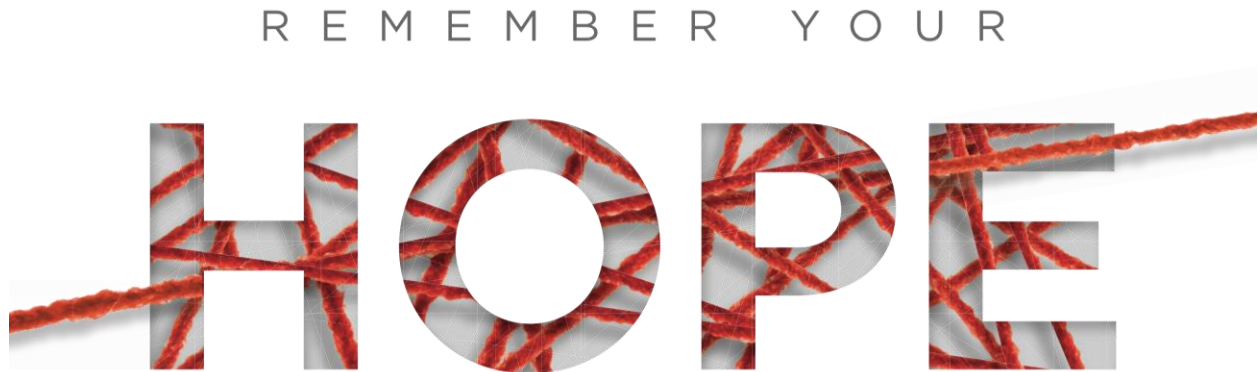


## Lesson 9: 1 Peter 5

### Hook



**Main Point: Humble yourself before the Lord now, and at the proper time He will exalt you.**

In March of 2015, *Forbes* released an article by Jeff Boss titled "[The 13 Habits of Humble People.](#)" In the article, Boss lists and explains the habits as:

- They are situationally aware.
- They retain relationships.
- They make difficult decisions with ease.
- They put others first.
- They listen.
- They are curious.
- They speak their minds.
- They take time to say "Thank You."
- They start sentences with "You" rather than "I."
- They accept feedback.
- They assume responsibility.
- They ask for help.

Divide your Bible Fellowship into groups and have them discuss the following questions.

**Q: In your own words, how would you define *humility*?**

**Q: Which of these habits do you value the most? Why?**

**Q: Which of these habits would you say are biblical?**

## Book

**Main Point: Humble yourself before the Lord now, and at the proper time He will exalt you.**

**Text Summary:** Peter closes his letter with a word to the elders of the churches and a word to the whole congregation, both related to humility. He exhorts the leaders to lead the people as shepherds, with humility rather than dominance. Then he exhorts all believers to live with humility toward one another. Peter promises that those who live in humility on earth will be exalted by God in the kingdom of heaven. Those who suffer for “a little while” in this life will live in eternal glory with Christ in heaven.

### 1 Peter 5:1–4 [Read]

**Talking Point 1:** Christian leaders are called to shepherd their people—to lead with humility, not dominance.

**Q: Why does Peter use the imagery of a shepherd for the leaders in the church?**

**Q: What does it look like to lead others with humility and love?**

Peter closes with a word to the elders about how best to lead the people under their care. Just as he told husbands about how to lead their wives in love and humility in chapter 3, he tells the church leaders to lead the people under their care as a shepherd leads his flock (5:2). This metaphor of shepherd leadership is found throughout the Bible, as the sheep need a shepherd and cannot be left on their own (Numbers 27:17; Zechariah 10:2). Throughout the Bible, Scripture provides examples of good shepherds and evil shepherds:

Good Shepherd	Evil Shepherd
2 Samuel 12; Psalm 23, 79, 80, 95, 119; Isaiah 40, 53; Luke 15; John 10	Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 11
Tenderly cares for his people	Steals from the flock
Protects them from harm	Abuses the flock
Provides for them	Uses the flock

