

EXILES FROM EDEN

A Study in 1 Peter



NORTHEAST
BIBLE CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

“By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.”

| *1 Peter 5:12*

“While the world changes, the cross stands firm.”

| *Bruno of Cologne*

No one sets out to fail. Quite the opposite, we throw ourselves into life with every intention of succeeding. When we begin our careers, we dream of making a difference; when we get married we dream of happily-ever-after; and when we set out to follow Jesus, we set out to be a faithful disciple, not a struggling one. Falling short is simply never a part of the plan.

I’m sure this was true for Peter, too. Peter was an ordinary fisherman and one of the first followers of Jesus. His boldness to abandon his career in order to follow Jesus becomes the hallmark of his personality in the Gospels (Matt. 4:18-20). Peter is routinely the first to speak up, to act in faith, to jump out of the boat and into the water (Matt. 14:22-33), and even to come to Jesus’ rescue during His arrest (John 18:10-11). Peter set out with every intention of following Jesus faithfully to the end. But in spite of all of his confidence, Peter would also be the one to deny Jesus three times at the scene of His trial (Luke 22:55-62), which makes Peter the perfect voice on standing firm in our faith because no one understands the cost of wavering better than he.

In the book of 1 Peter, Peter writes to encourage a people whose circumstances were quickly changing. Rome was beginning to question Christianity’s presence, and the Christians were increasingly finding themselves opposed and ostracized. Life was difficult; faith gave way to fear, and the temptation to adopt the status quo was strong. And so, out of his own bitter experience with compromise, Peter picks up his pen and writes to encourage the church to stand firm even in the midst of their suffering.

First Peter is a book of practical encouragement written to help us navigate the struggles and strains of life outside of Eden. Just like the first-century Christians, we find ourselves in a rapidly changing culture where our faith is increasingly challenged and misunderstood. Times are tough; relationships are hard; sin abounds. And in the face of a difficult and divided culture, it's easy for faith to give way to fear and for our walk with God to waver. Despite the challenges, 1 Peter calls us not to withdraw from the world but to stand firm in it. Covering everything from the political to the marital, Peter will teach us how to live holy lives as citizens of a greater kingdom, faithfully being present in the here and now to point our neighbors to the reason for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15).

This world may be a difficult place to live, but God has called us to embrace it as our mission field. Let's discover together, through the words of this beautiful letter, how to live out our calling well so that we can point a watching world to the hope that can be found in Jesus.



BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK

Audience and Occasion. First Peter was written around 62-63 A.D. to encourage Christians living deep inside the Roman Empire in what is now considered modern-day Turkey (1 Peter 1:1).

I AM WRITING TO ALL THE SAINTS IN...



The Christian faith called these new Christians to live lives that were distinctly different from their Roman counterparts. Rome already distrusted the Christian community for refusing to participate in pagan rituals, indulge sinful desires, or watch gladiatorial executions—all common Roman activities. In the Roman view, if you weren't “for” Rome, you were against it.

Around this time, Nero, one of the most ruthless leaders the Roman Empire had ever known, devised a plan to blame Christians for a fire that broke out and ravaged the city of Rome—a tactic he used to deflect blame from his own responsibility. Consequently, the situation for the Christian community quickly went from bad to worse, and within a few years persecution against the Church would sweep across the Roman Empire, taking thousands of Christian lives.

It is against this backdrop that Peter writes. Watching Christians becoming increasingly fearful and reclusive, Peter writes to encourage them not only to stand firm in the midst of their suffering, but to live out their faith boldly and in such a way that “when [people] speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12).

Themes. As we read through the book of 1 Peter, we'll see several key themes:


Suffering. Peter longs to help us understand the role of suffering in the Christian life as something that God uses not only for our growth and maturity, but also for His glory. It matters that those around us watch us navigate these difficulties through Him.

Holiness. Peter unapologetically calls us to live lives that are distinct from the world around us. As God's chosen people, we are to look and live differently so that those who are watching might see Christ in us and through us.

Citizens of Heaven, Strangers on Earth. Peter repeatedly reminds us that heaven is our home and we are now citizens of a greater kingdom. Therefore, our efforts and energies are to be spent concerning ourselves with God's kingdom, not this one.

Horizontal, Not Just Vertical. Peter tells us that the gospel is not just a remedy for the brokenness between God and man, but that the gospel also offers us its power to reconcile what is broken here on earth. First Peter shows us how the gospel offers us hope in everything from the relational to the political.

Place in the New Testament Canon. First Peter is commonly known as an “epistle,” a term that comes from the Greek word *ἐπιστολή* (epistolē) meaning “letter” or “message.” Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 21 are epistles—letters written either to churches or individuals meant for equipping or encouraging. These letters were written on scrolls and delivered by hand to be read by one church before being carried on and delivered to the next church. This was the case for 1 Peter, which was written and shared with all of the Christians scattered across “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1).

GOSPELS	HISTORY	THE LETTERS		PROPHECY
MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN	ACTS	ROMANS 1 COR. 2 COR. GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS 1 THESS. 2 THESS. 1 TIMOTHY 2 TIMOTHY	TITUS PHILEMON HEBREWS JAMES 1 PETER 2 PETER 1 JOHN 2 JOHN 3 JOHN JUDE	REVELATION 

WEEK 1

A LIVING HOPE

1 PETER 1:1-12

Hope is a powerful thing. The hope of returning home keeps soldiers strong during deployment. The hope of meeting a coming grandchild keeps cancer patients fighting through chemo. And the hope of children becoming well-rounded adults motivates parents during rough seasons of parenting. Hope inspires, encourages, and strengthens our resolve during the most difficult of days, which is why Peter begins this letter by pointing to a living hope.

The first two verses of Peter's letter tell us not only to whom Peter is writing (the "elect exiles of the Dispersion"), but also why hope is so desperately needed. These Christians resided in a Roman world that shunned their beliefs and practices. By addressing them as "elect exiles," Peter acknowledges the tension these believers must have felt. On the one hand, they had been chosen by God (elect); but on the other hand, they were despised and rejected by the world around them (exiles). They were a people far from home. They were exiles from Eden.

Seasons of suffering don't naturally instill us with hope. Instead, human nature takes over and reminds us of all the things we have to fear and all the things we stand to lose. Knowing this, Peter writes to encourage them that they have been given a *living* hope and an inheritance that can never be taken. Jesus had faced death *and won*—and this at the hands of Rome! Like growing trees that strengthen and mature, the hope of heaven only grows richer as time passes. In the same way, Peter is reminding these weary Christians that God's promises won't spoil or fade.

But even though hope can comfort and strengthen us, it does not shield us from our suffering. Peter acknowledges that life is hard, suffering is real, and salvation doesn't exempt us from struggle. Rather, the refining work of God comes with a promise that, in His hands, nothing is wasted—even suffering. Like gold that is purified and refined by fire, our faith is purified and refined by our suffering. It prepares our hearts for heaven. It teaches us what is truly valuable in life and reveals the One who never changes and will be faithful to the end.

