

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Be a Healthy Church in a Tough Situation*  
1 Peter 5:1-11

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #...). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Ask someone ahead of time to be prepared to read the 23 Psalm.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Have an easel with a writing board on it ready to use. Also, ask for the copy of the four key words found on the page at the conclusion of the printed session. You can use that list instead of rewriting those words on a writing board when the group defines them.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

You will need to help your church relate Peter's instructions to the leadership style of your congregation. You may not (probably will not) have persons named by your church as "elders", "pastors", "bishops", or other titles. But you will have persons who lead and guide in the things that your church does to exist, to teach, and to minister to each other and the world in which God has placed you.

### **Music Sources:**

**Be Strong in the Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

**Bind Us Together**, *The Worship Hymnal* #390; CCLI #1228

**Make Me a Servant**, *The Worship Hymnal* #381; CCLI #33131

**We Are One in the Bond of Love**, *The Worship Hymnal* #387; CCLI #14459

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***Be a Healthy Church in a Tough Situation***

### **Focal Text**

1 Peter 5:1-11

### **Background**

1 Peter 5

### **Main Idea**

Being a healthy church calls for servanthood by leaders, humility on the part of all, and faithfulness toward and trust in God.

### **Question to Explore**

Is your church in good health?

### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the church to list elements in healthy church life and identify implications for your church.

### **Gathering together:**

Sing:

**Be Strong in the Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

**Bind Us Together**, *The Worship Hymnal* #390; CCLI #1228

Have someone read Psalm 23 from the King James Version and another person read from a more modern translation.

### **First thoughts:**

Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not"? he replied. "They are the only ones who can take it." (Unknown)

The church in Peter's day was facing persecution. There are churches in many parts of the world today which face persecution. In fact, one of the reasons for home churches to exist is the reality that it is the only or safest way for Christians in some areas to meet. This lesson helps us know that being the body of Christ involves following and

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***Be a Healthy Church in a Tough Situation – 24-51-07-en***

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leading. We will not always be the leader; we will not always be the follower. But whatever our role is at a given time we are to exercise it in a Godly and loving manner. Sharing in the needed tasks and responsibilities of our church gives strength to God's plans for the good of our congregation and our ministries.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Be a Healthy Church in a Tough Situation*

#### **Focal Text**

1 Peter 5:1-11

#### **Background**

1 Peter 5

#### **Main Idea**

Being a healthy church calls for servanthood by leaders, humility on the part of all, and faithfulness toward and trust in God.

#### **Question to Explore**

Is your church in good health?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the church to list elements in healthy church life and identify implications for your church. (Be sure this is done in the lesson.)

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

Why do babies and young children take vaccinations? They are given very small doses of inactive viruses and diseases so that they might gradually build up an immunity, that is, a self-protection against a possible future infection of the live virus or disease. The end result is that they will be stronger as they grow and will not be as susceptible to contracting the disease.

God allowed the churches of Asia Minor to experience tribulation in order for them to become healthier. Nothing they experienced and nothing you and I experience will be able to crush us if we keep our eyes on the end result—Jesus is coming again.

Peter completes this letter of encouragement by pointing out characteristics of leadership and follow-ship for those who live in the world while anticipating the Lord's imminent return. Verse 6 is perhaps the key verse to understanding this letter to the fullest. Take all the trials, tribulations, and burdens and cast them on your heavenly Father. Why? Because your Father cares for you, never forget that. His caring will culminate when He comes again for each believer.

## **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the "**Introduction**" article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

### **THE CHURCH ELDERS**

***V. 1. Therefore, as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of the Messiah, and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you:***

"Therefore" connects the general exhortations in 4:12-19 with the specific applications in the passages to follow. Peter makes a personal appeal to the church elders, the leaders in each individual church. There was usually more than one in a congregation.

He appeals to the leaders as a "fellow elder". Exhort means he was writing to entreat or encourage them. He calls them to remember that he witnessed Christ's glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration and the sufferings of his life. This validates his testimony.

