

Bernard Brown, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kennestone Regional Health Care System in Georgia, once talked about working in a hospital where a patient knocked over a cup of water, which spilled on the floor by the patient's bed. The patient was afraid he might slip on the water if he got out of bed, so he asked a nurse to mop it up. The patient didn't know it, but the hospital policy said that small spills were the responsibility of the nurse's aide while large spills were to be mopped up by the hospital's housekeeping staff.

The nurse's aide decided the spill was a large one so she called the housekeeping department. The housekeeper arrived and said the spill was a small one and she wouldn't clean it up. So, they stood there and argued with one another whether it was a large spill or a small one.

The patient sat in his bed amazed at the argument. So, he took a pitcher of water from his night stand and poured the whole thing on the floor. Then he said, "Now, is that a big enough puddle for you two to decide who mops it up?"

Responsibility is a funny thing. Often times we act like we want it, but when it comes to really stepping up to the plate and doing what responsibility requires – many shy away from it, or they don't know what to do with it once they got it. This morning, we are going to be talking about responsibility – more specifically the responsibility of a leader.

Now, we've been working our way through **1 Peter** for a few months, and in his letter, Peter has been providing encouragement, and hope, and instruction – sometimes very difficult instruction to these churches in Asia Minor who were suffering under persecution from Rome. As we have worked our way through this letter from Peter, we have come to understand that suffering for identifying with Christ, suffering for standing on God's Word and biblical principles, and suffering for doing what is right and good for the sake of Christ should be expected by us in this fallen and hostile world. Peter said we should not be surprised if this happens, and last week he encouraged us to see our suffering not as something that is **happening to us** – where we are the *victims*, but rather we should see our suffering as something that is **happening in us** – like a test, where God is the Teacher and we are His *students*.

God loves us, and through the suffering He purifies us. He wants to strengthen us and mature us. God has a purpose and a plan for us in our suffering, and knowing that does help – it does give us hope – **but suffering still hurts, doesn't it?** Suffering is still hard, and in times of suffering – in times of difficulty – in times of

hardship, faithful leadership in the church is absolutely crucial, and because it is so, Peter takes a moment to speak directly to those who have the responsibility for leadership in the church.

This morning, my message is going to be really awkward for me because the passage we are looking at applies directly to me as your pastor. Peter is speaking to pastors, so basically for the next 30 – you get to hear me talk to myself – more than usual, but be that may, I do hope that what is said to me will be beneficial to you – maybe in the sense that it will help you to understand my biblical role as your pastor and maybe also, in an odd way, serve as my performance evaluation – which is a little unnerving when I think about it. So, if you have your Bible, turn to **1 Peter 5:1**. Peter says,

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

Peter begins with the word “**therefore**” which connects his theme of suffering in the previous passages to this verse which is directed to the **elders**. Again, Peter is stressing the importance of good leadership by elders in the church during times of suffering and persecution.

Now, as you know, in the New Testament, there are several interchangeable terms used to describe the same calling, the same office of spiritual leadership within the church. The term **elder** can also be translated as “overseer,” or “shepherd” or “pastor” – all focusing on the responsibility of providing spiritual leadership, and care, and feeding, and protection to God’s people – and for our purposes this morning, I will use the term “*pastor*” since we are familiar with that word.

As we continue on, did you notice how Peter referred to himself in this verse?

Peter could have pulled some serious rank and reminded the pastors that he was one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus, and among those twelve, part of the inner circle. Peter could have also said he was an Apostle and issued an order – but instead, he referred to himself as a **fellow elder** and makes an appeal to them as an equal. Here, Peter identifies with them – he is one of them. Peter lets them know they are in this ministry together – all of which speak to his desire to encourage them, but also to reveal his humility to them.

Peter made mention that he was a **witness of the sufferings of Christ**. If you recall, Peter was an eye witness to the suffering of Jesus as He agonized in the garden. Peter was there when Jesus was arrested and taken as a prisoner in the

dark of night. He stood far off when Jesus was mocked and beaten and questioned by the high priest in an unjust proceeding. Surely Peter can't forget that, because while the proceeding was occurring, Peter experienced the most painful event of his life where he swore to those around him, even to a servant girl, that he did not follow Jesus – didn't even know the man. And after the rooster crowed, Jesus looked at Peter and Peter wept. And although it's not said, Peter likely watched from a distance, from the safety of the shadows, as Jesus was tortured and later crucified. Peter was a *witness* to all of this, but now he speaks and writes as a *witness* completely forgiven and restored by Jesus – the very One he had denied. That's where his humility comes from.

