

X Explore the Bible.®

FALL 2016 > *Jeff Iorg, General Editor*

1,2 Peter; Jude

LIFE BY DESIGN

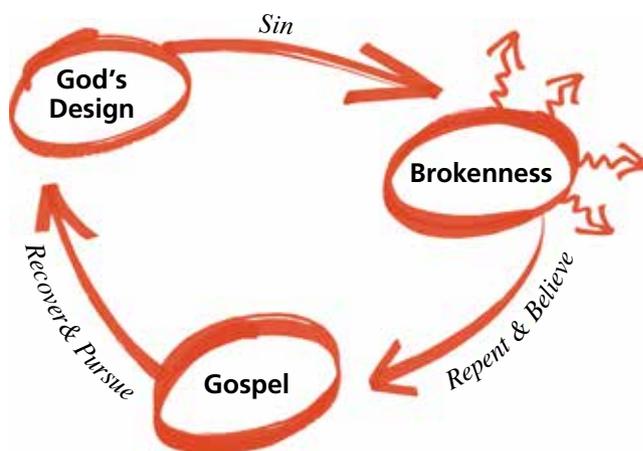
We live in a broken world. This brokenness is seen in suffering, violence, poverty, pain, and death around us. Brokenness leads us to search for a way to make LIFE work.

The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly—where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose—to worship Him and walk with Him. (See Genesis 1:31 and Psalm 19:1.)

Life doesn't work when we ignore God and His original design for our lives. We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. Sin leads to a place of brokenness. The consequence of our sin is separation from God—in this life and for all of eternity. (See Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23.)

At this point we need a remedy—some good news. Because of His love, God did not leave us in our brokenness. Jesus, God in human flesh, came to us and lived perfectly according to God's Design. Jesus came to rescue us—to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He took our sin and shame to the cross, paying the penalty of our sin by His death. Jesus was then raised from the dead—to provide the only way for us to be rescued and restored to a relationship with God. (See John 3:16; Colossians 2:14; and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued. We must ask God to forgive us—turning from sin to trust in Jesus. This is what it means to repent and believe. Believing, we receive new life through Jesus. God turns our lives in a new direction. (See Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; and Romans 10:9.)



When God restores our relationship to Him, we begin to discover meaning and purpose in a broken world. Now we can pursue God's Design in all areas of our lives. God's Spirit empowers us to recover His Design and assures us of His presence in this life and for all of eternity. (See Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 2:10.)

Now that you have heard this Good News, God wants you to respond to Him. You can talk to Him using words like these: My life is broken—I recognize it's because of my sin. I believe Christ came to live, die, and was raised from the dead—to rescue me from my sin. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in You. I know that Jesus is Lord of all, and I will follow Him.

Excerpted from *Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel*.

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Life by Design	2
Writers	4
A Word From the General Editor	5
Two Ways to Use <i>QuickSource</i>	6
Introduction to 1,2 Peter; Jude	8
Outline of 1,2 Peter; Jude	10
10 Terrible Ways to Read Your Bible	64
Coming Next Quarter	66
Map: Pentecost and the Jewish Diaspora	67

SESSIONS

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF	Title	Page
Sept. 4	Session 1: A Living Hope* (1 Pet. 1:3-9)	11
Sept. 11	Session 2: Be Holy (1 Pet. 1:13-25)	15
Sept. 18	Session 3: Building Our Faith (1 Pet. 2:1-10)	19
Sept. 25	Session 4: Living as Strangers (1 Pet. 2:11-20)	23
Oct. 2	Session 5: Living in Relationship (1 Pet. 3:1-12)	27
Oct. 9	Session 6: Always Ready (1 Pet. 3:13-22)	31
Oct. 16	Session 7: Equipped to Live (1 Pet. 4:1-11)	35
Oct. 23	Session 8: When Ridiculed (1 Pet. 4:12-19)	39
Oct. 30	Session 9: Alert Living (1 Pet. 5:1-11)	43
Nov. 6	Session 10: Being Useful (2 Pet. 1:3-11)	47
Nov. 13	Session 11: With Trust (2 Pet. 1:12-21)	51
Nov. 20	Session 12: On Guard (2 Pet. 2:1-3; Jude 16-25)	55
Nov. 27	Session 13: With Anticipation (2 Pet. 3:3-13,17-18)	59

*Evangelistic Emphasis

» WRITERS

ALLEN ENGLAND wrote this quarter's Key Words and Dig Deeper elements. He serves as the executive pastor at Millington First Baptist, Millington, Tennessee. Allen is married to Jane, and together they have two grown sons, Wil and Luke. Previously, Allen has served in churches in Kentucky, Alabama, and Tennessee, and on the faculties of several colleges and seminaries.

KIMA JUDE wrote this quarter's Discussion Plans and Object Lessons. Kima is a writer and pastor's wife living in Dayton, Ohio. She works as a grant writer for the University of Cincinnati Foundation. Jude and her husband, Barry, helped plant New Day Church in 2009. Barry serves as lead pastor, and Kima serves as children's ministry leader. The couple has four children, all young adults, and one grandchild.

Explore the Bible: QuickSource (ISSN 1552-7204; Item 005075279) is published quarterly by LifeWay, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Thom S. Rainer, President. © 2016 LifeWay.

For ordering or inquiries visit www.LifeWay.com, or write LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For subscriptions or subscription address changes, email subscribe@lifeway.com, fax 615.251.5818, or write to the above address. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email orderentry@lifeway.com, fax 615.251.5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.LifeWay.com/doctrinalguideline.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers®. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

AMP—Scripture quotations taken from The Amplified® Bible. copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.lockman.org)

ESV—The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®) copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV® Text Edition: 2011. All rights reserved.

MSG—Scripture taken from The Message. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

NASB—Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

NIV—THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

NKJV—Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All Web sites in this resource were reviewed and verified on 14 March 2016.



QUICKSOURCE LEADER GUIDE

FALL 2016

VOLUME 3 • NUMBER 1

ERIC GEIGER

VICE PRESIDENT,
LIFEWAY RESOURCES

JEFF IORG

GENERAL EDITOR

DWAYNE MCCRARY

TEAM LEADER

KEN BRADY

MANAGER, ADULT ONGOING
BIBLE STUDIES

MICHAEL KELLEY

DIRECTOR, GROUPS MINISTRY

SEND QUESTIONS/COMMENTS TO:

CONTENT EDITOR

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:
QUICKSOURCE LEADER GUIDE
ONE LIFEWAY PLAZA
NASHVILLE, TN 37234-0175

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA

COVER: © Shutterstock.com

INSIDE PHOTOS: © iStock.com

A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



We all need an encouraging word from time to time. Life is tough. For some, life's circumstances have been crushing. We need to know God is present and will comfort those who have been afflicted.

The Books of 1 and 2 Peter were written by one of Jesus' closest friends. As one of the original twelve disciples, Peter witnessed the persecution, arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection of his Savior. In these letters, he wrote to believers who were facing severe persecution for their faith, drawing on his experience with Jesus to strengthen them.

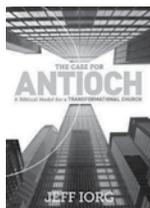
He encouraged them to see their trials as a way to increase their faith. We need the same message. Oppression is not the end. Because of the eternal hope we have in Christ, we can look beyond our current troubles and rest in God's power.

Jude's message is similar. This short letter was written to encourage believers to keep their hope strong. Though we may face heresy and harassment, the gospel is sufficient. The Word of God sustains our hearts and matures our faith through any trial we encounter from people or any spiritual power.

I pray that you'll discover similar encouragement as your group studies these biblical books. God intends for His people to thrive, no matter what life throws our way. This portion of God's Word will show you how.

With hope for your future,

Jeff Iorg



Dr. Jeff Iorg is the president of Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. He has authored numerous books, including The Case for Antioch, Seasons of a Leader's Life, Unscripted, and his latest, Ministry in the New Marriage Culture. Dr. Iorg maintains a leadership resources website at www.JeffIorg.com.



TWO WAYS TO USE QUICKSOURCE

➤ AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE LEADER GUIDE

1. After completing your study using the commentary provided in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, consult the Exploring Key Words section and the Talking Points page for additional insight or as a review.
2. After creating your initial plans for guiding the group time using the suggestions included in the Leader Guide, supplement and refine your plan using the ideas found in *QuickSource*. You will also want to consult the Explore the Bible blog (LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible) or Explore the Bible MinistryGrid page (MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible) for additional ideas.

➤ AS YOUR PRIMARY RESOURCE FOR PREPARING TO LEAD A SMALL BIBLE STUDY GROUP

1. Read and study the core passage.

Use Exploring Key Words on the first page of the session content to gain an understanding of the passage. Consult a study Bible like the HCSB Study Bible (also available online at myWSB.com) and a Bible commentary like the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* (available at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible in both print and digital formats) to gain additional insight into the passage.

2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page 2 of each session).

Record ideas and insights gleaned from your personal study time. Note: You may want to make a photocopy of the Talking Points page so you can use *QuickSource* again in the future.

3. Review the questions on the Discussion Plan page (page 3 of each session).

Identify the questions you believe would work best with the group you are leading. Reword the selected questions to reflect your personality and the personality of the group. Record the reworded questions on the Talking Points page (or the photocopy you made of the page) next to the point related to the question. Remember to arrange the questions so that you are leading the group to a conclusion or action.

4. Consider ways of using the Object Lesson idea (page 4 of each session).

Brainstorm other ideas sparked by the object lesson suggestion.

5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page 4 of each session).

Add insights gained from this page to the Talking Points page.

6. Use the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG).

Scan a copy of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG), looking for additional questions and the Bible skill feature. Consider ways of incorporating the Bible skill into the session, recording your ideas on the Talking Points page. Record additional questions from the PSG on the Talking Points page as well.

7. Review and refine.

Consult the Explore the Bible blog (Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras) or Explore the Bible Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/Web/ExploreTheBible) for additional ideas.

8. Arrive early.

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study.

Carry the Talking Points page into the class, using this page as your guide for leading the group.



INTRODUCTION TO 1,2 PETER; JUDE

Imagine two long-term pastors who have recently retired: “Pastor Peter” and “Pastor Jude.” Pastor Peter has learned that close Christian friends are enduring unfair suffering and persecution. He determines to write them a letter of encouragement and outlines his thoughts to his trusted associate, “Secretary Silas.” He asks Silas to help him organize and shape the content so that the letter is in the best form possible. Silas does so, and Peter sends the letter. It is destined to be recognized as a classic, both in its careful content and its brilliant style.

Meanwhile, Pastor Jude has learned that some of his Christian friends are dealing with false teachers in their congregation. This news upsets Jude, and he dashes off a brief note to his friends, warning them against the danger they are up against. Jude doesn’t have a Silas to help him, so his letter is a bit rough around the edges as a composition, yet it is still recognized as valuable advice.

Shortly after sending out his first letter, Pastor Peter gets more news: false teachers are also deceiving his friends. In their error, they even deny that Christ will someday return in power and glory. Peter determines to write another letter, but Silas is no longer available to help him, so he writes in his own homegrown style. He confers with his friend, Pastor Jude—or perhaps reads Jude’s letter—and writes his own warning letter, incorporating some of Jude’s thinking. His second letter lacks the excellent style of his first letter. The epistle, however, makes its way into the treasury of letters preserved and read by generations of Christians.

The scenario above is our best educated guess about how the epistles we are studying for the next three months first came to us. We are quite limited in developing this scenario, because we must base our surmises on the information we glean from the letters themselves. There is nothing in the Book of Acts or other New Testament letters to help us be more certain about how these letters originated. They are, nevertheless, not just ancient letters. They are God’s inspired Word to us, and all three letters have been included in the canon of Scripture from the first time that Christians put in writing the list of books considered to be the authoritative, inspired Word of God to followers of Jesus.

»» 1,2 PETER

Writer—The author of both letters named himself as “Peter” and as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” That is all we need to know to identify him as Simon the Galilean fisherman—whom Jesus renamed “Peter” (Greek for “rock”)—introduced in the four Gospels. He was one of the Twelve whom Jesus designated as His official representatives. In the Gospels, Peter famously confessed Jesus as the Messiah, Son of the living God; he is equally infamous for denying Jesus (Matt. 16:16; 26:74). The first part of the Book of Acts reveals Peter as a prominent leader of the fledgling Christian movement. Peter is absent from the latter part of Acts, but later emerged as the author of two letters. According to Christian tradition, Peter was a major source used by Mark in the composition of the Second Gospel. Also according to tradition, he was martyred in Rome during Nero’s reign.

Dates—The best clue for the date of 1 Peter is the persecution mentioned in the letter. The decade of the A.D. 60s is likely. On one hand, Christianity had spread to the areas Peter noted

in his greeting. On the other hand, the persecution he described (“fiery trial,” 1 Pet. 4:12) suggests organized, perhaps even government-sponsored, oppression. When he wrote his second letter, Peter was expecting to die soon (2 Pet. 1:14). He likely died during the years that Nero was actively persecuting Christians (from A.D. 64, the fire of Rome, till Nero’s death in A.D. 68).

Occasions—Somehow, Peter had learned about the suffering of believers in five Roman provinces (these make up the northern part of modern Turkey). They needed encouragement not to lose heart. So Silvanus crafted an epistle filled with important doctrinal truths as well as teaching about suffering within God’s plan. The situation that prompted Peter’s second letter was different, although the recipients were probably the same (see his reference to “the second letter,” 2 Pet. 3:1). Having learned of the threat of false teachers, he wrote a warning, without Silas’s help, about holding onto the truth of the second coming of Christ.

Key Themes—In 1 Peter, the major themes are: hope (confidence in God’s future plan), suffering (a privilege), holiness (becoming Christ-like in character), and humility (relating to others according to Jesus’ example). In 2 Peter, the major themes are: election (God’s sovereignty in salvation), false teachers (who threaten God’s people), and Christ’s return (in which believers may be confident).

» JUDE

Writer—The man Jude is quite obscure to us. (His name in Greek, “Judas,” is the equivalent of the Hebrew “Judah.”) He called himself a “servant of Christ” and “brother of James.” Bible students have deduced that he was actually Jesus’ younger half-brother, and James—author of the Epistle of James—was his sibling. Both of these men became followers of Jesus only after the resurrection. Nothing is certain about Jude’s ministry except that he composed this letter.

Date—The letter provides almost no clues for its date of composition. In fact, whether Jude’s letter was an inspiration and source for 2 Peter or whether 2 Peter was a source for Jude has been debated. Thus, the book has been dated anywhere from the A.D. 60s to the A.D. 80s. What is clear is that there is a notably close connection between the content of Jude and the second chapter of 2 Peter. There is an obvious overlap in the content of these verses.

Occasion—Jude said that he was going to write on one subject, but he changed his mind when he learned about dangerous false teachers who had infiltrated the people to whom he wrote (location unknown). In error, they were teaching that God’s grace entitles believers to live however they want morally, without reference to God’s commands. Jude wrote to warn against this erroneous teaching, attacking falsehood and encouraging believers to stay true to the faith.

Key Themes—Two major themes in the book of Jude are contending for the faith and identifying and rejecting what is ungodly. These themes are complementary. To do one well, it is necessary to do the other.

OUTLINE OF 1,2 PETER; JUDE

1 Peter

- I. Finding Identity in Jesus (1:1–2:10)
- II. Living as Foreigners (2:11–4:11)
- III. Thriving in Persecution (4:12–5:14)

2 Peter

- I. Experiencing Grace (1:1-11)
- II. Trusted Eyewitness (1:12-21)
- III. Exposing False Teachers (2:1-22)
- IV. Expecting Jesus' Return (3:1-18)

Jude

- I. Contending for the Faith (1-25)

SESSION 1

A LIVING HOPE

1 PETER 1:3-9

³ Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great **mercy**,^a He has given **us**^b a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ⁴ and into an **inheritance**^c that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. ⁵ You are being **protected by God's power**^d through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶ You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in **various trials**^e ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than **gold**,^f which perishes though **refined by fire**^g—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious **joy**,^h

⁹ because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** The mercy of God brings new life and is always available to those who “approach the throne of grace with boldness” (Heb. 4:16).
- b** The Epistle of 1 Peter was written to Gentile Christians who lived in Asia Minor and faced persecution because of their commitment to Jesus Christ.
- c** In the New Testament, *inheritance* refers to eternal life (Matt. 5:5; 19:29) in the kingdom of God (Jas. 2:5) through saving faith in Christ (also see Heb. 9:16-17).
- d** “Shielded by God’s power” (NIV); “kept by the power of God” (NKJV); “God is keeping careful watch over us and the future” (MSG).
- e** Peter acknowledged the hardships that his readers were enduring and encouraged them to rejoice in their sufferings because of the rewards of these trials.
- f** Peter compared the believers’ trials to refining gold; they would renew the genuineness of their faith and their adversities would result in their praise, honor, and glory in Jesus’ revelation.
- g** Meaning to reduce to a pure state; this image is often used figuratively of moral cleansing (Zech. 13:7-9; Rev. 3:18).
- h** Joy is the result of a right relationship with God, found in living a Spirit-led life (Gal. 5:22). It enables believers to rejoice in family (Prov. 5:18) and fellowship with others (Phil. 4:1). Adversely, self-indulgent pleasure-seeking does not lead to happiness and fulfillment. In fact, sin robs a person of joy (Ps. 51:8,12).

