

READ Plan

1 PETER: Is All of This Worth It?

October 3- November 13, 2021

WEEK 1

DAY 1

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1-5:14

Reflection:

Around thirty-five years after Jesus Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, one of His closest followers, Simon Peter, wrote a letter from Rome to churches spread across the northeast corner of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). It is a letter of encouragement and exhortation. To be a Christian in this time and place meant rejecting common cultural practices and embracing a new way of living. Being a follower of Jesus wasn't the cool thing to do. In fact, in Rome, Nero was blaming Christians for a fire that it seems he might have started. Not only blaming them, but actively killing them. That kind of persecution hadn't yet spread to this part of the world, but it was coming. By the time the apostle John would write the book of Revelation (AD 90), these churches that received Peter's first letter would be experiencing their own intense persecution.

ASK:

- What words or phrase stood out to you as you read this letter for the first time?
- How would you describe the tone of the letter?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

On six different days of this study you will read or listen to all five chapters of 1 Peter. Why? Because letters are meant to be read all at once. A messenger would have brought Peter's letter to the church and read it aloud to the gathered church. Each time you read imagine that you are a new follower of Jesus in one of those churches in a region that is hostile to your faith. Ask yourself: What is Peter's letter teaching me? What is it teaching all of us who make up the Church?

DAY 2

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1-2; Matthew 4:18-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:40-41

Reflection:

This letter was written by "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." And who exactly was Peter? The gospel accounts tell us that Simon was his given name and Andrew was his brother. They were fishermen living near the sea of Galilee invited to become two of the first disciples of a rabbi named Jesus. Jesus gave him a nickname and "Peter" went on to become the spokesman of the twelve disciples. He both asked a lot of questions and was often the first to answer questions that Jesus asked. If Paul was more of a theologian, Peter was more of an "everyman." Paul declared, "I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees..." Peter was more like, "I know the difference between carp and tilapia." But Peter's letter is a power-packed testimony to the transforming work of Christ in a life.

ASK:

- Peter identifies himself at the beginning of his letter with the term “apostle.” How do you identify yourself? What is your email signature, your social media bio, etc.?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Write down this phrase and practice it out loud: “(your name), follower of Jesus Christ.” What does this mean to you?

DAY 3

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1-2; Ephesians 2:19; John 15:19

Reflection:

For more than thirty years Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and more of Jesus’ followers had been spreading the good news throughout the Roman Empire. Here, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, churches had sprung up among new converts. They were gentiles, not Jews, who had chosen to turn away from worshiping pagan gods and to turn to worshiping Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life. In doing so, they were also turning away from their culture, from their families, from their neighbors. Their decision meant rejection, ridicule, and scorn. And the rumors from Rome made them wonder if more intense persecution might be coming their way.

ASK:

- What comfort would these rejected individuals have found in Peter’s description of them as “elect” or “chosen”?
- Having been “exiled” from the culture around them, what comfort would they have found in being part of a church body?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Are there rejected “exiles” living in your midst? Whether they are Christians or not, how might you extend a Christ-like attitude toward them?

DAY 4

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-6

Reflection:

As a follower of Jesus you have a “living hope.” And that hope is an inheritance that cannot be taken away, cannot be spoiled, and cannot disappear. Like a gift card with no expiration date, the hope you have of eternal life in the presence of God the Father is a sure thing. A done deal. Paid for by the death and resurrection of Jesus. What great news! What a great way to live! Secure in the knowledge that the end of your life as an exile on this earth will be the beginning of your eternal life in the glory of God’s presence.

ASK:

- How does the knowledge of a living hope and a secure inheritance lead to rejoicing even in difficult circumstances?

- What might it have looked like/sounded like for these churches to rejoice when they gathered? When they went about their daily tasks?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

How will you rejoice in your salvation today? Consider what you might do or say and then practice!

DAY 5

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Psalm 13

Reflection:

Our “living hope”, our eternal inheritance is cause for great rejoicing! And yet, we’re reminded that Peter’s audience is now suffering all kinds of trials and will suffer even greater trials. Generally, our first reaction to hard things is to ask, “why?” Peter gives us insight- the insults and the persecution are meant to *refine* the faith of these Christians.

Gold is a precious metal, but if it isn’t pure it is of less value and its beauty is spoiled. It must be refined. The only way to do that is to subject it to the intense heat of fire, so that it melts and the impurities rise to the surface where they can be skimmed off.

In the heat of hardship God is purifying His people- calling them to deeper trust and faith in Him and the inheritance He has prepared.

ASK:

-What is hard in your life right now? Have you allowed what is hard to drive you toward God or away from Him?

-What might be God teaching you through your circumstances?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Consider David’s prayer song in Psalm 13. He’s walking through a hard time and he calls out to God with both humility and honesty. Use this psalm to express your own prayer to God about your present circumstances.

DAY 6

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 3:16

Reflection:

The prophets foretold the Messiah, the son of David, the suffering Servant, the slain Lamb. Peter walked with the rabbi Jesus, watched him die, saw the wounds of the risen Savior. The Church is built on the fulfilled promise that God would redeem His people through an unblemished sacrifice. The story of Scripture crescendos in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Savior of the world. This is the privilege of living in AD rather than BC. It is the best news. And it is for the whole world!

ASK:

-Why is it good to remember and to remind yourself of the good news of Jesus Christ?

