

Leading through Shepherding

1 Peter 5:1-4

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LEADERS NEEDED

In the 1930's, no one would have viewed Winston Churchill as the future Prime Minister of England. He was on the periphery and was all but written off as a future prospect for leadership. And yet Winston Churchill understood the times better than anyone else in Britain's government. He kept a watchful eye on Adolf Hitler in Germany and saw the Third Reich as an imminent threat to Britain. He wrote articles and gave countless speeches warning against the growing threat, but he was viewed as a warmonger. After Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler in 1938, he declared that he had achieved "peace for our time." But within a year his credibility was destroyed as Hitler invaded Poland, igniting World War II. Only one man had the credibility to lead Britain during this era of great peril, Winston Churchill.¹

There will always be a need for leadership. The question is *who* will lead and *how* will they lead. Families need fathers to provide and protect; organizations need executives to give vision and mission; countries need governments to organize and preserve. There will always be a need for leadership; the question is *what kind* of leader will fill that role.

Former President Dwight Eisenhower is quoted as saying, "*In order to be a leader a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence the supreme quality of a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of phoniness, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose.*"²

There are any number of models and modes for practicing leadership. But the church has one manual and blueprint to follow in fulfilling God's purposes for leadership.

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Most of you are familiar with the basic structure of the church. Most can recognize the roles and functions various individuals serve in the church. Yet sometimes along the way, we forget *why we do what we do*, or *how we do it*. As we continue our series on the core values of Grace Brethren Church, we're answering the question: *why our church is necessary? What is your role here? How has God ordered His church?* If you identify with GBC as your "home church", you can't forget what the church stands for, where you "fit in", and what God expects from His people.

Why the church is necessary and vital to today

^{ESV} **1 Timothy 3:15** *if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*

Paul gives a brief summary of the church's vital duty and role in the world. It is not the same as other organizations, and is unlike any other institution. The church is a unique gathering of called and commissioned individuals to a mission of proclaiming and penetrating the gospel of God's kingdom into

¹ Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, pp.87-88

² *Bits & Pieces* magazine, Sept 15 issue, 1994, p.4

a sinful, dying world. The church is to be careful in its **CONDUCT**, mindful that it belongs to **THE LIVING GOD**, and a staunch **PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF GOD'S TRUTH**. As society constantly changes its meaning of values and morals, God's Word remains the blueprint for directing us into the truth.

The church's unique nature is described in several forms to help you visualize how God has ordered, intended and participates with His people. The church is portrayed as a **BRIDE** (Eph.5:22-33; Rev.19:7), **BODY** (Rom.12:3-6; 1 Cor.12:12-27), and **HOUSEHOLD/ LIVING TEMPLE** (Eph.2:19-22; 1 Cor.3:9-11; 1 Pet.2:4-10). These are not stale or static portrayals, but imagery of a dynamic, growing assembly toward holiness. We are continually in a growing process where member is being placed alongside member, in the same Spirit with the same goal of maturing. Your function within this dynamic, growing assembly is not to be individualistic but a corporate identity into the community God calls you to devote yourself in worship, service, and learning.

Structure of the church

EPHESIANS 2:19-22 *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

If you were to imagine the church as an architectural structure, you can visualize aspects of this building: *foundation, pillars, and roof*. The foundation to this building has already been laid as **Jesus Christ**. With God the Father as the Master builder, God the Son as the cornerstone, the rest of the foundation consists of the teachings of Christ, His Apostles, the prophets and those designated with authority in His church through the Holy Spirit. Each aspect of the foundation does not replace or supersede Christ's position as the Chief Cornerstone. Instead, they serve as the essential groundwork for the functioning of the church.

THE FOUNDATION

Christ, apostles & prophets (Eph.2:19-22) – Word of God

Command of Christ (Matt.28:19-20) – make disciples, baptize & teach

Teachings of the Church (Eph.4:11-16) – sound doctrine

Guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15) – leads to truth and proper understanding

Leadership of pastors and elders (Eph.4:11-13; 1 Tim.3; Titus 3; 1 Pet. 5) – shepherds of God's flock

Essential to the local church structure is the qualification of its leaders/elders. The emphasis God places is on **CHARACTER** and **UNITY**, versus polity and program. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, God has given qualified men to be leaders in their local church communities by gifting and designating various roles within the body. These roles are to serve the church body and advance the gospel of God's kingdom. These qualifications are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

