

Walking with Jesus in a Weird World

Leadership Now!

Unedited Transcript

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All right gentlemen, good morning. Good to see you all, the few, the brave, the proud, the Marines, or whatever. This is absolutely amazing, isn't it? It's Friday, it's labor day weekend and there's a hurricane, and you guys are here. You guys are the spiritual remnant. That's good, you get three free sins for being here, that's amazing. Let's pray and we'll get into it all right? Let's pray, Father thank you for Your goodness, thank You for my brothers, thank You for this opportunity. We commit this time to You and we're grateful that we're Your sons. We commit it in Jesus' strong name. Amen.

It is good to be back with you, I'm going to be with you next weekend too, not speak but with you for the 30th anniversary. That's going to be a great time. I hope that you'll plan to be here and bring friends with us as well. Today we continue the series, Walking with Jesus in a Weird World, which is really a study of First Peter. We're going to be looking today at Leadership Now, that's how we've entitled it. Leadership Now. First Peter 5:1-7, I'm going to be reading that text here in just a minute for you. Leadership is absolutely crucial for us as men. As we've talked so many times before leadership is something that pertains to us every day of our life, you are leaders. As we talk about our core identity being sons of God through faith in Christ, we also have a leadership role, a worker role and a warrior role.

Today we're going to be focusing on the leadership role. Guys, leadership is something we men struggle to understand, particularly in marriage and church and some of these other areas. Leadership is not something that we always get. I love the story, and maybe you've heard of this, of the high school teacher who was talking about the death of the pope. This was several years ago, a pope had died and he was explaining to his class how a new pope gets put in place. He was going through the whole process, then he ended up his discussion by saying, "The bottom line is that the cardinals pick the pope." One kid in the back row raised his hand, he had this look of confusion on his face. He said, "Why in the world would they allow a baseball team to pick the new pope?"

Some people don't get it when it comes to picking the pope, and a lot of times we don't get it when it comes to leadership and how it pertains to us. As we look at this text we're going to see that this is powerful. By the way gentlemen, this text is for all of us as men. This is not a text that is focused on the ladies, it really isn't. It's for the older men and the younger men, don't raise your hand on this one. Don't raise your hand on this one, if you're an older man you know who you are, if you're a younger man you know who you are. I don't know what the cutoff is but there it is.

First Peter 5:1-7, this is God's word, here we go. It starts out, "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 to be revealed: 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; not domineering over those in your

charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 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 He gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because he cares for you."

What a powerful, powerful text. I love how it ends up, He does care for us. The focus is on leadership, the theme of this text, the theme of this, the subject is leadership, the theme is leadership now. Why gentlemen? Leadership is absolutely crucial now! That's what we're talking about, and that's what Peter is talking about and how significant that is. I got 4 points for it, are you ready for 4 points this morning? Why leadership now? How leadership now? Reward for leadership now, and the leadership and the led. You got that on your outline? You'll have to have this memorized by the time you leave, there will be a test. Here we go, first of all let's talk about why leadership now.

Look at the first word in the text there, what is that first word? Talk to me. "So." In other translations of the Bible it starts out, "therefore." The word "so" then, or the word "therefore," when you see that in the text of scripture, you've heard this before, whenever you see a therefore in the text of scripture you've got to do what? You've got to look back and ask the question, "What is it there for? What is therefore there for?" Because it always refers to something before it, and in fact last week you talked about suffering, or the week before. This text picks up talking about suffering. The "so" or the "therefore" is pointing ahead to the reality that there has been suffering in the church in Asia Minor, that's to whom Peter was writing. The church spread all throughout Asia Minor, which is today Turkey.

They were suffering under the first general persecution of the church under the mad man emperor, what was his name? Nero, absolutely. Even this morning I got down from my shelves Foxe's, Christian Martyrs of the World. How many have ever read through this book, Foxe's book of martyrs? Yeah, not a lot of us. When I was starting out following Jesus this was one of the most popular books in Bible school that they said, "You've got to read this. You've got to read this because it shows the history of the church." I got it and I started reading it. I opened up again today, this was written in the, what, 1500s or 1600s or something. The first general persecution of the church after you get out of The Book of Acts, the first general persecution of the whole church was under Nero.

Nero was crazy. He had his mom executed. How did he do that? That would be a fascinat- What he did is he sent her on a voyage in a boat and made sure the boat would come apart in the water. This guy was a mama's boy. When she didn't die from drowning he had her executed by one of his soldiers. There it is, this guy was crazy. He would light Christians on fire and use them as torches. What we see here in this situation, it's very important to understand, 62/63 AD, that's why these are extraordinary times. Gentlemen, in extraordinary times extraordinary leadership is needed. Did you catch that?