-What does it mean that the prophets of the Old Testament were not serving themselves, but the church?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Remind someone else of the gospel today! Use John 3:16 to encourage someone you love.

DAY 7

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1-12

Reflection:

Perspective is an important word. No matter what you're going through, a change in perspective can make all the difference. That was also true for these Christians in the early church. Facing another day of insults and hardship may have felt overwhelming, discouraging, depressing, hopeless even. The opening verses of Peter's letter is a reminder, an encouragement- your place in this world is tenuous and uncertain. But your place in God's family is rock solid. Shift your perspective from the present, fleeting moment to the eternal.

ASK:

-What does the day, the week, the month hold for you? How do you feel about all the things facing you?

-What does it look like for you to shift your perspective from today to eternity?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Spend some time in prayer using the ACTS method:

A (Adoration)- *Jesus, you are worthy of my praise...*

C (Confession)- *Lord, I have not trusted you with the hard things...*

T (Thanksgiving)- *I am so thankful to be part of your family, God...*

S (Supplication- Say what you need)- *I want to live with the hope of eternity in my heart and mind...*

WEEK 2 (Sarah)

DAY 8

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1-5:14

Reflection:

Don't forget that 1 Peter is a letter! It is worth taking the time to experience Peter's words the way the first recipients would have. So, please don't skip reading or listening to the whole thing today!

Notice the repeated themes and ideas- "Christ" is repeated twenty-two times. "Election/calling" ten times. "Hope" five times. What additional repetition do you find?

ASK:

-What is Peter's letter teaching me?

-What is it teaching all of us who make up the Church?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Set an alarm on your phone or make a note in your schedule to pause today and meditate on one of these repeated themes found in Peter's letter.

DAY 9

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13-21

Reflection:

Peter is getting really real now! Living in hard times is not an excuse for lazy living, for cutting corners, for being closet Christians...

"Gentiles, you have been given a great hope- salvation in Jesus! God has done this not just for the Jews, but for you too! Now, having received this, live in light of it. You were worshiping other gods, looking to them for answers and examples. But this is THE God. and He is holy. As His followers, He wants you to be holy too. So, follow Jesus, the Son, and learn from Him how to live and walk as His children, part of His family, in a world that will reject you, scoff at you, hurt you."

ASK:

-How serious are you about your faith? Serious enough to give things up for Jesus? Serious enough to do hard things for Jesus? Serious enough to endure pain and bad days for Jesus?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Get honest with the Lord in prayer: *Jesus, I want to be your fully devoted follower, but sometimes it is hard...*

DAY 10

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13

Reflection:

This verse starts with the word “therefore.” Someone once said that when you see that word you need to ask yourself, “what’s the ‘therefore’ there for?” In this case, it is Peter pointing back to the salvation and living hope he has already outlined and saying- “God made a way. *Therefore*, walk in it!” So, first came the gospel, and now comes the response. Here Peter gives some ways in which these persecuted believers can live Kingdom lives in a hostile world.

The first step is to “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” There’s that eternity theme again. But this time Peter gives some idea of how this is done. He highlights two things: preparing your minds for action and being self-controlled (literally: not drunk). In other words- get your head on straight! Right thinking is key to right living. And right thinking begins with a mind set on eternity. Remember, Peter called these Christians (and us!) exiles and strangers- we’re here in this world temporarily until Jesus comes again and takes us home for eternity.

ASK:

-When you think about eternity with Jesus, how do you feel? How does that encourage you to face the next hard thing?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Finish this sentence: *Jesus had saved me; therefore...*

DAY 11

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13-16; Leviticus 11:45; Colossians 3:1-17

Reflection:

BE HOLY. You were once living in hopelessness. BE HOLY. Your sin carried a death sentence. BE HOLY. You could not save yourselves. BE HOLY. God made a way. BE HOLY. He rescued you. BE HOLY. The righteous and holy, just and mighty, true and steadfast God has brought you into His family. BE HOLY.

You were made in His image and He has called you to reflect that holy image. Your holy living both sets you apart from the world and points the world to something, Someone far greater. Jesus Christ is the hope of the world and You are His image-bearer. BE HOLY!

The idea of holy living can make us think of lists of rules, do’s and don’ts as if it is all about what we do and don’t do. But God’s command to “be holy”, as seen in the 10 commandments, in Jesus’ teachings and in the letters of the apostles, has always pointed us to what is found in our hearts. What motivates our action matters as much as what we do.

ASK:

-How does Paul’s letter to the Colossians instruct our hearts and not just our actions?

-Why does holy living matter in our relationships with other Christians? with non-Christians?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Be mindful of your motivations today. Set an alarm or write a note to ask yourself, *why did I do/say that...*

DAY 12

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:17-19; Deuteronomy 6:1-15; Ephesians 2:19-22

Reflection:

To a primarily Gentile audience, Peter is calling for a deep reverence and respect, a proper *fear* of God the Father, the just Judge. For the Jews, the words of Deuteronomy 6 were perhaps the most essential declaration of their faith in *the* Sovereign Lord God and their commitment to worship Him alone.

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your strength.
(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)*

Faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son and Savior of the world leads to deep devotion not only to Jesus but also to His Father. And not only that, but because of Jesus they are now "in." These Gentiles who were once enemies of God are now part of the family of God. And being part of the family of God means they will be strangers in the world. They have traded the temporary for the eternal, the pagan for the holy, the broken for the whole.

