

“Essential Attitudes for Every Christian”

1 Peter 5:5-7

In a recent book of his, Eric Geiger tells the story of how in 1996, a team from Procter & Gamble developed a product they were convinced that people would rush to stores in order to purchase. Their confidence was based on their work researching and talking to people about the desire for a product that would eliminate bad odors, not just overwhelm bad odors with good ones. The name of their new product was called ‘Febreze.’

Procter & Gamble’s research team polled various people who were grateful and excited about the launch of Febreze, but when the product launched in select markets, they were surprised that very few people bought it. The team was dumbfounded, and so they decided to visit people who had earlier said they loved Febreze to learn why they were not buying it. In their follow-up interviews, the research team discovered that people were not purchasing the product because they believed there were no bad odors to eliminate from their lives.

One of the homes they visited belonged to a woman who had nine cats living with her. The researchers could smell the cats even before the front door was opened to welcome them inside. Once inside the home, the smell was so overwhelming that one of the researchers gagged. When the woman was asked about the cat smell, she replied, “It’s usually not a problem. I only notice a smell about once a month.” Armed with the insight that people often fail to smell their own surroundings, Procter & Gamble repositioned and successfully re-launched Febreze as the way to finalize a cleaning process, not as a product solely for undesirable odors.

*We are often plagued with the very **same** problem.* We often fail to recognize our own bad attitudes, even though we can easily spot them in someone else's life.

Possessing the right attitude is crucial for us as we live and work and journey through life. When pressure and stress compounds, it can take its toll out on our attitudes. These negative attitudes can chip away at the close community that we are to have with one another as brothers and sisters in the family of faith.

Peter didn't want that to happen to his readers. Though they were in the thick of it for their faith, he wanted them to possess the right attitude and outlook.

It is interesting that in this last chapter, Peter spends time instructing both the leaders of the flock and the flock itself. He's calling on both leaders and followers to be patient and tolerant with one another in the face of difficulty. The shepherd needs to be patient with his people, and the people need to be patient with their shepherd. We are to show grace to one another in the family of God.

Living together as the family of God means that we have to learn to love one another and accept one another's differences. It reminds me of something I read about what happens when you call a certain Psychiatric Hotline:

- If you are obsessive compulsive, please press 1 repeatedly.
- If you are co-dependent, please ask someone to press 2
- If you have multiple personalities, please press 3, 4, 5, and 6
- If you are paranoid delusional, we know who you are and want you want. Just stay on the line so we can trace the call.
- If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully—a little voice will tell you which number to press.

- If you are manic depressive, it doesn't matter which number you press. No one will answer anyway.

That pretty much sums it up, doesn't it? All of us have our hangups, personality quirks, and problems. We all have our moments when our attitude is not what it ought to be. And yet in spite of our problems, we are all part of the family of God and must bear with each other. Which means that we all need to possess the right attitude.

Here in our text, Peter mentions three essential attitudes that ought to be found in the life of every Christian.

1. SUBMISSION (5:5a)

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.”

The theme of submission has been something that we have seen all throughout our study of 1 Peter.

The immediate context of Peter's instruction here is the previous passage that deals with the character and the responsibilities of elders. The elders are to shepherd the flock of God with willingness, eagerness, and meekness. Peter now follows that up by calling on the flock to willingly submit to the leadership of her elders.

“Be Subject To” —*military term that literally means to line up under; present tense language; literally means ‘keep on being’ subject to; descriptive of a lifestyle*

Peter is calling on everyone in the church to lay aside their pride and self-promoting tendencies and willingly place themselves under the leadership of their elders.

The opposite attitude of submission is independence, an attitude that does its own thing in resistance to authority. It is the Frank Sinatra attitude that says, “I did it my way.” We are to have a submissive spirit, not a cantankerous spirit that is hard to get along with.

Notice who he is addressing in verse 5—“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.”

The word ‘elders’ is used in verse 1 in connection to the office of leadership, and it would seem that Peter uses it here once more in reference to those who are older in the faith and more spiritually mature.

“Younger” — *word is ‘neos’ and means something new as opposed to something old; can refer to physical youthful age in contrast to someone who is physically older; used to describe our new identity in Christ after salvation (Col. 3:10); may also generally refer to those under the authority of leaders*

By using the term, Peter is saying that those who are younger in the faith are to submit to those who are mature in the faith. It reflects what Jesus Himself had taught.

