

OVER 4 MILLION "BE" BOOKS IN PRINT

BE

HOPEFUL

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF TIMES OUT OF YOUR WORST OF TIMES

NT

COMMENTARY

I PETER

Warren W. Wiersbe

FOREWORD BY KEN BAUGH

OVER 4 MILLION "BE" BOOKS IN PRINT

BE

HOPEFUL

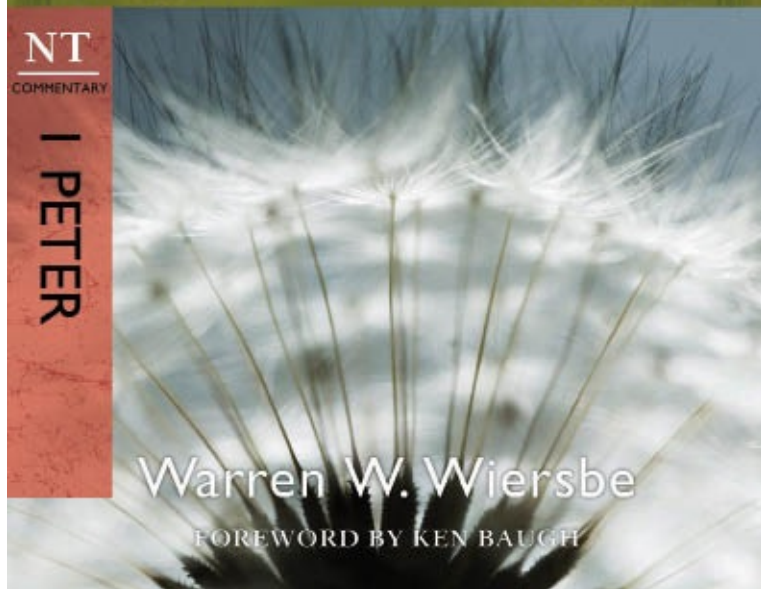
HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF TIMES OUT OF YOUR WORST OF TIMES

NT
COMMENTARY

I PETER

Warren W. Wiersbe

FOREWORD BY KEN BAUGH



BE

HOPEFUL

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF TIMES OUT OF
YOUR WORST OF TIMES

NT COMMENTARY

I PETER

Warren W. Wiersbe

David©Cook®
transforming lives together

BE HOPEFUL
Published by David C. Cook

4050 Lee Vance View

Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

David C. Cook Distribution Canada 55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, Canada N3L 3E5

David C. Cook U.K., Kingsway Communications Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NT, England David C. Cook and the graphic circle C logo are registered trademarks of Cook Communications Ministries.

All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form without written permission from the publisher.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. (Public Domain.) Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © Copyright 1960, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission; NIV are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved; and PH are taken from J. B. Phillips: The New Testament in Modern English, revised editions © J. B. Phillips, 1958, 1960, 1972, permission of Macmillan Publishing Co.

and Collins Publishers. Italics in Scripture have been added by the author for emphasis.

LCCN 2009923014
ISBN 978-1-4347-6743-1
eISBN 978-1-4347-0022-3

© 1982 Warren W. Wiersbe First edition of *Be Hopeful* by Warren W. Wiersbe published by Victor Books®
in 1982 © Warren W. Wiersbe, ISBN 978-0-89693-737-6

The Team: Karen Lee-Thorp, Amy Kiechlin, Jack Campbell, and Susan Vannaman Series Cover Design:
John Hamilton Design Cover Photo: Veer Images

Second Edition 2009

To our daughters-in-law

SUSAN WIERSE

and

KAREN WIERSE

And to our sons-in-law

DAVID JACOBSEN

and

DAVID JOHNSON

It's great to have you

in the family!

CONTENTS

The Big Idea: An Introduction to *Be Hopeful* by Ken Baugh A Word from the Author

1. Where There's Christ, There's Hope (1 Peter 1:1; 5:12–14) 2. It's Glory All the Way! (1 Peter 1:2–12)
3. Staying Clean in a Polluted World (1 Peter 1:13–21) 4. Christian Togetherness (1 Peter 1:22—2:10)
5. Somebody's Watching You! (1 Peter 2:11–25)
6. Wedlock or Deadlock? (1 Peter 3:1–7)
7. Preparing for the Best! (1 Peter 3:8–17)
8. Learning from Noah (1 Peter 3:18–22)
9. The Rest of Your Time (1 Peter 4:1–11)
10. Facts about Furnaces (1 Peter 4:12–19)
11. How to Be a Good Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1–4)
12. From Grace to Glory! (1 Peter 5:5–14)

The Big Idea

An Introduction to *Be Hopeful* by Ken Baugh

During a British conference on comparative religion, experts had gathered from around the world to debate those things that made the Christian faith unique. Slowly, the experts began eliminating one possibility at a time. Some thought it was the incarnation that made Christianity unique, but as they discussed this, it became evident that there are other religions that claim gods appearing in human form. Some suggested that the resurrection is the only unique element to Christianity, yet as they studied they found accounts in other religions of people returning from the dead. As time passed, the debates grew more heated.

C. S. Lewis, whom many believe to have been one of the greatest Christian thinkers in the twentieth century, strolled in. Lewis had heard the shouting from down the hall, and as he entered the room he asked, “What’s all the rumpus about?” His colleagues told him of their discussions as to what made Christianity unique from the other world religions. Lewis responded, “Oh, that’s easy, it’s grace.” And after further discussion they finally all agreed.

Grace sets the Christian faith apart from every other world religion. What is grace? Simply put, grace is God’s unmerited favor. You cannot earn grace; you cannot do anything to deserve grace. It is simply God doing something for you with no strings attached. God’s grace is solely motivated by love: deep, abiding, unconditional, sacrificial love. Phillip Yancey puts it this way:

The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of *karma*, the Jewish Covenant, and Muslim's code of law, each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional (*What's So Amazing About Grace*, 45).

But just because grace is free does not mean that it is cheap. Grace may not cost you and me anything, but it cost Jesus His life. Jesus came to earth over two thousand years ago. As God in human flesh, He lived the perfect life and then died on a cross to pay the price for your sin and mine. We deserved to hang on that cross, not Jesus. It was our sin that separated us from a holy and righteous God, our sin that made us guilty and deserving of spending eternity in hell. But because Jesus loves you and me so much, He had mercy on us and took the death sentence upon Himself that we so rightly deserved. That's grace. And because of God's grace there is hope both for today and the rest of eternity. Living in this hope is the Big Idea throughout the letter of 1 Peter.

Of all the disciples, I believe that Peter understood the grace of God the most because Peter denied knowing Jesus not once, not twice, but three times. Peter thought he loved Jesus enough to die for Him, but when that love was tested and Peter was accused of being one of Jesus' disciples, he failed and denied knowing Him. Jesus had warned Peter that this would happen: "'Today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.' But Peter insisted emphatically, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you'" (Mark 14:29–31 NIV).

Even though Peter did love Jesus, and even though he intended to stand firm in the face of persecution, he denied his Lord just as Jesus said he would. But in the midst of Peter's great failure, he experienced the amazing grace of God.

There is an interesting detail found only in Luke's account of Peter's betrayal of Jesus. It's found in Luke 22:61 (NIV): "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter." What do you think was in that look? What if you had been in Jesus' sandals; how would you have looked at Peter? Would it have been a look of hurt or anger? Would you have given Peter the evil eye and said, "Peter how could you? How could you do this to me?" All of these would be natural responses, and if Jesus had looked at Peter that way, who would have blamed Him?

But here's the interesting thing: None of these natural responses were in the look that Jesus gave to Peter. The Greek word for "looked" in this verse carries the idea of interest, love, or concern. Jesus didn't look at Peter with disdain but with grace. It was like Jesus was saying: "Peter, I love you, and I'm concerned about you, because I know how broken you are going to feel now that you have rejected me." Peter denied his Lord, but later Peter experienced God's grace.

For the last few years, I have participated in leading a tour to the Holy Land. One of my favorite spots on our tour is Mensa Christi, where Jesus restored Peter and commissioned him to full-time ministry. It is a powerful experience to sit there on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and listen to the water as it laps on the sand, feeling the sun on your face, knowing that at this very spot, some two thousand years ago, Peter experienced the amazing grace of God as Jesus restored him three times for each of his three denials. That day changed Peter's life forever from a hardened blue-collar fisherman into an ambassador of God's grace. And I believe as Peter penned the words of this first letter bearing his name, his intent inspired by the Holy Spirit was for every disciple who reads these words to experience the hope that comes through God's grace. As such, I believe that every follower of Jesus Christ can live every moment of every day with hope if they remember three important truths.

Truth 1: This earth is not my home; my home is in heaven. Peter reminds us over and over again throughout this letter that we are "strangers in the world" (1

Peter 1:1 NIV), that this life is not all there is. There is so much more to come, and when we receive God's grace of forgiveness for sin through Jesus' death on the cross, we can be assured of a home in heaven. Jesus took six days to create the world (Ex. 31:17; Col. 1:16–17), and there are some beautiful and amazing places in it, but imagine what heaven is going to be like! When I remember how amazing eternal life in the Father's presence is going to be, it enables me to endure whatever may come my way in this life.

Truth 2: God uses adversity in this life to strengthen my faith. Peter reminds us that we will suffer "grief in all kinds of trials" (1 Peter 1:6 NIV), yet we can still have hope, because God never wastes a hurt. He uses them all in a supernatural way to strengthen our faith, which is more important to God than the purest gold (1:7). In fact, the writer of Hebrews emphasizes the value of our faith: "Without faith, it's impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Nothing that happens in your life happens without God's consent. He is not the author of evil, but He allows evil in our lives, and then He supernaturally uses the suffering that comes from evil to shape us into men and women who bring Him glory.

The people to whom Peter wrote this letter were believers experiencing severe persecution under the reign of Roman Emperor Nero. Nero was a total psycho and afflicted these believers with horrendous acts of evil. Nero put women and children into the Coliseum for sport to be torn apart by lions. He impaled believers on stakes and burned them as human torches to light up his decadent evening parties. In fact, not long after Peter wrote his second letter, Nero had him crucified upside down. And yet, even in the face of great persecution, Peter encouraged his readers to stand firm in their hope in Christ, knowing their faith was being purified and bringing great honor and glory to God. Let us maintain the same perspective in the midst of our own adversity.

