

A blue-tinted photograph of a mountain range with a dirt path leading through a valley. The mountains in the background are rugged and have patches of snow. The foreground shows a dirt path winding through a valley with green grass and some rocky patches.

Homeward Bound

Week 5

1 Peter 5:1 - 2 Peter 1:15

Week 5 | Day 1

We learn from Peter in 5:5 that “accepting the authority of the elders” is a key dynamic of health in a believing and growing congregation. The pastor/elder is someone deserving of respect and, in addition, someone we must submit to as we seek to grow spiritually and as God directs the larger congregation. Now, apparently, Peter must not be aware—like us wiser, road-worn North Americans—of how hard it is to find a perfect elder:

The perfect pastor preaches exactly 10 minutes. They roundly condemn sin but never hurt anyone's feelings. They work from 8:00a until midnight and double as the church janitor. The perfect pastor happily makes only \$100/week, dresses professionally, drives a good car, buys good books, and donates \$70/week to the church. They are a zestful 32-year-old who has 40 years experience. Their dynamic preaching makes funny things seem wise and wise things sound humorous. When they aren't preaching, they're incredible with teenagers and senior citizens. They're always at the hospital visiting the sick and available if you need to see them at their office. Above all, they think you're perfect and always invite you over for pot roast after church on Sunday.

Why can't every church find the perfect Pastor(s)/Elder(s)?! And how could allowing elders to lead us all—as Peter here encourages (along with the Apostle Paul in his letters to the early Church)—be the superstructure he'll suggest for church governance across cultures and time?

The dynamics of being an Elder 1 Peter 5:2-3

Well, as a long-standing elder myself—in two different congregational contexts at this point in my ministry experience—I, frankly, couldn't agree more with the presumption and concern that elders/pastors are far from perfect. Yahoos like Peter who spoke quicker than he prayed or considered an idea! Hard guys like Paul who held his theology so strongly that his friendships could feel at risk if the other person wasn't holding the truth as tightly as he did (and in the same way)! And bleeding-hearts like Barnabas who held relationships so close and dear that, in so doing, he could also accidentally lower the bar of expectation that God and Scripture holds leaders to!

Yet, Peter says to depend upon these imperfect people—even those with sketchy backgrounds like Matthew and Simon or those with skeptical outlooks like Thomas. This is why **being an “elder” isn't really a thing as much about someone's age as it is about spiritual experience and evidence. It's not about personality, but about permanence.** Now, while they could never be perfect, there are qualities that must be at least set along a trajectory line in them. Among a number of these characteristics, Peter says they must have been (1) personally impacted by Jesus in such a way that has given them staying power, (2) they must lead people to good fields that nourish them spiritually, (3) they must be attentive to the bigger picture of their congregation, and (4) they must be

And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in His glory when He is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: ² Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³ Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. ⁴ And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor. ⁵ In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders.

1 Peter 5:1-5a NLT

leading and leaving an example. Further, chances are good that one of these four areas will be a key strength in them (and they'll need to improve in all of them). Church thinker, Vance Havner, once framed it thus: "In ministry, you need the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child, and the hide of a rhinoceros."

Personally impacted by Jesus in such a way that it has given them staying power. Peter points out how he had been a "witness" (5:1) of Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, sacrifice, and rising, so he knew Christ in such a personal way as his Savior and Leader. Of course, as time would unfold, it would be impossible for future elders to have been an eye-"witness" of Jesus; but they must have witnessed His powerful activity in their own day-to-day lives. Jesus must live in and through them. That said, "It's easier to preach ten sermons than to live one."

Care for people. In 5:2, the word **poimaino** (poy-MY-noh—translated "care for the flock") is used to describe the activity and attitude of an elder. It's a word picture that means much more than to just have a warm heart towards people in the congregation, but also to "shepherd" them by leading them to pastures in which they can feed themselves. (You see, no pastor ever "feeds" sheep. We lead them to the best fields where they must choose to eat themselves.)

Watch over the Body. 5:2 adds a verb: **episkopeo** (eh-pis-kuh-PAY-oh) which reveals the idea of a keeping a wary eye out for predators or problems inside, at the periphery, and outside the flock.