Peter experienced the gospel first-hand, and as a result, he could also describe himself as a **partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed**. Peter spent time with the resurrected Lord, he saw Jesus ascend to heaven, and Peter knew he would experience the future glory that will come to all believers when Christ returns.

Peter was an Apostle, a spiritual leader in the Christian movement, a pastor of the church in Jerusalem – but he was also humble. Pastors may be tempted to think they need to have all the right answers, all the time – but they don't and they won't. If the truth be told, pastors don't have it all together like they may portray from the pulpit. We suffer hardship, we have our doubts and our fears, and we our make share of mistakes just like everyone else, but a humble pastor can recognize and honestly admit their weakness and their failures. And just as important, a humble pastor will seek help when they fall short, and a humble pastor will listen to guidance from the wise counsel of others. Humility was evident in Peter, and humility remains essential to godly leadership today in the church.

After a humble Peter was forgiven and restored by Jesus along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, **do you recall what Jesus told Peter to do?** Jesus said “*shepherd My sheep*” – “*tend My sheep*” – “*feed My sheep*” and that's the instruction Peter passes on to these pastors. Look at **verse 2**,

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;

This verse is packed with a lot of stuff to ponder as a pastor, and it begins with some very important words. First, Peter uses the word “**shepherd**.” Pastors are shepherds because the congregation is a flock and the people in the congregation

are like sheep. Pastoring is like shepherding sheep, and some have suggested it's more like shepherding cats – if you can picture that. It's not an easy thing to be a shepherd, and to make it even more challenging, notice what Peter says next.

Peter doesn't tell the pastor to “*shepherd your own flock*,” rather, the pastor is to “**shepherd the flock of God.**” We belong to God because we were purchased at the cross by His Son. The flock is God's flock – we belong to Him, but the shepherding of God's flock is entrusted to the care of pastors who have been called by God to serve in that role. The pastor should not seek his own followers, instead the pastor is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ – faithfully leading and serving and feeding and protecting the **flock of God** that have been entrusted to him.

Now if you noticed, Peter said the pastor is **among** the flock, but he is also **over** the flock, and this can create some problems if the flock does not understand this. Because the pastor is one of the sheep like them, the pastor must be **among** the members of the flock to get to know them – to relate to them, but because the pastor is also **over** the sheep of God's flock, he has the responsibility to lead and to help them. The pastor has to be both **among** the sheep and **over** the sheep; otherwise, the pastor will not be an effective leader.

In his book, “A Turtle on the Fencepost,” Allen C. Emery tells of a night he spent on the Texas plains with a shepherd who was keeping two thousand sheep. The shepherd had prepared a bonfire for cooking supper and providing warmth, while the sheep dogs laid down near the fire.

Suddenly, Emery heard the unmistakable wail of a coyote with an answering call from the other side of the range. The dogs weren't patrolling at the moment, and the coyotes seemed to know it. Rising quickly, the shepherd tossed some logs on the fire; and in this fire light, Emery looked out at the sheep and saw thousands of little lights.

Emery writes, “I realized that these little lights were reflections of the fire in the eyes of the sheep, and in the midst of the danger, the sheep were not looking out into the darkness, but were keeping their eyes set toward the shepherd.”

That illustrates the heavy burden and the huge responsibility that a pastor has of shepherding God's flock – it's sobering when you think about it, and a pastor's heart had better be in the right place, and that's what Peter tells us next. He says the pastor should not serve **under compulsion**; rather, it must be done **voluntarily**. **Now, what does that mean?** Pastors should not serve as if they are being forced

against their will, or serve out of a sense of guilt or fear, or serve to please men; instead, they are to serve willingly, because they want to – and more importantly because God wants them to. A pastor serves from with a “shepherd’s heart” because he loves God’s people, he loves the sheep, and serves them because he *wants* to, not because he *has* to.

Lastly, in this verse, Peter said the pastor should serve not for **sordid gain**, or we could say *shameful and dishonest gain* which implies there is a love of money. This can’t be so, because a pastor who has a love of money essentially focuses on what the flock can do for him rather than what he can do for the flock. His heart is in the wrong place.

The Bible has a particular word for a person who is in it for the money. It calls that person a *hireling*. Such a person may be sincere and hard-working but his motive is not right. He may be a good preacher or a respected leader, but it makes no difference. If he’s in it for the love of money, he’s a hireling and something is wrong. Now, biblically, pastors should be compensated, but compensation should never be their motive for ministry. Instead, Peter says that pastors should serve with **eagerness** in their heart – as if the ministry itself is reward enough.

