

# Shepherd Leaders: God's Gift to the Church

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Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[ 0 : 01 ]     Okay, Christian leaders in general and church leaders in particular have not got a very good reputation. Unfortunately, the news is full of stories of scandals involving church and Christian leaders.

If it's not the constant news of sexual abuse cases, either against children or against women, then it might be scandals involving money.

Church leaders buying private jets and super yachts and holiday homes in the Caribbean, and not to mention churches being very secretive and privative about what happens with the finances, where it comes from, where it goes, and what happens in between, right?

And if it's not that, we hear stories of church leaders becoming controlling and manipulative and domineering, building their own empires, celebrity pastors with high-tech security details.

Well, the church leaders have not got a good reputation, and it feels like the days are long gone when church leaders saw themselves as servants of a congregation, there to help bring the congregation to maturity.

[ 1 : 08 ]     But today's passage of Scripture in 1 Peter chapter 5 gives us a different view of church leadership, and so let's dive into that. Now, today we come to the end of our series through the book of 1 Peter, which we've called The Splendor in the Furnace.

And in this book, we've seen how Jesus calls His followers, those that are Christians, to a radically different worldview, a different paradigm. And the worldview he calls us to is, he says in chapter 1, that Christians are a different kind of people.

We live with a different kind of hope. We have a different view of suffering and a different view of joy. And the reason why Peter gives us this different perspective is he says there's two things that we need to learn as we've gone through the book of 1 Peter.

The one is that Jesus Christ Himself, His own pattern of life and ministry was suffering first and then glory. And he says for those that are Christians, a Christian means a little Christ, that's where the word originally comes from.

For those that are Christians, our lives will follow Jesus' pattern. You don't become a Christian and then just life becomes supernaturally glorious overnight without a trouble for the rest of your days.

[ 2 : 19 ]     Actually, our lives are to follow the pattern of Jesus, suffering first leading to glory. And there's a second reason Peter gives why we should be those with a different worldview around suffering and hardship.

And that is because he says in the midst of the furnace of affliction, in the midst of the difficulty, God wants to do something beautiful, something splendid inside of us. God uses the trials in our lives and the difficulties and the oppression and the persecution to shape our hearts and to make us more like Jesus.

And so as we've gone through this book, this book has encouraged us to be Christians who don't retreat from difficulty, who don't pull back, who don't retreat into self-preservation, but follow Jesus in the midst of the storms of life.

Okay? And so that's what this series has all been about. And now in the final chapter, in chapter 5, we're going to see four marks of a healthy church. They're not the only four marks of a healthy church, but four marks that every healthy church should be known by or we should be able to see in every good and strong church.

A church, a healthy church which is going to stay the course in the midst of suffering. A church which is going to keep its eyes fixed on Jesus and not retreat. A church which is going to stay faithful to who Christ is even when the difficulties come.

[ 3 : 33 ] Okay? And so those four marks are, I think we've got them up somewhere, elders whose eyes are fixed on Jesus, pastors who lead joyfully, generously, and humbly, thirdly, congregations who are marked by humility, and fourthly, congregations whose eyes are fixed on Jesus.

Okay? Now, unfortunately today, I don't have the scriptures on the slide, but we're going to work through the scripture. So I want to encourage you to grab your bulletin or grab the Bible on your phone. And the slides are just going to have those four points.

Okay? So let's dive in with this passage as we come to a close in the 1 Peter series. So firstly, elders whose eyes are fixed on Jesus. So look at verse 1 and 2 with me of 1 Peter chapter 5.

Look at what it says. Peter writes this. He says, Okay? So who's Peter writing to here?

Well, he's actually, he's got two audiences in mind. On the one hand, he's writing to the entire congregation because he says, to the elders that are amongst you. So there's an entire congregation, and he's talking to all of them, but then he's honing in on a specific group.

[ 4 : 51 ] And he's saying, within the congregation, to the elders, I want you to sit up and listen to what I have to say to you. Okay? So to the elders that are amongst you. Now, this is important because Peter doesn't write a letter to the church saying, listen, when life is difficult and there's hardship and there's suffering, this is how you endure, this is how you persevere, and then on the side, write this kind of secretive memo to the leaders saying, listen, guys, when hardship comes, this is how you keep control of the church.

