

1 Peter, Teacher's Guide

Week 10: Humility, Shepherding, and Steadfast Faith

1Peter 5:1–14

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Peter 5 brings the letter to its close with appeals that are deceptively simple and doctrinally rich. What is at stake here includes the God-given role and character of elders as shepherds of the flock, the lordship of Christ as the chief Shepherd, the centrality of humility in the Christian life, the reality of the devil and spiritual warfare, and the keeping work of the God of all grace who will restore and establish His people after suffering. The teacher should be ready to handle the New Testament pattern of eldership and shepherding leadership, the call to mutual humility and submission, the sober reality of a personal adversary, and the assurance that God Himself completes the work in those who remain faithful.

This passage is also the formational summit of the letter, gathering its themes into a few memorable calls: be humble, cast your anxieties on God, stay alert, resist the devil, stand firm. Peter weaves humility through the whole chapter, the humility of leaders who serve rather than domineer, of members who submit, of all believers who clothe themselves in it, and of anxious hearts that trust God rather than carry their own burdens. The teacher's task is to help students embrace humility as the shape of the Christ-formed life, to actually cast their anxieties on a God who cares, to take the spiritual battle seriously, and to rest in the God of all grace as they remain faithful to the end.

Keep both targets in view. Students should leave with a clear grasp of biblical leadership, humility, spiritual warfare, and God's keeping grace, and with a concrete resolve about a particular pride to lay down, an anxiety to surrender, or a battle in which to stand firm. As this study of 1 Peter concludes, the disciple we are forming is someone who, clothed in humility and resting in the God of all grace, can face suffering and opposition with steadfast faith, growing ever more into the likeness of the chief Shepherd.

Question 1

Student Question:

Peter charges the elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (vv. 1–3). What does this teach about the God-given role of elders and the kind of leadership Christ wants in His church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter addresses the elders directly, and the teacher should use this as an opportunity to set out the New Testament pattern of church leadership clearly. The terms Peter uses are significant: he calls them elders (presbyteroi), tells them to shepherd (pastor) the flock, and describes their work as exercising oversight (the work of an overseer, or bishop). In the New Testament these are not three offices but three terms for the same role: elder, shepherd (pastor), and overseer all describe the men God appoints to lead a local congregation (compare Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7).

Draw out the shepherding character of the role. Elders are not a board of directors or a council of officials; they are shepherds of God’s flock. The image carries feeding, guiding, protecting, and tending the sheep, knowing them and caring for them at cost to themselves, after the pattern of the chief Shepherd. The flock belongs to God (“the flock of God that is among you”); elders are undershepherds caring for what is His, accountable to Him.

Note carefully the manner Peter prescribes, because it defines godly leadership. Elders are to serve willingly, not under compulsion; eagerly, not for shameful gain; and as examples, “not domineering over those in your charge.” This rules out leadership that is reluctant, money-driven, or heavy-handed. Christ wants shepherds who lead by example and humble service, not by throwing their weight around. This is the same servant leadership Jesus taught when He said the greatest must be the servant of all (Mark 10:42–45).

Mention, as fits the congregation, the New Testament qualifications for this role. Scripture sets out the character qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), and assigns this shepherding and overseeing role to qualified men who meet them. Help students grow in faith by valuing and honoring godly eldership as God’s gift to the church, and by praying for and supporting their shepherds, while also holding leaders to the Christlike, servant character Peter describes here.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Elder, shepherd (pastor), and overseer as terms for one God-given role (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7)
- Elders as undershepherds caring for the flock that belongs to God
- Leadership marked by willingness, eagerness, and example, not compulsion, gain, or domineering
- Servant leadership after the pattern of Christ (Mark 10:42–45)
- The character qualifications for elders, a role for qualified men (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9)
- Honoring, supporting, and praying for godly shepherds

Discussion Prompts

- How do the terms elder, shepherd, and overseer describe one role in the New Testament?
- What kind of leadership does Christ want, and what does He rule out?

- How should members honor and support the shepherds God gives the church?

