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Aprons for Everyone

Framing the Flock, Part 3

1 Peter 5:5-6

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Humility is necessary in the church. Peter tells us to clothe ourselves in humility. It's easy to get caught up in selfish desires and the things of this world. To walk in Christlikeness means that we walk in humility. We put aside our desires. We respect others and love them. We are gracious and submissive. Both young and old have something to learn. No one has arrived. When we walk in a spirit of humility, we are able to effectively put on our serving aprons and bless those around us. That's what the church should be doing. To be daily sanctified requires being humble.

Discussion Points:

Peter says that young men should be subject to their elders. Pastor Davey further explains that this is referring to all young people and older people.

- What are some ways that you see our culture (and Christians) failing in this area?
- How can the church influence the culture in this area?
- What is the real issue when someone refuses to be humble?

Humility requires putting aside our own desires and wants. It means that we are looking to serve others all the time. Pastor Davey repeatedly mentioned "putting on our aprons."

- The physical act of putting on an apron requires being intentional. How intentional is the church in looking for ways to serve?
- Why is it so easy to overlook the needs of others?
- Is being humble and serving others viewed positively or negatively in our culture today?

Discussion Guide Cont.

Humility is required for both salvation and sanctification. We are in desperate need of a Savior, and we are in desperate need of His leading and guidance on our lives.

- Is salvation and sanctification something that we take seriously?
- Why are we willing to be humble in our salvation and in our sanctification; yet, we cannot humble ourselves to our peers?
- What are the benefits to living a truly sanctified life?

Pastor Davey mentioned three ways that we know humility is at work in our lives.

- How important (to you) are your own demands when looking at others?
- How difficult is it to respond graciously and thankfully in all things?
- How willing are you to give up your desires in order to better serve those around you?

Gospel Connection:

As it was mentioned in the message, salvation and sanctification demand humility. Humility is necessary for the Gospel to take root and grow in one's life. We need to see our desperate need for Jesus and understand that He truly is the only One who can redeem us, make us new, and provide an eternity with Him. Scripture tells us that He is preparing a place for us. It tells us that He will make all things new and that He wins. We are not running this race in vain. We are pressing on for something greater. We must understand and believe that Jesus is so much better than this world. He is better than my selfish, prideful heart. He is worthy of my praise. To believe the Gospel means that we put aside our pride; we humble ourselves; we take up our cross and follow Him.

Practical Implications:

Think: What areas of your life can you show humility and wear your apron? How can you take that into the church? Into the community?

Pray: Ask God to give you a desire to serve Him and others. Ask Him to show you where there are needs. Ask Him to help you put your desires second.

Do: Be thankful for God working in your life. Be thankful for opportunities to help and bless others. Go out and serve.

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Framing the Flock, Part 3

1 Peter 5:5-6

One of the most life-changing, rather staggering moments in the lives of the disciples occurred just hours to the crucifixion of Jesus. In the upper room, a meal had been prepared by their hosts, but as they entered that room, no household servant had been designated to wash their feet before they reclined to eat.

They probably looked around the room, evidently deciding what they were going to do about it. And what they decided to do was ignore their dirty feet and sit down to eat anyway.

Then Jesus does the unthinkable – he gets the basin of water and begins to wash their feet Himself.

Peter was horrified at the thought, no doubt embarrassed, along with the other disciples that none of them had even thought to wash Jesus' feet, much less their own. And when Peter tried to stop the Lord, the Lord rebuked him. And then they were all unforgettably tutored on the subject of humility (John 13).

The Apostle Paul would later emphasize to the believer the need to adopt that attitude of humility, demonstrated over and over again in the life of the Lord (Philippians 2).

You don't have to wonder if Peter ever forgot that moment because the subject of humility will appear over and over again in his letters.

But the truth remains – humility doesn't come easily. Pride does. Self-promotion and self-love does.

I remember as a kid learning the lyrics to the song, and we'd sing it on the bus and in the locker room at the top of our lungs: Oh it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way; can't wait to look in the mirror, 'cause I get better lookin' each day."

That was a lie. And not exactly a good song for the church to sing. But it's easier to sing that

kind of song than it is to tie on an apron and wash somebody's feet.

The 4th century church leader and theologian, Augustine, wrote this challenge to the believer: Do you wish to be exalted? Begin by descending. Do you want a life that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility.¹

Did Peter ever forget that moment in the upper room when Jesus headed his way to wash his feet? No.

