

## 1 Peter 5:6-11 – Lion Taming<sup>1</sup>

**Before the Lesson:** You will be reading the entire passage aloud during the Transformational Exercise, so spend some time before the lesson reading the passage aloud alone, so you will know where you want to make your pauses. There is no handout or A/V need for this lesson.

**Fellowship Question:** (Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion and lead into the study):

When was the last time you saw a live lion?

If you have (or have had) a pet, did you train it to do any tricks? What tricks?

### Information

In today's lesson, Peter concludes his letter to the churches in what we now call Turkey. He has advised them to remain faithful in the face of persecution, to abstain from evil and to act with integrity. Now he warns them to be on their guard against the power of evil.

- Have a class member read 1 Peter 5:6-7.

“Humble yourselves,” Peter says. When we think of the word “humble” we may come up with a variety of images, some negative, some positive. If you were to hear a person described as being humble, what would you assume that meant? [You may want to make two columns on the board, positive and negative, and put suggested words under the appropriate column.] (Some negative images might include weak, a doormat, feels worthless, poor self-esteem. Some positive images might include modest, not pompous, gentle, etc.)

What might it mean to humble ourselves before God? (recognize our place in the universe, compared to God's place; recognize our limitations, but God's strengths/resources; trust and obey, etc.)

How can we be humble without feeling value-less?

Where did Peter get this idea of humility amongst fellow believers? It was not a virtue in the Greco-Roman world. “In the highly competitive and stratified world of Greco-Roman antiquity, only those of degraded status were ‘humble,’ and humility was regarded as a sign of weakness and shame, an inability to defend one's honor.”<sup>2</sup>

Peter watched godly humility demonstrated in the life of Jesus and acted out in the upper room.

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<sup>1</sup> This lesson is copyrighted by Dr. Rick Jordan, Great Bible Teachers, Inc, 2023. More lessons may be found at [greatbibleteachers.com](http://greatbibleteachers.com).

<sup>2</sup> John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 37B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 3.

- Have a class member read John 13:3-5; 12-15.

“Behind the command ‘clothe yourselves’ in v. 5b is yet another rare word. *Enkomboomai* is a verb built from the noun *enkomboma*, the word for an apron worn by a slave. In essence, Peter says, ‘put on an apron of humility, in the way that a slave aprons himself.’ Jesus dressed himself as a slave to wash the feet of his disciples and Peter wants the church to take a similar posture toward one another.”<sup>3</sup>

We humble ourselves, but later God will exalt us. Can you think of Biblical stories or passages that illustrate this principle? (Be humble as Christ was humble (Philippians 2:3-11); not looking for best seat at the table (Luke 14:7-11); Mary accepting pregnancy of Jesus (Luke 1:38); Saul made blind in his conversion to becoming Paul, etc.)

Humility is knowing who we are (an imperfect, semi-powerful child of God), acknowledging our true strengths and weaknesses and trusting that God will provide for us with God’s “mighty hand”. Thus, we “cast our cares on him, for he careth for you,” as the King James Version puts it. The First Nations Version (written for indigenous persons) reads, “The Great Spirit cares deeply about you, so gather all your worries into a blanket and throw them on his shoulders. He will carry them for you.”<sup>4</sup>

Peter heard this teaching from his Master, Jesus.

- Have a class member read Matthew 6:25-33.

How do you respond to this quote:

“It is our worries we are to turn over to God – the things we can do nothing about – not our responsibilities.... We cannot expect God to make our apologies or pay our bills or improve our physical fitness, but we can look positively to God for hope and help as we do these things, and need not waste energy worrying about them in the meantime.”<sup>5</sup>

What is your response to that idea?

- Have a class member read 1 Peter 5:8-9.

Imagine a lion is loose in your neighborhood. What would you do to protect yourself and your family? How might that relate to what Peter is saying about this evil lion on the loose? (Avoid it; don’t go where you know it is; don’t walk alone; know you are not ultimately alone; let others know that the lion (evil one) is lurking, etc.)

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<sup>3</sup> Dennis R. Edwards, *1 Peter*, The Story of God Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 202.

<sup>4</sup> *First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021)

<sup>5</sup> Tony Cartledge, “Taming Lions,” *Nurturing Faith*, June 1, 2014.

How does the strategy of humility aid us in resisting the devil?

