

a contrast community



## FIRST PETER

SB Community Church • Fall 2019





## A Contrast Community

For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs.

For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practice an extraordinary kind of life.

Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence or study of ingenious men, nor are they masters of any human dogma as some are.

But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvelous, and confessedly contradicts expectation.

They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign.

They marry like all other men and they beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring.

They have their meals in common, but not their wives.

They find themselves in the flesh, and yet they live not after the flesh.

Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.

They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives.

They love all men, and they are persecuted by all.

They are ignored, and yet they are condemned. They are put to death, and yet they are endued with life.

They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are in want of all things, and yet they abound in all things.

They are dishonoured, and yet they are glorified in their dishonour. They are evil spoken of, and yet they are vindicated.

They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect.

Doing good they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they were thereby quickened by life.

War is waged against them as aliens by the Jews, and persecution is carried on against them by the Greeks, and yet those that hate them cannot tell the reason of their hostility.





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This study guide was written by Erin Patterson and Nathaniel Hodson, with research and insight contributed by Erik Anderson, Benji Bruneel, Mike Willbanks, and Joanne Herdrich. Graphic design and layout is by Carolee Peterson.





## Welcome to Homegroups at SB Community Church!

### Homegroups have three essential elements:

- Bible study
- Prayer
- Community building

### How to thrive in a homegroup:

To build community and trust, we all make every effort to **be prepared, be present, and be real.**

- Expect to spend 45 minutes to an hour preparing for your homegroup gathering. You can split this time up into shorter daily segments. Spend time reading and pondering the passage. Consider the questions and mark any that you particularly want to discuss during homegroup. Come ready to contribute and also to listen to others.
- Try to come each week--this honors the rest of your group and contributes to building the trust and connections that will help us all to grow. Arrive on time if possible. Set your phone aside. Notify your leaders if you won't be able to attend.
- We all long for authentic relationships, and homegroups can be a place where we are truly known and loved. Keep information shared by others confidential.
- If you're comfortable speaking out in a group, or talk a lot, regulate yourself. Leave space for others to talk. Ask questions to draw out others.
- Respect others' views, do not argue, do not interrupt. As trust grows, be willing to build relationships and to encourage each other.

Our prayer as pastoral staff is that each homegroup grow spiritually, personally, and in community life as we study the bible together. May you engage in and enjoy the riches of God's word each week!



# HOMEGROUP CHILDCARE



## What Is Involved?

- Each homegroup is scheduled to provide childcare helpers 2-3 Sundays between September and June.
- This is strictly a helper role where you are assisting children's ministries leaders as they care for and lead the children.
- Be ready to be flexible and serve at a service time you don't normally attend!
- Helpers are placed in the following groups: Nursery, Toddlers, Preschool, and a few in Elementary plus one female Bathroom Monitor. These positions are available at all three services.
- You can request an age group and a service time, but Elementary spots are very limited and hard to accommodate.

## Why Do We Do This?

Our church philosophy is that everyone in our church is part of our church family and the larger family of God. We believe it is our privilege and responsibility to care for our church family, including the very youngest members. As you minister to the children in our family, we hope that in the process you would:

- Meet members of your church family you might not otherwise meet.
- See God in unexpected ways and places.
- Find a role you may enjoy and in which you might like to serve more regularly.
- Enjoy yourself!

## Substitutes:

- If you can't serve one of the Sundays your group is scheduled, you are responsible to find a sub for yourself.
- Carolee Peterson is a great resource if you need help finding a sub or working out a switch with another group (carolee@sbcommunity.org).
- All subs need to be someone who attends SBCC regularly and should be in high school or older.
- We really do need all scheduled slots filled every week!

## The Day You Serve:

- **MOST IMPORTANT!** Please check in at the Info Table 20 minutes before the service starts.
- Report to assigned children's area right away. (Don't stop and talk.) Kids are arriving!
- Sick at the last minute? Call or text Rhonda DuPar at (805) 895-4274 or Carolee at (805) 895-4064.

## Exemptions:

- Those who currently work as a Youth Leader or Children's Ministry Leader are exempt.
- Exemptions are not given for the important ministries of Worship, Sound/Projection, Info Table, Greeters, etc. since those serving are not out for all of the adult service when they serve in those capacities.
- We do give exemptions for health reasons or if there are other reasons where it wouldn't be appropriate for someone to care for our children. We ask that if you fall into this category, please let your homegroup leader know so we can exempt you.

**CAROLEE PETERSON**

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES PASTORAL ASSISTANT

**(805) 895-4064**

**CAROLEE@SBCOMMUNITY.ORG**







## Sources

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## Introduction

# A Letter to Exiles

1 Peter opens with: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1). Who is this Peter? And who are these ‘exiles’? Where are the obscure regions? When and why was this letter written in the first place?

1 Peter is a letter written by the apostle Simon Peter; the same Peter who travelled with Jesus as one of the twelve disciples during Jesus’ three-year ministry. Peter and his brother Andrew were the first two disciples called by Jesus, leaving their life as humble fishermen without hesitation to follow Jesus’ invitation: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). The Peter who wrote this letter is the same man who heard Jesus giving his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5), walked with Jesus on the sea (Matt. 14), witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt. 16), attacked the servant of the High Priest at Jesus’ arrest (Matt. 26:51), denied Jesus (Matt. 26: 69-75), and was restored by the resurrected Jesus (John 21:15-19). During our time in this letter, it will help to remember that it was written by *this Peter*. When we read a reference to a saying of Jesus, we know that the author heard this teaching straight from the lips of Jesus! When Peter exhorts us to witness to Christ in a hostile environment, we know that this instruction comes from someone who had himself denied Christ in the face of danger and social pressure, had “wept bitterly” over his betrayal (Matt. 27:74), and who had been forgiven and restored to leadership by Jesus himself.

Scholars think Peter most likely wrote this letter between A.D. 64 and 68.<sup>1</sup> According to the record of the early church, Peter was killed in Rome during the persecutions from the Roman Emperor Nero, who died in June A.D. 68, and the presence of Silvanus (Silas) in 5:12 indicates that the letter was written after Paul arrived in Rome in A.D. 64.<sup>2</sup>

To whom, then, is this letter addressed? The smattering of regions listed in 1:1 indicates that this letter is written to “Christians living in the northwest quadrant of Asia Minor,”<sup>3</sup> by the Black Sea in present-day Turkey. We do not know who first preached the gospel to these believers. It is likely that before they believed, these Christians were Gentiles, as Peter speaks of “the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (1:18), and writes that the time is past for “doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry” (4:3). It is unlikely that Peter would use this language in describing converts from Judaism.<sup>4</sup>

It’s interesting to notice what Peter calls his readers—“elect *exiles*.” Later on he calls them *sojourners and exiles* (other translations: *visitors, strangers, foreigners, aliens, temporary residents*). They live in a place where they don’t fully belong. They appear to live on the margins of society. They are “maligned” (4:4) for failing to conform to the patterns of the wider pagan culture. Some scholars have argued that these believers were social outcasts *before* their conversion, while others think the word

