

Strange World Good God-9
Shepherds & Sheep
1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a moment as we do each and every Sunday to welcome our church family and our first time guests that are with us today...also say what's up to all of those who are watching online!

If you have your Bible please turn to 1 Peter chapter 5...we've been going through this ancient letter to the church all summer long...

One of the main themes of Peter's letter is suffering...He mentions it around 20 times...

The reason he mentions it so much is because the Christians he was writing to were scattered throughout the Roman Empire...

And they were being severely persecuted and even killed for being Christians. Peter's writing this letter to encourage them, to not give in to the pressure to conform to the world, but to stand firm in their faith...

He's writing to remind them that although they are strangers in this world, they serve a loving God who is in complete control and will one day right every wrong...

So Peter's taught us a few things...

He's writing to remind them that they may be strangers in this world, but they are known by God, chosen by God and loved as children of God!

That although we may go through trials and tribulations that seem hopeless...we have a living hope in Jesus...

That although the world is rebellious and sinful, and wants nothing to do with God...

We can because of Jesus, be obedient to God's Word. The Holy Spirit in us helps us to live holy lives...helps us to live peaceful lives in the midst of all the chaos around us!

That even though we're going through circumstances that bring pain and sorrow, we can find true joy as we submit to King Jesus, as we submit to one another in love...

As Peter starts to bring his letter to a close...he's going to take a moment to encourage the leaders...

Why would leaders need encouragement? Because leading others is difficult...It's difficult in normal situations, but it's even worse when you're going through a crisis...

As crises increases, leaders can't run away, they need to lead...It's not time to hide...it's time to lead...

As things get harder, the leader has to lead better...

John Maxwell wrote "*everything rises and falls on leadership*" and I believe that's true at home, at work, at school, and in the church...

And although Peter is addressing spiritual leaders, I want to remind you that we're all leaders.

If you're a parent..you're leading your family
Some of you are leaders at work...Maybe you own a business, or you're a shift leader or a manager...You're a teacher or a coach

Some of you are leaders in your school...you lead a club or tutor younger students...

Some of you are leaders right here in your church...you're leading a ministry, you're leading a life group...

We're all leading someone...

Someone is looking to us to learn from us...someone is looking to us to be an example and to help them make good decisions for themselves...

The big idea is this...

The things that we go through in life, our experiences...the good, the bad and the ugly...the success and the failures...

We hopefully learn from them so that we can help those who are following us!

No one knows this more than the man who's writing the letter...Peter lived with and learned from Jesus, the greatest leader to have ever walked the earth...

Not only did Peter get to hear Jesus teach, he also got an opportunity to watch Jesus lead...lead when things were going well, and lead when things were getting increasingly worse...

It got to the point where Jesus was preparing Himself and His team for the moment when He would be betrayed, arrested and put to death...

To prepare Peter for what was about to happen, Jesus said, "Peter, there's a test coming..."

Satan has asked for permission to sift you like wheat...in other words, you're about to go through a spiritual attack...and Peter, you're going to fail the test...

But Peter, after you fail this test...you're going to learn some valuable lessons, and when you come back, I want you to use those lessons to love and lead others...

Now if you don't know what happened next...
Peter's like no way...I got You Jesus...How
many know that if you're telling Jesus He's
wrong, you're probably not right?

Jesus is arrested...

All of the disciples run for their lives...

Peter follows Jesus at a distance...and denies
that he even knows Jesus not once, not twice
but three times...

At the time that Jesus needed Peter to step up
and lead, Peter denies that he even knows
Jesus...

Peter, who personally learns from the greatest
leader in the history of the world, becomes the
greatest leadership failure in the history of the
world...But it's not over for Peter...

After Jesus dies on the cross and rises from the dead, He reunites with Peter...and He reinstates Peter...

John records that conversation...

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” 16 Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” 17 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 21:15-17 (NIV)

Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him three times, because Peter denied Him three times...

If you're here today and you've failed in some way...you were supposed to lead yourself, or your family, or your ministry and you just blew it...there's hope for you!

How do you know that? Well Peter's the one writing the letter...and he's about to teach some principles about leadership...

He had an encounter with Jesus, who gave Him another chance, and the same is true for you and I...If we bring our failures to Jesus, He will use them for our good and His glory!

5 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. -1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV)

Pray

Peter's going to start out by telling church leaders that they need to have the heart of a shepherd...

All through the Bible we see that God is pictured as the Shepherd...He leads us, He guides us, He cares for us, He protects us...

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.-Psalm 23:1 (NIV)

3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.-Psalm 100:3 (NIV)

God is the Shepherd and His people...His children are pictured as sheep.

Now, here in the Bronx, we don't really know a lot about sheep...maybe you order a leg of lamb at a nice restaurant but that's about it...

The thing about sheep that you may not know is they need constant care...They need constant supervision...They are unable to lead themselves, feed themselves, clean themselves, or rescue themselves...

They are considered one of the dumbest animals on the planet...

It's been said that sheep actually prove the existence of God, because there's no way they could have evolved...