God expects His leaders to care for His people the way a good shepherd cares for His sheep. In fact, that’s where the word *pastor* comes from—the Latin word for “grazed” or “fed,” as in a shepherd who feeds his sheep. Remember, this was one of Jesus’s last charges to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. He Himself told Peter, “If you love me, feed my sheep” (John 21). Peter writes to them as a fellow elder, a fellow shepherd (5:1). Good pastors (shepherds) care for their people. The role of pastors is to lovingly care for their flock by feeding, protecting, and guiding their sheep toward maturity and holiness. A good shepherd reflects the

love and care of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who knows and calls His sheep by name and lays down His life for them (John 10:11).<sup>i</sup>

Peter describes this kind of leader as one who exercises oversight, not for his own gain, but to serve (5:2), who is not domineering, but leads by example (5:3). This type of leadership requires humility. The biblical definition of humility is “not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.”<sup>ii</sup> It’s putting others’ needs ahead of your own (Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:3–4). Spiritual leadership isn’t about power and authority, but service and sacrifice. Robert Greenleaf, who coined the phrase “servant leader” in the business world in the 1970s, wrote:

The servant leader is servant first.... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? A servant leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong.<sup>iii</sup>

This is how God commanded His leaders to behave from the beginning. He said the kings in His kingdom would be different. They wouldn’t multiply horses or wives or wealth for themselves. Instead, they would serve their people in humility, not considering themselves more important than any of their brothers (Deuteronomy 17:18–20). This was true in the beginning, when Adam was given the responsibility to exercise dominion and stewardship of God’s creation (Genesis 2:15).

Spiritual leadership is a weighty responsibility. In fact, James states that teachers, leaders, pastors, and elders will “be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1) because they have a whole flock following them and trusting them to lead well. We all stumble, and we all fall, but if a shepherd falls, he can bring hundreds or thousands of others down with him. Peter encourages those who shepherd their people well that when Jesus, the “chief Shepherd,” returns, they will be rewarded with “the unfading crown of glory” (5:4). Church leadership is a weighty, yet rewarding, calling.

**Q: Describe some church leaders you have known who have really exemplified shepherd leadership. How did they impact their flocks and their communities?**

**Q: How can you encourage your church leaders? How can you best pray for them?**

## 1 Peter 5:5–7 [Read]

**Talking Point 2:** All Christians are called to humility — putting others' needs ahead of ours.

**Q: Why do you think Peter uses the phrase “clothe yourselves” with humility?**

**Q: Describe someone you know who lives in a truly humble manner. What does the person's daily life look like? How does he or she treat other people?**

Peter starts this section by exhorting younger believers to follow the example of humility set by the elders of the church (5:5). He makes an unusual choice with the word translated as “clothe yourselves.” This is the only time this phrase is used in the Bible and refers to any kind of clothing that is tied on with a knot. The picture Peter paints refers to the apron worn by slaves.<sup>iv</sup> Clothing was one way that slaves and their role in society were identified. Today, there are many professions (policemen, construction workers, military, and nurses, etc.) who wear a specific uniform for work. Those who wear a uniform do it daily and, while it may describe what they do, it often becomes a part of who they are. As Christians, we are servants, so Peter is really emphasizing the picture of humility — to put on your servant's uniform and serve one another! Peter may be remembering Jesus' wrapping Himself with the towel at the Lord's Supper when He knelt to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:4).<sup>v</sup>

In a “me-first culture,” where often, anything goes as long as we accomplish our goal, Jesus calls us to put ourselves last and others first (Matthew 20:20–28; Philippians 2:3–6). Especially within the Church. Jesus said the world would know we are His followers by this incredibly selfless *agape* love we have for each other (John 13:35).

