

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF CANA WEST
BIBLE STUDIES FOR CLERGY RETREAT
Thursday, May 04, 2017 – The Venerable Martin Oguike, PhD

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

1 Peter 5

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.

We have several pastoral letters in Scripture where Biblical Principles of the Christian Ministry are well laid out. What we have as our text for study is part of a letter from the Apostle Peter to other elders of the Church. This was an exhortation to them. These elders had special responsibilities that Peter addressed. The idea of the elder came into church life from Jewish culture (Exodus 3:16, 12:21, 19:7). The word "elder" simply speaks of the maturity and wisdom that an older person should have, making them qualified for leadership. In its application, it is more about wisdom and maturity than age. It was the practice of Paul and Barnabas to appoint elders in the churches they had founded (Acts 14:23). There was also the development of the office of pastor, who was essentially a teaching elder (1 Timothy 5:17) who appointed and guided elders and other leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-13, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5-9).

1. According to 1Pe 5:2-3, what should leaders in the church do?

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

2. What does Peter mean by "Shepherd the flock of God"? Peter seemed to remember Jesus' three-part commission to him in John 21:15-17. In that passage, Jesus told Peter to show his love for Jesus by feeding and tending Jesus' sheep.
3. A spiritual shepherd does his job in two main ways. The first job is to feed the sheep. Jesus emphasized this to Peter in John 21:15-17.
4. Another aspect of the job is to tend the sheep, which means protecting, guiding, nurturing, and caring for the sheep.
5. The most important "tool" to shepherd the flock of God is a heart like the heart of Jesus, one that is willing to give one's life for the sheep, and who genuinely cares about and is interested in them (John 10:11-14).

Serving as Overseers

For Peter, the job of being a shepherd could also be understood as being an overseer. This word for leadership comes to the church from Greek culture, and it meant someone who watches over, a manager, a Steward or a supervisor (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7).

Not by compulsion but willingly

Shepherds should not do their job by compulsion, as if they were being forced into a task that they really hated. Instead, they should serve God and His people willingly, from a heart that loves the people and wants to serve.

Not for dishonest gain but eagerly

Shepherds should not do their job for dishonest gain. Instead, they should serve eagerly, willing to serve.

Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock

Shepherds should not do their job as lords, because the sheep do not belong to them. The sheep are entrusted to them. Instead, shepherds are to serve by being examples, not dictators. In the mind of Peter, shepherds had significant authority in the early church. If the office of shepherd was so powerless that a shepherd didn't rule and lead, then there was little potential for being lords. But because Peter gives this warning, it shows there was the potential for lording over. The sobering fact is that pastors are examples to the flock, whether they intend to be or not.

Those entrusted to you

God has assigned the various portions of His precious possession (His People) to our care. The idea is that God has entrusted the responsibility of the spiritual care of certain individuals to particular shepherds.

THE REWARD FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE

1Peter 5:4 speaks about the reward for leaders in the church. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Peter reminded shepherds in the church that they would answer one day to their Chief Shepherd, who will want to know what they did with His flock. It is important for shepherds - pastors - to realize that they lead Jesus' sheep. He is the Shepherd, He is the Overseer (1 Peter 2:25). In this sense, the Christian shepherd doesn't work for the sheep, he works for the Chief Shepherd.

You will receive a crown of glory

Faithful shepherds are promised a crown of glory, but not like the crown of leaves given to ancient Olympic champions. This crown will not fade away. Crowns are not only for shepherds, but for everyone who was faithful to Jesus and who did what He called them to do (1 Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12).

QUESTIONS

1. What verse or phrase in this text catches your attention most and why?
2. What are the challenges we face in following Biblical Principles in Ministry and how can we overcome them?