

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **Life in Exile: Clothe Yourselves With Humility (1 Peter 5)**

Welcome back to our verse-by-verse study through 1 Peter. Today we’re going to cover 1 Peter chapter 5. In this section, Peter turns his attention to the elders in the Christian communities. He instructs them to be good examples of righteous conduct in the midst of suffering. Then he concludes with some general exhortations.

Before we get started, here’s a quick summary of what we discussed last time:

1. Peter instructed believers to adopt Yeshua’s attitude toward suffering. They must be prepared to suffer, just as the Messiah was prepared to suffer. Believers who endure suffering for their faith, instead of going back to their former sinful lifestyles, demonstrate that they truly have been changed.
2. Peter admonished believers to forgive one another and be hospitable toward one another, even as times are hard and resources are limited. He hopes that his readers will have a genuine care and concern for one another and want to help each other out of a heart of love.
3. Peter expanded his teaching on suffering, reminding his readers of the benefits of suffering and the reality that suffering in this life is temporary. One day God will judge the world, and believers will receive their glorious inheritance.

Chapter 5 begins with instructions to the leaders of the Christian communities. Peter writes this:

#### **1 Peter 5:1-5**

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, 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. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 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.”

Peter begins his exhortation to these leaders by establishing a sense of united vision and partnership with them. In other words, Peter wants to express that he and these elders have a lot in common. He does this by describing three characteristics that they share. Like the elders he addresses, Peter is “a fellow elder,” “a witness of the sufferings of Christ,” and “a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.”

In Greek, the word “elder” is *presbuteros*. Sometimes this word refers to an old person, and sometimes it refers to someone in leadership (e.g., Titus 1:5-6; James 5:14). Here, it is describing someone in a leadership position. However, the concepts are related since the older men in the community were also often the leaders in the community.

The leadership structure in the earliest Christian communities was largely modeled after the Jewish synagogue. Even the title “elder” was likely borrowed from Judaism. According to Craig Keener:

Given the church’s adaptation of synagogue models already effective in Diaspora cities, it is reasonable that they borrowed the title “elders” from there as well...Scholars note the widespread evidence for this office in the Jewish Diaspora. Usually a council of elders rather than a single elder exercised their activities in synagogues. That they appear in 1QS 6.8–9 [Dead Sea Scrolls] reinforces the impression that the Jewish usage was widespread.

-Craig Keener, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2021), p. 356-357

Peter addresses these elders as an elder himself. He aims to encourage them as someone who understands what they’re going through. Like them, he understands the burden of leadership in times of trouble and all the pressure and stress that comes with such a position.

Peter also describes himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. The emphasis here is not on Peter’s being an eyewitness of Yeshua’s sufferings. Again, he’s trying to describe what he has in common with these other leaders. His emphasis is more on bearing witness to the gospel message, which includes the message of Yeshua’s suffering. Peter and these elders are similar in that they all bear witness to the gospel. As Duane Watson explains:

[W]hile Peter saw the daily suffering of Jesus, he was not an eyewitness to the interrogation or crucifixion of Jesus, having deserted Jesus with the other apostles (Mark 14:27, 50). If eyewitness *to* is the reference, the focus is on the author and the elders as joint witnesses to the suffering of Christ by preaching the gospel. Suffering is the central topic of this letter’s witness (1:11; 2:21, 23–24; 3:18; 4:1, 13), and the portrayal of Peter in the NT is one of witness to the gospel, especially in the speeches and responses attributed to him in Acts (2:14–36 [v. 32]; 3:12–26 [v. 15]; 4:8–12; 5:30–32; 10:34–43 [vv. 39–41]).

-Duane Watson & Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012), p. 116

So, Peter identifies himself as a fellow elder and one who, like them, testifies to the truth of the gospel and the sufferings of the Messiah. Additionally, he is “a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.” Peter and these elders share a common hope—the same living hope that all believers have been born into through Yeshua’s death and resurrection (1 Peter 1:3-9). One day, the Messiah—the chief

Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4)—will appear, and God’s people will partake in the glory of Messiah’s eternal kingdom.

Peter goes on to exhort the elders of the various Christian communities. He says, “[shepherd the flock of God that is among you.](#)” The Scriptures frequently use the term “shepherd” to describe spiritual leaders (Jeremiah 23:4; Matthew 18:12-14; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11). Just as Yeshua commanded Peter to care for his sheep (John 21:15-17), Peter instructs the elders to care for God’s sheep.

