

Loving People

Detailed Outline

Part 1 of 5

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded and guided them with his skillful hand.” (Ps. 78:70–72 ESV)

I. An Elder Must Love People

A. Why is this important?

1. Two traits of David’s shepherding
 - a) Upright heart—character is everything
 - b) Skillful hands, skillful leadership ability
2. All of us need to improve in people skills.
 - a) All of us are fallen creatures. Our tendency is to kick back.
 - b) But we need to have a desire to improve. If no desire to improve our people skills, we will be ineffective in our leadership.
 - c) We cast the vision, people will be following us. We don’t want to disappoint them.
 - d) We want to be improving in our teamwork. Improve the way we talk with people, how we write emails.
3. Caring for the Lord’s people is not always a pleasant experience.
 - a) Sheep kick. The people we serve are imperfect people.
 - b) You can pour years into another person’s life, and then they can turn on you.
 - c) Think of Moses and David—they were men of grace and patience. In their ministries, there were times when they had people who complained against them, and even wanted to kill them. If it can happen to great leaders in the Bible, it can happen to us.
 - d) If we are going to serve people, it will be difficult at times.
4. As elders, we are in the people business.
 - a) We lead, we feed, and we protect.
 - b) Therefore, we must love people.

“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.” (Heb. 13:17 ESV emphasis added)

- c) We are not working in factories, building computers, building cars. We are working with people, with their souls. We need people skills. Good shepherds will know their sheep and will know how to deal with each individual.

- d) *Time Magazine* years ago had a report on why some educated people fail and others succeed. They had two conclusions: Those who succeeded had 1) good self-discipline and 2) good people skills and interpersonal relationship skills.
5. Consider the apostle Paul's people skills in dealing with the Corinthians.
- a) The Corinthians began to turn on the apostle at the instigation of others who moved in after Paul left.
- b) He could have asserted his authority as an apostle. But he was also a man of love and tact and diplomacy. He dealt with the Corinthians in a very loving way.
- "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!" (2 Cor. 10:1)*
6. Practical concerns: Initial thoughts
- a) Consider what Paul wrote to the Ephesians.
- "... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (Eph. 5:25)*
- 1) It was divine blood that was shed at cross for Christ to purchase people.
- 2) When we consider the high cost of that, it is a big deal to him how sheep are cared for, how people are loved.
- 3) Paul loved his Gentile converts.
- 4) So love must be the motivation of our ministry, the style of our ministry.
- b) When he sent Onesimus the slave back to his master Philemon, Paul said,
- "I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart." (Philem. 12)*
- c) With the Philippians
- "It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1:7-8)*
- d) To the Corinthians
- "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls..." (2 Cor. 12:15)*
- e) To the Thessalonians
- "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." (1 Thess. 2:8)*

B. What does this look like in practical terms?

1. Availability—we as elders must be *with* people.

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Part 2 of 5

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II. An Elder Must Love People (cont.)

A. What does this look like in practical terms?

2. Visibility

- a) I know elders who seem to never be available or present with people. Only talking with their friends.
- b) We want to circulate among the people, greeting them, asking about their children, how their surgery went.
- c) Elders need to set the tone by being available, visible.
- d) Work your way through the crowd, talk to the elderly, ask for prayer requests.
- e) Memorize people’s names. People love to hear their names. Know the children’s names.
- f) People are hungry for love, so we want to show people that we love them.

3. Responsibility

- a) When you love people, you are going to feel a deep sense of responsibility for them.
- b) You miss them if they are not around. You can’t rest if they are continually absent.
- c) When they hurt, you hurt. People know when you care for them.
- d) Taking a real, special interest in them.
- e) We give up too easily and too often on people.

4. Compassion

- a) B.B. Warfield said that the key emotional word that describes the Lord Jesus is the word “compassion.”
- b) Too often we elders are like Job’s comforters, “miserable physicians of the soul.”
- c) The people we serve suffer with weaknesses. We tend to think people just need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. But people have genuine needs and suffering.
- d) In Jesus’ day, women brought their children to the Lord. That just was not done in that day. This indicates that Jesus was approachable.

