

How to be Humble - 1 Peter 5:6-7

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[0 : 00] It's actually been that long. October, I think it was. And it's a pleasure to be back. I brought my daughter this time. My wife, unfortunately, couldn't come, but next time.

Today we're going to look at just a really short passage, actually. I don't usually preach really short passages, but I am today, from 1 Peter chapter 5.

And I'll read it. We'll read it together. And then we'll take a look at a really common word for Christians.

Really common. You know, we have our sort of vocabulary that we use as Christians, like the word holy. At home, we'd call that an in-house word, right?

So it's a word that we use all the time. We just sort of throw it around. Or we use the word love, right, or grace. We have these words that we understand as Christians in particular kind of ways, right?

[0 : 56] And sometimes they're words that other people don't use too much. A word like holy. Now, a word that we use a lot, that everybody knows, that everybody's sort of familiar with, is humble.

Every Christian ought to be humble. Or humility. We use that word, too. But what do we mean by it? And it's one of those words that we're so familiar with, that sometimes we maybe don't ask, what does it really mean to be humble, right?

So that's sort of the first question, just something to think about. What does it really mean, if you hear somebody say, or maybe you say, you know? I'm sure there's people you know, and when people ask you about this idea, he's very humble, right?

Or he always sort of shows humility, or she's very humble. But what exactly do we mean by that? And I think it's important for us to understand what exactly we mean by that, since it's such an important thing for a Christian, right?

We talk about that all the time, that one of the main things that would sort of characterize a Christian is that he or she is humble. But what do we mean? What do we mean?

[2 : 05] So let's just read, or I'm just going to read just a little bit of this from chapter 5. So Peter's writing to a church. It's a very, very young church. They're in trouble, basically, for being Christians.

They live in a place, in a time, where it would be very, very hard to be a Christian and people don't notice. It would be hard to be, at home, we would say, under the radar.

It was hard for these Christians that Peter's writing to just to live in their society and not be noticed as being different. And so they're under a lot of pressure from their neighbors and from sort of officials and people like that.

And he gets to this end. And Peter, this is a great little book. He addresses everybody. He addresses husbands and wives and people who are servants and people who work and young people and older people.

He addresses everybody and sort of has specific things to say to them. And he comes here to the end. And last of all, he addresses the church leaders. In chapter 5, he says, this is verse 1, To the elders among you I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who will also share in the glory to be revealed.

[3 : 19] Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you.

Right? So that's like not being sort of making sure everybody knows you're in charge all the time.

That's kind of what he means about don't lord it over people. But being examples to the flock.

And when the great shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to the elders. All of you, clothe

yourselves with humility.

Right? So now he's talking, he's starting to talk to everybody. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. And it's just the next two verses that we're going to spend our time looking at this morning. Verses 6 and 7. Humble yourselves, therefore. Why? Why humble yourself?

[4 : 20] Because God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. Right? He's quoting from the book of Proverbs there. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. So, the title of this sermon is, How to Be Humble. Now, it's kind of odd to stand up and say, you know what?

I'm going to teach you how to be humble. Right? It makes me uncomfortable to do it. And, you know, I mean, first of all, I mean, you can think, who is this guy? And first of all, if you are humble, why would you get up and talk about what it means to be humble?

And then, if you're an American, that's even less likely. Right? Because one of the things, I mean, we're known for lots of things. Right? Not all of them good.

One of those things is not typically humility. Anywhere I go in the world, it's not really one of the first things that people say about Americans. But whatever the case, there's a really good reason I'm speaking to you about humility and how to be humble today.

[5 : 27] It's because of everybody I know, I'm the one who needs to hear it most. So, I'm not going to talk to you about how to be humble because I've got it mastered, or because I'm the expert in humility.

Besides, if I was the expert in humility, you would know because I wouldn't talk about it. So, it's really because I'm not very humble that I'm up here talking to you about what it means to be humble.

Because I need to be humble. We all do. But here's the great thing about Peter. People sort of ignore Peter, right? Because we spend all of our time with Paul or reading Jesus in the Gospels, and Peter kind of gets put on the sideline a little bit.

