



1 Peter 5:1-4

Shepherding the Church

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Peter has written this book to instruct Christians like us how to live the Christian life in a world that is crashing down on them. The community around the original readers was rejecting them, so Peter wrote to help strengthen the church, the new community that's founded on the gospel.

And for persecuted Christians especially, it was the only place they had left. They lost their place in society, so this new society of the church was vital to their flourishing.

It's possible for Christians to grow and thrive even when the world rejects their faith and their ways. But there is no sustained growth in holiness without deep connections to Christian community. So in 1 Peter 5, Peter turns to the leaders of the Christian community to tell them how they are to lead it. With the assumption that a well-led, healthy church community improves the health of Christians in it:

1 Peter 5:1-4 1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

So Peter is writing to the church that is beginning to experience pressure and that will soon see fiery trial and persecution, and now he specifically addresses the elders of that church. And he does so in this letter that isn't just to the elders, but to the whole church. So he is saying something specifically to the elders that he wants the whole church to know these things.

And our church, like that church, is governed by elders who try to follow the biblical model. So it would be good to start by first addressing who the elders of a church are according to this passage.

This passage uses three important terms interchangeably. He says in verse 1 he is speaking to elders “presbuteroi”, where we get our word presbyterian. He tells them to shepherd the flock “poimen” (verse 2) - usually translated pastor. And he says to “exercise oversight”, verse 2, which is the greek word “episkopos” where we get our word episcopalian, and it's often translated bishop or overseer. So he says elders should pastor and exercise oversight.

So elders = pastors = bishops or overseers.¹ It seems that these are 3 different facets of the same role, and we tend to just call them elders or pastors here, but elders, pastors, and bishops, and overseers seem to be overlapping titles in the New Testament.

So throughout this sermon I'll use the terms pastor and elder interchangeably.

And we know from these labels that their **role of pastors is to shepherd or lead, and to oversee.**

So Pastors have a God-ordained role of oversight and authority in the local congregation.

Now two errors we make with regard to the idea of authority in the church. There's a ditch on each side of the road. On one side, we either reject any kind of oversight because we are Americans and not big on authority, or we, as pastors, can take authority too far and exercise legalistic, domineering rule which is not allowed by the Lord.

Martin Luther said, “History is like a drunk man on a horse. No sooner does he fall off on the left side, than he mounts again and fall off on the right.” So we can fall off on the side that rejects all church authority, then we get back on, and fall off on the other side that has authoritarian leaders that go beyond what they are permitted to do by God.

So let's look at the one side first: there is no way to get away from the existence of pastoral leadership in biblically functioning churches. We'll look at a few passages, and I'll give the disclaimer up front that it is uncomfortable to talk about passages that talk about honoring pastors and elders because I am one, and never want to be the guy who is saying “honor me” and “respect me,” those are usually the least respectable people.

But the New Testament gives these necessary principles for a thriving church, so I'll teach them, but I'll also teach them not just as a pastor but also as a member, and we have

¹ See also Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7

multiple pastors here and I do consider them my pastors, so I'll also be standing with you to say let's do this for them:

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, **13** and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

So we have some who are over us in the Lord, who labor, who admonish us, and we are to esteem them highly in love because of their work - because of what they do for us. They have an important role. Churches in the New Testament were planted and existed for a while before elders were appointed, but people were quickly sent out to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). It's important that we have them.

So not every Christian gathering is a church - it has to be aware of the fact that it is a church (everyone there thinks it is one), and also if it is, it should be moving toward biblically functioning elders.

1 Timothy 5:17-19 “**17** Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. **18** For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” **19** Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

So there are elders in the church who rule well. Some are worthy of a double honor if they labor well in preaching and teaching. They are to be paid, they deserve their wages, verse 18.

And while they are not above correction or even being charged with wrongdoing, don't let this verse silence abuse victims, go to the authorities with those things, get help doing so if necessary.

But if elders have been laboring faithfully, we don't allow rumors to cancel them, we don't hear rumors, they're to be given the benefit of the doubt but not blind, gullible trust that could never believe they might sin.

One more passage about the existence of church leaders:

Hebrews 13:17-18 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your 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 you.18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

So leaders exist. They are needed. They give account to God for the people under their care.

This is why we attend church. The physical presence allows you to be seen and known and, given enough weeks, a sense that you are part of things and being led by these leaders.

This is why we practice church membership - nobody could give an account for all of the Christians in Rochester, so there are lots of churches where people are committed members. We give account to God for the people that are members here, but not for everyone. And a reason we practice formally joining a church is to at least help our pastors know who we are responsible to respond to, care for, teach, shepherd, and even correct when necessary.

