

May 4, 2025

BE HUMBLE: 1 PETER 5:1-11

FACILITATOR 2

Introductory Activity

(You might bring some little ice cream cups for your group as a treat to match the introductory content.)

Introduce: Ask the group if they can think of some examples of things that are counterintuitive.

Explain: Science is full of counterintuitive facts. For example, did you know that the hottest planet in our solar system is not Mars, the planet closest to the sun? Venus is actually the hottest with an average surface temperature of around 900° Fahrenheit. The composition of its atmosphere causes the heat. Did you know that sometimes exercise can cause a person to gain weight? If you have done strength training, you will know this. While you replace fat with muscle, muscle mass weighs more than fat. One more that relates to everyone's favorite summer treat. If you add salt to ice, it lowers the ice's temperature more quickly, but it also lowers its freezing point. This causes the ice to melt and quickly absorb the heat from the surrounding environment. This is what makes the cream turn into ice cream in your homemade ice cream machine.

([linkedin.com/pulse/10-counterintuitive-facts-science-technology-demessie](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/10-counterintuitive-facts-science-technology-demessie))

Transition: Throughout First Peter, we have seen the counterintuitive nature of the gospel message. The Righteous died for the unrighteous. When we are persecuted, we are to submit in humility. When we suffer, we depend on the Lord instead of worldly strengths. Today Peter is going to close out the letter in chapter 5. The final three verses are messages of greeting, but verses 1-11 provide a few more counterintuitive instructions. Let's look at verse 1.

1. FOR PASTOR (1 PETER 5:1-4)

Read or have someone read 1 Peter 5:1-4

Ask: Ask the group to call out the name of some *effective* [I use that on purpose. You will see why below.] leaders. (The group might name political/military leaders, great coaches, or even pastors)

Dig deeper: You called out (insert some of the names they called out), but you did not call out Hitler or Stalin or Mao. You called out *great* leaders, but these men were *effective* in their leadership as well. Your answers reveal the biblical truth that there is a difference between great leaders and effective leaders. In this passage, Peter outlines what a great and godly leader should strive for. Let's begin by talking for a second about the

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETB Comm)
- *New American Commentary: 1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC)
- *Preaching the Word: 1-2 Peter and Jude* (Preaching)
- *Exalting Christ in 2 Peter and Jude* (Exalting)

THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE CURRICULUM FOCUSES ON THE CONCEPT OF HUMILITY IN THIS PASSAGE. WHILE HUMILITY IN AN IMPORTANT CONCEPT IN THE PASSAGE I AM NOT SURE IT IS THE DRIVING FORCE. I WILL TOUCH ON HUMILITY, BUT I AM GOING TO FOCUS MORE DIRECTLY ON THE COUNTERINTUITIVE NATURE OF 1 PETER.

word “elder.” We need to do so because, in a lot of ways, the early church was different from the modern church, and modern churches are different from one another.

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Let’s consider the early church first. The church at Jerusalem was led by the Apostles and the elders (Acts 15:2) When Paul and Barnabas planted new churches, they did not leave before appointing elders to lead the new church (Acts 14:23) These elders (*presbyters*), and there might have been multiple elders in each church, were expected to:

- make judgments (Acts 15:2)
- give direction to the congregation (Acts 11:30; 14:23)
- direct the church
- preach
- teach¹

In the modern, Western church the role of elders varies among churches. Generally, this passage is associated with the role of the pastor. However, consider how the duties listed above might be found among other leaders in the local church today. For example:

- A single senior pastor might function as an elder.
- A church might have a group of deacons that *function* as elders.
- A church might have a board of elders that might include senior, pastoral staff.
- A church’s pastoral staff might *function* as elders.
- A church might have individuals who function, without title, as elders.

Due to the variety of churches, you can find all of these situations, and some churches might have a mixture of styles (more ecclesiastical churches function differently as well). This lesson is not about the *correct* form and function of churches and their leadership model. Instead, I want you to consider your church. In your mind, identify the elders (you might be one) and think about them as we study this passage. Also, I want you to consider that elders are to be an example for all of those serving in the church. Everyone who serves the local body should exhibit the character traits outlined by Peter.

In these four verses, we see what Helm calls 1) The Elder’s Role, 2) The Elder’s Readiness, and 3) The Elder’s Reward. We will look at each from the senior pastor’s perspective and the staff elder or lay elder perspective.

The Elder’s Role: Peter says they are to shepherd and oversee the congregation. Peter, the fisherman, knows about the call to shepherd. He received this call on the shores of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus restored him in John 21. Jesus instructed him to “feed My sheep” “shepherd My lambs,” and “feed My lambs.” Wayne Baxter

Notes:

It should be made clear that in the NT the office of deacon and elder are distinct. In the early church, the deacon ministry was created to serve while elders oversee the church. That being said, in the modern church some deacon bodies function as elder boards.

