

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

January 17, 2021

Leading Like Christ

I Peter 5:1-4

Ben Cunningham

[music: "From the Inside Out"]

Michelle Jensen:

Good morning. We are glad you are here to join us in worship this morning, and to those who are joining us online, welcome.

Today is National Sanctity of Human Life Day. And this morning we want to take time to join with churches across the nation to celebrate God's gift of life, mourn those lives lost, and to commit ourselves to the value and protect life. As believers, we know that each and every life is made in the image of God. Their value is found in whose they are and not what they can offer. But we live in a world where the vulnerable among us are often devalued, and our hearts break at the loss. We know we serve a God who redeems brokenness and invites us to be His hands and feet to those around us. So, what can we do? Speaking words of love and truth and giving of your time and finances to organizations that value life at every stage, like Options 360, are some practical ways to help. There are opportunities all around us if we just look.

But above our action-oriented plans, we pray, and not just today. We ask God to protect the vulnerable to redeem the brokenness in our world and to bring people into relationship with Him and to open our eyes to the way our words and actions impact our world for His kingdom. Will you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, this morning our hearts are heavy as we sit with the reality that human life is not always valued the way you designed, that the unborn are considered by many to be disposable. Men and women are created in Your image, and yet we can treat one another with indifference and hatred. Forgive us for the ways we have sinned against You and one another. We pray specifically for women who find themselves in difficult and desperate situations during their pregnancies, which lead them to consider abortion as an answer. We pray for their eyes and hearts to open to the life they carry, that they encounter people who encourage and support them in choosing life. We pray for pregnancy clinics that recognize that each child is an image-bearer of God and work to bring about life and hope to the women that they serve. And we pray for women who have had an abortion and are mourning that loss. We pray that they know the power of Your forgiveness and the hope we all have through faith in Jesus Christ. Thank You for the ways that You have called and equipped each of us to choose life. May it begin with the unborn, but not stop there. We never cease to be made in Your image. We are amazed and thankful that You have entrusted the image of a perfect God to an imperfect people. Help us to live in a way that values what You value. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ben Rico:

We put our trust in the Good Shepherd who cares for His own. Let us worship together in the hearing of God's word.

Sam Jensen:

Psalm 23.

*"The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.*

*Even though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

This is the word of the Lord.

[music: "Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me"]

Ben Cunnigham:

Good morning. It is good to see you, and to be seen. I feel like I should reintroduce myself or something without this mask on. As some of you know, the restrictions from the state did change this past Friday, so hence some of the changes you've seen here with the growth of the band and being able to have one person not masked on the stage at a time. So, we rejoice in that and continue to look to God for these things. Thank you for continuing to mask as we navigate these interesting times.

Well, let's jump into the word of God together.

I've always been a fan of sample problems. So, whether it was mathematics or the sciences or even living examples from history, I've been helped by teachers who would take formless concepts and dress them up in example or illustration. In helping kids through homework, you've kind of got to kind of avoid two pitfalls: of just giving them the answer on the one side, or the other side of leaving them in their misunderstanding. And this is the brilliance of the sample problem: it illustrates the principle without giving the answer. It's the right degree of specific and unspecific. It's both faithful and incomplete representation.

And Peter has been describing this salvation which calls disciples to holiness and brotherly love. God's people are being built into a spiritual house, and as a people for God's own possession. And the world is watching this construction project and witnessing the power of the Gospel. So the people who these Christians used to run with and their coworkers and even their spouses are all witnessing the grace of God. These disciples that Peter's talking to are following the risen Messiah even into suffering, and they do so in hopeful expectation of glory.

But life in exile is not easy, and guidance is needed. And so these disciples lived during, as we've noted, the vicious reign of Nero and other emperors. They're living amidst major religious and personal turmoil because of the crucified Jesus. And while there were days of green pasture, a lot of life was lived in the valley of the shadow. And while the leadership of Jesus is-- and the presence of the Holy Spirit is undeniable-- it is also invisible. And there is an ache in Peter's words in 1:8 when he says, *"Though you have not seen Him, you love Him."*

Now that Jesus has ascended, were the people of God shepherdless? Well, God doesn't leave His grace without form or illustration. In chapter 4 we saw this through the manifold grace of God that's demonstrated through the use of the body's gifts. And this week we'll see how the ascended Good Shepherd leaves behind sample shepherds to follow. These under-shepherds are called "elders," and

like samples, they are designed to be an incomplete yet faithful representation of Jesus Christ. God's people are not left to fend for themselves.