Question 2

Student Question:

Peter calls elders to lead “not domineering... but being examples” (v. 3), and calls the younger to be subject to the elders (v. 5). Wherever you fall, how do you respond to spiritual leadership and authority in the church? Where might pride, in leading or in following, need to give way to humility?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the teaching on leadership into self-examination for everyone, since Peter addresses both elders (vv. 1–4) and the younger and all the members (v. 5). However we relate to authority in the church, our hearts are tested by it.

Help those who lead, or who aspire to lead in any capacity, to examine themselves against Peter’s standard. The temptation in leadership is always toward domineering, toward using position for control, recognition, or getting one’s own way. Even outside formal office, we can lord it over others in a committee, a ministry, a family, a friendship. Peter calls for the humility of an example, not the pride of a boss.

Help those who follow to examine their hearts as well. Peter calls the younger to be subject to the elders, and submission to godly leadership also requires humility. Pride in a follower shows up as resistance to authority, criticism, an unwillingness to be led, or a quiet superiority that thinks it could do better. Submitting to the shepherds God has given, while they lead faithfully, is itself an act of humility before God.

Move toward a concrete step. Invite each student to identify where pride most shows up in their relationship to church authority, whether in leading or in following, and one way humility could replace it this week: a leader serving rather than controlling, a member supporting and praying for the elders rather than criticizing. This is real growth in the humility that runs through the whole chapter.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to domineer in any position of leadership
- Leading by example and service rather than control
- Humility required in submitting to godly leadership
- Pride in a follower: resistance, criticism, quiet superiority
- Concrete humility in our relationship to church authority

Discussion Prompts

- How do you respond to spiritual leadership and authority in the church?
- Where might pride, in leading or in following, need to give way to humility?
- What would humility look like for you this week in relation to church leadership?

Question 3

Student Question:

Peter says faithful elders will receive “the unfading crown of glory” when “the chief Shepherd appears” (v. 4). What does it mean that Jesus is the chief Shepherd, and how does His coming shape the way both leaders and members serve in the church now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter calls Jesus “the chief Shepherd,” and the title is full of meaning. The elders are shepherds, but they are undershepherds; over them all stands the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Himself. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), and He remains the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). The whole flock, leaders and members alike, belongs to Him.

Draw out what His chief shepherding means for the church now. Because Jesus is the chief Shepherd, no human leader is the ultimate authority; all serve under Him and answer to Him. This both dignifies and limits human leadership: dignifies it, because elders do the chief Shepherd’s work; limits it, because they must lead as He leads and according to His word, never as lords over the flock. It also comforts the members: their truest Shepherd is not any fallible man but the Lord Himself, who never fails.

Focus on the promise tied to His appearing: “when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” The reward for faithful service is given at Christ’s return. This sets the horizon for all Christian service. Elders serve now in view of giving account to the chief Shepherd then; the reward is not earthly recognition but an unfading crown from His hand. The same forward look applies to every believer’s service.

Help students grow in faith by serving with the chief Shepherd’s appearing in view. Whether they lead or follow, their labor is for Him and will be assessed and rewarded by Him. This frees them from working for human applause and steadies them when their service goes unnoticed or unappreciated by people. The chief Shepherd sees, and He is coming.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus as the chief Shepherd over all undershepherds (John 10:11; 1 Peter 2:25)
- All leaders and members belonging to and accountable to Christ
- Human leadership both dignified and limited under the chief Shepherd
- The unfading crown of glory given at Christ’s appearing
- Serving now in view of giving account to the chief Shepherd then

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Jesus is the chief Shepherd over all church leaders?
- How does His coming shape the way leaders and members serve now?
- How does serving for the chief Shepherd free us from working for human applause?

Question 4

Student Question:

Peter commands every believer to “clothe yourselves... with humility toward one another” (v. 5), picturing humility as a garment we put on. Where is pride most visible in your life right now, in your reactions, your need to be right, your comparisons with others? What would it look like to put on humility this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter pictures humility as clothing: “clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.” The verb suggests tying on a garment, perhaps echoing the night Jesus tied a towel around Himself and washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:4–5). Humility is something we deliberately put on, day by day, in our dealings with one another.

Help students recognize where pride actually shows up, since pride rarely announces itself. It appears in the need to be right, the inability to apologize, the comparison that must come out ahead, the defensiveness when corrected, the quiet contempt for those we consider beneath us, the craving for recognition. Naming the specific form pride takes in our reactions is the first step to putting it off.

