

# ACTS: To the Ends of the Earth

## Study 47: The Mandate of Paul: Shepherd the Flock (Part 1)

READ Acts 20:28 and LISTEN to the [sermon](#) by Pastor Craig.

The church of God is precious to our Lord Jesus Christ. So much so that He gave His own life for her (Acts 20:28) and is now sanctifying and cleansing her “so that he might present the church to himself with splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:26-27). After purchasing the church, the Lord has placed His bride into the hands of elders and pastors to protect, guard, purify, mature and prepare her for His coming, when He will receive her to Himself.

**Big idea:** The Holy Spirit has appointed elders to shepherd His flock, which He purchased with His own blood.

### Questions:

1. Scripture tells us that the local church should be governed by a plurality (more than one) of elders<sup>1</sup> (Acts 15:2, 20:17; 1 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:5).
  - A. What does this mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - B. What might be the pros and cons of this kind of leadership?
  
2. Both men and women are equal in value to God (Gen 1:27) and therefore should have equal value in the church. Both have equal access to all the blessings of salvation (Acts 2:17-18; Gal 3:28). However, does the Bible permit a woman to hold the office of elder? See 1 Tim 2:11-14, 3:1-7; 1 Cor 14:33b-35<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The terms elder (20:17), overseer (20:28; 1 Tim 3:1-2), and shepherd or pastor (Acts 20:28, “to care for”) are all interchangeable and refer to the one office.

3. Who appoints elders to shepherd the local church (v. 28) and how might someone know if they have been given this calling? See Col 4:17; 1 Tim 3:1.
  
4. How should the church discern and affirm if someone has been called by God and is ready to be an elder? See 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
  
5. What does Paul mean when he tells the elders in Ephesus to “pay careful attention to yourselves” (v. 28)? See John 21:15-17; 1 Tim 3:1-7, 4:16.
  
6. From the following verses how should elders shepherd and care for the church:  
1 Tim 5:17; 1 Pet 5:1-2  
  
2 Tim 4:2  
  
Acts 20:29-31  
  
James 5:14  
  
Acts 15:6
  
7. How does knowing that the church has been obtained with Christ’s own blood (v. 28) act as a sober warning to elders? See also Heb 13:17.
  
8. How has this study particularly helped you and what might you do about it?

<sup>2</sup> In this passage, Paul cannot be prohibiting all public speech by women, for he allows them to pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). It is best to understand that in its context he is forbidding public evaluations or critiques of truth that would amount to ruling or governing.