



# Leading With Humility

1 Peter 5:1-14

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# LEADING WITH HUMILITY

BIBLE PASSAGE: [1 Peter 5:1-14](#)

## BIG IDEA

*Leading with humility is essential in effective Christian leadership. By following Christ's example of selfless service and dependence on God's grace, leaders can guide and nurture the church effectively.*

## OPENING THOUGHTS

We must always remember that Peter was writing this letter to the persecuted believers of Asia Minor (present day Turkey). The main theme of this letter was to instruct believers how to deal with opposition and persecution. These believers were going through severe persecution. Many lost their lives. Peter wrote to show them how to live in such a way that their lives would prove that many of charges placed against them were false.

As he drew toward the conclusion of his letter, Peter turned his attention to the relationships among the believers. Earlier he had exhorted readers to exercise humility and submission toward those in authority as a way of negating false charges against them ([1 Peter 2:16-3:12](#)). Here in chapter 5 the apostle again called for these attitudes as he instructed elders how to lead and to other believers how to relate to one another.

Peter showed that humility and submission are more than a means of muting the criticism of outsiders. These attitudes are essential to Christian spirituality for leaders as well as for those they lead. Humble service provides the necessary soil in which believers can grow in Christ. Peter then concluded his letter with encouragement to beware of the Devil's attacks, a blessing, and personal notes.

## SERVE WITH SELFLESSNESS

[1 Peter 5:1-4](#) ESV

*<sup>1</sup> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

It has been said that the best solution for handling suffering is to serve others. When we are going through times of suffering we have the tendency to remain focused inward. When we center our attention on the problem causing the suffering is magnified and it becomes hard to overcome because it seems so big. When we begin to serve others we find our own problems coming into better perspective. As we become conduits of God's grace to others, we will experience His grace and we will begin to heal and find strength to endure our own troubles.

The apostle, Peter, understood the healing dynamic of service and the strength sufferers can draw from it. As he concluded his epistle to the dispersed disciples of Asia Minor, he urged them to find strength for their suffering through service. As they cared for one another, they not only helped each other survive the persecution, they would discover God's grace ministering to them as well.

Peter closes his letter by addressing the elders of the church. Sometimes the term elder refers to simply someone who is older. But in this instance, it is one of three words used to describe a pastor. Peter is encouraging these elders to set an example by serving with selflessness.

Because Peter himself was a *fellow elder*, he could *exhort the elders* as one who understood their roles in the congregations. Keep in mind that 1 Peter was a circular letter meant to be read in the various churches throughout the provinces of Asia Minor. Pastors would understand that Peter was not trying to give orders as if he had some authority over them. Instead, they heard him as a person who knew the kinds of pressures and trials they were facing.

Peter understood the suffering they were experiencing. When he says "*a witness of the sufferings of Christ*" it took a double meaning. Peter had been a witness to the death and resurrection of Christ. Additionally, he too was experiencing the same trials and difficulties that these pastors were experiencing. Peter wanted them to see their trials and difficulties in light of Christ's sufferings. Jesus had

endured the cross for us so we should be prepared to suffer for His name. If we are going to take a stand for Christ, it is going to come with a price ([Matt 16:24-25](#)).

Peter urged the pastors to *shepherd God's flock*. The word rendered *shepherd* is a verb form of the term often translated as *pastor*. Persecuted people who had fled their homelands could easily be scattered as tyranny pursued them into their places of refuge. Peter urged the pastors to care for the people like shepherds who protected and provided for their flocks.

As today's church faces opposition from the culture. It is important that those called to lead the church as shepherds that protect their flocks from predators that would seek to harm and destroy the church. Peter offers four basic motivations for pastors to protect those they have been entrusted to lead.

**First**, *the church is God's flock*. The church is God's people, the "*sheep of his pasture*" ([Ps. 100:3](#)). God's flock has been entrusted to pastors. They do not belong to the pastor, but he has been placed among them to oversee and protect. Throughout Scripture, God directed the spiritual shepherds to care for His flock and warned them of dire consequences should they neglect or abuse His people.

**Second**, pastors serve not *out of compulsion but willingly*. They should be honored by the privilege of caring for God's flock. Following God's will in accepting His call to service. Pastors should not view their charge as a duty or compulsion, but as a delight. Similarly, they serve not for the that they might receive from the congregation, but should minister to the church with a willing mind and grateful heart.

**Third**, *pastors should care for the church by serving as examples to the flock*. Ministers should not exercise leadership, or oversight, by lording it over the people. Their service must not be onerous or heavy-handed, as if the pastor were superior to other people. Instead, they are to minister out of love.

**Fourth**, *the Master's reward is the pastor's greatest reward for service*. Peter had already reminded the churches about Christ's return. While they did not know when the second coming would occur, they had no doubt the *chief Shepherd* would appear. Pastors are "under shepherds," serving under the authority and direction of Christ. Ministers who serve the Lord's flock with loving faithfulness can anticipate receiving *the unfading crown of glory*. The crown of glory represented God's ultimate acknowledgement, "*Well done, good and faithful servant!*" ([Matt. 25:21](#)).

Leaders lead far more effectively by example than by the sheer power of their offices. People bend reluctantly before overwhelming power, but they freely embrace the moral and spiritual example of a humble servant who walks with God. I may grudgingly obey someone who has power over me and exerts it forcefully or even unfairly, but I will joyfully work with one who is exhibiting the servant spirit of our Lord.