Move toward the deliberate act of clothing ourselves in humility. This is not natural; it is chosen. It looks like serving without being asked, listening before speaking, admitting fault, deferring to others, refusing to compare, and treating others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Invite students to name where pride is most visible in their life right now and one concrete way they could put on humility this week. Since humility threads through the whole chapter, this is the heart of its formational call.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Humility as a garment deliberately put on, echoing Christ washing feet (John 13:4–5)
- The hidden forms of pride: defensiveness, comparison, the need to be right, craving recognition
- Naming the specific form pride takes as the first step to putting it off
- Concrete acts of humility: serving, listening, admitting fault, deferring (Philippians 2:3)

Discussion Prompts

- Where is pride most visible in your life right now?
- What does it look like, practically, to clothe yourself with humility?
- What is one concrete way you could put on humility this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Peter says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you” (vv. 5–6). What does it mean that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble, and how do we humble ourselves under His mighty hand?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” This is a weighty statement about how God relates to the human heart. Pride sets a person against God, and God against the person; humility opens the channel through which God’s grace flows. The same truth appears in James 4:6 and runs throughout Scripture.

Explain why God opposes the proud. Pride is, at root, the attempt to be our own god, to run our own lives, to take credit that belongs to God, to refuse dependence on Him. It is the original sin and the essence of all sin. God actively resists it, not out of petty offense, but because pride is destructive and false; it sets the creature against the Creator. The proud, by their very posture, close themselves off from the grace they most need.

Explain how God gives grace to the humble. Humility is the honest recognition of who we are before God: creatures, sinners saved by grace, wholly dependent on Him. The humble are able to receive grace because they are not clinging to their own sufficiency. To “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God” is to submit to His rule and His dealings, including the hard providences of suffering, trusting that He is mighty and good, and that “at the proper time he may exalt you.” We do not grasp for exaltation; we humble ourselves and leave the lifting up to God, in His time.

Help students grow in faith by seeing humility as the doorway to grace. The path to receiving more of God is not achievement but lowliness, the surrender of our pretended self-sufficiency. Inviting students to humble themselves under God’s mighty hand, especially in a hard providence they have been resisting, is both a doctrinal truth and a practical step toward the grace they need.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6)
- Pride as the attempt to be our own god, the essence of sin
- The proud closing themselves off from grace by their very posture

- Humbling ourselves under God’s mighty hand, including in suffering
- Leaving exaltation to God in His proper time
- Humility as the doorway through which grace flows

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God oppose the proud, and what does that pride actually look like?
- How does humility open us to receive God’s grace?
- What would it mean to humble yourself under God’s mighty hand in a hard situation?

Question 6

Student Question:

Peter ties casting our anxieties on God directly to humbling ourselves under His hand, “because he cares for you” (vv. 6–7). What anxiety are you holding onto as if everything depends on you? How is refusing to cast it on God actually a form of pride, and what would trusting Him look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter connects two things our minds usually keep apart: humbling ourselves under God’s hand and casting our anxieties on Him. In the Greek, casting our cares is the natural expression of humbling ourselves; they are one motion of the soul. This question presses that connection into the student’s actual worries.

Show how clinging to anxiety is a form of pride. We do not usually think of worry as pride, but Peter’s logic suggests it. When we refuse to cast our cares on God and insist on carrying them ourselves, we are, in effect, acting as though the outcome depends on us, as though we must manage what only God can handle. Humility says, I am not in control, but God is, and He cares; so I hand this to Him. Anxiety often masks a proud self-reliance that will not let go.

Dwell on the tender ground Peter gives: “because he cares for you.” We cast our anxieties on God not into the void but onto a Father who genuinely cares about us personally. This is not a technique for managing stress but an act of trust in a caring God. The God who is mighty (v. 6) is also tender (v. 7); His power is exercised on behalf of those who humble themselves before Him.