He will also share the glory that will be revealed when Christ returns. The theme of Christ's second coming has had a strong role in the epistle.

Peter spent a great deal of this epistle writing about the dangers the church was encountering. In order for the church to be strong amid the tribulations it would need strength, faithfulness, and exemplary conduct both among the congregation and beyond it. His life and leadership was the model from which he drew the necessary comparisons and contrasts.

"Elders" was a term taken in the church from the nation of Israel. It could mean men and women who were older by age or those who were older in the faith. They were the local leaders of the congregations. In the culture of the day, the majority probably were men although strong women leaders were present and readily accepted in the early church. Sometimes the elders were selected by the church for specific tasks. Sometimes they were simply those who had helped begin that church. Sometimes they

were accepted informally by the church as elders because the congregation realized that God had gifted those servant leaders for a role or task.

The discipling, the spiritual growth of all of the members of the church also included sharing leadership responsibilities among the members. So, often, many of these roles were passed from one member to another. The term used in home churches is “shared leadership”. It effectively prepares a church to reproduce itself into more churches as the opportunity presents itself.

**V. 2. *Shepherd God’s flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God’s will; not for money but eagerly;***

The metaphor of the church being a flock, perhaps a flock of sheep, is used again and again in Scripture. Sheep need their shepherd. They have to be led, fed, and safely bedded down for the night. Shepherds of local churches, that is, the elders or the under-shepherds, have the church entrusted to them for watch-care. The church is not their personal possession. It belongs to God. The elders are to care for them as a shepherd cares for a flock of sheep.

Theirs was to be a responsibility of love - not a responsibility taken primarily for pay. It was not a responsibility done to please their need for power or for money. They were overseers and those who oversee the churches are not to do so for “dishonest gain”. The elders were to accept the role and responsibility with eagerness, and with enthusiasm. When an elder served the church he served its Lord.

“The picture of Jesus as the Shepherd was a precious one, and the privilege of being the shepherds of the flock of Christ was for Peter the greatest privilege that the servants of Christ could enjoy.”<sup>1</sup>

**V. 3. . . .not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.**

The responsibilities of an elder were not to be given to someone who would become a tyrant. Elders were not to be petty tyrants. The implication in this verse is that the example to follow is Jesus Christ. Leaders were to lead by example. Elders were to serve with integrity, humility, and do it with zeal. That is exactly the way Christ led and it is the way He taught the apostles to lead. Peter was teaching what He had been taught. Shepherd the church like Christ would shepherd it. Leaders were for the church, not the church for leaders.

The Greek for “those entrusted to you” has also been translated “allotted to you”. God gives the flock to whom He chooses. The New Testament clearly teaches that the status of an elder is that of a role or responsibility. It is never seen as an “office” in the church—though some translations of the New Testament still use the term because it was handed down for so many generations of translations.

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, “The Letters of James and Peter”, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1960, p. 320.

**V. 4. *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.***

Peter might have had in mind two things. He may be remembering the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw Jesus transfigured. He saw Him in all His glory. He also may be thinking of the second coming of Christ.

There is a coming payday. It is not going to be with shekels of gold; it is going to be with a victorious crown of glory. Service to Jesus is rewarded with “a crown of glory that will never fade away.” The crown for an elder is an eternal one. It is a reward that can and will be returned to Jesus as an offering.

The word for crown in the Greek is a wreath of greenery given to athletes upon winning a contest. Those soon die and fade away. The contrast is between that which is fleeting and that which is eternal.

## **THE REST OF THE CHURCH**

**Vs. 5-6. *In the same way, you younger men, be subject to the elders. And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time.***

“In the same way” may refer to the examples of leadership given for the elders. The younger were to submit and serve the elders as the elders served the congregation. Too many times younger members of a congregation let their exuberance run ahead of common sense.

Submission is one of the themes of this epistle. As explained above, elders could mean those who hold responsibilities in the congregation, or length of time as a Christian, or simply mean one who is older. Either way the younger people were to show submission and respect. Submission is basically a two-way relationship. Respect for the younger invokes respect for the elder. The church is not the place for anyone to demand his/her own way.

