

**Charge to the Congregation of First Baptist Church, Marshall, MN,  
Upon the Installation of Pastor Greg Linscott, Sunday, March 16, 2008,  
Delivered by Pastor Todd Mitchell, First Baptist Church, Granite Falls, MN.**

**Introduction**

Please open your Bibles to John 21.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the story of how Jesus restored Simon Peter even after he had denied Jesus three times. In just a minute I'll read part of that story to you, from John 21.

Before Jesus was arrested, he warned Peter that he was going to fail, horribly:

<sup>31</sup> “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” <sup>33</sup> Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.” (Luke 22:31-34) <sup>1</sup>

And of course that's exactly what happened. Peter did deny Jesus, and he wept bitterly for it.

But after Jesus was crucified, died, buried, and rose again, he appeared to the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee one morning as they were fishing. Peter was so excited to see Jesus that he jumped out of the boat and went to him.

Jesus made breakfast for all of them, and they ate together.

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” <sup>16</sup> He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17)

I love this story for several reasons.

I love it because, first and foremost, it shows how sweet Jesus is. Jesus loves his sheep very much; he cares deeply for his sheep.

And I love this story because it shows how Jesus uses sinners like Peter. Peter failed, horribly. He lied through his teeth, and denied that he had anything to do with Jesus. But Jesus restored him; Jesus loved him, and trusted him with his sheep.

And finally (and most importantly for this afternoon) I love this story because it shows that Jesus wants his sheep to be led well, and fed well.

Jesus used two words when he challenged Peter three times to care for his sheep. The first and the last challenge was to “feed” his sheep, and the second, in v. 16, was to “herd, tend, or shepherd” his sheep. Jesus wanted his sheep to be fed, and he wanted them to be led.

<sup>1</sup> All scripture here is quoted from *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001).

This afternoon, I have a challenge for you, the flock of God at First Baptist Church of Marshall, as you install your pastor, Greg Linscott.

Knowing that Jesus wants you to be led well, and fed well, and knowing that your pastor has been appointed to do just that . . .

**Follow him where he leads you, and feast on what he feeds you.**

## **Body**

### **I. Follow him where he leads you**

Your pastor is supposed to act like a shepherd. He is supposed to lead you. That's what Peter said, in 1 Peter 5:2, when he commanded pastors, "shepherd the flock of God that is among you."

And your pastor wants to lead you. But for him to lead you, you need to be willing to follow. You need to be willing to . . .

#### **A. Leave what is behind and step out in faith**

This can be hard. It can be a very hard thing to change. But the Christian life is all about change, as we are conformed to the image of our dear Lord.

If you are committed to God's glory, then you should be willing to go wherever God leads you. Each of you should say, with Paul, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Php 3:13-14)

There might be times when you are tempted to plant your feet in the ground like a stubborn mule and refuse to be budged one inch. But the Bible says:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb 13:17)

What does part about "not with groaning" mean? I think that means you can make it so hard for your pastor to lead you that you can suck all the joy out of it for him. But if you do that, then "that would be of no advantage to you."

Follow your pastor where he leads you, and do it eagerly. As Paul said in:

1Th 5:12b-13 respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, <sup>13</sup> and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

You know what God has commanded you to do. He wants you to follow your pastor. Now, do you trust God? If so, then be willing to leave what is behind and step out in faith.

And always . . .

## **B. Pray for him to keep leading you**

Years after Jesus challenged Peter to feed and to lead his sheep, Peter wrote:

1 Peter 5:2-4<sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;<sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.<sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

From this I learn that pastors need to be encouraged to lead God's flock, and they need to be encouraged to lead by example.

I don't think I'm going too far out on a limb to say that if pastors need to be encouraged in this way, it must be because they don't always do it perfectly. If they did, then Peter wouldn't need to remind them about it.

So pray for your pastor to keep leading you. And by the way, if you do pray for your pastor to keep leading you, you may just find that it is an easy thing to follow him.

And while you are praying for your pastor to keep leading you . . .

## **C. Pray for God to keep leading him**

Your pastor can only lead you as far as he has gone, himself. If you catch up to him, he can send you ahead, but then he isn't leading, he's sending. Then he wouldn't be leading, but following. So pray that God would keep leading your pastor.

Paul, in his letters, begged for Christians to pray for him. He even begged for prayers that God would help him to preach clearly, in Col 4:4. Do the same for your pastor.

Jesus prayed for Peter, that his faith would not fail. Do the same for your pastor. Your pastor will face temptations in the years ahead, as will you, and I. Pray that God will lead him through those temptations, and keep him holy.

Pray that your *pastor* will grow closer and closer to Christ, so that he can lead *you* closer and closer to Christ.

Follow him where he leads you. And . . .

## **II. Feast on what he feeds you**

### **A. Crave pure spiritual food**

That's what Peter wrote, in 1 Peter 2:2-3, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

You all know what a newborn baby does when he gets hungry. He cries loudly until he gets what he wants. When you hear a baby crying for his milk, is there any doubt in your mind about how much he wants it?

You can put a pacifier in the mouth of a hungry baby for only so long. But anybody who has tried to do that when that baby is really hungry knows what happens. That baby spits out his pacifier and demands his milk.

That's how much you should want to be fed. When you listen to your pastor preach and teach, come hungry! Prepare to be a good student, not because you have to, but because you *want* to – because you long it like a baby longs for his milk.

And as soon as you are ready, you should . . .

## **B. Crave solid food**

The writer of Hebrews really scolds his readers, at the end of chapter 5, for not being good students of doctrine. After he introduces a fairly advanced topic, he says:

Hebrews 5:11-6:2<sup>11</sup> About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,<sup>13</sup> for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.<sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

<sup>6:1</sup> Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,<sup>2</sup> and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

What the writer of Hebrews is saying is, Grow up! Don't be content with what you already know. Learn something new! Learn something difficult!

This requires effort. That's what it says there, in Hebrews 5:14. It takes work. But that's what God wants you to do.

So when your pastor feeds you a solid meal, feast on it! Be a man! Be a woman! Enjoy solid food! If a grown-up who can eat solid food still wants baby formula, there is something wrong with him. If you still want baby formula after being a Christian for years, then it is time to feast on some solid food served up by your pastor from the Word of God.

Which brings me to my last point. If your pastor is to feed you from the Word of God, he is going to need time to do that. So . . .

## **C. Help him prepare your meal**

Respect his study time, and protect his study time.

In the early church in Jerusalem, the congregation came up to the apostles at one point and asked for help with a little problem they were having. They had been handing out food to the widows in the church, but something had gone wrong, and one group of widows wasn't getting its fair share.

So how did the apostles solve the problem? They could have dropped what they were doing and spent more time managing the process of distributing food to the widows, but that's not what they did. They said to the church:

<sup>2b</sup> It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables,  
<sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:2b-4)

They had their priorities straight. Their #1 job was prayer and the ministry of the word.

Your pastor's #1 job is prayer and the ministry of the word. And you might be surprised how much time it takes (and what a good library it takes) to prepare a good solid meal from the Word of God.

So do everything in your power to help your pastor prepare your meals from the Bible - respect his study time, protect his study time, and pray that God would help him use his study time effectively.

Crave pure spiritual food like a newborn craves its milk. Crave solid food; crave mature doctrinal teaching from the Word of God. And do what you can to help your pastor prepare your meals.

### **Conclusion**

**Follow him where he leads you, and feast on what he feeds you.**

Isn't Jesus sweet? He loves you so much! He earnestly wants you to be led well and to be fed well. And he has brought your pastor here to do just that.

**So follow him where he leads you, and feast on what he feeds you.**