

Elders 1

by Anton Bosch

The sermon explores the biblical understanding of elders, emphasizing their roles as shepherds and the equality of their ministry in the New Testament church.

Duration: 43:59

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 10:1-18, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Elders"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the role of a shepherd in wartime and how it relates to the ministry. The speaker emphasizes the importance of the shepherd in protecting and defending the sheep from enemies. They also highlight the shepherd's responsibility to heal and care for wounded and sick sheep. The speaker then addresses the connection between pastors and teachers, specifically addressing a different view propagated by John MacArthur. The sermon concludes with a discussion on Jesus as the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep.

Transcript

Turn with me please to the Gospel of John, Chapter 10, and we continue our series speaking on the Church, and this evening I want to speak with you about elders. And the lesson is not just for those who are elders, but for each one of us so we understand what the ministry is about. And particularly here, you may recognize by now that as we deal with this whole issue of the Church, we are using similar terms or the same words that everybody else uses, but we see a different meaning to them.

And so the differences are very, very subtle, but very, very important. And so it is important that you keep track and listen very, very carefully. Tonight is going to be somewhat technical, and I really wrestled with that because I don't want to just present academic stuff, but it's very important that we understand the issues that I want to raise this evening.

But let's read from John, Chapter 10, and it's a long reading, so let's read from 1 through 18. John, Chapter 10, verse 1. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him,

for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which he spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy.

I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep, but a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

The hireling flees because he is a hireling, and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and I am known by my own. As the father knows me, even so I know the father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore, my father loves me because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down for myself.

I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my father. Now, when we speak about elders, the biggest problem is the problem of language, and that's why we're going to spend quite a bit of time just dealing with the language.

And I'm going to take you to three scriptures, the first in Acts chapter 20, then Titus chapter one, and 1 Peter chapter five. And I've put it on the board so that we can have it before us, because I know that some have a Spanish translation, and that may be slightly different, and you may have a different English translation, which may be different. Now, what I'm going to try and do with this particular slide is to show you that the words elder, and bishop, and pastor, and shepherd are all the same thing.

They are not different ministries. Today, we in evangelical churches have the pastor and the elders, and the pastor or pastors are different to the elders. In the New Testament, they were exactly the same thing.

In the Episcopalian church and Catholic churches and some other churches, you have bishops, and bishops are superior to church pastors. Pastors, a number of pastors or a district or an area answers to a bishop. A bishop is a very senior person and often wears fancy robes and that sort of stuff.

In the New Testament, he was an elder, and so let's look at those scriptures in Acts chapter 20 and verse 17. It says that from Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church, and we've referred to this passage a number of times. This is Paul now on his way to Jerusalem and to Rome, and this is the last time he's going to see them, and in fact, part of his discussion with them is he says, you're not gonna see my face any longer.

This is the last time you will see me. Now, you'll see that he calls for the elders of the church, and I've put the Greek word there, and we're gonna come back to the meaning of that Greek word presbyteros, and it's important to just understand the meaning of the word. Now, that word presbyteros, you can hear from that.

In fact, we get the word Presbyterian or Presbytry. A Presbyterian church is a church which is run by elders. That's essentially, and I'm not sure here in America, but in South Africa, Presbyterian churches, all the elders sit on the platform, and they run the church.

The pastor, they will have a pastor, but the pastor is under the control of the elders. The elders hire and fire the pastor, and so in terms of their hierarchy, the highest form of government in the church is the presbytery or the elders. That's where we get that word presbytery or presbyteros from so he calls the elders of the church.

Then in verse 28, he says, therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Now, he's speaking to the elders, and he says you are overseers, and here we have the word episkopos, and that is the word which is sometimes translated bishop. So the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, and you see that word, we get another church denomination from that, which is the Episcopalian church, and so the Episcopalian church is run by bishops, but not bishops in the biblical sense, not in the way that the New Testament uses the word bishop, but in the way that modern denominations use the word bishop as a senior person who oversees a district or a large number of churches.

