**1 Peter: Elders, Shepherd the Flock**

1 Peter 5:1-4

**Context**

**1 Peter 5:1-4**—Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **2**shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; **3**nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. **4**And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The biblical analogy of the Shepherd/sheep is one that is reiterated frequently throughout the scriptures.

**Psalm 23:1-3**—The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. **2**He makes me lie down in green pastures; leads me beside quiet waters. **3**He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.

**Luke 15:3-7**—So He told them this parable, saying, **4**“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? **5**When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. **6**And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ **7**I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

It is no accident that God has chosen to call us sheep. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways. Sheep do not “just take care of themselves” as some might suppose. They require, more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The analogy helps explain the nature of Christ's care for believers, and helps us draw direct parallels between a shepherd's duties and the Good Shepherd's role in guiding, providing, protecting, and restoring us.

Peter was a firsthand witness of the Great Shepherd and was given a commission from the Lord Himself to “tend My sheep.” The exchange came at a time of restoration for Peter given his denials of Jesus and the challenge of his love for Christ. If he is to love Christ going forward, there would be a new commission to him: tend My sheep.

**John 21:15-17**—So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus \*said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He \*said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He \*said to him, “Tend My lambs.” **16**He \*said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He \*said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He \*said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” **17**He \*said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus \*said to him, “Tend My sheep.

The neglect of commission as well as usurping undue authority was a grave error. God had some very stern things to say about the leaders of Israel and their negligence to do what He required in the care for His own.

**Jeremiah 23:1-4**—“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the Lord. **2**Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the Lord. **3**“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. **4**I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord.

Peter aptly uses the sheep analogy because of the vulnerability, defenselessness, and tendency of sheep to wander away. As such, they desperately need a loving, caring shepherd to care, provide, and lead them.

Peter is reminding the leaders of the church to care well for Christ’s church. Because of the ongoing needs of the sheep, the shepherd must not only understand his role, but must be diligent and tenaciously implemented.

Up to this point, Peter has been writing to the persecuted church. The sheep are under attack. That makes them even more vulnerable. With greater risks to the flock, there must be a greater vigilance to be on guard.

The toughest times demand the best shepherds.  So Peter moves wonderfully from the difficulty the believers are experiencing to reveal God's will for the men who must shepherd the troubled sheep.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Thoughts of the Role of the Under Shepherd**

1. **The role the shepherd plays**

**1 Peter 5:1-2a**—Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **2**shepherd…

1. These believers were suffering persecution
   1. Attacks coming because of righteousness

**12**Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you…

* 1. In light of those hardships (these things being so[[3]](#footnote-3)), faithful elders respond

1. Exhort the Elders
   1. Exhort (parakaleō)—to call to one’s side, to address, speak to, to admonish, to beg, entreat, beseech[[4]](#footnote-4)
   2. The Holy Spirit ([Paraclete](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=b62a81363822e03c&sxsrf=AE3TifMZhDNwOaXgXxX0wMJ2bReQkW6VBA%253A1756306980729&q=Paraclete&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiJwc-toauPAxVplYkEHUPMC5UQxccNegQIMhAB&mstk=AUtExfCM2pImYKpPGkfLO1hiPaLHDbbHTJ8idkUY4yPAjyWG1zSvJoIIHcSsbPVNKhrHeNSyj0OhBfJ04LU83cD5YQ2ymQl4ui2CPxgXxlc6N-f6gSyd8xr2OAaH6f2qXHWGS0JngIfbhFuxR8doDyYYaKcYTpTjWyEf5D_uz9sxR11R2fzyKbZsMXqDuaHHPH_T8mN6RNcSFqS_SM5XD0sQ5HWufljGCEORwgB5PHYTrjzVtET0FHFQ3z1ArI-nOj6vHuf3sLEkE6G0qGChUX_kGWRD&csui=3)) affirms and gifts men with spiritual leadership and responsibilities within Christ’s church

**John 14:16-17**—I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; **17**that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

* 1. Elders are those appointed to lead

**Acts 14:23**—When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**Acts 15:4, 6, 22-23**—When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. …**6**The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter…**22**Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, **23**and they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

* 1. Elders are also referred to as overseers or bishops (episkopos), and pastors (poimen)
     1. The use of a particular word is intended to emphasize responsibilities
     2. The primary role is to feed and protect the sheep
        1. Peter received His commission directly from the Lord

**John 21:15-17**—So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus \*said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He \*said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He \*said to him, “Tend My lambs.” **16**He \*said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He \*said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He \*said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” **17**He \*said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus \*said to him, “Tend My sheep.

