

**Letters From A Fisherman**  
**Week 19**  
**1 Peter 5:1-4**  
**“A Word To The Shepherds”**

**Introduction**

**Remember your leaders who have spoken God's Word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.** **Hebrews 13:7**

In a world filled with sin, persecution, and chaos, good leaders are important. And in Peter's day as Nero's malevolent attacks were being brought to bear against the church, to have good steady hands at the helm was an absolute necessity. For where there is no good shepherd, the sheep are scattered. God cares deeply about His flock, and therefore, He sees to it that men are called to oversee to their care. God will honor the faithful pastor, who puts the needs of the flock above his own. And conversely, He is not pleased when the flock is left out in the cold with no one to watch over it. Jesus' heart was broken at the condition of Israel as He went about healing and teaching.

**When he saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.** **Matthew 9:36**

With this in mind, it becomes necessary for the church to understand not only the pastor/shepherd's role within the body, but also to understand his qualifications. Far too many so-called pastors today seem to be motivated by something other than love for the flock. This becomes obvious when you see some of the lavish lifestyles they lead. A pastor who cares for his congregation won't be flying around in private jets while the church is barely scraping by! Are pastors to be compensated for their labor? Of course! *The Bible* clearly teaches that a pastor should be taken care of by the church he is called to lead.

**The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says: Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain, and, “The worker is worthy of his wages.”** **1 Timothy 5:17-18**

That being said, however, there is a big difference between earning a living and making a killing!

As Peter puts the finishing touches upon his first letter to the persecuted church in Rome, he has some final thoughts for those who are called to lead, as well as those who are called to follow. Good and faithful pastors were desperately needed to help the church navigate the troubled waters that lay ahead, and then, just as now, the kind of men who were up to the formidable task were in short supply. So Peter offered up words of instruction and encouragement for those who would step up and lead God's people.

As we read his instructions today, I cannot help but think that every church should examine their own leaders in the light of this criteria. While no pastor is sinlessly perfect and should never be expected to be, it is important that he be a man after God's own heart, when it comes to shepherding God's flock. So let us look together today as we see what Christ, the Good Shepherd, expects of His *under-shepherds*. For they are called to *Feed The Flock*, and not *Fleece The Flock*, and to *Lead The Flock* by their own good example, and finally, when Christ returns they must *Cede The Flock*, for the Flock does not belong to them! God will honor the faithful shepherd, but He will also hold them accountable for the way in which they shepherd His people. And the Scripture is filled with warnings to those who would take advantage of those whom God loves.

**“Woe to the shepherds who destroy the sheep of My pasture!” This is The LORD’S declaration. “Therefore, this is what The LORD, The God of Israel, says about the shepherds who tend my people: You have scattered My flock, banished them, and have not attended to them. I am about to attend to you because of your evil acts” — this is The LORD’s declaration. “I will gather the remnant of My flock from all the lands where I have banished them, and I will return them to their grazing land. They will become fruitful and numerous. I will raise up shepherds over them who will tend to them. They will no longer be afraid or discouraged, nor will any be missing.” This is The LORD’s declaration. Jeremiah 23:1-4**

### **Feed The Flock (vs. 1-2)**

**I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory about to be revealed: Shepherd God’s flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed for money but eagerly.... 1 Peter 5:1-2**

Peter begins his letter in Chapter One by introducing himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ”, but here refers to himself as “a fellow elder”. I am fascinated by the content here in the Fifth Chapter of this epistle, for virtually everything that Peter writes can be linked to something that we learned of him in the four gospels. This first sentence is a perfect example. This man, who has been chosen personally by Christ Himself to be an apostle and granted the authority that comes along with such an honor, is now content to be recognized as a fellow elder. Why does this matter? Because this is the very same disciple who once told The LORD, **“I’m ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” (Luke 22:33)**. To which Jesus replied, **“I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you deny three times that you know Me.”**

You see, at one time, Peter thought of himself as something special. That is until the time came when he failed his LORD miserably. From then on, he was just another humble follower. No more boasting of his great love and loyalty. No more discussions as to who was the “greatest disciple”. From the time Jesus confronted him on the seashore after the resurrection, he was just simply... Peter, the shepherd whom Christ had called to “Feed My sheep” (**John 21:15-19**). And here we see him write to the preachers, not as Peter the great apostle, but as Peter, a fellow elder.

He goes on to say that he had personally witnessed the sufferings of Christ. Peter knew all too well that in order to serve in The LORD’S kingdom, one had to be willing to sacrifice. There was not a calling to the easy life, but rather, to a life of dedicated service to Christ and to His people. The glory would come much later, to those who had proved themselves faithful.

