

LIVING HOPE



First Peter for the Church on Mission

"GOD-GIFTED STATUS"

1 Peter 5

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by Pastor David Fields

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Part One: Humility in the Community of Faith

I. Orienting Observations

Three initial observations:

1. "Elders" – the Greek word is *presbuteros* – it could simply refer to those who are "older", but almost certainly means those who are the 'leaders among you'
2. Peter calls himself a "fellow-elder."
This gives a sense of responsibility to the leaders and to protect against a vile sort of 'authoritarianism'
3. Peter says he is a "witness to Christ's suffering who also will share in the glory to be revealed." Jesus' story – of self-giving, and trusting God – that shapes how we live.

II. Jesus-Shaped Shepherding

1. Pastor as Servants

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

– 1 Peter 5:1-3



"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

– Mark 10:42-45

2. God-Gifted Honour

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." – 1 Peter 5:4

"Peter underscores his claim that rejection and vilification among humans (2:4-8; 4:12-19) is rendered inconsequential by God's recognition of and reward for faithful service."

– Joel Green

Notice, the leaders are to set the 'example' for how the community is to live. That means that everything said to leaders about serving, about motives, about how we use our God-given power to lift others up – that is applicable to the rest of the community too.

If you are a parent, you are responsible for the spiritual development of your children. You can't farm that out. Our Life Group leaders, under the oversight of our pastoral team, you are functioning in a "shepherding" role, too.

***"Self-serving authority and self-centered autonomy are challenged by Peter's call for mutual humility."
– Douglas Webster***

"All of you, clothe yourselves in humility, because God opposes the proud, but he shows favour to the humble."
– 1 Peter 5:5b

The lowly are objects of antagonism, not the esteemed. But Christians are slaves, "slaves of God" (1 Peter 2:16), so "lowly" is an appropriate descriptor. What is more, if the apportioning of honour is God's prerogative, then worldly conventions are neutralized...the social order has been rewritten."
– Joel Green

Part Two: Accepting Our Humble Status

I. How God-Reassigns Our Status

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God..."

"I humble myself" – active voice
"I am humbled" – by someone or something else – that's passive voice

"Accept your humble status, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time."

We've already seen in this letter that because of the commitment to Jesus, believers will, at times, face insult. The question that Peter raises – and answers is: How will we interpret this unfair mistreatment? How do we respond when mistreated?

"With respect to the wider Roman world, the status...[for Christians, based on the evaluation systems of the world]...in the court of public opinion, the jury is already in. Christians are disgraced as social deviants....The choice left to Peter's audience of believers, then, is how to respond, how to render ignominy [public disgrace] meaningful. With his reference to humility "under the mighty hand of God," Peter identifies God as the arbiter of status, thus redefining the basis on which high status might be granted."

– Joel Green



Whose voice is going to matter to you?

“The command to be humbled under God’s mighty hand is a command to accept, though not seek, difficult circumstances as a part of God’s deliverance, neither railing against God (‘Why did this happen to me?’ ‘What did I do to deserve this?’) nor raging against those causing the difficulty, but rather blessing those who insult and injure (see 1 Peter 3:9)”

– Karen Jobes



II. How do we respond?

1. **“Cast all your anxiety on him, for he cares for you.”** – 1 Peter 5:7

“The anxiety Peter has in mind is the worry generated by chronic and pervasive hostility directed against the messianic community. Peter gathers up all that anxiety and challenges believers to cast their care on the Lord, to trust in his sovereign and protective care.”

– Douglas Webster

All the concerns you might have about being known as a follower of Jesus in your workplace, in your school – bring those to God, Peter says. He cares for you. He will sustain you.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

– Matthew 6:33

Peter essentially says that God delivers us in our trials, not out of them. Even in the “presence of my enemies”, Psalm 23 says, he lays out a table, to feed me, and tend to my needs. He doesn’t take the enemies out of the story, but he ministers to us even in the ‘presence of my enemies.’

Take Home: What’s stressing you out this week? What are you worried about? Jesus says: “Your heavenly Father knows what you need. You can trust him.” Peter says, “Cast all your anxiety on him for he cares for you.”



2. Be Alert and Sober-Minded

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...”

- 1 Peter 5:8-9a

Notice: both are ‘thinking words.’ Here’s why this matters. The “roaring” of this lion – that suggests intimidation.

“Think!” Think about it. Be aware of the ways that you may be intimidated to disbelieve the words of the Living God.”

3. Resist. Standing firm in the faith

A) Peter reminds them – and us: “It’s not just you.” The worst is not going through tough times. The worst is going through them *alone* – without anyone who ‘knows what it’s like.’ Peter says, “You’re not alone. The family of faith throughout the world are undergoing this same kind of suffering.”

B) We can’t possibly keep living in a situation of pressure if there is no end in sight; if we think our suffering is limitless.

“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **after you have suffered a little while**, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

- 1 Peter 5:10

How we view our future radically changes our experience of the “middle.”

C) We can ‘stand in faith’ when we know the faithfulness of God. Peter focuses on the character traits of **God as the Mighty and the Merciful.**

III. Gospel Images

The image of this mighty, merciful God is also the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. It is this God who takes on humanity, and dresses himself in the garment of a household servant to wash our feet.

The reason we can, all of us, “clothe ourselves in humility” is because we have had our feet washed by God who was made flesh.



Life Group Discussion and Reflection

Open Up

How do people in your circles tend to view humility? Why?

Do you tend to view humility as a positive trait, to be welcomed? What about your co-workers, or the sports team you play on? Why do you think that is?

Dig In

01.

Read 1 Peter 5:1-5. Why do you think Peter addresses the ‘elders’ the way he does? How might that help his message?

02.

How do you think Peter emphasizes the ‘shepherding’ imagery for pastoral leaders? Why do you think it is important in today’s church?

03.

What motivation does Peter point to for those charged with the care of the community (v.4)? How might that be helpful in a community?

04.

Peter speaks about the ‘younger’ in the community submitting to the elders. What does that likely mean, and how might that best be done in a community?

05.

What reason does Peter give for everyone in the community to clothe ourselves in “humility”? How does that motivate you?

06.

What are the biggest barriers in your own life to taking on the humble position of a servant in relation to everyone else in the church? Why? What one step could you take this week to make it clear that you are a servant of others?

07.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-14. The community of faith is told to ‘accept’ their position of humility in the wider world. What promises accompany this command in v.6? Why does that matter to you?

08.

How does “not being alone”, knowing that there is a “time limit”, and “knowing the gracious, powerful nature of God” shift how we might experience this ‘humility’ in the world? How has that (or could that) be helpful for you this week?

Pray

Take time to thank God for his care for us, his people. Ask God to help you live out this call to humility. Pray for any needs in your group or in our church family together, entrusting these to the God who cares for us.

