

MBC MEN'S STUDY: LEADERSHIP 6

CLASS 1: BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

Before getting into the book, here is the lay out the framework for our five-month men's study class.

- **Aug. 14th:** Chapters 1-4 *Church Elders*
- **Sept. 18th:** Chapters 5-8 *Church Elders*
- **Oct. 9th:** Chapters 1-4 *Expository Studying*
- **Nov. 13th:** Chapters 5-8 *Expository Studying*
- **Dec 18th:** Chapters 9-13 *Expository Studying*

PURPOSE OF THIS CLASS

- It is everyone's responsibility to build up the local church at some level. Some people are called to one-on-one discipleship, some to small group leaders, some to teach classes and some to eldership. No matter what area you are called to as a man, you are to be helping the church grow by discipling its members.
- Not only are you responsible for shepherding and training at some level, but you are also the first line of defense to keep false teachers out.
- False teachers never come to the church leadership and say they are going to start teaching heresy. This is why a highly trained and well-informed group of men are important in the church. They are able to hear about and cut off any false teaching/teachers before they infect the rest of the congregation.
- The five classes are structured in such a way that we will first find out what an elder is and what their practical responsibilities are and then we are going to specifically look at what it takes to put together an expository message.
- Over the past couple of years, we have talked about character and calling, hermeneutics and bibliology, convictions in systematic theology, the purpose of the church, counseling, and discipleship and now we are bringing it all together in this class.
- After working all that out, we need to know *how...how do we be elders?* That is what the first book, *Church Elders* answers.
- The second book, *Expository Studying*, will take the one difference between elders and deacons and expand on how to study and teach.
- This section is going to be some new information but will also be putting into practice all that we have been talking about and learning over our time together.

INTRODUCTION

- I love elders for another reason: they are God’s plan for leading his churches¹
- This is a great mission statement for us to start with, elders are God’s plan for leading His church.
- This means that God has called out certain men, not all men, to be the ones who are leading the flock. It is not just any flock; it is God’s flock.
- That means that elders (or any church leader) must not go about it in his own way but submit to what God has ordained for the church.
- There are not some aspects that elders get to *not do* or *not be accountable in*. While there is a plurality of elders who are governing the church, each elder must be able to accomplish the task.
- For example, as we will read, you cannot allow other leaders to “smell like the sheep” and you decide that you don’t really want to be around them.
 - You cannot have a “neutral” view of God’s Word because others have a high view.
 - Each elder must be able to serve, though each elder will have their stronger areas of service.
- Each elder must be able to teach, though not all from the pulpit. Each elder must be able to counsel and disciple, though there may be times they defer to more experienced elders. Each elder must shepherd their wives and kids well, though practically that will look different from house to house.
- The point is that we are not looking to make robots or carbon copies, but each elder must be able to lead the church in the way that God has required them to do so.
- These first four chapters are very practical. We are going to learn what it means to shepherd God’s flock, to assist Christ in this task until He comes back.
- **1 Peter 5:1-4** “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”
- Even if, at this stage, you are not sure about being an official elder, that’s okay! The best part of being trained as an elder is that you are working on your character and other qualifications so that at a minimum you are going to be walking worthy of the gospel (**Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12**).
- But this book is not just for current or aspiring elders. It’s also for church members. The whole congregation needs to understand God’s plan for the local church, including his plan for leadership. Church members can be just as confused about an elder’s job description as the elders are.

¹ Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People like Jesus*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 14.

- So I pray that this book will bring health to congregations as members and leaders unify around a biblical vision for ministry and leadership in the local church. I hope that spiritually lethargic, pew-warming Christian men might read this book and experience an awakening desire to shepherd their families and churches. Finally, I'm praying God will use this little book to change the course of a few men's lives by calling them into pastoral ministry as a vocation.²

CHAPTER 1: DON'T ASSUME

- Let's look at the qualifications which are found in the NT regarding the person who desires to be an elder.

