

Today is the last Sunday of our series reading through 1st Peter. We have learned that First Peter was a letter written to a group of people who had become Christians and who struggled with what that meant within the larger culture around them. Today we are going to read the last chapter of 1st Peter which are words written to the church leaders.

But as I read through this last chapter this week, I also realized that today is Father's Day. And as I read these words I realized that these words could very well be great words of advice to any father or mother. So I invite you to hear these words with whichever lens may be helpful to you. If you consider yourself a church leader, hear these words being written to you. If you consider yourself a parent, hear these words written to you. If you consider yourself someone who is neither of these but are looking for words of advice on how to live your life, then hear these words being written to you.

One thing to note in this reading is that in the first sentence you will hear the word "elder." The word which we translate elder is rooted in the Greek word "presbytereos." This is where we get the root for the word "Presbyterian." So a Presbyterian Church is a church governed by elders.

Read I Peter 5

Peter points out three things that good leaders or good parents must exhibit. Leaders must be humble. Leaders must give their anxiety over to God. And leaders must be disciplined. And I would say that is good advice for any parent or anyone who wants to grow in their faith as a person and as a Christian. Be humble. Give your anxiety to God. Be disciplined.

What does it mean to be humble? It's always dangerous, I think, to lift up current celebrities as role models. As soon as we lift them up, they do something really dumb and bring poor publicity upon themselves. But I can't help but pull for the Irish golfer Rory McIlroy today as he completes his final round at the US Open. If you follow golf at all, you know that McIlroy is setting a torrid pace and he is leading by ___ strokes heading into today's final round. McIlroy is only 22 years old but has a very pure and powerful swing. Much like my swing but only pure and powerful.

What you may not know is that McIlroy is Ireland's Ambassador for UNICEF. McIlroy spent last week in Haiti teaching young kids how to wash their hands properly to further prevent the spread of cholera, a disease which has killed about 5000 in Haiti since the earthquake. The week before a major golf tournament, McIlroy was in a third world country devastated by an earthquake. He said to his friend, "If I ever complain about a hotel room again you hit me over the head."

Remember Peter said that great leaders are people that are humble, give their anxiety over to God, and who are disciplined. I want to share a story that I think includes all three of these qualifications. This is a story about someone who has had something taken away and about learning to depend upon others. David Wallace shares these words. He says that real biblical humility is not about putting oneself down but quite the opposite. "It is recognition that our worth is to be found in our Maker. To give to our Maker all our shattered dreams, disillusionment, dashed hopes, and fears.

You see, since April 17, Wallace has spent more than 21 days in the hospital. According to him, "I have been in the emergency ward of two different hospitals, in ICU for two days, and diagnosed and rediagnosed. I have had veins collapse and spinal taps that didn't take. I've needed a wheelchair or a walker most of the time; have had moments of paralysis, episodes of violent shaking and paranoia and hallucinations (the most recent being just a few hours ago).

All because of some unknown virus that has attacked my central nervous system. I have been brought down by a bug so small it can't be detected by a microscope. My invincibility has been penetrated by the tiniest of enemies, the weakest of foes.

The doctors are baffled so they sent me home two days ago. There's not much more they could do. My kids are scared and my dear wife is exhausted. She has had to administer a very potent IV treatment once or twice a day for more than a month now."

Looking at his body and what is happening to it, Wallace then reflects on how this looks to others. He continues by saying, “I am not cool when my body jerks thirty times a minute for twenty minutes at a time (and when I’m not having an episode, my body still jerks, hundreds of times a day). I am not cool when I have an ongoing killer headache that keeps me from standing upright. I am not cool when I go days without shaving because I have a shunt in my shaving arm, forcing me to use the other to awkwardly shave and often miss spots or cut myself.

I am not cool when I need my wife to bathe me and shampoo me. I am not cool when I put on weight because I can’t exercise, since my legs don’t work and I’m not allowed to bend my arm.”

Wallace then reflects on what is important to him that he has learned through this ordeal that he is enduring. He says, “In all this lack of coolness, my dear wife, my precious Pati, loves me and cares for me and calms me down when I’m hallucinating that a train is coming at me or lava is engulfing my friends or I’m fighting Germans on D-Day or a dragon in medieval times. I am certainly not cool then; I’m not even lovable. Yet, she loves me even then. And she cares for me and holds my hand until the terror goes away.

I have become--at least temporarily--a full-time job. Now my wife has two full-time jobs and four boys (plus me) to care for. I know what it’s like to be helpless, to be cared for, to be loved. And that is very humbling.”

Peter says in verse 5 that we read that “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” It’s Ok as a father to not know everything you need to know and to make lots of mistakes. It’s also OK as a mother, as a friend, as a child, as just anyone.

So many of us want others to think that we are cool, or that we are smart, or that we are successful, or that we are great and wonderful or whatever way you define success. But according to Peter, grace comes to those who are humble. So maybe rather than striving for greatness or perfection or coolness or whatever we try to achieve in life, maybe we should instead strive to be the most humble of people.

Maybe we should not bring attention to ourselves but direct all attention upon God.

We don't need to be anxious because we haven't achieved something. We can be grateful for the grace given to us by God and be OK with that. AMEN.

-Wallace, David, <http://bible.org/article/1-peter-57-brief-comment-and-special-request>

-Text: I Peter 5

-Given: June 19, 2011 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)