

The School of Leadership

1 Peter 3:7-17

Russ Kennedy

Introduction It would be difficult to have a more stark contrast in leading men than Carol O'Conner (Archie Bunker) and John Wayne. From the hard, rough, opinionated, demanding role to the quiet, steady, strong, just, right-loving roles. And for a very different sort of leading man, think of the smooth, sophisticated, witty and debonair Spencer Tracy.

But who will be a man who leads? And does your leadership look like these men? What does it mean to be a leading man or a man who leads?

Our Conference

This morning we launch our 2007 Family Enrichment Conference entitled, The Leading Man. The aim of the series is to enable men practically to become godly and effective leaders.

Strategy

In the morning services we will be focusing on exposition from selected texts on the topic of the day with clear but principled application.

In the evening services we will be working out the principles in plain, practical and personal application with clear steps of action and illustration.

The conference will culminate in the Weekend Retreat followed by John Crott's message in the last AM message and an Open Forum in the evening.

Schedule

Sunday		Title	Text	Theme
Jan 7	AM	The School of Leadership	1 Peter 3:7-17	Biblical Leadership at Home
	PM	The Skills of Leadership		Practical Leadership at Home
Jan 14	AM	The Scope of Leadership	Ephesians 6:5-9	Biblical Leadership at Work
	PM	The Struggles of Leadership		Practical Leadership at Work
Jan 21	AM	The Standards of Leadership	1 Timothy 3:1-13	Biblical Leadership at Church
	PM	The Service of Leadership		Practical Leadership at Church
Jan 28	AM	TBA		
	PM	Open Forum on the Series		

Our Concepts

First, consider some basic concepts that we teach from God's Word that will be important for this morning's message as well as all the messages in the series.

We live out of WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE TRUE. How we lead as men will be shaped by what we affirm and what we deny leadership to be. The mix of thoughts about leadership will be the main tap-root from which our leadership emerges.

We live out of WHAT WE WANT. We will desire in our souls, we will move toward what we have defined as true and valuable. How we lead will be an expression of what we truly desire. It will not just be an expression of what we say, but of what truly orients our heart.

We live out of THE COMPLEX INTERACTION OF OUR HEART'S ORGANIZATION AND OUR HEART'S ORIENTATION. How we lead is not just about what we believe and want in leadership. Other truths and treasures will grapple with our thinking about leadership and sometimes overcome it. For example, we know that we ought to take initiative to organize and get a project done. However, our love for ease and comfort holds us fast to our sofas and TV's.

We live out of THE THEMATIC SUM OF OUR EXPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES. As our heart's beliefs and wants cause us to do and feel things in life, they create consequences. Those consequences tend to reinforce our heart or cause us to reevaluate our beliefs and wants. Wrong beliefs about leadership will be reinforced when, over and over again, it gets us what we want. This becomes a habitual or thematic heart/behavior action which eventually we do automatically; not recognizing what is causing it.

Our Challenges

What are some of the various "stunning insights" that are supposed to help us in our leadership? What kind of challenges do we face in thinking Biblically about our leadership? How do we think about leadership in all our relationships but particularly with our spouses?

In *primarily* IGNORED TERMS – In other words, we don't think about it much at all. We do not give thought, attention or effort to our leadership. When this is true, we will probably lead through a worldly grid placed in our hearts, undiscerned and unevaluated.

In *primarily* MYSTICAL TERMS – We think of leadership as how we experience the authority of God. We see ourselves as the extension of God's authority in whatever sphere we happen to be in. So in your home, you become the function god of that home. While this is less common in our circles, the popular "experiencing God" movement is moving leadership in this direction.

In *primarily* DISREGARDED TERMS – Leadership becomes something we are forced to do only when things start to so fall apart, we have to make a decision.

In *primarily* AUTHORITATIVE TERMS – Our approach to our leadership is that of exercising authority that God has given in a way that authorizes any decision we make. It sounds like this in the heart. "God has given me this authority. I have a made a decision. They should not question it. They should simply do what I say." The effect over time is to become dictatorial.

