

## Introduction

I've always been a really good sleeper. My wife simply cannot lie down and fall asleep. Ever. I don't understand it. When my head hits the pillow, it hits the pillow for a reason, and that reason ain't a review of what I had done that day or what needs to be done tomorrow. I literally have an app for that. It's called a calendar. It's this new thing they just came out with—a brand new invention. If I schedule an appointment, I put it in this thing called a calendar, and it alerts me when the appointment is near. If I need to do something to prepare for that appointment, I can add additional alerts for that, too. If I'm having a meeting with my insurance agent, for example, I get a notification 30 minutes before it starts.

That doesn't alert me to prepare for the meeting; it alerts me so that I don't miss the meeting. I might set an alert for the day before or even the week before to prepare for that meeting. Because of this new and amazing invention—it's brand new, which explains why so many folk I've known don't know about it!—because of it I don't have to rehearse these things in my mind when my head hits the pillow. I lie down, cover up, head hits pillow. *Sleep.*

Usually. Some things may either keep me awake or cause me to wake up in the middle of the night. This is almost never caused by a scheduling issue. Rather, I may lose sleep over something important, something significant that weighs me down. We all have those things. It may be an unexpected car repair and you're trying to figure out how to juggle all the bills. It may be a medical problem that is weighing on you. Relationship pressures may keep you up at night as you worry about a friend or loved one. I think we all experience this from time to time.

You know what *never* makes me lose sleep? Our grocery list. I'm never lying awake at night thinking, "Oh...there's something else we need from Aldi..." To be fair, that's largely because I never actually write grocery lists. I also never lose sleep over whether I need to water the lawn or if the car is due for an oil change. I never lose sleep over what we're going to eat for supper tomorrow or because the Celtics have an important game. (Okay. Bad example.)

The point is this: we all lose sleep from time to time and rarely do we lose sleep over the things that aren't important. Trivial matters do not cause us to fret—well, *most* of us. What I may consider trivial may be very important to others. And that's my point: we all may lose sleep over the things in our lives that are truly important to us. None of us loses sleep over matters that we find trivial. The person who is anxious about that shopping list isn't losing a lick of sleep over the price of gasoline in Montana.

This is important to know, for it reveals to us a profound gift the Lord has given his church: those who lose sleep. Let me explain. We're in 1 Peter 5.

<sup>1</sup> Pet 5:1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be

revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:1–5

## Elders

We must remember Peter’s intended audience. He’s writing this letter to the “elect exiles of the Dispersion”. Many of these believers have been relocated to these five provinces by the emperor Claudius several years prior. Because many of their friend and business networks were not longstanding, multi-generational contacts, they are more easily broken. Because these believers strive to be faithful to Jesus, they do not participate in the sinful behaviors of their communities, whether trade guild festivals or community sacrifices to various gods.

This has resulted in a “soft” persecution. The government is not persecuting them: business suppliers are not returning their calls. Customers are moving to other vendors. “Friends’ are suddenly too busy to share a meal. All are surprised, Peter says, that they will not participate with them in their “flood of debauchery” and so these elect exiles have begun to suffer. They’re being slandered as bad people, bad citizens, as those who are evil for not doing what is in the public good—namely, sacrifice to the gods for everyone’s blessing.

All of his instructions up to this point have been to all of the believers in these five provinces. Now in chapter 5 he addresses a small number of them and yet these instructions are actually for all. His instructions apply directly to the elders in these various churches, yet he writes for the benefit of all. In a sense, Peter is writing to these Christians to let them know what they ought to expect from their elders.

What, exactly, is an elder? Peter exhorts the elders among these five provinces, and he does so “as a fellow elder”. The term refers to older men, but eldership is not *limited* to older men. Timothy, for example, was set apart as the lead elder in the church in Ephesus and Paul refers to him specifically as a young man. “Elder”, therefore, is somewhat metaphorical. *Generally speaking*, an elder in the church is an older man, for with age comes spiritual maturity (though not always!).

