East 91st Street Christian Church | **Message Guide**

Refined	Those Who Lead You
November 8, 2026	Lake Webb
Week 5	1 Peter 5

Welcome to week five of our series "Refined," as we continue walking through the book of 1 Peter. Written by the apostle Peter, perhaps Jesus' closest friend during his earthly ministry, this isn't just some letter of truths written to nameless, faceless people, but a letter that is written to specific groups of Christians who are beginning to face the reality of what a life submitted to Christ brings. They are persecuted, ostracized, ignored, demonized, imprisoned, all because they refuse to bend the knee to Ceasar.

Peter begins this letter by reminding the readers that even though they are exiles, they have been chosen by God before the foundation of the world to receive an imperishable inheritance in Christ. This inheritance is far greater than any earthly possession because it won't fade and it's been tested by fire. It is the free gift of eternal life with Christ. Through that inheritance, everyone who believes is a priest. Everyone who believes has a place of honor as well as a holy responsibility in the Kingdom of God.

But the world doesn't like that priesthood. They're offended by it and are at war with the Kingdom of God. Moreover, the finite world doesn't like losing souls to the eternal Kingdom, so Christians suffer. They suffer for both what they do and what they believe, but the good news is that we aren't alone in our suffering because Jesus also suffered before us. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not and will not overcome it.

1. **What are some ways Christians today can "stand out" in the Kingdom of God, especially in the midst of suffering?**

When we arrive at 1 Peter 5, we begin with an oh so important Greek word, οὖν. It means then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so. Peter is essentially saying, "because of everything I've written so far, now really listen up! I'm going to give you an instruction or explanation that will tie all of this together for you and help you to live this out even though it's going to be hard!" Read 1 Peter 5:1-5.

God is the overseer of all creation. But beginning with Adam, God has specifically appointed people to exercise oversight over His creation under His authority. Adam named the animals and taught Eve what God commanded. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. The Judges protected God's people from other nations. The prophets delivered the Words of God. It follows the consistent theme of Scripture that God provides people who are appointed to lead His people. In the age of the church, this is no different.

There are two offices of the New Testament church in Scripture: one is the office of Deacon – Diakonos. Deacons are servants within the church who manage the day-to-day functions of the church. They are ministerial leaders and ministerial support by whom the people are cared for. The other office of the church is the office of Elder.

Now, there are three words that represent the same office within the church which can cause some confusion:

- Presbuteros – Elder (Maturity and Wisdom of office holder)
- Episkopos – Overseer (Function)
- Poimen – Shepherd or Pastor (Heart and Method of office)

So, why is it important to understand this? Because when we survey the New Testament and see these different words for the same office, we can know that the descriptions, qualifications, and responsibilities given are applicable to a singular office. And because God created and commanded the office, it's not just necessary, it's also good! So you need to know who is qualified and what their duty is to you. And when qualified elders oversee humble Christians, the church thrives. You thrive.

2. **What has been your understanding of the role of an elder and the different biblical terms to describe it?**

So, what are the biblical qualifications for someone to be an elder? Evidently, the group that Peter is addressing already has an idea of who qualifies because they currently have elders over their church, which would mean that Paul's teaching that we see in 1 Timothy and Titus on eldership had already circulated through the Church. Within 1 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Peter, there are a total of 16 qualifications of an elder – 15 of which relate to character or conduct.

- To be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2). An elder is to be one of those people who no matter what accusation could be raised against them, nothing will stick. They are living examples of Psalm 37:19 - The Lord knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance. Moreover they display a life that understands the cost of their sin. They are so aware of the reality and gravity of what Jesus has done for them that the righteousness in their lives is a demonstration of their gratitude to Christ.

- Those who desire to be and are called by the Holy Spirit. Peter says here that elders are to lead not out of compulsion, but willingly (1 Peter 5:2). And Paul writes to Timothy, This is a trustworthy saying: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task (1 Tim. 3:1). It is a joy to shepherd when you are called. Biblical elders do not drag their feet into the ministry and wear a badge of business or burden. They do so with joy because the Holy Spirit has called them. In Acts 20, Paul encourages the elders to remember who called them: Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood (Acts 20:28, ESV). How do we know someone is called by the Holy Spirit? If they display the calling and demonstrate the qualifications, confirmation of the Holy Spirit's commissioning comes through prayer and fasting by other elders (Acts 14:23).

