
YOUNG, OLD & HUMBLE, SHEPHERDS AND SHEEP

SUMMARY: The first letter of Peter has spent a large portion of time focused on the reality, importance and response to suffering. From the early parts of chapter 2, right through to the end of chapter 4 this has been the central theme.

Peter though, changes focus in these verses by addressing the leadership of the church, the elders (5:1-4). Following this, he moves to those who are younger (v.5a) and then the whole church (v.5b onwards).

The question is, what is an elder? Is it simply someone advanced in years or is it an official title. The simple answer is both. Given his address to the younger people in the church, it is clear that age is an important factor, but not the only one.

What Peter wants both the leaders and the church as a whole to see, is that leading and following requires an attitude of submission and service. Each of the three contrasts in verse 2&3 make that point clear.

Then in verse 4, he speaks about the reward of those who lead, a crown of glory that will never fade. What is interesting to note though, is that the next verse links it together. In the same way that servant hearted leadership ends in glory, so does the submission of the younger to the elders.

What ties this all together? One simple attitude, humility. As the second half of verse 5 says, we must all clothe ourselves in humility. God opposes the proud but will lift up all those who lower themselves in order to lift those around them up!

1. What does the word elder mean?
2. Why do you think Peter wanted the elders to know he was a 'fellow elder'?
3. Where in the Bible is the image and example of shepherding used for leadership?
4. Why is shepherding such an important metaphor for all Christians who lead or serve?
5. Why should an elder not lead out of compulsion?
6. How might an elder seek dishonest gain in their ministry? How might others seek it?
7. Why is being a positive example so important to leading within a church?
8. How do these contrasts as a whole, express what is required of elders and leaders in the church?
9. Why do you think the younger people are told to submit?
10. How are pride and humility opposite attitudes?
11. Why is humility essential in the church?
12. In what way is Jesus both the perfect example of shepherd leadership and servant hearted humility?

