

2026

hope in exile

a Severn Run Connect Series
Study Through 1 Peter

Reminders

Our Mission : To reach as many people as possible by creatively revealing the love of the Father, through the life of the Son, in the power of the Spirit.

Our Vision : to build community and connection in Christ by inviting our neighbors into meaningful relationships where they can belong and grow.

- Remember your training :
 - set expectations – help people feel comfortable by letting them know what to expect. establish culture.
 - the 70-30 rule – create space for others to talk, leaders can assume 30% of the conversation.
 - keep the discussion positive – if things turn negative or destructive, bring it back to the positive and healthy. invite group members to follow up with you or staff if they need to discuss something further.
 - celebrate – find ways to celebrate with your group, this series invites us to focus on the cross and remember the goodness of God. be a light to your group and show them Jesus.

As a connect Group Leader, you are never alone in creating community or facilitating your group. The staff and leadership of Severn Run are with you and here to assist and support you!

If a member of your group would benefit from some one on one conversations with a pastor or would be interested in finding professional counseling, we'd love to help provide that information and support.

Hope In Exile

Curriculum Resources

There are nine weeks in this series, and each week has a list of curriculum resources that have been developed for you and your group :

Section 1 // Sunday Sermon Notes

- Created by Pastor Jared

Section 2 // Engaging Resources

- Notes Summary : a 2-3 paragraph summary of the Sunday Sermon Notes.
- Prayer Prompt : a short (3-4 sentence) prayer
- Support Content : a list of quotes, Bible verses, and literary references that reinforce the main idea.
- Worship Songs : a short playlist of 3-4 songs that fit this week's main idea.

Section 3 // Diving Deeper

- Connect Group Discussion Questions : There are three categories (head, heart, and hand.) You can find at least three questions for each category each week.
- Experiential Activity : We would love to share creative ways for groups to interact with the theme each week.
- Sermon Guide : available in the atrium lobby each week.

Week One

// Sermon Notes

September 27, 2026
1 Peter 1:1-12

Peter uses his apostolic title and authority to lend weight to the letter. Not out of a matter of pride, but rather to let the recipients know that they have his attention, and thus, God's attention. They are not just "out there" (out of sight, out of mind) on their own; they are connected members to this faith for which Peter served as a representative apostle ("sent one"). The passage speaks to their dignity, purpose, and high standing in the plan of God. Peter, the author, wrote during the reign of Emperor Nero of Rome. Place of writing may have been Rome, and time of writing was likely AD 64 or thereabouts if we accept that Peter is indeed the author (which we do).

I. The Elect Exiles:

a. Who are the "exiles"?

- i. Jewish-background believers who, due to persecution, were scattered to these areas. Some believe the word "elect" infers their Jewish heritage.
- ii. Gentile believers who either already lived in these areas, were persecuted and moved to these areas, or who were compelled through other political/economic pressures to live where they are (during the Roman Empire). A Gentile background understanding could be supported by 1 Peter 4:1-4.
- iii. A combination of both Jewish and Gentile background believers who are spiritually exiled through a variety of circumstances that may also include physical displacement due to persecution. Will lean more into this broader understanding of exile, as it remains faithful to the text as well as communicates well with our current-day audience. Compare the identity of believers described in Hebrews 11:13.
- iv. Note: "Exile" does not mean someone who by virtue of their own choices removes themselves from fellowship, community, church, and accountability. That is not an exile, that is a disobedient Christian.
- v. Some of the recipients of this letter were, in fact, slaves (see 2:8-10).

- b. Where are they?
 - i. Most of these regions are in modern day Turkey (Asia Minor). Show a regional map of Asian Minor and overlay it with a modern map.
 - ii. The order of this list is usually considered a circuit/route by which the messenger delivering the letter would have distributed it, similar to the 7 Churches of Asia in Revelation.
- 2. The Purpose and Power of God's Action
 - a. This passage emphasizes over and over again how intentional God is. This counteracts the human tendency (especially in an "exiled" state) to adopt a victimhood mentality where life happens "to" you and you have lost your agency.
 - i. Elect - chosen by God.
 - ii. According to the foreknowledge of God - these exiles are not an afterthought. God saw and knew them ahead of time. His purposes, love, redemption, and grace preceded their current difficult situation.
 - iii. The (rare) inclusion of all three members of the Trinity in one verse acting on behalf of the exiles. The exiles have ALL OF GOD tending to and acting on their behalf - this really speaks to a feeling of powerlessness common in times of grief, persecution, and deep discouragement.
 - iv. He has caused us - again, God is acting, and their situation is not out of control, v. 3
 - v. Who by God's power are being guarded - God has ultimate agency! And He is OUR agent! V. 5
- 3. The Permanence of God's Work
 - a. The passage speaks directly to the aimless, "unmoored" feeling of being an exile.
 - b. The exiles are still being formed. They are not done, and God is not done with them. They are being sanctified, taught to obey (v. 2) and tested (v. 7), and awaiting the ultimate salvific outcome of their faith (v. 9).
 - c. They are not sidelined because of the exile; they are right on track.
 - d. The exiles are "sprinkled by His blood" (v. 2), emphasizing their high position as priests, a concept that will be explored more later in 1 Peter 2:9. Compare this sprinkling with what happened with priests in the OT who had the amazing right of privilege to approach God.
 - e. Speaking to the lack of permanence, Peter emphasizes the permanence of their inheritance (v. 4). The inheritance is being kept/guarded by God Himself and is triple-safe: imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. (A Gk. language word study on these terms could help illuminate shades of meaning here.)
 - f. We/the exiles inherit all that is Christ's.

4. The Hope of the Exiles

- a. The exiles have a “living hope” – a vibrant hope full of life
- b. This living hope is something the exiles are “born again” into; Hope is literally their family birthright!
- c. Use a common definition of biblical hope : **Biblical hope is waiting with confident expectation for what God has promised.**
- d. Connect dots how Gospel Hope answers all the deepest longings, insecurities, and pain of exile.
- e. Hope is based in the action of God, specifically, the resurrection of His Son. Blessed are those who believe, even if they don’t see! (Compare 1:8 to John 20:29.)
- f. Hope is transcendent; this is what allows us to rejoice in it while also suffering. Rejoicing is not based on present circumstances but on ultimate truth and reality defined by God. Hope is a treasure given to us. Believers can hope and grieve simultaneously. There is something glorious about hopeful rejoicing during suffering. If the glory of God is His weighty manifestation here on earth, no wonder the exiles (and US!) are considered priests; His glory manifests in our “temples” (bodies) as we navigate life in unshakeable hope.
- g. Exile is never evidence of God’s absence. You are not abandoned.
- h. How durable is our hope?

5. The Privilege of the Exiles

- Not even angels got to see or experience what they are experiencing in the unfolding plan of God’s redemption! (vv. 11-12)
- Even in the context of suffering and exile, God is fulfilling His promises through the prophets of old; His Word is coming true through YOU.
- Trauma is “broken story.” Notice how the text dignifies the exiles and lets them know that the suffering is temporary, or “a little while” (v. 6). Suffering is not the whole story. It’s not a side-quest. It’s not a broken off part of the story. It’s all connected, part of a greater glory that will one day outshine all the pain of this moment. We can incorporate healing and “trauma care” into the experience of these exiles, helping them see their story as part of a larger, more glorious, whole. They need not be ashamed of this season of suffering.

Week One

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

“Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen.” – Oswald Chambers

“Suffering is never for nothing.” – Elisabeth Elliot

John 15:18–20

Matthew 5:12

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

Peter’s letter to the exiled believers across Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia carried significant weight because it came from someone who personally walked with Christ and served as a co-laborer with the church in the Gospel and in its sufferings. Writing from Rome during the reign of Nero, a period marked by severe persecution, Peter encouraged believers who lived in regions shaped by the empire’s hostility. Though displaced and pressured by a resistant culture, they needed to know that God saw them. Peter reminds them of their identity. They are God’s elect even in exile, chosen by the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and cleansed by the sacrificial and cleansing blood of Jesus. Peter shows that everything needed for salvation has already been accomplished through Christ. Their trials were temporary, and God was guarding and refining their faith like gold. This hope anchored exiles who understandably felt unmoored and needed to know that their heavenly inheritance remained secure and that they belonged to something far greater than their circumstances. Prophets and even angels longed to see the fullness of God’s salvation, yet these believers were living in the center of His redemptive work as He shined His light through them, the church, in a dark world. The same hope sustains believers today, whether facing global persecution, rising hostility to the gospel, or personal battles. Exile is not evidence of God’s absence. In Christ, we are at home even when the world feels foreign.

Week One

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

1. Unmoored means loosened from one's moorings or released from what provides stability (Webster's Dictionary).

In this context:

The exiles felt unmoored from the stability, community, and belonging they knew prior to the persecution.

2. God does not abandon His people: Just as God did not abandon the exiles in Asia Minor during their displacement and persecution, believers today are not abandoned in trials, tribulations, or seasons of suffering. God guards, guides, and sustains His people. Our call is to remain faithful and obedient, holding on to the hope of glory that is ours in Christ.

3. The work is already done: In the Old Testament, sacrificial blood symbolized forgiveness, cleansing, covenant relationship, and consecration. It was the God-given means by which sin was addressed and fellowship with Him was restored. In the New Covenant, the sacrificial and cleansing blood of Jesus fulfills everything those sacrifices pointed to. Through His death and the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, our salvation is already paid for and fully secured.

4. Biblical hope is waiting with confident expectation for what God has promised.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Thank you, Lord, for your wonderful Word and the encouragement it gives. You have shown again and again that, just as you promised, you have not left us as orphans. You have given us your Holy Spirit to comfort, guide, and empower us, especially in the trying seasons of this life. Help us remember that you are using your church to draw people to yourself all over the world, even in the midst of persecution. We lift up our brothers and sisters who live in places where their lives are in danger because of the gospel. This world is not our home, and through it all you are leading us into your way everlasting. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Week One // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- What does Peter's identification as an apostle and eyewitness of Jesus tell us about the trustworthiness of this letter?
- According to 1 Peter 1:1–2, how does Peter describe the believers' identity as God's elect, and why is that significant for people living in exile?
- What does Peter say about the purpose of trials in verses 6–7, and how does this shape our understanding of suffering?
- According to 1 Peter 1:2, what does Peter mean by "the foreknowledge of God," and how should this truth encourage the believers he is writing to?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- Describe a time when you walked through a season that left you unmoored and dependent on God's anchoring?
- When you have walked through trials, whether a challenging season, a time of loneliness, or even persecution, what did God reveal He was doing in you?
- How does knowing your inheritance is secure, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading affect your confidence and focus on God during difficult seasons?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- How can you actively live as God's elect during challenging, lonely, or pressured times?
- Who in your life is walking through suffering right now, and how can you encourage them with the hope Peter describes?
- What intentional step can you take to strengthen your faith in the God you believe in but have not seen, and in what ways have you already seen Him at work in your life?

Worship Songs –

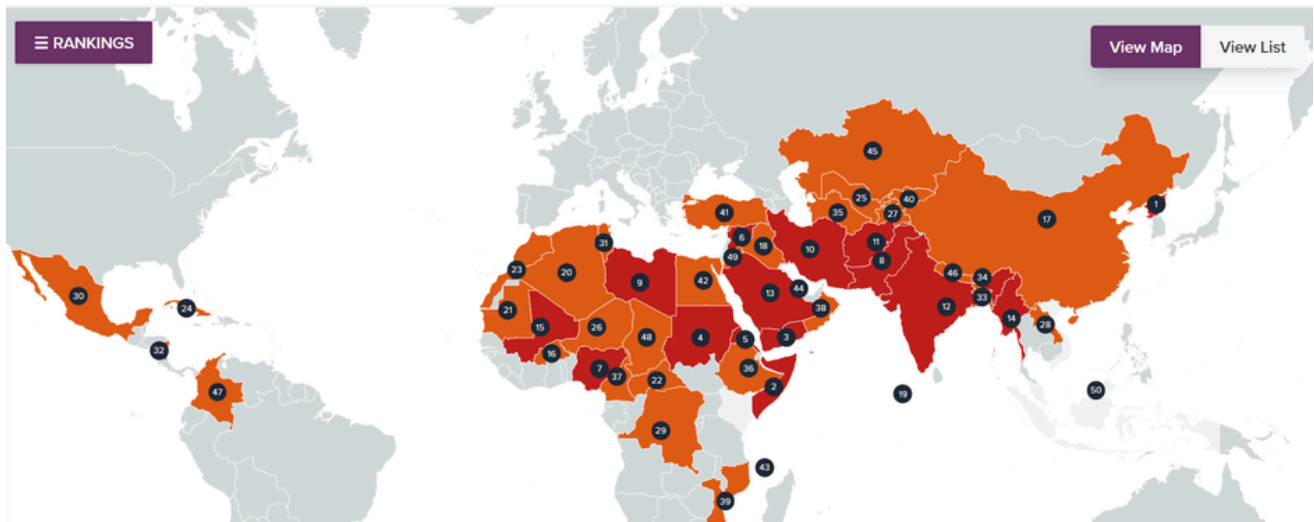
- **"In the Sky" by Bob Carlisle and Russ Lee**
- **"He's Able" by Redemption to the Nations Worship**
- **"You Keep Hope Alive" by Church of the City Worship feat. Jon Reddick**
- **"Joy" by Vashawn Mitchell**

Experiential Activity

Choose a present-day persecuted church community facing life-threatening danger and pray for them.

Christians around the world are facing severe persecution, especially in regions where violence or government pressure encourages it. In Nigeria, extremist attacks made it the deadliest country for Christians, with over 3,100 believers killed in 2024, nearly 70 percent of all faith-related killings worldwide (Open Doors, World Watch List 2025). North Korea and China both engage in systematic persecution of Christians. North Korea criminalizes all expressions of faith, while China uses nationwide surveillance, church closures, and state-enforced pressure on believers (Open Doors, 2025). In parts of Europe, Christians have been fined or arrested for praying or sharing Scripture in public, reflecting growing hostility toward biblical expressions of faith (Open Doors, 2025). Globally, more than 380 million Christians experienced persecution or discrimination in 2024 (Open Doors, 2025). Below is a map from Open Doors US showing regions where persecution is high, very high, or extreme.

Feel free to explore it to identify Christian communities in urgent need of your prayers. (you can visit www.opendoorsus.org/persecution/countries)



Week Two

// Sermon Notes

October 4, 2026
1 Peter 1:13-2:3

Biblical hope is waiting with confident expectation for what God has promised.