Okay? This is how you make sure things don't fall apart. This is the PR strategy you need to employ. This is the leadership techniques. Peter doesn't do that. He writes to the congregation, and then he says, in the hearing of all the congregation, elders, listen up, I want to talk to you now.

But he does so that the congregation can hear what he's going to say to the elders so that they can keep the elders accountable to what the apostle says to them. Does that make sense? Okay, so to the elders amongst you, the congregation.

Now, in chapter one, Peter identifies himself as an apostle. Now, the 12 apostles with Paul were a unique group of people.

Okay? They were tasked by Jesus to establish the foundations of the early church. They were tasked to write scripture, and they were eyewitnesses of Jesus and his sufferings.

[ 6 : 12 ] Okay? The apostles had a unique calling which ordinary Christians like you and I and church leaders today don't possess. They could say things that church leaders today don't get to say.

Okay? They had this calling from Jesus to write scripture and to establish the early church. But here in chapter five, Peter doesn't call himself an apostle. How does he identify himself?

As an elder. To the elders amongst you, I write as a fellow elder. Now, he could say, I, Peter, the great apostle, am going to command you. But that's not what he says. So why does he identify himself as an elder?

Well, the reason he does that is because as he speaks to these elders, he wants to use his own life in a sense as an example to say, I'm an elder with you and see how, where I've fixed my eyes, see what I've given myself to, and follow my example.

Does that make sense? And so Peter writes, to the elders amongst you, the congregation, as a fellow elder amongst you. And then he says two things. How does he identify himself? He says, I'm a fellow elder.

[ 7 : 15 ] And two more things. I'm a witness of Christ's sufferings. And as well as a partaker in Christ's future glory. Now, what on earth does that mean? And why is that important?

Okay? Well, it means two things. Peter's writing and he's saying, as an elder that's being given this responsibility of leadership in the church, I've fixed my eyes firmly on Jesus Christ and on two things in particular.

One, his sufferings and his death on the cross. And two, his future glory, his return, his triumphant return. So he's saying, as an elder, I've fixed my eyes on Jesus.

One eye is fixed on Christ and dying on the cross, his crucifixion. I'm a witness of his sufferings. But my other eye, at the same time, I've got an eye that's always aware that Christ is going to come back.

Christ is going to return in glory and triumphantly. Okay? And so this is what Peter's saying. As I go about my ministry, as I serve the congregations that I minister to, I'm one who keeps my eyes fixed on Jesus, his sufferings and his glory.

[ 8 : 16 ] Friends, this is a very important mark of a healthy church, that every church should be bifocal in a sense. We should have our eyes fixed on Jesus, but there's a part of us that always remembers Christ's death and his suffering on the cross.

We never move away from that. But we're not 100% hinged to this. There's a part of a healthy church of every Christian that our eye is always fixed on Jesus' future glory, his coming and his return.

And remembering this, and the reason for this, Peter says, is not only must a church be like that, but its leaders must be like that. And so a church must have leaders whose eyes are fixed on Jesus.

Now, why is this important? Well, it's important for a whole host of reasons, but let me just give us one or two. Firstly, think about leaders. If the elders' eyes aren't fixed on who Jesus is, what are their eyes going to be fixed on?

They're going to be fixed on themselves, they're fixed on their empire, their kingdom. They're going to start to lead the church as if it's an extension of themselves. They're going to start to do things and say things that they think is right, not what Jesus says is right.

[ 9 : 23 ] They're going to start to lead the church as if it's their own business, and they're going to say what they think is a good idea, lead it how they think is a good way as opposed to what Jesus says.

They may start feeling entitled, entitled to certain privileges or ease or comfort. What's going to keep these leaders faithful in their call to lead Jesus' people towards Jesus?

Well, it's leaders whose eyes are fixed on Christ, on his suffering on the cross and his coming glory. But additionally, the reason why this is so important is because when a congregation is suffering, when a congregation is going through hardship, when a congregation is feeling persecuted, when there's oppression and difficulty, what's going to stop this congregation from retreating into self-preservation?

What's going to stop them from running away and just going towards ease and comfort? Well, they're going to need to be reminded. They're going to need leaders who say, remember Christ's suffering. Remember the pattern of Jesus.

It's suffering first and then glory. A congregation under attack is going to need leaders who say, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Don't retreat into self-preservation. Remember Christ's suffering and that your suffering isn't the ultimate suffering.

