

“Harmonizing Holy Humility”

1 Peter 5:1-5

December 10, 2023

INTRO:

- How are you doing? How am I doing? How are we doing?... How do you feel about standards?

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- We’re in the book of 1st Peter: “No Matter What!”
- Today, CONTEXT is HUGE... due to TRANSITION...
- Let’s review major themes thus far...
 - Blessed Beloveds...
 - Submitted Harmony...
 - Suffering to Glory...

BIG IDEA: Harmonizing HOLY humility
is the key to family VICTORY!

PREVIEW:

(Harmonizing HOLY Humility’s)

1. Past
2. Present
3. Future

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: **2****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; **3**not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4**And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **5****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**.”

I. *PAST* Harmonizing of Holy Humility

So...

1. **So** WHO? (elect exiles; us; blessed beloveds; ALL)
2. **So** WHEN? (Now; **the end of all things is at hand!**)
3. **So** WHERE? (Local, regional, global; Revelation 2&3)
4. **So** WHAT? (God’s glory; man’s eternity; our witness)
5. **So** HOW? (grace thru faith; harmony in submitting)

II. *PRESENT* Harmonizing of Holy Humility

1. Present **READING**

A. *So, I exhort*

- a. **I** = personal from Peter per God to His people!
 - i. *“a fellow elder”*
 - ii. Contrast *“an apostle”* in 1:1
 - iii. *“a witness”* (see Acts 1:8... “martyr”)
 - iv. *“a partaker”* (a component of koinonia)
 - v. *“a shepherd”* (fellow elder = fellow shepherd)
- b. **Exhort** = Warning wrapped in encouragement

B. *So, I exhort the elders*

- a. Titles in the Bible:
 - i. *Elder*
 - ii. *Pastor*
 - iii. *Shepherd*
 - iv. *Overseer*
 - v. *Bishop*
- b. Qualifications in the Bible: 1&2 Timothy/Titus
- c. Duties in the Bible: Christ-like leadership
- d. Contrasts in the Bible
 - i. **O.T. false shepherds**
 - 1. Selfish liars
 - 2. Selfish users
 - 3. Selfish abusers
 - ii. **Psalm 23**
 - 1. Decides & Provides
 - 2. Detects & Protects
 - 3. Denounces & Pronounces
 - 4. Leads & Feeds
 - 5. Rod-blesses & Staff-blesses

iii. Here in **1st Peter**

iv. Jesus in **John 10**

1. Good Shepherd/under-shepherds

- a. Lays down his life for his sheep
- b. Loves the sheep
- c. Serves & sacrifices for the sheep
- d. Seeks & saves his lost sheep
- e. **Sheers & sanctifies** his sheep

2. False-shepherds = “hirelings”

- a. Superficial “job” vs. biblical love
- b. Detached vs. Delighted
- c. Revolt/rebel vs. Rejoice & relate
- d. Cut and run vs. stay and protect
- e. **Unlike-Christ vs. Christ-like**

C. ...Likewise, you who are younger...

D. Likewise... all of you...

2. Present RELATIONSHIPS

- A. ***I***
- B. ***Elders***
- C. ***You (all)***
- D. ***(persecutors implied)***
- E. ***Christ***

3. Present REALITY

A. WARNINGS

- a. *"you'll have various trials for a short time..."*
- b. *"the end of all things is at hand..."*
- c. *"do not be surprised when fiery trials come..."*
- d. *"don't act surprised... God is testing you..."*
- e. *"God opposes the proud"*

B. EXHORTING:

a. **Elders:**

i. **"Shepherd" (verb)**

1. **"the flock of GOD"**
2. **"among you"**

ii. **"exercising oversight"**

1. **NOT** *under compulsion*
2. **NOT** *for shameful gain*
3. **NOT** *domineering over those (sheep) in your charge*
4. **BUT**
5. **WILLINGLY** *as God would have you*
6. **EAGERLY** *(with rejoicing zeal)*
7. **BE-ing EXAMPLES** *to the flock*

b. **Youngers be subject to the elders**

i. **Hebrews 13:17**

Obey your leaders & submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy & not w/ groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

ii. **Hebrews 13:18: "Pray for us..."**

VIDEO: *"Pray For Us"*

- c. ***ALL of you*** (100% participation/application)
 - i. ***Clothe yourselves with humility***
 1. Choose to put on yourself...
 2. Aspire to BE biblically HUMBLE
 3. Submit to Christ & His 3 W's
 - ii. ***Toward one-another***
 1. *Humility goes vertically & horizontally*
 2. *See all the other biblical one-anothers*
 3. Humility is a measure of the heart!

Ephesians 4:11-16

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12**to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13**until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14**so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. **15**Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16**from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

C. ENCOURAGEMENT

- a. ***“for”*** (means the same as “because”)
- b. ***“God opposes the proud”***
 - i. ***Sovereign God is the only true God***
 - ii. God opposes = those opposed lose!

- iii. *Proud does not need to look God in the face and say “No!” All pride has to do is hold back 1% of God-honoring and defining devotion to ruin you – now and forevermore (Luke 14:27).* - JDP
- c. **“but”** (a blessed term of contrast)
- d. **“God gives grace to the humble.”**
 - i. **God gives...** see sovereign gift/power
 - ii. **Grace** = unmerited favor & MORE!
 - iii. **To** = a designated receiver (**not chance**)
 - iv. **The humble = God’s people/family!**
- e. Shift from present principle to future promise!

VIDEO: *Mahali Safi Mission House*

III. **FUTURE** Harmonizing of Holy Humility

- A. **“partakers in”** (components of koinonia)
- B. **“the glory that is going to be revealed:”**
 - a. **Adopted heirs with Christ**
 - b. **Imperishable inheritance in heaven**
 - c. **Royal priesthood**
 - d. **Holy nation**
 - e. **Chosen people of God!**

- C. ***“when the chief Shepherd appears”***
 - a. When Christ returns
 - b. When our King comes back to reign
 - c. When Jesus sounds the trumpets!

- D. ***“you will receive”***
 - a. God’s promises are our guarantees!
 - b. God’s power fulfills God’s promises!
 - c. God’s purposes are fueled by His grace!

- E. ***“the unfading crown of glory”***
 - a. ***The unfading*** = perfect & imperishable
 - b. ***The crown*** = VICTORY’s symbol
 - c. ***The glory*** = the reality of Christ in every way

REVIEW:

Harmonizing HOLY humility
is the key to family VICTORY!

CLOSE:

- 2024 will be the year of Faith, Family, & Fishing
 - Gospel of Matthew
 - **Jeff Needles**
 - Personal equipping for fishing

- We've been given our mission & vision – **Acts 1:8**
- Locally, Regionally, & Globally...



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- Plus.... **HISbridge Global** is coming in 2024!

VIDEO: *Who We Are*

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *Sweet Jesus*

New American Standard Commentary – Schreiner

2. Exhortations to Elders and the Community (5:1–11)

(1) Exhortations for Elders and Younger Ones (5:1–5)

¹To the elders among you,

I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

⁵Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older.

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

The elders are now addressed because as leaders they may face the brunt of persecution first.

Perhaps there is even an echo of Ezek 9:6, for the judgment that commences in God's temple begins with the elders. Or it may be

that the elders are addressed first simply because they are leaders of God's flock.⁵⁵

Peter as a co-elder **reminded the readers of the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow**, suggesting the paradigmatic function of Christ's sufferings.

Three exhortations are given to the elders.

