

FAITHFUL LEADERS

1 PETER 5:1-4

Several years ago Fuller Seminary conducted a survey among Christian ministers in America that revealed the following about pastors...

90% of pastors work more than 46 hours each week.

33% say *“Being in the ministry has been a hazard to my family.”*

90% feel frequently fatigued or *“worn out.”*

70% do not have someone they would consider a close friend.

89% have considered leaving the ministry at some point.

90% feel they weren't adequately trained for the demands of ministry.

70% will be out of the ministry within ten years after they start.

40% of pastors reported having a serious conflict with a church member at least once a month. Sum it up to say, being a pastor is a tough job.

If you're looking for an easy occupation become a brain surgeon, or a prison guard, or a Navy Seal, or the president of the United States...

...but whatever you do, don't become a pastor.

Being a pastor involves some difficulties and challenges.

The Discovery Channel has a hit show called *Dirty Jobs* – maybe you've seen it! Host Mike Rowe skips around the

country sampling the most grueling and messy jobs. Mike drills for oil... cooks hot tar... wrestles alligators... cleans up owl vomit... Some weeks I'm waiting on Mike Rowe and the Dirty Jobs film crew to pull up and sample being a pastor.

They probably decided being a pastor is *too dirty* for *Dirty Jobs*.

It was his first day on the job for the new pastor, so he thought he'd call the church's former pastor for any advice he might want to pass on.

The previous pastor offered his congratulations, and wished him well.

Then he said, "When the honeymoon phase is over, and the ministry begins to sour, and things start going south - look in the middle drawer of your desk... There are three envelopes. Open them in order..."

Well, a few months later the pastor encountered a faction of ladies who opposed one of his decisions. He opened his drawer and pulled out the first envelope. It read, "Blame everything on the former pastor. I'm in another state - at another church - it won't matter. Say it's all, my fault."

The pastor heeded the advice. It worked and staved off the opposition.

Six months later the pastor started to butt heads with the elders. Again he went to the drawer and opened the second envelope. It read, "Blame the problem on

headquarters. The organization is just too big and unresponsive. Say the reason for your problems is beyond your control.”

Once again, he heeded the advice, and it worked.

A year or so later a whole wave of bitterness, criticism, and questioning were launched at the pastor. He went back to the drawer and pulled out the final envelope. The note inside read, “Start preparing three envelopes.”

Over the last decade I’ve had the opportunity to work with lots of pastors and churches. I’ve heard firsthand how tough it is to be a pastor.

I’ve come to realize, not everybody pastors as good and as loving a bunch of people as I do. People can be mean toward their pastor. So often they end up diverting their guilt, or taking out their frustration on the pastor.

Pastors are public figures. Being in the spotlight gets them scrutinized. Since they’re under the microscope their flaws and faults get amplified.

It reminds me of what hockey goalie, Jacques Plante, a former stand-out for the Montreal Canadians, once said about being a goalie...

“How would you like it on your job if every time you made a small mistake, a red light went off over your desk and 15,000 people stood up and yelled at you?” His comment reminded me of what it’s like to be a pastor... Trust me leading a church is not a job for the faint of heart.

In 1 Peter 5, a pastor comes to the aide of his fellow pastors. *Pastor Peter* provides some encouragement and instruction to church leaders.

Peter informs pastors how they can please God, and be effective in ministry – while avoiding its pitfalls. In fact, the pastor who takes heed to Peter’s letter probably won’t need the other three letters in his desk drawer.

This morning I want **you** to look at Peter’s instructions to his *“fellow elders”* as a window into the heart of your pastors and elders. You should understand *what they do*, and *why they do it...* And in the end I’m going to challenge you with simple instruction for how you can help them succeed.

Verse 1, *“The elders who are among you I exhort...”*

There are three words used in the NT that refer to the roll of a church leader – a man in authority. They’re the words **bishop**, **elder**, and **pastor**.

Here, Peter uses the term **“elder.”** It’s the English translation of the Greek word **“presubteros.”** It refers to the man himself – his **maturity**.

The term implies the wisdom of years and experience. This doesn’t mean an elder in the church can’t be a young man age-wise, but he needs to possess wisdom beyond his years - an elder in outlook and judgment.

