

Our Local Church Leaders

Part 1: The Why.

Elder (Presbyter) = Overseer (Bishop) = Shepherd (Pastor)

Introduction:

Sheep without a shepherd, God's people without an overseer to lead their souls, God's children without a seasoned wise godly example to follow.

- Walk along the Judean hillside – What is going on with the sheep, meaning the people of God?
 - **Jeremiah 23:1-6** – This is the condition of Israel and Judah that God exposed through the Old Testament prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel (who were contemporaries).
 - **Ezekiel 34:1-10**. Woe to the shepherds who are scattering the sheep!
 - God's sheep were not being taught God's Words.
 - God's sheep are weak and not being strengthened.
 - God's sheep are injured and not being healed.
 - God's sheep are scattered and not being brought home.
 - God's sheep are being bullied and abused by the very shepherds appointed to nurture them and lead them.
 - God's sheep are not safe.
 - Sheep are in the wolves' mouths. But who are the wolves? The very shepherds of Israel!

I am against the shepherds (Ezekiel 34:10).

- God placed the blame for Israel's going astray upon the shepherds (priests and prophets).
- Who are the shepherds (Jeremiah 23:1)? The prophets, priests, or anyone among them who leads God's people and presumes to speak for God (Jeremiah 23:33,34).
- The specific sins as leaders of God's sheep.
 - **Selfishness (Ezekiel 34:2-3)**– The shepherds are tending to their own ways, things, and desires.
 - **Neglect (Ezekiel 34:4-6)** – Weak, injured and strays not strengthened, healed and rescued.
 - **Injustice / Abuse (Ezekiel 34:17-22)** – The shepherds were scattering and abusing the sheep.
 - These men were spiritual bullies, pushing their way around and butting people with their horns. You know why sheep do that? To show dominance. That they are in charge, and they want everyone to know they're in charge.
 - Look again at **Ezekiel 34:10** – I will rescue the sheep from **their** "mouths." Who are the predators and wolves? The shepherds!
 - **Lies** – Their "words" not God's words (**Jeremiah 23:16-22**).
 - Ezekiel – Plastering with un-tempered mortar / whitewashing.
 - The prophets says "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.
 - If the shepherds would have stood in the ways of God, things would be different.

3 Things God Will Do:

- 1 – Remove those men from being shepherds over His people (compare Ezekiel 34:10).
- 2 – God Himself will be their Shepherd (see also Zechariah 11:7).
 - He will rescue and gather His own sheep.

- **“MY”** sheep – Look at the pronoun “my” in Ezekiel 34.
- **“I WILL”** – Look at the phrase “I will.” Here’s what God the True Shepherd will do.
- Bring the One True Shepherd, the Son of David Jesus Christ (**Ezekiel 34:23-24**).
- “And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God” (**Ezekiel 34:31**; see also Psalm 100:3).
- 3 – God will appoint new shepherds who had the heart of the Good Shepherd who would feed the people with knowledge and understanding (see also **Jeremiah 3:15**).
 - **1 Peter 5:1-4** – In the New Testament, God wants these kind of leaders in every local church.
 - They are called **“elders.”** Why?
 - Because they are seasoned godly men who have demonstrated a godly **example** worthy of our followership.
 - They are called **“overseers.”** Why?
 - Because they are appointed by the Holy Spirit of God to watch out for our souls (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17).
 - They are called **“pastors or shepherds.”** Why?
 - Because they serve as under-shepherds to the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ in every church and as God’s shepherds they do the work of the Good shepherd, pastoring God’s sheep to green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23).
- **It is no surprise that God commanded for men like this to be appointed in every church (Titus 1:5).**

Jesus the Chief Shepherd and the Elders – Notice the comparison

- **1 Peter 2:21-25 – Jesus is the Shepherd, Overseer and Example for us.**
- **1 Peter 5:1-4 – Local church elders are also shepherds, overseers and examples as they follow Jesus!**

The Result of God appointed leaders who shepherd with God’s heart?

- A reversal of everything that was the problem caused by poor leadership.
- Ezekiel 34:25,28 – They shall dwell securely and none shall make them afraid.
- Sheep lie down when they’re well fed / watered, free from disease, parasites, predators and bullies.
- The point of elders / overseers / shepherds in the New Testament church is just this.

Invitation:

- **Ezekiel 34:31** – And you are my sheep...
- You are a sheep, and so am I.
 - I need a shepherd. I need Jesus as my chief shepherd, and I need shepherds with skin on today to oversee my soul, feed me, lead me to green pastures, correct me when I need it, tend to me when I’m injured, and to lead me through dark valleys.
 - God did not create an individualistic religion. Sheep will die left to themselves.
 - You also need to see that as a Christian, it is your responsibility to be led, but it is also every Christian’s responsibility to shepherd the souls of others and be examples to others.
- Jesus is the good shepherd (John 10). He will lead you to still waters and green pastures. He will be with you through the dark, scary valleys, and He will wondrously provide for you
- But most importantly. Jesus laid down His life for you to save you from your sins and to rescue you.
- We all like sheep have gone astray...Let’s return to the **shepherd** and **overseer** of our souls.