1. **They are to shepherd and oversee God's flock**, doing so because it is God's will, not because they feel compelled to serve.
2. Further, **they are to be eager in fulfilling their task and should not serve for financial gain.**
3. Finally, **they are to live as examples of the flock instead of using their authority to domineer the church.**

The motivation for the leadership of elders is explained in v. 4.

When Jesus as the Chief Shepherd of the church returns, they will receive a glorious crown that never fades.

If elders are to shepherd the church in a godly manner, the **younger members of the congregation are to submit to the leadership of the elders. And every member of the church is to live in humility since God is opposed to the proud but grants grace to the humble.**

5:1

The **content shifts from suffering imposed from outsiders to matters within the community.**

The text actually begins with a conjunction (*oun*) that could be translated as “therefore,” “then,” or “so” (RSV).⁵⁶ The NIV omits it entirely, probably because it is difficult to see how it relates to the preceding verses. We probably should explain the logical relationship as follows. The suffering and persecution faced by believers (4:12–19) puts a strain on the entire community. Both leaders and those who are younger must, in such a situation, respond appropriately to others in the church.

More specifically, since judgment begins with God’s household (vv. 17–18), those in the church are exhorted to live in a way that pleases God, so that they can avoid the judgment that will be imposed on the ungodly.

In vv. 1–4 Peter addressed the elders in the church. The word **“elders” (*presbyteroi*) is often used in the New Testament to refer to those who had leadership positions in the church.**

The church or churches in Jerusalem had elders (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22–23; 16:4; 21:18).

According to Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in all the churches visited during their first missionary journey. When a contingent of leaders visited Paul from Ephesus, they were called “elders” (Acts 20:17). The person who is sick and needs prayer is encouraged to summon the elders of the church for prayer and anointing according to James (Jas 5:14). The Pastoral Epistles show that elders functioned in Ephesus (1 Tim 5:17) and were to be appointed in Crete (Titus 1:5).

Every piece of evidence we have shows that elders were widespread in the early church.

They are mentioned by different authors: Luke, Paul, Peter, and James. They stretch over a wide region of the Greco-Roman world: from Jerusalem, Palestine, the whole of Asia Minor, and Crete. It is also likely that elders functioned as a plurality in the churches since the term is always plural, and Acts 14:23 says elders were appointed “for them in each church.”

Further, the elders who visited the sick in James were plural, but the elders who visited were almost certainly from one local church. Most scholars believe that the term was borrowed from Jewish usage, for the term “elders” is quite common in the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition.

In giving an exhortation to the elders,

Peter referred to himself in a threefold way:

- (1) a fellow elder,
- (2) a witness of Christ’s sufferings, and
- (3) a sharer of the glory to come.

We will take up each of these in order. The term “fellow elder” (*sympresbyteros*) occurs first here in Greek literature and probably was Peter’s coinage. Peter identified with the leaders of the churches by using the same title as theirs instead of appealing to the term “apostle” to emphasize his authority. We already noted that the leaders in the Jerusalem church were also called elders.

Nevertheless, it is also the case that **Peter’s authority shines through.**⁶²

He was the one giving instructions as a fellow elder, and it has already been noted that he was an apostle (1:1).

Second, Peter reminded them that he was a witness of Christ’s sufferings.

The reference to Christ’s sufferings is obviously intentional, for as the letter has made clear, suffering is the pathway to glory. Jesus Christ himself traveled the same road, and hence believers should not be surprised (4:12) that they are called to do the same.

Scholars debate whether Peter claimed to be an eyewitness of Christ’s sufferings here. Some argue that the point is that he was a recipient of the early tradition that transmitted Christ’s sufferings and observe that Peter was not an actual witness since he fled the scene. This latter point should not be used against Petrine authorship, as some scholars have done, for Peter was not insisting that he observed every moment when Christ suffered.⁶⁴ Peter did actually observe Christ in his ministry, saw the opposition mount against him, was present when he was arrested,

and may have found his way to the cross after denying him. Even if he was not present at the crucifixion, he would have received the tradition incredibly early from John the Apostle, the Lord's mother, and other witnesses.

Lastly, Peter identified himself again with the other elders, saying that he would also "share in the glory to be revealed." Some scholars see here a reference to the transfiguration (cf. Matt 17:1–8 par.; 2 Pet 1:16–18), and others detect an allusion to the resurrection. Both of these explanations can be rejected, for Peter spoke of a *future* glory here, not something observed in the past. **The glory to be revealed therefore is at the second coming of Christ.**

Elsewhere in 1 Peter "glory" (*doxa*) is usually the future reward either believers will receive or that Christ received after his sufferings (1:7, 11, 21; 4:13–14; 5:4, 10).

Words from the "revelation" word group also point toward the second coming of Christ in the letter (1:5, 7, 13).

Two verses in particular show that revelation and glory refer to the future coming of Christ. In 1:7 the testing of faith will "result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed," and in 4:13, "Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." Further, in 1:11 the "sufferings" of Christ precede the "glories" that follow, which matches the suffering and glory in 5:2.

All of the parallels here make it quite certain that the glory promised in 5:1 is the eschatological reward that will be given when Christ returns. **Peter encouraged the elders to follow Christ's example, enduring suffering in the present so that they will receive the eschatological reward in the future.**

5:2

The task of the elders is now explained.

They are to function as shepherds of God's flock.

They are not to be like the shepherds indicted in Ezekiel 34 who treated their flock "harshly and brutally" (34:4), who cared only for themselves (34:8).

The words "God's flock" remind the elders that the congregation does not belong to them. It is God's church, and they are given the privilege and responsibility of shepherding it.

The verb *poimainō*, "shepherd," is used in Acts 20:28 to describe the responsibility of the elders in the church. We are also reminded of Jesus' words to Peter in John 21:16, where Jesus exhorted Peter to "shepherd my sheep".

Luther rightly argues that we shepherd God's flock by preaching the gospel.⁷⁰

The participle "serving as overseers" (*episkopountes*) specifies another elder function.

As God's shepherds and leaders they are to oversee the church and superintend it. We have a hint here that in the New Testament the offices of elder and overseer were the same.

This conclusion is a matter of some debate in New Testament scholarship and has been seriously questioned in the recent work by Campbell.⁷² A recent dissertation by B. Merkle establishes, however, that overseer & elder were indeed one office.

This is the most plausible way of reading the New Testament evidence. In Acts 20:17 Paul summoned the elders (*presbyteroi*) of the Ephesian church, but in v. 28 they are identified as "overseers" (*episkopoi*), demonstrating that two different terms are used for one office. Paul charged Titus to appoint "elders" in Titus 1:5, but in v. 7 he shifts to "overseer."

The "since" (*gar*) connecting vv. 6–7 suggests that a new office is not in view, and hence we should understand the singular "overseer" as generic here. We should draw the same conclusion from 1 Timothy. The singular "overseer" of 1 Tim 3:2 is another way of describing the elders mentioned in 5:17 (cf. 1 Tim 3:1). In Phil 1:1 the officers of the church are listed as "overseers and deacons." It is quite likely that these two offices could also be described as elders and deacons.