“***And all of you***” brings the rest of the congregation into the picture. Humility is a beautiful expression. To be clothed with humility will be a witness to others of the character found in Christ Himself. Humility is the opposite of proud. It is the desire to put oneself under another always seeking what is good for each other. To do otherwise is to find the displeasure of God.

## **ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH**

**V. 7. *Casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.***

***“Casting the whole of your care—all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once for all—on Him”.*** (The New Testament from 26 Translations)

Here is the sublime statement of Peter concerning encouragement for those in dire persecution. This is where a healthy church turns in difficult times. The word “anxiety” means “diversion”. The same word is used in the story of Mary and Martha. As Mary sat at Jesus’ feet, Martha fussed about the kitchen worrying about whether or not there would be enough food to eat. Her cares and concerns so diverted her attention from the one thing needful—of listening to Jesus so that she even complained to Jesus that Mary wasn’t doing anything to help her.

Anxiety might make one unable to make decisions. It might bring one to the point of frustration as how to act on a decision made. Stress brings anxiety and might even break a person. Peter says, “Give it all to Jesus”. Why? because He cares for them. It is the caring of Christ that will see the congregations through their time of trial.

Casting all your anxiety or care upon the Lord is the supreme act of faith. It is more than lip service. It is trusting in Him when there is none other because He is there when there is none other. Give attention to the word “all”. Hold nothing back.

Paul learned this lesson and taught this lesson to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:13). He shares the same idea in Philipians 4:6. Jesus taught this in Matthew 6:25.

***Vs. 8-9. Be sober! Be on the alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your brothers in the world.***

Casting anxiety upon Jesus is followed by the next step for a healthy church. Keep your wits about you. Be alert and of sober mind. This will be possible once your anxiety has been assuaged. You can focus.

In the final analysis it is not the government that is looking to harm you, says Peter. It is Satan. He is using whatever means are at his disposal to make life miserable for believers.

Pilots trained for combat in WWII were told to keep their heads swiveling (constantly turning from side-to-side). They were never to fly straight for more than 30 seconds in combat. They were taught to be watchful and alert and because of their watchfulness they might live through the battle.

Resist the devil. Stand firm in the faith against him. Remember, you are not alone. Others are experiencing the same persecution. As a believer stands in the faith in one corner of the empire another stands in his, but all are bound together by mutual faith in Christ.

**Vs. 10-11. Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little. To Him be dominion forever. Amen.**

“The God of all grace” is personally going to take care of the believer. He is going to “restore” or make perfect. He will confirm. He will confirm each believer in spiritual knowledge and power. He will place each on a firm foundation. All this will be done after the churches have suffered “a little”.

Always keep the end in mind. God in Christ is going to call believers home to glory. He says our suffering is only for a short while. Christ is going to make them able to endure. It is His power that will energize the believer.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

A healthy church is one whose leadership is made up of humble servants, followers who humbly submit to the leaders, and who all cast their cares upon the Lord thereby committing themselves to Christ as its head. By being healthy the church is able to stand firm against the wiles of the Devil.

Lead the church to list elements in healthy church life and identify implications for their church. (Be sure this is done in the lesson.)

### **For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Be a Healthy Church in a Tough Situation***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

1 Peter 5:1-11

#### **Background**

1 Peter 5

#### **Main Idea**

Being a healthy church calls for servanthood by leaders, humility on the part of all, and faithfulness toward and trust in God.

#### **Question to Explore**

Is your church in good health?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the church to list elements in healthy church life and identify implications for your church.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Ask the group to list some of the trials and tribulations they have experienced. Record them on a board or sheet of paper.

Ask: How did you cope with them? Give a few moments for discussion.

#### **Guide the Study:**

Begin the study by reading this to the class. Why do babies and young children take vaccinations? They are given doses of viruses and diseases that they might gradually build up and immunity. Sometimes they even get a very mild case of whatever was injected or swallowed. The end result is that they will be stronger as they grow and will not be as susceptible to contracting the disease in its more serious form. It makes them healthier in the long run.