»» HOPE DISCOVERED (1 Peter 1:3-4)

- After a brief introduction to his first letter, Peter described salvation in terms of a living hope found through faith in Jesus.
- Note: Emphasize that God took the initiative in salvation (elect/chosen) while allowing for human choice (obedience).

»» HOPE ASSURED (1 Peter 1:5)

- Peter reminded his readers that salvation is secure for the believer through God's power.
- Note: Emphasize that salvation is dependent upon God and not the level of our faith.

»» HOPE CELEBRATED (1 Peter 1:6-9)

- Peter recognized that rejoicing during persecution comes by focusing on the hope of salvation and the value of a proven faith.
- Note: Interpret “various trials” in terms of the persecution that Peter's audience faced.

»» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Jesus offers a living hope to all who place their trust in Him.
- The promise of a secure salvation gives believers a reason to rejoice even when facing difficulties.
- In Christ, we discover a clear picture of God's grace and salvation.



FOCUS ATTENTION

Consider the term “false hope.” Some people argue that there is no such thing as false hope because hope simply is. Others argue that hope must have a basis. Which makes you more comfortable, the idea of being optimistic no matter what or the knowledge that there is a reason for your positive expectations?

- Maintaining a positive outlook, regardless of your circumstances, is important to surviving a difficult challenge. Yet powerful hope is not merely wishful thinking, nor is it dependent upon controlling one’s own attitude.
- Our hope rests on Jesus Christ. We hope because we have a basis and a reason. Our hope has a foundation.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 1:3-4

Peter described salvation as a living hope, born through the Person of Jesus Christ. How would you describe living hope to another person?

- All living things exist for a purpose, grow, and affect others. Living hope brings trust in eternal life as well as strength for the day. A living hope affects not just the person who possesses it but also those with whom he or she comes in contact. Hope, like life, is not insular but contagious.
- Life is the opposite of death. By accepting God’s invitation to life through Jesus Christ, instigated by His great mercy and love for us, we share in the resurrection.

Underline the words in this passage that describe what we will inherit through salvation in Jesus Christ. How do these words incite hope?

- The thought of an inheritance that does not perish, cannot be corrupted, and stays forever young naturally fills us with hope. We cannot attain this through our own power, but we can through Jesus Christ.
- On earth, where man must keep an appointment with death and everything is tainted by sin, we must cling to the thought of eternal life.

1 PETER 1:5

Why is it reassuring to know that salvation rests upon God’s power and the strength of our faith?

- As Peter so devastatingly illustrated when he denied Christ, even strong believers may experience moments of doubt. Others realize they are weak in faith (see Mark 9:24).
- God not only instigated the process of salvation, He protects us at every step along the way. Like a parent keeping watch over a newborn babe, God protects and nurtures our faith to maturity and, ultimately, salvation.

1 PETER 1:6-9

According to this passage, rejoicing is the appropriate response to trials or persecution. When you see someone focus on their salvation rather than their circumstances, how does that affect you?

- When we witness hope and a joyful attitude in others, it compels us to question the source of their hope. Hope is about focus. When we focus on a secure salvation, we can rise above our circumstances and look forward with joy to the inheritance to come.
- Genuine faith is tested by circumstances and revealed in hope. As we learn that we are utterly dependent on Jesus Christ for salvation, our hope grows.

The salvation of our souls is the culmination of our hope. If someone asked you how you know it is not merely false hope, what would you say?

- Christ transforms the lives of His followers. Once touched by God, we become different people in thought, attitudes, and actions, and we can testify to that change.
- The effects of God in our life may take the form of answered prayers, encouragement from others, and even miracles. Our hope is not without basis but is alive and lively.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

Would you describe your faith as a living hope? Does it have purpose? Is it growing? Is it dynamic and breathing? Does it affect others? Explain.

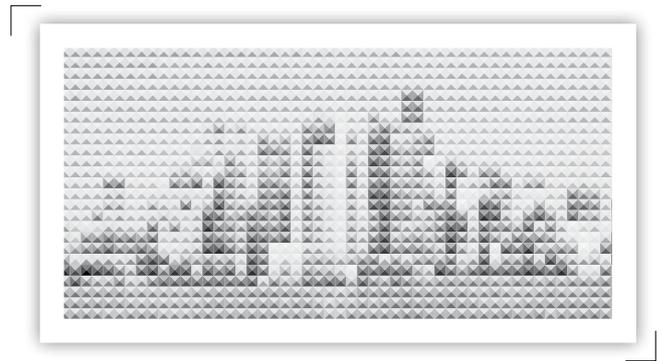
- If hope is about focus, then focusing on the right things can help your faith to grow. Spending time reflecting on the salvation of our souls is an expression of faith and hope. Reading God’s Word regularly will encourage your faith.
- **Personal Challenge:** What can you do to focus on the goal of salvation rather than fleeting and temporary circumstances? (1) Identify the circumstances that challenge your faith and threaten your focus. (2) Then turn your focus on Jesus, the living hope, and answer these questions: Does Jesus have the power to change, transform, or deliver you from these circumstances? When have you seen Him do this in the past? Will He be with you as you cope with whatever happens? Will your present circumstances change your final destiny and eternal life?

PIXELATED PHOTOGRAPHS

Use an Internet search engine to find a series of pixelated pictures that show the image as it moves from blurry to focused. Choose compelling images that evoke awe, joy, uncertainty, or curiosity—a historical landmark, an iconic piece of art, or amazing scenery. Make sure the first picture is almost abstract and unrecognizable. Print each picture on a separate sheet of paper.

Show the group the image that is the most pixelated, and invite them to guess what it is. After speculation, suggest that while the image is fuzzy and out of focus it's nevertheless a pleasing visual image. Move on to each image. If the group clues into the image, complete the picture by showing them the final version. Point to some of the fine details visible in the final version, drawing attention to color and lines.

Ask the group which picture their current understanding of salvation most resembles. *Is it sharp and focused or still blurry?* Explain: *Hope is the camera that produces our image of salvation. Our understanding of salvation and eternity will eventually materialize into rich details, strong lines, and vivid colors. Meanwhile, hope*



gives us a version that we can draw comfort from and delight in.

Point out that if someone does not have a picture of eternity, turning to Jesus Christ will bring clarity. His life was an illustration of the gospel and the perfect picture of God.

End by encouraging the group to stay focused on the salvation of our souls, and the Person through whom that will come: Jesus Christ.

DIG DEEPER

SALUTATIONS!

Peter began his epistles with a salutation that identified the readers as strangers in this world and yet "chosen" and "set apart" for the work of the Father, Spirit and Christ! (1 Pet. 1:1-2). It's easy to read over the salutation in an epistle; we may rationalize that we need to quickly move on to the meat of the passage. However, in so doing we miss the tone and the introduction for what follows. Remember, the salutation is God's Word as well!

In Peter's salutation we find that the rest of the epistle is predicated on the truth given in the first two verses: The reason we Christians don't feel at home in this world is because we are truly strangers here and because the entire Trinity has saved us! God's people have always been outsiders. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

Consider how the author of Hebrews describes the status of a faithful believer in this world: "These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. Now those who say such things make it

clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return" (Heb. 11:13-15). Paul summed it up by reminding us that "but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20).

The reality is that if we start to feel at home on this earth, then we are not as close to God as He wants us to be. The old hymn "Only Trust Him" by John H. Stockton (1813-1877) reminds us:

Come, ev'ry soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His word.
Only trust Him, only trust Him,
only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now.

SESSION 2

BE HOLY

1 PETER 1:13-25

¹³ Therefore, **with your minds ready for action**,^a be serious and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As **obedient children**,^b do not be conformed to **the desires of your former ignorance**.^c ¹⁵ But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct; ¹⁶ for it is written, **Be holy, because I am holy**.^d ¹⁷ And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one's work, you are to conduct yourselves in **fear**^e during the time of your temporary residence. ¹⁸ For you know that you were redeemed from your **empty way of life**^f inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, **like that of a lamb without defect or blemish**.^g ²⁰ He was chosen before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the times for you ²¹ 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**.^h ²² By obedience to the truth, having purified yourselves for sincere love of the brothers, love one another **earnestly**ⁱ from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached as the gospel to you.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

a Literally, they were called to “gird up the loins of your minds.” The image of “girding up the loins” means to tuck in one’s long flowing garments to run or do serious work (1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 4:29; 9:1; also see Jer. 1:17; Nah. 2:1; Luke 12:35).

b Peter first tells Christians they are “set apart by the Spirit for obedience” (1 Pet 1:2), and now he instructs them to be obedient by taking the Christian life seriously.

c “Former ignorance” could be described as *without knowledge of God*. This suggests that the recipients of this letter were mostly Gentiles who, before coming to Christ, practiced pagan religions.

d God is the standard for Christians’ lives and the way in which they relate to Him (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). Being made holy is a work of the Holy Spirit on the basis of Christ’s atonement that calls for Christians’ obedient submission.

e Paying respect to, being faithful and obedient to, or honoring God (Neh. 1:5; Ecc. 12:13). Paul admonished believers to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

f Referring to their former pagan life; Peter later made references to their preconversion sins of idolatry (1 Pet. 4:3).

g The Jews used a lamb as a sacrifice for the Passover Feast to celebrate Israel’s escape from Egyptian bondage (see Ex. 13:1-10; Lev. 22:19-25). Isaiah identified the Suffering Servant in terms of the sacrificial lamb (Isa. 53). John declared that Jesus was the true sacrificial lamb (John 1:29).

h Christ’s redemption came to us at a high price.

i “deeply” (NIV); “fervently” (NKJV); “as if your lives depended on it” (MSG)

»» OBEDIENT (1 Peter 1:13-16)

- Peter instructed his readers to obey God’s commands, reflecting God’s holiness as His children.
- Note: Explain that humans are not capable of perfection but are to strive to live a holy life.

»» REVERENT (1 Peter 1:17-21)

- Peter instructed his readers to live out of reverence for God’s position as Judge and in response to the cost of salvation (Jesus’ death).
- Note: Emphasize that all people are held accountable to God: the unbeliever for his or her rejection of Jesus and the believer for how he or she lived for Him.

»» COMPASSIONATE (1 Peter 1:22-25)

- Peter instructed his readers to demonstrate pure love as result of their salvation, having been born again through God’s enduring Word.
- Note: Interpret “obedience to the truth” (v. 22) as referring to faith and as the step we take for purification/salvation.
- When we trust Christ, we are both cleansed and born again. Avoid any implication that salvation is earned by our work.
- Emphasize that the pure heart is a result of trusting in God’s enduring Word, the gospel.

»» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Believers are to live in a holy manner because God is holy.
- Believers are accountable to God for how they conduct their life.
- The Christian life is motivated by a pure love based upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.



FOCUS ATTENTION

When you hear the word *holiness*, what images come to your mind?

- Becoming holy does not happen by accident or in a vacuum but in a reverent relationship with God the Father.
- Obedience to God results in a life of purity—the absence of sin.
- Holiness cannot be contained. Holiness will either ooze from our life onto others or be poured out onto them in love.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 1:13-16

Should personal holiness matter as long as we are not hurting someone else? Explain.

- God set the standard. We can be deceived into thinking that our particular brand of morality is acceptable, but ultimately He will be the judge.
- All sin—acknowledged or unacknowledged, private or public—is a heavy burden to carry. Attempting to be holy relieves us of some of that burden.

Why may old habits become potential barriers to holiness?

- The desires of our lives before receiving Christ may be deeply entrenched. We renew our minds by measuring old habits, attitudes, and philosophies against God's standards.
- Holiness must be cultivated. Unless we seek to follow Christ and be obedient to God we will not grow more like Him.

How should we respond to Peter's admonition to be holy like God is holy?

- Peter's instruction should not be viewed as a suggestion but as a command.
- While God's standard of holiness can never be attained—our righteousness is like filthy rags compared to God's (see Isa. 64:6)—we strive to grow closer.

When you consider holiness, what does that include?

- Holiness extends to our bodies, but it starts with our minds. Setting our minds on Jesus Christ automatically means some thoughts, philosophies, and ideas must be eradicated because they cannot co-exist.
- Conduct encompasses both our conversations and our actions. While it's possible that an outwardly righteous person actually harbors impure thoughts, experience tells us such a façade can't be managed for long. Inevitably, we act out what we think about.

1 PETER 1:17-21

Why does an eternal perspective help you to live a more holy life on earth?

- God will eventually judge the living and the dead. He will separate those who received Christ from those who rejected

Him, condemning those outside of Christ and rewarding those who are in Him.

- God did not choose temporal things, even those we consider valuable—such as gold and silver—to redeem us. He chose His holy and perfect Son to die in our place.

1 PETER 1:22-25

What does the purification process for believers encompass?

- It begins with salvation through Jesus Christ. When we accept Christ as Savior, "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).
- As we are born again, we experience the newness and purity of having our past sins washed away, but we also invest in becoming holy people who have experienced God's forgiveness.
- As we become obedient to God's Word we become more like Him.

What is the connection between a pure heart and sincere love?

- The quality of our heart determines the quality of our love for others. What's in our hearts always comes out. An impure heart will affect our ability to feel and exercise compassion and love.
- God is love. How we love others matters to Him and indicates how genuine our faith is and how deeply committed we are to His ways.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

Knowing that God is holy and demands holiness of His children, what can you do to cultivate holiness?

- Make a clean break with your past. If you're holding on to old habits, old thought patterns, or even old friends that affect you negatively, let them go.
- Stay in God's Word. It provides instructions for living and promises that serve as daily reminders that holiness will eventually be rewarded.

How would you rank the quality of your relationships with others?

- Love and compassion are holy earmarks of a relationship that pleases God.
- Pure love is devoid of resentment, jealousy, bitterness, etc.
- **Personal Challenge:** Have you made holiness an objective for your life? Conduct an inventory of your daily routines and relationships. Do you need self-imposed rules or safeguards to restore these areas? Pray and ask God to examine your life for impurities and to forgive and cleanse you for a new day.

OBJECT LESSON

CONTAINERS OF WATER

Gather bottles of purified water, spring water, and a glass of tap water before the session. Show each, one at a time, to the group and encourage them to discuss their preferences.

Note that while we probably all desire to drink water that is the healthiest, there are many opinions about what is best. For example, someone who works for the water department might prefer tap water because of added chemicals, such as fluoride. Others will drink only spring water because they want it to be as natural as possible.

Ask: *Why does water choice matter?* Point out that the goal for everyone is comparable: *We want water that tastes good and is good for us.* Note that our desire for holiness should be much the same. *As Christians, we should desire to be pure in a way that fits with God's standards of holiness. Just as people argue over the quality of water, people sometimes struggle with their understanding of what constitutes morality.*

Say: *The Bible has clearly defined "holiness" for us.* Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Peter 1:24-25. Point out that immersing ourselves in Scripture helps purify us because God's standard of purity



is delineated through its pages; the very act of reading His Word will cleanse our minds and give us insight into the holiness of God.

Point out that by nature human beings do not have the capacity for holiness outside of Christ. Discuss some of the ways we knowingly and inadvertently sully ourselves. Pray for the group to desire holiness and to make it a goal for their personal lives and your church.

DIG DEEPER

AGGRESSIVE OBEDIENCE

"Be holy because I am holy" (Lev. 11:44). Peter emphasized that believers were to be holy just like God; a huge benchmark indeed. Christians do not define obedience; it is measured by the holiness of God. Peter stipulated to his readers that holy living requires appropriate reverence for God and appreciation of the extreme cost of redemption.

The demand for this type of obedience was not a new concept for those who followed the Lord. In fact, God instructed Moses "This way you will remember and obey all My commands and be holy to your God" (Num. 15:40). Jesus said, "Even more, those who hear the word of God and keep it are blessed!" (Luke 11:28), and "You are My friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). The charge for obedience is clear and the standard of God's holiness is undeniable.

Peter instructed Christians to be aggressively obedient and highlighted the ultimate example of holy obedience in the redemptive sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. "We have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). The selflessness of Jesus "who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as

something to be used for His own advantage" but "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross" (Phil 2:6,8).