And so we believe there are pastors, we support them, we pray for them that they'd act honorably (Hebrews 13:18).

And Hebrews 13:17 says that if we work hard to make the work of a pastor a joy and not a burden, we gain an advantage. Joyless pastors are of no advantage to the people, so the more we make their work a joy, the more advantage we get - we benefit more.

So if your ideal church is one where there are no leaders, no authorities, no rulers, no people who labor especially in preaching and teaching, you are not following the biblical model.

And if your default mode is to distrust authority or make life hard for authority, that's not biblical either. (Now I know pastors have earned the distrust - I would guess that 10-20% of the pastors I've known are either corrupt or lazy, and I've even had to tangle with some that needed to be arrested - so we can't wonder why people tend to distrust pastors, we've dug our own grave, so pray that we would change that and "act honorably in all things". And when you go to a church and find a pastor that seems to be trustable, don't be so hesitant that you miss out on the benefit of having some very flawed and sinful but at least consistent and genuine and knowable leaders.)

But even the idea that there are spiritual leaders creates a situation that is ripe for abuse of power. Some people just love telling people what to do, and if you can tell them what to do because God said so, that's a big club. Manipulators love that.

And people who like power and prominence see this role where Christians are commanded to respect them, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, esteem them in love (1 Thess. 5:13), to pay them a wage that shows honor if they labor in the word (1 Timothy 5:17), to not allow gossip about them (1 Timothy 5:19), to pray for them (Hebrews 13:18), to make their work a joy (Hebrews 13:17). Those things are all commanded in relationship to the pastors.

And so if you're a narcissist or a control-freak, how could you not be attracted to that gig?

And if you want a cushy job, how about the one where God commands people to make their job a joy! So you could see the lazy, the self-important, the controlling, the self-righteous all being attracted to that role just because of what the Bible says about it.

And then you'd have really unhealthy pastors and an unhealthy church, at best. And at worst, you'd have churches led by shady, self-indulgent, controlling narcissists. If you only looked at the things I've said so far about the role of pastor.

But the Bible says more about that role, much more - and the rest balances it, sobers it up, and if applied, can make for healthy pastors and churches.

So starting again in verse 1, you see that the call to be a pastor is, in part, a call to suffer:

I. The call to pastor is in part a call to suffer

1 Peter 5:1 "1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

Now Peter literally witnessed Jesus suffer. In her commentary on 1 Peter, Karen Jobes points out that, while we don't know if Peter actually witnessed any of the crucifixion, He saw Jesus suffer:

- Peter witnessed tide of popular support turning against Jesus
- Saw his ministry alienate him from earthly family
- Saw Jewish leaders reject his claims

- Knew of plots against Jesus
- Saw agony of Gethsemane
- Saw Judas betray Jesus
- Saw Jesus get unjustly arrested and endure an unjust trial

So Peter saw how Jesus lived. He saw the sufferings of Christ.

And on the one hand, the sufferings of Christ are why we do all of this. Pastors should be in it to tell the story of Jesus and His death and resurrection. And to be a witness to that, is an absolutely immense privilege.

There is nothing better than speaking to someone who feels guilt or shame for sin they've been carrying, who feels adrift in the world, who feels fear of death or eternity, and to be able to preach to them or tell them across a diner table that Jesus Christ died and rose for them, and will welcome them with open arms if they believe and turn to Him.

And it's my privilege to be able to stand here and tell you that right now - Jesus paid the price for your sin, and if now, without doing anything, you'll call out to Him and turn from sin and trust in Him, He will forgive you. He will accept you. He will change you over time. He is the Savior you're after.

There's nothing better - what greater privilege than to witness to the sufferings of Christ. This is why pastors should be in it, because there is nothing better.

But also, a witness to the sufferings of Jesus like Peter knew what it would take to spread the message Jesus was spreading. Jesus, the ultimate leader, led through great suffering.

And anyone who wants to follow Him and lead under Him needs to lead like Jesus led - with a willingness to suffer to spread the Gospel.

Colossians 1:24 "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." - Colossians 1:24

Jesus's cross was lacking nothing as far as what it took to save us. He paid it all.

But Jesus's cross didn't spread the message of Jesus's cross. For that message to spread - for that lack to be supplied, Christians must experience hardship and make sacrifices. And they are in communities called churches that experience suffering and make sacrifices. And they are led by pastors who are fellow witnesses of the suffering of Christ.

So Peter looks at the elders and says, in the original grammar, that he is a "fellow elder" and a "fellow witness to the suffering of Christ." The elders experience a little bit of Christ's suffering too.

