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Series: *Faith for Trough Times*

Title: *Following Good Leaders and Leading Good Followers*

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Scripture: 1st Peter 5:1-14

Take your Bibles and turn to 1st Peter 5:1-14. Please stand in respect to God's Word as it's read.

1 Peter 5:1-14

1 - To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

2 - Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve;

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

4 - And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

5 - In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

6 - Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.

7 - Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

8 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

9 - Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

10 - And the God of all grace, Who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

11 - To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

12 - With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

13 - She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

14 - Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

This past weekend Sue and I helped Becca and Andrew move. They have been renting a small apartment in Northeast DC but just purchased their first home, a duplex in Capital Heights.

If you've ever helped someone move, you know that there has to be a command structure in order for the job to be done properly, especially when it comes to loading and unloading the truck. At those points, someone has to lead and the others have to follow. When it comes to filling a U-haul with furniture and boxes properly, well, it's like playing Tetris, remember that old game? You have to put the various items in just right in order for them to fit.

Andrew was our leader in that part of the move. He knew to fill that area over the cab of the truck with boxes and then put the mattress up against that to keep them from sliding off. He told us where to put the dresser and the couch, etc. And thanks to his leadership skills, when we were ready to roll from their apartment to their home, the truck was full and things were packed tightly, so that nothing would move and get damaged in the drive.

Then when we arrived at Capital Heights and it was time to UN-load, Becca took over as leader: As we got things off the truck and brought them into their home she said things like: *"That couch goes in the basement. That dresser goes upstairs in the master bedroom. Those coats go in the guest room closet."* She directed and we followed.

I bring this up because in the last chapter of his little letter Peter says for the church to work, especially in difficult times, there has to be leaders and followers.

1.) Let's begin by looking at the things good leaders and good followers have in common.

a. First, they are both HUMBLE.

In verse 5 Peter writes: *"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"*

Why does God do that? Why does He oppose PROUD leaders and PROUD followers? It's because neither one of them have anything to be PROUD of. Their giftedness and calling as either leader or follower is not from them, it's from God.

If I see C. C. doing an amazing job as a teacher, which I see every time C. C. leads his Grace Group, what I am seeing (all puns intended) is GOD at work. C. C. is a God-gifted humble leader. When I see Cathy S. doing an amazing job following C. C.'s instructions by giving him a list of prayer requests the class submitted or making sure C. C. knows who was present in Zoom that Saturday, what I am seeing is GOD at work. When she does these things Cathy is being a God-gifted humble follower.

That leads to another common quality.

b. Both leaders and followers RELY on GOD.

They know that when it gets hard to lead where God directs or hard to do what God's leader directs the followers to do, they can, *"Cast all their anxiety on Him because He cares for them."* They know they need not fear because God will HELP them to do what they need to do be it follow or lead.

Do you remember the account in Exodus of the twelve spies Moses sent in to scout out the Promised Land? When they returned these designated leaders said, *"It's a beautiful and fertile land."* But ten of them were afraid and they told the Hebrews, the followers, *"It's too well fortified! Their soldiers are giants! We are like grasshoppers in their sight! We'll never be able to defeat them!"*

Rather than casting their anxieties on the Lord and trusting He would provide, they cast their anxieties on the people. And their anxieties were contagious. The followers, the people, rose up against Moses' leadership and insisted on turning back. Because of that they wandered in the wilderness 40 years and died there, never seeing the promised land.

To be a good leader OR a good follower, you have to learn to rely on God.

Here's one more common trait.

c. They both know to be wary of the DEVIL.

As Peter puts it in verse 8, they are: *"...alert and of sober mind."* They know our *"enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*

On our last mission trip to Kenya, the place we stayed adjoined the famous game preserve filled with lions and tigers and bears---oh my! Well, no tigers or bears, but lots of lions. I know this sounds cowardly, but whenever I came out of my room and headed to the bus in the morning I was wary. I was watching for a lion to pounce.

Well, leaders worth following and followers worth leading look at the devil that way. They know he is real and that more than anything he wants to thwart God's purposes. They know that whereas he is not the EQUAL of God, he is still powerful and crafty. They know that Satan WANTS to destroy us and that he knows our weaknesses better than we do, so they are alert.