1 See Peter Davids, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 10.

2 Davids 10.

3 Davids 7.

4 See Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1988), page 18.



*exiles* points to “a new estrangement which a Christian way of life creates.”<sup>5</sup> Still others think that these believers were forced to colonize these regions in part *because* of their Christian conversion elsewhere and their subsequent social ostracism.<sup>6</sup>

Whichever one of these interpretations most accurately reflects the history of these believers,

“The important point to highlight is that the terms ‘aliens’ and ‘strangers’ describe real social realities. Rather than understanding ‘strangers’ as ‘describing the believer’s transitory life on this earth as a journey toward their heavenly home, it should be understood primarily as defining the relationship between the Christian and unbelieving society.’ In other words, Peter uses their experience of social marginalization to describe their experience as those in Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

Miroslav Volf writes, “That the members of the [1 Peter] community might have become Christians because many of them were socially marginalized seems an intelligent hypothesis. That they became alienated from their social environment in a new way when they became Christians is what the epistle explicitly states.”<sup>8</sup>

Precisely because the recipients of 1 Peter are socially excluded in some way because of their faith in Christ, and precisely because Peter addresses that status in this letter, we can take great encouragement from 1 Peter in our own wider culture that increasingly fails to recognize the gospel and rule of Christ, and in our own marginalization for his name.

## How To Use This Guide

Each week’s study guide contains a brief introduction with some historical, cultural, or linguistic context, as well as thoughts by various biblical commentaries, that may shed light on the passage. But your most important preparation will come from reading the passage, slowly and attentively. If it’s helpful, use a printed-out copy of the passage so you can mark it up. Note what stands out to you, what is unclear, what repetitions or themes you notice, what key words you see, etc. Read prayerfully, asking that the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom and insight.

After that, go through the questions. The goal of this study guide is not to be mindless “homework” or a way to test what we know. Its aim is to point us back to the words of Scripture—to help us learn to read, ponder, pray, and allow our lives to be transformed by the Word of God.

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5 Miroslav Volf, “Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation Between Church and Culture in 1 Peter, *Ex Auditu* 10 (1994), <http://www.yale.edu/faith/downloads/soft-difference-church-culture.pdf>

6 Karen H. Jobes, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005) 23-41.

7 Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Gospel Communities on Mission* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 30. Quoting Jobes, 62.

8 Volf, “Soft Difference,” quoted in Chester and Timmis, 30-1.



## Study One

# 1 Peter 1:1-12

Peter opens his letter with a more or less standard greeting found in letters of the time, but that shouldn't lead us to ignore the weighty, rich teachings and blessings in these first verses! In the general introduction we discussed the person of Peter and the "exile" (1:1) of the believers to whom this letter is addressed. However, don't miss the significance of the fact that Peter, a Jew, uses the word "elect" (or "chosen") in verse 1 to describe the Gentile recipients of the letter. Edmund Clowney writes:

Feel the drama in that description. Peter is writing primarily to Gentiles, to those who had no part in the people of God but who followed 'the futile ways inherited from your forefathers' (1:18)... Peter, a pious Jew, would regard pagan Gentiles with scorn and loathing... This is the apostle who writes to Gentiles living in Asia Minor (now Turkey) and greets them as God's chosen and holy people! What could cause such an about-face on the part of this very Jewish fisherman? The answer, of course, is Jesus. Peter came to a new understanding of what it meant to belong to the people of God: it meant to belong to the Messiah, the Son of God. Nothing is more astonishing than that he should call these Gentiles the *chosen of God the Father* (1:2).

So, verse 2 locates Gentile believers (that's most of us!) within the story of Israel. Peter says that we are "elect," or "chosen;" Israel was *chosen* as God's "firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22-23) at Mount Sinai, where God made the covenant with the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup> Peter says we are "sanctified" in the Spirit; "the word *sanctified* means 'made holy' or 'set apart.' [Israel was] called to be distinctive (Ex. 19:4-6). They [were] set apart from all the nations to live under God's reign and so make God known to the nations."<sup>2</sup> Lastly, Peter says that we are sanctified for "sprinkling" with Jesus' blood; the covenant at Mt. Sinai was sealed with the sprinkling of blood (Ex. 24:7-8). "All these elements are present in 1 Peter 1:2. We are chosen from the world by the Father, sanctified for the sake of the world by the Spirit, and called to missional obedience by the sprinkling of Christ's blood. Peter identified the church as the new Israel. We are recapitulating the story of Israel, and Peter locates us in that story at Mount Sinai."<sup>3</sup>

Other commentators view Peter's description of these believers as exiles as a command given to the exiles in Babylon hundreds of years earlier: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7).<sup>4</sup> As "exiles" in their communities, Christians are still called to seek the good of those around them, to love them, and show God's goodness.


Verse 4 is a wonderful example of Peter weaving into his letter teachings of Jesus which *he himself surely heard*. Peter's description of "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" calls to mind Luke 12:33, where Jesus speaks of "a treasure in the

1 Chester and Timmis, 47.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Douglas Harink, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: 1 & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 36.



heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.” Robert Gundry argues that the parallel notions in these verses can “hardly be accidental.”<sup>5</sup> Even though this inheritance is “kept in heaven,” and we are in a sense “exiles” on account of our new life in Christ, “Peter is not saying that heaven is our new home. Our home is the new creation, which is ‘kept’ in heaven for us. Our inheritance is kept for us (1:4) and we are kept for our inheritance (1:5).”<sup>6</sup>

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus (v. 1). If you’ve read the gospels, try to remember some of the things Peter witnessed. Pretend you’re flipping through a photo album of his time with Jesus. What might he remember most?
2. This passage is about orientation. Where are we, physically and spiritually? How did we get where we are? Who are we? What is our purpose? What is coming next? As a starting point, we have a beautiful reminder of the gospel (good news!) and the hope to which all believers have access. In your own words, describe the gospel message given in this passage (particularly vv. 3-5).
3. In this week’s passage, what is Peter telling these believers about the past, present, and future of a child of God? Consider each:

Past

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5 Robert H. Gundry, “‘Verba Christi’ in I Peter: Their Implications Concerning the Authorship of I Peter and the Authenticity of the Gospel Tradition,” *New Testament Studies* 13, no. 4 (1967): 337.

6 Chester and Timmis, 31.



Present

Future

4. What do you think Peter means by the phrase *a living hope*?


5. What is the Father doing in this passage?

The Son?

The Spirit?

6. What is “the good news” mentioned in verse 12? Write it out in plain language as you would explain it to someone who had no experience of the Christian faith.





7. Look through the passage again and look for occurrences of the words “joy” and “rejoice.” What causes them to rejoice? Is this joy in the present or in the future? Both?

