

Humble Saints, Humble Shepherds 1 Peter 5:1-5

Kenny McKinney (great name, Tony McTony), disciplined me. One word over his desk: "Humility."

- I don't think I'd ever thought much about humility; but he pursued it. That had an impact on me.
- The soil of all Christian virtue grows out of a heart of humility (to paraphrase Augustine). He also said:
- **"There never can have been, and never can be, and there never shall be any sin without pride."**
- Here we find Peter emphasizing humility for both members and **leaders**.

It's a very important text for leaders.

Many people around the world **have a negative view of leaders**.

- In general, there's a lot of **skepticism and criticism**.
- This is especially true today in **politics, but also in the world of business, educational institutions, families, and sports**.
- There's a lot of **distrust** of leaders and a lot **hurt** experienced from leaders.
- And this **negativity** is also true regarding people's view of **religious leaders**, as well.
- I can sympathize with the frustration with self-serving leaders, with their leadership failures, with their mistreatment of others, and I grieve over the pain that leaders have caused and are causing.

But it's important to know that we read of both bad and good leaders in Scripture; and the presence of bad leaders doesn't mean we are to reject all leaders.

When **Paul** writes the pastoral epistles, he speaks of false **teachers and corrupt leaders (eg., 1 Tim 6:2-5; 2 Tim 3:1-9)**, as well as **faithful pastors and leaders (1 Tim 3:1-7; 4:11-16; 5:17; Ti 1:5-9)**. Paul was clearly aware of the fact that there were **honorable** and **dishonorable** leaders (2 Tim 2:20-21).

So was **Peter**.

When Peter writes about *elders/pastors/overseers* (terms used **interchangeably** in the New Testament; see Acts 20:17, 28; Ti 1:5, 7), *he's not naïve*.

- He knows that there are **corrupt leaders (1 Pet 2:18)** and **corrupt teachers (2 Pet 2:1-2:22)**.

Just because corrupt leaders exist, this doesn't mean the church doesn't need faithful leaders and it doesn't mean that they shouldn't honor faithful leaders.

- While it's easy to be critical toward pastoral leaders, the fact is God has given the church leaders for good of individual Christians, and for the building up of the body (Eph 4:11ff).
- **Thabiti M. Anyabwile says, "A healthy member gives himself [or herself] to the Lord and then to the minister of the Lord, knowing that this is God's will (2 Cor 8:5).... Leadership in the local church is established by God for the blessing of his people."**

The Kind of Shepherds You Need: **Happy, Holy, and Humble Shepherds**

- Pastors are called to do their work happily unto the Lord (1 Pet 4:2).
- They're called to live a holy lives before God (as most of the pastoral qualifications related to character not skills; eg., 1 Tim 3:1-7);
- And they're called to be humble servant leaders, like Jesus (eg., John 13:1-35).

To be sure, pastors aren't perfect, and they will have bad days, but the **pursuit** and **pattern** of a shepherd's life should be marked by happiness, holiness, and humility.

- The **church flourishes under such leaders**, and these character traits sparkle in a world filled with fleeting pleasures, immorality, and arrogance.

One such leader that embodied this life is one of my pastoral heroes, **John R. W. Stott**.

- **A reporter once asked Stott, "You've had a brilliant academic career; firsts at Cambridge; Rector at twenty-nine, Chaplain to the Queen; what is your ambition now?" Stott replied, "To be more like Jesus."**
- But this was more than the Sunday School answer for Stott; it was his way of life.
- This was a man who often **prepared his sermons on his knees** with his Bible before him.
- He was also a humble servant around those closest to him.
- **René Padillia tells a story of traveling with Stott to Argentina. They arrived late at night in the pouring rain and ended up being quite muddy when arriving to their destination. The following morning Padilla awoke to Stott cleaning Padilla's shoes! When he objected, Stott said, "My dear René, Jesus told us to wash one another's feet. Today we do not wash feet the way people did in Jesus' day, but I can clean your shoes."**
- Another individual, Francis Whitehead said, "It still amazes me that he emptied my office wastepaper basket every day for many, many years."

These kinds of stories may not sound all that unusual, but in a world of leadership scandals, such stories move us; and for those of us are leaders, they challenge us.

Ken Perez, who knew Stott well through LICC, said, "Some people are impressive in public, but disappointing in private. John is the opposite. He is even more impressive in private than in public. His Christ-likeness, gentleness, personal kindness and authenticity are unforgettable."