The idea of an elder is thoroughly Jewish idea. In ancient Israel elders governed a town or city. They were older men who were wise and looked to as leaders of the people. This idea carried over into the synagogue. Synagogues had elders, men who were acknowledged as leaders. Synagogues also had rulers, those given direct responsibility for overseeing the individual synagogue, along with the elders. In Mark 5, Jairus was a synagogue ruler. His role was to organize services and maintain the proper order, including directing the readers and the teachers in the synagogue. He would also oversee the maintenance of the synagogue building itself. He was never alone, however. A synagogue always had a plurality of leaders. Their role was to care for the people of God.

This carried over into the early church. A local church had a council of elders, men appointed to the role. Often one or more of them would be set apart in a more formal

manner. This is what ordination is. The council of elders in Ephesus “laid their hands” on Timothy; they ordained him to the role of *vocational* elder. He would serve the church and the church would compensate him so that he could spend all of his time serving the church, whereas the non-vocational elders had more limited time due to their regular work.

There’s another term used for this office in the church. In 1 Timothy 3 Paul refers to “overseers”. He clearly uses these interchangeably. We see this in Acts 20. There in verse 17 he’s in a place called Miletus. Luke says Paul “called the elders of the church to come to him”. These elders travel to where he is to meet with him. He says this to these *elders*:

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Acts 20:28

He tells the *elders* the Holy Spirit has made them *overseers*. Why are they overseers? “To care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood”. Notice two things. First, the church is God’s church, not theirs. Second, their role is to care for that which belongs to God. Whereas elder is a very Jewish idea, overseer is a very Greek idea.

Overseer has a stronger emphasis on organizational authority, but both “elder” and “overseer” have the idea of caring for others. Elders / overseers have a responsibility to God for his church. The Holy Spirit made them overseers. They did not grasp this for themselves. This responsibility was given to them. When Peter says he exhorts the elders in this letter, and he does so as a fellow elder, this is what he means. They and he have been put into this role of overseer by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this assignment is to care for the church by providing leadership and structure.

Elder is a more Jewish term and has a stronger emphasis on providing leadership and *pastoral* care while also including organizational authority. Overseer is a more Greek term and has a stronger emphasis on organizational authority—things like budgets and staffing—while also including leadership and pastoral care. Both center on caring for those placed into their charge.

## Shepherd the Flock

In verse 1 Peter addresses the various elders in the churches in these five provinces. He says he is a fellow elder. This doesn’t mean there are no distinctions among the elders. Paul himself acknowledges a distinction between those elder. He told Timothy that elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, and especially those—notice the distinct category—*who labor at preaching and teaching*. That is, some are set apart vocationally—they are ordained. They are set apart by the church for the purpose of being an elder *full-time*, so to speak.

Peter is writing to both “kinds” of elders. Some of them are set apart by their churches to labor at preaching and teaching. Most work regular jobs while also serving their churches. Peter is addressing both, and he does so as a *fellow elder*. Given Peter’s role as an apostle, which comes with profound authority over the churches, and given his role as one who had a significant role even among the apostles, it’s incredible that Peter identifies himself in this way.

There isn't a sense of hierarchy here. He's one of them. Some are set apart vocationally, yet Peter doesn't make much of this. He simply addresses his fellow elders and he's writing as an elder. He's not denying a special role in the church, but he's also not making much of it. There's no sense of superiority here.

The word "fellow" also modifies the other terms. He's a fellow witness of the sufferings of Christ. He's already mentioned the sufferings of Christ! He wrote earlier, "Rejoice insofar as your share *Christ's sufferings*". Peter, like the elders in these various churches, has witnessed God's people suffer. Peter himself has suffered. By the time he writes his second letter to them he knows his death is near. He will die as a martyr—a *witness*—for the Lord Jesus. His fellow elders are witnesses of the sufferings of Christ through his body on earth. He knows they feel the suffering of those they serve, for he feels it, too.