Peter got a glimpse of that future glory, when he witnessed Christ’s transformation upon the mountain top (**Matthew 17:1-9**). He had stood there in the presence of Christ, with Moses and Elijah. He had been so overwhelmed that he didn’t even know how to respond. But in true Peter fashion, it didn’t stop him from speaking! Oh the change we see from that Peter to the one writing this epistle. He doesn’t need to boast in himself anymore. He simply wants to glorify the One Who had chosen him, to share in His glory.

He commands the pastors to “Shepherd God’s flock among you.” The Greek word for “shepherd” is “*Poimaino*”, and it is synonymous with the feeding of sheep. For this is the primary duty of a shepherd, to see to it that his flock has sufficient pasture upon which to thrive. It was the very same command that Christ had given to him, and here, we see him passing the torch to all those who are called to shepherd God’s flock.

I once had a conversation with a pastor who was annoyed that his congregation had been complaining that they were not being adequately fed by his sermons. I couldn’t help but think, “Well, isn’t that the number one requirement of a shepherd, to feed the sheep?” I think that the church has every right to expect to feast on God’s Word each and every time they gather. It is the lazy shepherd indeed

who does not adequately prepare in order to feed them. I seem to recall a certain *Bible* passage that commands pastors to **“Study”** in order **“to show thyself approved.”** (**2 Timothy 2:15a KJV**). If you aren't being fed by your shepherd, it's either time for your shepherd to repent or to hand over the flock to someone else. Don't settle for last years warmed over sermons that you've heard a hundred times before. You should expect to always be finding new truths in God's Word, when you go to church, for it has an inexhaustible supply of truth for you to feast upon!

Peter goes on to say that your pastor ought to feed you, because he takes joy in caring for the sheep, not just because it's his job, and he because he *has* to. If a minister doesn't truly see serving Christ as an honor, then he probably should be doing something else. Our's is not a compulsory service, but rather, it is to be a labor of love. Peter continues by reminding all the preachers that theirs is not a calling to get rich off the flock. No, the flock is not ours to “fleece”, but rather, it is a flock to be served by the shepherd. This, of course, as I mentioned earlier, doesn't give the church license to starve their pastor and his family. If the shepherd is truly feeding the flock, then the flock should in turn be appreciative of his labors. For in all truth, a good and faithful shepherd, who diligently studies God's Word in order to properly feed The LORD'S flock, well... is pretty hard to come by these days. The faithful shepherd loves the sheep. And that is his motivation to do what he does.

### **Lead The Flock (vs. 3)**

**...not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.**

**1 Peter 5:3**

I have been raising sheep (real ones, not the people kind) for about 20 years now. And I may not know everything about shepherding sheep, but one thing I have learned: You absolutely *cannot* drive sheep the way you drive cattle. If you try and drive them, they simply scatter in all directions. Sheep have to be led. And I have discovered that the best way to do this is to go out into the pasture with a bucket of feed. When I do this, they will follow me anywhere, because they know that I have something good for them!

It is no wonder that *The Bible* so often compares God's people to a flock of sheep. For there are in fact a great deal of similarities. I cannot begin to tell tell you how many times I have gone out to the pasture to find a sheep that was crying out because it had its head stuck in the fence. Sheep can be standing knee deep in good pasture, and for some reason are convinced that the weeds across the fence are better than what they have to eat. And as a result they get themselves into some pretty intense predicaments. Then all they can do is cry out until the shepherd (namely me) has to come to the rescue.

Does that not remind you of exactly what we do. We never seem to be satisfied with the pasture that God puts us in, and we often get ourselves into one disaster after another as we try to find a better way. Imagine that. We think we can find a better plan, than God's! And when it all falls apart we cry out for The Good Shepherd to come and save us. I wonder if He gets tired of having to do that? If we'd just listen and be content, maybe we'd understand that the fences are there for our own good? King David was a shepherd himself, and he understood well the protection of God's fences. That is why he wrote:

**LORD, you are my portion and my cup of blessing; you hold my future. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed I have a beautiful inheritance.**  
**Psalms 16:5-6**

Accordingly, Peter admonishes the “shepherds of the LORD'S flock” to lead them, and not to drive them. To become an example to follow, rather than a task master. Truth be told, a pastor has not been given any authority to boss people around. He has been commanded to lead the flock to follow him as he follows Christ. If everyone is following after Christ, then we are all going in the same direction. It is absolutely abhorrent when those who lead are of the mantra that says, “*Do as I say and not as I do.*”

Sheep follow, when they know that the shepherd is taking them to a good place. When they are assured that his direction is the best way.

