

15. Learning How to Both Lead and Serve

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to suffer according to the will of God. To suffer according to the will of God means that we learn to suffer for being faithful and obedient to God. It does not mean that we suffer because of our own sins. In our topic today, we are going to see how we help our children learn to both lead and serve. Sometimes, Christians drive others instead of leading them because such Christians have no idea what it means to lead and at the same time serve.

In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter wrote, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.” In the next few verses, we see that Peter is going to give instructions to those who are the leaders in the local churches. These leaders are called “elders” in verse one and “overseers” in verse two. In Titus 1:5, leaders are called elders; and in Titus 1:7, the same people are called bishops. As a result, we see that all three titles: elders, overseers and bishops are used for leaders in the local church.

Peter both exhorts (beseeches) and calls himself a fellow elder. Here, we see that Peter does not claim that he has higher authority than any other elder. Instead, he makes a request as a fellow elder. This is an important thing to notice because Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Christ is the One who has authority over all flesh. Christ spoke of the authority the Father had given Him in John 17:2 as He prayed to the Father, “‘As You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.’” We want our children and other people to understand that we are the bondservants of Christ and He is the One with all authority.

Even though both Peter and Paul were apostles, they recognized that they served under the authority of Christ. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9, “Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.” Here, we see that Paul chose to lead by example instead of leading by authority. Peter says here that he is a fellow elder and then in verse three he reminds the other elders that as elders they are also to lead by example just as he was doing.

Peter also wrote as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Since Peter was writing to the Christians that were suffering, he reminded them again that Christ had suffered for them. Peter understood the greatness of the sufferings that Christ went through for us. Since Peter was a witness of those sufferings, He heard when Christ cried in Matthew 27:46, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” As a result, Peter recognized that our sufferings are small compared to those of Christ.

However, Peter also had a future perspective because he wrote as one who would be a partaker of the glory that would be revealed in the future. Just as Peter had earlier reminded those to whom

he was writing of that glory, we see here that he reminded them again. In 1 Peter 1:6-9, he wrote, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.” Peter wrote to the fellow elders as one who had a joy that was inexpressible.

Peter went on to say in 1 Peter 5:2-4, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Here, we see that the first responsibility of elders is to shepherd the flock of God. As elders, we are to remember that the flock that we lead belongs to God. The word translated “shepherd” means “to feed and lead a flock.” When Christ restored Peter, in John 21, after Peter had denied Christ three times, John 21:16 says, “He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’” Christ told Peter he was to lead and feed the sheep of Christ based on his love for Christ.

Paul gave the elders in Ephesus the same instructions when he used this same word in Acts 20:28, where we read, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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.” Here, we see that elders are to shepherd the church of God. Christ paid an expensive price to purchase that flock so elders are to lead with love.

The word that is translated “serving as overseers” means “to look very carefully after the flock.” The only other place this form of the word is used is in Hebrews 12:15, where we read, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Here, we see that the word is translated “looking carefully.” A shepherd was to look very carefully after each sheep in the flock to make sure that no harm came to any of the sheep. Elders have that same responsibility as they care for the flock of God.

Then, we are given three things that elders are to avoid and three things that they are to do instead. First, elders are not to serve by compulsion but willingly. The word translated “compulsion” means “*because someone forces them to do it.*” Instead, elders are to lead with willingness. Second, elders are not to serve for dishonest gain but eagerly. The word that is translated “dishonest gain” means “*to be greedy for money.*” This word is used in both the qualifications for deacons and for elders. 1 Timothy 3:3 says, “Not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous.” Then, 1 Timothy 3:8 says, “Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money.” Spiritual leaders will not lead effectively if they are greedy for money.

Third, elders are not to lead as lords but are to lead by example. The word that is translated “being

lords over” means “*to bring a person under one’s power.*” This word is only used three other times. In Acts 19:16, it talks about a demon possessed man who overcame the seven sons of Sceva. The other two uses are in Matthew and Mark and both passages have almost the exact same words. Mark 10:42-45 says, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” Here, we see that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them.

In contrast, godly elders are to lead by example. The word translated “example” means “*a pattern or example to be imitated.*” Paul used this same word in Philippians 3:17, where we read, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Here’ the word is translated “*pattern.*” We see that if we are an elder we are to live a life that will be a pattern for others to follow. Elders who lead in this way can look forward to the crown that is eternal glory when Christ appears.

In 1 Peter 5:5, we read, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” The word translated “likewise” means “*in the same way.*” Just as elders are to lead by example, the younger Christians are told to submit to the elders by following their examples. In fact, all Christians are to be submissive to one another. “Submit” and “submissive” are the same Greek word. In the military, it meant to arrange yourself under your leader. In non-military use, it meant a voluntary attitude of cooperating and taking responsibility. As a result, we see that as Christians we are all to lead one another by providing godly examples to follow.

We are also to be clothed with humility. The word that is translated “clothed” meant “*to put on the clothing of a bondservant.*” Here, we see that as Christians we are to put on humility as our clothing. Philippians 2:3-4 uses this word when it says, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*” Here, this word is translated “lowliness of mind.” Peter illustrated that this was also an Old Testament teaching by quoting from Proverbs 3:34 which says, “Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.” God gives us His grace as we choose to have a humble attitude toward one another.

As we show our physical and spiritual children by our own attitude how to develop a humble attitude, the Lord will use that attitude to help them learn to lead others as the bondservants of Jesus Christ. A driver drives people until they get out of the way. A leader will lead people as far as he or she has gone. A bondservant will serve others to develop their full potential for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children as a bondservant of Christ how to both lead and serve with a humble attitude.