But there’s another word used for church leadership. It’s the Greek word **“episkopeo.”** It gets translated **“bishop.”**

It's the same word that appears in verse 2, "serving as overseers..." "Bishop" means "overseer."

This is the **ministry** of a church leader. It's his responsibility to look around, and be attentive, and to think ahead... and oversee the flock.

And third, the word "pastor" literally means "shepherd."

In verse 2 when Peter writes, "Shepherd the flock of God," it could just as easily be translated, "Pastor the flock." The word "pastor" speaks of the leader's **method**. A church is not a business. You lead a church not by managing, or bullying, or manipulating – but by "shepherding the flock."

Sadly, there're power-hungry leaders in some of today's churches who are no longer content to just be called "pastor." In their circles the word "pastor" doesn't have the same status or clout it once did. "Pastor" just doesn't sound authoritative enough. The term "bishop" carries more clout.

Before long we'll hear terms like "archbishop" or "super duper bishop."

Don't be overly-impressed or intimidated. Biblically speaking, all three words, *bishop, elder, pastor* refer to the same person of the same rank. A church leader is a mature brother called by God to oversee and serve.

Here's the way to think about these three terms...

“**Bishop**” refers to what a leader does - he oversees. It’s his **ministry**.

“**Elder**” is the leader himself – his character. It speaks of his **maturity**.

“**Pastor**” means “*shepherd*.” It illustrates his **method**.

Of course, sometimes church leaders are called by other names...

Just the other day our church secretary, Jessica, received a phone call. The man told her he wanted to talk to the “**Head hog of the trough**.”

Jess was shocked. She rebuked the caller on the spot. “*Sir, how rude! I’ll have you know we would never refer to Pastor Sandy as a hog.*”

The man apologized. “I’m so sorry! But would you tell Pastor Sandy I recently inherited some money, and wanted to give the church \$10,000.”

Jess answered, “*Well, why didn’t you say that in the first place? Hold on. I think I see **the big fat pig** coming down the hall right now!*”

I’m just thankful people call me “*Sandy*” or “*Pastor Sandy*.” They could call me “*Head hog*” or “*Big Fat Pig*.” I just want to be a servant for Jesus.

Peter addresses his co-laborers in the Lord as “*elders,*” “*shepherds,*” “*overseers*” - and notice, how he introduces himself, “*I who am a fellow elder...*” Peter classifies himself “*a fellow elder*” - not some exalted leader.

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus promised Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...” And He did! Peter was first to preach the Gospel – and open the door of salvation to each new people group... *in Acts 2, to the Jews - in Acts 8, to the Samaritans - in Acts 10, to the Gentiles...*

God opened the door of salvation to all people through one man, Peter.

When I think of Peter, Psalm 84:10 comes to mind. “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

Remember a haughty Peter denied the Lord in front of a campfire girl. He was humbled. Yet after forgiving Peter, God used him to open the door of salvation to the world. Peter was now happy to just be a doorkeeper...

Yet, what a huge leap when Roman Catholicism took a doorkeeper and turned him into a pope. Catholic theology claims Peter was the first infallible leader of the Church in Rome. For centuries, the Pope was called “the vicar (or representative) of Peter.” *Did anybody read their Bible?*

Imagine a cocky, impulsive, shoot-from-the-hip Pete an infallible leader? *Hardly!* Peter meant well, and loved Jesus, but he was far from infallible.

When Peter addresses the other pastors he doesn't lay claim to an *exalted title* or a *pompous position*... He

doesn't call himself "*Your Holiness*" or "*Pontif Maximus.*" Peter assumed a humble title, "*fellow elder.*"

I love this... The guy to whom Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom of heaven doesn't call himself "*reverend,*" or "*apostle,*" or "*archbishop,*" or even "*senior pastor.*" Peter is content to just be one of the elders.

But Peter was also "*a witness of the sufferings of Christ...*" When the Jews arrested Jesus, and brought Him to Pilate, Luke 22 tells us, "*Peter followed at a distance.*" It was a sad commentary on a backslidden Peter, but he was there when Jesus was tried, scourged, and nailed to the cross.

Peter wasn't a second generation recipient of the news. He witnessed firsthand the sufferings of Jesus. He'd never forget what Jesus endured.

All the gruesome images were burned indelibly into his brain.

And Peter was "*also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed...*"

Peter saw Jesus' sufferings, but he also saw His glory. He saw His glory twice... after Jesus' resurrection, and earlier at His transfiguration.