Truth 3: The end of all things is near. Because the end is near, Peter admonishes us to live each day being intentional about our witness to

unbelievers (1 Peter 3:15–16) and our love toward believers (4:8–10). My friend, you are going to live for eternity, not in this world but in heaven. Therefore, everything you do in this life will echo throughout eternity, bringing God glory and storing up for you treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19–20).

These truths that Peter reminds us of throughout this letter should act as a powerful source of hope every day of your life. You have so much to be grateful for through God's grace of forgiveness and the hope this establishes for you for the rest of eternity. In light of all of God's amazing grace, how can we do anything but praise and worship Him? My prayer for you as you read through this commentary is that you will remember these three important truths and carry with you every day the hope of God's presence, knowing that He is preparing a wonderful place for you in heaven.

Dr. Wiersbe's commentaries have been a source of guidance and strength to me over the many years that I have been a pastor. His unique style is not overly academic, but theologically sound. He explains the deep truths of Scripture in a way that everyone can understand and apply. Whether you're a Bible scholar or a brand-new believer in Christ, you will benefit, as I have, from Warren's insights. With your Bible in one hand and Dr. Wiersbe's commentary in the other, you will be able to accurately unpack the deep truths of God's Word and learn how to apply them to your life.

Drink deeply, my friend, of the truths of God's Word, for in them you will find Jesus Christ, and there is freedom, peace, assurance, and joy.

—Ken Baugh

Pastor of Coast Hills Community Church

Aliso Viejo, California

A Word from the Author

If you know something about suffering and persecution, then 1 Peter has a message for you: “Be hopeful!”

Peter wrote this letter to Christians who were going through various trials. The apostle knew that a severe “fiery trial” was just around the corner, and he wanted to prepare believers for it. After all, what life does to us depends on what life finds in us.

For the most part, Christians in the Western world have enjoyed comfortable lives. Our brothers and sisters behind iron and bamboo curtains have suffered for their faith. Now there is every indication that the time is approaching when it will cost us to take a stand for Christ. The only “comfortable” Christian will be a “compromising” Christian, and his comfort will be costly.

But God’s message to us is, “Be hopeful! Suffering leads to glory! I can give you all the grace you need to honor Me when the going gets tough!”

The future is still as bright as the promises of God, so—*be hopeful!*

—Warren W. Wiersbe

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF 1 PETER

Theme: God's grace and the Living Hope Key verses: 1 Peter 1:3; 5:12

I. God's Grace and Salvation (1 Peter 1:1—2:10)

A. Live in hope (1 Peter 1:1–12)

B. Live in holiness (1 Peter 1:13–21)

C. Live in harmony (1 Peter 1:22—2:10)

II. God's Grace and Submission (1 Peter 2:11—3:12)

A. Submit to authorities (1 Peter 2:11–17)

B. Submit to masters (1 Peter 2:18–25)

C. Submit in the home (1 Peter 3:1–7)

D. Submit in the church (1 Peter 3:8–12)

III. God's Grace and Suffering (1 Peter 3:13—5:11)

A. Make Jesus Christ Lord (1 Peter 3:13–22)

B. Have Christ's attitude (1 Peter 4:1–11)

C. Glorify Christ's name (1 Peter 4:12–19)

D. Look for Christ's return (1 Peter 5:1–6)

E. Depend on Christ's grace (1 Peter 5:7–14)

Chapter One

Where There's Christ, There's Hope

[\(1 Peter 1:1; 5:12–14\)](#)

While there's life, there's hope!" That ancient Roman saying is still quoted today and, like most adages, it has an element of truth but no guarantee of certainty. It is not the fact of life that determines hope, but the faith of life. A Christian believer has a "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3 NASB) because his faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:21). This "living hope" is the major theme of Peter's first letter. He is saying to all believers, "Be hopeful!"

Before we study the details of this fascinating letter, let's get acquainted with the man who wrote it, the people to whom he sent it, and the particular situation that prompted him to write.

THE WRITER (1:1) He identified himself as "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1). Some liberals have questioned whether a common fisherman could have penned this letter, especially since Peter and John were both called "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13). However, this phrase only means "laymen without formal schooling"; that is, they were not professional religious leaders. We must never underestimate the

training Peter had for three years with the Lord Jesus, nor should we minimize the work of the Holy Spirit in his life. Peter is a perfect illustration of the truth expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:26–31.

His given name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter, which means “a stone” (John 1:35–42). The Aramaic equivalent of “Peter” is “Cephas,” so Peter was a man with three names. Nearly fifty times in the New Testament, he is called “Simon,” and often he is called “Simon Peter.” Perhaps the two names suggest a Christian’s two natures: an old nature (Simon) that is prone to fail, and a new nature (Peter) that can give victory. As Simon, he was only another human piece of clay, but Jesus Christ made a rock out of him!

Peter and Paul were the two leading apostles in the early church. Paul was assigned especially to minister to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews (Gal. 2:1–10). The Lord had commanded Peter to strengthen his brethren (Luke 22:32) and to tend the flock (John 21:15–17; also see 1 Peter 5:1–4), and the writing of this letter was a part of that ministry. Peter told his readers that this was a letter of encouragement and personal witness (1 Peter 5:12). Some writings are manufactured out of books, the way freshmen students write term papers, but this letter grew out of a life lived to the glory of God. A number of events in Peter’s life are woven into the fabric of this epistle.

This letter is also associated with Silas (Silvanus, 1 Peter 5:12). He was one of the “chief men” in the early church (Acts 15:22) and a prophet (Acts 15:32). This means that he communicated God’s messages to the congregations as he was directed by the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 14). The apostles and prophets worked together to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), and, once that foundation was laid, they passed off the scene. There are no apostles and prophets *in the New Testament sense* in the church today.

It is interesting that Silas was associated with Peter’s ministry, because originally he went with Paul as a replacement for Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41).

Peter also mentioned John Mark (1 Peter 5:13) whose failure on the mission field helped to cause the rupture between Paul and Barnabas. Peter had led Mark to faith in Christ (“Mark, my son”) and certainly would maintain a concern for him. No doubt one of the early assemblies met in John Mark’s home in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). In the end, Paul forgave and accepted Mark as a valued helper in the work (2 Tim. 4:11).

Peter indicated that he wrote this letter “at Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13) where there was an assembly of believers. There is no evidence either from church history or tradition that Peter ministered in ancient Babylon which, at that time, did have a large community of Jews. There was another town called “Babylon” in Egypt, but we have no proof that Peter ever visited it. “Babylon” is probably another name for the city of Rome, and we do have reason to believe that Peter ministered in Rome and was probably martyred there. Rome is called “Babylon” in Revelation 17:5 and 18:10. It was not unusual for persecuted believers during those days to write or speak in “code.”

In saying this, however, we must not assign more to Peter than is due him. He did *not* found the church in Rome nor serve as its first bishop. It was Paul’s policy not to minister where any other apostle had gone (Rom. 15:20); so Paul would not have ministered in Rome had Peter arrived there first. Peter probably arrived in Rome after Paul was released from his first imprisonment, about the year AD 62. First Peter was written about the year 63. Paul was martyred about 64, and perhaps that same year, or shortly after, Peter laid down his life for Christ.

THE RECIPIENTS (1:1) Peter called them “strangers” (1 Peter 1:1), which means “resident aliens, sojourners.” They are called “strangers and pilgrims” in 1 Peter 2:11. These people were citizens of heaven through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:20), and

therefore were not permanent residents on earth. Like Abraham, they had their eyes of faith centered on the future city of God (Heb. 11:8–16). They were in the world, but not of the world (John 17:16).

Because Christians are “strangers” in the world, they are considered to be “strange” in the eyes of the world (1 Peter 4:4). Christians have standards and values different from those of the world, and this gives opportunity both for witness and for warfare. We will discover in this epistle that some of the readers were experiencing suffering because of their different lifestyle.

These believers were a “scattered” people as well as a “strange” people. The word translated “scattered” (*diaspora*) was a technical term for the Jews who lived outside of Palestine. It is used this way in John 7:35 and James 1:1. However, Peter’s use of this word does not imply that he was writing only to Jewish Christians, because some statements in his letter suggest that some of his readers were converted out of Gentile paganism (1 Peter 1:14, 18; 2:9–10; 4:1–4). There was undoubtedly a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles in the churches that received this letter. We will notice a number of Old Testament references and allusions in these chapters.

These Christians were scattered in five different parts of the Roman Empire, all of them in northern Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The Holy Spirit did not permit Paul to minister in Bithynia (Acts 16:7), so he did not begin this work. There were Jews at Pentecost from Pontus and Cappadocia (Acts 2:9), and perhaps they carried the gospel to their neighboring province. Possibly Jewish believers who had been under Peter’s ministry in other places had migrated to towns in these provinces. People were “on the move” in those days, and dedicated believers shared the Word wherever they went (Acts 8:4).

The important thing for us to know about these “scattered strangers” is that they were going through a time of suffering and persecution. At least fifteen times in this letter Peter referred to suffering, and he used eight different Greek

words to do so. Some of these Christians were suffering because they were living godly lives and doing what was good and right (1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:14–18; 4:1–4, 15–19). Others were suffering reproach for the name of Christ (1 Peter 4:14) and being railed at by unsaved people (1 Peter 3:9–10). Peter wrote to encourage them to be good witnesses to their persecutors, and to remember that their suffering would lead to glory (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13–14; 5:10).

But Peter had another purpose in mind. He knew that a “fiery trial” was about to begin—official persecution from the Roman Empire (1 Peter 4:12). When the church began in Jerusalem, it was looked on as a “sect” of the traditional Jewish faith. The first Christians were Jews, and they met in the temple precincts. The Roman government took no official action against the Christians since the Jewish religion was accepted and approved. But when it became clear that Christianity was not a “sect” of Judaism, Rome had to take official steps.

