

Lead On, Good Shepherd(s)!

1 Peter #9 • July 26, 2026

Opening



Travelers on the cruise ship *Europa 2* boarded the ship in Istanbul, greeted by professional staff and personalized luxury. While it was a small ship by modern standards – only 500 guests – the nearly 400 staff members (quite the ratio!) were ready to offer personal service in almost every way. The focus was on the guests, offering them amazing food and relaxation. Choices were everywhere... but you’d never expect the biggest choice. The **unexpected decision** was to give the guests a choice of where they would go!

This was a “**surprise cruise**,” a cruise where the itinerary (the where/when) depended on which ports got the most votes from passengers on the boat itself. Myrina, Volos, Izmir, Athens, Naxos, Patmos, Crete, Rhodes, Santorini... The options were plentiful in the Aegean Sea!

After setting sail, the passengers gathered on deck for an evening of voting to select their next stop. Presentations of options, discussions before dropping ballots in the big bowls up front, a big reveal... followed by a mad scramble by staff as they had to set up excursions and activities prior to their arrival! LOL

Does a “choose your own adventure” cruise sound fun? Giving control to the masses could be great (unless you really like everything planned out – cf. our “itinerary experts” from last week).

Here’s the irony, though. In an endeavor as **free** as a “surprise cruise” where people can make their own choices, **leadership** is critical. The more options available to people, the more they need good leaders.

Does that sound counterintuitive? If so, think about all the problems and setbacks that popular-vote decisions could encounter. Passengers could...

- Choose ports with **harbors that are too small** to fit the boat



- Choose **distant destinations** (ex: Hawaii, via the Panama Canal?) that extend passengers for days beyond the planned cruise length and use up all the supplies
- Choose a path that navigates through a **major storm**.
- Choose without an organized vote, **never gaining a consensus** on how to make the final decision – the paralysis of process, added to the paralysis of choice!



Leaders – whether the captain of the boat, the officers, or the owners – set boundaries and parameters to make the trip successful. They provide limits on where such a cruise would go (Aegean sea only), predetermine specific ports that might be feasible for docking and for excursions, and arrange the choices in advance (e.g. three options in the north for port 1, three options in the south for port 2) so a decision could be easily reached by the boat's passengers. The more options available to people, the more they need leaders...if they want success.

Leadership provides necessary and healthy guidance so people can get where they want to go!

HOPE

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Recap

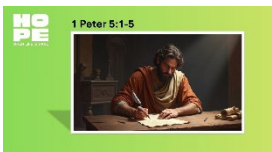
As we reach the final chapter in the New Testament letter of 1 Peter, his attention shifts to leadership. Peter writes about leaders of churches, not cruises, as a follow-up to what he was talking about in the previous section. *“As we live in preparation for Jesus’ return,”* he says, *“church leaders play a vital role.”*

What Peter says today will be of importance to those who serve as **leaders** of the church to hear, but it will also be important for *you* as **members** of the church to hear.

Please open your Bible to 1 Peter 5:1-5 and let's read.

1 Peter 5:1-5

“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: 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; not domineering



over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.””

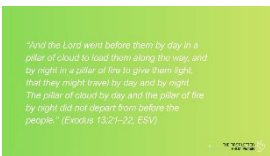
(1 Peter 5:1–5, ESV)



Leadership is Necessary

This passage in Peter is one of *many* that speak to the necessity of leadership among God’s people. Leadership is necessary! God himself appointed leaders (prophets, apostles, kings, judges) at different times and places to help His people thrive. And He did so not to **replace** His own leadership, but to **supplement** it.

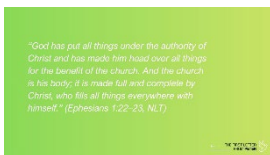
In the days of Moses, for example, God Himself clearly led the nation of Israel out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land.



“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.” (Exodus 13:21–22, ESV)

God provided clear direction and leadership!

And so it is for the church today. Our church is under the **leadership** of Jesus! He is the One that you and I follow:



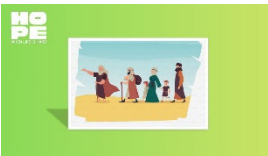
“God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.” (Ephesians 1:22–23, NLT)

This is a key doctrinal point for us at TCC.