The churches of Asia Minor experienced tribulation in order for them to become healthier. Nothing they experienced and nothing you and I experience will be able to crush us if we keep our eyes on the end result, Jesus is coming again.

Quote this: Mark Twain described how to be healthy this way: "To eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not."

Ask: What do you think would be necessary for a church to be healthy? Give time for answers and record them on a board or large sheet of paper.

Remind them to keep these ideas in mind as we study this passage of Scripture.

Ask: What do you think is more important to a healthy church, leadership or fellowship?

Explain with this: Even in the earliest churches, congregations came in all sizes. The church in Jerusalem apparently consisted of several thousand believers. Most of them, of course, were new followers of Jesus. They had no experience in understanding how a church could organize and function for God's Kingdom. But they did have the advice of some who had personally known and followed Jesus.

At the other extreme, some of those people moved to remote places and began small home-based churches with little or no help from the apostles and more mature disciples. The churches begun or disciplined by Paul and other early missionaries had the advantage of their counsel and wisdom. However, all of them were learning how to function as bodies of believers.

Soon, every type of leadership model began to emerge in the churches depending on the situation of the group. Peter is writing some of those churches to help them understand some basic principles of leadership within their group. He knew that they needed to carefully select and enable wise leaders.

Even though we may enjoy the privilege of more shared leadership in our church, Peter's advice is valuable for us as a home church. So, let's look carefully today at his counsel to those churches in the Mideast part of the world.

## **THE CHURCH ELDERS**

**V. 1. “Therefore, as a fellow elder and witness to the sufferings of the Messiah, and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you:”**

Explain to the group: Anytime you have “therefore” or “wherefore” in a scripture passage be aware that what comes next is tied closely with what came just before. “Therefore” connects 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:12-19 with the applications coming next.

Say to the class: Elders was a term taken from Israel. It might mean older men or it might mean those who have been Christians longer than the rest.

Question the group: Where do you think the church got the elders? (Some may have been ordained by Paul, some selected by the church for specific tasks. Sometimes they were simply those who had helped begin that church. Sometimes they were accepted informally by the church as elders because the congregation realized that God had gifted those servant leaders for a role or task).

Ask: Why was Peter able to claim to be an elder? (Peter’s age was advanced by this writing; but most important was his personal knowledge of the life of Christ.)

Seek an answer: What does Peter use as a basis for his encouragement? (Christ’s suffering for them and His second coming)

Pause to let them comment on the following: What Christian principles did Peter model for the church? (Being faithful, strong, and exemplary in conduct)

**V. 2-3. “Shepherd God’s flock among you, not overseeing out of compulsion but freely, according to God’s will; not for money but eagerly; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”**

Have someone to read vs. 2-3:

Discuss what the elders were to do.

Prompt them to look for: the manner in which they were they to carry out their duties?

Remind the group: The metaphor of sheep and shepherds would have been well understood. The elders were entrusted to watch over the flock. The flock belonged to God it was not the personal possession of the under-shepherd. “Those entrusted to you” can also be translated “those allotted to you”. God gives the flock to whom He chooses.

Ask: Is it all right to pay the leaders of a church? (Of course, pastors or leaders who devote full time to the ministry of the church must have a salary on which to live. Home churches have a different philosophy—one of shared leadership. Normally, home-based congregations do not pay salaries to their leaders.)

Explain: What should be the attitude of the elders toward reimbursement for their services? (Leaders should exercise good stewardship of whatever salary or benefits they receive; leaders should not expect “special considerations”; leaders should model wise use of resources).

Say: The mark and example of a selfless servant caring for the sheep is sacrificial love.

Ask: Is there any place in the church for a tyrannical elder? (Absolutely not. The leader is to be a servant-leader. A leader who makes all the major decisions fails to develop the spiritual gifts of the people of the church).

