the weight of responsibility in order to shepherd the flock is given a little more to some than others because the weight of having a full-time job, the weight of having a family, and the weight of shepherding the church is sometimes too much for the size of the congregation and the capacity of the elders.

So they say, let us financially support a few elders or one elder who labors in preaching and teaching that they may devote themselves to the full-time care of the church so they don't have a full-time job, a family, and the shepherding concern of the church.

They have a family and the shepherding concern of the church. And they don't have the 60-hour responsibility of a job in addition to shepherding and family.

Because those elders often labor in preaching and teaching, some of those elders also pursue formal theological education.

So the next slide may be helpful. So that's why Jay and Scott, we have master's degrees in Bible and theology, and we have prepared ourselves to be elders in this way.

[13:51] So how I would say it is this way. When I was hired as the senior pastor, I don't like speaking of it this way. I would want us to think of it this way. That the elders said, who among us can we pay financially support so that they can devote themselves to the full-time care of the shepherding concerns of the church?

Who can we do that? Scott, can we put your name forward to the congregation? And then you affirmed that decision. And so then I said, elders, elders, the shepherding care of this church is too much even for me.

Can we also ask somebody else to join us to give themselves to the full-time care and the shepherding concerns of this church and also financially support them? Yes, that's who Jay is. So sometimes, this is a cultural thing, we have non-staff elders and staff elders, and sometimes you refer to those staff elders as pastors. And we, because we use one of those Greek words, *poimen*, for pastors.

But, now if we can go back to the other slide. That distinction is helpful to an extent, but it's not helpful in saying all of us have the same responsibilities.

[15:08] The weight of responsibility may be given to a few of us for the care of the church, but all of us as elders share the responsibility. And let me begin with my, or let me conclude this point with my assertion.

The health of a church largely depends upon the health of its elders. So now let's look at the text and see how Peter makes that point. 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 1 through 4.

So I, so 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 the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive an unfading crown of glory. Okay. The health of a church largely depends upon the health of its elders.

What is the first thing we see? Then who is, who, what is an indication of a healthy elder? It is someone who loves Jesus. Notice Peter, he is saying things, I have loved the Lord.

[16:34] He was not perfect. I love that Peter is the author, because he was not a perfect man. We see that throughout the New Testament. But he was someone who is, who loved the Lord. He would defend him.

And he says, I was an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ. There are two ways that Peter indicates his affection for the Lord. He says, I have seen, I have saw, seen the sufferings of Christ.

Peter was there in the Last Supper. He went with Jesus from the upper room, and he went to him into the garden, where Christ sweated blood, and Peter saw Christ's distress.

Peter saw Christ's arrest. He was at, in fact, in Peter's exhaustion, when Jesus was arrested, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the arresting officers, Malchus.

I don't know why his name is in the New Testament, but we get his name, Malchus. Poor Malchus lost his ear, because Peter cut it off. Jesus put it back on and healed him.

[17:36] Peter followed Christ that early morning to Caiaphas' house, Peter loved the Lord, and the second thing Peter says is, I was a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed in verse 1.

Peter was one of three people, Peter, James, and John, who got to ascend the Mount of Transfiguration, where the Lord transfigured in front of him, and he saw Jesus for who he is, Lord of Lord, King of Kings, and he saw him in amazing glory.

And Peter was a man who was devoted to the Lord. And so Peter is using his exhortation to shepherd the flock of God among you out of this experience with the Lord.

He says, I was a witness of his sufferings. I saw the glory that is to be revealed. And out of that experience with the Lord and my love for him, I know it to be true.

Shepherd that flock. Elders. Elders have a love for Jesus. The health of a church largely depends upon the health of its elders.

[19:17] Elders love the Lord Jesus. Secondly, elders exercise loving oversight with proper motives. Look at the task that the elders are given. Shepherd the flock of God among you in verse 2.

That's your task. Exercising oversight. This is why I say, elders exercise loving oversight over God's people. Shepherd the flock.

A good shepherd knows the sheep to whom they have been entrusted. Shepherding means leading God's people in God's ways. Leading God's people to rich pastures of God's word where they can be fed and nourished by the Lord himself.

Shepherding binds up the wounds of the hurting and shepherding rebukes the sheep who are sinning and corrects and warns the sheep who wander and stir up disunity. Shepherds are on guard and defend the flock from enemies and those who pray upon the sheep.

Those who pray upon the sheep often have false teaching and some are wolves who are not sheep. And the key is to provide a proper oversight and with proper motives.

[20:31] What's one of the motives that the elders are to shepherd the flock that has been entrusted to him of God's people? Firstly, they are to do it willingly. The first motive, we're going to see three.

One of them is, the first one is willingly. Shepherds are to willingly serve. It says, not under compulsion. So look with me in verse 2. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly.

So shepherds are to willingly serve. A man should serve as an elder, not under duty, but out of delight. Serving as an elder is a get-to, not a have-to.