Peter goes on to elaborate more on what he means by this exhortation. He says that the elders should be “[exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you.](#)” In other words, elders must watch over the sheep in their care. They shouldn’t act in this role simply out of a feeling of obligation. No, they must serve *willingly* and *eagerly* in accordance with God’s will. They must not be in it for “[shameful gain](#)” or selfish motives (cf. 1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7). Elders must not be “[domineering over those in \[their\] charge.](#)” In accordance with the model of leadership that Yeshua taught (Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42), Peter admonishes the elders not to lord it over the sheep. That is, they must not seek to intimidate people or bully them into submission. Rather, they must serve the sheep in humility, being examples of good conduct.

Peter concludes his instructions to the elders by reminding them that “[when the chief Shepherd appears, \[they\] will receive the unfading crown of glory.](#)” While the elders serve as shepherds, they are still subject to the chief Shepherd. The flock is not theirs but God’s (1 Peter 5:2). One day Yeshua will appear again, and the elders will be rewarded with a crown of glory for their faithfulness (cf. 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12). Athletes were given “crowns” of leaves for their athletic achievements at this time, and ancient people often associated such an image with honor (Craig Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], p. 697). However, unlike the crowns of leaves awarded for earthly achievements, which perish in time, believers’ crowns of glory will be unfading, as Peter says. Additionally, Proverbs 16:31 describes gray hair as a “crown of glory,” which is earned through living a righteous life. Peter might be drawing upon this image here.

Peter now turns his attention from the elders to younger believers. He says, “[Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.](#)” Just as the elders humbly serve and lead God’s flock, the younger believers should humbly submit to their leadership. Like we mentioned earlier, the elderly in the community often *were the elders, the leaders*, of the community. Numerous Bible verses call for younger believers to honor their elders (Leviticus 19:32; 1 Timothy 5:1-2). Old age is often connected to having wisdom (Proverbs 16:31; Job 12:12; 32:7). So, younger believers should “[be subject](#)” to the elders—that is, show proper respect for their authority, defer to their wisdom, and abide by their decisions.

This is especially relevant instruction for us today since it seems that old age is not something that calls for honor and respect in our culture. The elderly are often seen as out of touch and ignorant. Not only does this attitude display a lack of love toward our elderly neighbors, causing them to feel insecure and worthless as they grow old, but it also does a massive disservice to the youth. We are deprived of the wisdom and experience of our elders. We are left to learn everything in life the hard way, or not at all. If we want to benefit from the wisdom gained through years of experience, we would do well to honor our elders.

But ultimately, whether old or young, leader or layman, Peter instructs “all” to clothe themselves “[with humility toward one another.](#)” Earlier, Peter instructed the community to “put away” the vices of malice, deceit, slander, and so forth (1 Peter 2:1). Now he says to “put on,” or clothe oneself, with the virtue of

humility. In support of this instruction, Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34: “[God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.](#)” God’s response to humility is to give grace. Peter goes on to describe what it means to walk in humility in the next few verses. This is what it says:

### **1 Peter 5:6-9**

[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. 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, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.](#)

According to Peter, those who are humble now (1 Peter 5:5) will be exalted “[at the proper time](#)”—that is, in the world to come (1 Peter 1:5-7, 13; 4:13; 5:4). Scripture often speaks of the humble being exalted (Matthew 18:4; 23:12; James 4:10), and Yeshua is the ultimate example of this motif (1 Peter 2:21-15; 3:18-22). Just as Yeshua humbled himself, even to the point of death, and was exalted in his resurrection and ascension (Philippians 2:8-9), so too will believers who humble themselves be exalted in the future. In the meantime, Peter tells his readers to cast “[all your anxieties on \[God\], because he cares for you.](#)” As we focus on serving God and one another in humility, we can take comfort in knowing that he cares for us and is willing to carry our anxieties and give us the strength to endure.

Peter goes on to speak of suffering in the context of spiritual warfare. He commands his readers, “[Be sober-minded; be watchful.](#)” As we’ve discussed before, being sober-minded means maintaining mental self-control. Don’t get distracted by all the trials or temptations to return to a sinful lifestyle (1 Peter 4:3-4). Peter also says to be watchful. This is the same word Yeshua uses during his Olivet Discourse when he commands his listeners to be watching for his return (Matthew 24:42-43; 25:13). Being watchful for Yeshua’s return involves being ready and doing the work that our master had called us to do, such as caring for the “least of these”—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, etc. (Matthew 25:31-46).