They must be leading and leaving an example. Lastly, Peter says in 5:3 that the congregation must be led by the elders' good **tupos** (TOO-pahs—n. the mark of a strike or blow, impression left to be copied). The impression they leave leads others to fill it. In other words, an elder's presence leaves a mold that will shape people and the future of a church.

Accepting authority 1 Peter 5:5

Once again as he has several times before, Peter commands us to **hupatasso** (what we see translated here as "accept the authority of" but means plainly to "submit")—to place ourselves under the authority of the Eldership to best position the church for its mission. Elders are the player-coaches of the Church world. They lead the local church family on the field and are answerable to God for play on it, too (Hebrews 13:17). What they do requires God to invite them into it and also requires God to keep them from quitting it.

Elders' blessings 1 Peter 5:1,4

So, while we all know and have met rascally church leaders, the elders aren't supposed to be wild-haired—except in their fun and courage. They are to be leaders—called by God and filling these expectations (found also in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). And if an elder lives their life and fulfills their calling well, they will "share" in Christ's glories as they've shared His pains (5:1). Furthermore, they will be near to the heart of the "Great Shepherd" and receive "never-ending glory and honor" that comes from Him. If this is the case, we must honor them, too, with our gratitude and following.

What does following the church's elders do to help us accomplish our mission?

Week 5 | Day 2

Peter describes three incredible forces that are at play in the life of the Christ-follower: (1) 5:8-9—the Roaring Lion that is Satan, (2) 5:5-6—the Humble, and (3) 5:10-11—the God of all grace and power. Let's deal with each one of them in the following order of ascension:

Satan: He hates, schemes, and attacks with rage, but is defeatable 1 Peter 5:8-9

Not enough teaching is dedicated to revealing Satan and his schemes to the everyday believer in our culture. Most of us are incredibly vulnerable and unwitting to his “lion-like” attacks. That said, too much teaching is dedicated to looking around every corner for Satan and his demons among a certain quarter of a spiritually-titilated Christianity. Some spend so much time studying Satan, they're paralyzed by him or praying incantations against him—as if there is magic prayers embedded somewhere in the Bible to neutralize him. (There aren't.) In both cases, each side is cheated of their defense or their offense.

In short, Satan and his demons are powerful; masters of understanding human nature; students of our personal wounds, prior defeats, and weaknesses; and relentless. It's doubtful demons have sabbaticals or vacations. They are set upon destabilizing and depopulating Heaven—where God wants us all bound for. They're wizards even at using truth to lie to us as well as committed to playing the long game against us. They are the worst thing we could ever face. But, **demons are also subject to our free will and our prayers, are not omniscient or omnipresent, cannot overwhelm one who is fully armored by the Spirit and holiness (Eph. 6:10-18), and are subject to the authority of the Holy Spirit and God's angels.**

You and Me: Be humble, anxiety-casting, and alert 1 Peter 5:5-9

C.S. Lewis—in his masterpiece book, *The Screwtape Letters*—writes of a mentor demon teaching his fledgling nephew demon how to disguise his tempting presence from his human so he can destroy him from the inside out. At one point, the teaching demon talks about the satanic war for the human mind: “It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.” Satan's best work is to lure us into NOT thinking. Just feeling. Reacting. Spiting someone in a flash of anger. Or giving in easily when our full faculties are exhausted. So, Peter tells us not to underestimate the

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”
⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:5b-11 NIV

The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

1 John 4:4 HCSB

Darkness. Don't think of Satan and demons as some kind of impersonal “Force” (think, Star Wars) or to think of any of it casually. [Satan and his demons are real beings—with personalities and with a plan. A plan, in fact, personally crafted to defeat YOU.](#) There are, no doubt, a troop of demons assigned to your demise—to defeat your hope, your marriage, your family, your reputation, and your fulfilling of your personal mission from God. They are planning against you, so you better be humble and “sober” enough to be “alert” (5:8) to them. And the best way to fill your mind with this awareness is to fill your thoughts and your soul with God, His Truth, His Spirit, and His Living Word. Furthermore, when you are fully aware of your weakness and frailty, “cast” this weight onto the Shoulders of the One who carried the cross, hung upon it, and defeated it. He knows.