In fact, in Peter's first letter, which is where I invite you to return, Peter will take a word and use it the only time it's ever used in the New Testament and essentially tell everyone of us in the church that what we really need to do is get an apron – used by servants – and tie it on and keep it on, for life.

We're in I Peter chapter 5. Three times, rather quickly, Peter refers to the attitude of humility.

He's already told the elders in the opening verses that they are not to use their position of authority in the church to lord over the flock with haughtiness but to lead the flock with humility.

Now Peter expands this subject for the entire church. And as we work our way through the next few verses, Peter is essentially going to ask and answer the question, what exactly is genuine humility?

We can draw from this text at least three principles that define what humility is.

And the first principle is this:

1. Humility is an attitude of respectfulness.

Notice verse 5 – just the first part – You younger men, likewise, be subject to your

elders (1 Peter 5:5a). Literally, be deferential to your elders.

The word for *young men* is without a definite article which allows us to generalize this to mean “young people”; in fact, this term for young men was commonly used in the Greek world for young people, both male and female.ⁱⁱ

So this command is given to the younger men and women in the congregation. And this gets even more interesting because the word for *elders* is also without a definite article, leading many conservative authors to conclude – and I’ll throw my hat in there with them – that this is not talking about deferring to men who occupy the office of elder (he’s already dealt with that), but to defer to those who are elderly.

Even though Peter has just addressed the elders of the church, he now uses the same term (presbuteroi) generically to refer to those in the church whom we would refer to as older people.

That doesn’t mean that we go around in here trying to identify who’s old. You can start with me.

I was at Harris Teeter two days ago; and when I checked out, the clerk asked me if I got the senior’s discount. She said it with a straight face. I’m going to Food Lion.

Peter is telling us that one of the ways you show humility in the assembly is for younger believers to show deference and respect for older believers. And is that a problem today? Of course it is. It’s a problem in every generation.

I read recently where one author made the analysis that children ask roughly 125 questions per day. 125 questions a day. Which is why parents just start repeating, “Because I said so.” My favorite was, “Go ask your mother.”

One hundred and twenty five questions a day. So if you’re a mom in here and you’ve got 2 kids, you’re getting bombarded with 250 questions a day. No wonder you’re losing your mind.

But get this, adults ask an average of 6 questions a day. So somewhere between childhood and adulthood, we stopped asking 119 questions a day.ⁱⁱⁱ Which is not really a

good thing, frankly. Curiosity shouldn’t stop with childhood.

The same thing occurs after salvation. The young Christian has a lot to learn, and they ask a lot of questions. Hard questions . . . and older Christians start answering, “Well, that’s just the way it is . . . because I said so . . . go ask the pastor.” Stop doing that.

Younger Christians have ideas, desires, passionate plans, and a desire to build new ministries and do things in new ways. It’s going to be easy for younger Christians to run over – or leave behind – the older generation.

Humility is actually defined by deference to older people. By the way, we’re doing the opposite of that, systemically, in the evangelical church in regards to worship. The heart songs of the older generation are entirely forgotten in favor of all new music. Older believer’s desires are not given any deference or respect.

The average church today effectively announces their distaste for any kind of compromise or blended worship. You can see it on the typical church sign. The early service is traditional. You might as well write on the sign: this one’s for old people; and the second service is contemporary. You might as well write on the sign: we don’t expect to see any old people at this one.

Rather than blending old and new, teaching the younger people some of the great hymns of the past as well as teaching older people some of the great songs of the present, we are segregating the worship of the assembly into young and old.

Music is intended by God, Paul writes to the Colossians, to unify us, not separate us, which is going to require humility from both sides of the age spectrum.

Older people are going to have to learn something worth learning, and younger people are going to have to learn something worth remembering.

After a morning service, both sides should leave church slightly irritated. Peter would call it somewhat humbled. It wasn’t all about me.

Here in this text, Peter invites the younger believer to respect the older believer – show deference to them – watch them and learn from their years of experience and honor their seasoned lives.^{iv}

Put on an apron when you approach a senior saint. Show humility toward older Christians who can easily be blown by in a rush to something new, and it might even be better, but show them deference and courtesy. Humility is an attitude of respectfulness.

Secondly;

2. Humility is an attitude of graciousness

Aprons aren't for young people alone. Notice the next phrase in *verse 5: All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5b)*

The words translated, *all of you*, stand at the front of this imperative, this command from the Lord through Peter, for emphasis. This is for all of us! None of us gets a free pass in the church body.