For a long time, in our Christian circles, we've seen the call to pastor as the call to glory - being on a stage and preaching transcendent truths. And it includes that, and again, what a privilege. But in Peter's day and in more persecuted areas today, it is a call to really great suffering. Nobody wanted to be the pastor when the Roman soldiers busted in to the church and asked "who's in charge here." There was a real risk to life, and Peter himself was eventually crucified upside-down because of his faith.

Peter says he is a partaker of glory to be revealed as well:

1 Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

This is referring to a victor's wreath like they'd put on the head of a winner at the Olympics, and it had on it an amaranth flower, a kind that didn't fade. There will be reward for pastoring faithfully, there will be victory, there will be glory for all Christians some day and some other reward for pastors who were faithful - maybe something like more crowns to throw at Jesus's feet in worship.

But glory is only guaranteed when Jesus the chief Shepherd appears.

For now, though, they have to partake in some suffering.

And again, we have it really good in the USA. But still, the call to be an elder or pastor does bring at least mild suffering. There is pain that comes with it.

It's not uncommon for elders to express the idea that "being an elder ruins church for me sometimes." Because you have to deal with sin and conflict and some incredibly dark things.

There's also, again not to exaggerate, because you aren't being martyred, a bit of a target on you. Pastors are targeted for attack, for false accusation, perhaps even spiritually with more temptation. They experience mild sufferings like Jesus, mild betrayals. No pastor who pastored faithfully for a while in the USA is lacking in scars.

This past fall I spoke with a pastor friend in another state who left the ministry. Things went well in the church he planted before the pandemic, but then the pressures of the pandemic riled people up. And he shared with a small group of men in the church some sin struggles he was having (nothing disqualifying from ministry.) But one of the guys took that info straight to twitter to discredit him because that guy didn't get his way in the mask argument. This happened around the country - it was strange - people were willing to destroy Christian unity and spread division over masks, on both sides.

Tensions spread, and my friend eventually had to step down because of what it was doing to his heart and his family. Things like that happen regularly. And the pandemic has been rough on lots of people, but from what I hear the percentage of teachers thinking of leaving teaching is about 40%, there's lots of burnout there, there's burnout among doctors and nurses, and there is burnout among pastors at about the same rate - 40% saying they're ready to go. I don't ever want to make it sound like pastors have it worse than others, but they are under similar pressures at least that other leaders and public figures are under these days.

There is suffering of losses and people that were long-time friends and members, under pandemic pressures leave. Being a pastor is a little like dating Taylor Swift - people will leave and sing bad things about you afterwards.

It's not being crucified upside down - we still have it good. But anyone who pastored long enough, even in the most comfortable of circumstances, will have some scars. And that humbling is good for us, but it can be unexpected when people go into ministry because from the outside you see more of the glory of the sermon, that they can run into a wall of disillusionment when suffering comes.

So one limit on the glory-seeking and comfort-seeking is that you find a great deal that is uncomfortable. A great deal that is inglorious. We are inglorious pastors.

So pastors are people who endure whatever suffering is necessary to shepherd the flock with the word of God and who oversee the church life of the local congregation. And the suffering is one check on the power-hungry and glory-hungry.

II. The authority of the pastor is limited by their place under God

1 Peter 5:2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you,

It's God's flock. And verse 4 calls Jesus the chief shepherd. Pastors don't own the church or the people. They are undershepherds under the chief shepherd. We're not the CEO, we're not the owner, we're the managers for a shift or two.

And because it's God's flock, and any authority pastors have is authority delegated and delineated by God, Pastors can only command people to an action if it is commanded by God in the Bible, rightly interpreted. Because it is God's church, and their role is to speak God's word.

Hebrews 13:7 "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

Leaders are the ones who speak the word of God. That's what a leader in the church is.

We can't tell you to do or not do without clear biblical teaching, or without what we are asking for being the good and necessary consequence of that teaching. The text of the bible, and any truths that "unavoidably arise" from that text.²

So this means pastors are not to be controlling. They are not to be busybodies. They can't make demands that scripture doesn't have them make. And if they command you against what the Bible says, you can tell them no, they should stay in their lane. Pastors are limited by the word of God. More limits in a second...

III. The pastor must serve with joy and not begrudgingly or lazily

1 Peter 5:2b "exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;"

He says elders are to serve not under compulsion - not because they have to, but because they are willing. God wants elders to willingly make the sacrifices necessary to shepherd the flock, to not be lazy, to not lack zeal, but to serve eagerly. It always means sacrificing other things. There is no way for elders to connect with the people and

² <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/by-good-and-necessary-consequence-2019-06/>

shepherd them well without effort and sacrifice. They want to do it to please the boss, the Chief Shepherd, and there's no way to be an absentee elder, but must be willing participants in the church. And not with an eye-roll and a complaint, but willingly. Again:

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your 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 you.