Move toward a concrete act of casting. Invite students to name the specific anxiety they are gripping most tightly, and to consider what it would actually look like to cast it on God this week, through honest prayer, through letting go of the need to control the outcome, through trusting His care in the face of uncertainty (Philippians 4:6–7). The aim is not the absence of concern but the daily, humble transfer of our cares to the One who carries them and us. This is real growth in trust.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Casting our cares on God as the expression of humbling ourselves
- Clinging to anxiety as a hidden form of proud self-reliance
- Humility as letting go of control and trusting God who is in control
- Casting cares onto a Father who genuinely cares for us (Philippians 4:6–7)
- The God who is mighty also being tender toward the humble

Discussion Prompts

- What anxiety are you holding onto as if everything depends on you?
- How can refusing to cast our cares on God be a form of pride?
- What would casting that anxiety on God actually look like this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Peter warns, “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 spiritual warfare, and how a Christian is to resist?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter shifts from comfort to warning: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” After the tenderness of verse 7, this is a bracing reminder that the Christian life is also a battle against a real and personal enemy.

Affirm the reality of the devil. Scripture presents Satan not as a symbol or a primitive way of talking about evil, but as a real, personal adversary who opposes God and His people. He is called the tempter, the accuser, the father of lies (Matthew 4:1–11; Revelation 12:10; John 8:44). To deny his reality is to disarm before an enemy who is very much present. The roaring lion image conveys both his ferocity and his aim: he seeks someone to devour, to destroy faith and ruin souls.

Explain how the devil works and how we resist. He prowls, looking for the unguarded and the isolated, which is why Peter calls for sober-mindedness and watchfulness. He often attacks through discouragement, temptation, accusation, division, and the pressure of suffering, the very trials this whole letter addresses. Peter’s command is to “resist him, firm in your faith.” We do not resist by our own strength or by fascination with the demonic, but by standing firm in faith, clinging to Christ and His word (compare Ephesians 6:10–18; James 4:7, “resist the devil, and he will flee from you”).

Add the encouragement Peter gives: we resist “knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.” We are not alone or uniquely

targeted; the whole family of believers fights the same battle. Help students grow in faith by taking the enemy seriously without fear, staying alert, staying connected to the body, and standing firm in faith, confident that the One who is in them is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The devil as a real, personal adversary, not a symbol (Matthew 4:1–11; John 8:44; Revelation 12:10)
- The roaring lion: his ferocity and his aim to devour faith
- His tactics: temptation, accusation, discouragement, division, the pressure of suffering
- Resisting firm in the faith, by Christ and His word (Ephesians 6:10–18; James 4:7)
- The encouragement that the whole brotherhood shares the same battle (1 John 4:4)

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it important to take the reality of the devil seriously?
- What are the devil's common tactics, and how does he seek to devour?
- What does it mean to resist him, firm in your faith?

Question 8

Student Question:

Peter says to resist the devil “firm in your faith,” knowing that fellow believers throughout the world are facing the same sufferings (vv. 8–9). Where is the enemy most actively working to discourage, isolate, or trip you up right now? What does standing firm look like in that specific battle?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the warning of verses 8–9 into present, personal battle. The enemy is not an abstraction; he works in specific ways in specific lives. This question asks students to identify where the fight is actually happening for them right now.

Help students discern the enemy's current line of attack. Peter names suffering as the context, and the devil often exploits hard seasons to discourage (whispering that God has abandoned us), to isolate (pulling us away from the church and into ourselves), to tempt (offering relief through sin), or to accuse (burying us under guilt and shame). Naming the specific way we are being pressed makes resistance possible; vague awareness of spiritual warfare does not.

Move toward standing firm in that specific battle. Resisting firm in the faith looks concrete: refusing to believe the lie that God has forsaken us, staying connected to the body rather than withdrawing, fleeing a particular temptation, answering accusation with the gospel of forgiveness, clinging to Scripture and prayer. Invite students to name where the enemy is most

active against them and one way they will stand firm this week, drawing on Christ, His word, and the fellowship of believers. This is real growth in a watchful, resilient faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discerning the enemy's specific line of attack in a hard season
- Common pressures: discouragement, isolation, temptation, accusation
- Standing firm through truth, fellowship, fleeing temptation, and the gospel
- Concrete resistance rather than vague awareness of warfare

Discussion Prompts

- Where is the enemy most actively working to discourage, isolate, or trip you up right now?
- How does naming the specific attack help you resist it?
- What does standing firm look like in that particular battle this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Peter ends, "And 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 teach about the purpose of suffering, the certainty of God's keeping work, and the call to remain faithful to the end, and how does it hold together God's power and our perseverance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson and a fitting climax to the whole letter. After all the calls to humility, watchfulness, and resistance, Peter lifts his readers' eyes to God Himself: "And 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." Several great truths converge here.