In **vv. 2–3 three contrasts are drawn** explaining the way elders should not behave as opposed to a way they should conduct themselves. These instructions are **always apropos, but they take on a particular urgency in a situation where the church faces persecution.**

1. First, **those who serve as elders are not to serve under compulsion but with a whole-hearted desire (*hekousiōs*), which is God’s will for them.** A similar thought is found in 1 Tim 3:1, where the desire to be an overseer is commended, though we need to balance this with the instruction from James, who reminds us that teachers have a great responsibility and face a stricter judgment (Jas 3:1). Those who serve only because they feel they must will lose their joy, and the church will suffer as a consequence. Davids observes **that elders would presumably work long hours and be the first targets of persecution, both of which could quench their desire to continue.**
2. Second, **elders must not take a leadership position out of greed.** The danger exists that they will resort to dishonest gain and embezzle funds in some fashion. The same term is used in Titus 1:7 (*aischrokerdōs*), where Paul instructed Titus not to appoint elders who desire dishonest gain (cf. also 1 Tim 3:3). **In the New Testament false teachers are often indicted because of their love of money (cf. 2 Cor 2:17; 11:7–15; 1 Tim 6:5–10; 2 Pet 2:3, 14–15; Jude 11).**

*Genuine leaders, on the other hand, have an eagerness (*prothymōs*) in doing the work.*

The word “eagerly” (NRSV) here is another way of stating the word “willingly” (NRSV, *hekousiōs*).

The leaders of God’s flock do not serve because they have to, as if it were simply another job, nor do they serve to skim off money for themselves.

5:3

The third contrast indicates that elders are not to use their positions of authority as an opportunity to oppress those under them.

*They are not to function as oppressors
but as examples.*

The term *“lording it over”* (*katakyrieuō*) may allude to the teaching of Jesus, where he instructed his disciples not to imitate the Gentiles, who use their authority to rule over others and advance their own interests (**Matt 20:25; Mark 10:42**).

Followers of Jesus are to use their authority to serve, and in that way they imitate the example of Jesus himself (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45).

The words *“those entrusted to you”* (*klērōn*) have been interpreted in various ways. Some argue that the meaning is that elders should not be dictatorial in assigning offices or positions to those below them in ministry or that they should not be autocratic when dealing with ministers who possess less power. The NIV, however, is almost certainly correct here.

Peter referred to God’s people here, not to those who are in positions of ministry.

We are uncertain whether the plural refers to the part of the congregation an elder superintends or whether the reference is to the various congregations from the different cities addressed in 1 Peter. In any case, the “flock” of v.

2 is what Peter had in mind. **Elders are not to enter the ministry so they can boss others around but so they can exemplify the character of Christ to those under their charge.**

5:4

We have already seen in v. 1 that the instructions to elders is introduced with the notion of suffering and then glory, implying that those who serve well now will receive a great reward later.

Peter did not call on leaders “to sacrifice” with no thought of reward. **He reminded them that their labor for others will have a great reward and will bring remarkable joy.**

Such a theme comes to the forefront specifically in v. 4.

Jesus here is called **“the Chief Shepherd”** (*archipoimenos*), a rare term that occurs nowhere else in the New Testament or in the Septuagint.

The designation of Jesus as the Chief Shepherd reminds the leaders that they are fundamentally servants, not autocrats. Their **positions of leadership are a responsibility, not a privilege by which they advance their own status.**

As shepherds they serve under the authority of the Chief Shepherd, doing his will rather than theirs.

The appearance of Christ refers, of course, to his second coming (cf. 1:7, 13; cf. also 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Col 3:4), reminding the leaders that their positions of leadership are temporary.

Clearly Peter preserved an eschatological urgency. **He did not focus on when leaders die but on the coming of the Lord.**

When the Lord comes, those elders who have served in accordance with the instructions in vv. 2–3 will receive a reward, **“the crown of glory that will never fade away.”**

The word translated **“will receive”** (*komieisthe*) is also used elsewhere to designate either reward or punishment on the last day (2 Cor 5:10; Eph 6:8; Col 3:25; Heb 10:36; 1 Pet 1:9).

Peter contrasted the crown elders will receive with the leafy crowns bestowed in the Greco-Roman world.

Such crowns were given after athletic victories or military conquests (Martial, *Epig.* 2.2; Pliny, *Hist. nat.* 15.5; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.15). **Such crowns faded as time elapsed, but the crown given by God (cf. 1 Pet 5:10) will never fade.**

The word “glory” is appositional to “crown.” It is difficult to know if the crown is equivalent to eternal life itself or if it is a special reward for elders. In the other “crown” (*stephanos*) texts the reward is entrance into heaven itself (cf. 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10; 3:11). The usage in the rest of the New Testament slightly favors the latter notion. Elders can be confident that they will receive the greatest reward conceivable when the *eschaton* arrives.

5:5

The **text shifts from “elders” to those who are “younger”** (NRSV, *neōteroi*), perhaps echoing Ezek 9:6.

The use of the word “younger” might cause us to doubt that elders in the previous verses referred to a position of leadership, concluding instead that those who are advancing in age are described.⁸¹ This interpretation can be ruled out since the descriptions of their activities in vv. 2–3 make clear that they were also leaders, and we saw that the term was commonly used to designate an office in the New Testament. It is also possible that the word “elders” shifts meaning in this verse, so that in vv. 1–4 the reference is to those who are in an official position of authority, but now Peter turned to those who are older. This solution is possible, but it seems unlikely, for the interpretation that does not require a change in definition for the term “elders” should be preferred.⁸³ And **the verse is tied quite closely to the previous section with the term “likewise”** (*homoiōs*, deleted in the NIV).

We have seen in 3:1 and 3:7 that the term “likewise” binds paragraphs together when complementary entities are addressed (e.g., husbands and wives). Another possibility is to limit the “younger” to a part of the congregation. Perhaps the young are those who are young in faith, neophytes who have been recently baptized, or perhaps as in Titus 2:6–8 those who are young are given a particular exhortation, especially since young people may tend to be more independent and less inclined to submit to those in authority.

The former notion is quite unlikely, for the evidence is insufficient to indicate that the term “younger” refers to those who are recent converts. Further, the argument depends upon alleged parallels to the Qumran literature, and such parallels are not firmly established. Nor is it likely that we have a reference to young people recently appointed as elders.⁸⁶ It is possible that “younger” refers to the entire congregation, which is contrasted to the elders. If this interpretation is correct, the term “younger” is used because generally speaking the remaining

believers are younger in contrast to the elders. **The designation**

“younger” is a suitable “formal counterpart” to

“elders.”⁸⁸ A decision is difficult, but **we probably should understand Peter to**

refer to those who are literally younger, perhaps because younger people would be more apt to act rebelliously. This view is suggested by the address to “all” (*pantes*) that follows the younger—introduced by “and” (NRSV, *de*—unfortunately deleted by the NIV). The “and all” (NRSV) could imply that now the entire congregation is addressed instead of merely the “elders” and the “younger.”

The younger in particular, then, should submit (*hypotagēte*) to the leadership of the elders.

We have seen elsewhere that Peter understood submission as the responsibility of believers to those in positions of authority (cf. 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5).

The purpose is not to encourage obedience no matter what leaders might say, for if leaders give counsel that contravenes God's moral standards or violates the gospel, then they should not be followed. Nor is the verse suggesting that leaders are exempt from accountability before the congregation. We have already observed that elders are admonished not to use their authority as dictatorial rulers but are to serve those under their charge.

Conversely,

those who are under leadership should be inclined to follow and submit to their leaders. They should not be resisting the initiatives of leaders and complaining about the direction of the church.

Smooth relations in the church can be preserved if the entire congregation adorns itself with humility.

When believers recognize that they are creatures and sinners, they are less apt to be offended by others.

