

## The Books of 1 and 2 Peter, Teacher's Guide

### Lesson 9: Shepherds, Humility, and the Adversary

#### 1 Peter 5:1-14

##### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Peter 5 brings the letter home with three great themes: the godly leadership of elders, the call to humility for all, and the spiritual warfare in which the church stands firm. Doctrinally, be ready to teach the New Testament pattern of church leadership, a plurality of elders (also called shepherds and overseers) who lead the local congregation not by domineering but by example, under Christ the chief Shepherd. This is the God-ordained structure of the Lord's church, and the qualifications and character Peter names here complement those in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Be ready also to teach the reality of the devil as a personal adversary, the nature of the spiritual battle, and the believer's call to resist him firm in the faith, neither denying his existence nor giving him more credit than Scripture does. Peter's closing promise that God will restore and establish His people 'after you have suffered a little while' reinforces the letter's theology that present suffering is brief against eternal glory, and that final salvation is God's sure work in those who remain faithful.

Pastorally, the chapter is rich soil for formation. Peter, the battle-scarred old apostle, models the very humility he commands, writing as a 'fellow elder' rather than pulling rank. The call to clothe ourselves with humility, to cast our anxieties on a God who cares, and to stay watchful against a prowling enemy speaks to the daily inner life of every disciple. Connect humility and anxiety as Peter does: we worry because we grasp, and we can cast our cares only as we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. Help students feel both the warmth of a God who cares for them and the seriousness of an adversary who hunts them.

Since this closes the letter, take time in the final question to help students look back across the whole of 1 Peter and name what God has been forming in them. Aim to send them out humble, watchful, resting their anxieties on a caring God, and confident that the God of all grace will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish them. The disciple we are forming leads and follows in humility, stays awake to the real battle, and entrusts both his cares and his future to the God to whom belongs the dominion forever.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*Peter, "a fellow elder," charges the elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight... not under compulsion, but willingly... not for shameful gain, but eagerly... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples" (vv. 1-3). What does this teach*

*about the work and character of elders in the Lord's church, and what kind of leadership does God want over His people?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Begin with the dignity and weight of the eldership. Peter addresses the elders (presbuteroi), whom he also describes by their function of 'exercising oversight' (the work of the episkopos, overseer) and 'shepherding' (the work of the poimen, pastor). These are not three offices but three words for the same God-ordained role: mature, qualified men who lead and care for a local congregation. Note that Peter assumes a plurality, 'the elders among you,' which matches the New Testament pattern of multiple shepherds in each church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

Walk through Peter's three contrasts, each naming a temptation and its cure. Not 'under compulsion, but willingly': shepherding is not a grudging duty but a glad calling. Not 'for shameful gain, but eagerly': leaders must not be in it for money, status, or self-interest, but for love of the flock. Not 'domineering... but being examples': the elder leads not by throwing his weight around but by the quality of his own life. Each contrast guards the office from a real and common distortion.

Stress the shepherd image, which Peter knew personally. The risen Christ had restored him with the charge, 'feed my sheep' (John 21). A shepherd does not drive the sheep from behind with a whip; he leads from the front, knows them by name, and lays down his life for them. This is the heart of godly oversight: tender, sacrificial, exemplary care, not corporate command. Such leadership reflects the chief Shepherd Himself.

Apply it to how a congregation views and supports its elders. Members should honor and follow shepherds who lead this way, and shepherds should examine themselves against Peter's standard. The health of a church depends in large part on whether its leaders shepherd as Peter describes or merely manage and control.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The God-ordained role of elders, who are also shepherds and overseers (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5–9)
- A plurality of qualified men leading each local congregation (Acts 14:23)
- Leadership marked by willingness, eagerness, and example, not compulsion, greed, or domination
- Christ as the chief Shepherd whom under-shepherds imitate (John 21:15–17)
- Sacrificial, exemplary care as the heart of biblical oversight

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What are the three temptations Peter warns elders against, and their cures?
- How does the shepherd image reshape what church leadership should look like?
- How should a congregation honor and support shepherds who lead this way?

## Question 2

### Student Question:

*Whether or not you are a leader, Peter's vision of leading by example rather than by control applies to all of us, as parents, workers, and members. Where are you tempted to control or domineer rather than to serve and set an example, and what would change if you led the way Peter describes?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies Peter's leadership ethic to everyone, since all of us lead someone, children, coworkers, younger believers, or simply influence those around us. The temptation to control rather than serve is not limited to elders; it lives in every heart.

