
Leadership at the Chapel

1 Peter 5:1-11

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One quiet day on a beach on the Sea of Galilee, around a fire stood a number of men. Fish were roasting and the talk was flowing. One big man, obviously a fisherman, sat somewhat glumly listening to the conversation. Suddenly he was engaged by the man seemingly at the center of the group. Three quick questions were answered with growing consternation. Each response was met with a form of the command, "Feed my sheep" or "Tend my flock".

Many years later, that former fisherman sat writing a letter to the flock he was tending and feeding. Through them, his words come to us. As he was preparing to leave the scene through death, he left a charge to the church. While they were suffering terribly under the persecution of the Jews and the Roman government, they were to suffer well as servants submitting first to God and then to the powers ordained by God.

As his departure was near, he wanted to ensure that the shepherd and sheep responded to each other in a God pleasing way. From his words we learn much about what leadership at the Chapel is to be like.

So, turn with me to our text, 1 Peter 5:1-11.

Our Leadership

(v. 1-5)

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Exemplary Shepherds

(v.1-4)

Peter as a Peer and a Partner

(v.1)

Peter wants to establish a common ground with the elders he is writing to. He wants them to know that he understands their commitments and challenges. He himself is a shepherd.

The Elders are spoken of as being among the flock. They are being reminded that their primary responsibility is to be among the people. Even though we do oversee the church, we are to be among the people.

Peter speaks of himself a fellow elder. He also is shepherding God's flock. He was given the direct charge by Christ to tend, to care for and to feed the sheep.

And he is a witness of Jesus' suffering. Since we know that he was not at the cross, this is likely all the suffering of Jesus that culminated in the Garden of Gethsemane as far as Peter's personal experience is concerned.

As a fellow elder and witness of Jesus' suffering, he is also someone who will share in the future glory that is not yet fully revealed.

In all these things, Peter is reminding us of the qualities shared by Biblical leadership. We must be among the people. We shepherd in concert with other shepherds. We are to expect to experience suffering. Finally, we are focused on eternal not temporal things.

Shepherding as the Picture

(v.2)

It is the attitude of our leading. It encourages us to care about you and put your needs first. It frames sacrifice for you and seeking your good even as we pursue God's glory.

It is the activity of our leading. We think in terms of leading the way. We do not drive. We do not force. We try to set the pace. We lead out going ahead. We set the pace and pattern in leadership for all those who follow.

Shepherding as the Practice

(v.3)

As shepherds, this is the way to govern God's people. It is presented in a series of contrasts.

Not by compulsion, but willingly. Elders in shepherding are to oversee the church, not out of a sense of obligation, but rather with a sense of eager willingness. The governance of the church must be something that we are glad to do. We must all recognize that it is God who has set forth what we are responsible to do.

Not for shameful wealth, but eagerly. Elders in shepherding are not to govern in the church in such a way as to manipulate finances for their own personal gain. So, an elder must be willing to serve even if there is no financial remuneration.

Not as dictators, but as examples. Elders in shepherding are to oversee the church by leading, not by lording. We lord when we command in areas that we ought to counsel. Thus, the opposite of dominating is modeling. We are to be an example of that which we require.

Christ as the Chief Shepherd

(v.4)

Why do we shepherd this way? Because we are looking at Jesus Christ as our perfect, heavenly example.

The elders are to recognize Jesus as the Senior-Pastor. He is the chief shepherd. Now some churches have a senior pastor. Some churches have an elder or elders who are set aside as the senior pastor. We do not do that. Russ Kennedy is not the senior pastor. We have consciously chosen to recognize Jesus in our church as our chief shepherd.

We are to serve waiting for the time of God's recognition and reward. It is so easy for elders to crave human acceptance and approval, recognition and reward. Earthly rewards will fade and decay. God's reward will remain forever.

Careful Submission

(v.5a)

⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.

Submission is an important issue in the 1st Peter. Christians are to submit to human institutions (2:13), servants to masters (2:18), wives to husbands (3:1), and everything to Christ (3:22). This submission by the servants of God brings them suffering. We are called to submit even in the midst of suffering. This is because the great Shepherd of the sheep suffered and submitted even to death on the cross as we see in 1 Peter 2:21-22.

²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

The “likewise” then connects this submission to the submission in the rest of the book. Peter’s command here is given in a play on words. The body of leaders in the church are called the elders, the “olders”, if you will. So the “younger” must be subject to the “elders”. Peter’s way of talking also recognizes the special struggle of youth to submit. So he points to submission to the elders as a way to grow up, to mature.

