

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Elijah: Living Outside the Comfort Zone*, these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: Lead others to serve God.

Introduction: A few years ago, I attended a conference on children's ministry that was sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship. The woman who led one of the sessions spoke of how she never considered herself a leader. She was always taught that some are born to be leaders, and some are not. I had to chuckle when she said that, because I was always taught the exact opposite. My Dad was a JROTC instructor and a retired soldier, so I was always taught that leaders are made, not born.

The Bible tells us that God chose some very unlikely candidates to be leaders. Think about some of Jesus' disciples. Matthew was a tax collector, and Simon was a Zealot. Chuck Colson once noted that, under normal circumstances, Simon would probably have killed Matthew! Tax collectors were considered traitors to Israel, and no one hated Jewish tax collectors more than Zealots. Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, and he was as fallible as any of them. He was known to speak out of turn, and when the chips were down, he denied knowing Jesus three times. Even after Jesus returned to heaven, Peter made his share of mistakes (Galatians 2:11-14). To his credit, though, Peter learned from his mistakes. In his First Epistle, he presented some biblical principles for leadership.

I. An instruction to church leaders.

A. Who were "the elders"?

1. The word in the original Greek language is *presbuteros*, but scholars disagree over its exact meaning.¹
 - a. Some believe it refers to lay leaders.
 - b. Others believe "elder" is simply another term for a pastor.
 - c. Others take the word in a strictly literal sense, and they believe it refers simply to the older men in the church.
2. Peter noted that he was an "elder" himself.
 - a. He was also "a witness to the sufferings of Christ."²
 - b. He was a "partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" – Peter was present when Jesus was transfigured, but since he used the future tense, I believe he was referring to Christ's return.

B. What instructions did Peter give them?

1. To “feed the flock of God”.
 - a. The word translated “feed” is the Greek word *poimano*, which speaks of the work of a shepherd.
 - b. It also carries the idea of guidance or protection.
 - I can’t control what other people read or watch on television, and I don’t desire to do so.
 - However, I do try to warn people of false teachings that are out there, so they can be on their guard.
 - c. “Taking the oversight thereof” – This means when members are going astray, we should do what we can to get them back on the right path.
2. To lead with the right attitude.
 - a. “Not by constraint, but willingly” – That means we should not regard ministry as a drudgery, but we should do it willingly and eagerly.
 - b. “Not for filthy lucre” – Peter was not saying pastors should not receive any kind of financial support, but he was saying money should not be the pastor’s primary concern.
3. To lead by example.
 - a. Spiritual leaders have a certain amount of authority, but they should use it responsibly.
 - b. They should lead not by intimidation, but by example.
 - I often tell parents that their greatest teaching is their example. You can lecture your children until you’re blue in the face, but if they don’t see you modeling it, you’re wasting your time. The same holds true for church leaders.

II. An instruction to churches.

A. Peter gave instructions on how people should respond to leadership.

1. Why did he primarily address the younger members?
 - a. Younger members are vital to the future of the church, but they need guidance from older members.
 - b. Young people often have a lot of zeal, but their zeal is not always tempered with wisdom.
2. “Submit yourselves unto the elder” – In this case, “elder” refers to the older members of the church.
 - a. Older people have the wisdom of experience on their side.
 - b. This does not mean older members are always right, but it does mean younger members should show them proper respect.

B. He told all of them to “be clothed with humility”.

1. “God resisteth the proud” – The word “proud” in this context speaks of arrogance or cockiness.
 - a. Everything we have comes from God (James 1:17).
 - b. It’s okay to derive satisfaction from your achievements, but you must keep them in the right perspective.
 - I think Junior Hill said it as well as anyone: “I’m always impressed by people’s education or accomplishments, except when they want me to be.”

2. He gives grace to the humble.
 - a. When we acknowledge how desperately we need God, then He does great things among us.
 - b. If we want to see real revival in America, churches must humble themselves before God.
 - Before the Covid pandemic hit, I used to come across articles almost every week that spoke of how to increase attendance at one's church. Usually, they promoted some new strategy or gimmick. The tone of some of these articles (not all of them, but some of them) really rubs me the wrong way. The writers almost seem to be saying, "If you loved Jesus as much as I do, your attendance would be as big as mine." Such smug attitudes may draw large crowds, but I have to question whether they really reflect the Spirit of God.

Conclusion: I was in my early teens when General Omar Bradley passed away. He was the last great hero of World War II, and the last man to attain the rank of five-star general. Bradley was known as the "GI's general", and he led by example. A few years after General Bradley died, I came across an article about him in *Reader's Digest*. It was written by Chet Hansen, who had served as his aide for many years. He said the people who served on Bradley's staff were hard on themselves, not because they feared him, but because they never wanted to let him down. Maybe you have seen the movie "Patton", with George C. Scott in the title role. Karl Malden portrayed General Bradley. Bradley himself served as the film's senior military adviser, and Malden asked his advice on how to portray him. He asked the general, "What do you do when you get angry?" Bradley said he didn't do anything differently. Malden was surprised by this, and he asked the general, "Don't you raise your voice?" Bradley replied, "Nope. Never needed to."

Friends, that's the kind of leadership we need in the church – people who lead not by their force or by coercion, but by example. Remember, leaders are made, not born, and no one turns out better leaders than Almighty God. If you humble yourself before God, and make yourself available to Him, He just might transform you into a biblical leader.

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¹ Based on my study, I would contend that the meaning of the word depends on the context. In this context, I personally believe it refers to pastors, but Peter's instructions are applicable to both pastors and lay leaders.

² Scholars disagree on whether Peter was actually present at Jesus' crucifixion. Early church tradition teaches that the Gospel of Mark was written under Peter's direction, and it gives a detailed account of the crucifixion. Thus, I believe Peter was present.