

The Chief Shepherd

1 Peter 5:1-7

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1 Peter 5:1-7 (NIV)

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. ⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

v1 – What is an elder?

The idea of the **elder** came into church life from Jewish culture (Exodus 3:16, 12:21, and 19:7).

- The word "**elder**" simply speaks of the maturity and wisdom that an older person should have, making them qualified for leadership.
- In its application, it is more about wisdom and maturity than a specific age.
- The office of pastor was essentially a teaching elder (1 Tim 5:17) who appointed and guided elders and other leaders (1 Tim 3:1-13, 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 1:5-9).

Why was Peter qualified to speak to the elders?

Peter was a **fellow elder**. Though Peter was clearly the prominent disciple among the twelve, he claimed no special privilege or position, such as being the pope of the early church. Instead, Peter saw himself only as one **fellow elder** among all the elders in the church.

Why is it wise to put ourselves into the position of those whom we address?

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 – *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰ and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law*

(not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; ²² to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

While this is addressing evangelism, the principle applies to discipleship as well.

- No one should ever seem to preach down to people; it is always better to be on the same level as they are.

What did Peter point out about his authority as elder?

A witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Peter was qualified to speak because he was a **witness** of Jesus' sufferings when he saw Jesus' torture and perhaps the crucifixion.

- He was also a **partaker** of Jesus' glory, probably referring to when he saw the transfiguration of Jesus.

v2 – What was Peter's exhortation to fellow elders?

Shepherd the flock of God: This was the first aspect of leadership. Peter seemed to remember Jesus' three-part commission to him in John 21:15-17.

- In that passage Jesus told Peter to show his love for Jesus by feeding and tending Jesus' sheep.

What is the responsibility of a spiritual shepherd?

A spiritual shepherd's first job is to *feed* the sheep. Jesus emphasized this to Peter in John 21:15-17.

- Shepherds also *tend* the sheep, which means protecting, guiding, nurturing, and caring for the sheep.

What example did Jesus set for shepherds of God's flock?

The most important "tool" to shepherd the flock of God is a heart like the heart of Jesus, one that is willing to give one's life for the sheep, and who genuinely cares about and is interested in them...

John 10:11-14 – *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ¹² But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*

What is an overseer (NKJV)?

This word for leadership comes to the church from Greek culture, and it meant someone who watches over, a manager, or a supervisor (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7).

What attitude should shepherds have?

Not by compulsion but willingly: Shepherds should not do their job by **compulsion**, as if they were being forced into a task that they really hated. Instead they should serve God and His people **willingly**, from a heart that loves God's people as a shepherd loves sheep and wants to serve them.

- None of God's soldiers are mercenaries or pressed men: they are all volunteers.
- We must have a shepherd's heart if we would do a shepherd's work.

What should we think of church leaders who are in it for the money?

Spiritual shepherds should not do their job for **dishonest gain**. The gain is **dishonest** because it was their motive for serving as shepherds.

- Instead, they should serve **eagerly**, willing to serve apart from financial compensation.

v3 – Why shouldn't shepherds act as lords?

Shepherds should not do their job as **lords**, because the sheep do not belong to them. The sheep are **entrusted** to them. Therefore, shepherds are to serve by being **examples**, not dictators.

Why did Peter have to give this warning about elders lording over the church?

There was potential for elders lording over the church because the role of a shepherd was in fact to rule and lead.

- The sobering fact is that pastors *are* **examples to the flock**, whether they intend to be or not.
- A congregation takes on the personality of its pastor in both good ways and bad ways.

v4 – To what should shepherds look forward?

The appearing of the Great Shepherd and their reward for being a good steward of what God entrusted to them.

- It is important for shepherds realize that they lead *Jesus'* sheep. *He* is the Shepherd; *He* is the Overseer.
- The Christian shepherd doesn't work for the sheep, he works for the **Chief Shepherd**.

What reward will shepherds receive for being faithful?

Faithful shepherds are promised a **Crown of Glory**, but not like the crown of leaves given to ancient Olympic champions. This crown will **not fade away**.

Are shepherds the only one who will receive a crown?