“We believe that Jesus Christ is the one, eternal, supreme Head of the Church. By virtue of His incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, bodily resurrection, and ascension, He alone

exercises divine authority, governs the Church spiritually, and sustains its life by the Holy Spirit. All ministry, gifts, order, discipline, and mission in the Church flow from His headship; no human office or structure supersedes or replaces His sovereign rule.”¹

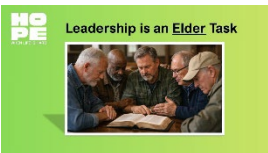
Whether we are on a trek through the wilderness to the physical Promised Land, or on a journey to our own spiritual Promised Land of Heaven, God Himself will always lead us, and we must not take any other course!



But as we follow our true leader, additional (supplemental) leadership is helpful. *Leadership* is needed to ensure that people follow God’s plan in an **orderly** fashion. During the Exodus, there were religious leaders (the Levites and Priests) who gave direction and assistance to maintain the camp’s purity. There were community leaders (tribal Elders) who helped organize their people and handle disputes.

And the same is true for the church today. We follow Jesus; yet we need leadership to help us stay on track and to ensure that we follow Him in an orderly fashion. **Leadership is needed** to ensure that we go where God goes, say what God says, love whom God loves, and stay true to God’s truth.

And in the church, that leadership is a task assigned to a group of people we call *Elders*.



Leadership is an Elder Task

Maybe you come from a different church background, or maybe you just haven’t paid much attention to this part of our church organization... but for those who don’t know about Elders, let me explain.

Peter says in this passage:

¹ Elder Governance – TCC Policy adopted by Elders

"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." (1 Peter 5:1, ESV)

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The word we translate as "elder" is "*presbuteros*,"² literally "*old man*." While it is connected with age (and hopefully wisdom!), the title here is used as less a descriptor and more as an **official position**. An "elder" was a person who held a role of leadership in the early church. The Elders of the church (described in places like the book of Acts) were the **primary group that discussed, decided, and acted** regarding topics of the greatest importance to the early Christians.

Peter writes to them...not just talking to them but talking as one. Peter says he himself (*a man who witnessed Jesus' sufferings; a man who has hope in Jesus' return*) is also an elder ("co-elder").

So what is involved in this position or title?

Scripture talks about the **qualifications** for serving as an "elder" in places like 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4 (here); and Hebrews 13:17.

The role had elements of **maturity** and **wisdom** (hence the word "elder"); it also had an element of **authority** ("oversight" - *espiskopeo*³). Those who served in this role were supposed to oversee the church, like the captain of a ship whose course was plotted by God. A third word is also used to describe elders, and it is the one Peter uses the most in this passage. It is the word "*poimen*" – "**shepherd**."

*"...**shepherd** the flock of God that is among you..."*
(1 Peter 5:2, ESV)

"Shepherd" is a common term both in and out of the Bible (especially in ancient times), but here it is loaded with theological meaning. Real-world shepherds provided a fitting illustration for God's people.

- Poets used it to in the Psalms as an analogy of God's care.
- Prophets like Ezekiel used the metaphor to speak of leaders in the nation.

² From which we get words like "Presbyterian"

³ From which we get the word "Episcopal"

Qualifications

- 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17

Descriptions

- "presbuteros" (older man)
- "episkopos" (overseer)
- "poimen" (shepherd)

HOPE

HOPE



- New Testament writers instructed leaders of the church using that same imagery. After all, Jesus said the same things!

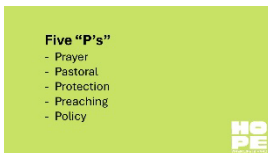
*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. **I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:10–11, ESV)*

“Shepherding” emphasizes a **relational aspect** of the role – caring for others. It involves an **element of safety** – making sure no harm comes on the flock. It also speaks of a **lifestyle rather than just a job**. A shepherd doesn’t clock out at night – he stays with the sheep all the time. They are his life!



At Tonganoxie Christian Church, the **role of elder** is an important leadership role. Elders are the designated *shepherds* of the church.

