

Weekly Cell Guide

Leader's Copy

Series - A Counter-Cultural Life
Topic - Shepherds and Sheep (1 Peter 5:1-5)

Date - 22-Nov-2020
Speaker - Ps Ernie Song

WELCOME [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

[Ice Breakers 1](#)

[Ice Breakers 2](#)

WORSHIP [15 min]

You may select songs like

1. Worthy is the Lamb
 2. Reward
-

WORD [45 min]

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Live a life that testifies to God's goodness and grace, not only as an example to the sheep, but also to the pre-believers.
2. Clothe ourselves with humility towards one another.

Sermon Summary

The following are the key points of the sermon:

1. Shepherds must lead out of willingness and be examples to the flock.
2. Sheep must be subjected to the leadership of the shepherd.
3. Sheep and shepherds must show humility when dealing with one another.

Sermon Recap (Full Summary)

This series on 1 Peter is on the theme of keeping our conduct honourable among the pre-believers so that through the way we live, we proclaim the excellencies of Christ who called us out of darkness. How the world sees us matters, because how we live is a testimony of the living hope that we profess. In 1 Peter 5, Peter touches on the conduct within the church, specifically the relationship between shepherds and sheep. 1 Peter 5:1-5 has three segments, addressing first to the shepherds, then to the sheep, and finally, to both.

Segment 1 – Addressing the shepherds of the sheep (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Although Peter is addressing leaders in the church, this is also applicable to anyone who in one way or another holds leadership positions in various aspects in their lives. Peter lists down what a leader should and shouldn't be.

	Not to Be	To Be
i.	5:2a – Not because you must (obligation, compulsion)	5:2a – But because you are willing, as God wants you to be
ii.	5:2b – Not for shameful gain	5:2b – But eagerly
iii.	5:3 – Not lording over those entrusted to you	5:3 – But being examples of the flock

- i. Some leaders are “pushed” into leadership positions. They serve out of obligation (and maybe with some reluctance). If you are a leader who is “pushed” into position, you need to find out what is the root of your reluctance. Take for example, Moses. When God called him to lead, he was reluctant and came up with excuses, but at the root, he was preoccupied mostly with himself. If you are called into leadership, God will empower you with the ability to lead. Leadership in God’s House is always a privilege – it must never be a burden or a chore.
- ii. Timothy Keller and David Powlison have proposed four idols that leaders struggle with: power, control, comfort, and approval. When you lead, do you lead with your own agenda for personal gains? The ‘cure’ to this is to serve the flock eagerly, regardless of who they are (even the difficult ones) and the costs involved.
- iii. In the Bible, the criteria for leadership is never skills – it is character and an inner life that is right with God. Be the message that you preach and live out what you teach. Peter says that shepherds are not to lord over the flock, but to be examples to them. It is not simply ordering your flock around (lording) on what to do or what not to do, but to also practise it yourself (example). Ultimately, what the church needs is not better strategies or talents, but better examples.

Segment 2 – Addressing the sheep (1 Peter 5:5a)

The general expectation of a shepherd-and-sheep relationship is that the sheep is subjected to the shepherd. However, what Peter is emphasising here is that sheep must be *willing* to subject themselves to their shepherds for the relationship to bear fruits. That means to open up your life to your leader so that he/she knows both your strengths and weaknesses, and that you are hiding nothing, so that your shepherd can lead you to the place of restoration, healing and strength.

Everyone needs a shepherd, even the shepherds themselves. The common fault of shepherds is to think that they have arrived and that they have no need for more mentoring. This is where the potential to fall is greatest for a shepherd.

Segment 3 – Addressing both the shepherds and the sheep (1 Peter 5:5b)

What is humility? It is “the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself” (John Dickson). It brings down the mighty to the level of the weak. Both shepherds and sheep are essentially at the same level – pilgrims on a spiritual journey, sinners in need of a Saviour. Humility enables the leader to minister effectively and likewise, it enables the sheep to receive fully from the shepherd.

Conclusion

How shepherds and sheep relate to each other and function in their respective roles within the church matter so that we can be a good testimony to the pre-believers. The aim for RiverLife is for shepherds and sheep to do life and face challenges together. It is not an individual that makes RiverLife successful, it is all of us. We journey together and we cross that finish line together.

