

Women's Bible Study
1Peter 5:2-4
November 1st, 2023 Sharyn Balogh

Recall from our last study, the Apostle Peter counts himself among those who are leading the church. He does this with humility and describes himself as one who has witnessed the sufferings of Christ, and one who is promised the glory of Heaven. In the next few verses, Peter gives general instruction to the leaders of the church, explains the details of his instruction, and encourages them with a reminder of their future in Christ.

1Peter 5:2-4 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The Apostle gives a general instruction to shepherd the flock, then he describes what it means. He answers the question, 'How are we to do this?'

By exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God;

Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

The 'flock' are those who follow Jesus, those who belong to God. The elders or ministers of the church are to care for God's children. This is a serious stewardship and responsibility. ***Thought – do you pray for the elders in our church? How difficult do you think it might be to oversee individuals who have different personalities, come from different backgrounds and experiences, and are in varying stages of spiritual growth and maturity?***

Shepherds guide their flock to food, and they protect their flock. The KJV reads 'feed the flock'. Peter would well remember this same charge repeatedly given to him by Jesus. Recall that three times Peter had denied Jesus (*Matthew 26:70,72,74*). In the book of John, we read the interaction between the risen Christ and Peter. Jesus questions Peter's love for him three times; then Jesus gives him a charge to care for the church – three times. The repetition of this exchange gives us a clear picture of Peter's genuine repentance, but also the repetition to shepherd the flock conveys its importance.

John 21:15-17 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "***Tend My lambs.***" He *said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that

I love You." He *said to him, "**Shepherd My sheep.**" He *said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, "**Tend My sheep.**"

Paul gave the same instruction to the elders in Ephesus as they gathered in Miletus. Acts 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood. **When you read this verse, what insights do you have?**

I thought it was interesting when I read one commentary on the explanation of feeding the flock. It simply said, '*Do not fleece the flock*' (Adam Clarke's Commentary). The meaning is quite clear – to fleece someone means to rip them off for your own benefit. This is the opposite of feeding the flock with the purpose of growing their understanding and desiring their individual blessing as a result. It is the opposite of caring for them. The leaders were to shepherd the flock of God *among them*, or those in close proximity to them. They were to shepherd the flock diligently and willingly, not because they had to but because they wanted to.

"Not by constraint, but willingly. Not as if you felt that a heavy yoke was imposed on you, or a burden from which you would gladly be discharged. Go cheerfully to your duty as a work which you love, and act like a freeman in it, and not as a slave. Arduous as are the labours of the ministry, yet there is no work on earth in which a man can and should labour more cheerfully", Albert Barnes' NT Commentary.

Exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God;

They were to care for the church, understanding they were stewards of God's church, and they were to set the greater interest of their ministry on those who were in their immediate surroundings. God has purposefully placed His children right where He wants them.

Not by compulsion – as if forced to do so, but voluntarily – willingly. Think of the difference between being made to do something and wanting to do something. The church at the time Peter wrote this was under persecution; overseeing the spiritual care of individuals was a difficult task. Serving should not be looked upon as a burden. Although these instructions are written to a specific group of individuals – the elders and leaders of the church – this does not mean we can cast away the principles set before us. Since we are all servants of the Lord, each of us has opportunities to encourage, to share Truths from God's word, to edify one another – all for God's glory.

Do you serve willingly with a cheerful heart, grateful for the opportunities God gives you? Or do you serve because you feel pressured to do so? What is the attitude of your service? Are we truly desiring spiritual growth and blessing in other's lives?

The purpose of our service is to glorify God, the mission of our service is to share the Gospel. We are to act *according to God's will*, not our own. Our service should not be for our own gain, but the blessing and spiritual growth of others; this is what glorifies God. When our sight is on God's glory, we are not as easily discouraged. We cannot be driven by what we think but rather our actions are to be based on the Truths in God's Word. ***How can we be certain we are acting according to God's will rather than our own desires?***

Psalm 54:6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

Psalm 78:70-72 He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.

And not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Are you looking to get or give? Are you seeking to be noticed? Again, be certain of your motivation. We should not serve to look important or to be recognized. If this is your goal, you will be easily discouraged and lose your interest, and become disenchanted with others. Instead, we should serve willingly, always motivated by our love for God and for one another.

"But of a ready mind. Cheerfully, promptly. We are to labour in this work, not under the influence of the desire of gain, but from the promptings of love. There is all the difference conceivable between one who does a thing because he is paid for it and one who does it from love--between, for example, the manner in which one attends on us when we are sick who loves us, and one who is merely hired to do it", Albert Barnes' NT Commentary.

Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge,

The leaders in the church were not to think of themselves as greater than those they were shepherding; theirs was not a position of control but of shepherding, teaching, and caring for the flock. Looking at the translation of these words, it could be worded *'but not in a manner of dominating God's children'*. Everyone, especially those in any kind of leadership position, needs to remember they are stewards in all roles God has placed them. It is an honor and a privilege to serve our Lord. Remember, those who are called by God belong to Him.

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

2Corinthians 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.

The leaders of the church are to guide the flock, feed the flock, and protect the flock, not in a position of absolute authority or dominion, but with a heart of love. There are many so-called religions whose leaders place themselves in a position of authority and lordship which is exactly opposite of the teachings we find in God's word. Think of the pharisees dressing in a certain way to be recognized. All honor and glory is for God alone.

Jeremiah 3:15 "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.

"Preacher or minister, whosoever thou art, who readest this, apply not the word to thy neighbour, whether he be state-appointed, congregation-appointed, or self-appointed; take all to thyself; ... See that thy own heart, views, and conduct be right with God", Adam Clarke's Commentary.

But proving to be examples to the flock.

"Not assuming to yourselves dominion over those who fall to your lot; but being humble, and behaving towards them with such gentle, tender solicitude for their souls, and such an entire freedom from the very appearance either of avarice or ambition, that your examples may be rendered worthy the imitation of the flock, and your conduct as instructive as any of your cautions and precepts can be", *Doddridge*. In other words, practice what you preach. To preach without practice is called hypocrisy.

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

I am drawn to think of the sincerity of the heart. We all know individuals who say one thing and do another. Often, words alone do not convey what is in a person's heart. It is the action we see which shows genuineness. Consider our greatest example of humility in leadership – Jesus. He walked as a man yet was Lord of all. He did not force His Truths upon others; He lived the Truth. His example was service, yet He had all authority. Following His Father's plan was difficult, yet Jesus submitted to God's will.

Each of us should consider the example of our actions. ***If I say I am a Christian, do I live as one? Are the words I share reflected in the life I live?*** Telling others the way they should act is not as effective as showing others through your own life. The elders or leaders in the church were exhorted to shepherd those whom God had placed in their care. Shepherding was not a position of authority but rather a position of guidance and instruction in Truth by example. This was a high calling, and considering the period of time in which it was written, a difficult calling – one filled with trials and persecution – yet they were called to be faithful, to be humble, and to be an example. All the while looking to the glory of Heaven. This is the motivation and the promise to those who labor for Christ.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The Chief Shepherd is Jesus. Those leaders who are faithful, who place themselves under Christ's authority, who accept their role of shepherding the sheep with humility of heart and care for the lost, will be rewarded when Jesus returns.

“O ye heavenly-minded, diligent, self-denying pastors after God's own heart, whether ye be in the Church established by the state, or in those divisions widely separated from, or nearly connected with it, take courage; preach Jesus; press through all difficulties in the faith of your God; fear no evil while meditating nothing but good. Ye are stars in the right hand of Jesus, who walks among your golden candlesticks, and has lighted that lamp of life which ye are appointed to trim; fear not, your labour in the Lord cannot be in vain!”, Adam Clarke's Commentary.

Think of the analogy used above: a lighted candlestick which requires trimming. If you do not trim the wick of a candle, it will burn furiously bright for a while but will then dim and eventually drown itself out in a pool of hot wax. To remain a continuous steady light, it needs regular trimming.

1Peter 1:3-7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1Corinthians 9:23-25 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Notice it is an unfading crown of glory which is received. This is unlike the crowns used in that period of history for victors in public games and the conquerors of war. The crowns placed on their heads were made of leaves and flowers which would eventually fade and dry up. The Greek word used for 'unfading', or in the KJV, 'that fadeth not away', comes from the word for a flower called amaranth. Even after these flowers die, they retain their rich color. The crown of glory, also referred to as *the crown of righteousness* and *the crown of life*, is imperishable. An eternal reward awaits those who labor for Jesus.

2Timothy 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

“And if this be indeed your character and behaviour, you will render up your account hereafter with joy; for when he, who does you the honour to acknowledge himself the chief Shepherd of the flock, shall appear, to take the final survey of it, and examine into the conduct of those to whom he had partly committed it, you shall be most magnificently and nobly rewarded, and receive an unfading crown of glory: a crown which shall bloom in immortal beauty and vigour, when all the transitory glories of this world are withered like a fading flower”, Doddridge.

Apply It!

Pray for our Elders and Leaders that they seek to glorify God in their service.

Do you seek to make their leadership easier by trusting God for their direction or do you voice discontent regarding their leadership?

Do you serve with a cheerful heart, desiring the blessing of others? How can you grow in this area?

Are you discouraged if your service goes unrecognized? Do you need to check your motivation?

Do your words and actions reflect your love for God?