They also know that with God's help, Satan can be resisted and they do that as they *"stand firm in their faith."*

Remember, Peter had personally experienced the power of our adversary. There was a time when he wasn't sober and alert to Satan's schemes and he suffered because of that. At the Last Supper Jesus told Peter, *"Be alert! Satan is going to sift you like wheat. You'll deny Me."*

But Peter was overconfident and boasted, “Oh, no, not me!” Satan stalked, attacked, and downed Peter before he knew what hit him.

Okay, with the commonalities behind us; humility, a dependence on God, a wariness of the Devil; let’s look at the things that are unique to leading the followers and following the leaders.

2.) Let’s “lead-off” with what Peter says to LEADERS who are good to FOLLOW.

Now, if you scan our text you’ll note he doesn’t use the word “LEADER.” Instead he uses the word, “*elder.*” This is one of the main terms used in the New Testament to refer to leaders in the church. Others are: “*pastor*” and “*overseer*” but they are all synonymous, they all refer to the same thing: the leader.

My favorite word for leader though, is in verse 2, the word “*Shepherd.*” I like it because Jesus is called Shepherd, the GOOD Shepherd. He is the PERFECT example of the PERFECT kind of leader. Back in 1st Peter 2:21 it says, “***Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps.***” Peter was reminding us that Jesus is not only the Savior of our souls, He’s a model for our everyday lives, including our leadership style. So, fellow Christian, whenever you LEAD in the church or outside of it, remember, you are called to lead like Jesus!

Ken Blanchard is a well-known author and motivational speaker, best known for his popular book, *The One Minute Manager*. As a Christian, Blanchard became convinced that Jesus was the greatest leader of all time and we all would do well to analyze His leadership style and follow it. He established an organization called, “*Faithwalk,*” and began to conduct business seminars across the nation called, “*Lead Like Jesus.*” His seminars were well received not only in churches, but by Christian leaders in major corporations. About the same time that Ken Blanchard was talking about leadership lessons from Jesus, a guy named Jim Collins, a non-Christian, was conducting extensive research for what would become a best-selling business book titled, *From Good To Great*. Collins analyzed hundreds of companies in an effort to determine what enabled a few businesses to maintain peak effectiveness for a long period of time. He discovered that the best leaders are not larger than life guys or gals with big personalities that overwhelm people. No, they are quiet, humble, reserved, gracious, mild-mannered, the kind of person who does not demand center stage. He calls this leadership style, “*The Level Five Leader.*”

As you’ve probably guessed, Collins’ description of this “*Level Five Leader*” sounds a whole lot like the same leader that Ken Blanchard talks about in his “*Lead Like Jesus*” seminars. Is anyone surprised? We shouldn’t be. Since the Bible is authored by the One who designed us, it’s always going to have the wisest counsel, including insight into what makes an effective leader.

And please hear me, I’m talking about all kinds of leaders, not just pastors. We all need to hear what Peter has to say because there are times we all LEAD. We lead as parents, as teachers, as coaches, as the head of student clubs, etc. All Christians are called to set the example for others, we ALL lead and when we do we must LEAD like Jesus, the GOOD Shepherd.

Okay, let’s get back to our text.

a. First, Peter says good leaders are WILLING.

Look at verse 2: “***Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.***”

I can’t help but think of what it says in 2nd Corinthians 9:7 about giving. “***You should give what you have decided in your heart to give—not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***” That verse doesn’t just apply to money, it also applies to the way we give God our lives, including those times He calls us to lead. The fact is, leading is a hard job and no leader can be good at it unless they are willing.

Have you heard the story about a young man sound asleep in his bed on a Sunday morning? His mom burst in and said, *“Wake up, son! You need to get out of bed RIGHT NOW!”* With his head buried in the pillow, he responded with a muffled voice, *“Give me three good reasons why I should get out of this bed.”* Pulling on his covers, his mom said, *“One---because it’s Sunday and Christians are supposed to go to church on Sundays.”* The man moaned. *“Two---because we have only 40 minutes until church starts and you haven’t even showered!”* The man tried to ignore his mother. *“Three---because you’re the PASTOR and you need to be there!”*

What kind of sermon do you think that pastor delivered? I doubt it was very compelling because He had to be compelled by his mom, forced to deliver it. This principle is true of any leadership role. As Swindoll puts it, *“Involuntary leadership leads to a lack of enthusiasm, lack of motivation, mediocrity and even depression.”* We need to remember that when enlisting people to lead committees and teach Grace Groups and serve as Deacons.