They are also fellow partakers of the glory that is going to be revealed. This, too, is a reference to chapter 4. That glory is the glory of Christ when he comes again. They share the sufferings of Christ, and they will rejoice when his glory is revealed. They partake of that glory in resurrection. *Believers* will be glorified when he comes.

What is his exhortation, then? In verse 2 he issues his direct command: shepherd the flock of God that is among you. In verse 1 he exhorts the elders "among you", that is, among his recipients. The assumption is they are active in the life of the church. They are *among* the people, not separated from them in some strong clergy / laity distinction. Not only are the elders among the people, the assumption is the people are among the elders. That is, the relationship is two-way.

As elders, or as we learned last week, the elders *qua* elders must shepherd the flock of God. Elders in their capacity as elders, must shepherd God's people. I've shared this before but one of my favorite books is one of my favorite books because of its title: "They Smell Like Sheep". This is one of the greatest titles of a book on church leadership because you don't have to read it to know exactly what it says. A shepherd smells like sheep, which is a large part of the reason shepherds were not super popular people. Why did they smell like sheep? *Because they were always around them.* If a shepherd does not smell like sheep, he's not actually a shepherd. He's a hired hand. He doesn't care about the sheep.

Elders are chosen from among the sheep and are to remain among the sheep. One of the best explanations for the downfall of Mark Driscoll was he started bragging about having a secret hallway from his office to the pulpit so he could avoid interacting with, you know, the people he was supposed to remain *among*. An elder who is isolated from the church is no true elder.

Remember, Peter is writing to all the believers in these provinces. By addressing elders directly, he's teaching these believers to know what to expect from their elders, and a significant thing they must know is their elders are sheep, too, and their elders must remain among them. If their elders are not, they must hold them to account.

## **Exercising Oversight**

Peter says the elders must actively engage in shepherding. That is, they are no mere figureheads, a group that simply gets to make all the decisions. They must actively walk with those in the church. Part of that shepherding is exercising oversight. This includes the

idea of managing the financial and organizational affairs of the church. It is a profound responsibility.

Peter's instruction to shepherd the flock of God includes exercising this sort of oversight. Then he adds that such service must not be under compulsion. If oversight were all rainbows and roses, why would he say an elder must shepherd the flock of God but not shepherd under compulsion? Clearly there must be something about oversight that can make it difficult.

One obvious reason for Peter's clarification is when suffering comes to a church, the suffering often begins with the elders. As Zechariah indicates, if you strike the shepherd, the sheep will be scattered. Often when persecution comes the first targets of persecution are the leaders in the church. When Peter says an elder must not serve under compulsion but willingly, he means a man must not feel obligated or serve merely out of a sense of duty. Instead, he must serve willingly.

When such service could be dangerous, what would compel a man to exercise oversight in the church at risk to himself? Peter was there when Jesus taught about shepherds.

Jn 10:11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

John 10:11–13

Jesus is *the* good shepherd. He gives his life for his sheep. This means elders, who must be shepherds, are not *the* shepherd. Notice in verse 4 Peter calls Jesus the chief Shepherd, the *senior* Shepherd—the Senior Pastor of the church. This means that elders must shepherd the church in full recognition they are only *undershepherds*. They *are* shepherds, and they must care for the sheep, but they don't own the sheep. Even though they do not own they sheep, they must never act as mere hired hands. They must shepherd as Jesus would shepherd.

In order for a man to serve the church as an elder, particularly during times of hardship and opposition, that man must love the church—the people who are the body of Christ. A man who hates “ministry” or who begrudgingly serves is not a man who should be an elder in Christ's church for he's breaking a fundamental requirement for serving. At a minimum a church should expect its elders to love them!

This service must not be under compulsion but willingly. Peter adds that it also must not be for shameful gain but offered eagerly. Shameful gain refers directly to financial gain. The responsibility for oversight includes managing a church's finances. I've heard of churches in which only the main elder and the person processing payroll knows how much he is paid. It's hard to see how this might be a good structure. Apart from pursuing shameful gain it would be hard to see how a man could advocate for such a structure.