Humility is the oil that allows relationships in the church to run smoothly and lovingly.

Pride gets upset when another does not follow our own suggestions.

Peter grounded this admonition with a citation from Prov 3:34, which is also quoted in Jas 4:6. The citation is closer to the Septuagint than it is to the Hebrew text, but the meaning in both cases is essentially the same.

Believers should heed the injunction to be humble because God sets his face against the proud, but he lavishes his grace upon the humble. Those who submit to God's sovereignty in humility will find that he will lift them up and reward them.

New Testament Commentary: Grudem

Living as church members and officers (5:1–7)

1. Elders: Shepherd God's flock rightly (5:1–4)

1. *So I exhort the elders among you* seems at first unrelated to the previous section, but the word so or 'therefore' (*oun*) suggests that this section follows logically on from the previous one.

It is likely that the thought of judgment beginning from the house of God (4:17) prompted Peter to focus on the need for purity of heart before God in relationships among those in the church, beginning with the leaders of the church.

This pattern may even have been suggested by Ezekiel 9:6, from which Peter borrowed the language about judgment beginning 'from the house of God', for there it says, 'So they began with the elders who were before (LXX: in) the house.'

The connection is: since purifying judgment is beginning with God's house, and especially with the leaders of God's house, therefore I exhort the elders among you.

Lest he seem to be too haughty in this prediction of judgment, Peter immediately classes himself with the elders: *as a fellow elder*. This lets the elders know that he thinks of himself as one of those with whom judgment will begin—even he, an apostle, is not exempt, nor should any among his readers think themselves too important or too sanctified to be exempt.

Moreover, as he is about to encourage them to be 'examples' to the flock (v. 3), so he demonstrates in the next phrase how he himself is willing to be an example for those leaders to whom he writes.

While it is remarkable that Peter the apostle would take the less exalted title 'fellow elder' to speak to elders, it is even more remarkable that he should describe himself as *a witness of the sufferings of Christ*. Had he said 'witness of the resurrection' it would have been a claim for the truthfulness of his message (as in Acts 2:32; 3:15; cf. 1:22). Even 'witness of his transfiguration' would have been a claim to authenticity (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16–18). But 'witness of the sufferings of Christ' bluntly recalls, for Peter and for anyone familiar with the details surrounding Christ's crucifixion, the most painful episode in Peter's life—for we remember just what kind of 'witness' Peter was: one whose courage failed and who three times denied that he even knew Christ (Matt. 26:69–75).

Why does Peter recall this? Probably to demonstrate that restoration even from grievous sin is possible

with Christ (cf. Paul's similar use of his life as an example of restoration totally by grace, 1 Tim. 1:16), and thus to encourage in the elders a humble willingness to be penitent for sin rather than a hypocritical pride and an unwillingness ever to admit to doing wrong.

The fact that Peter is also *a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed* shows that full restoration from sin is certainly available through Christ.

This phrase could refer to Peter's presence on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the cloud of God's glory overshadowed those with Jesus (Matt. 17:1–8; cf. 2 Pet. 1:16–18), but had he meant this he would probably have said something like, 'as well as a witness of the glory that *was* revealed'. The fact that he mentions this partaking in glory after he mentions his witnessing of the sufferings of Christ, and the fact that he says the glory is still *to be revealed*, suggest that he is thinking of the future glory that will come to believers when Christ returns (note this theme in 1:7; 4:13; 5:4, 10).

Peter is an 'elder' who has sinned, repented, been restored, and will share with Christ in glory. He can rightly 'exhort' any elder in whose life there is

sin likewise to repent and be restored before God's disciplinary refining fire reaches him.

On another level, the reference to Christ's sufferings may also function as **a reminder to the elders that just as Christ was willing to suffer for them, so they should be willing to endure hardship and suffering for the sake of those in their churches (cf. the note on the function of 3:18 in its context).** Yet in the context of Peter's speaking about himself as fellow elder/witness/partaker in glory, the primary emphasis of this phrase does not seem to be on Christ's example but on Peter's own experience.

2. Peter exhorts the elders, *Tend the flock of God that is your charge.* There is a play on words, since the verb *tend* (*poimainō*, 'serve as shepherd, serve as pastor') and the noun *flock* (*poimnion*) come from the same root. We could translate, 'Shepherd the sheep of God'. **The verb Peter uses is the same one Jesus used when he said to Peter, Tend (*poimainō*) my sheep' (John 21:16).** The phrase *that is your charge* is more literally 'that is among you'.

At this point the RSV mg. adds *exercising the oversight*, a phrase which translates the verb *episkopeō*, 'functioning as overseer (or bishop)'. The phrase should be included in the text here (so NIV, 'serving as overseers'; the three main manuscripts omitting it are all from one geographical area, while those including it are diverse in location, and several are also quite early). **The combination of the term 'elder' with the verbs related to 'pastor' and 'bishop' ('overseer') in such close connection in verses 1 to 2 is good evidence that the terms 'pastor', and 'bishop, overseer' were interchangeable during the New Testament period.**

Peter now tells the elders how they are to act, listing three sins to which elders are especially prone and three antidotes to which they should give attention.

Calvin introduces this section with a perceptive summary:

In exhorting pastors to their duty, he points out three vices especially which are often to be found, namely sloth, desire for gain, and lust for power.

Not by constraint but willingly means not doing the job simply out of obligation or because ‘someone has to do it’, but because the elder has freely and willingly chosen to carry out this valuable work (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1). The phrase in the RSV mg. *as God would have you* (literally, ‘according to God’, meaning ‘according to God’s will’) is also well attested in ancient manuscripts and should be included in the text (so NIV, NASB). No one should be pressured into accepting a church office which he does not really want to have—God wants our ungrudging service, and he will provide another solution. An elder is to serve *not for shameful gain but eagerly*. The word translated *eagerly* places somewhat more emphasis on a positive emotional desire to do the work, whereas ‘willingly’ in the previous phrase simply focused on the element of unconstrained or free choice, the decision of the will that one will do the work.

It may be questioned whether the prohibition against serving for *shameful gain* means one should never engage in church-related work in order to earn money, or whether it means one should not do it in order to earn money ‘shamefully’ (i.e. with greedy or selfish motives, or by dishonest or unfair practices). The second view seems preferable, both because **Peter says *shameful gain, not just gain, and because Scripture elsewhere indicates that it is right at least for some elders (probably those whose source of income or full-time work is their eldership activities) to earn money from this work (1 Tim. 5:17–18)—therefore, the desire for such earnings must be correct also, at least as part of their motivation.*** Yet the contrast is not: ‘not for shameful gain but for honest gain’, but a much higher one: ***not for shameful gain but eagerly***.

Greed and selfish interest are so near at hand in all human hearts that especially in this work they must be constantly guarded against.

3.

