

(Apostolic Vision) the Biblical Concept of Eldership

by Dale Heisey

Dale Heisey emphasizes the biblical understanding of eldership as a role of spiritual maturity and service within the church community.

Scripture: Matthew 20:26-28, Ephesians 5:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Hebrews 13:7-24, 1 Peter 5:2-3

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Servant Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by describing a scene where he sees a man diligently setting up chairs in the church basement. This man is later introduced as Brother Leonard, who exemplifies the proper discharge of duties and serving others. The preacher then focuses on Hebrews chapter 13, specifically verses 7, 17, and 24, which mention obeying and submitting to those who have rule over you. However, the preacher emphasizes that this does not mean dominating or controlling others, but rather serving and being examples to the flock. The sermon concludes with the idea that true leadership is found in those who serve and care for the needs of others, just as Jesus came to serve and not to be served.

Transcript

Again, this morning, may grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father be the portion and the blessing of everyone that's gathered in this assembly. It has been a real joy for me to be here throughout this week, and I count it a special privilege to be able to speak, maybe more particularly this morning, to the Tangent congregation, although I am aware that there are visitors here. But my words this morning are especially for the congregation at Tangent, and it's been a special blessing to be here among you.

And my wife's name is Suzanne, and as part of us as a family, we want to express our appreciation to you. You have not met her, but you have received me into your congregational family and into your hearts and homes, and we do deeply appreciate it, and I have felt the fellowship as we have been here among you. Fellowship is a most beautiful word.

I have also become aware, as this week has progressed, how different we are. And that has come out on several occasions as I have spoken to you on various themes, and it came to my attention that the way I'm saying this or presenting it is quite different from your normal way and your backgrounds and your customs here. And you must understand that what we are in Costa Rica is influenced by many, many things.

We are very isolated from churches up here, and we are a combination of some people from Amish backgrounds, from various kinds of backgrounds, and people with the kind of background like I have, and we have then our national members in our churches, and we have members there from various countries, from Nicaragua, from Salvador, various places in our congregations there, Costa Rica, and so it's a unique combination, but there is one thing that can hold us together, and if it doesn't come from here, we don't have very much authority for it, and we have a Bible that holds us together, and we want to study that Bible, and if there's anything that I appreciate about those who have been called to pastor the flock in Costa Rica, I appreciate the respect that they have for the Word of God, and I appreciate how the time and time again we don't turn to what the church's doctrinal statement says, but we turn to what God's doctrinal statement says and look to see what God wants us to do in the life of our congregations. Now the brother announced this morning ordination services for this congregation, and in one sense I have just a degree of trepidation as I think of you entering upon this important assignment. You have been through some serious and some congregation-changing circumstances when it comes to this whole area of those who guide and direct the flock here.

You've been through changes that have had serious effects upon the congregation, and it's a should be making every step with much carefulness, and so I am very, very concerned about this. I don't know if you're concerned about it or not. No one has said a word to me about it during this week, but I consider it to be a serious step to take in light of your recent history, and so I'm going to take a chance again this morning, and I told Brother Victor that I almost hesitate to do this, so I talked with him about it before I stand up here.

I'm going to take a chance this morning and present to you as best I can from the scriptures what we understand the Bible to teach, that is to say, the Bible concept of eldership in a congregation, and I'm not going to spend much time this morning talking about the work of those elders and pastors. I'm not going to spend much time talking about method, although it would be very interesting to do that if we had several more days to do it, but I plan to talk about a Bible concept. When you think of your ministers, when you think of your pastors, what comes to your mind, and what comes to your mind when you think of a pastor? The word that comes to your mind, the thoughts that come to your mind.

It's so very important if we're going to have the blessing of God upon us as we come into this coming weekend and make these very, very important decisions. What comes to your mind when you think of Brother Victor up here? Does this word come to your mind? Bishop. Well, what does that word mean to you? Jason Schrock.

Paul there. I'm going to take a chance, but I think it's Joe Wyrick. I'm not sure about that name.

What comes to your mind? What comes to your mind, brother? If you're sitting here and you think, well, you know, within a week or so, maybe I will be one of the ordained. Now, what comes to your mind? What does that mean? You know, in Costa Rica, a toad is called a supple, and a supple, you know, he can make himself any size he wants to be. He could start off pretty small, the supple can.

But, you know, a strange thing happens to the supple. He, he starts to inflate. He starts to puff himself up.