In *primarily* SELF-FOCUSED TERMS – Our approach to leadership is to get out of it all we want, usually couched in "needs" language. Leadership is primarily about how those un-

der me meet (or don't meet) my needs. Certainly then, our ruling wants will drive our leadership and often destroy it.

In *primarily* HORIZONTAL TERMS – We see leadership as how we can get acceptance and affirmation from our peers, who are also leaders. In other words, you see yourself as a strong leader when you are heartily approved by those whose leadership you prize. The good desire for approval can become a vicious master of fear so that we are no longer leading; we are a part of a pack of leaders craving each other's affirmation.

Our Connections and Context

The verse opens with a connective, *likewise*. We find that 3:1 opens with the same word. So we look back and see that 1 Peter 2:25 defines Christians as the chosen, new people of God living in exile, owned and mastered by God so that we might proclaim His worth and excellence. Thus verses 9-12 are very important to our context:

But you are 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. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. [ESV]

Here is the overarching context of all that follows in 1 Peter 2:1-3:17. Our submission and suffering are shaped by WHO WE ARE and WHERE WE ARE – we are the people of God and we are not at home. The immediate context is submission: to governments (v.13-17), to masters and employers (v.18-25) and wives in the context of disobedient husbands (3:1-6).

Then Peter brings us, not to a husband's submission to his wife – that would be a violation of roles, but rather to the strength of a husband's gentle leadership. Thus, in verses 7-12, we are brought into the school of leadership.

In our Roles, Considerate Leadership

(v.7)

First, we need to learn, with our wives, to be considerate in our leadership.

Its Precept

The command here is how to live with your wives in terms of leadership. You need to know in order to understand. This means two things for you as a husband:

YOU MUST KNOW YOUR BIBLE. The Bible defines, describes, and illustrates the landscape of your life and marriage. The Bible says that you are in a covenantal relationship with a sister in Christ, in the context of a called out community of believers, who has been given to you for companionship and to complete you. You are both sinner and saint. You need grace and the accountability of others. You tend to serve idols and be ruled by wants. You must know these truths and many others in order to be pleasing to God in your leadership.

YOU MUST KNOW YOUR SPOUSE. While knowing her favorite color and restaurant and that you must not use her toothbrush are involved in this, I believe that Peter has more in mind. It is useful to remember that Peter is himself married as attested to by both the gospel writers and Paul. You need to know her spiritual strengths and weaknesses. You need to know her physical strengths and weaknesses. You need to know where she is vulnerable to temptation and has patterns of sinful thoughts and wants. You need to know how to cultivate her walk with God, her ministry in the church, her mentoring of children and younger women. You need to learn and understand both how her gender and how her role affects her way of thinking and wanting.

Brothers, I find most men are often baffled by their wives. But, it is not true that they are impenetrable mysteries. The Bible gives you the lens, if you will but love and care enough to ask, listen, and evaluate. There are the common elements of our fallenness and our redemption – that we are all, husbands and wives, sinners and saints. We serve idols, masters and spiritual adulteries. We are indwelt by the Spirit and growing in grace. We are struggling to love God and neighbor. And there are the unique aspects of our personhood – that we are shaped by our experiences and live out of the unique mix of “I believe...” and “I want...” that make up our hearts. Further, there are the unique aspects of our gender and role. We are made in God’s image and we are male and female. So you must learn how that affects and to what degree it affects your spouse.

What emerges from knowing your Bible and knowing your wife is a husband full of understanding and gentleness who lovingly leads as head, the wonderful helper he has been given. The love that fuels your desire to know will emerge in a way of living that is full of sacrificial understanding, sympathy, compassion, gentleness that draws out a woman’s loving submission.

Remember, the immediate context is a wife’s submission even to a disobedient husband that is in verse 6, “without fear.” In other words, the man is in a position to abuse a lady – a feminine woman who exhibits the Biblical characteristics of womanhood. Generally, a man is stronger physically. He is less vulnerable emotionally. Further, his headship places him in a position to dominate and dictate his wife. The answer to all this is not egalitarianism – that is, to deny that the woman is weaker and more vulnerable and to deny the headship of man. The solution is to require that a man honor and respect her in a way that recognizes her vulnerability and restrains his strength and authority.