Luke 22:24-26—“A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.’”

Those who are younger are to be respectful of those who are older. A word of caution—not every ‘senior saint’ is a mature follower of Jesus. Quantity of years is no guarantee of quality of faith. Peter is not saying that the older church

members run the church and never listen to the younger members. All too often, and this is especially true in more older and established churches, there is a generation war in the church with the older folks resisting change while the younger folks resist the older.

Notice what Peter is saying here. He is saying that we need someone in life who is older in the faith, wiser, and has been around the block a time or two.

Discipleship demands that we have someone whose life we are patterning ours after. We are to listen to their counsel in the faith. We must be open to their warnings, watch their lives, and honor their seasoned wisdom.

If you are not careful, you can live your life in an echo chamber. You can surround yourself with those who only tell you what you want to hear. You need to have someone who can be completely honest with you, someone who loves you enough to tell you what you may not want to hear. This requires that we be teachable and submissive.

2. HUMILITY (5:5b-6)

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.”

Without humility, there could be no submission. And so for that reason, Peter says, “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.” This is to be the posture of each one of us toward the other in the family of God.

One translation of the phrase even expresses it this way:

“Put on the servant’s apron of humility to one another.”

As he was writing these words, perhaps in his mind Peter went back to an unforgettable experience one night when Deity wrapped Himself in humility and did the unthinkable. The Bible says in John 13 that Jesus ‘clothed Himself’ with a towel, assumed the role of a servant, and washed His disciples’ filthy feet.

Peter never lost sight of that servant’s apron. Those who follow Jesus Christ are to demonstrate the same humility that was reflected in His life. Jesus said:

John 13:14-15—“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

Peter quotes from Proverbs 3:34, a verse that is also referred to by the apostle James to make the same point. God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

“Opposes” —*carries the idea of being set in battle array*

God is opposed to the proud because He hates the sin of pride. It is at the top of the list of things that God hates:

Proverbs 6:16-19—“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”

It was pride that led to Satan's downfall. It was pride that led our first parents to taste the forbidden fruit. Blinded by pride, Pharaoh and his army were drowned when the Red Sea closed its doors over their heads. Nebuchadnezzar, whose

countenance was lifted up with pride, was humbled by God and made to eat straw like an ox until he cried out.

Again and again, the Bible says that God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

Micah 6:8—“What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with the Lord your God?”

Proverbs 29:23—“A man’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.”

Jesus said:

Luke 14:11—“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Lord God will do the exalting if we do the humbling. But if we do the exalting, then know that the Lord will do the humbling. That’s why Peter says, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.” Humble yourselves under God’s mighty hand—don’t wait for His hand to humble you.

Whenever the ‘hand of God’ is referred to in scripture, it always is used to symbolize two traits of His character. The first character trait is His discipline.

Exodus 3:20—“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; after that he will let you go.”

Psalms 32:4—“For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.”

The second character trait is God’s deliverance.

Deuteronomy 9:26—“...Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”

Ezekiel 20:34—“As I live, declares the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.”

To humble yourself under the mighty hand of God is to willingly accept His discipline, deliverance, and direction for your life.

What does this look like practically in your life?

3. TRUST (5:7)

“Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

Submission, humility, and now notice that Peter stresses the importance of trust in the face of life’s anxieties. We’re not to go through life gripped by fear and worry, but instead we are to trust God in each situation. The opposite attitude of trust is worry, which is really a subtle form of unbelief.

Corrie Ten Boom—“Worry is an old man with bended head, carrying a load of feathers which he thinks are lead.”

Worry is foolish because it concerns that which isn’t.

That word ‘worry’ comes from an Old English word that means to strangle or to choke. And that is exactly what it does to you whenever it grips your mind—it will strangle the life out of you.

Chronic worry and anxiety is the besetting sin of our time.

Yet we don't think of worry as being a sin. We see it as a harmless thing. At the root of worry is an insidious unbelief that is unwilling to trust God in the details of life.

“Anxieties” — *worries and concerns*

It is the same word that Jesus uses to describe the worries and concerns of the world that choked out the seed of the word from being fruitful in the lives of hearers.