[ 10 : 34 ] Jesus died for the sins of the world. But remember that Christ is coming in glory and he promises that his glory will be your glory as well. And so that's why the apostle Paul tells this young church leader, Timothy, in 1 Timothy chapter 4, he says, Timothy, as a leader, watch your own life and watch your own doctrine very closely.

For in doing so, you will save both yourself and your hearers. You see what he's saying? He's saying, as a leader, Timothy, make sure you don't get distracted. Make sure your eyes don't focus on yourself.

Make sure you don't start building your own empire or your own kingdom. Be a leader whose eyes are fixed on Jesus. And so that's what Peter's saying here. He's saying, as a fellow elder amongst you, to the elders amongst you, follow my example.

Be elders whose eyes are fixed on Jesus. Okay? Second thing Peter's going to say, as a healthy church is pastors who lead joyfully, generously, and humbly.

Let's look at those two verses again. Verse 1 and 2. He says, I exhort the elders amongst you as a fellow elder and as a witness of Christ's sufferings, as well as have partaken in the glory that's going to be revealed.

[ 11 : 46 ] And then he gives an instruction to these elders. He tells them to do something. And he tells them, shepherd the flock of God that is amongst you. Now, that word shepherd, it's obviously the verb.

He's telling them to do something. It means just to take care of the flock of God that is amongst you. But the verb is, I don't know how to grammatically say this, is the verbal form.

There's probably a better way of saying that. Of the noun, which is simply to be a shepherd. Okay? So think of in the Old Testament, King David, before he becomes king, he's a shepherd.

And that's what Peter's saying. Just be a shepherd. The word for shepherd and the word for pastor are actually the same thing. There's an amazing verse. It's somewhere in the Psalms, Psalm 78 or somewhere around there.

It says, God took David from shepherding sheep to shepherding his people. David never stopped being a shepherd. He just changed his flock, right? From the sheep on the field to the nation of Israel.

[ 12 : 46 ] But here Peter writes and says, to the elders amongst you, now I want you to pastor God's people. So what does that tell us? It tells us that this verse, as well as many other verses in the Bible, that pastors and elders are actually the same group of people.

You see that? It says, the elders, I've got a job description for you elders. I want you to be pastors. In other words, we could rephrase the first two points of our sermon. Pastors, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Elders, lead joyfully, generously, and humbly. Or we could say, pastor elders, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Elder pastors, lead joyfully, humbly, generously. You see, throughout the Bible, throughout the New Testament, we see this in Acts chapter 20, in 1 Timothy chapter 3, 1 Timothy chapter 5, Ephesians chapter 4.

God always calls the elders and the pastors, they're the same group of people that have got the same function. They are to elder and pastor God's people. Now friends, this is very important. And the reason why is because there's a trend, and this is very big in Hong Kong actually, to see the elders and the pastors as two different groups of people.

The pastors are those that work in the church, that's their job and their vocation. They get paid by the church. And they do all the pastoral work. They preach, and they teach, and they disciple people, and they walk with people, and they help people in situations.

[ 14 : 09 ] But then the elders is a separate group of people. They are like kind of a board of elders, or kind of like a board of directors. And they look after strategy, and finance, and vision, and hiring, and that kind of stuff.

But actually throughout the New Testament, again and again and again, God calls the elders, pastor the people amongst you. Because the elders and the pastors are actually one group of people that God calls to lead and to shepherd his church.

And so the question is, is Oscar a pastor? Absolutely. Is Ed a pastor in Watermark? Absolutely. Is Chris Thornton an elder in Watermark? Absolutely.

Just as much as Franklin, or Ed, or Oscar, or anyone else. Is Simon going to become a pastor today? Absolutely. Even though he works with IBM, right? Just pastor that congregation there at IBM, Simon.

To the elders amongst you, shepherd the flock of God. Now, look at what he says here. Shepherd, who does he tell these elders to shepherd? Shepherd your own church in your own name, right?

[ 15 : 12 ] Now, what does he say? Shepherd the flock of? Of God. Whose people, whose congregation is this? Who does the church belong to? It belongs to Jesus, right? So as tempting as it may be for me to rename Watermark Kevin Murphy's Ministries Extraordinary International, that's not a good thing.