No, besides the Crown of Glory for faithful shepherds, there are four other heavenly crowns that will be awarded to believers...

What is the Imperishable Crown?

1 Cor. 9:25 – *everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

Two things: (a) This describes all the crowns. It contrasts our crowns with the temporal and temporary treasure of this life. (b) It is also a special crown given for faithfulness in running the race and exercising self-control in order to serve the Lord and finish the race.

What is the Crown of Exultation or Rejoicing?

1 Thess. 2:19 – *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

This crown is a reward given for witnessing, follow-up, and ministry to others.

What is the Crown of Life?

James 1:12 – *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

This crown is given for enduring testings (trials and temptation).

What is the Crown of Righteousness?

2 Tim. 4:8 – *there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

This crown is a reward given for loving the appearing of Jesus when He comes for the church. Note that to love His appearing is to live in the light of it.

v5 – Who else does Peter exhort here?

Peter began this word of humility to **younger people**, in contrast to the elders he had just addressed.

- But this word to **be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility** really applies to everyone.

What does it mean to be clothed with humility?

Humility is demonstrated by submission. It is the ability to cheerfully put away our own agenda for God's, even if God's agenda is expressed through another person.

- The phrase "**be clothed**" translates a rare word that referred to a slave putting on an apron before serving, even as Jesus did before washing the disciple's feet (John 13:4).

What does humility look like?

- The willingness to perform the lowest and littlest services for Jesus' sake.
- Consciousness of our own inability to do anything apart from God.
- The willingness to be ignored of men.
- being truly others-centered instead of self-centered.

Why should we be humble?

For "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble": Peter quoted Proverbs 3:34 to show that humility is essential to our relationship with God.

- If we want to live in God's **grace** (His unmerited favor) then we must lay aside our pride and be **humble** — not only to Him but also to one another.

How is grace the polar opposite of pride?

- Pride demands that God bless me in light of what I think I deserve.
- Grace deals with me on the basis what is in God, not on the basis of anything in me.

How do we attempt to hide our pride?

- We give it a more positive spin calling it independence, or self-reliance.
- We can be proud of our humility

v6 – Why else should we be humble?

That He may exalt you in due time: If God has us in a humble place at the present time, we must submit to God's plan. He knows the **due time** to exalt us, though we often think we know that time better than God does.

v7 – Why should we cast all our cares on God?

True humility is shown by our ability to cast our **care upon** God. It is proud presumption to take things into our own worry and care about things that God has promised to take care of (Matthew 6:31-34).

What would happen if we truly casted all our cares upon God?

We would find we have far fewer cares to cast upon Him.

- Worries about covetousness, ambition, popularity, all evaporate under the command to *humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.*

What kinds of cares should not be cast upon God?

Any ungodly anxieties...

- "I am worried that I will never be rich."
- "I am burdened that others enjoy sinful pleasures and I do not."
- "I am worried that I am not famous or even popular."
- "I am burdened that I cannot get revenge on those who wronged me."

All cares of covetousness, anger, pride, ambition, and willfulness must be cast to the winds; it would be criminal to dream of casting them upon God.

- Do not pray about them, except that God will redeem you from them.

Why does it say cast our cares instead of lay our cares? Casting is a rather energetic word.

- The idea is, "*throw it away from you.*"
- The pressures and the burdens of life are so heavy and difficult that it takes effort to put them on Jesus.

Why should we expect God to help us when we cast our cares on Him?

He cares for you: At their best moments the religions of ancient Greek culture could imagine a God who was good.

- Yet they never came to the place where they believed in a God who *cared*... but that is who our God is!
- This is another distinction of biblical Christianity from all other religions.

How does remembering God's care for us glorify Him?

We often judge the parents by the children. When a child of God is full of worry and fear, the world has reason to believe that their Father in heaven doesn't care for them.

- Our worry and fear reflects poorly — and unfairly — upon God.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- Elders should be as shepherds having responsibilities to feed and protect the flock.
- There are 5 crowns representing rewards that believers should aspire.
- Humility is important before both God and men.
- God cares for us so we should cast all our cares on Him.