

The works and responsibilities of elders

Introduction

I. Elders

A. Life experience

1. Some have skill but no heart
2. Others have heart but few skills
3. Still others have heart and skill but use an antiquated business model of leading

B. Eldering is becoming more difficult

1. Values are vanishing
2. Social norms are shifting
3. Families are falling apart
4. There are tensions between cultural and ethnic groups
5. Inconsistent giving patterns
6. Conflict between traditional and progressive elements in the church
7. Fast pace urban life style
8. Individualistic mind set
9. Consumer minded

C. Many church leaders face

1. Bulging calendars
2. Church events
3. Counseling
4. Trouble-shooting
5. Refereeing

D. However the real concept of eldering is an idea that has returned

1. Elders are to Shepherd
2. Mentor
3. Equippers

Lesson- The sort of things that elders do

I. They Shepherd

A. Shepherd is not a title, rather it's a biblical concept of leadership

1. God as shepherd

a) **Psa 23**

b) **Isa 40:10-11**

10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

c) **Psa 100:3**, Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his [a] ;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Ezek 34:31 You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign LORD.' "

d) Although we like sheep have gone astray we have a "Good Shepherd" who will love us and lead us back to the flock. Isa 53:6

2. Prophets, Priest and Kings as shepherds

- a) David was a shepherd-king- 1 Sam. 13:14
- b) David shepherded with integrity of heart- Psa 78:70-72
- c) God also expected prophets and priest to shepherd His people
 - (1) But they often failed
 - (2) God pronounced woes on their heads Jer. 50:6, Ezek 34:2,4-5
- d) Today's leaders carry life and death responsibility for their flock, just as did the prophets, priests, and kings

3. Jesus as Shepherd

- a) In the NT Jesus is our shepherd
- b) Jesus says of Himself as the loving shepherd that He leaves the ninety-nine and searches for the one lost sheep. "And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' **Luke 15:5,6, NIV.**
- c) Jesus left the comforts of heaven and came into our world to smell like sheep
 - (1) He walked our pathways, braved our wolves, faced our temptations, and shared our struggles.
 - (2) The Holy One of Israel came to be our Good Shepherd.
- d) Good spiritual shepherds today imitate the Chief Shepherd
 - (1) Like Jesus they attract flocks through loving service and authentic relationships
 - (2) Like Jesus they feed and protect their flocks.
 - (3) They know their flocks and their flocks know them
 - (4) They are trusted as committed enough to put their lives on the line, daily, for the precious people they lead

4. The Apostles as Shepherds

- a) After Jesus modeled shepherd leadership he passed it on the apostles.
- b) Jesus gave instruction to Peter and perhaps the rest of the apostles to care for His sheep. (John 21:15)

5. Today's leaders as Shepherds

- a) Peter and Paul passed the shepherd model onto us
 - (1) Paul- **Acts 20:28- Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. [a] Be shepherds of the church of God, [b] which he**
 - (2) Peter- **1 Peter 5:2-4 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; 3not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.**
- b) Peter and Paul are not using a figure of speech when they use the term "shepherd."
 - (1) Rather it is packed with significant meaning
 - (2) Discovering this kind of leadership is indispensable to a clear, biblical understanding of spiritual leadership

B. The relational basis for Shepherding

1. The biblical shepherd model revolves around the relationship between the shepherd and his

flock

- a) It is not a figure of the strong over the weak- or lords over servants
- b) The shepherd figure is one of love, service and openness
- c) Of course the flock understands clearly who is in charge of the spiritual leadership

2. For the contemporary Shepherd...

- a) A shepherd is someone who has a flock!

- (1) As obvious as this sounds, it is frequently overlooked-- Many church leaders function in the name of office only and in reality has no flock
- (2) Flocks naturally gather around food, protection, affection, touch and voice.
- (3) Biblical shepherds are those who live among the sheep; serve the sheep; feed, water, and protect the sheep; touch and talk to the sheep-- even lay down their lives for the sheep.
- (4) Biblical shepherds (like Jesus) smell like sheep!

C. The shepherd flock relationship implies at least three qualities-

- availability
- commitment
- trust

1. Relationships require availability

- a) "Jesus talked with them until they (the disciples) began to hear his voice way down in their souls."

2. Relationships require commitment

- a) Shepherding sheep requires commitment of self, time and energy and the building of open, authentic relationships
- b) Modern-day shepherds rarely have the opportunity to spend such constant time with their sheep as Jesus did; but the intentionality of Christ, His relational approach, His commitment – these Shepherds can emulate.

3. Relationships require trust

- a) Sheep follow their shepherd because they know His voice.
- b) Sheep come to know from experience whether they can trust their shepherd.
 - (1) Trust is earned, not demanded, and it is built over time
 - (2) Jesus has proven that He loves us, warms us, protects us and feeds us. He never abandons or misleads us. We trust Him because He is trustworthy.
 - (3) "When the lives of leaders are invested in the lives of sheep, the sheep come to know and trust their voices."
- c) In a world where trust is rarely extended or deserved, the "shepherd" style of leadership inspires trust!
- d) When Godly, loving, gentle shepherds build authentic relationships with their flocks and begin to lead, sheep who are hungry for biblical leadership and wise guidance willingly follow.

