

## Several Functions of Faithful Shepherds

### *Various Texts*

#### I. Introduction / Background

- A. In common conversation the word *pastor* is well recognized. Most people view their church leaders as “pastors.” The word simply means shepherd.
  1. The concept of leaders as *shepherds* is a prevalent theme in Scripture.
  2. David was a shepherd boy and described the Lord as “my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1).
  3. God described Israel’s leaders as “My shepherds” (e.g., Ezek. 34:1–10). In that passage he condemns the shepherds who were not faithful in leading and caring for the sheep (i.e., Israel). He then describes what *He* will do as the Good Shepherd of His people (Ezek. 34:11ff).
  4. Jesus described Himself as “the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11). As the Good Shepherd He will protect them at all cost—even to the point of giving His life (John 10:15–18).
- B. However, the most common word in Scripture to describe the role of a pastor is the word *elder*.
  1. This is rooted in the Jewish Old Testament (cf. Exod. 12:21; 19:7; Num. 11:16; Deut. 27:1; 1 Sam. 11:3; 16:4).
  2. In the New Testament elders are almost always referred to in the plural except when it references a specific elder.
- C. The various terms used to describe the office of *pastor* are:
  1. Bishop / Overseer (Greek *episcopos*)
  2. Pastor / Shepherd (Greek *poimen*)
  3. Elder (Greek *Presbuteros*)
- D. One passage which uses all three terms (overseer/shepherd/elder) is found in 1 Peter 5.
  1. **(1 Peter 5:1–4)** The **elders** (*presbuteros*) who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow **elder** (*presbuteros*) and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd** (*poimen*) the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers** (*episcopeo*), not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords 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 does not fade away.
  2. A form of all three terms appears to describe the functions of the same office. See also Acts 20:17, 28 where the *elders* in Ephesus are described as *overseers* set to *care* for (i.e., *shepherd*) the church of God.

- E. Primary Scripture passages describing the roles of an elder (overseer in 1 Timothy 3:1–7; elder in Titus 1:5–9)

## II. Three Functions of Faithful Elders

### **A. Shepherd**

1. Feed
2. Protect
3. Comfort
4. Help
5. Heal

### **B. Oversee**

1. Rule (1 Tim. 3:4–5; 5:17)
2. Lead (Acts 20:28)

### **C. Spiritually Mature Example**

1. To those outside the church (1 Tim. 3:7)
2. To those who *are* the church (1 Pet. 5:3)

## III. Conclusion

- A. In short, the Bible describes a group of men who are tasked with the responsibility of shepherding, spiritually leading, and proving to be godly examples for the flock of God.
- B. The Biblical model of a group of faithful shepherds is to display in word as well as action the tender love and care of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.