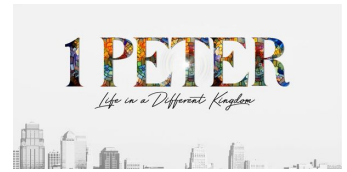


Ethics Part 3 – Unity in the fellowship through submission. 1 Peter 5:1-5

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Today, we are going to have a family conversation. That is, we are going to talk about life inside of Christian fellowship. What is life in Christian community supposed to look like? How are Christian leaders and overseers supposed to live and act?

In this passage, Peter instructs his readers about the type of shepherd-leadership that is needed to ensure the survival of the church in trying times of persecution. The leaders must oversee the church in a godly way, shepherding the flock rather than domineering it. The pastoral motif of the shepherd caring for and seeking the weak and the wandering even while jeopardizing himself provides the background against which these final instructions to the church are to be read. In this final section of the letter, by encouraging the elders to shepherd and the others to submit to that leadership, Peter underscores the importance of responsible church structure for seeing the Christian community safely through the fiery ordeal of testing.¹ In other words, according to Peter, in this third section on ethics, leaders are to exhort those entrusted to their care. They are to walk with humility, in that way, modeling the way for those they lead. And they are to protect and guard against those ideas and people who seek to destroy the flock. Christian community and Christian leadership is not about power for power's sake. Instead, it is about paying careful, watchful, humble, and sober attention so that those around you won't be devoured. Just like marriage, it is about mutual care and walking in roles that God gave for our flourishing. Then, for those who are under the leadership of Godly leaders, Peter reminds them that they are to submit to older, wiser Christians. The thing about it is that so much of what Peter reminds us of is not just for life in the church but is helpful in our everyday lives. When we lead with Christian humility in the public square, we live out a brilliant witness for the power of Jesus to impact and change our everyday lives.

We are new creations in Christ, and our fellowship should show that there is a better way to live with and respond to each other. The story of salvation is about how a gracious and loving God can take you and me, who are desperately broken and form us into new creations through his Son, Jesus. The witness of Christian fellowship is how that new creation/exile identity impacts our daily lives here and now. Peter doesn't pull any punches he reminds them and us that **leadership matters, and how I respond to leadership matters.**

¹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2022), 297.

1. Leaders are needed. (v.1)

- a. What are we talking about today? – The ground rules.
 - i. Leadership – office, role, gift, or some combo of the three?
 - 1. There are lots of thoughts and perspectives on this today. Those thoughts are often informed by several factors, life-experience, denominational ties, hermeneutical principles (the way you understand Scripture), to name a few. We’re not attempting to answer those in this conversation.
 - 2. It is important to note, believers can come to different conclusions on this topic (office, role, gift, combo?) and still work arm-in-arm for the sake of the gospel.
 - a. I.e., How we answer those questions doesn’t and shouldn’t drive us to disunity.
 - 3. This approach today may leave you with some questions, that’s ok.
 - a. So, what will be our focus today?
 - ii. **Posture – this is our main focus today.**
 - 1. Remember Peter’s words –
 - a. “You are different... live differently.” (cf. 2:9-11)
 - b. “Your life is an ever-present witness.” (cf. 3:15)
 - 2. **Our posture towards leadership and each other in fellowship might just be our single most significant testimony in our current cultural moment.** And was a distinctive of the early church.
- b. Peter’s leadership journey. (v.1)
 - i. **So → “likewise” leaders are to lead in a way that honors others and honors, Jesus.**
 - ii. Jesus’ example. – Jn. 21: 15-19
 - 1. The reality of Peter’s leadership is the reality of God’s grace.
 - 2. Peter didn’t start well, and if we read through the book of Acts, Peter needed some accountability by Paul. (cf. Acts 15)
 - a. **But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.** (Gal. 2:11)
 - b. Leadership is not about being perfect or inerrant. Peter doesn’t give us that perspective. Instead, it is about humility.
 - iii. While it is remarkable that Peter the apostle would take the less exalted title ‘fellow elder’ to speak to elders, it is even more remarkable that he should describe himself as *a witness of the sufferings of Christ*. Had he said ‘witness of the resurrection’ it would have been a claim for the truthfulness of his message (as in Acts 2:32; 3:15; cf. 1:22). Even ‘witness of his transfiguration’ would have been a claim to authenticity (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16–18). **But ‘witness of the sufferings of Christ’ bluntly recalls, for Peter and for anyone familiar with the details surrounding Christ’s crucifixion, the most painful episode in Peter’s life—for we remember just what kind of ‘witness’ Peter was: one whose courage failed and who three times denied that he even knew Christ (Matt. 26:69–75).²**
- c. **Why are leaders needed? → The enemy seeks to destroy the church.**
 - i. Paul reminds us of the reality of a spiritual enemy – Eph 6:11-12
 - 1. ¹¹ **Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.** ¹² **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against**

² Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 193.

the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- ii. Simply, the church suffers without godly leaders.
- iii. **“A church without godly leaders is an endangered church. And a church that does not train leaders is an unfaithful church. God gives leaders to his churches for the maturity, unity, and soundness of each local congregation. Without godly, faithful, replicating leadership, churches suffer deeply.”**³ - This is a powerful and important reality for us to consider. (Thabiti Anyabwile)
- iv. Consider the NT letters. → Lots of problems inside the early church.
 - 1. Colossians – Heresy regarding Jesus.
 - 2. Galatians – Unity issues and legalism problems.
 - 3. 1 Jn. → Church split.
 - 4. 2 Jn. → More warning against heresy.
 - 5. 3 Jn. → More antagonists.
 - 6. 1 Cor. → Massive sin issues and leadership quarrels.
 - 7. 2 Cor. → Local leaders undermining Paul.
 - 8. Jude → Wait for it, more heretics!
 - 9. Ephesians → Giving preference and legalism.
 - a. **These churches all needed godly leaders to keep them on the path of faithfulness.** We should be encouraged that today, we aren’t any different than they were!
- d. Peter is reminding this group that they need leaders to lead and the fellowship to come under the authority of those leaders.
 - i. **This passage may be the first apostolic commissioning of elders in northern Asia Minor, where no apostle was ever physically present as far as extant historical documentation attests.** If Peter’s readers were recently displaced to Asia Minor, there may well have been a vacuum in church leadership that the apostle is here addressing. Some of them may have previously been recognized as elders in the locale from which they had come. But what is their function and responsibility now, when they are displaced to a foreign location and brought into contact with other Christians who have similarly been displaced from other locations? Peter is instructing the *presbyteroi* that they must begin or resume their function as elders of the Christian believers in their new location.⁴
- e. **Leadership is a gift to be exercised for the good of the body. (Rom. 12:4-8)**
 - i. **“⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: ⁸... ; the one who leads, with zeal; ...”**
 - ii. Paul’s words correspond with Peter’s instructions here to this local body in Asia.
 - 1. This is the picture that Peter paints of those who lead the church: **men who lead and care for the church, God’s sheep, through the daily difficulties of life, feeding them with God’s word and protecting them from the predators in the world and in the church.**⁵
 - 2. Peter will put it this way, leaders, you are to serve willingly.

³ Anyabwile, Thabiti M.. Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons (9Marks, 2012) (p. 11).

⁴ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2022), 306.

⁵ Juan R. Sanchez, *1 Peter for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2016), 156.

