

Feed My Sheep: 1 & 2 Peter

Servant Leadership

Lesson #7 for May 13, 2017

Scriptures: 1 Peter 5:1-10; Acts 6:1-7; Jeremiah 10:21; Matthew 20:24-28; Proverbs 3:34; Revelation 12:7-9.

1. Churches that really grow have leadership which is inspired. Inspired leadership gets its direction from God but also provides opportunity for everyone in the congregation to exercise his/her individual spiritual gifts.
2. That kind of leadership is extremely challenging and rare. As we all know, most of the people who serve in various capacities in our churches are volunteers. And if services do not meet their idea of what should happen, members sometimes “vote with their feet” and either move to another church or leave the church entirely.
3. In Peter’s day, there was an additional problem. Christians were suffering persecution. What kind of leaders did they have in the early church, especially in northern Turkey? Were many of these leaders former-Jews?
4. Almost from day one, the early church faced challenges in dealing with its rapid growth as well as other issues/problems. Read Acts 6:1-7; 14:23; 15:6; 1 Timothy 5:17; and 1 Peter 5:2. Were these early church leaders paid at all?
5. With thousands of people joining the church from various cultural backgrounds, it was only a short time before there were questions about discrimination. Seven deacons were chosen to help deal with the financial affairs of the church. It turned out that at least two of those deacons, Stephen and Phillip, were incredibly gifted at preaching and evangelizing as well. How do we choose church leaders in our day?
6. Try to take a larger-view approach to what was happening at that point. Imagine how the Devil and his evil angels felt as they watched the Christian church grow exponentially. Before and even after Jesus was born, the Devil believed that he had just about won the great controversy. (See *the Desire of Ages* 22.1; 29.4-30.2.) Then, in a very short period of time following the ministry of Jesus, the number of true followers of God exploded. (See Acts 1-5.)
7. The disciples had spent the prior few years following Jesus and waiting for Him to guide them in each of their decisions. Were they really prepared to lead a burgeoning organization. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit led them.
8. A few years later, having been sent out after being ordained by the church at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas established new churches among the Gentiles in the territory we now know as Turkey. Read Acts 11:19-21;14:23. In each of these new churches, they assigned a leader.
9. Think of the challenges of being a church leader at that point in time. Not only did church leaders have to guide the church members from house to house, probably changing the place where they met from time to time to avoid attracting attention, but also they needed to be preachers and teachers, carefully explaining the Scriptures. Not only that, but also those elders were expected to be “shepherds” of their little flocks. They had to deal with the problems that would arise in mixed congregations coming from a variety of backgrounds.

10. In 1 Peter 5:1-10, Peter talked about leadership. How much of what Peter said in these verses is applicable to us today?
11. Read 1 Peter 5:1-4. Peter began this section of instructions by mentioning the fact that he himself was a fellow elder. He reminded the elders that they needed to understand, as far as possible, the full meaning of the mission of Jesus to this earth and how it fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. Then, they needed to live in accordance with that mission and encourage their members to do the same. Peter said that if they did so, they would one day share in the glory that Christ would return to reveal. (See the story of the martyrdom of Polycarp, leader of the church in Smyrna: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>)
12. Peter reminded the elders that caring for a local church congregation was a lot like attending to a flock of sheep. Sometimes, sheep wander off by themselves. They need to be found and returned to the flock. And one of the most important things that a local elder needs to do is to be an example to the flock.
13. How many groups do we see today who want to focus on their particular pet ideas but who fail to comprehend or support the larger, overall work that needs to be done? And how can we distinguish between people who are careful students and are truly seeking to know and obey their Bibles better and those who just want to follow some idea that fits their fancy?
14. Leadership did not become a problem for the first time in the New Testament. Read Jeremiah 10:21; Ezekiel 34:8-10; and Zechariah 11:17. These stark comments about the leaders of the people in Old Testament times are severe. Jeremiah called them “stupid”; Zechariah called them “worthless.” Ezekiel said that the leaders were only concerned about their own welfare and did not care about the flock.
15. Being critical of others is the easiest job in the world!
16. So, what about us? How many Adventist churches today are being led, instructed, and carefully prepared for the final events in this world’s history? Are our leaders working patiently with their church members to instruct and encourage them? How many “Laodiceans” are asleep instead of being prepared for what is coming? (Matthew 25:1-13) How many of those young women had extra oil?
17. Read 1 Peter 5:3 and Matthew 20:24-28. As we know, each of the 12 disciples who were the closest associates of Jesus were hoping to be the next prime minister of the Jewish people. They were very upset when the mother of James and John made a special request that her two sons be allowed to sit in the honored positions on either side of Jesus in the new kingdom which they all were hoping would be set up soon. How many church leaders today are ready to really humbly serve their churches? And how many of them are real leaders, providing true servant leadership? How many today would be prepared to die for their flock as the early disciples did? It is not God’s plan that elders lord it over their congregations or groups. Jesus carefully called His disciples together and said that true Christian leaders serve their members.