He just starts to get awfully messed. And my question is, does something happen to you when you become all of a sudden in quotes ordained? Do you add about six inches of heel under your shoe to raise you up by much, much further than what you were before? Or just what happens when this ordained takes place? Do you have now a position? Do you have now an elevation? Do you have now, what are you?

What is your biblical concept of those who guide this flock? And until we're thinking biblically about this subject, we cannot expect for our churches to flow well, and grow well, and develop well on this subject. And I find people that have wrong ideas.

They have wrong concepts in their mind. They're thinking wrong. What do you think when there's a knock at the door or someone rings the doorbell and you kind of peep out through the shutter? And there you see Jason's truck standing on your porch or Paul's there.

What goes through your mind? What's it to do now? What's going on? What is your concept? Is it a welcome thing? Is it a blessed thing? Is this one of the best things that's happened? Come on in brother. What is your concept? And this morning I want to look at, that's just that the biblical concept of the eldership of the congregation. And if our concept is not biblical, then the way these brethren function in the church will not be biblical.

And it's going to cause confusion. And there's going to be unrest. And the result of their work will not be peace and quietness forever.

It's going to be something else. And the reason why it's wrong is because the concept is wrong. We don't know what we are supposed to do.

We don't understand what we're called to do. We don't have the concept right. And this is so important this morning.

And if I could help get our thoughts somewhat more biblical on this whole concept of the guidance of the flock, then I would feel that this week has been well spent if nothing else happened, because there is so much confusion here. Now, I will maybe startle you a little bit if I would tell you that when it comes to this subject, we use words that the Bible never uses. And I think I'm going to start right here.

I'll start right at the beginning. We'll hit this thing with 220 volts right at the very beginning. We use, we use words the Bible does not use, and it shows the error of our concepts before we go any further.

We talk about the church administration. And that's the word that's not in the Bible. The word administration is in the Bible one time, but it has nothing to do with the eldership of the congregation.

It has absolutely nothing to do with it. It's not referred to the way a church is guided or directed by those elders. It's not referred to in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, in that verse 5, where the word administration is found.

The word administration there has nothing to do with what Victor and Paul and Jason are doing. It has to do with what the congregation at Tangent is doing. It has to do with the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the congregation, ministering His grace to the congregation.

Verse 4, I talked about the gifts that the God gives, diverse gifts. Everyone's gifts are different. I don't have the gifts that some of you brethren have.

I would maybe wish I had, but the Spirit of God did not see fit to give me some of the gifts that my brethren have and some of the dear sisters have. I don't have those gifts, and God decided that. The Holy Spirit decided that.

And as He ministers through the body, there is ministering going on here. There are ministrations going on about which I have done nothing. Do you realize that I am 55 years old, and I never did a thing to build a church in Oregon? Well, you have been labored over and prayed over and taught and guided, and look what God has done here.

And I have not done anything to contribute to it. Well, this is all been done by the Spirit of God. This is the work, the diverse work of the ministrations of the Spirit of God in the people of God that have been working here.

I did nothing. But we call it administration, and that very word scares me. Think of administration.

Office. Direction. Think of it.

Administration. Decisions. Administration.

Why, it sounds like we're running a corporation. And this is not a corporation out here. These are eternal souls of men.

These are sheep that need a shepherd. And we talk about administration. How do you administrate sheep? Tell me, how do you administrate sheep? Quite among those sheep that administrate.

Now, the very word throws a wrong concept completely over what we're doing when we give guidance to a church. Another word we use that's not in the Bible either, and right away throws the wrong connotation to what is happening is the word leadership. We talk about the church leaders, and we talk about the leadership.

And I was ordained to leadership. You know, the word leader is used one time in the New Testament. Did you know that? You know how it's used? It's used like this.

It's in chapter 15 of Matthew. When the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch. That is it.

And we put these words in here. And so we, someone invented these words. I don't know where they came from.

I don't know who put these words and applied them to the pastoral eldership of a congregation. But these words give us wrong concepts. And these words give us ideas that God does not have in his word for us.

These terms that I'm using or that we use create a tiered approach. Bishop, deacon, excuse me. Wait a minute.

How did we do that? These terms suggest an over-under relationship. An over and under. That these terms suggest a clergy laity distinction.

There's the clergy. There's the laity. I'm just a laity.

