

HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY ONE

Hope Beyond Failure: The Broken Man Behind the Book

Selections from 1 Peter

God chose Peter to write a couple of letters that would later be included in the canon of Scripture. And you know the last person who would have guessed that? Peter. He would have been shocked.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you ever made a *big* mistake? The kind that creates the feeling of instant regret that remains for years. Even the slightest thought of your mistake tightens your chest and upsets your stomach as your conscience says, *You are a failure*.

How can we find hope again after we've failed, after we've hurt those we hold dearest, after we feel like God will forever be ashamed of us, or after we've caused what seems like irreparable damage in our life or in another's?

These are the kinds of questions that followed the apostle Peter throughout his life. Peter is famous for his boldness in proclaiming the gospel. But this strong "Rock" of the faith often proved brittle. He demonstrated a lack of self-control. He was often swayed by public opinion. He occasionally ignored Jesus' words. And he ultimately denied his master and left Jesus to die alone.

Yes, Peter was no stranger to failure, but he also had an intimate understanding of hope. He knew that, in Jesus Christ, he could find hope . . . life-changing, life-giving hope . . . again and again. The letter of 1 Peter, the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* series, is a testament to the truth that *anyone* can find everlasting hope amid even the worst kinds of failure.



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Hope Beyond Failure: The Broken Man Behind the Book

Selections from 1 Peter



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Do the feelings of regret linger in your mind or heart today? The good news of the gospel is that God offers forgiveness for even the worst kinds of mistakes. Like pure water from a fresh spring, His Spirit can cleanse your conscience. Offer this prayer as you prepare your heart to study God's Word today.

Father, I confess that I have failed countless times in my life. Sometimes, intentionally. Other times, unintentionally. Please forgive me of them all. I embrace the grace that is mine in Jesus Christ. Use Your Word to instill an eternal sense of hope in my soul today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As more and more people converted to Christianity in the decades following Jesus' resurrection, the Roman Empire turned up the heat of persecution on those who considered themselves citizens of a greater kingdom—the kingdom of God. This persecution disrupted the life of many Christians, forcing them to scatter throughout the empire.

Due to these circumstances, Peter wrote his first letter to “God's chosen people . . . living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (*1 Peter 1:1*). Read *1 Peter 1:6–7* and summarize the essential message Peter wanted to communicate through this letter.

Peter wrote to his struggling brothers and sisters in Christ to show them how they could discover the joy available in Christ even when experiencing the worst kinds of suffering. He wanted them to find everlasting hope when life hurt the most. The message he shared nearly 2,000 years ago was a beacon of light that still beckons us toward trust and hope in Christ today.



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Selections from 1 Peter



Observation and Interpretation: Peter's Journey with Jesus

Whenever you receive a letter, you almost automatically ask who wrote it. Then, if you don't know much about the letter's author, it's natural to do some digging to learn about him or her. This section will journey through key moments of the apostle Peter's life, so we might catch a glimpse of the broken man behind the book called 1 Peter. Read each passage slowly, and keep track of key observations as you read.¹



Peter's Call Mark 1:16–17	
Early in His ministry, Jesus appeared to be nothing more than a rabbi—just another teacher of Israel. Most rabbis had a following of handpicked students with great knowledge, wealth, or acclaim. Yet from the very beginning, Jesus proved that He was not a typical rabbi. Mark 1:16–18 records Jesus' calling of the first disciples—not men of great prestige but simple fishermen.	
Observation	Interpretation
<p>What did Jesus say when He saw Simon (Peter) and Andrew fishing in Mark 1:17?</p> <p>According to 1:18, how did Peter and Andrew respond to Jesus' call? What description did Mark include to add color to their response?</p>	<p>What does it mean that Jesus would teach His followers to “catch people” instead of fish?</p> <p>In 1:16, Mark notes that Peter and Andrew “fished for a living.” Why is it significant that they “left their nets” to follow Jesus (1:18)?</p>
Accepting the call to follow Jesus is the most exciting, rewarding, and costly adventure of life.	

When Jesus called Peter, Peter looked into the eyes of the Man who in a few years' time would literally transform Peter's life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Peter's Confession Matthew 16:13–28	
Peter and the other disciples faced one of their greatest tests in a region called Caesarea Philippi. This region was famous for its massive temples constructed to honor pagan gods. In this setting, Jesus posed an all-important question that each of His followers—then and now—must address: “Who do you say I am?” Matthew 16:13–28 records Peter’s response.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
What confession about Jesus’ identity did Peter declare in Matthew 16:16 ?	Why is it significant that Jesus chose to discuss His identity in a region known for idolatry?
How did Peter react in 16:22 when Jesus predicted that He would die? How did Jesus then respond to Peter in 16:23 ?	Why did Peter push back against Jesus’ prediction? What kind of example did Jesus’ death set for His followers (see 16:24–25)?
Those who confess Jesus as Messiah enter into a life of self-sacrificial service.	

We really get into deep trouble when we start setting our mind on people’s interests, on people’s opinions, on people’s council, on people’s ideas. Jesus said, “You’re not thinking God’s thoughts, Peter. You’re off target.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Selections from 1 Peter

Peter's Denial Mark 14:27–31, 66–72	
During Jesus' ministry, Peter followed closely in the footsteps of his teacher, and though he often veered from the path, Peter always wanted to get back in step with Jesus. Yet one particularly large obstacle awaited Peter: Jesus' public trial and execution. Would Peter be willing to follow Jesus all the way to the cross? Turn to Mark 14:27–31, 66–72 to find out.	
 Observation	 Interpretation
What prediction did Jesus make in Mark 14:27 ? How did Peter react to Jesus' challenging words in 14:29 ?	Why did all of Jesus' disciples abandon Him? Why did they not want to be associated with Him at His execution?
According to 14:66–70 , at Jesus' trial, how did Peter respond when asked if he knew Jesus?	How is the disciples' negative example instructive for Christians today?
Failure in the past does not nullify purpose in the future.	

There are many ways you can deny our Lord. When that happens, you can pick up the false notion that you can never again have a place with Jesus because of your denial. No way! The gospel is a message of grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Selections from 1 Peter

Peter's Restoration John 21:15–17	
If Peter's denial was the end of his story, it would be tragic. Jesus, however, is a living example of the grace of God, so He decided to give Peter another chance. After His resurrection, Jesus returned to His disciples despite their choice to abandon Him. Then, in John 21:15–17 , Jesus pulled Peter aside to reassure him of his place in God's plan. Hope was not lost! What relief!	
 Observation	 Interpretation
According to John 21:15–17 , how did Peter respond each of the three times Jesus asked, “Do you love me?”	What kind of attitude did Peter maintain in his conversation with Jesus? What does his disposition reveal about genuine repentance?
What three responses did Jesus in turn offer to Peter?	What does Jesus' conversation with Peter teach about forgiveness and grace?
A broken heart is great preparation for healing fractured lives.	

That is an invitation for Peter to move on in his life and to get into shepherding God's flock. It's like a second chance. It's like a reordination. The Lord knew Peter had failed, but He extended grace anyway. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: One Letter of Hope

In his reflections on 1 Peter and the life of its author, Pastor Chuck Swindoll developed this timeless principle:

One letter of hope brings more encouragement than a thousand thoughts never expressed.

Take some time now to read the [full letter of 1 Peter](#). As you read, think about the author's life and how his dark moments of failure ultimately equipped him to write a letter shining with the hope of Christ. Feel free to use Pastor Chuck's chart to guide you as you move through the letter.

FIRST PETER

	Salutation (1:1-2)	Our Living Hope and Holy Life	Our Submission and God's Honor	Our Suffering and Christ's Suffering	Conclusion (5:12-14)
		"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3) ... for the hope we claim (1:3-12) ... by our walk of holiness (1:13-25) ... for our new identity in Christ (2:1-12)	"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake" (2:13) ... to the government (2:13-17) ... at work (2:18-20) ... like Christ (2:21-25) ... in the home (3:1-7)	"Since Christ has suffered" (4:1) Keep a good conscience (3:16) Share the sufferings and rejoice (4:13) Commit yourselves to God (4:19) Be humble (5:6) Cast your anxiety on God (5:7)	
		CHAPTERS 1:3-2:12	CHAPTERS 2:13-3:7	CHAPTERS 3:8-5:11	
Emphasis		Informing	Exhorting	Encouraging	
Grace		... to go on	... to live faithfully	... to stand firm	
Hope		A <i>living</i> hope through Christ's resurrection (1:3)	A <i>righteous</i> hope through personal submission (2:15)	A <i>trusting</i> hope through faith (4:19)	
Theme		Holy living in a hostile world; hope in the midst of suffering			
Key Verses		1:3-5, 13-16; 2:21; 4:12-13, 19; 5:10-11			
Christ in 1 Peter		Jesus is the living stone rejected by men, who has become the Cornerstone of the church and the Shepherd of our souls (2:4-10, 25).			

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Hope Beyond Failure: The Broken Man Behind the Book

Selections from 1 Peter

In what ways does this letter of hope encourage you today? Who in your life could benefit from this encouragement as well?

What parallels do you see between your own life and the life of Peter? How do the lessons his life teaches inspire you to follow Jesus more closely?

