

1 Peter 5:1-5 “Shepherds and Sheep”

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[0 : 00] I am also really excited for summer, maybe even more than some of you students, if that is possible.

We get to have this summer for the first time since COVID, short-term trips to work alongside some of our mission partners. How exciting that is. Opportunities here, Jeremy was telling you about in relationship with our neighbors.

Invite someone to the cookout or VBS. This is why God has us here, right? That we would see His name praised among the nations and the next generations.

That's what we're about. And it's exciting to get to be a part of that in these ways. One other thing I wanted to mention before we open God's Word together.

Today is a day that has been set aside months ago by our denomination because our denomination, the PCA, the Presbyterian Church in America, is turning 50 this year.

[1 : 13] And so this is a day of prayer to thank God for His work, to pray for the future of our denomination. And it's been especially poignant this week because we have experienced the death of multiple pastors in our denomination.

Last Sunday, Stephen Smallman in Pennsylvania. Thursday morning, Pastor Harry Reeder from Briarwood, a sister church in Birmingham, died suddenly in a car accident.

And then the next morning, Tim Keller went to be with Jesus. He's been in New York City and battling pancreatic cancer.

I know that He has shaped many of you. He has certainly shaped many of your pastors. These are men who are fathers in the PCA.

Maybe some of them, no one outside the Presbyterian Church in America would recognize, but significantly influential for years and years in our denomination.

[2 : 23] And so I encourage us to be praying for the future of the PCA and those who will continue to lead us and shepherd us as we thank God for these who have done that for us.

As these would certainly have it, let's open our Bibles. Let's hear from God appropriately this morning about leaders.

We are entering the last chapter of Peter's letter to God's people who are scattered through the world. He's been telling them and us about the suffering that we're going to endure because this world is not our home.

home. Pastor Keller once said, we all long for a place that is truly home. Jesus says it awaits you.

He's home now. We're not. We live in a place that is not our home. But at the end of chapter 4 last week, Peter told us God's judgment is coming to refine us.

[3 : 42] These difficult times to discipline our hearts, this suffering to purify our faith in Him. It starts with God's people.

In fact, in the Old Testament passage, Peter is drawing from it starts in the temple with the leaders of God's people. So in light of that, he keeps going.

The leaders of God's people are to lead them toward God, to entrust themselves to God in the midst of painful suffering. Peter has some words for those leaders.

Then briefly, words for the rest of the church in relation to them. In Jesus' church, there are elders called to lead.

Peter doesn't explain that here in this passage as many other letters do. Peter assumes it. He's writing to a bunch of churches. He assumes they all have elders. Shared leadership as with God's people in the Old Testament.

[4 : 43] So he writes to the elders here at the start of chapter 5, God's Word. Really important for elders to listen. Really important for all of us to listen to what our leaders should do and what kind of leaders we need as we nominate them, as we pray for them, as we share God's mission alongside them.

1 Peter 5 at verse 1. 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.

Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

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.

[6 : 05] Let's pray together. Father, we thank you this morning again for your word. Would you keep the PCA true and faithful to your word?

That we would be obedient to the great commission that we would not only know your word, that we would share your word. Lord, would you do that in our hearts here today?

Would you speak? We need hear no voice more clearly than yours. We are your sheep. So would we hear your voice? Would we listen? Would we follow our shepherd?

We ask it in the name of Jesus, our good shepherd. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. When the people of God are struggling as strangers in a world that's not their home.

When they're enduring suffering at the hands of the world and in their own flesh and their enemy, the devil. When they're being tested and refined, in fact, by God himself.

[7 : 17] What is imperative for their leaders to do? Peter has a charge for the elders of every church of Jesus Christ.

He exhorts us. He urges us as one who has seen the deepest sufferings of Jesus as well as the highest glory toward one thing.

What is that one thing that Peter exhorts the elders? Shepherd the flock of God among you. What is the church of Jesus Christ always in need of?

Shepherds. An elder, an overseer is another word used here and elsewhere for the same role, is a shepherd.

One who by definition, by spiritual vocation, by divine sanctification, cares for sheep.

[8 : 24] Listen, elders. You may teach. You may administrate. You may pray. You may evangelize.

You may disciple. You may organize. You may serve. You must always shepherd the flock.