I'm a laity. Brother, I was called to serve our churches as a bishop in the congregations. I am laity.

I am a non-professional. One of the brethren. One of the congregation.

Probably one of the more needy ones in the congregation. That's what I am. I am not over the congregation.

There's only one over the congregation in La Merced or Maseyo or Pital. There's only one over that. There's only one head of the church.

And I'm not the head of the church. I am just not the head of the church. I'm not qualified to be the head of the church.

I have not shed my blood for the church. I have not purchased the church with my own blood. I am not the head of the church.

I am one of the body. I don't know if I'm a little finger. I don't know what I am.

Maybe I'm an eyelash. I'm something. I'm part of this body.

I'm not the head. I'm just part of the body of Christ. Praise God that I was included.

Praise God I was invited. Praise God he called me. But I am one of the body.

There is not a clergy lay to distinction in the body of Christ. Now let's look at what the New Testament does say. Would you like to do that? Let's see what the Bible does say.

The Bible uses the word elders. Oh, we could find this word various places. I'll just turn to Acts chapter 20.

This is maybe not in any special order. I wrote these thoughts down as they came to my mind this morning. Not necessarily in any good order here.

But verse 17 says, And from Elitus he sent, that's Paul, to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. This word elders there is presbyters. That's a good word for it.

The word presbyter is the English word for the Greek word that means the same thing. Presbyteros. And that word simply means those who are mature.

Those with spiritual experience. The word is always found in its plurality in the New Testament. It's always used in plural.

Ordain elders in every city. Ordain elders in every church. You have that in chapter 14 of Acts.

You have that in every city in Titus chapter 1. And so these are elders. That's the word the Bible uses. It's a word that does not refer to function.

It refers to their own personhood. It's a person who is mature and spiritually sound. He has spiritual experience.

He is a person that the congregation looks up to as one who understands. And he's not a novice. He has experience in what he is doing.

He's an elder. That's a word that the Bible uses. It's something we look for when we choose those who guide the congregation.

The Bible does use the word presbytery. Let's look at it in 1 Timothy 4 verse 14. And this is simply the word, those elders.

It is the word referring to the elders. It's the same word that we have in Acts where we were reading in chapter 20. It's the presbytery.

It is the body of elders. The body of the experienced or the aged ones. It says here, Neglect not the gift, verse 14, that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the elders.

The laying on of the hands of the presbytery. It's an assembly of aged men or assembly of the elders or the assembly of the experienced ones. We had an ordination in Nicaragua during the last year.

Three of us brethren from Costa Rica went there. And we counseled with the churches and we talked to the brethren that are called there to pastor these congregations that we have there. We have several ordained brethren in those congregations in Nicaragua and we were going to choose a bishop to take more responsibility and give oversight to the congregation, which is what the word bishop means.

And so we spent a lot of time counseling with them. And one of the young men had come into our churches from another kind of church background. And when the meeting was over, this young pastor began to cry.

And I couldn't understand why he was crying. I couldn't understand what was wrong. I didn't know we had done anything wrong.

And he said, it's the first time in my life that I have not been afraid of bishops. It's the first time in my life when I just loved to sit and listen, loved to sit and learn. And he said he just wishes we would not go home.

Stay here and help us. We need this kind of help. And that's what the assembly of elders is.

It's no one to be afraid of. We were given the responsibility to take over a congregation that had come again to us from another type of background. And there was a young mother in that, a young sister in that home who had an ungodly husband.

And she wanted to have a meeting with us. She had some serious needs. She wanted to have a meeting.

And we arranged it. We came there, sat down on the couch, and this lady started to shake. This dear sister, I'd say thirty years old, she started to shake.

And when she tried to speak, she couldn't speak. And I sensed that something was seriously wrong. And she said, I just, I'm just scared to be in the presence of a bishop.

If you can't imagine what damage we do when people feel that way. Can you imagine a sheep saying, I'm scared to be near the shepherd? It is a terrible thing. We are unbiblical if we're that way.

We are unchristian if we're that way. There's something not Christ-like about that. There's something seriously wrong about that.

And these presbyters were nothing more than a group of men with experience and all their experiences available for all the rest of the church. And it's for all the rest of the younger ones coming on and the new ones coming into the responsibilities. And it's for guiding them and helping them and sharing with them and giving them some direction and being by their side and helping them along and leading them into it.

