

Lording It Over the Flock

In [1 Peter 5:3](#), the inspired apostle writes, ***“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.”*** This is a command given to those who shepherd the flock of Jehovah God in its individual congregations.

This verse is often used against an eldership because of how they handled a certain situation within the congregation. The membership does not like a certain decision and the accusation against the eldership is, *“They have lorded it over the flock.”* However, taken in its proper context, such an accusation is a misuse of the verse and misses completely the point the inspired writer was making.

The word *lord* can refer to a “ruler” as we read in [1 Timothy 3:5](#); [1 Timothy 5:17](#); and [Hebrews 13:7, 17](#). In this sense, elders are to rule. Therefore, elders are to be lords over God’s heritage. Is this the opposite of what the verse states? The translators of the King James Version knew there was no original word for the name of God in this verse. And because they misunderstood the point that Peter was making, they inserted the name of God in italics. The word *heritage* is possessive and in the second person. The verse would be better translated *“Not as being lords over your own heritage.”*

The manner of ruling is not in question here but the motive or the attitude of the rulers. In other words, the eldership is not to take upon them the authority over the consciences of men or to have dominion over their faith. Simply put, when the eldership states that the congregation is going to do something just because the eldership said, that is the wrong motive and wrong attitude.

The word *katakuriuo* (lording) is from *kata* (an intensifier or down) plus *kurieuo* (have dominion over). This means to have dominion “down” on others and includes the idea of domineering (as in the rule of a strong person over a weak person). It also means to exercise one’s dominion, to bring one under his power, to bring into his subjection, to gain dominion over, or to subdue. The preposition *kata* (down) indicates intensity and severity and depicts a heavy-handed use of authority for personal appeasement manifesting itself by a haughty demand for compliance. Brow beating the brethren into subjection in matters of option is something forbidden to true shepherds of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

Elders do have the rule in optional matters. However, when their decision is detrimental to the life and health of the congregation, they must reconsider their decision. *“Not as being lords over your own heritage”* denounces self gratification and promotes doing what ever is best for the congregation. For example, if a man has a questionable past but has repented and the eldership decides to use that man as a preacher or teacher, the eldership is exercising an optional matter. However, if the membership vehemently objects to the use of this man, what should the eldership do? True, the eldership has the rule in matters of option. But what are the options? One option would be to use the man over the objections of the membership, split the congregation, and, in that way, never give the man the opportunity to prove himself or be accepted. Another option would be not to use the man, keep the congregation together and, over time, give this man the opportunity to prove himself and be accepted. Which is the wise option? Which one would give the eldership time to teach and reach the brethren? If an eldership was truly concerned with the welfare of this man and the congregation, what would that eldership do?

Elderships are to be examples to their flocks. If an eldership will submit to doing what is best for the congregation and put aside self gratification and the high minded demand for obedience from the flock then there would be many less problems among the flock of God. They would be both trusted

and respected. Then elderships ***“may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*** ([Hebrews 13:17](#)).