- They are **not elected** (as if popularity were the key trait) but instead **appointed**. The current leaders are always looking to develop and identify spiritually qualified men to fill this role for the church.
 - **TCC Process:** We interview and vet those who are considered for the role. If they are found to be a good fit in keeping with Biblical standards, we present them to the church for affirmation – so you can verify that, “Yes,” the congregation agrees with that decision.
- They are not **business leaders** (as if they were a board of directors) but instead **spiritual leaders**. The tasks of administration belong elsewhere; these men instead are to lead in areas that will bring spiritual health to the church.
 - **TCC Process:** We ask our elders to focus on “Five Ps”
 - **Prayer** – lifting the church up to God (Acts 6:4)
 - **Pastoral** – caring for various needs of church members (Acts 20:28-29)
 - **Protection** – keeping the church safe from Satan and his schemes (Acts 20:28-32)
 - **Preaching** – ensuring the Word of God is proclaimed and taught (Acts 6:4)



- **Policy** – setting guidelines and guardrails for how the church will achieve its goals (Acts 15:22-23)
- *****NOTE***** I'll freely admit that at times in our past, we allowed our elders to get too wrapped up in business instead of spiritual matters. However, I think over the last few years we have taken great strides to keep our Elders focused on what matters most! Praise God!

As of today, TCC has five menⁱ who are serving as elders at TCC (Derek Novotney, John Pebley, Keith Cokely, Jerry Parrish, and Steve Lindsay). They are not perfect or infallible, but they are good and godly and striving to be Christ-like at work and at home, as well as at church. They wrestle with a lot of issues, pray a lot of prayers, bear a lot of burdens, and love our congregation.

To these men (and those who may join in the future), Peter gives instruction in **1 Peter 5:2-3** on how to serve in this role: “Shepherd this flock” (this group of people God has allotted to us)...

- **Not because you *have to*, but because you *want to*** (**not under compulsion but willingly**). Leadership is not a chore; it is an honor. It is an honor to look after people who are loved by God. You aren't drafted; you volunteered!
- **Not focused on what you get *from* it, but what you do *in* it** (**not greedy but eagerly**). Leadership is not about selfish gain. It is for the sake of others, not yourself (...*which is a good reminder when the Elder meeting runs until 11 pm!*)
- **Not *lording over* others but *showing* others** (**not domineering but as an example**). It is not a power trip to boss people around; we won't wield authority like a weapon. Instead, we strive to *model* the “one anothers” and “each others” of Scripture (e.g. “love one another,” “serve one another”). Like our Savior, we are here to **be served, but to serve**.

And when our “Chief Shepherd” (aka Jesus) returns, He will reward those who have *poimen-ed* (shepherded) and *episokopeo-ed* (oversaw? Oversighted?) and *presbuteros-ed* (old-manned) well.

“... 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**, **not domineering but as an example** to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3, ESV)

He'll make the effort worth it, giving them a crown whose glory never fades!

Leadership (via the elders) provides necessary and healthy guidance so people can get where they want to go!

Godly Leadership Requires Humility

So, because of what Scripture says, Tonganoxie Christian Church has the structure of church leadership where Elders “shepherd the flock” and give us guidelines and guardrails to help TCC follow Christ.

But leaders are only effective when others follow! And Peter has some words about “humility” for those of us who are being led. To the *sheep* under the shepherds, Peter says:

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”” (1 Peter 5:5, ESV)

Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 about humility. But just because he uses a Bible quote doesn't make it easy!

It's **hard** to listen to those in charge, especially when you think you could do better! That's true in the secular world as well as the church world. I was looking at one online article titled “*How to Deal with a Leader You Can't Follow.*” The author said:

“Working under a leader you don't respect isn't just a professional challenge—it's an emotional one. It can leave you feeling undervalued, frustrated, and questioning your long-term future in the organisation.”⁴

The Bible is full of stories of people who couldn't follow leadership. The **Israelites** grumbled against Moses. **King David's son** tried to overthrow him. The **Corinthian church** was mired in controversy as some leaders challenged the “apostle” status of Paul. All because they thought they knew better. Leaders are hard to follow!

⁴ [How To Deal With A Leader You Can't Follow](#)

Yet knowing the challenge of following, Peter still says to “**submit to the church leaders.**” Without an asterisk. Without an escape clause.

Was he wrong? Naive? Trying to make life easier for him, an elder?

No. He was simply saying to **choose humility**. Humility is not about status – it is about attitude. It’s not about being right (proud/arrogant). It doesn’t make claims about who is better. It simply says, “I will defer to your plan.”

Humility is not weakness. It is an attitude Jesus commands us to take:

“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:12, ESV)

Why? Because it is the same attitude He exhibited.