Let's wrap it up with this encouraging reflection from Pastor Chuck:

The good news is that failure is never final. No failure, no denial, no sin can trump the grace of God that restores the repentant rebel. Peter's life illustrates this beautifully.²



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I confess that I often am like Peter at his worse moments, demonstrating a lack of faith in You. Thank You for using Peter's example to show me that I can find eternal hope in you even despite my nastiest failures. Transform me and use me like Peter—as a bold witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. It's in His hopeful name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 13 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 143, 145.



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY TWO

Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

We all understand what it means to hurt. Pain is the one common element that unites us together. Because pain is such a pervasive problem, we need a potent prescription. Peter's first letter dispenses the remedy by telling us how we can endure pain, how we can handle suffering—not with clenched teeth but with a deep sense of peace and even joy.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERY single human being who has ever lived knows well the experience of deep emotional or physical pain. Though the seasons of greatest hurt come and go, and while each person's experience with pain is vastly different, no one can deny that suffering is an inescapable reality for *everyone*.

The good news of Jesus Christ promises many things like eternal life, everlasting peace, and extraordinary hope. More specifically, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection will, one day, fully eliminate the powers of sin and death as well as remedy and counteract all their painful effects.

Yet this perfect healing from our suffering won't arrive on this side of life.

Is it possible to find hope in today's pain and even to smile when life hurts most? According to the apostle Peter, the answer is yes . . . but *only* because of the good news of Jesus Christ. This *Searching the Scriptures* study continues our detailed exploration of Peter's encouraging words to a group of early Christians enduring a season of fretful suffering.



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Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12



PREPARE YOUR HEART

You may be feeling the sting of suffering in your body, mind, heart, or soul this very minute. As you open God's Word today, ask Him to remind you of the eternal hope you have in Jesus Christ and the timely hope of His presence.

Father, this life is painful, but I know that You will one day wipe the final tears from my eyes. I look forward to enjoying the eternal life You have promised me. Reveal to me the hope of my salvation through Your Word, and use this time to strengthen and guide me. I know You are with me every step of the way. Thank You. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Whenever you turn to a new book of the Bible, you should ask yourself, "What type of literature am I reading?"¹ First Peter belongs in the *letters* genre. Letters in the ancient world were similar to letters we write today. That means they are *real* documents written by *real* people for *real* reasons in *real* circumstances.

It is impossible, therefore, to understand and apply the message of 1 Peter without first knowing the author, the audience, and the occasion for writing. According to [1 Peter 1:1](#), who is the author of this letter, and who is the audience?

Author: _____

Audience: _____

Peter's readers were forced to scatter for many reasons, some fleeing their homes because of the ever-increasing pressure of persecution against believers in Jesus Christ. Turn now to [1:1–12](#) to discover Peter's purpose in writing to these refugees—to show that Christians can have hope in Jesus Christ, who is greater than even the worst kinds of suffering.



Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12



Observation: Hopeful Words for the Hurting

Read *1 Peter 1:1–12* slowly two or three times. Look carefully at every word, at every phrase, at every sentence, and simply ask, “What does this say?” While it is easy to jump ahead and wonder what the passage *means*, we must always observe a passage thoroughly before we can develop sound interpretations and meaningful applications.²

According to *1:3*, what do those who are “born again” obtain because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Read this verse using a few different Bible translations to see the full scope of Peter’s point.

Jesus’ death and resurrection also provide believers with a “priceless inheritance” (*1:4*). What is the nature of this inheritance?



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY TWO

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

In [1 Peter 1:5](#), Peter explains that God offers protection to those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. According to this verse, what does God protect His children from?

Peter acknowledges the hard reality that every human being “must endure many trials” ([1:6](#)). Yet he demonstrates a distinctively Christian perspective. According to [1:7](#), what unique benefit does that Christian perspective offer through suffering?

What kind of attitude toward God does Peter celebrate in [1:8](#)?



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Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

According to 1 Peter 1:9, what is the result of trusting Jesus Christ?

For those of us who know Jesus Christ, our final chapter is heaven—when we step into the presence of the living God. Nothing else on this earth qualifies as the final chapter. So we always have this hope—this living hope. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Faith, Hope . . . and Trials

Peter originally composed his letters in Greek, and while our English Bible translations are wholly reliable, not every Greek word has a one-to-one English counterpart. Thankfully, the meanings of key theological terms aren't buried in the sands of time. Even if you don't know Greek, you can use Bible study tools to dig deep and unearth the significance of these words.

Peter wrote to those who “must endure many trials” (1 Peter 1:6), and while he could have used many different words to depict his readers' suffering, he chose the word *peirasmos*. Look up this term using Bill Mounce's Greek lexicon available at billmounce.com. In what ways can you translate *peirasmos* into English? How does this term help you understand Peter's point in 1:7?



Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

Faith is a term that pops up so often in Christian vocabulary, few ever stop to ponder its supreme importance. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, *faith* carried undertones of trust or even allegiance. In light of this contextual understanding, what is the nature of a faith-based relationship with Jesus? How does enduring a season of suffering strengthen a Christian's faith?

Peter always clung to the hope he had in Jesus Christ, and he wanted his readers to do the same. Look up *hope* in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com. What (or who) is the object of the Christian's living hope? How does Scripture's perspective of hope differ from the conventional usage of the term *hope* today?

How do trials, faith, and hope relate to one another?



Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

For you who suffer, only Christ's perspective can replace your resentment with rejoicing. And for you who seek, only Christ's salvation can change you from a spectator to a participant. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Israel's Suffering Servant

At the end of the introduction of his first letter, Peter said, “This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you” (1 Peter 1:10). What prophetic words did Peter have in mind as he reflected on the needs of his suffering brothers and sisters?

Though Peter doesn't address a specific Old Testament prophecy in the introduction to his letter, later in 2:22, he quotes [Isaiah 53:9](#)—a key chapter that depicts a Servant of Israel who would suffer on behalf of His people. Peter likely had this chapter in mind as he wrote to his suffering brothers and sisters. According to [53:1–3](#), [7–9](#), what kind of suffering would this Servant endure?

Though these trials would be severe, the Servant would recognize that He would need to persevere for a greater purpose. According to [53:4–6](#), [10–12](#), what did this Servant's suffering accomplish?



Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

How was this prophecy of Israel's Suffering Servant ultimately fulfilled? How would the words of this prophecy offer hope to Peter's readers enduring their own kind of suffering?

Although Jesus suffered greatly, "it was our weakness he carried" (*Isaiah 53:4*). He carried our sins to the cross, and He carries us through our fiery trials today. For that, we can smile as we rejoice.



Application: Rejoicing Even in the Suffering

The words of Peter's letter are as true today as they were nearly 2,000 years ago. You may not have needed to flee from your home because of persecution, but you likely are facing faith-testing trials today.

What kinds of remedies does the world offer to soothe the sting of life's pains? Have you ever tried to find relief from your suffering in these dead hopes? What was your experience like? What lessons did you learn?



Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

How have your past trials tested and strengthened your faith in Jesus Christ?

Hope found in anything other than Jesus Christ will leave your heart feeling empty and dry. Yet those who place their trust in Him can experience abundant, overflowing joy. Peter teaches that we can rejoice because . . .

1. *We have a living hope.*
2. *We have a permanent inheritance.*
3. *We have a divine protector.*
4. *We have a developing faith.*
5. *We have an unseen Savior.*
6. *We have a guaranteed deliverance.*

As you consider the suffering you've experienced in the past week, month, or year, which of these six timeless truths offer you strength to endure?



Hope Beyond Suffering: How We Can Smile Through Suffering

1 Peter 1:1–12

God never promises that all suffering will cease the moment we place our faith in Jesus. That's just wishful thinking, not hope. True hope always looks to Jesus and His perfect sacrifice and rejoices in expectation of the wonderful promise of the things to come—no matter how hard the suffering is in the present.

It is because of this living hope that Peter could say, “Be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead” (1 Peter 1:6).



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for offering me living hope in Your Son. Though I eagerly await the day of His return—the day when all tears of sorrow will dry up—I ask You to use my present trials to strengthen my faith. Give me the ability to trust You and rejoice, even when my suffering is at its worst. I pray these things in Jesus’ hopeful name. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 121.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY THREE

Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21

In God's perfect arrangement, He has deliberately left us on this earth. We live in this crooked and perverse world on purpose. Don't think for a minute that the Lord has made a mistake leaving you and me as His lights in a world that's moving in an opposite direction from Him.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MILLENNIA ago, God uttered a timeless word of caution for all humanity: “Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master” ([Genesis 4:7](#)). Cain, the first recipient of this warning, ultimately chose to disregard God’s word about the ever-present danger of sin. Cain killed his own brother and spent the rest of his days a cursed man.

What was true for Cain then remains true for us today. Sin is everywhere. The world in which God has left His children is “crooked and perverse” ([Philippians 2:15](#)). And unless you set up a strong defense, this unclean world will inevitably corrupt you.

Is there any hope of us overcoming the pervasive power of sin and staying clean?

The apostle Peter answered this very pressing question in his first letter. This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores how believers living in an unclean society can overcome even the fiercest of temptations.



