

ELDERSHIP

Shepherding the People of God

This coming Sunday, we're taking the step of "ordaining and inducting" a new elder in our church. But what's an elder anyway? And what do we expect of those who lead God's church? Read 1 Peter 5:1-6

1. How does the apostle Peter describe himself in verse 1?
2. How do you think the things Peter has witnessed would affect his view of leadership?
3. There's a time for everything - even glory! But when is it?

What danger is there for Christian leaders in this area?

4. Notice what the "flock" is "under" in verse 2. What else can a leader try to place a church "under"?

Serving as overseers...

5. Pull apart the word "over-see-r." What do the parts add up to as a definition?
6. Why is the word "serving" an unusual one to use alongside overseer? (Is this an "oxymoron"?)
7. Peter says there are a number of qualities the elder/overseer should strive for. They appear in the passage as couplets, linked by the words NOT and BUT. Turn them into a table below...

NOT	BUT

Peter sees three dangers - unwillingness, bad motives (full time elders probably received financial support from the church, which can lead to greed) and pushy arrogance. Elders should rather be willing servants, setting an example of godliness for the flock they oversee. The glory can wait til later - "when the chief Shepherd appears." However, while it's possible to be a bad leader in some of these areas, it's equally possible to be a bad follower... and that's the area we turn to next...

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A WORD to THE FOLLOWER...

While we should be careful to avoid elders who want to claim the crown of glory too soon, the responsibility falls on those who are following to follow well.

Read verse 5. It's interesting - the same greek word (presbyter) translated as "elders" in verse 1 has been translated here as "those who are older." That's what the word actually means (as in English!) - but it's a fair bet that the same word used in the same context should be translated the same way.

The verse in fact reads, "Young men, in the same way, be submissive to elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another..."

How should all members of the church family relate to one another?

Are there particular groups that may have special difficulty in doing this?

Why is it especially hard these days to submit to church leaders?

According to verse 5, whose side is God on?

Elders and us...

Wouldn't it be hugely encouraging to be part of a church where the leaders were humble shepherds of God's flock - leaders who stood back and looked at the big picture wisely (as over-seers are called to), and who showed the way forward willingly - leaders full of eagerness to serve and lead by godly example. That's what we want to grow towards at mpc. None of our elders and leaders are perfect - but all are keen to grow in Christlikeness as they lead.

PRAY particularly for Rob McCall and Steve Buchanan as they join the eldership team at MPC. PRAY for our existing elders too:-

Gary Hanson	Steve Begg	Norton Russell (on leave)
John McClenahan	Don Anderson	Matt Lyndon
John Miles	Rob Hanson	Peter Burns

Along with Phil Campbell & Garnet Swann. Pray also for your Growth Group leaders and our ministry team - that they'll model the same godly leadership expected of those who are "shepherd" of God's people.

The Elder's Vows

At the induction or ordination of a new elder the following questions are asked:

1. Do you believe the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, to be the only rule of faith and life?
2. Do you own and accept the Westminster Confession of Faith, read in the light of the Declaratory Statement contained in the Basis of Union adopted by the Church on 24th day of July 1901, as an exhibition of the sense in which you understand the Holy Scriptures, and as a confession of your faith; and do you engage firmly and constantly to adhere thereto, and to the utmost of your power to assert, maintain and defend the same?
3. Do you own and accept the purity of worship as practised in this church?

4. Do you own the Presbyterian form of government to be founded on the Word of God and agreeable thereto? And do you promise that through the grace of God you will firmly and constantly adhere to, and to the utmost of your power, in your station, assert, maintain and defend the same?
5. Do you adhere to your acceptance of the call of this congregation, to exercise among them the office of ruling elder?
6. Do you engage through Divine Grace to discharge with diligence and faithfulness the various duties of your office, watching over the flock, showing yourself a pattern of good works, and giving a conscientious attendance on the meetings of Session, Presbytery and Assembly, when duly called to do so?
7. All these things do you profess and promise through grace, as you shall be answerable at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?