

LIFE Group Leader Handout

02/02/2020

Freed--and Staying Free

Pastor Michael O'Connor

Scripture--1 Peter 2:13-17

13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Main Idea--We Can Be Free Even Among the Constraints of a Fallen World

Putting ourselves in the text--it was a period of disruption

The Freedom God Gives Us: Preserving Choice

And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (Jesus in Matthew 5:41)

The Choices We Are Called to Make--

- Being Subject to Flawed Human Government (vs. 13-14)
- Doing Good not Evil (vs. 15-16)
- Choosing Honor and Love (v. 17)

Outdo one another in showing honor. (Romans 12:10)

Message: *A Call to Compete* from August 11, 2019

Test of Faith: Those Under Authority Have Greater Authority--see (Matthew 8:8-10)

God's "why"--"*...for the Lord's sake.*"

Application--

- Freedom--is that something you experience regularly, occasionally, rarely? Did God's truth in 1 Peter 2 help?
- Is there a situation in your life right now that is helped by the injunction of Jesus to "*go the extra mile?*"
- What are some practical ways to change the culture of your home, workplace, school by taking the initiative to *Outdo one another in showing honor.* (Romans 12:10)

Change Your Thoughts

Why evaluating your thoughts is crucial to healthy leadership

By Alan Danielson

How often do you consider the impact of your thoughts? Thoughts are powerful. Your perception of truth is what is true in your life. Our thoughts become our reality. Satan understands this human tendency and he seeks to exploit it by replaying negative and untrue thoughts in our minds over and over.

- "You're not good enough."
- "You're a failure."
- "No one really cares about you."
- "You can't do it."
- "God is ashamed of you."
- "People will never trust you."
- "You're stupid."

When we hear things like this in our heads enough, we start to believe them; we adopt them as our reality. Even though these statements are complete lies, we believe them as if they were true. God has allowed you the opportunity to become a leader. He did not choose you so you would fail. Yet, if you believe you'll never succeed, the lie ("You're a failure.") will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Romans 12:1 (NLT) says, *"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."* Notice, changed thinking comes first. Once the way we think is changed, we'll be able to know God's will for our lives. So focus on these bits of God's truth and allow Him to change your thinking: You're not alone. Every Christian leader struggles. Satan wants to take every church leader out, so remember that you're not the only person out there with a giant target on your back. Find people who will support you and listen to your struggles. Meet with a pastor or another small-group leader when you need to vent or get advice.

There will always be people who don't get it. No matter how good you are at communicating the vision for small groups, there will always be someone who doesn't get it. And that's simply because we're broken people. Some of your group members may not understand, embrace, or follow the mission of your group. And those people have a tendency to pull small-group leaders down. Refuse to be dragged down by people who don't understand. Continue to communicate the vision with the hopes that everyone will be on board, but don't let anyone steal your joy.

Sheep bites won't kill you. Brady Boyd wrote, "Sheep bites can't kill me, but the gnawing will make life miserable a few days each year." That phrase has stuck with me and helped me through some pretty annoying times. As you shepherd your group, the sheep will bite sometimes. When the sheep are biting, try to think of it like a common cold: "I'm going to feel bad for a few days, but I'll get well soon."

God believes in you. Consider how powerful that statement really is. God called you and gave you the opportunity to lead a small group. He will equip you, and He believes you are teachable enough to develop the character He wants for you. You may feel like you can't keep going. You may feel like no one supports you. But that's just not true. God believes in you and He's in your corner. There are people in your church who love and support you. On the occasion that negative voices rise, it's easy for them to feel louder than the positive ones. Never forget the people God has put under your leadership who support you. Remember to thank and support them. Because even when it feels like everyone's against you, you have some people in your corner.

It's worth it! There will be days when you wonder if the sacrifices you and your family make for ministry are really worth it. The answer is "Yes!" People will experience spiritual growth, biblical fellowship, and authentic mission because of your ministry. Lives will be changed, marriages saved, hope found, and truth taught. Don't give up, because you are making a difference. God is eagerly preparing a place for you in heaven that will outshine anything you could ever have here on Earth. If you finish well, God will one day say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." When He does, all of the struggles you've faced will disappear and you'll know for certain that it was indeed worth it.

We have so much stacked against us in ministry: a spiritual enemy, a fast-paced world, personal issues, and interpersonal challenges. What we have going for us, though, is greater than all of these: our heavenly Father. He has given us His word and some practical tools that can help sustain us, but it's up to each of us to avail ourselves of them. Will you leverage disciplines, rhythms, and thoughts to survive and thrive, or will you leave these tools in the toolbox only to find yourself discouraged and burned out?