

**LEADING TO BELIEVE****1 Peter 5****(Read 1 Peter 5)– not on the screen)**

**INTRO:** How many of you are elders? How many of you consider yourself leaders? Every one of you should have your hands up. All of you are elders and all of you are leaders to someone and for that reason this passage speaks to all of us. I'm going to show how it applies to all of us whether we consider ourselves leaders or elders or not.

You see, to someone you are a leader. There is someone who looks to you as their parent, boss, team leader at work, child in a baby-sitting situation, younger sibling, a younger classmate. There is someone who looks up to you or has expectations of you because of your profession of Jesus Christ. There is someone for whom you are a role model. With that in mind we need to be leading to believe. We need to be showing those who look up to us a transformed life and how to get there. Your life needs to be an example of how life can be lived when Christ has transformed you.

Peter knew all about that transformed life. He says that he was a witness of Christ's sufferings. He wasn't at the actual crucifixion, but he saw firsthand what Jesus went through in the days and hours leading up to the Cross when all his friends abandoned him to the kangaroo court and execution that followed. Peter still felt very deeply the gut wrenching grief he felt when he saw Jesus's face after he (Peter) denied him (Christ) for the third time. This denial of Jesus was so powerful that it's recorded in all four Gospels (Matthew 26:69, Mark 14:66, Luke 22:54 and John 18:15). Peter remembered his bitter tears when he realized the depth of his betrayal.

Peter knew the horror of crucifixion – he had no-doubt witnessed it happening to others beside Jesus, He remembered the terror between the crucifixion and the resurrection, knowing that he might be next. He remembered the nasty joke the ladies pulled when they came and said that Jesus was not in the grave, that he had risen for the dead. Then he saw for himself, his Lord was indeed alive again. He remembered the shame he felt when he faced Jesus for the first time. He remembered how Jesus looked him in the eye and asked him *Peter, do you love me?* Three times Jesus asked that, each time symbolically undoing the three times that Peter had said he didn't know him. Then Jesus reinstated this betrayer to his ministry.

Talk about suffering and talk about transformation. Peter had been raised and trained as a crude fisherman with no real formal education and now Jesus had made him a tool for transforming the world. Yup, Peter was a witness of Christ's sufferings, and he suffered some himself and he was ready to go through the same – and he did. He suffered (Read the first 5 chapters of Acts) and he served – faithfully.

Now he says we must be ready to take what leadership the Holy Spirit sends our way and he lays out a few guidelines and they all lead us to believe that we need to be leading with such integrity and purpose that others will believe too. Here's how . . .

**Lead willingly**

- Most likely you've seen a pro athlete confronted with questions about his less than stellar behavior affecting young people who might look up to him. And his response is "Hey, I didn't ask to be role model!" The problem is, he is! He can help by being a model for those who admire his work on the field or court and to disregard that responsibility is to renege on a natural obligation.
- Such an obligation is inherent in the very DNA of a Christ Follower. If you call yourself a Christian, and neglect your calling to reflect Jesus for all to see, your calling is suspect, at the very least.
- Being a leader and example isn't a task – it's a privilege. When you accept it as such, a potential chore becomes a wonderful opportunity and joy. I love how the NIV puts it in what I read a bit ago, *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing.* (2a). Peter says we are to eagerly accept our service.
- Have you ever heard the expression, "You can't herd cats." It's true. You can't. They have minds of their own – they are furry little narcissists who only think of themselves. That's why they say "dogs have masters but cats have staff." You can also herd cattle and horses. You walk or ride behind them and keep them moving. But if you ever try to lead cattle or horses you are bound to sooner or later look around to realize they have either wandered off in whatever direction they think is best in their feeble brains, or have simply stopped and are grazing. Know what else you cannot herd? Sheep! If you try to herd them they break in every direction –

I think it's a lack of ANY brains. That's why I've always been a little offended that Jesus calls us sheep. But that is how desperately we are in need of his leadership. Yes – you lead sheep. They will follow their shepherd.

