



CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS IV: SCRIPTURE & TRADITION

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Session 4

Outline:

St Peter in St Mark's Gospel: Leadership, Failure & Exemplarity

1. St Peter – In symbols, iconography and memory
 - a) A visit to St Peter's College Chapel
 - b) Discussion of Petrine symbols and iconography
 - c) St Peter in the Gospel of Mark: An Exemplary Failure?

2. Leadership, Failure & Restoration
 - a) Learning from Peter in Mark
 - b) How leaders fail
 - c) Restoring fallen leaders

PART I (9:00-10:15)

St Peter in St Mark's Gospel



PART 2 (10:45-12:00)

Leadership, Failure & Restoration





We have this amazing example of a combination of leadership, failure, restoration, exemplarity, community responsibility / self-knowledge.

Might this study of Peter in Mark and in memory help us to understand the relation between leaders and followers in ways that avoid some of the catastrophic failures of leadership, and resulting hurt, we all too frequently experience?

How might we apply this learning to our contexts?



On the side of the leader, a Petrine model would seem to require greater openness about failings, not just the trivial but also the serious.



And on the side of the follower, it would seem to require a different way of looking to leaders and different way of looking at oneself, such that there is a willingness to learn from exemplars weaknesses and failures as much as from their strengths and successes. We saw this in the images the Roman Christians chose to place in their burial places and noted that this was based on a reciprocal openness about the followers' own frailties.



- Don't let admiration for certain traits or aspects of a leader (let alone admiration for the position or status of a leader) blind us to the possibility of "failure" / weakness in other areas of their life and work
- Perhaps look to emulate particular character traits or approaches rather than model ourselves on a particular person
- Don't expect our own faults and weaknesses to disappear as leadership responsibility grows



Responsibility, forgiveness, reconciliation: With an increased recognition of failure, there needs to be an increased valuing of the people, practices and personality traits that help us to address and overcome the relational and organisational damage we do. Perhaps, the greatest challenge, and the most important task, in both Christian and plural settings is the formation of the virtuous friendships and communities that can sustain this kind of activity.



‘... practices of coping with frailty are prominent within these communities – practices for identifying failure, for holding community members responsible, for offering forgiveness, and for seeking reconciliation. Frailty is not simply theoretically recognised; it is integrated into the community’s practices of moral formation. Practices for the cultivation of virtue are thus merged with practices for healing and starting over in the face of the frailty of the human virtues’

Herdt, ‘Frailty, Fragmentation, and Social Dependency in the Cultivation of Christian Virtue’,

Mechanisms for Abusing the Metaphor “Servant” (Kessler, ‘The Dark Side of Servant Leadership, 110ff)

Servant Leaders as Saints

It is interesting that the Bible itself is more transparent about the weaknesses of the heroes of faith. Although Moses and David are praised for their leadership and their humility, the Bible also reports incidents where these heroes failed and were rightly criticized by others.



What might be a biblical example of each of these kinds of leadership failure?

- Morally blameless failure no-one hurt
- Morally culpable failure no-one hurt
- Morally blameless failure people hurt
- Morally culpable failure people hurt



What might be a contemporary (imaginary) example of each of these kinds of leadership failure?

- Morally blameless failure no-one hurt
- Morally culpable failure no-one hurt
- Morally blameless failure people hurt
- Morally culpable failure people hurt



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.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'

John 21:15 NRSV



What would the restoration of the leader require and look like in these scenarios?

- Morally blameless failure no-one hurt
- Morally culpable failure no-one hurt
- Morally blameless failure people hurt
- Morally culpable failure people hurt