1 Timothy 3, 1, lets us know that an elder should aspire to the office of an elder. There should be an aspiration, a desire to serve in the office of an elder within the church.

I appreciate when the elders each year consider those who are candidates for eldership. One of the things that we ask both the candidate and ourselves is do we have a sense that this person aspires to the office?

[21:42] We think they may be an incredible elder, but if they don't aspire to this office, we are not going to go any further. There has to be some aspiration within the person to desire to serve as an elder because they must willingly serve.

Wendy and I know someone who, there's a church that is kind of in disarray. The church is a rural church of 40 to 50 people and there is a man who is serving as an elder of that church at this time and he does not like preaching.

He doesn't like the people and he's doing it out of a sense of duty and I think, oh, I feel sorry for the flock under that man's care.

second, we are elders exercise loving oversight with proper motives. They are to eagerly serve. Not only are they willing to serve, but they have to be eager.

So look with me in 1 Peter 2, the bottom of the verse, says, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

[22:58] To serve eagerly. And it says, not for shameful gain. The wrong motive for serving is for financial gain or for power and we'll get to power in a second, but let's talk about shameful gain or for financial enrichment.

This is a warning primarily to Pastor Jay and myself because we receive financial compensation, we are staff elders. We read earlier in Timothy that it's permissible to support financially some elders, but it's not a necessity and for those who do receive financial compensation, there is a temptation there.

And as he says, do not serve for financial gain. That is a poor motive. We are to serve eagerly. We are not to do to serve as an elder to financially enrich themselves.

By the very people who they are called to shepherd. I appreciate Paul's perspective or warning on this out of his own motive. He tells us the motive at which he serves.

He says, knowing the fear of God, we persuade men. Paul is intimately acquainted with the fear of the Lord. And then the second thing that Paul says in that same context, he says, for the love of Christ controls us.

[24:25] I have awareness of the fear of God and the love of God controls me. That's what Paul would say. When I was officially offered the position as senior pastor and put before the congregation and affirmed, I asked that the elders would do me a favor.

And that is, there's a number of reasons for this, but this is one of the reasons, is to provide for me an annual evaluation. So each year, the elders ask the staff how I treat them, how I'm doing, what they perceive my motives are for serving in this role.

They interview some various ministry leaders in the church as well, non-staff. And I have benefited richly and truly thank you, elders, for serving me well every year by giving me an evaluation.

I think that is also for your, for your benefit, church, that this occurs, not just my own, because one of the things that is also evaluated is my attitude with which I serve.

Am I doing this under compulsion? Am I doing this for financial gain? And I want to also say here a special note of gratitude to our lay elders who do not receive financial compensation, who serve sacrificially in addition to their full-time job, in addition to their family.

[26:07] They have the responsibility of the church. I'm grateful for them. You say, Scott, well, what's the danger here? What's the temptation? Why is it so important that a person serves so eagerly and not for financial gain?

Because if someone were to serve for financial gain, and I'm sure many of us can think of people perhaps on TV that we see that you think, wow, I wonder what their motives are.

However, it can happen locally. one begins to use their spiritual office, the office of an elder, for personal benefit.

So ministry becomes transactional and not sacrificial. If something were added to my job description, would I say, so is there any more pay accompanying that additional responsibility? Is that my heart posture? Is that the heart of your pastor? God calls one's life, God's call on one's life turns into a career rather than a stewardship.

[27:16] And the pastor begins to ask themselves, what is this going to cost me instead of how will this serve the body? this gain, financial gain, has existed people for a long time.

In Isaiah 56, verse 11, it says this, the dogs have a mighty appetite. They never have enough, but they are shepherds who have no understanding.

They have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all. What's the problem? These dogs, these unclean, deplorable, vicious animals are the shepherds and they're doing it in Isaiah, it says, for their own gain.

Second, why is serving for financial gain so terrible among elders? The flock of God, the church, becomes a means, not a trust.

Instead of viewing the church as a flock of God's people, the pastor begins to treat people as an income source rather than souls to shepherd, as assets rather than sheeps, as numbers rather than names.

[28:32] And the result of that is there can be a tight grip on people. There's an unwillingness to lose people to go elsewhere, especially wealthy families. The pastor can begin to use flattery instead of being faithful to the Lord and avoid hard truths that may be costly to church attendance.

And the pastor can begin to prioritize influential and wealthy members over the weak and the needy. Shepherding turns also, here's the third, I thought of five reasons.

Shepherding turns into control or neglect. The greed of a pastor can move into one of two directions, control and domination or neglect and indifference.

Let's first talk about control and domination. The pastor may manipulate through fear or guilt or spiritual pressure and in that case the pastor will also be resistant to accountability.

Secondly, you can have neglect and indifference. the care of the flock becomes minimal to only do what is required and the pastor begins to function more as a hireling, someone to do a higher job than a shepherd who actually cares.