Good leaders don’t have to be FORCED into a job. No, they hear God’s call to lead and they willingly, eagerly accept it.

b. Second, Peter says that GOOD leaders are HONEST.

Verse 2 says they do not lead *“for dishonest gain.”* This rings a bell for all of us because we’ve heard countless stories of pastors and ministry leaders and heads of corporations who have been dishonest. The most recent example is Jerry Fallwell, Jr. who used his role as president of Liberty University to put millions into his own bank account. And there are so many other leaders who have greedily used their position for dishonest gain. I’m thinking of the PTL club scandal, the ENRON scandal, the VW emissions scandal, we could go on and on. Peter says that’s not GOOD leadership, it’s more DEMONIC than it is CHRIST-like. The most effective leader isn’t dishonestly exploiting people. He’s not living in luxury, while they live in poverty. Jesus spoke to thousands but *“had nowhere to lay His head.”* (Matthew 8:20)

I don’t know much about Sam Walton, but this week I read that when he was alive, this billionaire refused to be driven around in a limo like his peers. He always drove his 1979 Ford Pickup truck with a four-speed manual transmission. Over the years it got its share of dents and scrapes, but it came to symbolize Sam’s own humble honest work ethic. When he travelled he flew coach and stayed in a Ramada or a Day’s Inn. Quoting from an article in the Orlando Sentinel, *“Walton did not amass his billions of dollars by being greedy and tricky, by swinging stock deals, gouging his customers or pyramiding bank loans. No, In this time of deal-makers, swindlers, cheats and profiteers, it is especially important to remind young Americans---that one can be successful - even rich - by being honest, unassuming, and fair to employees, stockholders and customers.”*

That leads to a second quality of Christlike leaders.

c. Peter says they lead by EXAMPLE.

Look at verse 3 where he writes that they are not, *“lording it over those entrusted to them, but being examples to the flock.”*

I like how Warren Wiersbe puts it. He says leaders are to be *“overSEERS not overLORDS.”* They aren’t ABOVE those they lead, they are down in the trenches setting the EXAMPLE for those who they are leading.

Years ago, Scott Paper Company hired an ego-driven leader named Al Dunlap. After a year and a half on the job he was quoted in Business Week as saying, *“The Scott story will go down in the annals of American business history as one of the most successful, quickest turnarounds ever, making other turnarounds pale by comparison.”* According to Business Week, Dunlap personally accrued \$100 million for 603 days of work at Scott paper. That’s \$165,000 a day and he did it by slashing the workforce, cutting the budget in half, and putting the company on growth steroids in preparation for sale. After selling the company and pocketing more millions, Dunlap wrote a book about himself in which he trumpeted his nickname, *Rambo in Pinstripes.*

Well, that’s NOT a Christlike leader. Effective leaders are not Rambo-like tyrants. They love the followers they lead and they lead them by example, not by force or threats. Peter himself models that here. He doesn’t say, *“I demand of you as the lead Apostle, one of Jesus favorite three disciples, the Pillar of the Jerusalem Church.”* No, He said, *“I appeal to you as a fellow-elder, an eyewitness of Jesus’ suffering.”*

One of my favorite portrayals of WW2 is the series, *“Band of Brothers”* that tells the true story of Easy Company, which is led by Captain Ralph Winters. A few months after parachuting into France on D-Day, they find themselves deep in enemy territory. They have spent a cold night hunkered down in a ditch of sorts, recuperating from a skirmish with the Germans the night before. Hours earlier, a scout patrol reported a high-powered artillery gun positioned on well-defended high ground. Winters had gathered his men and led a stealth assault on the German position. The surprise attack went well at first, but they soon found out that they were outnumbered. They took cover in that ditch and settled in for a frigid night of waiting. When dawn broke, Winters was able to get a better view of their position. Comparing what he could see to his battlefield map, he realized their predicament. They were already outflanked by the Germans and in danger of being overrun. One soldier asks how many Germans they were up against, and Winters dryly answered, *“It could be a whole battalion, as far as I know.”* When his second-in-command asked what they should do, he says, *“We’ve got no choice. We have to attack.”* Dividing his 30 men in three groups of ten, he presented their assault plan. Ten would head up the dike; ten would follow him up the middle; and ten would move to the flank. It was brave, bold, and daring but their only hope was to take the fight to the enemy. With final orders of *“fix bayonets”* and *“wait for the signal of the red smoke,”* Winters jumped out of the ditch, pulled the pin, hurled his can of red smoke into the field in front of them and began to sprint across the open terrain.

