

THE CHURCH IS LED BY QUALIFIED ELDERS

YEAR: UNITE / FOCUS: I AM PART OF A FAMILY
SERIES: GOD IS FATHER - I AM PART OF THE FAMILY

BIG TRUTH: THE CHURCH IS LED BY QUALIFIED ELDERS

Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5

BIBLE VERSE: 1 PETER 5:1-3

“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.”

BIG IDEAS

- Jesus is the chief shepherd.
- Elders exist to lead the church like Jesus.
- The right response to godly leadership is glad-hearted submission.

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 PETER 5:1-11

UNITE - I AM PART OF A FAMILY

The Unite Year is an exploration of what it means to be united in Christ as the family of God (Romans 12:5). When we are saved, we are given a spirit of adoption as sons (Romans 8:15-16), are made a child of God, and we are also saved into a family- the Church. The Unite Year explores how we are to live as a part of a family, and to live in light of our calling as servants and disciples of Christ. We use our gifts to build up the church as we pursue unity, humility, and gentleness with our brothers and sisters in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-2).

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know that...

- The church is a family.
- The church is given by God.
- The church exists for God.



Every student should feel...

- Thankful for the unique ways God has gifted them and their church.
- Appreciation for the elders and leaders that God has gifted their church.



Every student should strive to...

- Prioritize gathering to worship each week with their church family.
- Learn more about membership in their local church.
- Do something to intentionally serve someone in their church family each week



Every student should want...

- To devote themselves to pursue holiness with their church family.
- To have their lives be marked by love for the church.
- To live in a way that is sacrificial and generous for the good of others and the glory of God

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.

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Elders shepherd the people of God.

“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...”

- Peter’s exhortation to the elders, also sometimes called pastors or overseers, came from his own position as an elder and his experience with Christ. Just as Christ does not ask anything of His followers that He has not already done Himself, Peter is exhorting fellow elders to fulfill the purpose that God has ordained for them.
- Elders are to shepherd, or look after the people of God. This means that elders are responsible for the people of God in the local body of believers that they are appointed. Elders oversee the spiritual lives of the people in their churches. They are responsible for teaching them and making sure they have what they need to grow and live for Christ.

Elders shepherd willingly and eagerly.

“...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you...”

- Peter exhorts elders to shepherd their people with willingly hearts. Pastors are given a special responsibility to watch over the people of God. This task can seem daunting and burdensome, but God has called pastors to willingly guide and protect His people for His glory.
- Pastors, or elders are to eagerly watch over their people in their churches. They should not begrudge the task of caring for God’s people. Instead, they should eagerly desire to see God’s people grow spiritually. They should eagerly desire the flourishing of the people in their flock because this brings God glory.

Elders shepherd as examples.

“...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”

- Elders are not given authority over God’s people to abuse them or to use it against them. Elders are not to rule over God’s people as bosses or dictators. Instead, they are to lead them and guide them as a shepherd would guide a young sheep.
- Elders are to set examples for their flock. They should live above reproach and set the standard by which their people should strive to live. They should live as Jesus lived and shepherd as He did so that the people may follow them in confidence.

THE CHURCH IS LED BY QUALIFIED ELDERS

BIG IDEA #1: JESUS IS THE CHIEF SHEPHERD.¹

[THIS]

In 1 Peter 5:4, Peter refers to Jesus as the chief shepherd. To be the chief of something is to hold the highest rank. Jesus is God; therefore, He is the most supreme being. All that He does is perfect and good. Jesus gave His life for all believers. He paid the ultimate sacrifice to care for His sheep and to pay the sin debt that every person owes. By doing this, He made a way for people to be reconciled to God. As the chief shepherd, He perfectly guides and leads all of God's people to live for Him. Jesus lived a life that pointed people to God and enabled them to see an example of how to please God. He willingly laid down His own life to save His people. He is the perfect shepherd.

[THEREFORE]

What does it mean for us that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd?