There's another reason why this is so important, leadership now, because of the general persecution. The first major general persecution of the church, the church needed shepherds. There's another reason, this is about 33 years after the resurrection of Jesus and a lot of the elders who had been leading the church are getting tired. They'd been leading the church and Peter says to them, "Guys it is not time for you to back down. Leadership is necessary absolutely right now because we're in a persecution. I know you're getting tired. I know you guys have been serving, but now's the time. We need you, absolutely need your leadership now!"

My conviction is that in extraordinary times extraordinary leadership is necessary, but I want to go on and say this, you ready? Every time, every day and age is an extraordinary time. Do we live in extraordinary times right now? Have you been following the elections? Oh my goodness, is this a nut case or what? These are extraordinary times. I look back on my young life, don't laugh too loud, and I've only been around 61 years, it's not very long, is it gentlemen? Am I an old guy or young guy? Don't say it, don't answer that. I look around in my life and I cannot think of a time in my short life where there hasn't been a need for strong sound leadership in the church, because every day as we expand the kingdom is an extraordinary time. That's why this is relevant not only to Peter's people in his day, it's why it's so relevant to us now.

What does he say to the leaders? He says, "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you," he gets through verse 1, and in verse 2 we find the first command, "shepherd." The word shepherd there is a verb, to shepherd. It comes from the noun, a shepherd. What he's doing is he's commanding the elders to shepherd the flock. He's saying to the elders who are already serving, "Elders you continue elding. You elders continue shepherding and showing oversight." The word there in the original language for oversight is the word episkopos. Anybody ever heard the word episcopal before? Absolutely. He's saying to the leaders of the church, "You guys need to keep shepherding, and as you shepherd you're giving oversight to the church."

Shepherding is another way of disciplining isn't it? What does the great commission say? Make disciples. The leaders of the church, the elders of the church are the ones primarily responsible for making sure that the great commission is being fulfilled, that people are coming to faith in Christ, that they're being raised up in the faith. Shepherding involves teaching, it involves directing, overseeing, it involves going out and finding the sheep that are wandering away and rescuing them and bringing them back. It involves a whole lot doesn't it, this shepherding the flock, those of you who've been elders in churches know. The reality is we need men who will see how crucial it is to shepherd the flock now. Leadership is necessary now. Discipling of our men and women and children is necessary now.

I was talking to Michael, who is a youth pastor and a children's pastor. He was overseeing the ministry in his church. I said, "How are you doing?" He said, "Wednesday night my 3 leaders didn't show up to teach my boys." I said, "What are you going to do? What did you do?" He said, "I had to scramble to find others to back up." I'm glad he was able to find them. We need leaders, we need shepherds, we need disciplers, we need elders, and we need them now, because every age is an extraordinary age. I was talking with a guy you wouldn't know, he's an older pastor, older than me if it's possible.

I was talking about discipleship with him and he said, "You know I don't really like the term discipleship and I don't like the word disciple. I don't want people to think that they're following me." My eyes were like this, I said, "I can't b-" He said, "I just want to be their friend." I said, "Okay, I get that. But you know what, I'm dealing with a lot of young around our city and what young guys need is not just a friend, they need a mentor, they need a shepherd, they need a discipler. They don't just need somebody to pat them on the back, they need a leader in their life, now, just like they needed them back then."

This past week, many of you know about it, hasn't been in the news much but it's been on Facebook, it's been blowing up on social media, another young man in our community committed suicide. Found his body on the roof of his apartment. I know the young pastor who is asked to do his funeral and to take care of his 2 sons that he left behind. It's tragic, absolutely tragic. He was one of the MCs at one of our Thanksgiving prayer breakfast a few years ago. I keep thinking, where were the leaders in his life, where

were the mentors, where were the fathers, where were the shepherds? Did anybody know his desperation? Leadership is necessary now.

When I talk to young guys and get together with younger guys for breakfast, or for lunch, or whatever, they say, "Hey, thanks for getting together." You know what I say? I say, "Listen man, listen, I'm the past and the present and a little bit of the future. I'm in my fourth quarter and there might be overtime. But you, you're the present and much more of the future than I am. You are absolutely necessary, totally worth my time. Are you kidding me? Thank you for getting together with me," because leadership is necessary now. That was going through Peter's mind. Why leadership now? Because leaders are necessary in extraordinary days, and every day is an extraordinary day.