8. Go back now and take a closer look at verse 2. Why do you think he included this?

9. Now that you’ve spent some time in this passage, try to retell in your own words what Peter is saying to his readers.

10. Finally, spend some time pondering verse 10-12. The treasure of this gospel, for which the prophets longed, is to have the privilege of knowing it and announcing it to others! Take some time in your group to ponder what this means for us. If you could grasp this reality more fully, what might change in your life?

### Prayer Guide

- Practice praying the gospel truths of verse 3-5 into each others’ lives.
- Pray that this study of 1 Peter would bring about a fresh love for the gospel among us and an eagerness to share it.
- Read and pray Psalm 130. The long-awaited redemption of Israel has arrived in Jesus! Celebrate this in prayer.
- Pray for the indigenous people group with whom our missionaries Merrill and Teresa D. work. Ask the Lord to help them hold tightly to their inheritance that can never perish as they experience persecution and death from drug traffickers, ranchers, and guerrillas from the neighboring country.



## Study Two

# 1 Peter 1:13-25

Many commentators have noted that verse 13 contains the first true command found in 1 Peter; an imperative to *hope*!<sup>1</sup> This command to hope on the grace of Christ only comes after proclaiming the riches of what Christ has *already fully accomplished* for us: he has “caused us to be born again to a living hope” through the resurrection (1:3), to a secure inheritance (1:4).

The phrase “preparing your minds for action” in verse 13 translates more literally to something like “gird up the loins of your mind.” This vivid Biblical image describes what a man wearing a robe needed to do if he were going into battle; gathering the ends of a garment between his legs and tucking them into his belt.<sup>2</sup> Again, it is quite likely that Peter has in mind a saying which he personally heard from Jesus’ mouth; when he spoke of his return, he told his disciples to “stay dressed for action [literally ‘*let your loins stay girded*’] and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast” (Luke 12:35-6).

In verses 15 and 16, Peter writes, “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, *You shall be holy, for I am holy.*” In these verses Peter once again links these unlikely Gentile believers in Asia Minor to God’s story of redemption through Israel! Peter is here quoting Leviticus 11:4 (and 19:2), central to the old covenant. While Leviticus can be a bit intimidating,

fundamentally the book of Leviticus is about God creating a new society through his word, which is distinctive in every way. In this way Israel will display the holiness of God in a way that attracts the nations to find blessing in God as God promised to Abraham... [As in the book of] Leviticus, Peter is going to spell out what it means for the church to be distinctive in every area of life, but the headline is ‘Be holy because I am Holy.’<sup>3</sup>

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. Describe a time when you wanted desperately to fit in with those around you. What did you do (or say, or wear, or endorse) in the hopes of being accepted? Share stories with your homegroup.

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1 For example, Harink 54.

2 Clowney 62

3 Chester and Timmis, 47-8



2. To help set the scene for this week's study, take a look at the first word in this passage: "Therefore." Try to summarize what is implied there, based on last week's study. In other words, "Because \_\_\_\_ is true..."

3. Verse 13 asks us to actively "set our hope" on something specific. How can a Christian hope in a conscious, intentional way?

4. How is gospel hope different from—or similar to—other things we hope for in life?

5. Think about what it means to "prepare your mind for action." What activities in your life have required you to "prepare your mind" in advance? Describe what that looks like.

6. Based on the context you have so far, for what "action" is Peter asking these Christians to prepare their minds?



7. How does your mind affect your behavior when it comes to living as a child of God? Think of a concrete example of a time when the processes of your mind led to behavior that you believe either honored God or didn't, and share with your homegroup.

8. What might a mind *unprepared* for holiness look like?

9. In the same vein, how would you describe what it looks like to be "sober-minded?"

10. In verse 18, Peter once again looks to the past to help provide context for these believers. What's an example of one of the "futile ways" from which you know you have been rescued?

11. This passage mentions "various trials." How do Peter's words to these believers provide some clues for what they might have been going through?

12. Have you ever thought about what holiness is for? Look through this passage for two reasons Peter gives as to why Jesus' children are to be characterized by holiness (hint: vv. 16, 22).



### Prayer Guide

- Read and pray through Isaiah 40 (quoted in our passage). As in our 1 Peter passage—especially verse 13—Isaiah 40 is a vision of God coming to set everything right, written to exiles who are longing for just that.
- Pray for a renewed vision for holiness, in your own life and in our church. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you repent where you need to.
- Ask God to help you “love one another earnestly from a pure heart,” in your homegroup, in your family, at SB Community.
- Pray for your mind. Offer your thought patterns and reasoning and emotions to God. Consider memorizing verse 13.
- Pray for Muslim-background believers, that their thought patterns and reasoning will be transformed to reflect their new life in Christ. Pray for SBCC missionary Katie Skiff as she shares the Good News with students in the Middle East.



## Study Three

## 1 Peter 2:1-10

1 Peter 2:2 contains the curious phrase “like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk.” The word for “spiritual” here is the Greek word *logikon*, which could also mean something like “rational” or “pertaining to the word” (*logos*). Because of this etymological similarity to *logos* and because immediately before this Peter is talking about the word of God by which we are born again (1:23), most commentators think that this “pure spiritual milk” refers to the word of God; the proclamation of the gospel, the apostolic teaching, and the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> Peter instructs us to *long* for this word of life.

This week’s passage is filled to the brim with rich allusions to the Old Testament. While we don’t have space to unpack them all, Chester and Timmis have provided a helpful chart in which we can see the tapestry Peter is weaving:

1 Peter 2:9-10	Main Old Testament Allusions
You are a chosen people	My chosen people (Isaiah 43:20)
A royal priesthood	A kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6)
A holy nation	A holy nation (Exodus 19:6)
A people belonging to God	My treasured possession (Exodus 19:5); my people (Isaiah 43:20)
That you may declare the praises of him who called you...	That they might declare my praise (Isaiah 43:21)
Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God	I will say to Not My People, “You are my people” (Hosea 2:23)
Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy	I will have mercy on No Mercy (Hosea 2:23)

It is worth providing a note concerning Peter’s difficult phrase in verse 8: “they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.” Peter is concerned with the responses of those who have heard the gospel, but rejected it. Regarding the word “destined,” McKnight says, “None of this surprises God. Those who know Scripture know” the consequences of rejecting Jesus as Lord. “God’s act of appointing Jesus as the living Stone has become both honor for believers and judgment for unbelievers; this was God’s design, and everything happens according to his will.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Clowney 79. Karen Jobes, however, argues that the “spiritual milk” is broader in the sense of new life in God and nourishment by Him *including* His word (Jobes 168)

2 McKnight 109

**Consider...**

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. This passage starts with the word, "So..." What does this word point back to? In other words, why should we "put away" the behaviors listed?
2. In this passage, Christians are compared to newborn infants. If you've been a believer for a while, how have you grown up in your faith? What events, beliefs, practices, etc. have nourished you?
3. How can your homegroup pray for and encourage you in your spiritual growth?
4. How is Jesus described in this passage? Use your own words.
5. Look again at verses 7-8. Then read Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22. Finally, read Mark 12:10. Presumably, Peter was present to hear Jesus teach this. What connections do you think Peter wants his readers to make through these quotations?



