

We have affirmed that understanding what Jesus says about shepherding is essential.

- I. **Fundamental 1: Jesus, Our Lord**
- II. **Fundamental 2: Jesus' Word, Our Effective Guide**
- III. **Fundamental 3: Jesus, Our Model Shepherd**
- IV. **The Need for Shepherds**
- V. **The Development of Elders**

From this introduction, we have identified seven specific benefits for those who will study what Jesus and His word say about shepherding:

1. Give a gift to Jesus that is just what He yearns for.
2. Do what is wise in the present.
3. Do what Jesus will commend when He returns.
4. Access divine power that produces remarkable and enduring results.
5. Benefit from the greatest shepherding mentor of all time.
6. Understand how to make the most of this good gift to His church.
7. Ensure that all the positive benefits of good shepherds are realized by the flock.

VI. **Ten Key Passages**

There are ten passages that speak at length to NT Shepherds are: Acts 20:17–35; Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–16; Hebrews 13:7, 17; James 5:14–15; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

From these passages we can learn about 6 key topics: Essential Function, Specific Responsibilities, Qualifications, Manner, Response, and Reward

VII. **Essential Function**

From these ten passages, we can identify 7 terms that help us identify what Shepherds/Overseers/Leaders/Elders do.

Elder

Oversee/Overseer

Shepherd

Leader

Equip

Manage

Four of these terms are titles.

Interchangeability

In Acts 20:17, Paul calls for the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him in Miletus. When they come, he reminds them that the Holy Spirit made them overseers (Acts 20:28). He then charges them to shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28).

In 1 Peter 5:1–4, Peter addresses the leaders of numerous churches as elders and names himself as a fellow-elder (1 Peter 5:1). Then, he charges them to shepherd the flock and exhorts them to oversee the flock in a healthy manner (1 Peter 5:2–3).

The verb translated “leader” or “those who led you” serves as a title for local church leaders and is used this way three times in the book of Hebrews. In none of these three passages do the words “elder,” “overseer,” or “shepherd” also appear. But in Matthew 2:5-6 – *“For out of you shall come forth a Ruler / Who will shepherd My people Israel”* – we find “leader” (same word) and “shepherd” linked.

Three of these terms are activity descriptors:

“Equipping” is a summary activity connected to “shepherds” in Ephesians 4:11–12.

“Manage” summarizes the function of local church leaders in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and in the list of qualifications for an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:4–5.

“Care for,” used in 1 Timothy 3:4–5, is a synonym for “manage.” These last two terms (“manage” and “care for”) are like a matched set.

Key Summary:

Man of seasoned character and maturity

One who understands his people and is watching out for them

One who feeds, cares for, and protects the flock

One who governs by assessing and identifying what is best

One who trains and outfits others for growth and effective ministry

One who is attentive to others in order to actively promote what is in their best interests

A. **Elder**

“Elder” renders the Greek adjective *presbuteros* (πρεσβύτερος).

This word is not a title that denotes a “function” of elders. It does not tell us what they do. It tells us who they are!

“Wisdom is with aged men, / With long life is understanding” (Job 12:12).

This term identifies local church leaders as a source of biblical advice and guidance.

The cognate *πρεσβυτις* (*presbutis*, feminine noun) is used of older women (Titus 2:3) who make a truth and wisdom investment in younger women.

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28).

So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

*Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances.
Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprove to a listening ear (Proverbs 25:11–12).*

B. Overseer

The term “overseer” is a rendering of the Greek noun *episkopos* (ἐπίσκοπος).

This noun only appears in the New Testament five times. Four are references to officers in the church (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7). Once it refers to Christ (1 Peter 2:25).

The cognate verb is found in Hebrews 12:15.

See to it (episkopeō, ἐπισκοπέω) that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal (Hebrews 12:15–16).

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation (episkopē, ἐπισκοπή) (1 Peter 2:12).

Don't confuse "overseer" with "overlord."

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 20:25–26).

C. **Shepherd**

The term translated "shepherd" is the Greek noun *poimēn* (ποιμήν). This noun appears seventeen times in the New Testament and most often denotes literal shepherds.

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night (Luke 2:8).

In the parallel commands that bookend verse 16, Jesus instructed Peter to "tend" (*boskō*, βόσκω) the flock. This term emphasizes guiding the sheep to and providing suitable grazing.