That's what an elder is. And we have the word bishops. And we have that in the same passage that I read in Acts chapter 20.

We have that word also in Philippians chapter 1 verse 1. And we have that word in 1 Timothy chapter 3, where there are qualifications given. And in Titus chapter 1. We have it here in Acts 20 verse 28. Take ye therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock of which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.

And that word is bishops. To feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Bishop and bishop is just like it says here.

It's an overseer. And as I understand Vine's expository of New Testament words, he said this word episkopos. Episkopos in Spanish, bishops in English, means one appointed to care for the needs of the flock.

One appointed to care for the needs of the flock. One who is called to give oversight. And that word oversight, as it's used, it's the same word in its verb form instead of its noun form.

It's found in 1 Timothy chapter 5 in verse 2. It means one who is looking carefully. One who takes the oversight thereof is one who is looking out carefully. Taking the oversight thereof in that verse, verse 3 or 5 too, does not mean the assuming of a position.

But it means the discharge of a duty. And when you take the oversight of a congregation, dear brother, you're not assuming a position in the congregation like this. But you are entering it upon a duty that you're responsible to discharge before the congregation.

And the two concepts are a world apart. Now look what I am or who I am here. Listen to who is speaking here.

I have a position to protect. I have a position to defend. I have a position to intercess.

But it is not that. The word means assuming upon the discharge of duties in a careful and caring way. That's what the word means.

Let's just look at it. Verse Peter 5. I want you to see what the Bible says. I don't want to convince you with my own understanding.

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, nor for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. And you can see all those words in that verse refer very, very obviously to what is being done and not to a position taken. Because everything there is telling you how to do it.

You're carrying out this discharge. You're carrying out this responsibility. You have this oversight to the flock.

And how are you going to do that? It's not talking to you about what kind of new label you should put on your desk to define who you are. It's giving you here the equipment you need to discharge it according to the will of God. We have another word that is in the Bible that we can use.

It's in the Bible. We have the word minister. The word minister, as you know, is the same as the word deacon, diakonos.

That word is found many, many times. It's found more often than any of the other words that we have already used. It means a servant.

It means an attendant, one who attends to. It means to minister or a minister. It means one who waits upon.

One who waits upon. I'd heard of Brother Leonard Overholt. I'd heard of him.

I'd heard that he is a very wise man. I'd heard that he has deep respect of his congregation. He was a bishop in the congregation of Minerva, Ohio.

That's a kind of a beachy congregation. You might not ever have heard of it. But I was visiting there at a CMTI school meeting.

And I think there's a sister here present today who was at that same meeting. And I wanted to meet this bishop because I had interest in him. I'd heard of him.

And I was, I'd heard good reports of him. Wanted to meet him. And I wanted to find out who this person was, bishop of the congregation.

And I hadn't met him. And now they were dismissing him for lunch. We were down the stairs to the basement.

I came down to the basement and I saw this stately looking gentleman and he was, he had folding chairs. He was lifting folding chairs and putting out chairs and lining them up and pulling out chairs. And he was doing that.

And as we were walking by he just kept working. He, and then somebody said, have you met brother Leonard? The proper discharge of duties. One who attends to, one who awaits upon.

A servant. I was preaching at a, at a church, church that all of you have heard about. Every one of you sitting here has heard about this congregation.

It's very, very popular. One of the most popular congregations in the United States. Not a Mennonite congregation, but you all have heard about it.

I was preaching there and there was a noon intermission and a family there had a handicapped son who could not help himself with his necessary duty. The father was not present. The mother came to me and said, brother Dale, this is a strange audience here in the men's restroom.

I don't feel comfortable taking my son. Could, could you take care of my son? He was about 20 years old. He could hardly walk.

He had, you had to do everything for him there. I said, that would be an honor. I took this son in there and took care of those problems.

And when he was all fixed up, I took him back out to his mother and she was very thankful for that. That is, that is a deacon. That is a minister.

That is what means to minister. That's what it means to serve. That's what it means to attend to.

That is the man that God is looking for. That is the attitude. Do you have that in mind when you think of your ministers? Now, I don't want to shake you up too badly, but I talked about this tier relationship.

You know, I put them in order. You know, which one's at the top. If there's a top, you know, which one's at the top.

I will show you biblically, which one's at the top. If you want top and bottom, if you want order, if you want hierarchy, if you want, if you want that tier arrangement, I will show you which one Jesus put on top. Turn to Matthew chapter 20.