Care for sheep. Peter is echoing the very words that Jesus spoke to him. The risen Jesus comes to Peter and says, Feed my sheep.

Tend my lambs. Pastor my people. Picture what a shepherd does, right? He knows the sheep personally.

He lives among them, protecting them from wolves that would attack or harm them. He sees that they get proper food when they need.

[9 : 24] He gives them rest rather than exhausting them. He searches them out when they wander away. This is what a shepherd does. Specifically here, Peter mentions that elders exercise oversight.

Think of looking over the large group, the guarding and the watchful care over the whole flock. Who is supposed to wrestle and pray over how to care for the sheep during a pandemic?

The shepherds. Who is called to be surveying the landscape of the surrounding culture and seeing the idols that are distracting our hearts from Jesus and guide the sheep to safety?

The shepherds. Who should be noticing even the sinful tendencies among the flock, the ways they tend to wander, the most dangerous temptations they encounter, and warn them clearly about the danger?

The shepherds. This is a weighty role, isn't it? A great responsibility.

[10 : 38] Boy, I have felt that this week. Can you imagine? Over 800 sheep. Precious souls ranging from five days old to 95 years old.

Every single one of them precious to the master, the good chief shepherd who loves them. Elders, notice who the sheep are that you're to shepherd.

If they are the focus of your shepherding, there's nothing more important than to know who they are. They are the flock of God. They belong to Him.

These are the ones, Peter has told us, think back to the beginning of this letter. These are the ones that God bought for Himself with the precious blood of His Son, the perfect Lamb.

Even the stubborn ones. Even the wayward ones. Even the weak ones. All of them are His blood-bought lambs.

[11 : 58] Don't you dare neglect a one of them. Or mislead any of them away from Him. Shepherd the flock of God.

Wow. Listen, brothers. There's a comfort that comes with the weight of that heavy hand.

That these are God's sheep. Right? If they're God's flock, He never stops shepherding them. Yes, for a season, He puts them in your care.

But while He puts their hand in yours, they never leave His hand. He will never let them go. So let that omnipotent hand lighten your burden without lessening your responsibility.

In Ezekiel chapter 34, God speaks some really sobering words against the shepherds of His people. Because they are feeding themselves and not feeding His sheep.

[13 : 08] They're not strengthening the weak. Caring for the sick. Seeking the stray. And the result there in the Old Testament with God's people is the sheep are scattered.

And many of them are lost. As a result, God promises to remove His shepherds. He will not stand for that from His shepherds.

And He promises to rescue His sheep. I myself will search for my sheep and rescue them and feed them.

Make them lie down. Bind up the injured and be their shepherd. What a faithful shepherd. You know you have one of those. No matter what any leader does that fails you, He will rescue you and be your shepherd.

And so elders, shepherd God's sheep. God's flock among you.

[14 : 15] Southwood elders, you can care for. But you don't specifically shepherd every Christian around the world.

Amen? You don't have to understand every political climate in every nation. You aren't called to understand the conflict in every Christian denomination.

You aren't responsible to understand every suffering everywhere. But these dear people sitting right here next to you, the ones who can't be here this morning, the ones you live with in your neighborhood, you must shepherd.

We must shepherd. Shepherd the flock of God among you. Last week, 35 sheep stood up here and took membership vows.

Even that looked like a lot to me. Did you realize that when that happens, that's not merely new members making a commitment to this church family?

[15 : 25] Those are the ones we saw and heard. But when that happens, simultaneously, every active elder who has likewise stood and taken a vow to God before this flock is making a commitment to them too.

Did you know that? That was happening last week. When you're received into membership, the elders of Southwood, the session, we call them as a group, They're receiving you as sheep that they promise to shepherd.

Not even just they promise you, they promise God. Elders, your sheep are suffering today and will suffer in the future in some ways that are common to all of them and in 800 plus unique ways.

Following Jesus is different for every one of them, but it's not easy for any of them. So shepherd God's sheep.

At Southwood, we have 20 active elders, teaching elders we call pastors, and ruling elders who shepherd together.

[16 : 41] That's part of why I'm often saying we this morning. We as shepherds need your prayers. We are far from perfect.

But one of the things I want you to know that I most love about these men is how they love the sheep. How they work to prioritize their time for shepherding the sheep.