But the smoke grenade didn’t work right. It didn’t instantly pouring out smoke. So for 30 seconds, Winters was the solitary figure on the battlefield, dashing towards the enemy, with his men following orders to wait until smoke billowed. Gasping for air and drumming with adrenaline, Winters sprinted up the final rise of the hill and found himself facing a full battalion of Nazi infantry alone. He paused for a split-second and then fired the first round, waiting for the rest of his men to meet him in the battle. And meet him, they did. Surprising two German battalions, this small band of men overpowered the enemy position. Being a leader most often means going first like Winters, leading by example.

Would you listen to a Grace Group leader who didn’t study his or her Bible? Would you want a deacon who didn’t attend worship, didn’t tithe? Of course not; because GOOD leaders, lead by example.

So, to review: Peter says, good leaders, Christlike leaders, are:

- Willing
- Honest
- And they lead by example.

Okay, that’s enough of leading the followers. Let’s talk about those times we are called to follow the leader.

3.) Good FOLLOWERS to lead are:

Now, following doesn’t seem as glamorous as leading but for any organization to function well there has to be a lot of people who suppress their egos, cooperate with their peers and follow the leader. So, what does Peter say are needed in order to be a good FOLLOWER to lead?

a. He says they are RESPECTFUL and OBEDIENT.

Again Jesus is the example in this for as Paul says in Philippians 2, *“He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”*

Look at verse 5: *“Young men...be submissive to those who are older.”*

There are two extreme reactions when it comes to following leaders: on one end is cynicism, an arrogant distrust of leaders. On the other end is idealism, naively putting leaders on a pedestal in hero worship and blindly following with no thought. That naïve idealism is how Jim Jones led over a thousand to commit suicide in Guyana.

In the center is realism, following imperfect leaders for the sake of our perfect God. This is the recognition that the leader may be flawed and fallen like you and me, but they are called, gifted, sincere, and following God’s will. A good

follower doesn't resent not being the leader and doesn't sabotage the leader's direction. He or she has an eager, cooperative, respectful, spirit.

An ego-driven, discontented follower who mumbles and ridicules the leader behind his back can dampen spirits and create division and make the entire organization ineffective. On the other hand few things reinforce a leader and strengthen an organization like respected followers who give evidence of support.

I can't help but think of the movie *"Remember the Titans."* It tells the true story of T.C. Williams high school that hired the first black coach in the county, Herman Boone, back in 1971. The assistant coach, Bill Yost was white and wanted the head coach's job. He was in a position to undermine the new coach. A lot of people didn't want a person of color coaching their kids. But Yost chose to be positive supporter of Herman Boone and the result was a winning season and racial harmony.

Good followers SHOW their respect by obeying orders. Hebrews 13:17 says, ***"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."***

In July of 1976, 103 Israelis were held hostage at the airport in Entebbe, Uganda. You may recall that Israeli Commandos made a daring raid at Entebbe to free their fellow citizens. In less than 15 minutes, the Jewish soldiers had killed all seven of the kidnappers and set 100 captives free. As successful as the rescue was, however, three of the hostages were killed during the raid. As the commandos entered the terminal, they shouted in Hebrew, *"Get down. Crawl! Get down!"* The idea was that the Jewish hostages would understand, and quickly hit the floor while the guerillas, who did not speak Hebrew, were left standing. Instantly, the rescuers shot the upright kidnappers; but two of the hostages hesitated, perhaps to see what was happening, and they also were gunned down. One young man was lying down and actually stood up when the commandos entered the airport. He too was shot with the bullets meant for the enemy. Had these three heeded the soldiers' command, they would have been freed with the other 100 captives. Good followers RESPECT and OBEY their leaders.

Let's pray.