So, what does that mean? It means husbands, that you respect your wife by not lording it over her in your leading of her. That you respect your wife by not demeaning her or destroying her in your correcting of her. That you respect your wife by not demanding from her what is inappropriate for her. That you respect your wife by acknowledging and affirming her femininity and womanhood. That you respect your wife by putting her interests ahead of your own. That you respect your wife by never ever criticizing her or demeaning her in public.

Let me emphasize this again. The Bible is holding out a third way for us. Not down slope into harsh, driving, self-serving, uncaring dictatorship nor down slope into passive, wimpy, self-serving, leaderlessness, but rather, loving, understanding, respectful leadership that honors while exercises headship.

Why should we do this? What are the underlying principles and reasons for this?

Its Premise

Here it is – husbands, in your leadership, live with your wives in a way that understands her vulnerability *because she is your sister in Christ*.

First, WE ARE JOINT-HEIRS IN HEAVEN. This language always points us to our being adopted and given full standing as heirs with Jesus. This is meant to focus our relationship in eternity. I am related to this woman in ways that transcend this moment in time and history. Esther and I will not be married in heaven – but we will always be brother and sister in Christ, standing together as full joint heirs with our Lord. Wives do not enter into their spiritual inheritance by virtue of their earthly union to their husbands in marriage, but by virtue of their spiritual union to the Lord Jesus in salvation.

We are PARTAKERS IN THE GRACE OF LIFE. Notice the appeal here. It is not to the fact of our being partners in marriage, but to the fact of our being partners in grace. Brothers, in all respects in all ways treat your wife as your Christian sister. She is your temporal earthly partner and she is your eternal spiritual partner.

Why does the Bible think this way? Because the Bible sees the community of believers, the church, as the primary context in which all of your life as a believer exists. If you think of your home as the primary context and you add the church to it as appendage (and maybe even a very important addition), you will simply not understand why this is important nor how the Bible is thinking. 1 Peter 2 makes clear what a Christian is in relationship – in relationship to God and to brothers and sisters.

I want to stress this again and again. It will radically change the way you lead your wife. It will open wide ranges of Scripture to affect your walk with her in every area. Now instead of three major texts, every text that speaks to horizontal relationships now is clearly brought to bear. It is my observation that we are in deep need of repentance – many Christian men would NEVER treat another Christian lady the way they treat their wives. This, brothers, is terrible. This is evidence that you are not seeing your wife as your Christian sister. Imagine what would happen if you consistently treated the women in this congregation that way you treat your wife.

Its Purpose

What is our aim in leading and living with our spouses in this way? So that prayers are not hindered...

If we do not treat our wives as we should, our prayers will be hindered. We will not have freedom of conscience nor access. This is not just the hindering of our praying together as husbands and wives, but it does include that. You simply cannot treat your sister in Christ sinfully and then hold her hand and pray with her. Your hypocrisy will be pretty evident. Our guilt will rob our joy, empty our fellowship and wound our walk with God. Wonder how much praying by men is snarled on the thorns of their poor treatment of their spouses.

It seems to me that it is appropriate to consider that our prayers are not helped by godly relationships with our wives, but actually thrive in that context. What freedom of access we have to God, what hearing we have in God's presence, what hope of help from God when we can come out of holiness of a God-pleasing marriage.

In our Relationships, Humble Leadership (v.8-9)

To wrap this discussion up, Peter points us to humble leadership which will be cultivated and built in our relationships. It provides the context in which we can flourish within our roles as leaders.

