



The Church - Elders

Key idea:

Each local church must have a group of elders who shepherd the flock by God's Word, are servant leaders for those under their care, set a godly example in character and conduct, and point people to Jesus, the Chief Shepherd.

Key text:

1 Peter 5:1–7

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Catechism Question 71:

Are Christians only called to be part of the universal Church?

No, all Christians are called to be part of local churches where they are led and cared for by elders, worship God, learn the Scripture, receive the sacraments, pray together, serve one another, and carry out the Great Commission together.

Key points:

1. In the New Testament elders are a group of men called to serve as a team to lead and care for a local church.
2. Elders are called to shepherd and care for the local church, which is the flock of God.
3. Elders primarily shepherd the flock by the Word of God.
4. Elders do not lead like leaders in the world but are called to be servant leaders.

5. Elders are to be examples for other believers in both character and conduct.
6. Elders do not lead others to themselves but to Jesus, Who is the True Shepherd.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Today people often think of the pastor as the sole leader of the church. Is this biblical? Is there a separate office of "pastor" or is the "pastor" simply one of the team of elders? Why is this important?
3. Why is it important that the main metaphor and command for elders is "shepherd"? What does this tell me about the nature of leadership for an elder? How would it be different if the Scripture used the metaphor of the CEO of a corporation?
4. How do elders shepherd through the Word of God? How does the Word of God govern, inform, and restrict their leadership? In what ways are they called to help sow God's Word among the flock?
5. What traits are most important for leaders in the systems of this world? In what ways are leaders among God's people to be similar? In what ways are they to be different?
6. Why does God place so much importance on the character and conduct of leaders? If a man is charismatic and a strong leader, does it really matter if his character and conduct are lacking? Why or why not?
7. Why must the goal of an elder be to point people to Jesus rather than to himself? How does an elder do this in practice?
8. Can I think of examples where elders did not match the pattern laid out in 1 Peter 5? Can I think of examples where they did? What were the outcomes in each case?
9. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? Who can I point to Jesus and encourage to gather with the Church for worship this coming Sunday?