We talk about it in terms of praying for you and pointing you to Jesus. That's pastoring, shepherding, right? And part of that role as under shepherds, that's what we are, under shepherds to the chief shepherd, is to raise up other under shepherds so that we shepherd one another better.

Our deacons help. The women on our advisory team help us shepherd. Our grace group leaders are a big part of that.

I hope if you are a member here in this church family that you're in a grace group and that you know that your leader loves you and shepherds you.

[17 : 54] We have organized our shepherding as a church so that each of those grace groups has an elder who is responsible for it. If you want to know who that is and you're confused, we'd love to let you know.

If you're not engaged in a grace group, we love you too. And you should have an elder who prays for you and contacts you and, among other things, encourages you towards a grace group.

If you feel that we're missing you somewhere in there, you feel lost, you don't know that any shepherd is watching over you, praying for you, please let us know that if that's what you're feeling this morning.

We don't want to overlook any of the sheep that God has entrusted to our care, but I'm sure that sometimes we do.

Talk to me or any of us. Email all of us at the same time. Elders at southwood.org. You can do it right now. We'll get it before the sermon's over. Well, they'll get it.

[18 : 59] Our heart is to shepherd this flock so that you are persistently prayed for and pointed to Jesus, so that you taste his grace more and you share his grace more.

That's what we want. Next, Peter gives three warnings about the heart of a shepherd. Elders, I hope you've been reminded we have a weighty calling.

Okay? Now it's heart check time. Verse 2, shepherd not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you.

Don't become or remain an elder merely out of obligation, begrudgingly for your own motivations. Peter's saying you should be motivated and called by God.

You should shepherd because you are inspired by the grace of Jesus. You're empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit. You're focused on the glory of the Father.

[20 : 06] The love of Christ compels you. The Spirit of Christ indwells you. The Father of Christ calls you. And you willingly respond to his call to be an elder and to shepherd his sheep.

Warning 2, verse 2. Don't do it for shameful gain, but eagerly. And most of our elders are thinking, oh good, the easy one.

I don't get paid a dime, so no problem on that, you know. Shameful gain, wow. Haven't really experienced any of that. I know y'all are thinking that. That's fair.

But guard your heart. Guard your heart against being an elder for your own benefit rather than for the sheep.

It could be for your own influence, your own position, your own social gain. Listen, if you're to be a faithful shepherd of God's flock for his sake, to watch over his sheep, then you have to be motivated to love the sheep when it costs you.

[21 : 24] When suffering comes to God's people, who usually gets attacked first? It's usually the leaders. People may think you're leading poorly and tell you.

They may be right. When suffering comes, elders, shepherding the flock may cost you friends.

And that is really hard. It may cost you time and health even. So often, the anxieties and the sufferings of the people of God will be yours to carry and your body may feel it.

It may cost you your life. So many elders have died when persecution comes to the church.

All of those things may happen. It may cost you all of those things. Nevertheless, shepherd God's sheep. Stay in the game for the sheep even if it costs you.

[22 : 32] Thank you. And thank you to those of you who've done that here. Some of you for many, many years. Warning 3, verse 3.

Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. Do you sometimes enjoy too much being in charge?

Being on the inside? Being respected? Servant leadership in Christ's church must look like the one who modeled it by getting up from the table, wrapping a towel around his waist, and washing his disciples' feet.

Elders are not to preach at others while leaning back and propping up their own feet. They're to set an example in service, in zeal for evangelism, not by Jeremy's methods, in friendship, in priority of knowing God, in repenting quickly and deeply, in shaping their lives and families after Jesus, and standing firm in their faith and suffering.

See, the chief shepherd is coming. And your job, elders, is to join everybody else in longing for him to come.

[24 : 05] I want you to remember that. Every time you're serving the Lord's Supper, and you get to serve that to the sheep, and then after you do, you turn, and as a sheep of the Lord Jesus, you're fed at his table yourself.

He is your joy. He is your joy. He is your shepherd. You are his sheep, and he will honor you even for caring for his sheep, receiving an unfading crown.

What he's saying is that your gain is eternal. Know how much that matters to Peter? It's the one that lasts. Your gain is eternal, even though being an elder likely costs you in this world.

Even that unfading crown, we will join the elders of Revelation 4 in casting at the throne of the chief shepherd because he's the one worthy of the honor.