ASK:

- In what practical ways might these Gentiles have had to learn "*to live as strangers here in reverent fear?*"
- In what ways are you living as a stranger to the world?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Choose a favorite worship song, preferably one that is *vertical*- directly singing praise to God for who He is and what He has done. As you listen, take on a posture of reverence and fear before a holy God- bow your head, get on your knees, or raise your hands.

DAY 13

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:18-21; John 1:29; John 8:28-29

Reflection:

Peter continues to teach the Gentiles Christians about God the Father by reminding them of their faith in Jesus as Savior. They know about His death- the great sacrifice He made on their behalf. They know that by His resurrection death has been defeated and they are now alive in Christ forever. But Peter gently points them to God the Father, reminds them that Jesus is from the Father, is one with the Father, and was before time. Just as God the Father has eternally existed, so has Jesus.

For Jews who came to faith in Christ there was a clear connection between the Old Testament promises, covenants, feasts, stories, etc. and their fulfillment in Jesus. For Gentiles, the entire story was new to them. For example, here in verse 19 Peter refers to the "precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Jews understood that the Passover lamb, the annual sacrifice made by the high

priest on behalf of the nation of Israel, was required to be perfect, spotless. Jesus then, took the place of that annual sacrifice. The Son of God, sinless, offered himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for all nations, not just for Israel. Peter is not only teaching some history, but also letting the Gentiles know that their salvation was God's plan all along.

ASK:

-How often do you stop to consider the BIG story that God has written? Old Testament to New Testament. Creation to Nativity. Beginning to end.

-What feelings do you have regarding your place in God's story?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Take a moment to meditate on the "family of God." Imagine it as a family tree, filled with faces from all times in history, all nations, all ethnic groups, all languages... Now imagine your spot in the tree. Who comes before you? Who will come after you?

DAY 14

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:13-21

Reflection:

Peter knows life isn't easy for these Christians and he's not pretending it ever will be. Rather, he wants them to be sure and certain that they're ready for what's ahead. They need to be prepared in their minds and in their hearts. Through this section, he seems to be holding up some choices and asking them to consider carefully.

ASK:

-Where will you set your hope? On the world or on Jesus?

-Whose standard will you live by? The world's or God's?

-Who will you fear? The world or God?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use the ACTS prayer method-

A (Adoration)- God, You alone are holy and true, good and just, righteous and steadfast...

C (Confession)- Forgive my shallow heart...

T (Thanksgiving)- Thank you for saving me from myself...

S (Supplication- Say what you need)- I choose You and I need your help...

WEEK 3 (Jess)

DAY 15

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1- 5:14

Reflection:

This letter reminds the Gentile Christian church (and us!) that we have hope because of a risen Jesus! This hope sustained the churches Peter wrote to and it has sustained the persecuted church ever since. For this reason, Peter's words are just as important today as they were to those Christians in the early church. Throughout the next six days we'll be looking into what Peter has to say about growing up in our faith. As you listen to or read the entire letter again pay special attention to what Peter is saying to the church about who they are in Jesus.

ASK:

- What is something you discovered in 1 Peter today that you didn't see or hear the last few times?
- What are some references that you see Peter make that point toward the importance of growing up as a follower of Jesus?
- Why might it have been important for the church at the time of Peter's letter to focus on their spiritual growth?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Because repetition helps us learn and retain information, write down/record somewhere a few notes that stand out to you about 1 Peter that you don't want to forget.

DAY 16

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:22-2:10

Reflection:

Peter is writing to a group of people who likely came from many different backgrounds, both culturally and religiously. This Christianity thing was a brand-new deal. Whenever we start something new, doesn't it feel better to have a guide or a blueprint? Of course, it does! And even with a guide, we won't get it right on the first try, if ever at all! In this particular section of the letter, Peter is reminding the church of their new identity in Jesus. This new life and new identity allow the collective church to reach more people than ever before – but only if they are rooted in Jesus as the solid foundation.

ASK:

- What are some ways that Peter describes the church's identity in Jesus? How does this help you see yourself as part of God's kingdom?
- How does verse 10 put into perspective what Jesus's death and resurrection really meant for the new church?

- What is something about your own life that is drastically different now that you're a part of "God's people"?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Sometimes it's easy to forget how much God loves us. Write "I am made new in Jesus Christ" on a post-it and place it somewhere where you spend a lot of time (your car, the kitchen sink, a mirror). As you come across this reminder, pause and let the love of Christ fill you up!

DAY 17

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:22, 1 Corinthians 13:11-13, John 13:34-35

Reflection:

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

One characteristic that should set Christians apart from the world is how we love others. Jesus was the best example of the kind of love that we should give to others. He consistently loved the people that society considered outcasts. Peter is reminding the church that they should strive to love others in the same way. He uses words like "sincere" and "earnestly" to describe the kind of love we need to dish out for others. As we grow in our faith and step into living as a fully devoted followers of Jesus, our deep love for others should also increase.

As Jesus himself says to his disciples in John 13:34, Christians have stepped into a "new commandment" that they should love as He has loved.

The "new commandment" transforms the old Mosaic law that Jews followed. In part, the Mosaic Law says that one should love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and mind and love their neighbors as themselves. Jesus showed His love by ultimately dying on the cross for the sins of the world. This kind of love is beyond anything the world has ever seen. Jesus turned the tide, and then reminds us, it's not good enough to love our neighbors. We need to love sacrificially just as He did.

