

Discussion Guide 1 Peter 5:1-4 Pastors

Many people have commented over recent years that in the western world there is a crisis of understanding the nature of the church. It could also be said that wherever there is a crisis understanding the nature of the church that there is usually also a crisis in the understanding of the role of a pastor.

While there are stories that people often tell about a pastor who was a faithful spiritual leader who helped them to follow Jesus in their lives, there are just as often stories about pastors who failed to rightly lead their churches to follow Jesus. Amongst people in our culture the stories of pastoral failure come in one of three directions:

- 1) A pastor was abusive toward people in some aspect of his leadership
- 2) A pastor could not guide people to a right relationship with God because he himself did not have a right relationship with God.
- 3) A pastor was loving and kind in all of his relationships with people and had a genuine love for God that was worthy of following, but failed to live into his calling to actually *lead the church* in some of the difficult areas that could bring confrontation or offense.

You will almost never find a church who has pastors who largely fail in any of these areas that is also a church that is growing spiritually deep while fulfilling Jesus' Central Commission to baptize and make disciples. For this reason, Peter's words to the shepherds of the church are important not only for the pastors, but for the entire church as well.

1 Peter 5:1-4

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.

We should make a note that this is one of the many New Testament passages where we can clearly see that the title/office of pastor (which means shepherd) and elder are used interchangeably. This truth informs why Venture Church has only one group of men who lead as a group of pastors.

The one immutable truth about the church is that the church belongs to Christ and that the shepherds of the church are merely undershepherds who are themselves led by him. Austin's sermon on this passage deals with the proper perspective, practice and prize of pastoral ministry. The end goal for being faithful as a pastor is the same as for every follower of Jesus: that we may receive the crown of glory that only Jesus can bestow as the chief Shepherd.

Discussion Questions

- If an alien from Mars asked you to define the church, what would you say?
- How do you define the job of a pastor? (Use specific phrases from 1 Peter 5:1-4.)
- Why are pastors important in the life of a church?
- Is pastor the only important role in the church?
- Is a pastor who you are or is it what you do?
- What are the most important character traits for a pastor?
- What is something you have learned from a pastor that he likely has no idea that he even taught you?
- Give an example of a person who you know is a faithful pastor. What specifically about them makes them a faithful pastor?
- Give an example of someone (without naming names) who is one of those examples of a failed pastor. What can you learn from their failure?
- Finish by praying specifically for the pastors of Venture. It will mean a lot for them to know how you prayed for them.