But the great thing about Peter is he tells you what to do over and over again, and then he tells you how to do it. And that's the great thing here, is all I really have to do is just repeat to you what Peter says.

Because he tells you to be humble, and then he says, by the way, here's exactly, exactly the way you do it. So, when you leave here today, not because I know everything about humility, but because the Apostle Peter was such a good guy, you're going to leave here today knowing exactly, exactly what you have to do to be humble.

[6 : 43] Now, there are a couple of things that come to mind when we think of the word humble, and sort of two things. And they're not really biblical humility.

One is there's sort of a humility, like you don't want to speak your mind, right? You think, well, this is just my opinion, right? And everybody has an opinion. I don't want to force my opinion on others. Here's something that somebody said about that kind of humility, right? So, it's sort of the humility that says, no, you know, I don't want to push my opinion on others. Your opinion is as good as my opinion. Who am I to say that's right? Who am I to say this is wrong?

It's just my opinion. If you think that's right, that's fine. I'm not going to sort of overstep my boundaries. So, there's that sort of humility. And a Christian man said this.

Every day, one comes across somebody who says, who says, my view may not be the right opinion. But, of course, his view must be the right one.

[7 : 39] Otherwise, he wouldn't hold it. It wouldn't be his view. He must think that's the right one. He just won't say that he thinks it's the right one. We're on the road to producing people too modest to believe in the multiplication table.

We're in danger of creating people who think the law of gravity is just a matter of personal opinion that you don't want to force on others. In old times, people were too proud to be convinced. But today, people are too humble to be convinced of anything. And that was written by a man called G.K. Chesterton in 1908. Right?

And it sounds like it was written yesterday. So, there's that sort of humility. But I would say, that's not biblical humility. That's not what it means to be humble in the Bible. Just saying, well, you know, that's your opinion.

And that's fine. It's just as good as my opinion. Right? Or, who am I to say that's wrong? Who am I to say this is right? It's just my view. Now, in the world, that might be considered humble.

[8 : 44] But that's not what the Bible means by it. The other thing is this. And I think this is the more likely thing that we do as Christians. And that is, we confuse, maybe, what it means to be humble with just the way a person is.

So, if somebody's quiet, if somebody's unassuming, if somebody is sort of a, I don't know, wallflower. I probably shouldn't use it.

At home, we would say a wallflower. I don't know if that's self-explanatory. It's like somebody who doesn't stand out, whatever the case. But they're quiet. They don't assert themselves. And we say, well, that's a humble person. And they may be.

And, of course, it's good to be quiet. It's good not to just speak when others are speaking. It's good to sort of be reserved. Those are all good things. But I happen to know some people who are very quiet, and the reason they're very quiet and reserved is because they don't generally think other people are worth their time.

So, they don't really speak to them that much. So, somebody could be quiet, but not at all humble. Somebody could be reserved and often themselves and not speak to others, but they may be the least humble people that there is.

[9 : 52] So, sometimes we think humility is just a character trait. And it may be, but it might not be. But that's kind of what we think.

You think being humble is just being quiet. Well, sometimes there's many of us. I can think of one in particular who needs to be quiet more than he is. But, that's not all.

In fact, that's not what Peter means. Here's what it means to be humble. There's four things we're going to talk about. And don't worry, four sounds like a lot, but it's going to go really fast. Because Johnny said, I only had two and a half hours to preach.

So, two and a half hours will easily do these. Four things. Number one, if you want to know what it means to be humble, according to the Apostle Peter, which means according to God, number one is, you have to begin, not with yourself, and what does it mean to be humble, you have to begin with who God is.

Right? So, strange, isn't it? How to be humble. First thing, start with God. Number two, if you want to learn what it means to be humble, is you submit to God's power.

[11 : 00] This also doesn't really sound like, how does this have to do with humility? Right? So, begin with God. Number two, submit to God's power. Number three, trust in God's promise. Right?

Well, this has nothing to do about humility, it sounds like. And number four, act on God's love. Act on God's love.