First, note the purpose and limit of suffering: "after you have suffered a little while." Suffering is real, but it is temporary, bounded by God, and brief in light of eternity. It is the prelude, not the end of the story. The God who calls His people to eternal glory uses the little while of suffering on the way to it. This frames all the suffering of the letter within God's good and eternal purpose.

Second, marvel at the keeping work of God. Peter piles up four verbs: God will "restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish" His people. This is God's own work, "he himself" will do it. He repairs what suffering has broken, makes His people firm and steady, supplies strength, and sets them on a solid foundation. The God of all grace does not merely save and then leave us to survive; He actively completes the work in those who are His (compare Philippians 1:6).

Third, hold together God's power and our perseverance, since both run through the letter. On the one hand, the keeping is God's work, our confidence rests in His grace and might, not in our own strength. On the other hand, this whole chapter has called us to humble ourselves, stay alert, resist the devil, and stand firm in faith. The two are not in tension. God establishes us as we continue in faith; His grace works through our active, dependent perseverance. This is the consistent biblical balance: we are kept by God's power, and we are called to keep ourselves in His love and remain faithful to the end. It guards equally against anxious self-reliance and against presumptuous carelessness.

Help students grow in faith by resting in the God of all grace while continuing to stand firm. As this study of 1 Peter closes, this verse is the note to end on: the suffering is for a little while; the glory is eternal; the God who called us will Himself complete what He began in all who remain faithful. To Him, as Peter says, "be the dominion forever and ever."

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Suffering as real but temporary, bounded by God ("a little while")
- God's call to His eternal glory in Christ as the goal of the whole journey
- The keeping work of the God of all grace: restore, confirm, strengthen, establish (Philippians 1:6)
- Salvation completed by God's own power, not merely our survival
- God's keeping power and our perseverance held together, not in tension
- Assurance that guards against both anxious self-reliance and careless presumption
- Faithfulness to the end as the path on which God establishes His people

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that suffering is only for "a little while" in light of God's eternal glory?
- How do the four verbs (restore, confirm, strengthen, establish) describe God's keeping work?
- How does this verse hold together God's power to keep us and our call to remain faithful?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole chapter, and over the whole letter. Peter calls us to humble service, humble submission, humble trust, watchful resistance, and steadfast faith in the God of all grace. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through 1 Peter 5, and through this study of 1 Peter. What is the truth from this letter you most need to carry forward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole chapter and the whole letter. Peter has called for humble service from leaders (vv. 1–4), humble submission and mutual humility from all (vv. 5–6),

humble trust that casts every care on a caring God (v. 7), watchful resistance against a real enemy (vv. 8–9), and steadfast confidence in the God of all grace who completes His work (vv. 10–11). The question asks each student to name one specific way Christ is forming them, through this chapter and through the entire study.

Resist generalities. Walk students back not only through chapter 5, the pride to lay down, the anxiety to cast on God, the battle in which to stand firm, but through the whole letter: the living hope, the call to holiness, their identity as God's people, honorable living before outsiders, following Christ in suffering, Christlike relationships, responding to opposition with hope, living for God's will, and rejoicing in trials. Invite each person to name the single truth from 1 Peter that they most need to carry forward.

Close the study by returning to its great aim: not merely to know 1 Peter but to be transformed by it, to become, like Peter himself, people who have passed through the fire and found the chief Shepherd holding them. Encourage each person to carry one truth forward, to keep returning to it, and to keep standing firm in the God of all grace, who has called them to His eternal glory in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Humility, trust, watchfulness, and steadfastness as the shape of the Christ-formed life
- Resting in the God of all grace while remaining faithful to the end
- The whole letter aimed at transformation, not merely information
- Self-examination leading to one truth carried forward

Discussion Prompts

- Which truth from 1 Peter 5, or from the whole letter, do you most need to carry forward?
- What one concrete step will you take to live in light of it?
- How can this group continue to support and pray for you beyond this study?