The joy of pastors matters. Pastors who don't shepherd with joy cease to benefit the flock. Which means pastors are called to maintain our joy and our zeal and when it is lacking we work to increase it. And in this passage, members of the church are to conduct themselves toward the leaders in a way that increases their joy.

And when he says to “obey” here, he isn't saying you have to do everything they say. Obey is “peitho”, which is also translated “trust” or “persuaded.” When we find reasonable pastors, we should have a default of trust and a willingness to be persuaded or convinced by them, making their work a joy.

This means we are reasonable, gracious people, eager to learn the word, quick to overlook small faults, not to assume the worst spin on the words they use, asking questions but giving the benefit of the doubt, quick to forgive and not hold grudges against them because we're people who believe the gospel, who expect their elders to live up to godly standards like the ones in 1 Timothy 3, but we also expect them to be human like us, so we are forgiving, gracious, not unreasonable or demanding.

IV. The pastor is never to be motivated by greed

1 Peter 5:2b not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

“Being a pastor - the worst of all jobs and the best of all callings” - John Newton

It's good for churches to pay their pastors generously according to 1 Timothy 5:17-18, and we do that, so thank you.

But anyone who does it just because it's a job won't do it well for long. Jesus said you can't serve God and money. If that's the motivation, do something else. If it's not being done to glorify the Lord and feed the people of God with the word of God, to see people come to Christ, to work to cultivate a Gospel-centered community - if we are not eager to

do those things but just eager to earn a paycheck, we should earn a paycheck somewhere else.

V. **The pastor is not to domineer, but to lead by example**

1 Peter 5:3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock

Pastors can't lead with a domineering spirit.

Notice first that Peter says, **“So I exhort the elders among you” (5:1).**

It's important here that he doesn't say “command” or “order” but “exhort”. Peter had the authority to give the churches orders. He was an apostle. He was specially appointed by Jesus to feed his sheep. He had a better resume than these elders, he had spent 3 years with Jesus.

But instead of “commanding” them, he exhorted them - he made an impassioned plea to them, he beseeched them, the greek word is parakaleo, to call alongside - it's like he says, “Come with me to follow Jesus” as opposed to “you serve and I'll bark out orders.”

Peter, who had authority, doesn't appeal to his office, he appeals to their hearts and exhorts them.

This is how he leads, and how he is going to encourage them to lead.

In **Philemon 1:8-9**, Paul does the same thing in, **“8 Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, 9 yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you--I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus--”³**

So a leader who loves his people doesn't bark out orders, even when there is real authority to lead. Paul exhorts, Peter exhorts, because leaders in the church cannot be domineering. People who lead in Gospel endeavors are called to lead in a way that paints a picture of the Gospel. Jesus said this:

Matthew 20:25-28 “25 But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over

³ This insight was gleaned from John Piper's videos called “Labs on 1 Peter.”

them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus said, "I'm going to lay down my life for you. In the same way, those who lead in the church lead - they really lead - and they lead as brothers and sisters, not as dictators and tyrants. Peter says to the elders in verse 2 of our passage: "shepherd the flock that is among you." You're part of the flock before you're over the flock. You're a sheep, too. You're one of them, not better than them.

Elder leadership is leadership of persuasion, not coercion. Because we are trying to lead by seeing hearts changed, and forced obedience isn't true obedience.

So this type of leadership requires tons of patience and faith, because while people might respond to coercion immediately but not be changed in the heart, the way we lead aims at heart-change and that can take a long time and sometimes we just need to have faith that it's even happening because it's happening so slowly we can't see it:

2 Timothy 2:24-26 "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."

So we are to be kind and not quarrelsome.

We have to patiently endure evil - evil in others lives, evil done against us. We correct, but do so with gentleness, not in the hopes that we can twist peoples' arms to get them to obey, but in the hope that God will grant them repentance.

Now not all leaders in the church are elders. There are lots of men and women in other leadership roles, and they are varied. But because the elders are supposed to be examples to the flock, their leadership should be an example of leadership to the other leaders. So these principles apply to all Christian leaders in the church: kind, patient, not domineering, exhorting, not arm-twisting, not demanding respect but earning it through patience, joyful, humble - these things all apply to everyone who leads in any capacity. In

a group, a kids class, a prayer meeting, a group of teens, a service project - we lead like this.