- That is what we are to do for those we lead. We are to shepherd and guide and protect. And notice, he says that we are not to take advantage of the situation and use it for our own selfish gain. This is not only wrong, it is evil. To exploit a trust relationship for our own pleasure or advantage is diametrically opposed to what God intends for our ministry to be. We must shepherd as God does.
- Instead of pressing any advantage we are to . . .

### **Put on the garment of humility**

- In verse 5, Peter addresses the respect the young are to have for their elders. And it's true. We need to. We have soooooo much to learn from them. It's a sad reality that respect has seemingly drained out of society – but it must not be true of the church.
- But while the Apostle is addressing young people this idea of humility really applies to all. We are to be humble – it's one of the examples we are to project for those who look up to us. Hopefully they respect us, but definitely we must be humble enough to respect them too. We are to clothe ourselves with humility. We are to knot it on to our being, is what the original language would indicate. Not some neat little slip knot that comes apart easily, but a knot that will stay tight when we are tempted to puff ourselves up.
- And then in verse 6 he says, *Humble yourselves, therefore under God's mighty hand.* (v 6) You see, a truly humble person is easy to follow. In fact, in my mind, humble people make brilliant leaders. Think about it, wouldn't go anywhere for them? Peter was just such a leader. He could have flaunted his apostleship. As one of the original twelve and the great preacher of the Day of Pentecost and a true Church Father, could have projected great authority. But he didn't. He began this chapter by referring to himself as "*a fellow elder*". That is the example we should follow and it's the example we should give to other as we lead them to believe.
- Humility demands that we be tools in God's hands and not vice versa. Do you know what I mean? Too many people see God as a tool rather than the other way around. If we are to be tools for transformation, we need to put ourselves into the hands of the Master Craftsman and that takes humility.
- And then in verse 8 and following we see that when leading to believe . . .

### **No superficial faith will do**

- We need to *Cast all our cares on him and he will care for everything* (v 7). Its interesting that the word "cast" is used in so many translations. And I think you can get the idea from the word. But a word that is more appropriate from the original language is "hurl" You get the idea of flinging your care far from you and straight into the care of God. Almost like a hot potato. Your anxieties are too hot for you to handle, but God can take them right away.
- When you are leading others to believe and the going gets rough, turn it over to God and he'll take care of the rest. What does that mean? Pray. PRAY! Prayer is your best weapon, often it's your only weapon and it works every time. I try to keep myself from saying "All I could do was pray." as if it's a last resort. That's an insult to God. Prayer is our best line of defense AND offense against that devil who prowls around looking for lunch.
- When we pray, we are inviting the mighty hand of God into action. You can't lose. Leading to believe requires God to be in control. Turn it over to him. That's why Peter says, *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* (v10). You can count on him. In fact verse 10 sounds a lot like my favorite benediction from 1 Thessalonians, *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.* 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. Maybe he had a suggestion of how to encourage his readers from his secretary, Silas, who gets a mention in verse 12 – because Silas probably took dictation from Paul for his letters to the letter to Thessalonica. But that's beside the point. The point is God can be counted one to stand again the evil one and all his evil works. Barclay says "*The devil is like any bully and retreats when he is bravely resisted in the strength of Jesus Christ.*"
- Notice too that leaders need to be self-controlled. How many relationships and budding believers have been destroyed by a lack of self-control? This could be a separate sermon if not a series of sermons. Especially for

these days. We as good examples must be self-controlled – better yet Spirit Controlled. That's leading to believe.

- And finally . . .

**Notice the reward**

- There is a *crown of glory that will never fade away* (v 4.). And there is the promise of *eternal glory* (v 10) as well. The reward of obedience even in the face of suffering will also mean we will have what we need for the journey and eternal life besides. F. B. Meyer speaking of how Peter refer to both glory and suffering in verses 1 and 10, says in so many words that when Peters uses glory and suffering in the same breath, he means that if we endure the one (suffering) we get the other (glory). Suffering is nothing new for the Christ Follower – we should be ready for it, and lead by example through it and the reward will be great.
- And one of the rewards will be seeing those you are leading to believe, in turn leading others in the same way. That's transformation. That's the plan.

**Conclusion:** You are a leader to someone -- lead them to believe that Jesus is the only way. Pass it on. Amen.