Instead of serving in order to receive a paycheck, a man should serve with desire to *serve*. What did Paul say?

<sup>1</sup> Tim 3:1 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

1 Timothy 3:1

The word for task is the same as work. Aspiring to be an overseer is a desire for a particular work. Work. Effort. Difficulty. Since the fall all work has its thorns and thistles, its sweat of the brow. Any man who wants to be an elder simply to be among those who “make decisions” is a man who is unfit for the work. Such a man merely wants authority and recognition, not the work of shepherding.

Do you see how Peter is also instructing the churches? These are the characteristics of those they should want as elders, and they are qualities they should *expect* in their elders. He continues his explanation. They should exercise oversight willingly, not under compulsion; out of a desire to serve, not for shameful gain. Further, they must shepherd the flock of God in a way that is not domineering over them but in a way that is an example to them.

To domineer is to “lord over”. Jesus said in Mark 10 that the rulers of the Gentiles “lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them”. Then he said this:

Mk 10:43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:43–45

Rather than being heavy handed with the real spiritual authority granted them, elders must shepherd in such a way that they are examples to the church. To be more specific, they must be examples of the Lord Jesus Christ to the church. How does he lead? He did not come to be served, but to serve. He leads his church by giving his life for his people. Christ’s undershepherds, the elders, must be like Jesus. They must give their lives for the church.

## Examples

Do you see what Peter is saying? The elders among these elect exiles must shepherd the flock of God and a significant means of shepherding them is to be examples to them. This is why spiritual maturity is a requirement. An elder doesn’t need to be perfect, else there would be no elders in the church. Paul explicitly says an overseer cannot be a new Christian. This is the idea of *elder*. They are “older” in the faith—mature.

Keep in mind that other than the requirement that he be able to teach the qualifications for elder are simply the goal of maturity in faith. All should be above reproach; an elder *must* be. He must be an example to the church of what it means to be above reproach.

All believers should be faithful. Paul says an elder must be “the husband of one wife”, but that sounds more like a status than a character quality. It’s literally an elder must be a one-woman man. That’s a character quality, not a status. He must be the sort of man who, if married, would be faithful to his wife. All should be faithful; an elder *must* be.

All should be sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable; an elder *must* be. All should not be drunkards, not violent with words but gentle in speech, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, but an elder *must not* be these things. All should manage their households well; an elder *must* manage his household well. All should be well thought of by outsiders.

Peter said to keep your conduct among the nations honorable; an elder *must* be well thought of by outsiders.

If an elder were a drunkard, what sort of example would he be to the church? If an elder were quarrelsome, what sort of example would he be to the church? If an elder were violent, what sort of example to the church would he be? Keep in mind that the meaning of “not violent but gentle” has to do with his *words*. There Paul is making a contrast: not this but that. Not violent but gentle. What does gentle mean? One lexicon says it means “not insisting on every right of law or custom” (BDAG, ἐπιεικής).

The idea here is an elder must not be the sort of person who is always burdening others with rules. Last week I mentioned the church that first proclaimed the gospel to me and how they were always meddling, telling us the kind of music we could listen to and which restaurants were off limits and we could not play with regular playing cards and guys had to keep their hair short and ladies had to keep their dresses long. We couldn’t watch a movie in the theater but we could watch it at home. Rules and rules and rules. They were overly concerned with the rules! Such insistence on rules is violence to a person’s conscience. They were meddling—grasping for authority they did not have. No Christian should be the sort of person who is violent, but should be gentle. An elder *must* be gentle.

Peter then points to a powerful motivation for faithfulness. When the chief Shepherd appears, or as he says in chapter 2, when *the* Shepherd and Overseer of our souls returns, we will receive our reward. The crown of glory is not a literal crown but refers back to 4:13—“when his glory is revealed”. In the resurrection when the Lord Jesus fulfills everything he came to do, we will have our reward. Until then, the elders must shepherd God’s flock, exercising oversight in a manner that is an example to the church.