Help students locate their own domineering tendencies. Parents can rule by intimidation rather than example; spouses can manipulate; capable members can run roughshod over others to get their way. Wherever we have a little power, we are tempted to use it for ourselves rather than to serve. Naming the specific relationship makes the temptation concrete.

Move toward leading by example. Ask each student where they tend to control and what it would look like to lead instead the way Peter describes, by humble, sacrificial example, in that exact relationship this week. The shepherd-heart is for every Christian, not just for elders.

### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The universal temptation to control wherever we have power
- Leading by example as the calling of every believer, not only elders (1 Corinthians 11:1)
- Service over self-interest in the use of any authority
- The shepherd-heart applied to home, work, and church

### Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to control or domineer rather than serve?
- What relationship most needs you to lead by example instead?
- What would servant leadership look like there this week?

## Question 3

### Student Question:

*Peter promises that when "the chief Shepherd appears," faithful shepherds "will receive the unfading crown of glory" (v. 4). What does it teach us that Christ is called the "chief Shepherd," and how does serving with an eye on His appearing and reward shape the way we serve now?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter calls Christ 'the chief Shepherd,' a title that puts every human leader in his place. Elders are real shepherds, but they are under-shepherds; the flock is not theirs but God's, and they answer to the chief Shepherd for how they cared for His sheep. This both dignifies and sobers all who lead.

Note the eschatological motive: 'when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.' Faithful shepherding is often hard, thankless work in this life. Peter lifts the leader's eyes to the appearing of Christ and an unfading reward, in deliberate contrast to the 'shameful gain' some chase now. The true payoff of ministry is not earthly but comes from Christ at His return.

Apply the principle of serving with an eye on His appearing to all service, not just eldership. When we remember that the chief Shepherd sees and will reward, we can serve faithfully even when no one notices or thanks us. The unfading crown outlasts every fading reward the world offers. Ask students how serving for Christ's 'well done' rather than human applause would change their motives.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Christ as the chief Shepherd to whom under-shepherds answer (Hebrews 13:20)
- The flock belonging to God, entrusted to leaders as a stewardship
- The unfading crown of glory as the true reward of faithful service (1 Corinthians 9:25)
- Serving in view of Christ's appearing rather than earthly gain

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it change to know Christ is the chief Shepherd over every leader?
- How does serving with an eye on His appearing reshape your motives?
- Where do you need to serve for Christ's reward rather than human applause?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Peter calls everyone to "clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another" (v. 5). Humility is something we put on deliberately, like a garment. Where in your relationships do you most need to deliberately "put on" humility this week, and what would that look like in practice?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Peter uses a vivid image: 'clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility.' The word he chooses pictures tying on a servant's apron, and it is hard not to hear an echo of the night Jesus tied a towel around His waist and washed the disciples' feet, Peter's feet among them. Humility is something we deliberately put on, like a garment, and it is the uniform of those who serve.

Stress the 'all of you.' Humility is not only for the young toward the old, or members toward elders; it is mutual, the disposition every believer wears toward every other. A church clothed in humility is a church where no one stands on his rights, where people prefer one another, where service flows in every direction.

Make it concrete and deliberate. Because humility is something we 'put on,' it can be chosen in specific moments: choosing to listen rather than insist, to serve rather than be served, to admit fault, to defer. Ask each student where a relationship most needs them to deliberately put on humility this week, and what one humble act would look like there.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Humility as a garment to be deliberately put on (Colossians 3:12)
- The mutual humility of all believers toward one another (Philippians 2:3)
- Jesus washing the disciples' feet as the pattern of servant humility (John 13:1-17)
- Humility expressed in specific, chosen acts

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean that humility is something we 'put on' like clothing?
- Where do you most need to deliberately put on humility this week?
- What one humble act would that require of you?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*Peter quotes Scripture: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (v. 5). What does it mean that God actively "opposes" the proud, and why is humility the doorway to receiving God's grace? How have you seen pride shut a person off from grace?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Peter quotes Proverbs: 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Sit with the startling word 'opposes.' God does not merely dislike pride; He actively sets Himself against it, ranges Himself in battle array against it. To be proud is to have God Himself as your opponent, which is the most dangerous position a creature can occupy.

Explain why humility is the doorway to grace. Grace is a gift, and a gift can only be received by open, empty hands. Pride keeps its hands full of its own supposed merit, achievement, and self-sufficiency, and so has no room to receive. Humility comes empty-handed and therefore goes away filled. The same grace God pours out on the humble simply cannot land on the proud, who think they do not need it.