3. **How might someone's desire to serve as an elder help confirm that it is God's calling?**
4. **Why do you think Paul emphasizes that elders pay careful attention to themselves and the flock, especially knowing that the Holy Spirit has called them to that responsibility?**

So what is an elder? An elder is a man of God, called by the Holy Spirit to oversee the flock. Why did God institute this role and why did Peter make a point to address church leadership? Remember one of the terms for elder is Poinmen (pastor). That word for pastor is also translated "shepherd." And we get the word pastor from the Latin pascere – to lead to pasture.

God uses this shepherding imagery all throughout Scripture:

- Isaiah 53 – All like sheep had gone astray, each had turned to his own way but the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
- Psalm 23 – The Lord is my shepherd…
- Matthew 9 – Jesus had grief for the crowd because they were like sheep without a shepherd. The narrative here is that sheep are helpless and in need of a shepherd; without a shepherd they will die.

Thankfully, we have been given Jesus as our great shepherd! But elders are like under-shepherds–– those who watch over specific segments of the flock of God as we wait for Christ's return. This means the role of an elders is very specific and necessary. Elders are not a board of directors. Elders do not exist simply to make financial and directional decisions for the church. Elders are to shepherd the flock of God in the truth. Their purpose is to rightly divide the word of God so that the people of God are able to feast on it––so that people can gain nourishment from it. And in Peter's context, so that they can be so deeply molded by the word of God, to face persecution faithfully.

5. **How does understanding elders as shepherds rather than simply decision-makers change the way you view their role in the church?**

Now, it's also important to remember that elders are sheep too. Sheep that must be shepherded as well! Peter addresses the elders this way: So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed… (1 Peter 5:1, ESV). Peter is speaking to them as a fellow elder––one who had received correction from Paul (Galatians 2) and was willing to be shepherded. Simply put, Peter is pleading with the elders to set a good example for the people of God and fulfill their duty to them, while also displaying their need for shepherding as well. This is why we don't have just one elder, but we have a council of elders.

Why is it important for us to have an in depth understanding of eldership? Because the second half of this section of the text instructs the Church to submit to this kind of leadership. Peter tells us this in verses 5-7: Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5-7). When Peter uses the word elders here, he doesn't mean old people. And when Peter addresses those who are younger, he's not just talking about age. Peter is both addressing young men as well as addressing those who are younger spiritually, knowing that the humility required to submit to spiritual leadership is less common in those who are young and spiritually immature.

6. **How do you respond to spiritual leadership? And what does that reveal about your spiritual maturity ?**

But what happens when someone claims the title of elder who is utterly disqualified from the pastorate? This is why Peter shifts to speak to everyone when he says, Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you (1 Peter 5:5b-7, ESV)

Elders and laypeople alike, be humble. Pride destroys the order God intends. And this is the story of humanity ever since the garden. Pride always returns destruction, but humility returns grace. Elders, be humble. Lead confidently but lead with humility. Church, be humble. Submit to the order God has designed with readiness. And when God's people are unified in the humility and exercise their roles with faithfulness, what happens? God will exalt you at the proper time. But in spite of the fear that humility can bring, continue to humble yourselves… casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7, ESV).

And in verse 8 Peter says, be sober-minded. Be watchful. It is doing your diligence as a Christ follower, knowing what He has said, and living in that order faithfully. And in spite of whatever anxiety might come from that, continue in the way the Lord has prescribed, casting it on Him. And Peter continues by reminding them of the enemy–our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8b-9, ESV)

7. **Peter's instructions are not optional for God's chosen people… continue to humble yourself, be sober-minded and watchful. Resist the devil, stand firm in your faith. Regardless of the role God has called you to, in which of these areas do you need strength?**

And then Peter offers hope… And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:10-11, ESV). We find our hope in God, who has called us to eternal glory in Christ. Eternal glory that was established and sealed on the cross. That's good news!