Then he briefly turns to the “youngers”. He’s addressed the elders with instructions. Now he turns to the youngers. This doesn’t really refer to their age, but to their role in the church. The “youngers” simply refers to those who are not elders in the church. He tells them to be “subject” to the elders. Be in submission to them.

Remember, he has just instructed the elders to be examples to the youngers, and they all would certainly have the backdrop of the qualifications of elders, whether they had Paul’s letter yet or not. They certainly had apostolic teaching and given there are elders already in their churches, they have some sense of the qualifications. They know that when Peter says they must be in submission to the elders’ leadership, Peter does not mean they must endure excessive rules and belligerence and arrogance and quarrelsome men who lust after power and money.

If the elders are truly shepherding the flock of God as Christ’s under-shepherds, then the youngers should have little trouble submitting to their authority—even if they don’t like some of the decisions. Implicit in Peter’s instruction to submit is the acceptance even of decisions they do not agree with. Provided the elders are not in sin and are not violating some command, the churches are to submit to that leadership and follow the elders willingly.

Then he quickly returns his attention to everyone in the church, elders and non-elders, and tells them to put on their *church clothes*. He says nothing about suits and dresses. Instead, the wardrobe for the church is much simpler—and far more difficult to wear. He says, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another”. Why? God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

It is amazing that he adds this at this point, for it is a warning to all. It is a warning

to elders who wield very real authority in the church and it is a warning to all the rest who may be tempted to ignore the example and leadership of the elders. All must wear humility. Their lives must be characterized by the humility of our Senior Pastor, Jesus himself.

## **Have This Mind**

In our culture we don't like the idea of humility in general and of submission in particular, yet this is what we are called to in the church. Each one of us must put on humility. That's a difficult concept for us in our culture. It was in the first century as well, for humility was not considered a virtue. Slaves were humble. The poor and the outcast were humble. Peter says you must all be humble.

The word he uses is a compound word. The first part means low status or insignificant. The second part means mindset or way of thinking. Have the mindset of being of low status. We see this idea in Philippians.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...

Philippians 2:3-5

To think low of one's self is not a self-hatred or a sense in which you despise yourself. Rather, it is the elevation of others. In the New Testament we are told to have a proper assessment of ourselves, and nowhere does it suggest a proper self-assessment puts us at the top. A proper self-assessment may well leave you with a strong sense of self, yet the instruction in holy Scripture is to count others more significant. This is the sort of humility all are instructed to put on, and rarely is it in a size that fits Americans.

We like to think we all should have input, that we all get a vote, that our desires and preferences ought to be foremost in everyone's mind when making decisions. I had a conversation recently with a man who told me a church should never make a decision without 100% buy-in from the church. The elders of a church, he said, should never make a policy change or a change in direction unless every single person in the church is in agreement.

That plays well with our idea of democracy, that we all get a vote and we all get a say. If a church were to operate that way then that church would be a church governed by its least spiritually mature member. The most childish and selfish member of a church would be given veto authority over every decision of the church. That is not the plan God has put in place, but even if it were, even if God intended for every church decision to be made by popular vote, what would be the requirement for casting your vote? "Count others more significant than yourselves". Don't look after just your own interests; look after the interests of others. Don't like the proposed new carpet color? That's okay; what is in the best interest of everyone else in the church? That's how you would vote.

This is the only way true humility is possible, and each one of us is called to true humility. Whether an elder or not, whether a long-time member or brand new, humility ought to be the thing that describes us and how we operate in the church. The local church is not a place for anyone's personal preferences.

This is true for the elders, too. Not only must the members of the church submit to the elders of the church, Peter says those same elders must put on humility. They must regard themselves as lowly. The idea of an arrogant or proud elder, one who thinks highly of himself, goes against what Peter is saying. Such elevated personal assessment is absurd when it comes to one who would be an elder. It should be unthinkable. It is incongruous with Scripture's description of overseers.