First Peter is a reminder that many of life's greatest heroes have been strengthened by adversity. Peter calls us to lean into the reality of a life with God that includes both a "living hope" and "various trials" (1 Pet. 1:6). Salvation is not a blanket of protection from suffering but a promise that difficulty will never win. God will be faithful. Trials may test us, but in His hands they will also strengthen us. And if we hold fast to Him, these struggles will only shape us in such a way that our lives shine brighter for Him.

Begin

Describe a time in your life when you walked through a season of suffering. How did this season test your faith? What did this season teach you about the nature and character of God?

Read

Read 1 Peter 1:1-12. Pay close attention to key words, themes, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. First Peter begins with a glimpse of the triune ("three-in-one") nature of God. According to 1 Peter 1:1-2, what role does each member of the Trinity play in our salvation? How might this awareness shape our walk with God?

2. How does Peter describe our inheritance? What words does he use, and what does this suggest about what God has secured for us through Christ?

3. How does Peter’s promise in verse 5 that we are “being guarded through faith” help us understand the certainty of our inheritance? What do you think this means?

4. Read John 10:27-29 and Romans 11:29. How do these passages help us further understand the security of our salvation in Christ?

5. What does Peter say is the purpose of trials in the life of a believer?

6. In verse 12, Peter says that “angels long to look” into these things. Why do you think angels marvel at redemptive history?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 1:1-12 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



The Certainty of Hope. The Scriptures do not paint the hope of heaven as a matter of wishful thinking. Unlike the way in which we use the word “hope” in our modern vernacular (i.e. “I sure hope they win,” “I hope it rains,” etc.), Scriptures refer to hope as a certainty and a coming reality. Biblical hope is treated as objective reality as opposed to subjective emotion. Our hope is anchored to the character and faithfulness of a God who always keeps His promises and cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18). This is why Peter says we have been given a

“living hope,” a hope anchored to a living and sovereign God who is working all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes.

The Source and Security of Salvation. Peter affirms what the rest of Scripture makes clear: salvation is not secured by our own effort or righteousness but rather “*according to His [God’s] great mercy*” through Christ’s perfect life laid down for us at the cross (1 Pet. 1:3). But just as we are saved by Christ’s work and not our own, so too God promises that our salvation is secured by *His* faithfulness when we were sealed by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed an inheritance which is “kept in heaven” for us (Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:5). An inheritance kept in heaven means that it is not held in our own hands, subject to our own faults and failures. Instead, our salvation is anchored to the unchanging character and eternal faithfulness of our God.

Reflect & Apply

1. Peter suggests that trials not only refine us but can ultimately lead to “inexpressible” joy as we hold fast in our faith. How have you experienced inexpressible joy in your life after a trial or witnessed it in someone else? What did it teach you?

2. How have you seen God use suffering to refine and strengthen your faith? What area of your faith is now stronger from walking through hard times?

WEEK 2

A NEW WAY TO LIVE

1 PETER 1:13-2:3

What we believe influences our actions. If we believe too much sun exposure is harmful, we'll put on sunscreen before swimming. If we believe saving money is important, we'll open a savings account and contribute to it regularly. And if we believe that Jesus changes everything then our lives will reflect that, too. This is Peter's call to the early church, a call not just to hope but a call to action.

Peter tells us to “set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 13). This profound hope is more than wishful thinking: it's the unshakeable expectation that Christ will return and set all things right. So as we wait on Him, Peter urges us to live in a completely transformed way: “as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (v. 15-16). Placing our hope in Jesus should prompt us to *want* to be holy and to prioritize the work of the Gospel in our lives.

Peter then retraces the epic story arc of Christ, the source of our faith and hope. “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:20-21). God, knowing we would sin against Him, still created us and sent Jesus to rescue us. Our faith is part of God's spectacularly woven plan that began before the creation of the world.

Knowing this, our salvation should prompt us to live in a radically new way. As Peter notes in chapter 2: “put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” Those words “put away” are incredibly strong in the original Greek. They denote not simply a “putting down” of an activity but a complete separation and departure to such a degree that “the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed.”¹ Essentially, Peter is telling us that we cannot abide in God and continue living in our old ways. Instead, Peter calls us to “long for the pure spiritual milk” (1 Pet. 2:2) by depending on God, finding satisfaction in Him alone, and nourishing our faith through His Word.

¹“Lay aside (659) Apotithemi,” Sermon Index, 2024, sermonindex.net.

Underpinning Peter’s call for the Church to crave pure spiritual milk is a conditional statement, “...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Pet. 2:3). This returns us to the idea that *if* we really believe in something, our lives will reflect it. Responding to our salvation in Christ by living holy lives is not just a one-time decision; it’s a daily commitment that seeks to put Christ first in every area of our lives. And the more we choose Him, the more He promises to make us like Himself.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, committing to be holy as He is holy.

Begin

What’s a belief (can be nonreligious) you have held that significantly impacted your life? Or, what’s a belief you once held but don’t anymore?

Read

Read 1 Peter 1:13-2:3. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. What stands out to you from this passage?

2. What does it mean to “be holy in all your conduct” (1 Pet. 1:15)? What does that look like in everyday life?

3. What is some of the imagery used to describe Jesus and our relationship with Him in 1 Peter 1:18-19? How does this shape our view of who He is?

4. Reread 1 Peter 1:22-25. What does this section say about the “living and abiding” Word of God?

5. Why do you think it’s so important to Peter that we “put away” our sinful behaviors (1 Pet. 2:1)? Why are we as Christians obligated to do this even after we’re saved?

6. What are some of the biggest takeaways you gathered from reading today’s passage?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 1:13-2:3 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



Exiles Ransomed at an Unfathomable Price. Applicable now as it was then, Peter refers to the Church as living in a time of exile: exiled on earth from our true home in heaven with Christ. First Peter opens our eyes to the reality of our salvation and its implication for our lives: we are to conduct ourselves differently because we have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:17-19). Living as exiles means living distinct from the world, not returning to our old lives and “futile ways.” The

very real price of our salvation from sin should result in a very real difference in our living while we are here on earth.

Holiness in Obedience to the Truth. The Scriptures repeatedly call us to “be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 19:2, 20:7; Ex. 19:6; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). This call is not an outdated relic of the Old Testament or a fleeting idea from religious leaders; Peter emphasizes that we are to be holy because God Himself is holy. While receiving grace through faith in Christ saves our souls and brings us to new life, it doesn’t exempt us from the responsibility of obeying God’s commands. Jesus reaffirmed this in John 14:15, saying, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Peter understood that our obedience to God’s truth reflects our genuine love for Him and helps us become more like Him: holy.

