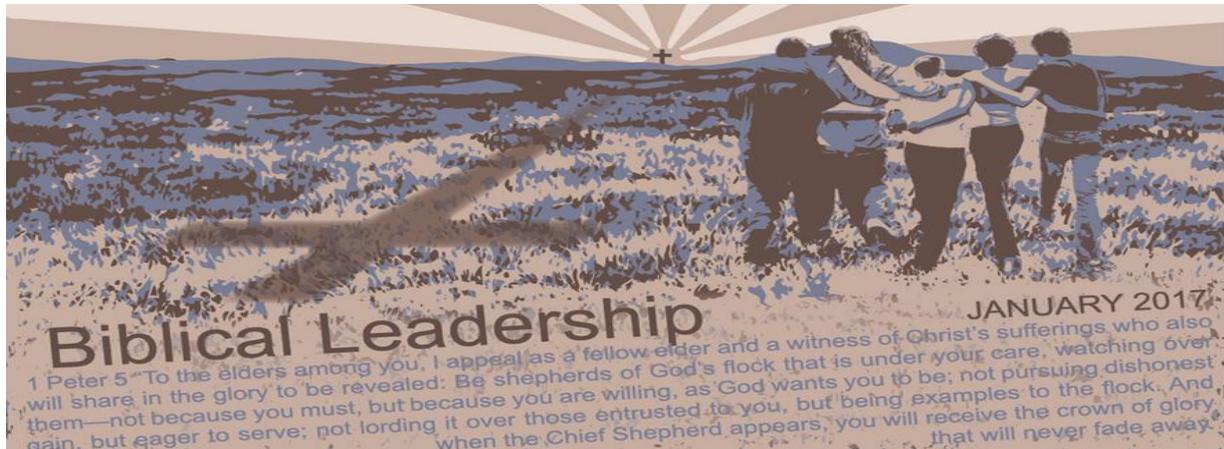


***How Do Biblical Leaders Actually Lead?***  
January Sermon Series on Biblical Leadership  
Kenwood Baptist Church  
Pastor David Palmer  
January 22, 2017

**TEXT:** 1 Peter 5:1-11



We continue this morning in our Biblical Leadership sermon series this January. We have been looking at how the church is a holy community that is built on the confession that Jesus is our King. The church is the people and the place where God's expanding mission in the world is extended. As we have been looking this January, the church matters a great deal, and then we looked at how the church is led in Scripture. What we have seen in both the Old and New Testaments is a consecrated group of shared leaders, most often in Scripture called elders, entrusted with the responsibility to protect and lead and guide God's people into Christ's future for them. Elders are to be hard-working, diligent, servant leaders. Last Sunday, we looked at the character of biblical leaders and this very high bar of the standard of godliness. It was God's providential timing that after church last Sunday we 'just so happened' to have a business meeting at which we actually put into our governing documents these qualifications. I had nothing to do with coordinating this. I thought it was awesome that we looked at biblical character in worship and the same Sunday we put it into our Constitution by an overwhelming vote. I think it says a lot about Kenwood, present and future, that we would as a community say character matters, and how we conduct ourselves in public emerges from who we are in private. I really believe Jesus taught that it is out of the treasure of what is within that we live, and we lead out of that.

This morning, we want to move a step further to how the church is organized in Scripture and what the character requirements are. We want to look at leadership in action and how biblical

leaders actually lead. We turn our attention to a very important text in 1 Peter 5. The two letters, 1 and 2 Peter, are written towards the end of Peter's life. They reflect a very mature vision, accumulated wisdom, and we see Peter having changed dramatically in many ways from the figure that we meet in the Gospels. Peter is beloved in the Gospels for many reasons. He is accessible to us; his faults are very visible; he is rash and decisive. He comes up to Jesus and says: "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me, up to seven times?" He is ready to cut his losses like a good fisherman. Jesus rebukes him and says: "Well, actually, it is 70 times 7 times, so you have quite a ways to go to approximate my compassion on sinful humanity." We see Peter also as someone who uniquely among the disciples rebuked Jesus—an ignoble distinction. When Jesus tells the disciples that He must suffer and be killed and raised in the third day, we read in Matthew 16:22:

*"Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to You!'"*

We see Peter overconfident in the Gospels. In Matthew 26, when Jesus tells His disciples that all of them will abandon Him, Peter says in Matthew 26:33:

*"Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will."*

By the time we meet Peter again in his letters, we see quite a different man. We see someone who is very different in the way that he leads and how he guides the church. The explanation for that? Maybe some of you are thinking what we just automatically get more godly as we age. Let me tell you, that is not the case. Augustin, the leader of the church in the fourth century, said: "Unless godliness is deeply rooted and anchored to our souls, when we get older, it just flies away from us." So, we need transformation that is really deeply grounded. Peter's transformation in his service to Christ is evidence of his being with Christ. In Acts 14:13, even those who knew him said: "This is a man who has been with Jesus."