You want to be an Elder

- “It became clear to me that Christlike elders are not an optional church feature; they are central to God's plan for shepherding his churches.”³
- Again, it was God's plan to have elders in His church, which He purposefully ordained. As the author states, elders in a church are not optional.
- In fact, I would argue that a church with no elders (sometimes it is only the pastor) is an incomplete church.
- Paul directs Titus in **Titus 1:5** “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would **set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you...**”
 - This can be taken as two separate commands...*set in order what remains* **and** *appoint elders in every city*.
 - I would submit that the primary means by which Titus was to *set in order what remained* was only to be accomplished by *appointing elders in every city*.
 - Paul knew that the churches there were lacking, as he was there most likely after his first Roman imprisonment. He knew the landscape, the culture and the pool of men that Titus had to choose from.
- Titus was to look for men who had an inner calling to be an elder so that the churches would be complete. He was not just to get any man for the job but firstly look for men who had good character (**vv. 6-9**).
- Then we learn from **1 Timothy 3:1** “It is a trustworthy statement: **if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.**” That they must desire this position.
- πιστὸς ὁ λόγος εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς **ὀρέγεται** καλοῦ ἔργου **ἐπιθυμεῖ**
 - **ὀρέγεται** (verb ὀρέγω) - to stretch oneself out in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something. (only used 3 times in the NT)

² *Church Elders*, 15–16.

³ *Ibid.*, 17

- **1 Timothy 6:10** “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by **longing** for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”
- **Hebrews 11:16** “But as it is, they **desire** a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.”
- The thing that we are **stretching ourselves out to get** will have a ruling effect over all that we do. This is why we are prone to idolatry as people.
- **ἐπιθυμῆ** - (verb **ἐπιθυμέω**) to set one's heart upon to have a desire for, long for
 - **Matthew 5:8** “...but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman **with lust** for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
 - **James 4:2** “**You lust** and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.”
 - This verb that Paul uses can either be good or bad. We are going to **set our hearts upon** something, and that is not always sinful.
 - The sinfulness is in what you are desiring and what you are going to do to get it.
- These two words, aspires and desires, should be in the heart of every man who wants to be an elder. This is not something that may be present, it is not a spiritual gift, but is something that can grow over time as you see how the Lord is working in your own life and in the life of the church.
- You can start to develop a heart for the sheep and a desire to see them grow in Christ. These are all good things that can contribute to desiring to be an elder.
- I would say that in every legitimate (genuine) church, there are going to be men who are not only currently elders, but men who have a desire to be so as well.
- This is why Paul could tell Titus to go to the churches and appoint men.

You are an example of Godly character

- “...the New Testament writers put far greater emphasis on holy character. Jesus’s under-shepherds must reflect Jesus’s character. Better a godly elder with mediocre leadership gifts than a charismatic leader with glaring moral flaws.”⁴
- We have already gone through these in detail in our earlier classes, but let’s just give them a cursory look.
- **Above reproach.** Paul began his virtue lists with “above reproach” and “blameless.”
 - These descriptions don’t mean an elder has transcended sin and leads a morally impeccable life. Rather, a man who is above reproach displays an exemplary degree of Christlikeness, free from conspicuous sin.⁵

⁴ *Church Elders*, 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

- **Self-Controlled**. According to Paul’s profiles, elders must be self-controlled, sober-minded, temperate, and disciplined. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23) and a mark of the Christian life. In short, a Spirit-filled man is a self-controlled man.⁶
- **Gentle**. There is a famous Swahili proverb that says, “When the elephants fight, the grass is trampled.” Likewise, when a church’s shepherds are combative and aggressive, the sheep get hurt. That’s why Paul described the qualified elder as “not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome” (1 Tim. 3:3) and “not arrogant, not hot tempered” (Titus 1:7).
 - Egotistical, domineering, argumentative, pushy, gruff, hotheaded, explosive overseers crush church members. Instead, elders must be gentle giants. Gentleness does not mean weakness or cowardice. Gentle elders exercise their authority with the tenderness of a shepherd and the sensitivity of a loving father⁷
- **Not Greedy**. Elders must not be “greedy for money.” Peter said that elders must serve “not for the money but eagerly” (1 Pet. 5:2). These words offer a stinging rebuke to pastors who use their ministries to get rich and live large. Beware of shepherds who fleece the sheep. Greed isn’t a problem just for paid pastors. Lay elders who live to make money have difficulty investing time and energy into caring for the congregation. Sometimes greedy lay elders manipulate churches with their donations. They may control church budgets and steer funds toward pet ministries. They assess the church’s health and success by the monthly treasurer’s report.⁸