Several events occurred that helped to precipitate this “fiery trial.” To begin with, Paul had defended the Christian faith before the official court in Rome (Phil. 1:12–24). He had been released but then was arrested again. This second defense failed, and he was martyred (2 Tim. 4:16–18). Second, the deranged emperor, Nero, blamed the fire of Rome (July AD 64) on the Christians, using them as a scapegoat. Peter was probably in Rome about that time and was slain by Nero, who had also killed Paul. Nero’s persecution of Christians was local at first, but it probably spread. At any rate, Peter wanted to prepare the churches.

We must not get the idea that all Christians in every part of the empire were going through the same trials to the same degree at the same time. It varied from place to place, though suffering and opposition were pretty general (1 Peter 5:9). Nero introduced official persecution of the church, and other emperors followed his example in later years. Peter’s letter must have been a tremendous help to Christians who suffered during the reigns of Trajan (98–117), Hadrian (117–138), and Diocletian (284–305). Christians in the world today may yet learn the

value of Peter's letter when their own "fiery trials" of persecution begin. While I personally believe that the church will not go through *the* tribulation, I do believe that these latter days will bring much suffering and persecution to the people of God.

It is possible that Silas was the bearer of this letter to the believers in the provinces, and also the secretary who wrote the epistle.

THE MESSAGE (5:12) First Peter is a letter of encouragement (1 Peter 5:12). We have noted that the theme of *suffering* runs throughout the letter, but so also does the theme of *glory* (see 1 Peter 1:7–8, 11, 21; 2:12; 4:11–16; 5:1, 4, 10–11). One of the encouragements that Peter gives suffering saints is the assurance that their suffering will one day be transformed into glory (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13–14; 5:10). This is possible only because the Savior suffered for us and then entered into His glory (1 Peter 1:11; 5:1). The sufferings of Christ are mentioned often in this letter (1 Peter 1:11; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1).

Peter is preeminently the apostle of *hope*, as Paul is the apostle of *faith* and John of *love*. As believers, we have a "living hope" because we trust a living Christ (1 Peter 1:3). This hope enables us to keep our minds under control and "hope to the end" (1 Peter 1:13 NIV) when Jesus shall return. We must not be ashamed of our hope but be ready to explain and defend it (1 Peter 3:15). Like Sarah, Christian wives can hope in God (1 Peter 3:5, where "trusted" should be translated "hoped"). Since suffering brings glory, and because Jesus is coming again, we can indeed be hopeful!

But suffering does not *automatically* bring glory to God and blessing to God's people. Some believers have fainted and fallen in times of trial and have brought shame to the name of Christ. It is only when we depend on the grace of

God that we can glorify God in times of suffering. Peter also emphasized God's grace in this letter. "I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it" (1 Peter 5:12 NIV).

The word *grace* is used in every chapter of 1 Peter: 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19 ("thankworthy"), 20 ("acceptable"); 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12. Grace is God's generous favor to undeserving sinners and needy saints. When we depend on God's grace, we can endure suffering and turn trials into triumphs. It is grace alone that saves us (Eph. 2:8–10). God's grace can give us strength in times of trial (2 Cor. 12:1–10). Grace enables us to serve God in spite of difficulties (1 Cor. 15:9–10). Whatever begins with God's grace will always lead to glory (Ps. 84:11; 1 Peter 5:10).

As we study 1 Peter, we will see how the three themes of suffering, grace, and glory unite to form an encouraging message for believers experiencing times of trial and persecution. These themes are summarized in 1 Peter 5:10, a verse we would do well to memorize.

The cynical editor and writer H. L. Mencken once defined hope as "a pathological belief in the occurrence of the impossible." But that definition does not agree with the New Testament meaning of the word. True Christian hope is more than "hope so." It is confident assurance of future glory and blessing.

An Old Testament believer called God "the hope of Israel" (Jer. 14:8). A New Testament believer affirms that Jesus Christ is his hope (1 Tim. 1:1; see Col. 1:27). The unsaved sinner is "without hope" (Eph. 2:12 NIV), and if he dies without Christ, he will be hopeless forever. The Italian poet Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, put this inscription over the world of the dead: "Abandon all hope, you who enter here!"

This confident hope gives us the encouragement and enablement we need for daily living. It does not put us in a rocking chair where we complacently await the return of Jesus Christ. Instead, it puts us in the marketplace, on the

battlefield, where we keep on going when the burdens are heavy and the battles are hard. Hope is not a sedative; it is a shot of adrenaline, a blood transfusion. Like an anchor, our hope in Christ stabilizes us in the storms of life (Heb. 6:18–19), but unlike an anchor, our hope moves us forward, it does not hold us back.

It is not difficult to follow Peter’s train of thought. Everything begins with salvation, our personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ. If we know Christ as Savior, then we have hope! If we have hope, then we can walk in holiness and in harmony. There should be no problem submitting to those around us in society, the home, and the church family. Salvation and submission are preparation for suffering; but if we focus on Christ, we can overcome, and God will transform suffering into glory.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever suffered for your Christian beliefs? If so, when?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:1 and 5:12–14. What do we know about the author of this book? (See also John 1:35–42; 21:15–17; Acts 4:13; and Gal. 2:1–10.)
3. What is significant about Peter calling his readers “strangers” and “scattered”? Why might he have called them that?
4. How are believers “strangers” today?

5. Do you think of yourself as a “stranger”? How do you think Peter expects that to affect the ways you think and act?
6. Peter wrote this letter from “Babylon,” by which he probably meant Rome. What do you think he meant by calling Rome “Babylon”? What is significant about his location?
7. Why did Peter write this letter?
8. Peter refers to suffering at least fifteen times in this letter. Quickly skim this letter to find out why the recipients were suffering.
9. How is God’s grace related to suffering?
10. How are believers, worldwide, suffering today?
11. How can you appropriate God’s grace for your present sufferings?

Chapter Two

It's Glory All the Way!

[\(1 Peter 1:2–12\)](#)

On a balmy summer day, my wife and I visited one of the world's most famous cemeteries located at Stoke Poges, a little village not far from Windsor Castle in England. On this site Thomas Gray penned his famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," a poem most of us had to read at one time or another in school.

As we stood quietly in the midst of ancient graves, one stanza of that poem came to mind: The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Man's glory simply does not last, but God's glory is eternal, and He has deigned to share that glory with us! In this first section of his letter, Peter shared four wonderful discoveries that he had made about the glory of God.

1. CHRISTIANS ARE BORN FOR GLORY (1:2–4) Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers have been "begotten again"

to a living hope, and that hope includes the glory of God. But, what do we mean by “the glory of God”?

The glory of God means the sum total of all that God is and does. “Glory” is not a separate attribute or characteristic of God, such as His holiness, wisdom, or mercy. Everything that God is and does is characterized by glory. He is glorious in wisdom and power, so that everything He thinks and does is marked by glory. He reveals His glory in creation (Ps. 19), in His dealings with the people of Israel, and especially in His plan of salvation for lost sinners.

When we were born the first time, we were not born for glory. “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass” (1 Peter 1:24, quoted from Isa. 40:6). Whatever feeble glory man has will eventually fade and disappear, but the glory of the Lord is eternal. The works of man done for the glory of God will last and be rewarded (1 John 2:17). But the selfish human achievements of sinners will one day vanish to be seen no more. One reason that we have encyclopedias and the Internet is so that we can learn about the famous people who are now forgotten!

Peter gave two descriptions to help us better understand this wonderful truth about glory.

(1) A Christian’s birth described (vv. 2–3). This miracle all began with God: We were chosen by the Father (Eph. 1:3–4). This took place in the deep counsels of eternity, and we knew nothing about it until it was revealed to us in the Word of God. This election was not based on anything we had done, because we were not even on the scene. Nor was it based on anything God saw that we would be or do. God’s election was based wholly on His grace and love. We cannot explain it (Rom. 11:33–36), but we can rejoice in it.

“Foreknowledge” does not suggest that God merely knew ahead of time that we would believe, and therefore He chose us. This would raise the question, “Who or what made us decide for Christ?” and would take our salvation completely out of God’s hands. In the Bible, to *foreknow* means “to set one’s

love on a person or persons in a personal way.” It is used this way in Amos 3:2: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” God set His electing love on the nation of Israel. Other verses that use “know” in this special sense are Psalm 1:6; Matthew 7:23; John 10:14, 27; and 1 Corinthians 8:3.

But the plan of salvation includes more than the Father’s electing love; it also includes the work of the Spirit in convicting the sinner and bringing him to faith in Christ. The best commentary on this is 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14. Also, the Son of God had to die on the cross for our sins, or there could be no salvation. We have been chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and set apart by the Spirit. It takes all three if there is to be a true experience of salvation.

As far as God the Father is concerned, I was saved when He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world. As far as the Son is concerned, I was saved when He died for me on the cross. But as far as the Spirit is concerned, I was saved one night in May 1945 when I heard the gospel and received Christ. Then it all came together, but it took all three Persons of the Godhead to bring me to salvation. If we separate these ministries, we will either deny divine sovereignty or human responsibility, and that would lead to heresy.

Peter did not deny man’s part in God’s plan to save sinners. In 1 Peter 1:23 he emphasized the fact that the gospel was preached to these people, and that they heard it and believed (see also 1 Peter 1:12). Peter’s own example at Pentecost is proof that we do not “leave it all with God” and never urge lost sinners to come to Christ (Acts 2:37–40). The same God who ordains the end—our salvation—also ordains *the means to the end*—the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God.

(2) A Christian’s hope described (vv. 3–4). To begin with, it is *a living hope* because it is grounded on the living Word of God (1 Peter 1:23) and was made possible by the living Son of God who arose from the dead. A “living hope” is one that has life in it and therefore can give life to us. Because it has

life, it grows and becomes greater and more beautiful as time goes on. Time destroys most hopes; they fade and then die. But the passing of time only makes a Christian's hope that much more glorious.

Peter called this hope *an inheritance* (1 Peter 1:4). As the children of the King, we share His inheritance in glory (Rom. 8:17–18; Eph. 1:9–12). We are included in Christ's last will and testament, and we share the glory with Him (John 17:22–24).