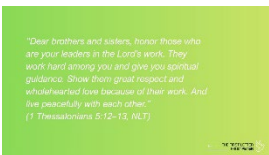
“he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8, NLT)

Humility comes when we know that the emphasis isn’t on ourselves; that it is about following God. That applies to those who follow as well as those who serve. Everyone must put on humility!

In church, for godly leadership to function well, those who are under the elders should humbly follow.

“Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, NLT)

It’s not a blank check for abuse. There is still accountability! Elders in Scripture were held to high standards when it came to their teachings about Jesus and to their character. Ours must be accountable, too (and there are processes our elders and our church can follow to hold each other accountable!). But never use “accountability” as a disguise for arrogance – stirring the pot when they didn’t agree with your idea, undermining a decision because the culture or the emphasis they’ve developed isn’t what you would have done. The





sins of gossip and division are tempting! Please don't sink to that level against your leaders. Instead, follow with humility. For example,

- If it's not going well...**pray** for the leaders' plans.
- If it's not your plan...**serve anyway** and **make it successful**.
- If it's not successful...**encourage** those who are trying.
- If it's not better... **shore up** the weaknesses.
- If your efforts *are not* recognized...**keep going** anyway
- If your efforts *are* recognized...let it be **by God**

At the end of the day, the church's success matters more than who gets the credit. As much as you can, do the things that will make your leaders look like they produced spiritual giants! And if you do, you'll ensure that the next generation of Elders will be far stronger and better equipped to lead!⁵

Closing

Leadership provides necessary and healthy guidance so people can get where they want to go!

To our elders that serve, listen to Peter's guidance. "Shepherd the flock" well! Be an example to follow and work for that unfading crown of glory when Jesus honors your humble service to the flock.

To our members that follow, listen to Peter's guidance. "Be subject" to the elders. Clothe yourself with humility as you stay within their guidance and guardrails, and let Christ exalt you later.

Together, if we do our part, our church can stay on track and follow God in an orderly fashion. **Together**, we can go where God goes, say what God says, love whom God loves, and stay true to God's truth!

Prayer + Invitation

- Pray for our elders!
- Pray for the humility to follow!



⁵ Taken from my sermon "Under the Hood" #3 - How do we follow imperfect people

Sermon Notes

Leadership is Necessary

(Exodus 13:21-22; Ephesians 1:22-23)

Leadership is an Elder Task

(1 Peter 5:1-3; John 10:10-11)

5 “P’s”: Prayer, Pastoral, Protection, Preaching, Policy

Godly Leadership Requires Humility

(1 Peter 5:5; Matthews 23:12; Philippians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- What is your typical thought when you hear the term “church leader?” Is your perception positive or negative? Why?
- Skim 1 Peter 4. If these are actions Christians should do while waiting for the return of Jesus, what role can church leaders play in making those actions a reality?
- Who is the ultimate leader of the church? Read Ephesians 1:22-23
- Who are the leaders in the local church who help us follow Jesus? (1 Peter 5:1-2)
- Discuss some of the words Peter uses to describe leaders: **Elders** (“*presbuteros*”), **Overseers** (“*episkopos*”), and **Shepherds** (“*poimen*”). What qualities are emphasized by each term?
- Review the qualities of an elder described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; and Hebrews 13:17. Pray for your current elders to stay aligned with these qualities.
- The task of an elder is summarized by five “P’s”: prayer, pastoral, protection, preaching, policy. How does each help the church have guidance and guardrails as we follow Jesus?
- Read 1 Peter 5:5. How can you choose to show humility when it comes to leadership in the church?

ⁱ Yes, “men.” That could be a whole other sermon. But the passages that talk about “elders” are male-focused. We try to follow Scripture as our authority (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9), so we must stand against much of our culture and keep this as a role where women do not serve. Reserving the role of elder for men also fits the pattern we see in marriage, where the man is placed as the “head,” not out of superiority but for the structure of home leadership. To have the husband lead at home but then be under the wife’s authority at church would be confusing at best, dangerous at worst. For the sake of order, then, leadership is reserved as a man’s role.

It is not our position that women have no leadership roles. TCC employs women in both senior staff roles and in significant volunteer leadership roles. Women, in submission to the elders’ authority, may have teaching roles in the church, whether small group leadership or classes meeting on Sunday mornings or in leading and teaching the next generation. TCC simply reserves the roles of Senior Minister, and of Elder, for male individuals as per 1 Timothy chapters 2 and 3.