6. What phrases are used in this passage to describe the people of God?

7. According to the passage, what is the purpose that the people of God exist to fulfill together?

8. Take a closer look at the terms used to describe Christ-followers in verse 9 and verse 10. To what extent do you view yourself as connected to the larger family of God's people? What has helped you, or what could help you, to feel more a part of this global, multi-ethnic family?

9. Read the whole passage again. Sum up the main point of each of the three sections and try to describe how they are linked together thematically.

Verses 1-3

Verses 4-8

Verses 9-10





### Prayer Guide

- Read Ephesians 2:19-22. In prayer, rejoice and delight in these truths!
- Also use Psalm 118, quoted in this passage, to give words to your prayers. Thank God for the “spiritual house” that is the people of God, and the individual people who are part of that house.
- Pray for those you know (maybe it's you!) who are still trying to decide how to think about Jesus, whether to respond with belief or to take offense. Ask Jesus to make himself known to those who are seeking him.
- Pray for the ministries of the Palestinian Bible Society as they seek to shine Jesus' light and love among people who can easily take offense at him. Ask the Lord of the Harvest (Luke 10:2) to make himself known to the Muslims in the region who are seeking to please God.



## Study Four

# 1 Peter 2:11-25

1 Peter 2:11-25 guide us through some challenging passages concerning power, submission, and suffering. Christians are free in Christ, but what should the Christian's posture be toward the various human structures of power and authority in society?

The first section deals with political authority. In verse 13, when Peter writes, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution," the word for 'institution' is the Greek word *ktisis*, which normally means something like "creation."<sup>1</sup> This is a very unusual use of the word, so most commentators think that Peter uses this word to relativize the authority of human institutions— they are *merely* created, human institutions, while God is Lord and Creator. New Testament scholar Scot McKnight offers some helpful guidance here: "Peter keeps in view the important impact holy living has on those who observe believers and the value lifestyle has for maintaining good relations with society at large."<sup>2</sup>

While this view points us to honor civil authority, McKnight says,

"For Peter and the entire church, 'submit' does not imply total obedience, for the Israelites and the early Christians participated in civil disobedience when the demands of society overrode the demands of the Lord (e.g., Exodus 1:17; Daniel 3:13-18; Acts 4:18-20; Hebrews 11:23). Wolfgang Schrage has expressed it well: '[Christians] are free with respect to the authorities, and *normally* this freedom manifests itself in respect and loyalty, submission and honor'..."<sup>3</sup>

McKnight goes on to explain that rather than providing an endorsement of Roman rule, "Peter's perspective was one that put authority in its place. It is the words of Martin Luther that have crystallized Peter's point the best: 'A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.'"<sup>4</sup>

Commentators have also made much of verse 2:17, noting that while we are to honor everyone, we *love* Christian brothers and sisters, and we only *fear* God.<sup>5</sup> Chester and Timmis again helpfully sum it up: from our "position of freedom...we offer submission (1 Pet. 2:16). This beleaguered, ostracized, misunderstood Christian community is to respond by honoring everyone and treating everyone with respect... It is freedom used to serve others in love (Gal 5:13)."<sup>6</sup>

This same principle is in play in Peter's instructions to "servants" as well. Edmund Clowney explains that this notion of "servanthood" (more starkly rendered in other parts of the New Testament as "slavery") is relevantly different from what comes to mind in our American context. He writes, "Slavery was widespread in Peter's world; it included many who would today be regarded as

1 Mark Dubis, *1 Peter - a Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 65.


2 Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 142.

3 McKnight 144.

4 McKnight 149.

5 Clowney 112.

6 Chester and Timmis, 101.



professionals: managers of estates, physicians, teachers and tutors,” and “obviously his concern is not social stability or the perpetuation of slavery.”<sup>7</sup> Peter’s message here is still the same: we are freed in Christ, and we are to use this freedom for showing radical dignity to others. Moreover, the fact that Peter is addressing servants at all marks a radical shift from the mindset of the ancient world. There are many existing “household codes” written from Greek and Roman ethicists around this time to describe and encourage authority structures. In these household codes, it is assumed that slaves were inferior persons and “thus did not have moral responsibility.”<sup>8</sup> The codes never addressed servants directly, but rather told masters how to deal with them. Peter turns this on its head: when he addresses servants, he treats them with dignity, acknowledging their personhood and moral responsibility as bearers of the gospel and imitators of Jesus himself.

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. List some times when you’ve willingly submitted yourself to discomfort in order to achieve a desired outcome of any kind. Share an example with your homegroup.
  
2. In this passage, Peter helps his listeners think about the postures and attitudes that should be characteristic of Christians living as “sojourners and exiles” in a society that doesn’t accept them. How would you describe these attitudes?
  
3. In your life, what are some of the “passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul?” What threat do these things pose to your soul? You may wish to keep your answers private, but do consider this question prayerfully. Think about finding one person with whom you can share your response.

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<sup>7</sup> Clowney 112.

<sup>8</sup> Davids 105.




4. In verse 13, Peter says, “Be subject...” and in verse 16, he says, “Live as people who are free....” Is this a contradiction? How do you interpret what is being said here?

5. Now get specific. In what situations or relationships do you experience this tension between your freedom and your calling to show Christlike humility?

6. How does Peter connect personal holiness with the bigger picture of how Christians’ behavior impacts society?

7. The relationship of God’s people to the state has been an ongoing topic for discernment among believers ever since the Babylonian exile (see the Book of Daniel). With our 1 Peter passage in view, in what circumstances, and in what ways, do you think civil disobedience might be appropriate? Read Acts 4:15-20 and Acts 5:27-29 for biblical examples.

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8. What do you think it means for Christians to show honor to those in political authority?
9. Most of us either are a boss, or have a boss, or both. How does the gospel shape the way we work within these relationships?
10. Look at verse 19 and 21 related to suffering. Is there a time in your life when God has used suffering in your life to bear witness to Jesus?
11. Look again at verse 24-25. What was the outcome of Jesus' submission to God?
12. Compare 2:21-25 with Isaiah 53:4-12. Peter seems to be paraphrasing the Isaiah passage. What is our call as Christians in light of the message of these two verses?



13. Consider the mention of doing “good deeds” in verse 11, 12, 14, 15, and 20 again. Is there a specific way you could live out the gospel by doing good in your community this week or this month?