May the Lord raise up more leaders like this!

I want to break down this passage in three parts: (1) a word to pastors, (2) a word to members, and (3) a word to us all.

#1: A Word to Pastors (5:1-4)

Much applies here to all Christians; and especially if you're in any kind of leadership role. Moreover, it's important to know what to expect from pastors.

(1)task, (2) heart, and (3) reward.

A. The Task (5:1) [we have all the terms here: **elder/shepherd/overseer]**

Peter begins with "**So**" drawing our attention to the previous passage **on suffering for Christ** for one or two reasons, or maybe both. .

- (1) Those who may face the fiery trial of persecution [eg, insults] first and most centrally are often the leaders of the church... we must be able to take the heat.
- (2) Further, when going through fiery trials, the need for faithful leadership increases.

Further, notice that Peter considers himself as a *fellow elder*.

- The plurality of elders is normative in the New Testament (1 Pet 5:5; Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 2-23; 16:4; 20:17-18; 1 Tim 5:17; Ti 1:5; Jas 5:14).
- It refers to a **role/office** not to **age or seniority**; to the work of spiritual oversight.
 - “Not a recent convert” as Paul says.
- Plurality of elders is a pattern in the OT (eg., **Jethro/Moses**) and a practice in the New.

Even though Peter was a **witness to the sufferings of Christ** (eg., Garden); and a **partaker in the glory to be revealed** (tasted at the Transfiguration), **he doesn't distance himself from the other elders, but affirms his unity with them.**

- There's humility.
- Plurality only works when there's humility as they path to unity always goes through humility.
- The elders serve alongside of one another, and under Christ.
- Therefore, their eyes are on Jesus, as they shepherd the flock together.

Peter underlines the **responsibility** of pastors in verse 2: “**shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight**” (1 Pet 5:2a).

- The job of the pastor is to tend to the sheep through **careful** and **skillful** shepherding and oversight.
- The idea of **shepherd** is a rich **biblical theme providing a vivid backdrop** for pastors to understand this role (cf., Gen 48:15; Ex 3:1ff; Ps 23; **77:20**; **Ps 78:72**; 80:1; 2 Sam 5:2; Isa 63:11; Jer 23; Ezek 34; Mt 9:36; Jn 10:1-18; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28).
- Shepherds were tough, unlike many artistic renderings. (**Jesus with a perm, blond hair**)
 - **1 Samuel 17: David speaks of killing lions and bears! Hardly a picture of a wimp.**
 - **I don't mean that pastors must look like Randy Macho Man Savage, but simply that when you hear shepherd, you should think of both tough and tender.**
 - **God as our Shepherd means we're safe, protected — no one compares to his might.**
 - **Gen 48:15: Jacob blesses “the God, who has been my shepherd all my life”**
 - **Ps 23 – The Lord is the ultimate provider, protector, and guide.**
 - “The Lord is my shepherd, I have everything I need
 - **God's people are referred as a flock (Ps 80:1)**
 - **Redemptive context, Exodus (Ps 77:20; 78:52) — Look at 77-80. Dark time in book 3, but rays of hope because of the faithfulness of their shepherd God.**
 - **God's faithfulness when we stray (Isa 40:11)**
 - **Two Major Leaders were shepherds, and taken from caring for real sheep: Moses and David (cf., Ps 78:72; Ex 3:1)**
 - **Kings were also known as Shepherds. (We tend to think of rulers as CEO's today, as people who sit behind desks and make demands).**
 - **False Shepherds are rebuked (Ezek 34, Jer 23)**

- The Ultimate Shepherd/King promised (**Micah 5:2, 4; Jer 23:5-6**)
- Jesus is the **Good** (that is **“True” or “Noble” or “Worthy” or “Model”**) Shepherd
- **Matt 9: He has compassion because they are like sheep without a shepherd.**
- **Hebrews 13: He is the Great Shepherd.**
- **Here in 1 Peter 5: Chief Shepherd.**

We may simplify this work into four parts: *knowing the sheep, leading the sheep, protecting the sheep, and feeding the sheep.*

Knowing the sheep means that pastors know who's under their care (**Heb 13:17**).