He's the ultimate caretaker of all the sheep. He's the one who, as the good shepherd, actually does lay down his life for the sheep. Friends, you have all known church leaders who failed to shepherd the sheep, who failed to shepherd faithfully, as God calls us to here.

[25 : 27] If you're not sure of that, hi, I'm Will. Now you do. Now you do. But the good shepherd will not fail.

So his under-shepherds here must above all else keep pointing to him. Many of you have heard my favorite literary picture of shepherds pointing others to follow a Jesus they can know and love.

It's in C.S. Lewis's Prince Caspian. For much of the story here, the young children who are the main characters, they're struggling. They're suffering. They're in this dark predicament where they're wandering around and they can't see the lion, Aslan, kind of, sort of the Christ figure.

They can't see him because they don't believe he's there. How hard it is when sheep can't see the shepherd, right? But there's Lucy, the youngest of the bunch.

She trusts him like a child and so she sees him, she alone. Listen to what happens. Aslan turned and walked at a slow pace about 30 yards ahead of them.

[26 : 46] The others had only Lucy's directions to guide them. For Aslan was not only invisible to them but silent as well. His big cat-like paws made no noise on the grass.

He led them to the right of the dancing trees. Whether they were still dancing, nobody knew. For Lucy had her eyes on the lion and the rest had their eyes on Lucy.

Lucy had her eyes on the lion and the rest had their eyes on Lucy. Fellow elders, my dear brothers whom I love, any of you who would consider God calling you to shepherd his sheep and we need you.

Keep your eyes on Jesus. Don't lead his sheep anywhere else. Chase after him so that any sheep following your leadership, even following you in your failings, will see through you to the good shepherd that your eyes are on.

We need to pray for that. I've asked Carla Cash who has for many years been married to an elder who is currently serving on our women's advisory team that labors alongside of our elders and prays for us and helps us.

[28 : 19] I've asked her to come lead us in prayer. As she comes up, if you're an elder here on our session, would you stand for a second? And then as you stand, would you step out into the aisle near you and just kneel?

And if you're near one of these guys and you want to put a hand on his shoulder or gather around him while we're praying, they'd appreciate that encouragement, I'm sure.

You guys kneel. Carla's going to lead us in prayer. Would all of you pray for these guys? Let us pray.

Father, we praise you for who you are. Our Father, our Redeemer, our Shepherd, and our Protector.

You're our guide. Right now, Lord, we take a moment to lift up these elders, these men who love you so much, and we pray for them.

[29 : 19] Would you continue to be with them as they lead and guide us as sheep, that they would shepherd us and love us and not lead us astray?

Lord, we pray that your Spirit would rest upon them so that the decisions that are made are made with wisdom and compassion so that they experience a bond of unity and that their hearts are willing and not duty-bound to guide us as a congregation.

Protect these men, Lord, and their families from the evil one who only desires to deceive us. We praise you and we thank you for each of these men who serves us and loves us well.

To you, O Lord, and to the Lamb, be praise and honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Carla.

Thank you for praying just then. Please keep praying for us. One verse now to the other members in the church family.

[30 : 44] you get your turn too. Particularly, it says, to those who are younger, best understood here as all those not serving as elders.

Verse 5, likewise, you who are younger be subject to the elders. It's that same word we've seen before several times in 1 Peter for submitting.

For submitting, placing ourselves under authority for our own good and the struggle is the same one we've seen before.

We know it. We don't like that. We are independent. We are self-sufficient. We're often sure that no one could possibly know what's best for us other than me.

But Peter is saying, you need shepherds. You need people who will point you to Jesus.

[31 : 47] Put yourself in relationship with them. Nominate them and encourage them to serve as elders in your church and then follow them. Follow godly leaders.

Ones you've seen are following Jesus because that's where you need to go. We have already acknowledged our elders won't always be right.

Sometimes you will need to help us see that and that's part of this. But the posture of your heart is to be subject to our shepherding, to follow our leading, to trust ultimately the God who called us.

Hebrews chapter 13. 13. Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning for that would be of no advantage to you.

But in fact it is to your advantage when people are shepherding you and pointing you to Jesus with joy. Following Jesus is not easy.