But the command is still aimed at the older in the congregation. It is a rhetorical “how much more.” It says, “If the younger are to submit to the elders, how much more those of you who are mature?”

Peter calls the elders to shepherd in view of the way Christ oversees His people as the chief shepherd. He calls on the people to be subject to the elders looking to the example that Christ set. Jesus then is our example of both how to lead and how to submit.

Our Attitude

(v.5b-7)

Humility is to be the dominant attitude of both shepherds and sheep, leaders and people.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Toward One Another

(v.5b)

Put on humility like a garment. Humble yourself in your own mind so that you will be humble in relationship to others. Elders are to lead as humble men. We are to be humble towards all of those who have been given to our charge. We must not walk or lead in pride. And the flock are to be humble towards the elders. We (and I include the elders in this) are to be poised to humble ourselves under the body of Elders. We must not walk in pride.

Finally, we are all to be humble with one another. Pride will infest a church, poison relationships and destroy the partnership and fellowship that is essential to ministry.

We are to humble ourselves towards one another because we need the grace of God in our relationships and our roles. To lead well we need God’s grace. To follow well, we need God’s grace. If we do not have God’s grace, the ministry of the church will be carried on by human strength and not by divine enablement.

Under God**(v.6)**

In order to humble ourselves towards one another we must humble ourselves under God. So, Peter commands us to humble ourselves under God's sovereign, powerful hand. This is where Christian humility begins: to submit ourselves to God. Why does Peter say this now? Because it is God who puts the gathered church together. He puts the people and the leaders together as He ordains. In order to shepherd, serve and submit as the Bible calls for, then we must see God's providential hand in it.

You can humble yourself even to the point of suffering because you know that God will lift you up when it is His time to do so. Just as Christ was humbled at the cross and will be exalted at His crowning, so we will be willing to humble ourselves till the crowning day.

Without Worry**(v.7)**

⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Here is a verse often taken out of its context. This verse isn't even a whole sentence on its own. When are we to cast all our burdens, cares, worries on God? When we are in the situation of the book, when we might suffer because of submitting as servants.

One of the greatest challenges to pleasing God in the church family is worry. We worry when leaders don't choose what we want. We worry when people resist what has been chosen. We worry that we are going to have to shepherd difficult people. We worry that we are going to have to submit to leaders we disagree with. This anxiety is useless and sinful.

So God commands you to throw your burden of worry on God. You are not casting the anxiety itself. You are casting the causes of the anxiety upon God. You submit to His hand. You place the worries and anxieties and cares of submitting to God and to shepherds into God's hands. Anxiety and worry are signs of wrong treasures, failed trusts and attempts to serve two masters.

You can do this because you are confident of God's care. He cares more about the situation than you do. Or actually, He cares about the situation in the right way. But really that is not the focus here. You take your burdens to the Lord because He cares *for you*.

Shepherd, serve and submit as God commands all without worry because you know for certain God cares for you.

Our Enemy**(v.8-9)**

The overarching context is suffering. The immediate context is submission. In these two situations Satan is seeking to destroy God's people.

⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Be aware of his danger

We need a serious minded, alert attention to the danger. Satan loves to use our poor shepherding and lack of submission to get in and destroy the church. He destroys relationships. The essence of shepherding, serving and submitting under God is relationships. So Satan delights to take areas of disagreement and dissatisfaction and use it to break relationships.

Brothers and sisters, God has been pleased over the last 14 years to largely grant us a huge measure of peace. But there are decisions that we as Elders have made and will have to make that some of you disagree with and will disagree with. We are seeking God's wisdom and humbling ourselves before the Lord listening to your counsel. Satan would love to turn the disagreement into dissent, and dissent into division. Let's be alert to his devices.

Resist him by faith

Truth believed and lived is the answer to Satan's attempts to devour us. We resist him by holding fast to faith, to what must be believed. This belief is not just affirmations of doctrinal truth, but accepting and affirming the truth of a situation. By faith we will believe what God says. By faith we will affirm God's interpretation of a situation.

Affirm your shared lot

Humbly recognize that you are not unique; Satan is attacking the church all over the world. Our situation is not unusual. I talk to pastors and people all the time to discover that churches all over the world struggle with variations of the same theme.