And we find in this embedded job description the qualifications of an elder-shepherd, but we see as we look at those the glory of our chief shepherd, Jesus Christ. And so, this morning, we will be taught how to recognize the resemblance between the Good Shepherd Jesus and the leaders that He appoints who are called elders. Every trace of Jesus that is left behind for us to find we want to discover, right? And so that's what we find here in 1 Peter 5:1-4. We want to see Him there so we can see Him here in the life of our church.

So, turn in your Bible to 1 Peter 5:1-4. I'll read it for us. It says this: *"Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."*

Peter first connects what he says in chapter 5 with what he said in chapter 4 by saying *"therefore."* And so how is Peter continuing his thought? Well, we found in chapter 4 that Peter called these disciples to trust that refining trials in the hands of their faithful Creator would be used to remake them in the image of Jesus. Do you remember that last week? God's refining judgment begins at the house of God and it moves outward, but guess where it starts in regard to the house of God? With the leadership, right? Authority comes with responsibility.

And we see this in how God calls people to account. So, the first family - sin in the garden - God calls Adam. When Israel is unfaithful in the Old Testament, God calls on kings and prophets and priests first. And so Peter is going to exhort the elders of this church because they are responsible for the care of these disciples.

And he's not doing this punitively, as if they've done something wrong, but this is more a preventative measure, you could say. He's going to start with the leaders of these churches. Let me find our text here. So, that's the connection with what's come before.

Now, why would we not just kind of get the elders in a room and talk with them about this? Why do all of us need to hear this? Just briefly, a couple of reasons why. The Holy Spirit offered this through Peter for the whole church to hear, first of all, we just have to acknowledge that.

It's also a helpful admonition and encouragement to our elders, and good training for future leaders, right? There are some who may have that gift and aspire to that office here, and so we want to help them understand what that task involves.

It also helps us, as the body, to recognize quality leadership. Many may have walked in this morning with an alternative definition of what quality leadership is, but here the Bible helps us and informs us in how we pray and support and identify leadership at Glenwood.

And lastly, we see the glory of our Lord in how He trains and directs His under-shepherds. It makes sense that we would see a resemblance between the master and His apprentices who are helping Him. So, if we know what to look for we can see the resemblance of Jesus which helps us and encourages us.

So let's look at what he says. In verse 1, he has a shepherd's sympathy, you could say. The forward is jumping in and urging them to shepherd, like he will. He does it in a certain way.

Exhortation is a strong push; it's a strong word; it's something bold to do. So, how does he do it? Does he do it in this top-down sort of way, flashing his apostle's badge? What's going to help these elders to receive it? Peter packages his

exhortation for maximum reception. He does it by being sympathetic. He exhorts them from alongside. He exhorts them with humility and understanding.

Look at what he says. "*I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder.*" Now Peter was an apostle, we know that from chapter 1. But he's also participated in the work of shepherding as well. He has pastoral scars just like they did. And so he knows from experience what the costs of leadership are, and he wants them to know that. He's going to dignify their office.

He also says, "*and witness of the sufferings of Christ.*" Now it's more likely this is referring to sharing in Christ's sufferings with them than it is of Peter's eyewitness account, you could say. Peter knows what it's like to be insulted and misunderstood and reviled. He's tasted their experience. And so all three of these phrases are intended to help him come alongside them so they'll hear what he has to say.

The last one is that he's "*a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.*" He's a participant of this hope that he's talking about. He's standing on tiptoe looking forward with hope just like they are.

And so he couches his exhortation in ways that will be heard. He's a fellow elder, a fellow sufferer, a fellow participant. We listen to people differently when they can directly relate to us, don't we? So, a woman who lost her husband ten years ago has the ear of a recent widow in a very different way. The cancer survivor, or person with the lengthy battle with depression, or a former addict, their voices are just louder due to their experience. And that's what Peter is doing here. He himself is an illustration of the exhortation he's going to be giving, because he's humbling himself; he's lowering himself. He's not beneath elder work, and he's imitating the humility of Jesus even in how he couches what he's about to urge them to do.

And this is because Christian hierarchy runs in the opposite direction from the world. The greatest is the least and the leader serves. It's like when Paul describes the difference between he and Apollos as the difference between where they're

working in the field. The honor is not in the title of "field worker". It's in working for a particular owner, and this is what Peter grasps. And that's why he's sympathetic in verse 1.