All of you – notice, *clothe yourselves with humility*. The verb to *clothe yourselves* literally means, “to tie a knot or a bow”.^v This word was used for the servant's apron as it was put on and the strings were tied in a bow.^{vi}

This is what Jesus did in the upper room when he gird himself with a towel. Jesus didn't take off his clothes and wrap a towel around his waist as some have suggested. He literally put a servant's apron over his clothing, as a household servant would have done as they began their chores, and he tied the apron strings in a bow. God has custom fit an apron just for you, so slip it on.

By the way, throughout the New Testament, I find it interesting that so much of the gospel involves the imagery of wearing something.

- For instance, we've been clothed with the righteousness of Christ (*Galatians 3:27*) as opposed to formerly being clothed in the filthy rags of our own righteousness (*Isa. 64:6*).

- We're told as believers to adorn ourselves with doctrine of God our Savior (*Titus 2:10*)
- We're told to put on the full armor of God (*Ephesians 6:11*)
- We're to put on the love with is the perfect bond of unity (*Colossians 3:14*)
- We're promised that one day we will put on immortality (*1 Corinthians 15:54*);
- One day we're going to wear golden crowns (*Revelation 4:4*)
- We're given the future vision of the redeemed, wearing garments of line, washed clean in the blood of the Lamb (*Revelation 19:14*).

In the meantime, God commands us here in *1 Peter*, grab an apron and put it on and tie the strings in a knot if you have to, to keep it on . . . aprons for everyone in the church.

Peter adds to this command by quoting from Proverbs 3:34: . . . *for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. 1 Peter 5:5c*. This is a standing principle of the corruption of pride and the character of God.

For the unbeliever, this general principle would speak to their need to humble themselves to an admission of sinfulness and their need to be saved from their sin by grace through faith in Christ alone. Salvation demands humility.

For the believer, this general principle would speak to us recognizing our own unworthiness to serve Him; recognizing our daily need for His grace and depending on the grace of God to in order to put on the apron of service and become a blessing in the lives of others.

Salvation *and* sanctification demands humility. The problem is apparent, or Peter wouldn't have to deliver this principle within the context of the church. We're so easily full of ourselves. We're so quick to take off the apron.

Self-confidence and self-promotion are so much a part of our culture and our lives, which is why the testimony of a humble servant of Christ sounds odd.

Let me give you an example. This was written by William Carey, the famous missionary to India, who, by the way barely rested as he evangelized, taught, planted churches, translated the scriptures into 40 languages and dialects; he had an amazing ministry.

Yet he writes a letter, on his 70th birthday, to one of his sons; and it reads, I am on this day 70 years old, a monument of Divine mercy and goodness, though on review of my life I find much, very much, for which I ought to be humbled in the dust; my negligence in the Lord's work has been great; I have not promoted his cause, nor sought his glory as I ought; I am trusting my acceptance with God to the blood of Christ alone.^{vii}

This sounds so strange to our ears, and it sounds so strange simply because we've come so far from true, biblical humility.

You know what the church should be? By definition, a church should be a gathering of the humble who talk like that.

- A church filled with repentant individuals who recognize their sinfulness and their utter dependence on the grace of God; who have nothing to brag about; who understand the impossibility of self-reform; who trust in Christ alone to save us and forgive us and use us and speak through us.^{viii}

And with that attitude, we're ready to say, "Lord, thank you for just letting me wear a servant's apron. I'm absolutely satisfied with that."

Humility is an attitude of respectfulness toward the elderly. Humility is an attitude of graciousness toward one another.

Thirdly;

3. Humility is an attitude of submissiveness

Notice verse 6: *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6a)*. Watch this – this passive voice needs to be understood this way; allow yourselves to be humbled. Accept your humble circumstances.^{ix}

He's not telling you to go sit on a pole for 3 months; go through the winter without a coat; fast and pray in order to humble yourself. No, allow yourselves to be humbled under the mighty hand of God.

Once again, Peter dips back into a popular Old Testament reference here to "the mighty hand of God"; it refers to God's sovereign control over the circumstances of life; defeating the enemies of His people; fulfilling His purposes and promises for His beloved.

When Peter writes that we are *under the mighty hand of God*, this would have been incredibly encouraging to the believers who were suffering.

Would you notice that Peter is not telling them that they are under God's thumb, as if they are being pressed down unmercifully. They are under His hand.

And here's His sovereign promise: notice further, . . . *that He may exalt you at the proper time. (1 Peter 5:6b)*. To be exalted in this context refers to a reversal of misfortune, a reversal of trouble; this is a reversal of suffering and hardship and pain.