Taste and See that the Lord is Good. Reflect on 1 Peter 2:3 and consider the perspective from which Peter writes. Peter experienced the closeness and correction of Jesus more than any other disciple. He witnessed His miracles, saw Him crucified, celebrated His resurrection, and cherished the sweetness of His forgiveness. But Peter also experienced Jesus’ rebuke (Matt. 16:23). Through good times and bad, Peter’s life was transformed. So imagine this disciple—who once denied Jesus and fled in fear—now writing boldly to persecuted churches, sharing the gospel far and wide, even facing crucifixion himself. Peter’s profound transformation and understanding of how deeply people are changed by the goodness of the Lord shine through in his letters and beckon us to do the same: to experience the love of a God who changes everything!

Reflect & Apply

1. Are you living for Christ with everything you have? Where in your life are you struggling with the call to be holy?

2. Write a prayer below asking God to make you more like Him.

WEEK 3

A NEW CALLING

1 PETER 2:4-12

In the game of Jenga®, players take turns removing blocks from a wooden tower and restacking them on top to make the tower as tall as possible before it falls. As the game progresses, you are reminded of the necessity of a sturdy foundation. And what's true of our homes and office buildings is also true of our faith: our spiritual lives require a firm foundation. This is the premise of 1 Peter 2:4-12.

Peter uses several architectural metaphors to speak about the foundation of our lives. He speaks of Jesus as a “living stone... chosen and precious...” in verse 4 and the “cornerstone” that was foretold by the prophets in verses 6 and 7 (see Is. 28:16 and Ps. 118:22, respectively). But what does this mean for those of us who don't build things?

In ancient times, the cornerstone was the central piece of any major building project. It was the first stone laid—often with great ceremony and religious blessing—at the start of a build. Cornerstones were hewn by stonecutters with astronomical precision, and builders would use them as the primary architectural point of reference for the duration of construction. You can still see them today in the rebuilt temple and temple walls in Jerusalem, which rest on enormous ashlar cornerstones weighing 50-80 tons each!²

The cornerstone was the foundational stone upon which all other stones rested and the standard by which all other stones were measured. This is what Christ is to the Church: the foundation, the standard, the guide. With this in mind, we can better appreciate Peter's sentiment that Jesus is the cornerstone of the Church and the ultimate unifier through whom we all come together.

But then Peter moves into more relatable terminology. Those of us who believe in Christ are now “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Pet. 2:9). We now have a new purpose, a new nationality and a new family. We *belong* to Christ, and we are His! What a powerful message

² Galyn Wiemers and Tim Vaniman, “Herod's Building Projects and Ashlar Stones,” essay, in *Jerusalem: History, Archaeology and Apologetic Proof of Scripture* (Wauke, Iowa: Last Hope Books and Publications, 2010), 104-9.

to anyone who has felt abandoned or excluded: we have been adopted into a new family and given a new calling!

These concepts of living stones building a holy house and a holy people expand on one another. Christ is our firm foundation and the reason for everything we do. He is the ultimate source of our identity and the reference point for our purpose. We stand firm on Him, build on Him, and live our lives through Him. Consequently, no matter how we feel about our place in this world, we walk with the assurance that we belong to a greater kingdom and have been called to a greater purpose. What a calling! What a promise! What an incredible hope!

Begin

Do you have any stories about a time when you felt unsteady on your own feet? How did it make you feel?

Read

Read 1 Peter 2:4-12. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. Why do you think it was so important for Peter to write the “Christ as cornerstone” analogy (v. 4-8) to the early church?

2. Read verse 5 again. How is this description for the early church different from descriptions of the Old Testament tabernacle and its purpose now that Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice?


3. What does it look like to make Christ our foundation and build our lives on Him?

4. Read verses 9 through 10. What does this mean to us for our sense of belonging?

5. What does it mean for us to live as “sojourners” and “exiles” (v. 11)?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 2:4-12 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



How Could God Have Known? The Scriptures teach that God, in His infinite love and wisdom, freely offers salvation to anyone who believes in Him. Yet, He also knows that not everyone will choose to believe. This passage, along with others like Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:5, 11, introduces us to the concept of predestination. Through His foreknowledge and love, God chooses (“predestines”) those who will come to know Him. This creates a delicate balance between God’s omniscience, His influence on our decisions, and the freedom He grants us. Even though we might not fully grasp this mystery, the simplest and most comforting approach is to trust in God’s heart and sovereignty. His foreknowledge and omnipotence coexist perfectly with the freedom He lovingly gives.

Misunderstood, Cheerful Ambassadors. We cannot expect the world to understand the Church, our role, or our relationship with Christ as His bride. Nevertheless, we are called to be a witness to the world by living as He has called us to live. The

most powerful testimony about Jesus comes from a life fully surrendered to God. The familiar saying, “you may be the only Bible some people ever read” reinforces Peter’s message: we are called to live good lives before a watching world, fully devoted to Christ so that our neighbors may see God’s work in our lives firsthand. We may be misunderstood and exiled, but we are a part of God’s plan to draw all nations to Himself!

Reflect & Apply

1. Are there areas in your life that feel unsteady right now? What does it look like to make Jesus your foundation in those areas? Write a one-sentence prayer to ask for His help in that.

2. What does it look like to find your identity in Christ? Why do we become our truest selves when we pursue Jesus more than anything else?



WEEK 4

A NEW POSTURE

1 PETER 2:13-25

We all want good leaders: bosses who treat us respectfully, teachers who are sensitive to their students, and politicians who are honest and just. We know in reality that not all leaders live up to these standards. Bosses can be disrespectful, teachers can become insensitive, and corruption can taint the motives of any political leader. So what should we do when those in charge aren't good leaders? What do we do if they fail to fight for us and even hurt us? Peter answers these questions in today's passage.

Peter is writing to Christians living under the Roman emperor Nero, a selfish and fearful leader who blamed the Christians for a riot in Rome and for setting the city on fire. With these false charges, Nero forced the Christians living in Rome to leave the city and abandon their homes. You could imagine that their natural response to such leadership would be to complain or even to rebel. But Peter's instruction to these Christians was decidedly different: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority" (1 Pet. 2:13). The word "submit" can have a negative connotation in our culture. No one wants to feel "under anyone's thumb." But that isn't what this submission implies. Peter is calling Christians to stop striving for personal power, gain, or influence and instead pursue the good of others and peace in the community.

When we were children, our parents set limits on how many sweets we could eat. But as we grew, these boundaries dissipated and we were free to indulge as much as we desired. At some point, we had to learn how to self-regulate. Being truly free, we must ask ourselves: *just because I can do something, does that mean I should?* This is where Peter's message hits home. He reminds us that as free individuals, our freedom isn't to be used only for our own benefit; we are to use our freedom to serve God and others, to honor authority, and to love our fellow believers (v. 16).

Looking to Jesus, we see the ultimate example of someone who chose to submit Himself for the greater good, despite having all power and authority unto Himself. Jesus, the Creator of all things, willingly endured rejection, misunderstanding, and suffering. He

humbly subjected Himself to earthly authorities and endured unimaginable pain and humiliation—all so that He could ultimately triumph over death and set us free from sin. Christ conquered death itself precisely because He chose *not* to exercise His power and authority, willingly submitting Himself to the Father in all things.