- **As a pastor of Imago Dei Church, I am accountable to God for the people at IDC in a way that's different for how I'm accountable for the people in my city, or for people in another church who may watch our sermon videos.**
- I am to shepherd the flock that is **“among us,”** that is, our local church.
 - Not a **meddler (4:15)**
 - **“Coach Your Team”**
- **This is one of the many reasons we practice church membership, so that we may actually know who's under our care, and so that we can give adequate care.**
 - This doesn't mean that only shepherds do care ministry in the church.
 - Indeed, all members should be doing care ministry, but the elders are to lead out in this, and equip all of God's people to do it well.

Leading the sheep involves **applying the New Testament's vision of church to one's local church's context.**

- It involves making **wise decisions** that build up the entire church.
- It involves equip others **for ministry and delegating certain responsibilities.**
- It means giving **counsel for others to follow.**
- And leading involves **setting an example** for others to follow (Mk 9:33-35; 10:42-45; 1 Tim 4:12; Phil 3:15, 17; 1 Cor 11:1).

Feeding the sheep is fundamental, for if sheep don't eat, they die!

- **I don't want to sound uncaring, but it does no good to pet the sheep if you don't feed the sheep!**
- **A primary task of a good shepherd is to feed the flock.**
- Expounding Scripture weekly nourishes God's people (1 Pet 1:23-2:3).
- It's how Jesus builds and rules his church today: by the Word and Spirit.
 - This is why we devote ourselves to expositional preaching.
- This is an essential way in which we do pastoral care and express our love to Jesus — **“Do you love me? Feed my sheep”** (cf., Jn 21:15-19; Acts 20)
- Following the pattern of the apostles, pastors are to be devoted to prayer and the preaching of the word (Acts 6:4).
- **The word is like the Good Shepherds Crook (correction on the nose, rescue with the hook) [Begg]**
- This **doesn't mean only pastors expound Scripture, but they're to lead out in this task and equip others to do it (Eph 4:11).**

- **Feeding takes place from the pulpit, and in other discipleship ministries of the church (cf., Rom 15:14; Jam 3:1).**

Protecting is also a responsibility of the elders (cf., Acts 20:29-30; Rev 2:2, 6; 14-16; 20-24).

“Fierce wolves” (Acts 20)

- Pastors warn about false teaching (Ti 1:9)
- They’re also called to lead the church to health church discipline (eg., Matt 18:15-20), which is a way in which the purity of the church is protected.
 - Sometimes church discipline doesn’t get to step three (Matt 18:17) because private warning achieved the purpose of restoring a wayward brother or sister (Matt 18:15-16; Gal 6:1).

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus knows us, leads us, feeds us and protects us.

B. The Heart (5:2-3)

Peter spends considerable space on the heart of the shepherd, pointing out **some of the most prominent temptations of church leaders**. He says: “not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pete 5:2-3).

First, we’re not to serve out of *compulsion*, but *willingly*.

- This means **no one should have to beg you to become a pastor.**
- **No one should push you to become a pastor.**
- Paul tells Timothy this should be something that a pastor “**desires**” (1 Tim 3:1).
 - “Zeal for your house consumes me” Jesus said.
 - We are to do our gladly not grudgingly.
- Pastors shouldn’t **begrudge the ongoing duties of a pastor**: “Oh, I have to go to this elder meeting”; “I have to prepare another sermon”; “I have to make this visit.” No, we get to do this things!
- **When you lose the desire, you begin to grumble. Test yourself.**
- They want to serve. Why? They love God’s people. They love God’s church.

Second, we’re not to serve for *shameful gain*, but *eagerly*.

- Faithful pastors are motivated by the sheer love of the work.
- This doesn’t mean pastors shouldn’t be compensated (cf., 1 Tim 5:17-18), but their motivation is not gain (2 Cor 4:2). See 1 Sam 8:1-3
- Further, pastors shouldn’t play **favorites** in the congregation based on the wealthiness of members.
- **The New Testament often ties false teachers and unfaithful leaders with an unhealthy love of money (cf., 1 Tim 5:5).**

Finally, pastors shouldn’t be *domineering*, but *humble examples*.

- Ask students: what do you want to be when you grow up? One says, “A teacher.” Why? “So I can give hard assignments; so I could put people in a corner.” Another says, “I want to share what I’ve learned for the benefit of others; I want people to flourish in life.”

