

**(T)** Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The third series of 5 Bible studies is about the church. The topics are: “The cultural task of the church”, “The missionary task of the church”, “The evangelistic task of the church”, “The goals of the church” and “The leadership of the church”. Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE IS OCCUPIED WITH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHURCH.

### **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read 1 Peter 5:1-7. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

**(S)** 1 Peter 5:1-7. “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed: **(T)** Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; **(S)** not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. **(T)** And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. **(S)** Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” **(T)** Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. **(S)** Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

### **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

**(T)** Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

**(S)** An important truth for me is in 1 Peter 5:1, which says that the apostle Peter called himself “a fellow elder”. The “apostles of Christ” were a unique group of people with a unique task in the universal or worldwide Church. They planted the first churches among the Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. However, wherever Peter visited a local church, there he functioned as one of the elders. He submitted himself to the same teaching concerning “elders” he gave to the churches. He did not lord it over any of the local churches.

**(T)** An important truth for me is in 1 Peter 5:2-3, which uses three words for “elders: Elders are called “elders”, “shepherds or pastors” and “overseers”. This fact means two things. First. There was no hierarchy of leaders in the Church of the New Testament. Second. The local church of the New Testament was led by a group of men, who were called “a body of elders”. The church was definitely not led by just one pastor. The tasks of the elders are described as the work of “shepherds or pastors” and of “overseers”. Leadership is not the privilege of one person, but is the duty of a whole group of men, called “elders”.

### **STEP 3. QUESTION**

**(S)** Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Question. Who are the foundational leaders of the whole Church?

**(T)** In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, “On this rock I build my church.” He says, “It is *my* church”. The Church worldwide and every local church do not belong to its leaders or people, but to Jesus Christ, because he bought them with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Moreover Jesus says, “*I* build my church.” Missionaries do not build churches. Jesus builds the churches by making use of people. Without Jesus Christ, we can do nothing that has eternal value! In Ephesians 1:22, God appointed Jesus Christ to be the Head over everything in creation as well as the Head of the Church. Thus, *Jesus Christ is the Builder, Owner and Head of the Church* now and forever! In Ephesians 2:20, the Bible says that the Church is built on the foundation of the “apostles and prophets”. The “apostles” are the 11 disciples of Jesus Christ and Paul, who were chosen, called and sent by Jesus Christ himself and who were witnesses of his death and resurrection. They planted the first historical churches among the Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. The New Testament “prophets” helped them. They were inspired preachers, like Timothy and Titus. These apostles and their helpers appointed the first institutionalised leaders of the local churches, called “elders”. These apostles have no successors, because nobody would qualify according to the requirements in Acts 1:21-22! Thus, *the apostles were the foundational leaders of the Church*.

In 1 Peter 5:1, the apostle Peter calls himself “an elder”. As “apostle”, Peter preached the gospel to non-Christians, planted the first local churches among the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles and wrote some books of the New Testament. However, Peter functioned in the local church, where he resided, as “an elder”. The other apostles also functioned as the elders of the Jerusalem church in the beginning. But because their main task and calling was to plant more local churches, the church chose and appointed local people to become the elders of their own local churches.

2<sup>nd</sup> Question. Who are the institutionalised leaders of the churches?

(S) According to Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for every new Christian church among the Gentiles. According to Titus 1:5, Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in every town where there were Christians. As the apostles and their co-workers preached the gospel and planted churches, they appointed “elders” for them in each local church. According to 1 Timothy 4:14, “the body of elders” constitute the leadership of each local church.

3<sup>rd</sup> Question. How do we know that the elders should be the leaders of the local churches?

(T) According to Acts 20:17,28, Paul sent to Ephesus for *the elders* of the church. When they arrived, he said to them, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*. Be *shepherds* of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” Like the apostle Peter, also the apostle Paul taught that the elders of the local church are the leaders of that local church. Like the apostle Peter, also the apostle Paul described their tasks as being “shepherds” and “overseers”. This clearly shows that with regard to terminology, the words “elders”, “shepherds” and “overseers” are used interchangeably in the New Testament. The modern words “bishops”, “priests” and “pastors” are derived from the Greek and Latin words in the Bible for “overseers”, “elders” and “shepherds”. Thus, although modern churches sometimes have changed these words into a hierarchy of different leaders, in the New Testament all three terms refer only to one group of leaders, called the “elders”. In the New Testament Church there was no hierarchy of leaders! There was only a group of elders, called “the body of elders” in each local church and they shared the leadership responsibility of that local church. The term “elder” expresses the leader’s spiritual maturity and experience as well as the greater respect he commands. The terms “overseer” and “shepherd” describe the nature of the elder’s tasks. Thus, all the elders of the local church should be the shepherds and overseers of their church. All the elders have pastoral, teaching and managerial functions in their local church.

4th Question. What are the tasks of the elders?