And that's kind of the how-to part. Right? So, I'm just going to go through these really fast. The first one is really fast. Look what Peter says. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand.

So, he doesn't begin with the people that he's speaking to. In other words, it's not just, go make yourself humble. He says, humble yourself under God's mighty hand.

Now, when you hear that phrase, mighty hand, what do you think of? What do you think of? What comes to mind? Well, you know what comes to mind when I think of it?

[11 : 57] Is I think of like a school principal who's always like ready for you to do something wrong. And the minute you do, and that's all they live for.

Right? And when I was growing up, I had a particular, a particular principal in elementary school. And I think her whole life was based on waiting for me to do something wrong just so she, and she was always right.

I would. But we think of like God's mighty hand, like that God's stretching his hand out and the minute you do something wrong, he's ready to come down on you. Do you ever think about God that way?

Some people do. Some people think that God is basically just sort of always hovering over. Like, I'm going to get you. I'm just waiting. And I'm waiting. And I know you're going to mess up just like you messed up yesterday.

And the minute you do, because I'm God, I'm going to jump all over you and smack you down and teach you a lesson. Now, we sometimes view God that way, but that is not how God reveals himself to us.

[12:58] And when Peter talks about God's mighty hand, it absolutely doesn't mean the hand of God that's getting ready to smack you the minute you do something wrong. It is God's hand that is stretched out to save you.

And the reason I'm pretty confident this is true is because that's how God's hand is talked about in the Bible itself. Listen to Exodus 3, verse 19.

But I know, this is God speaking to Moses, I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.

So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians and all the wonders and I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go. Deuteronomy 5. So, in other words, yeah, God's mighty hand is stretched out and that's bad news for Pharaoh, but it's good news for who?

It's good news for his people. Because God's mighty hand is God's hand, as it were, that's reached out and ready and willing and able to save his people. So God's mighty hand is on your side if you're a child of God, if you call upon the name of God, if you call yourself a Christian.

[14:10] God's mighty hand is not just there to take you down a peg. And of course, yeah, of course God does punish them. I'm not saying he doesn't, but that's not what this text is about.

This text is about God saving and God wanting to save. And then Deuteronomy 5.15, here Moses is talking to the Israelites and reminding them of everything that God's ever done for them.

Deuteronomy 5.15, and you will remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out of their house by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

And I think Peter gets his language from the Bible. And so when he says under God's mighty hand, that's the hand he's thinking about. It is the hand of the all-powerful God. But it's the hand of the all-powerful God that is stretched out on behalf of his people to save them.

Right? And so I think that's where Peter gets his language. That's the idea of the hand of God. And so we want to be careful when you hear the phrase humble yourself under God's mighty hand.

[15:16] You don't just think of I better do this or God is going to teach me a lesson. I think sometimes as Christians we think of God as though he's just some kind of version of us.

And that is he keeps a list of wrongs and he's up there like you know this is the third time this week. Right? That he's sort of just always ready to reprimand us no matter what.

And that he's keeping a list of wrongs and he's thinking one more time. Right? I've let you go three times. Three times. You've done the same thing three times. I'm going to let it slide. You keep pushing me though I'm all over you.

Or that he's just sort of spiteful. Or that he's moody. And so some days he forgives you and other days he's fed up. But the great news for you is in that way God is not like you.

God doesn't sort of wake up on the wrong side of the bed. God is not different tomorrow than he is today. God is not changing his mind and thinking you know I know I said I would do this but here's what I'm really going to do.

[16:21] But sometimes we think of God that way. But that's not how Peter's beginning. Peter's saying humble yourself under God's mighty hand. Why? Because he lifts up the humble.

He opposes the now God's hand is against the proud but the humble he lifts up. And Peter's getting ready to tell you what you've got to do to be humble. So you want to be lifted up by God's mighty hand?

Hang in there just for a minute and I'll tell you exactly how to do that and it's probably going to surprise you. Right? So you we began with God so I just kind of put those two things together. Right? So that's the submit to God's power. Right? So I kind of put two points together. Begin with God who God is not with yourself and humble yourself under God's mighty hand. So see we did two points really fast.