Once, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mountaintop and there His humility was peeled back. Peter got a glimpse of Jesus' glorified humanity. He glowed like the sun. Peter saw how Jesus looks today, and how He'll appear when He splits the eastern sky and

returns to earth to judge the wicked and establish His kingdom. Jesus will come in power! Peter saw the *grueling* and *glory* – the *Suffering Servant* and *Shining Son*.

And like Peter, we as Christians also live between two comings - two appearances. Jesus came in humility, but He's coming in again in glory.

Think of the teenage daughter on the day of her prom. She's having pictures taken at her house, so she gets up in the morning and throws on her blue jeans and T-shirt. She helps her mom scrub the walls, and mop the floors, and dust the shelves... she helps get the house ready for guests.

Of course, if you have a teenager daughter you realize this is a completely fictional scenario... The cleaning part would never happen...

Fast forward though to that night... She appears adorned in an evening gown, and up-do, and make-up... She's absolutely, drop-dead gorgeous...

She's a servant by day - and she's a princess by night.

Well, this is like Jesus! *He's a Servant by day!* He came the first time to clean house and hearts, and change us from the inside out. But *He's a King by night*. When the day is done, He'll return to rule with a rod of iron.

Peter was inspired to pastor by both the *suffering servant* and the *coming king*. Peter was an *in-betweenener* – inspired by both appearances.

As a pastor there are times when the “**witness of His sufferings**” should guide my life and leadership. Representing Jesus means humbling myself, laying aside my rights – serving - and sacrificing my life for others.

Yet at other times representing Jesus means “**partaking of His (future) glory.**” When I suffer - when I’m persecuted - I can take heart and be bold. Jesus is coming again to conquer and punish evil - and I’ll reign with Him.

As Christians we’re all *in-betweeners*. We live between two comings.

That makes us servants by day, and kings by night. This was Peter - a “**fellow elder**”, a “**witness of the sufferings**”, and a “**partaker of the glory**”.

And Peter says to his peers in verse 2, “**Shepherd the flock of God which is among you...**” Good shepherds serve the sheep in two ways...

They **feed and lead**. A shepherd provides the sheep what they need to grow – the proper diet. Not always what tastes good, but what is most nutritious. And He leads the sheep. He never *pushes the sheep*, or *beats the sheep*, or *drives the sheep* – rather he *leads and loves the sheep*.

And this is a pastor’s job... I teach you God’s Word. Faith grows when you read and study the Bible. I also seek the Lord for fresh vision and lead the church accordingly. All pastors have two jobs – *to feed and lead*.

And a good pastor never forgets who owns the flock. Notice, Peter calls the church *“the flock of God.”* It’s not *Peter’s flock* – or *Sandy’s flock* – its **God’s flock**. A pastor gets off track when he starts thinking thoughts like... *“It’s my church – these are my sheep – it’s my pulpit – it’s my ministry...”*

Every pastor will answer to Jesus for how he treats **“the flock of God.”**

It reminds me of the Israeli tour guide who described for his group how the ancient shepherds always led their sheep. The words had no sooner come out of his mouth that the group looked out of the bus, and noticed a man driving a herd of sheep down the street. The shepherd was behind the sheep – cracking his whip – pushing and driving, rather than leading.

It embarrassed and discredited the tour guide in the eyes of his group.

A few days later the guide saw this man in the market. He asked him, *“Why were you driving the sheep? Shepherds lead, they don’t push.”*

The man replied, *“You’re right, but I’m not a shepherd. I’m a butcher.”* Pastors likewise are shepherds, not butchers. Our job is to gently lead.

And as a pastor *leads and feeds* he’s constantly vigilant. He protects the vulnerable flock from thieves and predators. He watches out for the safety and welfare of the flock. This is why Peter calls pastors **“overseers.”**

Notice Peter says in verse 2 **“serving as overseers.”** Pushing a vacuum, or a rake, or taking out a bag of trash - shouldn't be below anyone – including a pastor. But those jobs aren't the only way to serve the Lord.

I'm glad we have people willing to do those tasks so those of us called to be **“overseers”** can give some time and attention to the larger picture.

