
Family Talk on Shepherding

1 Peter 5:1-4

Introduction

Because of Peter's formative experience of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus, the glory of Jesus is a powerful motivation to him. Watch how it develops through the book.

- 1:7 – Tested faith results in glory to Jesus;
- 1:8 – Believing in Christ fills us with an inexpressible and glorious joy;
- 1:21 – Our faith and hope are in the God who raised and glorified Jesus;
- 1:24 – The glory of man is frail and passing in contrast the enduring finality of the gospel and the Word;
- 4:11 – Our purpose in ministry is praise to Jesus in ascribing to Him supremacy and glory;
- 4:13 – Rejoicing in present suffering increases our capacity for joy at the future glory of Jesus;
- 4:14 – There is a spirit of glory that rests on those who are blessed by being insulted for the name of Jesus;
- 5:1 – We will all share in the glory that is soon to be uncovered;
- 5:4 – The Chief Shepherd will give to His under-shepherds a crown of glory;
- 5:10 – We have been summoned (called) to God's eternal glory in Christ.

What are we to think of when we think of glory?

- We are to think of a bright splendor. The essence of God is an unapproachable holiness represented by light.
- We are to think of a heavy weight. The unimaginable greatness of God is to weigh heavily on us.
- We are to think of magnifying God. The idea is not to make God larger, but to make Him great and supreme in our own view of Him.
- We are to think of honoring God. Giving glory to God is to believe and express His great worth and value. It is to treasure Him.

The glory of Jesus is the objective and aim and purpose and passion of our lives. So Peter encourages us in the midst of the mess to stretch forward and upward and Godward towards the glory of Jesus.

This orientation must begin with the leadership of the church. There must a constant passion for the glory of God in the elders of the church. Peter begins with this appeal to elders for Biblical shepherding.

Our Shared Experiences**(v.1)**

Peter's appeal is based on common ground shared by the elders to whom he is writing. Thus, it speaks to us as well in our own shepherding as elders.

Our Plurality

Notice that this is addressed to a group of men: elders, shepherds and overseers. The New Testament requires that churches be led by elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Phil. 1:2).

Our Unity

Two connecting unities are mentioned: the elders *among* the people and the elders together as *fellow* elders.

Our Testimony

Peter is not just someone who saw the sufferings of Jesus, but one who testified of it. At the center of Peter's preaching was the gospel of the cross of Christ. Elders are to testify in their ministries to realities they have experienced. It is a great danger that we talk about all these things having never truly experienced them.

Our Expectancy

Elders serving together in the gospel must have a passion for the glory of Jesus. It is not to be merely theoretical, but rather a deeply shaping expectancy. It is good for elders to ponder deeply that there is glory yet uncovered.

Our Shaping Analogies**(v.2a)**

How are we to think of the eldership? What kinds of paradigms or models or analogies does the Bible use? What about extending them to contemporary models such as ranching, coaching or business management? The Bible gives us two analogies that establish the required categories for the eldership. We can think of church leadership in no less than these categories and no new model can be used to set aside these analogies.

The Analogy of Shepherding

This analogy is used primarily to speak of how elders are to take care of the people in the church. This analogy sees the leadership as shepherds and the people as sheep and the church as a flock. It would do us all well to reflect on the fact that you are sheep whom God has brought together as a flock and that the elders here are to be shepherds to you.

So what does that mean in real world terms?

- Shepherds are to feed the flock.
- Shepherds are to protect the flock.
- Shepherds are to guide the flock.
- Shepherds are to train the flock.
- Shepherds are to heal the flock.

What two important ideas must a Shepherd keep in mind?

- It is God's flock. Shepherds do not own the flock.
- God has given them this flock to tend. Shepherds must give their primary attention to their flock.

Remember that in the Bible, the word "pastor" only occurs one time and it is a mistranslation of the word everywhere else translated shepherd (Ephesians 4:11). Train yourself when you use the word "pastor" to think "shepherd". That is ALL Biblically the word means. The office that we hold is that of elder. What we do is to shepherd and to oversee.

The Analogy of Overseeing

Here we have the verb form of the word *episkopos*. If the word for shepherds and servants (deacons) had been translated as consistently as this word has, we would have far less misunderstanding about church leadership, at least from a Biblical perspective.

