

Leading the Flock – 1 Peter 5:1-11

This morning I thought we would spend a few minutes studying the teachings of someone who I'm sure, many in his day, thought would never truly amount to much of anything. After all, he was a bit of a hot head, he was often more concerned about himself, and initially, he wanted to be part of the cool crowd without having to accept many of the things that came along with it. On the surface, Peter fit the part, but at the heart level, he was a counterfeit. Fortunately for us, we know the rest of Peter's story and we know he went on to become a solid follower of Jesus and a powerful preacher of the Gospel. Peter is a great example for us to consider when looking at leaders in the church and he provides some of the best instruction on how a spiritual leader should shepherd the flock. Let's look together at these instructions. **Read 1 Peter 5:1-11.**

Before we go further, I want to mention some things in reference to leaders within the church. It needs to be noted that leadership is not something to be taken for granted. Nor should it be something expected. Not every person is gifted to serve as a leader. Many are, but most are gifted for other roles. Peter understood this when he said, "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace*". (1 Peter 4:10) He said this just before he provided the words from this morning's text which instructs the elders of the church in the way in which they should shepherd.

I love how Peter does this. He doesn't come as the authoritative ruler, but in his words, as a fellow elder, to strongly urge the other elders to consider leading the first century church in the ways he mentions throughout the rest of the following verses. Let me take a minute to explain the word "elder". Elder, Bishop, and Shepherd (Pastor) are words often used interchangeably in the NT to speak of spiritual leaders. And like with all of Scripture, their usage depends on the context involved. For instance, the general term, *presbuteros*, Elder, describes a mature MAN, not based on age, but rather one's level of spiritual maturity. Bishop, *episcopos*, describes what the man does, or what action is involved in the ministry. It simply means to function as the overseer, or one with oversight and care for the flock. And finally, *poimeen*, describes the method in which a spiritually mature man provides oversight for the flock. In other words, it means the pastor feeds and tends to the needs of the flock daily. So, what Peter is saying here is that God has gifted certain, spiritually mature men with the desire to serve and lead others in such a way that their needs are met.

So, let's break it down a bit-

- a. Vs. 2: The flock of God – we must remember that it's God's flock, not ours. Every spiritual leader must understand that they are just an under shepherd to Jesus. He is the true leader.
- b. Vss. 2-3: Sheep – Along those same lines, and just as Peter acknowledged, every spiritual leader is a sheep too. Leaders serve alongside, not over.
- c. Vss. 2-3: Servant first – Spiritual leaders must follow the direction of Jesus when it comes to servanthood. Jesus said, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) Any leader who is not first a servant must not be allowed to lead.

- d. Vs. 2: Willing – Peter says every leader should accept the role willingly. If you’re serving in any ministry in this church and you know it’s out of obligation or perhaps, you’re feeling tired & burned out, then I exhort you to consider stepping aside, or at least take a break. It’s not worth it in the long run.
- e. Vss. 2-3: Honesty – Spiritual leadership demands honesty. You cannot lead for any other reason than to help feed the flock. If it’s for personal gain in any way, then you need to step aside.
- f. Vss. 5-6: Humility – We see this concept in verses 3,5 and 6. Many leaders seek power and control, but really, they should only seek to be a demonstration of Christ to those around them.
- g. Vs. 8: Good Stewards – Not with just money. Look at verse 8. Spiritual leaders are good stewards with souls also. This is not some whimsical, fly-by-the-night ministry here. No, it’s God’s Kingdom we’re involved in helping build. Every person who we encounter is a soul that Jesus died for!
- h. Vss. 8-9: Suffering – Spiritual leadership requires sacrifice, which sometimes means suffering. The beautiful part though is exactly how Peter described it for us in verse 10.

Commissioning: Today, we are installing and commissioning Chad Cobb and Brian Hupp, who have been nominated and confirmed by the members of this congregation, to serve as a Ruling Elder.

The church, as you know, is a living community of unified people, redeemed by Jesus Christ, who love each other, who fellowship together, grow together, and serve together, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. No one is more visible to the watching world than those who serve as leaders within the church. The leaders are the ones to whom the world will point as examples of what Christians truly represent. Therefore, it is important to carefully evaluate someone’s life before he can be entrusted with a position of Christian leadership.

For Chad and Brian, they have successfully navigated the processes of nomination, examination, election, appointment, confirmation and finally, today, will complete the process by being installed and commissioned to serve Jesus first, and then each of you.

