

Living Humbly

1 Peter 5:1-14

Welcome to the final week in our series through the book of 1 Peter. I pray that you have been encouraged, inspired and challenged through Peter's first letter. As with all Scripture, it is important not to simply learn some things but to actually live in light of it. May God give you strength and grace to live as aliens and strangers in this world; living holy, distinctive lives for the glory of God!

Christian Leadership

In 1 Peter 5:1-4 Peter has specific instructions for 'elders' in the church. What is your understanding of what an elder is and does? (cf 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, Acts 20:13-38)

Peter's instruction to the elders is to *be* shepherds, watching over God's flock under their care. What is it about shepherds that Christian leaders should emulate?

Why is 'watching over' such a key function of elders? What does this practically look like in the life of a church?

Christian leadership places a great deal of importance on a leader's character and motives over their proficiency at leadership tasks. Peter expresses the motivations that elders should have in 3 sets of negative and positive statements:

NOT <i>because you must,</i>	BUT <i>because you are willing</i>
NOT <i>pursuing dishonest gain,</i>	BUT <i>eager to serve</i>
NOT <i>lording it over those entrusted to you,</i>	BUT <i>being examples</i>

How do you see these positive qualities (willingness, eagerness to serve & exemplar leadership) demonstrated in some of the biblical leaders? What are some of the effects of leadership when it is reluctant, motivated by personal gain and domineering?

Most of us are not currently serving as pastors or elders of SBC, but many of us are serving in some capacity within the life of our church.

- If you are serving in a ministry, what made you volunteer in the first place?
- Peter didn't want people becoming elders out of obligation, but to be willing and eager. However, as people we don't always *feel* like serving, so how do you balance a God-honouring sense of duty/commitment with feeling willing and eager to serve?
- 1 Peter 5:2 includes financial reward but also can be broadened to include serving for the 'pay check' of affirmation, belonging, influence etc. As a leader, do you regularly check your motives to make sure that you aren't serving for your own selfish gain?
- How does the reward of verse 4 spur us on to devote ourselves to service and ministry throughout our earthly lives?

Why does Peter give a specific instruction for young people to 'submit' to their elders? What role should intergenerational relationships have within the life of a church? How could we be doing this better as a church?

Humility

How would you define a biblical understanding of humility? Give some examples of what humility is, and what it is not.

Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 in verse 6. Read also Proverbs 8:13, 16:18, Isaiah 2:11, 2 Chronicles 26:15-16, 32:24-26 and Psalm 10:2-4. What is the danger of pride? Why is God opposed to the proud?

In our day and age self-confidence, self-reliance and pride seem to be qualities to aspire to. How do you see pride at work in your own life? What does it look like to 'clothe yourselves with humility toward one another' instead?

Humbling ourselves to another is a hard thing to do, it involves a lot of faith and trust in the one we are humbled ourselves to. How important should v6-7 be in the life of a believer? Can you share a time where you found comfort and peace (and maybe answered prayer) by humbling yourself to God and handing over your anxieties to Him?

Read Luke 18:9-14. What spiritual truth do we learn from Jesus' parable here? How does that help us understand 1 Peter 5?

Non-flakey Christians

Once again Peter repeats the instruction to 'be alert and of sober mind'. How does having such a strong mindset help us to stay true to following Christ throughout our lives?

What is your understanding of, and experience of, 'your enemy the devil'? How exactly does one 'resist him'?

Sometimes when life seems to be conspiring against us, or we are feeling particularly vulnerable to various temptations Christians have been known to feel as if they are being singled out by the devil. How does v9 confront that thinking as well as provide more motivation to stay strong in the face of any opposition?

1 Peter 5:10-12 is a fitting end to Peter's letter. He reminds his readers of the character of God and their future with Christ. How would this benediction and the letter as a whole have encouraged these early believers to stay strong in their faith?

Series Recap

As you look back on the book of 1 Peter, what do you think has been the most relevant instruction from Peter for Western churches and Christians in 2013?

What verse or thought that has given you the most encouragement? What has challenged you the most?