

It seemed like any other Sunday
The priest (the shepherd)
was standing at the door (the Gate)
greeting people (his flock)
when a man approached and said
I have a bone to pick with you
You've been insulting me for years
And I just realized it this morning

The rector was stunned
How have I offended you?

You continually refer to the congregation as your flock
And to yourself as our shepherd, right?

Yes...

Well I just learned...
sheep are one of the dumbest animals on the planet!
Even pigs are smarter than sheep...

Don't even think about calling me a pig.

A sheep is bad enough

The truth is... sheep are ***not*** all that dumb
Cattle ranchers started that ugly rumor
Because sheep don't behave like cows

Cows are herded from the rear
by hooting cowboys cracking whips
but that won't work with sheep at all.
Stand behind them make loud noises...
and they'll run around behind you
They prefer to be led.

You push cows... you lead sheep..
and they won't go anywhere unless someone else goes first
namely... their shepherd
who goes ahead to show them everything is all right.

Sheep *know* their shepherd and their shepherd knows them.

A man who grew up on a sheep farm said
it never ceased to amaze him,
that he could walk right through a sleeping flock
without disturbing a single one of them,
while a stranger couldn't take one step into the fold
without causing pandemonium.

Sheep & shepherds have a language all their own.
And when they hear the voice of their shepherd
They will follow their shepherd wherever he leads them.
They have learned to know him and trust him.
They are not easily distracted by another shepherd.
Move three flocks into a field,
place three shepherds at three strategic points
and have each of them issue a call.
The sheep will sort themselves.
No brands are needed to know which sheep are yours.
They will only follow their own shepherd.

They trust their own shepherd...
Actually people are a lot like sheep in one way
When we *trust* someone... We *will* follow them...
We'll follow leaders we trust... leaders who care...
leaders who show their love by their actions.

Jim Collins is a well-known business guru
and author of four highly successful books
In *Good to Great*, he identified five levels of leadership.

Level 1 leaders are highly capable individuals
that succeed through talent, knowledge,
skill and good work habits

Level 2 leaders are contributing team members
Who achieve group objectives by working well with others

Level 3 leaders are competent managers
who organize people and resources
in pursuit of predetermined objectives

Level 4 are effective leaders who catalyze commitment to
and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision
Stimulating high performance

Level 5 executives build enduring greatness
through a paradoxical blend
of personal humility...
and professional will

Jim's top level of leadership...
The man and women who produce enduring greatness
Is surprisingly simple.

Passion and discipline to achieve lofty goals
And personal humility,
Because the vision is far more important than them

What level leader do you want to follow?

A knowledgeable hard worker... not bad
A team player can help build a good team
A good manager can lead others to a good outcome
An effective leader can do very well
But greatness... true greatness...
comes from a much higher place

Now lets imagine for a moment
that all of us are Christian Leaders

and before you raise your hands in denial
fearful that I'm about to assign some impossible task
Relax...
I said *imagine*...

And lets imagine that all of us want to be level five leaders

Well we need passion and discipline and humility
Passion for the gospel
Discipline to study it
And humility to accept it

Passion the Good News
Discipline to share it
And humility to accept that it is greater than anything

Passion for the presence of God
Discipline to live in it
And humility to accept our unworthiness for such grace

I believe the very essence of the Christian life
Is a disciplined commitment to faith in Jesus Christ
And humility to surrender our lives and our will to God

Is *Jesus Christ* a level five leader?

You bet!

Is he *passionate*?

On a level that goes beyond all human understanding

Is he *disciplined*?

He *never* leaves us

Is he *humble*?

Humble enough to hang on a cross

You see... we already have a level five leader in Jesus
Actually... Jesus is a zillion-level leader!

So what about the Apostles?

Were they also level five leaders?

They were passionate, disciplined and humble

What about our other leaders...

I've been privileged to spend time with Bishop Brewer.
And he is *very* passionate, and expresses it enthusiastically
He is very disciplined, in prayer, and study, and pastoring
and he encourages clergy to be deeply disciplined as well.
And... he is humble, and gives all the credit to God
Because his vision us is love of God, love of each other,
and never pride in our own accomplishments.
Rejoicing in the joy of witnessing God's grace.

Our church needs level five leaders
I pray that one day I will mature into one
But more than my own personal desire to reach level five
I desperately want every member of this congregation
To become level five leaders in the church

I pray that we all strive toward that goal
We *need* people like that
We need *to be* people like that

So that the sheep can become shepherds
So that the lambs will care for the other lambs
So that by changing our own hearts...
We can change the hearts of others...
By listening to them... and loving them...

A young woman had a baby boy.
Just after her son's baptism, a ragged old man came to her,
and offered to grant one wish on behalf of her son.
Thinking only the best for her baby...
She wished her son would be loved... by *everyone* he met.
The old man said, *so be it*, and vanished.
It turned out just as he said.

As the boy grew
everyone loved him so much he never lacked for anything.
Yet, things did not turn out as expected.
As adored and admired as the young man was,
he experienced a terrible emptiness within him.
He could have anything he wanted, just by asking,
but he had no real friends.

He never knew the joy of a day's work
or an achievement, richly rewarded.
His neighbors took care of all his needs.
The young man became cynical, jaded and selfish...
And none of his actions ever had consequences.

Finally, the day came when his aged mother died.
At the funeral, the same mysterious old man appeared
and offered the young man one wish.
He asked for his mother's original wish to be changed.
Rather than being loved by everyone he met,
He asked for the power to love everyone he met.
And, the story goes, from that day forward he knew
happiness such as no one on this earth has ever known.