

STUDY GUIDE

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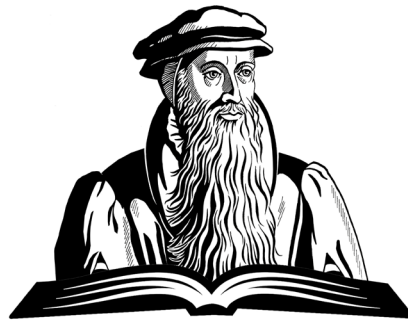
Biblical Eldership

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Robert D. McCurley, ThM

Lecture #6

Shepherding



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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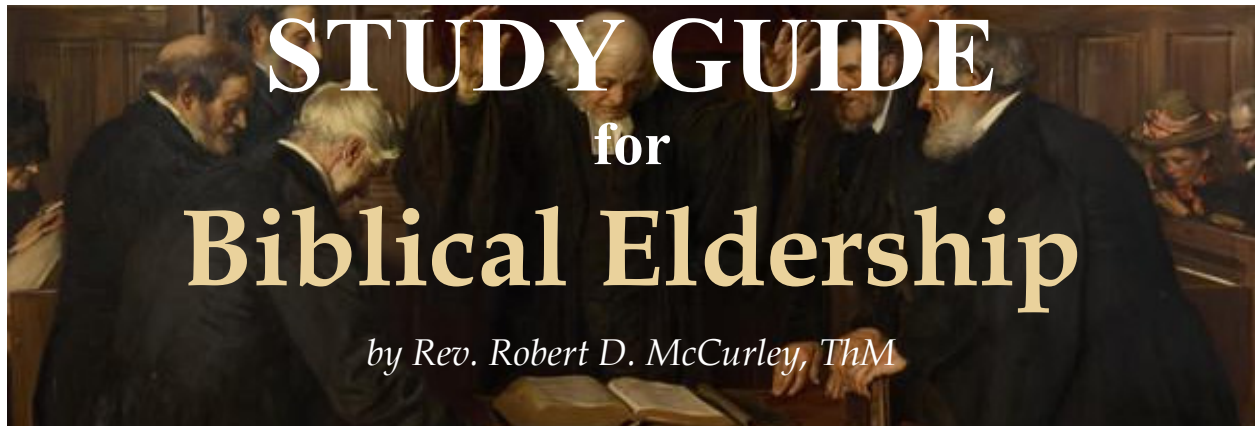
Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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Cover image: “The Ordination of Elders in a Scottish Kirk,” 1891, John Henry Lorimer