LEADER QUALIFICATIONS

1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9

- *Above reproach* – not able to be *accused*; good reputation
- *One-woman man* – a pattern of *devotion* to one wife
- *Sober-minded* – alert, *clearheaded*, watchful
- *Self-controlled* – in control of his *thinking* and *emotions*
- *Respectable* – responsible *behavior*; not *chaotic*
- *Hospitable* – *welcoming* to others; serves others

- *Gentle* – gracious and kind in dealing with others
- *Manage his own household well* – faithfully leads and cares for the well-being of his family both physically and spiritually
- *Lover of good* – prizes what is right
- *Upright* – prizes what is just
- *Holy* – sets himself apart for God
- *Disciplined* – diligent to persevere, not easily distracted
- *Holding fast the faithful word* – loves and uses God’s Word
- Avoids...*
- *Being a drunkard* – not addicted or mastered by any outside substance
- *Violence* – quickly angered turning into explosive actions.
- *Quarrelsome* – argumentative
- *Lover of money* – greedy and materialistic; coveting others
- *Arrogant* – pushing own ideas and desires above others
- *Quick-tempered* – pattern of anger; quickly angered

Not only should biblical leaders reflect the character of Christ as examples to the flock, but they must adequately equip the people to do the work of ministry while providing ample opportunity to do this work (Eph.4:11-13; Heb.10:24-25). God’s design for leaders of his church is to lead in a manner that reflects the character of Christ in alignment with the revealed will of god. God’s desire for his people is to follow Christ foremost, by the leading of those charged with caring for your soul.

Examples of leaders as shepherds

What qualities does God most earnestly desire in His leaders? As Scripture records the lives of those who served in various capacities and roles, two of the most prominent were men who served as actual shepherds. **MOSES** was chosen by God to lead His people out of slavery into the Promised Land. After forty years growing up in Pharaoh’s household, he spent another forty years in the wilderness as a shepherd. Only then was he ready to lead God’s people for another forty years out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into their new home. “*You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*” (Psa.77:20)

DAVID, the shepherd-boy-turned-king, richly embodied the Lord’s example of leading His people as a shepherd. David, declaring the Lord as his Shepherd (Psa.23), was called by God to be a faithful shepherd-leader for God’s people. “*He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.*” (Psa.78:70-72)

God expects His leaders to be gracious shepherds who *feed, lead, protect* and *care* for the flock **JUST AS HE WOULD DO**. God later judged His people and their leaders for lack of shepherding His flock as He intended.

EZEKIEL 34:1-6 “*The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.”*”

God's indictment against these false shepherds was their "fleecing" instead of feeding the sheep; abandoning the helpless, instead of binding their wounds; and indifference toward lost, instead of seeking the strays. These are serious charges against those who were supposed to be the soul-watchers of those entrusted to them. All human leaders will fail to varying degrees, but such deficiencies do not excuse them from their responsibility before God. Yet since man is imperfect, it is precisely why God Himself actively shepherds His people. It is why He would choose the PERFECT SHEPHERD to feed and lead His flock, "*And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.*" (Eze.34:23-24)

JESUS CHRIST assumed and fulfilled His role as the GOOD SHEPHERD, embodying exactly how God shepherds His people.

JOHN 10:11-16 "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*"

To be clear, there is only one CHIEF SHEPHERD. Everyone else is either a hireling, under-shepherd, or just a fellow sheep with delegated responsibility. There is to be only ONE SHEPHERD'S VOICE that you listen and follow after. Those who work for the Chief Shepherd are to direct all listening sheep to the voice of their Shepherd.

Before He left, Jesus delegated authority to those who were to carry on the work of the gospel. "*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ*" (Eph.4:11-12). Among the first was the apostle Peter, along with his fellow apostles, with whom the church would begin (Matt.16:17-19).

It was **PETER** whom Jesus Christ gently restored to a position of shepherd leadership over God's flock (John 21:15-19). The instruction for Peter to "*Feed My lambs... Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep*" shaped his attitude and motivation in leading God's people. It is with this same perspective Peter charged his fellow elders with the principles on how we are to lead today.

I. CHARGE FOR LEADERS AS SHEPHERDS

1 Peter 5:1-4 *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: 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; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

KNOW THE SHEEP

The term "shepherd" (*poimaino*) is used as an imperative verb in John 21:16, Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1 to mean, "*guide, care, look after.*"³ Peter's charge to "*shepherd the flock of God that is among you*" implies that leaders are with the people, known by the people, and know their people. The elders are to be able to identify those for whom they are accountable to the Lord. Elders are to do all

³ Friberg, *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, ποιμάνατε verb imperative aorist active 2nd person plural

they can to identify those who belong the body of Christ as known within the context of the local church. The authority of a shepherd-leader is to oversee those who profess Jesus as Lord and Savior as they participate in the functions of the church. Partaking in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper require a clear testimony of faith, which should be verified by the leaders of the church. This is for the sake of both the elder and individual so that these ordinances are not practiced in an unworthy manner (1 Cor.11:27-32).

