



## Leadership Principles Humble Leadership

by Chuck Gianotti

### Studies in 1 Timothy—Part 3

Timothy had a unique relationship with Paul, his mentor—something few ever experience. Paul delighted to share his wisdom and insight (inspired as it was). That is the easy part of the relationship—we all like to give advice and have young people hang on our every word. However, there are few Timothys who want that input. As we continue this series of selected studies in 1 Timothy, let us put ourselves in the sandals of this young disciple and learn from Paul.

What made the relationship work was Timothy's receptivity. He knew a good deal when he found it. A free theological and pastoral education! Well, actually, it was quite expensive, it cost him the sacrifice of his entire life. And it would not be easy--three times Paul speaks about fighting the "good fight" (1:18, 6:12, 2 Tim 4:7 NASB). Yet the heart of serving God was well lived and demonstrated by Paul; passion drips from his pen as he pours out his heart to Timothy.

### Right Use Of The Law

Ironically, after warning Timothy of wrong attitudes in teaching the Word (see previous article in this series), Paul turns to the law, saying it is good (1 Tim 1:8)! He wrote similarly in Romans 7:12 and 16. What uncharacteristic words these seem to be coming from one who so strenuously argued against keeping the law for justification! But there is still a place for the law, particularly in identifying what is "contrary to sound teaching" (1:10). Preaching must include the concept of sin, and how can people know what sin is apart from knowing the law? How can they know the law apart from the preacher telling them about it? Today especially people simply do not know about the law of God, and therefore don't understand their sin and their need of salvation. Even though many grow up in a "religious culture," there is a woeful ignorance of God's righteous standards.

### Sober Self-Analysis

Paul, never one to be a hypocrite and knowing the law well, applies the law to himself. He cannot escape what he says in Romans 12:3 is sound or sober judgment of himself. As servants of the Lord, we cannot afford the luxury of thinking too highly of ourselves. Imagine what Timothy thought as he read the words of his mentor in 1 Tim 1:12-17, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among

whom I am foremost [KJV: or chief] of all" (1:15). Paul was being more than rhetorical. He meant what he said! The only thing he brought to God's service was "faithfulness" which the Lord recognized and acknowledged (1:12). It was God who strengthened, God who was merciful, God who was gracious. Paul was ignorant, unworthy, and many other things the law identified as sin. What is most astounding is the present tense of the statement, "among whom I am foremost." Paul still saw himself that way.

### A Supreme Example

He goes on to say that the whole reason he found mercy was "so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life" (1:16). Now as elders and servants of God, we can sometimes misunderstand and misapply Paul's teaching here. He is not saying that his great oratorical abilities are an example of ministry to all believers. He is not saying his great faithfulness is an example, nor his great doctrinal adherence or his being a pillar of the assembly. The example he has in mind includes the fact that he *himself* is a sinner. The example, actually, is Christ's patience working in Paul, who is a sinner. The focus is on what the Lord can do. In other words, if God can use Paul, he can use anyone! The apostle doesn't flinch from this self-castigation, because it is absolutely true. To lead people to think of him otherwise would be hypocritical and would not result in his doxology that burst out in the very next breath: "Now to the

(Continued on page 4)

## Resource

***A Cosmic Drama: Men, Women & The Church***, by Chuck Gianotti, (Bible-Equip Publishers, 2006), 185pp.

Masculinity and femininity is deeply ingrained in who we are as human beings and this affects how we function in the church. However, there is much confusion and misinformation abounding on this subject on all sides! This book is meant for those who recognize that the subject deserves far more than a superficial statement supported by a few "proof verses." The reader is invited to think deeply and biblically, in the same way fo which the Bereans in Scripture were commended. Written by the founder and editor of Elders' ShopNotes, it provides a fresh, honest look at a subject that splits many Christians and churches. You can order a copy for \$10 US or \$15 CAN (plus \$3 shipping) by writing Elders' ShopNotes (see back page for address information).