### Prayer Guide

- Read and pray Isaiah 53, meditating on the character, posture and attitude of Jesus.
- Pray for “every human institution” that we are subject to—government, schools, employers, etc. Pray that as Christians in Santa Barbara, our participation in our community would always point to the gospel.
- Consider some people in your life who are suffering right now. Be instructed by this passage as to how to pray for them in their suffering.
- Pray for the ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship as they run weekly Good News Clubs at local schools; may the gospel change children’s lives!





## Study Five

# 1 Peter 3:1-7

This passage continues with more examples on the theme of posture and attitude. Within the various social structures in which Christians may find themselves, voluntary submission can be a way of imitating Christ's humility and willingness to put others first.

In this week's passage, Peter uses examples that come from the context of marriage. We should start by noting the fact that Peter is even addressing women, like last week. This shows a remarkable break from the thought world of the time. While ethicists of the time just spoke *about* women, making little of their humanity or moral responsibility, Peter directly calls women to imitate Christ in love and respect, acknowledging their personhood and their active role in pointing others toward the gospel.

Chester and Timmis helpfully see 3:1 as the working out of 2:11-12:

"[After 2:11-12], Peter then goes on to apply this mission strategy to our life in society (vv. 13-17), in the workplace (vv. 18-25), and in the home (3:1-7). In each case Peter addresses those who face hostility because they follow Christ... While Peter's words apply to the witness of all wives, his focus is on those whose husbands 'do not believe the word' (3:1). In each case we are called to good works (2:15,20; 3:1-2) and to show submission and have respect for others (2:13, 17, 18; 3:1-2)... Centrally, there is a repeated expectation that, echoing 2:12, our good works will have a missional impact."<sup>1</sup>

In verse 3, Peter's condemnation of ostentatious jewelry and dress isn't prohibiting adornment as such, otherwise we couldn't wear clothes!<sup>2</sup> The issue at stake is our public witness to Christ and his posture of voluntary humility. Pride can show itself in distinguishing oneself with expensive or garish dress, and in the original context Peter's teaching was most likely meant to lessen class distinctions in the churches, building unity and love in the family of God.<sup>3</sup>

When 3:4 recommends, instead of ostentatious adornment, a "gentle and quiet spirit," it will be helpful to note that this is not only a command for women. Clowney notes that Jesus is called gentle in heart (Matthew 11:29), gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23), and quietness is a Christian virtue for all (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Christian men and women are all called to cultivate and reflect the attitudes of Jesus.

3:6 can sound a little jarring to our ears. Clowney again offers a helpful reorientation. When Peter mentioned that Sarah called Abraham "lord," this 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."<sup>4</sup>


1 Chester and Timmis, 89.

2 Clowney 131.

3 Davids 118.

4 Clowney 133.





Lastly, when women are described as the *weaker vessel* in verse 7, Peter emphatically does *not* mean spiritually weaker: in Christ there is no longer male and female (Gal 3:28).<sup>5</sup> It seems that simple physical strength is the issue, as “vessel” probably refers to the physical body (2 Cor 4:7). In other words, husbands shouldn’t use the advantage of greater physical size and strength to mistreat their wives! Here is another echo of 2:16. In any case, husbands are called to live with their wives “in an understanding way,” loving them with sensitivity and intimate knowledge of who they are. After all, Peter reminds these men, believing women are “heirs with you”! Here is an opportunity for another reminder that Peter spent a lot of time with Jesus, and would have noted the way Jesus treated the women around him.

This passage urges both men and women to resist the urge to domineer over the other. Whatever social position they are in, Christians have the privilege of following the example of Jesus in both our public and our private relationships, and of looking for ways to honor and uphold those around us.

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. Look at the first word, “likewise.” What does this refer back to? Review your conversations from the previous passages about the heart attitudes of Christians and what kind of impact these attitudes can have on your community.

2. Look at verse 3-4. Most of us spend a certain amount of time on our physical appearance. Clothing, fashion, jewelry, tattoos, hair...these are all forms of messaging. What are some messages you’ve seen people trying to send with their appearance?

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<sup>5</sup> Clowney 134.



3. Consider verse 4. What is a “gentle and quiet spirit?” What would the opposite kind of spirit look like?

4. Read 1 Cor. 9:19. What light does this verse shed on our 1 Peter passage as to the purpose and effect of voluntary humility?

5. In your life, is there a relationship in which you experience power dynamics that are difficult for you? How could this passage, and the ones before, help you to shape your attitude and responses?

6. Throughout this book, Peter is very concerned with how the message of the gospel gets translated through the actions of believers. What is one way you’ve seen gospel truth demonstrated via someone else’s actions?



7. Imagine for a few minutes what it might look like for you to approach everyone in your life with humility, treating them with dignity and respect. What might change in your relationships with your colleagues? Your family? Your most difficult relatives? Neighbors? Other drivers on the road? People in your favorite online community? Or...? Think about your own life and be specific.

### Prayer Guide

- Borrow language from Psalm 37 to pray for the attitudes of your heart in the various aspects of your life:
  - Your social and political involvement
  - Your community relationships—school, work, people who provide services for you
  - Your non-believing friends and neighbors
  - Your Christian brothers and sisters
  - Your family
  - Your own heart toward God
- Pray for the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission as they serve homeless guests with dignity, kindness, and graciousness. May many hear and receive the Good News!



## Study Six

## 1 Peter 3:18-22

In 3:19, we once again recognize the words of Jesus. Surely Peter is drawing from his personal experience of hearing Christ give the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>1</sup> He heard Jesus say, “Blessed are you when others revile and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Mt. 5:11), and “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt. 5:44).

3:19-20 is a notoriously difficult passage to understand, though the original hearers no doubt understood perfectly well what Peter meant by his words.<sup>2</sup> Even the great Reformer Martin Luther once wrote, “A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.”<sup>3</sup> Among scholars today there are two major interpretations that we will briefly lay out.

One interpretation, held by St. Augustine, understands these verses to mean that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, preached through Noah as a prophet to the disobedient generation around him (who has since been put in ‘prison,’ i.e. judgment).<sup>4</sup> After all, just earlier in the letter Peter said that the Spirit of Christ preached through Old Testament prophets; this would be a “case in point.”<sup>5</sup> This interpretation could be paraphrased as, “He went and preached to those who are now spirits in prison when they disobeyed formerly when God’s patience was waning in the days of Noah.”<sup>6</sup>

The second major interpretation understands the passage to mean that Christ proclaimed his victory to fallen angels *after* his resurrection. This interpretation would also make sense, because verse 18 ends by talking about Jesus’ resurrection, when he was “made alive in the spirit.”

Commentator Edmund Clowney favors the first interpretation because verse 20 seems to teach that God was patient with these ‘spirits’ (waiting for them to repent); and this could only be true for human beings.<sup>7</sup> Peter Davids, on the other hand, prefers the second interpretation because the phrase from 3:19-20 “made alive in the spirit, in which he went...” most naturally refers to Christ’s post-resurrection ‘spiritual body’ (1 Cor. 15:44) rather than the person of the Holy Spirit,<sup>8</sup> and during Peter’s time there was a history of Jewish interpretation which linked disobedient spirits with the days of Noah (and the “Nephilim” of Gen. 6:1-4) and taught their later imprisonment.<sup>9</sup> Both of these commentaries are excellent resources if you would like to dig into this passage a little more deeply!

