

Last week I had the opportunity to visit my parents in Charleston SC. I took Abigail and Caleb with me as we spent a week visiting family I hadn't seen since we moved here almost 9 years ago. It was a very special time.



I grew up in the South, so it was fun taking my kids back to a culture I am so familiar with. Of course, we had to go to a Waffle House, we used to call it Awful House but it's where you hang out if you don't have much money and want to get some food or do people watching, especially after 1 in the morning. We used to go there to study late at night. The sausage and waffles took me right back to High School, it was great.



We also went to a sea food restaurant and they sat down a basket of Hush Puppies and the kids were asking what it that? Deep fried bread with some spices in it. Delicious. Then I ordered my favorite side as a kid, fried okra another cultural experience for the kids. We swam in the Atlantic Ocean and Abigail said when she got in, it's like swimming in a pool, she meant a heated pool.

We were walking outside, in the shade and Abigail wiped the sweat from her brow and said, I'm sweating! I'm not even doing anything and I'm sweating! And we sweat all week.

And here is a friendly guy that was in back of my parent's house. When we visited this big guy was gone but there was a smaller one sunning himself by the pond. Animal control doesn't do anything to them unless they show they are aggressive so there are quite a few alligators around this year.



After a week together, my parents dropped us off at the airport and my mom said "Thank you so much for coming, it really meant a lot. I love you."

It's funny after a whole week and so many conversations and words it's often the last words someone says that you remember the most.

In the same way, we are coming to the end of the letter of 1 Peter that we have been studying this summer and we will read some of the last words and thoughts of Peter. I imagine these last words the believers remembered well. Jonathan Martin will finish out the letter next week.

1 Peter is a letter written by the apostle Peter who walked with Jesus, to Christians spread all throughout Asia Minor to encourage them and instruct them on how to live when facing persecution and difficult times. Like the last words of my mom, Peter begins his last thoughts to the believers in 1 Peter 5.

1 Peter 5 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, 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. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Peter addresses two groups of people here, the elders in vs 1-4 and then the younger in verse 5, and then all of us in 5-6 and our relationships with everyone!

The call of Peter, the words that he wanted to shape our lives can be summarized in this section by Shepherd the flock.

Those were the words that shaped Peter’s life as well. They were some of the last words of Jesus told him. Let me remind you of the story.

After Jesus death and resurrection Peter didn’t quite know what to do. His rabbi was gone and all he knew was fishing so one day he tells the other disciples “I am going fishing”. So the disciples follow him and they go back to fishing. It was a tough night because they didn’t catch anything all night which must have been discouraging. Peter probably felt like he had just gone through a failed discipleship program and a now he was failing as a fisherman.



But then this guy stood on the shore and called out to them, cast your nets on the other side and they caught so many fish it almost sunk the boat! Peter realized it was Jesus, and even though he was the first one to get in the boat to go fishing, he was the first one out of the boat to go meet Jesus. There on the shore was Jesus already cooking up a fish breakfast.

Then Peter and Jesus have this intimate conversation, his last recorded conversation with Peter, his last words to Peter.

^{John 21:15} When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

Those last words shaped Peter’s whole direction in life, his motivation, his actions. He wasn’t a fisherman he was a shepherd of God’s flock. For over 30 years after Peter heard those words he lived by those words and now as an older man in a letter to believers, he is passing on his wisdom to the next generation and his creed or calling. Shepherd the flock.



When we were in South Carolina we visited a place called, Mepkin Abbey a Trappist Monastery where we got to see the beautiful gardens and be part of a worship service. The kids handled it great, but it was pretty boring for them. On this 300-acre property lives 13 monks who had given their whole lives to live for Christ by the rule of St. Benedict. St Benedict is credited with

beginning the monastic movement in 500 AD. Now, for over 1500 years monks and nuns all over the world have lived their life by something they call the rule of St. Benedict. It’s pretty simple life guided by a narrow focus. The phrase or words that govern their whole lives are in Latin - Ora et Labora, or pray and work. The schedule of their life reflects this creed. They begin at 3:00 am and the day ends at 8 with a rhythm of prayer, readings, worship, and work.