Heart Attitudes (v.8)

These core heart attitudes have a powerful affect on our leadership and on our submission. These attitudes cluster around being focused on others first. They are a reversal of self-focus and self-serving. All true, godly leadership, whether in home, work or ministry, will be shaped and motivated by affirming these truths and valuing them.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Harmony | We are to live and lead with an aim to produce harmony. Leadership intending to produce disharmony in order to gain power is wicked. Sometimes, those who refuse to follow leadership will be out of harmony, but godly leadership them must work to bring repentance and restore harmony through submission. |
| Sympathy | We are live and lead with a heart identifying with the struggles and sufferings of those we are responsible for. Verse 7 is rooted in this heart attitude. Detached and distant leaders will never know others well enough to care for their troubles. |
| Love | We are to live and lead with brotherly love. This is a single adjective used to describe our relationship with others. Always we are to have hearts trusting and treasuring people as an expression of familial love. In our leadership, being related to one another as Christians means that brotherly love guides and guards our leading. |
| Kind hearted | We are to live and lead with a tender heart. Leaders with callused, hear hearts will be unwilling to show compassion. We must have broken hearts before God so that we will have kind hearts toward those we lead. |
| Humility | We are to live and lead with a lowly mindedness that looks like courtesy. The word here is an adjective that describes a way of thinking of oneself that causes us to be courteous. It is a lowliness of heart that will open the door for those we lead and not expect that we will be |

publicly acknowledged and announced.

Is this the way you think? Do you affirm these characteristics as being essential to godly leadership? Do you see them as valuable and worthwhile, not just in those who lead you, but in your own leadership? This I think is a great self-test. Would I want this kind of leadership over me? So, will I become this kind of leader?

Holy Actions

(v.9)

When faced with difficulty in leadership and submission, we must be careful in our responses. Peter warns us about how we are to respond when we are opposed or attacked. As brothers and sisters, when we are in conflict, particularly in the context submission, then this is how we must respond.

Negatively – Put Away

First, we are warned about how not to respond. **DO NOT REPAY IN KIND.** When you are sinned against, do not respond by doing sin against them. Other people's sins do not excuse your responses. In the school of leadership, we learn that we are limited in what we can do to get others to respond to us. We are held accountable for how we lead and in what way. We are not necessarily accountable for how others follow. So, we are not allowed to respond sinfully *no matter what the provocation*.

DO NOT RETURN INSULTS. God's people have always had a bent to place verbal interaction in a different category. We tend to think that if a person attacks us verbally, we are allowed to attack them back. If they revile us, we can revile in return. You insult me; I'm going to let you have it. This is ungodly in our living and leading together. Godly leadership must put away all forms of ungodly talk about those who are not submitting. This is true at home, at work and in ministry.

Positively – Put On

Rather, we are to respond positively. We bless. This is a verb. In what we do and what we say, we aim for the good of the other. Even in the midst of their sinning against us, we point them through our actions and our words to the good God has promised and the glory He has purposed.

Honorable Aim

Why do we cultivate these attitudes and actions? So that we may inherit a blessing. The ESV leaves the impression that something is being acquired or purchased. The word here always refers to a bequest upon death, an inheritance. So we will lead in a godly, humble way, with a heart for others and careful, measured response to opposition with the aim to be qualified to inherit the blessing. And it may well require, as is discussed in the context, a Christ-like sacrifice of self.

In our Reasons, Biblical Leadership

(v.10-12)

This is drawn from Psalm 34:12-16. But the whole Psalm grounds what Peter has taught. In our submission and in our leadership, we must be Psalm 34 kind of people. We must be a people who praise and fear God. We must be a people who serve and suffer well. We must

be a people who trust God and treasure what He values. Peter firmly grounds his understanding of submission and leadership in the Word of God. So what he has called for in the whole of 1 Peter 2-3 is an interpretation and application of Psalm 34 to the particulars and problems we face in submission and in leadership.

The Authority of Scripture

(v.10-11)

Peter connects what he has taught to the authority and direction of Scripture. As he quotes the Psalm, we are expected to think of the whole Psalm as governing the kind of people we are to become. We are also expected to locate his instruction and our own experience in the Psalm as well.

There is an appeal to our God-given (and often sinfully abused) desire for happiness (v.10a). Peter through the Psalmist re-wires what is supposed to make us happy. He does not locate happiness in our circumstances. He locates it in our response to those circumstances. If we are going to be genuinely happy, then we must be authentically holy. Those who want to love life and see good days must...