When we as freed people follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we choose to take up His example: showing honor to one another, promoting the common good, and pursuing peace even at the expense of our own desires. And when we do this, we reflect the transforming love and grace of our Savior to a watching world.

Submission remains a foundational aspect of the Christian life. The gospel calls us to yield to authority and respect our leaders. This isn't a call to blind obedience or passivity, but rather a humble recognition of God's sovereignty and ultimate authority. God can be trusted with the outcome as we take up His call to live with a posture of service and submission in the world.

Begin

What examples of good leadership and poor leadership have you experienced in your life? How have these experiences impacted your attitude toward authority?

Read

Read 1 Peter 2:13-35. Pay close attention to keywords, themes, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. What stands out to you from 1 Peter 2:13-35?

2. Now that you've read more about the historical background of this letter, why do you think Peter wrote it?

3. Based on today's passage, what is our motivation to "submit" to authority? How does it help us stay focused on God's plan and purpose for us?

4. Peter points out that Jesus set the ultimate example and that we benefit as His followers (v. 22-25). How does Jesus' example help us understand how we should respond to authority as we follow God's plan?

5. How can Christians still submit to authority while speaking up for their beliefs and standing up against inequality?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 2:13-25 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



Good Citizens and Living for the Common Good. Scripture is clear about being good citizens who pay taxes (Mark 12:17), who obey the laws (1 Pet. 2:13), and who respect rulers and refrain from speaking ill of others (Titus 3:1-2). Good citizenship involves more than mere passive obedience. The motivation stems from love for our neighbors and a genuine desire to cultivate communities where everyone can thrive.

Within the boundaries of the law, this also means advocating for justice, challenging inequality, and speaking out against wrongdoing. Good citizens adopt a posture of humility and actively promote the well-being of the community, just like Jesus did.

Living Free and Choosing Restraint. True freedom is found in Christ. Through Christ's redemption, we are liberated from the chains of sin, shame, and the desires of this life. John wrote that "whoever the Son sets free is free indeed" (John 8:36). Such freedom warrants a sense of responsibility to steward our freedom with integrity and wisdom. Our freedom isn't a license to indulge ourselves; we must choose to exercise self-restraint out of love for our neighbors and for the greater good. This reflects the transformative nature of Christ's love within us. In Him, we discover that true freedom is not the absence of constraints but living in accordance with God's will—guided by love, humility, and a sincere desire to honor Him in all things.

Reflect & Apply

1. What changes do you need to make to be someone who uses their freedom for the good of others?

2. What might it look like to restrain parts of your freedom for the good of others in your home, workplace, community, or church?

WEEK 5

A NEW WAY TO RELATE

1 PETER 3:1-7

The Beatles—the iconic British rock band from the ‘60s—once sang: “*All You Need is Love.*” But if you’ve been in any kind of relationship (or simply observed someone else’s), then you know that it takes a lot more than love to make a relationship work... especially marriage! If love were all we needed to make a marriage work, then everyone would be married, and 50-year anniversary celebrations would be the norm, not the exception. We don’t get married to *find* love; we get married to *express* and *celebrate* love. And yet in spite of how deep our love may be at the beginning, something more than love is needed to make a marriage—or any close relationship—last.

As we come into chapter 3, Peter shares how the gospel calls us to live as husbands and wives. He wants us to understand that the gospel is not simply a remedy for our sin and its impact on our relationship with God. The gospel also offers us hope for how we relate to one another and interact with the world. Essentially, the same grace that offers us reconciliation with God, vertically, is the same grace that offers us reconciliation with one another, horizontally.

In chapter 2, Peter spoke of how the gospel calls us to honor everyone and humbly respect those in positions of authority over us; now Peter applies those same principles to how we relate to one another in marriage. Not once in these seven verses does Peter speak to us about the emotion of love or whether we feel like honoring one another (or even whether our spouse deserves our respect based on their behavior). Rather, Peter calls us to humbly take up a life of love that expresses itself through honor and mutual submission with each party putting the good of the other above their own good.

Honor, love, respect, and submission: these are not qualities to be embraced and expressed by only one side in the marriage relationship. Quite the opposite, the gospel reminds us that these qualities are to be present in *every* Christian as they approach *every* relationship. But Peter also reminds us that a failure to live

out the gospel well with one another has an unmistakable impact on our walk with God. Just as an earthly parent cannot turn a blind eye to how a child treats other children, God cares deeply how we treat one another.

The gospel offers us hope for our sin and for struggling relationships. God offers us a better way to walk in our marriages, and He promises that His way will not only produce fruit in our home but fruit in our walk with Him, too.

Begin

How has a close relationship with someone (best friend, spouse, etc.) been better than you imagined? In what ways has it been harder than you expected?

Read

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. How are we to understand the call to “be subject” and to submit in verses 1 and 5? What does Biblical submission mean? What does it *not* mean?

2. How is the idea of “submission” misconstrued in today’s culture?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:28 and Ephesians 5:21. How do these passages give us a fuller understanding of what it means to be subject to one another in love?

4. What does Peter mean by the phrase “a gentle and quiet spirit” in 1 Peter 3:4? Equally, what does it *not* mean?

5. What responsibilities does Peter assign to husbands in 1 Peter 3:7? According to Peter, what is the consequence of failing to love wives sacrificially? How does this bring weight and importance to the call to love others well?

6. Peter’s description of wives as a “weaker vessel” in verse 7 might seem dismissive, but Peter uses these words to challenge husbands to honor their wives more, not less. How is this idea supported by his instruction to treat them as “fellow heirs”?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 3:1-7 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.

Submission and Authority. Submission is too often dismissed as an archaic and patriarchal notion from a time gone by. But Scripture views submission differently—not as a one-sided

affair in marriage, but rather as the call of every Christian desiring to imitate the life of Jesus. Christ Himself submitted to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28). Paul's charge to couples in Ephesians 5 begins with a call for husbands and wives to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). We are also called to submit to governing authorities (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14) and to spiritual leaders in the church (Heb. 13:17). Biblical submission is not about being "less than another" but honoring others above yourself (Rom. 12:10). It is about taking up the humility of Jesus, who came not to be served but to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).

Equal Worth and Dignity. Though Peter speaks of submission within marriage, his words are balanced by his affirmation that both husbands and wives stand as fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). This was a radical notion in a culture that placed the greatest weight and value on the firstborn male as the true heir of an estate. But the creation account in Genesis makes it clear: even though God designed us to complement one another in our roles, men and women possess equal worth and dignity in the eyes of God. Because both men and women bear the image and likeness of God, Christian marriage is meant to be built on partnership and mutual respect, not power.