Leadership in the church is a fascinating subject as it affects so many lives and families. Churches will often prosper or struggle as they reflect the quality of care they receive from their shepherds. Many groups have embraced the Biblical teaching of leadership by elders, a subject to which a considerable amount of attention has been devoted in past issues of ESN. As time brings changes, elders move away or are called home to the Lord, churches grow in size, the question is heard: “How can new elders be found; when is a brother ready to be an elder?”

To answer these questions, there are a number of things to consider. Certainly there are the basic guidelines provided in the Scriptures. Then there are some things which seem to be implied but not stated in the Bible; things we might call wise but not specified. Finally, there are local issues which may reflect strong traditions of any particular congregation; things which may be changed but which must at least be considered.

**Basic Guidelines**

As to the first, Scripture indicates a work of God in making elders (Acts 20:28 KJV), a work in the heart and life of the individual as to desire and qualifications for eldership (I Tim 3:1-7), and a work in the people of the local assembly as they discern this good work taking place in the life and actions of a brother (I Thess 5:12). If any of these is lacking, it is safe to say that problems will likely follow. No amount of desire and popularity can substitute for a genuine work of God in the heart, and any true work of the Holy Spirit must be lived out in the practical conduct of a leader for God. If these things are present, they will be seen or recognized (at least informally) by the people, and hopefully in a tangible way by the entire church.

**Implied Principles**

With regard to things implied but not specified, it may help to mention a few. An elder will be a working part of a close brotherhood, and should be a team player, neither dominating nor receding into silent uninvolvedness. He ought to share the vision of the current elder

group for the work they have done thus far. And he should have some convictions about time commitment to the local work. Opportunities to be absent, even in the service of the Lord may abound, but shepherds must spend a substantial share of their time among the sheep.

**Local Issues**

As to local issues, there are considerations, traditions and scruples which may apply only in the particular local situation, but are very important to the people of the church. For example, in a retirement community of older believers, the “younger” men aged 50 – 60 may be expected to yield the place of leadership to those who are over 70. Some groups insist that an elder must be married,

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based on a particular interpretation of I Tim 3:2. And some would add to that the need for the elder to have children based on the same verse. Some hold that the preaching of the Word must be done by the elders themselves; others enjoy different measures of delegation of this task.

**Need For More Elders**

Important as all the various concerns may be, it is critical not to lose sight of the goal: the church needs an adequate supply of qualified, capable elders who have a heart for the Lord and the people, and this need must not go unmet on account of non-biblical technicalities! God has supplied the basics, and the believers would do well to go back and review them carefully. Has there been an ongoing work of God in the life of the brother in question? Does he have the desire to lead as an elder? Does his life display a reasonable degree of compliance with the qualifications set down in the Word? Does he have credibility and integrity among the people of the church? If the answer to these questions is yes, then serious consideration should be given to making a simple pub-

lic affirmation of what seems to be already well in progress!

Two related questions come to mind at this point. Are there things an assembly might be doing to ensure a good supply of elders for the future, and how can we protect the elders we have from “burnout?”

In looking toward the future, it is not a bad idea to have some sort of an “elders – in – training” program. This can be as informal as older men working with younger men, or in a larger church, there can be some specific guidelines by which ongoing preparation and discipleship are matters of accountability among the existing elders.

The three great discipling relationships in Scripture (Moses and Joshua, Paul and Timothy, and the Lord Jesus and His disciples) can serve as models for

this. Additionally, it should be remembered that Paul hints that those who have served well as deacons, procure a good standing (or “step”), implying the step up to more significant spiritual responsibilities

in the work of the church (I Tim. 3:13). Those who excel as deacons or leaders in small groups, are heading in a good direction for increased spiritual leadership among God’s flock.

**Protection of Elders**

As to the protection of those elders who are already functioning, there are endless creative ideas which can encourage the leaders among us. Before suggesting any though, let’s take note of one that is spelled out clearly in the Word. Those who lead should be able to do their work with joy and not with grief (Heb 13:17). Working among thankful, cooperative people will go a long way toward resting the spirit of any servant of the Lord! Beyond that, here are a few other ideas:

If the number of elders can be increased to a number greater than the bare minimum, why not rotate responsibilities with an occasional month to “rest” from extra meetings and visits.