Life's 'anxieties' come in a variety of forms. Sometimes they come in the form of difficult people. Sometimes they come in the form of health concerns. Sometimes they come in the form of needs in the lives of our children. Yet no matter the packaging they come in, Peter tells us how to process them. Give them to God!

“Casting” — *to throw upon*

The idea is that we 'throw' ourselves completely upon the care of God. We cast ourselves upon His sufficient mercy.

Why is it that we have no problem trusting God with our eternity, but for some reason or another, we don't expect Him to provide for us here in the temporary moments of our lives?

I remember hearing a story about a missionary who was driving a truck through the African interior many years ago. He came across a man who was carrying a heavy basket on his shoulders. The missionary came to a stop and offered to give the man a lift. The man had never ridden in a vehicle. He climbed in the back and the driver took off. After a few minutes, the missionary glanced in his mirrors to see the man struggling to balance in the pickup bed because he was

still supporting the weight of the heavy basket on his shoulders. He didn't realize that the truck had enough strength to carry both him and his burden.

Psalm 55:22—“Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”

If God can take me to heaven, then I'm pretty sure that He can also take care of me here on earth. David had learned this from experience in his own life. He knew what it meant to suffer the anxiety of constantly being pursued by Saul. Yet when you consider his life, he is an example of what Peter is writing about. He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. Rather than taking matters into his own hands, he simply trusted God to exalt him at the proper time.

Jesus did the same thing. He entrusted His life to the Father while suffering for our sin on the cross. Jesus carried the heaviest of burdens in our place so that we can lay it down and find rest. And at the proper time, God exalted Him to the highest place!

Principles for Application:

- The door of the kingdom is ***low***, and only those who humble themselves can enter.
- The hand of God is ***strong***, and nothing we encounter is ever too hard for Him.
- The grace of Jesus Christ is ***enough***, and you can trust Him now with your life.

When I was a child, someone gave me an illustrated copy of the Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. If you've ever read it, then you know that it begins with the story of the main character, a man by the name of Christian who lives in

the city of Destruction. In his hand he holds a book, and he has a massive burden on his back. The book told him that their city was marked for destruction, yet he didn't know what to do. His family thinks he has lost his mind. Day and night, his burden is heavy upon him. Then one day as he is walking out in a field, he meets a man who is named Evangelist who points him to a narrow gate and a shining light in the distance. Evangelist tells Christian that when he comes to the gate, he will be told what to do. So he sets out for the gate in the face of difficulty and opposition. His family tries to keep him from going. He meets a couple of men along the way who tries to turn him back around. His burden is still on his back. But he runs to the gate until he passes through it and come to a place called Deliverance. Bunyan writes:

“The burdened Christian ran up this way, with great difficulty because of the load on his back. He ran until he came to a place where the road climbed up a small hill. At the top of the hill stood a cross and little below at the bottom was an empty tomb. In my dream, just as Christian came up to the cross his burden loosened from his shoulders and fell off his back. It tumbled and continued to do so down the hill until it came to the mouth of the tomb where it fell inside and was seen no more.”

He stood still for a while and looked with astonishment at the cross. It surprised him that the sight of the cross released him from his burden. He looked and looked again as tears ran down his cheeks. He was given peace. He was given a new change of clothes. He was sealed with a mark that granted him entrance into the Celestial City. He leaped for joy and went on his way singing:

*“Thus far did I come burdened with my sin,
No one could ease the grief that I was in,
Until I came here, what a place is this!
Is this place the beginning of my blessedness?
Is this the place the burden fell from my back?”*

Is this the place where the strings that bound it to me were broken?

Blessed cross! Blessed sepulcher! Blessed rather be,

The Man who there was put to shame for me!

Cast all of your anxieties upon Him, for He cares for you! He carried the weight of your sin so that you can be free. Jesus paid the debt, so you can lay the burden down. Do you believe it? Not theoretically, but practically? Are you committing your way to Jesus Christ?

“Father, we praise You for Your love and care. Produce in our lives these attitudes that Peter describes. As those who trust in Jesus Christ, help us submit to one another and clothe ourselves with humility, the servant’s apron. And may we cast our every care and anxiety upon You, knowing that You care for us. Amen.”