God: Humbles the proud, defeats Satan, and cares for us at a great cost to Himself 1 Peter 5:5, 7, 10-11

From my view, God is the wisest and strongest Being in the entire Universe, yet may also be the most vulnerable of all of us. Whoa! Repeat that, John. What did you just suggest?! God is the One of Whom None is Stronger, but He willingly subjects Himself to our free will, our choices, and the consequences of our sins. Now, He's never been vulnerable to Satan—in the true sense of vulnerability—but He's willing to lose to us. To lose to the fickleness of our free will. Willing to humbly allow us back near to Him even when we've clearly done Him wrong. If He were a person we knew here on Earth, we'd say God's a glutton for punishment or someone others would take advantage of, but He doesn't even mind those labels. He wears that badge and sticks His chest out with it on it so everyone can see. It suits Him just fine to be the One of Whom None is Stronger, yet also the One Whom We Can Decide Over. That's how strong He is. He'll hang on a Cross and bleed for us even when we reject the whole thing out of hand. He knows there'll be a day we'll open ourselves to the notion and He'll flood us with His love. He doesn't mind the small rejections.

You see, [while we learn that Satan and his demons play the long game, God plays the even longer game.](#) He is patient—knowing that He will punish the Darkness' War against Him and His Creation, He will give the proud what they most lust for over Him, and He will win everything for the humble.

[So, if God's not worried about taking short-term losses to win the long-term War, why should we be?](#) It would be similar to worry about gravity not working tomorrow morning when you rise from your bed. (Which would, in all actuality, mean you'd float up from your bed, but I digress.) Only the proud are hurt by taking losses. One of my good friends—the man, in fact, who is the Lead Pastor now of our former church in the SW suburbs of Chicago—is Rick Tustin. Before Rick became a pastor, he was a public school teacher and a coach. For a couple years, I had recruited Rick to leave high school football to come and coach little league football with me. And as if often the case in little league football, some coaches teach their kids to be really loud and intimidating during their pre-game calisthenics and warm-ups and drilling. They're loud. And screaming. And it often rattles their opponents—especially when they're little. My good friend Rick always had a great line to lighten the fear for our young guys. He'd say, “You know, boys, we're gonna go ahead and let them win the pre-game. There's a bigger game that happens to start just after the Pre-game whose score matters a lot more.” Yeah, there's a lot of noise down here in the pre-game to Eternity, but the Home He's building for us after the pre-game is where the real sounds of celebration will be. Don't ever let Satan fool you to think otherwise.

**How is Satan attacking you right now?
And, how is knowing how Satan is
attacking you important?**

Week 5 | Day 3

Do you have everything you need in your tool belt of life from God? Does He have everything in His tool belt of His Kingdom in you?

You've got everything you need **2 Peter 1:3**

I know I've been guilty of making excuses for myself. "If such-and-such had been in place, I'd have succeeded in that, but I was hamstrung by _____." "If my parents would have done _____, I wouldn't be like I am today. I didn't get raised in a Christian home, so I'm just way too far behind the curve." But Peter—who himself was an adult when he found Jesus (and had a lot of un-learning to do himself, too), said, "God has given us everything we need for living a godly life." Not most of what we need. Part of what we need. EVERYTHING. The only thing hamstringing us is our excuses about why our

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Romans 8:11 **NLT**

faith is hamstrung. The moment we "receive" Christ's grace, we also receive God's Spirit—"His divine power." And the Holy Spirit isn't the third-string god in the Trinity. No! In Him, we receive the most powerful Person in the universe! He's got the juice and determination to overcome our

addictions, our shortcomings, our obstacles, our physical challenges, and any other thing that gets in the way of our becoming everything we're supposed to be. If we accept this as true, it will be a life-changing truth.

God's Promises are two-way **2 Peter 1:3b-7**

At the very end of 1:3, Peter says that God's "glory and excellence" fuels our own excellence. It's the word *arete* (ar-uh-TAY, n.) which generically means powerful virtue, but its oldest root meaning is a description of the highest state one can reach—one's most divine potential. God's greatness is the fuel for our own.