Our Hope

(v.10-11)

When we must suffer due to our submitting as servants, we do so in hope.

¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Problem: In our Situation

Remember that the church Peter was writing to was suffering horrible persecution. So we should not trivialize that by comparing our small sufferings with what they were going through. Yet, many of you are in situations where your submission to spouses, to employers and even to church leadership is causing you some pain and suffering. This paragraph is for you.

Provision: By what God promises

You can be pleasing to God in this situation if you will recognize who God is and what He promises. He is the God of all kinds of grace. Therefore He can and will enable you to go through what He has provided for you.

He promises to engage you in those situations Himself. He, Christ, Himself will do these things for you. He will do what He does for you in a relationship with you. He is not providing some spiritual engine or abstract power. He Himself will do what He promises.

What a comfort these four things are. Christ Himself will restore you. Christ Himself will confirm you. Christ Himself will strengthen you. Christ Himself will establish you.

Purpose: For His great dominion

Why is God commanding this kind of shepherding, serving and submitting even in suffering? Because He is the King and this, the church, is the present and visible place of His authority and rule. Now it would be easy read “He is doing for His glory” into this and He is because He is doing all things for His glory. But that is not what the text says. Here the praise is for His dominion, His kingdom, His rule. So God established this shepherding, serving and submitting *as the means by which He brings about His rule in the universe.*

Reflect and Respond

All of this has very personal impact on us as shepherds, you as sheep and as a gathered church. This series that we are wrapping up today flows out of our spring Elders’ Retreat. As we seek to shepherd the church, we have to make wisdom decisions. We have talked about these last fall and again in the spring. We have many new people and we have some with concerns. We have thought about, discussed, studied and prayed much about the growth that God has given us. In view of all that God is doing, we have two complementary trajectories.

We have a trajectory moving us towards Biblical church planting.

We have a commissional commitment to replicating congregations as the norm for a Biblical church. It is required for churches to evangelize in the neighborhoods and in the nations. Then it is normal for churches to be gathering God’s people into new congregations.

While the Chapel has no active or immediate plans to begin a church plant (or any form thereof, e.g. revitalization), it is the intent of the Elders to see the gospel spread in such a way that results in intentional multiplication of gathered church bodies. We believe that the Chapel should be always preparing and planning for the spread of the kingdom through this means. As to location, timing and method, we will continue to seek wisdom through prayer, study of the Scripture, and sensitivity to what the Lord is doing among us for the sake of mission in the neighborhoods and the nations.

Our immediate preparation has involved setting aside money to fund a future church plant. We have committed to setting aside a certain amount each month. We will also set aside a percentage of the end of year net cash.

We are also working to equip people for the work of evangelism. This training has started with the new ABE class Dan and others are teaching. This training will yield enormous present benefit. It will also equip people to be ready, mature, stable and skilled in the ministries needed to plant a church. This active effort to foster the poise and the readiness to send pastors and members out for the establishment of new church bodies will take some time to accomplish.

We have a trajectory moving us towards Biblical facility expansion.

We have a missional commitment to expanding the congregation here in Springboro. This is after all, the neighborhood in which God's providences and provisions have placed us.

Immediate preparations are to provide for the growth God has given us. This will mean in the near future going to two services. We do not know exactly what that will look like. But at our current growth we will need to have a "plan in the pocket" by Christmas.

Long term planning has begun in gathering data for considering the possibility of facility expansion on this campus. This expansion would address our need in worship, child care, teaching and fellowship. We will be working to wisely gather data, so that a wise decision can be made about whether or not to proceed in this direction.

We have come to believe that these are complementary, not competing tracks. Since neither are Biblically mandated as the will of God and both are possibly enabled by our present growth in both members and finances, we will seek to move forward with both wisely. We have been and will continue to seek your counsel.

In these two areas, as in all other areas of church leadership and oversight, this text applies directly to this situation. Elders have been given the oversight of the church and are entrusted by the Word and Spirit to make wisdom decisions. The Elders must also lead in these situations in a shepherding way. This means engaging and caring for people and humbly listening to counsel.

You also must be willing to serve and submit even when you disagree with decisions. Some of you want to plant a church now. We are not ready. Some of you do not want two services. It is almost inevitable. Some do not want to incur more debt for a new building. Unless God supernaturally provides, a mortgage is the mechanism we may use.

Now let us clothe ourselves in humility. May we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. May we shepherd, serve and submit well keeping our eyes on Jesus.

¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