So now we're to the third one and we're going to slow down just a little bit. The second one sorry third one is this. Trust in God's promise. Look what he says.

[17:21] Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Now this is in fact a promise that God is going to lift you up in due time.

And now real quick though I want to say this. Peter is not saying if you're going through something right now and remember here's the thing these people were going through lots of things. He's not just giving them like hey you all sit down and we're talking about humility.

They're suffering virtually every day for being Christians and their lives are filled with struggles and all kinds of other things just like yours are. So he's not just saying I'm going to teach you a lesson

on humility.

He's ending this letter by telling them reminding them reminding them who they are who God is and how to live before God and it's all about what it means to be humble. And so he says that he may lift you up in due time.

Now what's this due time? Well ultimately what Peter is saying is this. There is nothing that you can be going through nothing that you can be doing nothing that you will face that God will not lift you out of.

[18 : 32] Now you can hear that and agree with it and think yeah so eventually one day eventually right I'll sort of get through this and it'll be better. So we think of we can read this and think that the Christian life is just I'm going to put up with a whole bunch of stuff and then eventually it'll finally be over.

But that's not what Peter is saying. When Peter says he'll lift you up he doesn't just simply mean at the end in heaven. Though that is true.

That is very true. But he doesn't just simply mean he will finally lift you up put you in heaven. But for now you just put up with whatever you have to put up with bear it you know sort of shoulder to the wheel nose to the grindstone and you just bear it bear up whatever is happening and eventually God will then intervene and take you to heaven for now though right you just sort of hang in there and hope that that happens.

And sometimes we view it that way. And certainly certainly there are many many many things that we will not be released from until we arrive in heaven. That's very true.

But we also don't want to think of heaven as just the thing that finally comes when I finally get all this stuff out of the way. And until then it's kind of hopeless.

[19 : 50] I'll just I'll make it eventually but now it's just sort of misery or whatever else I'm going through. That's not what he means. That's not what he means. But he's calling them he's calling them to trust that God is on their side.

And that's he's getting closer and closer and closer to telling them exactly what they need to do to be humble. But he's wanting to make sure that first of all they understand God is not against them. And it would be easy if you were some of these people to wonder right?

Because they're suffering because they're Christians. And you get in a situation where you're suffering for whatever however you might be suffering whatever it is you might be going through and it's easy to start to think maybe and you know that God doesn't forget right?

And you know that God doesn't ignore people and you know that God knows everything but you start to think there's something wrong with me because God is not paying attention to me.

God is sort of checked out of my life. I mean I hear all those things I believe all those things the things that the preacher talks about and the things that we talk about things we read in the Bible I know those things are true I just don't think there may be true for me.

[21 : 07] I know God is kind and gracious and loving and he's on the side of his people I just maybe think not so much for me personally and we kind of do that right?

There's probably nobody in here as a Christian who doubts that God is loving and gracious but and you might not admit it and I might not admit it there's times where we think yeah he is loving and gracious but there's something wrong with me I've done something wrong and he's not acting that way towards me he does that for others and I know all these stories and I've read these books and I've heard these testimonies but for me in my life right now not so much and everybody I think has felt that way and so what Peter is saying right and he hasn't even told them how to humble themselves yet he's getting them ready so that they understand if they want to be humble that they will start with who God is remember that God is mighty and willing to save them and not just back when they became a Christian but the whole way and that he is on their side and is going to fulfill every promise for them and all these things all these things are the background for what it means to humble yourself now that finally gets us to the fourth point and look at it humble yourselves therefore

I'll just read the two verses again under God's mighty hand that he might lift you up in due time then seven cast all your anxiety in him because he cares for you now it sounds like two things doesn't it it sounds doesn't it because you might think what he's not even talking about humility anymore in verse seven it's what it sounds like right because there's even a full stop there humble yourself under God's mighty hand he will lift you up in due time full stop then cast your anxieties on him because he cares for you but Peter is not telling you to do two things he's telling you to do one thing

and then telling you how to do it now think about it for a second verse six humble yourself how do you do it right if this is two things if it's humble yourself done two cast your anxiety on God what is the first part how do you do it do you just think okay humble yourself here it comes here it comes it's coming okay