I love the word that *The New Testament* writers used for “example”. It is “typos” (*pronounced too'-pos*), and it is a word used to describe the imprint made in a fabric by a tool. An example of a typos would be the “genuine leather” stamp one would see imprinted upon a piece of leather. Thomas used this same word when he declared that he would not believe that Jesus had risen from the grave until he saw with his own eyes the “typos” of the nails in his hands.

Paul also used the word to describe the church at Thessalonica, when he said that they had become a *typos* for all of Macedonia to follow (**1 Thessalonians 1:7**). So what does it mean exactly? It means that people can see in you the imprint of Christ's craftsmanship. If Believers follow you, it is because they see Christ's stamp of approval upon your life. In short, they see Christ in you! This is what Peter meant when he told the pastors that they should be a *typos* for the flock to emulate. I don't know about you, but I am a whole lot more inclined to follow a person when I have the assurance that they are headed in the right direction! Or as Paul would say:

**Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.**

**1 Corinthians 11:1**

If you cannot see for yourself that your shepherd is following after Christ, then find another shepherd. For there are a great deal of false shepherds out there who are leading multitudes astray. Always compare the direction of your shepherd with God's Word. If these two things are not in alignment, then you very well may be led astray. Once again, in order to be a good shepherd, and a *typos* for others, one must:

**Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching The Word of truth.**

**2 Timothy 2:15**

### **Cede The Flock (vs. 4)**

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

**1 Peter 5:4**

In various pastor's meetings and conferences, I have often heard a pastor refer to a church as “my church”. And while I know what they mean by that and am probably guilty of the very same thing myself, we would all do well to remember that the churches in which we are called to serve are not ours. They all belong to the one that Peter refers to as the “*Archipoimen*”, which literally means “*The First Place Shepherd*”. I love this wonderful title for Christ, for it is absolutely what He is to us! He is not only our Good Shepherd, who leads His church, but He is the Chief Shepherd, and we are the flock of His pasture. We are His and His alone.

Those who have been entrusted to lead His people will one day have to cede that leadership to Him. And even now as we lead, we are called upon to follow our Chief Shepherd as our guide. The writer of *Hebrews* calls The Savior “**The Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith**” (**Hebrews 12:2**), and it is He who blazes the trail before us. When we keep our eyes on Him, the flock never strays into danger. Where He leads, we must follow.

Peter has often been called the “*hope apostle*”, for he uses that word “*elpis*” in the Greek very often. *Elpis* is not merely a hope that is pinned upon empty wishes, but rather, it is a confident expectation that God will do all that He has promised. And Peter reminds us here that to those who faithfully serve, motivated by our love for our Chief Shepherd, the very same will be rewarded when He returns in His glory! Every struggle, trial and personal pain will all be worth it when He comes to reward His faithful servants. And in this truth, we can have hope even in the worst of storms.

Ministry is difficult. And that is the honest truth, but it is also an honor to serve. Those who do not feel honored to be His ambassadors should either repent or find something else to do. To be entrusted with ministry is the highest purpose that can be had in this life. And the good news is, isn't

just the preachers who are called to minister, but rather, each and every Believer has been gifted to serve within the flock of God. We are truly, each of us, a member of a royal priesthood (**1 Peter 2:5**).

I love what Peter says about shepherding the flock “*among you*” in **verse 2**, for even those who are chosen as under-shepherds (pastors and elders) are also a part of the flock. We lead the flock, but we are also *of* the flock, because in the end, the flock belongs to only one Chief Shepherd. It is His Church, and He builds it, He leads it, He preserves it, and He alone lay down His life to purchase it. We are the sheep of His pasture, and the boundaries He has set for us most certainly will “fall into pleasant places.”

So as we all follow Him, let us not forget to honor those whom He has chosen to lead His people. For they will each stand before Him and give an account for the care that they provided to His flock. So pray for those who stand before you, that they will always serve with the right heart, always seeking His guidance as they lead His flock by their example. For they are called to *Feed* the flock, *Lead* the flock and ultimately to *Cede* the flock to the Chief Shepherd.

***The LORD is my Shepherd; I have what I need. He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He renews my life; He leads me along the right paths for His name's sake. Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff — they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of The LORD as long as I live.***

***The 23rd Psalm.***

Glory to our God for The Chief Shepherd, Who lay down His life for the sheep.

TRUTH!!!