

There's an old saying I believe is true – *everything rises and falls on leadership*. Meaning w/out effective leadership seldom will things get accomplished or hold together.

But what is *leadership*? Talk about an ambiguous term. If we had 100 people defining it, we'd likely have 200+ definitions to emerge. There might not be a more elusive idea to define than leadership.

And when it comes to leadership, there's one thing more difficult than defining it – and that's finding someone who is both willing/capable of actually leading.

In its simplest form, *leadership is influence*. Its intentionally using one's influence to inspire, move, and guide another person or group to accomplish a mission or task greater than themselves – for which you as the leader are willing to take full responsibility should something go wrong and defer all the credit to the team should the endeavor succeed.

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done b/c he wants to do it. *Eisenhower*

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more – you are a leader. *John Q. Adams*

What does this mean? It means leaders influence others to get involved. They believe/clarify the mission. They help to set direction. They establish expectation. They build morale. They inspire engagement. They attract cooperation. They encourage focus. They celebrate victory. They own defeat. Leaders take responsibility for the group and the mission.

On the heels of talking to us about the real threat of suffering and persecution, Peter is going to speak into our lives about the importance and role of leadership w/in the church.

If you're just joining us, we've been in a study of 1 Peter discussing God's call on our lives GLOW for His glory. When something glows it *emits* or *reflects* a steady radiance of light. It illuminates/shines/sparkles. As Christ-followers, we're called to emit/reflect the steady radiance of Christ in us into the dark world around us – *especially when the going gets tough and hostility rises.*

Therefore, to the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not b/c you must, but b/c you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 1 Peter 5:1-4

therefore – *term of conclusion*. Meaning whenever you see the word you ought to ask – what's it there for? What conclusion just occurred?

In this case (as we discussed last week), Peter just finished encouraging the believers to *be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord* – no matter what sort of suffering/persecution they were facing for following Jesus. Now he's going to encourage these believers to **follow the leaders** God has called out and placed over them for their spiritual health and well-being. And in doing so, he charges these elders to 'eld' accordingly.

Before we can look at the ministry of the elder, we need to know who they are. Let's begin by sharing who they're not.

- Elders may or may not be a pastor or minister (Peter)
- Elders aren't rulers or governors of the church
- Elders aren't the church administrators/gatekeepers

We can't forget the set-up of the early church. The church wasn't and was never intended to be an organization but an organism and its mission is only to make disciples of all nations so we might present everyone mature in Christ.

The early church met in homes b/c it was unsafe to meet in a public gathering. And these homes weren't very large – meaning the size of these churches was quite limited.

For example – we know in Ephesus the believers numbered over 5000 believers who made church – and Timothy was called to be the overseer/pastor of 100's of smaller house churches that were led by a team of elders/deacons – where the elder 'eld-ed' and the deacons 'deac-ed'.

The elders provided leadership/instruction while the deacons met the people at the point of their need so that together they helped everyone in the house church to know Christ, **grow** in the faith, so they could go into their city to **show** Christ.

These elders were maturing believers who willingly aligned themselves under the teaching and influence of the apostles to only teach to the people what was taught to them by the apostles who were taught by Jesus.

So an elder is a person who is maturing in the faith and is willing to accept God's calling on their lives to feed, nurture, and guide other believers to maturity in the faith. An elder's mission is to make, mature, and mobilize others to become fully developing followers of Jesus.

They don't govern – they teach/lead to make disciples. They are hands-on w/ a small group of believers to raise them up and release them into Great Commission ministry.

Elders are the life-blood of the NT church. They're the critical leaders who assume full responsibility for the personal making of disciples among those attending the house church. I think in the modern church the person fulfilling the role/function of the *elder* is the LIFE Group or Sunday School leader. So if you're a LIFE Group/LIFE Studies teacher/facilitator then you're sitting in the role of the elder – whether your 'eld-ing' or not.

So let me qualify this statement. An elder isn't just a Bible teacher – he's the person who's assumed full responsibility for the spiritual health and well-being of everyone who participates in his group. He doesn't see his group as his class, but as the people God has given to him w/ whom he has the responsibility to influence for the sake of the Gospel.

Let's seek to understand what exactly an elder is called to do.

elder (*presbyteros*) refers to one who is mature in the faith who is called/gifted by God to disciple His church. These people generally possess a wealth of spiritual experience enabling them to provide sound spiritual leadership to others.

Simply stated, God's called leadership must lead. They can't be swept away by the pull of popularity or surrender the helm of leadership to those who whine the loudest – they must unapologetically lead God's people to accomplish His mandate/mission.

Too many church leaders (lay/pay) have succumbed to the pressure of the masses. They've chosen the least path of resistance determining it isn't worth the pain to challenge people to be God's church.

This problem arises in too many churches b/c the avg. church member sees their leader(s) as the directors on a cruise ship. Their job is to keep the people happy by giving them their every want/whim making the trip fun/exciting. While the ship is at sea, these leader(s) make sure the desires of congregants are met always building toward the next port of call so as to ensure that all excursions are educational, engaging, and enjoyable. If these leaders don't produce such an experience, the member has every right to rock the boat.

A The MINISTRY of the Elder

shepherds (*poimaino*) one who tends sheep by leading, feeding, and protecting them.

Elders are to serve as the shepherd of a group of believers caring for their spiritual health. As a shepherd, elders provide spiritual leadership to guide believers to Christ-likeness. He's to protect the flock from wolves who might seek to kill, steal, and destroy lives.

tend (*bosko*) to feed. Elders lead and feed.

Warren Wiersbe has an excellent amplification of the picture of God's children pictured as sheep...

- **Sheep** are clean animals, unlike **dogs** and **pigs**
- **Sheep** flock together as God's people need to be together
- **Sheep** are notoriously ignorant and prone to wander away if they don't follow their shepherd
- **Sheep** are defenseless and need a shepherd for protection
- **Sheep** are useful. Jewish shepherds tended their sheep, not for the meat (which would've been costly) but for the wool, milk and lambs. God's people should be useful to Him serving others to bring them to Christ.
- **Sheep** were used for the sacrifices, and we ought to be **living sacrifices** doing the will of God

B The MISSION of the Elder

overseer (*episkopeo*) to exercise oversight and to have scope over. An elder serves by leading believers to fulfill God's commission. He does it for no other reason than to help every believer to collectively contribute to God's mission.

C The MOTIVATION of the Elder

His motivation for this role isn't for personal gain/prestige, but to see the will/power of God at work in others. Thus, he isn't just to teach it, he's to live it too.