Not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock **shifts attention from inward motivation to outward behaviour.**

But even here attitude is determinative, for an elder greedy for power over others will ‘domineer’, delighting in the use of his authority and seeking to increase, preserve or flaunt it. By contrast **the elder who seeks not his own status but the edification of others (cf. Phil. 2:3–4, 5–8, 20–21; Matt. 23:11) will strive continually to make his life an ‘example’ to others, a pattern to imitate.**

The term translated *domineering* (*katakyrieuō*) means ‘forcefully ruling over, subduing’, and can carry the nuance of a harsh or excessive use of authority (note its use in Matt. 20:25; Mark 10:42; Acts 19:16; also LXX Gen. 1:28; 9:1; and, in the context of military conquests, Num. 21:24; 32:22, 29; Ps. 110:2, etc.). The word always seems to involve bringing something into subjection by the use of force, whether physical, military, or political. Here **Peter forbids the use of arbitrary, arrogant, selfish, or excessively restrictive rule.** He implies that **elders should govern not by the use of threats, emotional intimidation, or flaunting of power, nor generally by the use of ‘political’ force within the church, but rather by power of example whenever possible.**

Nevertheless, verse 5, in commanding others to ‘be subject’ to the elders, implies that they have genuine governing authority in the church, and that at times they can give directions which the church ought to obey. (Paul’s use of his own authority as an apostle, especially in 2 Corinthians and Philemon, is a profitable example for study.)

Although we may already recognize that God himself is our example to imitate (Eph. 5:1) and that Jesus is our perfect example for a human life pleasing to God (1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6; etc.), we are probably surprised to find how often the early Christians expected all their leaders to live in a way which others could imitate as well: they did not have to be perfect in order to be *examples to the flock*. **Paul frequently urged others to imitate his example (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 2 Thess. 3:7–9), and told both Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12) and Titus (Titus 2:7–8) that they were to live as examples of the Christian life to others (cf. Heb. 6:12; 13:7).**

Thus, all in leadership positions in the church should realize that the requirement to live a life worthy of imitation is not optional—it is a major part of the job, challenging though such responsibility may be. Moreover, those who select church leaders should realize that academic excellence and administrative or financial skills do not automatically qualify one for leadership in the church (as they would for leadership in the university or business worlds).

Recognizing that one has such responsibility should never engender pride, but rather a continual humility in the awareness that the sin remaining in one's heart is still hateful, and that any growth in holiness of life has only come about by God's grace.

Indeed, to take pride in one's own spiritual progress would be to set exactly the wrong example for others.

Those who like Paul cry out, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ (2 Cor. 2:16b) are most likely to set the best example, for, as Peter himself says in this context, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’ (v. 5b).

Those in your charge has been thought by some to indicate that each elder had certain individuals assigned to him to care for, but there is not enough evidence to conclude this. The expression could just mean ‘your shares or portions of responsibility’ before God.

4.

Peter promises no earthly reward but rather directs the elders to look beyond this present world: *And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.* When elders are viewed as shepherds, as they are here, it is natural to call Christ the *chief Shepherd* (the term occurs only here, in the NT, but cf. 2:25; also Heb. 13:20; Matt. 26:31; John 10:11–16). *When [he] is manifested* means ‘when he is made visible, when he appears’, and thus refers to the time of Christ’s visible return to earth. At that time (and not even at death: see note at 1:7), Peter says, *you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.*

Crown (stephanos) is used of a victor’s crown or ‘wreath’ in athletic contests (1 Cor. 9:25), or a golden crown given by a Roman general to soldiers most valiant in battle (Josephus, *War* 7.14), or a crown worn by a king (2 Sam. (LXX 2 Kgs) 12:30; cf. Rev. 6:2; 14:14). In every case it is a sign of special honour, given not to all but only to those worthy of particular public recognition, commonly as a reward for some kind of unusually meritorious activity. Such an idea would fit this verse, where Peter mentions this *unfading crown of glory* specifically when speaking to ‘elders’, and when speaking of a reward which is given in the age to come, following after a description of righteous conduct in the exercise of the office of elder during this life. Moreover, the term *glory* carries the nuance of an outwardly visible evidence of honour. Finally, the ‘twenty-four elders’ in Revelation have ‘golden crowns’ (Rev. 4:4) which they cast before God’s throne (Rev. 4:10)—even though these are not identical to the elders in local churches to whom Peter is writing, the ‘crowns’ there are none the less marks of honour said to be possessed by particular individuals, not by all.

There are other passages of Scripture which suggest that some kind of ‘crown’ will be given to all believers (2 Tim. 4:8; Jas 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11). Yet in these passages the ‘crown’ seems to be a metaphor for the heavenly life in general. The ‘crown’ of righteousness’ in 2 Tim. 4:8 which

the Lord will give not only to Paul but ‘also to all who have loved his appearing’ (i.e. all believers) probably means ‘righteousness, which will be like a crown’. Similarly, the ‘crown of life’ in Jas 1:12; Rev. 2:10; cf. Rev. 3:11) is probably ‘eternal life in heaven, which is a reward like a crown received at the end of a race’, 1 Corinthians 9:25 implies that all believers should strive to obtain an ‘imperishable’ crown, but in the context it may also be viewed as a heavenly reward not for all believers but only for those who have continued through life faithful and obedient to God in a way worthy of special reward (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24, and note degrees of reward in 1 Cor. 3:12–15).

1 Peter 5:4, then, seems to indicate that elders in local churches should fulfil their office in ways pleasing to God, not in order to obtain honour or wealth in this life, but to obtain a special reward, an *unfading crown of glory*, when Christ returns (cf. note at 1:7).

In churches today this should be the reward which elders work for, but it often is not.

2. Younger people (and all others): Be subject to the elders (5:5a)

5a. Peter uses the word *likewise* to shift attention to a different group of people, yet still within the same general subject area, just as he did in 3:7 (see notes there and at 3:1 on *homoioōs*). The term *likewise* in both places means not ‘act in the same way’ but ‘continuing the same subject’ (at 3:7, relations within marriage; here in 5:5, relations between officers and others in the church).

You that are younger be subject to the elders commands submission to the governing authority of the elders within the church. *Be subject* indicates a general willingness to support the elders’ directions (see note on *hypotassō* at 3:1), except if they should ever direct one to sin (see note at 2:13).

The word *elders* (*presbyteroi*) in the New Testament can mean either ‘older people’ or ‘those who have the office of elder’, and the precise sense can only be determined from context. Therefore, some have thought that *the elders* in this verse must mean ‘older people generally’ in the church (so NIV: ‘those who are older’), since Peter does not say, ‘All of you be subject to the elders’, but speaks directly to *you that are younger*. The contrast between *younger* and *elders*, it is said, indicates a contrast in age, not church office.

However, several considerations make it more likely that we should understand *elders* here, as in verse 1, to refer to those who have the office of ‘elder’ within the church, not to older people generally. (1) The first word of verse 5, ‘likewise’, indicates that Peter is continuing the discussion begun in verses 1 to 4, just as ‘likewise’ in 3:7 indicates the continuation of the discussion begun in 3:1–6. And since the subject in verses 1 to 4 is those who hold the office of ‘elder’, verse 5 is to be seen as an instruction about relating to those who hold the office. However, if this were general instruction about relations between older and younger people generally, an entirely new subject would be introduced (on relationships). (2) Unless there were clear contextual indications otherwise, those reading verse 5 would naturally give the same sense to the word ‘elders’ which it had as the subject of the discussion in verses 1 to 4. (3) The word *hypotassō*, ‘be subject’, implies submission to an authority, not just deference or respect (see note at 3:1), and older people generally did not have governing authority in churches, but those in the office of ‘elders’ did.