The Power of Godly Influence. Scripture repeatedly reminds us of the power of a godly life on unbelieving spouses, neighbors, and coworkers. Peter notes that in marriage, godliness is more compelling than beauty. Jesus Himself called us to let our light shine through our good works, which would lead people to glorify God (Matt. 5:16). Paul calls us to be rich in good works (1 Tim. 6:17-18), a model of good works (Titus 2:7-8), and fully devoted to good works (Titus 3:8). Never does this replace the need for us to present the gospel using words, but it is a strong reminder that a life consistently and faithfully lived in service to God is a testimony no one can ignore.

Reflect & Apply

1. Take a moment and contemplate the importance of submission in the life of a disciple. Ask God to show you where you may be lacking in your submission to Him, His commands, or someone He has placed in your life. Where is God challenging you to grow in the grace of submission?

2. Of all the qualities Peter lists in this section of Scripture, which one stands out as an area where you could improve (being gentle, being understanding, showing honor, etc.)? Ask God for His help to grow and mature in that area of your life.

WEEK 6

A NEW WAY TO RESPOND

1 PETER 3:8-17

Life's not fair, and we know it. Bad things happen to good people; the rich get richer while the poor get poorer; and the Cowboys just keep losing. So how do we as Christians respond when things aren't fair? In 1 Peter 3:8-17, Peter reminds a young church experiencing new challenges to stand firm even when things are difficult. His charge is to do what is right and honorable by God, not just what feels fair to us.

Peter addresses how this church—facing opposition against their beliefs and very existence—should respond to the challenges surrounding them by starting from the *inside* before working toward the *outside*. Instead of criticizing the culture or circumstances, he urges the church to consider their own hearts first, emphasizing the importance of a community marked by unity, love, compassion, and humility (1 Pet. 3:8). Instead of the “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” mentality, Peter encourages them to respond to outside pressure with a community approach, not an individual one. Paul addressed similar situations when he told the Corinthians to “be perfectly united” (1 Cor. 1:10) and the Thessalonians to help and encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:14).

In verse 9, Peter then changes his focus to those *outside* pressures, writing that the community should “not repay evil for evil...but on the contrary, bless...” This theme of choosing to live honorably in unfair situations carries through the rest of the section. It recalls the “upside-down kingdom” that Jesus called His people to embrace: that to live, we must die to ourselves; that to be first we must be last; to be great, we must serve others; and to be peacemakers, we must not repay evil for evil.

We can live without seeking retribution, assured that God sees and hears the prayer of the righteous and will bring justice (1 Pet. 3:12). Meanwhile, we balance this submission with the Scriptures' call to be people who care deeply about injustice, but to respond to injustice in the way that Jesus would: showing blessing and grace, even in the face of misunderstanding and mistreatment. Peter's ultimate hope is that such encouragement drives us to be

“prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (v. 15).

Life’s not always fair, but our response defines us and the gospel we claim. Peter urged the early church to stand firm and be bold with a gentle spirit. In the same way, let us seek fairness and pursue what is right and honorable. Let us bless instead of retaliating, embodying Jesus’ upside-down kingdom, living without fear, and knowing that God will bring justice in His way and His time. Let us come together in unity, ready to share our hope with others so that God might be known and glorified through us.

Begin

Can you remember a time when you responded well to a challenging situation well and another when you didn’t? How do you feel about these instances?

Read

Read 1 Peter 3:8-17. Pay close attention to keywords, themes, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. What stands out to you about 1 Peter 3:8-17?

2. How do the context and setting of this letter help you understand Peter’s point?

share the hope of Jesus with anyone who asks. But we often separate this passage from the instructions surrounding it. Peter encourages the reader to live a life of unity, sympathy, love, compassion, and humility. This echoes Jesus' message that they will know us by our love (John 13:35). Thus Peter's charge is not simply to be ready to speak but to live out our faith visibly every single day, loving the community of God in such radical fashion that those who see us long to know why we are different. It is the unified, loving, others-serving spirit of the church that is designed to draw attention to the life-changing work of Jesus.

An Upside-Down Kingdom. Jesus often spoke about the “upside-down” nature of the Kingdom, where the values and priorities of heaven contrast with those of the world. In His Kingdom, the poor in spirit are blessed and the meek will rule (Matt. 5:3, 5:5). Even more, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first (Matt. 20:16). Jesus emphasized humility, serving others, and selflessness as Kingdom characteristics. To fully embrace this way of living, we must recognize that God is in control of all things, that our freedom is found in Him, and as such we can live fully and freely into His call to “seek first His Kingdom” knowing that He will care and provide for us while on Earth (Matt. 6:33).

Reflect & Apply

1. The Bible's advice about how to deal with people doesn't always feel straightforward. Take a moment to think about how you naturally react when things get tough with others. How can you respond in a better way?

2. Dealing with life's challenges begins with the Christian community embodying unity, empathy, love, and humility. Do you feel united with the people in your church right now? If not, take a moment to reflect and pray, seek forgiveness if needed, and consider how you can improve those connections moving forward.

WEEK 7

A NEW LIFE

1 PETER 3:18-4:6

Several years ago, a local police department discovered a malnourished dog in the backyard of a home they had raided. The homeowner had chained his dog to a flagpole in the middle of his backyard. Around this pole, the dog's constant pacing had cut a perfect circle through the grass—evidence of how long the dog had been chained to the pole. Noticing that the dog was friendly and eager for attention, the officers unchained it, only to learn that the dog refused to leave the circle. Even after successfully coaxing the dog out into the open yard, the dog always returned to sit inside the worn circle. The dog simply could not live beyond the pattern of his old life. Though he was free, he lived as though he were still in bondage.

In 1 Peter 3, Peter reminds us of our freedom in Jesus Christ. Like the Christians to whom he is writing, Peter says, "*Christ also suffered.*" He faced difficulty and trial and temptation. But Christ's suffering on the cross has set us free from sin, reconciling us back to God! And His suffering has an implication for how we live: we should live "no longer for human passions but for the will of God" (1 Pet. 4:2). Unfortunately, instead of embracing our freedom and new life, we too often settle for the worn circle of our old life. Though we have been freed from the desires of our flesh, we stay near them. Though we have been saved from "lawless idols," we keep returning to them. Instead of living into our freedom, we live as though little has changed.

Peter knew firsthand the temptation to return to the old life. After Christ was crucified and buried, John 21 tells us that Peter went back to fishing. It was there—in the midst of his old life—that Jesus pursued Peter and called Him a second time to come and follow Him (John 21:19). Remembering that moment, Peter now calls us to do the same: walk in the wonder of this new life given to us by Christ.

Difficulty and suffering in the Christian life have a way of blinding us to the freedom we have now because of Him. Whether our problems are professional, financial, or relational, it's easy for us to live focused only on the burdens of the present instead of the grace

and power of God’s promises. Equally, Peter notes that some of our struggles come because of our faith, like facing the taunts of those who wonder why we don’t live as they do (1 Pet. 4:4).

Amid all the trials and temptations to return to the old life, Peter points us to Jesus, to the One who was willing to suffer so that we might be set free. Let us walk in a manner worthy of the name of Jesus, fully embracing the new life we have been given in Him!