But the point here is that you'll see that he's referring to the same men as elders, he says that they are overseers or bishops, and he says that they are to shepherd, for in Maino, shepherd, that word is also translated pastor, it's the same word, shepherd and a pastor is the same thing. We speak about a pasture, a pasture is a field where the sheep would graze, where the sheep would eat, and so we speak about people in a particular country, people in rural parts of countries are pastoral, in other words, they are people who are herdsmen or they are shepherds, the same word, and so the word shepherd and pastor is the same word, but they just translated differently or different English words for the same thing. Now, you'll see then that he is using all three of these titles or these names, elders, overseers or bishops, shepherds or pastors of the same people, the same group of men.

He is not saying there are the elders and there are the pastors, and then there are the bishops, and in most set up you would have the bishops at the highest level, pastors at the next level and elders at the next level. He's not saying anything like that, the same men were all three of these things. Now, if we go to the next passage in the book of Titus, Titus 1 verse 5 and then Titus 1 and verse 7, Titus 1 5 and Titus 1 7. In Titus 1 5 he says, for this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders, presbytery, presbyteros in every city as I commanded you.

Now, we're gonna come back to this verse, this is a very, very important verse. Then he says in verse 7, for a bishop, episkopos, you see that we had the word overseer up there, episkopos, here we have a translated bishop, episkopos. Now, why does, and this is the New King James that I've taken this from and the King James is very similar, why did they use different words for overseer and bishop or translate the same word differently? Well, this is one of the problems with the King James version, remember it was translated by who? By Episcopalian or Anglican bishops.

That was, the King James gave the instruction for them to do the job, but the job was done by Anglican bishops. And so they had to justify their title somewhere and that's literally where it comes into, why they use it. And so, but the better word is overseer, that explains the meaning of the word, we'll see that in a moment.

But again, you can see that he says, for a bishop must be blameless, a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered and so on. But you can see it's the same people that he's speaking about as elders and bishops. So he says, appoint elders, these are the qualifications for a bishop.

So it's the same word, same thing. The next one, this is a verse that we've looked at before, Peter writing and he says, the elders, presbuteros, who are among you, I exhort, I who am a fellow elder, same word, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Shepherd, the same word, the flock of God, which is among you serving as overseers.

And you'll see that the word escapado is just a different verb in this case, but it's the same word, the flock of God, which is among you, sorry, serving as overseers, but not by compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. Now you'll see again, he's writing to elders and he is saying that they are to shepherd or pastor and they are to oversee. The same three titles used again about the same individuals.

There are other scriptures that I can use to prove the same point. And if you really want to get into the academic aspect of that, then I can give you a copy of this paper. But you can see that it's the same thing.

We today have a different setup. Today, in most churches, you have a pastor and elders. But in the New Testament, there was not such a thing.

And none of the elders were superior to, now, we spoke last week and we said that we have, or was it the week before, that we have different measures. You may have some who are full-time in the ministry and some who are part-time, full-time elders and part-time elders. You may have some, and we'll come back to this later, who may be teaching elders and others who are ruling elders.

We'll come back to that. But so there are different ministries, there are different functions. Some may be more visible in your face and some may be more behind the scenes, but they are all elders.

And this idea of having one elder which is somehow elevated above the other elders and we now call him pastor and we call the others elders, that is just, it's just not in the New Testament. This is the first time that that appeared was at the beginning of the second century, end of the first century, beginning of the second century. So this is 60, 70 years after the church was established.

The first time that this appeared, that men began to speak about a, what we call a hierarchical bishop. Those days, when they began to use this title bishop as a separate job, that was what we would call a pastor today. In other words, the man who runs the local church and under him you had elders.

And that of course was the beginning of the involvement of the Roman system which today of course we know has many, many other levels and other layers. But in the time of the New Testament, they were all the same thing. The question of course that people ask is why do we have different titles? Why are, and they are not titles.

I shouldn't even use that word. Different names for the same ministry. Why doesn't he call them all elders? Well, there is no easy answer to that.

Some of the ideas is that the word episkopos or bishop is more of a Greek term and you'll find it used more to the churches that had a bigger component of Gentiles, whereas the word elder is more of a Jewish term. And you remember that even in the Old Testament you had the elders of the city, the elders of Israel. And so there is this, that is one possibility.

