

A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF 1 PETER

BIBLE TEXT | 1 PETER 5:1-5

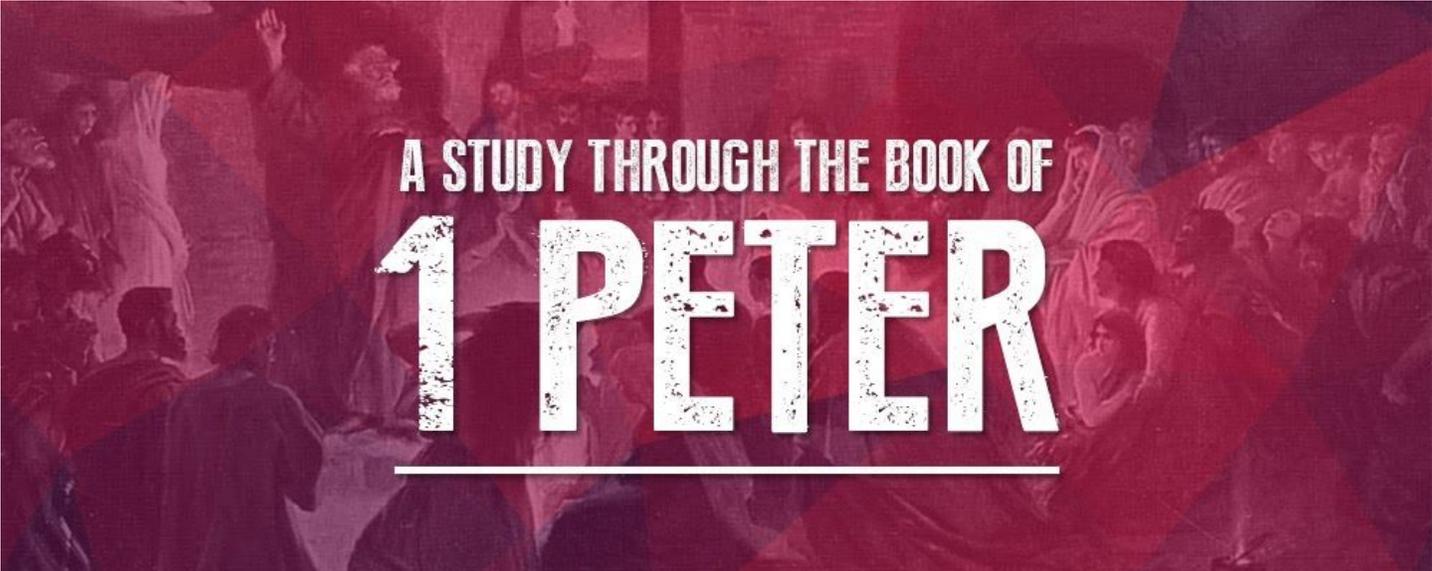
¹So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵Likewise, 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."

DEVOTIONAL FOR 1 PETER 5:1-5

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In four chapters, Peter has exhorted the church. He has instructed believers in how to live and respond in a world in darkness. Amidst the suffering therein, he teaches how to "shine as lights" as Paul states in Philippians 2:15. He doesn't just give instruction, but also provides the reason why the church is to respond to the world in the way he instructs. (See 2:12, 3:16, and 5:10, to name a few.) Verse 2:21 says, "For to this you have been called, *because* Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, *so that* you might follow in his steps" (*emphasis mine*). Every bit of instruction points back to Christ and his example, so that the church's response is befitting his grace and proclaims to the world around us his glory (4:11).

In the opening verses of chapter 5, Peter directs his focus specifically to the elders (pastors and leaders) of the church; and interestingly and importantly, might I add, he includes himself. We see from the Gospels, to the Acts of the Apostles, to other letters in the New Testament including this letter we are studying now, that Peter has undergone an amazing transformation to give such clear instruction on Christian living and response to a world of suffering. Surely he was an example to his flock, as he is an example to the church today.



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As he focuses on the elders among the church, his exhortation deepens. The primary role of pastors is "to lead, to guide, to nourish, and to rule." Then with directness in two verses (5:2-3), he describes how this leadership is to be done. The shortness of the command should not be under-estimated, after all, the entirety of the letter applies to them as well.

In exercising oversight, shepherds are to willingly and eagerly be an example to the flock. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1 "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," such should be the heart of every shepherd. Willingly and eagerly carry the idea of having a ready mind. An overseeing shepherd is resolved in their mind to respond to any situation arising within their flock with the only purpose being to edify and protect his flock. These shepherds do not lord themselves over the people in an attempt to bring others under their authority in an autocratic way, for they are ultimately the flock of God (verse 2).

It is interesting that Peter begins with elders and in verse 5 he changes his focus to younger men whom he commands to be subject to the elders. (Younger is not to be equated necessarily with age, but more likely younger in the faith, Christian maturity, or experience.) The point is that in submitting to the elders, the flock of God is submitting to their faithful Shepherd.

Lastly, Peter changes his focus back to the church as a whole ("all of you" in verse 5), and instructs the church to clothe themselves with humility toward one another, for (the reason why) "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." It is out of humility that we lead, and it is out of humility that we follow (Philippians 2:5-11).

The Lord has appointed roles and has given instruction for each so that his church may grow--not despite suffering--but because of it. "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (2:21). Amen.

Questions:

1. What does it mean to share in the glory to be revealed (5:1)? Do you expect to share in this glory? Why or why not?
2. Describe the qualities you think God requires of anyone who would serve as pastor of a church.
3. What does it mean to be humble? Can you be humble as the Bible directs and still be successful in your occupation?