Humility is learned through *doing*. In the same way, we are not just called to serve one another occasionally but to *be* servants. This isn't a picture of people who put on their servant's apron only when it's time to volunteer at church or a soup kitchen, but those who clothe themselves with humility daily. Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit will have God's heart toward other people, a heart of humility and selfless love (Philippians 2:1–8). A person who is truly filled with the Holy Spirit will *want* to serve others in humility. The more we practice serving others, the more we put on that servant's apron and get to work, the more we will develop the heart of a humility.

Peter includes a promise — that if we humble ourselves “under the mighty hand of God,” then He will exalt us “in the proper time” (5:6). The mighty hand of God refers to the Exodus where God delivered Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand. (Exodus 10:3). Humbling ourselves before the Lord means submitting to Him, honoring Him as God, and trusting His mighty hand in our

life. Those who demonstrate humility by trusting God now will be exalted “in the proper time,” in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>vi</sup>

**Q: How would your life be different if you *always* put others’ needs ahead of your own?**

**Q: What behaviors and attitudes do you need to change to submit completely to God’s authority? To put others’ needs ahead of your own at all times?**

**Q: How can you develop the heart of a servant? How would having a servant’s heart change your attitudes, habits and behavior?**

### **1 Peter 5:8–14 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** If we persevere through the spiritual battle on earth, God will establish us in His eternal glory in heaven.

**Q: What themes does Peter repeat in this section from earlier in the letter?**

**Q: Why might Peter close his letter by talking about spiritual warfare?**

Peter concludes his letter by restating his thesis — those who suffer for a little while here on earth will be glorified in heaven with Christ (5:10). He reminds them of what he said in the beginning, that their suffering is only “a little while” in comparison to eternity in glory. This time, though, he identifies this suffering as spiritual warfare (5:8). Peter uses the vivid picture of a roaring lion on the prowl looking for someone to devour (5:8) as a warning about the battle we face daily. This is reminiscent of the warning the Lord gave Cain about sin crouching at his door before he killed his brother (Genesis 4:7).

One of the biggest lies people believe about Satan is that he is in hell. He’s not. He’s the prince of *this* world (John 14:30). He is prowling around *on this earth*, looking to destroy people’s lives. As our adversary (5:8), he is a very real threat to you and to me. Too many of us underestimate the reality of evil, Satan, and the spiritual battle for our souls that rages every day. *Every day* we are in a spiritual battle with evil.<sup>vii</sup> Jesus said the world would hate us (John 15:18) and described sending out His disciples as sending sheep into the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16). So, Peter gives his readers three commands: Be sober-minded; be watchful; and stand firm. The commands are a picture of a soldier in the midst of a battle, as he would want to have a clear mind, pay attention to what is around him, and not give any ground.

*Be sober-minded:* To be sober-minded is to have a clear picture of the world around us. We do this by taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Peter had told them to “arm themselves” with the mind of Christ, with godly thinking (4:1), because

the battlefield is our minds (2 Corinthians 10:4–6). This allows us to look at the world with the mind of Christ. Practically, this is why we encourage you to spend time in God’s Word daily.

*Be watchful:* Like a lookout in the military, keep your eyes open, scan the horizon, realizing that the Enemy will especially try to sneak in. Don’t live naively or in ignorance, as if the threat is not real. Keep your eyes open and look out for the ways the Enemy may be working. He is a tricky adversary, worming his way into your life through simple little things such as disagreements with your spouse, or frustrations, or busyness. The Enemy is the king of the sneak attack! C. S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters* does an excellent job of describing how the Enemy can sneak into our lives if we aren’t paying attention. Lewis describes how the Enemy attempts to manipulate our best intentions — “Surely you know that if a man can’t be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighborhood looking for the church that ‘suits’ him . . . this makes him a critic where [Jesus] wants him to be a pupil.”<sup>viii</sup> We have to keep our eyes open, keep alert, keep on the lookout for the Enemy’s sneak attacks.