The other possibility is that they describe different functions or different aspects of the same individual. And so part of what an elder does, and I use that word elder as the term of the three that I prefer. And really you can use any one if you like.

The problem is that there is all sorts of baggage attached to the name bishop and there is other baggage attached to the term pastor. And so I prefer to use the word elder which is the safest of those, but it doesn't matter which one you use. But the overseer, that's part of his function, to oversee.

And I'm gonna look at the meaning of the word in a moment. Shepherding is another function, another part of what he does. They are two slightly different aspects of the same work, shepherding and overseeing.

And then the word elder really has to do with who he is, not with what he does. He is elder, he is older, he is senior. And that may be part of the reason why they use these different terms.

Now I want to bore you with the meaning of these words because they're important because they give us an idea as to where the word comes from and what the word means and how it is used. The word presbuteros, the word AV here, and this is copied directly from the Strong's Concordance. The word AV means authorized version.

So in the King James or the authorized version, this word is used 67 times, okay? Then of those 67 times, it is used 64 times it's translated in the King James as elder, just the word elder. Once it's translated as old man, once it's translated eldest, and once it's translated elder woman. Now you can see from that that the word, well, if you go through each one of those verses, each of those 67 verses, you'll see that it is sometimes a word that refers to the office of an elder in the church, and sometimes it's just used of an older person.

And so it's not a, the word elder in the context of the church does not necessarily mean that the person has an office in the church or a position or function in the church. It may just mean that they respect your elders. We use that word even in English.

That doesn't mean respect the elders of the church. It means respect older people. So the word is used in the same way.

And so you'll see here are the different ways in which it is used. It's used of an elder of age, the elder of two people. So you have two children.

I have two daughters. One is the elder. Doesn't mean she has a title.

It just means she's the elder of two people. Advanced in life, an elder, a senior, refers to forefathers. It's a term of rank or office.

This is the one that we're involved with. It is used amongst the Jews. It's a member of the great council or Sanhedrin because in early times, the rulers of the people, the judges were selected from elderly men.

And so your member speaks about the elders of the city. And those were not the youths. They were the older men who were ruling or judging the city.

I think that's, you'll see also it speaks about the 24 members of the heavenly Sanhedrin or court seated on thrones around the throne of God in the book of Revelation. 24 elders. Those 24 elders, by the way, represent the church in the book of Revelation.

The word episkopos, and you'll see the little number here, 1985. That doesn't mean the word was made in 1985. That is the Strong's number.

So if you have a Bible with Strong's numbers in it, then you'll find that number next to or above or below the word. And it's a standard numbering system which not only Strong's uses, but other concordances use it also. And so it's an important way of identifying that word.

Now, this word is used seven times in the King James. It is used once as overseer, translated once as overseer, and six times as translated as bishop. The word means an overseer.

That's its main meaning. It is a man who is charged with the duty of seeing that things are done by others. That they are done rightly.

He's a curator, a guardian, or a superintendent. Also means a superintendent, an elder, or an overseer of Christian church. The word comes from someone who sits on a platform when people are working in the field, and he is looking over the field.

So that Israel made reference to his supervisor. He is a supervisor in that sense. And so he looks over and he is overseeing, making sure that things are done correctly, that they are done right.

Sorry, I have to take a break to put the slides on for the sake of the tape. The word poimen means it is used 18 times in the New Testament, 15 times as shepherd, twice as shepherd. You'll see once as shepherd in lowercase, twice as shepherd in the uppercase.

In other words, who? Jesus, Jesus. We've returned to the shepherd and the bishop of our souls, referring to Jesus. So twice it refers to Jesus as the shepherd.

And once it is translated as pastor. Now that's interesting. And that once is obviously in Ephesians 4.11. When he ascended on high, he gave gifts unto men.

He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. That's the only time that word is used. The rest of the time, it's the word shepherds.

