

FBC Today

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● No. 38, Jalan SS17/1D,
47500 Subang Jaya,
Selangor, Malaysia.
● +603 5621 2623
● fbc.subangfamily@fbc.com.my
● www.fbc.com.my

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**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE**

ARTICLE
The Ministry of Eldership

PRAYER SPOTLIGHT
**NECF 40 Days Fast
and Prayer**

The Ministry of Eldership

When the Apostle Paul wanted to establish and strengthen the churches that he had planted on the island of Crete, he sent and charged Titus to begin by appointing Elders who would be entrusted to 'oversee' the groups of believers there (*Titus 1: 5*). In the Bible, the terms Elder, Pastor, and Overseer are often used interchangeably. But what does the office of Eldership entail?



**NEXT
WEEK'S
SERMON**

September 8, 2024

**The
Resurrection
Body**

1 Corinthians 13
Preacher
William Ngeow

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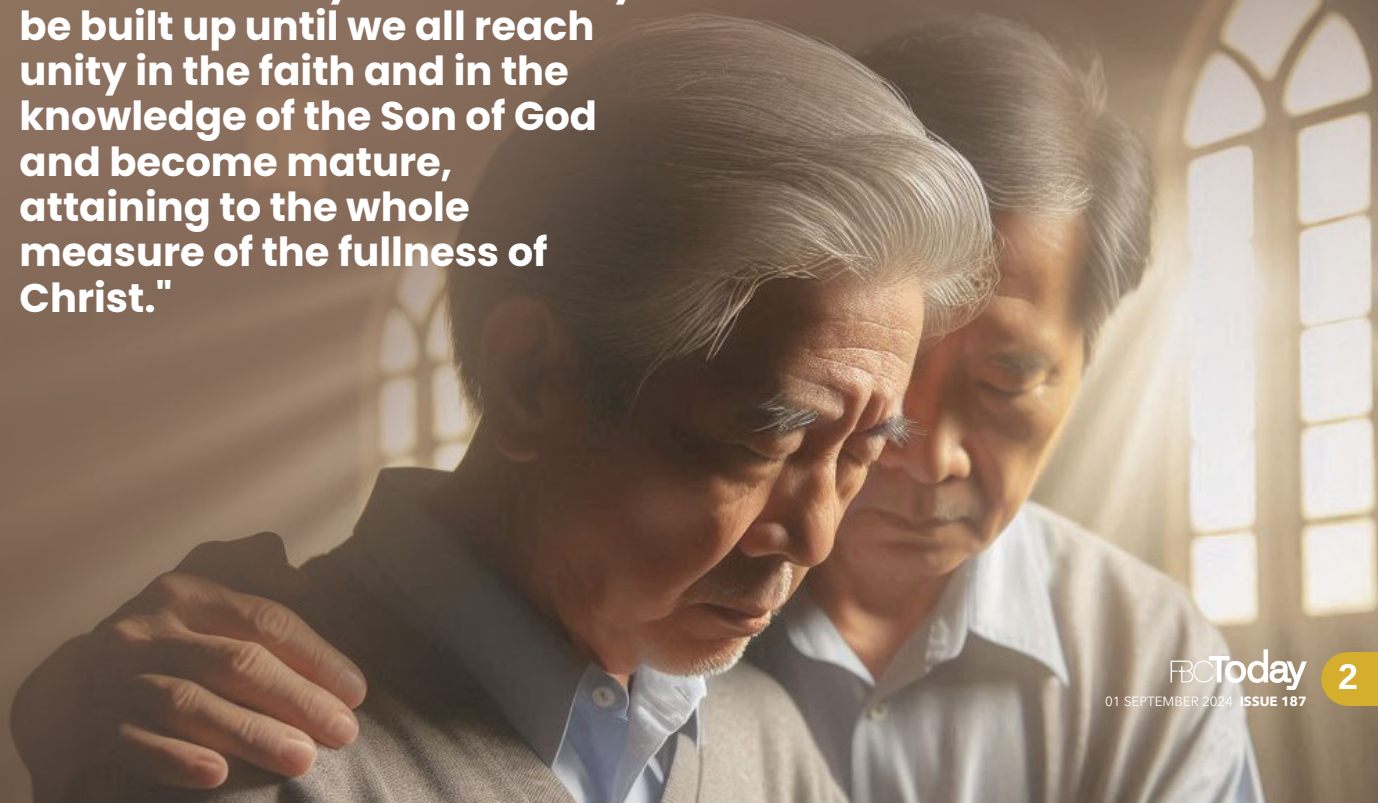
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Before we answer that question, it may be useful to first remind ourselves the purpose and mission of the church. 1 Peter 1:9, describes the nature of the church as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Peter is using Old Testament language here. Just as the nation of Israel was to be an example to the surrounding nations in reflecting the holiness and goodness of God, the Church today is to proclaim the excellencies of Christ through their transformed lives, so that the Gentile world may our good deeds and glorify God! (1 Peter 2:12)

Therefore, an Elder's responsibility, in a nutshell, is to faithfully lead and equip the church to become a credible witness for Christ (salt and light) to the world. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul states that it is Christ himself who gave the church pastors and teachers " to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