Let me apply this to all of us right at the beginning of the sermon. I want to challenge us all that who we become in this life is ultimately connected to our experience of walking with Jesus. That is who we are becoming. If you walk with Christ, you and I will become more Christ-like over time. It is directly linked, as obvious as that sounds. We also see Peter's change in maturity develop through decades of ministry. He has walked with Christ now for almost 35 years, and these letters towards the end of his life bear the fruit of that mature vision. We will not talk about 1 and 2 Peter at length today; we are jumping in towards the end, but they share the same template that we saw in Acts and in Paul's letters: the template of preaching the gospel; announcing the good news, followed up by discipleship over time; and then lastly, a concern for leadership in the church. Just like the example that we saw in Paul and his following the Old Testament example, the leadership pattern that we see in Peter is again this shared group of elders.

We had a great discussion on Wednesday night about how we apply this to Kenwood. We received a lot of positive feedback from that time, but a couple have asked if there is some sort of hidden agenda to the series. Let me just say there's no hidden agenda at all; the agenda is overt, explicit, on the table. The agenda for all of us should be to conform our life individually, as a family, and as a congregation, to God's Word. That's the agenda, so wherever that takes us, that is where we want to go. I don't have some master plan for scripting Kenwood's future locked up in the senior pastor office, but I will labor with all my heart, for my own soul, for yours, for families, for our big family, that we would live in accordance with the Scriptures. That is why we talk about this. How do we line up our life together so that we can follow Christ closely and join wholeheartedly in His mission in the communities around us? That is the agenda: conforming our lives to Scripture and to Christ-likeness over time.

So, when we get to 1 Peter 5, we see this vision of leadership in action. How do biblical leaders actually lead? Let's look at the passage here in 1 Peter 5. Within this passage, we will see three definitional categories, three descriptions of how leadership is actually carried out. These are life-giving; they are definitional distinctions made in how a biblical leader actually leads; and then there's a bonus element at the end. Then, the conclusion of the passage actually raises the question of how do we follow well, because often we are excited to hold leaders to a very high standard, and we never asked the question: "What does it mean to be a good follower?" We will see a parallel structure when we get to that.

Let's begin with 1 Peter 5:1. Peter begins with an exhortation "*to the elders among you.*" There it is again, another description, plural, a shared group, a plurality of leaders, and Peter sees himself as one among that group. It is very important to notice he describes himself as a *fellow elder*. He does not describe himself as in charge of the entire church. He describes himself as a fellow elder, as a witness of the sufferings of Christ, which I think is a statement that obliquely testifies to his humility. Most of the church knows that the moment of Christ's suffering was actually a moment of epic failure in Peter's life. He is a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's suffering, and then he describes himself as a "*sharer in the glory to be revealed.*" The ESV says *partaker*. The Greek word is actually a *sharer*. He says: "I am a sharer with you in the glory that is coming." These are amazing, self-deprecating descriptions. He describes himself in these terms, and then the imperative of 1 Peter 5:2. The command is the same command that we saw in Acts 10. The command is to "*shepherd the flock that is among you.*" It is an imperative; it is a command: "Shepherd the flock that is among you." In this, Peter summons the leadership. This category of shepherding draws up a whole chain of deep resonances both in Peter's own life and in the testimony of the Scripture. Why would Peter say at the end of his life: "If I could just tell you one thing, it would be to shepherd the flock"? Why is that word so important? I think part of the explanation is that this image of feeding the flock and caring for those whom Christ

has purchased is imbedded, is engraved upon Peter's life with his experience at the Sea of Galilee after Jesus was raised. You will remember that Peter denied even knowing Christ three times at the moment of His trial and imminent execution. When Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee, He had to restore Peter in the eyes of the other disciples, and just as Peter denied Christ, Jesus restores Peter three times in John 21:15-17:

*“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘You know that I love You.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed My lambs.’*

*Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love Me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of My sheep.’*

*The third time He said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love Me?’*

*Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ He said, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed My sheep.’”*

John said that Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him this for third time. He didn't quite realize the threefold restoration that was happening. Jesus told him: “If you love Me, then care for, lead, the people that I have obtained with My own shed blood.” This scene is engraved upon Peter’s soul, and he lives it out for 35 years and gives his life at the end for the sake of shepherding the flock. One of his last pieces of instruction to other biblical leaders will be this: “Shepherd the flock. If I can tell you just one thing: Shepherd the flock.”