How long has it been since the elders and their wives were treated to a night out at a restaurant for relaxing and renewing friendships by the people of the church?

Why not make up teams to visit families of the assembly with one elder and

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Biblical Foundations

## Pastoral Eldering

by Alexander Strauch

The biblical image of a shepherd caring for his flock—standing long hours ensuring its safety, leading to a fresh pasture and clear water, carrying the weak, seeking the lost, healing the wounded and sick—is precious. The whole image of the Palestinian shepherd is characterized by intimacy, tenderness, concern, skill, hard-work, suffering, and love. It is, as former London Bible College professor Derek J. Tidball remarks in his book, *Skillful Shepherds*, “a subtle blend of authority and care,” and “as much toughness as tenderness, as much courage as comfort.”

The shepherd-sheep relationship is so incredibly rich that the Bible uses it repeatedly to describe God and His loving care for His people. In one of the most beloved of all Psalms, David, the shepherd turned king, wrote: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, he makes me lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside quiet waters” (Ps 23:1,2 NIV). The Bible also uses shepherd imagery to describe the work of those who lead God’s people (Ezek. 34).

Thus when Paul and Peter directly exhorted the elders to do their duty, they both employed shepherding imagery. It should be observed that these two apostles assign the task of shepherding the local church to no other group or single person but the elders. Paul reminds the Asian elders that God the Holy Spirit placed them in the flock as overseers for the purpose of shepherding the church of God (Acts 20:28). Peter exhorts the elders to be all that shepherds should be to the flock (1 Peter 5:2). We then must also view apostolic, Christianized elders to be primarily pastors of a flock, not corporate executives, CEOs, or advisors to a pastor.

If we want to understand Christian elders and their work, we must understand the biblical imagery of shepherding. As keepers of sheep, New Testament elders are to protect, feed, lead, and care for the flock’s many practical needs. Using these four, broad, pastoral categories, let us consider the examples, exhortations, and teachings of the New Testament regarding shepherd elders.

### Protecting the Flock

A major part of the NT elders’ work is to protect the local church from false

teachers. The essence of Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders was, “guard the flock—wolves are coming” (Acts 20:20-28-31). Protecting the flock is vitally important because sheep are defenseless animals. They are utterly helpless in the face of wolves, bears, lions, jackals, or robbers. Just as a shepherd guards his sheep against such dangers, the elders must guard the congregation of believers from false teachers. According to Paul’s required qualifications for eldership, a prospective elder must have enough knowledge of the Bible to be able to refute false teachers (Titus 1:5, 6, 9).

Protecting the flock includes seeking straying sheep, disciplining sin, admonishing improper behavior and attitudes, and stopping bitter infighting.

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All this requires elders to be spiritually alert and courageous. This involves being watchful in prayer and being aware of changing issues both in society and the church. It means elders educating themselves about current winds of doctrines and practices. Who can calculate the damage done during the past two thousand years to the churches of Jesus Christ because of inattentive, naïve, and prayerless shepherds? Or weak elders who feared conflict or lacked courage to address difficult issues.

There are many weak, immature, and unstable believers, so the elders must act as a wall of safety around the people, protecting them from the fear-some danger of savage wolves and other destructive influences.

### Feeding the flock

Throughout the NT, extraordinary emphasis is placed on the centrality of teaching God’s Word. Unlike modern board elders, all NT elders were required to be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2 NIV). Paul states the elder must “hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to

refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). Sheep are nearly incapable of feeding and watering themselves properly. Without a shepherd, sheep would quickly be without pasture and water, and would soon waste away. The failure of church elders to know and teach the Bible is one of the chief reasons doctrinal error floods churches today and drowns the power and life of the church.

### Leading the flock

In Biblical language, to shepherd a nation or any group of people means to lead or to govern (2 Sam 5:2; Psalm 78:71, 72). Elders are also called “overseers,” which signifies that they supervise and manage the church. They are to rule (1 Tim 5:17). This involves management skill and hard work. The elders must clarify direction and beliefs for the flock, set goals, make decisions, give direction, correct failures, affect changes, and motivate people. They must evaluate, plan and govern. They must be problem solvers, managers

of people, planners and thinkers. One of the key qualifications for an elder is that he be “one who manages his own household well...but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:4,5).