ASK:

- How does each scripture passage describe Christian love?
- In what ways do you think the collective church can show God's love better?
- Do those around you see how much you love Jesus in how you treat other people?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

- Identify one person in your life that you need to love better. Start today!

DAY 18

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:23-25; Romans 6:23

Reflection:

Since the fall in Genesis 3 and sin's entrance into the story of humanity, death was always looming. Death was coming for everyone.

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23)

Enter Jesus, and everything changes! In this letter, Peter reminds the church that because of Jesus's death and resurrection, they can be born again. While physical death will eventually find everyone, Christians have an eternal hope in Jesus. Whatever may come, we can face it because of Jesus. In these passages, Peter is painting a picture of how earthly things may fade, but the Lord endures forever.

As we face life's challenges it's more important than ever to look ahead at the promises that await us.

ASK:

- Why is it important for the church, and for you as well, to remember that God's promises are forever?
- How might looking ahead change your perspective on your life in terms of what is hard, confusing, and painful about right now?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use the ACTS prayer method to come before the Father in a time of prayer-

A (Adoration)- *God you are the everlasting Father and you never fail me...*

C (Confession)- *I confess that this week I struggled to obey you...*

T (Thanksgiving)- *Thank you for loving me even though I fall short*

S (Supplication- Say what you need)- *Please help me/show me how to....*

DAY 19

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:2 and Psalm 119:25, 105

Reflection:

Do you remember the first time you held (or watched someone else hold) a brand-new baby? It's simultaneously incredible, and a bit terrifying, right?! A freshly born baby is so small and helpless in the arms of someone much bigger. When a baby is born, they are reliant on a caregiver to sustain them and give them what is needed to survive.

Peter teaches the church that just as a baby needs milk to grow, a Christian needs God's word to grow. It's the key to moving from spiritual infancy to "growing up into salvation". Even in the Old Testament the Psalmist spends an entire chapter acknowledging his absolute need for God's word. Both Peter and the Psalmist knew that in order to be prepared for whatever life may bring, a deep knowledge, love, and desire for God's word was necessary. Without the life-giving power of the word, how are we to stand tall when troubles come?

ASK:

- When you think about spiritual maturity, what does it look like to you?
- Do you treat God's word as necessary to your survival?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Think of a spiritually mature person in your life. Consider thanking them for their example or even asking them a question or two about what spiritual practices they consistently follow.

DAY 20

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:4-6, Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 16:18, and Ephesians 2:19-22

Reflection:

The cornerstone – the first stone laid during the masonry process – is the most important stone in the structure. It's the stone on which every other stone is placed. Without the cornerstone the structure would crumble and fall to pieces. It's no surprise then that throughout the story of scripture we see references of the Son of God as the cornerstone of the church. Peter reminds the church that it is how and where God will build His kingdom. In order for the church to be able to withstand the trials and tribulations to come, they need to stand on the solid foundation.

Interesting fact: The name Peter comes from the Greek word "Petros" which means "Stone". How cool is it that Jesus gave Simon the nickname Peter and then uses him as an essential building block for His church!

ASK:

- What do these passages teach us about God's intended structure for the church?
- How does the image of Jesus as the cornerstone change your view of the importance of the church body?
- When you've gone through trials in your life, how have you felt God's protection over you and the situation?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Find a picture of a rock and make it the background on your device or computer for the duration of this study. Each time you see the image, take a moment to remember the Jesus Christ is the solid rock on which you can stand.

DAY 21

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:8-10; Romans 3:23

Reflection:

Every single one of us is a sinner. Peter reminds the church in this letter that sin is a choice to disobey God's word. But God, full of grace, sent Jesus to die for our sins so that we don't have to. Just as He did for Israel, His chosen people in the Old Testament, God continues to show love and mercy to a sinful

people. He has chosen His church, both then and now, to build His Kingdom by letting the light of Christ shine through us.

ASK:

- What is Peter saying the church is called to do as God's chosen people?
- How does it feel that God calls you a part of His priesthood while knowing that you will sin?
- Do those around you see you proclaiming the good news of salvation?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Just as Peter writes a letter to the church about who they are in Jesus, take a minute today and write a note or a message to someone you know to remind them how much Jesus loves them.

WEEK 4 (Jess)

DAY 22

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1- 5:14

Reflection:

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine Peter writing this letter to the early church. What might the weather have been like? Maybe he found a comfortable space to sit and write, or maybe he wrote by the light of the moon. Do you think he was feverishly trying to capture every thought on paper as quickly as possible? Or perhaps it took him days of careful thought-out writing. Either way, this letter gave Peter the opportunity to put in one place everything he needed to say. These letters became a lifeline for new believers, full of encouragement and instruction on how to live and grow in God's kingdom.

ASK:

- How do you think it felt for this new body of believers to get a letter from Peter – someone who literally walked with Jesus?
- How can you look to Peter's words today as a lifeline for your life as a follower of Jesus?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Take a moment to thank God for His Son Jesus and for how He has loved you, protected you, chosen you, and helped you.

DAY 23

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:11-3:12

Reflection:

Throughout this letter, Peter is reminding the Gentile Church that living a remarkable life in the midst of suffering brings glory to God. In this section, Peter outlines four relationships that sometimes require submission and suffering.

