



Sermon Notes, 7 March 2021

Term Spring 2021

Series 1 Peter (Trust, Surrender, Confidence)

Gatherings: the 11, the 6

Title 1 Peter 5:1-6 (Christian Leadership)

Preacher Paul Langham

Reading – 1 Peter 5:1-6

1 Peter 2:13-17, Peter speaks of secular leadership, and urges respect and submission from Christians towards the Emperor and governors. From this and other passages by Paul, we see that all leadership, authority and power exercised by human beings is designed by God for the greater good, for the wellbeing of society. The overwhelming evidence of scripture is that leadership is about setting God's people free (in the Old Testament, often literally ... think of Moses or Gideon)

Verses 1-4 reveal a number of things about Christian leadership

- Leadership is plural ... to the **elders** among you ... (challenge to major denominations)
- shepherds ... is the model (protection, guidance, provision of food and water)
- watching over ... episkopi ... lit. keeping an eye on
- no compulsion ... forced ... but voluntarily (of free will)
- not for dishonest gain but eager to serve
- not lording it over (exercising dominion): Jesus very strong on this (Matthew 23:1-11 / Luke 22:24-27)
- mention of the Chief Shepherd a reminder that Christian leaders never cease to be followers ...

St Paul sums up: *For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. 1 Cor 10:33*

Verses 5-6 reveal that our attitude towards leadership should be a willingness to yield to what God has appointed. But Peter immediately adds the call to mutual humility: leadership doesn't excuse anyone from that call!

In a former version of the NIV (and still the NASB), Hebrews 13:17 was translated

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. NIV 1984 / NASB

We should note that leaders is again plural, and also that it is not gender specific: women and men are both called to leadership and ministry in all its forms within the church. But the most surprising thing here is that the word 'obey' is absent in the Greek. The word used is *peithó*, the root of *pístis* which means to have faith in, place confidence in, trust. It's the NT's go to word for trust in God and I believe this is the only place where it's applied to other humans.

Now, it's quite possible to obey someone, not from choice, but under compulsion: in which case the obedience will be grudging, through gritted teeth. To put your confidence in human leadership requires a heart attitude that is willing to yield ... not to them as much as to the God who has appointed them.

St Paul speaks about the purpose of leadership in Ephesians 4

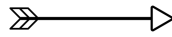
¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Again, we see that Christian leadership is about setting God's people free, equipping, empowering and mobilising every member of the church, the holy and royal priesthood which Peter described in chapter 2.

Spend time in your small communities this week praying for leaders: global, national, local; in business and community, in public and private sector, in schools and health care; as well as in churches.

How does Leadership work in Christ Church?

All metaphors and word pictures are imperfect ... but imagine for a moment God as an archer, with a bow and a quiver full of arrows. The arrows represent churches, communities of Christian believers designed to penetrate the world as it is in order to help it become what it will be.



The tip or point of the arrow, in historical denominations, has traditionally been an individual: the priest, the vicar, the minister, the pastor, the senior leader ... but the NT is clear that leadership is plural. So here at CC, we have a Core Team (Chris Brown, me, Janet Lee, Mark Parsons and Chris Whitwell), whose primary role is to discern God's word to the wider leadership.

The bulk of the arrowhead represents the PCC (Church Council) elected by the church family. The PCC keeps a steady hand on the tiller of governance, finance, staffing, safeguarding etc: as one member recently put it, 'making sure the right thing is done in the right way.' The PCC also act as a check point for what the Core Team brings ...

The edges of the arrowhead are the points of delivery – most visibly, perhaps, the staff team ...

The arrow's shaft, in this analogy, is the church family.

Or at least, that's how it looks; that's what appears visible to the casual observer. BUT the reality is much more complex than those headlines suggest ...

- The Core Team's primary role is to discern God's Word, but this doesn't mean we will necessarily hear God's word first. That may come from the PCC collectively, or it may come from members of the church family (and that's certainly been the case of late, and we've invited those members to join us on occasion) ... if you sense the Lord may be saying something to you for the whole church, please do let us know (hello@ccweb.org.uk)
- The PCC focuses on Governance ... but members of the church family not on PCC sit on finance and personnel group, for example (the PCC is also served by a smaller team, the Standing Committee, responsible for conducting PCC business in between its main meetings. Church wardens – Graham Stuart and Catherine Simmonds here at CC – are Bishop's Officers, providing a vital link of accountability between each local church and the wider diocesan family)
- The Core Team are all members of the staff team, and three are members within the PCC. Core Team, PCC & Staff are all members of the church family
- And it's certainly not just the staff team who make up the edges of the arrowhead: so many other members of the church family, including PCC members, are part of this too. Church family members head up / are involved in our ministry to the homeless ... schools, TLG & Christmas/Easter Experience ... toddlers, children and young people ... parenting, marriage prep and marriage courses ... Alpha ... the list could go on and on
- The shaft of the arrow, then, cannot be imagined as a collection of passengers! All God's people are designed and gifted by his Spirit to exercise leadership and ministry in varied ways; some lead Small Communities ... all are called to lead other people to faith ...
- And, if as is claimed by John C Maxwell, one of the gurus of leadership thinking for many years, 'leadership is influence' church family members are called to exercise influence in their daily lives – and this may be their primary calling under God, far more than anything they do within the walls of the church

So now that image of the arrow is no longer a static, unchanging representation of a rigid hierarchy ... rather it's a constantly moving dynamic of call and response. No wonder Peter urges us: *All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another ...*

The only part of the arrow I've not mentioned so far are the fletchings, which are crucial to its accurate flight. In my mind, these represent unity, one of the goals Paul specified in that passage from Ephesians 4. Earlier in that chapter, in verse 3, Paul urges: *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace ...*