

# The First letter of Peter

## LEADERS NOTES

Week 10 (1 Pt 5)

This is the final study in this series.

Elder - the Greek word is *Presbuteros* for which the modern equivalent is *Presbyter*. The Old English word *Prest* or *Priest* like the old Germanic *Priast* were the equivalent of *Presbyter* meaning elder. The term *Priest* was later confused in English with the Greek word *Hiereus* and Latin *Sacerdos* both of which refer to sacrificers.

1. Elder in verse 1 has been widely assumed to refer to Christian leaders. The alternative, that it simply means the older people would make some sense because of the contrast in verse 5 with the younger people. But the widespread use of the term 'elder' in the New Testament to refer to a particular office amongst the Jews and in the Church and what the elders are told to do suggests it is referring to the office of elder rather than just older people. Nevertheless elders would often be older people a fact which led Paul to tell Timothy to not people despise his youth.

An example of elder referring to the office is Acts 14.22 where Paul and Barnabas visit Lystra, Iconium and Antioch strengthening churches they had founded and appointing elders from among them (Acts 14.23). If these people were simply older there would be no need to appoint them, so clearly this is about a particular ministry.

2. There are two that I noted - to exercise oversight and to be an example to the flock. Nevertheless the idea of shepherding does convey leadership more generally in that the shepherd was to care for the sheep (Jesus laid down his life for the sheep) and even to direct the sheep (David refers to the rod and staff in Psalm 23).

3. The point of the following remark in italics is that it has been a feature of the Catholic church, shared by many Anglicans, that sees Bishops as of the fundamental nature of the church and the basis of unity.

By contrast some reformed churches abandoned the idea of bishops altogether as not being found as a separate office in the New Testament.

The Church of England and the Lutheran churches retained Bishops because we can clearly see how Timothy and Titus in were exercising a ministry which was beyond just a local church. This doesn't mean the reformers were happy with how episcopacy (having bishops) had developed in the centuries since. One great reformed Anglican of a later generation was Archbishop James Usher who particularly tried to reconcile the Presbyterian and Episcopal models of church government by seeing the Bishop as the chairman of a regional Presbytery. His famous book had the snappy title "The Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Presbyterian form of Church Government".

4. For example "not domineering" which can so easily become how Christian ministers conduct themselves. Of course the opposite is part of what it means to be humble, though that word is not used until verse 5.

5. People often use the expression "under-shepherds" to refer to Christian ministers to make the point that though called shepherds there is a chief shepherd, and though we are given the privilege of shepherding the flock it does not belong to us. The flock belongs to Christ.

8. The Church of England has particularly seen this as important in recent years. Some of the things are reasonable, drawing up role descriptions and terms of service. But it has created a different climate for ministry which is can be difficult and seems to focus on rights and legislation rather than the calling to discipleship.

9. Note that the exhortation in verse 5 to "clothe yourselves.... with humility..." is to "all of you" not just the "younger" mentioned at the start of the verse.

The words of Peter quotes in verse 5 are the same as the old Greek translation of Proverbs 3.34 (except that Peter has "God" rather than "Lord") . They are also alluded to in James 5.10.

10. Reasons:

- God commands humility
- He opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble
- he promises to exalt the humble
- he promises to care for those who humble themselves under His mighty hand
- The "toward one another" reminds us that it is important in church as the next question picks up.
- To all this we can add the example of Christ as Paul does in Philippians 2.

11. It is probably important because we are all difficult people and often very different, it can be hard at times to get on well with each other without humility and love.

12. The answer of course is when Jesus washed Peter's feet (John 13) giving them an example to follow (Jn 13.15).

14. We resist by being firm in faith, much as in Ephesians 5 when all we need to is stand in the armour of God. The example of others standing firm against persecution should help us in this.

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November 2016*