*Stand firm:* This is the same phrase Paul used repeatedly in the passage on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6. When used in a military sense, this phrase has the idea of holding a critical position while under attack.<sup>ix</sup> In the Old Testament, God repeatedly told His people He would fight the battle for them; they just needed to stand firm (Exodus 14:14). If we don’t hold our position, if we don’t stand firm, if we don’t put on the full armor of God every morning when we start our day, we will fall to the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

Peter is honest about the very real threat of the Enemy and encourages his people that they *can* stand firm, that they *can* resist him (5:9). Remember, he is writing to believers who are being persecuted for their faith, so they experienced warfare tangibly. Yet the true battle is spiritual, the real Enemy is the Devil, and they need spiritual weapons to defend themselves and stand firm. Those who fight the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7–8) and endure to the end (Matthew 24:13) will be established in eternal glory in Christ (5:10). Peter reminds them that our suffering is only “a little while” compared to the eternal glory of heaven (5:10). They can stand firm; they can hold on. When they do, God will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish them in His kingdom (5:10).

He closes his letter with a message of peace and love. This message, which also encourages them to stand firm, is particularly significant because so much of this letter talks about their struggle, their persecution, and their battle in this life. In this simple closing, he reminds them that Jesus brings them peace, even in the midst of the tribulations of the world (John 16:33). In the eternal kingdom, there will be perfect peace, but even now we can find peace in our hearts when we trust in Jesus, when we put on the mind of Christ and stand firm in faith (5:8). When we cast our cares upon Him (5:7), He will supernaturally give us the “peace which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), a peace that only comes from Jesus. No matter what is going on around you — whatever storm, whatever struggle, whatever pain — you can have peace when you trust in Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

**Q: In what ways can you see a spiritual battle going on in your life? How can you see Satan trying to worm his way into your life?**

**Q: How can we open our eyes to see what is going on in the spiritual realm?**

**Q: How can we encourage one another to stand firm in times of suffering or spiritual battle?**



## Took

**Main Point: Humble yourself before the Lord now, and at the proper time He will exalt you.**

The habits of humility in Jeff Boss's article are all relationally driven and come down to putting others first. Jesus, our ultimate example of humility, said In Matthew 20: 28, "even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Paul picked up this theme in Philippians 2:3–4: "*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*"

**Q: How does humility help us to REACH, LEARN and LOVE more effectively in our Bible Fellowship?**

## CHALLENGES

**THINK: *About your thought life.*** Spend some time this week contemplating what it means to take every thought captive. How often does Satan battle with us in our own minds? Think of the ways the Enemy has tempted you to sin in the past. How can you put up safeguards that will help you avoid falling into old sinful behaviors? How can you learn to better control your thoughts, resist him, and stand firm in faith?

**PRAY: *For spiritual warfare.*** Spend time this week praying against the schemes of the Devil in your life. Pray for God to keep you on the alert for ways he tries to worm his way in to your life. Pray for eyes to see how to resist him when he tries to sneak-attack you. Pray for the Spirit to work in your life and keep you sober-minded and focused on heavenly things so you can resist the Devil and his wily schemes.

**ACT: *Practice humility.*** Think of (at least) one way you can put someone else's needs ahead of your own this week. It may be as simple as doing a small chore for your spouse so he or she can have more time to spend with your family or helping someone with a project at work when you don't really have to. It may be sacrificing time or money to help someone in need or some grand gesture God is calling you to. But specifically focus on putting someone else's need ahead of your own, on loving someone else by serving them. The more we *practice* being a servant — putting on that servant's apron — the more we will develop the heart of a servant.

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<sup>i</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter, IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 162-164.

<sup>ii</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

<sup>iii</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, Center for Servant Leadership - <https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>

<sup>iv</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter, The Daily Bible Study Series* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976).

<sup>v</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter, IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 165.

<sup>vi</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter, The Daily Bible Study Series* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976).

<sup>vii</sup> Billy Graham, *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1975).

<sup>viii</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1942).

<sup>ix</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians, MacArthur Bible Commentary Series* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 337-8.