

Shepherding the Church of God

Devotional Study on Biblical Church Leadership and Unity

1. Elders Are Appointed by the Holy Spirit

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28, NASB 1995)

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17, NASB 1995)

Eldership is not a human election or popularity role — it's a divine appointment to guard the flock. The Holy Spirit makes elders overseers, implying divine trust and accountability. They shepherd what Christ purchased with His own blood — the highest stewardship imaginable.

2. Ministers Must Submit to Elders

“The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17, NASB 1995)

A preacher serves under the oversight of elders, not above them. Ministers labor especially in preaching and teaching under the same accountability, modeling submission and cooperation with the elders.

3. The Sin of Gossip and Division

“For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.” (1 Corinthians 11:19, NASB 1995)

“A perverse person spreads strife, and a slanderer separates close friends.” (Proverbs 16:28, NASB 1995)

“Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10–11, NASB 1995)

Gossip, backbiting, and factions are spiritual cancers that destroy churches. Divisive people must be warned and, if unrepentant, rejected to preserve unity.

4. Elders Must Lead Courageously

“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10, NASB 1995)

Faithful shepherds must please God, not people. Compromise kills credibility. Sometimes the flock must be pruned before it grows healthy again.

5. The Church Belongs to Christ, Not Committees

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22–23, NASB 1995)

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 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.” (1 Peter 5:1–2, NASB 1995)

Christ is the Head — the church functions through His order, not human systems. Elders oversee; deacons serve; members follow. When committees or cliques take control, disorder and strife result.

6. A Biblical Path Forward

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5, NASB 1995)

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” (Matthew 18:15, NASB 1995)

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1–3, NASB 1995)

Healing and unity come through prayer, humility, and obedience to God's Word. Elders should pray, correct, teach, and rebuild unity grounded in truth and love.

Closing Reflection

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock... to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28, NASB 1995)

Unity and leadership are sacred trusts, sealed by the blood of Christ. May God strengthen His shepherds to lead faithfully.