Even so, the question remains why Peter spoke only to *you that are younger*, and not to the whole church, in commanding submission to the elders. It is probably because the younger people were generally those who would most need a reminder to be submissive to authority within the church (and there is no need to restrict this to ‘young men’, NIV, or ‘younger men’, NASB, since the masculine plural noun would be used to refer to a mixed group of men and women as well). This would not imply that the others were free to rebel against the elders, but quite the opposite: if those who are likely to be most independent-minded and even at times rebellious against church leaders are commanded to *be subject to the elders*, then it follows that certainly everyone else must be subject to the elders as well. This idea finds confirmation in the fact that the *Epistle of Polycarp* 5.3 uses the same words as Peter did for the ‘younger’ (*neōteroi*) and for ‘be subject’ (*hypotassō*) in commanding the ‘younger’ to ‘be subject to the elders and deacons as to God and Christ’, and the context clearly indicates that church officers are in view (note the phrase ‘elders and deacons’; also the instructions to deacons in 5.2 and elders in 6.1).

3. All of you: Be humble toward each other (5:5b)

5b. There should be a new verse and a new paragraph beginning with the sentence, *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’* This is because Peter has moved from a discussion of relationships between elders and others in the church to a distinct section **(vv. 5b–7) dealing more generally with all interpersonal relationships in the church.** (Our verse divisions were introduced by the publisher Stephanus in 1551, and were not present when Peter wrote. Modern paragraph divisions are even more recent, since they are decided by each modern translator and will vary from translation to translation.)

Peter uses a metaphor of 'clothing' or fastening on garments to speak of the atmosphere of humility toward one another which should characterize relationships among Christians.

No one is exempt, for Peter includes church officers and non-officers, young and old, new Christians and mature believers in the address *all of you*. The term *humility* speaks of an attitude which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one's own.

This word (*tapeinophrosynē*) is well defined by [Philippians 2:3–4](#): 'Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in *humility* count others better than (NASB: 'more important than') yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others' (Christ himself is the great example of this in [Phil. 2:5–8](#)).

The reason for putting on humility is that *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*, a quotation from Proverbs 3:34 (also quoted in Jas 4:6).

Why does God act this way? Apparently because the proud (those who are haughty or arrogant, thinking of themselves as more important than everyone else) trust in themselves, while

the humble trust in God, and God delights in being trusted.

Moreover, the proud seek glory for themselves while the humble give glory to God—and glory rightfully belongs to God, not us (1 Cor. 4:7; also 1 Cor. 1:26–31; Rev. 4:11).

Grace is God's undeserved favour toward us, and is needed not only to save us from eternal judgment but also to enable us to live the Christian life.

The whole quotation applies well to daily Christian living, since...

the present tense verbs give the sense 'God is continually opposing the proud but continually giving grace to the humble'.¹

What are the qualifications of elders and deacons?

The Bible has a clear set of qualifications for a deacon and an elder and their positions in the body of believers. The office of deacon was developed to deal with a practical issue in the church: "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables'" ([Acts 6:2](#)). The word translated "wait on" is the Greek word *diakonein*, which comes from a word meaning "attendant, waiter, or one who ministers to another." To "deacon" is to serve. The first deacons were a group of seven men in the Jerusalem church who were appointed to work in the daily food distribution. A deacon, therefore, is one who serves

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, [1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 192–201.

others in an official capacity in the church.

The Greek word translated "[bishop](#)" is *episkopos* (the source of our English word *episcopal*). The bishop is the superintendent, the [overseer](#), or the officer in general charge of the congregation. In the Bible bishops are also called "elders" ([1 Timothy 5:19](#)) and "pastors" ([Ephesians 4:11](#)).

The qualifications of the bishop/elder/pastor are found in [1 Timothy 3:1–7](#): "Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap." Paul also instructs Timothy on the things that exemplify the teaching of a good minister. Beginning in [1 Timothy 4:11](#) and continuing through 6:2, Paul gives Timothy twelve things that he should "command and teach."

The apostle Paul repeats the qualifications of a bishop/elder/pastor in his letter to Titus. "An elder must be blameless, [faithful to his wife](#), a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" ([Titus 1:6–9](#)).

The qualifications of a deacon are similar to those of a bishop/elder/pastor. "In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus" ([1 Timothy 3:8–13](#)). The word translated "deacon" in this passage is a form of the same Greek word used in [Acts 6:2](#), so we know we are talking about the same office.

These qualifications are simple and straightforward. Both the deacon and the bishop/elder/pastor should be a male, the husband of one wife, of sterling character, and one who rules his own home in a biblical way. These qualifications also presuppose that one seeking such an office is a born-again believer and walks in submission to God's Word. The only substantial difference between the two sets of qualifications is that the bishop/elder/pastor must be "able to teach," whereas teaching is not mentioned as necessary for deacons.

The Lord Jesus Himself is called the "[Shepherd](#) and Overseer of your souls" ([1 Peter 2:25](#)). The titles are interesting. The word *Shepherd* is a translation of the Greek word *poimen*, translated "pastor" elsewhere (e.g., [Ephesians 4:11](#)). This *poimen* is someone who tends herds or flocks and is used metaphorically of Christian pastors because pastors should guide the "flock" of God and feed them the Word of God. The word translated "Overseer" is the same word, *episkopos*, used by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy and Titus.

Clearly, the offices of elder and deacon are important in the church. Ministering to God's people in word and deed is a serious responsibility for a man to take on, and it should never be done lightly. A biblically unqualified individual should not occupy either the office of elder or deacon; the church deserves better.

What are the duties of an elder in the church?

The Bible spells out at least five duties and obligations of an elder:

1) The elders help to settle disputes in the church. "While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the Christians 'unless you keep the ancient Jewish custom of circumcision taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.' Paul and Barnabas, disagreeing with them, argued forcefully and at length. Finally, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question" ([Acts 15:1-2, NLT](#)). The question was raised and forcefully argued, then taken to the apostles and elders for a decision. This passage teaches that elders are decision makers.

2) They pray for the sick. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" ([James 5:14](#)). Since the elders have to meet specific qualifications, their lives are godly and therefore the sin in their lives is minimal and is confessed regularly; therefore, they are used to pray for the sick. One of the necessities in prayer is praying for the Lord's will to be done, and they are expected to do this.

3) They are to watch out for the church in humility. "I exhort the elders who are among you, I being also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God among you, taking the oversight, not by compulsion, but willingly; nor for base gain, but readily; nor as lording it over those allotted to you by God, but becoming examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory" ([1 Peter 5:1-4](#)). Elders are the designated leaders of the church, and the flock is entrusted to them by God. They are not to lead for the pay or the reward but because of their desire to serve and shepherd the flock.

4) They are to watch out for the spiritual life of the flock. "Yield to those leading you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you" ([Hebrews 13:17](#)). This verse does not specifically say "elders," but it is talking about the church leaders. They are accountable for the spiritual life of the church.

5) They are to spend their time in prayer and teaching the word. "And the Twelve called near the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word'" ([Acts 6:2-4](#)). This is for the apostles, but we can see from the passage above in #3 that Peter equates himself as an apostle and an elder. From this verse you can also see the difference between the duties of elder and deacon.

Simply put, the elders should be peacemakers, prayer warriors, teachers, leaders by example, and decision makers. They are the preaching and teaching leaders of the church. It is a position to be sought but not taken lightly—read this warning: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" ([James 3:1](#)). The role of elder is not a position to be taken lightly.

Do You Have the Spiritual Gift of Exhortation?

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"Wow, you're such a good exhorter!" said no one ever.

Exhortation isn't a word we use very often. Yet for some reason, several Bible translators (such as the ESV) keep using it to describe a spiritual gift in [Romans 12](#).

Some Bible versions, such as the [NIV](#), use "encouragement" instead, which sounds more natural to our modern ears. But does that mean the same thing?