2. Leaders are to serve willingly. (vv.2-3)

- a. **Care for the flock you are appointed over...**
 - i. Peter exhorts the elders, *Tend the flock of God that is your charge*. There is a play on words, since the verb *tend* (*poimainō*, 'serve as shepherd, serve as pastor') and the noun *flock* (*poimnion*) come from the same root. We could translate, 'Shepherd the sheep of God'. **The verb Peter uses is the same one Jesus used when he said to Peter, Tend (*poimainō*) my sheep' (John 21:16). The phrase *that is your charge* is more literally 'that is among you'.⁶**
 - ii. Again, leadership and the authority of leadership is affirmed, but it is also buffered.
 - 1. It isn't their flock... it is God's flock.
 - 2. It isn't their glory... it is God's glory.
 - 3. These leaders are called to an important role.... But, it is just that, a role, and they themselves are under the authority of Peter (cf. 1:1) and, ultimately God.
- b. Recap – **Authority and submission are part of the created order. Dominance and domineering are results of the fall.**
 - i. **Authority and submission are good, first of all, because they are rooted in the Trinity.** There is only one God, and he exists in three Persons.
 - 1. **Each Person is equally God, yet the Son submits to the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3), and the Spirit submits to the Father and the Son (John 15:26).**
 - ii. Authority and submission are good, also, because they are rooted in creation (Genesis 2:18–25). The man and the woman are equally God's image (Genesis 1:26–27), but they have different roles in governing the creation and filling it with God's image-bearers (Genesis 1:28). God created the man to lead, protect, and provide for those under his leadership, and he created the woman to come alongside and help the man. In her role, she is to affirm and encourage his leadership. Like God, then, the man and the woman share equality in essence but have different roles of authority and submission. Authority and submission are good because they reflect God's character; rebellion against authority is evil because it reflects Satan's character.⁷
- c. **Even the concept of hierarchy is not anti-biblical.**
 - i. In our modern moment, we can see the idea of hierarchy, or even the difference in roles as a moral evil that is to be undone or worked against.
 - 1. Now, this does not mean that all forms of hierarchy are noble, good, or beneficial.
 - ii. **The concept that all people are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights comes from the Enlightenment and would have been "thoroughly alien" to the ancient world. ... Thus Dennis Duling cautions, "Ancient society was not 'egalitarian' in the modern Enlightenment, individualist, political-philosophical sense in which equality is a self-evident human right and/or social goal for everyone."⁸**
 - 1. Love, not equality, leads to the true unity that Paul describes in which the members "may have the same care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25). Equality speaks to one's personal privileges and rights, whereas love describes one's willingness to prioritize others.⁹

⁶ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2022), 303.

⁷ Juan R. Sanchez, *1 Peter for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2016), 117–118.

⁸ Lee-Barnewall, Michelle. Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian (p. 85). Baker Publishing Group.

⁹ Lee-Barnewall, Michelle. Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian (pp. 88-89). Baker Publishing Group.

- iii. **The presence of hierarchies in the kingdom, and even more so their reversal, should also cause us to question the centrality of equality as a biblical theme.** For example, while the family of God was redefined along religious and moral rather than biological lines, there remained hierarchy in the structure, even as there might be hierarchy in a traditional family. Jesus called God “Father” (e.g., Matt. 12:50; Mark 14:36; Luke 11:2), and his followers were children of God (e.g., Mark 2:5) and brothers and sisters (e.g., Luke 8:21). ... The Twelve had higher status than other disciples, with Peter, James, and John as the “inner core” of the Twelve having an even higher status. Other hierarchies are evident in the church itself, such as the appointment of elders, who are given charge over the church (1 Pet. 5:2), with the possibility of earning “double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17). **Some inequalities result from God himself, as the Spirit sovereignly distributes gifts so that some are worthy of more honor or are “greater” (1 Cor. 12:22–24, 31).** Numerous places in the Gospels speak of those who will be called “greater” or “least” in the kingdom (e.g., Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28; 9:48).¹⁰
- d. **Peter gives three boundaries for those who are called to lead in the body of Christ.**
 - i. These three markers should also be applied to any area that we lead in... family, relationships, work, parenting, etc.
 - ii. Again, these become the boundaries for our posture in leadership.
 - 1. **Warning – It is so easy for any or all of these to creep into our hearts at any time.**
- e. **Leadership isn’t about doing it because no one else will. → Instead, willingly.**
 - i. “No one is qualified, and no one else is willing, so I guess I’ll have to...” – I once heard this from a person who would become the single elder in a church I was at. This is not only an unhealthy attitude towards leadership and the body, it violates Peter’s clear instruction.
 - 1. Leadership in the body of Christ is not to be done begrudgingly.
 - 2. This doesn’t mean that leadership is always the most exciting or happiness-producing endeavor.
 - ii. What happens when we serve begrudgingly?
 - 1. It opens the door to arrogance, pride, and ultimately a condemning attitude towards those you are leading. I.e., It can come out as “you owe me.”
 - 2. This goes against the grain of Jesus’ own leadership and care for you and me.
- f. **Leadership isn’t about selfish gain. → Instead, eagerly for the good of others.**
 - i. Peter’s second boundary speaks to what happens when we lead begrudgingly.
 - 1. We can become entitled in our leadership and this prevents us from treating those in our care with concern or empathy.
 - ii. Should we pay our pastors and leaders?
 - 1. **Peter says *shameful gain*, not just *gain*, and because Scripture elsewhere indicates that it is right at least for some elders (probably those whose source of income or full-time work is their eldership activities) to earn money from this work (1 Tim. 5:17–18)—therefore, the desire for such earnings must be correct also, at least as part of their motivation.**¹¹
 - 2. **The practice of financially compensating church leadership in some form apparently arose early in the church (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:7; Gal. 6:6), but abuse of the privilege also arose with it (1 Tim. 3:3; 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3; Jude 11).** The term *aischrokerdōs* implies a dishonest attempt to gain financially, which suggests that the leaders who oversaw the