Knowing the sheep is both broad and personal in its scope. There are specific characteristics about our congregation within this community that we generally know. But there is also a personal, closer relationship we share with each other. Peter specifies "*those in your charge*," as the allotted stewardship entrusted to our care.

This is why we have Shepherding Groups with Shepherding Leaders. This is where you can get to know and be known by others. It is in these smaller settings you witness and experience the body of Christ lived out. Remember, you are not a number, nor a project, nor just "that guy". You are a fellow person, created in the image God for whom Christ died. As a believer, you are a brother and sister in Christ with whom we share the innumerable riches of God's grace and glory. Knowing each other is uncomfortable, messy, scary, satisfying and sanctifying. Just as Paul was not afraid to know and be known by his people, neither are we.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 "*But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*"

FEED THE SHEEP

One of the primary duties of a shepherd-leader is to make sure the sheep are fed. In the context of our church, this takes place in both the PUBLIC and PERSONAL ministry of the Word. Paul's charge to his disciple Timothy was to "*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching* (2 Tim.4:2). This is the basis for the PUBLIC ministry of the Word of God. Our regular method is through the careful **exposition** of God's Word. This is not a duty we take lightly (Jam.3:1) but it is one we perform seriously and soberly. Feeding primarily comes through the preaching and teaching of God's Word, and it begins with our **pulpit** ministry. It extends through our Sunday Equipping classes, children's and youth ministries, Bible study groups and Shepherding Groups.

The effectiveness of the public ministry is tied directly to the PERSONAL ministry of the Word. The sustaining power of authentic, spiritual leadership is dependence upon the Word of God and prayer. God's word continually builds and fortifies the leader's ability to think, speak and act wisely. God's word is the treasure which produces real joy and reward those who search it diligently. The people of God will only grow as deep as their leader from God. "*Prayer and the ministry of the Word must be the main occupation of the shepherd. If the under-shepherd ignores these elements, both he and his flock suffer greatly.*"⁴

The PERSONAL ministry of the Word begins with the leader's personal walk with God, with their family, and then extending to God's flock. Personal ministry of God's Word happens in counseling, crisis, special occasions (weddings, funerals) and discipleship. Just as you regulate your diet to maintain a healthy lifestyle, you must regularly be dieting on the feast of God's Word to sustain your spiritual health.

⁴ Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, p.229

LEAD THE SHEEP

LUKE 22:26 *But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.*

The paradigm of leadership within the church feels antithetical to the culture around us. But it is by precisely following Jesus' model and instruction do you understand the wisdom of God's leadership. Shepherd leaders are not to demand being served, but serve and sacrifice for the good of their Savior. Jesus instructed we follow His model of **Servant-Leadership** as our chief imitation. *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."* (John 13:14-15)

Leading engages at several levels. The first is at the 30,000 ft. level, from a high vantage point that looks out wide and far. Here leading requires vision, mission and purpose. At GBC we state our mission as, **"We exist to honor Christ by making disciples and teaching them to love God and people."**

Leaders need to know where they're going, how they're going to get there, and what resources are needed. Leaders that engages at a high visual horizon are often able to see the cost of their decisions, the influence of the culture, or when to enact at the right time. Leadership at this level decisively acts at critical moments in the life of the church, demonstrating courage and initiative.

Leading must also happen with a "boots on the ground" mentality. Just as men are inspired when their captain is leading at the front of the charge, shepherd-leaders cannot remain sequestered in a lofty tower apart from those under their care. Leading through shepherding is personal, intrusive and transparent. If, like Paul, leaders are to claim, *"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"* (1 Cor.11:1), then you have to look inside our lives to know how to imitate. Leaders must be willing to pull back the curtain to our family, homes, work places, worship, serving, giving or any arena where Christ is to be imitated. It does not mean the leader has all the answers, but is approachable, teachable and sensitive to others.

PROTECT THE SHEEP

MATTHEW 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*

A final aspect of shepherd leadership is the duty of protection. If the church is to be a pillar and support of God's truth, it requires diligence and discipline. The shepherd leader must have a wartime mentality to remain vigilant at all costs. For the church, there will be no time of peace (maybe reprieve) until Jesus Christ returns to reign triumphant.