What does equipping the church entail? This is where the picture of a shepherd as used by our Lord Jesus is instructive. Three times in John 21, Jesus gave the Apostle Peter the command to "Feed my Sheep". That means to shepherd or care for the flock. God's people are often referred to as sheep in the Bible (*Psalm 95:7; Isaiah 53:6; John 10:27*) and Jesus is our Great Shepherd (*John 10:11*). To me, caring for the flock would involve at least these 4 things:

1. PREACH (AND TEACH). As essential as it is to provide food and nutrients for the physical growth and well-being of the sheep, preaching and teaching the word of God is vital for the spiritual growth and well-being of the church. In Paul's final instructions to Timothy, he charged the young elder to "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction" (*2 Tim 4:2*). Likewise, the elder must "encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (*Titus 1:9*). Thus the faithful teaching ministry must be both formative and corrective in nature.



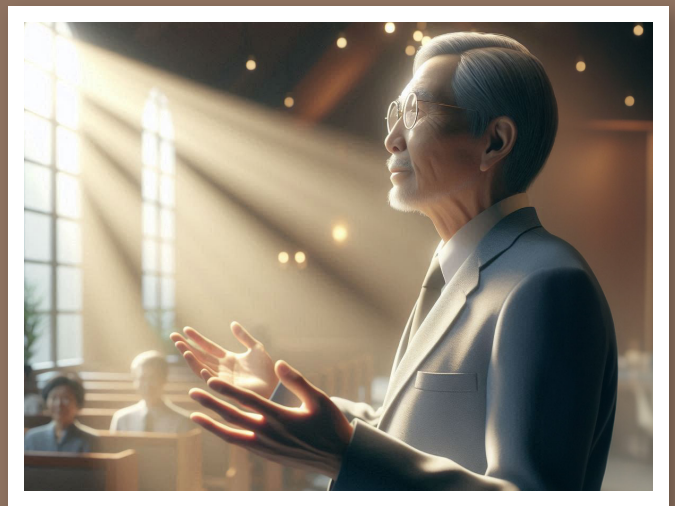


2. PROTECT. Sheep are vulnerable animals and prone to wander off from the herd and get lost. They are also often attacked by predators like wolves. In the church, such attacks can come from external sources through the prevailing culture and persecution. But often, such attacks come from within the church where individuals sow seeds of discord through false teachings, slander, and other carnal behaviors. We see these manifested in Paul's letters to the churches in Corinth and Crete (Titus). In fact, Paul warns in Acts 20:28-29: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." In the opening chapter of Titus, Paul had to instruct Titus to refute those rebellious Judaizers who were stirring up trouble in the church.

3. PRAY. There are over forty recorded prayers of the Apostle Paul in his writings that reflect his pastoral heart for the people of God. It's clear that an Elder/pastor must constantly pray for his people. To the Thessalonians in Thes 1:2, Paul writes " We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers." To the Ephesians, he writes, " I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (1:16)

as he asks God to enlighten the eyes of their hearts to know the hope, inheritance, and power they have in Christ. Prayer is the means by which God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Paul's appeal to the believers in Thessalonica to pray for him in service for spreading the Gospel and deliverance from wicked men speaks of the importance of prayer in the life and service of God's servants. Likewise, as an elder, I would never presume that anything in ministry work can be accomplished according to God's will without constantly seeking His enablement in prayer.



4. PATTERN. Last but not least, an elder must lead by example, serving as a pattern for others to follow. We are probably familiar with the qualifications of an elder as spelled out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus. Those lists of traits focus on godly characters rather than any specific skills. In demonstrating the importance of these qualifications, the apostle Peter appealed to the elders of the church not to misuse their authority but to be examples to the flock in humble leadership (*1 Peter 5:3*). Elders are therefore to be under-shepherds, following in the example of Jesus our Great Shepherd who is gentle and humble in heart (*Mathew 11:29*).

As leaders of a church, elders are held to a high standard of conduct and

accountability. It's a sacred and demanding calling because they keep watch over the souls of their flock and must one day give an account to the Lord (*Hebrews 13:17*). In our fallen world, elders and pastors are certainly not perfect. Yet Scriptures exhort the church to obey and submit to them; to afford them due honor if they govern well (*1 Tim 5:17*). May we, as the body of Christ, support and pray for our elders, recognizing the immense weight of their responsibility. May those called to this office embrace their calling with humility, courage, and unwavering devotion to our Great Shepherd.



By Leong Yew Lum

Yew Lum serves as an elder and Chairman of First Baptist Church (E) Subang Jaya.

 **PrayerSpotlight**

1 September 2024
Today's Prayers

Heavenly Father, we are grateful for Jesus, our Great High Priest who deeply understands our weaknesses. We believe that, in Your unshakeable love, You will provide a way out for us in spite of our weaknesses. Strengthen us each time with Your Word and Your Spirit when we are vulnerable. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pray that the department and agencies for religious affairs under the Prime Minister's Department would successfully foster a better understanding of religions among the public with a moderate and balanced approach.

Pray that the life and practices of the Malaysian churches would not fall into a form of religiosity but that we would be people with a vibrant worship who lead spirit-filled lives.

source: 40-Days Fast & Prayer 2024

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