So now that they're ready to hear, what does he actually exhort them to do? He says in verse 2, "*shepherd the flock of God among you.*"

Before we talk about shepherding, who is it that Peter is specifically exhorting here? He's exhorting leaders in the church, those with authority. We know that because of what it's about to say in exercising oversight. It's also clear that God's will is involved, because He's appointed the certain designated flock to these specific people by describing them as "*those allotted to your charge.*" Notice that this is the flock of God. God owns this flock, not the elders. They are stewards of another's property. Elder authority is not original; it's secondary. It's a delegated authority from which they'll give account, right? And so Peter reminds the elders of this sober responsibility towards those among you, that their authority reaches as far as this allotment goes.

Have you ever kept watch over something that was incredibly valuable? Have you ever baby-sat, and you felt like something was going wrong? Maybe the child got something stuck in their throat or something? Or you house-sat and you tried to use the stove and nearly burned the house down or something? Where there's this sense of sober responsibility for this massively valuable thing? This is part of what Peter's after. It's what Paul is after in Acts 20 when he says it's the blood of Christ that purchased the church. What more precious a thing could be entrusted to people than the church of the living God? So he's urging them because of this oversight.

And he's urging them to "*shepherd*" or to "*pastor.*" Now, this might not have been the word that you expected. You might have expected him to say to "preach" or to "counsel" or to "lead" or to "manage." And all those things are involved in shepherding. But he uses this summary image that's multifaceted; it involves caring

and feeding and protecting and leading and seeking out, and all these things. If you remember, "shepherd" was a word that had great significance to Peter. Remember some of the final words of Jesus to him when He asked him, "*Peter, do you love Me?*" And his response, three times, had to do with this very thing. "*Feed my sheep.*" "*Tend my lambs.*" And that stuck with Peter. So when he's trying to grasp a word or a concept to summarize the task of eldering, he says "shepherd." Shepherd the flock.

This imagery is rich. It goes way back in Israel's history, and in the history of God's people, to the Old Testament. You think of David who's described as one with "*upright heart.*" He shepherded them and "*guided them with a skillful hand*" in Psalm 78.

But there were bad shepherds too, like the shepherds in Ezekiel 34. Listen to the description of what shepherding includes in this passage. It says, "*Son of Man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.*" He goes on and says, "*My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.*"

And this is one of the most devastating and vulnerable descriptions in all of the Bible-- is sheep without a shepherd. Because the dangers were real. Wolves were on the prowl, and false shepherds offered false protection. You remember the people that Peter is speaking to are scattered and disoriented with the new situation. And imagine what it would have been like to hear that, in God's grace, Jesus tasks men to serve as living, breathing caretakers of God's people.

Now, we know that the resemblance is far from perfect, right? By no means the only ones doing this. But here we have offered the embodied grace of God in the form of leaders within the church. A team of humbled and prayerful pastor-elders leading the church serve as a reminder that we are not without the help of the Good Shepherd. How have you seen the resemblance of the Good Shepherd in the elders who shepherd here or in other churches?

One example that I recall from early on in our marriage when we were living in Los Angeles-- we were part of a church down there. And the team of elders there, week after week, as soon as service was ended or before it began, they were pursuing people who were new or unknown to the body. And it was just kind of a known thing; they were just proactive in that way. Inclusion was normal. And we all naturally gravitate, right, towards what's comfortable on a Sunday morning. But this mindset helped continue to push people outside of themselves, outside of their comfort, towards noticing the people around them, to embrace ministry opportunities that were not scheduled and not planned, but were sitting there ripe for the opportunity. And the people were gathered. It was a good illustration, and a good reminder and a teaching point for us. And it's these kinds of examples-- this is what Peter's after, and so his main charge is, to the elders, to remember this basic task to shepherd people, to not get distracted from this fundamental thing.

Well, there are places in the New Testament that tell us what elders do, but now Peter gives attention, after he tells them the exhortation, and he focuses on why they do what they do. He talks about the inward motivation and the nature of their outward influence. So, we'll see, actually, the elder qualifications that we read in 1 Timothy and Titus actually show up in practice in our text as well. So, let's look at the shepherd's motive and influence. The shepherd's motive and influence, that's where Peter goes next. What should and shouldn't motivate an elder to shepherd other people?

Well, he mentions two things in the second half of verse 2 that both have to do with this inward motivation. He says, "*Exercising oversight not under compulsion, but*

voluntarily, according to the will of God." So an elder, first off, is to shepherd willingly. Something is going to drive an elder to do what he does, right? And so Peter says there's a wrong kind of compulsion that's this forced an obligatory constraint that comes from the outside in. It's maybe a trapped feeling that "no one else will do it if I don't," kind of a lie of indispensability. Or maybe it's pressure from other people. There's six generations of pastors in your family, and there's kind of this pressure. Or maybe there's a leadership vacuum in the church. Maybe it's a guilty conscience. "God, if you get me out of this, I'll become a pastor."