You can teach the Bible.⁹

- This is the unique qualification of an elder. This is, as Rinne points out, *central to the elder’s shepherding work*. Can you know that you are able to (and have) instructed others with the Bible with effect?
- This is not living a life which is an example to others (though that is done through our character), but this is the ability to take the written word and communicate it to people effectively.
- This most certainly includes the gospel message but also Biblical doctrine.
- Paul says this in **Ephesians 4:11-13** “**And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.**”
- This is vital as the elders are responsible for training sheep (Heb. 13:17) and for being able to refute false teachers (Titus 1:9).

⁶ Ibid. 21.

⁷ Ibid. 22.

⁸ Ibid. 23.

⁹ Ibid. 24

- Our ultimate goal is to see the sheep be trained and equipped for the work of service and to be maturing into the fulness of Christ. That is only done by the proper teaching of the Word of God.

You lead your family well.

- The home life of an elder is of the utmost importance. It is the home life that is the training ground for a man who desires to be an elder.
- No man is perfect, no man is free from guilt, but each man should be growing in these areas and striving to not only love his wife as Christ loved the church but growing in his own discipline.
- Have you been sexually faithful to your wife? Do you frequent pornographic websites? Have you ever been divorced? How are things between you and your spouse right now? No one has a fairy-tale, friction-free marriage. But if your marriage is limping (or worse) or if you've had a marriage failure in the past, you should talk with a few wise elders and pastors before seeking eldership. How you handle your bride matters very much if you would care for Christ's bride.¹⁰
- Being an effective father is extremely important as well. While your children are at home, do they respect you, listen to you and obey? Or is your home chaos with no discipline? Is your wife the one who rules the house and the kids?
- An elder is to instruct his children in the ways of the Bible and to lead his whole family in the path of holiness. This is no different than non-elders, the purpose though is to show yourself as an example to the church of how they are to conduct themselves.
- Being hospitable means that you have people into your home and that you go to people to see them.
- As we will see, smelling like sheep is important, you cannot smell like them if you are not around them. Furthermore, you should welcome people into your home so that they can see firsthand how you operate as a husband and father.
 - This will serve you well if accusations come upon you. If people have been observing you and they know your character, those who accuse you will have no proof, nor will they have an audience.

You are a male.

- Does this mean that women can never teach or shepherd, confront sin or model godliness? Of course not. You can probably think of godly women whom God has used to shepherd and shape you, as can I. But the eldership is more than a gifting or a ministry. *Elder* describes a specific office, a divinely appointed role, a distinct position within the organizational structure of a local church, just as *father* is a distinct, divinely appointed position in the family. And as with the role of father, so God has sovereignly summoned qualified *men* to the role of elder.¹¹

¹⁰ *Church Elders*, 25–26.

¹¹ *Church Elders*. 28.

You are an established believer.

- 1 Timothy 3:6 “...not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”
- This is for the protection of the church, the potential elder and the current elders.
- A man must be known by the church body, by his employer and by his own family to be a believer.
- There is no time frame for how long someone must be saved, but one of the best subjective gauges is how does the man do under trials.
- If someone has been through some trials and some hard decisions and has come out stronger on the other side, this is a man who has started to refine his faith and lean on the Lord.
- Are there any sins that are tripping him up or that he does not want to get rid of? While no man is free from sin, someone who desires to be an elder is very aware of his own sin and always looking for ways that he can be killing his own flesh.

CHAPTER 2: SMELL LIKE SHEEP

- The elders are pastors too.¹²
- This is one of the most confused issues in the modern church because there are so many different models of church government and hierarchy.
- The Bible does not make all the distinctions that man has come up with over the years.
- To be fair, some of the systems that were put in place many years ago were there to protect the purity and unity of the church.
- But just like with any system that man comes up with, it has become corrupt and no longer needed.
- It is true that those who are paid for being an elder/pastor usually have more education and ministry experience, but that is not always the case.
- All elders and pastors are equal when it comes to church matters. One “vote” does not mean more than another one. Both are facing the same challenges in the church; it is just one can devote far more time to the issues facing the sheep.
- If you remember only one thing from this book, then, let it be that elders are pastors/shepherds, and their **core job is to tend the church’s members like shepherds tend their sheep**. To be more precise, elders are under-shepherds who serve the Good Shepherd by leading *his* sheep.¹³
- **The way an elder/pastor tends to the sheep is to be purposefully engaged in the life of the sheep by having intentional relationships with them.**

¹² Church Elders. 28.