1 Clowney 137.

2 Clowney 156.

3 Quoted in Clowney 156.

4 Clowney 157.


5 Clowney 157.

6 Clowney 162.

7 Clowney 162

8 It is important to note that Christ’s post-resurrection body is a body, not a spirit, though it is in a new glorified “spiritual” mode; the same will be true for believers at Christ’s return. We will not be disembodied spirits, but will be our glorified bodies. Our bodies are good: they are part of God’s good creation and his plan is to restore and glorify his good creation! (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

9 Davids 138-40.



Verses 21 and 22 can be, at first glance, a little tricky as well. How is it that Noah's ark *corresponds* to baptism? What does this mean? Here Peter engages in a bit of *typology*. The inspired authors of the New Testament recognized that some of God's mighty saving acts in the Old Testament anticipate and symbolize aspects of our salvation in Christ. The author of Hebrews, for example, considers the sacrifices in the wilderness tabernacle a symbol, or antitype, of Christ's sacrifice and later intercession in heaven (Heb. 9:24).<sup>10</sup> So here, Peter sees that baptism *corresponds* (the Greek here is the word *antitypos*) to Noah's deliverance through water. Like Noah's family, the suffering Christians in Asia minor can trust the promises of God for deliverance. They were delivered from the judgment of the flood, "yet the judgment of the flood was only provisional, and the deliverance of Noah but a prefiguring, or 'type,' of the final and full salvation of Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup> Peter makes sure that we note, however, that baptism *as a ceremony* does not save us. He explicitly says that it is "*not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (3:21). Peter sees our salvation *through baptism* as rooted in a pledge of commitment to Christ<sup>12</sup> and their union with the resurrected Christ.<sup>13</sup>

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. Consider the character traits described in verse 8. How do these connect to what we've been studying in previous weeks?

2. In verse 9, note the phrase "to this you were called." Go back to 2:21-24, where Peter uses the same phrase. Reflect on that for a few minutes. To what, exactly, are we called in these two passages?

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<sup>10</sup> We find similar typology in the letters of Paul; see Romans 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 10:11.

<sup>11</sup> Clowney 164.

<sup>12</sup> Davids 145.

<sup>13</sup> Clowney 165.



3. Look at verse 15. How would you give a reason for the hope you have, if someone asked you?


4. In what situations or areas of your life could you imagine people asking you about the “reason for the hope that is in you?”

5. Has anyone ever asked you this? How did the conversation go?

6. What is there in your life that might hinder your ability to talk to others about the gospel?

7. How could your homegroup help each other to “be prepared” in the way verse 15 describes?

8. Have you ever seen someone give a good defense of the gospel? What did this look like?



9. Read Psalm 34, quoted in this passage. How does the Psalm describe our hope for justice in this world?

10. Have you ever been in a situation when you felt that you suffered for doing good? In other words, describe a situation when you opposed a cultural norm for the sake of your faith, and experienced negative consequences.

11. Peter connects the salvation of Noah through water to our baptism. What role does baptism play in the life of the believer? What role has it played in your own life?

### Prayer Guide:

- Pray Psalm 34. Use the words of this psalm to ask God to train you toward the mindset that Peter is encouraging in our passage this week.
- Pray for yourself and your group members, that you would be ready and prepared, with gentleness and respect, to give the reason for your faith in Jesus.
- Pray that your homegroup would reflect the attitudes described in this passage: unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender hearts, humble minds.
- Pray for Michelle and Gerber Perez as they serve with Mission Impact in Guatemala; may each member of the groups who visit the country for work projects reflect Jesus brightly so his kingdom will expand.



## Study Seven

# 1 Peter 4:1-11

In 4:1 we read, “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” Peter does not mean that any person that suffers in any way ceases to sin at all. Rather, it seems clear that Peter’s encouragement is based on what Christ has already done. Based on the fact that “Christ also suffered once for sins” (3:18) and in doing so has “finished with sin,”<sup>1</sup> Christians should take heart in their sufferings, knowing that as Christ’s body we are following his sufferings (2:21). And through these sufferings, the power of sin is broken in our lives. Again, Peter is *not* expressing the general principle that *any* bodily suffering ends sin. He is speaking only of our participation in the sufferings of Christ: when we “do good and suffer for it” (2:20). Chester and Timmis write,

The willingness to suffer is a sign of our break with sin. We do not choose to suffer per se (3:13; 4:15), but we choose to break with sin even though we know this will lead to suffering. Peter anticipates intense peer pressure when we refuse to join in doing what we used to do before our conversion (4:3-4)... [but] Peter’s message is clear: not sinning might lead to suffering, but it is better to suffer than to sin.<sup>2</sup>

Verse 6 is also a little strange; what does Peter mean when he says “this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead”? This perhaps alarming phrase actually has a rather straightforward meaning. New Testament scholar Scot McKnight explains, “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...Because this life is only a prelude to life after death, the gospel was preached to those who are (now) dead. And because those people will have to give an account to God for their life, everyone must hear the gospel.”<sup>3</sup>

In verse 8, we see Peter quoting Proverbs 10:12 as a general principle: love binds together the community of Christ in the face of hardship, forgiving others as we have been forgiven.<sup>4</sup>

Verse 11 is a helpful reminder that we deeply need the “strength that God supplies” to minister to one another, and *not* just if preaching is your job! Clowney writes, “Peter’s exhortation is no less needed for service than for teaching... [We] may agree that the ministry of the word needs special grace, but waiting on tables, collecting money, or caring for the sick is just a matter of rolling up one’s sleeves and getting the job done. Not so. If God is to be glorified by ministry in his name, it must be ministry performed in his *strength*.”<sup>5</sup>

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1 Davids 149.

2 Chester and Timmis, 136.

3 McKnight 227.

4 Davids 158.

5 Clowney 186.





### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. What is Peter referring to in verse 1 by “the same way of thinking?”
  
2. Again, as we have seen several times over the past weeks, Peter urges believers to cultivate a particular frame of mind (4:1, 4:7). The repetition of this message points to how important it is! (And this won't be the last time we hear it...) ! Look back in 1 Peter and call to mind the things that have been said previously about mental preparation and a chosen mindset, and jot down what some of these mindsets look like (some hints: 1:13, 2:18-25, 3:1-2, 3:15-16, and more).
  
3. Have you taken any specific action in these past weeks to prepare or train your mind in accordance with what you're learning in 1 Peter? Share with your homegroup.
  
4. This passage gives some examples of how the Christian community is noticeably and publicly different from the surrounding community. Describe some ways you've noticed that the members of SB Community live in contrast to the rest of Santa Barbara.



