

LEADING & SERVING: ELDERS — ACTS 20:17-38; 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

1. We all have personal experiences with leaders—whether in school, work, church. Which one has positively influenced you the most? What do you admire about their leadership?

Over these next three weeks, we're looking at the people God has provided the church to fulfill its calling: elders, deacons, and members. In the book of Acts, we see a pattern in Paul's ministry of proclaiming the gospel, planting churches, and developing elders to lead those churches as he leaves to continue his mission. **READ ACTS 20:17-38**

2. How does Paul describe his ministry in Ephesus among these leaders in verses 18-27?
3. Starting in verse 28, Paul gives some parting instructions to the Ephesian elders.
 - a. What roles and responsibilities are entrusted to these elders?
 - b. What warnings are given to the elders?
4. Paul compares elders to shepherds and the church to a flock (of sheep). These images have deep roots in the Old Testament. **READ PSALM 23 and EZEKIEL 34:1-16.**
 - a. How does God shepherd his people according to Psalm 23?
 - b. How do Israel's elders fail in their responsibilities according to Ezekiel 34?
 - c. What does God promise to do in response to failed human leaders?
5. Looking again at our passage in Acts, what does verse 28 reveal about God's relationship to the church? What impact should this have upon *any* leader in the church?
6. **HEBREWS 13:17** calls us to "Obey [our] leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over [our] souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to [us]." What does it practically look like to respond to this exhortation in our church?
7. The list of elder qualifications in **1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7** places a tremendous weight on character and lifestyle. But this list is not altogether different from the "fruit of the Spirit" (**GALATIANS 5:22-23**) to which all believers are called to cultivate in their lives. What particular, exemplary qualities do you see in *our* elders?
8. Though we are not all elders, many of us have some position of authority and influence—even if informal. How is God calling you to steward your own leadership well?

PRAY

Pray for our elders (and their families) that they would trust in the Lord Jesus as their shepherd and lean on the Spirit for strength and wisdom. And ask the Lord to raise up more elders and leaders to share in the burden of caring for God's church.