

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Shepherding the Flock 1 Peter 5:1-4 Part 1**

We are now entering the homestretch in this great epistle of 1 Peter. This morning we will begin examining 1 Peter 5:1-4. I would encourage you to open your Bibles to this text and follow along as I read, **“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, (2) 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; (3) nor yet as Lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”**

Peter is addressing a group of people called “elders.” Who exactly were “elders?” The New Testament clearly tells us that the care and oversight of the first churches was committed to this particular group. This was true of the earliest Jewish Christian churches in Jerusalem, Judea, and neighboring countries, as well as many of the first Gentile churches.

Writing to Jewish congregations scattered throughout Judea’s neighboring countries, James urged the sick to call for the church elders (**James 5:14-15**).

Barnabas and Saul gave their offering for Judea’s poor to the elders (**Acts 11:30**).

The elders at Jerusalem united with the twelve apostles to deliberate over a doctrinal controversy (**Acts 15**).

After Paul and Barnabas planted new churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they immediately revisited those churches and appointed elders for each (**Acts 14:23**).

The Biblical record also reveals leadership by a plurality of elders in the church at Ephesus (**Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-25**); **the church at Philippi (Philippians 1:1)**; **the churches on Crete (Titus 1:5)** and of course the churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia as was made clear in this epistle in **1 Pet. 1:1**.

Elders were in fact so important in the early church that Paul did not consider a church to be fully developed until it had functioning, qualified elders. Consider the words of Paul in **Titus 1:5** which were written near the end of Paul’s life, **“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.”** What did Paul say to Titus? **“that you might set in order what remains.”** A lot had already been done, but one thing was still lacking and that was the appointment of elders.

Without question the responsibility for the care and oversight of the churches in New Testament times rested with the elders. We do not believe that this happened by accident, but rather by design. And as such we at Valley Bible Church have adopted this pattern for ourselves.

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Not just in form but in function. In other words the responsibility for the oversight and care of Valley Bible Church truly does not rest in the collective wisdom of the congregation as it would in a congregational form of government nor in any single individual as it would in a pastor ruled church, but rather in a specific group of men known as the elders. At this present time we have three men serving as elders, Gerry Andersen, Jim Kross, and Myself.

Peter, in this passage before us, is therefore exhorting those church leaders who had been entrusted with the care and oversight of churches that he is now addressing with this epistle to do what? **“To shepherd the flock of God among them.”** Though these four verses are directed toward the elders it is important that you understand the kind of leadership that we as elders should be providing so that you might pray for us and hold us accountable to the truths contained in this passage.

As we examine this passage and more specifically the whole concept of shepherding we will be asking three different questions.

### WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHEPHERDS?

When people think of church elders and the work that they are to be doing within the church there is no better way to communicate this work than by using the image of the shepherd. We know this because this is the image that the Lord has chosen in order to communicate to us the essence of this particular work. The only problem with using this image is not with the image but with our present understanding of the image. It was very clear to readers of this epistle nearly 2,000 years ago, but times have changed. And there are very few of us here this morning who have a clear understanding of a shepherd’s work from first hand knowledge. There are very few of us here this morning who have an understanding of what is entailed in caring for the sheep entrusted to a shepherd’s care, but I would like to take a few minutes and share with you what I have come to understand from others about the care of sheep. I would like to take a few minutes and share with you various concerns of the shepherds.

### KEEPING THE SHEEP TOGETHER

Do you think it is easy to keep sheep together under the care of a shepherd? If you think that is an easy task you are very mistaken. Consider the words of **Isaiah 53:6**, **“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.”** In other words “sheep stray.”

Isn’t this something that we have all felt? Remember the words of the hymn, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing“ with the verse “prone to wander Lord I feel it prone to leave the the God I love?” We as elders know that there are many things tugging at you to pull you away from the Lord and meaningful interaction with this flock. This is why one of our vision statements for this fellowship is to have every member of our church directly or indirectly connected to the ministry of a growth group. Not just 50%, 60%, 70% but a 100%. Certainly I do not believe that it would be acceptable to a true shepherd to have even a single sheep be unaccounted for.

I would encourage you strongly to be praying for the multiplication of our growth groups and your involvement with them. Why is this so important? Why would it be such a concern to have various people from this fellowship drifting away from the Lord and from the fellowship of the saints?

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Do you realize that the sheep is the only animal in the world which can be lost just a few miles from his home. Most animals have been given by God an instinct to find their way back, but not the sheep. Within a sheep's closed range it has adequate skills. It knows its own pastor, it will return to the same shade every day, but if a sheep wanders into a strange place it has no sense of direction and has no means to find its way home. It will therefore simply wander in circles. Doesn't this describe many Christians. This may even be describing you, but someone might say what is the big deal about individuals becoming separated from the flock under the oversight of a shepherd? Sheep left on their own will not be able to meet their basic needs for water and food.