Knowing that Jesus is our Savior and Shepherd brings us joy. A shepherd looks after and protects his sheep. Jesus is this protector and caretaker for all who follow Him. John 10:11 and Isaiah 40:11 show us that Jesus is the good shepherd. He watches after His people and continues to work on their behalf as He sits at the Father's right-hand interceding for us as Romans 8:34 shows us.

[THIS]

Because Jesus is God and man, He is the chief shepherd. As God, He cares for and guides His people perfectly. As man, He suffered all things for His people that they might know God and have their sins forgiven. Shepherds in the ancient world sacrificed for their flocks. They lived with them and protected them. King David is another example of a shepherd who fought off wild animals to protect his sheep². Jesus as the chief shepherd indicates that He is greater. He is the good shepherd who does all things for His people. He watches over them with all diligence and gives them power to live for Him. He leads perfectly in all wisdom, knowledge, and love. Jesus is the head of the church and He alone leads it perfectly.

[THEREFORE]

How does knowing Jesus is the Chief Shepherd change the way we relate to earthly leaders?

Earthly leaders will always let us down because we are all sinful and even as believers, we struggle against our sin natures. Jesus will never let us down and when we remember that He is the head of the body of Christ, we can be encouraged. Ephesians 1:22, 5:23 and Colossians 1:8 show us that Jesus is the head of the church. He alone is our true King and we can always trust in Him.

How can you discipline yourself to trust in Jesus as the chief shepherd?

Discipline requires us to make many choices throughout our day that lead us to do the thing we want to do. When we want to train ourselves to trust Jesus, we must take our thoughts captive and think on who Jesus is and what He has done. We can trust in Him because He is faithful. Psalm 9:10, 28:7, and Romans 8:28 all remind us that Jesus can be trusted. When we plant these things in our hearts and minds, we can discipline ourselves to trust Him as our chief shepherd.

1. 1 Peter 5:4: Jesus is the chief shepherd. He alone guides and protects perfectly.

2. 1 Samuel 17:34-36: David fought off a bear and lion, killing them to protect his sheep.

THE CHURCH IS LED BY QUALIFIED ELDERS

BIG IDEA #2: ELDERS EXIST TO LEAD THE CHURCH LIKE JESUS.³

[THIS]

God made Jesus the head of His church. This established order is what is best for God's people. An extension of that established order is the elder, or pastor. Elders have specific qualifications and instructions given to them to help them lead the church as God would have them to do. God's Word tells us that churches are to be led by elders, men who can preach and who live above reproach. In 1 Peter 5:1-11, Peter teaches about elders and their responsibilities. Elders should first and foremost seek to be like Christ because they are exhorted to lead the church like Christ. This means that their lives should be above reproach. They should follow the example of Jesus by dying to themselves and serving the body of Christ they are appointed to. They are not to grow arrogant or puffed up. Instead, they are to lead humbly and for the glory of God. They are to sacrifice for their people and seek to lead them to grow spiritually.

[THEREFORE]

What is the importance of a elders in a church?

Acts 20:28, James 5:14, and Titus 1:6-9 help us understand why the church has elders. Besides God ordaining that His people are led by elders, the function and purpose of elders is important to note. Elders do more than make decisions for the body. They serve, teach, and guide them as Jesus did.

[THIS]

Being an elder comes with great responsibility. The man who becomes an elder takes on the role of caring for God's people and of doing it like Jesus. He must first live above reproach, meaning that he regularly repents of his sin and seeks to live a holy life. Because an elder teaches God's Word to the body, he is held to a higher standard.⁴ An elder must first know God's Word himself before endeavoring to teach it to others. Jesus is a servant leader. During His earthly ministry, He set an example of serving His followers. He lived humbly and sought to do the will of the Father. Elders are required to lead in this same way. They are to lead in serving others by following the example of Jesus. They are to lead others by sacrificing for the body so the body grows in Christlikeness.

