

Introduction: Pg. _____

“The Price of Leadership” Acts 20:28

Intro: Acts 20:28... wholly appropriate... today, we have the joy of commissioning Steve Agboola as a Pastor in our church family. It’s also a joy for me to talk about leadership before I go on my 11 week Sabbatical, because this time of rest is for the ultimate purpose of fulfilling my calling as a servant of God and one of the pastors of this church.

But this word is for every leader and the entire church.

Intro **Leadership Pipeline...** (where are you? Where is God taking you?)

No matter where you are currently, I can promise you: God has called you or will call you to lead somewhere.

What kind of leader will you be in the hands of God?

Acts 20:28 shows us that leaders must be willing to pay the price.

As we work our way through this verse and the leadership truths I am going to share, I want you to ask yourself: are these increasingly true of me?

1. Leaders love their God.

When Paul tells them to “pay careful attention to yourselves...” there are a couple of things we should note.

#1) He is speaking to a group of leaders. (“yourselves”)

- We believe in Team Leadership at RHC, because the Bible sets it forth as the most healthy model of leadership in the church.
- Some churches have a single pastor that calls all the shots, but as Pastor Chasteen often likes to say, one of the beauties of a multiple pastors is that it helps make up for all of the inadequacies of the Lead Pastor.
 - Can you believe that he would say such a thing?!?! :)

#2) The most important responsibility of leaders is to walk closely with God.

- “Paying careful attention to yourselves” means living to honor God and glorify him!
- A pastor must live consistent with the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 – above reproach, a one woman kind of man, sober-minded, self-controlled . . . able to teach...not a lover of money, managing his own household with all dignity, and the list goes on.
- Maybe you’ve heard the pithy little statement “Leaders are readers.” That’s true, especially when it comes to this book. But much more than that, “Leaders are seekers!”
- You show me a leader who can’t get enough of God’s presence, who loves to pray, loves to worship, loves to just BE before God, and I will show you someone ready to be used in POWERFUL ways for God.
- This is what I love about Steve... He is a seeker of God. Because he seeks God, like few people I’ve ever been around, he is a man full of God’s Spirit, full of wisdom, full of faith!
- All true spiritual leadership begins with being led by the Ultimate Leader, Jesus Christ.

T: “Pay careful attention to yourselves...” “AND to all the flock...” #2

2. Leaders know God's people.

- They not only love God. They love God's people. They are in tune with the people under their care. They are "paying careful attention to ALL the flock...*the church of God*"
- This comes from spending time!
 - But this is so much more than knowing names and some info about people.
 - This is about caring for people's spiritual condition.
 - Our pastors, are responsible before God, to keep a pulse on each one of our members spiritual health, to the best of our ability.
- But notice Paul says: to care for ALL the flock. The work of pastors is to equip EVERY PERSON for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12ff)
- I have to tell you, it would be easier to care for and invest in a few. Then hope for the best for all the rest.
 - Do you know about the Pareto Principle 80/20? It says: 20% of the people give you 80% of the results. Translated to the church: 20% of the people will do 80% of the serving, 80% of the giving, 80% of the sharing about Jesus.
 - I hear this from the gurus: focus on the 20%!
 - You know what I think about that? It's trash.
 - I mean it's a fine mindset for the business world.
 - But it's not what we read in the Bible.
 - Paul says: ALL the flock. ALL means ALL. The church means the church.
 - That's why I'm still zealous to see EVERYONE serving, EVERYONE living in community, EVERYONE giving. EVERYONE sharing about Jesus.
- I'm about to go on Sabbatical, I can't wait to get back and hear stories how ALL of you were engaged this summer, everyone playing your part to push the mission forward. Thank you, in advance!

T: Leaders love their God, they know God's people, and #3...

3. Leaders care for God's people.

Leaders "care for the church of God." Some translations say: "to shepherd the church of God."

Let's talk about the role or the assignment of pastors.. And there are aspects of each of these no matter what your role may be in leading and caring for others. We see two key terms here: 'overseers' & 'care or shepherd'

Overseers: Watch over. They lead at a high level. They think strategically and provide visionary leadership for the entire church. Their job is to fight for the health of the flock as a whole, providing oversight for the various ministries of the church.

