



QLD PRESBYTERIAN
ELDER TRAINING

THE ELDERSHIP PAPERS

FOR THE TRAINING OF ELDERS IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF QUEENSLAND

Eldership Paper 2



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Eldership Paper Two

Eldership and the Pastoral Role

Introduction

In Eldership Paper 1, we considered the characteristics and abilities for an overseer and how they were aligned with the health and character of God's household, the church. This is because an Elder is not only able to teach what a mature follower of Jesus looks like, they are also able to embody this in their relationships and habits, a maturity that can be imitated.

In Eldership Paper 2, we will continue looking at the characteristics of Eldership but this time through the lens of 'shepherd' and will focus more on the motivations appropriate to a shepherd/Elder in 1 Peter 5. We will spend time looking at 1 Thessalonians 2 to see those attitudes in action in the ministry of Paul, Silas and Timothy.

To prepare us for that journey we will begin by looking at the image of shepherd-leader in the Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament Background

The LORD's kingship/leadership as shepherd is celebrated in the best-known Psalm: Psalm 23.

“ A psalm of David.

¹ *The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

² *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,*

³ *he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.*

⁴ *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.*

⁵ *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil my cup overflows.*

⁶ *Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*



The shepherd-king David, celebrates the Shepherd LORD's personal care and provision in poetry. As the Shepherd, the LORD provides all that is needed for a sheep; still waters and green grass, the refreshment of soul. But the divine Shepherd also guides and protects. Right paths sometimes lead through dark and difficult places, but even there, David celebrates the LORD's caring presence. For David, the future, because of this Shepherd's loving wise character, is safe. David anticipates being at home in the house of the LORD. David's delight in the LORD's care is further enjoyed because he too was a shepherd.

David, the king after God's own heart was called from being a shepherd caring and guarding sheep to being a shepherd caring and guarding God's people Israel.

David, wasn't always a good shepherd. In the tragedy of Uriah and Bathsheba, power replaced care and protecting his reputation - looking good - replaced being a man after God's own heart.

This departure from the ideal of a human shepherd leader becomes endemic leading up to the time of Judah's exile to Babylon.

The most extended and scathing critique is found in the book of Ezekiel chapter 34:1-12:

“*The word of the LORD came to me: ² ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ³ You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak or healed those who are ill or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. ⁵ So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. ⁶ My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.*

⁷ *“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸ as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock*



lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock,⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:¹⁰ this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

¹¹ “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep...”

The Old Testament looks forward to a time when the LORD, the good Shepherd, will judge and replace the wicked shepherds.

New Testament Background

The New Testament reveals the coming of the good Shepherd who is contrasted with the wicked shepherds in Mark 6:14-53 and then in John 10:11-13.

Contrasting Two Shepherds

In Mark 6:14-56, two shepherds and two feasts are contrasted: Herod Antipas at his birthday celebrations and Jesus and the feeding of the five thousand.

Herod's celebrations involve pride and rash promises that result in the murder of John the Baptist.

Mark 6:34, significantly, tells us that:

“ *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.*

Read Mark 6:39-53 and underline the parts of the narrative that show that Jesus is the Shepherd of Psalm 23.

“ *³⁹ Then Jesus told them to make all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave*



them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

⁴⁷ Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.

Jesus the Good Shepherd John 10:11-13

“¹¹ 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.'"

Jesus identifies how you can tell bad shepherds, hired hands, from Himself, the good shepherd by how they behave when the flock is under attack. The hireling preserves his own life by leaving the sheep to the wolves. The good Shepherd in contrast lays down His life for His sheep. Because they belong to Him, He gives His life for them. For Jesus, His commitment to His people would result in His death by crucifixion at the time of the Passover.



Be Shepherds of God’s Flock 1 Peter 5:1-4

“ To the Elders among you, I appeal as a fellow Elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:² be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” - 1 Peter 5:1-4

In 1 Peter, Peter addresses the churches in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia to be faithful and Christ-like under suffering. In one of the last sections of the letter he addresses the Elders of the churches as an Elder himself. This makes sense, given that they will need to be both models (v3) of how to be faithful and Christ-like under suffering, and to encourage those under their care to be patient and loyal in the present hard times.

Peter identifies himself as a fellow Elder, a witness (proclaimer) of Christ’s sufferings and one who will share with them in the glory to come with the coming of Christ. Peter then addresses them as shepherds of God’s flock that is under their care.

Peter addresses the motivations they are to have as these Elders watch over the flock. He first identifies what motivation to avoid and then identifies a motivation to embrace.

Fill in the table below.

Negative Motivation	Positive Motivation
... not because you must	
... not pursuing dishonest gain	
... not lording it over those entrusted to you	



Questions

If the Elders embraced the negative motivations, who would they be like?

If the Elders embraced the positive motivations, who would they be like?

How does v4 encourage the Elders Peter is addressing to live out their role or calling as shepherds?



Throughout the first and second papers, the importance of Elders being examples or models has been stressed over and over again. The power of a seeing a life lived with purpose, direction and integrity brings life to others and inspires them to similar behaviour. This is the role of an Elder in God's church.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-12

In 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his, Silas' and Timothy's shepherding behaviour when they were among them.

As you read through this section of 1 Thessalonians, circle the relationship roles Paul, Silas and Timothy lived out among the Thessalonians, and underline how those roles were expressed.

“³ For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. ⁴ On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed – God is our witness. ⁶ We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. ⁷ Instead, we were like young children among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.⁹ Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

- 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12



The Language of Church

Before we finish this paper, I want to briefly address the issue of how we address other members of our church. This will largely turn on what image we adopt to describe church. In Paul Minear’s classic study called *Images of Church in the New Testament*, 96 images of the church are identified. There is no doubt that is an embarrassment of riches, but the more important question is: what is the dominant image of the church in the New Testament? I believe the dominant image is the household of God. Through Christ, our fellow heir, we can approach the holy God as Father; we are given the Spirit of sonship.

We must be careful not to adopt deforming roles about leadership from the world, about leadership such as, ‘boss’, or ‘CEO’ or think that church is a business because these will run counter to developing warm, interdependent relationships in the household of God in which a new identity is formed in Christ.

What image have we adopted and how does it deform our role as Elders when we describe our brothers and sisters in Christ as:

Volunteers?	
Attenders?	
Members?	
Giving units?	

Language matters especially in a culture that seeks to judge success by values other than what God values.



Question

How should the meeting of a group of Elder/Pastor (the Session) be shaped by the behaviours described in 1 Peter 5?