## SUBMIT WITH SERENITY

[1 Peter 5:5-7](#) ESV

*<sup>5</sup> Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

Peter continues his letter by addressing the members of the churches. It has been said that the enemy of a servant spirit is pride. Peter reminds us that if we are going to serve it must be done with humility. Peter describes putting on humility, like putting on a new set of clothes.

Peter gives several suggestions on why and how believers should wear the cloak of humility while serving others:

**First**, *believers should direct their humility toward one another*. [1 Peter 1:22](#), Peter urges believers to love one another with sincere love. and [1 Peter 4:9](#) urges believers to be hospitable toward one another without complaining. Unlike the unsaved culture that has a me first mentality, believer should seek to serve others with humility.

**Second**, *by seeking to be humble we will resist the temptation of being prideful*. Peter reminds us that God opposes the proud and gives grace the humble. We can become prideful when we serve only so that others will see our works. Humility will lead us to place others ahead of ourselves.

It is important that we always remember that God's saving grace is received by the person willing to repent of sin, recognize the need of forgiveness, and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. Only a humble person will take each of those steps to salvation.

Too often we resist the humble approach when undergoing difficult circumstances. Like the persecuted saints of Asia Minor, we can get so caught up in our personal struggles that we assert ourselves in self-defense. Peter taught that the opposite is true. When we humble ourselves before God and one another, we can enter a position of security and rest. The very act of humbling ourselves is made possible by our *casting all cares* on the Lord. Rather than wrestling with the cares of life, we trust God with our burdens.

The Greek word *epirrhianto*, translated “casting,” is interesting because it means to roll something that will most likely roll back upon you. So cast your cares upon God and keep doing it over and over again knowing we can trust Him with whatever circumstances we face. If He loved us enough to send His Son to the cross for us, we must not doubt His care for us. In His love, we can humble ourselves and submit to His mighty hand.

## STAND WITH STRENGTH

### [1 Peter 5:8–14](#) ESV

*<sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. <sup>12</sup> By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting, and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. <sup>13</sup> She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. <sup>14</sup> Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*

Because those in his first-century audience were in a precarious position facing hostile neighbors. Peter used Hebrew parallelism in his warning to beware of those who seek to harm us and the message of Christ. First he instructs us to *be sober-minded*, he had already emphasized this in the opening of the letter ([1 Peter 1:13](#)). We are to take seriously the threat and maintain a serious attitude to the danger.

Secondly, Peter instructs us to *be alert*. Like a soldier in battle we must always be vigilant and watchful for the attacks of the enemy. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that our enemy is not merely “*flesh and blood*”. [Ephesians 6:12](#) “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*” Our real enemy is Satan and his demons. The name *devil* literally means *slanderer*. Connected with Peter’s earlier warnings about persons who would falsely accuse believers, this statement places the Devil behind the human weapons attacking them.

Peter portrayed Satan *like a roaring lion*. His metaphor contained three aspects that illustrate the Devil’s methods:

**First**, This lion is *prowling around*, moving stealthily like a crouching beast on the hunt. In the same way, Satan, and his demonic minions roam about the earth.

**Second**, Peter described the Devil like a *roaring lion*, trying to frighten its prey with a deep-throated growl. If many modern Christians become intimidated merely by the sound of opposition, how much more will they be alarmed by actual persecution.

Third, the Devil is no empty threat; he is looking for anyone he can *devour*. He cannot steal our salvation, but he can stampede us into doubting our faith and seduce us into sin.

Our only defense is to resist him in the faith, that is, to trust in the power of Jesus Christ. We should not think we are experiencing something unusual, for believers elsewhere in the world are undergoing similar or worse opposition.

When we go through hard times the one thing we desire most is hope. We may despair if we don’t think there’s a light at the end of the tunnel. Peter concludes his letter to these persecuted believers by encouraging them to serve with the hope and anticipation of God’s ultimate victory. Peter wanted them, and us, to understand that regardless of how painful our circumstances we will overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Whatever we might encounter in a culture that hates us and our God, we can find security in knowing true *dominion* belonged to the Lord. Satan might think he is in control, but the Lord of hosts is still on the throne of heaven. Human kingdoms will fade, but God’s reign is forever. Our citizenship is not in a culture that seek to cancel or expel. We are citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever opposition we experience from this culture is temporary. Not only in the end but throughout our lives, we can be encouraged that our God reigns. A day will come when we shall find rest in a place prepared for us by the very hands of Christ (John

14:2–3 *“In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”*)

## APPLICATION

You may find yourself feeling overwhelmed by the pressures and responsibilities of life. Scripture encourages us to 'cast all our anxiety' on Him because He cares for you ([1 Peter 5:7](#)). This week, try journaling your worries and then in prayer, literally 'hand them over' to God. It can be as simple as writing each concern down and then burning the paper safely or placing it on an altar. This active outpouring reminds you that you are not alone, but rather, God is intimately involved in your struggles.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What specific instructions does Peter give to the elders in [1 Peter 5](#), and how do these reflect his understanding of leadership?
2. How does Peter describe the attitude that should characterize both leaders and followers within the church?
3. In what ways does this passage reveal the nature and attributes of God, particularly regarding His role as our chief shepherd?
4. In what ways can we actively support and encourage our church leaders as directed in [1 Peter 5](#)?
5. How does the concept of 'casting all your anxiety on Him' resonate with your current life circumstances?



## SUGGESTED RESOURCES

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