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S03
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Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In [1 Corinthians 10:13](#), the apostle Paul wrote, “The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.” Say this prayer as you prepare your heart to search the Scriptures today.

Father, every day I face great temptation to reject You and embrace sin, but I praise You because You always offer me a way out. Strengthen me through the truth of Your Word today so I can run from sin the next time I'm tempted. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Peter addressed his first letter to “God’s chosen people who are living as foreigners in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” ([1 Peter 1:1](#)). Realities like persecution forced these early Christians to scatter from their homes and live in various regions of the Roman Empire.

When you take a smoldering coal out of a blazing furnace, it cools off quickly. Similarly, the believers to whom Peter wrote were forced out of their homes and Christian communities. Their new environment, dominated by idol-worship and filled with sex parties, posed serious threats to cool and suffocate their fiery faith. In [1:13–21](#), Peter shared how these believers could resist the influence of demonic ideology and keep their faith burning for God.



Observation: Holiness in an Unholy World

Every time Pastor Chuck Swindoll turns the page of his Bible to a new passage, one task and one task only occupies his mind: observation. Before he considers what the words might mean or how he might apply them, he simply asks, “What does this passage say?”¹ As you read [1 Peter 1:13–21](#), note Peter’s commands. List them in the space below.



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21

Living Our Lives in Holiness—1 Peter 1:13–16

In this long series of commands, *1 Peter 1:14* contains Peter’s central desire for his readers living in a corrupt society. Summarize this verse in your own words.

In short, Peter wanted his readers to be holy in an unholy world. According to *1 Peter 1:15–16*, why is it essential for Christians to be holy?

Conducting Our Walk in Reverent Fear—1 Peter 1:17

At the end of *1 Peter 1:17*, Peter exhorted his reader to “live in reverent fear of [God].” According to the beginning of this verse, why must Christians conduct their walk in this manner?



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21

Focusing Our Minds on Christ—1 Peter 1:18–21

Those who don't place their trust in Jesus are enslaved to sin ([Romans 6:20](#)). In [1 Peter 1:18](#), Peter said that God paid the ransom to set Christians free from sin's oppressive grasp. According to [1:18–19](#), how did God pay the price for His people's freedom?

According to [1 Peter 1:20–21](#), for whom did Christ appear? What resulted from God raising Christ from the dead?

Just as children pick up the nature of their parents, so also do we pick up the nature of God. We have a Father who is holy. And Peter says we're to be holy like our heavenly Father.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Importance of Holiness

God's holiness is one of His most important attributes. He made His holiness evident in the very fibers of creation. He rooted the commands of the Mosaic law in His holiness. And He commands His people to live holy lives because the God they serve is holy.



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21

Using your Bible study tools, do some digging to uncover the meaning of the word *holy*. For the basic sense of the term, look up *hagios* in Bill Mounce's Greek dictionary at billmounce.com. For a more detailed discussion, open up in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com. To see the significance of holiness for 1 Peter 1:13–21, check out Constable's Notes at netbible.org.

Now define *holiness* in your own words and express your newfound appreciation about this essential attribute of God.

Because God is holy, He is “set apart” from the rest of creation. After the fall, God's once idyllic creation was cursed by sin and death. Now, the corrupt ways of the world are so insidious that they can deceive, tempt, and lead astray even those with the strongest faith.

Yet in Jesus' final prayer for His disciples, He said, “I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one” ([John 17:15](#)). What is the difference between God removing us from the world's sinful influence and God keeping us safe from it? Why is this difference important?

I have often said, His plan is that we not be isolated from the world but that we be insulated. You and I are left in a world where the majority are going the wrong way. We are left as lights, as examples, as testimonies, as spiritual salmon swimming up the opposite direction from the flow of the river or the stream. And it's on purpose.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean
in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21



Correlation: Jesus' Temptation

Although Jesus was fully God, He also was fully human, which means He experienced temptation. And at the outset of Jesus' earthly ministry, Satan put the holiness of God to the test. For forty days, Satan made offer after offer to try to break Jesus. Read an account of this scene in [Matthew 4:1–11](#), and fill in the chart below as you read.

Scripture	Satan's Offer	Temptation	Jesus' Response
Matthew 4:3–4			
Matthew 4:5–7			
Matthew 4:8–10			



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21

How is Jesus' example instructive for believers facing their own temptations?

The author of Hebrews likely had this scene in mind as he penned his letter. According to [Hebrews 4:15–16](#), why was it important that Jesus endured these temptations?

When Satan's schemes threatened to corrupt Him, Jesus looked to God, and when temptation draws near to us, we can run to Him and find refuge in His example. He stood strong and remained holy, and He desires to see that same holiness flourish in us as well.



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21



Application: A Challenge to Be Different

A slow trickle of dirty water will eventually pollute even the cleanest pond. So it is with Christians who allow the ideas, impulses, and influences of this sinful world to infiltrate their souls. Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers four challenges for believers who desire to remain clean in an unholy world:

1. *Pay closer attention to what you look at.*
2. *Give greater thought to the consequences than to the pleasures of sin.*
3. *Start each day by renewing your sense of reverence for God.*
4. *Periodically during each day, focus fully on Christ.*

In what ways are you tempted to embrace the ways of the world and reject the ways of Christ? Which of these four challenges above can you begin to apply to keep yourself clean from this world's pollution?

Have you let the temptations of the world win recently? You may feel hopeless, but the good news of Jesus Christ is that God offers forgiveness to *any* person for *any* sin. *First John 1:9* says, “But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”



Hope Beyond Temptation: Staying Clean in a Corrupt Society

1 Peter 1:13–21

Write your own prayer of confession below. God will cleanse and forgive you. His pure path awaits.

As long as you live in this world, you will feel tempted by its ways. But that is no reason to despair! The blood of Jesus has cleansed you from your sins, and God has set you apart for His good purpose. So go! Bring the holiness of God to a polluted world and marvel as He uses you for His purpose and His glory.



A FINAL PRAYER

Say this prayer from Pastor Chuck as you wrap up your time in God's Word today:

Lord, hear my prayer today as I ask You to bring to my attention those things that will assist me in staying clean in a corrupt world. Give me an intense distaste for things that displease You and a renewed pleasure in things that bring You honor and magnify the truth. I pray in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY FOUR

Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3

Unity is an almost forgotten virtue.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you ever witnessed anything like this? A fan at a sporting event punches someone cheering for the opposition, causing the stands to erupt into an all-out brawl. A politician goes so far as to break the law to humiliate, or even eliminate, a local rival. A discussion about religion quickly degrades as two family members shout biting words and personal digs. Moments like these reveal a harsh reality . . .

Humankind is more divided than ever.

Each person is unique. There's nothing wrong with that! Yet we live in a time when differing preferences and disparate ideologies produce hostility that threatens to rip apart friendships, families, and entire nations. Communities that once held together like tightly bound ropes have been unraveling. Enmity is fraying the threads—one at a time.

Sadly, even the church is susceptible to this kind of division. Some Christian communities are characterized more by scalding hatred, unfair criticism, and deceptive backstabbing than they are by self-sacrificial love and devotion to Jesus Christ.

How can the church resist the constant temptation to divide and instead come together in Christ? The apostle Peter answered this very question in his first letter and cast a vision of a church that pulls together rather than one that drifts apart.



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S04
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Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Offer this prayer as you prepare to dig into Scripture:

Father, the desires to be right rather than loving, to win rather than encourage, to silence rather than serve tempt me like everyone else. That way is not Your way. Give me the strength to live in peace with all people. Examine my heart through Your Word today, and show me the role I can play to cultivate unity with my brothers and sisters in Christ. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Peter wrote to believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Persecution was on the rise, so the apostle acknowledged that his fellow followers of Jesus would have to “endure many trials” during this season (1 Peter 1:6).

When internal and external pressures push against a Christian community, the threat of division looms closely. Peter recognized this fact, so in 1:22–2:3, he offered his readers several reasons why they should join hands in unity rather than allow their circumstances to force them to go their separate ways.



Observation: United by Love

Most Christians want to apply the teachings of Scripture to their lives. Yet, if we get too eager, we run the risk of not spending enough time understanding the full meaning of a passage. If application is the destination, then observation is the first step.¹ Read 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 closely. This passage is rich with applicable points. For now, however, simply focus on what it says.



Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3

According to 1 Peter 1:22, what happened when Peter's readers "obeyed the truth"? How did Peter want this new reality to affect their relationships?

In 1:23, Peter yet again reminded his readers that they have been "born again" (see 1:3). From what kind of "seed" were they born? According to 1:23–25, how could his readers have assurance of this reality?

According to 2:1, what five kinds of sin did Peter tell his readers to "get rid of"?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3

What image did Peter use to describe his readers in 1 Peter 2:2–3? What does this imagery represent?

How do you develop unity and community so that you don't live your lives so damnably lonely? First, there is obedience to the truth. Second, there is purity of soul. Third, there is a lack of hypocrisy. That's what makes it possible to pull together. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Pure Lives, Pure Love, Pure Unity

Peter said, “You have *purified* your souls. . . . So love one another earnestly from a *pure* heart” (1 Peter 1:22 NET, emphasis added). Christ’s purification of believers’ souls strengthens them to love one another more powerfully, which tightly binds them together in unity.