The word is used to refer to those who were appointed by emperors and kings to govern newly established (or conquered) city-states. He was responsible to the king, but the king's authority was delegated to him. He was to govern the colony or city.

There are two primary aspects of this word.

- **Serving** – The idea here is the elders are serving God. They are under the authority of God. They are not ruling as a king whose word was law, but as a governor accountable to the king. The word here is not meant to convey the idea of serving the church. That does come out in other texts, but not this one. The elders govern *under God's authority*.
- **Overseeing** – The elders do govern God's community, the congregation. They are to teach, apply and implement God's Word in an authoritative way. Elders do have authority – it is a delegated and mediated authority, but it is still to be submitted to.

This is why we refer to eldership *governance* and not to elder *rule*. Elder rule has come to stand for an oversight that is absolute and often, tyrannical. The rule of the church is the Word of God. The governing of the church is given to the elders under the Word.

Our Strong Warnings

(v.2b-3)

Do you ever think that the church in Bible days was very different from our day? It was in many ways, but in many others, it is no different. The passion of the elders for the glory of God will deal some real problem areas for leadership.

Reluctance

The wording is a bit difficult. Does it mean that elders are not to be compelled to serve, but must come forward voluntarily? Or, does it mean that the elder does not view ministry as something he has to do, but as something he wants to do because it is God's will? Maybe both. This phrase is modifying the verb *be shepherds*. It generally can be said that if someone becomes an elder for wrong motivations they will find the difficulties of shepherding disheartening. Maybe, Piper has it right: One becomes and serves as an elder, not out of duty to God, but out of delight in God.

Materialism and Professionalism

Peter simply says what is to be true of Christians generally and certainly of its elders. We cannot serve money; we must be serving God. Simplicity and frugality ought to mark the life and ministry of all elders, but particularly vocational elders.

There is one other possibility here. The word is one often used to refer to increasing ones wealthy sinfully or by evil means. It refers to fraud or cheating. This may be something of a warning against the sort of financial fraud too many "pastors" are caught out at.

Peter seems to have in mind here those elders whose living is supplied by the church. We call them vocational or staff elders. One must not become an elder just so that one has a way of making a living. Professionalism and materialism among churches who ordain a clergy or have some kind of high-powered pastor is an abomination. Mark this, it is not possible to be serving God and money at the same time. There must be an eagerness of heart serving God that comes from having treasure in heaven.

Tyranny

The kind of tyranny in view here is that of a leadership that requires of the congregation what it itself does not do. It creates two classes, lords and servants. It is the self-view of leadership that is evident in most dictatorships. The lifestyles and levels of sacrifice are totally different. In contrast, Godly leadership sets the example by requiring of itself what is required of the church.

The second aspect has to do with the manner in which the elders govern. There is to be a sense that the flock is entrusted to the elders and that there is an accountability to God in the manner and methods used. Jesus clearly told the disciples that the church is not to be governed like the world using its principles and methods. This means that the elders must not abuse or that the church must not ignore their authority.

Heavenward Motivations (v.4)

A godly eldership with a passion for the glory of Christ will be driven by two great motivations.

The Supremacy of our Chief Shepherd

Elders who shepherd and govern well do so under Christ. We recognize Him as our Chief Shepherd, the pastor of the church. He is supreme and preeminent. We exist and minister for Him. We look to Him as our Divine pattern. And we bow to Him as our final authority.

This is why I do not like being called “the pastor”. I know that people mean well. But I am a shepherd of this church along with 6 other elders. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd.

The Satisfaction of the Glorious Reward

Elders who shepherd and govern well do so for a heavenly crown. Earthly applause and recognition is short, feeble and fickle. But to have served well and bow before Christ so that our faithfulness brings Him honor and pleasure makes the struggle worth it all.

Conclusion

Beloved pray for us that we will be God’s kind of Shepherds.

Elders, May you as Shepherds give heed to the Lord’s instruction:

- Exercise oversight as God would have
- Be an example to the Flock

All of us, may we submit to the Chief Shepherd who will come with His reward, an unfading crown of glory.