Secondly notice how leadership now? How do we do this leadership now? How do we do this? Verses 2 through 3 gives us these words, "not under compulsion, not for shameful gain, not domineering over those in your charge." I like that, that's very helpful, those 3 knots show how not to do leadership and shepherding in the church. The kind of men we need shepherding other men are grace based men, aren't they? They understand the gospel of grace, they understand that Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so. That he died on the cross for my sins, that God is not angry at me and therefore my leadership, because God took all of His anger out on Jesus, my leadership can be one that's not under compulsion, "Okay, I'll serve another term," not, "Well, what do I get out of this?" Not, "I'll do it if you do what I say." It's, "I'm glad and honored to serve. I get much more out of this than money. I've got to continue growing because they need me."

Elders, leaders, shepherds, mentors, coaches are necessary. The how of leadership, he shows us here. Did you notice? I love this little line, do you notice how he says that he's shepherding God's flock, that it's not my flock? When I was a pastor people would say, "Hey I like your church," or, "I don't like your church." I'd say, "All right, cool. It's not my church, it's Jesus Church." I'm not trying to be super spiritual, though I am probably more spiritual than most of you in this room. If you believe that I've got some wetland I want to show you. The reality is that it's Christ church, it's God's flock. That's why shepherds, how we do our shepherding is absolutely crucial. It's not manipulative, it's not controlling. It is strong, there's strong leadership needed in the church. How we do it is important.

He talks about not only the why of leadership now, but the how of leadership now. Look at verse 4, we get the reward for leadership now. I love this, "When the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory." Back then they had crowns when you won an Olympic race or something, you would get a crown, a laurel wreath. It would dry out, it'd be green when they gave it to you and then it would dry out and they'd give you a bundle of flowers, but the flowers dried up, they faded. When we who serve serve, when we elde, when we shepherd, when we coach, when we mentor, when we develop other people, particularly men, we will receive the unfading crown of glory.

James 3:1, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment," that's true. However it's so worth it, because of the blessings of the chief shepherd saying to us under-shepherds, "Great job, thank you for mentoring Bill and Tom. Thank you, thank you, thank you." Is mentoring and leadership and shepherding draining? How many of you found it's tiring discipling and developing other people? Yeah it is. It's exhausting. They'd always do what you want to do. You tell them, "Don't jump off that cliff," and they jump off the cliff. You say, "Don't do that, do this," and then they'll do it, and then they come back and they say, "I didn't do what you said." I said, "I know."

There it is, keep at it until Jesus comes back again. We shepherd and shepherd and shepherd, and there's going to be a great reward in the here and now, and in the there and then. Lastly notice the leaders and the led, I love this, the leaders and the lead, verses 5-7. Now he's moved beyond you older guys and he's talking about all of us. Did you figure out who's older here and who's younger? You know who you are? I'm not sure, because I've met guys with a lot of grey hair we have a very, very young spirit. They're in the game and they're fighting. I've seen some young guys who seem very old to me. Just saying.

"Likewise you who are younger, be subject to your elders," I love that. I love that verse, the word "subject" there comes from Ephesians 2 also, where it says, "Wives be subject to your husbands," that's one of my other favorite verses. "Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders; clothe yourselves," that's a unique Greek word, wrap yourself, clothe yourself, all of you, "with humility toward one another." Humility is that word that means rank yourself under, intentionally rank yourself under. We tend to think that we're better than others but he says, "No, no, no. Continually rank yourself under somebody else. "For God opposes the proud but favors the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you." Younger guys, He's saying, "Listen to the shepherding and the coaching of the older guys they know something about life. Don't be anxious when they tell you to follow God's word, trust them. Cast all your anxieties upon Him."

Some of us have learned some things. Haven't you older guys learned some things? Huh? Don't you have some things to share? You better. I know you do. You teach me. Older guys, have humility toward the younger guys. Younger guys, have humility to go after and find those older guys. Let them coach you, let them teach you, because we need leaders. It takes a man to develop a boy into a man, always. Women can have enormous influence but they don't understand how we think from the inside out. It takes a man to develop a man. The church stands or falls on its leadership. Every time I come I think I say my mantra, you're probably tired of hearing it but I'm going to say it again, as the men of the church go so goes the church. The church never gets beyond the quality level of its men. A culture never gets beyond the quality level of its men. Guess what? Our culture has fewer quality men than ever in the history of this country.

The reality is that church gets to move in, build great men. When men flourish, women, children, churches and culture flourish. The only revival that's going to come in our country is through Christians, I really believe Christian men. Let me give you real quick 3 applications and you can do some table talk and clean up any heresy I've committed. Number 1, some of you are looking around, you're saying, "I do this. I shepherd. I'm doing this." You're my hero, keep at it. Keep going. Keep doing it. Cliff is not here today but he leads Marathon Men on the other side town in a tangible park area. I want you to know he's got a vision for reaching men. We have a vision, FORGE where I am at point at right now, FORGE is a new division of Man In The Mirror, we're part of you guys. We planted one in FORGE Oviedo, we have another one in Longwood that's going. We want to plant another one, and then we want to build, our vision is to build a school of young communicators that continue to spread out through the whole city.