1. Hope transforms our minds! (vv. 13-17)

- Hope transforms our minds because we now belong to a different Father.
- This would be a good time to revisit the graphic we made in week one about the mind and thoughts of a defeated, deeply discouraged person. A person in this situation may experience a loss of agency, be swamped and immobilized by big emotion, paralyzed by numbness, and/or may conclude that they cannot make forward progress in thriving with God if they do not currently have, or are able to access, the emotions they want to have at this time.
- This passage includes subtle good news in how it is written: by speaking directly to the mind and will, it emphasizes a person's active role and volition in living with hope. It is a message delivered with gospel dignity. Notice the direct commands in these verses, indicated in italics below. They are punchy and assertive shifts of the mind in accordance with what God says is true. These are ways to align our minds and "take our thoughts captive" (2 Cor. 10:5).
- Exiles do not survive merely by changing circumstances. They survive by learning to think differently. Peter's first concern is not their environment but their minds.
- "Gird up your loins" (or as translated, "prepare your minds for action") carries a vivid word picture. It describes the act of gathering the loose folds of a garment (robe), tying them up around the waist, and preparing to run or charge or make a stand. I would emphasize making a stand against the assaults and fears that the exiles were facing - every thing that would sap their hope and take their eyes off Jesus. Peter may intentionally echo Exodus imagery. The exiled recipients of Peter's letter are a type of "new Exodus" people preparing for a journey through exile toward their inheritance.
 - Hope certainly includes emotion, but Peter treats hope primarily as an act of trust and expectation grounded in God's promises. It is something we actively set upon Christ. Hope is waiting with expectation on God.
 - Hope is not wishful thinking; it is rooted in the character and performance of God. Some dismiss it as positive thinking, but it's much more. It is ultimate reality.

- Be soberminded. Sober-mindedness is not just a demeanor of seriousness. It is a willingness to face reality with calm. Compare to intoxication. Intoxicated people are not sober; they avoid, hide, and numb in order to not face a painful reality. They lose control of their executive function.
- Set your hope. Live and think in a future-oriented way. This is an act of will. Pin your hope to a sure outcome, the revelation (from which we get the word, apocalypse) of Jesus Christ. You cannot pin it on anything greater or more sure than that! Note the rise of apocalyptic literature, film, and art in pop culture. Most is bleak. Christians have a hope-filled apocalyptic future!
- Do not be conformed. This is a choice of obedience to not go with the flow and be pressed into the mold of thinking prevalent around you. You are a son/daughter! You have relationship and connection to the Father! You are tethered and moored to Him, you do not need to “float along” and become like the world around you. You know better. You are not ignorant.
- Be holy. At first glance, this sounds like an impossible order, similar to “get everything right” or “be perfect.” Would God tell us to do something that is only aspirational and not possible with the strength he provides in Christ? No! Read it this way: “Daughter, be like Me!” or “Son, be like Me!” He is holy and we share in His holiness through discipline (see Hebrews 12:10). This is an invitation to find both meaning and purpose in the painful exile. It is not wasted. As you cooperate with the Father, this is making you holy – set apart and godly in character. So we can take heart – there is growth and progress ahead for us! Our progress in holiness is tied to the work of Christ, just like our hope is. Peter does not present holiness as earning God's acceptance but living consistently with the family we've already been adopted into.
- Conduct yourselves with fear. This is a call to give reverence and gravity to something more permanent, powerful, and transcendent than our current situation: God Himself. We bless and honor God when we “weight” His power, His word, His judgment, His instruction, His reality above the pressures of our exile. Reverence reorders reality. Conducting ourselves in reverence helps us get “unstuck” from letting lesser things dictate our thoughts, emotions, and actions; we become transcendent as we connect with a transcendent God. (The cheap knockoff of this would be escapism.) We hold in tension His fearsome awesomeness with the relational closeness of Him as our Father! If God is holy and worth following, we can ask ourselves how we can honor him best today and in the future. This connection and continuity provides a blessed stability in what may otherwise seem like a broken, disconnected season of our lives when not a whole lot else makes sense.

2. Hope reshapes our identity! (vv. 18-21)

- Hope reshapes our identity because we've been born into a different family.

- We believe in a better, more durable redemption and heritage than what we were born into.
 - Compared to what is offered in Christ, everything passed down to us from our forefathers is futile; those behaviors, patterns, and way of life are not enough to fill us with a hope that lasts or give us a future beyond this one.
 - Peter contrasts two family inheritances:
 - the empty inheritance handed down by our ancestors
 - the living inheritance secured by Christ.
 - God causes us to be born into a new family – a family of hope (1 Pet. 1:3)!
 - What has been handed down to us by our families of origin may predispose us to certain tendencies, mindsets, weaknesses, temptations, and dysfunctions. We may have been taught to play relational roles that keep us stuck and unable to thrive in God today. God offers us redemption and birth into a new family. That “adoption” was costly – no amount of silver or gold could purchase this new family and inheritance!
 - No matter what we were handed in life, the redemption offered through the perfect sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus connects us to a new future and a new family.
 - This critical belief of adoption/being “born again” into a new family is critical to our faith, and thus, to our hope in this life.
 - Every family hands us a toolbox. Some tools are beautiful gifts. Others helped previous generations survive but no longer help us flourish in Christ. Peter invites believers to examine every inherited tool in light of the gospel. We would do well to examine, and in some cases remove, the “tools” left to us in the “toolbox” of relational and behavior patterns we were given. Christ’s sacrifice can break sinful patterns passed from generation to generation from us as we learn to walk in faith and obedience.
3. Hope creates a new way of living! (vv 1:22-2:3)
- Hope teaches us a new way to live out our “family resemblance.”
 - The message of the gospel – God’s Word – is enduring, abiding, and secure. It will not wither or fade away like grass does; it is durable. It’s not a fad or a temporary fix – it is a declaration by Almighty God, guaranteed by His power and the sacrifice of His Son! Because of this, we can walk out this faith with confidence. We can learn new behaviors in this new family God placed us in. We can come out from the “curse” of what we were handed in life. We are not doomed.

- Love one another earnestly from a pure heart. In the new family of God, we can give and receive genuine love. Part of the dysfunction of our family systems and the beliefs/behaviors we have absorbed from our broken, unsafe world is that we have barriers to both receiving and giving love. Love was often conditional, unreliable, stop/start, used for favors, weaponized, etc. Let God teach us how to love again. And that love should be earnest (fervent = “with heat”), but pure and innocent. The love should be unconditional (agape) as well as warm, and brotherly (philadelphia). (Both Greek terms are used in this verse.) So many of our brothers and sisters are withering from a lack of being nourished by love; they have built up internal defenses to it and cannot receive it. The family of God becomes the place where we learn a different way of being human. God's love slowly melts the defenses we've built, teaching us both to receive love and to give it freely. Let God “re-family” us so that we create patterns of behavior in line with what is most true about us. We are sons and daughters! And the love God offers is imperishable. He never uses it to gaslight, manipulate, harm, etc. He never abandons. From that place of security, we can rebuild a hopeful life.
- Put away malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. These behaviors are incompatible with genuine love. They work against it! They are the very patterns likely handed down to us from our forefathers.
- Long for pure spiritual milk. We are to develop an ongoing hunger for God's Word and ways. We often fill up on “junk food” that entertains but leaves us empty and relationally distant. We can ask God to reignite that hunger in us, but we must be active participants in developing and maintaining that longing. We must grow. We've been “reborn” in this new family, but healthy children develop. Some of our old habits leave us stuck in early, un-adaptive developmental stages. God says to grow! Grow by “tasting” that He is good. “Tasting” is experiencing (Greek *geuomai*); we do not learn merely through information, but transformation through experience. That experience comes as we obediently walk with God and relate to those in God's family. We “re-family” one another in the ways of God. Theology is transformational! Truth is meant to become experience – taste and see that He is good (Psalm 34:8). As we experience his goodness, it helps us long for Him even more.

Week Two

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

“Holiness has never been the driving force of the majority. It is, however, mandatory for anyone who wants to enter the kingdom” – Elisabeth Elliot

“If you think you can walk in holiness without keeping up perpetual fellowship with Christ, you have made a great mistake. If you would be holy, you must live close to Jesus.” – Charles Spurgeon

Romans 12:1-2 | 1 Thessalonians 4:7

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

First, **hope transforms our minds!** In v13, Peter opens with the word “Therefore” which is a crucial bridge connecting the hope in our promised inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-12) to the godly response to suffering that it can inspire in us. This passage speaks directly to both the mind and will, emphasizing a person’s active role and volition in living with hope. As our hope inspires our faith, we learn to align our minds and “take our thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:5). This then shapes our emotions, emotional processing, and reactions to the situations we face. The alignment of our mind, emotions, and will propels us into action. We learn to reverently and obediently follow God in how we live, think, and conduct ourselves in spite of and through the challenges.

Second, **hope reshapes our identity!** We have been born into a different family through our faith in Christ – and it is a family of hope. In v 18-19, Peter reminds us of the cost of our adoption, which is “the precious blood of Christ.” In Him we are born again and invited to live in our new identity with God’s faith family. This means taking off the old patterns of life and predispositions handed down by our ancestors, and then taking up the living inheritance secured by Christ. The critical belief in our adoption is crucial to our faith, and thus, to our hope in this life.

Third, **hope creates a new way of living!** Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the message of the gospel – God’s Word – we can learn new behaviors in the new family God has placed us in. His enduring, unconditional, abiding love teaches us over time a new way of being human that is holistically, fully alive in Christ. Peter reminds us of the love we have been invited into, and the faithful response of that love, which is to demonstrate it to one another (v 22).

Week Two

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

Holy – Peter uses the Greek term *hagios* in 1 Peter 1:16, which is translated as “holy.” The meaning of the word is “sacred” or “set apart” exclusively for God. The concept of living in holiness is directly drawn from the Old Testament, primarily from the Book of Leviticus. Through Moses, God teaches the Israelites to live a life that is “set apart” for Him in the ways that they relate to Him as a Holy God (Exodus 19:6, Leviticus 11:44). He is entirely set apart and morally perfect. In Christ, we can approach the throne – the Holy of Holies – without fear (Hebrews 10:19–22). As we grow sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are transformed into people who reflect His directive to be “Be holy as I am holy” in the ways that we conduct ourselves from a purified heart.

Biblical hope is waiting with confident expectation for what God has promised.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Heavenly Father, you are holy and gracious. Thank you for offering us the gift of salvation and a living hope in your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to respond with a heart of worship that transforms us. Lead us in lives that are holy and set-apart for you in our thoughts, words, and conduct. Help us to glorify you in all of the circumstances and places you lead us, pointing those around us to your son, Jesus. Amen.

Week Two // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- How does Jesus call us to be holy? (vv 13-17)
- Read 1 Peter 1:17 and Proverbs 9:10. How do these verses connect with living with the fear of the Lord? How can you “conduct yourselves with fear” (v.17) as you wait with expectation of the hope you have in Christ during times of suffering?
- Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6-8 in vv 24-25. Why do you think he did that?
- What does Peter mean by spiritual milk in vv 2:2?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- 1 Peter 1:17-19 states that believers are ransomed not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. How does the atoning sacrifice of Christ shape your understanding of your own value and worth?
- Read 1 Peter 2:1-3. When we are “born again” we become spiritually alive. Spiritual infants mature over time. How does the concept of “growth” in your spiritual life inspire your perseverance?
- How would you explain what “holiness” means in everyday life, and what your biggest struggle is with it?
- How would your daily stress levels change if you truly viewed yourself as a temporary “exile” or visitor on this earth?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- Reflect on 1 Peter 1:13. How can you “prepare your mind for action” as you navigate the world as one who has been set apart in Christ?
- What is one old habit or crowd-pleasing behavior from your past that you still struggle to walk away from?
- Where can you find support/tools for holiness and spiritual growth?

Experiential Activity -

Give everyone index cards. On one side write labels the world gives them (job, parent, student, failure, success, etc.). On the other side write truths from the passage (“chosen,” “born again,” “living hope,” “kept by God”). Share which identity is hardest to believe this week. End by praying these truths over one another.

Worship Songs -

- “Holy Forever” by CeCe Winans
- “Build My Life” by Pat Barrett
- “Only a Holy God” by CityAlight

Week Three

// Sermon Notes

October 11, 2026
1 Peter 2:4-12

1. Everything begins by coming to Jesus (v. 4)

- a. "Coming to him," or "as you come to Him" denotes a continual act of dependence on Christ (it is a combination of Gk words that includes "pros" – a face to face turning towards Jesus.) "Pros" was used in John 1:1 when it talked about the Word was "with" God. Jesus was face to face, close, turned towards, embracing the Father who was the source of his life, fellowship, joy, wisdom, and ministry direction. In our passage, we mirror that same intimacy by approaching the face of Jesus, knowing He will never cast us out (John 6:37) and will never hunger again after "tasting" his goodness (cf. 1 Peter 2:3 and John 6:37). The exiles addressed in this passage only had to keep turning toward Jesus' face; they did not have to wait around until their situation was better or their fortunes had changed. Despite the hardship and trials, no one could steal their ability to simply turn to Jesus' face. There they found their source of life and ultimate connection.
- b. Christ is the Living Cornerstone! He is the chosen foundation upon which the house (or household, Gk. "oikos") would be established.
 - i. We know God is building up his people on Christ, the True Rock, not on Peter (whose name also means "rock" – see Matt. 16:18). Our Catholic friends have made a fundamental error in doctrine in believing that the foundation of the church came through the Apostle Peter and his lineage of popes. It has only ever been Christ the cornerstone. It is worth noting that Eph. 2:20 talks about the apostles and prophets as being part of the foundation, but acknowledges Christ as Chief Cornerstone. Christ is the Word (Logos) who authored the teachings of the apostles and prophets and spoke through them. See what another apostle (Paul) said about building on the foundation in 1 Cor. 3:10-11.
 - ii. Christ is alive, not simply a historical figure who spoke truth and did miracles. He is no dead relic, he is living, breathing, and approachable! The Father is building a living household based on the source of life, Jesus, the foundation and cornerstone. We are to build our lives on Jesus, interacting with him in real time because he is alive and imparting his life into us as we grow!