[30:00] I'll just give you the two real quick, the last two. The church is harmed and not nourished. Preaching can become shallow and selective. This is why I like preaching through the whole books of the Bible because if that's the next passage, whatever it says, that's what I'm going to preach and it may be hard and it may cut our attendance but I'm going to be faithful to the Lord and so I like, instead of topical preaching, I like preaching through books of the Bible because this is what the Bible has to say and I can't avoid it and you know it if I skip it.

He'll say, hey, you skipped a verse and that's good. And then worst of all, the gospel witness is undermined. Greedy pastors make the gospel appear like a commodity to be sold than a truth to declare and a gift to receive.

Okay, that's why that's so important. Next, let me begin or may restate my assertion. A healthy church largely depends upon the health of its elders.

So then there's this loving oversight that elders are to have or have three motivations. We looked at willingly to serve, eagerly to serve and then thirdly is to exemplify humble leadership. Look with me in verse three.

Not domineering over those in their charge but as being examples to the flock. There is an ounce of insecurity likely in all of us but if a man goes into the pastorate who is insecure and serves as an elder it should be a disqualifying thing.

[31:38] I remember talking to a young man years ago and the young man voiced why he wanted to be a pastor. He said, I'm going to go to this seminary and get theological education but I questioned whether the man should even, if he was even character wise qualified to serve as an elder so I asked him, hey, why are you wanting to pursue this?

and he said this, this was his motivation, he said, well, I want to be well thought of and I want to influence others. I shared with him that he should consider doing any other job than serving as an elder.

I continued and said, and you should not even consider married, being married until this is put to death in you. Ladies, you can thank me later. You don't become a pastor to get a stage.

You enter ministry to proclaim the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ and for that message people may hate you. You don't get into the ministry to get the stage, you enter ministry to provide loving oversight and shepherd God's people unto the Lord.

You don't shepherd people unto yourself, you shepherd people unto the Lord. Leadership and responsibility leadership is a stewardship. It is not a right.

[33:01] You don't go into eldership or spiritual leadership in any form for the perks, for the status, for the money, for the influence, for the stage, for the power. You are going to abuse the sacred trust that is given to you if you do so.

You have no business serving as an elder. No business serving as a pastor. Last, in our text, this is why I say the health of a church largely depends upon the health of its elders.

So let's review what we've covered so far. Elders are those who love Jesus. Number two, they exercise loving oversight with proper motives and those proper motives include a willingness to serve, an eagerness to serve, they exemplify humble leadership, and then lastly, they serve assured of a future reward.

Look with me in verse four. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive an unfading crown of glory. I love how verse four begins, when the chief shepherd appears.

I love teaching the starting point class that many, if you are newer to the fourth, I encourage you to attend that class. We typically hold it on the first Sunday of the month at nine o'clock.

[34:37] Come join us. One of the things every person who attends the starting point class hears is this. If after this class and I share the distinctives that I'm going to share about Fourth Memorial Church, you feel like this church is not a good fit for you, would you tell me?

Because I would love to hear the things that provide you tension and I would love to make a recommendation of a church that you may better fit in. Now why would I say that?

Because the Lord Jesus is the chief shepherd. I am not. You all are ultimately, you answer to the Lord, ultimately. The elders are provided to any local church for the care of its people.

And I want to help people find a place where they can be well cared for if they feel this isn't it.

Because you have a chief shepherd and it's my job to point you to the chief shepherd, not to me or to any of the other elders.

So when the chief shepherd appears, that's not the point of this verse. It's just for your benefit. You will receive an unfading crown of glory.

[35:59] The text here is saying, hey, elders, there's very little earthly reward for you serving as an elder. You are not going to get money.

You are not to serve for money. You are not to serve for popularity. You are not to serve for control. You are not to serve for power. You are not to serve for influence. So then the elder may be thinking, well then, why serve?

Good question. first of all, even if there was not a reward, the chief shepherd is enough. Is he not for all of us? Why do you serve in whatever capacity you do? Isn't he not enough? But there is a reward stated here and it's described as this unfading crown of glory. Before I get to what that crown of glory is, which I'm going to tell you later, I don't know. However, before I declare my ignorance or reaffirm my ignorance, I'm going to show you this. [37:10] In Hebrews 13, 17, I want us to appreciate the weight that elders have. obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls.

Again, this is what the function and the role they are to have in the church. And it says, as those who have to give an account, excuse me, one day, those who serve as an elder will have to give an account to the Lord for how they have shepherded his people. And that is a day we all as elders should both look forward to and have a degree of trepidation about.

It gets worse for those who serve as elders. In James 3, 1, it says this, not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with a stricter gut, with a greater strictness.

so not only, one of the functions of an elder is to preach God's word, to faithfully preach God's word and stay away from error and correct false doctrine, to present his word correctly so that you may see the glory of Jesus for who he is and his purpose and plan and be able to apply this to your life.

[38:38] And those who do this, one day when they do give an account to the Lord, they will be judged with a stricter judgment. And that too ought to be thought of with trepidation.

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