The Bible calls us sheep

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;-Isaiah 53:6 (NIV)

The bad news is the Bible calls us sheep...all of us...you may be educated but you're still a sheep...you may be talented but you're still a sheep...you may be rich, or successful, or spiritual...but you're still a sheep...I'm still a sheep...

The Good news: we have an amazing Shepherd and His name is Jesus! And that should bring us comfort that our good Shepherd is watching over us...He's taking care of us, He's cleaning us up... as we walk through this strange world...

One of the ways that Jesus, our Good Shepherd takes care of His people... Is by calling others to lead...to shepherd...to take care of...to pastor His people...

But understand this...those called to pastor...those called to lead a ministry, a group, to teach...are still sheep...

Sheep that will make mistakes...sheep that need a shepherd...that's why every pastor needs a pastor...Someone to help lead and guide and correct them...

Stay away from pastors who have no accountability...stay away from leaders who are in authority but not under authority...who are not part of a fellowship...who claim to follow Jesus, but have no undershepherd...

Who forget that they are not THE GOOD SHEPHERD...

I'm very thankful for the overseers in my life...they help lead and guide me...advise and correct me...

Peter lists some qualifications for pastors and church leaders...And You may be thinking...well I'm not a pastor or a church leader so why do I need to know this?

Because you need to know the kind of leaders that God has equipped and what He expects from them...

The first qualification is this...they must have

A PERSONAL relationship with Jesus

You may be thinking, isn't that obvious?

No...it may surprise you that there are spiritual leaders who don't know Jesus personally.

5 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:

Notice that Peter says "to the elders among you"...Within the flock...God calls and equips pastors and leaders to lead and take care of the church...

Peter knew Jesus personally...He literally walked with Him...on water! And notice his attitude...He's humble...

His tone isn't hey listen to me...I'm Peter...I'm kind of a big deal...in fact one day they're going to build a church over my grave...it's going to be called St. Peter's Basilica...

No he says...hey I'm a fellow elder just like you...See they didn't literally walk with Jesus like Peter did...but now they're walking with Jesus by faith...just like Peter is...

Peter's like I'm just another sheep like you, called to lead and waiting for our Shepherd Jesus to come back!

Peter writes as a person who knows Jesus personally...Remember, He's epically failed and seen the grace and mercy of God...And now, years later...He's helping others!

When a person has a real relationship with Jesus and they're growing...they're applying His Word...

They're learning from their mistakes...they're listening to their undershepherd...that person now has a foundation to share and minister to others...

Pastors and church leaders need to be constantly growing in their relationship with Jesus...

Growing in their personal lives...because as the pastor grows so grow the sheep. If the pastor stops growing...the sheep stop growing... Later in his second letter Peter will write

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...-2 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

You see, it's quite possible to have a position of leadership in title only...

Over the years I've met a few people who were considered elders or deacons, church leaders and even pastors but never had a born-again experience...It happens!

So Peter says that the first qualification of a Pastor or shepherd or overseer is that they have a personal relationship with Jesus...The second qualification is they must

LOVE and CARE for people

***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.***

Peter calls pastors and leaders to shepherd God's flock...what does a shepherd do? They take care of the sheep.

They have to feed the sheep, they have to guide the sheep, they have to shear the sheep, they have to protect the sheep...

Notice the words “under your care.” As leaders we have to remember that this isn’t our church it’s God’s church! These aren’t our people...they’re God’s people...and He loves them...and He’s placing them under our care...

He wants us to take good care of them! Love is an action word...it will be seen...Christian leadership should love and care for God’s people...Because Jesus our Good Shepherd loves and cares for people...

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. -Matthew 9:35-36 (NIV)

Jesus calls pastors to love people...
A pastor who doesn't love people hasn't been called to pastor...because an undershepherd should shepherd like the Good Shepherd!

What's that look like?

Well Psalm 23 gives us a picture

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

A pastor should be visible and available...Jesus is always available...His promise is to never leave us or forsake us...

Obviously we can't be with you 24/7...but we can do our best to make ourselves visible and available...

This is really important to our team...as we grow we want to make sure that our team is visible...that you see us on Sunday's...

You see us at Prayer...that you don't just see us...but we're approachable...and if you need us...we're available! You can talk to us...

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,-Psalm 23:2 (NIV)

This means that the undershepherd needs to be able to feed the sheep...feed them what? The Bible...The Word of God...that's how we grow...not just some of it...all of it! It takes the whole Bible to make a whole Christian! Paul told young Timothy

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.-2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.-Psalm 23:3 (NIV)

The shepherd's heart is to see lost people found...and prodigals brought home...

The local church should be a place where people help you when you fall...they encourage you to keep going...

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.-Psalm 23:4 (NIV)

The rod speaks of discipline...The shepherd has to be willing to have the hard conversations in love...To say, hey that thing you're doing isn't what God would want for your life...

The staff speaks of protection...the shepherd has to be willing to protect the sheep from predators and from the sheep...

This means that you're not going to be liked all the time...some sheep will turn on you...