2. Our identity is determined by the Cornerstone. (vv. 4-8)

- a. Everything God says about us begins with what is already true about Christ. Because Jesus is chosen and precious, so are we.
- b. It is interesting to note that the spiritual elite and religious class considered themselves the keepers and “builders” of the nation. They were decidedly against Jesus, however. Jesus warned his followers in Jn 16:2 that a time would come when those who sought to kill them would think they were doing God a favor. To them, Jesus was a castaway and a reject. I imagine them physically building or improving the temple complex. They continue tripping over a stone they don’t know what to do with, and in anger, they reject it by rolling it down the hill into the ravine (the Valley of Hinnom, perhaps, which was associated with trash, filth, and hell itself). In effect, their actions were screaming, “Go to hell, Jesus!” Jesus did descend to the pit and the grave (“Sheol”), but rose again (see Ps. 118:22). Why? Because God chose him to be the cornerstone, and Jesus was precious to him (see Psalm 116:3 and 15, noting that Jesus Himself is the true Saint in the passage). It is also interesting archaeologically to note that to this day, there are huge foundation stones and possibly even a discarded cornerstone dating from Jesus’ day in the Western Wall tunnels in Jerusalem. If any of the exiles to whom the letter of 1 Peter was written had a Jewish background or had been to Jerusalem, they might have pictured those very same stones as they heard this letter being read to them. See: <https://youtu.be/XC-CiHY44RA?si=tJbT9X7tL0I9NrN>
- c. God is building his household, his family, not just some physical building. The household is alive, and is made of the same stuff as the foundation cornerstone. Jesus is alive, and we are alive in him. Jesus is chosen, and we are chosen. Jesus is precious, and we are precious. Think of the grace that fell on the ears of these exiles as they heard that they, too, were part of God’s plan and that he had chosen them in love (see Eph. 1:5)! Our belief unites us to Christ and erases our shame. We are honored because Christ shares his glory with us (see Jn. 17:22; Romans 8:17; 2 Cor. 3:18.)
- d. We are to act as a priesthood. Priests represent God to people and people to God, though Christ is (and remains) the Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16). We are connected to Him and are his representatives, urging people to be reconciled to God through him (2 Cor. 5:20). We are priests filled with the Spirit, offering Spirit-filled “sacrifices.” Christ became our sacrifice, so what are we sacrificing? Certainly not animals or grain or wine as in the OT. As priests, we offer our bodies (Romans 12:1-2), our praise (Heb. 13:15), our sufferings (Philippians 2:17), and our prayers (Rev. 8:4). What else? In what other ways do we perform a priestly function as individuals and as a spiritual “oikos”? It is very important to note that new behavior is rooted in identity, which is rooted in Jesus the Cornerstone. This is not just a pep talk to “do better” or “get your act together.” It is a call back to the foundation of life in Christ.

- e. Jesus will always be offensive to the disobedient. Sometimes in our effort to make Jesus attractive and palatable to all we try to remove any “offense” of the gospel. We can’t and we shouldn’t. There will be some who do not believe and get offended; they are destined to “stumble” upon the Rock, Christ. Now, we should do everything else possible to not offend by our posture, our attitude, our demeanor, or our approach. We should do all we can, like Christ, to cross barriers to seek and save the lost. But for some, Christ Himself will be the barrier and we should never diminish his lordship and preeminence in a misguided effort to make him less offensive and more attractive. If we offend others, it should only be because they are offended by Christ and we have publicly and clearly identified ourselves with Christ. We should not be obnoxious and graceless, heaping upon ourselves needless offense and creating barriers to the gospel. There is a current trend in American Christianity that is calling for a more caustic, callous presentation of the gospel (in the name of being “bold” and not giving into fear). This, too, is misguided. Yes, we should be bold but boldness is confidence in Christ, not seeking controversy and provocation.
 - f. This passage is sometimes used in the debates about Calvinism. The text does say that the believers are “elect” (chosen) and it does say that those who are offended by Christ stumble as they were “destined” to do. I do not like to frame this debate with the Calvinism vs. Arminianism terminology, as that is confusing to most and presents an either/or discussion. The truth is that the Bible teaches predestination AND human responsibility, and somehow in God’s sovereign plan, those two things are at play.
3. **We have become God’s people for God’s purposes (vv. 9-10)**
- a. Chosen race/people – people with a common ancestor. This was to be a pervading identity for them and is so applicable to us now with so much division in our world. Skin and culture do matter, but in the kingdom of God, relation through the blood of our Father through Christ is paramount above all. That new reality should supersede our earthly affinities and loyalties, and should bind us to one another through Christ in a way the world cannot experience or understand.
 - b. Royal priesthood – not just priests (see discussion above), but priests connected to royalty. Jesus is our Priestly King. We are priests with him, and we will one day reign with him.
 - c. Holy nation. The exiles are not just stateless people to be absorbed by another culture, nor are they people who by virtue of their situation have to form and preserve their cultural identity as the truest thing about them. This would certainly be a temptation as they lived cross-culturally and were displaced. They were separate, but separate on purpose in order to share in God’s holiness. Their new identity was a spiritual nation that was not bound by borders or politics or physical conquest.

d. A people for God's possession. Some exiles experienced imprisonment, forced labor, and enslavement. But they belonged to God who sets captives free and breaks the yoke of bondage. They had not lost themselves. They had been found and claimed by God himself!

e. Becoming claimed/owned by God is the source and cause of our mission to proclaim the gospel. It should frame our testimonies from darkness to light. It should cause us to speak up about how excellent God is!

f. Recipients of mercy. See Hosea 1:1-2:23 and Romans 9:25-26. Hosea's and Gomer's children were prophetic signs to the people about the consequences of their covenant breaking – separation from God. Their children, sadly named Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah (“not my people” and “no mercy”, respectively) proclaimed what would happen if the people no longer lived under God's rule and reign.

4. Our identity shapes our witness. (vv. 11-12)

a. Our behaviors flow from our new identity

b. Peter addresses them as “aliens” and “strangers” (or sojourners). He does not do so because that is their true identity (their identity was much more exalted than that, see previous verses). It was because they were to reframe their situation from a spiritual point of view. They were to function as spiritual aliens and sojourners in the land. Because they had a people and were claimed by God, it allowed them to not tie their prosperity and identity to an address. Earth was not their true home and they didn't have to hold onto it in the same way. Because they did not belong to that place but belonged to Christ, they could separate (become sanctified/holy) and say no to the desires of this life. This was not some passive struggle, but an act of war being waged against their very souls. The enemy tried to make them unholy people who just gave up, became victims, and gave in to the base desires of the world. There would be a significant temptation to forsake godly ideals and sink to the lowest common denominator. Why bother being holy when you're a victim of the world? The HS, through Peter, is correcting that way of thinking and calling them to live out of a new identity. It is very important to note that new behavior is rooted in identity, which is rooted in Jesus the Cornerstone. This is not just a pep talk to “do better” or “get your act together.” It is a call back to the foundation of life in Christ.

c. There is an expectation of suffering, accusation, and slander in the text. “When the Gentiles...”, not “if.” We have to build a testimony on the Rock of Christ that can withstand trials. Sadly, our discipleship is often woefully lacking and does not prepare our people to “do good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (v 12). We don't really know what the day of visitation means: it could be the day of suffering or the day God reveals himself to those we've been sharing our good deeds with. Then again, it could be both.

i. How do we teach young disciples to keep their behavior “honorable” among the unbelievers?

ii. Notice the assumption that we will be living out our faith in the context of hostile unbelievers. This should be normative. Also notice that Peter does not call these believers to create a Christian bubble, or, dare I say, a Christian nation. How do these passages call us to faithful witness and correct some of the current false teaching around Christian nationalism?

Week Three

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

"Peter describes believers as God's new temple, not because they gather in one place, but because Christ, the living cornerstone, has made them God's dwelling wherever they are." - Karen H. Jobes

"The church is God's new society. Its identity derives entirely from Jesus Christ, the rejected stone who became the cornerstone." - John Stott

Exodus 19:5-6 | Psalm 118:22-23

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

Christ is the Living Cornerstone. Peter makes this very clear as he lays out his justification for this statement throughout the passage. As we continually come close to him and depend on him we build our life on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ. He is alive and actively growing us. A royal priesthood is what we are called to since we are chosen and precious like Christ.

With Christ being our sacrifice, we are to also offer sacrifices to God. Our lives as priests are to represent to the world we are God's children urging those we influence to connect with and reconcile to God. We do this by being careful not to offend unbelievers with our behaviors but by being bold in Christ.

As chosen people we are tied together in a way that separates us from the world. Being God's possession we, like the Israelites, receive mercy when we have become separated from him. We are to continue to live free and share in God's holiness despite our life circumstances.

All these things become part of our identity and define who we are in Christ. This develops our witness. As Paul explains, our behaviors flow out of our identity as we live as strangers in this world. There will be suffering and we will have opportunities to withstand trials for which we can be fully prepared as we have grown in Christ.

Week Three

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

“Pros” used in the original Greek language means “towards”, “forwards”, “in the presence of” or face to face turn to Jesus. This is an action word leaving us to take action in turning towards, moving forward to, and being in the presence of Christ.

In verse 5, the original Greek word “oikos” is used to describe God’s spiritual dwelling place made up of His people, not just a dwelling place. This is significant because it conveys much more than the idea of a physical building but instead the importance of a personal relationship and points to God’s presence with his people.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the cornerstone on which you built your church. We are so thankful that you made a way for us to be part of your family and the royal priesthood of Christ. Draw us closer to you as we turn toward you. Grow us in your wisdom giving us a solid identity in you knowing in all situations and challenges in this world we can be your witnesses in pointing others to you and your goodness. Amen

Week Three // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- Verse 4 starts with this phrase, “As you come to him, the living Stone...”. Why do you think coming to him is so important? Is this a one time action? Explain your answer.
- What does Paul say about building on the foundation of Christ the cornerstone in 1 Cor. 3:10-11.
- We know that Jesus will often be offensive to those who are disobedient. Why do you think that is?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- In what ways do you come “face to face” with Jesus to draw close to him and continue to do so on a daily basis?
- How does knowing Jesus influence your opinion of yourself and others who follow Jesus?
- Knowing you are a priest in God’s kingdom, how does that make you feel and why?
- How does seeing yourself as an “alien” or “stranger” in this world affect your thoughts, decisions, and behaviors?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- How can we teach and model to younger disciples the ways to keep our behavior “honorable” among unbelievers?
- How do these passages call you to faithful witness and correct some of the current false teaching around our place and posture in the world?
- In your daily conversations, verbal and written, what does being bold in Christ and sharing your faith look like while staying Christlike?

Experiential Activity -

Let’s come up with a plan for our group to do something together outside of our normal meeting time. The goal is to gather in a public or community space where we can be an example of healthy Christian fellowship, service, and fun. Pray over this opportunity and the potential encounters you may have with others.

Worship Songs -

- “Who You Say I Am” - Hillsong Worship
- “Cornerstone” - Hillsong Worship
- “Build my Life” - Pat Barrett
- “The Denied Stone” by Vanessa Bell Armstrong

Week Four

// Sermon Notes

October 18, 2026
1 Peter 2:13-25

1. Submission to institutional authority is a hallmark of God's people. (v. 13)
 - For the Lord's sake. As we submit and obey, we have an opportunity to fellowship with Christ, knowing and acknowledging that we trust Him and are doing this for Him. Our obedience is not victimhood or weakness; it is transcendence into worship of the King of Kings.
 - Notice that even submission is a kingdom choice, not an inevitability of victimhood.
 - Submission is a voluntary lining-up-under. It is a military word that carries the meaning of falling in formation under someone, aligning with them.
 - By and large, the people of God should be a joy to govern because they obey and show honor to authority! This submission and honor should be the baseline of a Christian citizen's behavior, not an exception to it.
 - Christians were being maligned in the historical context in which Peter wrote this letter. They were blamed for and accused of all sorts of evil behavior. They were not to "live down" to these accusations, but rise above them, proving their accusers wrong. They could not take on the identity the culture was trying to give them - the only way they could flourish was to stand in the identity Christ gave them as expressed in the previous verses.
2. The idea of biblical submission and honor are not a blank check. (vv. 13-17)
 - Not every person who claims an authoritative voice or position should be given one. This is limited to human institutions of governance. For example, some hold to a view that all women are to be subject to all men based on a misunderstanding of biblical submission, institutional authority, and biblical gender roles. This view is not consistent with what the text teaches.
 - Submission is not conditional on a specific person who holds an office. It is noteworthy that Emperor Nero was in office during the time of Peter's authorship of this letter, and Peter himself would eventually be killed by this same administration. (See <https://youtu.be/arSfE63NUaE?si=J7zFenykFOkOxIJc>)
 - i. Submission is conditional upon the purpose of the office. Institutional authority is to punish those who do evil and reward those who do good. Authority used to perpetrate evil requires no biblical submission, rather a bold stand against evil even if that stand comes with a cost. There are many biblical examples of honorable, God-honoring resistance to authority used for evil purposes.

- Acts 5:27-32. The apostles had been told by Jesus and angels to speak of Christ. The authorities forbade them from speaking any more. Peter, on behalf of the apostles, replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” The persons in authority were using their position to make the apostles disobey Jesus. They could not submit to that directive and remain faithful to Jesus, so they resisted.
- Daniel 3:13-18. King Nebuchadnezzar commanded all people to worship his idol, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego resisted him to his face. Even though they had up to this point been submissive to his authority, they could no longer submit when the King ordered them to break the commands of God.
- 1 Kings 18:9-15. Obadiah was a God-fearing man who served in high office in Ahab and Jezebel’s administration. When Jezebel ordered the rounding up and killing the Lord’s prophets, Obadiah went around her and hid one hundred prophets and provided for them, possibly even from the administration’s own stockpiles.
- Verse 16: Jesus considers us free people no matter our station in life (John 8:36). If we are under the thumb of an authority or are indentured servants, He still sees us as free people. We belong to Him, and he is the chain-breaker (Isaiah 61:1-2)! We may be temporarily inhibited in our movement or freedom, but we are free in Christ and can retain our ability to act in ways that bring glory to Christ. We are not just people to whom life happens; we are freed people, sent by Jesus, and assigned to live and act as people who bear the hallmarks of our True King. This freedom of ours is not leverage to do whatever we want or to cover up evil decisions or shameful acts. Freedom brings us into a life lived in the light of God’s presence. Peter juxtaposed our freedom with our becoming servants to Christ. Serving a Liberating King is the most freeing thing we can do! This King made himself low and humbled himself to submission just like we are called to do.
- Because we are followers of Jesus, we believe every person has in-born dignity as image bearers. This allows us to show them honor (or dignity). Twice, this text urges believers to show honor: to everyone, and to the emperor (v 17). Some translations use the word “respect,” but I lean more towards the idea of honor and dignity.
 - For a very helpful understanding of the concept of dignity vs. respect, see Dr. Donna Hick’s video. Dr. Hicks to my knowledge is not a believer, but has stumbled upon biblical truth in her decades’ long work in international conflict. <https://youtu.be/wSosTocATEA?si=BKYOB78lowegMwYV>
 - I believe verse 17 is calling us to acknowledge the dignity and honor inherent in all people because of the imago dei, AND it is calling us to show dignity/honor to an office of institutional authority. Peter would need to double down on this because some of his contemporary authorities were so corrupt and evil.