¹⁰ Lee-Barnewall, Michelle. Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian (p. 91). Baker Publishing Group.

¹¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 194–195.

Christian community sometimes misappropriated its resources for their own gain. **The proper attitude of an elder is an eagerness to give, not a desire to get.**¹²

g. Leadership isn't about power. → Instead, modeling Christlikeness.

i. **Here Peter forbids the use of arbitrary, arrogant, selfish, or excessively restrictive rule. He implies that elders should govern not by the use of threats, emotional intimidation, or flaunting of power, nor generally by the use of 'political' force within the church, but rather by power of example whenever possible.**¹³

ii. Christian leadership says, follow me as I follow Christ.

1. Speaking on 1 Tim. 3:1-7 Tripp says, **"First, in a general sense, God wants pastors and leaders to be successful because he loves his Kingdom and his bride, the church, but in God's estimation, long-term faithfulness that produces fruit and ministry is rooted in humble, godly character. – A second thing that this leader quality list presses in on us is that ultimately God is the achiever; Our Calling is to be usable tools in his powerful hands."**¹⁴

iii. Worldly leadership says, follow me because I hold the power.

1. On servant leadership, Michelle Barnwell-Lee says, **"As a result, their worth and identity come not from their own abilities but solely from God."**¹⁵

a. This again stands in direct contrast to the power dynamics of the world.

b. My worth as a Godly leader does not come from my achievements or abilities, but instead it comes from whom God declares me to be. That identity is the well I draw from for my leadership.

3. We need to be open to being led. (v.5)

a. Image of a leaderless person. → Colorado

i. One time when we were vacationing in Colorado, we were driving from Breckenridge to Colorado Springs. As we drove, we found an area where there were RV's, trailers, shipping containers, and make-shift housing all over the place. It was clear, these were folks who wanted to be in a place with no leadership over them. It was disorganized and had no infrastructure to speak of.

ii. Being a leaderless person does not lead to your flourishing, nor is it a biblical principle.

1. Secondly, it teaches something that is exponentially damaging to future generations.

iii. If we know that leadership is good and needed, what is to be our posture as those who are being led?

1. Peter reminds us right away, don't be leaderless in your posture.

2. He also calls us back to something we've heard before.... Be sober-minded.

b. Keep your head – be sober-minded and humble.

i. **What is humility?** – Not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less often.

1. **Peter includes church officers and non-officers, young and old, new Christians and mature believers in the address *all of you*. The term *humility* speaks of an attitude**

¹² Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2022), 303.

¹³ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 196.

¹⁴ Paul David Tripp, *Lead – 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (2020), p. 39.

¹⁵ Lee-Barnewall, Michelle. *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian* (p. 109). Baker Publishing Group.

which puts others first, which thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy of attention than one's own.