Begin

If you had to give up one modern “creature comfort” (phone, TV, internet, hair dryer, etc.), which one would be most distressing to lose? Why?

Read

Read 1 Peter 3:18-4:6. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. How does Peter describe Christ’s work in 1 Peter 3:18-22? What are the implications of this work according to Peter?

2. In verse 21, Peter compares baptism to Noah’s salvation from the flood. How are the two similar, and what do these two events represent? According to Peter, what is it that saves us?

3. In 1 Peter 4:1-6, what attitudes and actions does Peter call us to take up in light of Christ's redemptive work?

4. What do you think it means to live "for the will of God" as stated in verse 2? What might that look like in the life of a believer?

5. What contrast does Peter make between the lives of believers and non-believers in verses 3 and 4?

6. What do you think Peter means when he says in verse 6 that "the gospel was preached even to those who are dead"? Who do you think Peter is speaking about?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



Sanctification and Suffering. Nothing in the Christian life is wasted in God's hands, including suffering. In 1 Peter 3, we are reminded that even Christ suffered, but by God's hands His suffering led to our redemption. Similarly, the Scriptures teach us that God uses suffering in our lives to refine our faith and deepen our dependence on God. This purifying work, known as *sanctification*, conforms us more and more to the image of Jesus Christ. In a very real way, suffering is the soil in which

humility, compassion, patience, and perseverance grow in the Christian life.

Living for the “Will of God.” Christians often perceive the “will of God” in a very narrow sense—as if God has a specific, individual calling for each of our lives that we must discover. However, when the Scriptures speak of the will of God, the focus is far less about discovering our own purpose and far more about aligning ourselves with God’s. Paul says that it is God’s will that we rejoice always and pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:16-18); that we be sanctified and align our desires and actions with God’s commands (1 Thess. 4:3-7); and that we will better understand what God is calling us to do as we are transformed by Scripture (Rom. 12:1). Peter says it is God’s will that we do good and live out the Gospel (1 Pet. 2:15). What this means is that we can rest assured that if we are pouring ourselves into Scripture and seeking to obey God’s commands, He will direct our steps and hold fast our future.

Reflect & Apply

1. Where in your life are you experiencing a taste of suffering? How are you inviting God to refine you and strengthen your faith in this season? Take a moment to ask for His strengthening grace.

2. Reflect on Peter’s call in verse 3 that it is time to put the old life away and stop living in the way of the world. Seek God in prayer and ask Him to show you where you need to cultivate a greater separation from old patterns and behaviors. Write down what He reveals to you below and ask Him for the strength to walk in holiness in that area.



WEEK 8

A NEW WAY TO LOVE

1 PETER 4:7-11

In week 5, we touched on the Beatles' 1967 song "All You Need Is Love." Commissioned by the BBC for its first satellite broadcast, the Beatles wrote the hit in the face of global conflicts, political strife, and societal divisions. The resonating message of unity reached over 400 million viewers during the initial broadcast, and its message has been ingrained into our culture. The sentiment speaks to our human need for others to want us and understand us, and we find the ultimate solution for this need: godly love for one another.

In his letter to a church facing conflict, political strife, and persecution, Peter emphasizes the importance of this young church being marked by love. Peter reminds believers of God's plan to restore all things, that His redemption plan is imminent (1 Pet. 4:7), to be alert, and to love one another deeply.

At the heart of the Christian faith lies a transformative love—a love so profound that it shapes the very essence of who we are and how we live. And the Scriptures are clear that this kind of love is neither a passive emotion nor an impassioned feeling but a sacrificial action. Just as God so loved us by giving His Son for us, so too we are to be a people willing to lay down our lives in love for one another.

Peter's remedy for this embattled and struggling community was nothing less than that: love one another. Peter highlights the significance of hospitality, encouraging believers to welcome others without complaint and foster a sense of community and belonging. This kind of hospitality extends far beyond mere gestures of kindness; it embodies a spirit of selfless-service and compassion that reflects God's incredible love for us.

Peter also emphasizes that gifts, particularly spiritual ones, are not meant for personal use but rather to serve one another in love. Spiritual gifts are given to believers by the Holy Spirit to be used for the good of the community. Whether through acts of service, teaching, or mercy, these gifts are to be used for the glory of God

and to build up the church in love (Eph. 4:11-16). This aligns with Peter’s instructions in verses 8-10, where he encourages the church to love one another deeply, show hospitality, serve one another, and speak God’s Word over one another—all in the spirit of love!

Peter’s message here is clear: in times of hardship and heaviness, what the church truly needs is to take up a lifestyle of love.

Begin

Who comes to mind when you think of someone who is hospitable? How do you feel when you are in their home, and what do they do to make you feel that way?

Read

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. Pay close attention to keywords, themes, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. What stands out to you about 1 Peter 4:7-11?

2. What do Peter’s introductory remarks about the “end of things being near” (v. 7) reveal about his purpose and attitude in this passage?

3. How is love characterized in this passage? Who is called to demonstrate this type of love and to whom?

4. Hospitality is a prominent theme in Scripture. Why was it such an important part of the early church, and what *attitude* should we maintain in showing hospitality?

5. In what ways can hospitality be seen as an expression of love in modern times? How would you like to be more intentional with acts of hospitality?

6. Read 1 Peter 4:11. How does Peter stress the importance of using our gifts in a way that honors God and points back to Him?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 4:7-11 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



The Gospel as a Homecoming. If you've ever been away from your loved ones for a long time, you know the feeling when you finally return: it is a homecoming, a return to where you were always intended to be. Jesus often describes the experience of hearing the gospel as a "homecoming." Like a son who realizes his mistakes and returns to a loving father (Luke 15:11-32), or an outcast welcomed to a royal banquet (Matt. 22:1-14), the message of the Gospel is to "come home"

to the One who formed you and gave up His life for you. When we genuinely welcome others into our lives with hospitality, we reflect the warmth and joy of that sentiment to our friends, neighbors, and even strangers. This is why Christian hospitality is commanded in the Scriptures: so that those far from God might get a taste of what it is like to be loved and welcomed by God when they step into our homes.

Gifts for the Good of Others. We all have been given gifts, some big, some small, some natural, some supernatural: but they're all meant for a purpose. These gifts aren't for our own gain. These gifts are for the good of others—to uplift, encourage, teach, lead, and love. When we use our gifts in this way—for the good of others—we bring glory to God and we build up His bride, the Church. God has given spiritual gifts to every single believer and it is His will that you would use these gifts to glorify Him and build others up in their faith.

Reflect & Apply

1. Reflect on the concept of hospitality, and think of someone who has made you feel welcome and included. How has it impacted you? (*Consider writing them a note or sending them a text to express the impact their hospitality had on you!)

2. How can you use the gifts God has blessed you with to love others deeply? What intentional steps can you take this week to use these gifts for others? .