- o One desires a position to domineer; the other to enrich others.
- o No one should enter the office of elder to control and dominate.
- The desire for **power and control often leads to toxic church environments.**
- **Christian leadership is not lordship; it's about humbly following Jesus and inviting others to follow you** (cf., Mk 10:42-45; 1 Tim 4:12).
- **Leading by example** is an essential aspect of pastoral leadership (cf., Matt 23:11; Phil 2:3-4, 5-8).
- See **1 Timothy 4:12** - **less likely to despise your youth if they admire your example**
- Domineering attitudes and actions have no place in **pastoral leadership.**
 - **Jesus, "Gentiles lord it over you" but you must be a servant leader (Mark 10).**
 - **Pharisees were horrible examples, of demanding of people things that weren't biblical, and things they didn't even do themselves**
- Pastors must not be characterized by **pride, selfishness, manipulation, threats, intimidation, or structural power-plays.**
- **But rather, exemplary in love, speech, faith, purity (1 Tim 4:12)**
 - **I love a minister whose face invites me to make him my friend ... on whose doorstep you read "Welcome," not "Beware of Dog." Give me the man around whom the children come.... An individual who doesn't have a friendly, cheerful manner about him had better be an undertaker, and bury the dead, for he will never succeed in influencing the living.... A man must have a great heart if he is to have a great congregation.... When a man has a large, loving heart, men go to him as ships to a haven.... Such a man is hearty in private as well as in public; he is not cold and fishy, but he is warm as your own fireside. No pride and selfish chill when you approach him; he has his doors all open to receive you, and you are at home with him at once. Such men I would persuade you to be, every one of you. (Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures*)**
 - o **May the Lord raise up more leaders like this.**
- **We should remember this when reading what Peter says about being "subject to elders" (1 Pet 5:5). He has humble pastors who lead by example in mind.**

C. The Reward (5:4)

- Being a pastor is a great challenge, and **it's easy to despair in certain seasons of life.**
 - o **Pastors are tempted to lose heart over lack of church growth, people leaving the church, lack of conversions, criticism, attack, gossip, false accusations, and more.**
 - o They can be prone to deep **depression** and great **anxiety** (Covid has only increased this).
- It's almost weekly that I hear of another minister leaving ministry, and it's a sobering reminder that I could be next if I don't watch my life.
- **I used to be very ambitious in my thirties, but now in my mid-forties, I just want to finish well! I want to make it to the end.**

In order to make it to the end, one thing is for sure, pastors need to **keep their eyes on Jesus.** Peter says, "And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).

- Notice Jesus is the real “Senior Pastor” (cf., Heb 13:20) and he will reward the faithful service of elders.
- **Shepherds are also sheep, and they depend upon the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and they too are looking for the glorious coming of Jesus, like every other Christian.**

When Jesus returns, Peter says these faithful pastors who lived out verses 2–3 will receive “the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet 5:4b).

- Peter contrasted the crown elders will receive with the leafy, fading crowns bestowed in the Greco-Roman world, like at the Isthmian Games. The crown God gives will never fade.... To receive the greatest conceivable reward should motivate pastors to work faithfully.

One of the things you can do for your pastors is to help them keep this vision in their minds as they labor.

- **Help them never lose the wonder of our glorious hope.**
- **Sermon preparation is exhausting, lonely, and often unrewarding; pastoral care is often unnoticed and draining; but the Chief Shepherd sees such faithful work and he will reward it.**
- **As you encourage them in this way, remind yourself that Jesus sees your faithfulness as well (2 Cor 5:10; Heb 10:36; 1 Pet 1:9).**

#2: A Word to Members (5:5)

Peter goes on to say: “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’” (1 Pet 5:5).

Peter seems to be singling out those who may be more inclined to not follow the elders in humility (“you who are younger”).

- **Older, more mature Christians will ideally have a healthy view of biblical leadership and will be less inclined to create problems for pastors and the church.**
- When you have faithful shepherds leading well, then you should humbly submit to their leadership.
- **Submission is an important aspect of our Christian discipleship (Rom 13:1; Eph 5:21ff; Ti 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13, 17) and it requires an attitude humility.**

This doesn’t mean the elders are always right, or that they will always do things well and are therefore beyond correction (eg, Gal 2:11-14).

- **In Acts 6, the apostles were neglecting the Greek speaking widows in the congregation and this was brought to their attention.**
 - They didn’t intend for this to happen surely, but it was.
- **If the apostles had weaknesses and blind spots, then I’m quite sure I do!**
- **What humility before leaders means is that when you do need to have a conversation, and when correction needs to happen, it is carried out humbly and biblically not haughtily and hatefully (1 Tim 5:19-20).**

This is one of a handful of texts that describe how one should relate to pastors.