If that ever happens, please shoot me or don't allow that to happen, okay? Because the congregation is not their congregation. It doesn't belong to them. They are merely servants of the congregation to shepherd and pastor God's congregation.

In fact, we see this in verse 4 where Peter writes and he says, When the chief shepherd appears, that's Jesus, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

So in other words, the congregation belongs to Jesus. And these elders, shepherd, pastors are not in charge. It doesn't belong to them. They are merely under shepherds, under Jesus, that have been tasked with the job of teaching, leading, and bringing the congregation closer to Jesus, to help the congregation fix their eyes on Jesus.

Now, what are these elder pastors meant to be like? What are they meant to do? Well, Peter gives us three statements of not this, but this, okay? So let's look at the first one.

[ 16 : 27 ] He says, In other words, shepherd God's people, not reluctantly, not because you have to, not because you've got a title or that's in the job description, but willingly, joyfully, because you get the opportunity to help God's people grow in maturity.

When someone in your congregation is going through a difficult time or is troubled or tempted by sin, it is a joy to come alongside them and help them fix their eyes on Jesus.

Think of a literal shepherd. Now, I know it's hard for us in Hong Kong to imagine there's green open spaces and animals rolling around, but there are places in the world that that does actually happen. And imagine a literal shepherd, okay?

Sometimes it's not very sexy being a shepherd. But imagine it's six o'clock and you're counting your sheep and one has strolled off.

And you can hear the wolves are out there and you think, time to check out. Sorry, I'll check on you tomorrow morning. Best of luck. I hope you have a good night, right? I've got to get back to my family. Sometimes it's inconvenient.

[ 17 : 39 ] Sometimes you go at night and you're looking for that sheep. Sometimes you stay awake with a little lamb all night and you're nursing it back to health, right? You don't get any sleep. It's kind of like being a parent, right?

Wilson, I saw Wilson here earlier, had matchsticks to keep his eyes open. Kind of like being a new parent, right? You pour out your life. And that's what Peter's saying. Do so not in a compulsion, but willingly.

Secondly, he says, do so not for shameful gain, but eagerly. In other words, don't shepherd and pastor these people calculating what you can get out of it.

Okay? Doing a cost-benefit analysis. Is this going to work out for me or not? So again, imagine our shepherd here, okay? He's about to go back home, the end of a long day, and he counts the sheep and he realizes there's one sheep that's missing.

And he quite quickly realizes which sheep it is. It's that one that always goes missing. It's the one that's got that weird ear that does that strange thing. And it's got like a funny leg and it can't really walk properly, okay?

[ 18 : 40 ] And he's tempted to think, I couldn't really sell that sheep for very much anyway. I'd rather get an extra hour's sleep. Ah, I just won't tell anyone. I'll just pretend something happened to it, right?

What kind of lousy shepherd is that? No, shepherd loves the sheep. And so he says, okay, fine. Let me get my pack. Let me go and find that stray sheep and bring it back.

The shepherd doesn't do a cost-benefit analysis. I wonder whether this is going to work out for me, an extra \$50 versus an extra hour of sleep. No, I think I'll go for the, okay, I'll go and help the sheep. No, out of the joy that he has for the sheep because he wants to see the sheep doing well, he goes after it.

I had a friend in school. Well, when, sorry, before I tell you that story. Here Peter says, do shepherd the sheep amongst you, the congregation, God's flock, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

The context here is he's talking primarily around money and wealth. Don't do it because you can gain financially from it and you're going to make a lot of money, but do it because God's called you to do it, right?

[ 19 : 41 ] Now, in the context of Hong Kong and marketplace elders, they're not going to get paid anything for being elders. But there is the question you could ask of doing it for shameful reputational gain.

So maybe it's not going to make you rich, but actually you can feel like, yeah, that'll look good on my CV, or people will esteem me, people will honor me. And Peter says, don't do this for shameful gain, either for the honor that could come your way.

Do it eagerly because you love God's people. Do it generously, giving of yourself. When I was at school, I had a friend come to me. He was in a drama class, and the class had been given, each person in the class had been given a character that they had to do like a three-minute monologue, you know, impersonating this character.

And he came to me, and he said, at lunchtime, and we were talking about who everyone was given. And so my one friend comes to me and says, I've forgotten the word. What is the word? It's those people that steal money.