Horarium

3:00 AM | Rise

3:20-4 AM | Vigils

4:4:30 AM | Meditation, followed by Lectio Divina or private prayer

5-6:00 AM Breakfast, followed by Lectio Divina

6:30-7:00 AM | Lauds

7:30 AM | Eucharist, followed by 15 minutes thanksgiving

-Grand Silence Ends-

8:35-11:30 AM | Morning Work Period

12:00 PM | Mid-Day Prayer, followed by Dinner and None
 1-1:40 PM | Optional Siesta
 1:45-3:30 PM | Afternoon Work Period
 5-5:30 PM | Supper
 6-6:30 PM | Vespers
 7:35-8 PM | Compline
 -Grand Silence Begins-
 8:00 PM | Retire

The rule of Benedict. In a similar way Peter is giving the believers something like the rule of Peter. A way in which to live your life, to orientate your time, schedule, motive, and heart. Peter would say it's the marching orders he heard from Jesus himself. Shepherd the flock.

I wonder if you wrote down your schedule this last week if others could look at it and see how it reflects the rule of Christ in your life in caring for other, in generosity of your time, in caring for others. Let's look at how Peter says this should work out in our lives.

He is addressing the elders first as he himself is a fellow elder. An elder of a church is an under-shepherd of Christ. It's a position in the church responsible to care for, pray, lead, give spiritual direction, correct at times, and responsible to God to shepherd the flock, the flock of God. He is the good shepherd, the chief shepherd, elders are to reflect Jesus. It's a huge calling. A calling to serve and love.

Here at Cornerstone we have **6 men who hold this position**. We meet most Wednesdays to eat together, pray for you, study and shepherd the flock. It's not a position of glamour but of humble service. Barry told me once that true shepherds will end up dirty and stinky because of situations they step into, just like real shepherds. It's a group of men who seek the Lord first and make decisions in consensus. The term Elder then can and often does refer to this position in the church. The position of elder, but that's not all.

This word elder, can also just mean older person or old. Some of you identify with that right away, yep I'm old. But all of us are older than someone so it applies to us all in certain relationships, except the youngest baby here but that probably won't be for long.

What is our responsibility in shepherding the flock as someone in the position of elder or someone who is simply in relationships with people younger than you? What does it mean for you high schoolers who have Middle school students looking up to you. What does it mean for you single adults who influence the youth in the church? What does it mean for you parents dealing with kids and younger families? How about you grandparents and great grandparents what does it mean to shepherd the flock of God?

Peter tells us, it's not the do's and don'ts it's the don'ts and do's as he begins each set with warnings or the negative.

3 don'ts

Don't care for others with a poor attitude or just because you think you have to. Nobody like a grouchy offer to help or negative advice. Don't begin with, that's not the way we did it. Your attitude is a reflection of you heart condition so if you love the good shepherd you will love his sheep. It shouldn't be guilt driven.

Don't be greedy for your own personal gain, monetarily, or seeking some advantage over those under your care or authority. Don't be nice to the people you think you can get something from and then neglect the hurting sheep. It's not about you.

Don't use your power for your own good. Don't make your kids fetch you stuff all the time because you are too lazy to get up and get it. Don't be a backseat driver or use your power to your advantage to get things or privileges others below you couldn't get.

Instead, he says here is what you should do.

3 do's

Do look out for others out of a sincere heart, a care a love and compassion.

Do be generous with your time and money and with your emotions and energy, giving to others.

Do be examples, jump in wherever they may need your help. Setting up chairs or picking up garbage. Be the first to apologize, the first to humble yourself, first to admit your wrong, the first to lean into hurt.

That's what it means to shepherd the flock, to feed the sheep, tend the sheep. It's a shepherd getting dirty, bandaging wounds, seeking the lost. Shepherds were not a glamorous position.

