

## Honor Honor

Would you do your current job if it didn't involve a paycheck? Though you might love your career, most folks wouldn't jump at the chance to work for free. And that's not a bad thing! We don't view teachers, police officers, or plumbers with disdain just because they're getting paid.

With that in mind, let's shift our conversation back to Paul's — sometimes overlooked — words in 1st Timothy 5.

*"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'"* (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

**The Big Idea:** A shepherd's role in a congregation's health and security is so important that we should provide for them while they work for us.

### Worthwhile Work

- We doubly honor our shepherds because their work is *"a noble task."* (1 Timothy 3:1).
- Shepherding was so important to Paul, that he made Titus' main focus to *"appoint elders in every town as I directed you"* (Titus 1:5). Notice that Titus wasn't called to establish full-time preachers, find a meeting house, choose a teaching curriculum, or set up a website — though those are certainly important.
- Would you risk your life for something that's optional or unimportant? Paul came back to Lystra — the city where he was stoned — to appoint elders (Acts 14:23).

### Work Done Well

- As with all work, it can either be done well or not. And Paul specifically identifies those shepherds who *"rule well ... especially those who work in preaching and teaching"* (1 Timothy 5:17-18).
- Because of the importance of the work, it's not to be taken lightly or entered into half-heartedly. Qualified men must *"Pay careful attention to (themselves) and to all the flock ..."* (Acts 20:28).
- We may think we've mastered multitasking, but not even the apostles — inspired by the Holy Spirit — wanted to be distracted while they did the more important work: *"And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'"* (Acts 6:2-4).

### Worthy of Wages

- Paul refers us back to the Old Law, where God commanded his people not to push their brethren to the breaking point (Deut. 25:1-4). While the ox works to make your food, don't expect them to do that job very well — or for very long — if you haven't fed them.
- And it's not oxen that God's concerned about, but it's about people's right to receive material support for the spiritual service they provide (1 Cor. 9:4-14).
- Jesus said that laborers are worthy of their wages (Luke 10:7), and I think we all agree. So, should we pay our elders here? Would it be right and appropriate to do so, given our situation here? The answer may change as the makeup of our congregation or eldership changes in the future (1 Cor. 9:12; Acts 16:3; Gal 2:3).

## **Conclusion**

Shepherds fill a vital role in the congregation's health and safety. Because they ought to be able to focus on that work without distraction, let's make sure we're always prepared to support them — yes, with admiration and respect (1 Thess. 5:13) — but also with our willing and generous financial support.