And I was like, I don't know, bank robber or, you know, insurance salesman or something like that. Sorry if you're insurance. But I don't know. Who steals money?

[ 20 : 48 ] He said, no, no, those Christian people. Those Christian people. I don't know. The ashes? Someone who counts the money? I don't know. I'd never been exposed to dodgy leaders. Like, I'm an evangelist.

That's it. It's an evangelist. I've been asked to be an evangelist. And that was his paradigm, that evangelists, pastors, leaders, their job is to fleece the congregation, to take as much money from the congregation and build their own empire and buy massive jets and yachts.

Friends, if you're here this morning and you're new to church or you're not a Christian, maybe that's your idea. Maybe you see Christian pastors on TV and you think, these guys are just in it for themselves.

Friends, I'm so sorry for the fact that the church has ever given that impression. I really am so sorry. It breaks my heart. This is what God calls us to. Don't worry about those bad examples.

This is what God calls us to. Elders, shepherd the congregation. Not for shameful gain. Not for what you can get out of it. But eagerly, generously, and joyfully. Finally, the last thing is, he says, not domineering over those in your charge, but being an example to the flock.

[ 21 : 54 ] In other words, lead with humility. Don't lead arrogantly, not from your position. Let your authority be the fact that you are a humble example who likewise submits to God and his word.

And you're living for his glory. Elders are those who call people that are suffering and hurting to fix their eyes on Jesus because they themselves have fixed their eyes on Jesus. And so, as Paul says, follow me as I follow Christ.

You know, friends, one of the things I'm amazed by is as people move cities, and we do it a lot in Hong Kong, to a new city, or maybe you become a Christian for the first time. I don't know. Sorry.

You become a Christian. Your colleague shares about Jesus with you, or your family member prays with you, or you become a Christian. And when people are looking for a new church, maybe you move to another city or whatever reason, I'm constantly amazed how low down on the priority list is this question of what are the leaders like?

Are these humble, faithful, shepherd-hearted servant men and women that are going to help lead our church? Top of the priority list is how good is the music? How entertaining or funny is the speaker?

[ 23 : 01 ] How nice is the building? And yet one of the most important things about a healthy church is not how pretty the building is, but are these leaders, men and women, whose eyes are fixed on you and are calling the congregation to do the same?

So that's the second point. Okay. Pastors, shepherds, pastor elders who lead joyfully, generously, and humbly. Third thing is this. Congregations who are humble.

Let's look at verse 5 together. Peter writes and he says, Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Now, just so you know there, the word younger does, it generally means literally younger in age, but it can also mean younger in maturity.

And so most of the commentators said that because of the Greek and the context and the sentence and the grammar, what Peter is saying here is those of you that aren't elders, honor those that are elders.

Okay. Not just those that are younger in age. So just to clarify that. Then he goes on to say, Clothe yourself, all of you, elders and non-elders, clothe yourself, all of you, with humility towards one another.

[ 24 : 05 ] For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So we've just seen in the section before, Peter calls these leaders to lead not domineering, but gently with humility.

And now he says to the whole congregation, not just the elders, to all of you, let this be a mark of your congregation. That together you come to church week in and week out.

You go to CG with humility, seeing how you can serve and love and encourage one another. You see, sometimes a congregation is led by arrogant, domineering leaders.

Those who think that the church is their own empire, an extension of themselves, right? But sometimes a church can be led by a strong congregation. Sometimes a church can consist of a congregation that sees the elders or the leaders just as mere servants to do the work of ministry on their behalf.

So it's the elders that must go and evangelize on their behalf. Or the elders must go and visit the sick on their behalf. Or the elders must do ministry on their behalf. And the congregation can kind of see themselves as entitled to be served by the leaders.

[ 25 : 07 ] But what Peter says here is all of you, whether you're a multimillionaire or whether you're saving money to send home to your family, every one of us, no matter what your position or your title or where you serve in the church, clothe yourself one another with humility.

And the word clothe there is actually, it's the verb to put on a cloth. But in the ancient world, there was an apron that slaves wore that was of the similar word.

And if you were a slave in a household, you would wear this apron as you served your master or as you went to the marketplace to go and buy goods on behalf of your master. And this apron would distinguish those that were free from those that were slaves.