5. Creating an atmosphere of love

- a) When you love people, you will create atmosphere of love in the church.
- b) Our churches should be safe places. Our people are out in the world getting beat up. They come to our church for safety, for love, for acceptance.
- c) Do people sense a Christlike compassion, love, hospitality, the joy of the Lord, a spiritual vitality?
- d) We as leaders set the tone for this.
- e) Love is our key to the relationship to our people.
- f) Studies show that when people come to our church, they will decide in the first five minutes whether they will come back. What brings people back is how we treat people.
- g) Listen to what D.A. Carson says:

“No amount of good works, wisdom, discernment in matters of church discipline, patient endurance and hardship, hatred of sin, our disciplined doctrine can ever make up for lovelessness.” – D. A. Carson

Gentle and Patient Shepherd

Detailed Outline

Part 3 of 5

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded and guided them with his skillful hand.” (Psalm 78:70–72 ESV)

III. An Elder Must Be Gentle and Patient.

A. Gentle

1. Example of Jesus

- a) Jesus was gentle and lowly; he didn’t push people around.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matt. 11:29)

- b) We shouldn’t be kicking people around, pushing them around.

“He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.” (Isa. 40:11)

2. Example of young parents

- a) Be gentle with first-time parents whose children cry during the meetings of the church.

- b) Assure them, be gentle with them, don’t cast a hurtful eye at them for disruptions.

“I am so happy you are pro-life, it brings me joy to hear your child cry in the meeting.”

“It thrills me to know that there are young families in our fellowship—they are the next generation.”

3. The requirement of an elder is that he be “gentle.”

“Therefore an overseer must be . . . gentle” (1 Tim. 3:3)

- a) This is not “salad bar theology;” we can’t pick and choose what we want.

- b) An elder “must” be gentle.

4. The example and teaching of Paul

- a) When confronting a serious problem, Paul warned the Corinthians with gentleness.

“I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!” (2 Cor. 10:1)

- b) Even dealing with people who may be antagonist or critical of us.
“But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.” (1 Thess. 2:7)
- c) When dealing with people are struggling, we restore people with gentleness.
“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” (Gal. 6:1)
- d) When dealing with people who oppose us:
“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 2:24–25)
- e) Do all of these things, but do it all with complete patience and gentleness.
“... Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” (2 Tim. 4:2)
“We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by . . . patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love . . .” (2 Cor. 6:3, 4, 6)

5. The reason for treating one’s opponent with gentleness is that it enhances the possibility of restoring someone to the truth.

“God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.” (2 Tim. 2:25–26)

- a) Gentleness makes people more receptive to listening to rebuke, and more open to heart and mind change.
“Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.” (Prov. 16:21)
- b) We sometimes think that raising our voice or pounding the pulpit will get our point across. But sweetness of speech is persuasive. It is God’s way.

B. Patient

- 1. Our work as elders is a spiritual work with people, so it must be done in God’s way with patience and care.
 - a) An impatient elder is as destructive to the people as an impatient father is to his children.
 - b) As fathers, sometimes we are really good at scolding our children.
 - c) Where we sometimes lack is in encouraging our children, being kind, gentle, building them up patiently.

2. Patience is needed in leading people because life is filled difficulties, injustices.
 - a) Love suffers long.
 - b) Patience is needed when dealing with the many weaknesses and failures of people.
 - c) We live in a fallen world. People have eccentricities, problems, and struggles.
 - d) We need to have patience with people who are:
 - 1) Slow to learn
 - 2) Resistant to change
 - 3) Weak in the faith
 - 4) Forgetful in their responsibilities
 - 5) Quick to complain
 - 6) Emotionally unstable
 - 7) Fearful, wayward
 - e) All these need to be dealt with patiently.

“... Encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” (1 Thess. 5:14)
 - f) Elders need to be patient because “church work is slow work.”
 - 1) Being patient doesn’t mean being passive.
 - 2) Paul didn’t give up on the Corinthians, cut them off, or act vindictively.
 - 3) He answered their criticism, confronted their sin, and warned them of discipline to come.
 - 4) But he entreated them and did it in a very loving way, in the spirit of true patience and heartfelt love.
3. Without gentleness and patience, a leader has a serious deficiency.

Ministry of Encouragement

Detailed Outline

Part 4 of 5

“He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded and guided them with his skillful hand.” (Psalm 78:70–72 ESV)

IV. An Elder Must Be an Encourager

A. Introduction

1. Encouragement is vital to the church community.
2. “There is a broken heart in every pew.”
3. Many people are discouraged, feel unappreciated.
4. Everyone needs an encouraging or uplifting word.
5. Leaders can create an encouraging environment in our local churches.
6. Words carry energy for good or for bad.