WEEK 9

A NEW WAY TO SUFFER

1 PETER 4:12-19

Elisabeth Elliot understood suffering and loss. In 1956, her husband Jim Elliot was brutally speared to death in the dense jungles of Ecuador by the Huaorani people while trying to share the gospel with them. Despite this horrific tragedy, Elisabeth showed courage and grace by choosing to spend two years living with the very tribe that had taken her husband's life—all to ensure that the gospel of Jesus was shared. In her book about suffering, Elisabeth said, "Someday, even you will see that there's sense in this. Your suffering is never for nothing."³

Sometimes life doesn't make sense; death, unemployment, illness, and even hostility toward our faith are all experiences that can change the picture of what we expected for our lives. However, suffering is *never for nothing*. In this section of his letter to the church, Peter writes as a caring pastor to a community he loves, instructing them on how to deal with suffering.

Peter's words to followers of Jesus who are facing suffering are simple and to the point: "*do not be surprised*" (1 Pet. 4:12). Suffering is a universal experience, and suffering because of faith in Jesus is equally certain (v. 12). But Peter's instruction on how we should respond to suffering is different than we might expect. Peter calls us to rejoice! This isn't a call to enjoy suffering in some masochistic way; rather, Peter urges us to rejoice because in suffering we follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Suffering helps us identify with Christ, who Himself endured the shame of the cross on our behalf. By enduring suffering with patience and steadfastness, we walk as Jesus walked and suffer as He suffered, showing ourselves to be faithful servants of God just as Christ was.

Suffering requires us to trust God's sovereignty (v. 19), knowing that nothing is wasted in God's hands. This is the very thing Paul wrote to the church in Rome, saying: "*We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose*" (Rom. 8:28).

³ Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019).

Suffering will come—it’s a fact of life. But we get to choose how we respond. We can respond by growing discouraged and despondent, wondering why God has allowed these things to be—*or*—we can respond by entrusting our “souls to a faithful Creator” (v. 19). No matter the source of your suffering, trust God to be faithful, recognizing that our trials are “never for nothing.” God can truly can work all things for our good. Just as steel is strengthened under pressure, ask God to use whatever difficulty you are facing today to forge your faith into something greater and stronger so that the world may see the reason for the hope that is in you.

Begin

Think about someone you know who has experienced hardship and handled difficult times well. What stood out to you about how they handled it?

Read

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. What stands out to you in 1 Peter 4:12-19?

2. Why does Peter tell believers not to be surprised by the “fiery ordeal” they are facing? How does understanding suffering in the Christian experience change our perspective on trials?


3. Peter cautions against suffering as a wrongdoer (v. 15). How does this distinction affect our understanding of righteous suffering versus suffering due to our own actions?

4. Read Romans 5:8. What does this tell you about God's posture toward us when we are experiencing hardship because of our own decisions?

5. What allows us to respond to suffering in the way Peter describes?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 4:12-19 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



A High Priest Who Sympathizes. Suffering makes us feel isolated, alone, disconnected, or beyond help. We often project these perceptions onto God as well. “Why isn’t He helping? Why doesn’t He care?” The author of Hebrews reminds us that we have a High Priest (referring to Jesus) who can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:14-16). Instead of ignoring our pain and suffering, God came to this world to experience it and to overcome it. Death is the ultimate expression of suffering, and in Christ’s resurrection, He showed that He has power and dominion even over death. Just as we find hope and comfort in the reality that God loved us so much that He sent His son to suffer for us, we can also find peace in the fact that He understands our suffering, too.

Resistance to Our Faith. For more than 2,000 years the church has faced oppression for confessing a risen Savior. In

the West—and especially in America—we have been given a tremendous amount of religious freedom. Most Americans do not know the threat of true and imminent harm for being committed to their faith; however, in recent years the efforts to suppress and silence our faith have become increasingly real. There is a growing effort to discourage people of faith from speaking out; in some cases even categorizing Biblical views and values as “extremist.” This resistance to our faith connects us to Christians throughout history. But just as the early Church survived persecution in Rome, we must hold fast to our faith knowing that God will sustain us, too. As Paul notes in Galatians 6:9, “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.”

Reflect & Apply

1. How have you responded to suffering in the past? How would you like to respond differently in light of today’s study?

2. If you are experiencing suffering now, take it to the Lord. Pray the truth of this scripture over your life. Record your prayer or God’s response. If you are not experiencing suffering, do the same exercise for someone you know who is going through hardship.

WEEK 10

A NEW HEART

1 PETER 5:1-7

The Middle East has some of the fastest-growing churches in the world. Experts estimate that more Muslims have become Christians in the last 20 years than in the past 1,400 years!⁴ International missions help, but much of the growth is from faithful, local Christians ministering in their own communities. Many of these Christians print Bibles in secret, hold underground Bible studies in the shadows of cities that still practice honor killings, and even share the gospel with extremist neighbors and enemies. Why do these Christians risk so much in order to share their faith? According to Peter, it's the same motivation that led Jesus to the cross: the courageous humility to lay down our lives for one another.

The first half of 1 Peter 5:1-7 addresses the church elders: spiritual leaders who shepherd the church, guard its teaching, and help carry out its ministry. Peter encourages them in their role, warning them against misusing their authority, and reminding them of their future reward (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Peter knew that serving as an elder requires spiritual perseverance and constant reliance on God, and he encouraged them to keep persevering, even during difficult times.

But Peter also understood that these elders might have to sacrifice everything in carrying out their calling. The Roman Empire was hostile to the early church; early Christian leaders were often the first captured, tortured, and killed in order to send a message to the rest. Serving as an elder meant risking your life for the gospel, and many church leaders worldwide still do that today.

While we may marvel at the courage of Christians who face such extreme persecution, we must remember that they are just as real as we are. The elders to whom Peter wrote weren't distant, unrelatable figureheads; they were real people with real families, real problems, and real anxieties. However, we can also safely assume that such Christians who stand up under fire for their faith are able to do so precisely because they know the truth about the God they serve: that He is faithful and able to deliver them no matter the suffering they face.

² Tom Doyle, "Is the Church Dying in the Middle East?," *allarab.news*, February 23, 2022, <https://allarab.news/is-the-church-dying-in-the-middle-east/>.

Jesus, the Perfect Elder, walked with the same confidence. He knew God’s heart for the unrighteous and the lost (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; Rom. 10:14), and He knew that God could be trusted to deliver Him—and us—in the midst of His suffering. Likewise, we are called to walk in the same confidence and hope, ready to share the reason for the hope that we have in Him.

It is doubtful that we will have to give up our very lives for the gospel. But if we believe that Jesus changes everything, let us walk with that same willingness, no matter the cost.

Begin

What is the difference between a “leader” and someone who “has authority”? Who is someone in your own life whose leadership you admire, and what sets them apart?

Read

Read 1 Peter 5:1-7. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. Read 1 Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28. Based on what you’ve read, what does an Elder do for the body of Christ?

2. How is Christ’s leadership modeled in the descriptions of eldership in 1 Peter 5:2-4? Can you think of any examples from Jesus’ own life when He modeled leadership like this?