- Honor/dignity is valuing a person and/or an office. Respect, while similar, is not the same. I can value the dignity of a bad person or corrupt leader while not respecting their actions or what they stand for.
 - Biblical submission is not a requirement to give up our God-bestowed dignity.
 - Submission does not mean that you are inferior or less valuable than your authority. (Bechtle)
 - When Jesus was twelve years old, he went home from the Temple and was submissive to His parents, even though He was the Son of God (Luke 2:51).
 - It is of note that we are to go beyond honor when it comes to our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not only to honor, but to love them unconditionally (agape).
3. Biblical submission draws us toward Christ (vv. 18-25)
- “Slaves” or household “domestic servants” are instructed to submit to their masters with all fear (some translations say respect, but the word is “phobos” – fear). The exiles occupied low positions in society and at least some worked as servants. Some reports suggest 10-30% of residents were enslaved.
 - This servitude likely had significant differences between the trans-Atlantic chattel slavery with which we are most familiar, but it was still servitude.
 - The Scripture speaks to exiles in this station; this passage is not primarily about slavery. In other passages, the Apostle Paul encourages slaves who can become free to do so, see 1 Corinthians 7:21. Some may feel dissatisfied that this passage does not thoroughly address slavery as an institution nor call out its evil. This passage in no way endorses slavery, however. In fact, it contributes to the theologically-rich ideas of the imago dei, honor, and dignity that would later be behind the Christian societal push to outlaw slavery (though some Christians tried to use the Scriptures to justify the wickedness of slavery). In the US, we owe much to Christian abolitionists who rightly divided the Scriptures on this issue and advocated for freedom for all people made in God’s image!
 - The word translated “servant” in verses 16 and 18 are not the same Greek words. The first is bondsman (Greek doulos). We are bondsmen of Christ. He has set us free and we choose to live under his rule because in Him we have life and true freedom (see Exodus 21:1-6). In verse 18, the word is more akin to domestic servant (Greek oiketes).
 - When instructed to serve with fear, the fear is a holy reverence directed at God and His authority over our lives, not so much fear of the master.

- Whether or not the master is kind and just, the servant can bring glory to God because submission aligns us with Christ, knowing Him in his sufferings and in his glory (Philippians 3:10). Peter, keenly aware of what it would cost him to follow Jesus, likely recalled Jesus' words to him in John 21:15–22, where Jesus forecast Peter's suffering and death – a kind of death that would bring glory to God (Jn. 21:19).
- We cannot claim biblical submission and Christlike suffering if we are simply reaping the natural consequences of our sinful behavior. That is wasted pain, and Christ warns of its futility.
- Instead, we are to model our lives after Christ in His suffering. When suffering as Christ did, the passage tells us it is a “gracious thing.” A testimony and evidence of God's compassionate activity on this earth embodied through your sacrificial act. This is at the core of Jesus' redemptive mission, and suffering in this way is a strong testimony of Jesus' redemption. In other words, this is not wasted pain!
- Christ's example is something for us to copy. The Greek word “example” is hypogrammon. It carries the idea of copying something by being under it. Think of graphite paper. You would “submit” (be under) the “pattern” of Jesus' life, and it would be traced onto your own as you remain in submission to him. What a beautiful picture – we get to be copies of Christ even in suffering. No bad government official, emperor, boss, or master can keep this from us. In what ways should the life of Jesus be copied onto our own?
 - Suffering for righteousness
 - Living a life of truth without deceit
 - Refusing to vilify those who treated him wrongfully
 - Refusing to threaten his enemies
 - Continuing to entrust/submit himself to the Father's will for his life, over and over. This entrusting is a life of surrender.
- It is through Jesus' wounds that we are healed. The apostles willingly attributed their suffering (and found ultimate meaning) in the healing wounds of Christ. The exiles could, too. That Wounded Healer, Jesus, is the same shepherd and overseer taking care of the suffering exiles. He is the one guarding them. His suffering on their behalf – and ours – is what made it possible for us to return (“convert”) and become His people, His flock (v 25). Being a servant in this temporary pilgrimage does not change who we belong to or who is caring for us.

Week Four

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

"There are two types of laws: just and unjust... A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law." - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"We submit to human authority because a higher authority, Jesus Christ, tells us to submit for his glory." - John Piper

Matthew 5:11-12 | Romans 13:1 | Titus 3:1-2

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

It all comes back to one thing: who we are comes before how we act. We're already God's chosen, holy people (2:9) — that's settled — and everything Peter tells us to do grows out of that, not toward it.

First, our submission is really about living good, visible lives that shut down the rumors, not just avoiding trouble (2:12, 15). People were accusing Christians of all kinds of evil, and Peter's answer isn't to argue back — it's to out-live the accusations.

Second, that submission isn't unconditional. It's owed to what authority is supposed to do — reward good, punish evil — not to whoever happens to be in charge. When authority flips that around, our response isn't submission anymore, it's standing firm, because our real loyalty was never to the government or the boss in the first place.

Third, we honor people even when they don't deserve it, because everyone carries God's image (2:17). Honoring someone isn't the same as approving of them.

Fourth — and this is really the heart of the passage — unjust suffering isn't something to escape. It's a chance to look like Christ (2:19-25), trusting God instead of getting even.

Underneath all of it: none of this is about self-protection. It's freedom — people who already belong to God choosing to live this way, no matter what it costs us.

Week Four

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

Biblical submission can be defined as a voluntary lining-up-under. In Christ, we have been freed to live for Him to glorify God as glimpses of His Kingdom here on earth. Our alignment with Him enables us to live righteously in human kingdoms and human institutional authority.

Imago dei - a Latin theological phrase meaning "Image of God." In Genesis 1:26-27, God created man "in His image," a foundational concept that means that human beings are uniquely created in God's likeness and divine image. This gives every person inherent dignity, worth, and distinct purpose in creation.

"Slaves" or household "domestic servants" are instructed to submit to their masters with all fear. This servitude experienced by many of the exiles likely had significant differences between the trans-Atlantic chattel slavery with which we are most familiar. The Scripture speaks to exiles in this station; this passage is not primarily about slavery. It also does not endorse the institution. In fact, it contributes to the theologically rich ideas of imago dei, honor, and dignity that would later be behind the Christian societal push to outlaw slavery in the US. We owe much to Christian abolitionists who rightly divided the Scriptures on this issue advocating for freedom of all people made in God's image!

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Heavenly Father, you are merciful and compassionate. Thank you for offering us the gift of salvation that frees us to live a life in the example of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to respond with a heart of worship that transforms us in the ways that we submit to earthly authorities. Teach us to lead lives that show you honor and extend grace to those around us, all who are made in your image. We desire to be a testimony to who you are, even when we suffer for righteousness sake. Help us to glorify you in all of the circumstances and places you lead us, pointing those around us to your son, Jesus. Amen.

Week Four // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- Read 1 Peter 2:13-14. How can we reconcile the call to submit to all human authorities with moral responsibility and examples of civic disobedience elsewhere in the Bible?
- How does Peter's description of Jesus in 1 Peter 2:22-24 confirm Isaiah's prophecy about the Servant's appearance, reputation, and character?
- Read Matthew 5:39-44. What connections do you see between these commands of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and Peter's exhortation to the exiles in this week's passage?
- 1 Peter 2:25 calls Jesus the Overseer (or Guardian) of your souls. How does a spiritual guardian differ from a worldly leader?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- Does your heart harbor bitterness or grumbling against leaders you disagree with personally or politically?
- How does the concept of imago dei invite you to consider the posture of your heart towards those in positions of authority or people outside of your comfort zone with whom you disagree or dislike?
- How does having Jesus as the "Shepherd and Overseer of your soul" (v 25) comfort you when you are experiencing a time of turmoil, confusion, or suffering?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- 1 Peter 2:17 reminds us to "Love the Brotherhood." In what practical ways are you pouring into your local church or Christian community?
- Read 1 Peter 2:24. What does a life actively lived for "righteousness" look like in your family? Workplace? Community?
- What does it look like practically for you to treat God as your ultimate and final authority this week?

Experiential Activity -

In 1 Peter 2:23, we see Jesus do these five things : Suffering for righteousness, Living a life of truth without deceit, Refusing to vilify those who treated him wrongfully, Refusing to threaten his enemies, Continuing to entrust/submit himself to the Father's will for his life, and Entrusting is a life of surrender. Pick one of these five things and write them on a card or notebook. Make it your prayer this week to grow to be more like Jesus in this way. You can share what you chose with your group, and/or share with a friend or family member later this week.

Worship Songs -

- "Man of Sorrows" by Reawaken Hymns
- "He Will Hold Me Fast" by Shane & Shane
- "Yes" by Shekinah Glory

Week Five

// Sermon Notes

October 25, 2026
1 Peter 3:1-22

1. **Married believers are to model the holiness of Christ to one another. (vv. 1-7)**
 - a. Being “set apart” as God’s people in exile is not relegated to public life or public impressions. It guides how people live their lives in both private and public in the fear of the Lord.
 - b. In a continuation of the previous sections on living a life surrendered to God (“Likewise”), wives are to demonstrate what godly surrender looks like in their own marriages, too. As in the section on servants and masters, they are able to do this regardless of whether their husbands are believers or not. In fact, the woman’s conduct should be fearfully reverential (Greek, *phobos*, though some translations say “respectful”) and pure. They are not fearing their husbands, but God.
 - c. If the husbands are unbelieving, the holy behavior they see modeled in their wives will be a strong witness in bringing them to Christ.
 - d. The focus is inner character that is formed by Christ, not externals. Some take this passage to be prescriptive about women’s modesty, but it is not primarily about that. The little it does speak of modesty, it is modesty of a type that demonstrates inner character rather than flaunting wealth or status. As opposed to beauty or wealth that fades, character is enduring.
 - e. Wives are to cultivate a gentleness and quietness of spirit. This is a humility and settled composure that comes from trusting Jesus and revering Him above all. This allows the woman to be strong, resilient, and unafraid as she submits to the Lord and her husband like the biblical matriarch Sarah did. Special Note :
 - i. Men are also called to be humble (James 4:10)
 - ii. This passage was never ever intended to subjugate women and shut them up.
 - iii. A parallel passage in Ephesians 5 speaks of the Christian marriage, but first exhorts all believers to submit to one another in the fear or reverence of Christ (5:21), not just the woman.
 - iv. This passage highlights that a woman’s worth is not in her status, wealth, or beauty. Her worth is innate; she is a precious person to whom God has given worth and dignity. Because she has that, she is able to navigate a marriage relationship in a way that honors God.

- v. It is a gross misuse of this passage – as well as a profaning of God’s holy name – to use these verses to justify marital abuse, violence, sexual harm, and subjugation of a woman made in the image of God. God hates violence, injustice, and abuse; women are not being told to “just take it” because they have to submit. Just like the previous verses dealing with governmental authority, believers do not submit to others when in doing so they violate the will and ways of God.
 - f. Husbands likewise are bound, in the fear and reverence of Christ, to live a surrendered life to the Lord in the context of the marriage.
 - Husbands are to “know” their wives – they are to attune to them, understand their hearts, study them, accommodate them, spend time with them, and do life with them. Wives should hold a place of honor and value in the eyes of their believing husbands.
 - Husbands are to give honor and dignity to their wives (similar to how all believers are called to honor one another and the emperor in previous section).
 - Verse seven refers to the wife as the “weaker vessel.” This may sound demeaning and misogynistic to modern ears, but it denotes a level of care, concern, priority, and value that should be placed on a person this man is charged to care for and protect. She is not to be disregarded, tossed around or treated like a common object. Why?
 - Because she is a fellow heir of the grace of life. She stands as an equal inheritor of all that Christ has. She has equal standing before God. She has direct access to God through Christ. She does not have to go through him to get to Christ. In terms of standing, inheritance, and access, there is no male/female divide (Galatians 3:28). The husband should treat her so carefully because she is of holy lineage and belongs to Christ. Mess with her, and you’re messing with Christ!
 - Harming or mistreating a wife hinders prayers to God. This woman is precious to God! Mistreat her at your own peril. See Matthew 18, specifically verse 10, about how God makes himself an available avenger of those who are vulnerable (in that context, “little ones”/children). Christian men cannot expect God to hear and answer their prayers if they are injuring the person and dignity of their wife.
2. The believing community is to model what life looks like under King Jesus (vv. 8-12).
- Peter seems to be concluding a longer section on what it looks like for believers to live in fear of, and submission to, Christ within their exiled context. He started by addressing the whole community and ends by addressing the whole community. He illuminates what this looks like in some tricky relationships (servants/masters, citizens/government, husbands, wives). He ends with a generalized sense of what the community should look and feel like as a whole. The list would make an excellent evaluative tool for our own church to assess how we are or are not exhibiting a surrendered life of people to God in our own context.

Week Five

// Sermon Notes

- What traits should we expect to see in the community of Jesus-followers?
- Unity. We don't unify around an idea or a distinctive, we unify around the Person of Jesus who is our head (Eph. 1:22-23 and Philippians 2:1-11). Unity doesn't mean that we all agree on everything all the time; it does mean that we keep Christ central and that we fight FOR one another, not against one another. We are in the same boat together, though each of us have different roles and sometimes bring different emphases based on our own stories. What unites us, though, is Christ himself and our shared commitment to live a surrendered life to Him. Unity also means a shared commitment to work out conflict in a way that honors the Lord: not just walking away or damaging one another, but building one another up (Eph. 4:16).
- Sympathy. We feel with one another, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (Romans 12:15). This requires great listening, knowing one another beyond the superficialities of brief greetings, allowing Jesus to develop in us a care for the experiences of others, and being ok with feelings. The church community has to be "safe" enough that people can bring their whole, real experiences into it and know that there will be support and care. It doesn't mean that feelings usurp truth; the community is to model itself after Jesus who lived a life of truth and grace at the same time (John 1:14-17).
- Brotherly Love. Previously, God's people were instructed to love one another unconditionally (Gk agape, v. 17); here, they are told to love with warm fondness for one another (Gk philadelphos). We shouldn't be aloof from one another, but include each other in our lives. We shouldn't be afraid to show (appropriate) affection; that level of warmth and fellowship should be observable and tangible in our church.
- Tender Heartedness. Even more strongly worded than the above traits, "tenderheartedness" (Gk eusplagchnos) denotes a depth of feeling from the bowels/guts of a person. It is used to describe a compassion that originates from the center of the deepest feeling. The church should be a place of deep empathy for one another, sharing the experiences of those in the body, especially as they suffer for the sake of Christ. Theirs should be a shared suffering experience. It is worth noting that there's a fringe evangelical movement that is trying to attack the idea of empathy as being ungodly and leading to the collapse of moral truth. The scripture is clear: there is a depth of compassion and empathy required of the church, especially with one another. That is ALWAYS held in tension with truth, doctrine, and right teaching. They are not exclusive of one another.
- Humble Mindedness. It would be easy for the exiled church to develop a defeated mind or a defensive mind. Notice the text calls for a humble mind: a mind that rightly understands its proper place before a holy God. Because the believers can trust that God is holy and they belong to Him, they no longer have to fight to create their own identity or meaning. They don't have to fight for self-protection and preservation; they understand that they have are sojourners on a path of suffering. They can joyfully identify with a lowly Christ who is their co-sufferer. Humility offers a clear-headed understanding of their place in the world and with Christ, relieving them of performing roles they were never meant to hold.

- Blessing. This, more than any of the others, is clearly directed to outsiders and enemies. When outsiders do what is evil or revile the body of Christ, the body is to bless in return. This blessing is not a roll-over-and-play-dead scheme, nor is it an offer to be a doormat for what anything wants to do to abuse us. Rather, it is an active response rooted in deep trust and the fear of the Lord. What would that look like practically to be a people of blessing in a hostile world? For starters, it is not escalating evil talk and behavior. It is restraint. It is not adopting a “I’m gonna get them before they get me” mentality. It is a refusal to go lower, to use deceit, to exercise all your rights to communicate in a way to get even, it is a readiness and initiative towards peace. Peter goes on to quote Psalm 34:11-16 to further illuminate his point here.