This is when these disciples had a problem wanting to know which one's going to be the greatest around here. And they wanted to sit in right hand and left hand. Verse 25 says, this is Matthew 20, 25.

But Jesus called them, called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are a great exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever shall be chief among you, let him be your servant, let him be your deacon, let him be your deacon.

Twice in verse 26 and verse 27. Jesus Christ came to be a servant, and Jesus said, that is office number one. Now, you've got to decide brother Jason, if you're in that office or not.

And you decide, Brother Malin, if you're in that office or not. You're going to side Shane, if you're in that office or not, you're going to side here man. You're going to side brother John.

You're going to side there Roger. You're going to side brother Victor. If that's who you are now, you're going to side that.

You're going to side. If you're going to be a servant or if you're going to be served, if you're going to be honored, if you're going to honor, if you're going to be looked up to, if you're going to look up, you're going to decide where you are. And the greatest in this place, the greatest in this place is one who serves the most selflessly, selflessly.

That's one that God's looking for. It reminds me of when the Indian tribes of this continent were in need of a new chief. And as I've heard word chief kind of makes you just pop up and kind of stick the chest about three inches farther.

I've heard the word chief kind of makes you feel for an important chief. When they looked for a chief, the old chief had died. They looked around the tribe and found the man that was most available to help the widows and the orphans and the needy people of the tribe.

And the one they felt served the most to those most needy ones in the community, the Indian community, that's the one they named to be their new chief. Dear brethren, if you're looking for a person like that in this congregation, who would you choose? Not the one with the most ability, not the one who can speak the best, not the one who can hold your attention, not the one who has the biggest bank account, not the one who has the biggest operation, not the one who is the best known, not the one who comes to that populous family and popular background. A servant.

What is your concept? What is your concept? Leadership! Administration! What is your concept? I'm trying to find this morning a biblical concept for this whole matter of giving guidance, direction, and direction to a

church. It's not an office, but a way of life. It's an attitude of ministering towards others.

You say, Brother Dale, you missed the most important verse. You stepped right over top of it. You tripped right over it.

You didn't see it in your Bible. Let's do it. Let's go right straight there.

Hebrews chapter 13. Let's look at it head on. Three times in this chapter, in the King James Version of the Bible, there is a phrase that seems to justify leadership, administration, clergy laity, leadership laity.

And I choose to look at verse 17 of this chapter. Obey them that have the rule over you. And submit yourselves for they watch for your souls, that they must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.

That same phrase is found also in verse 7. Remember them that have the rule over you. That same phrase is found in verse 24. Salute all them that have the rule over you.

And all the saints. See that, Brother Dale? We are called to rule. We have rule over.

We are ruling over. We administrate. We dominate.

We control. See that? We have authority. We have responsibility.

See that, Dale? Can't you read it in your Bible? We rule over the people. Why, a three-fold cord is not quickly broken instead of three times in one chapter. So we have this, immediately we have this obedience, submission on one side and authority and power on the other.

We have this obedience and the submission here. And we have the authority and the power here. And we have a ruling over.

And those who rule expect this and have a right to expect this. I understand that. Now you wonder what I'm going to do with that.

This word has been translated in your King James Bible about ten different ways. And I wish I had time this morning to show you every time this Greek word is used in your New Testament. I don't have time to do that.

Of course not. But this word can be and at one time in your New Testament is used to mean to govern. It is at one point in your Bible used to translate the word to govern.

And I just read those verses to you. And I'm going to read them again now, not from Matthew, but from Mark. I want you to go to chapter 10 of Mark.

And this is the same context these disciples want to sit on the right and on the left. And so it's the same context, but I want to see it as Jesus explains it to disciples in Mark's gospel. He says here that sit on my right hand and left hand.

Verse 40, is not his to give, but is given to them for whom it is prepared. Now we go to verse 41. And when the ten heard it, that is the question that James and John asked, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

Now we go to verse 42. But Jesus called them to him and said unto them, ye know that they which are counted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. This is what they do.

They rule over one another. You know that they which are counted to rule over, to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. Now this is what they do in the Gentile world.

This is what they do in Iraq. That's what Saddam Hussein does. That is what carnal administration does.

That is what human administration does. That is what the Gentiles do. But Jesus spoke to us in verse 43.

But so shall it not be among you. That's what they do. Now look at those three words.