By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the one who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share His divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. ⁵ In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. ⁸ The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. ¹⁰ So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. ¹¹ Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-11 NLT

Well, how do we access that power? One might answer that question out-of-hand by just reflexively responding, “the Holy Spirit,” but that’s not how Peter begins the idea of reaching our fullest redemptive potential in this life. He, rather, explains that it begins with our response to God’s “great and precious promises” (1:4) that “enable” us to

We don't become gods. We become God's.

become “partakers of the divine nature” (NASB’s rendering of 1:4). **God’s nature and power begin to replace each and every inch and ounce of our own . . . an inch and an ounce at a time.** This

obviously doesn’t happen naturally or overnight. It involves a steady surrendering to the Spirit and God’s Scriptural promises through many years of belief, obedience, and faithfulness. In this way, we receive God’s nature into ourselves. Now, be mindful in this process, this language doesn’t mean we become gods, but become God’s.

Becoming more useful to God (and Him more useful to us) 2 Peter 1:3,5b-8

In an intriguing full-circle move, we begin to discover a pattern in the picture Peter is sketching by telling us we can be “productive and useful” (1:8). Now, when we began the passage in 1:3, God told us that **WE have everything we need in our tool belt to be strong in our Kingdom life because we had ALL OF HIM** (1:3). Now, in a twist, God tells us that He is transforming us into **becoming all HE needs in His tool belt because He has ALL OF US!** Did you see that?! For His part in making us useful to Himself, He is giving us moral excellence (arete), greater knowledge, more self-control, greater endurance, His godliness . . . and all this towards making us more brotherly and sisterly in our love for others in and out of the Church. God is very useful to us when we believe His promises and stayed attuned to His Spirit. And in adding these things to us, He is making us all HE needs to bring the Kingdom of God to its greatest potential in us. Oh, that we would have this be said of us!

Do we need to prove ourselves? 2 Peter 1:10

But, friend, is it possible that there might be a way to disappoint this spiritual process in becoming our Arete Potential?! Soberly, we must accept that there is. Remember how God said that His judgment begins in God’s household (1 Peter 4:17)? Our lives are a proving ground—these principles teach us. In fact, the original language of Peter’s words in 1:10 direct us to, in essence, “**make certain** your calling and chosen-ness.” In this, we need not doubt God’s promise to keep us as His own (John 10:27-30; 1 John 5:10-13), but whether we’re continuing to live like we are His. We must keep pursuing our Arete by inviting God’s Spirit and Promises more and more into our lives.

What usefulness to God is your proof that you are God's?

What usefulness by God recently proves to you that He is real?

Week 5 | Day 4

As Peter concludes His first letter to the Believing Pilgrims of Planet Earth in 1 Peter 5, he restates a simple hope he has when we read it: to “encourage” and “assure” us all. **When God’s grace is present in us and to us, our level of encouragement rises!** What good news.

Stand firm in grace 1 Peter 5:12

“What you are experiencing is truly part of God’s grace for you” is a simple reassurance that, no matter what the circumstances, the circumstances will rarely be the assurance. God’s grace will be. If we stay tuned-in to the original audience to whom Peter wrote these letters, the circumstances were crummy. Dangerous, in fact. If the Apostle had insinuated that the highs and lows of their circumstances were directly related to their walk with God, they’d have thought that their faith and faithfulness must be failing. Why? Well, their conditions were very discouraging. But, **their circumstances were not evidences of THEIR LEVEL OF FAITH or GOD’S LEVEL OF LOVE. God’s grace was.** Peter always brings us back to Jesus and His sacrifice for our sins. He says, “Hey, if God loved you all the way in your worst version of yourself, imagine how powerful that love will feel and work when you’re choosing to increasingly become like Him.” You see, our current conditions ought very rarely to be our go-to measurement on discerning whether God is with us. He IS with us. That’s already set—the conditions fluctuate, but God and His promises do not. His grace is continuous. So, we are to stand in His grace firmly. Wins or losses, pleasure or pain, ease or difficulty . . . this is all terrain we are sure to encounter for the rest of our lives. **The terrain isn’t the signature of God’s love.** He isn’t saving us to make our lives easier. He is saving us because He loves us. **Our current conditions aren’t our footing—God’s grace is!** Of course, this presumption flies in the face of some of the name-it-claim-it prosperity teaching in some corners of Christianity—which the original audience of this book would have rolled their eyes at. Their faith was strong even though their pockets were rarely full. Their faithfulness was sure even if no amount of faith or prayer would change the political landscape or their physical conditions or well-being. And they

I have written and sent this short letter to you with the help of Silas, whom I commend to you as a faithful brother. My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God’s grace for you. Stand firm in this grace. ¹³ Your sister church here in Babylon sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be with all of you who are in Christ.