3. For believers, suffering is not a sign that God removed his blessing. In fact, those who suffer identify with Christ in a special way (vv. 13-22).

- Christians are to be zealous for good. They are not to intentionally try to avoid persecution or suffering, nor are they to seek it out. In the zeal for good, suffering may well come as a result. If it does, we can take comfort in the fact that God’s blessing remains on us and has never left. God is not surprised by our trial or affliction.
- Over the next few verses and into the following chapter, Peter is helping the believers build a theology of suffering. Does the American church have a theology of suffering? Does Severn Run?
- Note that the believers are not to operate out of fear or fear their persecutors. Many times in 1 Peter, Peter exhorts the believers to fear but that fear is always directed towards a holy God to whom we are surrendering our lives. Nor are the believers to be roiled and ruled by anxiety churning them up from the inside out. (If anything, they are to be stirred with compassion and tender-heartedness for one another, v. 8). Persecutors can feel all-powerful and in control; not surrendering to them and not giving them our fear and anxiety helps us center ourselves in the One to whom we belong.
- **Believers must be prepared to give a reason for their hope.** Persecution is designed to steal hope away, and when that hope remains present and resilient, people will wonder why! The word defense (Gk. apologia) is where we get the idea of “Christian apologetics,” or “why we believe what we believe.” Sometimes, apologetics are taught as a series of truthful “gotchas” that Christians can lob at non-believers to win arguments. That is not at all the idea here. Apologetics are truthful and bold, yes, but they are to be employed with gentleness, a fear of God, and with the co-witness of a clear conscience. They are not tactics to convince someone; they are well-thought-out answers for why a believer should hold onto hope while exiled, suffering, persecuted, and mistreated. To outsiders, it makes no sense for lowly people to have such resilient, durable hope and they will want to know why it’s there and so vibrant when life “should have” beaten it out of them.

Week Five

// Sermon Notes

- Peter reemphasizes the need to suffer for doing right, not foolishness. We are not called to waste our pain, but to identify with our Suffering Savior, who did no wrong and did not threaten. To the extent we do wrong (since we are not sinless), we have the opportunity to maintain a clear conscience through confession and repentance. This should be the posture and lifestyle of God's people! If nobody ever hears us confess or repent, we are not keeping a clear conscience and will be less resilient under pressure, less able to give witness to those asking, and more prone to fear and isolation.
- Our suffering identifies us with, and allows us to specially fellowship with, our holy Savior, the Man of Sorrows. There is a sweetness and depth of fellowship that comes through the fire of suffering that many believers try to avoid especially in the Western world. Our brothers and sisters in many other parts of the world know Christ in this way and their faith is stronger. We would do well to listen and learn from them, develop our own theology of suffering, and stop living in avoidance of persecution. Our witness is often not as bold as it should be. It might be brash and argumentative (which is a popular, false replacement for biblical boldness), but it is not reflective of the suffering for righteousness described in this chapter. THAT suffering, and the accompanying verbal witness, is marked by gentleness and reverence, not brash arguments.
- What should inspire us during our suffering? The effectual work of Christ! Look at Him! He suffered and went to great lengths to bring gospel hope to people throughout history. The next several verses are difficult and debated (vv. 19-22). What is clear is that suffering was not Jesus' final destination. Glory next to the Father was his destination, and it is ours as well. The suffering servant is the reigning king. God is even now gathering the ends of the earth and all created things under the feet of Christ; the last thing to be gathered is death itself (1 Cor. 15:26).
 - While we wait for the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' reign, our suffering allows us to identify with him. He is not a powerless victim, but the holy son of God! And his suffering was effective to dismantle the darkness that had enveloped the world. The scriptures tell us that Christ descended to the depths so that later he might fill all things (Eph. 4:7-10). Some believe he descended to hell itself to preach the gospel; certainly he descended to the grave. In any event, redemptive history (as seen in the holy scriptures) reminds us that God left a witness for himself in all ages and among all people, including the wicked generation in Noah's time. Whether Jesus "went back in time" to visit souls in hell and give them one more chance (as some believe this passage alludes to) or whether this passage simply emphasizes how Jesus gave them a chance to repent and believe in real time through the Christ-forshadowing figure of Noah is still something believers debate. The image of the ark passing through the waters to save Noah's family is an enduring picture of how Jesus continues to save all who trust in him, bearing them through the flood of sin and destruction as they shelter by faith in his plan of rescue - a picture we celebrate at every Christian baptism.

Week Five

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

"The measure of a life is not its duration, but its donation." ~ Corrie Ten Boom

"The Christian is to be a living message from God to the world." ~ Andrew Murray

Romans 13:8

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

In 1 Peter 3:1-22, we see what it looks like to live as God's holy nation, ambassadors in a foreign land. In every relationship Peter addresses, the pattern is the same: God calls us to win people over by living life according to His ways. Peter first applies this to marriage: wives are called to win over their unbelieving husbands by focusing on having a quiet, reverent, and pure character, and husbands are called to honor their wives as fellow heirs of God's grace, equal in value, inheritance, and access to God. Calling the wife the "weaker vessel" isn't an insult; it speaks to the level of care and protection she's owed, since mistreating or abusing her hinders a husband's prayers. Peter also calls believers to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21), however, we are not to submit when doing so violates God's will and ways.

Peter then turns to what this ambassador identity looks like in community: believers are to pursue unity in Christ, sympathy for one another, love, compassion, and humble hearts as we relate to one another and unbelievers. These traits flow from a confidence that we belong to God, even in the midst of hardship and persecution.

Suffering will come in this life, but it isn't a sign God has left us. It's a sign His blessing and will are moving forward, like light pushing back darkness. Suffering connects us with Christ in a special way, and with that understanding, we can respond the way God would have us respond to those hostile to the gospel: not repaying evil with evil, but responding with peace, love, prayer, and good works, always ready to give a gentle, reasoned defense (apologia) for the hope we carry.

Week Five

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

The greek word for “quiet” in vs.4, ἡσυχίου (from ἡσυχιος) describes a spirit that is quiet, gentle, calm, and undisturbed. What a witness to exemplify this kind of tranquility during disagreements and relational challenges.

The greek word used for “sympathetic” in vs.8 συμπαθεῖς, means to be mutually compassionate. To feel with one another and share in each other’s suffering. This is an important part of doing life together.

The greek word for “love” used is in vs.8, philadelphoi, refers to brotherly affection, a warm, familial love shared among fellow believers.

The greek word for “humble,” in vs. 9, tapeinophrones, refers to a lowly-minded posture. A modest, gentle attitude toward fellow believers. When we understand how merciful God has been to us, it humbles our attitude towards others.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Father, all the traits you call us to exemplify in these verses of 1 Peter 3 are what we owe to you and what we owe to others. You have told us to owe no one anything except love, so this is the least we can offer in response to your love, your mercy, your kindness, your understanding, and your compassion toward us. Thank you for giving us the perfect example of these things in Jesus Christ. May we be the ambassadors you have called us to be in this world that is not our home, until the day you call us home. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Week Five // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- What do you think the Apostle Peter meant in 1 Peter 3:3–4? Was he forbidding certain hairstyles, jewelry, and fine clothing, or was he emphasizing something deeper?
- What does biblical love and submission look like for husbands and wives in the context Peter describes?
- The believing community is to model what life looks like under King Jesus, So what traits should we expect to see in the community of Jesus followers?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- Why do you think submitting to God or other people is unpopular and uncommon in our culture?
- Read 1 Peter 3:8–9. Can you share which of those responses comes easiest to you, and which one might feel the most difficult to you?
- How should the exiles, citizens of Heaven, approach suffering? What is it about Jesus and our relationship to Him that impacts our reaction to pain and suffering?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- Peter quotes Psalm 34 about keeping your tongue from evil (vv. 10–12). Why do you think he roots this instruction in an Old Testament promise about "the eyes of the Lord" being on the righteous?
- Are there places where honor can grow in your life and relationships? How can we honor and love each other in a godly way?
- Peter tells us to always be ready to give a reason for the hope we have, but to do it "with gentleness and respect" (v. 15). Have you ever seen someone defend their faith in a way that was true but not gentle? What was the effect?

Experiential Activity -

1 Peter 3:15 tells us to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that we have in Jesus. This is a good opportunity to share our story and testimony. Take a moment to share a brief version of your relationship with Jesus, who is He to you and following Him has changed your life. If you aren't comfortable sharing your story with the group, or if you don't have time for everyone to share, then challenge your group to write their story and share it with someone later this week.

Worship Songs -

- "Losing" by Tenth Avenue North
- "Everything And Nothing Less" by Jesus Culture
- "I'm Yours" by Casey J

Week Six

// Sermon Notes

November 1, 2026
1 Peter 4:1-11

1. We don't grow strong in hope by avoiding suffering. We grow strong in hope by learning from the Suffering Savior.
 - a. The key to our hope and resilience is not simply adopting a "growth mindset." It is learning to think like Christ.
 - i. Hope is very much a battle of the mind, which is why we must learn the mind of Christ
 - ii. "Growth Mindset" is a very helpful concept that helps people get unstuck and see their ability to grow and mature. In secular settings, it is seen as a critical skill to develop in order to build resiliency and hopefulness. For the Christian, it is another helpful way we can think about sanctification: we can grow and develop into maturity in Christ over time. Our lives are not static. But growth mindset is not a big enough concept by itself to be "the answer" to victimhood, being "stuck," or hopelessness. Our mindset has to have a worthy Object, and for the Christian, that Object is Christ. My hope is not rooted in developmental ability or neuroplasticity that allows me to grow; I am very grateful for those things and attribute them to God's good design. My hope is rooted in a Person who has gone before me, suffered, dealt with my sin, experienced shame and pain, rose again, and reigns. This Person says I can be part of Him; I can find meaning within his life, I can find redemption in his death and resurrection, I can find resilience and care in his suffering, and I can find hope in a future expectation of his glorious presence.
 - b. A Christian theology of suffering is not fatalism. It is identification. We identify with Christ himself who suffered, endured shame, and now lives in a place of honor at the Father's right hand. We know that we inherit all the treasures of Christ Himself, and the privilege of suffering for His sake allows us to identify with Him
2. We cannot endure well unless we think like the One who suffered for us (v 1)
 - a. Biblical hope and endurance are not just "getting by." Christ's fellow sufferers are privileged and blessed. There is a special, peculiar beauty that adorns a people who identify with Christ in his sufferings! (This truth will be fleshed out even more in the next passage, 1 Peter 4:12-14.) We were designed to reflect glory!
 - b. Learn to think like Christ! He is our model!

- c. Peter uses a military term, admonishing the exiles to “arm themselves” (Gk *hoplizo*, same root as Greek Hoplite warriors) with the same thinking Christ has. This is similar to his exhortation to 1:13 to “prepare your minds for action”. We believers are told to align our minds and thoughts with Christ and be ready to take an active stand against the onslaught of opposition. Peter was not advocating for a physical call to arms or physical resistance, since our kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). The weapons of our warfare (2 Cor. 10:1-5) are for pulling down strongholds and thinking that is in opposition to Christ. It requires defense (standing firm) and offense (demolishing). We are very much responsible for this mental and spiritual war – we are not to be passive. There is a certain amount of dignity and respect that Peter shows here toward the exiles in acknowledging they have an active role to play. He does show great comfort and compassion towards them, but does not do the disservice of letting them use the difficulty of their situation as an excuse to lose hope, agency, and participation in the ongoing suffering and coming glory of Christ.

3. Thinking like Christ sets us apart (vv. 2-11)

- a. With all the previous teaching on humility and submission, it might be tempting to conclude that Peter hopes the exiles can just keep their heads down, stay off the radar, and just do their best. But no: he emphasizes how different, how unique, how separate and distinct they are to be as people who belong to Christ.
- b. Being recognizable as holy people brings glory to the name of Christ.
- c. Thinking like Christ makes his people recognizable in the following ways:
 - i. They are marked by a sharpened sense of purpose
 1. Christ's suffering in his flesh was the price he paid to break the power of sin over us. Sin is no longer our destiny or ruler; Christ is. Since that has been broken, we are free to live for the will of God (v. 2).
 2. As we discussed in previous weeks, hope allows us to transcend earthly realities. We can anchor to spiritual reality. Our sense of purpose is not trying to wring out value, meaning, worth, and treasure from this broken place. We now seek to know and follow God's will, confident He will speak to us and guide us in the day to day. His purpose is not derailed by our pain or persecution; in fact, his plans may be amplified by the very things that would crush and defeat those who have no hope in Christ. Seeking the face of God and following his will should be a consuming passion for us.
 - ii. They are motivated to live in purity (vv. 3-6).

- We all have a testimony, a list of things we engaged in or were known for that are shameful. We had a crowd we ran with. It no longer makes sense to subject ourselves to such destructive activities that harmed our own (and others') dignity. When we come to see our incredible worth in the eyes of God and come to understand that sinful patterns are no longer our master, we can live a life of purity. We don't adopt prudishness to prove our own righteousness; we simply see clearly the reality of how destructive sin is and how we were made for glory. Our "being" starts becoming our "doing." We have been made righteous, therefore we begin to separate from impurity and do righteous things. We begin to experience the sweet fellowship of Christ Himself, and begin to lose our taste for the temporary "high" of the things that could never satisfy.
- A certain measure of our suffering will come from exactly this: those we used to sin with will not understand the new identity and will interpret it as us being judgmental, shaming, "too good" for them, or fake. They will malign and mock. They do not realize that there's a coming judgment. It might be you who voices that message to them. The passage says for this reason the gospel is preached to "the dead" - I understand this to mean that every person (even those who have lived and now died) have had gospel opportunities to turn from this futility and find life in the Savior. If God saved us, then those we sinned with and against have an opportunity to receive mercy before it's too late.
- They are mindful of the urgency of the times (v 7-9).
 - They know Christ is coming back - their hope depends on it!
 - Urgency fuels their prayers. They pray with soberness, knowing the spiritual reality and warfare going on around them. They pray with faith and a clear-headed reality that Christ reigns and will return soon. Since they are no longer going back to old, impure behaviors, they have their faculties available to them - they are not intoxicated or hiding from reality anymore.
 - They cultivate a warm love for their brothers and sisters, willing to keep short accounts and letting love cover the sins that would previously have made them bitter, caused them to separate from relationship, or cut others off. (Note that love is not presumed upon in Christian relationship as an excuse to enable people to keep sinning and acting in destructive ways. Love also confronts.)