5. Have you ever had the experience of being tempted to go back into an old way of life from “the time that is past” (verses 3-4)? How did you handle the situation?

6. Would you describe yourself as “self-controlled” (v. 7)? Why or why not, and in what ways?

7. Peter gives a command in verse 7 related to training your mind and body for holiness, sandwiched between two reasons why this is important. Explain these reasons in your own words.

8. When you hear the phrase, “keep loving one another earnestly,” what comes to mind? What might it look like to love the other members of your church family earnestly? Where do you need encouragement to *keep* at it?

9. How does the mandate to show willing hospitality to other believers connect with the rest of this passage?



10. Describe an example you've seen of believers showing hospitality. What message did their actions send?

11. Verse 10 speaks of using our gifts to serve one another. Do have a sense of what spiritual gifts you may have? (A few lists of possible spiritual gifts can be found in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10). Share with your homegroup.

12. In your homegroup over the past 8 weeks, when have you seen examples of members serving one another with their unique gifts? Share stories to encourage one another.

13. Look at verse 11 and the phrase "by the strength that God supplies." When was a time when you needed God's supernatural strength to serve others?

### Prayer Guide

- Pray through the passage. This passage has some amazing phrases for how Christians can live in light of the gospel. Pray each thing for one another, and pray for each member that their spiritual gifts would grow and bear fruit.
- The words of Ephesians 2:1-10 mirror this week's message beautifully. Praise and thank God for all he has done to bring you from death to life.
- Pray for one another in your group, asking God to develop your gifts and show you how and where to use them for his glory.
- Pray for the members of Community One:27, a group in our church who are parenting foster/adopted children. Praise God for the earnest love and hospitality (vv. 8-9) they are showing, and ask on their behalf for "the strength that God supplies" (v. 11).



## Study Eight

# 1 Peter 4:12-19

When Peter reminds us that we should not “be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon” us (4:12), we should again be reminded of Jesus’ teachings in the beatitudes: “Blessed are you when others revile and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Mt. 5:11). Surely the words of Jesus remained with Peter as he wrote this letter. We should keep in mind as we read 4:12-19 that our sufferings, these “fiery trials” (4:12) are *not* the wrath of God, which will be upon unbelievers at the time of judgment. For those of us in Christ, “The flames of persecution...are a token to Christians of the faithfulness of God who will deliver [us] from the wrath to come.” The flames of persecution, therefore, are a token to Christians of the faithfulness of God who will deliver them from the wrath to come.”<sup>1</sup>

As we saw in 4:1-11, the sufferings we endure are sharing in “Christ’s sufferings,” not in the sense that our suffering contributes to his atonement, but that we are following him in suffering for doing good (2:21).<sup>2</sup>

New Testament scholar Robert Gundry says that in this passage Peter wonderfully twists the way the Greco-Roman world understood suffering. “In pagan society,” Gundry writes, “suffering was considered shameful, and persecutors of Christians set out to shame them. So Peter tells his audience not to be ashamed to suffer ‘as a Christian.’ For ‘the Spirit of *glory*,’ which is the opposite of shame, rests on them; and Christ, after whom they’re named as Christians, will have his glory revealed even to their persecutors. So Christians should glorify God instead of succumbing to shame.”<sup>3</sup> Where others would find shame in suffering, we find *glory* in sharing in our Lord’s suffering!

It might seem strange that when Peter lists actions for which we should *not* suffer, along with murder and theft he lists “meddling!” The Greek word here has the meaning of “overseeing someone else’s affairs.”<sup>4</sup> While clearly putting your nose in other people’s business is not as grave an offense as murder, Peter does not want the Christian community to be characterized by such behavior and to bring shame upon the gospel. Furthermore, it seems likely that Peter is trying to keep the Christian community from becoming a little too eager to aggressively denounce pagan practice, instead of influencing the culture through sincere and winsome witness.<sup>5</sup>

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

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1 Cloney 195.

2 Cloney 191.

3 Robert Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 952.

4 Davids 169.

5 Davids 169.



1. Again, we have another passage that repeats themes we've seen before in 1 Peter. Find all the other places where the topic of suffering for being a Christian versus suffering for wrongdoing is discussed in this book.

2. While virtually all believers are guaranteed to experience tension and discomfort at times as a result of living out their faith in a world that can be hostile; violent persecution is the norm for large numbers of Christians around the world today. Do a bit of research and bring to your homegroup one recent story from a place where Christians are persecuted. ([www.voiceofthemartyrs.com](http://www.voiceofthemartyrs.com) and [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org) are good places to start).

3. Have you ever been "insulted for the name of Christ" (v. 14?) Share stories. How could this possibly be construed as a blessing?

4. Look at verse 15. "Meddler" is an interesting term. Try to define it in your own words. Look it up in a dictionary. Why do you think it's included here?

5. How could Christians' "meddling" behavior damage the message of the gospel?



6. Verse 17 has a change in tone and a possibly surprising theme. In your own words, what do you think Peter is saying here? Read Matthew 7:1-4 and consider how it could shed light on this passage.

7. Describe the overall mindset Peter is describing in this passage. What attitudes can believers choose and cultivate when they are suffering or being unfairly treated?

8. Try to paraphrase verse 19 in your own words.

### Prayer Guide

- Pray Psalm 143, including the names of people or specific situations you became aware of this week through your research.
- Pray for Charles and Beverly Kohl, who lost their visa to work in Jordan and are planning to move to a city in France where they can continue serving among Muslim people. Pray for Muslim background believers who suffer greatly for their faith—that they would be blessed, that they'd be able to rejoice in the midst of it, and that "the spirit of glory and of God" would rest on them (v. 14).





## Study Nine

# 1 Peter 5:1-5

In the opening of chapter 5, Peter urges the “elders” among them to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you.” Edmund Clowney points out that in this remark Peter “certainly alludes to his own calling.”<sup>1</sup> In the study questions you’ll have the chance to take another look at the passage in John that tells that story.

Of course Jesus is himself the “Chief Shepherd” (5:4). Many of us may be familiar with shepherd imagery to describe Jesus; this term also has a rich history in the Old Testament, used for “those charged with the care of the people of God, but especially for God himself and the Messiah.”<sup>2</sup> Moses is called the shepherd of the flock of Israel (Isaiah 63:11), and King David, a *literal* shepherd, is also called the shepherd of God’s people (2 Samuel 5:2). Of course, God is the great Shepherd: “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1), and Jesus, God incarnate, is the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. Jesus says of himself, “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (John 10:14). During his preaching ministry, he “had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36), and comforted his people with “fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Just as we are to imitate Jesus the suffering Servant (2:22-25), so are we to lead others like the good Shepherd, whom Peter heard teach “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... but it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:42-5).