It’s a beautiful image, echoing the scriptural refrain to feed the sheep. We read in Psalm 23:1-5:

*“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. . . You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”*

Ezekiel 34 is a very beautiful and moving description of the Lord as our Shepherd, and it is a rebuke of phony or false leaders who only feed themselves. The Lord says: “I will remove these false shepherds who only feed themselves and should have fed the sheep.” The Lord says: “I will shepherd them Myself.” Jesus says: “I am the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.” This image of shepherding that we saw in Acts 20 involves an active feeding from the Scripture, and so an elder must be able to teach.

This image of shepherding also involves a protecting against danger. It involves a knowing of the congregation, knowing them by their names and leading them to the place were Christ is calling us all forward. Biblical leaders, these servant-shepherds, feed, protect, and equip. This is the task before us. The question arises: “How is this done? Is it all about the bottom line? Is it about the results no matter what the methods?” Not so in Scripture. The means, the method,

the manner of leading, are just as important because the way that we lead comes out of the godly character that was summoned from last Sunday. When we turn to 1 Peter 5:2, we see the beginning of these three definitional distinctions that are made in the text, and I want us to look at these closely. I have been saying these in my mind all week: not this, but this. Each of them has this pattern: not this way, but this way. Sometimes to lead or to learn something you have to have someone teach you: do this. But sometimes a more effective way of teaching is to say: don't do it this way, do it this way, and that's what we have here 1 Peter. We read in 1 Peter 5:2:

*"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;"*

The first distinction is this: ***"Shepherd the flock not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you."*** That is, do not serve in leadership by being constrained, forced, or compelled to do it. Do not serve begrudgingly, but instead, the image is a willing offering of yourself. This is the Bible's view of free will. I love it; this is the free will that you want. The free will that you really want is not your ability to decide what type cereal or bagel you want for yourself. That's tyranny, isn't it? Have you been to the grocery store lately? There's an overwhelming number of selections. The free will that the Bible envisions is a free will, he says, *"as God would have you."* The text really says: *freely, according to God.* The free will actually is when God so moves your spirit to say: "I want to do that. No one is forcing me to do it. No one is compelling me to do it. No one is recruiting me in the hallways of the church and saying: 'We really need you to do this; we can't find anyone else; would you just do it?'" What instead is in view is what the Levitical system of offerings describes as a *free will offering*: you don't have to, but you want to because the Holy Spirit is at work in your heart, and you say, "I want to freely offer myself to God." Don't serve because someone is forcing you or saying we need a warm body in this seat. You serve because the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and you willingly offer yourself. You exercise oversight over lives and people, not forced by pride or prestige or necessity or any other motivation, but by a willing call from God. Some of you know Pastor Ken Atchison. I overheard him mentoring someone who is considering going into ministry, and Pastor Ken looked at him and said: "You know, you should do that only if you could imagine yourself doing nothing else, if there is rising up within you, 'I just want to offer myself to God.'" That is true for people going into ministry; that is true for leaders; and this really true for any expression of our service. Don't take the position if it is begrudging, but if God is calling you. That is the first distinction.

The second distinction, Peter continues and says: ***"Shepherd the flock among you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly."*** This gives us the picture that leaders do not lead to gain, but leaders lead to give. Shouldn't that be the posture of those serving? You don't take the reins to gain a new business card. You don't take the reins of an organization or institution so that you