A famous preacher once said, "One volunteer is worth two pressed men." And that's true, and Peter knows that. He says that's a compulsion that should not characterize an elder. But, in contrast to that, there should be a willingness, and it should be voluntary according to the will of God. God loves a cheerful elder for the same reason He loves a cheerful giver. And that's because sincerity matters to God. He's not short of supplies; His HR department is not scrambling for names; He's not without resource; that's never the problem. And Peter seems to say that there's actually a right kind of compulsion when he says our oversight is to be done "*according to the will of God.*" There's a God-centered compulsion to serve.

Now why would this matter? Why would Peter bother with motivations when it comes to leaders? Well, because what motivated the man to become an elder is often what will motivate him as an elder, right? Elders must be free of enslaving motivations. They must be willing to be unpopular. They must be free to obey God. This is intuitive to us.

I love an illustration that John Piper gives. I was sitting down with my wife last week, celebrating our anniversary, and imagine if I said this to her: "Sweetie, out of a sense of obligation and duty, I'd like to present you these flowers to commemorate the covenant I made public 19 years ago." You'd expect her face to drop, right? Her heart to shrivel.

Motives matter. And people know that, and they sense that. They're impossible to hide for very long. And so an elder is to shepherd willingly just like Jesus did. Was there anyone more free from outside compulsion than Jesus? Right? Elders are bound to follow their master, but Jesus bound Himself to human nature. He was not compelled by guilt or obligation, but by holy love. Can you imagine what it would be like-- to envision Jesus as this kind of knuckle-dragging, begrudging Savior? We've probably never thought of Him in those terms. It's because He's not pushed and pulled by other's opinions. He's compelled by the will of the Father and by His own love.

We see that in John 10 when He says, *"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me, I know the Father; and I lay My life down for the sheep."* He says later, *"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I laid My life down that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me; but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."*

And elders who are free and desire and hungry to serve and imitate their chief Shepherd. You want elders who want to elder.

The second thing, motivation that Peter notes - we'll see there in the second half in verse 2 - he says, *"And not for sordid gain, but with eagerness."* Elders serve not out of greed or self interest, but out of zeal for others. Sordid gain typically has to do with greed or money, and the implication is either lining their pockets or advancing their own personal benefit in some way. We see it in Titus, where elders are not to be greedy for gain, or in 1 Timothy 3, they're not to be lovers of money. And here we see that in practice.

Now, the legitimacy of paying pastors at all is not what's on the table here. We see that in 1 Timothy 5:17. It's the tendency of fallen men to look out for themselves first and to view others as a means of getting themselves advanced or ahead. Now remember, we're talking about motive here, not station in life. So this means that

the poorest pastor in the world could be motivated by greed, and the richest pastor in the world could care less about it. This has to do with motivation. I remember talking to a missionary once who was discouraged because in their church network, they were constantly battling losing pastors to whoever was paying the most at the time. And it was a discouragement to him. It was hard because they seemed to be after that first.

And so Peter says, "Don't serve for that reason, but have a zeal for serving others." Instead of using others for your benefit, you offer yourself for theirs. It means doing this with focused intent and enthusiasm. The motivation is not coming from outside of you, but from a love for God that's linked to faithfulness to what He's appointed you to do.

So, elders are to shepherd others out of zeal to serve, not personal benefit-- a lot like Jesus. Right? Did Jesus do what He did for earthly reward? He was offered every gain possible. Do you remember the temptation? And He rejected that gain that He was due for the loss of the cross. Is there anyone more genuinely zealous as He was? And in the end, that sacrifice was gain. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you might by His poverty become rich."*

So both of these qualifications that Peter's talking about have something in common, right? He's basically saying, "Elders, don't serve for yourself; serve for Christ in others." It's pretty simple.

The third thing that he talks about, you'll notice, starting in verse 3, he says, *"Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge."* Thirdly, an elder influences others by example, not by force. See, Peter assumes elders are going to have influence. He knows that. But he's picky about how it is that elders influence others. He says there's two ways you can do that.