They rule over, they exercise lordship over, and they exercise authority upon. And he said, but so shall it not be among you. And I was teaching a group of 300 pastors in Nicaragua.

I was teaching them the Bible doctrine of the two worlds. The kingdom of this world is one kingdom, and the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the midst of this world is another kingdom, completely apart with another king, with another set of values, another charter, with another purpose, with another army, with another set of weapons. A completely different kingdom inside the kingdom of this world.

And when the lesson was all done, they had time for questions and answers. The first question that came was, Brother Dale, do you think that Christians should be involved in politics? Do you think we should be voting? They were in the election right then between the Bolanos and Ortega. Do you think we should be voting up here in Nicaragua? Do you think we should participate in politics? What do you say? So I asked them to turn this passage, and I read this passage to them.

I said, but so shall it not be among you. But how about if it's that way in the church? How about if we have ruling over, and exercising authority over, and exercising lordship over in the church? Then what do we have? Then someone is not obeying Jesus. Whatever Hebrews means, it has to mean something else.

Whatever Hebrews means, it has to mean something else. We can't contradict what Jesus said. It has to mean something else, I think.

The Spanish Bible says, obey your pastors. That's what it says. Obey your pastors.

The Greek word that we have there can mean, many times does mean, guide and feed. Obey those who guide and feed the flock. It's the concept of guiding the flock, as opposed to governing or ruling over a flock.

And I want to show you this as best I can in 1 Peter chapter 5. We were there a minute ago, but I want to show you now in the larger context what I believe Peter's confirming that we are to do when we obey those that have the rule over us, as it says there. Obey our pastors. Obey those who guide the flock.

Obey those that have the oversight. Obey those who are carefully and diligently watching over. Obey those who are concerned, who give their lives in diligence to be laughed, to watch, to look over, to notice, to be vigilant, carefully interested.

And what is happening among the brothers and sisters in the church, in verse 1 of chapter 5, the elders which are among you, I exhort him also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also partake of the glory that shall be revealed. Now he's talking to elders. He's talking to the eldership of the church.

Notice what he says. Number one, feed the flock of God, which is among you. Taking the oversight thereof.

Now taking oversight, as we've already said, is the careful watching. Carefully guiding and caring for the flock. Not by constraint, but willingly.

Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither, neither, as being lords over God's heritage. Don't do that.

We are not Gentiles. Christ said no. Christ said I came to be a servant.

Christ said I came to serve you. Christ said the chiefs among you should be your servants. Christ said don't do this.

Neither be as, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock, or examples it says here. And when the chief shepherds shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. And we have these beautiful teachings here of submitting ourselves one to another and everyone being clothed with humility because God loves that and God blesses that.

This is the teaching here. Now you say, Brother Dale, you missed some more verses. All right, I'm agreed.

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians 5 and see what it says. Verse 12. We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord.

See that where they are? They're over us. We have a tier here. We have, an over-under relationship.

We have a, we have above and below relationship. And I'm in the over, I'm in the up above. We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

And this also says, to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake and be at peace among yourselves. Spanish Bible says, know them which preside. Those of which preside.

Now you can easily see the close connection between presiding and being over. The word means in Greek to stand before, to lead, to direct, to attend to, to stand before. The flock is in trouble.

There's a great need comes up. There's a problem. There's something disturbing the congregation.

There's a, there's something going on here. And someone is called upon to face that. Someone is called upon to take the first steps.

And the, the elder comes before and stands before and takes all the responsibility and guides that flock in this very, very important, this very crucial moment. He stands there and goes first. In that sense of the word, he's over us.

And that's what the word means. I will see that same, I'll show you that same word in, in Romans chapter 12, the same word is there. In Romans chapter 12 in verse eight, over you.

I said Romans chapter 12, verse eight, here's a list of gifts. It says, or he that exhorteth on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.

He that ruleth with diligence. He that showeth mercy with carefulness. And this word ruleth is the same word that you have in first Thessalonians 5, 12 over you.

It is the exact same word. Again, Spanish says preside. He that presides, let him do it with diligence.

First Timothy 5, 17. I want you to notice that verse yet, please. First Timothy 5, 17.

We're looking for a Bible concept of the elders of the congregation. What is our concept of these elders? Verse 17, let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they that labor in the word and doctrine. And it's the same word as over you in verses five, a term that indicates care and diligence.

