Jan. 20, 2019 a.m.

THE LEADERSHIP OF ELDERS

Reading: **1 Peter 5:1-5**

This is a leftover topic on the list from last year. (Church Guidance – Elders/Deacons)

What is the role of elders? In what way do the rule? What does it mean to obey the elders?

When do they become ‘lords’ instead of shepherds?

**Acts 20:28-30, 35; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24**

**The qualifications are qualities they will need to be able to shepherd the flock.**

* Not soon angry – they will deal with angry people; rule their own house well – to help others to do the same; hospitality – approachable; not quarrelsome – they will have to deal with some who are: not covetous – they will have to have time to do the work; able to teach – so they can feed the sheep and convict those who contradict sound teaching; good reputation – to have an influence on those outside of Christ

**Elders are *pastors* – they are *shepherds* who *feed* and tend the flock.**

* They *admonish* the flock.
* “to put in mind, i.e. (by implication) to caution or reprove gently:--admonish, warn” (Strong’s)
* They feed the flock publicly and privately, and especially privately.
* Much of the teaching that’s needed should be done on a one on one basis.
* Consider Paul’s example that he taught the elders – **Acts 20:20** (house to house)
* For example, sister so and so is not dressing modestly. People are talking – saying things like you (elders) need to take care of this. Then the elders tell the preacher “You need to preach on this.” No, you need to go talk personally with sister so and so. Take your wife. She might appreciate this more than knowing she is “being preached at.”
* Or a couple is having marriage problems – ‘preach some lessons on marriage.’
* Gary Henry once said that an elder will never be doing the work anymore, than when he is sitting in a living room with a bible teaching/admonishing one of the sheep.
* There is a place for some teaching on this and other subjects when no one is purposely being singled out. (the list given to me this past year – I was not being asked to do this)

**They are *overseers* – they look over/inspect the sheep.**

* They are not busybodies but they do care about the spiritual growth of others.
* There will be times when problems will arise that will “blindside” them - as one elder (Allen Dvorak) told me recently about some concerns among the flock that he shepherds.
* They are perceptive – they *watch* for our souls.
* They visit and talk to the sheep. (hospitality)
* They see warning signs (blood, dirt on the wool, don’t come to the fold).
* They ask, “How are you doing?” “Let’s get lunch this week.”
* They go looking for the wandering sheep. (as the parable and the song teach)

**They are *examples* to the flock.**

* Elders are leaders – to *rule* means to lead.
* We may *follow (imitate, mimic)* their *example* of *faith.* (a faith that works – faithfulness)
* We can see the *outcome* of their *conduct*.
* We can see how being faithful has turned out in their lives. We see the qualifications.
* We are looking at a man who decided some time ago to make the Lord first in his life.
* Do they rule only by example? (as some have suggested) While rule does mean to lead and elders lead by example, there are other things to consider.

**So when do we *obey* them? When are we to be *submissive* (yield)?**

* *“Over you in the Lord”* – “to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to preside, or (by implication) to practise:--maintain, be over, rule” (Strong’s)
* “Literally, those who stand in front of you, your leaders in the Lord” (RWP)
* Elders do not make the rules. I’m not sure they are to make any rules.
* Keeping the traditions of the elders received a rebuke from the Lord.
* The traditions of church leaders lead to the formation of many churches.
* They are not *lords* – there is one Lord over the church and only He makes the rules.
* They teach, admonish and encourage us to keep the rules of the Lord.
* When I obey the Lord’s commands, I’m not doing so to show submission to the elders.
* I‘m not here today to worship because Joel and Marlin think I should be.
* I may respond to their admonishment to keep the Lord’s rules.
* They will lead the flock when sadly, a sheep has to be punished for not wanting to keep the rules. (an example is found in **1 Cor. 5**)
* In areas of judgment? When some decisions have to be made. (expedients, incidentals)
* See **Acts 15:19-22**
* I’ve heard is said that elders make decisions only when those judgments meet the approval of the flock. This would put us back to the business meeting arrangement of reaching decisions (and here the whole church would have included the women).
* I believe this passage teaches is that the flock was pleased with the decision – they were supportive – which is a great way to demonstrate submission.
* This is not to say that elders don’t ever consider the input of the sheep.
* When and how often should we meet? Joel and Marlin did not set in order our present practices. But what if they saw a need to change? Listen to the sheep?
* Leftover thoughts from my lesson on attendance – do we attend to obey/submit to Joel and Marlin? I attend for the reasons I presented in that lesson. What if they added an extra 10 minutes to the evening assembly on Sunday? What if they decided meeting on Tuesday and Thursday would be a good thing? We get comfortable with the way things are, do we not?
* Examples of yielding to the judgment of others: timing of withdrawing from some; spending the contribution – who, how much, for how long; who is supported as an evangelist with this church; decisions about the meeting place

Let the sheep recognize those who labor among us, esteem them highly for their work’s sake, be at peace among ourselves and help them to rule with joy and not

with grief, for that would be unprofitable for us.