- They show biblical hospitality toward one another and towards strangers (v. 9) (Gk philoxenos, philos – brotherly love + xenos = stranger or guest). Elsewhere in Scripture, hospitality is a requirement for Christian leadership within the church, it's THAT important (see 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8). We don't often think of urgency being a motivator for hospitality, but it certainly is among the exiled believing community. "We only have so long to show the warm love of Christ to one another and to strangers; let's get to it!" They are to do this without grumbling – it is part of being the body of Christ. Note that there are no qualifications on this; everyone is to be hospitable regardless of means, personality, housing situation, etc. The only qualification is to do it in a way that is loving and without grudging.
- They are moved to act on behalf of Christ (vv. 10–11). The exiles were to see themselves as stewards of God's grace. They were to act on behalf of Christ in how they spoke and in how they served – as if the spoken message was from Christ's own lips and the service was from Christ's own hands. There was a direct line between Jesus and their action.
 - There can be a modern temptation to ascribe to Jesus everything I say or do as a Christian. Just because someone said, "God told me or led me to do X" does not mean He actually did. We are still to test the Spirit and really listen to Him. The point of this passage was for the believers to lean into Christ and act as people who closely identified with his sufferings and acted boldly given the inevitability of his return. They were not dawdling Christians, but serious and sober minded. They had a role to play, and that was not just to hunker down and survive suffering.
 - God's glory and reign (his "dominion") should be very evident in the words and actions of His people as they move by the Spirit. The same Spirit gives varied gifts to His people (1 Cor. 12:4–6), but no matter the variation the result should be the same: God is glorified. It should be abundantly clear and evident that God's people are leaning on and depending on Him in all things. The church should be a place where all are functioning, using their gifts, and bringing honor to Christ – not just paid professionals. Is our church such a body? Is each member functioning? Is the glory going to God? Are we a clear and consistent witness to the better reign of the better King who is soon coming back? I pray we are.

Week Six

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

Paul spoke about remaining pure and representing Christ in Romans 13:13-14.

Around AD 112, the Roman governor Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan about Christians in the province of Bithynia. He wrote that they were meeting on a particular day, singing a hymn to Christ “as to a god”, binding themselves to an ethical commitment, promising not to commit theft, adultery, fraud, etc., and later sharing a common meal.

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

Hope can make us stronger in Christ if we do not avoid it and we choose to learn from the suffering of our Savior. A “growth mindset” will not be sufficient, we need to develop a mind that thinks like Christ. It is when the Object on which we focus is Christ that we are able to be rooted in the hope of Him. It is that Person with whom we can find our identity and strength through His suffering. Thinking like Christ, the one who suffered, will allow us to endure. Those who endure are privileged and blessed, they are not just making it through life. This is our design – to reflect glory. Thinking like and arming ourselves like Christ will prepare us for taking action against those who oppose us. It’s a spiritual battle we are fighting in which we, like the exiles, have an active role.

The thinking we develop sets us apart from the world and brings glory to God. We understand we are a people of purpose. Our testimony is more than our past when we begin to see the destructiveness of sin. We then choose fellowship with Christ over the worldly behaviors which never satisfy us. Others around us may not understand and may not recognize the coming judgement. Living the Gospel allows others to potentially receive mercy.

Christ is coming back! Like the exiles, this is the key to our hope. This urgency leads us to pray for strength in fighting the battle; extend love and build relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ; and build hospitality toward everyone into our daily lives. We do all these things with a positive attitude. In all we do, serving and speaking, we are to see ourselves as doing so on behalf of Christ. Our actions directly reflect Christ. We become committed to using our God given gifts to bring honor to Him in our actions and within the church.

Week Six

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

In the first century, hospitality was essential to Christian community. There were no church buildings in the modern sense, and Christians frequently met in homes. Traveling Christians, missionaries, teachers, and believers who had been displaced needed places to stay.

One of the biggest differences between the culture of Peter's time and ours is that religion was woven into virtually everything. A person might encounter pagan religious practices at: civic celebrations, family meals, public festivals, business associations, weddings and funerals, military events, entertainment and even neighborhood gatherings.

Peter emphasized to those in exile the need to leave their former life and live differently. Around AD 112, the Roman governor Pliny the Younger wrote to Emperor Trajan about Christians in the province of Bithynia. Pliny investigated Christians and reported that those who had genuinely been Christians said they had been accustomed to: meeting on a particular day, singing a hymn to Christ "as to a god", binding themselves to an ethical commitment, promising not to commit theft, adultery, fraud, etc. & later sharing a common meal.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Dear Jesus, we are in awe of your example to us. You made a way through your suffering for our redemption. We pray your experiences will become part of us and that we will learn to think your thoughts such that we are able to glorify you in all our actions. Give us your strength when we are challenged and in times of suffering. We pray our actions and words will point others to you so they too can know, love and follow you. We thank you and praise you in all things. Amen

Week Six // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- Since we are already embattled in this world, wouldn't it make sense for us to take a low profile and stay out of sight? Why or why not?
- Read 2 Cor. 10:1-5 . What are the weapons of our warfare?
- Biblical hospitality toward one another and towards strangers (v. 9) is known as brotherly love. Read 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8. What does this kind of love mean for our church community? Does our church function in this way?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- When suffering, how do you live as though you are privileged and blessed?
- The exiles were extolled to live a life of purity. In what areas do you struggle in remaining pure? What would motivate you to change your behavior and thought process in this area of purity?
- The urgency of the times fueled the prayers of those in exile. What fuels your prayers? How does the urgency of our times affect you and your prayers?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- What are your initial thoughts when you hear the words "Spiritual Warfare"? What action are we called to take in this battle?
- In what ways does your life bring glory to Christ? What can you do differently to be even more effective?
- Considering the cultural differences between our culture and the culture of the exiles, what does showing hospitality to strangers look like for us? Share examples.

Experiential Activity -

Find specific ways to minister this week through breaking bread and sharing a meal with others. This is something that you can plan to do as a group this week during your meeting time, or you could plan and schedule to do this another night of the week or for your next gathering. Perhaps there is someone that you can invite to join your group's meal and be a blessing to that person or family. Pray as a group to see more opportunities to share and show love through your presence and hospitality to others.

Worship Songs -

- "For the One" - Jenn Johnson
- "Raise a Hallelujah" - Bethel Music
- "You Made a Way" by Travis Greene

Week Seven

// Sermon Notes

November 8, 2026
1 Peter 4:12-19

We have discipled people for many parts of the Christian life, but we have often failed to disciple people for suffering. If we do not develop a theology of suffering before suffering comes, we will interpret suffering badly when it does. We may assume suffering means God has abandoned us. We may be shocked by something Peter says shouldn't surprise us. Or, importantly, we may spiritualize the painful consequences of our own sin and call them persecution.

If we were to develop a discipleship course on how to suffer with hope, what would we teach? What would the disciples need to know and do in order to suffer in a way that glorifies God?

How do we learn to suffer in a way that glorifies God?
Six Capacities to Build Resilient Disciples

1. Know you are beloved (v. 12)
 - a. Suffering does not change your status as God's beloved.
 - b. Before there is any command of what to do, the believers are reminded who they are. In life and especially in suffering, identity is primary. Suffering may severely inhibit our freedoms, curtail our "ministry output," or hamper us from accomplishing our ministry plans. What it cannot do is change our status before God.
 - c. Beloved: Experiential, (Gk. *agapetos*) unconditional love
 - d. It is significant to note that the Father calls the Son the same word: Beloved. See Matthew 3:17 and 17:5. This is yet one more way in which we identify with Christ, and identify with him even more closely in suffering.
 - e. Note Jesus' prayer in John 17:25-26. He prays that the disciples would be one with the Father as he himself is, and that they would know the same love that He and the Father share, so that "the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."
 - f. It can be tempting in times of suffering to conclude that God doesn't like or love us. This thinking is to be rejected, for it tries to rob us of the blessed, loving union Christ prayed for on our behalf.
 - g. How do we grow this as a capacity in disciples who will suffer for the Lord?

2. Expect suffering without assuming the worst (v. 12)
 - a. Don't let it come as a surprise
 - b. God is not singling you out for pain.
 - c. Expect to be tested in your faith
 - d. This is not strange and you are not outside of God's will. Suffering is not necessarily evidence that something has gone wrong.
 - e. Don't mistake suffering for God's absence.
3. Cultivate joy by connecting to Christ (vv 13-14)
 - a. Four times, these verses use words for joy and gladness that are all connected to identifying with Christ.
 - b. Are you going through pain? Are you being defamed? Frame this experience as a chance to share in deep fellowship with Christ who also suffered. Think of it as an invitation to know (experience) him – he is directly discipling you to become like him through this suffering.
 - c. Rejoicing is an action we take and may be different from what we traditionally think of as “happiness.” Joy is rooted in, and rests upon, a Person who secures an outcome of ultimate blessing for us. Happiness may come and go depending on circumstances we find favorable. Joy is not based on circumstance, but upon our deep, abiding connection with Christ.
 - d. One aspect of rejoicing happens in the moment of our suffering. A future aspect of our joy is a joy on “lay-away” for the time when God's glory is fully revealed.
 - e. In one sense we actively choose to rejoice; in another sense, we are recipients of blessing. It is both a choice and a gift.
 - f. In the OT, God's Spirit came and went on people and on the tabernacle. It was a cloud of God's glorious presence. See Exodus 40:34–38 and 1 Kings 8:10–11. In the NT, see Matthew 17:5. Note how the promise of these verses in 1 Peter is that the Spirit of glory and of God would rest (come to abide) upon us. Why? Because we have the Spirit of Christ within us. See 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 and Galatians 2:20. Take note especially of the Galatians 2 passage; it specifically links the Spirit of Christ in us being made possible because we are crucified with Christ!
 - g. Philippians 3:7–11 is a key passage about how loss and suffering connect us to “knowing” Christ, and frames our losses as nothing to be compared with this special relationship with Christ.
 - h. Encourage believers to meditate on these scriptures and to hide God's word in their hearts. There are many testimonies of persecuted believers who took great joy in reciting God's words and songs of worship during their greatest trials. One way we can build this capacity in disciples now is by expanding their “catalog” of Scripture and worship songs from which to draw during times of suffering.

4. Distinguish suffering for Christ from suffering for sin (vv 15–16)
 - a. Learn to live a holy life!
 - b. Not all suffering is Christian suffering.
 - c. Don't call the consequences of disobedience persecution. Don't suffer for your own sinful choices and bad behaviors; do not let sin be the impetus for your suffering
 - d. Peter's list of sins moves from the obvious (murder) to the more socially-acceptable sins (meddling).
 - e. Christians can behave obnoxiously, intrusively, foolishly, or sinfully and then interpret the resulting hostility as suffering for Jesus. But Peter says, essentially: make sure it really is because you bear Christ's name.
 - f. Because we have blindspots, we sometimes do not know what part of our suffering is attributable to our own foolishness and what part is not. This is where we need to grow in discernment. Also, being in community where we give and receive honest feedback and accountability from one another is essential. But perhaps suffering cuts us off from fellowship; what then? We ask Jesus to reveal what needs to be revealed (see Psalm 139:23–24).
 - g. True suffering is not shameful. Those who suffer may instinctively feel like they are at fault or that they need to hide in shame. This passage invites them out of shame and into glory. They can name the name of Christ boldly and rightfully identify themselves as co-sufferers with him. They can explicitly honor and speak God's name to those inflicting pain upon them; this is the OPPOSITE of taking God's name in vain. They are to invoke his name in glory!
5. Understand what God is doing in his household (vv. 17–18)
 - a. Remember, God is building a holy household – 1 Peter 2:4–5.
 - b. If Jesus was “made complete” through suffering (See Hebrews 2:10–13), how much more the family God is building through Him? Notice the words in Heb. 2:11: “Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” Without holiness, no person can see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).
 - c. Malachi 3:1–7 describes God as a refiner and a “launderer” (one who washes and whitens cloth) and a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). He is not to be trifled with! Because He is holy and we are told to “be holy as he is holy” (1 Peter 1:16), he begins his work of judgment in his own house. He judges the thoughts of the heart, the words of the mouth, and the deeds done in the body. It is his grace we are not consumed, but Christ took our sins upon himself!
 - d. Let suffering do its refining work! The church is supposed to be refined. Expect God to start here. Expect for God to hold his people to account. Expect them not to “get away” with what the world appears to be getting away with...at least for a time.

- Understand the church's role in God's judgment. Every person must give an account for themselves (see Romans 14:12 and 2 Cor. 5:10). The judgment in God's house is to prepare himself a pure bride (the church). If we who have found grace in Christ still are terrified by his awesome holiness, how much more so those who do not have the covering of Christ's blood?
 - The church can become like the world, adopting worldly ways of using power and control, replacing relationship with religiosity, building human ideas over the foundation of Christ, etc. Those things will be burned as "wood, hay, and stubble" (1 Cor. 3:12). The difference between the church and the world is that the church has the foundation of Christ to get back to; the world doesn't!
 - Embrace the good, purifying work of God among his house. This may be a reason for your suffering, and yet another chance to lean into the purposes of Christ and identify with him.
 - Let this build a soberness and urgency to represent this holy God to those who are in line for final judgment and wrath. What a terrifying end for those outside of Christ! What will their end be?
6. Entrust yourself to God—and keep doing good (v 19)
- a. Continue entrusting yourself (not just a one-time act) to God's faithfulness.
 - b. Entrust (Gk. *paratithēmi*): to place alongside ("para"). Keep putting your very soul alongside Christ. Identify with him! Surrender to him! Commit yourself to him as an offering! Fellowship with him as you are SIDE BY SIDE, enduring together, suffering together, experiencing the close bond of persecution, looking forward together to the future joy and glory at his presence.
 - c. Note that this same word entrust is what Jesus used when he said, "Father, into your hands I commit (entrust) my spirit" Luke 23:46.
 - d. Actively engage in God's good work even while suffering. Our faithful Creator is holding your very soul and he is trustworthy. Because he holds your soul, you can do what is right and virtuous even when pain tempts you to fight back, give up, curse God, or any number of other responses to suffering.
 - e. This is not a passive posture (again, we are not victims; we have agency with which to choose to respond to God, rejoice, cooperate with the plans and purposes of God, and even rejoice. That agency has not been taken away from us, even in the darkness of suffering.)
 - f. Suffering does not take you out of usefulness to the body of Christ!
 - g. The Christian life is one that includes suffering as part of God's design for our good and his glory. We don't just "take it," we endure it with hope and joyful expectation. While we do so, we identify more and more closely with Christ, depending upon him with the very depth of our souls. And we actively do what is good and right, even if our capacity or freedom is limited by the suffering we endure. We begin to bear about in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 6:17).

Week Seven

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

"Suffering can refine us rather than destroy us because God himself walks with us in the fire." Timothy Keller

"Suffering, then, is the badge of true discipleship. The disciple is not above his master." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

James 1:2-4 | Isaiah 48:10

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

Peter starts by reminding us that suffering doesn't change our status — we're still God's "beloved," secure in His love whether things are going well or falling apart (v. 12). We should expect suffering, not be shocked by it, and know it's meant to test and refine our faith. He even tells us to "rejoice" (v. 13) — not because suffering itself is good, but because it connects us to Christ, and through that connection we experience real transformation. That's the difference between joy and happiness: happiness rises and falls with circumstances, but joy is rooted in our abiding connection to Christ, who suffered for us first.