But if you want to know what this word means and what these who are exercising this care and this responsible manner standing before to give the direction, if you want to know what that word means, study it in the rest of the verse. Those who labor in word and doctrine, Spanish says those who labor in preaching and in teaching, in the predicate and in the word and in the doctrine, in the preaching and in the teaching. I don't want to embarrass anybody with this.

I know that our cultures are vastly different and I don't know much about your setting up here. And if I would have been raised here and maybe I would look at some things differently from what I do. And you will please forgive that.

And I'm not asking you to twist everything into a Costa Rican mold because it will not fit up here. This is Oregon. But how much time do you ministers spend? How much time of your lives, how much time of your week do you spend preaching and teaching? How much of your time? Well, we preach every other week, Sunday morning service every other week or maybe every three weeks when my turn comes around.

And I hear people talk like this. Some say it's my turn to preach. Others say I have to preach on Sunday.

And I'm sorry, but I don't understand that kind of terminology. I don't know where that comes from. It doesn't come from this book.

It's a wrong concept of what the Bible is teaching. Be instant, in season, out of season. Be always ready to give an answer to every man.

The reason of the hope of the life is in you with meekness and fear. You should be living in the Bible. The apostles say we must give ourselves to the word of God and prayer.

I don't know if we realize how much time that takes. It's awful hard for a godly minister. It's awful hard for a caring pastor to get this done and do a whole lot of other things besides or do much of anything else besides.

We are not supported by the states. We don't have a mission board taking care of our needs. We earn our own living where we are.

I suppose that I spend less than an hour a day earning a material living. There are needs everywhere. The people come to the door.

There's someone we must go to see. There is someone who's suffering. There's someone who's struggling.

There's someone who's going astray. There's someone who was not in church on Sunday. There's someone who was in church on Sunday.

They were never there before. They are worthy of a visit. It takes so much time to preach and teach.

It takes so much time to be with the people. It takes too much time to serve. It takes so much time to minister.

We don't have a lot of time to do other things if we have a biblical concept of what we're called to do. I think that everything I've been trying to show you is all summed up in one very, very beautiful word that the Bible uses time and time again. And I think the concept we need to have, these dear brethren, that God chooses and the congregation calls to take this place of great responsibility, I believe a beautiful Bible word for that is the word shepherd or pastor.

If you would just study, dear pastors, Psalm 23 and see what Psalm 23 says, and then and there, get your minister's manual. Psalm 23 is a minister's manual. Psalm 23 outlines the duties of a godly pastor, a Christian pastor, a Christian servant.

Psalm 23 is your pastoral Bible. It's your minister's manual. It's your minister's guidelines.

I'd like to read it to you. It's biblical concept. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

And if you want an exercise in spiritual humility, if you want to have a broken heart before God as a pastor, just take one of your church members. Let's see, who do you have here? I don't know all your members' names, but let me see if I can find one here. In fact, there's a Doreen in here somewhere, or there's a Janet, or back there's a Ramona.

So, I'm going to use Ramona. There's Ramona. She's looking at me.

So, there's Regina. Any one of these. Ramona, my brother Jason, I'm going to use you.

So, you listen, and you let your heart be melted by what I'm going to say. And Ramona is back there in that little house where she lives off of Powerline Road, and she says, Jason's rock is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me beside still waters. Jason's rock restoreth my soul. Intense struggles I have.

And Jason's rock restoreth my soul. Jason leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his namesake. Yea, though I would walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for in that most difficult moment in my life, Jason's rock is with me.

His rod and his staff, they comfort me. He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies. And Jason's rock anoints my head with oil, and my cup runs over.

And then Ramona ends this little meditation by saying, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, because Jason's rock is my pastor. If I'm not mistaken, that is a biblical concept, what this thing is all about.

Until we get to this point, I ask you, how do you expect your church to function? What do you expect to happen here? Until we get to this condition, until we get to this position. I'd like to just look at John chapter 10, where we have some, a holy example here. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door of the sheepfold, but climeth up.

O dear people, did you read those words? Climeth up. Did you read those words? Climeth up. Please read your Bible.

Study your Bible. Climeth up by some other way. What is that person? What's it say here? Are you afraid to say it? He's a thief and a robber.

He enters into the door of the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth. And the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. They obey him.