- 1- Christians are called to submit to the government.
- 2- Peter also speaks specifically to slaves in this section and reminds them that their submission in the workplace glorifies God.
- 3- Marriage is another area that Peter is calling the Christian church into a mutual submission between husbands and wives.
- 4- Finally, he's calling for submission within the church itself. Remember – this submission isn't about control, it's about honoring others and bringing glory to God.

ASK:

- How do you see themes of submission and suffering play out in these passages?
- Do you truly believe that Jesus is greater than anything you might encounter in this life?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use this doxology (a short hymn of praises to God) as your prayer today

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise Him, all creatures here below

Praise Him above the Heavenly host

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost

Amen

DAY 24

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:11-12, John 1:17, Philippians 3:20

Reflection:

It's so easy to get caught up in seeking the comforts of this world. It's much easier to do what feels good in the moment than to be subject to discomfort, pain, or suffering. Chasing after worldly pleasures, acceptance, accolades, success... the list goes on and on. Those things have tempted people for all of time and have never equaled true joy. For example, throughout the Old Testament the Israelites struggled to follow God's plan for His people. In Deuteronomy 6, God tells the Israelites of all the goodness to come for them IF they obey His way. He outlines a great life! Instead, the Israelites continue to turn away and disobey God. They traded the promises of God for the pain and consequences of an earthly existence.

This world is not our home. We are reminded of this time and time again throughout scripture. Eternity in God's presence will be far greater than any perceived rewards we earn in this world.

ASK:

- Why does Peter ask the church to keep in check their desires for things of the flesh?
- What is Peter suggesting will happen when Christians are rebuked for following God's way instead of the world's way?
- What might it look like to live everyday like a "citizen of Heaven"?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

What is one "passion of the flesh" (1 Peter 2:11) that you need to trade in so you can more fully step into your calling as a follower of Jesus? Come up with a few steps to focus less on this thing and more on Jesus. This would be a great way opportunity to invite a trust Christian confidant or mentor to pray for you and to help hold you accountable.

DAY 25

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 13-15

Reflection:

As Christians, Jesus has the highest authority over our lives. In this letter, Peter reminds the church that it is pleasing to God when they are submissive and respectful to earthly authority figures. Our goal should always be to bring glory to God.

Submission by definition means *ready to conform to the authority or will of others*. This call to submission is not about perpetuating evil behaviors or powers that are abusive, and it certainly doesn't condone abusive relationships. What Peter suggests is that we can build up the Church of Christ by humbly living within the rules set by authority figures in our society.

ASK:

- Why is submission a vital part of following Jesus and growing His church?
- Is submission easy or hard for you? Why do you think that is?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Is there an area of your life that you need to be more submissive? If so, what is one thing you can do today to work toward being more submissive as an act of obedience to Jesus?

DAY 26

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 16-17, Galatians 5:1

Reflection:

Freedom is something every generation since the beginning of time has been trying to achieve. It's something that means one thing to the world, but something entirely different to the Christian. We have freedom from death because of Jesus's death on the cross. Peter wants the church to step into this freedom so that they can both love and serve God and love and serve others. We are set free to love and live like Jesus. Regardless of what we face on here on earth, no matter the shackles that bind us, Jesus has set us free. Forever. When we set our sights on heaven, that is the only freedom that matters.

ASK:

- Why do you think it is important for the church to be reminded of its true freedom?
- How do these passages about freedom in Christ help you to live confidently in a world that is less and less accepting of the Christian lifestyle?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

It's a sobering reality is that so many people around the world still do not live with any sense of freedom. They live every day in bondage. Schedule time today to pray for these people. Take it a step further and put in a reminder on your phone to pray daily for the next month for enslaved people around the globe.

DAY 27

Scripture: 1 Peter 2: 19-23, Matthew 26:69-75

Reflection:

Peter knew that being a follower of Jesus wasn't the popular way to live and he knew that these Christians would one day face physical persecution because of their faith.

Biblical scholars suggest the context of suffering Peter is referring to in these passages is suffering endured because of religious beliefs. It's not suffering due to illness. Peter himself had watched Jesus suffer and be persecuted while living out his ministry. Additionally, when asked if he knew Jesus, Peter denied him three times. When his faith was tested, Peter took the easy way out. Peter isn't alone here. How many Christians can share stories of times they've denied Jesus – maybe not so much with words but with actions. Not so shockingly, the answer is every single Christian!

It's not a stretch to think that part of Peter's attention to this detail in his letter comes from his own experience of denying Jesus, and the subsequent feelings of shame and despair.

Throughout history there are accounts of Christians who have suffered tremendously because of their devotion to Jesus. In fact, within a few years of writing this letter, Peter would die a martyr's death.

ASK:

- How does the suffering (because of following Jesus) of Christians expand the kingdom of God?
- How can you live a life of preparation for what's to come? Not all doom and gloom, but a healthy level of preparation to stand firm for Jesus if/when your faith comes into question.

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Worship through song is one way that you can praise God and show Him honor. In a quiet moment today, listen to your favorite worship song – one that reminds you of who He is. As you're listening, praise Him and thank Him for being the greatest Father, the Risen Savior, the comforting Spirit.