Note the description of this inheritance, for it is totally unlike any earthly inheritance. For one thing, it is *incorruptible*, which means that nothing can ruin it. Because it is *undefiled*, it cannot be stained or cheapened in any way. It will never grow old because it is eternal; it cannot wear out, nor can it disappoint us in any way.

In 1 Peter 1:5 and 9, this inheritance is called “salvation.” The believer is already saved through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8–9), but the completion of that salvation awaits the return of the Savior. Then we shall have new bodies and enter into a new environment, the heavenly city. In 1 Peter 1:7, Peter called this hope “the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Paul called this the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).

What a thrilling thing it is to know that we were born for glory! When we were born again, we exchanged the passing glory of man for the eternal glory of God!

2. CHRISTIANS ARE KEPT FOR GLORY (1:5) Not only is the glory being “reserved” for us, but we are being kept for the glory! In my travels, I have sometimes gone to a hotel or motel, only to discover that the reservations have been confused or cancelled. This will not happen to us when we arrive in heaven, for our future home and inheritance are guaranteed and reserved.

“But suppose we don’t make it?” a timid saint might ask. But we will; for all believers are being “kept by the power of God.” The word translated “kept” is a military word that means “guarded, shielded.” The tense of the verb reveals that we are *constantly* being guarded by God, assuring us that we shall safely arrive in heaven. This same word is used to describe the soldiers guarding Damascus when Paul made his escape (2 Cor. 11:32). See also Jude 24–25 and Romans 8:28–39.

Believers are not kept by their own power, but by the power of God. Our faith in Christ has so united us to Him that His power now guards us and guides us. We are not kept by our strength, but by His faithfulness. How long will He guard us? Until Jesus Christ returns and we will share in the full revelation of His great salvation. This same truth is repeated in 1 Peter 1:9.

It is encouraging to know that we are “guarded for glory.” According to Romans 8:30, we have *already* been glorified. All that awaits is the public revelation of this glory (Rom. 8:18–23). If any believer were lost, it would rob God of His glory. God is so certain that we will be in heaven that He has already given us His glory as the assurance (John 17:24; Eph. 1:13–14).

The assurance of heaven is a great help to us today. As Dr. James M. Gray expressed it in one of his songs, “Who can mind the journey, when the road leads home?” If suffering today means glory tomorrow, then suffering becomes a blessing to us. The unsaved have their “glory” now, but it will be followed by eternal suffering *away from the glory of God* (2 Thess. 1:3–10). In the light of this, ponder 2 Corinthians 4:7–18—and rejoice!

3. CHRISTIANS ARE BEING PREPARED FOR GLORY (1:6–7) We must keep in mind that all God plans and performs here is preparation for what He has in store for us in heaven. He is preparing us for the life and service yet to come. Nobody yet knows all that is in store

for us in heaven, but this we do know: Life today is a school in which God trains us for our future ministry in eternity. This explains the presence of trials in our lives: They are some of God's tools and textbooks in the school of Christian experience.

Peter used the word *trials* rather than *tribulations* or *persecutions*, because he was dealing with the general problems that Christians face as they are surrounded by unbelievers. He shared several facts about trials.

Trials meet needs. The phrase “if need be” indicates that there are special times when God knows that we need to go through trials. Sometimes trials discipline us when we have disobeyed God's will (Ps. 119:67). At other times, trials prepare us for spiritual growth, or even help to prevent us from sinning (2 Cor. 12:1–9). We do not always know the need being met, but we can trust God to know and to do what is best.

Trials are varied. Peter used the word *manifold*, which literally means “variegated, many-colored.” He used the same word to describe God's grace in 1 Peter 4:10. No matter what “color” our day may be—a “blue” Monday or a “gray” Tuesday—God has grace sufficient to meet the need. We must not think that because we have overcome one kind of trial that we will automatically “win them all.” Trials are varied, and God matches the trial to our strengths and needs.

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

Trials are controlled by God. They do not last forever; they are “for a season.” When God permits His children to go through the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. If we rebel, He may have

to reset the clock, but if we submit, He will not permit us to suffer one minute too long. The important thing is that we learn the lesson He wants to teach us and that we bring glory to Him alone.

Peter illustrated this truth by referring to the goldsmith. No goldsmith would deliberately waste the precious ore. He would put it into the smelting furnace long enough to remove the cheap impurities; then he would pour it out and make from it a beautiful article of value. It has been said that the Eastern goldsmith kept the metal in the furnace until he could see his face reflected in it. So our Lord keeps us in the furnace of suffering until we reflect the glory and beauty of Jesus Christ.

The important point is that this glory is not fully revealed until Jesus returns for His church. Our trying experiences today are preparing us for glory tomorrow. When we see Jesus Christ, we will bring “praise and honor and glory” to Him if we have been faithful in the sufferings of this life (see Rom. 8:17–18). This explains why Peter associated rejoicing with suffering. While we may not be able to rejoice as we look around, in our trials, we can rejoice as we look ahead. The word *this* in 1 Peter 1:6 (NASB) refers back to the “salvation” (the return of Christ) mentioned in 1 Peter 1:5.

Just as the assayer tests the gold to see if it is pure gold or counterfeit, so the trials of life test our faith to prove its sincerity. A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted! Too many professing Christians have a “false faith,” and this will be revealed in the trials of life. The seed that fell on shallow soil produced rootless plants, and the plants died when the sun came up (see Matt. 13:1–9, 18–23). The sun in the parable represents “tribulation or persecution.” The person who abandons his “faith” when the going gets tough is only proving that he really had no faith at all.

The patriarch Job went through many painful trials, all of them with God’s approval, and yet he understood somewhat the truth about the refiner’s fire. “But

he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). And he did!

It is encouraging to know that we are born for glory, kept for glory, and being prepared for glory. But the fourth discovery Peter shared with his readers is perhaps the most exciting of all.

4. CHRISTIANS CAN ENJOY THE GLORY NOW (1:8–12) The Christian philosophy of life is not “pie in the sky by and by.” It carries with it a *present* dynamic that can turn suffering into glory *today*. Peter gave four directions for enjoying the glory now, even in the midst of trials.

(1) Love Christ (v. 8). Our love for Christ is not based on physical sight, because we have not seen Him. It is based on our spiritual relationship with Him and what the Word has taught us about Him. The Holy Spirit has poured out God’s love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5), and we return that love to Him. When you find yourself in some trial, and you hurt, immediately lift your heart to Christ in true love and worship. Why? Because this will take the poison out of the experience and replace it with healing medicine.

Satan wants to use life’s trials to bring out the worst in us, but God wants to bring out the best in us. If we love ourselves more than we love Christ, then we will not experience any of the glory *now*. The fire will *burn us*, not *purify us*.

(2) Trust Christ (v. 8). We must live by faith and not by sight. An elderly lady fell and broke her leg while attending a summer Bible conference. She said to the pastor who visited her, “I know the Lord led me to the conference. But I don’t see why this had to happen! And I don’t see any good coming from it.” Wisely, the pastor replied, “Romans 8:28 doesn’t say that we see all things working together for good. It says that we *know* it.”

Faith means surrendering all to God and obeying His Word in spite of

circumstances and consequences. Love and faith go together: When you love someone, you trust him. And faith and love together help to strengthen hope, for where you find faith and love, you will find confidence for the future.

How can we grow in faith during times of testing and suffering? The same way we grow in faith when things seem to be going well: by feeding on the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Our fellowship with Christ through His Word not only strengthens our faith, but it also deepens our love. It is a basic principle of Christian living that we spend much time in the Word when God is testing us and Satan is tempting us.

(3) Rejoice in Christ (v. 8). You may not be able to rejoice *over* the circumstances, but you can rejoice *in* them by centering your heart and mind on Jesus Christ. Each experience of trial helps us learn something new and wonderful about our Savior. Abraham discovered new truths about the Lord on the mount where he offered his son (Gen. 22). The three Hebrew children discovered His nearness when they went through the fiery furnace (Dan. 3). Paul learned the sufficiency of His grace when he suffered with a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12).

Note that the joy He produces is “unspeakable and full of glory.” This joy is so deep and so wonderful that we cannot even express it. Words fail us! Peter had seen some of the glory on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus discussed with Moses and Elijah His own impending suffering and death (Luke 9:28–36).

(4) Receive from Christ (vv. 8–12). “Believing ... receiving” is God’s way of meeting our needs. If we love Him, trust Him, and rejoice in Him, then we can receive from Him all that we need to turn trials into triumphs. First Peter 1:9 can be translated, “For you are receiving the consummation of your faith, that is, the final salvation of your souls.” In other words, we can experience *today* some of that future glory. Charles Spurgeon used to say, “Little faith will take your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.” It is not enough

that we long for heaven during times of suffering, for anybody can do that. What Peter urged his readers to do was exercise love, faith, and rejoicing, so that they might experience some of the glory of heaven in the midst of suffering *now*.

The amazing thing is that this “salvation” we are awaiting—the return of Christ—was a part of God’s great plan for us from eternity. The Old Testament prophets wrote about this salvation and studied closely what God revealed to them. They saw the sufferings of the Messiah, and also the glory that would follow, but they could not fully understand the connection between the two. In fact, in some of the prophecies, the Messiah’s sufferings and glory are blended in one verse or paragraph.

When Jesus came to earth, the Jewish teachers were awaiting a conquering Messiah who would defeat Israel’s enemies and establish the glorious kingdom promised to David. Even His own disciples were not clear about the need for His death on the cross (Matt. 16:13–28). They were still inquiring about the Jewish kingdom even after His resurrection (Acts 1:1–8). If the *disciples* were not clear about God’s program, certainly the Old Testament *prophets* could be excused!

God told the prophets that they were ministering for a *future* generation. Between the suffering of Messiah and His return in glory comes what we call “the age of the church.” The truth about the church was a hidden “mystery” in the Old Testament period (Eph. 3:1–13). The Old Testament believers looked ahead by faith and saw, as it were, two mountain peaks: Mount Calvary, where Messiah suffered and died (Isa. 53), and Mount Olivet, where He will return in glory (Zech. 14:4). They could not see the “valley” in between, the present age of the church.