Emphasize: It was important for the early churches to have spirit-filled leaders. It is important that churches today have spirit-filled leaders. Two of the most important aspects of their responsibilities are to lead and to protect the flock.

Tell the group: The next step is to look at the flock.

## THE REST OF THE CHURCH

Vs. 5-6. ***“In the same way, you younger men, be subject to the elders. And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time,”***

Have the class: Refer back to verses 1-4 to get the meaning of “In the same way”. Leadership and follow-ship should be compatible.

Ask the class to tell what it means to “be subject to the elders”?

Now ask: What does the phrase “and all of you” mean?

To the group: Tell the number one virtue, mentioned in verses 5-6, that young men should exemplify? (humility)

Define humility for the group: It is a personal quality in which an individual shows dependence on God and respect for other persons.

Ask: Why do you think Peter thought humility was a virtue of great importance? (The end result is exaltation under the mighty hand of God)

Tell me: What did Peter say was the opposite of humility? (pride)

Ask: Do you think that pride is a problem with young men only?

Ask: Is it possible for you to rate your own humility? (Humility is usually defined in a person by the observation of another person.)

Say: Next we will see how the healthy church acts.

## ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

V. 7. ***Casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.***

***“Casting the whole of your care --- all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once for all --- on Him”.*** (The New Testament from 26 Translations)

Remind the group that a healthy church knows to whom they should turn in difficult times. “Take it to the Lord in prayer”.

Tell the group: Anxiety can make a person unable to make decisions. One might not know which choice or action to take. Being unable to choose a course of action brings frustration.

Ask: Why should a person give all his cares and anxieties to the Lord?

Have a member read Matthew 6:25, another read 1 Corinthians 10:13, and another Philippians 4:6.

Vs. 8-9. ***Be sober! Be on the alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your brothers in the world.***

Remind the class: Getting rid of anxiety is important.

Also add: Now we turn to two other characteristics of a healthy church: Be sober and be alert. If translated literally, to be sober is to refrain from wine because it dulls and slows the senses and reactions of a person. This would then mean to refrain from wine so that one might be watchful and alert to danger to the church from any source, inside or outside the congregation. However, the phrase may also refer to the need to be serious about those issues of great importance.

Ask: Can you think of specific reasons that Peter is telling the church to be sober and alert?

Remind them. Christians are in the Lord’s army and the Devil is the enemy. Every soldier has to be on the alert with his wits about him in order not to be caught unawares by the enemy.

Call upon someone to read 1 Peter 5:8-9.

Tell the group. Peter kept reiterating the truth that they are not alone. Persecution is possible for every Christian. However, every Christian has the strength that comes from knowing he is not alone. Small congregations sometimes forget this truth.

**Vs. 10-11. Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little. To Him be dominion forever. Amen.**

Comment: You see, you have a personal relationship with the eternal God of creation.

Ask: What can a believer expect after all the trials and tribulations of life? (Christ will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support.)

Write the words **restore**, **establish**, **strengthen**, and **support** on the board or show the copy found at the end of the session. Ask the group to define each term. Then, suggest the following definitions and/or write beside the terms: restore (make perfect or complete), establish (set in place), strengthen (able to stand), and support (settle or lay the foundation).

Remind them again: a healthy church is a tested church. But, after the fiery trials will come a strong, faithful, committed follower. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow".

### **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Now share this: This completes the series with 1<sup>st</sup> Peter. The overarching truth to take with you is this: "No matter the situation facing you, the weapon of choice is the truth found in the Word of God".

Ask the group to share what this final session has taught them about the church and about leadership in the church.

Have someone close in prayer, asking God to guide each one of them as they learn to become the members and leaders that God has planned for each of them.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***Be a Healthy Church in a Tough Situation*** 1 Peter 5:1-11

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **Sick or Healthy**

**Discuss these questions among yourselves. And take them seriously. They could help your church survive!!!**

Ask: Do you ever get sick?

Ask: What do you do when you get sick?

Ask: How do each of you keep yourselves healthy?