¹ Craig A. Smith, “Church Leadership,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

says shepherding involves giving spiritual oversight.² In his farewell address to the leaders of the Ephesian church, Paul tells them to “guard” the flock against false teachers (Acts 20:28ff).

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- From the pastor’s perspective, this means that **pastors are to teach the Word and guide church members in discerning right and wrong teachings.**
- From the staff and lay elder perspective this means that **they are to study and teach correctly and help others steer clear of wrong teaching.** They do so under the direction of their senior leadership.

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Peter also says they are overseers. In the narrative of Paul’s farewell address to the Ephesian elders, the descriptor of overseer is used as well (see Acts 20:17, 28). Elders, as overseers, “are to oversee the church and superintend it.” (NAC, 234)

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- From the pastor’s perspective, this means that **pastors are to establish the biblical mission and vision of the church and oversee the direction of the church.** Depending on church size, the pastor may delegate some overseeing responsibilities, but he is still the overseer. Later, we will look at the character traits of the godly overseer.
- From the staff and lay elder perspective this means that **they are to seek to execute the mission and vision of the pastor.** Later will see the character traits of the humble church member.

Discuss: How can a church member help the pastor/elders in his/their duties to shepherd and oversee the flock? (They can first humbly submit to and study the Word themselves. Those who teach can strive to accurately teach the Word in accordance with the church’s doctrine. Members can also humbly follow their pastor/pastors/elders as they oversee and lead the church. Moreover, church members can help the pastor/pastors/elders by volunteering to lead in some of the everyday activities of superintending the organization and its resources.)

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The Elder’s Readiness: In verses 2b-3, we see the readiness of the pastor/elder. We will need to do this quickly.

- 1) He/they are to shepherd and oversee the flock without complaint. The work of ministry is hard, and pastors/elders should do the work not out of obligation but willingly. “Well God told me to do it...” “If I don’t do X then so and so will be mad...” “Well, it’s my job...” or “It’s what is expected of me...” are not the reasons a pastor or elder serves.

Notes:

“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.” (NAC, 234)

C.S. Lewis writes “Duty is only a substitute for love (for God and other people) like a crutch which is a substitute for a leg.” (Preaching, 161)

² Wayne Baxter, “Shepherding,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Le (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

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- a. From the pastor's perspective, a sense of obligation might develop when he is tired, overworked, or nearing burnout. That is why rest, retreat, and delegation are important. (Church members should remember that sometimes they need to allow pastors to retreat.)
- b. From the staff and lay elder perspective a sense of obligation might develop from a lack of personal spiritual vitality, a need for approval, or an overestimation of personal abilities.

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- 2) He/they are to shepherd and oversee the flock in eagerness, not out of a desire for money. First, Timothy 5:17-18 instructs us to financially support our pastors. On the other hand, in the NT, false teachers were often described as greedy (2 Cor. 2:17; 11:5-15; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 14).

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- a. From the pastor's perspective, this means that they should not be chasing after churches that can pay more and more. Moreover, they should be content with the lifestyle God provides. (A caveat should be given. A pastor should ensure that he can adequately support his family. This might mean working bi-vocationally or seeking God's leadership to a place that can support his family. Likewise, the church should adequately support its pastor to the best of its ability so that he is not burdened with financial issues.)
- b. From the staff perspective, he or she should respond in a manner similar to the pastor. For lay elders, they should not expect financial compensation for their role. If it comes, that is a blessing, but it should not be sought after.

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- 3) He/they should not lord their leadership position over the congregation. This is one of those counterintuitive concepts of Christian leadership. Christian leaders are first and foremost servants, not dictators.

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- a. From the pastor's perspective, this means they should *shepherd* as they *oversee*. They might be driving the boat, but they do so with gentleness and patience. They are not to be domineering instead they seek wise counsel and build trust.
- b. From the staff or lay elder perspective, leadership can sometimes go to our heads, and we begin to think we are special and are *in charge* of some aspect of ministry. We should be careful not to lord our position or authority over others.

Discuss: How can church members help pastors and elders lead rightly?

(They can humbly help out and humbly submit to authority. This will help the pastor/elder serve with joy, not

obligation. They can support the pastor adequately either his salary or personal blessings. They can humbly trust the mission and vision of the pastor so as not to cause him to feel that he must resort to unrighteous leadership methods. Of course, churches and people are always subject to acting wrong and the Holy Spirit must guide us in our response to those situations.

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The Elder's Reward: Peter says that after the long, hard work of faithful leading, pastors and elders will receive their reward. They receive their reward from the chief Shepherd because their earthly ministry as under-shepherds was done in service to Him. In this verse, we can see the reason for the instructions above. Pastors/elders do not serve the church out of obligation because they are actually serving the Savior who died for them. They do not serve out of a love of money because Christ is their reward. They do not serve haughtily because Christ is their example.