Obey your pastors. They obey him, because they know his voice, because he lives with them, and he lives among them. And he hath oil in his horn, and he restores their soul, and he is with them in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death.

There he is. And when he calleth them forth, they follow him, and they obey him, because he is their shepherd, and he is the only shepherd they have. And they love him, and he loves them.

They won't follow a stranger. The thief cometh, verse 10, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy, I am come to them that have life, and they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the harling won't do that. The harling won't do that.

Verse 14, I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. Verse 27, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. This is Jesus.

He asks us to follow his steps. He asks us to be what he is. Give the life to the sheep.

Live with the sheep. Know the sheep. Call them by name.

They follow. She told me she has 87 grandchildren, she told me. She said she thinks she knows the name of every one of them, of her 87 grandchildren.

I'll never have 87 grandchildren in my life. I don't know if I'll ever have 10. But 87 grandchildren, and she knows their names.

And this shepherd knows the names of all the sheep, and he calls them by their names. He doesn't just know their names, he knows their hearts, and knows their needs, and knows where they're suffering, and knows where they're hurting, and lives with their sheep enough to know why they're bleating, and knows where the scratches are and where the wounds are, and he knows that there was some poisonous weeds eaten there, and he knows that there was a venomous bite, and he knows exactly where the wool is torn and where the skin is bleeding, and he has oil in his horn, and he knows his sheep, and he lives among his sheep. And it takes a lot of time to do that.

It takes a lot of time to do that. And what else can we be doing when we give our time to doing that? I realize that you people up here are probably able to take care of themselves. You people are probably so well-trained and well-able, you don't need someone to watch over you.

I realize we have a situation quite different. We work with first-generation people. They do all kinds of stuff. They come with their problems. They say whoopee at the door. They need you in any hour of the day or night.

Maybe you don't need a pastor. Maybe you're different. Maybe your hearts don't ache.

Maybe you don't make mistakes. Maybe you know all the answers. But most people need a shepherd.

And God is looking for shepherds. He's looking for men with pastor's hearts. He's looking for someone who's willing to lay down his life for the sheep.

He's looking for those when they call them, the sheep follow. I'm a good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I had some more notes here, but the hour has come to close. I want to show you how a proper concept of church elders, congregational elders and pastors, how a proper concept works out in practical life. Would you just turn and close me to Isaiah 32.

We'll have to leave this without getting into that. It takes a lot of time to be a pastor. You have to be available.

You have to be willing to make investments in the lives of your people. You have to have time to listen. Just time to listen.

They come in there to your study. They come into your living room. They sit on the edge of your porch.

We do a lot of hours on the porch. And you listen. And they have a whole story.

And they go on and on on a big story. And you listen. You don't need to say much.

Listen. Don't answer the matter before you've heard it. Listen.

Don't answer the matter until you've heard both sides. Listen. Be a listening pastor.

And pray. I tell my people many times, I don't have an answer for you now. I need some time to pray about it.

I won't give you an answer now. But thank you for coming. It's a real blessing that you came.

I really appreciate that you shared this. This was hard for you to say that. I know it was hard for you to say that.

You probably felt angry feelings in your heart when you said that. You probably felt that you were out of place when you did that. You probably felt that you were too, came on too strong when you said that.

And I know it was hard for you to say that. I want to thank you for saying it. I don't have an answer right now, but I want to pray about it.

I thank you for being honest. I want to know how you feel. I'm glad you said it like it was.

Search the Scriptures, brethren. Read the Bible. Feed on the Word of God.

Fill your heart with this message. Fill your heart with these answers. Fill your heart with this life.

The Word I speak to you is spirit and life. Fill your heart with this life. Be compassionate.

Be compassionate with these people. Go ye forth with weeping, bearing the precious seed. Know your sheep.

Many people stood last night. They all said something. But it's very, very possible that not everybody said everything.

It's very, very possible if they had a moment, a private moment with a pastor, they would have more to say. Search them out, pastors. Go to every one.

Give them each one time. Is there something else you wanted to say, John? Is there something else, John? Did you say it all? Would you like some more help, John? Do you have what you need? Do you spiritually have what you need to meet that pornography tomorrow, to meet that truck driving job tomorrow? Do you have in your heart what you need, brother? We want to help you. Let's take the time and look at it together.

We'll sit down and visit about this thing. It takes so much time. Why, if somebody would just simply follow through with the work that this meeting last night gave to us, we have many hours of work to do there.

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