* + - 1. Tend (boskō)—to feed; portraying the duty of a Christian’s teacher to promote in every way the spiritual welfare of the members of the church[[5]](#footnote-5)
    1. Feeding means to teach the truths of God’s Word

**1 Timothy 5:17**—The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

**Titus 1:5-9**—For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you **6**namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. **7**For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, **8**but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, **9**holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. (Cf. **1 Timothy 3:1-7**)

* + 1. The purpose is to edify the church so that the Word works against error
    2. The shepherd edifies, strengthens through the Word
    3. The outcome brings conviction, repentance, godly living, discernment, consistency, power, and effectiveness in the believer’s testimony of the greatness of The Chief Shepherd
    4. All the while, being an example to the flock

**3**nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

**1 Timothy 4:12**—Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.

* 1. Plurality of elders
     1. In reference to this ministry, the term always appears in the plural in the NT, affirming that the office was designed for a plurality of men[[6]](#footnote-6)
     2. Having multiple elders provides for greater ministry effectiveness, more ministry care, safeguards against domineering as well as doctrinal error

**1 Corinthians 14:29, 32**—Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. …**32**and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets

* + 1. A plurality of godly and gifted elders enriches the church since God does not give all the spiritual abilities to one man.[[7]](#footnote-7)
    2. It also helps in transitions and avoids a lack of continuity
  1. Under shepherds are accountable

**Hebrews 13:17**—Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

* + 1. In the OT, there was serious abuse

**Ezekiel 34:2-16**—“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? **3**You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. **4**Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. **5**They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. **6**My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.”’” **7**Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: **8**“As I live,” declares the Lord God, “surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; **9**therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: **10**‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.”’” **11**For thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. **12**As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. **13**I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. **14**I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. **15**I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord God. **16**“I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment. (Cf. **Jeremiah 23:1-4**)

* + 1. They were to love and care for the church
    2. Understanding well from Whom they received their commission
    3. And the significant implication of abuse

1. Peter identifies himself as your fellow elder
   1. Doesn’t pull rank
   2. Doesn’t take advantage of his apostleship nor his elevated position as a leader
   3. Rather, he identifies and understands
   4. He is empathetic to the challenges
2. He was a witness of the sufferings of Christ
   1. Another reason to boast
      1. He had been chosen by Christ
      2. He had been an eyewitness to the sufferings of Christ during His ministry
      3. Christ had given him authority
      4. He was personally commissioned to proclaim those sufferings in the gospel

**Luke 24:45-48**—Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, **46**and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, **47**and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48**You are witnesses of these things. **49**And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

* 1. His experience and commission would have given authority to his instruction
  2. His preaching throughout Acts includes so much of Christ’s sufferings

(i.e. **Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26: 4:8-12**)

1. Peter reminds them of the future glory that ought to motivate them
   1. They were partakers also of the glory that is to be revealed
      1. Secure promise
      2. Genuine hope
      3. Confident assertion in their faithful service
2. The glory that is to be revealed looks at the return of Christ
   1. Peter has repeatedly used that truth as a motivating factor throughout the epistle

**1:7-9**—so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; **8**and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, **9**obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

**4:7**—The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

**4:12-13**—Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; **13**but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

* 1. To be a partaker also in the ultimate blessing is no small matter
     1. All believers will share in the eternal glory with their Lord

**5:10**—After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7**—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4**who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **5**For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. **6**But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; **7**and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

**1 John 3:2**—Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

* + 1. Peter is identifying that this blessing will be extended to all elders
    2. Peter had a glimpse of that glory during Jesus’ lifetime on earth

**Matthew 17:1-8**—Six days later Jesus \*took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and \*led them up on a high mountain by themselves. **2**And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. **3**And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. **4**Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” **5**While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” **6**When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. **7**And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” **8**And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

1. **The ones whom the shepherd tends**

**1 Peter 5:2b**—…the flock of God among you

1. **The care the shepherd provides**

**1 Peter 5:2c-3**—…but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; **3**nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

1. **The motivation the shepherd partakes**

**1 Peter 5:4**—And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

**Conclusion**

Shepherding the flock is to be understood as not only a glorious gift but also a huge responsibility. They are accountable to God for the ministry they are entrusted. Which is why Brother James tells us:

**James 3:1**—Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

The commission for each of us to do that which God has gifted and equipped must be done as a faithful steward of grace. May we all understand and pray for one another as well as we endeavor to please the Lord in every respect.

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

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1. Keller, 20-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Macarthur [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Strong’s G3767 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Strong’s G3870 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Strong’s G1006 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. MacArthur, 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)