DAY 28

Scripture: 1 Peter 3: 8-12, 1 Corinthians 12:12

Reflection:

Whew! Peter has covered some weighty topics throughout this letter. As we've discussed throughout the study, this letter was written for a body of believers, not just individuals. Peter is encouraging the church to stay the course and stick together. In the passage in 1 Corinthians, Paul also speaks to the value and design of the church as a body of believers, not just individuals. This call to endure suffering and persecution applies to the church as a whole. Peter is also reminding the believers that God always provides, especially during hard times.

We know from history that Peter's words to prepare and be ready become reality for this church because persecution DOES come their way. They will suffer greatly in order to raise up the kingdom of God. In spite of that, thousands of years later the church still endures. The promise to them at that time is the promise for us today- God will not abandon us. He is with us. Praise Him!

ASK:

- What are some of the things Peter tells the church to do when they face persecution? How does that apply to the church of today?
- Why do you think Peter is reminding the church to stick together?
- Are there any areas in your life right now that you're suffering? How can you implement some of the things Peter suggests?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use the ACTS prayer method to come before the Father in a time of prayer-

A (Adoration)- *God you are my protector...*

C (Confession)- *I confess that sometimes I don't...*

T (Thanksgiving)- *Thank you for offering me more than what can be found or achieved here on earth...*

S (Supplication- Say what you need)- *Please help me/show me how to....*

WEEK 5 (Sarah)

DAY 29

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1- 5:14

Reflection:

When was the last time you really needed to hear some encouragement? When have you felt hungry, desperate for someone to speak words of life to you? Perhaps today, we're too often distracted by the mountains of information and entertainment at our fingertips 24/7 to really notice that we need life-giving words. Perhaps the Christians in Peter's audience were distracted by the worries of every day, by the social ostracism they faced. Perhaps this letter came at just the right time. Written by a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit, empowered by God Himself to speak life and truth, encouragement, and hope. Imagine yourself hungry for those kinds of words and read/listen to this entire letter again sometime today.

ASK:

-What truth did you hear in God's Word today?

-How have you benefited from repeated read-throughs of this letter?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Imagine a conversation with Peter. What would you ask him? How would you thank him?

DAY 30

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:1-2; Philippians 2:1-11

Reflection:

There it is again! What's that "therefore" there for? It is there to point Peter's audience back to this:

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18)

Christ's suffering was unjust. He didn't deserve it, and yet He endured it and embraced it. He was willing to suffer for doing good. Philippians 2 beautifully and poetically describes the sacrifice Jesus made. And in that letter Paul instructs the church, just as Peter does here, that we must embrace Christ's attitude if we are to be His fully devoted followers.

What was His attitude? Humility. Submission. Surrender to the will of His Father. Commitment to His mission. He knew what mattered most and it wasn't what was going on "out there." What mattered most was what God was doing and would do in hearts and lives.

ASK:

-What is your attitude when you are unfairly treated?

-How can living with right priorities help us be done with sin?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

What will humility look like for you today? Consider your daily tasks and ask God to give you the attitude of Jesus.

DAY 31

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:3-6; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Reflection:

Peter does not shy away from the pain points his audience is experiencing- choosing to follow Jesus is not going to be easy. It's not easy to walk away from old habit and it's not easy to walk away from old buddies. It also won't be easy to walk in the light of Christ while still living in a dark world. But light is what the world needs. Let them judge you, scorn you, and persecute you for the light of the good deeds you do and the good news you share. God too will judge you and find in you the light of life.

ASK:

-What things have you walked away from now that you are following Jesus?

-What is hard about living a different lifestyle than your friends, colleagues, family, etc.? Is Jesus worth it?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Prayerfully consider how you will live as light today- what will you say, what will you do? Ask God to give you boldness.

DAY 32

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:7-11; John 13:34-35

Reflection:

In this section we're reminded again that Peter is addressing a plural audience. Too often we read the word "you" and think "me" when it really should be "we." In this section the phrase "one another" is used three times. In the New Testament, this Greek word is used around fifty times to give instructions for how Christians should treat each other- humility, love, and unity are the dominate themes.

In the midst of their suffering, in the midst of hard times, Peter does not want them to isolate or hide. He wants them to love, to practice hospitality and to serve. And to do it with a good attitude. This brings glory to God and it brings the light of Christ to a dark world.

ASK:

-How do the three one another phrases used here reflect your heart for fellow Christ-followers? How do they reflect your church's heart?

-Why would the love of Christians for one another be obvious to the world?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

-Choose one of the "one another" instructions here to practice with a brother or sister in Christ. Do it today or tomorrow or sometime this week. Make a plan and stick to it!

DAY 33

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:12-19; Psalm 86:15

Reflection:

Beloved... What a beautiful word to begin this section. God called Jesus "my beloved Son" and the apostles refer often to the churches as "beloved." This is no mere tender feeling, this is divine love, a deep affection unlike any other.

Which may feel strange when followed by "*do not be surprised at the fiery trial...*" But Peter wants them to know how deeply they are loved, cared for, seen and known. It doesn't make the bad news less bad. But it does strengthen their hearts. The hard stuff isn't going away and it may not get better, but the church can stand together- firm, steady, ready, and rejoicing. They are beloved by the Most High God, you are beloved, just as Jesus was.

ASK:

-How does God's love strengthen you and prepare you to face the next hard thing?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use this verse to lead you into meditation and prayer

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (Psalm 86:15)

DAY 34

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:19

Reflection:

"So then..." Here is a concluding sentence- a sort of thesis statement that sums up Peter's letter.