3. Read 1 Peter 5:4 again. Why do you think Peter reminds the elders of their reward in heaven? How often do you think about your own reward in heaven?

4. What do you think it means to “clothe yourselves... with humility toward one another” (v. 5)? What might this look like in our day-to-day lives?

5. What stands out to you about 1 Peter 5:6?

6. Read 1 Peter 5:7 again as Peter addresses anxieties in the early church. Now read John 14:27, Phil. 4:6-7, and Matt. 6:25-34. What do these passages say about our anxiety, and how should we respond?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 5:1-7 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



Joyful Exiles and a Big God. Second Timothy 3:12 reminds us that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...” Jesus spoke often about persecution during His ministry (Luke 6:22; John 15:18, 20). Christians worldwide (including those who live in “safe” regions) are guaranteed to experience the tension of ministering to a broken world that doesn’t believe it’s really broken. But this tension does

not release us from the mission to serve others and share the gospel. Jesus commands us to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44), and this was the same call to the early church in 1 Peter. You see, the Gospel isn’t just for people who are open to it; it is equally for those who are hostile to it, from Roman emperors like Nero to people like the apostle Paul. We can expect the world to be anti-gospel; but we can also expect God to do big things as we step out in faith and obey His calling to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Humility. Too often, humility is misunderstood as weakness or self-deprecation. But Jesus modeled humility as a constant submission to God’s will. He said in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit [beggarly in some translations], for theirs is the kingdom of God.” In this way, humility is when we realize our own emptiness without God and respond by letting Him fill us with Himself and lead us in His ways. This surrendered relationship to God is precisely how Jesus perfectly lived out the will of the Father from the moment He came to Bethlehem to the moment He died on the cross. In like fashion, a humble disciple surrenders their own desires and submits to the will of God, recognizing that all are empty without Him.

Reflect & Apply

1. Where in your life is God calling you to boldness for His mission?

2. Are you willing to lay down everything in your life to serve Jesus? Write a prayer asking Him to help you do that.

WEEK 11

A NEW WAY TO STAND

1 PETER 5:8-14

It's hard to stand firm, especially when you feel like you are standing alone. Just ask Hayden Philpot.

Each September, Christian students around the country gather at their school's flagpole to pray, and each year tens of thousands of students do exactly that. But at one high school in Lake Minneola, Florida, only one student showed up: Hayden Philpot.

Placed in that same situation, most of us would have been tempted to go home. After all, no one wants to be "that kid" standing all alone, praying in front of the school for all to see. But Hayden didn't leave. Instead, he stood and prayed that God would do something, even as he stood alone.

First Peter is a reminder that the Christian life will often be filled with seasons of struggle, and frequently we will feel as though we are alone. But as we enter the final verses of this letter, Peter reminds us that we are never alone. Just as God reminded Elijah in the midst of his despair that He had 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed a knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:1-18), so too Peter reminds us that, though we may face trials in the Christian life, we do not suffer alone. Peter writes that "the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (1 Pet. 5:9). Even more, God Himself is with us and promises to "restore, confirm, strengthen and establish" us by His grace (1 Pet. 5:10).

While it is comforting to know that we are not alone, Peter's ultimate goal is to challenge us. As disciples, we are called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, following the example and pattern of His life even amid our suffering. In chapter 3, Peter notes that Jesus Himself suffered (1 Pet. 3:18). And yet, though He faced death on our behalf, Christ stood firm. Though oppressed and afflicted, "... He opened not His mouth" (Is. 53:7). There was no grumbling or complaint. Quite the contrary, when Jesus did finally speak, He asked the Father to "forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus is the ultimate example of what it looks like to keep our eyes fixed on the Father, trusting His sovereign plan, even when our lives feel like they are unraveling. And that is Peter’s aim as he closes out this letter: rest in the fact that the God of all grace is not only watching over us but can work all things together for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Begin

Talk about a time when you had to stand firm in the face of a trial, temptation, or hardship. What did it feel like? What did it teach you?

Read

Read 1 Peter 5:8-14. Pay close attention to key themes, words, repetition, actions, and contrasts.

Study the Scriptures

1. How does Peter characterize “the adversary” (the devil) in 1 Peter 5:8, and what implications does this have for us in regards to spiritual warfare?

2. What do you think it means to be “sober-minded” about spiritual attack? How does Ephesians 6:12-13 help you understand this more fully?


3. List the four things in verse 10 that Peter promises God can and will grant us in the midst of suffering. What do each of these mean?

4. What do you think it means to “stand firm”? What actions, attributes, or behaviors might be a reflection of this command?

5. What does the conclusion of Peter’s letter tell us about the importance of community for our ability to stand firm in the faith?

Principles to Ponder

Consider the message of 1 Peter 5:8-14 in light of the rest of Scripture and how it supports and reveals the following themes.



The Reality of Spiritual Warfare. Peter makes it clear that we have an enemy—an adversary—who, like a prowling lion, seeks to destroy our faith and lead us astray. Likewise Paul, in Ephesians, reminds us that our struggle is not merely against “flesh and blood” but also against this same enemy (Eph. 6:12). Jesus’ own life and ministry stands as proof of this fact, revealing that even He faced temptation from Satan (Matt. 4:1-11). While it is possible to go overboard and view everything as a spiritual attack, it is equally dangerous to live without a constant awareness that we have an enemy seeking to undermine God’s Kingdom. As Christians, we are called to live in a state of constant awareness, spiritual vigilance, and prayer.


God’s Sovereignty and Grace. Amid the challenges of spiritual warfare, Peter assures us of God’s sovereignty and grace. We can cast all of our anxieties on God, knowing that He cares for us and can strengthen and sustain us (1 Pet. 3:7). Equally, Peter

reminds us of God's ultimate promise to one day rescue and restore us when Jesus returns (1 Pet. 3:10). And in a beautiful provision of grace, we are repeatedly reminded that we do not walk alone. God has given us a spiritual community in the body of Christ designed to support, encourage, sustain, and care for our hearts when we grow weary from suffering and temptation.

Reflect & Apply

1. Peter challenges us to resist the devil by standing firm in our faith. What are some practical strategies for resisting temptation and remaining steadfast in the midst of spiritual attack?

2. In what area of your life are you struggling to stand firm? Ask for God's help and strength in that area now.



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WHO HAS CALLED YOU
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/ 1 PETER 5:10

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STANDING FIRM IN TRYING TIMES.

We know the longing in our own hearts: we long for another world, the kingdom of heaven promised to us through Jesus. Until we get there, we contend with the everyday reality of our broken world.

Like strangers in a foreign land, followers of Jesus live in a way distinctly apart from the rest of the world. Yet Peter, having walked with Jesus and been set apart for His work, had much to say about this same tension.

Join us as we navigate 1 Peter, which teaches us to stand firm in a world that is not our home. We must learn to live as persevering, joyful, hope-filled exiles, all while pointing others to a greater King and kingdom.