1. Introduction

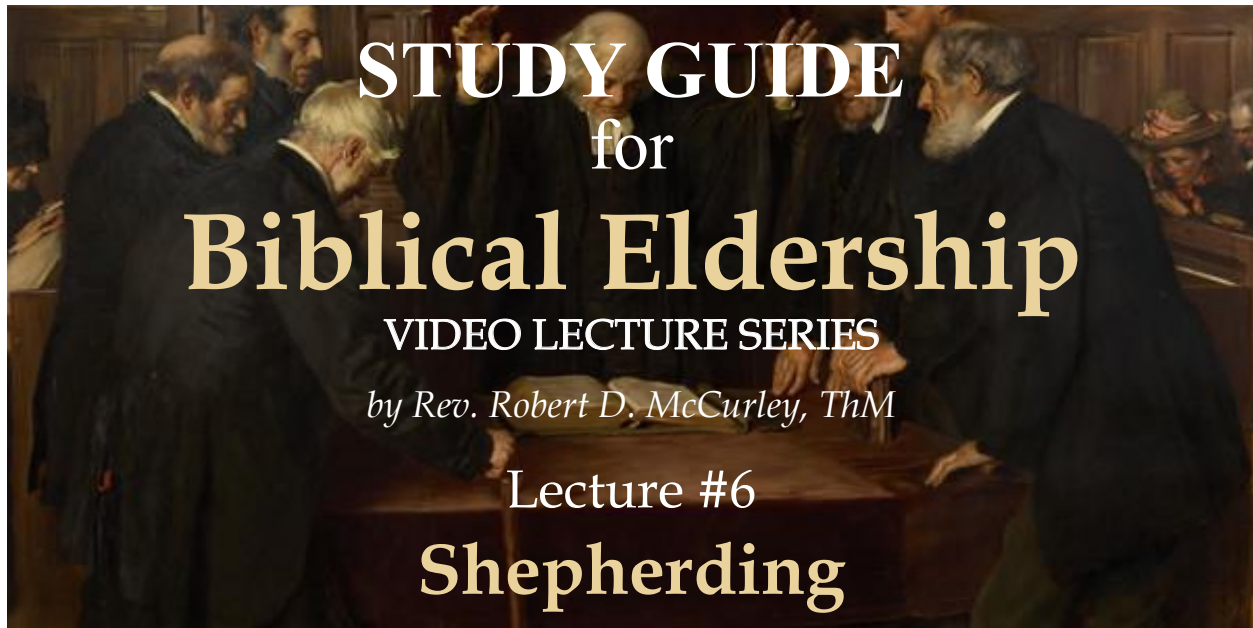
2. The Office

3. Qualifications

4. More Qualifications

5. Doctrine

6. Shepherding



Introduction

Shepherding is among the oldest occupations in the world. The duty of shepherds is to keep their flock intact, protected from predators, and guided. His responsibility is the safety and welfare of the flock. In our own day, some flocks may include as many as a thousand sheep. A shepherd will graze the animals, herding them to areas of good forage, and keeping a watchful eye out for poisonous plants. Shepherds sometimes work in groups, either looking after one large flock, or each bringing their own and merging their responsibilities. Well, this is a striking picture, and as you know I'm sure, it's a familiar image in the Bible, which often speaks of sheep and shepherds, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Theme

The elder's role and responsibility in shepherding the Lord's people, the flock of Christ.

Key Points

1. The Chief Shepherd.

- a. The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the Shepherd of his people.
- b. God shepherded his people through Moses in the Old Testament

2. The Undershepherds.

- a. In the New Testament, the Lord shepherds his people through elders in the church.
- b. Elders are appointed as undershepherds, under Christ who is the Chief Shepherd.
 - 1) Promised in Jeremiah 23:3–4, "I will set up shepherds over them."
 - 2) 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28–29; John 21:15–17; Ephesians 4:12
- d. Elders are to wisely direct the affairs of the church.

- e. Elders are to personally care for God's people with counsel, help, and encouragement.
 - 1) Elders must know each one by name; know their circumstances, their needs, struggles.
 - 2) Elders must know the state of the souls of God's people.
 - 3) Elders must serve God's people with biblical love.
 - 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Ezekiel 34:16.
- f. Elders must engage in self-sacrifice for Christ's sheep.
 - 1) John 10:11–15.

3. *Shepherding Visits, or Home Visitation.*

- a. Elders must follow Paul's pattern in Acts 20:20 and 31.
- b. Historically, elders have engaged in visiting the families of the congregation.
 - 1) It's not a social visit, not an interrogation, but the aim is to serve the people.
- c. Frequency of home visitations can vary, depending on the size of the congregation and the number of elders.
- d. Suggested activities for elders during home visitations.
 - 1) Read from Scripture.
 - 2) Ask if the member needs prayer.
 - 3) Inquire how they are doing, how the family is doing.
 - 4) Ask if they have any questions or concerns.
- e. Elder districts can help to make sure that everyone in the congregation is visited.
- f. The benefits of Home Visitation.
 - 1) Strengthens the role of the eldership in the congregation.
 - 2) Elders can become aware of potential problems and address them.
 - 3) All the congregation are shown that they are valued members of the church.
 - 4) Elders benefit from the joy of seeing fruit and growth of members.
 - 5) Elders themselves grow in maturity, knowledge, spiritual depth, and pastoral skill.
 - 6) Home visits encourage regular attendance in the public worship.

4. Conclusion and summary.

Study Questions

1. From which Bible passages do we know that the Lord Jesus Christ shows himself to be the Chief Shepherd of his people? How do we see from the New Testament that God appoints elders as undershepherds to watch over, protect, and guide his flock?

2. What are some of the ways that elders' must care for God's people with counsel, help, and encouragement?

3. When we study texts like those in 1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28–29; John 21:15–17; and Ephesians 4:12, what do we learn about the responsibilities of elders in the church?

4. What are the implications of knowing that elders must care for God's people deeply?

5. In this lecture, Rev. McCurley said that elders are called to give themselves self-sacrificially in the care of God's people. How does this differ from the way a "hireling" would care for the sheep?

6. How can elder home visitations affect people's attendance in the public worship service?
What is the aim of home shepherding visits by elders?

7. In order to fulfill this aim, what kinds of questions might be asked by the elder during the home visit? What are some helpful preparations can be done by both parties in advance of a home visitation—by both the elder and the person visited?

8. How frequent should Home Visitations be? What if it is a large congregation with only a few elders? Might there be additional home visits in the case of an emergency?

9. How does a well-organized pattern of faithful elder visitation strengthen the role of the eldership in the church? How do the members of the congregation benefit from Home Visitations individually, as families, and collectively?

10. How can an elder's faithful practice of home visitations be of benefit to himself?

Further Study

1. As we meditate on how the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed elders as undershepherds to watch over his people, what practical instructions can we derive about the importance of being members in the visible church?

2. What can we learn from the Lord Jesus Christ himself about the duty of elders and church members during home visitations?