If you look out for others, give of yourself, serve and humble yourself then it says in verse 4 that the chief Shephard, Jesus will give you the **unfading crown of glory**. That's the goal or the prize. It's not what you can grab and take, how powerful you can be but if you can be a servant of all. The prize is received not taken, so hold on. Don't stop doing good, don't stop caring for others God sees you.

Now verse 5, Peter transitions to the younger and connects it with the older. Likewise, you who are younger. Peter does this, uses the word **likewise** to connect two sides like husbands and wives in chapter 3. It doesn't necessarily mean you are do to the same thing but that you are working together towards the same goal, to shepherd the flock.

The younger are to come underneath the elders, that means to give respect, to listen, to defer when you are in opposition. It's humbling yourself to not think that you know how to do it better all the time.

This intergenerational community the younger and older working together, that Peter is talking about is difficult, especially in the West, you can often see the tension in the church as well. It's some young guy thinking he knows how to do it better than the older generation and that they just need to step out of the way. It's the older generation thinking since they have more experience they know better and the younger people need to just get in line, be quiet and take a back seat.

So how can this ever work? The only way that this can happen is not some seminar on intergenerational systems, it's not splitting everyone up, so everyone just gets what they want. The answer to how this could ever work is what Peter says in verse 5 is clothing yourself in humility.

The elders are to be examples of how to live life by the rule of Christ in shepherding the flock. So, when it says cloth yourself, **all of you**, with humility that applies to all of you whether you are young or old, but first to the elders. This is something I struggle with as my flesh wants to fight back, defend myself, stick up for myself. I think that if I humble myself then I will be stripped naked and vulnerable but it's actually the opposite.

Way back in creation Adam and Eve are told not to take from the tree of knowledge of good and evil but we all know the story, they do. They think they know better than God and, in that sin, they are left naked and ashamed.

That's the place our sin and pride leave us, it's ugly and a dark rabbit hole. So, what's the good news?

In sin you are left naked and vulnerable, so you defend yourself, rationalize, blame other. The answer is to cloth yourself with humility, confess your sin and receive the righteousness and forgiveness of Christ. Humility seems like a stripping or bearing of your soul that leaves you naked and ashamed but it's just the opposite. Sin leaves you naked, humility clothes you.



So, then what do we do when we encounter problems or hurts, or frustrations and we want to defend ourselves, protect ourselves, when pride sneaks in?

Peter tells us in verses 6-7 to repent, turn to the Lord and cast all your cares on him.

In your humility Peter tells us turn to the Lord first, before dumping it on your friend or parents or spouse. Before venting or getting something off your chest- first talk to the Lord about it.

You cast your cares and anxieties on to the Lord who can handle them, who can take them, who can do something about them. Sounds wonderful doesn't it? God is there with open arms waiting, wanting to carry your burdens and worries. He is

right here saying, just give them to me. I'll take your health concerns, your job worries, your struggles at school, your body image issues, your eating disorder, your addictions and pain. Give them to me.

But do you know what we do sometimes? What I sometimes do? I take that worry, that burden, that care, that frustration and I unload it on someone else. I take a hurt and I cast my care on a person. I just had to get that off my chest, I just needed to vent. Do you believe what this person said about me or did to me? I'm struggling with this or that.

And when we do that with others first, we make them our Lord. Think about it. We are saying I want you to be my savior, I want you to rescue me. I want you to fix it, fix me, give me comfort, you give me hope. It's an incredibly huge burden you place on them that they can never fulfill and leaves you empty still.

The only answer is to cast all your cares on the Lord, turning to him first. Venting to him like the Psalms, voicing your frustrations, hurts, cares, worries to him before saying a word to anyone else.

Clothing yourself with humility begins on your knees in prayer giving your worries to the Lord.

Before saying anything to someone else, ask yourself - have I talked to God about this first?

I have to admit this is an area the Lord's been working on me, in my life and maybe he is for you as well. Maybe you have something that has been worrying you or frustrating you and you are tempted to cast your cares on your friends or parents or spouse. Before you do, talk to the Lord about it. Humble yourself under God's might hand so that you can receive grace so that you can be clothed.