One, is by domineering - this is the way the world operates. Whether it was Rome, or an earthly master during that time, Peter knows that authority can corrupt. And so Jesus speaks directly to this in Matthew 20 when He says, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."*

It would really odd for a community of people who are called to mutual love and brotherhood and humility, to be led by controlling people, wouldn't it?

Now how does this happen? How does this morph in the mind of an elder? Well, people don't start out trying to control. Much of the desire that kind of gets warped into control comes from a desire for Christ's kingdom to advance. It's the same reason why parents would be controlling, or a spouse would be controlling. They want the best for their children or for their spouse. But there is this confusion about agency. Who does what? Who is responsible for what? And so the controlling elder or parent or spouse doesn't like it when they have to face the reality that, ultimately, they are powerless. They can't single-handedly, through force of will, effect change. Even though they are appointed instruments for that change, you can't bring about that final change that you're looking for.

And this is hard, because, normally, diligence and faithfulness result in change. And most times they do. But even diligent church leaders are at the same time dependent on supernatural intervention. I can preach the sermon faithfully, but I can't effect change through it. An elder can give the wisest and most timely counsel possible, but it might not be received. A leader can organize and equip people, but there has to be a willingness to serve. It's almost as though God is trying to communicate that we need Him still. And leaders taste that, I think, maybe more than others.

So a controlling elder is one who takes on too much weight. It manifests itself as constant chastising, or critiquing, or making unreasonable demands, or lacking thankfulness, or having a disinterest in people's spiritual health. And that may sound really petty, and we may say, 'How could an elder do that?' But it's the same reason why parents raise their voice, why teachers stop listening out of frustration, or government officials bend the rules, right? It's a very familiar thing when you think about it.

But imagine what this looks like from God's perspective, right? A power-tripping elder. It would be like hiring a house-sitter, and then returning home to find your entire house rearranged. There's a disastrous confusion about who is ultimately in charge of this thing.

But notice, just because an elder shouldn't force influence through domineering, it doesn't mean he's not to influence. He actually influences through his example. This is what Peter says, *"but proving to be examples to the flock."* And so 1 Timothy 3 describes an elder as *"self-controlled, is not violent, but gentle, is not quarrelsome,"* and it goes on to require proof of an established influence by an example in his home, right, *"he manages his home well."* He is well thought of by outsiders, Paul says.

And this is because this is how influence actually takes place. Listen to Oswald Sanders, who quotes a wise person, he says, "One of the outstanding ironies of history is the utter disregard of ranks and titles in the final judgment men pass on each other. The final estimate of men shows that history cares not an iota for the rank or title a man has borne, or the office he has held, but only the quality of his deeds and the character of his mind and heart."

It reminds us of what Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 - this was my password for many things for many years to remind me of this-- it's not anymore, so don't try to hack into my accounts or anything-- but here's what he says. Paul says, *"Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in*

purity.” Later he says, “Practice these things, devote yourselves to them, that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.”

I thought of this passage last time when we were honoring the Nymeyer family, and Nathan’s example here, to our church. I couldn’t tell you much about the academic or professional accomplishments of the people who I’ve learned a lot from, and I’m guessing that you might not be able to either. Resumes might actually and initially impress, but they don’t influence. But examples do.

And the example by which elders are measured is, of course, Jesus. Jesus we find to be gentle and lowly. Of all the people who could have lorded it over them, it was Jesus, right? Of all the people who could have just said, ‘I am who I am, and obey, because I said so,’ it could have been Jesus. And He demonstrated His greatness in His first advent with a washbasin, and His authority through His service, and His power through considering others as more important than Himself. And this led to Him being the most influential figure in human history.

See, the Gospel actually changes lives, so it makes sense that we would expect that leaders in the church should give evidence of a changed life as well.

And as a relatively new person to Glenwood, I see good examples to follow here. It’s one of the reasons my wife and I came. There are men who desire God’s will above their own, who love people truly, who are burdened by the needs of others, who live what they say, who have courage and lead people in a principled way, even when it’s unpopular. I have found that these men are worthy of your respect and your imitation and your prayer, because they lead by example, which is what Peter says they ought to do.

Let’s look finally at a shepherd’s reward in verse 4, to wrap up this text. Peter promises something to faithful elders, this unfading crown of glory. This was a reference to a wreath, or a crown of some kind, that would be given publicly to acknowledge a person’s accomplishment or value. It’s unfading like the inheritance

we have in chapter 1. But there is a bit of delay involved here for an elder, right? There's a lot of cost in serving in this role. But as in other ventures that are attached to Jesus, it ends in glory. And Jesus doesn't have to do this, because we are His dutiful servants, but He offers it anyway. We can't be sure what this crown is, but we know why Peter includes it, and that's to encourage these elders to be faithful. And I think his intent is the same today.