Christ's example of being holy and obedient was exactly what Peter had in mind when he wrote, "Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be serious and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). Peter concluded that Christ has rescued us, and our only proper response is to be completely devoted to Him and to "love one another earnestly from a pure heart" (1 Pet. 1:22).

Aggressive obedience is this: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

BUILDING OUR FAITH

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible.

1 PETER 2:1-10

¹ So rid yourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, desire the pure **spiritual milk**,^a so that you may grow by it for your salvation, ³ since you have **tasted that the Lord is good**.^b

⁴ Coming to Him, a living stone—rejected by men but chosen and valuable to God— ⁵ you yourselves, **as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house**^c for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it is contained in Scripture: Look! I lay a stone in **Zion**,^d a **chosen**^e and honored **cornerstone**,^f and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame!

⁷ So honor will come to you who believe, but for the unbelieving, The stone that the builders rejected—this One has become the cornerstone,^g and A stone to stumble over, and a **rock to trip over**.^h They stumble because they disobey the message; they were destined for this.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. ¹⁰ **Once you were not a people**,ⁱ but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** Spiritual nourishment from the gospel; compare this verse to 1 Corinthians 3:2; 9:7 and Hebrews 5:12-13, where the term is used to illustrate a Christian's immaturity with the gospel. Interestingly, all uses of this metaphor indicate nourishment.
- b** Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!"
- c** Peter described the church as a living body that gives sacrificial service to God. Ultimately, Christ is using His followers to build a new temple in and through each of their lives.
- d** While Zion in Scripture also refers to David's conquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6-10; 1 Chron. 11:4-9) or the temple Solomon built (Pss. 2:6; 132:13), here the word references the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God that is to come.
- e** The unity of all believers; through Christ, all races become unified.
- f** Literally the "head of the corner," it symbolizes the strength and prominence of a building or ruler. Jesus Christ is the only sure foundation of our faith (Matt. 21:4; Eph. 2:20).
- g** Here Peter portrayed Christ as a rock that causes unbelievers to fall (also see Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:33). In 1 Corinthians, Paul identified Christ as the "spiritual rock that followed" the Israelites in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:4).
- h** Through Christ's redemption, God has fashioned special recipients of His mercy from those who previously never belonged to anyone.

NOTES

» SPIRITUAL MILK (1 Peter 2:1-3)

- Peter called for believers to abandon their old way of life and to pursue spiritual truth with the goal of moving toward maturity.
- Note: Interpret “grow by it for our salvation” in terms of future glorification for the believer.

» SPIRITUAL HOUSE (1 Peter 2:4-8)

- Peter referred to his readers as living stones, as being built into a new kind of spiritual house, and as members of a priesthood.
- These traits point to a community committed to serving and pleasing God.

» SPIRITUAL PEOPLE (1 Peter 2:9-10)

- Peter reminded his readers that believers are united by a common Savior and a common cause: declaring what God has done for them.

» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- We are to crave the spiritual food that leads to maturity.
- As members of God’s family, believers are to serve God in a way that pleases Him.
- Believers are to declare to others what God has done and is doing.



FOCUS ATTENTION

What do you consider to be the essentials for physical strength and health?

- The basics include food and water, but health is often influenced by the quality of each—along with other factors, such as exercise and stress level.
- Likewise, spiritual growth requires careful attention if we are to develop to full strength. Only as fully developed followers of Christ will we bring Christ all the glory He has purposed for us.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 2:1-3

If you've ever focused on healthier eating and exercise, why was it important? How does it compare to maintaining our spiritual health?

- By optimizing our health we also maximize our opportunities for living a long life with the physical ability to do everything God calls us to do.
- When we work hard at staying in shape spiritually, we also optimize our opportunities for a long ministry of fulfilling God's call on our lives.

Why should we desire a spiritual diet of pure milk? How will malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander contaminate pure spiritual milk?

- Pure spiritual milk helps us develop from newborns in Christ to strong followers.
- Before coming to Christ we undoubtedly absorbed sinful attitudes and actions from the world—and regurgitated it in turn. These attitudes and behaviors contaminate our relationship with God and others.

How can we recognize pure spiritual milk? What is it and where do we find it?

- Spiritual milk can be defined as spiritual truth and is contained in the Word of God and confirmed through His Spirit.
- We recognize spiritual truth for what it is because we have already tasted and seen "that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8).
- Spiritual truth resonates with a believer who has the Holy Spirit as a teacher.
- Developing a desire for godliness requires self-discipline. Not only must we rid ourselves of worldly contaminants and influence, but we must actively replace them with godly habits and practices that help us absorb God's truths. Otherwise, we will be tempted to fill that void with ungodly things.

1 PETER 2:4-8

In this passage Peter painted a vivid picture of living stones fashioned into a spiritual house. What do you understand that house to be and what is its function?

- Christ was the cornerstone who came and began the process of building a community of believers. We typically refer to this community as the church.
- The church represents the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to the world and proclaims Christ. As such, the church is a valuable and integral part of God's plan of redemption.

As we look at how Christ was received, how is the church viewed by the world? By God?

- The world rejected Christ and will always look skeptically at His church and persecute it.
- Yet the church can rest in the knowledge that God has honor in store for followers of His Son.

How did Jesus represent a stone both to believers and unbelievers?

- For believers, He is the cornerstone, the foundation for our salvation, and the One on whom we can build our community.
- For unbelievers, that stone becomes a stumbling block. Their rejection of Him will eventually prevent them from entering eternal life.

1 PETER 2:9-10

Underline the descriptions Peter used to describe God's church. How does each describe the nature of our relationship with God?

- *A chosen race:* God hand-selected us for the task.
- *A royal priesthood:* We will share in Jesus' inheritance.
- *A holy nation:* Purity and strength define us.
- *A people for His possession:* God desires to dwell with His people forever.

In return, God has expectations for His people. What does He expect of us?

- God expects us to praise Him for pulling us out of darkness into His marvelous light.
- We are to document and share the mercy He has extended to us.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What can the church do to live up to our calling?

- We must allow it to embolden, reassure, and fill us with resolve to live out our purpose. It is our privilege to share Christ with the lost and to build up other believers.
- **Personal Challenge:** Being called out of darkness into His wonderful light is an amazing and fascinating visual picture. Write your testimony by outlining the darkness that surrounded you before salvation and the change that took place in you through receiving Christ. Plan a way to share your testimony with a friend or family member.

OBJECT LESSON

A BAG OF GROCERIES

Bring in a shopping bag of groceries. Include some items carefully selected for their value in healthy eating, like fruits, vegetables, milk, and eggs. Also include junk foods, like potato chips, candy bars, and soda.

Unpack the groceries in front of the group. Invite a volunteer to separate the items into two piles: one nutritious and one strictly for appetite. Note that the nutritious foods items are important sources of physical health. Point out that a steady diet of the junk foods will likely have a negative impact on health with the potential to cause obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

Say: Each and every day you must decide how to nourish your body. Will you choose what's good for you, or will you choose to eat less than the best? It is the same with spiritual holiness. On a daily basis, Christians must decide to pursue godly ways while remaining vigilant about not consuming sinful attitudes and behaviors.

Point out that the science of healthy nutrition has become increasingly sophisticated—and confusing. According to new



studies, foods previously avoided because of cholesterol are now deemed healthy by nutritionists.

Explain: Likewise, the world offers a lot of advice on what constitutes spiritual health and purity. If the church followed worldly recommendations we would fall far short of God's expectations. Instead, we must consult God's Word as the reference book and develop an appetite for His ways.

DIG DEEPER

JESUS IS THE CORNERSTONE!

Peter used the metaphor of Christ as the cornerstone to present the unquestionable truth that everyone must make a decision about the identify of Christ. Peter says that for those who have accepted Christ this truth is wonderful: "So honor will come to you who believe" (1 Pet. 2:7). But to those who reject this truth, Jesus is "a stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over" (1 Pet. 2:8).

The metaphor of Christ as the cornerstone is nothing new is Scripture, and the people of the day would have easily understood what Peter was communicating. In biblical times, the cornerstone was the stone laid at the corner to fasten two walls together and to strengthen them. It is an image of power and distinction—and that's exactly why Peter, et al, used it to illustrate Christ as the only sure foundation for redemption.

The psalmist prophesying of Christ wrote, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Ps. 118:22). This Cornerstone—Christ—uses His people as living stones who themselves have been "rejected by men but chosen and valuable to God" (1 Pet. 2:4) to build them "into a spiritual house" (v. 5).

The apostle Paul put it this way, "When the Messiah came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ... So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:17,19-20). What a wonderful picture of the glorious truth that Jesus is the Christ; we all must face that truth and if we accept Him as Christ He has big plans for us!

*"Trusting as the moments fly,
Trusting as the days go by;
Trusting Him whate'er befall,
Trusting Jesus, that is all."¹*

1. Edgar Page Stites, "Trusting Jesus"

LIVING AS STRANGERS

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible.

1 PETER 2:11-20

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as **strangers and temporary residents**^a to **abstain from fleshly desires that war against you**.^b ¹² Conduct yourselves **honorably among the Gentiles**,^c so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on **the day of visitation**.^d ¹³ **Submit to every human authority because of the Lord**,^e whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority¹⁴ or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that you silence the **ignorance**^f of **foolish people**^g by doing good. ¹⁶ As God's slaves, live as free people, but don't use your freedom as a way to conceal evil. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.

¹⁸ **Household slaves**,^h submit with all **fear**ⁱ to your masters, not only to the good and gentle but also to the **cruel**.^j ¹⁹ For it brings favor if, mindful of God's will, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** See 1 Peter 1:1. Christians were foreign to their pagan environment and were not adjusted to it.
- b** When Christians yield to sinful desires, they wage battles within themselves.
- c** Unbelievers are drawn to Christ through the self-discipline and obedience of Christians.
- d** This refers to the day when God intervenes in human history with either grace for His followers or perfect judgment for those who have denied Him.
- e** "Make the Master proud of you by being good citizens" (MSG). "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (ESV).
- f** A lack of knowledge or comprehension. Obedience characterizes the lives of believers just as ignorant desires characterize those who don't believe in Christ (also see Isa. 53:3; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 3:1).
- g** Refers to the Gentiles who were mentioned in verse 12.
- h** Likely from Peter's use of the word "slave" here, many of the first Christians were in a position of service or bondage.
- i** Treating someone or something with significance, relevance, or worthy of attention
- j** Literally crooked or unscrupulous

NOTES

»» IN CULTURE (1 Peter 2:11-12)

- Peter reminded his readers that they were like foreigners living in a strange land and that they were to live above board, carrying positive reputations.
- Note: Be aware that the Christian's status in this world as a stranger and temporary resident serves as the backdrop for this session.

»» TOWARD OFFICIALS AND LEADERS (1 Peter 2:13-17)

- Peter instructed his readers to submit to governmental authority, being model citizens so they would be praised and not punished.
- Note: Be careful to avoid inferring that government law takes precedence over God's law. Be sensitive to people who may live under a government that represses Christianity.

»» THROUGH YOUR WORK (1 Peter 2:18-20)

- Peter called for slaves to submit with respect to their masters by always doing what is good and by patiently enduring any suffering caused by their godly behavior.
- Note: Indicate today's work situations are not precisely parallel to first-century slaves, nor was first-century slavery parallel to modern slavery. Emphasize that showing respect for others today does not mean we must accept their abuse. Affirm showing respect without allowing others to abuse us.

»» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Believers are to be exemplary members of their community, having a positive influence.
- Believers demonstrate trust in God by respecting their local government leaders.
- Even when abused, believers can demonstrate God's character to those who abuse them.



FOCUS ATTENTION

Describe a time when you felt conflicting emotions about an important event (such as a big game, speaking publicly, displaying your artwork or research)?

- We often face situations where we have mixed emotions. The most important situation, however, is the balancing act of Christians being of the world but not in the world—that may both thrill and intimidate us.
- Believers have responsibilities to the world they live in and the world to come that they will inhabit. Knowing how to live in the world effectively as a Christian requires wisdom, courage, and a healthy sense of balance.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 2:11-12

Peter used words like “strangers and temporary residents” to illustrate a Christian’s earthly existence (v. 11). What do those terms imply to you?

- Once we become followers of Christ, He transforms us in a way that makes us strangers to the world and aliens among people who think differently than we do.
- Christians have a destination beyond their earthly existence. While believers do not take up permanent residence in the world, they do leave a mark on it.

Why would succumbing to fleshly desires in all their forms be such a threat to a believer?

- Becoming too much like the world threatens one’s credibility as a Christian. Christianity is a markedly different lifestyle, one with high moral standards and saturated by a love that draws unbelievers to Christ, like moths to a flame.
- Christians must not deviate from their mission on earth, which is to glorify God. Indulging in worldly pleasures not only distracts us from our mission, but it also distracts others from seeing Christ in us.

In a world full of do-gooders, how do Christians’ good works point to the glory of God? What distinguishes Christians’ good works from others’?

- Christians must be careful not to confuse their good works with the good works the world produces. They must make careful decisions about how to spend their time and resources to benefit others. Not all good works are created equal.
- Christians who back up their good works with good words glorify God in truth and in deed.
- Letting others know why we work for the good of others as servants of Christ glorifies God.

1 PETER 2:13-17

How does being a law-abiding citizen following man-made rules reflect positively on God?

- Lawbreakers routinely signal a disobedience to authority, just as those who conscientiously follow the rules reveal a submission to authority.
- To follow Christ, the ultimate authority, demands the will and self-discipline to assume an attitude of obedience.

Why should we be subject to man-made laws when God is the higher authority?

- God has placed authorities over us. Even when we have rulers and laws that we consider misplaced and misguided, we are responsible to them.
- Only when laws are in direct conflict with God’s authority are we permitted to engage in civil disobedience.
- Honoring earthly authorities signals a strong and comprehensive set of values and integrity.

1 PETER 2:18-20

How does one person’s willingness to accept authority over them in the workplace, school, or military affect those around them?

- Submission has a trickle-down effect. One person who models a servant’s heart influences another to do the same.
- Unfortunately, rebellion has an incendiary effect, too. We influence others to become rule-breakers when they see us, especially as Christians, do it.

Why would Peter ask Christians to respond respectfully not only to good masters but dishonorable ones?

- There may be rare times when rebellion is required, but Christ has identified love as His method of transforming the world.
- When someone suffers unjustly under the authority of others but accepts it meekly, God promises to show them favor.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How will submission to authorities impact your devotion to God?

- In addition to earning God’s favor, submitting to others is good practice for how we respond to God’s directions in our lives.
- **Personal Challenge:** How can you become a better servant to your earthly authorities? Review the way you handle yourself at home, in the workplace, at church, and in your community. Do you give visible support to your spouse, your pastor, your boss, and your elected leaders in conversation and in action? Make a list of ways that you could become outwardly more supportive.

OBJECT LESSON

A 2X4 PLANK

Bring a 2x4 plank to serve as a balance beam, or use masking tape to mark off a 4-inch-wide area across the room.

Indicate your “balance beam” by noting that gymnasts perform intricate aerial maneuvers on a surface that is only 3.9 inches wide. Point out that a 2x4 is slightly wider and certainly less dangerous at only 2 inches off the ground. Remind the group that learning to perform on a balance beam takes considerable time, patience, and dedication; feats are generally conquered one at a time.

Compare the balance beam to the Christian’s walk through the world. Note: *Believers must practice godliness, and as they do, they become more accomplished. As they grow in confidence and skill, they learn to meet more and more difficult challenges. Yet at all times, they must stay alert and under control to maintain that balance. The balancing act never goes away but remains a challenge, and the risk of slipping into sin is always a threat.*

Discuss the benefits of staying the course. Remind the group that just as we are impressed by the gymnast’s ability to stay upright on a balance beam, the world is impressed by a Christian’s ability to walk



confidently through a troubled world because they have their eyes fixed on Jesus. Say: *Invariably the world looks to see what prompts such sure-footed steps, which turns their eyes to Christ, too.*

Invite the group to take turns walking the plank, encouraging them to stay upright, straight, and balanced. As each takes a turn, read these verses aloud to reinforce the lesson: Matthew 7:14; John 17:16; Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 2:11-12.

DIG DEEPER

LIVING AS STRANGERS

The theme of the passage in Peter’s first epistle is submission, not surrender. *Surrender* describes one who has no choice but to give in to another because of defeat or incapacitation. Contrastingly, *submission* is one person’s willing, intentional acceptance of another’s authority. In the first few verses of this passage, Peter encouraged believers to behave honorably to the people of the nations, to submit to the authority of the government and their masters, and to do all this in obedience and submission to Christ and His perfect example of submission.