Now ask: Does the church ever get sick? How would it get well?

Tell the group that churches sometimes go through difficult times and become unhealthy. Getting the right help from God's Word is essential to maintaining good Spiritual help.

# 3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

## Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

### ***Being a Healthy Church in Desperate Times*** 1 Peter 5:1-11

#### **Beginning the Service:**

Begin by reciting together the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6:9-14).

Sing:

**Make Me a Servant**, *The Worship Hymnal* #381; CCLI #33131

**We Are One in the Bond of Love**, *The Worship Hymnal* #387; CCLI #14459

#### **Offering:**

Consider using the offering to relieve suffering.

#### **Praying for the World:**

Pray for the churches undergoing persecution. Nigerian churches have suffered in the year 2012. Two pastors were murdered and another forced to leave his home. There are undoubtedly others that are not known. Nigerian Christians number almost half of the population of Nigeria, but are currently suffering much persecution.

#### **Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

## **A Healthy Church**

Peter describes a healthy church as one whose leaders have willingness and an eagerness to lead and serve. It is a church where the followers also demonstrate a submission to follow with that same willingness and eagerness. According to Peter

healthy churches put their faith and trust completely in the hands of God. His idea of a healthy church focuses upon how the members relate to God and to each other.

Peter's admonition to the churches came from a sympathetic heart. He has experienced what they were going through. Just as he had done, the churches in Asia Minor were asked to sacrifice everything for Jesus. Their task was a daunting one. They were to live exemplary lives at a time when their lives were threatened. The only way for them to do this was to plant their eyes steadfastly forward, keeping them always upon the Lord. Christ's second coming would not be long. Believers are admonished to hold on to their faith.

According to this passage four prominent points stand out.

1. A healthy church will have leaders who lead willingly and eagerly.
2. A healthy church congregation will submit to the leadership.
3. A healthy church will be alert to the tactics of Satan.
4. A healthy church will be confident that God is faithful.

We need to take these truths and make application to the unique situation of the home church.

### **I. A healthy church will have leaders who lead willingly and eagerly.**

Every church should seek out dedicated and qualified members to fill leadership roles. They should be leaders of such integrity that all are sure when problems or challenges arise. Home churches share leadership and each person needs to do those tasks which they are equipped and called to do. There may be someone in the group who takes responsibility for downloading materials and organizing meetings. Administrative skills are a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:27-28) and are to be used for the good of the body of Christ. Especially in a small church such as a home-based church, the following concept most often provides the best choice for leadership. Every member should ask themselves this:

1. If I can do this needed task and no one else feels the call of God to do it, then it is probably God's call for me to offer to do it.
2. If I offer and the church suggests another to do it, I will not feel rejected. Rather, I will joyfully support the decision and knowing that God has a better plan for me.
3. I will consider every needed task to be God's special task, regardless of whether my human nature sees it as important or trivial, interesting or boring, exciting or less-than-fun.

It is one thing to be eager and willing to stand up for Jesus once or twice. It is another thing entirely to do this when life is threatened day after day after day. Constant

persecution, never knowing when the knock at the door might bring death, would challenge any leader.

Leaders assume leadership because they love the Lord and they love the people. No amount of money can compensate for a loving, compassionate leader.

One day a church leader went to visit one of the poorer families in his congregation. After his visit and prayer he was about to leave when one of the little girls looked up to him and said, "Are you God?" That is the kind of leader Peter is writing about. Just as Jesus was eager and willing to serve and go to the cross, so should His servant leaders.

How enthusiastic are the leaders of our home church? What motivates us to take the time to encourage our group. Teaching another in the best of times is hard work. Discipling another in desperate times is even harder work.

"We do well to remember, before we consign the concept of spiritual leadership to the arena of the superstar, that we serve a God who invaded this planet as a small, fragile baby" Stanley Rinehart.