We've been a church for fifteen years now. Last Friday was the actual anniversary of New City Church launching in 2011. When I realized God was calling me to plant a church, I immediately began praying that God would raise up good elders, men who love him and who love his church. I knew I was not capable of leading and serving a church all by myself. I still am not. God has blessed this church with Dan and Dave and Jim and Will. These men are qualified to serve as elders. They love the church. They gladly serve the church. They put on humility every day and look after the interests of the church. In fact, you could say they *lose sleep for this church*.

## Losing Sleep

In Hebrews the author writes to church members—the “youngers” of the church—and gives this instruction to them.

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders and submit to them, he says. Why? What reason does he give for this submission to the leaders of the church? “for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account”. The overseers of the church have a responsibility to govern the church. Paul says elders who *rule well* are worthy of double honor. This includes budgets and staffing decisions. That's a rather small part, however. Hebrews says they are *keeping watch over your souls*.

Think of the metaphor of “shepherd”. A shepherd watches over and cares for the sheep, for their entire well-being. As it says in Psalm 23, as good shepherd leads the sheep to still waters, for fast-flowing waters could quickly drown a sheep. He steers them away from danger. A good shepherd makes the sheep lie down in green pastures. This is their source of food. A lazy shepherd wouldn't walk over the next hill to see if the grass is plentiful and green and then lead the sheep to graze there. A lazy shepherd would let them forage for themselves.

The word translated “keeping watch” means “losing sleep”. They're not losing sleep over worry, but over deep concern for the welfare of the church. They are staying awake during the night when danger is more prevalent. Wolves come at night. Predators go hunting at night. The shepherds make sure their flock is safe from such predators, even if it means they lose sleep. To say this another way, shepherds care for their sheep by giving their lives for their sheep. Good shepherds mimic *the Good Shepherd*, the one who gave his life for us.

Failure to do so would be catastrophic. Did you catch what Hebrews said? Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, *as those who will have to give an account*. Want to know what keeps me awake at night? This warning. One day I will stand before the Lord and he will begin asking me about the work he gave me to do, and he will demand an account—not only for my time and how I spent it in prayer and study and preaching and teaching. No, much more than that. That, yes! But also he will begin asking me and the other elders about you, about your life, about how we shepherded you and whether we led you away from danger and to still waters, about whether we made you lie down in green pastures, pastures full of the Lord and his gospel that feeds your soul. We are keeping watch *over your souls*. We are *losing sleep* over your souls.

Why does Peter put this into a letter that is about suffering? An elder want to suffer with you. A good shepherd is in the suffering with the sheep. You can look into our lives and see suffering as well. None of us lives a cushy life free of suffering. An elder ought to show the church *how* to suffer.

Elders must be examples to the flock. This is what Paul was getting at in 1 Corinthians 11: “Be imitators of me”—not because Paul is something special. “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”. It’s not about being like the elders, but about being like Jesus.

Part of Peter’s encouragement for these elect exiles to remain faithfully present even in the midst of suffering is to tell them the Lord has given them a profound gift: those who gladly lose sleep out of love for them. The Lord raises up overseers who guard his people, who serve them, who walk with them, who suffer with them, that they—together—may become more like Christ.

Like any gift the Lord gives, this gift can be twisted into something that is not at all a gift. We can all name men who have made a mess of things, those who have disqualified themselves by having affairs or by bullying—domineering—those in their charge or who have pursued shameful gain. For every disqualified elder who brings harm, there are countless men all across the world serving their churches well, shepherding the flock of God, exercising oversight, being examples to the church—those losing sleep. Most of these elders will likely never receive much recognition for their service, for they never sought it. Consider: we cannot name a single elder in any of the churches Peter is writing this letter to. They knew! Those churches knew who their elders were, and those men served them well.

The Lord—the Good Shepherd—loves his church. A significant way he loves his church is he gives gifted men to serve the church by watching over them, by loving them, by leading them. And where do they lead the church? Time and time again, the elders lead the church to Christ. Over and over again, for they have nowhere else to lead them. True, godly leadership always leads the church to Christ.