Apply it pastorally. Pride is the original sin and the most disguised one; it hides behind competence, religiosity, and even false modesty. Ask students where they have seen pride shut

a person off from grace, in others and in themselves, and where their own self-sufficiency may be keeping God's grace at arm's length. The way back is always the same: humble yourself, and receive.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God actively opposing the proud (James 4:6; Proverbs 3:34)
- Humility as the necessary condition for receiving grace
- Pride as self-sufficiency that has no room for grace
- The disguised, pervasive nature of pride

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean that God actively 'opposes' the proud?
- Why can grace only be received by the humble?
- Where have you seen pride shut a person off from grace, including yourself?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Peter says to "humble yourselves... under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you" (v. 6). Where are you tempted to exalt or promote yourself rather than to humble yourself and trust God's timing? What makes waiting for God to lift you up so difficult?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Peter says, 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you.' The promise is real, God will lift up the humble, but on His timing, not ours. The phrase 'the mighty hand of God' recalls the Exodus; the same powerful hand that delivered Israel is at work in our lives, and we are to place ourselves trustingly under it.

Expose the temptation to self-exaltation. The world says promote yourself, demand recognition, climb, grasp. Peter says the opposite: humble yourself and let God do the lifting in His time. This requires deep trust, because self-exaltation feels active and effective while waiting for God feels passive and slow.

Help students name where they are tempted to grasp rather than wait. It may be a longing for recognition, a position, vindication after being wronged, or simply being noticed. Ask what makes God's timing so hard to trust, and what it would look like to humble themselves and leave the exalting to Him this week.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God's promise to exalt the humble in His own time (Luke 14:11; 18:14)
- The 'mighty hand of God' as the powerful, delivering hand we submit to

- Self-exaltation versus trusting God to lift us up
- Waiting on God's timing as an act of faith

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where are you tempted to exalt yourself rather than wait on God?
- What makes trusting God's timing so difficult?
- What would it look like to leave the 'lifting up' to God this week?

### **Question 7**

#### **Student Question:**

*Peter commands, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith" (vv. 8–9). What does this teach about the reality of the devil, the nature of the spiritual battle, and how a Christian is to resist him?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Peter sounds the alarm: 'Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.' Teach the reality of the devil plainly. He is not a metaphor for impersonal evil but a real, personal adversary who actively opposes God's people. To deny his existence is to be ambushed by an enemy we refuse to see.

Yet keep the biblical proportion. Peter pictures the devil as a roaring, prowling lion, dangerous but not sovereign. He 'prowls' and 'seeks,' which means he is on the hunt but does not have unlimited power; he can be resisted and made to flee (James 4:7). Avoid both errors: ignoring the enemy, and giving him so much attention that we live in fear. The devil is real, but Christ has already triumphed over him (1 Peter 3:22; Colossians 2:15).

Teach how to resist. Peter says, 'Resist him, firm in your faith.' We resist not by our own strength or by clever technique but by standing firm in the faith, holding to Christ and His truth, staying sober and watchful. Sobriety and watchfulness are the opposite of the drowsy, distracted, self-indulgent state in which the lion finds easy prey. The alert, faith-anchored believer is not devoured.

Apply it concretely. Ask where the enemy tends to attack each student, in discouragement, temptation, division, fear, and what staying 'sober-minded and watchful' and 'firm in the faith' would look like there. Resistance is active, daily, and grounded in dependence on the Christ who has already won.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The devil as a real, personal adversary, not mere metaphor (Ephesians 6:11–12)

- The biblical proportion: dangerous but defeated, to be resisted not feared (1 Peter 3:22; Colossians 2:15)
- Resisting the devil by standing firm in the faith (James 4:7)
- Sobriety and watchfulness as protection against the prowling enemy

### Discussion Prompts

- How should a Christian take the devil seriously without living in fear?
- What does it mean to resist him 'firm in your faith'?
- Where does the enemy most often attack you, and how can you stay watchful there?

## Question 8

### Student Question:

*Peter says to resist the devil "firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (v. 9). How does remembering that other believers are facing the same battle help you stand firm? Who could you stand alongside, or draw strength from, in your own struggles?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter adds a comforting reason to stand firm: 'knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.' The struggling believer is tempted to feel singled out and alone, as if no one else faces this. Peter reminds them they are part of a worldwide family enduring the same battle.