Even the angels are interested in what God is doing in and through His church! Read 1 Corinthians 4:9 and Ephesians 3:10 for further information on how God is “educating” the angels through the church.

If the Old Testament prophets searched so diligently into the truths of salvation and yet had so little to go on, how much more ought we to search into

this subject, now that we have a complete Word from God! The same Holy Spirit who taught the prophets and, through them, wrote the Word of God, can teach us the truths in it (John 16:12–15).

Furthermore, we can learn these truths from the Old Testament as well as from the New Testament. You can find Christ in every part of the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:25–27). What a delight it is to meet Christ in the Old Testament law, the types, the Psalms, and the writings of the prophets. In times of trial, you can turn to the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, and find all that you need for encouragement and enlightenment.

Yes, for Christians, it is glory all the way! When we trusted Christ, we were born for glory. Every day we are being kept for glory. As we obey Him and experience trials, we are being prepared for glory. When we love Him, trust Him, and rejoice in Him, we experience the glory here and now.

Joy unspeakable and full of glory!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Name some individuals throughout history who have enjoyed a lot of glory but are now insignificant.
2. Read 1 Peter 1:2–12. How did Peter describe our spiritual birth?

3. “We have been chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and set apart by the Spirit.” In your own words, what does each of these statements about the three members of the Trinity mean?
4. Why did God save us?
5. What does Peter teach about the trials we experience?
6. How does denying that trials are painful make the suffering even worse?
7. How can the fact that God controls our trials comfort us when we’re going through them?
8. How does Peter say we should respond to trials?
9. How can this response bring glory into suffering?
10. Is anything Peter says about trials helpful to you personally? If so, what? If not, why not?

Chapter Three

Staying Clean in a Polluted World

[\(1 Peter 1:13–21\)](#)

In the first section of this chapter, Peter emphasized *walking in hope*, but now his emphasis is *walking in holiness*. The two go together, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

The root meaning of the word translated “holy” is “different.” A holy person is not an odd person, but a different person. His life has a quality about it that is different. His present “lifestyle” is not only different from his past way of life, but it is different from the “lifestyles” of the unbelievers around him. A Christian’s life of holiness appears strange to the lost (1 Peter 4:4), but it is not strange to other believers.

However, it is not easy to live in this world and maintain a holy walk. The anti-God atmosphere around us that the Bible calls “the world” is always pressing against us, trying to force us to conform. In this paragraph, Peter presented to his readers five spiritual incentives to encourage them (and us) to maintain a different lifestyle, a holy walk in a polluted world.

1. THE GLORY OF GOD (1:13) “The revelation of Jesus Christ” is another expression for the “living hope” and “the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Christians live in the future tense; their present

actions and decisions are governed by this future hope. Just as an engaged couple makes all their plans in the light of that future wedding, so Christians today live with the expectation of seeing Jesus Christ.

“Gird up the loins of your mind” simply means, “Pull your thoughts together! Have a disciplined mind!” The image is that of a robed man, tucking his skirts under the belt, so he can be free to run. When you center your thoughts on the return of Christ and live accordingly, you escape the many worldly things that would encumber your mind and hinder your spiritual progress. Peter may have borrowed the idea from the Passover supper, because later in this section he identified Christ as the Lamb (1 Peter 1:19). The Jews at Passover were supposed to eat the meal in haste, ready to move (Ex. 12:11).

Outlook determines outcome; attitude determines action. A Christian who is looking for the glory of God has a greater motivation for present obedience than a Christian who ignores the Lord’s return. The contrast is illustrated in the lives of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 12–13; Heb. 11:8–16). Abraham had his eyes of faith on that heavenly city, so he had no interest in the world’s real estate. But Lot, who had tasted the pleasures of the world in Egypt, gradually moved toward Sodom. Abraham brought blessing to his home, but Lot brought judgment. Outlook determined outcome.

Not only should we have a disciplined mind, but we should also have a *sober* mind. The word means “to be calm, steady, controlled; to weigh matters.” Unfortunately some people get “carried away” with prophetic studies and lose their spiritual balance. The fact that Christ is coming should encourage us to be calm and collected (1 Peter 4:7). The fact that Satan is on the prowl is another reason to be sober-minded (1 Peter 5:8). Anyone whose mind becomes undisciplined, and whose life “falls apart” because of prophetic studies, is giving evidence that he does not really understand Bible prophecy.

We should also have an *optimistic* mind. “Hope to the end” means “set your

hope fully.” Have a hopeful outlook! A friend of mine sent me a note one day that read: “When the *outlook* is gloomy, try the *uplook*!” Good advice, indeed! It has to be dark for the stars to appear.

The result of this spiritual mind-set is that a believer experiences the grace of God in his life. To be sure, we will experience grace when we see Jesus Christ; but we can also experience grace today as we look for Him to return. We have been saved by grace and we depend moment by moment on God’s grace (1 Peter 1:10). Looking for Christ to return strengthens our faith and hope in difficult days, and this imparts to us more of the grace of God. Titus 2:10–13 is another passage that shows the relationship between grace and the coming of Jesus Christ.

2. THE HOLINESS OF GOD (1:14–15) The argument here is logical and simple. Children inherit the nature of their parents. God is holy; therefore, as His children, we should live holy lives. We are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) and ought to reveal that nature in godly living.

Peter reminded his readers of what they were before they trusted Christ. They had been *children of disobedience* (Eph. 2:1–3), but now they were to be obedient children. True salvation always results in obedience (Rom. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:2). They had also been *imitators of the world*, “fashioning themselves” after the standards and pleasures of the world. Romans 12:2 translates this same word as “conformed to this world.” Unsaved people tell us that they want to be “free and different,” yet they all imitate one another!

The cause of all this is *ignorance* that leads to *indulgence*. Unsaved people lack spiritual intelligence, and this causes them to give themselves to all kinds of fleshly and worldly indulgences (see Acts 17:30; Eph. 4:17ff.). Since we were born with a fallen nature, it was natural for us to live sinful lives. Nature

determines appetites and actions. A dog and a cat behave differently because they have different natures.

We would still be in that sad sinful plight were it not for the grace of God. He called us! One day, Jesus called to Peter and his friends and said, “Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men” (Mark 1:17 NIV). They responded by faith to His call, and this completely changed their lives.

Perhaps this explains why Peter used the word *called* so often in this letter. We are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:15). We are called “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). We are called to suffer and follow Christ’s example of meekness (1 Peter 2:21). In the midst of persecution, we are called “to inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9). Best of all, we are called to “his eternal glory” (1 Peter 5:10). God called us before we called on Him for salvation. It is all wholly of grace.

But God’s gracious election of sinners to become saints always involves responsibility, and not just privilege. He has chosen us in Christ “that we should be holy and without blame before him” (Eph. 1:4). God has called us to Himself, and He is holy; therefore, we should be holy. Peter quoted from the Old Testament law to back up his admonition (Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7, 26).

God’s holiness is an essential part of His nature. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Any holiness that we have in character and conduct must be derived from Him. Basically, to be *sanctified* means to be “set apart for God’s exclusive use and pleasure.” It involves separation from that which is unclean and complete devotion to God (2 Cor. 6:14—7:1). We are to be holy “in all manner of conversation [behavior],” so that everything we do reflects the holiness of God.

To a dedicated believer, there is no such thing as “secular” and “sacred.” All of life is holy as we live to glorify God. Even such ordinary activities as eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). If something cannot

be done to the glory of God, then we can be sure it must be out of the will of God.

3. THE WORD OF GOD (1:16) “It is written!” is a statement that carries great authority for the believer. Our Lord used the Word of God to defeat Satan, and so may we (Matt. 4:1–11; see Eph. 6:17). But the Word of God is not only a sword for battle, it is also a light to guide us in this dark world (Ps. 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19), food that strengthens us (Matt. 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2), and water that washes us (Eph. 5:25–27).

The Word of God has a sanctifying ministry in the lives of dedicated believers (John 17:17). Those who delight in God’s Word, meditate on it, and seek to obey it will experience God’s direction and blessing in their lives (Ps. 1:1–3). The Word reveals God’s mind, so we should *learn* it; God’s heart, so we should *love* it; God’s will, so we should *live* it. Our whole being—mind, will, and heart—should be controlled by the Word of God.

Peter quoted from the book of Leviticus, “Ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (11:44). Does this mean that the Old Testament law is authoritative today for New Testament Christians? Keep in mind that the early Christians did not even have the New Testament. The only Word of God they possessed was the Old Testament, and God used that Word to direct and nurture them. Believers today are not under the ceremonial laws given to Israel; however, even in these laws we see moral and spiritual principles revealed. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the Epistles, so we must obey them. (The Sabbath commandment was given especially to Israel and does not apply to us today. See Rom. 14:1–9.) As we read and study the Old Testament, we will learn much about God’s character and working, and we will see truths pictured in types and symbols.

The first step toward keeping clean in a filthy world is to ask, “What does

the Bible say?” In the Scriptures, we will find precepts, principles, promises, and persons to guide us in today’s decisions. If we are really willing to obey God, He will show us His truth (John 7:17). While God’s methods of working may change from age to age, His character remains the same and His spiritual principles never vary. We do not study the Bible just to get to know the Bible. We study the Bible that we might get to know God better. Too many earnest Bible students are content with outlines and explanations, and do not really get to know God. It is good to know the Word of God, but this should help us better know the God of the Word.

4. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD (1:17) As God’s children, we need to be serious about sin and about holy living. Our heavenly Father is a holy (John 17:11) and righteous Father (John 17:25). He will not compromise with sin. He is merciful and forgiving, but He is also a loving disciplinarian who cannot permit His children to enjoy sin. After all, it was sin that sent His Son to the cross. If we call God “Father,” then we should reflect His nature.

What is this judgment that Peter wrote about? It is the judgment of a believer’s works. It has nothing to do with salvation, except that salvation ought to produce good works (Titus 1:16; 2:7, 12). When we trusted Christ, God forgave our sins and declared us righteous in His Son (Rom. 5:1–10; 8:1–4; Col. 2:13). Our sins have already been judged on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), and therefore they cannot be held against us (Heb. 10:10–18).