Peter also draws a line between suffering for Christ and suffering for our own sin (vv. 15-16). Not all suffering is "Christian" suffering — some of it is just the consequence of our own disobedience, and we need discernment, and honest community, to tell the difference. But when suffering is genuinely for Christ, there's no shame in it — Peter invites us out of shame and into glory as co-sufferers with Him.

He widens the lens further: God's judgment — His refining work — begins with His own household first (v. 17), purifying His people and preparing His Bride. That's not punishment, it's purpose. And if we who are covered by Christ's blood still stand in awe of His holiness, how much more should those without that covering (v. 18)? He closes with a call to action, not resignation: entrust yourselves to God, and keep doing good (v. 19). God gave us agency even in suffering — we get to actively identify with Christ, surrender to Him, and offer ourselves to Him through it, rather than just endure it.

Week Seven

// Resources

Things To Know

// Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

The word “beloved” in 1 Peter 4:12 is translated from the Greek word “agapetos” which is used in Matthew 3:17 and 17:5 where Jesus is described as God’s “Beloved Son.” Agapetos reflects an experiential, profound, unconditional love. Peter uses this word to describe the exiles – and us! We are secure in God’s love regardless of our circumstances.

In v19 Peter uses the word “entrust” (Greek paratithēmi) meaning to place alongside (“para”). Peter is exhorting his readers to put our souls alongside Christ. Note that this same word entrust is what Jesus used when he said, “Father, into your hands I commit (entrust) my spirit” Luke 23:46.

Prayer

// Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Heavenly Father, you are the joy of our lives. Thank you for offering us a living hope in your Son, Jesus Christ, and sustaining us in times of suffering. Please teach us to rejoice as we endure times of contentment and times of tribulation, for you are worthy of our praise and worship. Please help us to grow in intimacy and accountability with our Brothers and Sisters in Christ with whom we share in the inheritance you have given us. Purify your church, Lord! Our heart's desire is to live a life that is holy and pleasing to you. Amen.

Week Seven // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- Peter uses the image of fire (v12). Can you think of any other references to fire and purification in the Scripture? How does fire change, purify, or reveal the true nature of an object?
- How does Peter distinguish between suffering for Christ and suffering for doing wrong (v13)?
- Peter quotes Proverbs 11:31 in v17. Why do you think New Testament writers frequently pulled from Old Testament wisdom when trying to explain suffering to early believers?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- How do you typically react when facing trials that test your spiritual maturity?
- Can you share a past "fiery trial" that ultimately strengthened your relationship with God?
- When you face trials, is your first reaction to rejoice or to complain?
- What does it mean to you personally to carry "the name of Christ"?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- In what areas is God currently refining or correcting your faith?
- What is one practical way you can support a fellow Christian who is suffering right now?
- When going through hard times, do you tend to adopt a "bunker mentality" (just trying to survive) or a "kingdom mentality" (seeking how God wants to sanctify you through it)? How can our small group support each other to choose the latter?
- Read 1 Peter 4:19. What is one practical area of your life right now where you need to stop worrying and actively entrust your soul to God?

Experiential Activity -

Read the article "Unshakable Faith in an Underground Church in China" and then watch the embedded video about suffering in the global church. How can the perseverance of the saints around the world affect your faith during times of suffering? Pray as a group for the global church throughout the week.

<https://www.opendoorsus.org/stories/jinyi-underground-church>

Worship Songs -

- "Refiner" by Maverick City Music / Chandler Moore
- "We Fall Down" by Chris Tomlin / Passion
- "Another in the Fire" by Hillsong UNITED

Week Eight

// Sermon Notes

November 15, 2026
1 Peter 5:1-7

Two Guardrails for a Thriving Church

1. The church must be led by faithful shepherds (vv 1-4)
 - a. Notice Peter's relational way of addressing the church leadership. He "exhorts" them (Gk. parakaleo: para=alongside and kaleo=call); he is assuming an alongside position of relational encouragement and instruction. Even as a leader, Peter is modeling the same kind of humility and mutual submission he has been speaking about. This is beautiful.
 - b. Peter doesn't emphasize his special apostleship here, but that he is a fellow elder (coming alongside the churches), a fellow witness (from which we get the word "martyr" - and he would soon be that in all senses of the word), and a fellow person who knew the fellowship (partaking, from the Gk. koinonia) of the glory of Christ that would be revealed. In other words, he wrote in humility and hope, not lording it over the churches. He was joined with them, fully bought in, anchoring his hope to the yet-to-be-revealed glory of Jesus, just like he had been teaching them to do.
 - c. These verses are interesting in that they use the three words from which we get a lot of our modern church leadership titles: elders (Gk. prēsbūtērōs from which we get Presbytery. Even modern Presbyterians have "elders" as leaders.); shepherd (Gk. pōimēn from which we get Pastor); and overseer (actually, verse 2 speaks of exercising oversight, using a form of the word Gk. ēpiskōpōs, from which we get overseer or bishop. We would also think of an "Episcopal Church" whose name is rooted in this word as a church of bishops, or a church under a bishop/overseer). I do not think Peter was writing this as a treatise on church polity or necessarily naming leadership offices, but he did use different descriptive words for those charged to lead the local church, and those terms are still used widely among current-day denominations. It is also worth noting that "elder" does have a connotation of senior or older, though not all church leaders are aged people (see 1 Timothy 4:12). Other passages specifically lay out biblical qualifications for what an elder must be (1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), and there is no age requirement. An elder cannot be a "newbie" to the faith, though. He must be "senior" in terms of his development, character, and maturity.
 - d. The leaders are to actually lead! They do not get a "pass" to be passive in the face of so much external pressure. They are to shepherd, not just be named as a shepherd. Leaders must do the actual work of shepherding!

- Elders/leaders are shepherding not their own flock, but God's. This is a sacred trust and God has high standards and expectations for how leaders treat the flock for which his Son died (see Ezek. 34 and Jeremiah 23). Also, the flock is "among them" – leaders must serve from among the sheep, not separated from them in status or relationship. After all, these "shepherds" are themselves the sheep of the Great Shepherd! This should engender a sense of humility and the same "coming alongside" position that Peter assumed even though he had an arguably greater status.
- The elders' leadership should exhibit certain biblical characteristics:
 - They are to exercise oversight. Again, this is active watchfulness and wariness out of concern for the flock.
 - They are to be willing. There is all kind of biblical teaching on humble leadership; there is no biblical teaching on reluctant leadership. Leaders must be willing to serve and even want to serve (1 Tim. 3:1), not be forced to serve. Some ways in which leaders get into positions they are neither qualified for or willing to do the work is when they feel shamed into leadership, are in a system in which they are "rotated" into leadership because they are next in line, are in a position in which they are assumed to be leaders because of social standing or wealth, or in which they see the title as desirable or necessary as a means to another end. The church cannot be served by leaders such as this!
 - They are not to use their position for gain. People are all-too familiar with exploitative leadership. Within the church, there can be none of this. Leaders must be people who serve the welfare of the flock, not using the flock to further their own interests and gains. Not "fleecing" the sheep in order to gain standing or wealth or status. The problem is that such people often exhibit what we might classically consider leadership qualities. They can gain an audience, wow people with oratory skills, manage businesses, etc. In other words, they may look like leaders but are motivated by self-gain. That kind of leadership may – and often does – work in the world. Not so here. Weed out these kinds of people from gaining title in the household of God. There should be no whiff of a leader using a church position for shameful self gain
 - They are to show eagerness and readiness. Leaders are to be alert and at the ready. They are not eager for power or prestige, but to fulfill their God-given task to lead the sheep.
 - They are not to dominate. The Scriptures are not only concerned with leadership tasks, decision-making, or vision; they are also equally concerned with how those things are done. What is the spirit of the leader and how do they affect those they lead? Are they harsh, egotistical, heavy-handed, brash, hot tempered? They are not to be domineering. They must lead humbly and must model what it looks like to be surrendered to Jesus. They should listen well and show care for the dignity of others.

- They are to model Christlikeness. People should be able to pattern their lives after what they see in the life of a leader. If a leader preaches something but fails to live it, they are not a biblical leader. This goes back to the necessity of leaders leading from “among” the sheep; the sheep have to know them, see them be tested, and watch them walk out their faith in the context of real life. They are not to be so elevated or “pedestalized” that they cannot be observed. Leaders must be observed, serving as “types” (Gk. *typos*, “examples”) that others can follow. They should actually look like Christ.
 - They should hope in the Chief Shepherd. Leaders should look for their reward from the “arch-Shepherd”, Jesus. When he is manifested with all his glory, the leader can rightfully expect an unfading “crown” of glory. They, like Peter, are partakers/shareholders in the glory of Christ “ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). They know that in their transitory existence here in exile, their hope is not in the sheep or in a position, but in fellowship with Christ and in his coming glory.
2. The church must operate in deep humility (vv 5-7)
- a. Just like we saw in previous passages about relationships, people are to operate in humility and relational submission with one another. It is the same here, where the younger are to be subject to the elders. In the context, I believe this means that the younger in age and younger in the faith (neophyte) are to live in subjection to the leaders God has put over his church. Other passages address all (not just the younger) being subject to, and respecting, biblical leaders in the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and Hebrews 13:17). But this passage speaks specifically of the younger. In previous passages, Peter addresses other “tricky” relationships that believers in the exiled church had to navigate, whether that was in marriage, employment, servitude, or towards the government.
 - b. Notice how there is both vulnerability AND protection woven into the family of God. It is vulnerable to subject oneself in relationship. But there is protection in biblical, God-honoring leadership which does not exploit and is, in turn, humble among the flock. This dynamic of mutual submission, fear of the Lord, and humility is essential to keep the church from becoming a place of harm. In fact, elders are to guard not just individuals, but the “system” of the church so that it remains safe, healthy, God-honoring, and caring.
 - c. All members of the church must “cloak themselves” with the garment of humility. It should be the first thing people notice when they interact with one another; they are literally wearing it on their sleeves. That humility should be directed “towards” one another in a spirit of mutuality. Counterintuitively, this humility protects, rather than weakens, the church. Humility protects us from experiencing God’s opposition. In a church with a lot of external opposition already, God is to function as our friend, advocate, and protector. We don’t want his opposition! We want his grace! Humility invites more grace from God.

- The church is to make herself low before our mighty God! Too often, we reduce God, minimize his glory, and think less of his mightiness. But we must exalt Him! He is the rallying point of the whole church. The center of all is not our shared experiences as exiles, our suffering, or even our ethnic identity: it is always and only Christ to which we must subject ourselves in humility.
- Note that the persecution and displacement do not make us low or crush us; we get to choose to make ourselves low before God because he is greater than any persecutor, difficult experience, pain, or ungodly ruler.
- Humbling ourselves is a sure bet: it comes with a reward of exaltation by God Himself! The only one worth being humble towards is the only one powerful enough to lift us, make us alive, and grant us to be sharers in his glory! That glorification will be at the “proper time,” i.e. it will happen when he wills it. In the meantime, we must trust and receive his grace to endure with hope. Humility is critical to receiving that grace and enduring with hope. And we are to humble ourselves together as a body.
- The church must deal with anxiety together. Part of our humility is recognizing we cannot carry the burdens of this world ourselves. We are not that strong or mighty; God is! That means we must cast (and continue to cast) our burdens upon his broad, able shoulders. He cares for us! He carries the burden of care and is worthy of our anxieties. We are not to be known for our anxiety, but as people humble enough to cast our anxieties on the one who cares the very most, our Chief Shepherd. He delights to carry us and take our burdens. He invites this! (See Matthew 11:28–30). We can be a people of hope because we know a day of future exaltation is coming. We know will be enveloped in the glory of His presence forever, and his Spirit rests on us even as we suffer for a little while here. We would far prefer the future, eternal exaltation of his presence than a brief respite from the pain of our sojourn as exiles. We look at the future, not at the present. We can properly frame what most burdens and worries us in light of who God is and what he has promised to do. We can continue to cast these anxieties on him in a spiritual discipline of humility, dependence, and surrender.
- Anxieties in the text comes from the Gk. *merizō*, which denotes fracturing and dividing. This is powerful! We have been talking about how a person with hope thinks when they are so strongly pulled toward depression, anxiety, and hopelessness. Those anxieties pull apart the mind, making it less than whole. Casting anxieties on the Lord whose plan is our wholeness helps heal our minds and allows us to put focus and attention on HIM.

Week Eight

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

“Christian leaders are to be shepherds, not dictators.” ~ John Stott

“The greatest issue facing the world today is whether those who profess Christ will become disciples — students, apprentices, practitioners of Jesus.” ~ Dallas Willard

John 10:11 | Philippians 4:6

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

Peter writes to the elders as one who personally knows the heart of Christ's calling. Jesus Himself entrusted him with the threefold charge: “Feed My lambs (the young in age and faith)... take care of My sheep... feed My sheep” (John 21:15–17). Because of this, Peter is aware of the weight and exhorts the elders to shepherd God's flock willingly, eagerly, and by living their own Christlike example rather than lead as the world does through prideful domination (1 Peter 5:2–3). They are to remember that even leaders remain sheep under the Chief Shepherd, awaiting their crown of glory that will not fade (1 Peter 5:4). A part of humility is the church realizing that we are all in this together.

Peter then calls the whole church to mutual humility. Younger believers, whether young in age or faith, are to submit to their elders (1 Peter 5:5), unless that leadership is directing them towards ungodliness. Scripture warns through King Rehoboam, who rejected the wise counsel of experienced advisors and followed the prideful, immature advice of his inexperienced peers, fracturing the kingdom (1 Kings 12:6–16). When love, humility, and the fear of the Lord guide both leaders and members, the church is protected from harm and strengthened in unity. Finally, humility shapes how believers carry their anxieties. We lower ourselves under God's mighty hand, trusting Him to exalt us at the proper time (1 Peter 5:6). We cast our anxieties on Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). The Greek word used for anxiety, *merizō*, speaks of a mind pulled apart, so surrendering our worries to the Lord is an act of letting Him restore that wholeness. Present suffering is temporary, but our hope remains steady because Jesus holds His people and will complete their restoration.

Week Eight

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

Presbyteros “elder”: This word emphasizes maturity, not necessarily age. It refers to spiritually seasoned leaders who shepherd the church. Peter identifies himself as a fellow elder, exemplifying humility and shared responsibility.

Poimēn “shepherd/pastor”: Used in the call to “shepherd the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2). It conveys care, guidance, protection, and feeding. This is the same imagery Jesus used when commissioning Peter in John 21:15–17.

Koinōnia “fellowship, sharing, partaking”: Peter says he is a “partaker” in the glory to be revealed (1 Peter 5:1). This word highlights shared participation. Leaders and members alike stand under the same hope and the same future glory.