Peter gives these instructions because “[Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.](#)” Believers must recognize that there is a spiritual battle going on. Ultimately, behind all human governments and authorities that persecute believers, is a dark spiritual force: the devil. He is our “adversary,” as Peter says, which means accuser or enemy, and he intends to devour believers like a lion devours its prey. Craig Keener provides some additional insight on this image:

Lions were viewed as the most ferocious and mighty beasts, and from Psalm 22:13 (probably the background here) they came to be used as figures for enemies of God’s people. In the time of Nero, Christians were fed to some literal lions as well.

-Craig Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), p. 697

In light of this spiritual threat from the adversary, believers must “[resist him, firm in the faith.](#)” They must be consistent in prayer and in following Yeshua’s ways, not turning back to old patterns of sin. As Duane Watson remarks:

The devil’s volley of slander and persecution can lead the recipients to deny Jesus Christ and revert to pagan ways. Remaining steadfast in the faith is the way to oppose the devil. It is to trust

in God, who guards Christians through faith (1:5, 21) and protects the praise, glory, honor, salvation, and hope that is the outcome of their faith (1:7, 9, 21).

-Duane Watson & Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012), p. 121

Peter goes on to reassure his readers that they are not alone and that “[the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.](#)” As we discussed in our last teaching, a strong connection is formed between people who share suffering. For Christians, we become more united in our purpose to glorify God in our lives—including in our suffering—and proclaiming the hope we have in Messiah (1 Peter 3:15). We as believers can take heart in knowing that our brothers and sisters around the world are standing firm in their faith while facing the same difficulties that we are.

And again, Peter reassures his readers that suffering is temporary. But their reward for their faithfulness is eternal:

### **1 Peter 5:10-11**

[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. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.](#)

Peter says, don’t give up! This life of suffering is not all there is. The sufferings of this life will soon be swallowed up in the eternal glory of God’s coming kingdom.

Peter concludes his letter with some final greetings. Here’s what he says:

### **1 Peter 5:12-14**

[By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.](#)

As we learned in the first part of this series, Silvanus was the one who delivered copies of Peter’s letter to the Christian communities (1 Peter 1:1) and perhaps even helped Peter write this letter (Craig Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], p. 697). Peter commends Silvanus to these communities.

Peter explains that his purpose in writing this letter was to exhort the Christian communities and testify to the true grace of God revealed in the gospel message that they’ve come to believe (1 Peter 1:25). He says to “[stand firm in it](#)”—that is, stand firm in God’s grace to which his letter bears witness. As Duane Watson remarks:

This final command to stand firm (*histemi*) in God’s grace contrasts with the command to oppose or stand against (*anthistemi*) the devil (5:9).

-Duane Watson & Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2012), p. 126

Peter goes on to say that “[she who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings.](#)” During Peter’s time, “Babylon” had become a common cryptogram—that is, a secret code or symbol—for Rome. Sometimes the believers would use such cryptograms to avoid persecution if their letters ended up in the wrong hands. Peter also mentions “Mark.” This is perhaps John Mark from Acts 12 and 15, whom Peter visited after being freed from prison. The “son” title is affectionate language to describe a younger disciple or colleague.

Peter’s final instructions are to “[greet one another with the kiss of love.](#)” Kisses were common affectionate greetings between family and close friends (Craig Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], p. 697). Peter wants his readers to consider each other members of the same family—they have all been born again into God’s family through the Messiah (1 Peter 1:3, 23).

Finally, Peter’s letter ends the way it begins. He says, “[Peace to all of you who are in Christ.](#)” At the beginning of his letter, his greeting was, “[May grace and peace be multiplied to you](#)” (1 Peter 1:2). Having peace in the Messiah is what frames this entire letter. Even in the midst of suffering and persecution for our faith, we can have peace in Messiah.

## Conclusion

So, that’s the book of 1 Peter. Here’s a short summary of what we’ve learned in this teaching series.

### **1. We can be confident that Peter wrote this letter.**

As we discussed in the introduction to this series, the content of 1 Peter is similar to other biblical teachings that are ascribed to Peter. Also, there are numerous historical witnesses to the letter’s authenticity. These pieces of evidence confirm the letter’s claim that Peter was its author.

### **2. Peter’s readers were predominantly Gentile believers. Nevertheless, Peter applies Old Testament descriptions of Israel to his audience as a strategic way to identify them with Israel.**

Peter wants his readers to see that they are part of Abraham’s family through the Messiah, and they have the same mission and hope for the future.

### **3. Exile is a prominent theme throughout the letter, and Peter intends for his audience to see themselves as exiles.**

Peter’s audience are sojourners in a land not their own, surrounded by a culture that is hostile toward their beliefs and lifestyle. They are waiting to be brought to their true home—the Messiah’s future kingdom. In the meantime, they have a mission to fulfill while they await the arrival of that kingdom.