The one characteristic that isn't in every Christian or isn't in every leader is that the pastors and elders are "able to teach."

We don't have time to look at the elder qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1 today, but it's a list of general character traits that elders should have, and they are all things all Christians should be striving for. The one exception that not everybody can necessarily attain is "able to teach."

A pastor shepherds the flock by teaching. This doesn't mean every pastor preaches from the pulpit, but every pastor or elder knows the word of God and is able to instruct people in it.

And this is an absolutely central part of a pastor's role, the main thing. Paul wrote books to two pastors, Timothy and Titus, and the emphasis on teaching and preaching the word couldn't be more clear.⁴ Read 1 Timothy and Titus and see how much he tells those young pastors about teaching. A pastor has to know the word and be able to teach it.

Now some of the elders do this even more than the others:

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

There are some specialists among the elders whose whole week is centered around labor in teaching and preaching. That we expect to be studying and preparing, that are employed in large part to do that for the church.

These teaching elders aren't to spend most of their time running programs, creating productions, or meeting every need in the community. They are to spend most of their time in the word and bringing the word.

But that doesn't mean that's all that the church does. Because they bring the word with a goal in mind.

⁴ An excellent expansion of this idea can be found in Hansen, Collin; Leeman, Jonathan. Rediscover Church (pp. 126-129). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

In Ephesians 4:11–16, Paul says that Jesus has given lots of gifts to his church, including pastors (v. 11). Then he says why Jesus gave them to the church:

Ephesians 4:12 “12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”

So pastors equip the church with the word so that the church can use all of its varied gifts to serve and minister.⁵

Pastors likely have some other gifts and should be involved in other things in the church, and out in the community, too. They should get their hands dirty and serve like everybody else because they are sheep before they're shepherds. They should volunteer time to serve the church in all kinds of ways, but their main daily role is word centered - to equip the church to do all the other things in their lives.

But often people will ask, “why doesn't the church do X,” with the expectation that the pastors will do it.

Often that desire is a call for you to do it. Because the church is a community, a body, not just our Sunday services, and not just a sermon, and not just the things that pastors do. Not everything that the church should do is something the elder should do or is even gifted for.

And there is no limit to the good works Christians should do and do together out in the community, and it isn't even all supposed to be run by the pastors or the church centrally. The church when we scatter should do tons of good out there, all week long, but we are more limited in our focus when we gather.

Because we gather for word and sacrament to be pointed to Jesus.

By leaders who, with a million failings and their own sins, are struggling to point the way to Jesus in His word.

We also do so with communion. This is a regular part of our gathering to make sure we stay focused on the main thing:

⁵ And don't forget this dimension: Sinclair Ferguson says, "Elders of the church should always have in view that they are preparing and feeding the people of Christ to be able to stand even if the fires of persecution come. That is what elders, leaders in the communities of God's people, are summoned to do."

1 Corinthians 11: 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one anotherâ€” 34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

So Jesus takes this first Lord's supper with his followers, and when he takes the bread he says, "This is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of ME."

So he initiated this ordinance as a remembrance, or as a reminder of Him and his body torn for us.

We tend to forget.

We have a tendency to minimize sin. So we need this reminder of the torn body of Jesus to know how serious it is.

We have a tendency to doubt God's love for us.

In those dark moments when we doubt that God could ever love us and want to bless us, we are supposed to remember that he sent his only son to shed his blood and have his body torn for us. There is no greater love than that - that a Father would give his only son.

We have a tendency to think we can solve our biggest problem.

But this preaches grace to us. It is a reminder that we have sinned, but Jesus is our Savior. So those who take this supper today do so to say, “Jesus has saved me. I’ve fallen and failed, but He is enough.”

So take this today if you have repented of your known sins, and if you are clinging to Jesus alone for your forgiveness.

Let’s take a moment to confess our sins in silence.

Father, we thank you for the gospel reminder of your supper. Thank you for the forgiveness offered by Jesus. For His spilled blood and torn body, which was the only solution for our sin.

And thank you for how thorough it is. These sins we’ve confessed have been taken as far away as the east is from the west.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you tend to resist authority or to expect too much human authority in your life?
- 2) What do you expect pastors to do for you? What should you expect them to do for you?
- 3) Read Hebrews 13:17. What do you think you can do to help make their ministry a joy and more of a benefit to you?
- 4) What do you suppose a domineering leader leads like? Why is that so bad in the church?
- 5) What are some shameful reasons someone might want to pastor or lead in general?

- 6) How does having Jesus as our Chief Shepherd put some limits on human leadership?
- 7) How can leadership reflect Jesus?