Acts 14:21-23 records the appointment of elders in the first-century church:

How does God reveal to the church who the elders should be? This passage suggests that prayer and fasting are part of it. If you remember, when we first presented Brian and Chad, you were encouraged to pray and fast over them and their nomination. Thank you church for your participation and your obedience during that time. It was valuable in determining whether God agreed with our selection of these two men to serve as Elders.

I also want you to know, Elders are not primarily selected based on their knowledge of the business world, or their financial status, or their social prominence, or even by their ability as leaders. They are chosen because God has called and prepared them for a time such as this. God is very clear in His Word that men selected for such a position must meet qualifications as found in 1 Timothy 3 and 5, Titus 1, and of course, 1 Peter 5. As you think about these qualifications,

know that both Chad and Brian are qualified in accordance with Scripture: **Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7.**

Along with meeting these qualifications, each elder must also be prepared to fulfill the expected duties of the role. **Acts 20** gives us some insight into those duties. **Read Acts 20:28-36.** Chad and Brian have accepted God's call on their life, as well as your appointment, and by doing so have agreed to fulfill the elder leadership role based on the expectations described for them in these verses.

II. The Congregation

Not only do Elders have qualifications and roles to fulfill, as a participant of Mt Freedom's congregation, you too have some basic roles.

The basic roles of church leadership include being Spirit-filled, teaching sound doctrine, explaining how it applies to daily life, and living it out as an example for others. The basic roles of church membership are also to be Spirit-filled, to seek to learn God's doctrine, to continually apply His truths, and serve others in a manner pleasing to Christ.

The congregation then becomes the focal point of the leaders' ministry with an overall desire for sharing the Gospel, explaining the Gospel, and helping believers grow as a disciple of Jesus. The hope is through the leader's commitment and dedication to their role, other members of the church will also desire to become elders, or perhaps missionaries, or perhaps even pastors. Remember this: We all start at the same point—somewhere in the congregation. And as the Bible teaches, those who are faithful with small tasks can then be entrusted with larger responsibilities.

We also find in Paul's teaching to the church at Ephesus an indication as to the purpose of both church leadership and those who make up the church. **Read Ephesians 4:11-13.** It's important to note that each party has an expectation to work alongside the other, unified, and in such a manner that much is made about Jesus Christ. Assuming the leadership of the church is Spirit-directed, the members of the congregation are to follow their guidance because they are ministering on behalf of Christ as His under-shepherds. We can find this instruction in Hebrews 13, where the elders are called to follow Christ with joy and sacrifice. And the congregation is called to subject itself to their godly ministry. Although there may be moments of misunderstanding, and some may even disagree with what the elders are attempting to do. The church's commitment and obedience stands as a living testimony to the world about the power and work of Jesus Christ in our lives.

There are many things that hurt a church and can potentially destroy its testimony. The primary one is poor leadership or false teachers who fail to build the church on the Word of God and keep it centered around the Gospel. Another thing that often weakens a church is a congregation that refuses to follow its leaders. As a result, strife among congregants often leads to irreversible results and exposes such things to the full view of the world around us. Therefore, every church leader and every church member must work together to keep in step with the Spirit and be faithful and obedient to the call and commands of Christ. It is out of obedience and unity that the

world receives an authentic and Spirit-filled testimony of Jesus Christ. And it is that testimony which brings all glory, honor, and praise to God, and Him alone.

Read Ephesians 4:1-7

Conclusion

I thank God for Chad and Brian. I thank God for Dwight and Terry. These men are dedicated to that which God has called them. Let me assure you, together, we will serve Jesus first and let Him lead us as we serve and lead you.

Invite Dwight and Terry forward. Invite Chad and Brian forward to sit in the chairs.

Chad – after hearing the qualifications and expectations of Spiritual leadership as laid out in Scripture, do you willfully agree to serve the congregation of MFBC in the role of Elder?

Brian – after hearing the qualifications and expectations of Spiritual leadership as laid out in Scripture, do you willfully agree to serve the congregation of MFBC in the role of Elder?

Congregation - After hearing the qualifications and expectations as described in Scripture, do you agree to pray for, support, and work alongside Chad and Brian as they serve as elders to this congregation.

Invite any ordained man to come forward and pray over Chad and Brian.

Invite the church to gather around both as I pray for their ministry.

Presentation of Certificates and gifts.