## **II. A healthy church congregation will submit to its leaders.**

Stephen P. Beck told the following story: "Driving down a country road, I came to a very narrow bridge. In front of the bridge, a sign was posted: "YIELD." Seeing no oncoming cars, I continued across the bridge and to my destination. On my way back, I came to the same one-lane bridge, now from the other direction. To my surprise, I saw another YIELD sign posted. Curious, I thought, "I'm sure there was one posted on the other side." When I reached the other side of the bridge I looked back. Sure enough, yield signs had been placed at both ends of the bridge. Drivers from both directions were requested to give right of way. It was a reasonable and gracious way of preventing a head-on collision. When the Bible commands Christians to "be subject to one another" (Ephesians 5:21) it is simply a reasonable and gracious command to let the other have the right of way and avoid interpersonal head-on collisions."

Leading is not possible unless there are those who will follow. Leading willing followers who have no problem being submissive is important. The followers of the churches in Asia Minor were told to be exactly like their leaders. They were to be willing and eager. The example of their leaders was to be mimicked by the body. The organizational chart is this: Jesus is the head of the church. Leaders follow his leadership. The congregation is to follow their leaders just as they follow Christ. Each one is to grab hold of the others hand and stand firm in their commitment.

In a home church situation, leadership looks a bit different. Everyone does the task which best fits their own spiritual gifts. Everyone in fact is a part of the leadership of the church. Affirming one another is important. Listening to one another is important.

Giving up one's person opinion or agenda will often be needed. Strong, out-spoken people may need to stay silent and give opportunity for everyone to participate.

### **III. A healthy church will be alert to the tactics of the Devil.**

An army must be well trained, alert, and confident in order to take on an enemy. The church is the army of the Lord that is to take on Satan in his own back yard. Each church and each member will be trained by fire. Each must be strong enough withstand the wiles of the Devil.

The persecution being unleashed upon the churches of Asia Minor was being carried out by individuals and government. But, the power behind the persecution the churches was experiencing was Satan himself. The churches were told by Peter about their real enemy. Satan was so confident in himself that he could announce his presence with a roar. Satan believes he can scare the church into inactivity.

Perhaps the number one reason for apathy in many churches today is fear. A healthy congregation will not live in fear of Satan or anyone else. There is a hymn with these words:

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus; The trumpet call obey;  
Forth to the mighty conflict, In this His glorious day;  
Ye that are men now serve Him against unnumbered foes;  
Let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose.”

Webb, G. and Duffield, G. Jr., Public Domain, CCLI # 132379

### **IV. A healthy church will be confident that God is faithful.**

Where does the congregation get confidence to take on Satan? It can only come from the Lord. Each congregant must keep his/her eyes upon the future and the coming again of our Lord Jesus.

***No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.*** (1 Corinthians 10:13).

A church that is able to keep this in mind is a church that will be healthy and will grow spiritually and numerically. It will be nourished by its each member in the leadership position which they have been led to do. People will take their calling seriously. Everyone will contribute to the welfare of the group. The church will have a confidence born out of an unshaken devotion to God.

### **Call to Commitment:**

One writer sums up this passage. "Peter exhorted the church elders to shepherd those under their care. He exhorted younger Christians to submit to their older brethren. And he exhorted all to stand firm against Satan's attacks armed with an attitude of submission to God and to one another."<sup>2</sup>

### **Concluding the Service:**

Adoniram Judson was a great missionary. He once said about serving God and success: "There is not success without sacrifice. If you succeed without sacrifice it is because someone has suffered before you. If you sacrifice without success it is because someone will succeed after."

Are you ready to sacrifice your life for someone else's good? Are you ready to place the welfare of another over your own? A true leader and a true follower of Christ must ask himself/herself these questions. A healthy church depends upon a positive answer.

***He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death---even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).***

Pray for the members of the group to have courage to face whatever comes. Pray for anyone who should make a decision to follow Jesus. The road may be rough but Jesus will always be there with them.

End the service by singing:

**Be Strong in the Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, 2012 ed., p. 63.

For use during the Bible Study Time:  
(Ask the group to define these terms.)

# restore

# establish

# strengthen

# support