I remember talking to a seasoned pastor who told me that there are times when this is all the motivation that you have, and it's all the motivation that you need. What a grace of God, to encourage elders in this way.

What are some implications that we can draw from this text, both for the body and for the elders here at Glenwood?

First, for the body. D. A. Carson has wisely said that one of the things that's so remarkable about the characteristics of an elder is how unremarkable they really are. Right? They are simply Christian maturity-- in this text case, maturity in practice. There is clearly crossover between the way an elder is told to imitate the Lord Jesus, and how leadership is to be exercised in general. Fathers are told not to exasperate their children, right? Employees are told to work heartily, as to the Lord, and we're told to live lives that are exemplary to other people in the church. So to what degree do you and I need to apply this way of leading to the areas of authority that we have been given? How does our labor and leadership need to be informed by willingness, other-interest, and living as examples before other people?

Glenwood family, this should also inform how we live together as the body of Christ. Let this passage shape how you pray for the elders here. Let this shape what to expect from elders and what not to expect from them. Let this inform who is included in leadership here. Let this inform how classes are taught and people are disciplined and events are managed and life groups are led. Let this passage cause us to be circumspect about how we lead and who we are becoming.

Good leadership doesn't just appear. It's a cultivated thing. And so these marks of courage and sacrificial investment in others and a reproducible humility are developed and matured over time. So let's embrace these criteria for good leadership in our lives, so that leaders here always point to Jesus. Let us be the kind of church that encourages our elders to be faithful in their personal faith and home life. Not making unreasonable demands that tempt them to forsake their influential example. To reword Hebrews 13, let's be willing to work with and submit to our leaders, knowing that they will give an account for watching over our souls. Let's help them do this with joy, and not with groaning.

For the elders and pastors here who are listening, it's my prayer that returning to this passage would encourage you and direct you. We as a body will pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you through hopeful and beneficial application of this text.

The troubling motivations that Peter mentions often come in small increments, don't they? We will pray against sagging shoulders and minute moments of greed or short-lived power trips. There is grace at the cross for these. These inward motivations don't appear through effort, either. They result in communion and love for Christ Himself. And so, elders, continue to allow the love of Christ to compel your willing and enthusiastic service. We will pray that you will be energized by God's Spirit and not fall to the trap of self-service. We thank you for your example. Continue to do the vital work of growing in Christ personally, and loving your families well. Your leadership will extend as far as the foundation of your example. We know that this season has not been easy. We honor your desire to pay love's cost, even when the price tag is higher. We appreciate you. We thank God for you. You are a regular way that we experience grace. The chief Shepherd will be here before you know it, and He will finish what He started.

As a concluding word, notice that both the congregation and the elders are to look to the same place in looking to Jesus. The body sees the resemblance of Jesus in leadership. The body can look through these imperfect examples of the elders to Christ. And the elders look to Jesus, because He is their chief shepherd too. They're

sheep, as well. Whether there is a helpful reminder or a subtle corrective or the hope of reward, every elder will humbly look to Jesus when hearing these words as well.

So this isn't merely a sermon on elder qualifications. It's an opportunity to glory in the person of Jesus. He remains our Good Shepherd. Let us look to Him, and learn how to give of ourselves in service to others.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the good Shepherd, for Jesus who does not forsake His people, who provides the indwelling Holy Spirit, and whose sacrifice and resurrection will permanently give us access and righteousness that will bring us all the way home. Thank You that He continues to lead us. Not only through the word and through prayer and through personal means, but also through the leaders of this church. We pray for them. We ask for You continue to help them to sift motivations, to find roots of the things that Peter warns against, and by Your grace to pull them out. Help the body here to be an increasing encouragement to those who serve as elders here. We thank You, God, for this clarity. Help us to recognize potential leaders. Help us to affirm what we see in others. Help us to take the diversity of gifts that this body has and that this team of elders here has, and to glorify you in those things. It's incredible to us, God, that You, the Shepherd-- as it says in Revelation 7, *"For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* We marvel at You, Jesus, our great Shepherd who became the Lamb. Help us to offer our lives to others. Help us to do what we can to further Your kingdom in these ways. We pray this in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

Ben Rico:

Amen. Would you read with me from 2 Corinthians 5:15

"And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."

[music: "The Cause of Christ"]

Amen. Go as under shepherds of the good Shepherd. Go in peace.