¹³ Ibid., 35

- Jesus was the best model for this. He not only came and laid down His own life for the sheep, but He also spent His life ministering to the sheep.
- Jesus came specifically to be the Good Shepherd.
- A pastor is not a CEO, he is not a commander nor a dictator. He is one who loves the sheep and has a strong desire to be around the sheep.
 - An important point is the essential nature of a plurality of elders. There is no way for one man to effectively shepherd hundreds of sheep.
- The shepherd never grows out of being a sheep himself and therefore must be among the sheep.
- While the shepherd is called to lead the sheep of the local flock, he is still under the care of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.
 - When an elder forgets that they are just an under-shepherd, they begin to think too highly of themselves. They begin to think they are ultimately in charge and pride sets in.
- Being an elder is not about facilitating programs but about seeing people grow in maturity.
- Elders are not managers, stage directors or event planners. Elders are there to serve the people the Word of God for the purpose of their growth in godliness.
- Once again, Ephesians 4:11-13 “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”
- We must be with the people in order to equip the people in what they need.
- The difference between programs and Biblical discipleship is that programs are a general study which has no specific people in mind. They are set up for people to do something for an expected time and then get the results at the end.
- Not so with Biblical discipleship and equipping. While we may use the same method for each person (that is the Bible), each person has specific areas they need to work on and grow in.
- While using programs may be helpful at times, they have a tendency to disconnect the elders / teachers from the flock they are overseeing.
- In order to effectively grow the sheep, we must know where they are, which means we must be with them.
- **On a side note**, this is why sending out elders from a local church to do church planting is so key in missions. It is the elders of the church that are going to be equipping the church. As the church is equipped with their teaching, they are going to start doing the word of the ministry.
- If our goal is not church planting or training elders, it is very hard to do anything with a local church. Many missionaries are simply doing a ministry of a church, not fulfilling the mission of the church.

CHAPTER 3: SERVE UP THE WORD

- Perhaps more than any other task, teaching sets elders apart in a local church. We saw in chapter 1 that qualified elders must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). It's worth noticing that Paul's qualification lists in 1 Timothy 3 for elders and deacons are rather similar, except for one glaring difference: elders must be apt to teach the Word, whereas deacons have no such requirement. Both elders and deacons need Christlike character, but only elders must demonstrate skill in explaining and applying the Bible.¹⁴
- Notice two things. First, all these officeholders communicate God's Word. The apostles are eyewitnesses who proclaim and inscripturate Jesus's words and deeds. Prophets deliver direct words from the Lord. Evangelists herald the gospel. Likewise, pastors teach local churches. That leads to the second observation: the words *pastor* and *teacher* in verse 11 go together. In the Greek, one definite article governs both nouns, signaling that the two nouns modify one another. So "pastors and teachers" does not refer to two roles but to one, that of a "pastor-teacher."¹⁵
- Why is it important to be able to *serve up the Word*?
- Jesus said in **John 8:31** "If you continue in my Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine..."
- Notice that Jesus does not say that disciples are good church goers or that they follow clever teachers, disciples of Christ follow the teachings of Christ. That is why the church must teach God's Word in order for it to be a real church.
- You absolutely cannot have an actual church that does not teach the Bible. If people are not following what the Bible says, they are not disciples of Christ and are therefore not saved.
- As a shepherd, serving up the Word must be the top priority.

Protect the preaching

- I believe this two-fold in nature. Elders have a responsibility to protect the preaching of the Word for two very important reasons.
- **Firstly**, Sunday mornings are not a time for shows, plays, skits, etc. They are a time for the body of Christ to gather together to worship the Lord through music, the preaching of the Word and fellowship with one another.
 - **1 Timothy 4:13** "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching."
 - There are many things which people want to have announced, displayed or otherwise talked about on Sunday from the pulpit that we have to say "no" to.
 - If we are not saying no, there are many times that we have to shave off some time to have it fit.