...those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to a their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

What do we do in times of suffering? When we're made fun of, put down, slandered, assaulted? Do we respond in kind? Do we run away? Do we fight or flee? Neither. Peter gives two responses: a posture and a charge.

The posture is commitment. We commit ourselves to God because He is faithful, has always been faithful, will always be faithful. We willingly put our hearts and lives into His hands, trusting Him. Not to fix it or end it. But trusting Him to be present with us and to bring us through it.

The charge is to continue to do good. The implication is not just doing good for our own selves, but to do good for others. Within our Christian communities and out in the broken world needing a Savior. Do good.

ASK:

-How would you describe your posture towards suffering?

-What does commitment to God look like now in your life? What are additional ways you can intentionally trust God in your present circumstances?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

You can do good today! Intentionally brainstorm a few small ways that you can do good for someone else today and be prepared to follow through! Take it a step further and ask God throughout the day to show you ways to love and serve others spontaneously.

DAY 35

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:1-19

Reflection:

"Christian." A follower of Christ. From the second century AD until today, Christians in many places have worn the title with honor. But when Peter wrote this letter, it was not a word of honor. It was a word of derision. [In fact, it is only used two other times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28).] Pagans mocked the followers of Jesus by calling them "Christians." Like a racial slur, it was never used in kindness or with respect. So when Peter's letter was read aloud, the people would have had a visceral reaction to the word. It was a label spit at them on the streets. So why did Peter use it? Because he doesn't want them to be ashamed to stand up for Christ. He doesn't want them to be ashamed to live differently. He doesn't want them to abandon truth, abandon hope, abandon eternity just to make the insults go away.

Whatever they say, whatever they do, do not be ashamed to love and serve God. Do not be ashamed to love and to serve one another. Do not be ashamed to love and serve even those who spit on you.

ASK:

-When Jesus was arrested, Peter was ashamed to be recognized as one of His followers. What do you think Peter learned from that time until he wrote this letter?

-To what degree are your words and actions determined by how others will perceive them? How does this help/harm your witness for Jesus?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use the ACTS prayer method to come before the Father in a time of prayer-

A (Adoration)- *Jesus, you are the best part of my life...*

C (Confession)- *I confess that I live for an audience...*

T (Thanksgiving)- *Thank you for not giving up on me...*

S (Supplication- Say what you need)- *I want to be bold and courageous....*

WEEK 6 (Jess)

DAY 36

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1- 5:14

Reflection:

Wow! You have read or listened to 1 Peter at least six times. Hopefully these words of truth, hope, and preparation have taken root in your heart and mind.

Upon reading Peter's letter over and over again, it probably looked a bit tattered, some of the words might have started to smear after being studied, examined, and prayed over. Perhaps a corner or two has a wax drop from a hovering candle. Over the last five chapters Peter has poured out his heart to the Gentile Christians to both encourage and prepare them. They're ready now. Ready to go and live out their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

Though years and generations separate us from the original recipients of Peter's letter, we too can find comfort and encouragement in what he has to say.

When we are overwhelmed by everything that feels hard about living out our faith, Peter reminds us that glory awaits us. When the world feels off kilter and we can't make sense of what happening, Peter reminds us that we serve a God who loves us. When it feels like we are all alone, Peter reminds us that God designed the church to be a unified people spreading the good news of salvation together. Life on earth isn't going to be easy, but it's worth it when we love and follow Jesus.

As Peter says, *"Peace to all of you who are in Christ."*

ASK:

- How has your understanding of living a faithful life increased?
- Where do you see themes of hope, joy, and peace in your life right now?
- Do you feel more prepared now to face whatever comes your way?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

You've read or listened to the entire book of 1 Peter at least six times! What has God taught you over the last 36 days? Take a minute to do a review of some sort and record somewhere (journal it or save it on your device), the five biggest takeaways (so far!) that you have from reading this book.

DAY 37

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1-14, Revelation 2:10-11

Reflection:

Have you ever heard the phrase "Failing to plan is planning to fail"? There are many versions of this quote floating around cyberspace, but the point is, planning is important for success. Preparation is important for Christians too. We live according to a different order, but there is still work to be done.

It's vital to get our heart in order, to live in community with other believers, and to study God's word. Peter puts into words what the church's preparation should look like.

In the passage from Revelation, John is writing to a church who is also facing persecution. His words are meant to lift them up and encourage them in their suffering. Again, the church is reminded that the persecution they face will result in the "crown of life." God sees His church in the midst of their suffering, and a great treasure awaits them.

We have the benefit of history to show us what happened when the church came under intense persecution. Yes, generations of believers have suffered. Yet, The Kingdom of God continues to spread across the globe. More and more people choose to follow Jesus. Countries facing some of the most intense and violent religious persecution are experiencing exponential growth. The church continues to cling to the promises of Jesus that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Questions:

- Do you feel differently about suffering and persecution having read Peter (and John's) words?
- Why is suffering necessary to build the kingdom of God?

Next Step:

Is there someone in your life that is going through a tough time? Even if the suffering isn't a result of their religious beliefs, God calls us to carry one another burdens. How can you support them in a Christ-like way?

DAY 38

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:1

Reflection:

Peter concludes his letter by speaking directly to the leaders, the "elders" of the church. He starts out simply with the word "so". Nerd alert! Based on our English translation "so" is a subordinating conjunction used to introduce clauses of result or decision. Peter has left everything on the table so to speak. He tells the church one last time why he's qualified to bring them such instructions. Peter has imparted what He knows and it's time for the church to get to work.

