

“The Whole Counsel of God”

Sermon Notes

➤ **Shepherds are wise to love flocks over the long haul,
and flocks are wise to love shepherds over the long haul**

**3 benefits of long-term, church-anchored pastoral ministry of the Word...*

1. Lives become accessible (vv.17-21)

2. Motives become discernible (vv.22-24)

3. Ministry becomes accountable (vv.25-27)

Next Week: Acts 20:28-38 - “Pay Careful Attention to Yourselves”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of August 18th-24th

Getting Started

1. In one of his lesser-known singles (“Ring Them Bells”), songwriter Bob Dylan writes: “The shepherd is asleep where the willows weep, and the mountain is filled with lost sheep.” He drew the word picture from the Old Testament in Nahum 3:18. Take some time on the front end of this study to ponder the meaning of this image as a group. Be sure to look up the reference and discuss what both authors (Dylan and Nahum) are communicating. What sort of a burden does this place on the importance of this topic?

Digging Deeper

2. When you hear the term “elder” in the context of the local church, what comes to mind? Does this word mainly have positive, negative or neutral connotations to you? Why? Would you say that you have a strong, weak, or so-so grasp of what the Bible says about elders? Explain.

Open Your Bible to 1 Peter 5:1-5...

3. In 1 Peter 5:1, what are the three ways Peter identifies himself? Why is it significant that he doesn't use the title "apostle" here (as he does in 1 Peter 1:1)? What is he communicating to the elders in the churches of 1st century Asia Minor (as well as to elders in the churches of 21st century North America)?

4. What is the command to the elders in the second half of 1 Peter 5:2? Though Psalm 23 is clearly about the Lord's pastoral care of his sheep, take this psalm and draw from it the job description of a shepherd. According to Psalm 23, what types of activities does faithful shepherding involve? Try to identify at least three aspects of shepherding. As a sheep, would you say that you make a conscious effort to help your church leaders carry out this calling with joy (according to Hebrews 13:17)? Explain.

5. In 1 Peter 5:2b-3, Peter gives three "not...but" exhortations to elders that are to characterize their pastoral work. What are they? Why are these pitfalls into which church leaders can easily fall? Regrettably, can you think of examples in your personal experience of observing leaders in the local church where an elder has succumbed to such temptations? Using discretion (taking care to avoid gossip), please share with the group.

6. Turning to the other side of the coin, can you think of some examples and stories of elders in the church you've known who've served voluntarily, generously, and by example (vv.2-3)? If so, share this with the group as well.

7. The only time the term "senior pastor" appears in the Bible is right here in v.4 ("chief Shepherd"). To whom is Peter referring? Why do you think it's relatively customary for churches to refer to their main preaching elder as a "senior pastor"? Does this seem wise? What might be the value of churches altering their vocabulary in this area of church life?

8. These next two weeks afford us the opportunity for careful study, reflection and application of what the Bible says about church leadership. As you close your time together as a group, please take a moment to pray for our study of this portion of God's Word. Pray especially for our current (as well as future) elders - Dave, Aaron, Andy, and Scott (and their wives and children, too!) - that we would increasingly manifest Christ's vision for the leadership of our church.