How does the strategy of casting our cares on God aid us in resisting the devil?

It is true that we often initiate our own crises through our choices to commit sins. And, sometimes, bad things that cause us suffering are no fault of ours – they just happen. However, Peter warns that there is another cause for our suffering. The devil intends to harm us, to “devour” God’s children. How does this make you feel?

What is the role of the devil in 1 Peter 5:8-9?

“Christians make two common mistakes in their thinking about the devil. One error is in taking demonic power too seriously... The other is in not taking evil seriously enough.”<sup>6</sup>

Which way do you lean? What is the “perfect balance” between these two errant ways?

C. S. Lewis wrote a classic Christian work called *The Screwtape Letters*.

The story unfolds as a chronological series of letters that captures the downs and ups of Wormwood, [the demon] Screwtape’s nephew, who is trying to use what weapons he has, lies, deceptions, doubts, to undermine the faith of his “patient,” a young man whom we first meet as one struggling to believe, and then who is on and under trial as a new Christian.

From Screwtape we learn that temptation is essentially a campaign of distortion, exaggeration, manipulation, lies that tempt the individual one way or another to focus on the self, to become selfish, self-important, preoccupied with one’s own appearance, one’s own standing, a constant appeal to vanity—the beginnings of hell on earth.

Lewis cleverly demonstrates that “big sins” start as small ones, but are predicated on the one, essential step to exalting the self, promoting pride as essentially the deepest, longest, widest abyss between God and His creatures. “Why use adultery when golf will do?”

Perhaps the most enduring lesson to be learned from *The Screwtape Letters* is that diabolical lies can be resisted and refuted by steadfastly holding on to the truth of Who God is, and who we are in Him, and by being knowledgeable and vigilant to oppose the devil’s schemes, through prayer, Scripture, worship, and, most of all, the company we keep.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, we are not called to be lion trainers; we are called to train ourselves to avoid “lions.”

- Have a class member read 1 Peter 5:10-11.

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<sup>6</sup> Cartledge.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce L. Edwards, “The Devil and Mr. Lewis,” C. S. Lewis (blog), HarperCollins Publishers, October 28, 2016, <https://www.cslewis.com/the-devil-and-mr-lewis/> accessed 10/14/2021.

*Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* notes that “all these phrases are architectural; and the apostle has again in view the fine image which he produced [in] 1 Peter 2:5. [Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.]”

Thus, “make you perfect/complete” is from the word meaning “put in complete joint as the timbers of a building.” “Establish” means “make you firm in every part, adapt you strongly to one another, so that you may be mutual supports.” “Strengthen” means “cramp and bind every part, so there shall be no danger of warping, splitting or falling.” “Settle” means “cause to rest evenly and firmly upon the best and surest foundation that ye may grow together to a holy temple in the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

Why do we live in houses? (protection from the elements, protection from harm by persons or creatures, a secure place to keep our things, a place for family to gather for food and rest, etc.)

How does this “house that is built by God” relate to the prior passage about the devil?

“For most of the time in this letter we have been aware of persecution coming from the surrounding non-Christian culture...How easy it will have been, and still is, for the Christians then to demonize their visible, human opponents, to regard them as the real source of the problem. Now at last we see this is not the case. There is a real enemy. Like the [nearly invisible malaria-carrying] mosquito, this enemy is seriously dangerous, particularly when ignored.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Transformational Exercise**

One of the most remarkable movements of modern times is Alcoholics Anonymous and its spin-offs (Narcotics Anonymous, etc.) The first step of twelve in AA is to admit that we do not have control over this enemy/disease/power. The confession that “I do not have power over this monster” is itself a power-instilling confession.

Even a lion tamer will not say that their animal is domesticated. The lions are kept in a cage, not in the house.

As we acknowledge the devil's power, we also acknowledge our dependence of God's saving power. God has the power to conquer evil.

As we conclude, I encourage you to enter a prayerful attitude as I read our entire passage aloud. Let these words nourish your soul and build up a house that will protect you from the Evil One.

[Read the passage, pausing slightly after each sentence. You may want to conclude with a prayer, or allow the last verse to be the concluding prayer.]

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<sup>8</sup> [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/1\\_peter/5.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/1_peter/5.htm) accessed 8/1/2023.

<sup>9</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Early Christian Letters for Everyone: James, Peter, John and Judah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 95.