ASK:

- How is Peter referencing joy in suffering through this passage?
- How have you experienced joy and God's glory during a time of suffering in your life?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Sometimes we need to intentionally remember what is good and joy-filled about our lives. Take a moment today to sit and reflect on the last year of your life. Maybe it's been the hardest year of your life, or maybe it's been the best year of your life. Either way, make a list of some things that bring you joy. Once you have a list, pause and pray to thank God for the moments of joy in your life.

DAY 39

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:2-4

Reflection:

Being a shepherd during biblical times wasn't a glamorous job. They were pretty low on the social totem pole. They were able to make some money and could support a family, but they probably smelled and looked dirty most of the time. They spent more time with animals than they did with other humans. It was a hard and grueling job. However, shepherds knew their flock intimately. If one sheep went missing, they knew. In turn, sheep knew their shepherd intimately. When the shepherd called, they came because they recognized the sound of his voice. This relationship between the shepherd and his flock is used throughout scripture to represent the relationship between Jesus and the church.

Jesus is the good shepherd. He knows and loves His people intimately. If one goes missing, He will stop at nothing to find them. Peter is reminding church leaders that they are called to do the same for their own flock. To shelter from the storms, to find the one who strays, to lead to the best place to thrive and grow.

Jesus has chosen the church, and everyone in it, to be the vessels in which the larger Kingdom of God would grow. Nothing grows without being fed and cared for. The leaders of this church have a very important job to do.

ASK:

- How can you (and the church as well) do a better job at caring for the people in your life?
- How have you seen or felt Jesus as the Good Shepherd in your life?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Spend time today praying for the leaders in your church.

DAY 40

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:6-7, Philippians 4:6-7

Reflection:

Facing something unknown is really scary. Often our reaction is one of fear and anxiety. We might feel butterflies in our stomach, or maybe have sweaty palms, or experience sleepless nights. When we begin to feel those things, Jesus offers us another way.

There are several things Peter is reminding the church about in this passage. When we submit ourselves to God, when we walk in His ways and not our own, we can trust Him to get us through whatever might come. Peter also reminds the church that at the end of all the pain and suffering, God will exalt them. God's plan is for much more than the earthly troubles we endure. His plan ultimately ends in restoration

and redemption for all of humanity. Our job while we wait for that is to put our trust in Him and follow Him.

During the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in the 1940s, a Christian woman named Corrie Ten Boom risked her life to hide and protect Jews. Ultimately, Corrie was arrested and sent to a concentration camp for her crimes against the government. She suffered greatly. Corrie is later quoted as saying, *“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.”* It’s hard to even begin to imagine what she lived through. It’s clear though that she believed in whatever she was to face, God would be there with her.

We can live with that same confidence. We can turn our anxieties into an unshakable faith in a known God.

ASK:

- How does knowing Jesus allow us to give Him our fears and worries?
- What do you need to do in your own life so that the next time you face something scary and unknown, you turn first to Jesus?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Look up the hymn, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus” and take a minute to listen and reflect on the lyrics. As you listen to the song picture yourself literally turning toward Jesus. Picture yourself running into the safety of His arms!

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full, in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace*

DAY 41

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:8-9, John 10:10

Reflection:

Since the beginning of time, Satan has been an ever-present threat to followers of God. He is sneaky and he’s looking for any crack to break in. His goal is to break down the kingdom of God. Peter’s letter is a tall order for the Gentile Christians of this time. Peter also reminds the church not to forget that Satan is trying to harm them. They need to be on guard and ready. Preparation matters. The more we know God’s word, the more equipped we’ll be to call upon Him during the hard times, rather than being vulnerable to Satan’s schemes.

Jesus himself in John 10 acknowledges that there is a real enemy that is coming after Christians. But Jesus says, *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”*

Christians don’t need to fear because God is with them. They need to live every day with the armor of God.

ASK:

- Do you have any cracks in your life right now that might make it easy for the devil to attack?

- How does living in community with other believers help you to stay the course with Jesus?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Take John 10 and make it personal this week. Write “Jesus came that I may have life and have it abundantly” in your journal or somewhere you’ll notice throughout the week. Remind yourself of this promise to keep you path steady and eyes focused on Jesus, not shifting toward distractions that take you away from Him.

DAY 42

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:10-11, Romans 8:18-22

Reflection:

You’ve made it to the conclusion of Peter’s letter! There has been so much to unpack and learn. Peter has reminded the church that they are chosen and loved by the High King. He has acknowledged that life is hard and will likely get harder. But amid all of that, Peter points us to the hope found in Jesus and to living a life devoted to Him.

His parting words serve as a reminder that whatever we face here on earth is only temporary. Eternity with the Father awaits the faithful. In his letter to the Romans, Paul teaches that though hard times await Christians, following Jesus is worth it. There is NOTHING greater!

ASK:

- What action words does Peter use to describe what God plans to do to restore what His church has lost by suffering for their faith?
- Do you feel more hopeful after reading these last words?

TAKE A NEXT STEP:

Use the ACTS prayer method to come before the Father in a time of prayer-

A (Adoration)- *Jesus, You are worth it...*

C (Confession)- *I confess my lack...*

T (Thanksgiving)- *Thank you for leading me...*

S (Supplication- Say what you need)- *Teach me....*

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