I did that part now I'm going to cast my anxiety what is it what is it to humble yourself did you ever I mean just think about it for a second don't answer out loud you don't have to answer out loud but just think of verse six all by itself humble yourself under God's mighty hand what does that even look like in your mind as you imagine it you might even have a vision of yourself what what how how do you do it so I'm just going to ask you how do you humble yourself you know how you humble yourself by understanding that Peter is not saying humble yourself command number one humble yourself command number two cast your anxieties on God what he's saying is this humble yourself here's how you do it you cast your anxieties upon God or cast your cares on him right

I've got like three different translations going on my head so I need to keep looking down all your anxiety on him because he cares for you that's how you humble yourself how do you humble yourself you humble yourself by casting your anxieties on God and not trying to carry them yourself so he's Peter's great he tells you humble yourself and then says oh here's how you do it now you think what does casting my anxieties have to do with humbling myself well think about it for one minute what could say what could show humility more and say to God that I am trusting in your promises I am trusting that your hand has reached out to save me your mighty hand and that you're on my side more than coming to God with all of your anxieties and whatever they may be and saying to God and standing before God with your hands open saying I can't bear these myself I am not strong enough to bear the things in my life and hand them over to

[25 : 47] God that's what biblical humility looks like biblical humility is this is saying to God I can't handle my own stuff and we need to hear this every single day and it doesn't matter what your stuff is by the way I can just start naming some things and I will it could be your anxiety over your job or needing a job or maybe losing your job it could be anxiety over your children whether or not they're believers or whether they're ill or any number of things it could be anxiety that you have over parents it could be anxiety you have over people from work because of whatever tensions or a boss it could be anxiety you have among yourself just with friends it could be the anxiety you feel just when you leave the house and deal with other people it could be the anxiety of knowing or waiting for a phone call from a doctor and you suspect bad news or getting that phone call and it is bad news it could be the anxiety that comes from struggling day in day out day in day out with temptation and sin he says all your anxieties he doesn't just sort of name five all of them so what that means is whatever you got you think well what anxieties well just ask yourself what anxieties do

I have and then what you say is I'm not going to try to handle these myself I'm not going to try to fix these myself and we do that right we do that we know we're usually pretty aware of what our problems are now we have some problems we're not even aware of and other people see but I imagine that every one of us are pretty much experts on what our problems are but yet how often do we think I need to work on this and then I'm going to get my relationship with God right you know as soon as I work on this thing in my life this temptation or this sin if I can just take care of this and work on this then I can go to God in prayer because you think you ever ask God for something you ask God to help to release you from some sin and temptation you think I can't ask for this again certainly

I've used all my chances and so what I'm going to do is I'm not going to commit this I'm not going to fall in this sin I'm not going to fall in this sin again and the minute I don't fall in this sin again then I'm going to be back in sort of I'll be back on God's good side and then he'll start answering my prayers so in other words what you say is I'm going to start with myself I'm going to fix myself I'm going to fix my problems I'm going to fix my sin I'm going to fix my anxieties I'm going to take care of them and then whatever the bits I can't handle then I'll take the leftover part that's too much for me and then God will take care of it now I don't think any of us think in those sort of black and white terms but that's how we act when it comes to God that we're going to fix the little things or the things that we're too ashamed to bring back to God we're going to work on those and then get our relationship back on track with God what Peter is saying is this no you want to be humble and here basically Peter is saying you want to live a real authentic