Walk away from you...cancel you...but you have to be okay with that...because you love them enough to tell them the truth...

If you want everyone to like you, sell ice cream...don't be a pastor!

We could keep going, but I think you get the picture right? And the joy of a good pastor is found in verse 6...

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.-Psalm 23:6 (NIV)

This is why a Pastor has to be called into this...God calls a pastor to give their life to the flock so that the flock can eventually be with Jesus forever...

I don't have a job...I have a calling...

Now when I say calling...I don't mean that I got a text message from the Lord...

No God began to stir my heart...He began to stir Pastor Cyndie's heart...He began to break our hearts for the things that break His heart!

We were thinking...this is crazy, God I'm a forklift operator and Cyndie's a nurse...we've never preached a sermon...we haven't studied homiletics, hermeneutics, theology, eschatology, Greek, Hebrew...

People think that God calls the equipped...That's not the case...He equips those that He's called!

God is still calling Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastor's & Teachers to equip the church...to take care of and lead the church...

Here's the thing...

If you're called...others will see the fruit...This is why it's so important to have a pastor over you...those who have been called, will verify that you've been called...

We see this in Acts 11 Barnabas and Saul go to Antioch and they spend a whole year there serving in the local church...teaching the people...

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.-Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

Barnabas & Saul (who changes his name to Paul) were serving as teachers...then they were called to bring the gospel to the nations...the calling was commissioned by the local church pastors and elders...and they were sent out...

Now how do you know they were really called by God? They actually brought the gospel to the nations, and planted churches...

And it wasn't easy...

And it wasn't glamorous...

And it wasn't for the money...

But they did it because they were called by God...and equipped by God to do what He called them to do...

So Peter's saying hey...in these crazy times of suffering and persecution...you need to be shepherds...you need to care for and love people...you need to have a heart that wants to see them transformed by Jesus...

So Peter's list of qualifications are...

You have to have a personal relationship with Jesus...You have to love and care for People
You have to have

A deep desire to PLEASE Jesus

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

Remember Peter is encouraging the pastors who were suffering themselves and yet trying to care for others...And He tells them the same thing he tells everyone else...

Our reward is Jesus!

He's saying...

Look, I know it's hard right now...and I know that sometimes it's a thankless job...people love you and hate you...

But remember your motivation isn't for yourself...it isn't to please others...it's to please Jesus...it's to be faithful to what He wants...

At the end of the day whether you're a pastor or not, we're going to stand before Jesus and our goal is to hear Him say well done good and faithful servant...

And you'll get a crown that will not fade away...
That's a reference to the Olympic games...

Back then when you came in first, second or third, you didn't get gold, silver or bronze, you didn't get endorsement deals, book deals, and cameos in a movie...

You know what you got for all your hard work?
A little wreath of leaves and flowers to wear on your head...It was all nasty within a week...

You can labor for other crowns...
Be a Celebrity pastor, worship leader, or ministry leader...live for the applause of people...But all that stuff fades away

But Peter's saying make sure you're laboring for Jesus...Don't worry about becoming famous...Make His name famous...Live for Him...Obey Him...Do it for His glory!

As we close today, I want you to know that it's an honor and a privilege to be your pastor...and to be part of a team of pastors and leaders who love God, and love you!

I want you to know that I can't wait to see you on Sunday...I can't wait to worship with you, pray for you, help you take your next step...

It's what I live for! It's what we live for! We're not perfect...we make mistakes...but our heart and desire is to learn from them...and help you become fully-devoted to our Good Shepherd Jesus!

So as we close today, we as sheep have to remember a couple of things as we navigate through this crazy world...

All of us must

TRUST the GOOD SHEPHERD

He's always with us...He will never forsake us...He loves and cares for us

And one of the main ways that He takes care of us is through the local church...We're not meant to do life alone...So as you're trusting in Jesus you need to

Find your **FLOCK**

You need to be part of a local church...so that you can continue to learn and grow...so that you have a place to use your gifts and talents for the glory of God!

Once you've found your flock...now you need to

FOLLOW the undershepherd

Understanding that your pastor isn't perfect, but he's there for you, to lead you to guide you, to help you take your next step...to get closer to Jesus...Paul said follow me as I follow Christ...that's how we grow...

What's the Holy Spirit saying to you?

I want to pray for you

If you've been hurt by a pastor, or by a ministry then I want you to know that I'm sorry that happened...

Jesus isn't like that. He's not abusive, He's not manipulative, He's not angry...He's not greedy...He's not selfish...He's loving

You may have walked away from a bad pastor or a bad church...Don't walk away from Jesus...Let Him heal that hurt...You can trust Him...He wants you to get back to church

I want to pray for you if you really identify with Peter, because you have failed epically...and you can't seem to get past it...

Failure is not final...God's mercies are new every morning... Bring it to him...and move forward...Trust Him for your future

I want to pray for you if you're feeling called by God in any way...You're wondering is this really You God? I don't think I can do this God...

He equips those He calls...Trust Him!

Altar Time