Draw out the strength that comes from solidarity. Suffering isolates; fellowship in suffering sustains. Knowing that brothers and sisters across the world, and across the centuries, have stood firm under the same pressures steadies us. We are not the first to walk this road, and we do not walk it alone.

Apply it relationally. Ask students who they might stand alongside in their struggles, a fellow believer to confide in, pray with, and draw strength from, and whom they might strengthen in return. Part of God's design for resisting the lion is the brotherhood; the sheep stay safest together, not scattered and alone.

### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The worldwide brotherhood enduring the same sufferings (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Fellowship in suffering as a source of strength against isolation
- The communion of saints across the world and the ages
- Standing firm together rather than alone (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

### Discussion Prompts

- How does knowing others face the same battle help you stand firm?
- Who could you stand alongside in your current struggles?
- Whom might God be calling you to strengthen in return?

## Question 9

### Student Question:

*Peter promises, “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (v. 10). What does this verse teach about God’s purpose in our suffering, the certainty of our final restoration, and the relationship between suffering “a little while” now and “eternal glory” in Christ?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal and pastoral high point of the chapter, a promise to memorize: ‘After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.’ Notice first the timeframe: ‘a little while.’ The whole letter has set present suffering against eternal glory, and here Peter weighs them one last time. However long our trials feel, they are ‘a little while’ measured against the ‘eternal glory’ to which God has called us.

Dwell on the title ‘the God of all grace.’ Behind every trial stands not a stingy or indifferent God but the God of all grace, the source of every kindness we need. And He has ‘called you to his eternal glory in Christ.’ Our final destination is not merely survival but glory, and the call is sure because it rests on God’s purpose, not our performance.

Walk through the four verbs, which build like hammer blows of assurance: restore (mend what suffering has broken, like setting a bone or repairing a net), confirm (make firm and stable), strengthen (fill with strength), establish (set on a sure foundation). And mark the emphatic ‘he himself’ will do it. Our final restoration is not our achievement but God’s sure work. This is the ground of perseverance: we hold on because He holds us, and He has promised to complete what He began (Philippians 1:6).

Hold together suffering and glory rightly. Peter does not say suffering is meaningless or that God merely tolerates it; God uses the ‘little while’ of suffering as the very means through which He restores, confirms, strengthens, and establishes His people for glory. The fire is not the enemy of our establishing; in God’s hands it is part of it. Send students out resting in the God of all grace who will Himself finish His work in them.

### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Present suffering as ‘a little while’ against ‘eternal glory’ (2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 8:18)
- ‘The God of all grace’ as the source behind every trial

- God's effectual call to His eternal glory in Christ
- God Himself restoring, confirming, strengthening, and establishing His people
- Final perseverance as God's sure work in the faithful (Philippians 1:6)
- Suffering as the means God uses to establish us, not merely an obstacle

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What weight does 'a little while' carry against 'eternal glory'?
- What do the four verbs (restore, confirm, strengthen, establish) promise you?
- How does 'he himself' doing this work steady your assurance?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Look back across the whole letter, which Peter closes here. From a living hope, through holiness, suffering, and submission, to humble shepherding and resistance to the adversary, name one specific way Jesus has been forming you through 1 Peter. What single truth from this letter do you most need to carry forward, and how will you let the God of all grace establish you in it?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Use this capstone to look back across the whole letter, since Peter is closing it. Trace the journey: a living hope born of the resurrection, a call to holiness purchased by precious blood, the identity of a chosen people, submission and the example of Christ, godly homes, suffering for righteousness, baptism into the risen Lord, living for God's will, sharing Christ's sufferings, and finally humble shepherding and steadfast resistance to the adversary. The letter has been one long lifting of suffering eyes to glory.

Press for personal, specific formation. Ask each student to name one way Jesus has been forming them across this study of 1 Peter, and the single truth from the whole letter they most need to carry forward. The goal is not to remember everything but to be changed in something.

Close as Peter does, with grace and peace and the dominion of God. Peter ends, 'To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen... Peace to all of you who are in Christ.' Send students out humble, watchful, resting their anxieties on a caring God, and confident that the God of all grace will Himself establish them. Remind them that the same God who held Peter through his failures and made him a shepherd will hold them all the way home.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The unifying message of 1 Peter: present suffering lifted to eternal glory in Christ
- The integration of hope, holiness, suffering, humility, and watchfulness
- God's sure work of establishing His people for glory

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Looking back over the whole letter, how has Jesus been forming you?
- What single truth from 1 Peter do you most need to carry forward?
- How will you let the God of all grace establish you in it?