B. Practical Ways We Can Begin a Ministry of Encouragement

1. When you greet someone, look them in the eye. Give them undivided attention.

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” (Heb. 3:13 NIV)

*“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”
(1 Thess. 5:11 ESV)*

2. By nature, we are self-centered; we have to work at building others up.

“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” (1 Thess. 5:14)

“You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” (1 Thess. 2:10–12)

“Encouragement is oxygen of the soul.” – George Adams

3. Don’t assume that people can read your mind.
 - a) When you see people, tell them that you appreciate them.

- b) Don't be like the man who on the day he was married said to his wife, "Now listen to this, I am going to tell you this one time, so you don't have to worry about it for the rest of your life. I love you. So don't expect me to tell you that every day!"
 - c) People love to hear that every day.
 - d) Tell people that you appreciate them, love them, that you see the good they are doing, their ministry, how hard they are working.
4. Make a list of people to encourage who serve in the church, weekly, monthly:
- a) Sunday school director, teachers
 - b) I know a man who served two years in Sunday school and not one parent ever came to him and said, "Thank you for the time you spend teaching my child, for the time preparing lessons."
 - c) The only time they spoke to him was to complain.
 - d) Youth workers—very challenging ministry
 - e) People working with seniors
 - f) Those on the music team (hours and hours of preparation)
 - g) Nursery workers
 - h) Deacons
 - i) Anybody who is serving in the local church
5. Let people know that you see what they are doing.
- a) Sometimes we give people jobs, and we say to them in effect, "OK, here's your ministry, now bye, bye." And we never go back to them unless there is a problem. Don't be like that.
 - b) If you give someone a ministry, follow them, write them a card, send an email, tell them they are doing a good job.
 - c) Don't be like a fireman who sits in his station and only acts when there is a fire.
 - d) Go out, breathe encouragement into the people in your church.
6. Send cards or a handwritten note.
- a) Don't just send an email.
 - b) Maybe include a gift certification to say, "Thank you."
7. Make a phone or two call every day, just to encourage people, not with anything other purpose than encouragement.
8. When people are sick, call them, visit them, send them flowers if in the hospital.

9. Parents of “prodigal” children
 - a) We don’t realize how many parents cry themselves asleep at night over their wayward children.
 - b) Single mothers who are struggling with their children
 - c) Give these people a hug on Sunday morning in the foyer, a kind word, or a squeeze on the arm. “I’ve been praying for you.” Something culturally appropriate to let them know you care for them.
10. People who are out of work
 - a) Send them a meal.
 - b) Send them an encouraging card.
 - c) Call them—if you are an elder, you will be on the phone a lot.
11. Someone going in for an operation
 - a) Call them the night before.
 - b) Pray with them on the phone.
12. Anniversaries and birthdays—acknowledge them
13. Widows and widowers
 - a) Call them on the anniversary of the death of their loved one.
 - b) “I know this is a tough day for you . . .”

V. An Elder Must Be Tactful

“Paul was probably the most tactful missionary who every walked the earth.” – William Hendrickson

A. Two key words for elders: diplomacy and tact

B. Paul’s letters are the perfect example of diplomacy.

“I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.” (1 Cor. 4:6)

C. Hudson Taylor, a great manager of people, was extremely tactful with the Chinese.

“Some persons seem really clever in doing the right thing in the worst possible way or at the most unfortunate time. Really dull or rude persons will seldom be out of hot water in China. And though earnest or clever or pious, will not affect much. In nothing do we fail more as a mission than in lack of tack and politeness.” – Hudson Taylor

In the culture he lived in, it was impolite to not have the hot water going if someone was coming over for tea.

D. Words hurt, but words have the power also to encourage.

“There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Prov. 12:18)

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt . . .” (Col. 4:6)

Hospitality and Prayer

Detailed Outline

Part 5 of 5

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VI. An Elder Must Be Hospitable

A. Use your home for the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In our hyper-busy society, hospitality is almost a forgotten ministry. This is an outright disobedience to the clear commands of Scripture.
2. The commands in scripture about hospitality are just that: commands!
“We are missing a valuable jewel in the crown of the Christian life.” – Alexander Strauch
3. Hospitality is closely associated with encouragement. It is almost always found in the context of love.