Peter doesn't specify when it might take place, partially, temporarily, while we're still alive; but it *will* happen permanently, entirely, totally in that coming day, when all sorrow and all pain and all trouble and all suffering will all be eliminated forever (*Revelation 21:4*).

But here's the point – *whenever* and *wherever* life gets a little easier for you – and you catch your breath, Peter reminds us that it always happens when? – *at the proper time*.

Since it is according to God's timing, it is always at the right time.^x Never too early and never too late.

Humility is being willing to wait for God's timetable.^{xi} And while you wait, you are under the control of His mighty hand.

One author put it this way as he wrote, "Life is not a straight line leading from one blessing to the next and then finally to heaven; life is a winding road with switchback after switchback. The point of biblical narratives about Joseph and Job and Esther and Ruth is to help us feel in our bones (not just know in our heads) that God is *for us* in all these strange turns. God is not just showing up after the trouble and cleaning it up; He is plotting the course and managing the troubles with far-reaching purposes for our good and for the glory of Jesus Christ."^{xii}

This is what humility is:

- It is an attitude of respectfulness
- It is an attitude of graciousness
- It is an attitude of submissiveness.

And that leads me to ask a practical question, "**How do you know when humility is really at work?**"

How Does Humility Work?

1. You'll know this attitude of humility is at work in your life when your demands becomes secondary, especially as the young wear the apron and respect the elderly.

We could say it this way, You won't run over older believers! And you won't leave them in the dust either.

2. Secondly, humility will be at work in your attitude and life when your disposition becomes gracious.

Remember, this is a command to every member in the church, young and old alike. Aprons are for every believer, so tie one on and play the role of a gracious servant. Which not only means that you won't run over older believers, but you won't run down one another!

Humility eliminates competition, covetousness, meanness. Humility greases the gears of every relationship. It is gracious disposition toward one another that binds the church together.

When humility is at work in your life and heart and attitude, **your demands become secondary; your disposition becomes gracious** . . .

3. Thirdly, you'll know that humility is working in your life when your desires become adjustable.

Simply put, you won't run ahead of God. We will submit to His pace. We will refuse to demand His timing match ours. He not only leads our steps; we'll allow Him to lead our stops as well.

In the meantime, Peter wants all of us to grab an apron when we come to church and everywhere else.

Listen, the employee you like to work with shows up with this apron on. The family member you can count on has this apron tied onto their spirit; and even when you come to church, the believer that is most helpful and most encouraging and most fruitful is going to be wearing an apron.

And believers who walk with the Lord, wearing an apron embroidered with the word, humility, are willing to wait for His timing and depend on His grace. And at the right time, in God's time, relief will come . . . now . . . tomorrow . . . next month . . . or on that future day in glory.

But it will come at last.

My wife was listening to a new song this past week, and she printed out the lyrics. I read them and knew they would be the perfect exclamation point to the promises from the Lord in this text to Christians, from the 1st century to this 21st century. They go like this:

Through many danger toils and snares
I have already been

I'm trusting God will use them as a verse in my
life's hymn

While I'm singing in the dark, it's hard to see
the way
But a day will come

In this chapter where the words have cut me to
the heart
Though tears have blurred the pages,
Still it's just the middle part;
Breathless I await the joy, I know will end the
play;
Yes, a day will come.

I will understand it better by and by somehow . .
Heartache will not last forever, and yet for now .

His plan keeps unfolding and glory lies ahead;
I don't see it yet,
But a day will come
Yes, a day will come.

I only have the puzzle's edge, I see it
incomplete;
But I'm trusting, knowing God Himself
Holds every missing piece;
The picture won't be fully whole
Till each is put in place.
But a day will come . . .
Yes . . . a day . . . will . . . come!^{xiii}

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 05/06/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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ii D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1992), p. 308
iii Mark Batterson, A Trip Around the Sun (Baker Books, 2015), p. 163
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v Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 765
vi William Barclay, 1 Peter (Westminster, 1976), p. 270
vii Daniel M. Doriani, 1 Peter (P & R Publishing, 2014), p. 218
viii Adapted from Doriani, p. 221
ix Adapted from Hiebert, p. 311
x Adapted from Derek Cleave, 1 Peter (Christian Focus, 1999), p. 155
xi Hiebert, p. 312
xii John Piper, A Sweet and Bitter Providence (Crossway Books, 2010), p. 101
xiii A Day Will Come, sung online by "Sisters"/2018