The Lord is my shepherd, / I shall not want. / He makes me lie down in green pastures; / He leads me beside quiet waters. / He restores my soul; / He guides me in the paths of righteousness / For His name's sake. / Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, / I fear no evil, for You are with me; / Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 23:1–4).

A shepherd:

The title, "shepherd" (*poimēn*, ποιμήν), is clearly used to designate officials in the local church.

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors [*poimēn*, elsewhere translated "shepherds"] and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the*

body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–12).

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:29–30).

The New Testament recognizes proximity as a regulating factor in the work of shepherding. Peter calls the elders to *shepherd the flock of God among you* (1 Peter 5:2).

IV. **Leader**

In Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24, the verb *hēgeomai* (ἡγέομαι) is used as a participle to denote local church leaders. This verb is used twenty-eight times in the New Testament, most often to denote the activity of reckoning, counting, or making an assessment.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials (James 1:2).

This idea of making a judgment call or determination allows a substantive participle (a verb that is used like a noun) of *hēgeomai* (ἡγέομαι) to refer to a leader.

“But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant” (Luke 22:26).

So when the writer of Hebrews speaks of “leaders” using the verb *hēgeomai* (ἡγέομαι) (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24), he is referring to those who govern, who make assessments and determinations, and who decide what is best and what is to be done.

V. **Equipper**

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors [poimēn, ποιμήν, also translated “shepherds”] and teachers, for the equipping [katartismos, καταρτισμός] of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–12).

The term translated “equipping” in Ephesians 4:12 is a New Testament hapax.

Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them (Matthew 4:21).

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1).

Shepherds equip the saints for the work of ministry. They are growth assets and ministry coaches who supply what is needed for the members of the congregation to effectively and fruitfully do the work of ministry.

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip [katartizō, καταρτίζω] you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen (Hebrews 13:20–21).

VI. **Manager**

The elders who rule [proistēmi, προϊστημι] well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

Receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well (Romans 16:2).

He must be one who manages [proistēmi, προϊστημι] his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage [proistēmi, προϊστημι] his own household, how will he take care of [epimeleomai, ἐπιμελέομαι] the church of God?) (1 Timothy 3:4–5).

Paul links *proistēmi* and *epimeleomai*.

Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful (Titus 3:14).

First, this quality involves caring for others and

Second, this management responsibility mirrors a

Third, *proistēmi* suggests action that results in things being under control as opposed to

Fourth, *proistēmi* is about being engaged and proactive as opposed to

Summary:

The man who is an invaluable asset to God's people can be described by six terms.

He is a man of seasoned character and maturity, a respected source of wise and godly counsel.

He secures a firsthand understanding of his people and sees to it that they are engaged in what matters.

He nourishes, cares for, and protects his flock, even at great personal risk.

He serves others by assessing the best way for them to follow the Lord and then directs them accordingly.

He facilitates others' growth, trains them for effective ministry, and then mobilizes them to bear fruit for Jesus.

He is attentive to others and what they lack and then proactively provides the necessary resources, support, and guidance.

Discussion Guide

Six phrases capture the core responsibility of church leaders. The kind of leader whom God commends is this:

- Elder: Man of seasoned character and maturity
- Overseer: One who understands his people and is watching out for them
- Shepherd: One who feeds, cares for, and protects the flock
- Leader: One who governs by assessing and deciding what is best
- Equipper: One who trains and outfits others for growth and effective ministry
- Manager: One who is attentive to others in order to actively promote what is in their best interests

Discussion Question: As you look at this list, what strikes you as different from the world's definition of what a good leader does? Which responsibility from this list do you think is hardest to fulfill?

Discussion Question: As you look at this list, does someone come to mind who has served you in one of the ways listed? For example, has a man (or woman) of seasoned character and maturity made himself (or herself) available to you for guidance and counsel at some key moment in your past? How has your life been shaped by this influence? What did someone say and do?

Discussion Question: It is possible that you drew a blank on the previous question because you have not had a shepherd invest in you! If so, how would your life perhaps have taken a different path if a shepherd was watching out for you? What would you say to others in your group about the importance of elders, overseers, and shepherds who actively promote the good of the sheep?

Discussion Question: How would First Evan (or your church) be different if everyone who names our church as home could identify a shepherd who is actively doing these six things for them and their families?