Summarize Transition: We spent a long time on this passage because it is important for us to understand the role of the pastor and church leadership. Church leadership is counterintuitive because the gospel is counterintuitive. It is also important for leaders both pastoral and lay to serve righteously. In the next passage, we will quickly look at Peter's instructions for everyone else.

2. FOR BELIEVERS (1 PETER 5:5-7)

Read (or have someone read) | Peter 5:5-7

Explain: Let us remember that Peter is writing a persecuted church. His instructions to pastors are instructions to pastors of suffering church members. Now he instructs the persecuted members on how to live in community. The ETB material understands these instructions to be given to those who are young in the faith. Other scholars understand that they are given to the entire congregation and the word "younger" is simply meant to contrast the term "elder." Nevertheless, Peter gives them three instructions 1) submit yourself 2) humble yourself as a group 3) humble yourself as a subject.

Submit yourself ("be subject to the elders"): Sometimes it can be difficult to submit ourselves to pastors or elders especially when they are young or are making uncomfortable changes. However, we should realize that having younger leaders is a blessing because that means God has blessed us with a long life. At some point, leaders will be younger than you. We should also realize that change is necessary if a church is going to stay vibrant and helpful to God's Kingdom in a changing culture. Submission requires humility.

Humble yourself as a group (All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the

Notes:

"The word for cares refers to worries, anxieties, fears, and uncertainties." (ETB Comm, 106)

humble.) “The Greek term for clothe yourselves was used to refer to a servant putting on an apron before serving others.” (ETB Comm, 105) Churches, church meetings, and church hallways should be filled with humble people. There is no place for pride and one-up-manship in a body committed to Kingdom advancement.

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(Discuss: If you have time, you might discuss how we can practice humility in the church.) Humility is expressed when church members volunteer for roles in the shadows or dirty jobs. It is expressed in realizing that your classroom is not *your classroom*, and it might be used by other groups. Nor is your seat *your seat*, your parking spot *your parking spot* or your role *your role* forever. Humility to others is grounded in humility to the Lord.

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Humble yourself as a subject (Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.) Humility before the Lord is the only logical response of a believer to the gracious, mighty God who created and saved him or her. Peter references the mighty hand of God, who had displayed His care and power during the exodus from Egypt. He will eventually exalt those who humbly follow Him. Peter is constantly pointing us to the return of Christ. He has the power to save us and exalt us and He will, when He comes to set all things right. We also cast our cares on Him. This is a form of humility. We stop striving in our own assumed power and give our worries anxieties, fears, and uncertainties into His mighty hands.

Summarize and Transition: Peter is writing to a group of believers who are suffering but also desire the please the Lord. He tells them to submit to their leaders, relate to one another humbly, and humbly submit to the Lord. If they/we do those things God will bring us through hard times and use us for His purposes.

3. GOD’S GLORY (1 PETER 4:7-11)

Read or have someone read 1 Peter 4:7-11

Explain: Peter concludes the bulk of his letter with a warning, a command, and an encouraging word. First, he reminds them that the devil and his counterparts are making a lot of frightening sounds. These are seen in the persecution and cultural pushback faced by believers. Don’t let the roars scare you. He is also seeking to devour the followers of Christ. He wants to take back those who are following Christ, and he wants to destroy their lives. While a person can never lose His salvation, it is guarded by the Lord (1 Peter 1:5), a believer can return to the devil-ish way of life. As a result, Peter gives an instruction. Believers are to resist the devil. This is an active resistance. Counterintuitively, it does not include physical warfare. Instead, Peter says that believers resist the devil by standing firm in their faith. This is the same language used by Paul when he outlines the

Notes:

“Resistance, then, is not passive but represents active engagement against a foe. Believers will not triumph over the devil if they remain passive.” (NAC, 242)

Be Humble: 1 Peter 5:1-11

Armor of God in Ephesians 6:13. As we daily strive to learn from the Lord and live for the Lord, we are resisting the devil. Peter goes on to encourage those who resist and stand firm by reminding them of God's power to save. God will "restore, establish, strengthen, and support" the believer. To restore is the word to mend. God will fix us up. Establish means that "He will stand us up on our own two feet." (Preaching 173) He will give us strength in this life and return the strength that life has sapped from us when He comes back. Lastly, He will support us with His mighty right arm.

Summarize and Transition: Stand firm and resist the devil because God cares for you, and He guards your eternal inheritance. Moreover, depend on Him because He has "dominion forever."

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CONCLUDE

Peter concludes the letter with these final thoughts and they are pertinent for churches and leaders of any age.

Challenge:

This week lift up the leadership of your church and ask the Lord to help them be the leaders he desires.

This week list up other church members (or members of your group) and ask the Lord to help them stand firm in their faith.