Peter referred to the love he desired his readers to embrace as *philadelphian anypokriton*—“unhypocritical brotherly love.” Those living in the first-century world considered their siblings among their closest companions, and many would have even felt closer to their siblings than their own spouse. How does this context help you understand the nature of Christian unity?



Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3

Look over your list of the five vices in [1 Peter 2:1](#). How do these kinds of behaviors damage Christian unity? For additional insights into the meaning of these vices, look up the meaning of some of these terms in Bill Mounce's Greek dictionary at billmounce.com: [kakia](#), [dolos](#), [hypokrisis](#), [phthonos](#), and [katalalia](#). Or look on page 176 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*.

What positive behaviors and attitudes counteract these five negative vices? How do these virtues cultivate unity in a Christian community?

For Peter, love and unity cannot exist without one another. Yet Peter didn't come up with this revelation on his own. Rather, he learned it from his Teacher . . . *the One who embodied love in everything He did*.



Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3



Correlation: A Demonstration, a Command, and a Prayer

If Jesus wanted His followers to be characterized by any trait, it was love. On His last evening with His disciples, He taught the importance of this virtue through a demonstration, a command, and a prayer.

First, Jesus *demonstrated* self-sacrificial love. According to [John 13:4–5](#), what did Jesus do for His disciples? And according to [13:14–15](#), what example did Jesus set through this action?

Then, Jesus *commanded* His disciples to love one another. According to [13:34–35](#), *how* were the disciples to love one another? What would be the result of them showing this kind of love?



Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3

Finally, Jesus *prayed* for His disciples. According to [John 17:20–23](#), what was Jesus' desire for His disciples? How do your answers to the previous two questions help you understand how Jesus envisioned His desire being fulfilled?

I would love to see the day when Christians are so closely drawn together that nothing divisive can penetrate the circle. They stick together because the group is such a tightly knit team! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: True Unity

In this world characterized by division and hostility, Pastor Chuck offers four reasons why we can pull together in unity:

1. We are children of the same Father: *our heavenly Father*.
2. We take our instruction from the same source: *the Word of God*.
3. We have our struggles in the same realm: *the flesh and sin*.
4. We focus our attention on the same objective: *spiritual maturity*.



Hope Beyond Division: Reasons for Pulling Together

1 Peter 1:22–2:3

What kinds of issues, practices, or beliefs most threaten the unity of your local Christian community? Which of these four reasons above will cause your brothers and sisters in Christ to pull together?

Have you experienced division with a certain Christian brother or sister lately? What would it look like for you to strive for unity by showing this fellow follower of Jesus Christ unhypocritical brotherly love?

Many would say that true unity is impossible. Peter would argue that true unity is impossible . . . *without Christ*. Nothing ties a community of Christians together like the love of the Savior. Accept His love. Bind it to your relationships. And link arms with your brothers and sisters in Christ.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the love You've shown me throughout my life. You chose to join Yourself to me in Christ even though I did nothing to deserve it. Help me come together with my fellow believers in Jesus Christ—even those I find hardest to love. Make me a person of unity, not a person of division. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY FIVE

Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12

In light of your role as a living stone in a building that will never be destroyed, in light of your role as a priest in the same temple, as a chosen race, as a holy nation, as a people for His own possession, as a people who have received mercy, your life will be the reason the world turns to Christ.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FOR nearly 2,000 years, Christians have been laboring to build up the kingdom of heaven here on earth. Jesus laid the foundation through His life, death, and resurrection. Ultimately, He is responsible for building His church (see [Matthew 16:18](#)). He does so through His people. As they spread the King's gospel, new people receive the King and the promises of His kingdom.

Ever since Jesus proclaimed, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations” ([28:19](#)), His followers have wondered *how* they could best go about achieving this goal.

Some followers have chosen to be roadside preachers or traveling teachers. Others have taken a grittier approach by spreading the gospel through dedicated service to the needy. Other Christians have used books, articles, tracts, billboards, and even television advertisements. Though the approaches vary, all can be effective.

Yet God doesn't want His followers to get so focused on the way they spread the gospel that they neglect their own *hearts* behind their efforts. The attitude behind evangelism mattered greatly to the apostle Peter, and in his first letter, he addressed how Christians can best cooperate with Christ to build His kingdom.

How?

By becoming living stones.



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Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare to study the Bible, spend some time praying to its Author and the Architect of the kingdom:

Father, thank You for so generously welcoming me into Your kingdom. I am eager to be a citizen who serves the King well. Use my time in Your Word today to shape me into a living stone whose life is a powerful witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. In His strong name I pray, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When some of the original recipients of 1 Peter looked up after reading the letter, what they saw looked nothing like home. In fact, many Christians in that day had fled their homes as the storm of persecution assaulted them. So Peter wrote to these exiles to fortify their faith during a time when countless pressures threatened to fracture it.

In [1 Peter 2:4–12](#), the apostle reminded his readers of their essential identity in Christ. Peter demonstrated how this identity will not only strengthen believers but will also draw in nonbelievers.



Observation: The Identity of God's People

The foundation of effective Bible study is observation.¹ Without a frame of strong observations, our interpretations will be shaky, and our applications will fall flat. Read [1 Peter 2:4–12](#). Then read it again . . . and again! Read it as many times as you can, and each time you read, keep track of new observations.

Living Stones—1 Peter 2:4–8

In [1 Peter 2:4–8](#), Peter uses the image of stones to create a metaphorical description of the Christian's new identity. Don't worry about discerning all the details about the metaphor right now. We'll look more closely at the imagery's meaning during the interpretation phase. For now, focus only on what the passage says.



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12

According to 1 Peter 2:5, what is God doing with these living stones? What are the living stones to do in response?

According to 2:4, 6–7, who is the Cornerstone? What happened to this Cornerstone?

Each time someone trusts Christ as Savior, another stone is quarried out from the pit, cemented into place through the kind work of the Holy Spirit. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Other Titles—1 Peter 2:9–12

Then, in 1 Peter 2:9–12, Peter offered clarity to the stone imagery by describing the identity of God’s people. According to 2:9, what four titles did Peter ascribe to his readers? (Hint: look for the words “you are.”)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12

According to [1 Peter 2:10](#), how does a person's essential identity change when he or she places his or her faith in Jesus Christ?

Peter did not want these powerful realities simply to stay in his readers' hearts and minds. He wanted these truths to move hands and feet as well! According to [2:11–12](#), how did Peter want his readers to act in light of their identity in Christ? What would be the result of these actions?

I believe God is still at work in His church, and I believe that His church will never stop growing until it has come to its fulfillment. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12



Interpretation: A New Temple

The stone metaphor in [1 Peter 2:4–8](#) appears complex at first, but Peter's Jewish readers would have put the pieces together and realized that he was using the image of the Jewish temple to describe the new people of God. Jesus Christ is the temple's cornerstone—the essential first stone. And He builds all other believers on top of His foundation to create a new temple for God.

Look up the term [temple](#) in a Bible dictionary (like *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* at [biblestudytools.com](#)), and write down what you discover. As you read, consider these questions: What was the purpose of the temple? What kinds of activities took place in the temple? Why was the temple a key part of the Jewish faith?

Previously, God's temple, and consequently His presence, was planted in Jerusalem. When Jesus died, the temple's veil tore, symbolizing the release of God's presence from the temple ([Matthew 27:51](#)). Now, God's presence dwells in His church—in the corporate body of believers. And because the temple is comprised of *living stones*, it is a *living* entity.

In what ways does the corporate body of believers today carry out the original purpose of the physical temple in Jerusalem? How does knowing this affect how you live your Christian life?

As living stones comprising a living temple, believers in Jesus Christ can bring the presence of God to the entire world. What a privilege for us! What a gift for the world!



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12



Correlation: The People of God . . . Then and Now

As you have already realized, this passage is full of references and allusions to the Old Testament. Yet one of the most important passages Peter points to is [Exodus 19:5–6](#). Read this passage, and in the chart below, record all the parallels it shares with [1 Peter 2:4–12](#).

Exodus 19:5–6	1 Peter 2:4–12

God shared the words of [Exodus 19:5–6](#) with Moses right after He miraculously led the Israelites out of Egypt and right before He gave Moses the law. Essentially, these verses explain what it means to be the people of God, so Peter found it fitting to repeat these words to his readers exiled in a world of paganism as they awaited their entry into the heavenly promised land.

An essential role for the people of God—both then and now—is to be a *priesthood* for the world. Jewish priests had the responsibility of entering the temple to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people of Israel. Essentially, they acted as mediators between God and the Israelites. Israel’s task, therefore, was to channel God to the Gentile nations.



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12

How can the church act out its role as the priest between God and the world today?