Typos “example, pattern, model”: Elders are to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Typos means a pattern worth imitating — leadership that is visibly Christlike, lived among the people, not above them.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Father God – We pray for our pastors and leaders to guide Your people in the way our Lord Jesus exemplified and taught. We pray that the members of Your church will worship, serve, connect, and share their life and ministry as they follow Christ. May we live in fellowship with one another with love, humility of heart, unity, and Your Word, wisdom, and understanding guiding us in this world, so that You will be lifted up and draw all people to Yourself. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Week Eight // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- How does Jesus' threefold charge to Peter in John 21:15–17 shape Peter's instructions to elders in 1 Peter 5:1–4?
- What distinguishes biblical shepherding from worldly leadership according to 1 Peter 5:2–3?
- How does Peter define humility and submission within the church in 1 Peter 5:5, and why is this so important in fostering unity and order?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- How does Peter's humble approach to leadership, influence, responsibility, and authority challenge the kind of leader you will strive to be?
- When have you struggled with submitting to godly leadership, and what revelations did you receive from God as a result?
- What anxieties feel like they pull your mind apart, and how does knowing you can cast your cares on the Lord reshape your response?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- Name something you can do this week to demonstrate humility toward leaders or fellow believers?
- How can you show godly leadership in your home, church, job, school, or sphere of influence?
- What specific worry will you intentionally cast on the Lord today, trusting that He will work it out for your good?

Experiential Activity -

As a group or individually, bless your community and leaders by writing a short note or postcard to an educator, coach, leader, or anyone that would be encouraged by your affirming words. Offer a prayer and a word of encouragement to them in the card/s. After writing, the group can pray over the card/s together and then deliver them during the week, trusting God to strengthen and uplift each educator through their kindness and support.

Worship Songs -

- **"Give Me Faith" by Elevation Worship**
- **"Let Go Let God" by DeWayne Woods**
- **"Think on These Things" - Southeast Inspirational Choir**

Week Nine

// Sermon Notes

November 22, 2026
1 Peter 5:8-14

Standing Firm in Exile

Notice how Peter again tells the believers they are to do, actively. He is engaging their wills and minds to think like people belonging to God, the holy nation. He is disciplining their minds, not just giving them a laundry list of dos and don'ts.

1. Be soberminded (v. 8)

- a. As mentioned elsewhere in 1 Peter (1:13 and 4:7), we are responsible for our minds. We are not just victims or people who hide from life. We are not intoxicated, but sober.
- b. Sober people are not hiding or numbing themselves from reality. We have low mental distress tolerance in the church! We turn so quickly to distraction, pleasure, substances, work, and other things to numb out and not feel or face reality. The Christians in exile were told 3 times in this book not to do that. It's understandable, but it's the easy way out and does not lead to a life lived in surrender to God. It is training/disciplining your brain to think in ways that keep you from life. It needs to be overwritten and re-wired with gospel hope!

2. Be watchful (v. 8)

- a. This is to be alert, awake, and vigilant. We know it does not mean worry or anxiety, because we've already been told to cast that upon the Lord (v. 7).
- b. Some equate spiritual awakeness with looking at everything around us conspiratorially. Every weather event, world news story, or natural phenomenon suddenly becomes a sign of the end times or something we need to be hyper vigilant about. That is not what this is teaching. We are to be vigilant, but not for the purpose of creating conspiracy theories. We are to be vigilant because we acknowledge we have a very real enemy.
- c. Our enemy wants to take us out, neutralize us. We are to be wise and watchful for the ways in which he might do that. Will it come from an obvious frontal assault? Or something possibly more subtle such as a way of thinking and thoughts that keep us in a defeated cycle? It could be either or both; we need to be alert about it, and not just alert in our own silo. We need to be alert in community for one another. Often it is someone else who helps me see (or at least confirms) a particular way Satan is attacking me. We may know how he's likely to attack or use our own stories as leverage against us, but we may still be surprised or deceived – that is why we must be a watchful community together. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices – 2 Cor. 2:11.

- Resist Satan (vv 8-9)
- Why be soberminded? Why be watchful? Because you have an adversary. He's not just a general adversary, he's your adversary. It's personal. He's after you, because you are a sharer in Christ's sufferings and Christ's glory. You reflect Christ's life and purpose on this earth, and Christ's kingdom is encroaching on the territory of the "ruler" of this world (John 12:31). You are marked by the grace of Christ, but that also marks you as a target of the enemy. Be realistic about this. It's true!
- Resistance is active, not just passive. We are to put up stiff resistance against our enemy. We stand against him. Think of this in military terms. We submit (line up under) God and resist the enemy. Think of planting feet, leaning in, locking shields, battle ready. We are not just absorbing hits, we are defending ourselves and defeating the purposes of what the enemy is throwing against us. Early on in the book, Peter told us to "gird up the loins" of our mind in preparation for action (1 Peter 1:13). A lot of what we do to resist will be in our minds.
- Our adversary is opposing us with legal arguments, trying to nail us to the wall. Thankfully, our Lord has already nailed our sins to his cross for us! He has canceled the decrees made against us (Col. 2:13-15). Christ is our advocate against this legal accuser, a fact Peter would know intimately based on Luke 22:31-34. Jesus told Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat (separate him from himself and work against the wholeness found in the Healer) Satan "demanded" him (a legal term, making a claim over Peter). Jesus prayed/petitioned for Peter - a courtroom drama in which Jesus played the advocate in the face of the accusing prosecutor, Satan.
- Similarly, Satan wants to dissolve and sift us. As the prince of this world, he tries to lay legal claim over us. He wants to tear us apart so that we are no longer whole or living the life God has for us. Satan walks about and stalks, seeking destruction, looking for angles, looking for ways to penetrate our defenses.
- Ultimately, believers belong to Christ and no one (not even Satan!) can snatch them out of Christ's hand (John 10:28). That doesn't keep Satan from trying or doing all he can to neutralize us so we are not effective, victorious, hopeful, pure, and thriving in community.
- So, how do we resist Satan? By doing all the things Peter has taught us to do in the epistle. To foster a deep hope and rootedness and dependency on Christ. To work hard at identifying with Christ in our pain and trouble. In learning to live a submitted life of holy reverence toward God. Of walking away from the impure practices we used to have. To guard our minds and work toward the wholeness God has for us. We do all this from our position of humble submission to Christ and in his name alone. We can do it in confidence, verbalizing our identification with Christ and invoking his name. We make no "agreements" with Satan and break those thoughts and thought patterns as we become aware of them. If Satan is always looking for ways to accuse and dis-integrate us, any self talk that affirms his message is acting/thinking in accordance with our enemy and must be dismantled in Jesus' name!

- All of this resisting must be done in faith. We must look to cultivate a stronger faith day by day! This is a great prayer for one another: “Lord, please help my sister to be strong in her faith...” See 1 Cor. 16:13.
- 4. Look towards the God who rewards (vv 10-11)
 - a. In view of eternity, our suffering here is only a little while. How important it is to frame our experiences in light of God’s truth! Note: this is not the same as using “spiritual bypass” to minimize real suffering.
 - b. Notice the passage does not actually tell us to keep our eyes on the “roaring lion,” Satan. It says to be watchful and soberminded. But our eyes are to be on Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah! He is our rewarder and our reward. Like the Author of our faith, we fix our eyes ahead, past all the trials and suffering, on the future glory of being with our Father (see Hebrews 12:1-2). We are to put our eyes on Christ!
 - c. How will God reward us after this momentary suffering? He will make us whole. He will repair us, remake us, and settle us.
 - i. Notice how the text reminds us that God has ALL grace (his abundance and compassion never run out) and he has called us to ETERNAL glory in Christ (what we have in him never ever ends). Our trials, in comparison, are not “all” or “forever.” They are light and momentary (2 Cor. 4:17). We have access to a God of abundant grace and forever glory.
 - ii. Suffering and persecution often feels like God is not seeing, knowing, or noticing us. “How long, oh Lord?” cries the Psalmist over and over. But God does see and does know. He sees our suffering. And he will take direct action in our healing and restoration. These terms have some overlapping shades of meaning, but are rich and beautiful. Picture a house (or cathedral) that has become weathered, weakened, and unstable due to time and hard times. He will:
 - 1. Restore: God will mend and repair your broken heart and your broken story.
 - 2. Confirm: God will renew your vigor when you have felt completely spent and weary.
 - 3. Strengthen: God will put you on a firm foundation, put “buttresses” on your walls, and make you stable and able to stand.
 - 4. Establish: God will ground you, stabilize your life, connect you to the Rock.

5. Remember you are not alone (vv 9b; 12-14)
- a. We do not suffer alone. Our suffering does not remove us from community or God's redemptive plan. It actually strengthens our ties of fellowship first with Christ, and with his family. It can be tempting to sink into a depression like Elijah, thinking we are the only faithful ones left. But God has left a remnant of people, and we belong to them! See 1 Kings 19:18.
 - b. God intends for us to lean into our connection with the global church – our brothers and sisters with whom we suffer for the name of Christ. We are to remember them in our suffering and them in theirs. Many minority believers in hard places say similar things to believers from the West: Please do not forget us.
 - c. Our connection and affection with our brothers and sisters should be tangible. It should be evident that we have love for one another (“holy kiss”). We are told to be affectionate because:
 - i. We need love and connection!
 - ii. We are to be known by our love for one another (John 13:35)
 - d. Note: It is not a normative rule that we must physically kiss one another. (I prefer hugs!) What is normative is that our brotherly love is known and observed. It is also worth noting that the apostle Paul specifically tells the brothers to treat the women as sisters, with all purity (see 1 Timothy 5:2).
 - e. We have contemporary brothers and sisters with whom we should be connected right now as part of our effort to hold on to hope in troubled times. We also have a “cloud of witnesses” cheering us on – faithful believers who have lived and died, and now wait for us to run our race (Hebrews 12:1).
 - f. Notice how the text names real people: Silvanus, Mark, and “she who is in Babylon” (possibly a person, but I lean towards this being the church in Rome). These real people send their greetings and exhortations. We honor one another when we stand firm in God's grace and hold onto hope. Hope is not just for ourselves. Peter did not even write this message in a silo; he had other genuine believers confirming the word and adding their blessings to it.
 - g. The letter ends with a benediction of peace. This is the state of the rule and reign of Christ: absolute peace. And that peace is wished for you by the Lord and the Lord's people. It CAN rule in your hearts and minds, even if you are experiencing trials and pain. This peace is what Jesus left for you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, sisters and brothers – John 14:27

Week Nine

// Resources

Support Content // Parallel Scripture & Quotes

“Your faith will not fail while God sustains it; you are not strong enough to fall away while God is resolved to hold you.” J.I. Packer

Ephesians 6:11–12
James 4:7
2 Corinthians 4:17

Summary // Based On Sunday Sermon Notes

Peter closes his letter by calling us back to something we're responsible for: our minds. Being "sober-minded" and "watchful" (v. 8) means we don't get to numb out or hide from reality — a mind surrendered to God is a mind being retrained around gospel hope. Part of that watchfulness is recognizing Satan as a real, personal enemy who wants to devour us precisely because we share in Christ's suffering and glory. Resisting him isn't passive; it's an active, day-by-day act of faith (vv. 8–9), especially once we already know suffering is coming and we're not meant to be surprised by it.

In verse 11, Peter grounds that ongoing resistance in what God is actually doing in us right now, not just someday. He restores us — mending our broken hearts and stories. He confirms us — renewing our strength when we're spent. He strengthens us — planting us on Him as our foundation. And He establishes us — stabilizing our lives by connecting us to the Rock. We get real glimpses of that work now, even while we wait for its fullness later.

His last word to these exiles is that suffering never removes them from community or from God's plan for them — and that's just as true for us. We don't suffer alone; it actually deepens our ties to each other, to the global church, and to the "cloud of witnesses" who've gone before us (Heb. 12:1). Our love for one another is meant to be visible, not theoretical (v. 12). And the letter ends where it should — with peace (v. 14), the fruit of Christ's reign in us as we keep hoping in His future glory.

Week Nine

// Resources

Things To Know // Extra Notes For Context & Clarity

1 Peter 5:10 offers powerful promises of God to transform temporary pain into lasting spiritual strength. A word study on the four Greek words used in this verse offer a rich, deeper understanding of God's work through our suffering. All four of these words center on God "Himself" (Greek - autos) who will do the work in the lives of believers.

- Restore - Greek katartizō, which means to mend, repair or make whole to a fully functional condition. The same word is also used in Matthew 4:21, katartizō described fishermen mending their nets to make them whole and functional again
- Confirm - Greek stērizō, which means to make steadfast, fix firmly
- Strengthen - Greek sthenoō, (derived from the word for "bodily strength" or "might") infused with inward might or spiritual strength and power
- Establish - Greek themelioō, which means to lay a deeply immovable foundation, to ground.

Prayer // Reflective Prayer & Scripture

Heavenly Father, you are a most gracious God. Thank you for your restorative work in and through the trials of our lives. In Christ we have a firm foundation upon which we can establish our lives. Please teach us to be soberminded and alert, always on guard for the schemes of our adversary, Satan. Help us to resist temptation and be discerning, especially when we are experiencing suffering. Lord, grow us in love and affection for our brothers and sisters in Christ, both in the local and global church, especially those facing persecution. We love you, Father, and we glorify your name. Amen.

Week Nine // Questions

Head (knowledge) :

- Read 1 Peter 5:8. What are Peter's immediate instructions? What is the literal and spiritual difference between these two actions?
- Read 1 Peter 5:10. What four distinct actions does Peter promise that God will personally do for the believer after they have suffered?
- 1 Peter 5:11 is a powerful doxology. Why does Peter burst into praise immediately after discussing suffering and spiritual warfare (v 9-10)?
- Read 1 Peter 5:12. How does the context of suffering redefine grace? Knowing the original readers faced heavy persecution, how does Peter's definition of grace contrast with a modern view that links grace primarily to comfort or prosperity?

Heart (what does it mean to you) :

- How can the understanding of suffering within the global church influence our perspective on personal trials?
- Think about a current or past trial in your life. Does it feel like a "little while," or does it feel permanent? How does this verse challenge your personal perspective on time and pain?
- In which of the four areas promised by God in v10 - restoration, confirmation, strengthening, or establishment - do you most need His intervention right now?

Hand (how to apply / what now) :

- How can we practice being sober-minded in our daily lives, and what are some practical steps to achieve this?
- What is one practical step you can take this week to stand firm against a recurring temptation or negative mindset?
- In what ways does this passage reinforce the role of the church community in one's spiritual journey?

Experiential Activity -

Prayer Circle of Commissioning – Have everyone write one area where they need to stand firm. Exchange cards anonymously and spend time praying over them. End by having the group stand in a circle with hands together or on shoulders while reading 5:10-11 as a commissioning over one another.

Worship Songs -

- "Firm Foundation" by Cody Carnes
- "Graves into Gardens" by Elevation Worship, Brandon Lake
- "In Christ Alone" by Keith and Kristyn Getty, CityAlight
- "Stand By" Donnie McClurkin