Jesus bears tenderly with them, not rebuking their selfishness in seeking preference above their brethren. He reads their hearts, He knows the depth of their attachment to Him. Their love is not a mere human affection; though defiled by the earthliness of its human channel, it is an outflowing from the fountain of His own redeeming love. He will not rebuke, but deepen and purify.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 548.6.

18. He told James and John that positions of honor in the kingdom of God are assigned by the Father and not by Jesus in His human condition. Then, Jesus reminded them that leaders of His flock are supposed to be very different from the leaders of Gentile nations.
19. What does it really mean to serve—and not to be served—even to be willing to die as Jesus did as a “ransom for many”?
20. Humility, surrender, and self-denial have never been popular ideals! But, those who want to follow Jesus must embrace these ideals.
21. Read Philippians 2:4-8. Imagine Jesus leaving the perfect environment of heaven where everyone respected and revered Him for His leadership and coming down to this earth to be born as a helpless baby boy, living that challenging life constantly accosted by the Devil and, finally, dying the death of a common criminal. How was He able to do it? What if He had sent a message to the humans living on earth at that time and said: “I will come and do it if you will pay Me what it’s worth”?
22. As we know, society was very stratified in the days of Peter and Paul. Those who were Roman citizens and held high positions lorded it over the poor slaves who were at the bottom of the totem pole. The word translated *humility* was a Greek word which meant “lowly,” “insignificant,” “weak,” and “poor.” If a person was “humble,” he had no status and no power in society.
23. Read 1 Peter 5:5-7. Peter continued by instructing the elders to tell the young people that they must submit to their elders. That would obviously be in an ideal situation; but, I am sure it was never easy. When Peter said that he wanted us to put on humility, he used the word *Tapeinophrosúne*.

Tapeinophrosúne - lowminded, base, which is from *tapeinós* (5011), lowly, humble. Humility, lowliness of mind, **the esteeming of ourselves small, inasmuch as we are so, the correct estimate of ourselves** (Acts 20:19; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 2:18, 23; 3:12; 1 Pet. 5:5). For the sinner *tapeinophrosúne* involves the confession of his sin and a deep realization of his unworthiness to receive God’s marvelous grace.—Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*.* Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers. [Bold type is added.]
24. Translating the Greek Septuagint (*LXX*) for Proverbs 3:34 into English says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” That verse was used in James 4:6. God makes it His responsibility to bring down those who consider themselves to be high and mighty; and at the same time, He raises up the poor. See Isaiah 13:11; 23:9; and Job 40:11.
25. What is one of the primary characteristics of a truly good Christian leader? Humility. We need to be humble toward God but also humble toward our fellow Christians.
26. We must never forget that we are all sinners. (See 1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:10,23; and 1 John 1:10.) So, those of us who were given leadership roles must never try to lord it over others. It is easy to be humble in the presence of those we regard as superior to us. Peter mentioned being humble before God our Creator; that is relatively easy. The true test about whether or not we are really humble comes when we deal with those who are of a lower economic or social status than we are—people who have no power over us. It is that kind of humility that Peter was recommending.
27. If we remember what Jesus did and how He died, there should never be a reason for us

to think of ourselves with pride!

28. Remember that all of these words by Peter were spoken in the context of church members who were suffering persecution. They did not have any church buildings; they had to meet in private homes and always had the fear of being discovered and persecuted. Try to imagine how we would react today and how we would feel individually if someone from our Sabbath school class or a church member had just been executed by the government for being a Christian.
29. Fortunately, our understanding of death and the future life is different from that of the world.
30. Read 1 Peter 5:8-10 and Revelation 12:7-9. In the context of all he had said to that point, Peter reminded his readers that the Devil goes about as a roaring lion. Some years later as recorded in Revelation 12:7-9, the apostle John called the Devil a dragon. It is interesting to note that lions usually roar to call the members of their pride because they have successfully killed their prey.
31. We must never lose sight of the fact that the great controversy is going on between our ears. Jesus Christ is leading the forces of good; the Devil himself is leading the opposition. Revelation 19:13,16 tell us that Jesus is the Word of God, the King of Kings, even the Lord of Lords. By contrast, Satan is pictured as a dragon. (Revelation 12:7-9; 20:7-8) But, Revelation 20:9-10 tell us what is the guaranteed end of Satan and his forces. Why would we want to join them in the second death? And despite the fact that Christians may suffer temporarily, they have a guaranteed future in eternal glory. (1 Peter 5:10) It is possible to be persecuted and die and curse your enemies as they are doing it. It is also possible to be persecuted and die and bless your enemies, even praying for them, while they are doing it. There is a very big difference between those approaches.
32. Our true Christian and Jewish forefathers have shown the way. (See Hebrews 11:13-16.) We know that our victory is assured thanks to the victory won by Jesus through His life, death, and resurrection.
33. There probably is no greater example of servant leadership than the story of Jesus's interaction with His disciples in the upper room. Read John 13. Jesus and His disciples were meeting in the home of John Mark's parents. (Acts 12:11-17) And it must have been a fairly large room in the upstairs portion of the house. But, where was the servant who should have washed their feet? When Jesus was finished with them, did He wash His own feet? None of them was willing to offer to wash feet! As we participate in the quarterly communion services, we need to be reminded that it was God who bowed down and washed 12 pairs of dirty feet! Try to imagine yourself in the position of one of those disciples. What was Jesus thinking as He washed those dirty feet? What were the disciples thinking?