We are all career priests—all of us. And you're not fulfilling your role as a child of God if you're not carrying out the functions of a priest. Priests offer up prayers. They bring spiritual sacrifices. They represent the needs of others. They traffic in spiritual truths throughout their day. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Living as Stones and Priests

The final step of the Bible-study building project is application, as it puts the finishing touches on the hard work of observation, interpretation, and correlation. So, what does it mean practically to be a living stone, a priest in this new temple of God? Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers four pieces of advice on living out the Christian identity Peter expressed in [1 Peter 2:4–12](#):

1. *Live a clean life.*
2. *Leave the lost no room for slander.*
3. *Do good deeds among unbelievers.*
4. *Never forget that you are being watched.*



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12

Have you ever seen your own example or another Christian's example draw a nonbeliever closer to Christ? What action specifically led this nonbeliever to shifting his or her perspective on God or Jesus?

What words would the non-Christians in your life use to describe you? Take some time to reflect. And be honest! Transparency paves the way toward transformation.

Which of Pastor Chuck's exhortations do you need to take more seriously today? How would adjusting your behavior in this way transform you into a more effective priest for Christ?



Hope Beyond Guilt: Becoming Living Stones

1 Peter 2:4–12

The heart of Peter's program of evangelism is simple: embrace your identity as one who belongs to God, and you will naturally point others to Jesus. This is what it means to be a living stone. Remind yourself daily of what Jesus has done for you and who you now are because of Him, and you will carry out the role of a faithful priest.



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your own prayer in the space below. Ask God to use you as a living stone and a priest in new and powerful ways.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY SIX

Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25

I'm convinced in my heart that if we were good students of submission we would get along a lot better in life. Submission is the one thing that works against our nature. Our problem, however, is that we don't actually do it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

How do you respond when someone rips you off? Assertive personality types might want to take justice into their own hands and try to get even. Meeker individuals tend to adopt an attitude of passivity when experiencing life's unfairness. They may run and hide from the potential threats of life. Others simply try to ignore the pain by looking the other way and saying, "That doesn't bother me!"

While these responses are typical—or even encouraged—they often lead to resentment that grows into bitterness, which slowly eats away at the soul like acid. Are those the ways to respond when ripped off? No! Scripture offers an alternative option—one that enables you to press on with a cool head and soft heart.

Outsiders often consider this biblical option foolish. Yet the wisdom of God is folly to the world. Only that biblical option offers eternal blessing not found anywhere else. This *Searching the Scriptures* study explores that option to help you understand and embrace the way of Christ when—not if—others treat you unfairly.



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Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25



PREPARE YOUR HEART

You might be feeling the sting of unjust treatment at this very moment. Offer your feelings to God in prayer before you open His Word:

Father, I can write a long list of the people who have treated me unfairly throughout my life, but in this moment, examine me and take away any bitterness that might hide in my heart. I don't want to grasp onto any pain that might make me miss what You want to teach me today. In Jesus' gracious name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Throughout the history of the church, followers of Jesus Christ have been abused because of their faith. Christians have lost their jobs for refusing to compromise their convictions. Some families will banish a member who converts to Christianity. And believers all over the world today experience the constant threat of ghastly violence simply because they worship Jesus.

The recipients of 1 Peter experienced this kind of mistreatment for their faith. With each passing year, the flames of persecution burned hotter and hotter. Naturally, some of these early Christians wanted to retaliate, to rebel, to fight fire with fire.

Yet Peter turned this impulse upside down in [1 Peter 2:13–25](#) as he demonstrated that the appropriate Christian response to unjust behavior is not resistance but *submission*.



Observation: A Disposition of Submission

“What does this passage say?” This question ought to always be at the front of your mind as you study a new passage of Scripture. If you don't observe a text and know what it says, then you will never be able to discern its meaning and application.¹ Read [1 Peter 2:13–25](#), and for now, focus only on what the passage says.



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25

According to 1 Peter 2:13, with what command did Peter begin this section of his letter? What rationale did he provide for this command in 2:14? How do these verses relate to the context of the letter?

In 2:15, Peter provided the reason for the command in 2:13–14. What is God's will for His people?

In a paradoxical twist, Peter affirmed to his readers that they are truly free because they are slaves to God. In light of this reality, Peter offers five commands in 2:16–17 on how a slave of God can lead a life of holy submission. List the commands below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25

Peter then took his framework for handling mistreatment and focused on a specific example. What group did Peter address in [1 Peter 2:18](#), and what command did he give them?

According to [2:19–21](#), what was Peter’s rationale for offering such a difficult command?

Peter’s point is simple yet challenging. We can endure unjust suffering because Jesus our Savior endured even more unjust suffering. According to [2:22–25](#), what kind of suffering did Jesus endure? What were the results of this suffering?

Peter is appealing to believers to live submissively, ultimately to the Lord and then to those with whom or for whom they work—not only to the good and gentle, but also to the cruel and unreasonable. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

STUDY

1 Peter 2:13–25



Interpretation: The Meaning of Submission

When ancient Greek-speakers envisioned the meaning of *submission*, certain images came to mind. The term was used to depict one bone arranged under another, a person standing under the protection of a shield, or a piece of parchment appended to the end of a document. In its most basic sense, submission refers to something that is placed or positioned beneath something else.

Peter took this imagery and applied it to relationships. To submit is to place yourself beneath another—both willingly and actively. In other words, “Respect everyone” (1 Peter 2:17). Yet Peter took this command a step further. Respect even those who mistreat you.

Some today might hear the word *submit* and think of it in negative terms—like someone acting out of blind obedience, no questions asked. Or like someone acting as a doormat, no struggle returned. Yet Peter turned these ideas on their heads and painted them in a *positive* way.

In light of this context, what does it look like to “submit to all human authority” (2:13)? Why does it matter that followers of Jesus submit to others, especially to those who mistreat them?

Put yourself in the well-worn sandals of a first-century slave. Your previous master, Cornelius, was “kind and reasonable,” treating you like a family member (2:18). But his business was failing, and he needed more cash. So he sold you to his neighbor Marcus—a “cruel” man (2:18).

Marcus follows Aristotle’s philosophy, so he considers his slaves mere property. To him, you are no different than his trusty knife or his favorite chair. He does *whatever* he wants to you. He overworks you. He abuses you when you don’t correctly anticipate his desires. You’ve even witnessed him kill some of your fellow slaves for disobeying him.



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25

Naturally, you scoff at Peter's exhortation to submit to Marcus "with all respect" (1 Peter 2:18). *How can I respect this man? He doesn't offer me even the slightest shred of dignity. How can I submit? Shouldn't I revolt against this evil institution?*

Now reread 2:18–23, still imagining you're this slave. How could those in the most undignified positions, even slaves like you, find *true* dignity based on their identity in Christ? How is Peter's radical teaching instructive for Christians today?

Just because Peter accepted the reality of slavery doesn't mean he approved of it. Sadly, his pen couldn't erase slavery and its horrors. He did, however, write a word of hope. Christ is our true master (2:16), and He is the shepherd and guardian of our souls (2:25). Our brokenness and pain will eventually fade away, and Jesus will one day give us new, resurrected bodies.

True freedom awaits us in eternity.



Correlation: Jesus' Teaching on Submission

Jesus led a life of self-sacrifice even in His dying breath. His teachings foreshadowed the kind of death He would die and demonstrated why His followers should adopt a posture of submission in their relationships.



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25

Read [Matthew 5:38–42](#), and in your own words, summarize Jesus' teaching in these verses. According to Jesus, how should a citizen of the kingdom of heaven respond when he or she is treated unfairly?

Jesus' words in [5:38–42](#) may sound startling, confusing, or even irrational. Yet later on, Jesus explained why believers can maintain a posture of submission to those who treat them poorly. According to [16:24–26](#), what does it take to be a true follower of Jesus? What must a Christian be willing to give up to obtain true life?

Jesus Christ is our example. But we are so quick to defend ourselves. Quick to fight back! Quick to answer back! Quick to get back! When's the last time you deliberately took it on the chin, kept your mouth shut, and gave Christ all the glory? That's a rare, rare thing, I say to our shame. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25



Application: A Costly Call

No one is immune to mistreatment. So, we must be ready to respond in a Christlike manner when such mistreatment inevitably arrives. What is your natural impulse when someone mistreats you? Do you want to get even? Do you retreat into yourself? Do you try to ignore the pain? What were the results of this behavior for you in the past?

As Jesus hung on the cross, fighting for every single breath, he whispered, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing” ([Luke 23:34](#)). Jesus didn’t want His oppressors to suffer. He wanted, rather, for them to experience God’s mercy. Is there someone you need to forgive today? How would your offer of openhanded forgiveness affect this relationship?



Hope Beyond Unfairness: Pressing On Even Though Ripped Off

1 Peter 2:13–25

How can you practically submit to those who have historically treated you poorly? Write down some specific ways you can place their needs above your own.

The call to submit is a difficult one . . . a *costly* one. It involves giving up our own desires, our own comforts, and even our own safety to serve others. Doing so would be *impossible* if Jesus hadn't first lovingly submitted *to* us by willingly giving up His own perfect, divine life *for* us. No one was treated more unjustly than our Savior, yet He endured the pain anyway.

Because of His example, we can continue to give ourselves to love, serve, and submit to others—even those who treat us unfairly.