So really, if you want to use the word pastor, you should really use the word shepherd, because that's the word which is most often used in the King James, and that is the word that would literally be translated from the Greek. If you translate it from the Greek today, you would, and you didn't have any religious background, just translate it from the Greek without a religious mindset or tradition, you would use the word shepherd. The same way as if you translated the word baptizo, you would translate it into immerse, and not use this religious term baptize.

So you can see why we have some problems with the language. In the parable, it is he who cares and controls others who have committed themselves and whose precepts they follow. The metaphor means the presiding officer, the minister, manager, director of any assembly.

So if Christ is the head of the church of overseers of the Christian assemblies of kings and princes. So sometimes kings are referred to as shepherds also. Particularly in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel chapter 34, God has much to say about the shepherds of Israel.

And when he speaks about the shepherds of Israel who abused the sheep and who fed themselves and fleeced the flock, he is not just referring to the prophets, but he's also referring to the kings and the princes

of Israel who used the people of Israel for their own ends instead of being servants to the people of God. It's interesting, because this is also from Stong's, that the task of a Near Eastern shepherd were, first of all, to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep. We mentioned in the discussion on Wednesday evening that sheep, and it's interesting that God uses the picture of the church as sheep, and as we as sheep, because sheep are very unique in the animal world.

One of the problems that sheep have is that they are defenseless. They have no means of protecting themselves. They do not have great horns.

Some sheep have horns, but they cannot really fight, they cannot defend themselves against a wolf or a coyote or anything. They are defenseless. They are dependent on the shepherd to protect them.

And so one of the important functions of the shepherd is to watch for the enemies that are attacking the sheep, to defend the sheep from attackers, to heal the wounded and sick sheep. This is how they used to do it in the old days, and this is still what a shepherd really has to do today, to find and to save lost or trapped sheep. That's one of the other unique qualities about sheep.

They go astray. They get lost very, very easily. When I was a young boy, one of the jobs I had on the farm, growing up on the farm, was to tend the sheep, to look after the sheep.

And so you look after them and you sit down, you think, I'm gonna just sit down under the tree and enjoy a bit of shade for a moment. When you see again, the sheep are scattered. One has gone off in that direction, another one's off there, another one's got stuck in the mud, and another one's got stuck in the trees and the thorns.

That's what sheep do. And in Isaiah 53, it says that all we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

That's just the nature of sheep. Sheep are easily lost and easily go astray. And then a shepherd is to love the sheep, sharing their lives, and so earning their trust.

During World War II, a shepherd was a pilot who guided another pilot whose plane was partially disabled back to the base or the carrier by flying alongside him to maintain visual contact. So he would shepherd the damaged plane back to safe haven, being able to, and in that process, what he would do is he would guide him, he would serve as his communication with the base, and he would protect him. If an enemy plane came and wanted to attack that plane, he would then have to fight back because the wounded plane could not fight.

And he would be called a shepherd in wartime. And so from that, we get the idea as to how this ministry functions. All right.

Now, one other aspect that I need to deal with is the link between pastors and teachers. If you turn to Ephesians chapter four, and normally I wouldn't deal with this elsewhere, but because we're very close to geographically and many of us receive tapes and teaching of John MacArthur, he is the main person who is propagating this teaching. And so I need to just address that.

And it's not a serious error. It's just a different view. But Ephesians chapter four, verse 11, he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

And you'll see that there's a connection there between pastors and teachers. He doesn't say he gave some pastors and some teachers. The way that that word and, in the Greek, the word chi is used there, connects these two ministries together.

And so MacArthur's argument is that, and those who listen to him on the radio or receive his tapes will recognize that he speaks of himself as, I've forgotten, pastor-teacher, pastor-teacher MacArthur, or the teaching pastor. He connects those two as a title. Now the only place that those two words are connected in this way is here, in this verse.

None of the other references to an elder or to a pastor connects it to teaching, except when we look at the qualifications, which we'll look at in a moment. One of the qualifications of an elder is that he must be apt to teach. But that does not mean that he is a teacher.

There is a difference between those who are called and gifted to teach and the elders who should be able to teach at least the basics of the faith. But not all elders are teachers. And not all teachers are necessarily elders.

