

8. Lastly, let's turn our attention to the "young men" (v. 5a NASB). Why do you think Peter singles them out with the command, "be subject to your elders" (v. 5a)?

9. To ensure the congregation has shepherds in the future, "young men" need encouragement to "aspire" to the eldership (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1). As a congregation, what will you do to encourage your "young men" to one day serve as shepherds?

"Young men" what will you do to prepare yourself to one day assume the mantle of leadership? (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Last Word: I once saw a bumper sticker that said, "Don't follow me, I'm lost too." That's the state of the world and unfortunately, of many well-meaning Christians and churches. How desperately we need to embrace the apostle's view of leadership. Peter has set down three primary commands: Elders are to diligently shepherd the flock; Saints are to be humbly follow and support their leaders; and the younger men submit to the elders, preparing themselves for leadership. Each of these commands confronts us with a choice, to trust or to test. Testing our leaders brings God's opposition, trusting them brings His grace. What will your choice be?

Prayer: Pray for humility, wisdom, and loving hearts for your shepherds, yourself, and the congregation.

Elders and the Congregation

1 Peter 5:1-5

In a recent email, the wife of an elder shared with me, "It was weird when people congratulated my husband on being appointed as an elder. How do you respond to that? It is not a position of power or prestige, it is a weighty responsibility and a sobering role. It is a servant's work of taking care of God's people. Congratulations are sort of the last thing on the mind of an elder who realizes what is at stake."

GROUP DISCUSSION: Read Proverbs 11:14 and reflect how this truism applies to the local church.

The existence of elders as spiritual leaders goes back to Old Testament times when seventy elders were appointed and divinely empowered to assist Moses in leading the people of God (Numbers 11:16-30). In the New Testament age, we find the local church is served by a plurality of elders. Because leadership is always so influential on the wellbeing and spiritual growth of the body of Christ, one of the first things the apostle Paul saw to was the appointment of elders in every church as shepherds of God's people (cf. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

Sadly, too many believers do not understand the vital role elders are to play in the life of the church. In our text, the apostle Peter tasks his fellow elders to lead with a shepherd's heart, and the congregation to respond with trust. A challenge for sure in today's combative society. *Let's begin by reading 1 Peter 5:1-5.*

1. In a word or two, summarize each of Peter's three contrasting statements of what *should not* and *should be* an elder's motivation (vv. 2-3).
2. Peter's overarching instruction to his fellow elders is, "*Shepherd the flock of God that is among you*" (v. 2). Describe what you think it looks like for elders to "*shepherd*" the local congregation. (Psalm 23 is always a good model.)
3. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13, Paul describes the shepherd's work as a "*labor... work*." From your perspective, what do you think are the hardest aspects of leading a congregation? (As a follow-up ask your elders how they answered this question.)
4. Elders who shepherd well are promised an "*unfading crown of glory*" (v. 4), a similar expression for the eternal reward given to all believers (2 Timothy 4:8). If elders will receive no greater reward than any other believer, why do you think they endure all they do in service to the church?
5. Now let's focus our attention on the congregation's relationship to their elders. In your own words, explain how "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (v. 5b) in the context of a congregation and her elders.
6. The work of shepherding can be an unappreciated, thankless act of love. Using the following verses, what will you do to show your elders you appreciate their work?
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13 –
 - b. 1 Timothy 5:17–19 –
 - c. Hebrews 13:17 –
 - d. James 5:14, 15 –
7. Disagreements are bound to occur between elders and the congregation. In light of what we've seen thus far, how can we express our differences of opinion in a humble and trusting manner and not in a prideful and testing way?