[32 : 54] Especially when suffering comes on that account. Your heart will need to be shepherded. Trust the good shepherd and as a result of your trust in him those that he puts in place to shepherd his sheep.

We do love to pray for you as your elders so I've asked one of our ruling elders Alan Judge to lead us in praying for the sheep of Southwood this morning.

You don't all have to get up and kneel because that would be even more awkward than it was the first time but we want to pray for you. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord you are a great God a great king above all gods.

You alone are worthy of all worship adoration and praise. I praise you Lord. You dwell in unapproachable light such that all the beings around you constantly cry holy holy holy holy is the Lord.

And yet you who dwell in unapproachable light became approachable by becoming flesh and dwelling among us. And over and over again you have demonstrated your great love toward us.

[34 : 20] the rich irony of me being called upon to pray after a sermon on submission is too funny for me not to also note that you clearly have a great sense of humor.

For you know all of my sin as it is ever before you. So you know that submitting to anyone other than myself is one of my greatest struggles.

Until this morning I refused to sign in using this stupid code scan thing. But since I was being called up to pray about submission I thought I better do it today.

Lord as I have been called upon to pray for your church here at Southwood I must first confess that I am unworthy to do so.

I am selfish self-reliant and I constantly seek to get my own way. Have mercy on me a sinner.

[35 : 40] For I can only stand up here because of your grace mercy and love. But I am not alone. As Isaiah said I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.

We all struggle with submitting to one another and submitting to the church. As I examine my heart before you and ask why do I and indeed why do we all struggle so mightily in submitting to each other?

Your word reveals the answer over and over again. We like sheep have gone astray. We forget who we are and whose we are and we have served the creation rather than the creator.

In short Lord we have failed to submit to you because we have forgotten why we are here. why did you who needed nothing to be fully complete why did you create us?

You knew what we were going to do Lord. We would betray you over and over again. You knew that we would desire things of this world comfort financial security reputation but really above all else Lord like spoiled children we want to get our own way most of all.

[37 : 08] Even so knowing all of that at the right time Christ died for us the godly for the ungodly he who knew no sin became sin on our behalf he who was and is equal with the father did not consider such a quality a thing to be grasped but he humbled himself submitting to the father to the point of death even death on a cross at the hands and for the benefit of sinful humans us Lord we caused you to die why Lord why did you allow that to happen it doesn't make sense there's no way that if I was in your place that I would have done that in my judgment we're not worth it but thanks be to God that you are God and I am not your ways are not my ways or our ways your thoughts are not our thoughts you do not treat us as our sins deserve for as high as the heavens are above the earth and as far as the east is from the west so far have you removed our sin from us and cleansed us from all unrighteousness why because you who are love wanted to share that love with us you who lived in perfect relationship between the father son and holy spirit created us to share that relationship you created us to know you that is why we are here oh what love the father has lavished upon us that we might be called children of God it cost you everything to adopt us your children as your children you are faithful and your faithfulness is more than enough

God give us a picture of your beauty and let us desire to know you above all else so that your name will be glorified in your church and in all the earth teach us to remember why we are here Lord and be able to say with the psalmist your face Lord will we seek let the words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing to you our Lord our Savior our King Amen Amen Thank you Alan Finally a word for all of us shepherds and sheep honor others above yourself verse 5 clothe yourselves all of you with humility toward one another for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble you've heard

Paul call us to this same humility following in Jesus footsteps and humility consider others better than yourselves so elders care more for the sheep than for yourself sheep care more for the elders direction than your own agenda honor others in your church family above yourself after all he said there is one person for sure you need to know is on your team and that's God you don't want him against you and he opposes the proud those who think they're okay on their own can trust their own instincts their own wisdom their own gifts but God gives grace to the humble don't we need grace Alan's right we need it doesn't God have so much of it abundant grace it says amazing grace grace upon grace he gives more grace so confess how much you need him trust that in this family there is one strong father there is one perfect shepherd there is one unending source of grace and praise

God we are his sheep amen let me pray for all of us father would you make us humble show us more of how much we need your grace that we might never think there is something in us that commends us to you or anyone else oh but there is there is indeed more grace give it to us father more of your spirit dwelling in us empowering us making us yours would you give us that grace that we might indeed live as your people faithfully in your church sharing the good news of eternal life with everyone help us know you more we ask in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org