*It doesn't matter how many hands are on deck, and how orderly they function - the ship is still going to swerve off course unless there's someone in the wheelhouse steering the ship. Oversight is crucial. And the same is true in the church. This is why pastors are called on to **“oversee.”***

There was a time in the life of our church when I pretty much did it all...

I typed, and printed, and folded the Announcement sheet. I vacuumed the carpets and mowed the grass. Then I prepared for the Bible Study.

And quite frankly, I enjoyed the work. I like rolling up my shirtsleeves and doing... My tendency is to want to do it all. Relying on other people gets stressful to me. Sometimes it's easier for me to just do it myself.

But God convicted me. My reluctance to delegate was a bottleneck in the life of our church. Folks weren't stepping up because I was in the way.

I learned that God calls pastors to be **“overseers”** – not **over-doers**.

I once read where if someone can do it 80% as well as you can, you need to get out of the way and let them at it. Church leaders need to pass on and multiply ministry – not hoard it for themselves. A pastor’s job is to provide other folks the joy and opportunity to use their gifts in serving God.

Today, with all that goes on in our church there’s no way I can do it all.

Understand the average church in America has one pastor for every 45 people. Conservatively speaking, we probably have one pastor for every 150 people. You have no idea what gets done from week to week at CC...

Our building gets used for more events - and for more purposes – than probably any other facility in the community. This church also has a regional reach that goes far beyond what’s common for its size and budget.

A big part of what we can do is the result of the army of volunteer servants the Lord has raised up at Calvary... But you need to know our church staff works harder and is more efficient than any other staff I know.

God does more with less through this church than with most... I like to say we have “a loaves and fishes ministry.” The Lord is constantly multiplying... We give Him 5 loaves and 2 fish, and He feeds a multitude.

Yet let me tell you what’s been happening over the last two years.

Last year in 2009 the tithes and offerings to Calvary Chapel were down about 7% from the previous year. This year our tithes and offerings have decreased another 7%. That's a 14% drop in the offering over two years.

In fact, this June was the lowest offering since November, 2004.

And it's no secret what's occurred. We're in a slumping economy. Unemployment is up. Folks can't tithe and give when they don't have a job.

Here's how I've responded. I'm praying and trusting God to provide us what we need. We won't beg or borrow – or rob Peter to pay Paul...

We'll trust God... which means we'll take what He provides and stretch it as far as we can. Then we'll cut what we have to cut. Relying on the Holy Spirit, and seeking God's will, we'll try to do more with less. But my job as your pastor is to oversee, and we can't spend more than we take in. And though this is all but a forgotten principle these days, it's still true.

As overseers we're doing our part... *As members of CC* we only ask that you do your part, and give to God in proportion to what He's given you.

Of course, finance is not the only oversight *"the flock of God"* needs.

Elders and pastors also look out for *wounded sheep*, and *sick sheep*.

Jesus warned us to be on-guard against wolves and rustlers who want to harm the sheep. I've learned there will always be folks who'll drift through with their own agenda, and try garner a following for them selves.

There will be people who'll want to take advantage of what the Lord is doing in our church. And the job of the pastors and elders is to stop them.

If you're here for the wrong reason – we'll eventually find out - and we'll confront you... And if you don't repent we'll tell you not to come back.

Then we'll let the ushers know you're not welcome, so if you try to come anyway you'll have to deal with the head usher – who's 6'8" for a reason.

You've heard of extending *the right hand of Christian fellowship*. We also extend *the right foot of Christian fellowship* when it's necessary.

It's a leader's job to oversee what's taught and practiced in the church.

This is why we're vigilant. If false doctrine invades - or if the wrong example appears – it's on me. I'll stand before God and give an account.

Pastors and elders are called to **shepherd** and **oversee** the flock.

Peter tells church leaders *what to do*, but he also tells us *how to do it...*

He adds in verse 2, “not by compulsion but willingly,” Leaders in the church should never feel *pressured to serve*, but should *desire to serve*.

The Bible says God loves a *cheerful giver*, but a *begrudging giver*.

This is why at CC we’re not going approach you and hassle you about getting involved. We want you to step up and express a desire to serve.

If God is blessing you at Calvary, I’m sure you’ll want to be a blessing!

Anytime you’re serving under compulsion it’s what the OT calls “a blemish sacrifice.” You’re giving less than your best. God gets no pleasure from Christians who just *go through the motions - without the devotion*.