2. **The concept of “clothing” oneself in the Christian virtues is a common image in the NT (e.g., Rom. 13:12, 14; Eph. 6:11, 14; Col. 3:12, 14; 1 Thess. 5:8).¹⁶**
 - ii. This is a call we have already heard from Peter. (cf. 4:17)
 - iii. **Both “self-controlled” and “sober-minded” explain the overall mindset we must have in light of the coming end.** Self-controlled might helpfully be translated, “Keep your head.” Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem *If* begins, “*If you can keep your head when all about you Are losing theirs and blaming it on you ...*”
 - iv. He captures the sense of self-control we are to pursue. Fear of the end can cause many to “lose their heads.” Because the end is near, Peter commands his readers to keep their heads about them, to be clear-headed. This may not seem like radical advice, but it is certainly necessary.¹⁷
 - v. **Again, in many ways this goes back to 2:1 → Put away...malice, deceit, envy, slander, and hypocrisy.**
 1. Those instructions are the minimum requirements for relational and communal unity.
- c. **How does this get worked out in the leadership relationship?**
 - i. We give the benefit of the doubt to our leaders until proven otherwise.
 1. This means we are willing to discuss any miscommunications and misunderstandings.
 2. This also means we operate under the perspective
 - ii. We don’t create or invent “back stories” or assign speculative motivation when we don’t really know.
 1. Secondly, when we pursue conversation and a leader clarifies, we accept that clarification.
 - iii. We don’t seek to destroy a person’s reputation even when we have a disagreement that requires a parting of ways.
 1. Do you remember Paul and Barnabas? → Acts 15 – They were close parents in ministry and split ways over a disagreement over John-Mark. They didn’t slander each other, in fact later on Paul praises Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6) and calls John-Mark a faithful partner (2 Tim. 4:11).
 2. I.e., It is possible to disagree, and not have to defame each other.
- d. **More than anything, I am to be open to being led, because that is reflective of the nature of my relationship with God.**
 - i. Peter is not calling this group to anything that is not found throughout the scope of the Scriptures. → He reminds them of this reality with a direct quote from Proverbs 3:34.
 1. **“Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.”**
 2. To say that I do not need to submit to godly leadership is to in effect say that I do not need to submit to God.
 - ii. We are also reminded of the power of the testimony of our lived experience.
 1. We’ve said it before, **Our posture towards each other in fellowship might just be our single most significant testimony in our current cultural moment.**

4. My life is a witness. (cf. 3:15)

- a. Circle back to 3:15 – Why is my life an important defense?

¹⁶ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition., Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2022), 307.

¹⁷ Juan R. Sanchez, *1 Peter for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2016), 148.

- i. He goes on to encourage preparation for active witness which will win the unbeliever to Christ. Peter envisages the need to respond to allegations of wrongdoing which Christians face from their opponents, so he says: *Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. The word defense (apologia) almost always has a sense of 'reply to an accusation' (cf. Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; Phil. 1:7, 16).*
- ii. **However, since the questioning is concerning *the hope that is in you*, Peter must be assuming that the inward hope of Christians results in lives so noticeably different that unbelievers are prompted to ask why they are so distinctive (cf. 4:4).** Christians therefore should always be ready (prepared) to give an answer. Paul provides a good example of seizing the offensive and bearing testimony to Christ even when on trial himself (Acts 22:1–21; 24:10–24; 26:1–23, 25b–29). In hostile situations the opportunity for witness to Christ often comes unexpectedly; the Christian who is not always ready to answer will miss it.¹⁸
- b. If we can't provide a better example, why would anyone want to follow Jesus?
 - i. **Thus all in leadership positions in the church should realize that the requirement to live a life worthy of imitation is not optional—it is a major part of the job, challenging though such responsibility may be.** Moreover, those who select church leaders should realize that academic excellence and administrative or financial skills do not automatically qualify one for leadership in the church (as they would for leadership in the university or business worlds).¹⁹
 - ii. Leadership and submission to leadership in the church is not to be defined nor understood in terms that reflects the world. Instead, it is to show that there is a better way.
 - iii. This idea of “always be ready to give an account” isn't just with our words. Yes, our words are part of it. But, the always part also speaks to our lives. That is the thing that gives our words any validity.

¹⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 160–161.

¹⁹ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 196–197.