This leads to the second basic concern for the shepherd not only that he would keep the sheep together, but that he would provide for them the proper nourishment.

### KEEP THE SHEEP PROPERLY NOURISHED

Though sheep spend most of their lives eating and drinking they are very poorly equipped to adequately supply their need without the help of the shepherd. Let us first of all consider their problems with their need for water if left on their own. Most animals can smell water. But guess what? Sheep can't! They can sniff, but it will be in vain. But let us say that they by sheer chance might happen to stumble onto water while they might be wandering in circles. They still may be in very big trouble because it must be a certain kind of water. The Psalmist in **Ps. 23** calls it "**still water.**" When David refers to "still water" he is not referring to stagnant water which potentially could be filled with various diseases, but rather slow moving water. But it cannot be moving too quickly, otherwise the sheep will not drink. You can see how invaluable the shepherd is to the sheep just in the matter of water.

But let us now for a moment consider the matter of "food." Sheep, when left on their own, will tend to overgraze. They will eat the grass and they will eat the stubble and then they will eat the dirt. Not only will they eat the grass to the stubble and then try and eat the roots as well they will eat anything else in their sight whether it might be good for them or not. This is why sheep must be led as the Psalmist says in **Ps. 23** into green pastures.

Sheep cannot take care of their basic needs for food and water on their own. They are dependent upon faithful shepherds.

We as elders must recognize that we have been called to shepherd the flock of God among us and therefore we must be very concerned about providing proper nourishment for His sheep. I am not talking about water and grass, but rather nourishment that comes to God's flock when the Word of God is faithfully ministered to them.

Hopefully you can see the effort that we are attempting to make here at our church to do this. I am not using this time on Sunday mornings to entertain you. I am using this time to nourish you with the Word of God. I know that some of what I am sharing with you may not be as interesting for you as other things I might share from time to time, but I am fully convinced of this based on God's word that "**All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be adequate for every good work.**"

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This concern does not only apply to what is taking place here on Saturday nights and on Sunday mornings but in every aspect of our ministry at Valley Bible whether that is in our children ministry, youth, or adult ministries.

But the elders cannot only be concerned about keeping the flock together attempting to keep the sheep from wandering away and bringing to them proper nourishment but they also need to protect the sheep.

### KEEP THE SHEEP PROTECTED

First of all from sin. When we think of sheep we probably think of sheep as these soft white wooly things. Sheep are rarely white and almost never clean. They are stained. In the wool there is an oil called Lanolin. They are the greasiest animal you would ever put your hand on. Everything in their environment sticks to them. Dirt, weeds, vegetation, seeds, anything and everything. And they have absolutely no capacity to clean themselves. They have no physical dexterity to do that. They are dirty until they are sheared. Because of this condition they provide a perfect place for flies to lay eggs which in turn hatch and become maggots. Maggot infested wool is certainly not a good thing for the sheep. Therefore, the shepherds have to stay watchful.

Within the flock of God elders must also be alert to the problems that come upon those they are overseeing by virtue of the fact that they are people. What does the author of Hebrews exhort us to do in **Heb. 12:1**, “**therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us.**” Just as sheep are so quickly encumbered by filth which makes a perfect situation for the laying and hatching of flies eggs, the people who make up God’s flock are encumbered with all manner of things from this world which makes it so easy for sin to entangle them. We must be careful not to let sin infest the sheep.

Certainly we as a church have never been accused of being lax on sin. And this is something we must continue to be diligent about.

Secondly from those who would seek to harm the flock Sheep are defenseless. They can’t kick, scratch, bite, jump or run. They just stand there and die. They have no defense mechanism. They are dead meat. When attacked they don’t run away, they run together. Without the shepherd they could never survive.

In **Acts 20** the Apostle Paul gave the following warning to the elders at the church at Ephesus. Beginning to read in **V. 29** it says, “**I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (30) and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. (31) Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.**” When it speaks about perverse things, we should not simply limit it would false doctrine, but anything that ultimately would be used to divide the body of Christ so that as the passage states disciples are drawn away after them.

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But having said this let me be quick to add that false doctrine is by far of greatest concern. The elders in Peter's time had it easy in comparison to ourselves. Who must in addition to handling the people within the fellowship and the periodic traveler who comes from the outside also deal with all the books that you are reading, the seminars you are attending, the television problems that you are watching and the radio stations that you are listening to.

### CONCLUSION

I would implore you not to become dependent upon outside sources for instruction unless we ourselves are encouraging you in this way.

Within this passage of scripture elders are being exhorted to shepherd. And as we think of shepherd and the shepherd's work let us be reminded of what that entails.

It involves keeping the sheep together

It involves providing proper nourishment

It involves protecting the sheep

None of these works can be done without the heart of the shepherd and I am not talking about just any shepherd I am talking about THE SHEPHERD. And what was that heart? Consider the words of Christ in **John 10:11-14**, **“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (12) He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the sheep going, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. (13) He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep. (14) I am the good shepherd.”**