And so Peter is saying here, clothe yourself, but the connotation is put on the servant's apron. As you come to church, clothe yourself with this apron that says, here I am to serve one another, not be served by one another.

Friends, as we said earlier, you may be a millionaire. You may be living carefully to send money home. What makes a church a healthy church is not the size of the congregation or the size of the bank balance, not how good looking the worship leaders are or how beautiful the building is.

[ 26 : 18 ] When a congregation comes together, clothed with humility, willing to serve and love one another. And the reason why this is so important is because of the fourth and the final point, which is congregations who have their eyes fixed on Jesus.

Because this humility is going to protect us against spiritual attacks and against the devil's schemes. So let's read verse 6 and 8 together.

Peter writes and says, Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time he may exalt you. Verse 8, Be sober-minded, be watchful, because your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

But you resist him, stand firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brothers and sisters all over the world. So here in this final paragraph, Peter tells us to do two things.

To be humble and to resist the devil. Now what's interesting is that there's one other place in the New Testament epistles where the writer also quotes Proverbs 3 that says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

[ 27 : 27 ] And that's in James chapter 4. But in James chapter 4, in the very same paragraph, he also says, resist the devil. So here in the two places, two places, in the New Testament, where the instruction is, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. At the same time, he also says, resist the devil. Now what's the connection between being humble and resisting Satan who wants to take you out?

Well, it's a good question, right? Peter's absolutely right when he says that there's a devil who wants to destroy you. Friends, if you're a Christ follower this morning, there is a devil who wants to destroy you and destroy your faith.

He wants to take you out. He loves it when we start to just toy with a little bit of sin or when we start to compromise. He rubs his hands with glee when he sees our hearts getting hard towards God or towards one another.

Because he's prowling, waiting to destroy us and to destroy our faith. But the way that he does it is not doing it suddenly. The way that he does it is by slowly and surely wearing down our faith in the faithfulness and the trustworthiness of God.

[ 28 : 35 ] Okay, does that make sense? So C.S. Lewis put it like this. He said, the safest road to hell is the gradual one. The gentle slope, soft under your feet, without sudden turnings, without any milestones, without any signposts.

See, friends, if you're a Christian this morning, Satan does want to destroy you. He wants to take you out. But he's not going to do it by waking you up one day and suddenly you doubt the existence of God. He's going to do it by slowly dripping seeds and dropping seeds in your mind of half-truths.

Slowly doubting whether God is really for you, whether God is really faithful. He's going to do it by making ourselves think of ourselves more highly than we ought to. He does it by sowing lies of false teaching in our mind.

Which is why we need to humble ourselves under God's word, under God's truth. And why we need leaders that can bring us God's word and say, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. He does it by telling us, by making us feel sorry for ourselves when things don't go our way.

Or when we face suffering or persecution. Which is why we need shepherd leaders who can remind us of the pattern of Christ. Suffering first and then glory. Which is why we need leaders who can come around us and lift our eyes to Christ and pray for us when we don't have the energy to pray for ourselves.

[ 29 : 50 ] Friends, the way Satan will do it is by puffing us up with pride. By telling us that we're better and more wonderful than people give us credit for. And to tell us that we deserve more in life.

Friends, which is why we need a church family that can wash us with the gospel. Remind us that it's our sin. It's my sin. It's your sin that put Jesus on the cross. Which is why we need a church family that can come around us and remind us of suffering and then glory.

And can remind us that Jesus will come again and utterly and finally destroy his enemies. See friends, the opposite of humility is pride. And pride is the devil's forte.

It stops us seeing our need for God. It stops us seeing ourselves very clearly. It stops us seeing our own sin. It allows us only to see other people's sin and magnify their sin.

And ultimately pride destroys our relationships and leads to isolation and individualism. C.S. Lewis put it like this. He said, pride is a spiritual cancer. It eats up the very possibility of love, of contentment, even common sense.

[ 30 : 52 ] The Christians are right. It is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began. And that raises a terrible question. How is it that people that are quite obviously eaten up with pride can say they believe in God?

Or appear to be very religious? I'm afraid it means that they are worshipping a God of their imagination. Friends, because of our sinful nature, because there is a devil, we are constantly going to be tempted with this challenge of pride.

We are constantly going to think of ourselves as more highly than we ought, better than we are, and we are going to think that we are entitled and deserve a certain area of comfort in life.