The call to holiness from the Psalm governs how we exercise Biblical leadership (v.10b-11). For this whole month, these three major precepts will be worked out in each sphere of life. You can easily see how what he has said is derived directly from what the Psalmist has written.

In our leadership and submission, we must control our tongue.

In our leadership and submission, we must do what is right.

In our leadership and submission, we must pursue peace.

Our Sunday Evening services will be unpacking how this will be worked out at home, at work and in ministry.

The Accountability of Leaders

(v.12)

We are living before the face of God. In whatever role you have where you are to lead, you do so before the face of God. As a husband, as a leader at work, as leading in ministry, you will give an account to God. Living before the face of God means there are consequences now. God will hear your prayers or He may resist your efforts.

Note how this connects to verse 7. The Lord sees the quality of our leadership with our wives and He is either open to our prayers or sets His face against us. So Peter has not created a new notion that our relationship to our spouses affects our prayers. He has read this Psalm and applied to these situations, recognizing the roles and responsibilities entailed. So verse 10 connects to the first phrase of 9 and verse 11 to the second phrase of verse 9.

But don't miss it. God's ears are open to the righteous – the husbands who live with their wives according to knowledge, who respect them as weaker vessels, since we are all partners in grace, brother and sisters. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil – the husbands who are ignorant and insensitive of their wives, treating them as slaves or children, not honoring them as feminine expressions of the image of God in their womanhood, and little thinking of them as their sweet sisters in grace and partners in salvation.

In our Responses, Poised Leadership (v.13-17)

But what do we do when this way of leading is opposed by others? The opposition may come from our spouses in personal and practical ways. The opposition may come from the world in philosophical or in detrimental ways. You may well face people who are in a position to harm your reputation, to halt your advancement, to cause you real physical pain. Now what?

Have Courage in Christ (v.13-15)

Set aside Christ in your heart so that courage will fill your soul to say and do what is right. We are blessed when we suffer for doing what is right. So we must not fear what can be done to us.

Be prepared to explain why you believe and act the way you do. Unfortunately, this verse is yanked out of its context and often used as a pretext for the use of reason and logic to prove or argue for the existence of God. Peter does not have that in view at all. He is exhorting those who suffer when they submit and when they lead as Christians to be ready to explain their hope. So our poised submission and leadership may appear irrational and foolish to the world, but is to be deeply grounded in Biblical truth and godly reason.

Keep Conscience Clear (v.16)

In giving reasons and explanations, we must do so in a way that keeps our conscience clear. We therefore explain ourselves with gentleness and with respect. Harshness, hardness and ungodly forcefulness are not wise ways to express the kind of submission and leadership Peter is calling for. We must also speak respectfully, honoring the position and place of the person we are talking to. Aggression and rebellion will undermine the authenticity of our hope in suffering.

Why do we explain ourselves with careful, measured, gentle, respectful reasoning? Because we aim to shame those who speak evil against us for doing what is right. Godly submission and leadership often provokes sinners to strike out at us verbally. So you must be poised with a clear conscience to give no one a reason to accuse you.

Be Committed to Suffer (v.17)

A poised leadership will be committed to patient perseverance even if it means being sinned against in way that brings suffering. Peter is here countering an argument that says, "If we are going to suffer anyway, let's at least strike out and defend ourselves." No, it is better to suffer for doing what is right than it is to be punished for doing evil.

Many of you are finding out that godly leadership in your home and in your work are often not admired nor accepted. Sometimes, it is openly opposed. What a poise is being called for. Courage, conscience and commitment – gently and respectfully explaining yourself without fear so as to leave a godly witness being ready to suffer if necessary.

Conclusion

What will all this look like in life?

Be God's kind of leader.

Be gentle and understanding, recognizing her vulnerability.

Show her honor and respect her, as a sister in Christ.

Guard carefully what you say and what you do.

Lead from a stance of humbleness and with the strength of firmness.

Be ready to explain yourself well and suffer if necessary.

May we be good students in the school of leadership. May God change your hearts. May God hear your prayers.