

# In the Shepherd's Care

1 Peter 5:1-11



## Instructions to Shepherds

- ❑ As Peter approaches the end of his letter, he gives instructions to “the elders” and everyone else in the church. The elders<sup>1</sup> are designated leaders in the church. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5.<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ Peter tells the elders, “Be shepherds<sup>3</sup> of God’s flock that is under your care” (5:2, *NIV*).
  1. In what specific ways are elders (pastors) like ‘shepherds’ in the church?<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ As “shepherds,” elders should have particular attitudes as they “watch over” God’s flock.
  - *Not* under compulsion (because they must), *but* because they are willing (5:2*b*)
  - *Not* pursuing dishonest gain (due to greed), *but* eager to serve (5:2*c*)
  - *Not* lording it over those entrusted to them, *but* being good examples (5:3, 5)<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ After giving instructions to the elders, Peter refers to “the Chief Shepherd,” which reminds them that their ‘shepherding’ is overseen by the great Shepherd – Jesus Christ (5:4; 2:25).<sup>6</sup>
  2. Based on verses 2-5, what *words* would you use to summarize the proper attitudes and behaviors of elders (pastors)? Why are these attitudes and behaviors so important?<sup>7</sup>
- ❑ In the context of 1 Peter, elders/pastors were exposed to greater opposition and mistreatment (which is still true today in many places in the world). Thus Peter encourages them: “...when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (5:4, *ESV*).

## Instructions to Sheep

- ❑ Peter tells those who are younger to submit themselves to the elders (5:5). Though addressed to the “younger,” this instruction would apply to all the “sheep” under the elders’ authority.
- ❑ Then Peter says, “All of you...” (5:5*b*), which includes the elders and everyone else. The elders are also “sheep” under the authority of the chief Shepherd (5:4). Peter writes, “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another...”

<sup>1</sup> In the context of church leadership, *presbyteros* (‘elder’) and *episkopos* (‘overseer’) are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Later in church history, some denominations used the terms to designate different offices.

<sup>2</sup> Peter is an ‘apostle’ (1:1) but he also identifies himself as a ‘fellow elder’ (5:1) which would be an encouragement to the elders. Peter’s authority is greater than an ‘elder’ but he shares in the responsibility of overseeing God’s flock.

<sup>3</sup> In the original Greek, the word ‘shepherd’ is a verb, so it more literally says, ‘Shepherd (*poimante*) the... flock (*poimnion*) of God.’ This is similar to what the risen Jesus told Peter: ‘Tend (*poimaine*) my sheep (*probate*)’ (John 21:16). In Ephesians 4:11, the noun ‘shepherd’ (*poimēn*), also translated ‘pastor,’ is used to denote a particular role in the church. In the New Testament, the terms ‘elder,’ ‘overseer,’ and ‘pastor’ refer to the same people.

<sup>4</sup> In general, a shepherd leads, feeds, nurtures, comforts, corrects, and protects the sheep.

<sup>5</sup> Elders should exemplify humility (5:5). Jesus said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ (Mark 10:42-45, *NIV*).

<sup>6</sup> In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is regularly referred to as the ‘Shepherd’ (e.g., Mark 14:27; John 10:11, 14; Hebrews 13:20). See especially John 10:1-18.

<sup>7</sup> While these instructions are directed *to* elders, those under their authority should also pay attention to these qualities. Otherwise, they might be misled by their ‘shepherds.’ Also see 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

3. What is “humility”?<sup>8</sup> What is it not? Why is it so important?



📖 “Do nothing out of rivalry (or selfish ambition) or conceit (empty pride), but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (*Philippians 2:3-4, HCSB*)

📖 “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (*1 Peter 5:5b, HCSB; James 4:6*).

📖 “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (*James 4:10, NIV*).

4. How can we grow in Christian humility?<sup>9</sup> What is involved in humbling ourselves?

- ❑ Read 1 Peter 5:6-11. Peter gives three imperatives (commands) to the “sheep” of Christ: 1) “Humble yourselves . . . under God’s mighty hand” (5:6); 2) “Be alert and of sober mind” (5:8); and 3) “Resist [the devil], standing firm in the faith” (5:9).
  - ❑ To humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand involves “entrusting ourselves to the faithful Creator” even in times of mistreatment and suffering (4:19). It involves casting all our anxieties on him, knowing that he cares for us, and that he will lift us up in due time (5:6-7).
  - ❑ Peter has previously told his readers to “be alert and of sober mind” (1:13; 4:7), but verse 8 gives another reason to be alert and sober-minded. It concerns our “enemy the devil.”<sup>10</sup>
5. What characteristics of the devil does Peter mention in verse 8? Considering this danger, what must we do and how can we do it, practically? (5:8-9)<sup>11</sup>

## God's Assurance for His Sheep

- ❑ Peter concludes this section by assuring believers that God, “who called [them] to his eternal glory in Christ,” will complete his gracious work. After they “have suffered for a little while,”<sup>12</sup> He will “restore, establish, strengthen, and support” them (5:10, *HCSB*). In God’s grip, the sheep’s living hope, eternal inheritance, and complete salvation are secure (1:3-6).

## Reflection & Application

- Are you in God’s flock? Do you need to trust in and follow the Good Shepherd – Jesus?
- As a believer, are you “clothed with humility?” Humility is essential to “living well” as a Christian. Commit to humble yourself and keep asking God for a heart of humility.

<sup>8</sup> Biblical humility is rooted in a right understanding of ourselves relative to God. It’s an attitude of the heart that recognizes our lowliness before God and our absolute dependence on Him. Knowing this, we should listen to God and respond in faith – that is, trust and obedience. Andrew Murray said, ‘[Humility] is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God.’ Humility means we *do not* think more highly of ourselves than we ought (which is pride and arrogance), but rather think of ourselves with sober judgment (*Romans 12:3*). Adapting a C.S. Lewis quote: ‘Christian humility is not necessarily thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.’ See *Philippians 2:3-4*.

<sup>9</sup> Paul says, ‘have the same mindset as Christ Jesus,’ and then he presents Christ as the greatest example of humility (*Phil. 2:5-11*). To grow in humility, we need to follow in his steps and become more like Christ, which is a work of the Spirit. Thus we confess sin, pray, seek to grow in our knowledge of Christ, and daily submit ourselves to God.

<sup>10</sup> The devil (or Satan) is the leader of the spiritual forces that oppose God. While Christ has defeated him (*1 Peter 3:22*), his complete destruction is future. He is real and active, but his ‘attacks’ are not necessarily direct. He uses the world’s influence and our fallen human nature (including our self-centeredness) to accomplish his purposes.

<sup>11</sup> Consider *James 4:7*, *Ephesians 6:10-18*. See ‘Spiritual Struggle’ under the *Ephesians* study on the ICF website.

<sup>12</sup> Peter earlier talked about suffering ‘for a little while’ (1:6). To us, suffering may seem to last a long time, but compared to ‘eternal glory’ it lasts only ‘a little while.’ See *Romans 8:18* and *2 Corinthians 4:17*.