Let me remind you of a few others.

How might one humbly relate to pastors practically? 3 Texts Are Worth Noting.

1. Respect faithful pastors. (1 Thess 5:12-13)

- Paul tells the Thessalonians, “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (1 Thess 5:12-13).
- If you see leadership being done in a way that reflects biblical principles and reflects the example of Jesus, then respect such leaders.
- The church is called to “outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom 12:10b) and that calling extends to pastoral leaders (1 Tim 5:17).
 - **Respect them by being attentive to their teaching;**
 - **By refusing to participating in rumors and backbiting (and do what you can to end divisive gossip and complaints!);**
 - **Respect them by honoring their office, knowing that it’s established by God for your good.**

2. Love your pastors. (1 Thess 5:13b)

- Paul says, “esteem them highly in love” (1 Thess 5:13).
- The honor given to **pastors isn’t a distant honor, but a warm honor.**
- There should be deep affection between pastors and members (2 Cor 6:11-13).
- Pastors shouldn’t withhold affection for members and members shouldn’t withhold affection from pastors, and all members should “Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters” (Rom 12:10a).

3. Be thankful for the teaching and example of faithful pastors. (Heb 13:7)

- The writer of Hebrews says, “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7).
- The idea of imitation may sound cultish, but the point isn’t that you form a personality cult, but rather consider leaders’ conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Tim 4:12) and imitate that kind of life.

4. Be a joy to pastor. (Heb 13:17)

- The writer of Hebrews says, “Obey your leaders and 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 and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb 13:17).
- **Avoid being a burden by constantly opposing his teaching, by refusing to attend gatherings, by being quarrelsome, by failing to contribute to the church’s ministry financially, by refusing to engage in mission, or by causing division in the church with your words (whether in person or online).**
- I can truly say that pastoring here is “joy” because of the faithfulness and care of our members.
- Thank you for being such a blessing to us.

5. Pray for your pastors. (Selected texts: Eph 6; Col 4; 1 Thess 5:25)

- A careful look at the task of pastors should naturally cause us to pray for them.
- And is there anything better that you could do for a pastor than this?
- When someone asked Spurgeon what was the secret to his effectiveness, he said, “My people pray for me.”

#3: A Word to Everyone (5:5b)

This attitude of humility should be pursued by **both leader and member** in the church, and Peter gives us an additional reason for this pursuit saying, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God gives grace to the humble’” (1 Pet 5:5b).

- **This image of clothing speaks of adorning oneself with humility before God and others.**
- **One wouldn’t dare walk without clothes in public, and a Christian shouldn’t conceive of relating to others without being cloaked in humility.**

Peter goes on to write of our reverence before God, and our humble confidence in the love of God, in the following verses (which we’ll consider more closely next week) saying, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pet 5:6-7).

- **As we consider God’s might and God’s love, we experience awe and gratitude.**
- **Out of this heart, we are able to walk in humility toward one another in the church.**
- **So let us think daily on God’s greatness, and let us offer our concerns to God daily, in order to enjoy sweet fellowship with God and his people.**

Pastors cannot lead like Jesus apart from humility, and members cannot serve rightly without humility.

- **What’s more, we need God’s enabling grace moment by moment.**
- **And the way in which we experience grace is through humility, as our God “gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5b; Jam 4:7).**
- **Who doesn’t need more grace!**
 - **We need God’s empowerment to deal with Satan (1 Pet 5:8) and suffering (1 Pet 5:9).**
 - **We need God’s enabling grace to be faithful to the end (1 Pet 5:10).**

The pattern for humility and the pattern for Shepherding is Jesus himself.

- **The one who humbled himself, taking the form of a servant, by becoming obedient to the point of death...**
- **He gave himself the title, “The Good Shepherd”**

John 10:10–18:

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep [**sacrifice/substitution**].

12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep [**Jesus doesn't flee; he's with us; like sheep, we're dependent upon him our entire lives**].

14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me [**we're known by the Good Shepherd**],

15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep [**What love!**].

16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also [**are you part of his flock? He's gathering more from around the globe**], and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord [the power of the Shepherd]. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again [**he is the exalted Shepherd!**].

And he will lead us into glory.

Revelation 7:17: For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”