A FINAL PRAYER

As you conclude your time with God, write your own prayer in the space below.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY SEVEN

Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

Peter is on target when it comes to marriage. You will never read stuff like this in the Times or in Newsweek or in any periodical you'll ever receive in this generation. You'll only get it from the Scriptures. And this works! The truth of it works. It works, men and women!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FROM the very beginning, marriage has been a central component of the song of God's creation. The harmony between husband and wife echoes the unity, intimacy, partnership, and love between God and humanity. Everything about marriage sings of God's glory . . . at least it *should*.

Yet in any marriage, pressures from within and without constantly threaten to drown out unity—financial troubles, parenting challenges, unforeseen illnesses, communication breakdowns, difficulties with in-laws. Almost half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce, and many who decide to stay together are barely hanging on. Sadly, the tune of marriage often sounds more discordant than harmonious.

How can a Christian couple live out their marriage according to God's beautiful design? To answer this question, the apostle Peter acted as an orchestra conductor, guiding Christian couples to play along in God's symphony for domestic harmony. Those who follow his instruction will cultivate a harmonious marriage that will both glorify God and demonstrate the love of Christ.



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Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, you will discover the importance of prayer in marriage. Yet prayer is essential for any follower of Jesus Christ—married or not. Say this prayer before you open God’s Word today:

Father, teach me through Your Word what it means to be a loving spouse. I want to glorify You and reflect Christ’s character in all my relationships. Equip me to do so right now. In Jesus’ loving name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

According to the apostle Peter, a key behavior characterizes the Christian life: willing and active submission. Because Christ willingly and actively submitted to His accusers and allowed Himself to be unjustly executed (1 Peter 2:21–25), Peter wanted his readers to adopt this same attitude as they endured a season of unjust persecution at the hands of a corrupt government (2:13–17).

Peter took this same principle and applied it to specific relationships. Slaves are to follow Christ’s example in their relationships with their masters (2:18–20). Then in 3:1–7, Peter turned to the subject of marriage to exhort Christian husbands and wives to adopt Christ’s posture of self-sacrifice and love in the home. Such instruction is always vital, but especially in Peter’s readers’ context—away from home in a hostile land.



Observation: Exhortations for Husbands and Wives

Read 1 Peter 3:1–7 and keep track of your observations as you read.¹ Pay careful attention to *what* Peter wants wives and husbands to do and *why* he wants them to do those things.



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

Wives—1 Peter 3:1–6

What exhortation did Peter offer to Christian wives in *1 Peter 3:1*? Note how Peter starts this verse saying, “In the same way.” In the same way as whom are wives to carry out this action?

According to *3:1–2*, what did Peter expect would happen to unbelieving husbands if their believing wives were to act in this manner?

How did Peter describe the world’s standards of beauty in *3:3–4*? How does this contrast with how “the holy women of old” demonstrated their *true* beauty (*3:5*)?



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

To whom did Peter point as a prime example of this kind of true beauty in *1 Peter 3:6*? What kind of behavior did she demonstrate?

Husbands—1 Peter 3:7

What two exhortations did Peter offer to Christian husbands in *1 Peter 3:7*? Note how Peter starts this verse saying, “In the same way,” just as he did in *3:1*. In the same way as whom are husbands to carry out this action?

According to *3:7*, what is the result of Peter’s vision for Christian marriage?



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

This paragraph is written precisely to people who live with disobedient mates, mates who are going their own way, mates who care little about the things of God, mates who would even mock the things of Christ. It's easy to say, “Sure, I'll be that kind of spouse I should be as long as my spouse does the same.” Yet Peter calls us to something much greater.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Timeless Principles for Harmonious Marriage

When we interpret a passage of Scripture, we consider what the text *means* in light of our observations. Then, we develop timeless principles based on our understanding of the passage. For some help working through the more difficult details of the passage, consider using a commentary like Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter* or *Constable's Notes*, available for free at netbible.com.

Use the following prompts to develop timeless principles for Christian husbands and wives:

Principle #1: *Christian wives are called to . . . by . . .*

Principle #2: *Christian husbands are called to . . . by . . .*



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

How would a Christian husband and wife who follow these principles cultivate marital harmony?

According to the world’s standards, what are the ultimate goals for marriage? In what ways is Peter’s vision for Christian marriage different from this worldly framework? How is Peter’s approach ultimately more dignifying to women, men, and the institution of marriage?

Wives, how you view your actions, your adornment, your attitudes, your attention couldn’t be more important. Husbands, how you approach living with your wife, getting to know your wife, honoring the woman God gave you couldn’t be more important.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God’s Design for Marriage

From the earliest days of creation, marriage was on God’s mind. After creating the man, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him” ([Genesis 2:18](#)). When God realized that none of the animals would make a suitable companion for the man, God created the woman.



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

Read [Genesis 2:23–25](#). What principles do these verses teach about God’s intended design for marriage? Remember, these events occurred before the fall.

Many millennia later, the apostle Paul would turn to these very verses in his own discussion on the importance of Christian marriage. According to [Ephesians 5:31–32](#), what mysterious reality did God design marriage to represent?

How do these readings from Genesis and Ephesians help round out your understanding of Peter’s exhortations in [1 Peter 3:1–7](#)?

When a Christian couple heeds Scripture’s exhortations for a healthy marriage, their very relationship acts as a beacon for the gospel—shining the light of Christ’s love and God’s unity with humanity.



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7



Application: Growing in Domestic Harmony

There are many ways a couple can apply the principles of *1 Peter 3:1–7*, and Pastor Chuck provides some starting steps:

1. Spend some time thinking about what you appreciate most about your spouse. Write down three or four things and share them with him or her.
2. Admit to your spouse one thing you'd like to change about yourself. Ask him or her to join you in your journey of personal sanctification.

Write down one step that you and your spouse can take this week to cultivate harmony, not discord, in your marriage.

If you are single and want to be married, how does this passage provide you with guidance as you consider a potential future spouse? How can you apply Peter's principles to make yourself a more marriage-ready person?



Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7

According to Peter, when a marriage is strong, the couple’s “prayers will not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). Prayer is essential to a healthy marriage. Would you say prayer is a common practice that you and your spouse share? What steps can you take this week to cultivate a culture of prayer in your home?

Every couple will admit that carrying the tune of marriage in perfect harmony is just plain difficult. When two sinners live under the same roof, discord is unavoidable. Yet Peter offers a path toward unity—a relationship characterized by Christlike love and self-denial. Cultivating these qualities within your home doesn’t guarantee a perfect marriage, but doing so will cause you and your spouse to live in closer harmony than you ever thought possible.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I want to lead a life that glorifies You and reflects the self-sacrificial character of Christ. Today, start with my marriage. Work in me to be a person of harmony, not discord. Remind me of the great sacrifice He made so You and I might have a harmonious relationship. Give me the strength to follow His example. It’s in His name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*.”



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY EIGHT

Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

Without a doubt, the process of spiritual growth is long and often a very painful one. En route to maturity, we all spill our milk. We say things we shouldn't say. And at times, we do not act our age. It's not a pretty sight, but it's reality. Yet growing up is a stated objective for every member of God's family. Growing old happens, but growing up isn't automatic.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE journey from infancy to adulthood is a journey into maturity. At each waypoint on this voyage, a person has the opportunity to demonstrate his or her developmental progress.

Toddlers slowly figure out how to eat on their own, to walk on their own, to use the potty on their own. As they grow into young children, they learn the art of language, proving to be fluent speakers and skilled readers. Adolescents take the last steps into adulthood when they finally break from full dependence upon their parents.

As a person passes each of these milestones, he or she takes important steps in the process of growing older. Yet there is an important difference between growing *older* and growing *up*. Many who have crossed the threshold into adulthood do not necessarily exhibit behavior that matches their age. Likewise, some have character far beyond their years.



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Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

Jesus said that those who put their trust in Him are “born again” ([John 3:3](#)). The moment you choose to follow Jesus, you receive the gift of new life, and you return to infancy . . . spiritual infancy. Yet many Christians do not realize or accept they are able to grow spiritually and that they are responsible for their spiritual maturity. So they never take steps to grow!

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will zero in on this topic of Christian maturity. It is possible to know if you are growing or not. The apostle Peter offers a checklist of sorts you can keep handy to help assess how well you are growing spiritually in Christ.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

When we study Scripture, we look at the life of Jesus, whose mature example we seek to follow in everything we do. Take a moment to ask God to conform you to Jesus’ image through the power of the Holy Spirit:

Father, each day, I want to take another step down the path of spiritual maturity. Help me take that step today by showing me through Your Word what the life of a mature Christian looks like. I pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

How do I live out my Christian faith when it feels like the whole world is working against me?

In 1 Peter, the bold apostle provided profound—yet challenging—answers to this important question. In [1 Peter 2:13–3:6](#), he addressed specific individuals: those mistreated by the government ([2:13–17](#)), slaves ([2:18–21](#)), wives ([3:1–6](#)), and husbands ([3:7](#)).

Then in [3:8–12](#), Peter turned his attention away from these individuals and looked to “all of you”—to all those who made up the community of faith ([3:8](#)). The marks of Christlike character Peter discussed in these verses function as maturity checkpoints, both for individual believers and for a local Christian community.