Why? “For it is God’s will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good” (1 Pet. 2:15). This is a rudimentary theme throughout Scripture. The author of Proverbs wrote about loving others despite the costs:

“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you” (Prov. 25:21-22).

Are these acts of kindness and service done to produce the opposite of the outward perception? Certainly not, but the contrast of the Christlike servant will expose the misguided intentions of others.

In fact, Peter addressed this very notion when he wrote:

“As God’s slaves, live as free people, but don’t use your freedom as a way to conceal evil” (1 Pet. 2:16).

Christians are to submit to others because Christ has commanded us to do so. In our submission to others, the world will see first-hand that the love of Christ requires nothing in return.

“For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Christ alone indeed! While it goes against our human instincts, God’s love is free and unconditional if only we accept Him.

LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible.

1 PETER 3:1-12

¹ In the same way, **wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands^a** so that, **even if some disobey the Christian message^b**, they may be **won over^c** without a message by the way their wives live ² when they observe your pure, reverent lives. ³ Your beauty should not consist of **outward things like elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes^{d 4}**. Instead, it should consist of what is inside the heart with the imperishable quality of a **gentle^e** and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes. ⁵ For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also beautified themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become **her children^f** when you do what is good and are not frightened by anything alarming. ⁷ Husbands, **in the same way^g**, live with your wives with an understanding of their **weaker nature^h** yet showing them **honor as coheirs of the grace of lifeⁱ**, so that your prayers will not be hindered. ⁸ Now finally, all of you should be like-minded and sympathetic, should love believers, and be compassionate and humble, ⁹ **not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult^j** but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you can inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For the one who wants to love life and to see good days must keep his **tongue^k** from evil and his lips from speaking deceit, ¹¹ and he must turn away from evil and do

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** "Wives, be submissive to your own husbands [subordinate, not as inferior, but out of respect for the responsibilities entrusted to husbands and their accountability to God, and so partnering with them" (AMP).
- b** Christian women were called to show Christ to their unbelieving husbands by serving them and showing them respect.
- c** May be gained or converted to Christianity.
- d** Peter and Paul called Christian women to dress themselves modestly and sensibly (Isa. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:9).
- e** Gentleness possesses power (Prov. 15:1; 25:15).
- f** Women show that they are Sarah's children when they do good and are courageous.
- g** The root Greek word used here means *likewise* or *equally*.
- h** This indicates that husbands are typically physically stronger than their wives. It does not infer that wives are morally or intellectually inferior to their husbands.
- i** In the context of this verse, a husband should see his wife as a fellow Christian, showing her that she is also equally deserving of all he is entitled to as a child of God. This idea of equality between men and women was unheard of in Peter's culture.
- j** Christians are to treat others as God has treated them.
- k** The tongue expresses a person's true nature, for "what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a man" (Matt. 15:18).
- l** "But [God] turns his back on those who do evil things" (MSG).

what is good. He must seek peace and pursue it,
¹² because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and
His ears are open to their request. **But the face of the
Lord is against those who do what is evil.**¹

“” TALKING POINTS

»» FOR THE WIFE (1 Peter 3:1-6)

- Peter called on wives to submit to their own husbands, to focus on inner beauty, and to live godly lives. If her husband is an unbeliever, the goal of the wife is to win him to Christ through these actions.
- Note: Clearly explain the following: (1) Submission does not imply inferiority. (2) Submission is given willingly, never coerced. (3) Submission does not mean wives are to participate in sinful activities dictated by husbands or to remain in life-threatening situations.

»» FOR THE HUSBAND (1 Peter 3:7)

- Peter demanded that husbands seek to understand their own wives and to honor them as fellow believers.
- Note: Emphasize the radical nature of this mandate in light of the culture Peter was addressing. Explain that Peter was elevating the status of women in society.

»» FOR ALL BELIEVERS (1 Peter 3:8-12)

- Peter directed all believers to be a blessing to others by showing sympathy and compassion.
- Note: Be careful to avoid misrepresenting salvation as being contingent upon the believer's behavior.

»» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Wives demonstrate Christ by submitting to their husbands and possessing a pure lifestyle.
- Husbands demonstrate Christ by protecting, understanding, and respecting their wives.
- Believers can be a blessing to others by offering godly compassion and love.

NOTES



FOCUS ATTENTION

Do you consider a strong person who disciplines himself to accommodate others as being someone who is submissive? How do you define biblical submission? Explain.

- The biblical definition of *submission* may be at extreme odds with the world's definition.
- Although it is counter cultural to consider adopting a posture of submission in most instances, it should be a goal of every Christian. Understanding what true submission looks like is critical to being able to live the life that Christ requires of us.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 3:1-6

Why would Peter give such detailed instructions on what submission looks like in the daily life of a believer?

- Submission must be intentional. Our human nature must be subdued to fit in with God's plan for us to remain gentle and humble.
- The nature of godly submission is so contrary to human nature we need clear instructions and word pictures to illustrate it.

After reading this passage, what would you say is the purpose of submission?

- The wife who submits to her unbelieving husband through godliness points Him to Christ and may win him to Christ.
- A submissive spirit is ultimately about pleasing God rather than simply pleasing one's husband. God approves a gentle and quiet spirit rather than a rebellious one.

Why would the commonly heard phrase "beautiful inside and out" be a good summary of Peter's instruction to wives?

- The outward beauty of women cannot compete with inner beauty, and Peter wanted to make that clear distinction.
- An outward appearance is far less important than attending to one's character and inner nature. Fashionable clothing, accessories, and hairstyles are not what God cares about, and, therefore, neither should we.
- In citing a wifely example of submission, Peter pointed to the inner qualities of someone like Sarah, who took a posture of submission with Abraham. All Christian women's lineage dates back to Sarah, and we can still look to her as a relevant example of how a wife should relate to her husband.

1 PETER 3:7

According to Peter, what is the husband's attitude to be toward his wife?

- He must consider the needs of his wife, who is physically weaker, and treat her accordingly. More to the point, he must honor her, a word that elevates the wife's status above his own.

- He also must recognize her equality in Christ; she is a co-heir, not inferior or superior, but one who will share equally in the kingdom of God.
- A husband's treatment of his wife will determine whether his own prayers are answered. A husband who mistreats his wife sets up barriers between him and God.

1 PETER 3:8-12

According to this passage, how does submission compare to other godly behaviors?

- The earmarks of submission mimic the virtues that make us Christlike: sympathy, love, compassion, and humility.
- Submission is not a spiritual gift, nor is it a responsibility required of a chosen few. It is the mutual obligation to love others as we would ourselves (see The Golden Rule, Matt. 7:12) and beyond (see Phil. 2:3).

- Indeed, submission goes beyond The Golden Rule to loving your enemies (Matt. 5:44) and returning good for evil.

What are the rewards of being a submissive Christian?

- Submission enhances relationships, especially marital ones.
- More important, God counts it as righteousness. Therefore, a non-submissive lifestyle may be credited as sinful under certain circumstances.
- Finally, God blesses us when we do good to others, even those who mistreat us.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How do you practice submission as a way of life? As a group, talk about routines that reveal a humble and gentle spirit in speech and actions.

- Polite references to authorities suggest submission, whether it is as simple as using phrases like *sir* or a title like *Mrs.*
- Quickly and decisively following the directions of someone in authority signals submission.
- **Personal Challenge:** Make an outline of the authorities in your life and assign a value from 1 to 10 to rate your attitude, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest. In what direct and indirect ways have you shown yourself to be submissive? In what ways have you refused to be submissive? If there are outstanding issues that need to be resolved, decide on the steps that you will take to submit to that authority.

OBJECT LESSON

A BRIDE AND GROOM CAKE-TOPPER

Before the session, conduct an Internet search for a photo of a bride and groom atop a tiered cake. Print the picture on cardstock and cut into puzzle pieces. Be sure to cut the bride and the groom into distinct pieces. Apply double-sided tape to the back of each piece of the puzzle so it can be assembled and displayed on a board.

Explain that following Peter's advice to husbands and wives can build a wonderful foundation for a marriage. As you put the piece with the bride in place on a board, point out that wives are to show their husbands love and respect. Encourage discussion of what wifely submission may look like in a marriage (honor, respectful attitude, kindness, trusting his leadership). Likewise, as you add the groom puzzle piece, talk about what it means for a husband to love his wife with understanding (patience, helping with household/kid duties, prioritizing her needs, keeping her the focus of attention). Note: Be sure to make the connection to how Christ laid down His life for the church.

Point out that a wife's submission is not something coerced by her husband but voluntarily given. A husband cannot demand a submissive and compliant wife; she yields that to him. Be prepared



to discuss what submission does not look like from either person (belittling, bullying, etc.) and to suggest that mutual respect and open communication is important for all healthy relationships.

Continue to work the puzzle as you connect submission to other relationships. Point out that a submissive spirit will improve most relationships and models Christlike behavior to all unbelievers.

DIG DEEPER

EQUALITY IN CHRIST

At first glance, the word *submission* may make some pull back and mistake the command (3:10) as making one person superior over another. In reality, Peter was saying just the opposite. In the time of the writing of this epistle, the women of Rome had no rights at all. They were completely at the mercy of their husbands. Any frivolous offense, whether real or perceived, could result in the legal abuse, divorce, or even death of the wife. Thankfully, that is quite the contrast to our culture today. Yes, Peter did instruct wives to submit to the authority of their husband (v. 1), but he also instructed husbands to honor their wives: "The same goes for you husbands: Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them. As women they lack some of your advantages. But in the new life of God's grace, you're equals. Treat your wives, then, as equals so your prayers don't run aground" (1 Pet. 3:7, MSG). Peter went as far as saying, "Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you, no exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead, bless—that's your job, to bless. You'll be a blessing and also get a blessing" (v. 8, MSG), a radical command given the times.

So how does one do this? By finding his or her identity in Christ! Peter told the wife that she will be considered Sarah's child when

she puts her hope in the Lord and not in her outward appearance (v. 3). The true beauty of a woman will "consist of what is inside the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes" (v. 4). The husband will have unhindered prayer (v. 7) as he shows his wife understanding and honor. Paul adds, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25)—the perfect example of selflessness.

To be clear, putting another first is not in a person's nature. On the topic of selfishness C.S. Lewis wrote,

"Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. ... Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.¹

The apostle Paul summed it up by saying, "each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband" (Eph. 5:33)—that's equality no matter the culture.

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 224-225.

SESSION 6

ALWAYS READY

1 PETER 3:13-22

¹³ And who will harm you if you are deeply committed to what is **good**?^a ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. **Do not fear what they fear^b** or be disturbed,¹⁵ but honor the Messiah as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a **reason for the hope that is in you.**^c ¹⁶ However, do this with gentleness and respect, keeping your conscience clear, so that when you are **accused,**^d those who denounce your Christian life will be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For **Christ also suffered for sins once for all,**^e the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God, after being **put to death in the fleshly realm^f** but **made alive in the spiritual realm.**^g ¹⁹ In that state He also went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison ²⁰ **who in the past were disobedient,**^h when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while an ark was being prepared. In it a few—that is, eight people—were saved through water. ²¹ **Baptism,**ⁱ which corresponds to this, now saves you **(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God)**^j through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ²² **Now that He has gone into heaven, He is at God's right hand with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.**^k

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** From the Greek *agathos*, meaning *useful, pleasant, or honorable*
- b** Christians are called to be in awe and have a reverential fear of our holy God alone.
- c** Christ's death and resurrection is the reason Christians' have hope for eternal life with God and endurance when facing earthly suffering.
- d** "slandered" (ESV, NASB); "abused: (RSV); "speak maliciously against" (NIV); "throw mud at you" (MSG)
- e** Hebrews 9:28 says, "so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him."
- f** Jesus experienced a real physical death in His human nature.
- g** Even though Christ suffered death on the cross, the Spirit raised Him from the dead. Believers who face suffering will ultimately share in Christ's resurrection.
- h** After Christ's death on the cross and resurrection, "He went and proclaimed God's salvation to earlier generations who ended up in the prison of judgment because they wouldn't listen" (MSG).
- i** Baptism is not a requirement of salvation, but it is the first step of obedience after expressing saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- j** This refers to the fact that baptism is symbolic and does not save a person.
- k** "Jesus has the last word on everything and everyone, from angels to armies. He's standing right alongside God, and what he says goes" (MSG).

»» **READY TO DEFEND** (1 Peter 3:13-17)

- Peter exhorted his readers to honor Christ and to keep a clear conscience so that if they suffered, they would do so for having done something good as opposed to something evil.

»» **POINT TO CHRIST'S WORK**

(1 Peter 3:18-20a)

- Peter explained that Christ suffered to secure our salvation and to bring others to the Father.
- Note: Acknowledge that opinions vary about verse 19. Make clear that the dead will not get another opportunity to receive Christ (see Heb. 9:27). Be clear in tying the passage to verse 17.

»» **DISPLAY YOUR FAITH**

(1 Peter 3:20b-22)

- Comparing baptism to the ark that Noah's family boarded, Peter explained that salvation is secured through the resurrection of Jesus, with baptism being the public display of that salvation.
- Note: Explain baptism as a symbol of the cleansing and the new life that people receive when they trust in Christ.

»» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- We can face suffering with confidence, knowing that we do so to bring honor to God.
- All life situations include opportunities to point others to Christ.
- Christ died on the cross to secure salvation for all who are willing to accept Him.



FOCUS ATTENTION

How does getting ready for a trip compare to getting ready to defend your beliefs?

- Both require some preparation and planning, but you can't always schedule when you'll defend your faith.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 3:13-17

When have you suffered for righteousness? How can focusing on God's faithfulness to you in the past help you withstand the troubles?

- The average Christian has probably seen much more in the way of answered prayers, blessings, and deliverance than trials that can be traced to persecution of their faith.
- The losses of livelihood and freedom seem like small threats when we consider how powerful Christ is. Everything that we risk for the sake of Christ can be restored by Him.
- We can take pride in suffering for Jesus' sake and wear it as a badge of honor. To never suffer for serving Christ probably means that we have spent too much time in a safe zone rather than on the front lines sharing the gospel with unbelievers.
- As we suffer for Christ, we get a unique opportunity to share our faith. The lost wonder how and why we persist.

How does suffering that is produced by our own sinfulness or mistakes differ from suffering that comes to us because of a stand for righteousness?

- Knowing that we have not brought misfortune on ourselves helps us to endure.
- We suffer doubly when we suffer for our own evildoing because we reap the consequences and we suffer a guilty conscience until we are restored to God.

What can you do to endure faithfully as you suffer for righteousness?

- Setting apart Christ in our hearts means giving Him a position of power and authority in our lives that allows us to be fully surrendered to what comes our way.
- Part of pain relief is focusing on something besides what brings the pain. Keeping our minds fixed on Christ makes suffering much easier to endure.

In the midst of suffering for Christ's sake, why would a humble attitude rather than defiance in the midst of suffering for Christ's sake make more of an impact on unbelievers?

- Defiance is coupled with rebellion, so if we maintain an attitude of gentle submission when we suffer we continue to point to Christ.

- Use your prayer, wit, strength, and intellect to change your circumstances in order to keep on with ministry, but when suffering comes model your response after Jesus'.

1 PETER 3:18-20a

What cues can we take from Christ's suffering to apply to our own?

- Christ suffered unto death, yet He never lost sight of His mission on earth. Likewise, believers can draw encouragement by keeping our eyes on the big picture, not just our present circumstances.
- Christ continued to share with others through His suffering. Suffering is an opportunity to expand our witness because others will notice how we respond.

1 PETER 3:20b-22

How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ serve as a source of strength?

- We know that there is more to this life than our present circumstances and time on earth.
- In heaven, we who have placed our allegiance with Christ will enjoy the spoils of being on the winning side.

Why should we submit to baptism to symbolize faith in Christ?

- To show the wonder and magnitude of an internal transformation starts with baptism and continues with love, good works, and a verbal witness.
- Baptism symbolizes the transaction that takes place during salvation. We are cleansed of our sins and arise from the graves of our sinfulness into new creations alive in Christ.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How can we support those who are suffering for Christ?

- As a group, think about Christians in the news, in your community, or in your church who need encouragement because of their stand for Christ. Send a card signed by each person in your group, reminding them of your concern and prayers. Then pray for their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and safety.
- **Personal Challenge:** Have you been baptized to show your faith in Jesus Christ? That is the first step of a life of faith. If you have not, set up an appointment to talk to your pastor about it today. What other faith steps is God calling you to take? Have you avoided them in order to avoid suffering?

