

Title: How to Serve
Date: December 2, 2018
Subject: Dynamics in the church that aid in its growth
Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1 - 7

READ 1 Peter 5:1- 4

Chapter 5 isn't an abrupt change of direction. The thought of suffering lingers in the background. There was growing danger of suffering, especially for the leaders of the church who may be tempted to give in to fear. Peter may have been thinking his death was very near and was trying to stimulate the idea of "next man up" like so many football teams talk about when a player gets injured. He was calling upon people to be faithful in their interpersonal relationships in the church body.

Peter offers his credentials. He refers to himself as a fellow elder meaning he may have been involved in a local fellowship. He'd have more influence since he was an eyewitness. The third credential again put him on the same level as the other believers. He was looking forward to heaven.

I. Directives for elders (leaders or those who are older)

The two main responsibilities are to be a shepherd and an overseer. Spiritual shepherds are to care for the flock by feeding them from God's Word. They direct the sheep into places where they can learn. Protect them from harm by warning of enemies that try to attack. They oversee the direction and supervise the flock.

A. Marked by willingness. It's a choice, whether the person volunteers or is recruited. When the military had a draft system, some people entered because their number came up. There were others who enlisted voluntarily. Both could serve willingly as the person whom Uncle Sam tapped could willingly accept his role.

Peter got his draft notice in person. Jesus showed up and said, "I want you to follow me." Jesus didn't force him. Peter had to be willing. He was. His willingness remained throughout his life. Now as he nears the end of his life, Peter would think back to when he was commanded by Jesus to feed the flock (John 21:15-19). Jesus told him then, "When you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." This was to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. He would have to willingly face the future.

Elders are to willingly exercise their authority. They aren't to be pushed into it by external pressure. Not view it as a burden. Some may be unwilling because of a false sense of unworthiness. Some are reluctant to take responsibility. Others only want to do the minimum. The willing person has a better attitude than the one who's forced. It's like the hired hand who guards the sheep until the wolf comes. Then he heads for the hills because he didn't sign up for hazard duty. Willingness pleases God.

B. Motivated to serve. Elders are to be eager to do so. They shouldn't be forced to serve like a slave who's under the whip. They're free people who deliberately look out for the interests and benefits of others. They look for opportunities to serve and accept those given to them.

The opposite is to be interested in self. That's what greed is all about. What am I going to get out of this? It can be money. The KJV calls it "filthy lucre." Sounds like something from a pirate movie. The new NIV reads, "Not pursuing dishonest gain." The idea is people view serving the Lord as a kind of "get-rich-quick scheme." They feel it's a good gig and they should be amply compensated for it.

Greed can also be for acclaim, notoriety, power. Some people want to be a firefighter because they view it as a way to impress people. Greed in any form isn't good.

C. In the manner of an example. A mom asked her two year old son to put his dirty clothes in the laundry hamper. Her son looked puzzled so she explained, "You know—the place we put our dirty clothes before they're washed." The light went off in the little boy's mind. He promptly picked up his clothes, trotted into his parents' bedroom and dropped them on the floor—right by his father's side of the bed.

His dad unknowingly, hopefully, set the wrong example. The wrong example for elders is to lord it over where they are assertive, push/drive others away by having to have their way and seek to dominate.

This was one of the great lessons Jesus tried to communicate to the disciples. A rift was forming as James and John and their mommy requested that they (her boys) be given the positions of power and significance in Christ's kingdom (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45). The other ten became indignant when they learned about the request, probably because they didn't think of it first. Jesus reprimands them and tells them that his followers aren't to be like the Gentile leaders who seek to show off their power and authority over others. Instead they were to be servants. Jesus capped off the teaching, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:35).

The great apostle Paul could have got on his high horse and demanded Paul adhere to his plans, purpose and ways of doing things. After all he was one of the apostles and the one who had brought them the good news of Jesus. Instead he told the Corinthians that he and his team didn't lord it over their faith, but worked with the people for their joy (2 Corinthians 1:24).

Bob Deffinbaugh, "Even Christians tend to measure leaders in terms of their success, but the Scriptures measure them in terms of their faithfulness in the midst of suffering. Success is not the test of leadership; suffering is. When we introduce a Christian speaker, we tell the audience of their educational achievements, their success in ministry (usually measured in numbers), and their acceptance by men. Peter will have none of this. And neither should we. Even when we seek to recruit leaders, we appeal to men on a human level, according to human pride and ambition. We want them to think of leadership as an honor rather than a means of expressing humility. We speak to them about feeling fulfilled rather than of emptying themselves in service to others." (The Leader and Suffering, bible.org).

Elders are to willingly accept their responsibilities and execute them as an eager servant. Those who serve the Lord in this way are promised “the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

II. Younger are to be submissive v. 5

The younger crowd is addressed “in the same way” meaning they are to be willing as well. Some of it includes submission to their leaders/elders, just as submission is necessary to government (2:13), to employers (2:18), to husbands (3:1). The prime example of submission is Jesus Christ who submitted himself to his killers (2:21-24). Submission includes respect and honor.