[THEREFORE]

What does it look like for an elder lead in sacrificing for the body of Christ?

All believers are called to live sacrificial lives for Christ. Elders are to lead in sacrificing for the body of Christ because God has positioned them as the leaders of the church. Romans 12:1-2 and Ephesians 5:1-2 teach us the connection between living for Christ and sacrificing. If the elder leads in sacrificing, the body can follow and God is glorified.

What does it mean to be above reproach? Why is it important for elders to live above reproach?

Christ is our example of how to live godly lives. To be above reproach means to live in a way that accusations don't stick because there's nothing to make them true. We do not engage in any activity that could even be mistaken for unholiness. Elders are the leaders of the church; therefore, they should lead in pursuing holiness and in being above reproach. Elders should live in a way that sets an example for members of the church and that shows the world that believers are different as 1 Timothy 3:2 shows us.

3. 1 Timothy 3:1-7: The qualifications for overseers show us how perfectly Jesus leads the church and the example set before us.

4. James 1:3: Those who teach God's Word are held to a higher level of accountability and should take it very seriously.

THE CHURCH IS LED BY QUALIFIED ELDERS

BIG IDEA #3: THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO GODLY LEADERSHIP IS GLAD-HEARTED SUBMISSION.⁵

[THIS]

Godly leadership is leadership that seeks to please God. It is leadership that pursues holiness and seeks God's kingdom above all other things. Godly leadership is exemplified through the life of Christ. He died to Himself, setting aside His rights and privileges to obey the Father. He lived a holy life that sought to please the Father above all else. Godly leadership is important for God's church. Because God's church is made up of His people, it is very important that the leaders of the church live in a godly way. If the elders of the church do not glorify God themselves, they cannot expect or lead the body to glorify God. Godly leadership is a gift from God to His people. When He works in the hearts of the people He has called to lead His church, He positions the body to grow in Christlikeness. This type of leadership helps individual believers fulfill their God-given purposes.

[THEREFORE]

Have you seen the church grow due to godly leadership? How have your leaders encouraged you to pursue Christ?

Acts 2:47 and 9:34 gives us a picture of how godly leadership can help the church grow. When we experience the fruit of godly leadership, we are encouraged to live out God's commands. We are eager ourselves to pursue a right relationship with God and to obey Him. Godly leadership will encourage us to use our spiritual gifts to help the body grow and we will live out our faith in our daily lives.

[THIS]

Hebrews 13 helps us understand what our attitude towards our leaders should be. We should support our leadership by submitting to them and praying for them. Leading a church is no small thing. It requires time and energy that is only possible with the help of the Holy Spirit. God works through and in His chosen leaders to help individual believers obey Him. As members of a local church, we should submit to our godly leadership gladly. We should have glad hearts that willingly follow the leaders God has placed above us. When we do this, we show that we trust God and we believe that it is God who ultimately leads us. Glad-hearted submission is achieved when we ourselves are submitting daily to God. When we gladly submit our personal lives to God daily, we will gladly submit to the leaders that He places over us. When we recognize that godly leadership is a good and gracious gift from God, we can willingly submit to them and commit to support them through our sacrificial giving and by praying for them daily.

[THEREFORE]

How can you practice glad-hearted submission to your leaders this week?

1 Peter 5:5 and Hebrews 13:17 remind us that submission to our leaders is commanded by God. When we set aside our own ideas and opinions and follow our leaders, we are submitting to them. Submission to leaders means also refusing to malign them or gossip about them. It means we are not complaining about them, but rather we are speaking encouragingly of them and supporting them.

How can you pray for your godly leadership each day this week?

1 Timothy 2:1-2 helps give us an idea of how to pray for our leadership. We should seek to know our leadership and to understand how we can best pray for them. We should ask God to protect them and to guide them. We should pray that God gives them wisdom and helps them lead the church for His glory.

5. Hebrews 13:17: We are to gladly submit to our godly leadership because this pleases God and brings Him glory.