OBJECT LESSON

A WHITE HANDKERCHIEF

Bring a white handkerchief to the session. Say: *Today, let's associate this white handkerchief with suffering—and not just any kind of suffering but suffering for Christ.*

Explain: Because Jesus suffered, we will all suffer; some of us will suffer a lot.

Ask: *How can we cope with suffering for Christ's sake?* Explain that first we pray for deliverance, but as God's will becomes clear, we wave the white flag [wave the handkerchief].

Say: *As you probably know, a white flag symbolizes surrender. We each have a choice. We can surrender to the Enemy by becoming angry or bitter over our situation. Or we can submit our situation to Christ and commit His watchful care over us.*

Discuss those in the group, in church, in the community, or around the world who are currently suffering for Christ. Take a moment to pray for them.

Say: *Maybe you are not suffering currently, but you know someone who is. For years handkerchiefs were something we offered to someone in tears. When we could not take away their pain, we at*



least dried their tears. Ask: On behalf of those suffering, what can we do to encourage someone in their suffering? How can we offer them a handkerchief?

DIG DEEPER

VICTORY IN JESUS

The reality is that Christians will suffer for the cause of Christ (see Matt. 10:38; Luke 14:27; Acts 9:16; 2 Cor. 4:8; 1 Thess. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5). The apostle Paul wrote, "For it has been given to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Phil. 1:29). Indeed Paul was very familiar with suffering; he wrote, "From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I bear on my body scars for the cause of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). That seems like an outlandish concept to the American Christian, but the fact is that our brothers and sisters around the world are suffering for Christ's name today. Knowing that we will suffer when we follow Christ, Peter addressed how we should handle the hardships:

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear or be disturbed, but honor the Messiah as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. However, do this with gentleness and respect, keeping your conscience clear, so that when you are accused, those who denounce your Christian life will be put to shame" (1 Pet. 3:14-16).

We need to be ready to defend our faith in Christ with gentleness and respect. Doing so with love will discredit our accusers and cause others to question the motivation behind their actions.

Peter reminded his readers that Christ's sufferings brought the offer of new life to humanity. He also urged believers to use Christ's sufferings as motivation for endurance as we undergo sufferings. While the next few verses of this passage have various complexities (vv. 19-21), the message is unarguable: Christ is victorious over death, and He is risen! His suffering is complete, and He has been redeemed: "Now that He has gone into heaven, He is at God's right hand with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him" (v. 22).

Yes, we as believers may be called upon to endure suffering, but Christ has already given us the victory!

*I'm so glad I learned to trust Him, Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that He is with me, Will be with me to the end.¹*

1. Louisa M.R. Stead, "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"

SESSION 7

EQUIPPED TO LIVE

1 PETER 4:1-11

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, equip yourselves also with the same resolve—because **the one who suffered in the flesh has finished with sin^a**— ² in order to live the remaining time in the flesh, no longer for human desires, but for God's will. ³ **For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the pagans choose to do:^b** carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry.

⁴ So they are surprised that you don't plunge with them into the same **flood of wild living^c**—and they slander you.

⁵ They will give an account to the One who stands ready to judge **the living and the dead.^d** ⁶ For this reason the gospel was also preached to **those who are now dead,^e** so that, although they might be judged by men in the fleshly realm, they might live by God in the spiritual realm. ⁷ Now the end of all things is near; therefore, be serious and disciplined for prayer. ⁸ Above all, maintain an intense love for each other, since **love covers a multitude of sins.^f** ⁹ **Be hospitable to one another^g** without complaining. ¹⁰ Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, **as good managers of the varied grace of God.^h** ¹¹ **If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words;ⁱ** if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

a Jesus, who suffered on earth, died to destroy sin.

b The Christians reading this epistle had led sinful lives before their conversion, and now, Peter instructed them to do God's will.

c Refers to the sins listed in verse 3; "You've already put in your time in that God-ignorant way of life, partying night after night, a drunken and profligate life. Now it's time to be done with it for good. Of course, your old friends don't understand why you don't join in with the old gang anymore. But you don't have to give an account to them. They're the ones who will be called on the carpet—and before God himself" (vv. 4-5, MSG).

d Anyone who has ever lived

e This doesn't mean evangelism to the dead but rather deceased believers; their death illustrates that sin brings judgment on all people. Even so, deceased believers have eternal life in Christ.

f "Love makes up for practically anything" (MSG). Peter challenged believers to show love to others when they invariably make mistakes. Christians are to display forgiveness, mercy, and kindness to others, just as they need in return. First John 4:20 reminds us, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen."

g Under persecution it is our fleshly nature to moan and grumble; Peter says we are to be Christlike in all circumstances. From the Greek *philoxenos*, "hospitable" means "to be generous."

h As Christians, all of our words and actions should lead to a singular end goal: to bring glory to God.

i "If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God" (NIV).

»» **LIVING FOR GOD** (1 Peter 4:1-4)

- Peter directed his readers to resolve to live their lives with Christ as their example when facing slander and other trials, realizing that they are following God's will instead of the will of others.

»» **ANSWERING FOR THE GOSPEL**

(1 Peter 4:5-6)

- Peter reminded his readers that everyone will give an account to the Father, with the slanderers being condemned and the believers being vindicated.
- Note: Interpret the preaching to the dead (v. 6) in terms of believers who heard the gospel, accepted it, and have since died.
- Clearly state that people do not have another opportunity to receive Christ after they have died.

»» **REDEEM THE TIME** (1 Peter 4:7-11)

- Peter called his readers to remain unified in service to others to bring honor to God and to demonstrate God's pure love.

»» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- Believers are to look to Christ when facing persecution for their faith, knowing that He has a greater plan.
- Following our own wills leads to destruction and judgment.
- Believers honor God by loving each other and serving others out of love.



FOCUS ATTENTION

What is your favorite way to be shown love or appreciation?

- Love can be extended through many different relationships in a myriad of ways, including extravagant gestures, simple courtesies, hospitality, and kindness.
- The life well-lived is a life that loved well. While we depend on the Holy Spirit to fill us with the love we need to minister to others consistently and completely, we also must remember to be intentional about practicing love.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 4:1-4

When considering Jesus' suffering on the cross, what kind of encouragement does it provide to you for living life as His follower?

- Knowing that Christ suffered without sin should motivate us not to continue in our sin but to try to become more like Him.
- Knowing that Christ gave up His life for us is a piercing reminder that to do God's will we must love as deeply as He did.

This passage outlines pastimes that are sinful and a complete waste of time for Christians. Why do lost people think it's strange when we no longer do these things?

- We make a break from cultural traditions, such as alcoholism, drug use, and other excessive behaviors that serve to detract or even derail a Christian from his or her mission.
- We earn the ire of the world, whose tendency to minimize the virtue of a pure lifestyle makes their own sin more acceptable.

1 PETER 4:5-6

When considering our will to either indulge or abstain from sin, we will account to different people for different reasons. How do these people affect your decision-making when it comes to sin?

- Others observe the way we live. We can cause them to wonder at our self-control and restraint and point them to Christ—or we can join them in sin and signal our approval of ungodly living.
- Ultimately, however, we live for an audience of One, and it is to Christ that we give an account for how we lived our earthly lives—not our families, our friends, or our communities.

1 PETER 4:7-11

According to this passage, how should we, as Christians, spend the remaining time we have on earth?

- Living with the understanding that our lives are finite and our time here on earth is limited should encourage us to seize the days, plan our ways, and stay in prayer.

- Most importantly, we must love with urgency.
- Hospitality is something we can give in small and large measures to people everywhere, whether it is through simple, random acts of kindness, giving someone free passage in traffic, shoveling snow or raking leaves for our neighbors, or serving others sacrificially in deep and complex ways.

What synonyms would you use to help others better understand the attitudes called for by Peter?

- Being serious indicates the ability to reason and find the pathway to intentional living. Disciplined prayers reveal the ability to aspire to lofty and long-term goals with God's help. Intensity shows passion.
- We should love others not out of duty or obligation but from hearts that have been quickened by God's love for us.
- Likewise, an absence of grumbling and complaining when extending hospitality shows genuine care and concern for others.

How does love cover a multitude of sins?

- Love covers over our own sin, because when we love others completely we give and receive forgiveness more readily.
- Love covers the sin of others. Just as a sinless Christ died to redeem sinful men, believers who extend sacrificial love to others give them a glimpse of Christ.
- When we love others well, it motivates and encourages them to love well also.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What can you do this week to purposefully extend hospitality to others and to practice love?

- Engage your neighbors and community creatively through out-of-the ordinary acts of kindness. They do not have to be complex or extravagant to capture attention, just uncommon to your relationship.
- **Personal Challenge:** Plan ways to show special kindnesses to your family and friends. Evaluate these relationships to determine if you have shown love to others in ways that they recognize. If you find that you have neglected or ignored anyone, plan ways to renew your efforts.

OBJECT LESSON

A BATCH OF HOMEMADE COOKIES

Bring homemade cookies to the session. If possible, serve them warm. Distribute the cookies, telling the group you prepared them yourself at home. Note that to complete the task you had to find the recipe, shop for the ingredients, prepare them according to the instructions, bake for the required time, package them for transportation, and distribute them to the group. Point out that it took some money, time, and effort, but that your friends are well worth all of that.

Explain: *Love is like that. It bakes cookies, washes cars, vacuums floors, and otherwise serves one another in a myriad of ways.* Invite the group to discuss other facets of love. You may want to reference the book *The Five Love Languages* by Dr. Gary Chapman¹ and bring up time, gifts, acts of service, words of affirmation, and physical touch as ways that people show love to one another.

Ask: *If I complained about how much time I spent in line at the grocery store to purchase the ingredients to make these cookies, the cost, or the effort cleaning up the kitchen, would my affection for you look, feel, or taste the same? Explain.*

State: *In the same way, the manner in which we serve one*



another is another measure of our love, and it must be devoid of grumbling or complaining because that diminishes the quality—but that love—after the cookies are gone, the words have faded, or our arms are empty—is what remains.

Pray for the group and ask God to let them know how much you love them and, more importantly, how much He loves them.

DIG DEEPER

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

It's believed that John Wesley said, "The person who bears and suffers evils with meekness and silence, is the sum of a Christian man." Peter's words carry that same ideal:

"Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want" (1 Pet. 4:1-2, MSG).

The main focus of the passage is not that as Christians we will endure persecution, but that we must get over ourselves. In his bestselling book *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren wrote about the purpose of one's life, and he answers the question of the entire book with the first sentence: "It's not about you!"²

Peter was saying it is all about Jesus! Only when the believer fully yields and accepts their new identity in Christ can they have the ability to focus on the beauty of living for Christ.

"Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials" (Jas. 1:2). Trials will come, but only with this attitude can a Christian face what lies ahead with the joy of Christ and bring glory to Him in difficulties: "If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything" (1 Pet. 4:11).

When trouble is upon us, a heavenly focus will help us keep our eyes on the proper place. May we live our lives focused on the glory of heaven!

1. An assessment is available online at 5lovelanguages.com/profile.

2. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 23.

SESSION 8

WHEN RIDICULED

1 PETER 4:12-19

¹² Dear friends, don't be surprised when the **fiery ordeal**^a comes among you to **test you**^b as if **something unusual were happening to you.**^c

¹³ Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory. ¹⁴ If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, **you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**^d

¹⁵ None of you, however, should **suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler.**^e

¹⁶ But if anyone suffers as a **"Christian,"**^f he should not be ashamed but should **glorify God**^g in having that name. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin with God's household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ **And if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?**^h ¹⁹ So those who suffer according to God's will should, while doing what is good, entrust themselves to a faithful **Creator.**ⁱ

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

a Insults and injuries are heaped on believers because of their faith (see 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 2:20-21). Such persecution is included in God's plan for a number of reasons, and one of those reasons is to "test" believers (v. 12).

b "That is, to test the quality of your faith" (AMP); "to prove you" (RSV); "a spiritual refining process" (MSG)

c John 16:33 tells us, "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

d When we encounter persecution for following Christ, we know that the Holy Spirit is with us.

e Christians should not defame the name of Christ with a bad attitude or poor behavior.

f The term is used three times in the New Testament: Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.

g Bearing the name of Christ with honor while undergoing persecution extols Jesus.

h "It's judgment time for God's own family. We're first in line. If it starts with us, think what it's going to be like for those who refuse God's Message! If good people barely make it, What's in store for the bad?" (MSG).

i God is mentioned as *Creator* or *Elohim* in the first verse of the Bible, revealing the infinite nature of God, a mystery that humankind is unable to fathom.

NOTES

»» EXPECT RIDICULE (1 Peter 4:12-14)

- Peter warned his readers to expect opposition and ridicule as a result of their commitment to Christ. Believers should not be surprised by this treatment.

»» REPRESENT JESUS WELL

(1 Peter 4:15-16)

- Peter challenged his readers to live exemplary lives, finding joy if they suffered unjustly for the name of Christ.

»» FOCUS ON THE CREATOR

(1 Peter 4:17-19)

- Peter reminded his readers to depend upon God even in the midst of persecution, knowing that the trials would refine their faith and that God is trustworthy.
- Note: Highlight God being identified as the Creator.

»» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- We can trust the Holy Spirit to provide strength when we face ridicule as believers.
- Believers can faithfully represent God by carrying His name well when facing ridicule.
- Believers can face persecution with confidence, knowing God will use our tested faith for His kingdom purposes.



FOCUS ATTENTION

Why are Christians such targets for ridicule by the media and the world at large?

- Believers distinguish themselves from the rest of the world with values, loyalties, and traditions that unbelievers simply cannot appreciate and share.
- An unswerving commitment to Christ and His teachings, which cannot be influenced by prevailing cultural trends, often creates tension and derision as unbelievers try to force believers to accept their viewpoint.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 4:12-14

What potential difficulties might a person face for simply being a believer in this world?

- Although the theological discussion about the repercussions of living in a fallen world could be a long one, very simply, a commitment to Christ will require each believer to take up his or her cross. Part of that cross will be the willingness to be misunderstood, judged, ridiculed, and persecuted by a world that does not understand or appreciate our values.
- Few Christians appreciate a fiery ordeal when it is unfolding. Yet God will work our struggles for our good (Rom. 8:28), and our suffering will serve a purpose.

What should the Christian's attitude be when believers face ridicule?

- We should expect ridicule, not as people who are resigned to our fate but as those who are prepared.
- We should feel honored that we have been chosen to share, in a small measure, in Christ's suffering.
- Ridicule is an indicator that we belong to God. Moreover, it's described as a blessing with benefits that we may not immediately recognize.

1 PETER 4:15-16

What important attitude does this passage suggest that the Christian under fire should take to heart before and after bouts of persecution?

- While the world and Satan will continue to accuse of wrongdoing the Christians suffering for Christ, they need not be ashamed. Persecution and ridicule is a badge of honor, not an indictment.
- Distinguishing between the consequences of real sinfulness and suffering because of our commitment to Christ is important to being able to assuage guilt.
- If we suffer for doing evil, then we should feel guilty.

1 PETER 4:17-19

Knowing that some type of judgment awaits both the believer and the unbeliever, how should that impact the way we live as Christians?

- We can accept suffering, knowing that at the judgment seat of Christ we will be spared condemnation.
- We can witness to the lost through our suffering in the hope that they will see our hope and also look to Christ for salvation.

If Christians suffer for serving Christ, what will be the fate of those who refuse to accept Him?

- Our sufferings pale according to the eternal consequences of life outside of trusting Christ as Savior.
- In the end, Christian behavior and allegiance will be vindicated and validated.

When you suffer, what can you do to bear up under it?

- Committing our well-being to God empowers us to accept our suffering. When we choose to accept that—no matter what persecution we are facing—we do not just resign ourselves to our fate; we will grow spiritually through it.
- God is always in control of our circumstances and will have the end word on the evil we face.
- Just as Christ's finest hours were the ones He endured on the cross, so it is with Christians who suffer for Him.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

When you suffer a trial because of your faith, what attitude should you bring to this situation? What posture or action should you take in order to bring honor to God?

- Whenever you experience a trial, first ask God for the wisdom to distinguish between suffering that stems from persecution or from the consequences of sin that you brought on yourself. If you are at fault, repent and seek to reconcile the situation.
- If you are being ridiculed for Christ's sake, commit your well-being to God, resting in the knowledge that God can change your circumstances any time He chooses—but also understanding that, just as Jesus had a mission on the cross, there will be a purpose for your suffering as Christ's follower.
- Pray that God furthers your witness during any difficult situation.
- **Personal Challenge:** Think about someone currently being ridiculed for Christ and write that person a note of encouragement. Thank the person for his or her faith in Christ and encourage the person to stand firm, not to become weary in well-doing, and to keep looking up. Assure the person of your prayers.

A GLASS SCULPTURE

Bring a glass sculpture or goblet to the session. Show the sculpture to the group and give a brief history of how you acquired it.

Explain that the sculpture reminds you of the fiery ordeals that every believer will encounter as a servant of Christ. Note: *For glass to be molded it must first be put into a furnace at extremely high temperatures. Intricate sculptures are not created through a single exposure to heat but require many trips into the furnace. The glassmaker molds the piece or makes additions to it only at times when the glass has been heated. Therefore, the crafting process encompasses a continual exchange between the furnace and his hands until the piece finally embodies the glassmaker's vision for it.* As you pass around the sculpture for the group to examine, point out that the glass is delicate and fragile but also strong and lovely.

Compare the art of glassmaking with what happens to Christians as they are ridiculed for their faith: *For every fiery ordeal endured, important sculpting takes place as God allows Christ's followers to be exposed to the heat produced by an unbelieving world.*

Say: *These experiences, although painful at the time, are not*



without purpose. If we trust in God, each incident will serve to make us look more like Him. Remind the group that God has promised His children that they will not be forced into situations that will overpower or break us. Instead, God promises that He will be with us in the fire, and what inevitably emerges is a stronger, more beautiful, more purposeful servant of Christ.

DIG DEEPER

OUR RESTING PLACE

Peter tells his readers to expect ridicule from the world for their faith in Christ: "Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you" (1 Pet. 4:12). While our sufferings will be painful, there is great joy found in sharing in the sufferings of Christ (v. 13). Peter says that if we are suffering because we are Christians we should not "give it a second thought. Be proud of the distinguished status reflected in that name!" (4:16, MSG).

However, be warned; if believers haven't matured in the faith to have this attitude and understanding when these trials come, they may fall into the temptation of moaning and groaning about their circumstances (v. 9) instead of reveling in being found worthy to suffer for His sake: "Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name" (Acts 5:41).

Ridicule and suffering provide a chance to bring glory to Christ. As Christians we're commanded to carry Jesus Christ's name with honor. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:11b-12). What a brilliant opportunity to praise Jesus!

One such example of praising Jesus in the midst of hardship is Lidie H. Edmunds (1851-1920). She was a Philadelphia schoolteacher who became an invalid after a spinal cord injury. In the face of great suffering, Edmunds wrote the old hymn, "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place," that reflects on the comfort we will find with our Father:

"My heart is leaning on the Word, The living Word of God:
Salvation by my Savior's name, Salvation through His blood.
I need no other argument, I need no other please;
It is enough that Jesus died, And that He died for me."¹

1. Lidie H. Edmunds, "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place"

SESSION 9

ALERT LIVING

1 PETER 5:1-11

¹ Therefore, as a fellow **elder**^a and **witness to the sufferings of the Messiah**^b and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you: ² **Shepherd God's flock among you,^c not overseeing out of compulsion but freely,^d according to God's will; not for the money but eagerly,³ not lording^e it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.** ⁴ And when the **chief Shepherd**^f appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ In the same way, you younger men, be subject to the **elders.**^g And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you. ⁸ **Be serious! Be alert!**^h Your adversary the **Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.**ⁱ ⁹ Resist him and be firm in the faith, knowing that **the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.**^j ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ The **dominion**^k belongs to Him forever. Amen.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

a "pastors, spiritual leaders of the church" (AMP); Elders were prominent members of both Jewish and Christian communities. The Greek transliteration *presbyteros* is where we derive our word *priest* or *pastor*.

b While distant, Peter was a witness to the injustice suffered by Jesus.

c "Shepherd *and* guide *and* protect the flock of God among you" (AMP); "care for God's flock with all the diligence of a shepherd" (MSG)

d Peter encouraged the elders to complete their tasks not out of obligation but because they freely chose to do so.

e Not domineering

f Refers to Jesus Christ; "The great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20), Jesus knew His sheep and would lay down His life for them (see also John 10:7-18).

g The term *elder* here may refer to advanced age and not the office of elder, as in verse 1.

h A common theme in Peter's writing (1 Pet. 1:13)

i Scripture tells us that the Devil is a "thief [who] comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10, NIV). Yet Jesus "was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil's works" (1 John 3:8).

j Peter encouraged persecuted believers by reminding them that they are not alone—other believers endure hardships for the faith.

k While humanity currently exercises dominion over God's creation, ultimate dominion rests in the hands of God: "His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation" (Dan. 4:3; see also Dan. 4:34).

» RESPONSIBLE SHEPHERDS

(1 Peter 5:1-4)

- Peter called for elders to care for their congregation as shepherds, fulfilling their callings with integrity and respect.
- Note: Explain that this passage does not negate the responsibility of local congregations to care for the needs of their pastor and other church leaders.
- Interpret “elders” in 5:1 in terms of the role generally applied to pastors today, a role further described by “shepherd” and “overseeing” (5:2).

» TRUSTING SHEEP (1 Peter 5:5-7)

- Peter directed all believers to practice humility and to depend upon God for their needs.

» THE NEED FOR ALERTNESS

(1 Peter 5:8-11)

- Peter reminded his readers that Satan was seeking to destroy them, requiring believers to be on the alert and diligent in their faith.

» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Leaders in the church are to humbly fulfill their duties, demonstrating Christian character in their leadership.
- All believers are to display humility, realizing that God provides for their needs.
- Believers are to resist the Devil with humility, lest they fall prey to him.



FOCUS ATTENTION

What kinds of calendars or schedules do you check routinely in anticipation of what will happen next? Why do you bother?

- Many of us check the weather forecast, stock market, sports and entertainment previews, school calendars, etc. We desire both short-term and long-term knowledge to be prepared for what's ahead. For example, if rain is forecast, we carry an umbrella. If we are in the middle of a drought, we take steps to conserve water. College students must decide which courses to take in a single semester—but with an eye on what will be available in the long-term if they hope to graduate on time.
- Christians, too, have been provided clues in God's Word that tell us what to do while we await His coming, and they provide both short-term and long-term objectives.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1 PETER 5:1-4

How would you define the main roles assigned to the church while we await the return of Christ?

- Pastors, or elders, assume leadership, especially through preaching and teaching the Word.
- The rest of the church shares in ministry, especially the mission of introducing others to Christ.
- Meanwhile, we must always be on the lookout for our Enemy, who wants to cause us to stumble.

Peter gave explicit instructions to elders, or pastors. What cautions did he give pastors?

- He warned that pastors should not serve for a paycheck. Although churches are responsible to provide for their pastors, an elder, for his part, should not be overly concerned about that aspect but expect his ultimate reward to come later, in heaven.
- Peter also warned pastors not to become too autocratic. Because they have authority over their flocks, it is important that they exercise this influence carefully and wisely, maintaining a humble, teachable spirit.

1 PETER 5:5-7

According to this passage, to whom is the church to be submissive?

- The church member should be submissive to the pastor, understanding that God is ultimately in control of the elder, who must give an account himself of how he managed the church.
- Christians also must maintain humble, submissive attitudes with one another. Pride and impatience oppose community and fellowship in the church.

Do we have a choice in submission? Explain.

- Humbling ourselves means God will exalt us at the appropriate time. The Bible warns us that pride foreshadows defeat, so asking God to keep our attitude in check will save us from ourselves.
- When we resist being submissive, we also risk the blessings that God has in store for us. A survey of Bible characters most blessed by God reveals people of great humility. Consider the humble attitudes of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Joseph. .

1 PETER 5:8-11

Why would humility be so important when countering the Enemy?

- Satan seeks out the proud to humble them. He knows, as one who is proud, too, that with pride comes downfall. With humility, however, comes a reliance and dependence on God that provides protection and safety from Satan's schemes.
- We must be both vigilant of our own heart attitude and aware that we have a real Enemy who wants us to stumble. Meanwhile, we know we have a Savior who is more than capable of delivering us from evil if we put our trust in Him.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

Humility suggests a willingness to submit yourself to the needs of others. What can you do to encourage your pastor and fellow believers this week?

- Review the last time you gave your pastor an encouraging word, and consider sending him an email or note. Just giving him a reminder that he is in your prayers may go a long way to encouraging your church leader.
- Think about another believer who may need encouragement. Is there a simple act of service that you can provide?
- **Personal Challenge:** Because pride is a sin common to us all at times, how do you know when you have crossed the line and it has become all about you and less about Him? Make a list of the blessings in your life that you recognize as unmerited or unearned, beginning with salvation. Write out a prayer thanking God for these fruits and dedicating them to Him.

OBJECT LESSON

A WHITE TOWEL

Explain that you will be using a white towel to symbolize how the church should function as we live out our mission until Jesus returns.

Put the cloth around your neck like a shawl as you reference 1 Peter 5:1-4, that tells us an elder, or pastor, has responsibilities to shepherd his flock with gentle guidance as his responsibility until Jesus returns. Note that many pastors do not wear clothing that marks them as elders, but some do. Ask: *What responsibilities are assigned to pastors?* (ex.: preaching, teaching, visiting the sick and imprisoned, caring for the poor, etc.) Point out the Scripture forbids a “man of the cloth” from being overbearing or money-hungry.

Place the towel over one shoulder as servers in restaurants do. Explain: *This illustrates the posture we should adopt as church members. It is our responsibility as Christians to serve one another.*

Take off the towel and snap it like a whip. Suggest that being aware of Satan, who roams like a lion waiting to devour us, also is our responsibility, as 1 Peter 5:8-11 tells us. Point out that staying alert does not mean we must act as lion tamers. Instead, our responsibility is simply to resist the Devil, who will flee from



us. Suggest that the snapped towel represents the Word of God, which is our authority and our protection when we are being tempted. Draw a parallel to Jesus resisting Satan in the wilderness as He quoted Scripture.

Put the towel back on your shoulder. Say: *Being alert requires us to be humble servants who love. That is all, and that is enough.*

DIG DEEPER

MANAGEMENT VS. LEADERSHIP

Management is based in control and is primarily concerned with using resources (ex.: equipment, finances, personnel, etc.) in the achievement of organizational goals. Leadership is based in influence and relationship with people, and is primarily concerned with developing a person to function at his or her highest level for both individual personal growth and also the benefit of the organization. Both management and leadership have their place and are crucial components of any organization.

The apostle Peter instructed the elder to shepherd the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). Peter’s use of the term *elder* is interesting; he used it to mean both the pastor and spiritual leader (v. 1), as well as an older person (v. 5). Peter further instructed the elder to oversee, but not to dominate (v. 3) and to be a good example to his followers. Peter then referred to Christ as “the chief Shepherd” (v. 4), clearly our ultimate example. Peter’s use of the metaphor of a shepherd was provided to instruct the church how to give and receive management and leadership.

Another example we have of a person who shepherds others is the role of a parent. Both shepherds and parents must utilize management and leadership on a daily basis. Consider the rules and guidelines that a parent establishes in his or her home. Some of

the rules (controls) are non-negotiable (ex.: Don’t talk to strangers. Complete your chores, etc.). These rules are intended for the protection of the child and the operation of the home and are not open to interpretation (management), but these same rules can be used to develop the child’s discernment of opportunity and danger and create a godly work ethic (leadership). Interestingly, as parents we manage and lead simultaneously, every day.

Certainly, the terms *elder* and *shepherd* are not terms we see in most business or parenting textbooks. Even so, Peter masterfully used these terms to give a lesson on the connection between management and leadership. We would do well to learn this lesson and follow his advice throughout our lives.

SESSION 10

BEING USEFUL

2 PETER 1:3-11

³ His divine power has given us **everything required for life and godliness**^a through the **knowledge of Him**^b who called us by His own glory and goodness. ⁴ By these He has given us **very great and precious promises**,^c so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desires. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with **goodness**,^d goodness with knowledge, ⁶ knowledge with **self-control**,^e self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, ⁷ godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if **these qualities**^f are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being **useless or unfruitful**^g in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ The person who lacks these things is **blind**^h and shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these things you will never stumble. ¹¹ For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly supplied to you.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** The salvation given to humanity is complete, providing everything necessary for godliness.
- b** It is through a relationship with Him that one gains all that is needed for this life and the life to come.
- c** There is no secret knowledge, better way, or alternative belief system that God has revealed to some unique group or teacher. The truth is available to everyone.
- d** "virtue" (NKJV, ESV); "goodness" (NIV) "moral excellence" (NASB); "good character" (MSG)
- e** The *Holman Bible Dictionary* explains about self-control that "freedom in Christ does not give believers liberty to cast off all moral restraint as some members in Galatia and other churches apparently believed. Nor does it call for a withdrawal from life and its temptations. It calls for a self-disciplined life following Christ's example of being in the world but not of the world."¹
- f** "These qualities" make up what is known as the ladder of faith (see 1 Pet. 1:5-7).
- g** If a believer will develop the previously mentioned spiritual strengths, then he or she will not fall into spiritual ruin.
- h** This refers to the spiritually blind, those who are not aware that they are blind. They are unable to see the role God wanted them to fulfill if they had followed Him.

NOTES

»» **STAND ON GOD'S COMPLETE PROVISION** (2 Peter 1:3-4)

- Peter reminded his readers that God provided everything they needed to live godly lives.

»» **CULTIVATE YOUR CHARACTER** (2 Peter 1:5-9)

- Peter encouraged his readers to build godly character, knowing that doing so makes them useful in God's kingdom.

»» **LIVE WITH ASSURANCE** (2 Peter 1:10-11)

- Peter commanded his readers to confirm their salvation through godly living, knowing that they would not be left behind and would be welcomed into heaven.

»» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- Believers can be thankful that God provides complete salvation through faith in Christ.
- Believers can cooperate with God in the building of godly character.
- Believers can live with confidence in the promise of salvation.



FOCUS ATTENTION

How important are the materials you have to work with when you are cooking, creating a presentation for work, gardening, or building something?

- Having the appropriate materials for a project, whether it is cookware, software, spade, or drill, makes it easier. Daily tasks such as preparing a meal, working a job, or aesthetic contributions require quality materials procured in the correct measures. Without them, we are unlikely to perform up to our own expectations or to fulfill the responsibilities that have been charged to us.
- It may surprise some believers, but we already have everything we need—the correct resources in the appropriate measures—to live purposeful, victorious Christian lives and to fulfill the mission God has ordained for each of us.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2 PETER 1:3-4

What tools or resources do you see available to Christians, according to these verses?

- We share in divinity. We have the indwelling Spirit of God living in us, and He provides wisdom and guidance for our lives. Understanding that we are vessels of divinity should be an empowering, emboldening experience. We can rise above the limits of humanity to live much bigger, nobler, dramatically God-inspired lives because we are indwelt by God's Spirit.
- God's promises through Scripture are rich materials for day-to-day living. We can cling to God's promises, found in His Word, for hope, inspiration, wisdom, and practical advice. Knowing and applying God's promises can be the difference between success and failure in any situation.

How does knowing Jesus already provides all we need give us peace and security?

- Those who never embrace the resources God provides may fail to live victoriously or fully embrace God's purposes for them. Instead of living victoriously, they live defeated lives, and for believers that is never necessary.
- While we have all the resources required, God expects us to contribute to the project of Christian living. We must build into ourselves in order to build into others. Conversely, as we build into others, we also build into ourselves. If we never pick up or employ the tools that God has provided we cannot perform up to His expectations.

2 PETER 1:5-9

In building the Christian nature, what does the believer bring to the table?

- Powerful Christian living starts with faith. Faith allows a believer to build a life with goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, and brotherly affection that looks and acts like God, who is love. Keep in mind that such a structure is not just a façade but composed of inner strength.
- Faith must be executed. Yet the divine nature of Jesus Christ provides the strength for all of these to stand. We do not rest upon our faith, but on Jesus Christ our faith rests.

2 PETER 1:10-11

What is the benefit of building up our character as Christians when we know that, despite our flaws, our salvation is secure?

- A lack of desire to become more Christlike reveals the failure to fully appreciate being forgiven of sin.
- If we stumble as Christians and fall into sin, even though our eternal destiny is secure, we are not insulated from the consequences of our sin.
- Working on our Christian character is a testament that we have saving faith. It is not that virtue saves, but virtue symbolizes our salvation. Our Christian character is a living witness to Jesus Christ.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What would a formal evaluation of your character as a Christian reveal? Rate yourself on a scale of one to ten in the areas of faith, virtue, self-control, patience, and overall godliness.

- Keep in mind that if you are weak in faith all the other building blocks will be unstable. Ask God to strengthen your faith—and be prepared for the ways He may test it.
- Remember that if you consider yourself weak in the building block areas, your overall rating for godliness must be affected.
- **Personal Challenge:** Consider the weaknesses that make your Christian life less than victorious. Draw up a formal plan for improvement and write down at least five goals. Be sure to leave plenty of space between each goal for additional notes. Under each goal, find and record a promise from God that correlates. Review the list and God's promises each day this week.