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12



Observation: The What, How, and Why of Christian Living

As Peter addressed the behavior of the broad body of Christ in [1 Peter 3:8–12](#), he answered three questions: *What? How? and Why?* Keep these questions in mind as you observe these verses.¹

According to [3:8](#), what kinds of qualities should characterize the Christian community? (Hint: these five characteristics are easiest to observe in a more word-for-word translation like the *New American Standard Bible*.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In [3:8](#), Peter answered the question, “What should I do?” Then, in [3:9a](#), he answered the more pragmatic question, “How can I do it?” What can a follower of Jesus practically do to embody all the attributes of [3:8](#)?

Next, in [3:9b](#), Peter answered the question, “Why should I do these things?” What result awaits believers who faithfully demonstrate this kind of behavior?



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

According to 1 Peter 3:10–11, what should you do “if you want to enjoy life / and see many happy days” (1 Peter 3:10)?

The main ideas of this passage are nicely reviewed in 3:12. Summarize this verse in your own words.

The great secret of our collective unity and personal maturity, I have found, is focusing our full attention on the person of Jesus Christ and agreeing on points related to Him, His message, His kingdom, His model. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12



Interpretation: Developing Character in Community

The apostle's words in [1 Peter 3:8–12](#) reveal eternal truth about what kinds of Christlike character traits reflect true maturity. What kinds of qualities underlie the behavior Peter encouraged? List as many qualities as you can! For some help, look at pages 212–214 of Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*. Or for a free online resource, check out [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#).

How would an individual's cultivation of these qualities result in the strengthening of the Christian community? Similarly, how can the community foster the growth of these qualities within one of its individual members?

Why is it essential for the body of believers to remain unbreakably bonded together? Remember, Peter wrote this letter to Christians who were facing unfair treatment at best, and full-blown persecution at worst.



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

As Peter shared these exhortations with his brothers and sisters in Christ, he reflected on the example of one great hero of the faith: King David. Let's see how his example can push us toward true maturity.



Correlation: From David to Peter

In the correlation phase of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, we correlate the themes of our main passage with the themes of other passages it references. Doing so allows us to gain a greater appreciation for the lessons God wants to teach His people.

For many of Peter's original readers, the words of this passage would have reverberated in their minds like a familiar tune. That's because, in [1 Peter 3:10–12](#), Peter echoed the words of David in [Psalm 34:12–16](#).

Before David took the throne of Israel, he was gaining popularity with the people. Yet, at the same time, he was garnering animosity from King Saul. The king was strong in stature but weak in spirit, and because he was jealous of David's fame, he tried to kill David. Despite Saul's relentless pursuit, God preserved David . . . again and again.

David penned [Psalm 34](#) as he pondered the events of [1 Samuel 21:10–15](#). Based on this passage, what drastic measures did David take in the hostile gentile territory of Gath to escape Saul's wrath?

Now read [Psalm 34](#). How does seeing the context of [1 Samuel 21:10–15](#) and Saul's pursuit of David help you better understand and appreciate the message of this psalm?



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

How did David's circumstances correlate with those of the earliest Christians? How does Peter's allusion to David's conflict with Saul help you better understand and appreciate the message of *1 Peter 3:8–12*?

"Taste and see that the LORD is good. / Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!" (*Psalms 34:8*). During one of his greatest trials, David remembered all the times God demonstrated His goodness. Reflecting on God's faithfulness strengthened David to trust God. And faith is the seed from which all other characteristics of a mature Christian ultimately grow.



Application: Metrics for Maturity

Based on his study of *1 Peter 3:8–12*, Pastor Chuck developed eight checkpoints a Christian can use to gauge his or her own spiritual maturity. Read through the list slowly, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you which of these characteristics you are actively reflecting in your life. Place a check mark next to each of your strengths.

1. Unity
2. Mutual Interest
3. Friendship and Affection
4. Compassion
5. Humility
6. Forgiveness
7. A Controlled Tongue
8. Purity and Peace



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

How can you know if you're on the right road to maturity? Go back over that list and do an audit of your life. We all have weak points along the way. In fact, I don't know of one that hasn't been a struggle for me at times in my own life. But that's what I pray about. Ask God for strength in these areas of weakness. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Which of these qualities would you like to improve in your own life right now?

These eight checkpoints connect with each other like a web of virtue. As you cultivate one, others grow with it. How can you lean into your strengths to fortify your weaknesses?

As you look back on your Christian journey, at what points were you most progressing in maturity? What kinds of steps were you taking to bring you further down that road? What would it look like for you to keep walking down that same path?



Hope Beyond Immaturity: Maturity Checkpoints

1 Peter 3:8–12

The apostle Paul once said, “When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things” (*1 Corinthians 13:11*). Growing up is hard . . . at least without the Spirit of God helping you. Yield to His presence today. Put away those childish things. And grow into the mature Christian person God has created you to be.



A FINAL PRAYER

In the space below, write your own prayer asking God to help you move down the path of true maturity.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “*How to Study the Bible for Yourself*.”



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY NINE

Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

1 Peter 3:13–17

How can I feel blessed by God if I’m getting unfair treatment? That’s a good question. Because you have been called to go through this, it’s a reminder that God’s hand is still on your life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT do children on the playground say when someone picks up the soccer ball and throws it into the goal? *That’s not fair!* People have a similar reaction when a young mother or father’s life is cut tragically short by illness: *That’s not right!* And when a criminal goes free while the true victim goes to prison, protestors line the streets shouting, *That’s not just!*

Engrained in the very nature of every human being is a deep desire for fairness, rightness, and justice. That’s because every human being is made in the image of God, and He is entirely righteous and just. Yet we all must come to a hard realization at one point or another . . .

Life just isn’t fair.

Many who come to this realization choose to maintain a *human* perspective. They say things like, “Because life isn’t fair, I’m not going to play fair.” But that kind of thinking only perpetuates the problem.

The apostle Peter, however, calls us to adopt a *divine* perspective—one that recognizes that God remains just even when life isn’t fair. This *Searching the Scriptures* study will explore how to keep your eyes on God even when you face mistreatment because of your commitment to Him.



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Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17



PREPARE YOUR HEART

When life feels unfair, it's easy to grow bitter and shake your fist at God, wondering, *How could You let this happen to me?* Yet God is righteous and just, and His divine plan is greater than our small human imaginations. Offer this prayer as you prepare your heart for Bible study:

Father, life hasn't always been fair to me, but I praise You for lighting even my darkest days. Teach me today how to better trust You and love others—even those who treat me poorly for no reason at all. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The tagline for Peter's first letter could read: *finding hope when life isn't fair*. The apostle's original audience was undergoing a season of persecution, and he wrote to encourage them regarding the eternal hope they have in Christ. Specifically, he wrote to:

- Citizens of an unjust government (1 Peter 2:13–17)
- Slaves of unjust masters (2:18–20)
- Wives of unjust husbands (3:1–6)
- Husbands of unjust wives (3:7)

Despite all the mistreatment his readers endured, Peter offered a word of hope:

*The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right,
and his ears are open to their prayers.
But the LORD turns his face
against those who do evil. (1 Peter 3:12)*

Then in 3:13–17, Peter explained why believers can find hope in Christ despite the worst mistreatment.



Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17



Observation: Suffering Harm for Doing Good

Read [1 Peter 3:13–17](#) carefully, slowly, repeatedly. As you read, keep track of any observations about what the text says.¹ We’ll uncover what this passage means and how we can apply it later in the study.

Peter opened this passage with a rhetorical question. Yet he provided no direct response to this question because the answer ought to be obvious. What is the implied answer to the question Peter posed in [3:13](#)?

According to [3:14](#), what will God do for those who suffer for doing what is right? How should those who remain faithful to God respond to threats against them?

What two commands did Peter extend in [3:15](#) to those who suffer for doing what is right? (Note: In the original Greek, this second line technically isn’t a command. Instead, it describes *how* one can practically carry out the main command.)

1. _____

2. _____

Overall, Peter desired his readers to maintain a clear conscience when they face mistreatment. According to [3:16](#), why is it important to live a life of integrity during trials?



Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17

Peter clearly stated the central theme in [1 Peter 3:17](#). Summarize Peter’s conclusion in your own words.

When you face undeserved treatment, consider yourself uniquely blessed by God. Do not run in panic or sit in worry. Acknowledge Christ as Lord even over this event. Be ready to give a witness. And always keep a good conscience. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: A Reason to Hope

Sometimes, the word *if* suggests a nearly impossible reality—like the person who wishfully imagines, *If I win the lottery*. . . Many apply this kind of thinking to [1 Peter 3:14](#) and assume Christians will *never* “suffer for doing what is right.” Yet Peter’s perspective was quite different.

Peter thought it unlikely for someone to endure unjust treatment for doing good deeds. After all, who would want to harm another who is “eager to do good” ([3:13](#))? Yet the Greek of [3:14](#) shows that Peter acknowledged that this kind of suffering is still a very real possibility. In fact, he had already personally endured such mistreatment for his faith in Christ.

What timeless principles does this passage teach about Christian suffering at the hand of others?



Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17

Hope. An essential element of this passage and a central theme of the entire book. Biblical hope—*true* hope—is more than wishful thinking or even enthusiastic optimism. It’s an assurance that God will do what He says He will do.

Hope looks back to remember God’s past faithfulness. In what ways does hope look to the future (see 1 Peter 3:14)? How should this confident expectation affect how we live in the present?