But when the Lord returns, there will be a time of judgment called “the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10–12; 2 Cor. 5:9–10). Each of us will give an account of his works, and each will receive the appropriate reward. This is a “family judgment,” the Father dealing with His beloved children. The Greek word translated “judgeth” carries the meaning “to judge in order to find

something good.” God will search into the motives for our ministry; He will examine our hearts. But He assures us that His purpose is to glorify Himself in our lives and ministries, “and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5). What an encouragement!

God will give us many gifts and privileges as we grow in the Christian life, but He will never give us the privilege to disobey and sin. He never pampers His children or indulges them. He is no respecter of persons. He “shows no partiality and accepts no bribes” (Deut. 10:17 NIV). “For God does not show favoritism” (Rom. 2:11 NIV). Years of obedience cannot purchase an hour of disobedience. If one of His children disobeys, God must chasten (Heb. 12:1–13). But when His child obeys and serves Him in love, He notes that and prepares the proper reward.

Peter reminded his readers that they were only “sojourners” on earth. Life was too short to waste in disobedience and sin (see 1 Peter 4:1–6). It was when Lot stopped being a sojourner and became a resident in Sodom that he lost his consecration and his testimony. Everything he lived for went up in smoke! Keep reminding yourself that you are a “stranger and pilgrim” in this world (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11).

In view of the fact that the Father lovingly disciplines His children today and will judge their works in the future, we ought to cultivate an attitude of godly fear. This is not the cringing fear of a slave before a master, but the loving reverence of a child before his father. It is not fear of judgment (1 John 4:18), but a fear of disappointing Him or sinning against His love. It is “godly fear” (2 Cor. 7:1), a sober reverence for the Father.

I sometimes feel that there is today an increase in carelessness, even flippancy, in the way we talk about God or talk to God. Nearly a century ago, Bishop B. F. Westcott said, “Every year makes me tremble at the daring with which people speak of spiritual things.” The godly bishop should hear what is

said today! A worldly actress calls God “the Man upstairs.” A baseball player calls Him “the great Yankee in the sky.” An Old Testament Jew so feared God that he would not even pronounce His holy name, yet we today speak of God with carelessness and irreverence. In our public praying, we sometimes get so familiar that other people wonder whether we are trying to express our requests or impress the listeners with our nearness to God!

5. THE LOVE OF GOD (1:18–21) This is the highest motive for holy living. In this paragraph, Peter reminded his readers of their salvation experience, a reminder that all of us regularly need. This is one reason our Lord established the Lord’s Supper, so that regularly His people would remember that He died for them. Note the reminders that Peter gave.

He reminded them of *what they were*. To begin with, they were slaves who needed to be set free. The word *redeemed* is, to us, a theological term, but it carried a special meaning to people in the first-century Roman Empire. There were probably sixty million slaves in the empire! Many slaves became Christians and fellowshiped in the local assemblies. A slave could purchase his own freedom if he could collect sufficient funds; or his master could sell him to someone who would pay the price and set him free. Redemption was a precious thing in that day.

We must never forget the slavery of sin (Titus 3:3). Moses urged Israel to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt (Deut. 5:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22). The generation that died in the wilderness forgot the bondage of Egypt and wanted to go back!

Not only did we have a life of slavery, but it was also a life of *emptiness*. Peter called it “the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers” (1 Peter 1:18 NIV), and he described it more specifically in 1 Peter 4:1–4. At the

time, these people thought their lives were “full” and “happy,” when they were really empty and miserable. Unsaved people today are blindly living on substitutes.

While ministering in Canada, I met a woman who told me she had been converted early in life but had drifted into a “society life” that was exciting and satisfied her ego. One day, she was driving to a card party and happened to tune in a Christian radio broadcast. At that very moment, the speaker said, “Some of you women know more about cards than you do your Bible!” Those words arrested her. God spoke to her heart, she went back home, and from that hour her life was dedicated fully to God. She saw the futility and vanity of a life spent out of the will of God.

Peter not only reminded them of what they were, but he also reminded them *of what Christ did*. He shed His precious blood to purchase us out of the slavery of sin and set us free forever. *To redeem* means “to set free by paying a price.” A slave could be freed with the payment of money, but no amount of money can set a lost sinner free. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can redeem us.

Peter was a witness of Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 5:1) and mentioned His sacrificial death often in this letter (1 Peter 2:21ff; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). In calling Christ “a lamb,” Peter was reminding his readers of an Old Testament teaching that was important in the early church, and that ought to be important to us today. It is the doctrine of substitution: an innocent victim giving his life for the guilty.

The doctrine of sacrifice begins in Genesis 3, when God killed animals that He might clothe Adam and Eve. A ram died for Isaac (Gen. 22:13), and the Passover lamb was slain for each Jewish household (Ex. 12). Messiah was presented as an innocent Lamb in Isaiah 53. Isaac asked the question, “Where is the lamb?” (Gen. 22:7), and John the Baptist answered it when he pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In heaven, the redeemed and the angels sing, “Worthy is the

Lamb” (Rev. 5:11–14)!

Peter made it clear that Christ’s death was an appointment, not an accident; for it was ordained by God before the foundation of the world (Acts 2:23). From the human perspective, our Lord was cruelly murdered; but from the divine perspective, He laid down His life for sinners (John 10:17–18). But He was raised from the dead! Now, anyone who trusts Him will be saved for eternity.

When you and I meditate on the sacrifice of Christ for us, certainly we should want to obey God and live holy lives for His glory. When only a young lady, Frances Ridley Havergal saw a picture of the crucified Christ with this caption under it: “I did this for thee. What hast thou done for Me?” Quickly, she wrote a poem, but was dissatisfied with it and threw it into the fireplace. The paper came out unharmed! Later, at her father’s suggestion, she published the poem, and today we sing it.

I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed;
That thou might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
I gave, I gave, My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me?

A good question, indeed! I trust we can give a good answer to the Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. When you hear the phrase *holy person*, what comes to mind?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:13–21 for a biblical description of a holy person. What are some of the things a holy person is and does? How do these make him or her different from most people?
3. What incentives did Peter give for living a holy life?
4. Which of these incentives, if any, is motivating for you?
5. How can we “gird up the loins of our minds”?
6. Peter speaks of judgment in 1:17. How does this talk of God judging your work affect you?
7. Why is it important to remember our salvation experience and what it cost God?
8. What practical steps can you take this week to become more holy?

Chapter Five

Somebody's Watching You!

[\(1 Peter 2:11–25\)](#)

The central section of Peter's letter (1 Peter 2:11—3:12) emphasizes *submission* in the life of a believer. This is certainly not a popular topic in this day of lawlessness and the quest for “personal fulfillment,” but it is an important one. Peter applied the theme of submission to the life of a believer as a citizen (1 Peter 2:11–17), er 2:11 -

10. How can you bring yourself in line with Peter's instructions this week?

Chapter Six

Wedlock or Deadlock?

[\(1 Peter 3:1–7\)](#)

A strange situation exists in society today. We have more readily available information about sex and marriage than ever before, yet we have more marital problems and divorces. Obviously something is wrong. It is not sufficient to say that God is needed in these homes, because even many *Christian* marriages are falling apart.

The fact that a man and a woman are both saved is no guarantee that their marriage will succeed. Marriage is something that we have to work at; success is not automatic. And when one marriage partner is not a Christian, that can make matters even more difficult. Peter addressed this section of his letter to Christian wives who had unsaved husbands, telling them how to win their mates to Christ. Then he added some important admonitions for Christian husbands.

No matter what your marital status may be, you can learn from Peter the essentials for a happy and successful marriage.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (3:1A, 7A) The phrases “in the same manner” and “in like manner” refer us back to Peter’s discussion

of the example of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21–25). Just as Jesus was submissive and obedient to God’s will, so a Christian husband and wife should follow His example.

Much of our learning in life comes by way of imitation. Grandparents have a delightful time watching their grandchildren pick up new skills and words as they grow up. If we imitate the best models, we will become better people and better achievers, but if we imitate the wrong models, it will cripple our lives and possibly ruin our characters. The role models that we follow influence us in every area of life.

While standing in the checkout line in a supermarket, I overheard two women discussing the latest Hollywood scandal that was featured on the front page of a newspaper displayed on the counter. As I listened (and I could not *help* but hear them!) I thought, *How foolish to worry about the sinful lives of movie stars. Why clutter up your mind with such trash? Why not get acquainted with decent people and learn from their lives?* A few days later, I overheard a conversation about the marital problems on a certain television “soap opera,” and the same thoughts came to me.

When Christian couples try to imitate the world and get their standards from Hollywood instead of from heaven, there will be trouble in the home. But if both partners will imitate Jesus Christ in His submission and obedience and His desire to serve others, then there will be triumph and joy in the home. A psychiatrist friend of mine states that the best thing a Christian husband can do is pattern himself after Jesus Christ. In Christ we see a beautiful blending of strength and tenderness, and that is what it takes to be a successful husband.

Peter also pointed to Sarah as a model for Christian wives to follow. To be sure, Sarah was not perfect, but she proved to be a good helpmate to Abraham, and she is one of the few women named in Hebrews 11. I once made a pastoral visit to a woman who said she had marital problems, and I noticed a number of “movie fan club magazines” in the magazine rack. After listening to the

woman's problems, I concluded that she needed to follow some Bible examples and models and get her mind off of the worldly examples.

We cannot follow Christ's example unless we first know Him as our Savior, and then submit to Him as our Lord. We must spend time with Him each day, meditating on the Word and praying, and a Christian husband and wife must pray together and seek to encourage each other in the faith.

SUBMISSION (3:1–6) Twice in this paragraph Peter reminded Christian wives that they were to be submissive to their husbands (1 Peter 3:1, 5). The word translated “subjection” is a military term that means “to place under rank.” God has a place for everything; He has ordained various levels of authority (see 1 Peter 2:13–14). He has ordained that the husband be the head of the home (Eph. 5:21ff.) and that, as he submits to Christ, his wife should submit to him. Headship is not dictatorship, but the loving exercise of divine authority under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Peter gave three reasons why a Christian wife should submit to her husband, even if the husband (as in this case) is not saved.