What Is the Difference between Exhortation and Encouragement?

Exhortation certainly includes encouragement—but it doesn't stop with it. Merriam-Webster defines exhortation as "language intended to *incite* and encourage."

Encouragement is grounded in kindness and hope. It strengthens others' confidence. It comforts them when they feel discouraged.

Exhortation is filled with this same kindness and hope, but then it takes a second step—it *incites* its listeners to action. Instead of offering vague platitudes, exhortation speaks specifically to someone's situation, challenging them to do what is right.

Exhortation is grounded in truth. [It isn't passive about sin](#). But it always affirms God's continued work in the other person, and it always holds hope for

their future. It inspires that person to grow and become everything God made them to be.

That sounds kind of like the Holy Spirit, doesn't it?

Funny you should ask...

What Is Exhortation in the Bible?

Exhortation is named as a spiritual gift in [Romans 12](#).

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation ([Romans 12:6-8](#), ESV).

The word the ESV translates as "exhortation" here is the Greek word [paraklesis](#), and it appears in several other passages in the New Testament. In [2 Corinthians 1:3-7](#), [paraklesis](#) appears nine times, and the ESV translates it as "comfort."

Interestingly, it comes from the same root word as [parakletos](#), the word used to describe the Holy Spirit in [John 14](#).

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you ([John 14:26](#) NIV).

Other versions translate [parakletos](#) as helper or comforter, and the more we read throughout [Scripture](#), the more we see the thread of [paraklesis](#) (exhortation) in the Holy Spirit's role.

In the same way, the Spirit **helps us** in our weaknesses. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself **intercedes for us** through wordless groans ([Romans 8:26](#) NIV, emphasis added).

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in **hope** ([Romans 15:13](#) ESV, emphasis added).

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and **encouraged** by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers ([Acts 9:31](#) NIV, emphasis added).

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will **guide you into all the truth**. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come ([John 16:13](#), NIV, emphasis added).

And I will put my Spirit in you and **move you to follow** my decrees and be careful to keep my laws ([Ezekiel 36:27](#) NIV, emphasis added).

The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit **gives us desires** that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires ([Galatians 5:17](#)a NLT, emphasis added).

The Holy Spirit is our *parakletos*—our comforter, advocate, and helper. And in that role, he gives us hope, encouragement, and motivation to follow God. He is completely truthful, yet nowhere in Scripture does he condemn us. Instead, he reminds us of who we are as God’s children, inspiring us to turn from sin and do what is good.

This is why *paraklesis* in [Romans 12](#) is so often translated as *exhortation*. It’s a kind of encouragement that not only comforts us—it motivates us to do what is right.

How Do You Give Exhortation?

Now we know what perfect exhortation looks like. But what does it look like for an imperfect human to give exhortation?

Again, it comes back to the Holy Spirit.

None of our human minds hold all the answers. We will inevitably meet people we are unsure of how to help. But by learning to walk with the Spirit in love and in truth, we can prepare to meet each situation with the right heart—even if we don't have all the answers.

[Galatians 5](#) is the roadmap for walking in step with the Spirit. Here are the last three verses of the chapter that boil it all down:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

This passage warns us of two pitfalls: sinful desire and conceit. Either of these can knock us out of step from the Spirit, and in turn, taint our exhortation.

If we become tolerant of sin, we risk becoming enablers rather than exhorters. We risk cultivating a culture that encourages anything and everything, allowing sin's roots to grow deeper in the body of Christ. Exhortation without truth is the only fuel for sin's growth.

Yet we must also be careful in confronting sin. If we become proud and self-righteous, we flip exhortation's purpose on its head, using truth to tear others down rather than build them up. Exhortation without love chokes a community with bitterness, envy, and infighting, weakening and isolating the body of Christ.

This is why Paul highlights walking with the Spirit. It is impossible to walk with the Spirit and be comfortable in sin ([Galatians 5:17](#)). And it is impossible to love the Spirit without loving our brothers and sisters in Christ ([1 John 4:20](#)). Exhortation is a spiritual gift, and only through the Spirit can we exhort as [Ephesians 4:15](#) calls us to.

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" ([Ephesians 4:15](#) ESV).

How Do You Know if You Have This Gift?

So now that we know what the Spiritual gift of exhortation is, how do we know if we have it?

There are countless spiritual gifts tests available online. Sometimes, they confirm and strengthen our understanding of the way we've been using our gifts. Other times, they offer us fresh insights. A test's questions often help us think about how God has used us in the past and which areas of ministry we are most passionate about. Those are good questions to ask, and they can push us to recognize passions and talents we'd undervalued or underutilized.

However, tests also have some dangerous limitations.

A spiritual gifts test is subjective. It relies on our perceptions of ourselves and our attitudes toward different gifts. God doesn't always call us where we think he's calling us, and if we use our "spiritual stats" as an excuse to reject opportunities in areas we didn't score highly in, we may be following our plans rather than God's.

Moses considered himself a terrible public speaker, yet God called him to be a leader (and speaker) anyway ([Exodus 4:10-11](#)). Gideon was full of fear, yet God called him to become a bold and mighty warrior ([Judges 6](#)). In time, Moses gave great speeches, and Gideon won great battles ([Deuteronomy 1-30](#), [Judges 7-8](#)).

Perhaps you don't consider yourself to be good with people, and you think you'll say the wrong thing. Or perhaps you're afraid of talking about difficult subjects honestly. That doesn't mean God won't use you to give exhortation in others' lives.

Not all of us are naturally generous, but God calls all of us to give ([Luke 6:30](#)). Not all of us have a gift for evangelizing, but God calls all of us to share our faith ([1 Peter 3:15](#), [Matthew 5:15-16](#)). In the same way, all of us have a responsibility to encourage and inspire one another toward righteousness ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#), [Ephesians 4:15](#)).

Ultimately, a spiritual gift comes from the Spirit, and it should be rooted in dependence on him. Whether we are specifically blessed with the gift of exhortation or not, we can always turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance in helping us exhort one another.

BibleStudyTools.com

The Role Of A Shepherd

(An outline study of the 23rd Psalm)

We should understand the LORD (Yahweh) is the good shepherd that David speaks of in the Psalm. We should also understand that Jesus declares that he is the good shepherd thus making him God. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). However, in this study, we want to see the characteristics of a good shepherd and how we are in the role of a shepherd.

I. Who is a shepherd?

- A. A pastor is a shepherd to the church.
- B. An elder or deacon is a shepherd within the body.
- C. A husband is a shepherd to his wife.
- D. Parents are shepherds to their children.
- E. A teacher is a shepherd to his students.
- F. An employer is a shepherd his employees.
- G. An older child is a shepherd to his younger brothers and sisters.
- H. Anyone who in anyway leads anyone is shepherd who is responsible for the care of another.

II. What are the responsibilities of a shepherd. (Psalm 23).

- A. (Psalm 23:1) "The LORD is my shepherd"
 - 1. A good shepherd gives the sheep a sense of belonging.
 - 2. He should **know** his sheep.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14). Note the word "know" is the same word used of the intimate knowing of a man and wife.

3. He should know them by **name**.

"To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3).