can acquire more power. Actually, what you acquire is greater responsibility, and Peter wisely says: *“Don't serve in leadership for shameful gain, but eagerly.”* It is almost embedded within this the expression that you would do it for nothing. Would you do it for nothing? What kind of leaders would God's people have if they were not compelled, but called; not eager for gain, but eager to give. Where would the direction of the family go with this eagerness, this willingness, the sense of I'd do it for nothing. I am really excited about N.T. Wright's coming. It is a very, very exciting time for us a couple months out. But it's fascinating to watch the character of leaders who display eager willingness. I love to see how people respond to such invitations. Some very godly people just say: “Put me to work; fill my schedule; I'll be here for these hours and I'll do as much as I can.” That's what you want to hear. I remember when we had Ken Elzinga a couple of years ago. He gave seven talks in two days. He just packed his schedule. *Eager, willing, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.* We see this language in Paul in several places, that ungodly leadership is exploitative and seeking to gain. Second Corinthians has passage after passage where he gives an indictment of pseudo-Christian leaders who are serving in order to gain benefits for themselves, and Paul says that when you see someone operating that way, that is not an authentic biblical leader. How many of you have seen Christian leaders who seem to be tipping the scale of the organization or institution for their own benefit? That is a marker of someone who is not leading in this way, and Peter knows this from experience. Paul urges in his letters that he is someone who has renounced ways of shameful gain, worked hard. He writes to the Roman church in Romans 1 that he feels an obligation to proclaim Christ to all peoples, and then he uses the same language: “I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.” *Eagerness, a willingness,* and there must come with it a pattern of active self-denial. I remember when I first became senior pastor at Kenwood four years ago, and I sought to get the counsel of other people. I wanted to benefit from mature wisdom, so I interviewed other experienced senior pastors and asked them to tell me the best things they knew. One of those I approached was Alex Aronis. I went out to lunch with Alex and said: “Tell me what I need to know. You have been a senior pastor for decades, what do I need to know?” I even gave him the question in advance, so I knew it was going to be great. He said: “Practice self-denial.” That was his admonition: “Practice self-denial; get in the habit of following Christ; take His words to heart—*What would profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.*” He said: “Practice that.” It is a great pattern for anyone leading, isn't it? It is not the pattern you'll find in the *Harvard Business Review*. It is not the pattern you'll see in corporate America, but it should be a pattern for the people of God.

Let's look at the third distinction. In 1 Peter 5:3, Peter says:

*“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”*

***“Don't lead in a way that is domineering over people around you.”*** Domineering can happen in a variety of expressions. Some people domineer by micromanagement; some people domineer by saying: “You can't do anything without passing it through me first,” and people just get exhausted. Other people domineer by thinking: “I have to be the smartest one in the room. I have to have all the ideas.” Other people domineer by saying: “If anything bad happens around here, it's your fault. If anything good happens around here, it's mine.” Sometimes people in leadership get credit for things they have nothing to do with, and it is an expression of being an example to those around us to honor the contribution of other people. No one has all the gifts; no one has all the ideas. We praise God for the wisdom of this model: “Don't domineer over those in your charge, but be an example.” I imagine Peter's words here again echoing Jesus' own teaching. In Luke 22, the disciples were on their way to seeing Jesus in Jerusalem, and they were getting excited: Here's the promised King; He's going to Jerusalem; things are looking up; those in power are going to be out; surely we are going to have new business cards at the very minimum. And they start arguing with each other on the way, somehow not hearing Jesus' vision of leadership that is: “I'm going to offer My life for the redemption of My people,” and they start arguing: “Who is going to be the greatest? Are you going to be in charge or will I?” They start arguing with each other, and Jesus pulls them aside, this motley group of twelve, and He says in Luke 22:25:

*“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.”*

They take on a fancy title of “benefactor,” the one who does good deeds for the sake of the community, so insist on being honored. But Jesus says in Luke 22:26-27:

*“But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”*

Most of us, if we were to be honest, would say the greater one is one sitting at the table. The greatest of all is the one opposite the door, at the head of the table. That's the greatest one. Jesus knows us. He says, the one at the head of the table, that's what earthly greatness looks like. “Give me the honor; let me lord it over you,” and Jesus says: *“But I am among you as one who serves.”* It's a radically different picture of leadership, not domineering, not lording it, but being an example. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1:

*“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”*

This is the call: three definitional statements for us about how biblical leaders do their leading.

Again, some of you are thinking: "Well, I'm not a leader, so I can domineer within my sphere." I know some of you are thinking: "This doesn't apply to me, maybe to someone else, but this whole sermon series has nothing to do with me." Some of you are thinking: "I come here to gain as much as I can. I'll squeeze every drop I can out of the Kenwood ministry. Don't ask me to give anything." Some of you may not have formulated it quite that basely, but it's in there. Remember that the description of leadership becomes aspirational for the community. It is who you mark and recognize as leader that says: "That's where we all want to go."

The postscript to leadership, the bonus element, in 1 Peter 5 is **delayed gratification**, and this strikes a note of terror within us. If you are a digital native used to instantaneous feedback and reward, it doesn't even make any sense to you. It's like a brand-new vocabulary. Delayed what? Delayed gratification. Sociologists and psychologists tell us that delayed gratification is actually one of the indicators of long-term success. Peter says in 1 Peter 5:4 that if you are leading, then:

*"When the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."*

You lead and you serve in these ways, and you wait for your reward. Your reward will be apportioned by the Chief Shepherd, and you will get it when He returns in glory. Does that mean you just hang your head down low and say: "Oh, Jesus, I hope you notice what I'm doing down here. I hope somebody's keeping track of this"? No, it means you just trust yourself to Christ. You serve as unto Christ.