In 5:4, Peter encourages us: “when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” The word for ‘unfading,’ *amarantinos*, indicates that in Peter’s description this crown is quite possibly made from amaranth, a flower chosen for its ‘everlasting’ quality. The phrase would then be translated ‘the amaranthine garland of glory.’<sup>3</sup> This unfading flower-crown vividly portrays our unfading and imperishable inheritance (1:4). Clowney relates these promises to the prophecies in Isaiah 28:5: “In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people.”<sup>4</sup> *The Lord himself is our crown of glory.*

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1 Clowney 199.

2 Clowney 199.

3 Clowney 207.

4 Clowney 208.



**Consider...**

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*

1. Is there a Christian leader you have known whom you think lives out the leadership values of verses 2-5? Share examples with your homegroup.
2. Describe a place where you exercise leadership or influence over others—whether it's in the church, with your children, at work, among friends, through your social media platform, etc. What does your leadership look like? How could these verses influence you?
3. What is one way you could seek to be an example (v. 3) of godly service and humility to those you influence?
4. This passage contains several references to humility and humbling oneself. We've seen and discussed this repeatedly over the past weeks in 1 Peter. How has your understanding of the meaning of humility changed or developed? Reflect and compare notes with your group.



5. Consider one aspect of your life in which you think God may be nudging you to reflect Christ's humility more fully (don't be hypothetical here!). What are some steps you might take?

6. This passage can inform our understanding of godly leadership in general, but it's also directly addressing the matter of church leadership. Read from 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 about the qualifications for eldership and jot down some notes.

7. Now, read and ponder Hebrews 13:17. What does it mean to you to be under spiritual leadership?

8. Read and ponder the verses pertaining to shepherds in this week's introduction. What does it mean to *shepherd* other people, as opposed to other terms we use for leading (manage, administrate, supervise, govern, direct...)

9. Now that you've done some thinking about shepherding, go back and read the story of how Peter himself was commissioned for a shepherding ministry—after having previously denied even knowing Jesus. Read John 21:15-19.



## Prayer Guide

- Use verses 1-5 to pray for your church's elders, pastors, homegroup leaders, youth leaders, children's ministry leaders, Gathering and Praxis leaders, worship leaders—in other words, for all who exercise leadership in the church. Especially pray for any in your homegroup who fulfill these roles or others.
- Our church family is in the process of choosing two new elders, as we do every two years. Pray together for this process and that the chosen elders would embody the kind of gospel-shaped life described in 1 Peter.
- Pray for all the mentors who work with Royal Family Kids Club. May each one humbly exercise godly leadership and influence with each foster child with whom they interact. Pray for many more loving adults to work with this ministry.



## Study Ten

# 1 Peter 5:6-14

When Peter writes in 5:6-7, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you,” he quotes from Psalm 55:22: “Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” Edmund Clowney notes that in this psalm,

The psalmist’s anxieties arise from the attacks of false friends. The promise is therefore particularly appropriate. Peter is calling for humility in situations of hostility, betrayal, and persecution. Precisely in such situations, Christians are tempted to react in pride, perhaps even to draw the sword as Peter did in the garden of Gethsemane. It is such pride that the promise of the Lord dispels. Christians can trust the *power* of the Lord, for their cares are his concerns.”<sup>1</sup>

In these verses we can also hear echoes of Paul writing to the Philippians, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

In this passage, we get one more reminder that the processes of the mind, and how we actively train our minds to think and believe, have great ramifications in shaping our lives. Science bears this out. J.P. Moreland cites a neuroscientist and neuropsychiatrist on the topic of anxiety: “What you allow to occupy your mind will sooner or later determine your feelings, your speech and your actions. Thoughts...have a real impact on how you feel and behave.”<sup>2</sup>

In 5:13 Peter sends greetings from “she who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen.” While older commentators often argued that this was a reference to Peter’s wife, it is most likely the church in Rome.<sup>3</sup> Rome is called ‘Babylon’ in many Christian and Jewish sources in reference to its status as a great capital of the empire, and in this letter, as a place of exile.<sup>4</sup>

### Consider...

*Read through the passage slowly and attentively before beginning. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here.*


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1 Clowney 211.

2 Daniel Amen and Lisa Routh, qtd. in J.I. Packer

3 Davids 201.

4 Davids 202-3.



1. Once again, in verse 8 we have a strong word about the necessity of being “sober-minded” and “watchful,” paired with a reminder that we do face spiritual opposition in this world that we are called upon to resist. What habits, spiritual disciplines, or actions help you resist the influence of evil in your life?

2. The Book of Common Prayer categorizes threats to our souls as “the world, the flesh and the devil.” See also Ephesians 2:1-3. What do you perceive could be a threat to your soul this week?

3. Note the encouragement to believers to resist evil with the knowledge that we are connected by our faith to other believers all around the world (v. 9). What experiences have you had connecting with believers from other parts of the world? Share stories with your group.

4. List some people you know of who are suffering in various ways. Pray for each, using the words of verses 10-11. Where there is suffering in the lives of members of your homegroup, take time together during the group to pray these words for them.



5. Peter recognizes that his readers don't have easy, straightforward lives, and that following Jesus in our cultural context is never an easy task. Verses 6-7 are a sweet pastoral word to all of us who are trying to live as disciples but need comfort and reassurance. Take some time to ponder and reflect on verses 6-7 and consider memorizing them, especially if you struggle with anxiety. Is there something here that speaks directly to you in your current circumstances? Share with your group if you feel comfortable.

6. Read and reflect on Phil. 4:6-7. Read it alongside 1 Peter 5:6-7. What does each passage have to say about...

Anxiety

Prayer

God

7. Read verses 12-14 carefully, noting the relationships described in these sweet parting greetings. What relationships do you have in your life that are a direct result of belonging to Christ?

8. Who in your life would you like to see restored, comforted, strengthened and established (v. 10)? Name them and take time to pray these things for each of them.

### Prayer Guide

- Pray for God's protection against any power or influence that would harm the message of the gospel
- Pray verses 6-7, slowly, phrase by phrase. Try to memorize it.
- *Humble yourselves, therefore...* He is God, and you are not! Offer yourself to him in prayer as completely as you can. If you have anything to confess, do so.
- *...under the mighty hand of God...* Praise him for his power. Remember in prayer who he is—sovereign over all things large and small.
- *...so that at the proper time he may exalt you...* Talk to God about the things you are waiting for. Ask for patience and humility as you wait. Ask for him to “exalt you” in his perfect timing.
- *...casting all your anxieties on him...* Try to do just that. Release to God all your anxieties, small and large.
- *...because he cares for you.* Rest and worship in the knowledge of this truth.
- Pray for our church missionaries who work with college students (Chris Comstock, Julie Day Harber, Jen Hu, Tim and Kim Notehelfer, and Jeff and Robyn Wood). Pray for their protection and power to resist evil, and that they would be free of anxiety and wrapped in God's care. May each one clearly present the Good News and see countless students enter into the Kingdom.