Very, very important. I preached, and later as I matured, I began to teach. And for many years, except for maybe, I don't know, the last 10 years, I was not ordained as an elder.

I was not an elder. I was a teacher or a preacher. But not an elder.

So you can have preachers or teachers who are teachers without being elders. You can have elders who are not teachers. But you do get some teachers who are elders as well, where the two function together.

Now, I know that that raises some questions, and we'll come back to that in a moment. But sufficient to say that the idea that teachers and pastors are always connected, no, they are not always connected. They are not, all teachers are not elders or pastors, and all pastors are not necessarily teachers.

And if you go to John MacArthur's church, you'll find that. He, by the way, admits that there is no difference between pastors and elders. And yet, when you go to his church, you'll find that there are pastors who are on staff, and there are elders who are separate from those pastors.

And yeah, so, but even in practice, not all of his pastors who are on staff are teachers. Some of them are administrative. And so even in his own operation, this does not hold true.

All right, now, the plurality of elders. The word elders, every time it is used in the New Testament, it is always used in the plural, 67 times, I think it is. Not once do you read about the elder of the church.

It is always the elders of the church. And so it is, you cannot then, if you go through, if you're going to apply the New Testament way of doing things, you cannot have a single elder or a single pastor. There always has to be more than one.

How many is more than one? Well, at least two, at least two. And I believe that there is a reason for that. And the reason is simply that there may be balances or balance, because one may overemphasize one particular aspect.

One may be over-disciplinary or disciplinarian. The other one may be over-gracious, and they need to find a balance. One may be a teacher and one may be a governing elder, a ruling elder, and I don't use it in the sense of lordship, but an elder who leads, who shepherds.

I have to work with elders who are shepherds, because I am not a shepherding elder. I am a teaching elder. My gift is not at shepherding or pastoring.

My gift is at teaching. And so if I was alone in a church, which sometimes happens if you have a new church, it's very hard for me and for those who I lead, because my emphasis is on teaching. I need to work with others whose emphasis is on shepherding and which is on pastoring.

That is one of the reasons. The other reason is that we don't want to, and the scripture does not want to focus on a man. We want to focus on Jesus.

And when we have a multiplicity of elders, then we're not focusing on one individual. And these men may have different gifts and different abilities, different strengths and different weaknesses. What we want is we want a one-stop shop.

We want one man who can sort out all our problems, teach us, do everything for us, sort out our marriage problems, sort out our children problems, sort out our tax problems, sort out our finances. Whereas in fact, the New Testament recognizes that we have different skills and different gifts. If you have a doctrinal problem, you go and see that brother.

But if you have a marriage problem, you go and see that brother. And if you have a financial problem, you go and see that brother. And we need to recognize and draw and be able to draw on all of the skills and all of the gifts that are available to us in the local church.

If we have only one man, then that one man has to be, as we said, a jack of all trades. And he has to be quite a unique character, having many gifts and many abilities. Now, you just don't find many people like that.

And so, but when you, and you remember we spoke about the principle of one five-talent ministry or 51-talent ministries. And when it comes to elders, if we have three, let's just say three two-talent elders, that is still better than having one five-talent elder. The problem is that you're never gonna find that one five-talent elder.

But your chances of finding three two-talent elders is quite easy. Shouldn't be a problem. And so, they work complementary.

They work together. And so, they work as a team. And the one makes up for the lack of the other.

And the one's strengths are balanced by the others. And so, that is the reason why the New Testament speaks about more than one elder. Elders in the plural.

Now, the only time when you will have one elder only in a local church is when that church is very new. And so, if it is an apostle or a church planter who is operating as the elder, when Paul would go and preach in a particular place while that church was being raised up, Paul would be the only man who would really be shepherding that church. But his function would be to raise up other elders so that he could step out of the way.

So, only in an immature church, in a church which has not been fully developed, could you have one elder. And then, in the extreme case that you had only two elders, and obviously when we say plurality, we're not meaning only two. There can be three, four, five, six, however many, depending on the size of the church,

depending on the gifts and the talents that are available.