1 Peter 5:12-14 NLT

Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

2 Peter 1:12-15 NLT

**Our current
conditions
aren't our
footing—God's
grace is.**

To keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time He said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NLT

made themselves OK with this because we’re into really meant to “claim” everything, but simply to proclaim, “God’s grace is all I need” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Established in and repeating the truth 2 Peter

1:12,15

Peter shares one of the most over-looked, yet most powerful principles of the writings when—in 2 Peter 1:12—he spurs us to be “established in the truth that you have.” Now, we might rush on past this phraseology to the next big idea, but we’d be smart to sit down in the idea a bit. Remember that in Peter’s day, there were no leather-covered Bibles with everyone’s names embossed on them in gold lettering. The Bible wasn’t yet complete. There was still more Scripture to be revealed. He wasn’t suggesting, “Now that I have given each of you the TOTAL revelation, go do such-and-such” because that wouldn’t even have occurred to them to need a finished Bible to do what they knew at that point. There are people reading this who are very young in their Faith. And for all of the encouragement to be long in your belief and obedience—and that so much comes as a result of this down the road, don’t mistake that for thinking that Peter is saying, “You young ones in Jesus have a long way to go.” No, the Apostle teaches us, “You have truth in your hands right now. You don’t need years to do something with it. In fact, failure to do something with the truth you are hearing right here (as beginning and basic as it might be), you probably would never hear the next level of it before petering

out. Live THIS truth you’ve got right now.” Get established in that truth and let that truth get established in you. The next thing will come next. You can be heroic in the Faith one day into it if you believe and obey right now.

What truth has been established in you over the last month?

What pain are you feeling right now that you deeply need God’s grace to be able to stand through?

The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and His ears are open to their prayers . . . The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers.

1 Peter 3:12, 18-21, 4:5b-6 NLT

A DAY DEDICATED TO PRAYER

Week 5 | Day 5

On this final day of our devotional week, we would like to pull back and encourage you be one who moves off into a quiet room, takes a longer walk in the woods, and to separate off from your normal routine and/or community to dedicate yourself to

solitude, silence, meditation, and prayer.

You, no doubt, have an incredible number of things to pray about in your own life and about the lives of those you love. Dedicate yourself to a more substantive time of supplication on these things.

Some things worthy of your consideration as you focus your energies less on “learning” through reading, but learning about God through time with Him:

- (1) Feel your knees on the ground. Acknowledge you are a created being and a servant to the King of the Universe. The power of our knees’ humility can both put us in a proper perspective of our created-ness, but also embolden us in our discouragements—since getting on our knees is how people of faith have always connected with God.
- (2) Consider dedicating some section of this day to FAST from something: food, media, technology, or even speaking.
- (3) Add praise to your prayers. Don’t forget how Good God is. Tell Him about your recognition of His Goodness.
- (4) Find a way to be alone in this prayer. Just you and your love of God.
- (5) A period of silence and quietness would be powerful in a world of noise and movement and distraction. Find a rock to sit on, a creek or lake to be beside, or time to hear the breeze.
- (6) Consider journaling what you heard from God in this silence.

Group Conversation ||| WEEK FIVE

1. What was the hardest part to grasp in this week's passages of 1 & 2 Peter?
2. What lit a fire in you from this week's readings?

DAY ONE

3. What does following the church's elders do to help us accomplish our mission?

DAY TWO

4. How is Satan attacking you right now?
5. How is knowing how Satan is attacking you important?

DAY THREE

6. What usefulness to God is your proof that you are God's?
7. What usefulness by God recently proves to you that He is real?

DAY FOUR

8. What truth has been established in you over the last month?
9. What pain are you feeling right now that you deeply need God's grace to be able to stand through?