¹⁴ Ibid., 45–46.

¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

- Our mission moments, communion, reading and prayer time are all good things, but not the purpose of why we are meeting together.
- Our singing is an integral part of our service, but not the purpose for our meeting together.
- You will see that in many churches who have a low view of the Word and of it being preached, cut the time down and down.
- In 2019, for example:¹⁶
 - Evangelicals (Reformed, Baptist, Nondenominational): 39 minutes
 - Mainline Protestants (Lutheran, United Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian): 25 minutes
 - Roman Catholics: 14 minutes
- As the Word of God is taken away from the pulpits and put aside for the word of man, the church is going to be a reflection of the world, not of Christ.
- **Secondly**, we must protect the church from false teachers.
 - Titus 1:9 “...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”
 - “Opposing false teaching demands vigilance.”¹⁷
 - This is something that is not just one and done, but must be done on a consistent basis throughout the life of the church.
 - He gives some helpful strategies for keeping a pulse on false teachings / teachers¹⁸:
 - **Know your context.** Know what false teachings are active in the area where you live and where the church is located. We have people who are coming from all over, what are some of the popular beliefs around West Michigan?
 - **Monitor your membership process.** We must know who is joining our church and what background they are coming from. People do not need to agree with the non-essentials to be a member, but they cannot come in and cause division over them either.
 - **Audit our ministries.** Know what is happening and being taught when our church gathers for teaching. A good shepherd knows what is being fed to his sheep.
 - “It doesn’t take a seminary degree to protect the church’s doctrine, but it does take courage.”¹⁹
 - This is, in my opinion, what is going to take down churches in the present day and the future. Because we are afraid to call truth exclusive and allow people to base their values and beliefs on their emotions and thoughts, the priority of the Bible is minimized at best and forgotten at worst.

¹⁶ www.9marks.org/article/how-long-should-a-sermon-be/

¹⁷ *Church Elders*, p. 51

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 52–54

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 55

- If we are to be faithful Christians (firstly) and shepherds in our church, we must know what the truth is and be ready to stand against falsehood when we see it.
- There are, without a doubt, false teachers in our church body...the law of averages says so. There will always be men and women who disagree with something about the church or the teachings. To disagree is not an issue, but what comes from it could be one.
- The church is never going to be perfect, but we should strive to make sure it is pure. Part of a pure church is that its doctrine is pure so that its practices are pure also.

CHAPTER 4: TRACK DOWN THE STRAYS

- “It’s an all-too-common phenomenon in churches. A church member stops showing up on Sunday mornings. A few weeks pass, and then a few months, before someone notices. It might happen more easily in larger churches, but it can happen in small churches, too.”²⁰
- Shepherds are not just there to feed and protect the sheep, they are also there to watch over them. Watching over them means that when one has wandered from the flock, the shepherd should take note.
- “Once again, here is where church elders come into the picture. Elders serve as Jesus’s under-shepherds, keeping watch over the flocks that have been saved and gathered by Jesus and his gospel. Elders are aptly named “overseers.” They “keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account” (Heb. 13:17). This, in part, is why leading your family well is an elder qualification (see chapter 1). Good parenting requires attentive oversight of children and family dynamics, and so does good pastoring.”²¹

Who do the elders have oversight of in the church?

- While there are no verses in the Bible which say *you must be a member of the local church!* There are certainly enough instances in Scripture which point to the necessity of joining a local church.
- Chiefly among them is who desires to be accountable to the church and the church’s leadership.
- As we read in Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”
- If there were no church membership and people were just coming and going as they pleased, how would the elders know who they are supposed to watch over?
- Church membership, for the member, declares they are a disciple of Christ and have a desire to be held accountable in their walk with Christ.

²⁰ Ibid. 57

²¹ Ibid. 59-60

- In Paul’s final words to the church at Ephesus **Acts 20:17** “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.”
- **Acts 20:28** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
- While there are many things to point out here, Paul calls the elders of the church at Ephesus *overseers*.
 - Literally, that means *a man charged with the duty of seeing that things be done by others are done rightly...to be a guardian of souls...one who watches over the welfare of others.*²²
 - This same word is used when Peter talks about Jesus in **1 Peter 2:25** “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”
 - As an elder or leader in the church, we are charged with being a Christ-like undershepherd by overseeing the souls that He has purchased until He returns for them.
- Interestingly in **Acts 20:28**, elders are called *overseers* who are to *shepherd*. The action of an overseer is that they are shepherding the church of God that He put together.
 - To shepherd is *to rule...to govern...to nourish...to feed...to keep*. All of this is how we can make sure that we are tracking down the strays through our normal shepherding of the church body.

