

Strangers on the earth

Getting to grips with the message of 1 Peter

This first letter of Peter speaks right into the challenges Christians face in the western world in the 21st century.

Its aim is to encourage you as a believer, and to instruct you in how to live in such a way that you “*declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*”

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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9. 1 Peter 5.1-5 [w/b Sunday 31st March 2019]

“.. humility towards one another ..”

It's clear from both the book of Acts and the pastoral epistles, that elders were seen to play a significant role in the growth of the church. This short section of Peter's letter reflects that same perspective, focusing as it does particularly (but not exclusively) on the ministry which elders are to exercise in the life of Christ's church.

What Peter writes here is not dissimilar at all to what Paul said to the Ephesian elders in **Acts 20.17-35**: you might find benefit from reading that passage as well. It's an area of our own life here at Gilcomston at which we're really working presently, so it is a very topical theme we're considering in these verses!

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 3, 4, 5 and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. **Read 1 Peter 4.12-5.5.** The letter has a coherence to it, each section flowing out of the one before. It'll be helpful, therefore, to read not only the passage itself but that to which it is the sequel.

What is the connection between the section in this study (5.1-5) and what has immediately preceded it?

How would you summarise the theme of 5.1-5?

2. Read 1 Peter 5.1. Good leadership is important in any sphere of life, and it is no different in the life of Christ's church: Peter is keen, therefore, to set out the pattern of leadership required.

In what 3 ways does Peter describe himself?

Why do you think he uses each of these descriptions?

3. Read 1 Peter 5.2. In this powerful appeal to the elders, Peter highlights the privileged nature of the responsibility entrusted to them.

What comfort is there for you in knowing that a local fellowship of Christians is "God's flock"?

What would you say is involved for elders in their being 'shepherds' of the people of God who are 'under their care'?

4. Read 1 Peter 5.2-3. It's not only the nature of the particular responsibility entrusted to elders which Peter highlights, but the manner in which that responsibility is to be exercised.

What are the 3 contrasts which Peter draws to set out the way elders are to 'watch over' God's people?

What practical benefits are there when elders rise to the challenge of these two verses?

5. Read 1 Peter 5.4. In all aspects of our following Jesus it's important that we've adopted the biblical perspective, whereby alongside our faith and love, we are living *in hope*.

Why do you think Peter describes Jesus here as 'the Chief Shepherd'?

What is the incentive given to elders in the exercise of their responsibilities as such?

Read Heb.13.17-19: *In the light of what these first 4 verses of the chapter teach, if you don't do so already, try making a point of praying regularly for your elder by name, and for the body of elders as a whole in the exercise of their calling.*

6. **Read 1 Peter 5.5.** The responsibility of the elders is to be matched by the response of the fellowship, not least, as Peter is careful to stress here, *“you who are younger”*.

Why do you think Peter exhorts *“you who are younger”* in particular?

Read 1 Pet.2.11-3.7 again: what should this call to ‘submit’ (lit. ‘arrange under’) look like in the life of a fellowship?

7. **Read 1 Peter 5.5.** This short section is now rounded off by Peter with a statement summarising the essential thrust of what he’s been teaching.

What does it mean to ‘clothe ourselves with humility towards one another’?

Why is it so important that we relate rightly to one another according to what Peter says here?

What practical steps (if any) does your study of these verses prompt you to take?