

1 Peter 5:1-7

As Peter prepared to wrap up his letter, he turned his attention to the issue of church organization. At first glance this section seems almost out of place. However, upon closer analysis, it makes perfect sense. When the church faces difficult times the temptation to fall apart rears its ugly head. Confusion, finger pointing, and the like, if not unchecked, can take over. At times like these we need to know how to “keep it together.”

Big Idea: If we want spiritual victory during times of persecution we need to know our responsibilities

I. We need to know what responsibilities apply to the elders. vss. 1-4

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Comment: The word “elder” comes from the Greek term presbuteros. You might recognize this word. Presbyters are the church leaders in the Presbyterian denomination. In New Testament church governance it referred to the role of an elder. In every day affairs the word simply referred to an older person. One can see the connection. Older = maturity = wisdom = leadership. Well, sort of, kind of. As the word became functional in the early church the dynamic/spiritual meaning of older became more important than chronological age. One could be chronologically younger, but spiritually older, As a result, he may very well have been appointed to leadership even though he was a chronologically younger man...like Timothy and Titus.

A. Elders must shepherd. vss. 1-2a

Comment: The word “shepherd” is actually where we get the word pastor. Here, of course, it refers to the actions of an elder. The only place where it is applied to church leaders as a title is in Ephesians 4:11-13...

It was he [Jesus Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Question: As you think about shepherds, what characteristics of leadership come to mind?

Question: As you think about Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, what characteristics come to mind?

Question: Does an elder have to be perfect? After all, Jesus was.

Question: What are some things that would disqualify a man from being an elder?

B. Elders should shepherd willingly. vs. 2b

*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—**not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you***

Question: Why do you suppose this was necessary to include? Hint: Remember, the overall intention of Peter's letter...how must we respond during times of persecution.

C. Elders should shepherd from a servant's heart vs. 2c-3

*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; **not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.***

Question: Again, why is this important? What kind of social implications might be in play for a Christian leader when ridicule, slander, insult, marginalization, and even full blown persecution, turn up the heat?

D. Elders should shepherd with their eye on the ultimate prize. vs. 4

Question: How often does any thought of heaven prove to be motivational for you? Can anyone give us an example?

II. We need to know what responsibilities apply to the younger. vs. 5a

Comment: The NIV translates the Greek as “younger men.” However, the Greek term is more literally rendered “younger.” The King James Version, the American Standard Version, Young's Literal Translation, and many commentators prefer the more literal “younger.”

The difference of opinion has to do with the context. For those who prefer “younger men” the fact that Peter has been addressing Church Leadership – which explicitly means he is referring to men – implies he would continue with that subject. The next “logical” address, then, would be to

those waiting to step up to the challenge of Christ-like leadership. For those who prefer the literal term “younger” the grammatical construction stands out. Verses one through seven contains three injunctions: Elders shepherd the flock. Younger submit to this leadership. Elders and younger alike be humble.

Regardless of which position one assumes is more accurate, the same conclusion can be reached. Other passages of Scripture would support either view. Young men should submit to godly leadership. People who are spiritually younger in their walk with the Lord should also submit to godly leadership.

Question: Assuming we are following true elders – examples, sacrificial, Christ honoring, not greedy, etc. – what might this submission look like?

III. We need to know what responsibilities apply to the both the elders and the younger.
vss 5b-7

Read the passage.

Question: Again keeping in mind the overall context of First Peter – how to be encouraged and successful during times of persecution – what will this kind of humility look like?

Question: How does humility serve as a motivational force for what Peter was discussing in verses 1-4? How does it do so for what he was discussing in verse 5a?