Let's follow this briefly, as Peter does. If this is what leadership means, not under compulsion, but willingly; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering, but being an example; and resting in delayed gratification of receiving your reward and recognition from Christ, what does it mean to be a good follower? I think this model of leadership invites us all into active following, first of Christ, then of a leadership team, and then into mission and ministry together. What does Peter say about being a good follower? Starting in 1 Peter 5:5 and following, we see three things with a postscript.

The first quality of a good follower is in 1 Peter 5:5:

*"Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders."*

The imperative here is the imperative to **submit**. That word for some of us *elicits a response* of "ouch!" Be independent? I can live with that. Share your own opinion? I can do that, but submit? That word does violence to our fallen humanity, doesn't it? It's hard to translate, but the ESV says *be subject*, which doesn't really help that much. It is still offensive. I don't know which feels less offensive, 'submit' or 'be subject,' but in reality, that verb is a combination of two words at the end of 1 Peter 5:5:

*“Be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”*

The Greek term here is *upotasso*, to *be under the authority* is what it means. And then it says God opposes, which *antitasso* which is to be against. The imagery is not to be submissive in terms of never speak, never do anything, to stare at your shoes, do what you are told, don't ask any questions. That is not really the image. I would translate this image as: respect the elders, respect your leaders rather than resist them. The image is: walk with, do not be at war with them; follow, do not fight. This is the same terminology that is used to describe a healthy and flourishing marriage: respect one another; don't resist; don't be antithetical; I want to be for you, not against you. Sometimes to be for someone means that you tell them what you perceive or think or know. So, to be a good follower means to respect those leading.

The second quality is in 1 Peter 5:6:

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.”*

Being good follower is to clothe ourselves with humility: to **humble ourselves**; to be in a state of humility that is characteristic of a flourishing family.

The third quality is in 1 Peter 5:8:

*“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

This is the same terminology from Acts 20 that was required of the elders there. Be **sober-minded** and be **watchful**; be **attentive**. Just as there is spiritual danger in Acts 20, Peter knows this too. So, be attentive because your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. It is naïve to think that a church would be flourishing and growing and doing mission and seeing people come to know Christ the Savior without a battle with the adversary. Hallelujah! we have several baptisms next week! That means new territory for the Kingdom of God, and whenever that happens, that means that demonic power rises up and says: “I don't like that. I don't like that at all.” We need to be vigilant and watchful.

Then we see in 1 Peter 5:10 the postscript of **delayed gratification**:

*“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.”*

This is the challenge before us: to live and lead in this model. What is required of leaders is required of us all: delayed gratification. This has application for all of us as a community. We want to follow God's Word and will so that our church can be a flourishing church, predicated

on trust and following hard after Christ, and so that our time is available and maximized for mission. This is a vision of leadership. It is very challenging, a high bar, and yet when we look at it and see this as aspirational for us, it is actually a very beautiful picture. A church that is led in this way becomes a countercultural picture announcing God's New Creation to the heavenly powers. No matter who holds public office; no matter who is in charge of the institutions around us, the church should be led in this way, and in so doing, it announces the Kingship of Christ, announces the arrival of the Kingdom of God. We should aspire to this as a community and look to it and mark these characteristics and hold leaders accountable to act in this way. Then, in our own lives, in the spheres of influence that we have, I want to challenge you to lead. Husbands, lead in this way; teachers, lead in this way; in the spheres of your employment, lead in this way. If you are guiding a small group, lead in this way. These characteristics and qualities should exhibit this type of godliness and this alternative vision of leadership that is beautiful and that maximizes the church's potential to be on mission with Christ. Let's keep following hard after the Lord together. Next week, we will look at what it means for all of us to maximize mission. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we honor and extol You, Chief Shepherd of our souls. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You have all power in heaven and on earth. You serve Your body and You lead willingly, not for gain, but what You can give; not domineering, but an example, awaiting vindication from Your heavenly Father, setting before us the ultimate example. Lord Jesus, I pray for Kenwood this morning that You would lift us up and rivet our eyes upon You, Author and Perfecter of our faith. Lord, we ask for Your forgiveness where we have obscured Your image and led in any of the 'not' ways. I ask You to forgive me, Lord, for any ways that I have not reflected You. We ask that You would be glorified here and that all of Your people would be mobilized and that Your Kingdom would grow in our city as a result of this Your church. We love You, we honor You, and we stand together and sing *King of our Heart*.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.