The devil is rubbing his hands with glee at the thought of you and I being destroyed with pride. So what do we need? What do we need? We need a community that's going to come around us and remind us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

And we're going to need leaders whose eyes are fixed on Jesus themselves and are going to remind us to remember Christ and his sufferings, Christ and his future glory. That are going to remind us that the pattern of Jesus is suffering and then glory.

[ 31 : 57 ] That are going to remind us that it's our sin that put Jesus on the cross and so there's no reason to become puffed up with pride. But are going to remind us that Jesus is coming and one day he's going to wipe away every tear and every sickness.

And he's going to destroy Satan and sickness and sin and suffering forever. Friends, for nine weeks we've been looking at this book of 1 Peter, this remarkable little book.

And it's a book that calls us to see our difficulties as a severe mercy, as a kindness of God. To see the trials that we go through as a kind of furnace of affliction that does something beautiful and splendid inside of us.

In this book in chapter 1 Peter called us to see those of us that are Christians as a different people. With a different hope. With a different view of suffering differently. With a different view of joy.

We've seen that Peter's called us to be holy because God is holy. We've seen that Peter has called us to see the church as a temple of God's presence on earth. Built on the rock and the foundation that is Christ himself.

[ 32 : 57 ] We've seen that Peter's called us to, in the midst of unjust suffering, not to exert our rights and to fight back. But to submit and to surrender to those that God puts in our lives.

We've seen that Peter's called husbands and wives to love and serve each other. Not assert their self-rights but to sacrificially serve one another. We've seen in chapter 4 how Peter said, pray for your enemies.

Bless those that persecute you. And we've seen in chapter 4 how he calls us to be a gospel community. Not a self-centered community but a community that serves one another and looks out for the interests of others. And then finally last week we saw how Peter said, do not be surprised when hardship and suffering comes because you carry the name of Jesus.

And now Peter calls us to be a church. A healthy church. A church which is marked by those in leadership and the congregation whose eyes are fixed on Jesus. Remembering Christ.

One eye fixed on his cross and his suffering. One eye fixed on his coming glory. Friends as we've journeyed through this book it's been a prophetic word from God for us.

[ 33 : 59 ] God has been speaking to our church. The gospel does call us to be a different people. To live with a different hope. And if we follow Jesus faithfully in Hong Kong we will have trouble. We will have difficulty.

There will be suffering and there will be opposition. But Peter reminds us that the suffering and the opposition God is using as a furnace of affliction to do something beautiful and splendid inside of us.

Friends my hope is that as we finish off we don't just tick off this book and say we've done it. Let's move on. But that as the trying and difficult seasons come we will come back to the book of 1 Peter again and again.

And remember Christ our Lord. And so Peter ends off here in verse 10 of chapter 5. And this is my prayer that we will remember this. He says, After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory, he himself will restore you, confirm you, strengthen you, and establish you.

To him be the dominion and the glory forever and ever and ever. Amen. Let's pray together. Oh Father God, we come before you as a congregation.

[ 35 : 16 ] All of us sheep of your flock, whether we are pastors or whether we have just joined this church last week, we are members of your congregation.

And you Christ are our chief shepherd. Jesus, we want to be a healthy church. We want to be a church that is faithful to your calling. In the midst of trials and difficulties.

In the good times and the tough times, Lord. We want to glorify your name, God. We want to lift your name on high. We want to be a light into our city that says, Follow Jesus. He is glorious and magnificent.

Christ, won't you help us to do that? God, I pray for our leaders. I pray for our elders. I pray for our CG leaders. I pray for those that serve in so many ways. Christ, won't you cause us to fix our eyes on you, God?

God, even if you have to do it with a degree of severity, Lord. Even if you have to grab us by the collar. God, don't let us get sidetracked, God.

[ 36 : 24 ] I pray, God, that we will be a church which is marked by humility, Lord. Serving one another. Clothed with the apron of humble service, God.

And, Father, we pray that every one of us in our church will keep our eyes fixed on you, God. As we remember Jesus. We remember your sufferings. We remember your glory. God, as we go to work tomorrow and the challenges arise, as we face difficulty, as we maybe do well and make a lot of money.

God, won't you help us to keep our eyes fixed on you? Won't you help us not to get puffed up with pride and open the back door to the devil? God, help us to stay close to you.

We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen.