

STUDIES IN
I PETER



SANTA BARBARA
COMMUNITY CHURCH



Winter Calendar

Teaching Date	Study	Text	Topic
1/23	1	1:1-5	New Birth = Living Hope
1/30	2	1:6-12	The Joy of New Birth
2/6	3	1:13-16	Holy Living
2/13	No Study: Bob Bakke teaching		
2/20	4	1:17-25	Living as Strangers Part 1
2/27	5	2:1-10	Living as Strangers Part 2
3/6	6	2:11-25	Life Among the Pagans
3/13	7	3:1-7	Husbands and Wives
3/20	8	3:8-22	Silencing the Critics
3/ 27	9	4:1-6	Our Attitude Toward Sin
4/3	No Study: Easter Sunday		
4/10	10	4:7-11	Our Attitude Toward Fellow Believers
4/17	11	4:12-19	Don't Be Surprised by Suffering
4/24	No Study: Church Retreat		
5/1	12	5:1-13	Humility and Leadership

The artwork for this study was provided by Linnie Avila. The text was written by Steve Jolley. Many thanks to proof-readers Joan Fredrickson and Krista Frohling.

Sources / Abbreviations

Blum	Edwin Blum, <i>The Expositors Bible Commentary, 1 Peter</i> , Zondervan, 1981.
Cedar	Paul Cedar, <i>The Communicator's Commentary</i> , Word, 1984.
Clowney	Edmund Clowney, <i>The Message of 1 Peter</i> , Inter Varsity Press, 1988.
ESV	English Standard Version
Kistemaker	Simon Kistemaker, <i>New Testament Commentary</i> , Baker Book House, 1987.
KJB	King James Bible
Luther	Martin Luther, <i>Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude</i> , Kregel Publications. 1982.
McArthur	John McArthur, <i>The McArthur New Testament Commentary 1 Peter</i> , Moody, 2004.
McKnight	Scot McKnight, <i>The NIV Application Commentary</i> , Zondervan, 1996.
NIV	New International Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Stibbs	Alan Stibbs, <i>The First Epistle General of Peter</i> , Eerdmans Publishing, 1959.
Wiersbe	Warren Wiersbe, <i>Be Hopeful</i> , Victor, 1982.

All Scripture passages are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

Peter. His original name in Hebrew was *Simeon*. James refers to him with this name at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:14). His Greek name, *Simon*, is how Peter is referred to forty-nine times in the New Testament. *Cephas* is his third name and is the Aramaic word for *rock*, which is the same as the Greek word for rock, *Petros*. What sort of man was this Peter?

He was just an ordinary guy, a working man, a fisherman to be precise. No distinguished family name—all we know for sure is that his father was called John. Not a lot of money and not much in the way of formal education, it seems. Like all “ordinary people” he had his particular strengths and he had his share of human weakness. His life revolved around the family business, the sea, the wife, the mother-in-law—you know the kind of story. (David Gill, Peter the Rock, p. 13)

Jesus selected twelve disciples to travel with him and learn about his Kingdom. With his brother Andrew, who was also one of the twelve disciples, Peter was to spend the better part of three years with Jesus. Along with James and John, Peter rose to a place of leadership and prominence among this traveling band of brothers. Peter was with Jesus at the transfiguration (Matthew 17). He was the first to recognize and proclaim that this rabbi Jesus was in fact the long awaited Messiah (Matthew 16). This impetuous disciple was the only one to try his ability at walking on water (Matthew 14). He was not above violence. At the arrest of Jesus it was Peter who drew a sword and took off the ear (he missed his target) of Malchus in an attempt to protect his Lord (John 18:10). Yet, only hours later, this previously brave disciple denies Jesus three times to those who question him (Matthew 26).

After Peter’s failure Jesus reinstated him giving him a special commission (John 21). Peter was to preach the first sermon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit used Peter’s words and the book of Acts tells us that three thousand people believed in Jesus that day (Acts 2). The Church of Jesus Christ was born. Peter goes on to become the dominant figure in the first half of the book of Acts. It was this disciple who healed (Acts 3), spent time in prison (Acts 4), took the gospel to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and played a pivotal role in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

Not much is known about Peter’s later life. The focus of the book of Acts shifts to the apostle Paul. When Peter was released from prison he, *left for another place* (Acts 12:17). He may have traveled in Asia Minor ministering to *God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia* (1 Peter 1:1). Peter eventually settled in Rome where he was crucified for following Jesus.

Both 1 & 2 Peter are a part of the New Testament letters referred to as the “catholic” (universal) or “general epistles” (James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude). These letters are grouped together because they are not addressed to a specific location such as Paul’s letter to the Christians at Rome. Since these epistles lack a specific audience they are named after their authors.

In reading 1Peter it quickly becomes apparent that the apostle’s tone is warm and pastoral. The letter is full of encouragement for Christians who are suffering persecution and hardship. Peter is giving practical guidance for these believers who are trying to figure out how to live for God in the midst of a pagan culture that is hostile to their faith. While the letter is not a theological treatise, like Paul’s letter to the Romans, it is full of valuable theological insights.

Peter highlights the sufferings of Jesus and his subsequent messianic glory. Since Jesus suffered and was then glorified the followers of Jesus can also expect to suffer and look forward to future glory and reward. This is a comforting picture for believers who are experiencing hatred and persecution. The word *suffer* is found twelve times in this brief letter. Peter wants his readers to realize that the sovereign Lord will sustain them in the midst of adversity and lift them up to a position of honor and glory in the future.

Some commentators speculate that Peter may have been living in Rome (*Babylon of 5:13*) during the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68). In his madness Nero burned two thirds of Rome and then blamed it on the Christians. The result was an ever widening and hostile persecution of this young church in much of the Roman world.

Peter is the disciple that the New Testament presents in all his strengths and weakness. While the apostle Paul impresses us with his discipline, brilliance, and missionary tenacity, many Christians have a hard time relating to this giant of the New Testament. His penning of thirteen New Testament letters, three lengthy and costly missionary trips can seem super human and beyond the ability of the ordinary Christian. We love Peter, however, because we can identify with him. He puts his foot in his mouth, he stumbles, and he gets mad. In short, he is so very human! We find in him comfort for our own failures and, in his success, hope for our own advancement in discipleship.

Study One

New Birth = Living Hope

1 Peter 1:1-5



As we begin our study of 1 Peter try to picture yourself in the position of Peter's readers. You are *strangers in the world* who are *scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.*¹ In short order Peter will remind these believers to *not be surprised by the painful trial you are suffering.* (4:12) Not exactly comforting words. In the weeks ahead we will come to understand more fully what it is to suffer for the sake of Christ. Peter begins his pastoral letter of encouragement to suffering Christians by reminding them of their new identity in Christ. In this brief epistle, the apostle wastes no time in providing a

condensed resume of the Christian faith.

1 Peter is a short, truth-laden letter to everyday Christians. As we embark on our twelve-week study of this remarkable New Testament book, take the time to read the letter in its entirety in one sitting. What themes do you notice? Are there any particular words or concepts that stand out? Take a stab at summarizing the broad thrust of Peter's words in these five chapters. Be ready to share *your* opening impressions with your Homegroup.

¹ Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia are the names of Roman provinces that cover a large part of Asia Minor. Most of modern day Turkey would be included. Most likely some of the large Jewish population of this part of the world heard Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Jerusalem and returned to these provinces spreading the gospel.

Peter begins by identifying himself as an *apostle of Jesus Christ*. Think through some of Peter's failures as a disciple and Jesus' reinstatement of him. How is it that Peter has now come to proudly wear this title of distinction, *apostle of Jesus Christ*?

- Matthew 26:31-35
- Matthew 26:69-75
- John 21:15-19

In 1 Peter 1:1-5, the author describes the Christian's new birth. He begins by emphatically pointing out that the miracle of salvation begins with God. Salvation is God's initiative. *To God's elect . . . (vs. 1)* The Bible frequently teaches that our salvation is due to a sovereign God electing or choosing people to be saved. This doesn't sit well with many people. After all, we like to believe that we are masters of our own destiny and that we choose to follow God. Ours is an era that feeds on the belief of the freedom of the individual. If it seems startling to you for Peter to begin his letter with this teaching, consider how Paul begins some of his letters. What are the similarities and differences between Peter and Paul's introductions?

- Ephesians 1:1-5
- Titus 1:1-2

The fact that God has chosen us is so central to Peter's understanding of new spiritual birth that he mentions it again in 2:9, *You are a chosen race*. This biblical teaching of "election" or God's choosing of us is found throughout the Scriptures. Ponder the texts below and write down a few of your thoughts concerning this wonderful and perplexing teaching. What do you make of this teaching on "election"?

- Romans 8:29-30
- Ephesians 1:11

- Colossians 3:12
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Jesus himself was quite clear concerning the sovereignty of God in calling individuals to himself to be born again spiritually. Consider the words of Jesus. How do they help your understanding of God's choosing people to be saved?

- Matthew 24:22
- John 6:44
- John 13:18
- John 15:16

If you are wondering about your part in choosing to follow Jesus rest assured that the New Testament writers also affirm the truth that every man and woman who comes to God must exercise their will. Consider the following Scriptures in light of those we have already looked at.

- Matthew 23:37
- John 3:16
- John 7:17-18
- Acts 2:37-38

Charles Spurgeon, the famous 19th century London preacher, was once asked how he reconciled the Bible's teaching on God's sovereign election and our freedom to choose to follow God. Spurgeon responded, "I never reconcile

friends.” How do you understand and apply these two sets of Scriptures we have considered?¹

Peter is writing to, *God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout . . .* The word “scattered” comes from the Greek word *diaspora*, which is where we get the English word dispersion. The “diaspora” became a common term that referred to the scattering of the Jews after their forced deportation by the Assyrians in 722 BC and exile from Jerusalem, under the Babylonians, in 587 BC. How would these opening 5 verses of Peter’s letter be of encouragement to people who were *scattered* and *strangers*? How are they an encouragement to you?

Peter now goes on in verse 2 to clarify the scope of this new spiritual birth in Jesus Christ. According to verse 2, how are we chosen? You should find at least three ways that God’s activity is involved in his saving us. How does this help you understand your new birth?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

¹ Theologian J.I. Packer has written an excellent book that struggles with these two biblical teachings. “All Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it. What causes this odd state of affairs? The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the Church—the intruding of rationalistic speculations, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and let God be wiser than men, and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic. People see the Bible teaches man’s responsibility for his actions; they do not see (man, indeed, cannot see) how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions. They are not content to let the two truths live side by side, as they do in the Scriptures, but to jump to the conclusion that, in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility, they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty, and to explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to over-simplify the Bible by cutting out the mysteries is natural to our perverse minds, and it is not surprising that even godly men should fall victim to it.” (J.I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, 1961, pp.16-17)

What is *foreknowledge*? Simon Kistemaker gives us some help in understanding this term.

It is much more than the ability to predict future events. It includes the absolute sovereignty of God in determining and implementing his decision to save sinful man. The word *foreknowledge* appears in Peter's Pentecost sermon, where he declares to his Jewish audience that Jesus was "handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge." (Acts 2:23) Peter implies that God worked according to his sovereign plan and purpose which he made in advance. Paul also refers to foreknowledge. The verb *foreknow* occurs in Romans 8:29, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." Paul indicates that the concepts of *foreknowledge* and *predestination* go together. Foreknowledge and predestination were acts of God before the creation of the world. (Kistemaker, p. 35)

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. What role does the Spirit of God play in our salvation? How have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life since you have become a Christian?

When Peter mentions *sprinkling by his blood* he undoubtedly has in mind Exodus 24:3-8. How does this Old Testament story help you understand this verse?

Before moving on, identify each member of the trinity—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—in these opening two verses. Do you normally think of your salvation as a work of the trinity? Why? Why not?

What our English versions take five long sentences to translate (vs. 3-9) is really one long sentence in the Greek text. What may upset English teachers in Peter's grammar is a beautifully elegant doxology (praise) for what God has done for us in our salvation.¹

The picture of *new birth* is a metaphor describing our new spiritual life. Peter will go on to use the same image in 1:23 where he says, *For you have been born again*. Jesus said much the same to a Pharisee named Nicodemus telling him he must be, *born again*. (John 3:3) What do you like about this image of new spiritual life? How does it help in your understanding of salvation?

What are the similarities between physical birth and spiritual birth?

The term *born again* has become very popular in the media in recent years and is often used to describe Christians. You will hear commentators on TV refer to "born again Christians." Are there any other type of Christians? Is it possible to be a Christian and **not** be *born again*? Do you use this term to describe your faith to non-Christian friends?

What *hope* is Peter referring to in verse 3? Think about your own salvation. In what ways does your new birth result in a new hope? Don't be too "spiritual" here! Get very practical and describe this *hope* in every day terms a non-Christian would understand.

Would we have any *hope* without the resurrection of Jesus? Is it possible to have a Christian faith without a resurrection?

¹ Peter's doxology in 1:3-9 is very similar to Paul's run-on sentence in Ephesians 1:3-14. If you want to go deeper in this study compare words and themes in these two lengthy sentences. What are the similarities? Do you notice any differences?

When a parent dies many people end up with some kind of inheritance. Here in verse 4 Peter refers to our spiritual inheritance. The concept of *inheritance* in the Bible is a rich one and the word is found often. If you want extra-credit for this study, read these verses that speak of our *inheritance*. Impress your Homegroup by summarizing what you learned.

- Romans 8:17
- Galatians 4:7
- Ephesians 1:13-14
- Titus 3:7
- Hebrews 9:15

In verse 4, Peter tells us three ways that our heavenly *inheritance* is different from any earthly inheritance we may receive. How are they different? What does this mean to you and your future?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Peter's readers are *scattered, strangers* and suffering for their faith. How does Peter assure them that this inheritance is secure?

End your Homegroup by sharing how this hope we have in Christ is shaping your day-to-day living now.

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Two

New Birth = Joy!

1 Peter 1:6-12

In 1 Peter 1:6-12, Peter is reminding his readers that their new spiritual birth changes everything. Peter began his letter with an affirmation that being born again results in a living hope because of God's initiative on our behalf. In this long run-on sentence (vs. 3-9 are one sentence in the Greek text) Peter now goes on to point out that this new birth is accompanied by an *inexpressible and glorious joy*. (vs. 8) Salvation and joy belong together. When the believer becomes fully aware of the gift of eternal salvation, it is expressed in a rejoicing and joy regardless of earthly circumstances. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said much the same thing.

And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. (Isaiah 35:10)



Peter's readers were facing severe persecution. In the weeks ahead as we study this epistle we will see this theme come up frequently. It is against this backdrop of a suffering church that Peter seeks to encourage the believers, writing of the salvation joy that is an essential part of being a Christian.

While the focus of our study is verses 6-12, start at the beginning of the chapter and read 1:1-12 again. Try reading it in more than one translation. Keep in mind as you read that the people who first read these words were having a tough go of it. Life was not easy and suffering, persecution and hardship was a definitive part of their everyday experience.

Verse 6 says, *In this you greatly rejoice . . .* What are the words *in this* referring to? Why would this cause rejoicing?

Peter comes back to this theme of joy a few verses later when he says the believer is, *filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy . . .* (vs. 8) According to verse 9 why should the Christian's life be characterized by this joy?

Think about the things that bring you joy in life. For just a moment leave God and our spiritual blessings out of your thoughts. List a handful of ingredients in your life that bring you pleasure and joy.

Now think about your eternal salvation. How does it bring joy into your life? How does your salvation and the living hope we have in Christ affect the joy you find in the more temporal and common things of life?

Peter says this joy is *inexpressible*. The Greek word (*aneklateto*) literally means to be higher than speech. In other words, salvation joy is at one level beyond communication. In spite of this it is only natural to search for words. It is typical of a lover to say his love is beyond words and then write a lengthy poem trying to describe this love. Christian devotional literature (especially the mystics) is full of authors who have had an ineffable experience of joy with Christ and then spare no effort trying to explain what they deem essentially inexpressible! Go ahead and give it a try. How would you describe the joy that you have in your salvation? Describe and give expression to this *inexpressible and glorious joy*.

Consider and respond to Simon Kistemaker's and John MacArthur's thoughts on the joy Peter is talking about.

What is joy? Joy is not an emotional outburst that lasts momentarily. It is not simply a response to external circumstances that favor and encourage

expressions of joy. Joy often appears in the midst of hardship, suffering, trials, and persecutions. Joy is a gift that we receive from God, for Scripture shows that God is the giver of joy. This gift, then, comes to the believer who puts his complete trust in God. (Kistemaker, p. 51)

Salvation joy is not some brief, shallow, circumstantial emotion, but rather something permanent and profound, tied closely to the spiritual blessings of faith, hope, and love and given by God through His Son and the Holy Spirit. Mere happiness comes from positive external events, but salvation joy results from the deep-rooted confidence that one possesses eternal life from the living God through the crucified and risen Christ . . .

(MacArthur, p. 40)

What other Scriptures do you know of which speak of the joy the believer has in salvation and knowing God? Be ready to read some of these verses to your group.

The Westminster Catechism asks the question,¹ *What is man's chief end?* It answers: *Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.* Why is the enjoyment of God so important to the Christian life? Why do you think Peter is so concerned that his readers understand the role of joy in the Christian life?

Before moving on in our text for this study think about your own life. Are you experiencing an *inexpressible joy* in your spiritual life? Why? Why not?

Augustine, the 4th century pastor and theologian from North Africa, was acquainted with inconsistency in his experience of joy. How do you resonate with his ruminations below?

I was astonished that although I now loved you . . . I did not persist in enjoyment of my God. Your beauty drew me to you, but soon I was dragged away from you by my own weight and in dismay I plunged again

¹ Catechism comes from the Greek word *katecheo*, which means to teach or instruct. It was during the 16th century Reformation that churches began to take members through a set catechism of instruction, often in preparation for baptism. In 1647 the most famous of the Reformed catechisms took shape, the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechism.

into the things of this world . . . as though I had sensed the fragrance of the fare but was not yet able to eat it. (Quoted in John Piper, When I Don't Desire God, p. 14)

At the heart of this letter is Peter's concern for Christians who are facing *grief in all kinds of trials*. (vs. 6) He reminds his readers that their sufferings are only for a *little while* (more literally would be *for a season*). Read the verses below. How do they give perspective to the believer who is suffering? Grapple especially with 2 Corinthians 4:17 where Paul calls our sufferings, *light and momentary troubles*. How can Paul say this?

- Psalm 30:5
- Isaiah 54:7-8
- Romans 8:18
- 2 Corinthians 4:17

After our discussion of joy it would be a mistake to think that Peter takes the pain and suffering of believers lightly. Nothing could be further from the truth. The *grief* Peter refers to is real (NASB translates this as *distressed*). Respond to this observation by commentator Warren Wiersbe.

Peter did not suggest that we take a careless attitude toward trials, because this would be deceitful. Trials produce what he called "heaviness." The word means to "experience grief or pain." It is used to describe our Lord in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37), and the sorrow of saints at the death of loved ones. (1 Thes. 4:13) To deny that our trials are painful is to make them even worse. Christians must accept the fact that there are difficult experiences in life and not put on a brave front just to appear "more spiritual." (Wiersbe, p. 24)

Verse 7 explains, at least in part, why believers suffer through trials. What positive purpose do *trials* have in the Christian's life? How does the illustration of gold being refined by fire help you understand these trials?

Verses 10-12 tie the Old Testament and the New Testament together. The great salvation, that Peter has spoken of in vs. 3-9, was predicted by the Old Testament prophets. If you find yourself amazed at the scope of God's provision for salvation, you are in good company. It appears that the prophets themselves had to study their own words to figure out what God was up to! Even the angels are astonished and maybe a bit perplexed by God's plan.¹ Consider Edwin Blum's comment.

Through revelation the prophets learned that some of their utterances related to future generations. The writings of the prophets contain both "near" and "far" aspects. Yet the prophets were unable to understand the time significance of their prophecies or to understand fully the relation of the sufferings of the Messiah to his glory. (Blum, p. 222)

Read 2 Peter 1:20-21. How does this help in your understanding of our passage in 1 Peter 1:10-12?

Having spent some time in individual study and group discussion of 1 Peter 1:6-12 what part of the text has impacted you the most? Which part of this study will you apply to your life this week? Be ready to share with your group how you will implement what you have learned.

¹ Could it be that God is educating the angels by what he is doing in the church? (1 Corinthians 4:9, Ephesians 3:10)

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Three Called To Be Different 1 Peter 1:13-16

When was the last time you had a conversation with a fellow believer where you encouraged each other to holy living? It has probably been awhile. Holy living is a subject that is easy to avoid. We tend to become uncomfortable with the idea. Un-biblical caricatures of a “holy life” may flood our minds and when we are really honest it just is not that attractive! It is much easier to talk about God’s holiness or to sing the hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.”

After pondering God’s choosing of us for salvation through the miracle of new birth, Peter now begins to lay out a plan for actually living a new life based on this new birth. The goal is a lifestyle that is characterized by holiness. Nineteenth century preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “Holiness is the architectural plan upon which God buildeth up His living temple.” Before reading the text, write down some of your thoughts, pre-conceived ideas, stereotypes and impressions about what “holy living” looks like. Have some fun sharing these in your group.



Read 1 Peter 1:13-16. While it will take some work to discern the implications of this text, Peter’s position in these four short verses is very clear. Warren Wiersbe gives us a succinct summary.

The argument here is logical and simple. Children inherit the nature of their parents. God is holy; therefore, as his children, we should live holy lives. We are “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4) and ought to reveal that nature in godly living. (Wiersbe, p. 33)

The grammatical syntax of this passage is important. Peter began his letter using the indicative mood explaining the nature of the Christian’s faith in verses 3-12. Peter essentially said, “This is what God did for you . . .” Now Peter changes his tone of voice and begins to command and urge (imperative mood) his readers to live a new life based on their new spiritual position. *Therefore* (vs. 13) is an important word because it reminds us that this call to holiness is based on God’s concrete action on our behalf.

In verse 13 Peter gives three rapid-fire commands for this new life. What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The first admonition, *prepare your minds for action* presents us with an image that is often lost in our English translations. The NKJV gives a more literal wording from the Greek text, *Gird up the loins of your mind*. The metaphor can be a little confusing at first glance. What we are to picture is a first-century person who would pull a long flowing garment between his legs and either tie them off around his waist or tuck them into a belt. The point was so as not to be hindered in walking, running, working or battle. Peter then applies this image to our mind. Commentators note that a modern equivalent would be something like, “rolling up the shirt-sleeves of your mind,” or “taking off the coat of your mind.” (McKnight, p. 84)

How do you take the initiative in preparing your mind for a life of holiness? Be practical. How does how we think affect how we act? What can we do to think correctly?

How do the verses below help?

- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
- 1 Peter 5:8

The second command, *be self-controlled* is translated in the NASB as *keep sober in spirit*. The original meaning of this word was related to abstaining from the excessive use of wine. In the New Testament the word is used often with a view to having sound judgment as a believer in all areas of life. Consider John MacArthur's comments.

Metaphorically it means not to lose spiritual control by imbibing the world's sinful system. It connotes the entire realm of spiritual steadfastness or self-control: having clarity of mind and discipline of heart, being in charge of one's priorities and balancing one's life so as not to be subject to the controlling and corrupting influence of the flesh's allurements. (MacArthur, p. 65)

Peter will re-emphasize this self-control again in 1 Peter 5:8. How have you seen self-control help in your quest to live a holy life? If you are brave and it is appropriate, share with your group an area where a lack of self-control hindered your spiritual life.

The third command in verse 13 concerns living life now in light of our hope in the return of Christ. Remember Peter is writing to a suffering church. This longing for the return of Christ permeates New Testament writings and was an essential part of first century faith.¹ In our own era it seems that a positive hope in the return of Christ may have been replaced with a fearful desire to not be "left behind." What hinders you from thinking about our hope in Christ more?

In the New Testament our hope in the return of Christ is often coupled with holy living. Along with our text in Peter consider Titus 2:11-14. How is our hope in the return of Christ related to holy living now?

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus

¹ See Romans 8:23, Philippians 3:20-21, Colossians 3:4, 2 Timothy 4:8, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 22:12.

Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:11-14)

This call to holiness in lifestyle is further expanded in verse 14 with a positive and a negative.

Positive = *As obedient children*

Negative= *do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance*

Respond to this comment by commentator Paul Cedar.

Obedience is at the very foundation of Christian lifestyle. If we are to be disciples of Jesus, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34). Jesus said that the person who authentically loves Him is the one who obeys Him (John 14:21). Peter warns us not to conform to our former desires as we once did when we lived in ignorance of sin. The word “conform” denotes a fashioning that is superficial and transient. It is to be compared to the fashions in both men’s and women’s clothing that are constantly changing from one season to another. (Cedar, p. 124)

In verses 15-16, Peter bases his call to a different lifestyle on the nature of God. He quotes from the book of Leviticus to make his case, *Be holy, because I am holy.*¹ What does the word *holy* mean? Write a few sentences that describe “holiness.” To help you make it clear assume that you are explaining this concept to someone who is unfamiliar with the Bible and biblical language.

¹ The quotation could be from either Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2 or 20:7. The adjective *holy* is found more often in Leviticus than in any other book of the Bible.

Does holy living sound exciting to you? Why? Why not? Does it sound impossible to you? Why? Why not?

Think about this statement on holiness made by C.S. Lewis. Do you agree with it?

How little people know of who think holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing . . . it is irresistible. If even 10% of the world's population had it, would not the whole world be converted and happy before a year's end?
(C.S. Lewis)

If you took holiness more seriously what would need to change in your life?

Some may see "holiness" as good for a "spiritual" part of their lives but having little to no effect on practical daily living. Respond to this statement by Warren Wiersbe.

To a dedicated believer, there is no such thing as "secular" and "sacred." All of life is holy as we live to glorify God. Even such ordinary activities as eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)
(Wiersbe, p. 35)

How has this study challenged you? What plans do you have to live out your calling to a different lifestyle?

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Four

Living As Strangers Part 1

1 Peter 1:17-25



A main thrust of Peter's epistle is the call for believers to see themselves as *strangers* in the world. We have already seen this at the very beginning of the letter where Peter refers to his readers as, *God's elect, strangers in*

the world . . . (1:1). In verse 17 of this study Peter again refers to Christians as *strangers*. He will again come back to this theme in chapter 2:11 calling the church *aliens and strangers in the world*. The two Greek words that the NIV translates *alien* and *stranger* differ slightly. One refers to a stranger passing through a land, while the other speaks of someone who lives in a country without citizenship. In 1 Peter 2:11 these words are combined.

Read 1 Peter 1:17 – 2:23. It will take us three studies to cover this material. As you read, ponder this theme of being a stranger and alien in our world. Peter is crafting a vision for the people of God, the church, that will enable them to live out their new identity as a people who have been *born again*. (2:23) Borrowing from this imagery Stanly Hauerwas and William Willimon have written a book titled Resident Aliens. Consider these words in light of our study in 1 Peter.

We believe that the designations of the church as a colony and Christians as resident aliens are not too strong for the modern American church — indeed, we believe it is the nature of the church, at any time and in any situation, to be a colony. Perhaps it sounds a bit overly dramatic to describe the actual churches you know as colonies in the middle of an alien culture. But we believe that things have changed for the church residing in America and that faithfulness to Christ demands that we either change or else go the way of all compromised forms of the Christian faith. The church is a colony, an island in one culture in the middle of another. (Resident Aliens, p. 12)

When Peter refers to believers as *strangers* and *aliens* how do you respond? Do you feel like a *stranger* in this culture and this country? What stops you from embracing the idea of being an *alien*?

What does verse 17 tell us about God? How is this information about God's character to shape our living as *strangers*?

Verse 18 begins with the words, *For you know . . .* Read 1 Peter 1:18-25 again. What is Peter reminding these believers that they already *know*? Simply list the truths about our salvation that you find in these verses.

In verse 18 we are introduced to one of the most important words to describe our salvation. Christians are people who have been *redeemed*. It is the key word in our passage and essential for understanding our identity as believers. Unfortunately the impact of this word can be lost on the 21st century reader. Edwin Blum helps us with some background.¹

The Greek word *lytroo* (“redeem”) goes back to the institution of slavery in ancient Rome. Any representative first-century church would have three kinds of members: slaves, freemen, and freed men. People became slaves in various ways—through war, bankruptcy, sale by themselves, sale by parents, or by birth. Slaves normally could look forward to freedom after a period of service and often by payment of a price. Money to buy his freedom could be earned by the slave in his spare time or by doing more than the owner required. Often, the price could be provided by someone else. By the payment of a price (*lytron*), a person could be set free from his bondage and servitude. A freed man was a person who formerly had been a slave but was now redeemed. Jesus described his ministry in Mark 10:45: *The Son of Man . . . came to serve, and to give his life as a ransom [lytron] for many.* (Blum, p. 224)

Read this selection of New Testament verses below. How do they help you grasp and further clarify the meaning of redemption?

¹ It is estimated that there were up 50 million slaves in the first century Roman Empire. Many slaves became believers and worshipped alongside free men and women. Think about the social dynamic this would bring to a Homegroup!

- Acts 20:28
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- Galatians 3:13, 4:4
- Ephesians 1:7, 14
- 1 Timothy 2:6
- Titus 2:14
- Hebrews 9:12

Give a brief explanation of redemption that a non-Christian could understand. As a group read your definitions and help each other modify these statements to make them more understandable to someone unfamiliar with the Bible and Christian terminology.

According to verse 18 what did God redeem believers **from**?

How would you describe your life before you were born again?¹

What do verses 18-19 say God redeemed believers **with**?

Peter uses the words *corruptible* and *incorruptible* several times in his letter; 1 Peter 1:4, 18, 23 and 3:4. What is the point he is trying to make with this repetition?

¹ Commenting on verse 18 Simon Kistemaker says: "The phrase *empty way of life* describes a lifestyle that is without purpose, unfruitful, and useless. The text provides no information whether Peter is referring to the forefathers of the Jews who lived by tradition instead of God's word. Another possibility is that Peter thinks of the pagan forefathers of the Gentile readers . . . A third option is that Peter means the forefathers of both the Jews and the Gentiles." (Kistemaker, p.69)

Why does Peter use the image of a lamb without blemish in verse 19? See John 1:29, Hebrews 7:26-27, Revelation 5:9-14.

Think about the salvation that God has provided in Christ. Is God's plan an afterthought or "Plan B" after things went wrong in the garden with Adam and Eve? What verse 20 tell us about the planning of God in saving people from sin?

1 Peter 1:17-21 is of a brief summary of the gospel message. After looking at these verses what is your emotional response to what God has done for the Christian through Christ? How does it help you to worship this God?

In verses 22-25 Peter now turns to the practical outworking of this born again life for believers who are strangers in this world. Christians are to live a life of love with each other in their new family. How does Peter say we have been *purified*? What does it mean to be *purified*? Do you feel like a person who is *purified*?

Our new life is to result in a new love for our brothers and sisters.

Peter uses two different words for love: *philadelphia*, which is "brotherly love," and *agape*, which is Godlike sacrificial love. It is important that we share both kinds of love. We share brotherly love because we are brothers and sisters in Christ and have likenesses. We share *agape* love because we belong to God and therefore can overlook differences. (Wiersbe, p. 44)

Jesus made it clear that love was to be at the very center of the Christian life when he said that people would recognize us as his disciples if we loved each other. (John 13:35) In verse 22 Peter teaches three specific ways that we should love each other. What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is it about our new life with Christ that propels us toward this love? Is it difficult for you to love other Christians? Do you find yourself loving your fellow believers at SBCC? Your Homegroup?

How does verse 23 tell us we have been born again?¹

Think about your new birth. What did this birth look like in your life? What changes did Christ perform in you? How would you live differently if you were not born again?

Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6-8, in verse 24. The quotation is from the “Book of Comfort” in Isaiah’s prophecy and is addressed to an exiled and oppressed people. Now this word of comfort is applied to Peter’s readers, pilgrim believers living with suffering in a pagan world. How would this prophecy be of comfort to Peter’s readers? Is it of comfort to you? How?

¹ Peter’s epistle makes abundant use of the Old Testament. Isaiah is quoted six times, Psalms two times, Proverbs two times and Exodus and Leviticus once.

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Five

Living As Strangers Part 2

1 Peter 2:1-10

In 1 Peter 2:1-10 the apostle continues his promptings and instructions for believers to live as *strangers* and *aliens* in this world. Peter's meandering writing style can be somewhat confusing. As you study this text keep in mind this theme of the believer as a pilgrim. We are, *God's elect, strangers in the world* . . . (1 Peter 1:1)

Speaking of Peter's literary method Scott McKnight observes,



Once again, Peter's style here—weaving in and out of topics, exhorting and then stating the foundation for the exhortation, and digressing to cover important ideas—prevents many readers from finding any logical sequence. This section [1 Peter 2:1-10] continues what began at 1:13, where Peter drew out practical manifestations of salvation and hope. (McKnight, p. 103)

Read 1 Peter 2:1-10 carefully as Peter continues what he began in chapter 1:13, giving instructions for how believers should live as strangers in this world.

The *Therefore* of 2:1 draws a conclusion based on what Peter established in 1:22-25. Born again children of God ought to exhibit their new life by a new way of living. What follows is a catalogue of sins that the Christian should *rid* themselves of.¹ Each of these behaviors and attitudes that Peter lists is incompatible with a born again life style. Write a few synonyms that will help you and your Homegroup understand the thrust of Peter's concern. Is there a common thread that ties these words together?

¹ The New Testament will often use the picture of removing old clothes and putting on new garments. Here in 1 Peter 2:1 Peter uses such a Greek verb that gives the image of getting "rid" of old clothes. (For other examples of this see; Romans 13:12-14, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 3:8-12, Hebrews 13:1, James 1:21)

malice

deceit

hypocrisy

envy

slander

1 Peter 2:2-3 makes it clear that spiritual growth is the goal of the believer's life. Think about Peter's illustration of a baby craving milk. What comes to mind when you ponder this picture? Is this a good description of your spiritual life?

What is this *spiritual milk*? The NASB version translates verse 2 as *long for the pure milk of the word*.¹ Commentator Edwin Blum paraphrases this verse, *crave the unadulterated spiritual milk of the word*. (Blum, p. 227) What evidence is there in your life of craving the spiritual milk of the Scripture?

Respond to this statement by John McArthur.

It is notable what Peter did not command. He did not charge believers to read the Word, study the Word, meditate on the Word, teach the Word, preach the Word, search the Word, or memorize the Word. All of those things are essential, and other passages do command believers to perform them. However, Peter focused on the more foundational element—which believers need before they will pursue any of the other

¹ "The meaning of this verse needs to be distinguished from what is said by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:2 and by the author of Hebrews at Hebrews 5:12-14. Confusion has resulted from the identity of meaning because each of these authors uses the metaphor of drinking milk. Peter has in mind the desire characteristic of an infant when wanting milk; Paul has in mind the immaturity of the believer who can have only milk, as only babies drink milk; and the author of Hebrews has in mind an idea similar to Paul's: Milk is the first kind of food Christians drink, and then they mature to the point of eating meat. There is no suggestion in 1 Peter 2 that milk is food for immature Christians; rather, Peter praises the desire of infants and prays that his readers will have the same desire for spiritual things." (McKnight, p.105)

things—a deep, continuous longing for the Word of truth. (MacArthur, p. 100)

Parents are always on the lookout for signs of growth in their children. Given time and nourishment babies are supposed to become adults. The same is true of our spiritual lives. The second part of verse 2 makes this goal clear, *so that by it you may grow up in your salvation*. Is this a period of spiritual growth in your life? Evaluate your progress and growth as a Christian. What is the correlation between your spiritual growth and your hunger for the Word of God?

Verse 3 *now that you have tasted that the Lord is good* echoes the words of Psalm 34:8 where the psalmist says, *Taste and see that the Lord is good*. Just as a baby, once he has tasted of his mother's milk, cannot wait for more, so the believer who has tasted of God's goodness should want more of God. Describe how you have "tasted" the goodness of God.

Peter changes metaphors in verse 4. Here, Jesus is pictured as a *living stone* that has been rejected by some. In verse 7 Peter will quote Psalm 118:22, in much the same way he did in his very first sermon, delivered years earlier, in Acts 4:11. Verse 5 contains four illustrations for the people of God. What do these pictures tell us about the nature of the Christian life? What do they tell us about the Church?

living stones

spiritual house

holy priesthood

offering spiritual sacrifices

In verses 6-8 Peter quotes three Old Testament passages to make two points. First, quoting Isaiah 28:16, he points to Jesus as the *cornerstone* of this spiritual house. Paul uses this same image in Ephesians 2:19-22 where he calls Jesus the *chief cornerstone* and refers to the church as a *building*. Secondly, quoting Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, he highlights the distinction between those who

have rejected or stumbled over this stone and those who believe this stone is precious. The contrast is vivid.

Have you ever noticed how many people feel very comfortable talking about “God” but become quite uneasy when the conversation turns to Jesus? Why do you think this is the case? Why is it that people stumble over Jesus? Was there ever a time in your life when you stumbled over Jesus?

In verses 9-10 how does Peter describe the people of God? (You should find at least six ways believers are described)

According to verse 9 what is this new people of God supposed to do?

The NIV uses the word *people* four times in verses 9-10. Throughout the Bible we find references to a *people* that are God’s possession (for example see Malachi 3:17, Acts 20:28, Titus 2:14). These *people* are unique in that it is their relationship with God, and not nationality or ethnic ties that provide their identity. With what people-group do you primarily identify? Is it your family, tribe, nationality or ethnic background that gives you your identity? How do these verses inform how a Christian should think about himself?

Twice in our study of 1 Peter 2:1-10 Peter has referred to believers as priests.

holy priesthood (vs. 5) *royal priesthood* (vs. 9)

What we may read casually is nothing short of revolutionary to the Christian life and involvement in the local the church. It is from verses like these that the New Testament teaching of the priesthood of the believer is derived. Commenting on these verses Blum asserts,

The great new truth Peter states here is the revelation that “through Jesus Christ,” i.e., through his work on the Cross, every Christian is part of a new priestly order. This truth of the “priesthood of all believers” was

rediscovered and restressed during the Reformation. It means that every Christian has immediate access to God, that he serves God personally, that he ministers to others, and that he has something to give. (Blum, p. 230)

What practically does your “priesthood” mean for your life as a believer and your involvement at SBCC? Be specific.

Martin Luther was a feisty sixteenth century German Reformer who played a central role in reasserting this key biblical truth that all Christians are priests and ministers fully able to serve God and function in the church using their gifts. Have fun reading just a brief section of his lengthy comments on 1 Peter 2:5.

Here he cast down the outward and temporal priesthood, which had existed before under the old dispensation, as also the outward Church, which he takes entirely away; as though to say: That outward institution of the priesthood has all but ceased, wherefore another priesthood now begins, and another sacrifice is offered, even one that is entirely spiritual. We have had much discussion on this point, maintaining that those who are now called the clergy are not priests in the sight of God; and it is founded upon this passage of Peter. Therefore apprehend it well, and if one should meet you with the objection, and attempt to show, as some have done, that he speaks of a twofold priesthood; of outward and spiritual priests, then bid him lay aside his spectacles that he may see clearly, and take nieszwort, or aromatic snuff that he may clear his brains. (Luther, p. 88)

As a Homegroup of priests enjoy offering praises to *him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Six

Life Among the Pagans

1 Peter 2:11-25



In 1 Peter 2:11-25, Peter continues to instruct his readers about living this new life of faith in Jesus in the middle of a world that is hostile to the things of God. The way of the Christian is very different than the path pagans take. Once again Peter urges those receiving his letter that they are to live as *aliens* and *strangers*. (2:11) A relationship with Jesus Christ changes everything.

Read 1 Peter 2:11-3:7 (we will study 3:1-7 next week). Look for the overall theme of submission in Peter's instructions. Much of this text goes against the grain of how 21st century Americans think. It is not a part of the spirit of our age to opt for a life of submission. Before we consider the particulars of Peter's teaching write down a few of your initial thoughts.

- What stands out?
- What bothers you in this text?
- What questions would you like to ask Peter?

In verse 11 Peter makes it clear that the living of the Christian life is similar to *war*. According to this verse (for the time being leave out the rest of the New Testament) what is the nature of this war? Who or what are we fighting?

With verse 11 in mind, describe your own personal battle with *sinful desires*.

In verse 12 Peter becomes more direct about what it means to live as believers in pagan environment. What type of life does Peter urge his readers to live? Why does he want them to live like this?

The word that the NIV translates as *accuse* is better translated as in the NASB *slander*. Think about being a Christian in the first century Roman world. What sort of slander would be brought against you? Edwin Blum gives us some background.

Some of the more common [accusations] were disloyalty to the state or Caesar (John 19:12), upsetting trade or divination (Acts 16:16 ff.; 19:23ff.), teaching that slaves are “free” (1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 3:20), not participating in festivals because of “hatred of mankind” (cf. Col. 2:16), holding “antisocial” values, and being “atheists” because they had no idols. (cf. Acts 15:29) (Blum, p. 232)

Obviously much of the slander directed toward Christians in the first century was due to their minority status, misunderstandings, and cultural withdrawal. The situation in our time is very different. Christianity is the largest and fastest growing faith in the world. In spite of this, believers are often maligned. What sort of slander and accusations are brought against Christians in our era? How can we silence contemporary critics by our good deeds?

Peter's teaching here reminds us of the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16. *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* How have you seen this work in your life? Have your *good works* had an effect on the non-Christians around you?¹

Look again at verse 13-17 where Peter advocates not revolution but submission. Simon Kistemaker says of these verses,

He implies that the first demonstration of the Christian's personal behavior is his conduct toward government. He urges the believers to honor the persons who have been appointed to rule them (vs. 17). Peter virtually reiterates the message that Paul wrote to the church in Rome, for Paul teaches that legitimate authorities are instituted by God for the well-being of the people (Rom. 13:1-7; see also Titus 3:1-2). And Peter asserts that Christians must submit to authority "for the Lord's sake." That is, the law of the land must be upheld as long as it does not force the Christian to disobey God's law (compare Acts 4:19; 5:29) (Kistemaker, p. 98)

What is the extent of the submission Peter teaches? At what point does the Christian not submit to temporal authority?²

What does it mean to *live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil*? Can you give an example?

In verse 17 we find four succinct commands concerning Christians social obligations. What are they? Give a practical example for your life in each of these four areas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

¹ The last phrase of verse 12 is difficult to understand. Simon Kistemaker comments. "The meaning of 'on the day he visits us' is problematic. Does Peter mean 'on the return of the Lord' or 'on God's gracious visitation of salvation that may come to the non-Christian?' In favor of the latter is the word 'see,' which suggests that the pagans will continually observe the good works and perhaps God will grant them repentance unto life." (Kistemaker, p.232)

² The word Peter uses for "silence" is most often used to describe a muzzled animal!

4.

In verses 18-20 Peter addresses slaves in particular. The text sounds unusual to our modern ears. Slavery, however, was a fact of life in the Roman world. When slaves became Christians, as they did in large numbers, their behavior as slaves had to be addressed. Again, Peter's words are in harmony with Paul's teaching for slaves to obey their masters (Eph. 6:5, 1 Tim. 6:1, Col. 3:22, Titus 2:9). What is the point of this submission?

Thankfully, there is no longer slavery in the United States. Can you think of any current cultural situations where the principle talked about in these verses would apply?

The last phrase of verse 19 speaks of the believer's new relationship to God.

conscious of God (NIV)

mindful of God (RSV)

awareness of God's presence (NASB)

How does being conscious of God's presence in your life inform how you relate to the unpleasant realities of your life? Be specific.

To this point in our study Peter has issued a strong call to live radically different lives in this world because of your new birth. He essentially says, live holy lives in the midst of a chaotic and pagan world, because you are now in relationship with the Holy One. While the cultural situation may be different today, the call remains the same. Unfortunately the church is all too often compromised by the dominant culture. Discuss and respond to this statement by David Wells.

The choice for God now has to become one in which the church begins to form itself, by his grace and truth, into an outcropping of counter-cultural spirituality. It must first recover the sense of antithesis between Christ and culture and then find ways to sustain the antithesis . . . It must give up the

self-cultivation for self-surrender, entertainment for worship, intuition for truth, slick marketing for authentic witness, success for faithfulness, power for humility, a God bought on cheap terms for the God who calls us to costly obedience. It must, in short, be willing to do God's business on God's terms. (David Wells, God in the Wilderness, p. 223)

Our text for this study ends in verses 21-25 where Peter grounds his call to submissive living among the pagans with the example of Christ. Summarize verses 21-25. How are the sufferings of Christ an example for the believers Peter is writing to? How are they an example for you in your life in Santa Barbara?

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Seven

Husbands and Wives

1 Peter 3:1-7

Beginning in 1 Peter 1:13 Peter has been fleshing out what it means for the believer to live as an alien and stranger in this world. He has been teaching that a holy lifestyle lived before the unbelieving world will have a positive impact on them. *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake* (1 Peter 2:13), is to be the pattern in our relationship to civil authority, slaves to masters, within the church body (1 Peter 3:8ff next week's study), and in marriage. Peter's ultimate point is to show that all social relationships are to be transformed because of the believer's new and unique relationship with Jesus Christ.



Peter will spend six verses describing the submission of Christian wives to their husbands and one verse on the obligation of husbands to their wives. At first reading these verses can sound strange and alienating to the 21st century American Christian. Take a deep breath and read 1 Peter 3:1-7. As you read, keep in mind the larger context of submission and pagans who were making accusations against believers. What is clear in these verses? What is confusing in these verses? If you could ask Peter one question what would it be?

In 1 Peter 3:1, Peter begins his discussion of the submission of wives to husbands with the words, *in the same way be submissive . . .* What do these words, *in the same way*, refer to?

What is New Testament *submission*? Try and give a definition of submission. Do you know of other biblical passages that would help you understand *submission*?¹

To have even a basic understanding of the New Testament and especially texts like the one before us in this study, we must consider the cultural context in which the teaching was given. The first century world differed from our own time in many respects. As we have already seen, slavery was simply a fact of life in the first century. Somehow Christians had to come to grips with this lamentable reality. The pattern for family life was clearly patriarchal. The social status of women was little more than that of a servant. Peter seems to be concerned about women who were becoming Christians but were married to unbelieving husbands. Simon Kistemaker helps to understand the dilemma in this culture.

In the middle of the first century, a wife was expected to profess the religion of her husband. If the husband adopted the Christian faith, his spouse would have to do so, too. But if the wife became a Christian, her husband would consider her unfaithful to him and his pagan religion. This caused tension in the home. Peter therefore counsels these wives to submit to their spouses, even if their husbands make life miserable for them because of their Christian commitment. He fully realizes the predicament of Christian women whose husbands refuse to listen to the gospel. (Kistemaker, p. 118)

How does this cultural reality help you to understand Peter's concern? How would submissiveness help to protect both marriage and the spread of the gospel?

It would be easy at this point for your study and Homegroup discussions to digress into a general consideration of the New Testament teaching on women. For the moment avoid this temptation. Stay with the thorny problem of how the reputation of the gospel and Christians would be affected when a wife is a believer and the husband is not. Respond to this statement by Edmund Clowney.

¹ Scott McKnight observes that, "Just arguing that the term 'submission' is a legitimate word to describe the relationship of a wife to her husband can make many readers hyperventilate." (McKnight, p.187)

Christian wives can have an important part in the churches witness. That witness may not be easy. Their husbands have resisted the claim of the gospel. They may ridicule the message and insult their wives. So strong may be their hostility that it is no longer possible for their wives to speak of the Lord to them. Even then the Christian wife must not despair. She still possesses a mighty weapon for winning her husband to the faith; it is the testimony of her life. Her husband has refused to heed the word; very well, let him be won without words. The silent eloquence of his wife's pure and reverent behavior can preach the transforming power of Jesus Christ. (Clowney, p. 130)

In verse 2-4 Peter contrasts internal and external beauty, teaching that the internal is more important than the external. We live in an age, probably not unlike the 1st century, where there is a tremendous concern about physical attractiveness. This text now sounds so very contemporary! What is Peter's concern about *braided hair*, *gold jewelry* and *fine clothes*? Is this to be understood as prohibiting the wearing of these items?¹ Should SBCC have a dress code?

Consider these two statements on Peter's concern. Do you agree with them? Why? Why not?

Enslavement to fashion by men or women runs counter to growth in spiritual holiness. (Clowney, p. 131)

Peter's emphasis is not on prohibition but on a proper sense of values. (Blum, p. 237)

Apparently a preoccupation with flashy dress and style was a significant issue in the early church. As people from every strata of society found faith in Jesus, undoubtedly wealthy women became believers. These women had both the means and the interest in fine clothes, jewelry and the latest fashions. Echoing

¹ The latter church fathers applied this passage as prohibiting all aesthetics and beauty in the way women dressed and presented themselves.

Peter's words here in 1 Peter 3:3, Paul says much the same thing in 1 Timothy 2:9-10.

I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

What is *modesty*? Are Paul and Peter teaching that Christian women should look differently than other women in that culture? Give practical illustrations of how these verses could be applied in our time and culture. How would the principle of these verses apply to men?

Describe the *gentle and quiet spirit* that Peter speaks of in verse 4. Could a woman have a gregarious and loquacious personality and still be the type of wife that Peter is describing?

How is Sarah an illustration of the point Peter is trying to make?¹

In 1 Peter 3:7 Peter speaks to husbands. We again find the words, *in the same way*. Remember that our text for this study started out with these words, *in the same way* (v. 1). Remind yourself of what this phrase refers to. Is Peter saying anything different to husbands than he said to wives?

¹ The term "master" can be misleading. Edwin Clowney explains: "He calls attention to the fact that Sarah spoke of Abraham as her *master* (the reference is to Gn. 18:12). The Greek term *kyrios* was used in polite address, rather like our 'sir' or 'Mr.' It indicates the respect with which Sarah spoke of Abraham. Certainly Sarah's submission to Abraham was not slavish." (Clowney, p.133)

Compare Ephesians 5:21-29 (make sure you begin at verse 21!). Notice in Ephesians 5:28 this phrase again, *in the same way*. How does the Ephesians text help you to understand 1 Peter 3:1-7?¹

The phrase, *weaker partner*, in 1 Peter 3:7 has caused the blood of many women to boil! What is Peter talking about?

The woman is called the “weaker partner”; but this is not to be taken morally, spiritually, or intellectually. It simply means that the woman has less physical strength. The husband must recognize this difference and take it into account. (Blum, p.237)

Think about where our study has taken us. Given the cultural context, would you say that Peter has a high view of women or a low view of women? Are his comments a help or hindrance to marriage and the husband—wife relationship?

What trans-cultural principles will you remember from this study? How will you apply them to your life?

¹ Consider Scott McKnight’s comments on submission. “Furthermore, it is my firm conviction that we have placed the wrong emphasis on the word ‘submission’; we have also been preoccupied with ‘what we can do’ and ‘what our rights are,’ whereas the biblical injunction is that the wife ought to give her life to her husband, ‘to serve and cherish him,’ and the husband ought to lay down his life for his wife. Thus, when the Christian wife is seeking to love her husband with her whole being and the husband is seeking to love his wife with his whole being, **the issue of submission never emerges.**” [emphasis added] (McKnight, p.189)

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Eight

Silencing the Critics

1 Peter 3:8-22



To this point in our study of 1 Peter, the apostle has given instructions to his readers regarding our relationships with outsiders (2:11-12), to government (2:13-17), to masters (2:18-25), to wives (3:1-6), and to husbands (3:7). 1 Peter 3:8 begins with the word *finally*. This is Peter's way of announcing that he is wrapping up this part of his letter. In our text for this study Peter gives a summary of the qualities of the Christian life that are to characterize our relationships—especially those within the family of God. This is practical advice for the whole community. The backdrop to all of 1 Peter, and especially our text in this study, is the suffering and persecution of believers.

Our study begins with practical, easy to understand teaching. It proceeds to ponderous and difficult theology in verses 18-22. One commentator has said, "This section contains some of the most difficult exegetical problems in the NT." (Blum, p. 241) Read 1 Peter 3:8-22 keeping in mind that we are moving from the clear to the cloudy. Write down a few preliminary observations as you read. What is clear? What is cloudy?

Verse 8 begins with five commands that are to govern our relationships with others. While the previous sections we have studied have addressed specific kinds of people this exhortation is for, *all of you*. Think through these five imperatives. How would our lives look if we were practicing these virtues? Give a practical illustration of how each of these could be implemented in our lives.

live in harmony (see Romans 12:16, Philippians 1:27, 2:2)

be sympathetic (see Romans 12:15, 1Corinthians 12:26)

love as brothers (see 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)

be compassionate (see Matthew 9:36)

be humble (see Philippians 2:6ff)

How are these commands related to the submission that Peter spoke of in 2:13ff.?

If these virtues were practiced in a local church how would it affect the life of a body of believers? How have you seen these practiced at SBCC?

In verse 9 Peter's concern seems to focus on the believers relationship with a pagan hostile society. The New English Bible has a wonderful translation of these instructions.

Do not repay wrong with wrong, or abuse with abuse; on the contrary, retaliate with blessing.

1 Peter 3:9 is similar to Paul's words in Romans 12:17, *Do not repay anyone evil for evil* and in 1 Thessalonians 5:15, *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong*. Both Peter and Paul are echoing the teachings of Jesus who said, *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* (Matthew 5:44)

This is a revolutionary characteristic of the Christian life. Why is it so difficult? Share a time when you have been successful in living out this teaching. If you are brave, be ready to share a time you have failed to live out this new ethic.

The authors of the New Testament love to quote the Old Testament to give authority to their writings. We find more than two hundred direct Old Testament quotes in the New Testament along with many other allusions to the Old. Peter has already quoted and referred to the Old Testament many times in this short letter. In 1 Peter 2:3 Peter alludes to Psalm 34, which he now quotes directly in 3:10-12. How does Psalm 34:12-15, that is quoted here, support the point that Peter is trying to make? It would be helpful to read all of Psalm 34. What does this Psalm teach you about the Christian life?

What does Psalm 34 teach us about God?

Respond to this statement by pastor Warren Wiersbe.

It [Psalm 34] describes what God means by “good days.” They are not necessarily days free from problems, for the psalmist wrote about fears (v.4), troubles (vv. 6,17), affliction (v. 19), and even a broken heart (v. 18). A “good day” for the believer who “loves life” is not one in which he is pampered and sheltered, but one in which he experiences God’s help and blessing because of life’s problems and trials. It is a day in which he magnifies the Lord (vv. 1-3), experiences answers to prayer (vv. 4-7), tastes the goodness of God (v. 8), and senses the nearness of God (v. 18). (Wiersbe, p. 83)

In 1 Peter 3:13, Peter makes a transition and begins to give principles for the believer to endure suffering in a way that is completely Christian. What is the answer to the rhetorical question asked in verse 13? Read Romans 8:31 where Paul asks a similar question.¹

What does it mean when Peter says in verse 15, *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord*? Give a practical example of how you are doing this in your life.

¹ The sixteenth-century Scottish Reformer John Knox said, “With God on his side man is always in the majority.”

The persecuted believer needs to be ready to defend her faith.¹ Our *hope* is one of the distinguishing marks of a believer. Concerning this *hope* McKnight says:

Christians are, in other words, expected to be prepared to speak at any moment about God's salvation of his people through Jesus Christ and how that salvation will manifest itself at the end of history. This very hope sustains them through persecution and gives them strength to carry on when everything looks dismal. (McKnight, p. 214)

Do you feel prepared to give an answer concerning the hope you have in Christ? When was the last time you had the opportunity to *give and answer* concerning your hope in Christ?

Verses 15b-16 describe the attitude the believer should have as he defends his faith. Why might unbelievers be willing to listen to the Christian's hope from a person who is living with the attitude Peter describes?

How does a Christian keep the *clear conscience* that Peter is talking about in verse 16?

A clear conscience gives stamina and faithfulness to a Christian's witness. . . . Christians with tender consciences may be dismayed by Peter's words. Aware of their sins and shortcomings, they may despair of having a clear conscience. They may find the suspicions of others confirmed by their suspicions of themselves. Peter shows that he knows our need of forgiveness and cleansing, for he goes on to describe again Christ's atonement (3:18). (Clowney, p.152)

As Peter again briefly ponders the atonement of Christ he ends verse 18 with the wonderful words, *to bring you to God*. What is the relationship between a *clear conscience* and these words, *to bring you to God*?

Our study ends with a perplexing portion of Scripture that has been the source of endless debate and speculation. It is one of the most difficult sections of the New Testament. One commentator, in a fantastic understatement, was content to say little more than, "Peter then proceeds to some teaching which requires

¹ Some commentators argue that this defense took place in a courtroom. Most, however, understand this defense to refer to various kinds of informal settings.

deep and thorough study.” (Cedar, p. 171) Blum outlines the three main problems in interpretation.

1. Who are the “spirits” to whom Christ made a proclamation?
2. When was this proclamation made?
3. What was its content?

The *spirits* of verse 19 have been understood as the souls of men, fallen angels, or both. There are at least five distinct views of what transpired when Jesus preached to these spirits. Today, the most popular view sees this text teaching that the resurrected Christ proclaimed his victory over death to these imprisoned spirits (demons, fallen angels) when he ascended to heaven. Peter then goes on to use an illustration of Noah and the building of the ark. The story is allegorized with the water of the flood becoming a symbol of New Testament baptism. This text provides more questions than answers. In spite of the confusion, what principles and lessons do you find in verses 18-22?

An important principle of Bible interpretation is to always interpret the unclear portions of Scripture with the clear. This principle, called the “analogy of Scripture,” simply points out that Scripture interprets Scripture. Can you think of any sections of the Bible that would help you make sense of this difficult and opaque text?

Think through the big picture of this study. What encouragements can you take with you from 1 Peter 3:8-22 this week? Think of one lesson you will apply to your life. Be ready to share with your Homegroup what it is and how you have applied it.

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Nine

Our Attitude Toward Sin

1 Peter 4:1-6



The authors of the New Testament frequently call believers to examine their lifestyle in light of their new relationship with Christ. As new creations we are called to, *be holy in all you do.* (1 Peter 1:16) Born again

Christians who have tasted the goodness of the Lord are to rid themselves of the old way of life (2:1-3). What is unique about our text in this study is that this call for believers to examine their lives is framed by the sufferings of Christ. Our death to the old life is to be understood, for Peter's readers, in light of a suffering savior.

Read 1 Peter 4:1-6. In some ways this portion of Scripture sounds very familiar to the Bible reading believer. Of what other New Testament texts do these verses remind you? What is unique and stands out in these six verses?

Verse one begins with a call to battle.¹ The believer is to *arm* himself.

The verb *arm yourself*, which Peter uses to spur the believers to action, is a military term which refers to a soldier putting on his weapons to fight the enemy (see Rom. 13:12, 2 Cor. 6:7, 10:4, Eph. 6:11). (Kistemaker, p.156)

¹ The last phrase in verse 1, "done with sin," is difficult. Blum helps us sort through the text. "He who has suffered in his body is done with sin" is often taken to be a proverbial expression and linked in thought to Romans 6:7. It is also possible to refer this statement to Christ and the finality of his work against sin. Many commentators see the purging effects of suffering in the sanctification process. But the expression 'is done with sin' is a perfect tense and looks to a definite past act. So this difficult statement is probably best understood in the Pauline sense of Romans 6. By union with Christ, the Christian is to understand that his conversion is a death to sin. Thus he is 'done with sin.'" (Blum, p. 244)

How does this battle imagery help you understand the nature of the struggle to live the Christian life? How is it helpful for you to think of your spiritual life as warfare? Give a practical illustration from your life this week.

The believer is to arm herself with the same *attitude* as Christ. The Greek word here (*ennoia*) gets translated as, *mind, purpose, intent*, or in the NIV as *attitude*. Pastor Paul Cedar points out how crucial our attitude is to Christian living.

As we know, our conduct is greatly determined by our mind or attitude. When our attitude is right, our conduct is usually right. (Cedar, p. 174)

What is the attitude that the believer is to have? What evidence is there in your life that you have this Christ-like attitude?

According to 1 Peter 4:2 what is the twofold result of the Christian arming himself with Christ's attitude?

- 1.
- 2.

Evidently many of Peter's readers were converts from a pagan lifestyle. In verse 3 the pagan way of living is contrasted with the will of God. Peter describes this old way of life with a series of nouns.¹ This list of vices does not paint a pretty picture. The *debaucheries* (lack of restraint, uncontrolled action) of this life are listed. Think through this catalogue of uncontrolled living. How does this describe the paganism of Santa Barbara? Describe how have you seen evidence of this type of living. Was the 1st century much different than the 21st century?

lust

drunkenness

orgies

¹ In the original Greek these nouns are in the plural but appear in our English translations in the singular for easier reading.

carousing

detestable idolatry

How are the behaviors in this list related to each other? Are they usually lived out individually or as a group?

This list implies that the believer should have an attitude toward sin that is based on his *attitude* (vs. 1) in Christ. What is the Christian's attitude toward sin? Do you have it?

How have you experienced the social reaction that Peter refers to in verse 4?¹ In what ways have your non-Christian friends, co-workers, and neighbors communicated to you that they think your Christian lifestyle is odd?

Notice that Peter gives us three graphic phrases in verse 4. What sort of images do these phrases bring to mind for you? Check some different translations to see how these phrases are translated.

plunge

flood of dissipation

heap abuse

How does Peter say the believer should respond to those who ridicule a Christian's lifestyle?

¹ Enjoy Petersons' paraphrase of verse 4: "Of course your old friends don't understand why you don't join in with the old gang anymore."

To what extent should a Christian expect to fit into our world? Should we expect the non-Christian world to understand and approve of the believers pattern of living?

1 Peter 4:6, is another verse that presents a number of difficulties and has given rise to several interpretations.¹ If you are a little perplexed you are in good company! The interpretation of verse 6 has often been linked to how you understand Peter's comments in 3:19. But as Blum points out, "the vocabulary of the text and the context differ. This verse makes sense in its own setting." (Blum, p. 245) While opinions abound it is best to go with the simple and most obvious reading of the text. McKnight gives us a simple summary. "The vast majority of commentators today argue that Peter is referring to Christians in Asia Minor who heard the gospel while alive but are now physically dead." (McKnight, p. 227) Peter is pointing out that the gospel does not prevent us from dying physically. It does, however, prepare us for judgment.

Think back through 1 Peter 4:1-6. This entire text is written in light of the sufferings of Christ talked about in verse 1. How does the reality of Christ's sufferings shape the concrete living of the Christian life? Could Peter have written these words and not mentioned the sufferings of Jesus?

What changes will you attempt to implement in **your** life this week as a result of studying 1 Peter 4:1-6?

¹ Blum points out that this difficult verse has four primary interpretations.

1. Christ, while in his three-day death, went and preached salvation to all the dead, offering salvation to those who lived in pre-Christian times.
2. Christ, while in his three-day death, went and preached salvation to the just of OT times.
3. The theme is the preaching of the gospel by the apostles and others on this earth to those who were spiritually dead.
4. The dead are Christians, who had the gospel preached to them and who then died (or were put to death). (Blum, p. 245)

Study Ten

Our Attitude Toward Fellow Believers

1 Peter 4:7-11

When an individual places their faith in Christ, and is born again spiritually, all relationships change. Peter, writing to persecuted Christians, has been teaching his readers about how their new spiritual life has a corresponding new social outworking. Having explained the believer's attitude toward sin and those individuals who live in *debauchery*, in 1 Peter 4:1-6, Peter now turns to the believer's attitude toward his fellow Christian brothers and sisters.



Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. Before delving into the particulars of our study, try to grasp the big picture of these five verses. What is Peter's vision for the relationship that believers are to have with one another? Make a brief summary statement that captures the essence of Peter's teaching in these verses. Be prepared to read this statement at the beginning of your Homegroup.

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament taught that the Christian life should be lived in light of the return of Christ.¹ Peter begins his plea for relationships within the body of Christ with the words, *The end of all things is near*. Why should the return of Christ make a difference in how we live our lives? Do you think of the coming of Christ often as you live your life?

Verse 7 exhorts the believer to be *clear minded* and *self-controlled*. The word translated as *clear minded* or *sound judgment* (NASB) derives from a term that literally means to *be in one's right mind*. To add emphasis to this idea Peter then tells his readers to be *self-controlled* or as the NASB puts it, *sober*. Three times in this brief letter Peter advocates for *sober living* (1:13, 4:7, 5:8). In his letters, the apostle Paul, exhorts people to be *sober minded* ten times. Think about these two phrases here in verse 7. What type of mental attitude are they

¹ See Luke 12:35-43, 17:26-27, Romans 13:11, Hebrews 10:25, James 5:8-9, 1 John 2:18.

describing? Give some practical illustrations of what *clear minded* and *self-controlled* Christian living would look like.

What does Peter want us to do when we are *clear minded* and *self-controlled*?

Once again (1:22, 2:17, 3:8) Peter encourages a love for fellow believers. How does Peter say we are to love each other? What does this mean?

Respond to Blum's comment on loving other Christians. What is the relationship between emotion and action in loving our brothers and sisters?

Love is capable of being commanded because it is not primarily an emotion but a decision of the will leading to action. (Blum, p. 246)

How can love *cover a multitude of sins*? Kistemaker sets the context for the second half of verse 8.

The second part of the verse, "Love covers a multitude of sins," is an allusion to Proverbs 10:12, "Love covers all wrongs." Because James in his epistle (5:20) has virtually the same words Peter writes, we assume that the saying circulated as a proverb. What is the meaning of this proverbial saying? Whose sins are covered? God forgives the sinner who comes to him in repentance and faith (Ps. 32:1). He demands that the forgiven sinner show the same forgiving spirit toward his fellow man (compare Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-22; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). (Kistemaker, p. 168)

Have you had the experience of forgiving others and being gracious toward others in the body of Christ because of Christ's forgiveness extended to you? How is the vertical forgiveness we experience in salvation contagious in our horizontal relationships?

The *hospitality* that Peter commands in verse 9 is an example of the practical outworking of love.¹ In a world without modern hotels and inns this was an important and concrete expression of Christian love. How can we practice hospitality today? What might Peter have used as an illustration of love if he was writing this today? How have you acted in love and yet *grumbled*?

Our new relationship with other Christians requires that we love them by serving them through the gifts that God has given us. In 1 Peter 4:10-11, Peter points out that ministry is the responsibility of every Christian. There are four passages in the New Testament that discuss the important issue of spiritual gifts. This would be a good time to review these texts. Read these passages and then answer the questions below.

- Romans 12:4-8
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- Ephesians 4:11-13
- 1 Peter 4:10-11

Why does God give spiritual gifts?

What happens to a church where people do **not** use their spiritual gifts in service?

What happens in a church where people know they are gifted and use their gifts?

How are we to use these gifts?

¹ Hospitality is mentioned often in the New Testament. See; Matthew 25:35ff, Romans 12:13, 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:10, Titus 1:8, 3 John 5-8.

The term *faithfully administering* (vs. 10) or as the NASB renders it, *good stewards*, refers to a manager who is in charge of his masters possessions. The NEB has a marvelous translation of this passage, *Like good stewards dispensing the grace of God in its varied forms*. How are believers managers of God's grace?

Peter makes a distinction between gifts that *serve* (vs. 10) and gifts that *speak* (vs. 11). How are these gifts different? Give an example of both.

It is from portions of Scripture like this that believers understand that we are all called to ministry. Every Christian is to serve or minister (same word in the Greek text) their gifts to the body. Consider Blum's summary of 1 Peter 4:10-11.

The believer is not only to view himself as gifted but also as a steward and a minister. One of the longstanding misconceptions in church practice is the idea that only one person is to "minister" in the local church. The biblical principle is that all can and should minister in one way or another. (Blum, p. 246)

How do you view yourself as functioning in the Christian life? Do you see yourself as a minister? Why? Why not?

Our study ends with a doxology. While you might expect this at the end of a letter, it is not uncommon for New Testament writers to place such a note of praise in the middle of an epistle (for example, Romans 9:5, 11:36, Ephesians 3:20-21). This brief doxology is very similar to others in the New Testament. It is not uncommon for Bible readers to breeze right past these brief statements of praise, giving them little thought. Read the passages below. What is the same in these doxologies? What is different? Why do you think these sorts of statements appear so often?

- Romans 16:27
- Philippians 4:20
- 1 Timothy 6:16

- Jude 25
- Revelation 1:6
- Revelation 5:13-14

The last word in our text for this study is “*Amen.*” It signifies assent and means something like, “So it is!” or “Yes!” What have you said “Yes!” to in 1 Peter 4:7-11?

Sermon Notes. . .

Study Eleven

Don't Be Surprised by Suffering

1 Peter 4:12-19



There may be times when we, as Christians, come under a certain amount of persecution for our faith. On the job, at school, in the neighborhood, and possibly even in our own families, we encounter people who are hostile to the Gospel. They may ridicule or exclude us. What Peter is addressing in 1 Peter 4:12-19, however, is a persecution of a different order and magnitude than what average American believers may face.

What the NIV translates as a *painful trial* (vs. 12), the NASB renders *fiery*

ordeal. The Greek word (*pyrosis*) literally means burning and carries with it the idea of refining metals in fire. Undoubtedly Peter's readers are facing difficult circumstances for their faith. Peter is writing as a pastor to comfort and give perspective to these suffering believers.

Throughout the centuries, members of the Jewish nation had become accustomed to persecution. During the course of the first century, Jews who had put their faith in Jesus Christ even withstood the rough edge of harassment from their countrymen (see 1 Thessalonians 2:14). But Gentile Christians had not endured persecution, and for them persecution for the sake of Christ was a trying experience. Therefore, Peter addresses an encouraging word to them. (Kistemaker, p. 173)

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. Try to envision how these words would sound to a suffering believer. What is the worst that you have suffered for being a Christian? How do these words sound to you?

Why should Christians not be *surprised* when suffering and persecution are a part of their life?

Many working through this study guide will find this text foreign. After all, we live in America where we enjoy tremendous spiritual freedoms. Our current president, George W. Bush, is an outspoken believer, and pollsters tell us there are somewhere in the vicinity of 35 million evangelical believers in the United States! Politicians and salesmen court the evangelical vote and dollar. We are loved! Persecution? Suffering for being a Christian? Should we feel guilty if we are not suffering for our faith?

Peter is undoubtedly thinking of the words of Christ about persecution. Read these passages where Jesus speaks of the world hating us. How do they help you understand our text in Peter?

- John 15:18-19
- John 16:33

While suffering is unpleasant Peter now tells his readers, in 1 Peter 4:13, to rejoice! Why does he say the believer should *rejoice*?

Peter indicates that there is a connection between the suffering of the Christian and the full manifestation of Christ's glory that is yet to be revealed. One day we will be *overjoyed*.¹ Peter will again touch on this theme in 1 Peter 5:1, where he says he is, *a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed*. In a similar vein the apostle Paul says in Romans 8:17, *if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory*. Kistemaker quotes the commentator Richard Lenski to give us a feeling for Peter's intentions.

At the return of Christ, the believer will see the glory and splendor of the coming age in its fullness. Christ is the victor and all his followers share in his victory. Together they participate in Christ's glory. Therefore, when we contemplate the glory we shall inherit with Christ, we are unable to refrain from "exulting, jubilating, skipping and bubbling over with shouts of delight." (Kistemaker, p. 175)

How would Peter's readers have understood verse 13? How does this promise of joy make a difference in your life now?

¹ Peter uses a combination of two verbs here that point to super joy and is translated, "overjoyed" (NIV) or as "rejoice with exultation" (NASB).

Why were Peter's readers *insulted* for the name of Christ? Why are suffering Christians *insulted* throughout the world today? Have you ever been *insulted* for being a believer?

Peter gives two reasons in verse 14 why the insulted believer will be blessed. What are they? What do these two promises mean practically in the life of a suffering believer?

- 1.
- 2.

Christians may suffer for the wrong reasons. McKnight sets verse 15 in context.

Suffering for the name of Christ or for being a Christian is acceptable; suffering for doing bad things is unacceptable and deserving. Once again, the social context highlights the importance of Peter's exhortations: The Christian household is under severe threat of extinction, and any kind of behavior that jeopardizes an already difficult situation must be eliminated. (McKnight, p. 250)

In verse 15 Peter lists some sins that should not be the cause of persecution in the Christian's life.¹ What are they? Make your own (less dramatic) list of inappropriate behaviors that might cause a believer to suffer. How do Christians sometimes bring pain on themselves because of their own sin?

In verse 16 we find the word *Christian* which is only used three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28). The term *Christian* was originally attributed to believers by pagans and was a term of derision. Before the popularity of the term *Christian* believers referred to themselves as, *disciples* (Acts 6:1), *believers* (Acts 4:32), and those *who belonged to the way* (Acts 9:2). In the New Testament Christians are referred to in many ways. Have some fun and try and

¹ In this list we find the word "*meddler*." This is the only time this word is found in the New Testament or secular Greek literature. Scholars are not completely sure of its meaning. Translations include, "*meddler*" NIV, "*spy*" (Phillips), "*informer*" (JB), "*revolutionary*" (Moffatt), and "*embezzler*" (Bauer).

think of the many names for believers in the New Testament. Share these as a Homegroup. What do these names tell you about our spiritual identity?

1 Peter 4:17-18 reminds us that whatever we may go through in this life, judgment awaits everyone. Verse 17 tells us that this judgment has already begun with God's people and goes on to ask a question about non-believers. What is the implied response to this question?

As Peter has been doing throughout his letter he strengthens his teaching by quoting the Old Testament. Here he quotes Proverbs 11:31.¹ How does this quotation help you understand the message of verse 17?

Suffering believers, Peter says in verse 19, should fulfill two obligations. What are these two commands?

- 1.
- 2.

How are you seeking in your Christian walk to implement these two commands? Give some practical examples.

Parts of our study in 1 Peter 4:12-19 can seem foreign to the 21st century American believer living in a benign setting like Santa Barbara. Think back over this text. What new thoughts have you had about living the Christian life? How will you apply the lessons of this passage to your life in the next few weeks?

¹ Peter quotes from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and hence the wording is slightly different from the Hebrew text. The result and intention of the passage, however, is the same.

Study Twelve

Humility and Leadership

1 Peter 5:1-13

When the church is suffering persecution, leadership becomes all the more crucial for the life of the body. It is to the subject of leadership that Peter now turns in 1 Peter 5:1-4. He then goes on to end this letter with a variety of exhortations and encouragements.

In verses 5-10 Peter reaffirms much of what he has already covered in this epistle. Before going on in this study read 1 Peter 5:1-13. Record your initial thoughts. What themes are in these verses that we have already seen in our study of 1 Peter?



1 Peter 5:1-4 could be titled, “How to Be a Good Shepherd” (Wiersbe), or “What Christian Leadership Is All About” (Cedar) or “The Shepherds’ Suffering Flock” (Blum). New Testament churches were organized under the direction of elders (Acts 14:23, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5ff). The words *elder* (*presbyteros*, where we get the word Presbyterian) and *overseer* (*episkopos*) refer to the same office. The term *overseer* is also often translated as *bishop*, but is the same word. Peter is making an appeal to his fellow elder leaders. In verses 2-3 we find a list of both negative and positive directives for elders to follow. Separate these instructions into two categories.

Not to be

To be

Peter commands these elders to *shepherd* God's flock. Blum points out that, "The comparison of God's people to a flock of sheep and Lord to a shepherd is prominent in Scripture (Genesis 48:15, Psalm 23, Psalm 100:3, Isaiah 53:6-7, Luke 15:3-7, John 10:1-16). Jesus uses this metaphor of his spiritual care for us when he says, '*I am the good shepherd*' (John 10:11)." (Blum, p. 250) How does this picture of sheep and shepherd enhance your understanding of the role of pastoral leadership? How would 1st century readers in an agrarian society have heard this? Does it bother you to be referred to as sheep?

Peter is clearly teaching that he wants leaders to have a certain type of character. He wants elders to lead by example and not authoritarian domination. What type of leadership do you see in the larger Christian community? Does it fit the pattern Peter is appealing for? How are the elders and Homegroup leaders at SBCC doing in light of Peter's teaching?

Jesus had a great deal to say about servant leadership. Read Matthew 20:20-28 for a story that is both humorous and instructive. What type of leaders does Jesus want in his Kingdom?

Verse 4 is the only time the expression *Chief Shepherd* appears in the Bible. Variations of this picture of Jesus are found elsewhere.

Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:2)

the Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20)

Peter wants to remind his readers and his fellow elders that it is Jesus' church and he is the one who is ultimately in charge of it. Elder pastors serve as leaders under the authority of Jesus. What happens in the church and Christian community when leaders forget that it is Jesus, not them, who is in charge of the Church?

In verses 5-6 Peter once more touches on the themes of submission and humility. The exhortation is directed to *young men*. Why do you think that immediately after the section on the role of elders (vss. 1-4), Peter now addresses *young men*?

Write a definition of biblical humility. For help in understanding humility see, Matthew 11:29, Philippians 2:3-4, Colossians 3:12-14.

Respond to Warren Wiersbe's comments on 1 Peter 5:5-6. Do you agree?

We can never be submissive to each other until we are first submissive to God. Peter quoted Proverbs 3:34 to defend his point, a verse that is also quoted in James 4:6. It takes grace to submit to another believer, but God can give that grace if we humble ourselves before him. (Wiersbe, p. 135)

Verse 7 calls the believer to give our *anxiety* to God. The Greek word for "anxiety" means "to be drawn in different directions." (Kistemaker, p.199) Whether it is the 1st century or the 21st century, anxiety has a debilitating effect on our confidence. According to verse 7 why can the believer cast his anxiety on God?

What causes anxiety in your life? How have you seen this effect your spiritual life? What hinders you from casting your anxiety on God?

Read the verses below. What do they tell the believer they should do about worry and anxiety?

- Psalm 55:22
- Matthew 6:25, 32
- Philippians 4:6

When Peter says to be *self-controlled* and *alert* to spiritual attack he may be reflecting on his own experience with Jesus where Satan *sifted* him (Luke 22:31) and he failed to *watch* (Matthew 26:38). Read verses 8-9, and list the ways Peter instructs his readers to fight the attacks of Satan.

The Scripture makes it clear that Christians are involved in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-18). Peter says, *Resist him* (v. 9), James 4:7 in a similar fashion says, *Resist the devil* and Paul urges the Ephesians to *stand against the devil's schemes* (Ephesians 6:11,13). How do we do this practically? Give some concrete examples.

Ponder and respond to this statement by John McArthur.

Since Satan is a liar (John 8:44; cf. Gen. 3:1; 2 Thess. 2:9) and a deceiver (Rev. 20:7-8), the only sure way to stand up against him is by faithful obedience to biblical truth. The battle is a spiritual one . . . (McArthur, p. 285)

How does 1 Peter 5:10 say that God will sustain us?

After the beautiful benediction in verses 10-11, Peter concludes his letter with a postscript. The letter was written with the help of Silas who served Peter as an amanuensis or secretary. There is no reason to think that this is not the same

Silas mentioned in the book of Acts. Read the verses below. What do we learn of this Silas? What do these references and the brief mention of his name here in 1 Peter tell us about the nature of team ministry in the New Testament?

- Acts 15:22-23
- Acts 15:40-18:5 (You may want to skim these chapters covering the Paul's second missionary journey where Silas is prominent)
- 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2
- 2 Thessalonians 1:1

1 Peter 5:13 is a difficult verse to understand. There are several interpretative problems and options.

1. Wife or Church? Who is *she* referring to? Paul at one point pondered wives on missionary trips. *Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brother and Cephas?* (1 Corinthians 9:5). The best understanding of the *she* in verse 13 is that this is a reference to the church.¹

2. Babylon or Rome? *She who is Babylon . . .* There is no evidence that Peter traveled to the city of Babylon and established a church. It is best to understand *Babylon* as a cryptic name for Rome, just as John does in the book of Revelation (Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 17:5, 18:2, 10, 21).

3. Mark or spiritual son? While *Mark* could be Peter's biological son, most commentators see this as a reference to John Mark who was a spiritual son to both Peter and Paul (see Acts 12:12, 25, 15:36-39, 2 John 1, 13).²

It was common for the New Testament writers to encourage believers to greet one another with a *kiss*. (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26) Sometimes this kiss is called a *holy kiss* or as in verse 14, *a kiss of love*. What does this tell us about the nature of relationships in the church?

¹ New Testament writers often describe the church in female terms. (See John 3:29, Ephesians 5:25-33, Revelation 19:7-8, 21:2-3, 22:17).

² "Tradition indicates that Mark, with the aid of Peter, wrote the gospel named after him. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (about A.D. 124), writes that Mark was Peter's interpreter and composed the Gospel." (Kistemaker, p.209)

Peter's benediction, *Peace to all of you who are in Christ*, ends his letter. Describe the peace a believer has in a relationship with Christ.

Think back over these past twelve weeks and our study of 1 Peter. What lessons have stood out the most to you? What did you learn that was new about the Christian life? Spend some time as a Homegroup encouraging each other with some of your favorite verses from this letter.