(1) Submission is an obligation (v. 1a). God has commanded it because, in His wisdom, He knows that this is the best arrangement for a happy, fulfilling marriage. Subjection does not mean that the wife is inferior to the husband. In fact, in 1 Peter 3:7, Peter made it clear that the husband and wife are “heirs together.” The man and woman are made by the same Creator out of the same basic material, and both are made in God's image. God gave dominion to both Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28), and in Jesus Christ Christian mates are one (Gal. 3:28).

Submission has to do with order and authority, not evaluation. For example, the slaves in the average Roman household were superior in many ways to their

masters, but they still had to be under authority. The buck private in the army may be a better person than the five-star general, but he is still a buck private. Even Christ Himself became a servant and submitted to God's will. There is nothing degrading about submitting to authority or accepting God's order. If anything, it is the first step toward fulfillment. And Ephesians 5:21 makes it clear that *both* husband and wife must first be submitted to Jesus Christ.

Husbands and wives must be partners, not competitors. After a wedding ceremony, I often privately say to the bride and groom, "Now, remember, from now on it's no longer *mine* or *yours*, but *ours*." This explains why Christians must always marry other Christians, for a believer cannot enter into any kind of deep "oneness" with an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14–18).

(2) Submission is an opportunity (vv. 1b–2). An opportunity for what? To win an unsaved husband to Christ. God not only *commands* submission, but He also *uses* it as a powerful spiritual influence in a home. This does not mean that a Christian wife "gives in" to her unsaved husband in order to subtly manipulate him and get him to do what she desires. This kind of selfish psychological persuasion ought never to be found in a Christian's heart or home.

An unsaved husband will not be converted by preaching or nagging in the home. The phrase "without the word" does not mean "without the Word of God," because salvation comes through the Word (John 5:24). It means "without talk, without a lot of speaking." Christian wives who preach at their husbands only drive them further from the Lord. I know one zealous wife who used to keep religious radio programs on all evening, usually very loud, so that her unsaved husband would "hear the truth." She only made it easier for him to leave home and spend his evenings with his friends.

It is the character and conduct of the wife that will win the lost husband—not arguments, but such attitudes as submission, understanding, love, kindness, and patience. These qualities are not manufactured; they are the fruit of the Spirit that come when we are submitted to Christ and to one another. A Christian wife

with purity and reverence will reveal in her life “the praises” of God (1 Peter 2:9) and influence her husband to trust Christ.

One of the greatest examples of a godly wife and mother in church history is Monica, the mother of the famous St. Augustine. God used Monica’s witness and prayers to win both her son and her husband to Christ, though her husband was not converted until shortly before his death. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*, “She served him as her lord; and did her diligence to win him unto Thee ... preaching Thee unto him by her conversation [behavior]; by which Thou ornamentest her, making her reverently amiable unto her husband.”

In a Christian home, we must minister to each other. A Christian husband must minister to his wife and help to “beautify her” in the Lord (Eph. 5:25–30). A Christian wife must encourage her husband and help him grow strong in the Lord. Parents and children must share burdens and blessings and seek to maintain an atmosphere of spiritual excitement and growth in the home. If there are unsaved people in the home, they will be won to Christ more by what they see in our lives and relationships than by what they hear in our witness.

(3) Submission is an ornament (vv. 3–6). The word translated “adorning” is *kosmos* in the Greek, and gives us our English words *cosmos* (the ordered universe) and *cosmetic*. It is the opposite of chaos. Peter warned the Christian wife not to major on external decorations but on internal character. Roman women were captivated by the latest fashions of the day and competed with each other in dress and hairdos. It was not unusual for the women to have elaborate coiffures, studded with gold and silver combs and even jewels. They wore elaborate and expensive garments, all for the purpose of impressing each other.

A Christian wife with an unsaved husband might think that she must imitate the world if she is going to win her mate, but just the opposite is true. Glamour is artificial and external; true beauty is real and internal. Glamour is something a person can put on and take off, but true beauty is always present. Glamour is corruptible; it decays and fades. True beauty from the heart grows more

wonderful as the years pass. A Christian woman who cultivates the beauty of the inner person will not have to depend on cheap externals. God is concerned about values, not prices.

Of course, this does not mean that a wife should neglect herself and not try to be up-to-date in her apparel. It simply means that she is not *majoring* on being a fashion plate just to keep up with the crowd. Any husband is proud of a wife who is attractive, but that beauty must come from the heart, not the store. We are not *of* this world, but we must not look as though we came from *out of* this world!

Peter did not forbid the wearing of jewelry any more than the wearing of apparel. The word “wearing” in 1 Peter 3:3 means “the putting around,” and refers to a gaudy display of jewelry. It is possible to wear jewelry and still honor God, and we must not judge one another in this matter.

Peter closed this section by pointing to Sarah as an example of a godly, submissive wife. Read Genesis 18 for the background. Christian wives today would probably embarrass their husbands if they called them “lord,” but their attitudes ought to be such that they could call them “lord” and people would believe it. The believing wife who submits to Christ and to her husband, and who cultivates a “meek and quiet spirit” will never have to be afraid. (The “fear” in this verse means “terror,” while in 1 Peter 3:2 it means “reverence.”) God will watch over her even when her unsaved mate creates problems and difficulties for her.

CONSIDERATION (3:7) Why did Peter devote more space to instructing the wives than the husbands? Because the Christian wives were experiencing a whole new situation and needed guidance. In general, women were kept down in the Roman Empire, and their new freedom in Christ created new problems

and challenges. Furthermore, many of them had unsaved husbands and needed extra encouragement and enlightenment.

As Peter wrote to the Christian husbands, he reminded them of four areas of responsibility in their relationship with their mates.

(1) Physical—“dwell with them.” This implies much more than sharing the same address. Marriage is fundamentally a physical relationship: “They two shall be one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). Of course, Christian mates enjoy a deeper spiritual relationship, but the two go together (1 Cor. 7:1–5). A truly spiritual husband will fulfill his marital duties and love his wife.

The husband must make time to be home with his wife. Christian workers and church officers who get too busy running around solving other people’s problems may end up creating problems of their own at home. One survey revealed that the average husband and wife had thirty-seven minutes a week together in actual communication! Is it any wonder that marriages fall apart after the children grow up and leave home? The husband and wife are left alone—to live with strangers!

“Dwell with them” also suggests that the husband provide for the physical and material needs of the home. While it is not wrong for a wife to have a job or career, her first responsibility is to care for the home (Titus 2:4–5). It is the husband who should provide (1 Tim. 5:8).

(2) Intellectual—“according to knowledge.” Somebody asked Mrs. Albert Einstein if she understood Dr. Einstein’s theory of relativity, and she replied, “No, but I understand the doctor.” In my premarital counseling as a pastor, I often gave the couple pads of paper and asked them to write down the three things each one thinks the other enjoys doing the most. Usually, the prospective bride made her list immediately; the man would sit and ponder. And usually the girl was right but the man wrong! What a beginning for a marriage!

It is amazing that two married people can live together and not really know each other! Ignorance is dangerous in any area of life, but it is especially

dangerous in marriage. A Christian husband needs to know his wife's moods, feelings, needs, fears, and hopes. He needs to "listen with his heart" and share meaningful communication with her. There must be in the home such a protective atmosphere of love and submission that the husband and wife can disagree and still be happy together.

"Speaking the truth in love" is the solution to the communications problem (Eph. 4:15). It has well been said that love without truth is hypocrisy, and truth without love is brutality. We need both truth and love if we are to grow in our understanding of one another. How can a husband show consideration for his wife if he does not understand her needs or problems? To say, "I never knew you felt that way!" is to confess that, at some point, one mate excommunicated the other. When either mate is afraid to be open and honest about a matter, then he or she is building walls and not bridges.

(3) Emotional—"giving honor unto the wife." Chivalry may be dead, but every husband must be a "knight in shining armor" who treats his wife like a princess. (By the way, the name Sarah means "princess.") Peter did not suggest that a wife is "the weaker vessel" mentally, morally, or spiritually, but rather physically. There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, the man is the stronger of the two when it comes to physical accomplishments. The husband should treat his wife like an expensive, beautiful, and fragile vase, in which is a precious treasure.

When a young couple starts dating, the boy is courteous and thoughtful. After they get engaged, he shows even more courtesy and always acts like a gentleman. Sad to say, soon after they get married, many a husband forgets to be kind and gentlemanly and starts taking his wife for granted. He forgets that happiness in a home is made up of many *little* things, including the small courtesies of life.

Big resentments often grow out of small hurts. Husbands and wives need to be honest with each other, admit hurts, and seek for forgiveness and healing.

“Giving honor unto the wife” does not mean “giving in to the wife.” A husband can disagree with his wife and still respect and honor her. As the spiritual leader in the home, the husband must sometimes make decisions that are not popular; but he can still act with courtesy and respect.

“Giving honor” means that the husband respects his wife’s feelings, thinking, and desires. He may not agree with her ideas, but he respects them. Often God balances a marriage so that the husband needs what the wife has in her personality, and she likewise needs his good qualities. An impulsive husband often has a patient wife, and this helps to keep him out of trouble!

The husband must be the “thermostat” in the home, setting the emotional and spiritual temperature. The wife often is the “thermometer,” letting him know what that temperature is! Both are necessary. The husband who is sensitive to his wife’s feelings will not only make her happy, but will also grow himself and help his children live in a home that honors God.

(4) Spiritual—“that your prayers be not hindered.” Peter assumed that husbands and wives would pray together. Often, they do not; and this is the reason for much failure and unhappiness. If unconverted people can have happy homes *without prayer* (and they do), how much happier Christian homes would be *with prayer*! In fact, it is the prayer life of a couple that indicates how things are going in the home. If something is wrong, their prayers will be hindered.

A husband and wife need to have their own private, individual prayer time each day. They also need to pray together and to have a time of “family devotion.” How this is organized will change from home to home, and even from time to time as the children grow up and schedules change. The Word of God and prayer are basic to a happy, holy home (Acts 6:4).