OBJECT LESSON

A SET OF BUILDING BLOCKS

Gather a supply of blocks or Legos® to build a small tower. Make sure you have at least two long blocks for the base of the tower.

Point out that the process of becoming Christlike is similar to building with blocks. Explain: *God has already provided all the materials and resources we need to become Christlike and live purposeful lives: His indwelling Holy Spirit provides knowledge, wisdom, conviction of sin, and His Word contains His promises. But what do we bring to the table?* Show the group one of the long building blocks and point out that we must bring faith. Note that faith is not just something we possess but something we employ.

Put the block in place on top of the other long building block. Say: *On whom does our faith rest? The foundation is Jesus Christ. Together these two blocks form a solid foundation.*

Guide the group to search 2 Peter 1:3-11 to discover what we can build onto faith (goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, brotherly affection, and love). As they name each, build up from the faith block. Invite the group to offer explanations of how these apply in their daily lives.



Finish the tower and emphasize: *We have everything we need to build lives that point to Christ.* Remind the group, however, that we must be active participants in the process. *God will most often use those who respond to His call. In those times when He pushes an unwilling subject into accomplishing His will (see Jonah), the process is not pleasant, but the end result is the same.*

DIG DEEPER

STANDING ON THE PROMISES

In this passage the apostle Peter reminded believers that God has given them everything they need to have successful Christian lives in Christ. Peter was writing this letter just before his martyrdom, so clearly he was facing significant challenge and danger himself. Even so, Peter encouraged and instructed the readers of this epistle to “make every effort to confirm your calling and election” (2 Pet. 1:10). The ladder of faith—goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection and love (vv. 5-7)—are the method Peter describes for this confirmation. Those who did not exhibit these qualities were “useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 8) and “blind and shortsighted” and had “forgotten the cleansing from his past sins” (v. 9). Contrastingly, those who possess these qualities “will never stumble” (v. 10), and they will have “entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 11).

Peter was discussing more than just moralism here; he was describing a type of living that can only be accomplished by the power of Christ in us. James wrote, “But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works—this person will be blessed in what he does” (Jas. 1:25). Here again, James tells us

it’s not our good works but our faithfulness that will be blessed. The apostle Paul wrote, “For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don’t do what you want. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith” (Gal. 5:17,22). What a glorious truth—only through Christ can we live a set apart life that looks like Christ!

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God.²

1. “Self-control,” *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1244.

2. R. Kelso Carter, “Standing on the Promises”

SESSION 11

WITH TRUST

2 PETER 1:12-21

¹² Therefore I will always **remind**^a you about these things, even though you know them and are established in the truth you have. ¹³ I consider it right, as long as I am in this **bodily tent**,^b to **wake you up with a reminder**,^c ¹⁴ knowing that I will soon **lay aside my tent**,^d as our Lord Jesus Christ has also shown me. ¹⁵ And I will also **make every effort**^e that you may be able to recall these things at any time after my departure.

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, **we were eyewitnesses of His majesty**.^f

¹⁷ For when He received honor and **glory**^g from God the Father, a voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!

¹⁸ And we heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ So we have the prophetic word strongly confirmed. You will do well to pay attention to it, as to **a lamp shining in a dismal place**,^h until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

²⁰ First of all, you should know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, ²¹ because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were **moved by the Holy Spirit**.ⁱ

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

a Peter wanted his readers to be under the constant influence of Christ and His desires for their lives.

b A temporary dwelling place for this life

c "Refresh your memory" (NIV); "not going to let up for a minute in calling you to attention" (MSG); "to inspire you by reminding you" (AMP)

d To physically die

e Peter intended as long as he was alive to inspire his fellow believers to show their devoted commitment to Christ.

f Peter witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (see Matt. 17:1-7; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36).

g The Amplified Bible footnote for Hebrews 1:3 tells us that "the word 'Shekinah' does not appear in Scripture, but has been used by both Christians and Jews to describe the visible divine Presence of God, in such things as the burning bush, the cloud and the pillar of fire that led the Hebrews in the wilderness, and the Presence of God that rested between the cherubim over the mercy seat of the ark."

h The prophecies act as a torch shining in our dark world. They expose the dirt and defilement of sin, making it possible to get rid of it.

i Scripture is trustworthy because the Holy Spirit directed the writing of God's Word.

»» **NEEDED REMINDERS** (2 Peter 1:12-15)

- Peter explained that even though his readers had heard God's truth before, they still needed to be reminded of that truth on a regular basis.
- Peter declared his intention to remind them so that even after his death, the readers would not forget God's truth.

»» **EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS**

(2 Peter 1:16-18)

- Peter emphasized that he had been an eyewitness to significant events in the life of Jesus (the transfiguration specifically).

»» **WRITTEN BY GOD** (2 Peter 1:19-21)

- Peter reminded his readers that God's written Word was the result of God speaking through men.
- Note: While Peter's "Scripture" was the Old Testament, point to 2 Peter 3:15-16, exploring Peter's understanding of Paul's writings.

»» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- Believers can remind each other of the truth of the gospel and the Scripture.
- Believers can affirm the power of the gospel through the demonstrations of that power that they have witnessed.
- God's Word is reliable and can be trusted as the Word of God.



FOCUS ATTENTION

How do we determine whether or not something is valuable?

- Products such as watches or phones must perform well for their value to be established. No matter how slick the advertising campaign, if the product does not live up to its claims, the value will diminish accordingly. Even for something as subjective as artwork, where value truly may be in the eye of the beholder, the value is established not just by broad-based acceptance and appreciation, but by experts and connoisseurs who have studied the masters and know how to discern skill from fad.
- Spiritual truth is both subjective and objective. It's individually embraced, but it's intrinsically valuable, not when it's accepted by the masses, but because God has said it. Therefore, everything that veers away from His truth must be considered false teaching.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2 PETER 1:12-15

If Peter considered it important to remind believers of the truth, then what value should we place on truth and recalling it?

- Peter was aware that he had a responsibility to share truth with the world. Likewise, all believers should remind themselves of God's truth and share it with others.
- Peter shared truth until his time on earth was at an end, a challenge to us to remember that our responsibility as Christians does not end until our deaths. We share truth throughout our lives right up until death.

2 PETER 1:16-18

How do we disseminate truth so that others will recognize it at such?

- Peter was careful to note that the truth he shared was truth indeed and not a story birthed out of human imagination. He shared his own eyewitness accounts of what he had seen and experienced with Christ. Likewise, believers can share the power of Christ that has been witnessed and experienced in our lives.
- Helping unbelievers understand that the Bible is a complex series of interrelated and interwoven books, including eyewitness accounts, builds a case for Christ. These writings corroborate each other in such a way that they will help defend truth built on facts and testimony.

2 PETER 1:19-21

Why would contending the author of Scripture as God, writing through inspired men, be important for Peter to state and for us as believers to also contend?

- Understanding that Scripture is God-breathed gives it more weight and validity. The challenge to accept the Word of God as His must be directly stated or some will deduce that the Bible is little more than the poetic, pragmatic, and improbable writings from the minds of men.
- The Bible is more than a history book. It also provides important clues about the future. We must be convinced of the reliability of the Scriptures as the direct Word from God to trust our future to its pages and proclamations.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How can you help someone who doubts the authority of God's Word?

- Re-read the New Testament books, especially looking at those written by contemporaries of Jesus. Put yourself in their shoes as you read. What would prompt these types of men—uneducated fishermen—to write down their experiences unless that experience was amazing?
- Review some of your favorite Bible passages that have always managed to inspire or move you. Compare those writings to other secular ones. How many of those have had the power to help you make life changes?
- **Personal Challenge:** When have you stepped out in truth to set the record straight? All of us as Christians confront untruths on a routine basis through the media or social media. While becoming the person who constantly corrects others will not endear you to friends and family, it is the Christian's responsibility to take loving measures to correct false impressions of Christianity or to challenge philosophies and practices that contradict the teachings of Christ. This week when you are confronted with an untruth, resolve to kindly and lovingly communicate truth in return. This could take the form of a letter to the editor, a post on a friend's social media page, or a conversation with a friend.

OBJECT LESSON

VARIOUS KINDS OF BOOKS

Gather a selection of books to bring to the session. Include a fairy tale, an encyclopedia or reference book, a popular business book, and the Bible. Spread the books out. Ask if anyone has read any of them and invite the group to discuss what they like most about them.

Reference the fairy tale and note that such fiction usually represents charming storytelling because it encompasses fantasy, imagination, and creativity. Cite the encyclopedia as a valuable source of facts. Hold up the self-help book and explain that the author has provided some practical and inspiring tips.

Finally, hold up the Bible and note: *The Bible contains all the elements of the other books. It includes poetry, storytelling (Jesus' parables), historical record, and a plan for having the best life possible. What's different about this Book is that it contains the truth. We need the truth in our lives more than we need good stories, records of facts, and self-help books.*

Go on to discuss the dangers of confusing truth of the Bible with what is found in a fairy tale, a reference guide, or a self-help book.



For example, discuss how Bible stories are often re-invented in books (or even films) that veer from the truth of Scripture. Ask: *Why is it important to know and communicate God's truth?*

Encourage the group to remind each other of truth by reading it for themselves, sharing it verbally, and giving Bibles away.

DIG DEEPER

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The apostle Peter in this passage reminded and affirmed the readers of the majesty and power of Christ provided to them to live their lives in accordance with His commands. He further confirmed the absolute authority and trustworthiness of Scripture and identified the Holy Spirit and its supreme author.

The people of Peter's day used torches at nighttime to provide light until the morning; they understood full well what darkness looks like. Building on this knowledge, Peter reminded them that this world is "a dismal place" (2 Pet. 1:19). He reminds them of the credibility and dependability of Scripture and how it will provide instruction and strength until Christ's return, or as Peter puts it, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (v. 19).

Trusting in God and His Word is not a new concept. Daniel told us that "the king was overjoyed and gave orders to take Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, uninjured, for he trusted in his God" (Dan. 6:23). David said, "Lord GOD, You are God; Your words are true, and You have promised this grace to Your servant" (2 Sam. 7:28), and again, "Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of Yahweh our God" (Ps. 20:7).

What a magnificent gift that the Holy Spirit Himself has provided to us. In the Scriptures He has given us everything we need. Undeniably, God has provided us a light in the darkness. "Then Jesus spoke to them again: 'I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12).

"Then the One seated on the throne said, 'Look! I am making everything new.' He also said, 'Write, because these words are faithful and true'" (Rev. 21:5).

SESSION 12

ON GUARD

2 PETER 2:1-3; JUDE 16-25

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even **denying the Master who bought them,**^a and will **bring swift destruction on themselves.**^b ² Many will follow their unrestrained ways, and the way of truth will be **blasphemed**^c because of them. ³ They will exploit you in their **greed**^d with deceptive words. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep. ...

¹⁶ These people are discontented grumblers, walking according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage. ¹⁷ But you, dear friends, **remember what was predicted by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;**^e ¹⁸ they told you, “In the end time there will be **scoffers walking according to their own ungodly desires.**”¹⁹ **These people create divisions and are unbelievers, not having the Spirit.**^f ²⁰ But you, dear friends, as you build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life. ²² Have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; **have mercy on others but with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**^g ²⁴ Now to Him who is **able to protect**^h you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** Even though Jesus died for the sins of the world (even false prophets) many still reject Him (see 1 Pet. 2:6-8).
- b** The inevitability of God’s judgment on false teachers
- c** Literally meaning to speak harm. The Old and New Testaments use this term to mean any improper action regarding the Trinity, Scripture, and the Church.
- d** Greed is often the motivation for false teachers.
- e** False teachers are nothing new. According to 1 Timothy 4:1-3, “in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods that God created to be received with gratitude by those who believe and know the truth.”
- f** “‘In the last days there will be people who don’t take these things seriously anymore. They’ll treat them like a joke, and make a religion of their own whims and lusts.’ These are the ones who split churches, thinking only of themselves. There’s nothing to them, no sign of the Spirit!” (MSG). “Unbelievers” indicates that true believers are not false teachers.
- g** “Go after those who take the wrong way. Be tender with sinners, but not soft on sin. The sin itself stinks to high heaven” (MSG).
- h** By depending upon Christ and Christ alone, one can avoid being misled by a false teacher.

NOTES

»» **EXPOSED** (2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 16)

- Peter exposed the motives and end results of false teachers.
- Jude painted a similar picture of false prophets who teach falsehoods to gain a personal advantage.

»» **PREDICTED** (Jude 17-19)

- Jude reminded his readers that the apostles had warned them about false teachers and the dangers they posed.

»» **COUNTERED** (Jude 20-25)

- Jude called for his readers to counter false teachers by growing in their own faith, encouraging other believers when they have doubts, and demonstrating God's love to false teachers without accepting their teachings and practices.

»» **SUMMARY STATEMENTS**

- Believers must expose false teachers and their motives.
- Believers must be on guard for teachers who promote lifestyles contrary to the Scripture.
- Believers can overcome false teachers by maintaining their spiritual growth and reaching out to those who may be susceptible to false teachings.



FOCUS ATTENTION

How does it make you feel when you read a book, article, or news story that contains inaccurate information, facts out of context, or extreme bias?

- Early in the church, believers were confronted with teachers who presented teachings that were in conflict with Christ's.
- While we live in a society that values free speech, we still have a responsibility to confront falsehood, especially when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no room for misinterpreting God's revelation to man, and it is up to believers to communicate it accurately as well as to correct misperceptions.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE 2 PETER 2:1-3; JUDE 16

Name a few of the false teachings that threaten the church today?

- Although the Scriptures teach that Jesus is the only way to salvation, some churches accept that there is more than one way to God.
- The acceptance of a homosexuality as an option for family life has become a hot topic up for debate in many churches.
- Others reject the authenticity of miracles in the Bible, calling them folklore or tradition rather than literal accounts.

According to these passages, why are false prophets so dangerous? Can't we just ignore them?

- Teachings that confuse, distort, or discount the gospel may cause someone to miss out on salvation through Jesus Christ. Other false teachings may lead us to miss out on the best that God has for us.
- The teachings of false prophets eventually bring destruction to prophets themselves but also to those around them.

What character traits help us to identify false teachers?

- False prophets introduce heresy in stealth and secrecy. Falsehood often creeps in without fanfare or without much notice until it becomes established.
- False teachers are selfish, critical, arrogant flatterers. They promote ideas, teachings, and people to their own advantage, not the kingdom of God.

JUDE 17-19

What happens to a church or Christian community when it is infiltrated by false prophets and teachings?

- The church inevitably suffers strife and division when it entertains or permits false teachings.
- Because false teachers do not possess the Holy Spirit and instead follow their own natural inclinations, the church may

find itself pursuing strategies or principles that are simply not of God.

JUDE 20-25

What can Christians and the church do to protect ourselves from false prophets?

- Our faith is a defensive shield (see Eph. 6:16). Ongoing prayer serves to drown out voices that would disrupt our faith.
- Love is an offensive posture that guarantees we will not become victims of false teaching. As we practice what we preach there is no time to be led astray. When we must confront those who do not teach truth, we do so in love.

How should we handle the doubt that people often feel when confronted with the gospel and truth?

- Doubt should not be treated with condescension or condemnation. Doubting can be a healthy enterprise if it leads to understanding and confirming truth. Instead, treat doubters with patience and love.
- Never disregard, however, the urgency of the gospel. Sharing truth is not just critical but always timely. A lost world needs our timely intervention with the truths of the gospel.

What actions can we take to avoid becoming a victim of false teaching?

- Maintaining a sense of caution toward a false prophet is healthy. We are more likely to stumble or get sidetracked if we assume that we are impervious to the influence of false teachings.
- We can trust our all-powerful Savior to keep us from falling away from truth as long as we continually look to God and His Word.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How should you confront false doctrine if you or someone you know has entertained it?

- Consider researching and providing a well-written book on the subject in question that includes Scripture to give them food for thought grounded in biblical truth.
- Share with them in all sincerity the strength of your conviction, based on biblical authority, with an explanation of why any false teaching may be detrimental.
- **Personal Challenge:** Review the cultural traditions, ideas, and routines that have infiltrated your church and your personal daily life. If you determine there is falsehood that you have accepted or ignored, decide on the steps you need to take to dispel or remove it.

A DIET SUPPLEMENT

Bring a popular diet supplement or advertisement to the session. Show the product to the group and recount its advertised claims.

Note that the diet supplement may indeed be a good product, but often a product, philosophy, or teaching does not live up to its image. When that happens, we classify it as fraudulent or false. Often when a product's claims are found to be misleading, the manufacturers of the product face lawsuits and pay hefty fines.

Point out that this is the path that any false teaching takes. It leads to downfall for those who recklessly move forward without truth as basis for their claims—and it negatively impacts those around them.

Share the story of one of the world's most famous false teachers, Jim Jones, who began his journey to destruction by first infiltrating a Methodist church and then establishing his own Peoples Temple. Remind the group that Jim Jones's leadership eventually resulted in the suicide of 909 people, a third of them children, in Jonestown, the camp Jones established and named for himself in Guyana.

Ask: *The details of this sad journey aside, how did this happen?* Suggest that there will always be those who want to dazzle us,



control us, and exploit us with false messages. As independent thinkers we must be smart, ask the right questions, and turn to the perfect authority, God and His Word, for validation of truth.

Direct a volunteer to read Jude 24-25. Lead the group to discuss the comfort these verses give regarding avoiding false teachings. Then close in prayer that all would strengthen their faith in God.

DIG DEEPER

TRUTH IS RIGID

It seems that we Christians see it everywhere we look today. There is a war on truth in our world. By definition, truth is ridged, but the world would have us believe that it is elastic, just enough to fit the current agenda. Jude and Peter both warn about this travesty. They warn that the believers can be hurt and that the false teacher will be judged. The Scripture is replete with warnings of false teachers. Here's a small sampling:

Jude

"Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write and exhort you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all. For some men, who were designated for this judgment long ago, have come in by stealth; they are ungodly, turning the grace of our God into promiscuity and denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord" (Jude 3-4).

Paul

"I know that as soon as I'm gone, vicious wolves are going to show up and rip into this flock, men from your very own ranks twisting words so as to seduce disciples into following them instead of Jesus.

So stay awake and keep up your guard. Remember those three years I kept at it with you, never letting up, pouring my heart out with you, one after another" (Acts 20:29-30, MSG).

"To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work" (Titus 1:15-16, ESV).

John

"Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).

The threat of false teachers is real; we must be prepared. Jude tells believers that God "is able to protect you from stumbling" (Jude 24). How? The Scripture instructs believers to know God's Word. "Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil" (Eph. 6:10-11). The threat is real. Are you prepared?

SESSION 13

WITH ANTICIPATION

2 PETER 3:3-13,17-18

³ First, be aware of this: **Scoffers**^a will come in the last days to scoff, living according to their own desires, ⁴ saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? Ever since **the fathers fell asleep**,^b **all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation.**”^c ⁵ They willfully ignore this: Long ago the heavens and the earth were brought about from water and through water **by the word of God.**^d ⁶ Through these waters the world of that time perished when it was flooded. ⁷ **But by the same word**,^e the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

⁸ Dear friends, don’t let this one thing escape you: **With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.**^f ⁹ The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is **patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.**^g ¹⁰ **But the Day of the Lord**^h will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. ¹¹ **Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness**ⁱ ¹² as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. The heavens will be on fire and be dissolved because of it, and the elements will melt with the heat. ¹³ But based on His promise, we wait **for the new heavens and a new earth**,^j where righteousness will dwell. ... ¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. ¹⁸ **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**^k To Him be the **glory**^l both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

- a** People who show contempt for others
- b** Old Testament patriarchs had died physically.
- c** False teachers looked skeptically at such promises because the stability of the universe did not indicate that God was about to break into history again.
- d** God speaks and it happens; in this case Peter was pointing to God’s judgment of the world through the flood in the time of Noah. God demonstrated His power and judgment in a world that rejected Him.
- e** God will bring judgment again to the earth when Christ returns.
- f** Time is a part of creation; God lives outside of time in eternity.
- g** “He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn’t want anyone lost. He’s giving everyone space and time to change” (MSG).
- h** A time will come when God reveals His sovereignty over humanity’s power and existence
- i** Peter taught that Christian persecution brings opportunities for revering Christ.
- j** Isaiah tells us “The Lord’s justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field” (Isa. 32:16, NIV).
- k** The opposite of the false teachers, Christians are called to grow in Christlikeness.
- l** The importance and shining majesty that accompanies God’s presence

NOTES

»» A SURE RETURN (2 Peter 3:3-7)

- Peter reminded his readers that they could rest assured of the return of Christ regardless of what the false teachers may declare.
- Note: Affirm a literal hell for those who are judged, as opposed to annihilation.

»» THE PATIENT FATHER (2 Peter 3:8-9)

- Peter pointed to God's delay in the second coming as an act of God's grace that allows for more to come to Him in repentance.

»» THE WARNING ISSUED (2 Peter 3:10)

- Peter assured his readers that the Day of the Lord would come, so they should not be presumptuous of God's grace and miss the opportunity to accept His forgiveness.

»» WHILE WAITING (2 Peter 3:11-13,17-18)

- Peter called on his readers to practice holy living in anticipation of the return of Christ and in light of God's future judgment.

»» SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Believers can be confident in the return of Christ.
- Believers can urgently show God's grace by sharing Christ with all people.
- Believers demonstrate assurance of the return of Christ by building godly character in anticipation of that return.



FOCUS ATTENTION

When have you given up on something because you despaired of the waiting? When has being patient paid off?

- It is easy to grow weary when we are waiting for a positive pregnancy test, a job promotion, or some other critical change in our present circumstances. It is tempting, for example, to give up on a broken marriage after a long, painful dry spell. In God's timing, however, many people have discovered that by refusing to divorce and entrusting their relationship to God, their marriage eventually grew more satisfying.
- Long before we hit the earth, believers in the early church were already growing weary of waiting for the return that Jesus had promised. Believers today may even forget to anticipate it.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2 PETER 3:3-7

Why is it important to anticipate and pray for the return of Jesus Christ?

- Christ's return will signal the culmination of God's plan for redemption and as such is an important key event.
- Being partners in God's plan to redeem the world means we must be prepared to engage in every aspect.

Observing that "ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation" in itself does not make someone a scoffer. What qualifies?

- Scoffers diminish and downplay God's words for influence and reputation.
- Scoffers reject the truth that God has always been in control of all creation, including its beginning and the day when Christ returns.

Why is an acknowledgement of God's role in creation as well as the end time so important?

- The same power that formed the heavens and the earth will command the day of judgment. All people will answer to God the Creator, and those who have not received Christ will be sent to hell, a literal place that God created for those who did not accept His Son.

2 PETER 3:8-9

Why is patience so important when considering Christ's return? How should an understanding of God's timing impact a Christian?

- God is outside of time in the sense that His days are not measured in human terms. What seems like an eternity to us may be a short stint from God's perspective.

- Being patient for the Lord's return, while seeking it and praying for it, encompasses the realization that God is giving mankind every opportunity possible to turn to Him.

2 PETER 3:10

From reading this verse, how would you describe the Lord's return?

- It will be sudden and unexpected "like a thief." Thieves show up and steal what they desire. Likewise, Christ will take the world by surprise when He plucks away His followers.
- It will produce shock and awe as the dramatic events unfold. While a full understanding of what will take place is incomprehensible, the warning and image of heaven and earth catching fire should fill us with the desire to lead holy, godly lives until then.

2 PETER 3:11-13,17-18

What should those of us who are waiting on the Lord's return be doing as we wait?

- Despite the passage of time, we must keep the thought of His return fresh in our own hearts and minds. If we lose sight of this unfolding, we, too, become vulnerable to becoming unprepared scoffers.
- We should continue to share Christ and practice our faith so that we are continuing to grow spiritually.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How long has it been since you contemplated the Lord's return and shared your excitement with another believer or your fear with someone who is lost?

- Spend some time going over the passages that will help you anticipate Christ's return: Matthew 24:36; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 22:12.
- Plan a witnessing activity together, such as a Christmas coffee, where the group shares the message of the Christian story.
- **Personal Challenge:** Study 2 Peter 3:12. Choose honest, descriptive phrases for your state of mind when you think about that day. Write out a prayer for Christ's return and read it aloud each day for a week. Does the act of praying for Christ's return change your feelings about it?
- Make an appointment to share Christ with a lost person who has been on your heart. Use the subject of Christ's return to explain your concern for the person. Do not be afraid to share your belief in a literal hell.

OBJECT LESSON

COFFEE, CUPS, AND A CROCKPOT

Bring a crockpot to the session, along with a packet of coffee, and a cup of fresh brewed coffee. Depending on the size of your group, you may consider treating each of them to their own cup of coffee.

Show the group the coffee cup(s) and ask if anyone would like a cup of coffee. Take a few minutes to casually discuss their favorite flavors, when they enjoy it most in their day, what they like to eat with their coffee, etc. In other words, whet their appetites for coffee.

Point to the crockpot and note that if you had an efficient coffee maker at your disposal you could have a cup of coffee ready for everyone in the room in minutes. Say: *But let's pretend that a coffee maker is not available. Instead, let's say the perfect cup needs to be brewed for a while. That's why we'll agree that we need to use this slow cooker for this coffee. How long to do you think it will take to make coffee in a crockpot?*

Transition to a discussion of the Lord's return by noting that God's preparation for the last days is similar. *God is taking His time getting to the perfect blend of circumstances, not because He is slow in human terms, but because only He truly understands*



when the time is right. Stress that God is giving us time to reconcile the world to Him. Invite the group to discuss how this knowledge should affect the way we witness to others.

If you brought coffee for everyone, distribute the cups, noting that you are showing your impatience as a human being by serving this coffee instead of the crockpot coffee. Challenge the group every time they drink coffee this week to pray for Christ's return.

DIG DEEPER

COME, LORD JESUS!

Peter warned his readers that scoffers will show up to them and mockingly question if Christ really will return (see 2 Pet. 3:3-4). Some may be tempted to become wrapped up in the business of life and fall into prey to this false thinking. These folks may rationalize that "all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation" (v. 4b). The apostle Peter reminded believers to remember the patience of God and that God "is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance" (v. 9). But make no mistake: Christ will return!

How would it change the way we live if we routinely reminded ourselves of this wonderful, glorious truth? Dwight L. Moody once said, "I never preached a sermon without thinking that possibly the Lord may come before I preach another."¹ As believers, do we anticipate the Lord's return? The magnificent reality that Christ is coming to collect His bride should have a profound impact and outcome on our lives as Christians. C. S. Lewis wrote, "If this is not an integral part of the faith once given to the saints, I do not know what is."² We must be on guard and live a sanctified life. "Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found at peace with Him without spot or blemish" (v. 14).

Billy Graham summed it up well: "A Christian should live his life ... in the constant anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ! If we could live every day as though it may be the very last one before the final judgment, what a difference it would make here on earth! But we don't like to think that way. We don't like to think that our carefully made plans, our long range schemes may be interrupted by the trumpet of God. Too many people would rather say, 'Oh, well, the end of the world hasn't come yet, so why think about it—it's probably a thousand years away.'"³

Look! He is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see Him,
including those who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7a).

1. Billy Graham, "He Is Coming Back" Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Cited 13 March 2016. Available at billygraham.org.

2. C.S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1988), 93. 3. Ibid., Graham.



Connections

SOCIAL MEDIA



Connect with a community of Explore the Bible users on Facebook. Post responses to questions, share ideas, and link to great blog content. Connect with us at Facebook.com/ExploreTheBible.



Get quotes, instant updates about new articles, giveaways, and more on Twitter. Follow us: [@ExploreTheBible](https://twitter.com/ExploreTheBible).

BLOG

Discover useful articles and blog posts for leading and strengthening your Bible study group. You'll find additional teaching ideas from Explore the Bible leaders, video intros, and much more. Subscribe to the blog at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults.

10 TERRIBLE WAYS TO READ YOUR BIBLE

by Dr. Philip Nation



As we face another calendar year, many people will renew their commitment to regular Bible reading. It is a commitment that I've made numerous times as well, with varying results. But, as we all know, as Christians, we must regularly engage with the Bible if we plan to mature in our faith.

1. SET AN UNREALISTIC GOAL.

Make sure that you try to go from barely picking up your Bible to understanding the nuances of Ezekiel in the first week of the year.

2. PUNISH YOURSELF FOR NOT READING ENOUGH.

Since you were so bad at it last year, heap guilt upon your mind and soul. It is a key motivator for behavior modification.

3. CHOOSE A TRANSLATION YOU'VE NEVER USED BEFORE.

Since you are challenging yourself, get a translation (ancient or modern) that is totally unfamiliar. This way, not only will you lapse in amount of reading, you'll confuse yourself in what you are reading.

4. READ IN BED JUST BEFORE YOU FALL ASLEEP.

Using the final few moments of consciousness will insure that you drift off to sleep mid-passage and forget most of what you read.

5. READ TO FIND BIBLICAL FACTOIDS.

Make sure you discover random facts about Bible stories and characters so you can impress your fellow Bible study members. You'll be ready for questions like: "Who knows the name of the servant who had his ear cut off by Simon Peter?"

6. SKIP THE BIBLE READING PLANS.

Just open your Bible randomly each day. Eventually, if you stick with it, surely somehow you'll read the entire Bible. Or, at least, an entire book. Maybe one of the short ones.

7. SEPARATE PRAYER FROM BIBLE READING.

You're smart and can figure out the Bible all on your own. Make sure you hold off on prayer until some other time.

8. MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.

Since you slacked off last year, you need to do some serious catching up. Make sure you try to read at least 23 chapters a day.

9. JUST READ THE RED LETTERS.

Don't worry about the rest of the Bible. If it did not come directly from the lips of Jesus, obviously, you don't need to worry about those other guys like Moses, David, Paul, or John.

10. USE THE BIBLE LIKE A MORAL HANDBOOK FOR LIFE.

You need to make yourself into a better person. The Bible is filled with great morality tales and quick proverbs to make you a better you.

Now that I've got your attention, let me encourage you to do none of those things. Instead, have a combination of joy, sincerity, and expectation about reading the Bible. Our God has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures and longs for you to know Him. Find a pace that is comfortable and enjoy the journey ahead as you read the Bible. Drop the need to be smarter than everyone else about it all and just be a disciple. That's all Jesus asked of you anyway.

Dr. Philip Nation is the director of Content Development with LifeWay Christian Resources and serves as teaching pastor for The Fellowship, a multi-campus church in Nashville, TN. He is the author of Compelled: Living the Mission of God, Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow, and Storm Shelter: Psalms of God's Embrace. He was the general editor for The Mission of God Study Bible.

COMING NEXT QUARTER

JOSHUA; JUDGES; RUTH

- Session 1** **Commissioned** > *Joshua 1:1-9*
- Session 2** **Conquest** > *Joshua 6:12-25*
- Session 3** **Commitment Kept** > *Joshua 10:6-14*
- Session 4** **Savior Announced** > *Luke 1:26-38*
- Session 5** **Settled** > *Joshua 22:1-8*
- Session 6** **Challenged** > *Joshua 24:14-28*
- Session 7** **Value All** > *Proverbs 24:11-12; Mark 10:46-49*
- Session 8** **Rebellion's Cycle** > *Judges 2:11-19*
- Session 9** **Willing Servants** > *Judges 4:4-10,12-16*
- Session 10** **Timid Warrior** > *Judges 6:11-16,25-32*
- Session 11** **Compromised Potential** > *Judges 16:4-6,13-20*
- Session 12** **Faith Through Trials** > *Ruth 1:6-18*
- Session 13** **Redeemed and Secure** > *Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17*

Pentecost and the Jewish Diaspora



*Pentecost and the Jewish Diaspora" is taken from The Holman Bible Atlas © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, page 241. Used by permission.

Explore the Bible®

ADULTS

Coming Up Next

New Studies for Winter 2016-17

Scripture: Joshua; Judges; Ruth

General Editor: Tony Evans

LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible

Want to use *Explore the Bible* with other age groups?

Preview *Explore the Bible: Kids, Students, and Young Adults* at LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible.

And now, there is a **choice of translations** that appears in your study. Choose from HCSB, KJV, NIV, or ESV.

CHECK OUT THESE ADDITIONAL STUDY OPTIONS FOR ANY OTHER TIME YOU NEED A BIBLE STUDY.



Volume 6: Exile and Return

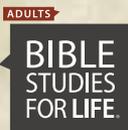
God the Sustainer (Daniel, Ezra)

by Daniel Akin and Walter R. Strickland II

God the Provider (Esther, Nehemiah, Malachi)

by Jimmy Scroggins, D. A. Horton, and Robby Gallaty

GospelProject.com



Spoken: The Rhythm of God's Word

by H. B. Charles, Jr.

Thrive: Living in Real Joy

by Tony Merida

BibleStudiesForLife.com



Create your own Bible studies

in minutes. Choose from 1,200+ text-based and video-enhanced studies on more than 400 topics from all 66 books of the Bible. Visit the website for a free trial.

SmallGroup.com

LifeWay | Adults