(S) The first task of the elders is to “be shepherds or pastors of God’s flock”. According to the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5:1-2, the tasks of the elders are “to shepherd the flock of God and to serve as overseers”. According to the apostle Paul in Acts 20:28, the tasks of the elders are exactly the same. There should not be just one pastor or priest for every church. Instead, everyone of “the body of elders” should be a pastor. As *shepherds or pastors*, the elders should “oversee” the local church just as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, oversees the worldwide Church. They should feed, protect, care and guide the members of the local church with a view to their spiritual growth and well-being. The elders as pastors should exercise their task, not as a matter of assuming a position, but rather as a duty. Every elder should keep watch over the other elders as well as over the members of the local church. In this way, both members as well as elders stand in an accountability relationship to somebody else. The elders should be wide-awake against false teachers and sheep stealers. The elders should also show concern and loving care to the really needy members of the local church, like orphans, widows and new converts. Elders should visit and pray for the sick.

(T) The second task of the elders is to “be stewards of God’s household”. 1 Timothy 3:5 says, “An overseer ... must know how to *manage* his own family and take care of God’s church.” 1 Timothy 5:17 says, “The elders who *direct* the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour.” And Titus 1:7 speaks of the elder as a person “*entrusted with God’s work*.” In Timothy, the task of the elders is described as “to rule, direct or manage” in the sense of “to lead by going in front” or “to give direction by example”. In Titus, the task of the elders is described as “to be a steward, manager or administrator” of a household. As *stewards*, the elders are entrusted with functions and possessions of the local church and they should manage these. The elders and not the deacons should direct the affairs of the local church. Although the elders are the leaders of the church, their leadership style may not be one of lording it over those entrusted to them. The elders should lead by their example. If an elder does not manage his own family well and his wife or children need more attention, then he should resign as an elder in order to give his family what they need. The elders manage the meetings, evangelism, training programmes and different kinds of ministries of the local church.

(S) The third task of the elders is to “be teachers of God’s Word”. 1 Timothy 3:2 says, “An overseer ... must be *able to teach*.” 1 Timothy 5:17 says that the special tasks of some elders are “*preaching and teaching*.” And Titus 1:9 says, “An elder ... must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can *encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it*.”

Thus the elders have tasks that require the use of the Bible. As *teachers*, the elders should use the Bible to instruct the members of the local church in the whole will of God (Acts 20:27) and in anything that would be helpful (Acts 20:20). They should teach them to obey all that Jesus Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:19). They “preach” God’s Word to non-Christians and Christians alike. They “teach” the members of the local church, “encourage” them and “warn” them. They “discuss and decide doctrinal issues” and “refute” false teachings. Etc.

(T) **The fourth task of the elders is to “be servants of God and people”.** In Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus called his disciples together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your *servant*, and whoever wants to be first must be your *slave* - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” As *servants* of God and people, the elders should carry out tasks for the benefit of others. This task summarises the “leadership style” of the elders. The leadership style of leaders in the church should be radical different from that in the world. The elders should serve willingly, freely and eagerly. They may not lord it over those entrusted to them. They should be examples to the believers. Rather than leading by commands, they should lead by example. Rather than being served, they should serve the members.

5<sup>th</sup> Question. What should the Christian’s attitude be towards church leaders?

(S) 1 Peter 5:5-6 teaches that the correct attitude towards church leaders is *submission*. God has given elders authority, but their authority is *limited* to their tasks. Moreover, the elders themselves are under the authority of Jesus Christ, that is, under the authority of the Bible, of the Holy Spirit and of the other elders in the board of elders. The authority to save, change, use and bless people, to guide through the Word and the Spirit, to give spiritual gifts, to assign specific tasks in the local church and to call to specific ministries in the local church as well as in the Church worldwide, ultimately rests with Jesus Christ and not with the elders. But in the areas of their assigned tasks, the elders have authority and the members of the church should submit to their leadership. The attitude, which God demands from both the members as well as the leaders, is *humility*. And a humble person is not puffed up with his own importance, abilities, or accomplishments. He also does not arrogantly assert himself or try to domineer others. A humble person does not belittle others, but instead counts them better than himself.

(T) **STEP 4. APPLY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

(S) I am a leader and teacher of the youth in our local church. I have learned today that a Christian leader serves the people he leads. Moreover, he leads by being an example. I want to be such a leader. Not one who lords it over those entrusted to me, but doing my task willingly, eagerly and especially humbly.

(T) I am an elder in my church. The Bible reminded me today that my task is especially to be a shepherd of God’s people and a steward of God’s activities. It is my duty to see that God’s activities serve God’s people. God’s people should not be misused to accomplish God’s activities. I should remind my fellow elders that we may not lord it over God’s people and use them to accomplish our goals. I should care for people, encourage them and motivate them by my personal example.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in 1 Peter 5:1-7.

Dear Father in heaven, please make me a youth leader that leads them by serving them and by being an example to them.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, help me as an elder to really care for the welfare of God’s people. Help me never to use them to accomplish my own goals, but to serve them by helping them to become the people you want them to be.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. If you are a leader in the church, what should be your special task and leadership style?

Second. Next week we will begin a new series of Bible studies about “Living in the world”. “Prepare next week’s Bible study. The Bible study topic is “Money in the world”. And the Bible passage is 1 Timothy 6:3-12, 17-19.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.