God wants us to serve Him from our heart.

I’ve known pastors who lost their passion. Somewhere along the line it became a profession to them. It’s was all about a paycheck. I read recently where 57% of pastors would quit the ministry if they had another option.

I don’t want to be a *professional* pastor – I want to be an “amateur.”

I embraced that designation several years ago when I learned the meaning of the word *amateur*. It’s a French word that means “For the love of it.” I want to serve God - for the love of Jesus, and for the love of people.

We should serve *“not by compulsion but willingly,”* and *“not for dishonest gain but eagerly...”* Pastors should serve - not for what they can get out of it – but for *the glory of God, and the benefit of other folks.*

Because of the downturn in the economy the area of our ministry that’s been hardest hit is CC Christian School. And we’ve had two teachers who’ve taken cuts in pay to help us out. If you need another reason to enroll your kids, here it is... our teachers are examples of true leadership!

It’s ironic, some of you think, *“If I could only draw a salary I’d serve Lord.”* Peter says, *“If you really want to serve a salary won’t matter.”*

Thirty years ago when God called Kathy and I to start this church the last concern on our minds was a paycheck. In those days I would’ve paid you to come. For a while I worked another job so that I could pastor CC.

In fact, the first year I drew a fulltime salary it amounted to \$14,000.

Since then, I and my family have appreciated the salary the church provides. But that’s not why we do what we do. We love *the Son of God, the truth of God, the people of God, the glory of God...* And as long as God allows me the opportunity I want to continue to serve Him as your pastor.

Church leaders should serve because *they want to, not have to* – for *God’s glory, not their own gain* – and then

Peter says, “nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock...”

A pastor or elder should never be pushy, or manipulative, or bossy.

As a pastor I know that whenever I have to throw my weight around to get people to follow instructions – or pull rank – I’ve lost the high ground.

On occasion it might be necessary, but I would always rather lead by love and example. I want people to follow me because they *respect me* and *love me* – not because they *fear me*. This is true Christian leadership.

Sad to say, in too many churches today the pastor is an *exception* rather than an *example*. Here’s his motto “Do as I say, not do as I do...”

You should know I not only teach tithing, I also tithe – *gross not just net...* I teach you to witness, but I really like to personally share my faith... I teach you to desire holiness, but I seek to be holy in my own life...

I’m all too aware the stuff in the Bible applies to me as well as to you.

For years I parked in the far parking lot on Sunday mornings so other people could park closer to the doors. I resisted having a reserved parking space. Finally, I reluctantly marked off a spot. I kept running late to Calvary 316 because I had to hike to my car in the outer reaches of the parking lot.

I just believe pastors are servants, not celebrities.

The church isn't made up of *stars and extras* – *popes and peons*. God's flock *does* consist of *sheep and shepherds* - but we're all just **servants**.

As a pastor and an elder I want to serve my Lord faithfully...

Not assuming some exalted position, but as a *“fellow elder.”*

Not as a butcher, but a shepherd. Not as an over-doer, but as an overseer. Not as an exception, but an example. Not as a celebrity, but as a servant. As a faithful servant by day - and as a partner in glory by night...

And if a pastor serves well, Peter assures us in verse 4, *“when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”* Here again, Peter says what he said before - pastors and elders are just under-shepherds, proxy-shepherds. The Chief Shepherd is Jesus.

And Jesus promises *“a crown,”* a reward to leaders who serve faithfully.

But notice when it's received *“when the Chief Shepherd appears.”*

This is why being a pastor should be on *Dirty Jobs*... A pastor leads, and feeds, and oversees, and prays, and cares, and serves, and sacrifices, and works hard to do more with less, and shepherds, and runs off the wolves... Only to have somebody leave over the slightest offence -

or get bored and seek greener grass – or worse, just stick around and criticize...

His award doesn't arrive until the Chief Shepherd shows up!

If you want to make a pastor's job easier then *support him, pray for him, give him the benefit of the doubt, follow his leading, and enjoy his feeding.*

Next week we'll look at what Peter says in verse 5, *"Submit yourselves to your elders..."* *The shepherd is happiest when the sheep willingly follow.*

But regardless, pastors and elders need to remember the reward for our faithfulness doesn't come at retirement - or at a specific milestone. We receive it *"when the Chief Shepherd appears"* - and that could be today!