### **4. Believers have been “born again” into God’s family.**

According to Peter, we experienced a type of new birth when we received the Messiah. We were “born” into God’s family. We became God’s children. As God’s children, we have an inheritance: eternal life in the Messiah’s kingdom. Peter speaks about this promised inheritance being the basis for our hope as believers. Because of the Messiah’s work, we will be saved at the end of the age. A glorious future awaits us. This hope we have for the future prompts us to rejoice. We rejoice despite suffering and

persecution. And in fact, the trials we endure are for our good. God uses them to refine our character.

**5. Believers must get their minds in the right place.**

Peter says, “[Prepare your minds for action](#)” and be “[sober-minded](#)” (1 Peter 1:13). Our mind—our thoughts and intentions—needs to govern our emotions and desires so that we can resist the enemy and stay focused on our calling. That calling includes being holy in *all* our conduct. Peter appeals to Scripture, specifically Leviticus, as the basis for his admonition to be holy. Leviticus describes what holy conduct looks like from a biblical perspective. Holy conduct includes things like honoring your parents, caring for the poor, keeping the Sabbath, and not eating unclean meats, among other things. Our calling to be holy means that our priorities and values will not match the world’s priorities and values. This will create some conflict in the world around us. Some people won’t like us and will even persecute us for our beliefs. Other people, however, will be drawn to God because of our witness.

**6. Those who have been genuinely born again into God’s family will desire God’s word.**

According to Peter, if you’ve experienced the Lord’s goodness, you will want to experience more. Your longing for God’s word should be like that of an infant longing for his mother’s milk (1 Peter 2:1-3).

**7. Our response to the Messiah, whom Peter calls the living “stone,” sets us on a path that will lead to either eternal salvation or eternal punishment.**

We’ve learned that God has chosen honor and salvation for the believer and punishment for the unbeliever. Also, contrary to some readings of 1 Peter 2:8, Peter does not say that God predestines some to unbelief. Rather, God predestined *the punishment* for unbelief. By stumbling over the stone—that is, rejecting the word—unbelievers have set their fate for eternity.

**8. Believers are to live honorably among unbelievers so that they can refute slanderous accusations.**

According to Peter, believers live honorably among the unbelievers by following the standard household codes of the broader culture, existing in the tension between faithfully obeying God and being a good citizen in an ungodly society. This way of life involves submitting to human authority figures. We should do our best not to offend or stir up trouble unnecessarily. However, sometimes faithfulness to God *requires* us to be in conflict with society and endure persecution for our faith. Wisdom is learning how to navigate this path and knowing when to submit to secular authorities and when to resist. Our calling as believers is to be a light wherever God has placed us. We don’t need to worry about the outcome—God will take care of the outcome. We just do what we’re supposed to do. We behave honorably in whatever situation we find ourselves in.

**9. We must not retaliate when slandered but instead repay evil with blessing.**

Standing firm in the faith and doing good, even to those who persecute us, is part of our “apologetic”—our defense of the faith. And speaking of apologetics...

**10. Believers must be prepared to offer an intellectual defense of their hope in the Messiah.**

This means we must know what we believe and be able to explain it and even answer criticisms. Our intellectual defense of the faith must also be accompanied by “gentleness and respect.”

**11. Believers are to adopt Yeshua’s attitude toward suffering.**

We must be prepared to suffer, just as the Messiah was prepared to suffer. Believers who endure suffering for their faith, instead of going back to their former sinful lifestyles, demonstrate that they truly have been changed. In the midst of suffering, believers are to forgive one another and be hospitable toward one another. Peter hopes that his readers will have a genuine concern for one another and want to help each other out of a heart of love.

**12. Elders in the community are to care for God’s sheep.**

Elders, or leaders, are given the responsibility to guide and protect their communities like a shepherd guides and protects his sheep. The younger believers are to submit to the elders. Everyone is to serve God, and each other, in humility.

**13. Believers must recognize that they are in a spiritual battle.**

We have an enemy who hates us. We must resist him and stand firm in our faith.

**14. Suffering is temporary, but the reward for our faithfulness is eternal.**

Don’t give up. The end of all things is at hand. Yeshua is coming back.

We hope you enjoyed this verse-by-verse teaching series through the book of 1 Peter. As Peter would say, peace to all of you who are in the Messiah.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.*

*Remember, continue to test everything.*

*Shalom!*

*For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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