B. Scripture

“Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show [or pursue] hospitality.” (Rom. 12:13)

“Show hospitality [or practice] to one another without grumbling.” (1 Peter 4:8–9)

“Do not neglect to show [or practice] hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Heb. 13:2)

Elders, “. . . [be] hospitable . . .” (Titus 1:8)

C. Shepherding work is selfless work. There is much sacrificing in caring for God’s people in a spiritual way.

“For I have no one like him [i.e. Timothy], who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 2:20–21)

D. Hospitality is hard word, but it reaches people—they respond to love.

1. It is a tool for building the church and helping people get to know one another.
2. Helps people get out of their Sunday morning “churchianity.”
“Rarely in my travels do I find congregations who are seriously committed to being a genuine community.” – Eugene Peterson, The Unnecessary Pastor
3. We as leaders must lead by example.
4. It is impossible to shepherd people in one or two hours a week. We must open our homes to people.

E. Examples of people to have to your home

1. Students who are away from home
2. The elderly people who live alone
3. People who are new to your church—show them you are a loving community.
4. Keep the crock pot ready so you can invite people spur of the moment on Sunday after meetings.
5. People who are suffering
6. Young people who need help or mentors
7. Missionaries, itinerate ministers—your children will benefit from rubbing shoulders with servants of the Lord.
8. Non-believers—hospitality is a marvelous tool for evangelism.
9. Anyone who has never been in your home, or who are strangers to you

*"I've done more for the kingdom of God around my kitchen table than I ever did in the pulpit."
– Martin Luther*

VII. An Elder Must Be a Prayer Leader

A. An elder must be a leader in the area of prayer

1. We will never arise above our prayer life.
2. Our work as elders is mainly a spiritual work.
3. The most important aspect of our lives is that part that only God sees.
4. Prayer is an elder's highest activity and probably the primary test of his spiritual state.

"Jesus never taught his disciples how to preach, only how to pray. To know how to speak to God is more important than knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men, but power with God is the first thing." – Andrew Murray

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you . . ." (1 Sam. 12:23)

5. A consistent prayer life is one of the most difficult things in our hyper-busy society.

B. Scripture

"Epaphras, who is one of you . . . always struggling on your behalf in his prayers . . . I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you . . ." (Col. 4:12–13)

Paul wrote that he was "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." (Eph. 6:18)

"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you . . . we have not ceased to pray for you . . ." (Col. 1:9)

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4)

This is key for a leader, what was a priority for the apostles.

"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work, prayer is the greatest work." – Oswald Chambers

"We must go forward on our knees." – Hudson Taylor

C. A praying elder is a caring elder.

D. Practical suggestions

1. Use your church directory. Divide it into seven days. Pray for certain people on a given day, pray for everyone in your church. This is also a good way to get to know people's names and memorize them.
2. Be aggressive to get the prayer requests from people in the church.
 - a) Let people know the elders are praying for them.
 - b) Put prayer request slips of paper in the pews.
 - c) Seek requests during corporate prayer times.
3. Seek to improve corporate times, make this a dynamic part of your elder ministry
 - a) Have a prepared prayer list.
 - b) Be a prayer facilitator
 - c) Break into small groups. Have two or three elders prayer together.
 - d) Make sure you say "Amen" during prayer.
 - e) Keep prayer short so people don't go to sleep.

"If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much would we find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children." – Robert Murray McCheyne

E. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of prayer in dealing with God's people.

Closing quote for this series on "People Skills":

"I regularly tell our seminary students that if I happen to visit one of the churches in which one of them serves, I will not ask is the man a good preacher. Rather, first of all, I will ask the secretaries, office staff, janitors and cleaners, what is it like to work for this pastor? I'll ask what kind of man is he? Is he a servant? Is he demanding and harsh? Or is he patient and kind and forbearing as a man in authority. One of our graduates may preach great sermons, but if he is a pain to work for, then you know he will cause major problems in any congregation. Leaders of the church are required by scripture to set an example in the areas of love, kindness, gentleness, patience and forbearance before they are appointed to preach, teach and rule. If we obediently require these character traits and attitudes of our leaders, what will our new community look like." – Professor Jerram Barrs