ACTS 20:29 *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.*

The eastern shepherd was, first of all, a watchman. He had a watchtower. It was his business to keep a wide-open eye, constantly searching the horizon for the possible approach of attackers... Vigilance was a cardinal virtue... There were many kinds of enemies, all of them terrible, each in a different way.⁵

⁵ Jefferson, pp.41-42

There are two types of protection shepherding leaders provide. The first is **protection against:** *worldly philosophies, cultural pressure, personal compromise, infiltrating sin.* There is a constant barrage of outside forces and influences that attack our faith in the Scriptures, Jesus Christ, His church and God Himself.

But perhaps the great dangers are the attacks within. As Paul warned “*fierce wolves will come in among you*”, leaders provide **protection for:** *wandering sheep, sick and weak, those easily influenced, ensnared in sin.* Unlike the shepherds of Ezekiel’s day we must retrieve the lost, encourage the faint-hearted, and if necessary, discipline those in unrepentant sin. “*And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*” (1 Thess.5:14)

*“Paul’s ministry was successful because his life was right with God, he made it his priority to feed and guard the flock, he devoted himself to prayer and the ministry of the word, and he was totally free of self-interest. The result was the devoted love of his people and, more important, the approval of God.”*⁶

II. ROLE OF THE BODY WITH SHEPHERD-LEADERS

HEBREWS 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.*

BE KNOWN IN YOUR CHURCH

One pastor has said, “*Fellowship is participating together in the life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through our union with Christ. Fellowship is sharing something in common at the deepest possible level of human relationships – our experience of God Himself.*”⁷

We don’t come to church *just because* we have friends here; nor do we *not* attend because you don’t have any friends. Church isn’t about a friendship-social club; it is about connecting with others different (or the same) from you better than anyone outside of Christ can hope to connect. As believers connect, friendships are formed; identity is made clear and purpose is achieved. But part of the goal in being involved in a local community of believers is to learn God better together so we can grow deeper personally.

HEBREWS 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

MATURE IN YOUR FAITH

COLOSSIANS 1:28 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

EPHESIANS 4:11-16 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the*

⁶ Jefferson, Charles, *The Minister as Shepherd*, p.231

⁷ John Loftness as quoted by Joshua Harris in *Stop Dating the Church*, p.75

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

- Primarily, Sunday morning is a feeding time. We gather together to worship God through praise, prayer and preaching. All these aspects work together so the soil of your heart would be cultivating personal growth. Sunday morning services, Equipping, children's & youth, Bible studies and Shepherding Groups are NOT the end in themselves. They are simply the **MEANS** by which you receive vital, nutritional grace to aid in your growth. Don't waste your Sundays by starving yourself spiritually during the week. **SUNDAYS AREN'T FOR BINGING, BUT FOR STIMULATING.**

SUBMISSIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 *We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.*

- The paid and volunteer staff of any church requires support through encouragement and prayer. Church leaders are not here to run programs or entertain you. You've been called and chosen to involve yourselves in the care and concern for the souls of others. They are not always right, good looking or do things the best, but they have been placed in leadership for a time to care for the burdens of others. Those within the church can make their responsibility joyful and exciting when they are encouraged, loved and observe growth from those they are ministering to.

"In joining the church, we put ourselves in a position where we ask our brothers and sisters to hold us accountable to live according to what we speak with our mouths. We ask our brothers and sisters around us to encourage us, sometimes by reminding us of ways that we have seen God work in our lives and other times by challenging us when we may be moving away from obeying Him."⁸

COMMITTED TO CHRIST'S BODY

- There is something the church does that cannot be done anywhere else. There is a purpose God has designed for the church to fulfill that cannot be completed individually or outside of it. There is safety for the believer who is inside the church; and there is danger to a believer who is outside. God has not designed the church as a social gathering for His people, but He has included very specific blessings and benefits for all to participate in.

SO MAKE THE CHURCH YOUR PRIORITY, and not just with lip service. Attending church in America has quickly become a negative instead of a positive commitment today. Don't wait to decide where you stand in your commitment. There are many things competing for your attention and time; very few, if any of those things are actually profitable. **IT'S NOT ABOUT COMPETITION, BUT CONVICTION.** *Is Christ your conviction? Is His bride your delight?* If so, then cherish His people and willingly labor alongside each other so the gospel is preached, God's kingdom is advanced and God is glorified in us.

⁸ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, p.152

“So, do not merely attend a church (though you should attend), but join a church. Link arms with other Christians. Find a church you can join, and do it so that non-Christians will hear and see the Gospel, so that weak Christians will be cared for, so that strong Christians will channel their energies in a good way, so that church leaders will be encouraged and helped, so that God will be glorified.”⁹

⁹ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, p.164