A husband and wife are “heirs together.” If the wife shows submission and the husband consideration, and if both submit to Christ and follow His example, then they will have an enriching experience in their marriage. If not, they will miss God’s best and rob each other of blessing and growth. “The grace of life”

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Read 1 Peter 3:

problems. There must be no conflict between *pastoring* and *preaching*, because they are both ministries of a faithful shepherd. The preacher needs to be a pastor so he can apply the Word to the needs of the people. The pastor needs to be a preacher so that he can have authority when he shares in their daily needs and problems. The pastor is not a religious lecturer who weekly passes along information about the Bible. He is a shepherd who knows his people and seeks to help them through the Word.

Being the spiritual leader of a flock has its dangers, and Peter pointed out some of the sins that the elders must avoid. The first was *laziness*—“not by constraint but willingly.” His ministry must not be a job that he has to perform. He should do God’s will from his heart (Eph. 6:6). Dr. George W. Truett was pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, for nearly fifty years. Often he was asked to accept other positions, and he refused, saying, “I have sought and found a pastor’s heart.” When a man has a pastor’s heart, he loves the sheep and serves them because he *wants* to, not because he *has* to.

If a man has no conscience, the ministry is a good place to be lazy. Church members rarely ask what their pastor is doing with his time, and he can “borrow” sermons from other preachers and use them as his own. I met one pastor who spent most of his week on the golf course; then on Saturday he listened to tapes of other preachers and used their sermons on Sunday. He seems to be getting away with it, but what will he say when he meets the Chief Shepherd?

Next to laziness, the shepherd must beware of *covetousness*—“not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” It is perfectly proper for the church to pay the pastor (1 Cor. 9; 1 Tim. 5:17–18), and they ought to be as fair and generous as possible. But making money must not be the main motive for his ministry. Paul stressed this in his qualifications for an elder: “not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:3); “not given to filthy lucre” (Titus 1:7). He must not be a lover of money nor devote himself to pursuing money.

Because of family or church situations, some pastors have to engage in outside employment. Paul was a tentmaker, so there is no disgrace in “moonlighting.” But, as soon as possible, the members of the church ought to relieve their pastor of outside employment so he can devote himself fully to the ministry of the Word. Pastors need to beware of getting involved in moneymaking schemes that detour them from their ministry. “No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer” (2 Tim. 2:4 NIV).

The phrase “a ready mind” means “an eager mind.” It is the same word Paul used in Romans 1:15—“I am so eager to preach the gospel” (NIV). It means a willingness to serve because of a readiness and an eagerness within the heart. This is the difference between a true shepherd and a hireling: A hireling works because he is paid for it, but a shepherd works because he loves the sheep and has a heart devoted to them. Read Acts 20:17–38 for a description of the heart and ministry of a true shepherd.

Be an example to the flock (v. 3). The contrast is between *dictatorship* and *leadership*. You cannot drive sheep; you must go before them and lead them. It has been well said that the church needs leaders who serve and servants who lead. A Christian leader said to me, “The trouble today is that we have too many celebrities and not enough servants.”

It is by being an example that the shepherd solves the tension between being “among” the sheep and “over” the sheep. People are willing to follow a leader who practices what he preaches and gives them a good example to imitate. I know of a church that was constantly having financial problems, and no one could understand why. After the pastor left, it was discovered that he had not himself contributed to the work of the church but had preached sermons telling others to contribute. We cannot lead people where we have not been ourselves.

Peter was not changing the image when he called the church “God’s

heritage.” The people of God are certainly His priceless possession (Deut. 32:9; Ps. 33:12). This word means “to be chosen by lot,” as the dividing up of land (Num. 26:55). Each elder has his own flock to care for, but the sheep all belong to the one flock of which Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. The Lord assigns His workers to the places of His choosing, and we must all be submissive to Him. There is no competition in the work of God when you are serving in the will of God. Therefore, nobody has to act important and “lord it over” God’s people. Pastors are to be “overseers” and not “overlords.”

A DESIRE TO PLEASE CHRIST ALONE (5:4) Since this is the epistle of hope, Peter brought in once again the promise of the Lord’s return. His coming is an encouragement in suffering (1 Peter 1:7–8) and a motivation for faithful service. If a pastor ministers to please himself or to please people, he will have a disappointing and difficult ministry. “It must be hard to keep all these people happy,” a visitor said to me after a church service. “I don’t even try to keep them happy,” I replied with a smile. “I try to please the Lord, and I let Him take care of the rest.”

Jesus Christ is the *Good* Shepherd who died for the sheep (John 10:11), the *Great* Shepherd who lives for the sheep (Heb. 13:20–21), and the *Chief* Shepherd who comes for the sheep (1 Peter 5:4). As the Chief Shepherd, He alone can assess a man’s ministry and give him the proper reward. Some who appear to be first may end up last when the Lord examines each man’s ministry.

One summer day, I stood amid the ruins of a church near Anwoth in Scotland. The building at one time seated perhaps 150 people. By modern standards, it would not have been a successful church. But the man who pastored that flock was the saintly Samuel Rutherford, whose *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* is a spiritual classic. His ministry continues, though today his church

building is in ruins. The Chief Shepherd has rewarded him for his faithful labors, which included a great deal of persecution and physical suffering.

There were several kinds of “crowns” in those days. The one Peter mentioned was the athlete’s crown, usually a garland of leaves or flowers that would quickly fade away. The faithful pastor’s crown is a crown of glory, a perfect reward for an *inheritance* that will never fade away (1 Peter 1:4).

Today a Christian worker may labor for many different kinds of rewards. Some work hard to build personal empires; others strive for the applause of men; still others seek promotion in their denomination. All of these things will fade one day. The only reward we ought to strive for is the “Well done!” of the Savior and the unfading crown of glory that goes with it. What a joy it will be to place the crown at His feet (Rev. 4:10) and acknowledge that all we did was because of His grace and power (1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Peter 4:11). We will have no desire for personal glory when we see Jesus Christ face-to-face.

Everything in the local church rises or falls with leadership. No matter how large or small a fellowship might be, the leaders must be Christians, each with a vital personal relationship with Christ, a loving concern for their people, and a real desire to please Jesus Christ.

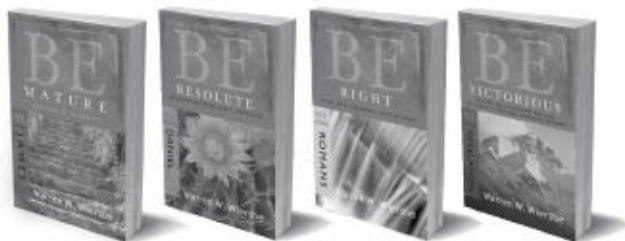
We lead by serving, and we serve by suffering.

This is the way Jesus did it, and this is the only way that truly glorifies Him.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How would you describe the general condition of the church?

not just for
North American
readers!



"Resources in China are insufficient. I found this 'BE' series
was very good for equipping and preaching . . .

We welcome more copies so that I can distribute them
to all coworkers in the county in our annual training."

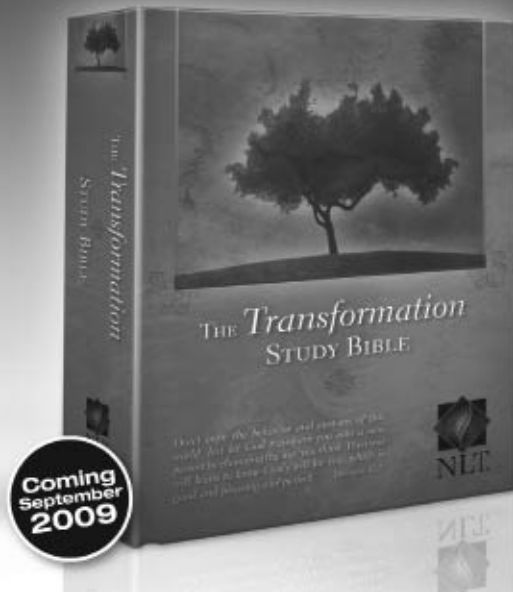
—Rev. Wang, Central China

To learn more about Cook International visit:
www.cookinternational.org

1.800.323.7543 • www.DavidCCook.com

David © Cook

Be Transformed by GOD'S WORD



The Transformation Study Bible

General Editor: Warren W. Wiersbe

Now you can get more from your study of Scripture. Available for the first time, the trusted commentary of Pastor Warren Wiersbe's "BE" commentary series has been excerpted and included alongside the easy-to-read *New Living Translation* text. Accessible and insightful, it's an essential resource for growing motivated disciples.

Available at a Christian bookstore near you or at DavidCCook.com.

1.800.323.7543 • www.DavidCCook.com

David Cook
DAVID COOK PUBLICATIONS

Get the Entire Fifty-Book "BE" Series in Two Volumes



The Wiersbe Bible Commentary

Here in two volumes is all the exciting, life-changing truth of the Scriptures wrapped in the warm, personal wisdom of one of America's best-known Bible teachers, Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe. *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary* helps you study the entire Bible in easy-to-read sections that emphasize personal application as well as biblical meaning.

ISBN: 978-0-7814-4541-2

To learn more visit our Web site or a
Christian bookstore near you.

1.800.323.7543 • www.DavidCCook.com

David Cook
DAVID COOK BOOKS

HOPE IN GOD THROUGH YOUR ADVERSITY.

Beloved author and teacher Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe leads you through the book of I Peter with encouragement for all those who are going through difficult times. Whether you are starting out in life or nearing your twilight years, learn how to make every minute count for eternity.

With study questions and a new introduction by Ken Baugh, *Be Hopeful* is the perfect companion for a study of I Peter. Allow Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe's forty-plus years of experience to instruct you on important truths from God's Word as you rely on the hope you have in Christ.

Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe is an internationally known Bible teacher and the former pastor of The Moody Church in Chicago. For ten years he was associated with the *Back to the Bible* radio broadcast, first as Bible teacher and then as general director. Dr. Wiersbe has written more than 160 books, including the popular "BE" series of Bible commentaries, which has sold more than four million copies. He and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.



Also available by Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe:
Companion Bible studies to the "BE" series.
Visit www.DavidCCook.com for details.

David©Cook
transforming lives together
www.davidccook.com

www.davidccook.com