How can we keep watch practically?

- While we are not a program driven church, in order to keep track of the hundreds of members and many more who call MBC home, we have to have some systems in place to keep up with what is going on in the body of the church.

Elders have member calling groups

- Each of our elders, at the beginning of the ministry year, are assigned members by their last name. They are to make periodic contact with them throughout the year. This can be done through email, text, phone calls, talking at church, lunches, etc.
- The goal is not to constantly bombard people but to let them know that the elders are praying for them and that if there are any issues they can come and discuss them.

Small group ministry

- Our small groups are an extension of our shepherding at MBC. They exist to make the big church on Sunday mornings into smaller groups for fellowship and discipleship.
- Each small group leader is there to help keep the group accountable and to shepherd their group through their normal course of life.

²² Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

5 SPECIES OF STRAYING SHEEP²³

- The final few pages of chapter 4 he talks about the main sheep who are going to be straying from the flock in the local church.
- This is why a regular and intentional fellowship with the sheep is so vital. As elders and leaders, we need to know where our sheep are and what is going on in their lives.

Sinning Sheep

- Everyone sins and every church is full of sinners. What we need to be aware of are those who are unrepentant in their sin.
- As the church teaches from the Bible on a constant basis, people are going to be convicted of their sin.
- They are going to be faced with giving up their idols or giving up the church.
- The sinning member, in my opinion, is the top one who leaves. With the constant teaching of living a holy life, dying to sin and rooting out heart idols, one can only take so much of it.
- To be sure, in two decades of church leadership I have never heard someone say *I am leaving the church because I love my idols too much*. There is a plethora of other excuses, but when it comes down to it, they want to hold fast to their ways and don't want to be told otherwise.
- "People who aren't interested in holy living will avoid being exposed to sound doctrine."²⁴

Wandering Sheep

- These are the sheep that are not necessarily in sin, but they have let the desires of the world take precedence over the desire to please Christ.
- What starts with missing one Sunday for vacation becomes missing another for a kid's sporting game becomes missing another because there's work around the house that needs to be done, etc., etc.
- Vacation, sports or work around the house are not sinful, but they should not be the priority in our life either. That is why knowing our sheep is important and reaching out to them to let them know that we have noticed they are gone is vital. Sometimes a simple email will bring someone back on track.

Limping Sheep

- There are hurt people in our church that just need someone to walk with them through their pain.
- Some people are weathering major storms, some are confused and others just don't know where to start. As church leaders we should reach out when we see or know someone is suffering.
- It is not about having the right thing to say but simply about being there for them.

²³ *Church Elders*, 62-68

²⁴ MacArthur, John

- People want to know that you care about them and that they are not just a butt filling a seat that gives money on Sunday morning.

Fighting Sheep

- While we may be tempted to turn away from conflict, if we do it runs the risk of infecting the church.
- Church leaders need to lean into church members who are fighting with one another. There are times when people's judgement is otherwise clouded by anger and they just need to have someone referee what is going on. That is where we come in.
- Nobody likes to go to people who are fighting but it simply must be done. We don't do it because we want to or because it is comfortable, we do it because we love the sheep, we love the church and we love Christ.

Biting Sheep

- There is no way around it...sheep are going to come at the shepherd or the leader.
- Being someone who is in charge means that by making decisions you are going to always leave someone out, usually unintentionally.
- People are going to want something that you can't do, they are going to want to have something that they should not have, and you are going to be right in their crosshairs.
- This happened to Christ all throughout His ministry so we should not consider it strange when it happens to us.

WHY DO WE DO ALL OF THIS?

- By doing all of this, we are fulfilling what Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 5:14-15** **"We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people."**
- As Christ came to seek and save the lost, we should also be emulating Him in all that we do for the church that He brought and paid for with His blood.