Discussion Questions

1. **Everyone is both a sheep and a shepherd. What do you personally understand from “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another” (1 Peter 5:5a) as (i) a sheep and/or (ii) as a shepherd?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes:

Humility is an attitude of disregarding one’s status and using one’s gifts and resources for the benefit of others (John Dickson). Humility enables the leader to minister effectively to his/her sheep (while the sheep do not see the leader as high and mighty). Likewise, humility enables the sheep to receive fully from the shepherd. They are willing to acknowledge their shortcomings and that they can benefit from the shepherd’s leading. Those who think they already know everything will be too proud to receive help from others. Humbling ourselves before God is the first step to receiving from Him. When we are humble, we are not lowly or losing out on anything or to anyone. It means we have entrusted our life and our will to God, and are honouring Him by obeying Him. We know that our treasure is in heaven, not on earth. Therefore, shepherds and sheep must clothe our interactions and relationships with humility, and to practise till it becomes our second nature.

Optional Questions

- *Shepherds to sheep: How can I shepherd you better so that you can mature into Christlikeness?*
- *Sheep to shepherd: What can we do to make your shepherding easier?*

Transition (Wrapping Up & Moving to The Next Question)

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5b). Humility is a defining mark of a true Christian. When we are truly humble, it means that we have fully surrendered ourselves and our lives to God, emptying ourselves for Him – and He then fills us up with His grace.

2. **Examine your relationship with your shepherd. Is there any area in your life that you have not opened up to him/her for ministering and guidance? Think of steps you can take to create a “safe space” for sharing between your shepherd and you.** [15 min]

Leader’s Notes:

This is a reflect question for members to think about why they have not fully opened up to their shepherds. What may be stopping them? Is it a fear of judgment, or a fear of losing control? Or do they not trust their shepherd? If this is the case, what can they do to build that trust? Similarly, shepherds can also make the first move and integrate themselves with their flock by sharing their own struggles and asking the sheep to pray for them. It creates a sense of mutual dependency (and a safe space) that gives confidence for the sheep to open up. The idea is to make the sheep comfortable with the idea of opening up and allowing themselves to be fully ministered by the shepherds. In practice, this usually happens when the shepherds make the first move.

Transition (Wrapping Up & Moving to The Next Question)

Doing life together is key to a successful shepherd and sheep relationship. That involves opening up our lives to each other and journeying alongside together. Thus, it is important to be each other’s “safe space” for sharing anything and everything.

3. In your own areas of leadership (e.g. at work, in church, at home), how can you cultivate a life of humility as an example to others? [15 min]

Leader's Notes:

We are all leaders in certain areas of our lives (e.g. part of the management team at work, a cell leader, a worship leader, a parent, or elder sibling at home, etc.) People are always observing the way we live and how we respond to various situations as Christians. In the Bible, the criteria for leadership is not skills, but character and a righteous inner life. So how do we cultivate our character and our inner life to be good examples to those we lead?

Some suggested steps:

- *Stop idolising yourself as a leader.*
- *Serve your sheep (as a servant-leader) willingly, not to gain favours, but out of love.*
- *Know that not everyone will love you, so do everything for God and not for man.*
- *Be genuinely happy for your sheep or fellow shepherds when good things happen to them. Celebrate with them.*
- *Live out what you preach and believe – through your actions and your speech.*
- *Have a godly response towards trials and suffering.*

Sometimes we learn by imitation and this reinforces the point about shepherds being a good example to their flocks. Think about the shepherds that you look up to and share with the group the qualities you see that made them good leaders.

Transition (Wrapping Up, Vision Casting to Cell & Closing the Discussion)

Ps Ernie says that ultimately what the church needs is not better strategies or talents, but better examples. When we look up to someone, we naturally want to learn and imitate their best qualities. Therefore, we must watch our behaviour and speech (how we live our lives) because there is always someone looking up to us. Ultimately, we want the world to see the church as a testimony of living hope! Therefore, let it begin in the relationships between the sheep and the shepherds in the house!

WORKS [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Pray that:
 - The shepherds in RiverLife are willing leaders who lead by example.
 - The sheep in RiverLife are willing to open up their lives to be under the leadership and guidance of the shepherds.
 - That both sheep and shepherds clothe themselves in humility.
2. COVID-19
 - God will sustain the zero community cases that we have been seeing.