Sometimes those who are younger think they know it all and get impatient. Various people have commented, tongue in cheek, about how a child views his father. At 4 they feel their daddy can do anything and knows everything. At 11 they begin to doubt dad’s abilities. In the teens the father is so ignorant it’s hard to have the old man around. Sometime in their 20’s or 30’s, maybe after they’ve had a kid or two, they become astonished at how much the old man has learned.

Younger need to understand there is something to be learned from those who have traveled life’s roads ahead of them. There are lessons, insights, examples. Need to respect, honor and submit to elders/leaders.

III. Humility for all people v. 5 – 7

A. The call for humility. This characteristic has been alluded to in the previous groupings. Serving and submission both require humility. Now it’s triply emphasized. “Clothe yourselves with humility.” “God gives grace to the humble.” “Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand.”

The first wording for humility in the original language means to “tie yourselves up.” Wrap a cloak around to fight off the cold wintery wind. It pictures a slave tying his work apron around him. Jesus took on the role of a servant in the upper room when he tied a towel around him before he washed the disciples’ feet.

A young man invited to a dinner given by South African statesman John Cecil Rhodes arrived by train. He was late and had to go directly to Rhodes’s house in his dusty, travel-stained clothes. He arrived to find a room full of people elegantly dressed. Soon Rhodes appeared, wearing an old suit. He’d heard of the young man’s problem and wanted to spare him further embarrassment. He clothed himself with humility.

Humility is to be expressed to people. We put ourselves in their clothes, so to speak. Don’t think of ourselves more highly and the companion directive of not thinking others more lowly.

Humility is to be expressed to God. He’s the one who is in charge even when it may not seem like it as when we have to go through trials and suffering. Submit ourselves to him, to his wisdom, his timing, his care. Report for duty.

The motivation to be humble is in the quote in v. 5. READ. Sounds like a good reason to be humble. God gives grace to the humble. Grace is a good thing, isn’t it?

God opposes the proud. Doesn’t sound great for God to have someone in the crosshairs.

There’s a Mongolian folk tale of a boastful frog. It noticed two geese about to fly south for the winter. He wanted the geese to take him along. The geese were willing, but didn’t know what to do. The frog cleverly

produced a long, heavy blade of grass and got each goose to take an end of it while he gripped the middle with his mouth. The three began their journey. They were soon noticed by some men who were stunned by the inventiveness. They wondered who'd been clever enough to think of it. The frog opened his mouth to say, "It was I." The words came out as he fell to the ground. It was not only the end of the journey for the frog, but also the end of the frog. Pride goes before a fall.

Further motivation to be humble is in v. 6. God will lift up his people, you and me, in due time. The problem we have is "when is due time?" We often think it's due time right now. We have to remember that we don't operate by our timing but when the Lord sees fit. And for many things that will be in heaven. We may be despised and rejected and ridiculed and treated as nobodies while on earth. But in heaven . . . we'll be co-heirs with Christ, sharing his rule, returned to God's design for people.

B. Humility is shown through casting anxiety on Lord v. 7.

The NIV I read is a little misleading, according to most translations. The wording isn't an independent command – "Cast all." It's a dependent clause that tells us how to do v. 6. Take out the middle phrase and squash it together so that the sentence reads, "Humble yourselves by casting all your anxiety on him."

It's recognizing that God is in control. We won't depend on our resources, devices and strategies. We give it to the Lord's wise determination. What do we give? Our anxieties. That's a great command for all anxieties but the specific ones in view are for leading, following and living at a time when we're suffering.

We humble ourselves before God by casting our burdens on him. It means our reaction to the problems (anxiety) and not necessarily the problem itself. We'll still have to deal with the issue but we won't have to get uptight about it. Anxiety is a mistrust of God. We cast and not reel back in. We cut the line so the weight isn't pulled back. Leave the anxiety with the Lord.

Tim Tebow is currently pursuing a professional baseball career. The Heisman Trophy winner and two time National College Football Champion was a first-round NFL draft pick. He's best known for being an extremely committed follower of Jesus Christ. He always wove in his faith in Christ into interviews. He wore eye-black with Philippians 4:13 on it while in college. He played pro football a few years but didn't have the same success as when he had accompanying skilled players. He was met with more than his share of critics who helped drum him out of the league largely, I think, because of his faith in Christ. Opposing fans, teams and SNL mocked and belittled him for his faith and when he didn't have success.

His response to the attacks is revealed by a comment by an observer: "Tebow has taken the mockery in stride, never once rebuking anyone for their bad behavior. Most could argue that his healthy response to the abuse exemplifies the power of his faith" (Clabough). Tebow himself said, "If people want to bash me for that, that's OK. It really won't bother me. At least they know what I believe" (Jennifer Marshall).

He could have wrung his hands about the mistreatment. He didn't. He humbled himself before God and others. He threw any possible anxiety over the suffering and let God carry the weight. That's what we are to do and in God's impeccable timing he will lift us up.