Being an elder requires lots of hard work and sacrifice. Pastoring God’s flock requires a life of devoted work. That is why Paul exhorts believers to highly honor and love those who work hard at caring for the flock (1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim 5:17).

### Caring for Practical Needs

James instructs the sick members of the flock to call for the elders of the church (James 5:14). Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to care for the weak and needy of the flock (Acts 20:35). This means visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, strengthening the weak, praying for all the sheep, visiting new members and providing counsel as needed. In addition, they must insure that others in the flock are being equipped for the work of ministry. The elders are dependent upon the gifts and skills of others (some of

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Humble

(cont. from page 1)

King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1:17).

Can you see what Paul is saying? In verse 9-10, he had listed the kinds of sinners and sins that merit the law’s holy censure. With this fresh in his mind, Paul is forced to include himself. Is this hyperbole, that is, does Paul exaggerate the point? To make sure we don’t conclude that, Paul prefaces his confession with, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance ...” (1:15).

He knew full well the holiness of the law, having been trained in the highest rabbinical schooling possible. He had been taught personally by Christ (Gal 1:11-12). As he warned young Timothy about false teachers and spoke of the goodness of the law in identifying sin, the awesome reality of God holiness must have overwhelmed him. Could it be also that one of his encounters with James (Gal 1:19, 2:9) left him agreeing with the injunction: “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1)?

### Unworthy And Know It

So, as we read along with Timothy, we should be reminded that we teach, preach and lead only because of God’s work in our lives. It has nothing to do with our abilities, talents or gifts. We need to be ever mindful of our sinfulness apart from God! We are unworthy. We need to fight against the tendency to put on our holy face on Sunday mornings, act like

we don’t make mistakes or fall short of the moral standard we desire. As elders, we need to become more transparent, willing to acknowledge when we are wrong, guard against pride and self-righteousness, confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). What God desires most is faithfulness and honest humility. 

## When Ready? (cont. from pg. 2)

one deacon (or younger man) in each team to help keep nights out to a reasonable number. Where Sunday teaching workload is heavy, why not an occasional panel of elders with written questions submitted in advance?

One may wonder at such suggestions in an article about when a brother is ready to be an elder. But they go together! Ask a congregation whose people have gotten the idea that doing the work of an elder is a dirty job of late night meetings, neglected family and stomach ulcers! Or the group whose elders have come to believe they are merely the puppets of a powerful administrative boss. No, these are not the pictures of elder work given in the NT. Instead think of a flock of contented sheep, giving constant thanks to God for supplying them with wonderful caring shepherds. Yes, they’re human, and yes, they sometimes could have done it better, but overall “Where would we be without their tireless, loving help?”

Happy is that assembly whose younger men look forward to the day when they are numbered with the team of godly, older men called elders! 

## Shepherd

(cont. from page 3)

whom may be more gifted than any of the elders in certain areas of ministry) for the overall care of the local church. The elders are to lead an active, alive, every-member-ministering church.

The secret to caring for the sheep is love. A good shepherd loves sheep and loves to be with them (2 Sam 12:3). The best elders, likewise, are those who love people, love to be with them and are fervently involved with them. If you were to ask the average Christian what he or she most wants from spiritual leaders, the answer in most cases would be, “To be loved and cared for!” If a body of elders lacks certain gifts or dynamic personalities, the elders’ love for the people can compensate for such deficiencies. There is, however, no compensation for a lack of love and compassion on the part of the elders. Without love the eldership is an empty shell. Without love, an elder is “a noisy gong,” “a clanging cymbal,” a spiritual zero. So, like the Lord Jesus Christ, a good shepherd-elder loves people.

*Adapted and abridged from “Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call To Restore Biblical Church Leadership”, by Alexander Strauch (Colorado: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), pp. 15-31. Used by permission. *

## From the Q-Files

“Hindsight alone is not wisdom. And second guessing is not strategy.”

George W. Bush

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