John River said we can use every one of his 4 rivers in the city for having morning meetings we're going to develop, that's the next step before we start our third FORGE, because I want to develop young communicators so we can proliferate. I see this, and when I drive here I'm praying, "God give us the city of men who can influence other men." It's awesome to be a part of this movement of men, you're my hero if you're doing it, keep doing it.

Number 2, by way of application, if you've been in leadership and are ready to give up don't. Don't give up. You say, "I've been developing guys and I'm tired." I know, get rested. This almost sounds like a non grace thing. I'm not saying that Jesus will love you more if you disciple and develop and mentor other guys, I'm just saying you're too necessary. Don't give up we need you, because men are like herding cats. You've heard that a million times. You call ... I hear this everywhere I go, the women in the church say, "We're going to have an event," how many women sign up? 300 million women sign up. You say, "Guys we're going to have an event," how many guys sign up? Like 2, maybe 5. Now if they're invited by another guy then they'll come. Why? Because we're independent cusses and we need others to draw us alongside.

When an older guys says to a young man, "I want to get together with you." Lyle, you meet with your pastor every week, a young pastor, that's awesome. That is awesome. It's difficult to shepherd people. Leadership guru Dave Kraft said, "Most leaders are devout cowards." He said, "Yes, I did just say that. I have said it for a number of years. I have had people challenge me on it but at this point in time I stick by my guns. I must add that when I say most leaders I'm thinking of leaders in churches where I have been involved in one way or another. Many, maybe most of the leaders that I've been associated with I've shied away from the tough conversations. They would rather quit and move on than deal with tough issues and difficult people."

As a pastor for 35 I've seen that. I've seen elders come to me and say, "I'm tired of the conflict in the church. I'm tired of these people that don't agree with us. I'm tired of these people that won't obey." I say, "I know, but don't bail out on us because we need you." People are frustrating, shepherd them anyway. One of my favorite stories is the story of this guy who worked at Walmart. He was a retired guy, clean cut, really sharp looking guy.

He was recently retired and he'd come to work 5, 10, 15 minutes late, and his boss was so frustrated by that. He called him in his office, he said, "Bill you're a great guy. You're clean cut, people like you, you're a good greeter, but you're always late." He goes, "I know boss, I know. I'm late and I'll work on that." The manager said, "You know, I don't understand, they tell me that you're retired from the military, and here it is you're always late. What did they say to you in the military when you showed up late?" He said, "Well, usually in the morning they would say, 'Good morning Admiral, do you want coffee today?'"

I love that, and the reason I love that is because here's an admiral and he's bailed out. I was speaking here one time and we had retired general. I just knew he was a general. I said, "You're in the military, right?" He goes, "Yeah." Just the way he carried himself, and he's involved in men's discipleship. Don't ever get out of it, even if you were never an admiral or a general. I'm not guiltting you, I'm exhorting you because we need you.

Then the third application, have you ever had a Popeye moment? Those Popeye moments, those of you who grew up with Popeye, what's a Popeye moment? It's all I can stands, and I can't stands no more. I want you to have a Popeye moment when it comes to the leadership around you. You get ticked at the leadership, you look around and you say, "There just aren't any leaders," make some. I'm not guiltting you, I'm exhorting you. We need you, that's what this text is all about. This is all about leadership now.

I'll amend with this, I was having coffee with Don Sweeting, he was the president of Reformed Theological Seminary, this past week. He's a long guy like me, he's 61. We were talking about his dad, because I know his dad. You may have known the name, George Sweeting, used to be president of Moody Bible Institute. When I was in Bible college George Sweeting was the president of Moody Bible

College, writing books. He was a name. I didn't even know he had a son, that Don Sweeting is his son. The president now of Reformed Theological Seminary. I said, "What's your dad doing these days?" He says, "He's still on staff at his church." "How old is he?" "94." "94?" He goes, "Yeah, he'll never retire."

Leadership is needed now guys. Don't ever let the evil one say that you're not important because you could influence people I can't, that Pat Morley can't, that David Delk can't, that Brett Clemmer can't. What did I say? Did I say that right? I said Brett Morley? Brett Clemmer, Brett and I are real close, he used to be one of my elders, I just said his name wrong. You're crucial, you're crucial. Don't ever forget it and read these words over and let them sink in and energize your for ministry.