B. (Psalm 23:1) "I shall not want."

1. The shepherd should see that the **needs** of the sheep are met.

2. He should **feed** the sheep.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

a. Jesus asked, "Do you **love me** more than these?". (The Greek word "agape" means a self giving type of love). But Peter responds, "I **have affection** for you like a brother." (The Greek word "phileo" means to have affection for a brother). Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

b. Jesus asked as second time, "Do you **love me**?" Peter again responds, "Yes, Lord, you know that I **have affection** for you as a brother." Jesus said, "Shepherd (or tend to) my sheep."

c. Jesus asked the third time, "Do you **have affection** for me as a brother?" This time Peter responds, "You know that I **have affection** for you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Do you LOVE your sheep enough to feed the young lambs using a bottle, tend to the needs of the sheep, and feed the older sheep?

C. (Psalm 23:2) "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

1. **Green pastures** pictures a place of **tranquility** and a soft bed of grass.

2. **Green pastures** are a place of **rest**.

3. The shepherd should not be a slave driver, but one who provides rest for his sheep. We should not treat our sheep as dogs, telling them that they must fetch this that or the other for us all the time.

D. (Psalm 23:2) "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

1. The shepherd is to **lead** his sheep, not drive them.

a. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). The sheep should be able to trust the voice of the shepherd and be willing to follow him.

c. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Peter 5:1-4).

(1). Again the shepherd is to care for the sheep (not just feed them).

(2). God has given you that role and position of a shepherd.

(3). We should not do it out of compulsion, but voluntarily.

(4). We should not do it for money, but willingly.

(5). We should not be lords over the sheep, but lead by being examples to the flock. The result is that we receive a crown of glory.

2. The shepherd leads by **still water**.

The sheep will drown in swift water. Their wool is like a sponge that absorbs the water so that the sheep can not swim out. The shepherd again should lead them to the still water that they can drink without fear of drowning.

E. (Psalm 23:3) "He restoreth my soul."

1. The soul is the mind will and emotions.

2. How does the shepherd do this?

a. He affirms the sheep rather than bring criticism.

b. He encourages the sheep rather than being discouraging to them.

c. He instructs rather than condemning them.

e. He speaks blessing over them rather than cursing them.

f. He protects them rather than feeding them to the wolves.

g. He gathers them together with the flock rather than scattering them in the wilderness.

3. The shepherds are to bring **healing**.

a. God rebukes the shepherds of Israel.

"The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that

which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them" (Ezekiel 34:4).

b. Jesus sent out the twelve to shepherd the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7-8).

F. (Psalm 23:3) "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

1. He leads the sheep by example teaching the sheep what is the right path.

a. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

2. He is also willing to go after the lost sheep.

"And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:3-7).

a. He leaves the flock to go after the one that is lost until he finds it.

b. He brings it back upon his shoulders, rejoicing.

(1). Oral tradition has it that the shepherd breaks the leg of the sheep so that it does run off again.

(2). He carries it so that it will become dependent on the shepherd and the flock.

(3). He **rejoices** that he has found it.

c. **Loving discipline** often requires restrictions to be placed upon the sheep.

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24).

3. The shepherd should also realize that his own reputation is at stake.

G. (Psalm 23:4) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for the art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

1. The shepherd should provide security for the sheep providing a freedom from fear for the sheep.

2. The good shepherd must be willing to give his life for his sheep.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

3. The shepherd should be willing to stay with his sheep rather leaving them to the wolf.

"But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and

scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep" (John 10:12-13).

4. The **rod** represents the authority of the shepherd. It was like a club that the shepherd used to protect his sheep.

Note: To have authority one must submit to authority. The shepherd himself should be under authority.

5. The **staff** was a long stick with a hook on the end used as an aid to pull the sheep out of the pit if it fell into one.

6. The shepherd must be willing to fight for his sheep.

"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God" (I Samuel 17:32-36).

a. His first concern was for the sheep.

(1). He went after the enemy.

(2). He smote (attacked) the enemy.

(3). He took the lamb out of the enemy's mouth.

b. Our tendency is to get angry at the sheep. Imagine the bear walking away carrying the sheep in his mouth by the sheep's hind leg and the shepherd hollering at the sheep

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(1). "I told you so!"

(2). "You can't do anything right!"

(3). "You are always running away!" (Just maybe this attitude is the reason the sheep keep running off.)

H. (Psalm 23:5) "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

1. The shepherd must **prepare the food** for the sheep.

a. The shepherd must prepare the field.

(1). He must remove the stones and thorn bushes.

(2). He may also need to cultivate and irrigate the field.

(3). He builds a hedge about the field.

b. He must spend time in the Word.

(1). "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

(2). If a shepherd does not study the Word, he has nothing to share with his sheep.

2. The shepherd again must feed the sheep.

a. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). If two people will teach two each, then four will be taught. If the four will then teach two each while the two are teaching two more, then ten people will be taught. You see there is multiplication factor.

b. If the shepherd properly feeds the sheep, they will be **strong** and **healthy** and **multiply**.

Illustration: I built a bird feeder for our back porch, provided, a birdbath, and a place the birds could come out of the hot summer sun. Now, I think birds from all over town come to our back porch. When a shepherd feeds his flock, provides water for their thirst and protection, more sheep will come. When we lived in Ft. Worth, Texas, we on an occasion visited a church where people filled up the isles on Sunday night to worship and hear the Word preached. The church had just moved into their second new building and it was overflowing.

3. The **enemy** will be watching for the sheep, but so should the shepherd be watching for the enemy.

I. (Psalm 23:5) "Thou anointest my head with oil"

1. The anointing is to bring a sense of worth.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight" (Numbers 27:18-19). Moses placed Joshua before the priest and all the congregation putting him into a position of authority.

2. The shepherd in the field anointed the head of the sheep with oil and spice to protect it from harmful insects.

a. "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Act 20:27-32).

b. APPLICATION: We should be willing to anoint others and pray for them. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14).

3. The shepherd should watch and pray for the sheep.

a. He may pray a hedge about them to protect them from wrong outside influence. (Hosea 2:6-7).

b. He may bind the enemy to protect them from the enemy in general. (Mark 3:27).

c. He may cast down strongholds to protect them from the enemy within. (II Corinthians 10:4-5).

J. (Psalm 23:5) "My cup runneth over."

1. The shepherd should not be stingy, but generous toward his sheep.

2. The shepherd should bless the sheep beyond measure.

a. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

b. How? Through giving attention (giving quality time to), praise, affirmation, thanksgiving, provision, and promotion. He should also rejoice with the sheep when they make progress.

K. (Psalm 23:6) "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

1. The shepherd should be GOOD to the sheep.

2. The shepherd should show mercy.

b. Mercy is not dealing out what is deserved.

a. Don't always scold the sheep or punish them when they go astray.

3. "All the days of my life"

a. Parents should look beyond the 18th birthday or when the child leaves the home.

b. Employers should look beyond the last day the employee works.

c. Pastors should look at what the individual may carry with them when he goes somewhere else.

L. (Psalm 23:6). "And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

1. The shepherd should provide a place that one can call home.

2. The parent should not say, "Well, if you leave now you, are never to come back again."

3: In Luke 15:11-32 there is the story of the selfish son who demanded his inheritance and left home.

a. The son wasted his life and his inheritance but was free to return home.

b. The father waited and watched for his return.

c. The father saw him coming from a distance.

d. The father greeted him, hugged him, and kissed him welcoming home.

e. The father blessed him by putting a robe, a ring, and shoes upon him.

f. The father celebrated his son's return and threw a big party for him.

Personal Evaluation:

1. Who are your sheep

_____?

2. What kind of shepherd are you

_____?

3. What things might you do to become a better shepherd

_____?

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