D. Distorted leadership models

1. Hired hand (John 10)

2. Cowboy

- a) Shepherds lead and Cowboys drive!
- b) Cowboys force the herd to go their way
- c) The shepherd depends upon relationship

3. Sheriff

- a) He says he wants to enforce the law and keep the peace.
- b) He's the law, and what he says goes!
- c) He doesn't ask if you like it; he just demands that you do as he says (peace).
 - (1) At best, this style merely reaps compliance, at worst, rebellion.

4. Pop-manager

- a) Because of our fast paced world it is tempting for modern-day shepherds to look for leadership models in pop-management shortcuts.
 - b) Biblical leaders are spiritual shepherds, not one minute mangers
5. CEO/Chairman of the Board
- a) This model operates behind closed doors-- making decisions, tapping gavels, dispatching memos, and announcing edicts: It's policy. And that's that!

II. Mentor (A leader who develops people, adds. A leader who develops leaders, multiplies- John Maxwell)

A. Mentoring defined

1. Mentoring in one sense is another dimension of shepherding.
 - a) Shepherds feed, protect and care for the flock
 - b) Mentors pull up along side human beings and model behavior, values, and faith through the shared life.
2. Almost every society had "elders" of some kind.
 - a) Whether tribal chieftains, village headmen, clan leaders, or family patriarchs.
 - b) These "elders" are generally older, more experienced, stronger members of the group to whom others look for identity.
 - c) In many ways this role is absent from American society
 - d) Yet we long for mentors. We seem to do better when they are in our lives.

B. Spiritual mentoring in Scripture

1. Jesus mentored His twelve disciples- **Mt. 20:25-28- Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**
2. Jesus makes it clear that His leadership style is based on submission and service, not on authority
3. Paul also used mentoring as his leadership style (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9; 2 Thess. 3:6-7; 2 Thess. 3:9)
4. three facets of mentoring
 - a) Example
 - b) Teach
 - c) Model

C. Spiritual mentoring for the modern-day shepherd-

1. Peter charged spiritual leaders to be examples- 1 Pet. 5:3
2. Paul gave instructions to the elders of Ephesus Acts 20:18, 35
3. Shepherds today are charged to "encourage the timid and help the weak" - 1 Thess. 5:14
4. Shepherds are to be intentional, continually expanding the circle of mentors by equipping others to mentor

III. Equippers

A. Healthy leaders strive to equip each member for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12)

1. Healthy churches help new members find genuine relationships
2. They help develop effective ways to help each member find his or her gift.

3. Find specific ministries in which the members can exercise their gifts
 4. Equip each member with the knowledge and the skills necessary to accomplish those ministries
 5. Guide members to become meaningful parts in accomplishing the mission of the church
 6. Foster ownership of the vision and mission of the congregation
- B. Church leaders are Christ's gift to the Church
1. The responsibilities of all these leaders mentioned in Eph. 4 is for the equipping of the Church
 2. This equipping function of the elders (pastors) cannot be overlooked
 - a) They are to equip members for ministry and works of service
 - b) This equipping involves both knowledge and skills
 - (1) Knowledge- teaching from the word (focuses on what to believe)
 - (2) Skill- taking the time to show "how to serve"
 - Often, it is easier for leaders to just do the job themselves rather than to train someone
- C. The purpose of equipping is growth!
1. Why equip? (Eph. 4:12) To build up the body of Christ
 2. The Church grows in at least three dimensions
 - a) Numerically Matt. 28:18-20
 - b) Spiritually Eph. 4:13
 - c) Organically Eph. 4:16

Here's why we need elders who are shepherds, mentors and equippers:

Ted moves like an athlete and looks like one too. He is usually confident and assertive. But today, sitting in front of the counselor he seems different. Ted is a new Christian and the father of sons four and seven and he has hit a wall. "I don't really know what a good father is supposed to look like. I don't know how to show affection or to be approachable. I want to connect with my wife and kids and listen to them. I want to build their self-esteem and lead them spiritually. But it seems like every time I try I either freeze up or mess up. Although my father and mother lived together for sixteen years of my life, I never really knew my father. He never put his arm around my mother or said that he loved us. He rarely talked to me, didn't listen to me. And he never hugged me at all. In fact the only times he ever touched me was when he whipped me. Who can I watch so I don't wind up doing to my family what my Dad did to me?"

Sally is strikingly attractive, always gregarious and out-going, but she still doesn't seem to have close friends. Her kids always look bright and neat — but a bit stiff. When the office door closed, things begin to tumble out. "I don't know what to do. I love my kids. But I'm scared because what I am doing to my children comes fearfully close to child abuse. Usually, I am a good mother. But, when I'm under pressure and the kids drive me up the wall I revert and do to them what Mom did to me!"

Sue and Jerry are thirty-something and not only realize that if their church has a future, people like them are going to have to shoulder more of the responsibility. Besides, they feel God's tug on their hearts. "We would love to become genuine helpful spiritual leaders, but the only elders we knew seemed like distant men who only occasionally emerged from their 'smoke-filled rooms' with sour looks on their faces and handed down another edict or scolding for the congregation.

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