Shepherding:

- Shepherding gets into caring for souls. It is praying. It is sitting down and listening to a person's story. It's rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn.
- AND THEN, it's taking this BOOK, and applying it to any and every situation. A pastor must be able to teach, and that's not just Sunday mornings, that's primarily, wherever God places us, in small groups and personal conversations.
- Look at what Paul says: *Acts 20:18-24*

Loving God. Knowing God's people. Caring for God's people. There is a high price that must be paid to do this well.

T: How is this possible?

4. Leaders are called by God's Spirit.

Look at this... it says that pastors - are raised up and called by God himself. "Pay careful attention . . . to all the flock, *in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers...*"

How does this work? Just as God calls us to salvation by the Holy Spirit, so God also calls some to pastoral ministry by his Spirit.

God invites ALL people to receive the gospel and follow Christ (that's the general call of the gospel), BUT it takes the work of the Holy Spirit pulling at our hearts, speaking, sometimes shouting - YOU NEED THIS! (Perhaps this is you today!). That's the effectual call of God's Spirit.

A very similar thing happens when God calls someone into ministry. Like the effectual call, the Spirit tugs at the heart, changing our desires. We start thinking: "I have to serve people. What else would I rather do with my "discretionary" time (if you serve in a volunteer capacity - which is most of the leaders in our church) or in my vocational pursuit?

We call that "internal calling."

- Paul puts it this way in 1 Timothy 3:1 – "If anyone *aspires* to the office of overseer, he *desires* a noble task." (1 Timothy 3:1)

But that internal call should be confirmed by an "external call."

- Just like the church, in Acts 13, affirming the work of the Spirit calling Paul & Barnabus into mission, last Sunday the members of Redemption Hill voted to affirm Steve Agboola as one of the new pastors of Redemption Hill.

T: Leaders are called by God's Spirit, But this last leadership truth is what carries a leader through the entirety of their ministry.

5. Leaders serve because Jesus paid the price.

Acts 20:28 one more time: "Pay careful attention... to care for the church of God, *which he obtained with his own blood.*"

Let me say three things about this truth.

The death of Jesus:

- 1) . . . is the theme of all Christian ministry. I don't care what your spiritual gift or assignment may be. We say with Paul: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (2 Cor. 2:2)
- 2) . . . gives eternal importance to all Christian ministry. Here's the simple logic: If Jesus loved these people enough to shed his blood and sacrifice his life, we value people in light of the infinite value he has placed upon them. If Jesus died for them, what will I not do in our service to them?

[[There is a seriousness and urgency to the work of ministry. I love the words of Richard Baxter, in his classic work on pastoral ministry, when he said: "Preach as sure to never preach again, as a dying man to dying men."]]

3) . . . motivates all Christian ministry. All of our work is driven by the work of Christ. We serve because he has served us (John 13:15). We see people through the lens of Jesus and his cross (2 Cor 5:16). We work hard to complete our work, remembering his dying words in accomplishing his mission: "It is finished." (John 19:30) We agree with 1 John 4:19 – "We love because he first loved us."

Everything we do, we do in the shadow of the cross.

We pour ourselves out (Phil 2:17). We gladly spend and are spent for the sake of their souls (2 Cor 12:15). We live if they live (1 Thess 3:8). We don't count our life as precious (Acts 20:24). We gladly deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus into the unknown (Luke 9:23).

We pay the price because the price has been paid.

Conclusion:

The Point: Sacrificial leadership flows from the sacrifice of Christ.

Temptation - dumb it down. Lower the bar. Don't talk about sacrifice...

Sacrifice is not only the entrance to leadership. Sacrifice is the entrance to Christianity. If you want to follow Jesus, you just stepped into sacrifice. If you want to lead others to Jesus, you will sacrifice as you call them into that same sacrifice.

But listen! Every sacrifice pales in comparison to the reward that awaits us, both in this life and the life to come... (Luke 18:28-30)

[[Jesus said: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."]]

So I ask you . . . Steve, Leaders and People of Redemption Hill... in this call to love your God, know and care for God's people, as you're called by God's Spirit to serve in light of the price he paid.

What kind of leader will you be in the hands of God?