But if you have a small church and you only have two elders and one of them moves away or dies, then obviously you would have a unnatural situation where you're left with one elder. Now, the ordaining of elders, I'm not gonna go through that in great detail. Simply to say that every church has to have elders.

The scripture that I refer to in Titus, in Titus 1.5, Paul says, for this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in all the things are lacking and appoint elders in every city. Now, the context is clear. Paul had sent Titus and said, appoint elders in the cities, in the churches.

And Titus had failed to do this. And so Paul writes to him and he says, this is why I sent you. I sent you to do this.

And he's actually reprimanding Titus. And he's saying, I told you to appoint elders in every city. So why did he not do it? Well, obviously because he didn't feel that there were people who were qualified.

That was the problem he faced. That's the problem we have faced on many occasions. And yet, if God has raised up the church, as I said a couple of weeks ago, if God has raised up the church, he will make sure that the ministries are present and that the gifts are functioning in that local church.

So every church must have elders, every church in the New Testament. Remember when Paul went and Barnabas went out, when they came back, it says they appointed elders in every city. And so there are a number of scriptures that deal with that.

All right, I have five minutes and I have about two hours of material. The qualifications. I'm not gonna go through the list because we just don't have the time, but there's a list in Timothy and in Titus.

And you'll see that there are similarities between the two lists. In Timothy, it says a bishop must be blameless. In Titus, it says if a man is blameless, a bishop must be blameless.

Twice he emphasizes this. This is very, very serious. This is a very, very high qualification and high office.

No wonder Titus had a problem finding elders. And they need to be blameless in the sense that nothing can be held or be charged against them, not inside the church or outside the church. In other words, they have to live holy and upright and righteous lives.

Then they are to be the husband of one wife. Both of them emphasize that. That does not mean that they have to be married.

Some people teach that they have to be married, that the scripture says they have to have a wife. That's not what he's emphasizing. He's emphasizing that they must not have more than one wife.

In other words, they must not be polygamists or they must not be living in adultery. And so the husband of one wife, they are to be temperate, sober-minded. Both of them refer to being sober-minded, of good behavior.

Both of them emphasize hospitality. They need to be able to teach. And Titus says, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convict those who contradict.

So he must know the scriptures. He must not be given to wine. Same in both passages.

Not violent, same in both passages. Not greedy for money in both passages. Gentle in Timothy, not quick-tempered in Titus, same thing.

Not quarrelsome, self-controlled, same idea. Not covetous, one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence according to Timothy. And Titus, having faithful children, not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

Very, very important qualification because the way the man rules his house is the way he's going to lead the church of God. If he can't do it at home, he's not gonna be able to do it in the church. He's not a novice.

He cannot be, by definition, he cannot be a young man. The trend in the churches today is to have elders and shepherds and pastors who are 20 years old. That is against the very idea, the whole principle of the fact that he is elder.

Now, elder does not mean an old man. Elder is a relative term, as we saw. My elder daughter is five years older than the other one.

And so if the whole church is made up of young people, then the elder to that church or the elder, those who are elder in that situation may not be, may be 40 years old. But that person who's 40 years old in that church, you bring them into another church where there are people who are 50 and 60 years old, that person would not be an elder in that church. Now, that raises an important point.

An elder in one church is not an elder in another church, because it is based on relationship. It's based on relationship. A teacher is a teacher wherever he goes.

A prophet is a prophet, whether he's in England or in America or in Mexico, he remains a prophet. But an elder is not an elder wherever he goes because his ministry is based on his relationship with the people. And so in a very mature church, the elders will be very mature men.

In a younger church, those men, but they still cannot be novices. A novice means somebody who is a newcomer, Johnny come lately, somebody who really has not proven himself. And he must have a good testimony of those which are without.

That's an amazing qualification. What does his boss say about him if he's in secular work? What do his neighbors have to say about him? What does his police report look like? Now, I'm not suggesting that we have to go and ask for those references, but if somebody has not got a good testimony in the world, he is disqualified from eldership. All right, I'm not gonna get through it.

I think we'll have to pick up on this next week because there are some important issues here. Thanks, Leo. And we'll take.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net