Christian life he's not just talking about a characteristic of a Christian by the way what it means to be humble he's really talking about what it means to live your practical Christian life not just have the humble box checked off and says cast your anxieties on him and that's what a humble person looks like a humble person is a person who looks at God and whatever their trouble may be whatever the anxiety may be whatever that thing is that you lay awake at night staring at the ceiling that maybe only you don't even want the lights to go out because you know when the lights go out here it comes rushing in on you maybe you held it back all day by being busy maybe you had to go to work you had to take care of your kids you had to do all kinds of other things and then at night all of a sudden you're alone you have a moment or you're driving the car and here it comes and you know it's coming what Peter's saying is this is whatever that may be you take it before God and you hold your hands out and stand before

God under God's hand who's ready to save you and say I can't I can't bear this myself I can't fix this I can't make this go away I can't make this better and you cast it on God who can carry it who can fix it who can maybe not take it from you immediately and make your life all of a sudden a bed of roses but can intervene in your life in a real way and show you that his grace is sufficient for you even if that means your troubles are not going to disappear that's what God does God doesn't typically come in and just sort of take away your disease or all of a sudden take away all the tensions you have in your life he comes in and teaches you how to live in those things and rely on him in the midst of it God teaches you that he's there with you in the midst of it that he's aware of your suffering he's aware of your anxieties and he says give them to me right he's the all powerful eternal

[31 : 28] God and says to you who are not all powerful and are not eternal and are not almighty and don't know everything and can't do anything can't do everything the one who can do everything does do everything who creates something out of nothing who created the whole world who provided a savior for us in his son Jesus Christ says I can do it what can he not do if God can forgive your sins fully do you believe that God forgave your sins fully in Jesus can he not also then bear your burdens for you if you bring them to him it can't be too much for him and he doesn't look at you and say alright you know what I'm talking about alright here we go again because James says in chapter 1 that God gives without holding a grudge

God doesn't you don't come to God and ask for something and he's like alright I gotta do it I mean I'm God and all and you know I know you and all your failings God's not like that God never God never blames you for not being able to do something that he knows you can't do already God's not going to blame you for not being able to bear your own anxieties and troubles because he already knows ahead of time that you cannot do it and that's why he says you know who can I can you know who wants to I do you know how I've proved it to you is I have taken away your greatest anxiety and that is sin and death by how taking it upon myself in the person of my son and so that's what Peter's talking about here and then look at the very last thing and this is it we're going to wrap up with this don't miss these last few words because he cares for you right

God doesn't just say I guess I got to do this I mean we have this sort of relationship and it's my job to forgive God says Peter says why because he cares for you and that's a huge question for you to ask yourself today can you say this and believe it well here's the thing you can say it and believe that God never breaks his promises and it's important for you not to think because he cares for me I'm not really feeling it the idea here is that Peter just says it cast your anxieties on him not so he can say all right but he cares for you it's another way of saying because he wants you to because he wants and desires to bear those things for you he bore the burden of your sin he wants to bear and is willing and more than able he wants you to come before him and say you know what you're God I'm not you give and I receive I'm not bringing you know what you bring to God all your stuff you know what God gives you life and he takes it from you so say this to yourself today not because he cares for you don't say you because he cares for me right because he cares for me I can take my anxieties whatever they may be and cast them upon him and believe that I don't just do it because he's God but he personally cares for me calls me my name knows who I am and loves me and is more aware of my faults and problems than anybody more aware of my faults and problems than even I am but he cares for me and this is what Peter says so you want to know how to be humble here's how you I'm not going to fix myself by myself

I'm not strong enough to do it and that's a very difficult thing to do because we want to believe that we can in fact fix ourselves we want to believe that we can in fact kind of tie up some loose ends

and then we'll do the God part with our relationship with God but Peter is saying you don't have to do any of that it's all free because God cares for you so humble yourself under the mighty hand of God so that he will lift you up in due time by casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you let's pray father help these not to just be words that we repeat back or say or read or just sort of agree with but words that are real to us that penetrate our heart that strip away all the barriers that we put up between ourselves and you and all of our efforts to try to make ourselves better but help us to believe that when it says that you care for us that you really do not just that you care for others but that you care for me you care for each one of us so

[37 : 05] Lord give us the grace today to unload our anxieties and burdens onto you and to trust that you are on our side in Christ's name Amen