In consenting to become man, Christ manifested a humility that is the marvel of the heavenly intelligences. The act of consenting to be a man would be no humiliation were it not for the fact of Christ's exalted pre-existence. We must open our understanding to realize that Christ laid aside His royal robe, His kingly crown, his high command, and clothed his divinity with humanity, that he might meet man where he was, and bring to the human family moral power to become the sons and daughters of God. To redeem man, Christ became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; he gave proof of his humility in becoming a man. Yet he was God in the flesh. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." [Exodus 3:5] We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.—Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*,* October 13, 1898, par. 5-6. [Content in brackets is added.]

Those who would be his disciples he invites to take his yoke upon them, and to learn of him who is meek and lowly of heart; and he promises those who do this that they shall find rest unto their souls. The meekness and humility that characterized the life of Christ will be made manifest in the life and character of those who "walk even as he walked."—*Ibid.*,* November 8, 1894, par. 1. Compare *Sons and Daughters of God* 81.4; *1SM* 243.3.

34. In light of these words from Peter, can you look around you among your church members and see examples of the true servant leadership and humility that he spoke about?
35. What are the qualities of a good Christian leader? How would you compare those qualities with the qualities of a good secular leader? Are they different?
36. There are those who claim that Satan is not a real being, just an evil influence either from within ourselves or in the world in general. How would you answer someone with such a claim? Think what it would do to our understanding of the great controversy! No evil in the human nature of Jesus could possibly have been responsible for the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness. How could evil in our human natures cause 2000 pigs to run down a cliff and drown in the Sea of Galilee? (Matthew 8:30-32; Mark 5:11-13; Luke 8:30-33)
37. For those Christians who believe in the great controversy over the character and government of God, it is important to understand some of Satan's methods.

But his most successful scheme in deceiving man has been to conceal his real purposes, and his true character, by representing himself as man's friend and a benefactor of the race. He flatters men with the pleasing fable that there is no rebellious foe, no deadly enemy that they need to guard against, and that the existence of a personal devil is all a fiction. While he thus hides his existence, he is gathering thousands under his control. He is deceiving them, as he tried to deceive Christ, that he is an angel from Heaven doing a good work for humanity. And the masses are so blinded by sin that they cannot discern the devices of Satan, and they honor him as they would a heavenly angel, while he is working their eternal ruin.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* July 28, 1874, par. 15; *Redemption** 34.2; *Con** 35.3; *1SM** 270.3.

One class have a theory that there is no personal devil, and that Christ had no existence before he came to this earth; and they try to maintain these absurd theories by wresting scriptures from their true meaning.

The utter folly of human wisdom in matters of religious faith is thus made manifest. The heart that is not sanctified, and imbued with the spirit of Christ, is perverse in its interpretation of the inspired word, turning the truth of God into senseless falsehood; and some who have not searched the Scriptures with humble hearts allow these wild speculations to unsettle their faith; they accept them in place of the plainly revealed will of God.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* March 27, 1884, par. 4. [Bold type is added.]

Read 1 Peter 5:1-3 once more. There are three special terms used for church leaders: *Elders*, *overseers*, and *shepherds*. Elders were supposed to be overseers and leaders in local church congregations. (Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7.) The terms *overseer* and *shepherd* are describing a nurturing function. *Pastor* is another word for *shepherd*. Jesus Himself is called the Shepherd of our souls. (1 Peter 2:25) He is called the Chief Shepherd in 1 Peter 5:4. He is called the Good Shepherd in John 10:11,14.

38. The term *overseer* refers to being a supervisor or manager. Jesus is also called an Overseer in 1 Peter 2:25.
39. Why is pride regarded as such an evil thing in the Bible? Why is pride a very bad thing for church leaders? Even church leaders wives are supposed to be tested. (1 Peter 3:10-12)
40. We must never forget that we live in the Devil's domain. (1 Peter 5:8-11) God has promised His loving care for us; but, the evil lion is also lurking. We need to remain alert and awake. Peter reminded his readers that they were/are not standing alone. Others were/are going through the same kinds of troubles that they were/are going through.
41. And what about us? Read Revelation 12:9,17. Satan is especially angry about people who are still faithful to God in these final days of this world's history. We must learn to endure with patience whatever trials we have to face.
42. Think of the changes that have taken place in the structure of the church from the times of the apostles to our day. In the beginning, the disciples were the church organization. Then, they added deacons. Look at how much different our church organization is today.
43. Some people are calling for a reorganization of our church. Our church has a representative system of church organization.
44. Do you understand how our church leaders are chosen? After they are chosen, what authority do they have? Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a hierarchy?

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