Now Peter continues with his instruction to pastors, and he says in **verse 3**,
nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

During a couple years in high school, I was a member of the Future Farmers of America. That might surprise you – it still surprises me. Anyway, for my yearly project, I raised sheep for show in county and state fairs. It was a lot of hard work to tend the sheep – to get them ready for show, but I actually enjoyed it, and I learned that it’s easier to *lead* sheep where we want them to go than it is to *drive* them like cattle, and I think Peter is saying the same thing when it comes to leading God’s flock in God’s way.

Pastors should not **lord it over** God’s people, meaning pastors are not to use their biblical authority in a heavy-handed, or harsh, or forceful manner. It’s not the way Jesus did it, in fact, He said in **Matthew 20:25-28**,

²⁵“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wishes to be

first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Ironically, Jesus was the Lord, but He did not lead that way, and it's not the way a pastor is to do it either. Pastors don't drive the flock, they lead the flock, because as I already said, the flock does not belong to the pastor. The flock belongs to God and is simply entrusted to the pastor; therefore, pastors should be **examples to the flock** of what it looks like to follow Jesus. A pastor cannot lead people to go where he is not willing to go or do what he is not willing to do. In my secular background in management, I learned – managers say “go” but leaders say “let's go,” and that's a huge difference, **isn't it?** Look at **verse 4**.

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

This verse concludes with the highest motivation for pastoring, especially during difficult times, by pointing to Christ. Jesus is the **Chief Shepherd**, and to Him all pastors are responsible. It is Jesus who died for the sheep. It is Jesus who lives for the sheep, and it is Jesus who will come for His sheep. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and He is the only One who can truly judge the heart and the ministry of a pastor. We are told the Chief Shepherd will honor those who have been faithful, godly pastors with **the unfading crown of glory**.

I thought about the crown for a bit, and I believe there are about five different crowns mentioned in the Bible – but, I will be honest with you – a crown is not a motivation for me. Maybe it should be, but at least for now it is not. But I will tell you what motivates me and it is this – I just want to hear the words from Jesus, **“Well done, good and faithful servant.”** Rather than a crown, I just want to hear those words.

If I pastor for the purpose of pleasing myself or pleasing other people, I am setting myself up for a disappointing and difficult ministry. I don't want that, the Lord doesn't want that, and neither do you. So, as your pastor, I must seek to please the Lord and follow Him. That has to come first and foremost, and then my ministry as a pastor flows from there. My desire is to please the Lord, and to hear His words, **“Well done, good and faithful servant.”**

Kevin Miller, one of the editors of Leadership Journal, talked about his days as a kid driving down the street to “Hooper Wolfe's” hardware store with his dad.

“Hooper Wolfe's,” he says, “had an old wood door, painted white--except where

the paint was worn off near the handle. You walked in, and you could hardly move. There were two narrow aisles. The counters were filled with merchandise, shelves were overflowing, and stuff was hanging from the ceiling. You'd think, 'No way am I going to find anything in here.'"

"But you didn't need to. As soon as you walked in, Clarence from behind the counter would say, 'Help you today?' My dad would say something like, 'I want to hang a light out back.'"

"Clarence would come out from behind the counter and ask questions. 'Where you going to hang it? Over the patio?' Well then '--and he would start rummaging through shelves until he pulled off just the right light—'you want a light like this. And don't use these bolts here; they're good for indoor stuff, but for outdoor, you want something galvanized.'"

"Then Clarence would pull a flat carpenter's pencil off his ear and get out a little piece of paper and sketch it all out. 'The conduit goes here...and make sure you don't mount the light too close to the soffit,' etc."

Then Kevin Miller compares that experience in his childhood to going to Home Depot today as an adult. He says, "Unlike "Hooper Wolfe's," where you had to parallel park on the street, there's an ocean of parking. And inside, Home Depot is huge. The ceilings are 30 feet high. Home Depot has forty times the inventory of Hooper Wolfe's." It all looks great under bright, argon lights, but you're pretty much on your own.

I understand what Miller was saying, in fact, I was in Home Depot this week, looking for a water facet cover to weatherize my house. I could not find it, and I was standing amongst four people in orange aprons, who were chatting with each other, who saw me searching, they heard my frustration, I noticed them noticing me, but they did nothing to help until I accosted one of them.

The church doesn't need guys in orange aprons who are just doing a job and getting a pay check. The church needs Clarence's – pastors who have a genuine heart to serve people – to shepherd God's flock, and to lead them to the Chief Shepherd.

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