In 3:15, Peter exhorted his readers to “be ready to explain” the reason for their hope in Christ. A key Greek word in this verse is *apologia*, from which we derive the English terms “apology” and “apologetics.”

Peter didn’t want his readers to apologize for their faith in Christ. He also didn’t expect them to engage in heated debate with every naysayer. While it’s important to be able to articulate what you believe and why you believe it, Peter had something specific in mind.

Based on 3:14–16 and the broader context of the letter, what did Peter envision a believer’s explanation of his or her hope to look like?

There is nothing like being observed in a time of mistreatment. It is a perfect platform for a witness. Your neighbors will want to know how you do it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17



Correlation: Love for Jesus, Hatred from the World

As these difficult words flowed from Peter’s pen, his mind likely returned to the final meal he enjoyed with His Master and Friend. As Jesus prepared His disciples for His imminent death, He shared what life would be like for His followers after His departure. Read [John 15:18–26](#) to see what Jesus said about mistreatment.

According to [15:18–19](#), what kind of treatment should followers of Jesus expect from the world? Why should they expect this kind of treatment?

According to [15:24](#), what kind of good deeds did Jesus do? How did the world respond to these good deeds? By extension, what response should followers of Jesus expect when they do good deeds in His name?



Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17

This seemingly bleak audit of the Christian experience ended on a high note: “But I will send you the Advocate” ([John 15:26](#)). Later in His conversations, Jesus explained why this is good news. According to [16:7–11](#), why is the presence of the Holy Spirit better than the physical presence of Jesus? How do Jesus’ words here relate to His warnings in [15:18–25](#)?

Jesus did nothing but good works. He was the only human being ever to do so. Yet the world hated Him. Compassionate teachings were met with scolding. Merciful miracles were met with beatings. A call to a new way of life was met with crucifixion. If Jesus suffered in this way for doing good, then we who follow Him should expect the same.

So how can we prepare for such mistreatment?



Application: Facing Unjust Treatment

Just as Peter warned, you won’t often face mistreatment for your good deeds. Yet it will likely happen at some point, so it’s worth being prepared. Pastor Chuck Swindoll suggests five perspectives to maintain when you face unjust treatment:

1. As far as the act of injustice is concerned, be happy. Consider yourself uniquely blessed by God.
2. As far as your persecutor is concerned, be calm. Remember that nothing can cause eternal harm to those who rest secure in Christ.
3. As far as the Lord is concerned, be faithful. Acknowledge Christ as Lord even in your suffering.
4. As far as others are concerned, be prepared. Testify about your hope in Christ that carries through mistreatment.
5. As far as you are concerned, be pure. Keep a good conscience—especially when you feel bitterness and resentment.



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Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17

Have you ever faced mistreatment for doing good? How did your hope in Christ and His promises carry you through this trial?

What actions does your current cultural climate consider *bad*, even though God considers them *good*? How does your awareness of these conflicting standards help you prepare for a time when you might experience mistreatment for your good deeds in the future?

Peter knew better than anyone that this world is hostile to Jesus Christ, to His message, to His followers. Peter’s life would later come to a gruesome end when he faced an upside-down crucifixion for his faithfulness to His Savior. Peter really believed his own words: “Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!” (1 Peter 3:17).

Will you also believe these words?



Hope Beyond Bitterness: When Life “Just Ain’t Fair”

STUDY

1 Peter 3:13–17



A FINAL PRAYER

You may be enduring a season of unjust treatment right now. Use this prayer from Pastor Chuck to place this situation in God’s hands.

Lord, I know you’re with me right now. You’re much too gracious to take advantage of me. You’re much too kind to be cruel. You’re much too good to be unjust. Take charge. Use my integrity to defend me. Give me the grace to stay calm. And above all, be the Lord over my present situation. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”



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HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY TEN

Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

Isn't this passage a grand statement of faith? It's almost like another creed that one might memorize or state from Sunday to Sunday.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SINCE the birth of the church, Christians across the world have joined voices to recite shared liturgies called “creeds.” When we speak the words of these creeds, we reaffirm our trust in the most essential Christian beliefs. One of the most popular creeds is called the Apostles’ Creed:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord:
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended to hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*



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Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

Those who confess these theological truths today participate in the global, centuries-long chorus of committed followers of Jesus Christ . . . going all the way back to the days of the apostles.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study looks at what may be one of the earliest creeds regularly recited by the first Christians. By standing on these ancient, powerful words, we will not only *affirm* our faith in Christ, but we also will *bolster* it in preparation for when we will inevitably endure seasons of great testing.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Some creeds are long and dense, but the beauty of the gospel is that it is still simple enough for a small child to understand and believe. Say this simple prayer to affirm your faith in God:

Father, I believe in You. I believe that Your Son died for my sins, and I believe that He has saved me. I believe that You have already given me new life through the Holy Spirit, and I believe that I will live with You forever. I trust You. Strengthen my faith today. I pray these things in Jesus' faithful and true name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The original recipients of the letter called 1 Peter endured great suffering. Some faced violent persecution. Others lost their homes and their jobs. And many were separated from their families and communities . . .

All because of their faith.

Such poor treatment might seem deserved for criminals and crooks, but Peter's audience consisted of good people who simply wanted to serve their Lord and do well to others. In light of these challenging circumstances, Peter shared even more challenging words in [1 Peter 3:17](#): "Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!"

Though Peter's words may seem preposterous, he proved his point in [3:18–22](#) by pointing to the example of the One who endured great suffering while being the greatest human who ever lived: Jesus Christ. Peter knew that by anchoring his trust in the just One who died for the unjust, he could endure the fiercest storms of suffering and mistreatment.



Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22



Observation: An Ancient Creed

Before you begin making observations, read [1 Peter 3:18–19 in the New English Translation](#).¹ Do you notice how these verses are offset from the rest? This format helps us see these words as an ancient creed—a simple snapshot of the gospel. Read the words aloud. Feel the rhythm of the poetry. Let the truth wash over you.

According to [3:18–19](#), for what purpose did Christ suffer and die? What happened after Jesus died?

In [3:20](#), to what historical figure did Peter compare the work of Christ?

According to [3:21](#), what did the water represent in Peter's extended metaphor? What does this water accomplish?



Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

According to [1 Peter 3:22](#), where is Christ at the present moment in time? What kind of status does He currently maintain?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in dying on the cross, provided us with an entree into heaven. He gave us access. And the access to heaven is now permanently paved. It is available to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Dead, Buried, and Risen with Christ

This passage contains a couple of key issues that Bible scholars debate even today. But don't let what's muddy distract you from what is as clear as fresh water.

Imagine you were sharing the gospel with someone, and you could only use [1 Peter 3:18–22](#) in your conversation. What would you say? In other words, what essential truths of the Christian faith are embedded within this brief paragraph? As you write your response, take note of how these truths match up with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

As you explain the gospel according to [3:18–22](#), you might run into a tricky question based on [3:21](#): *Is Peter saying that I am saved through the work of baptism?*



Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

The key to answering this question is found in the expression “not the removal of dirt from the flesh.” The Greek word *sarx* literally refers to physical flesh, but the biblical authors tended to use the term figuratively to refer to humankind’s sinful tendencies. In his statement in [1 Peter 3:21](#), Peter appeals to *both* the literal and the figurative use of the term *sarx*.

How does this literary context help you understand the meaning of Peter’s words about baptism? If baptism cannot cleanse your sinful flesh, then what does it represent? For some guidance, check out [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org.

One lingering interpretive question remains that causes even the most learned believers to scratch their heads in confusion: What in the world did Peter mean when he said that Jesus “went and preached to the spirits in prison” ([3:19](#))? To answer this question, we must turn back the pages of time to one of the earliest moments of creation.



Correlation: Christ and the Spirits

When Peter referenced Noah in [1 Peter 3:20](#), he provided an interpretive key that allows his readers to unlock the meaning of his cryptic words in [3:19](#). In these verses, Peter connected Christ’s work of salvation to the well-known history of Noah and the great flood.

[Genesis 6:1–8](#) records the context of the events that precipitated God’s choice to send the cataclysmic flood. [Genesis 6:5](#) notes the main reason why God sent the flood: “The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil.”



Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

God wouldn't allow humanity's evil actions to persist in His presence, yet the evil of another group also offended God's righteous character. According to [Genesis 6:2](#), what did the "sons of God" do? According to [6:4](#), what was the result of these actions?

Christians have long debated the identity of these "sons of God," yet it seems best to view them as fallen angels. By having children with human women, these supernatural beings polluted the human race, causing God's true image-bearers to bear children in the image of their demonic fathers. God would not allow these creatures to continue to mar His beautiful creation.

It might sound like Jesus preached a gospel of salvation to these evil spirits, but the Greek word translated "preached" is *not* the term typically used to describe evangelism. Instead, Jesus made a certain *proclamation*. What message did Jesus declare when He visited these spirits? For help, look at pages 222–225 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*.



Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

In light of this context, what message about Christ's work of salvation did Peter communicate by comparing Christ to Noah in 1 Peter 3:20?

The cross is our ark. It is our way of life. It is the way to get through the death-like world about us. And baptism came in as a beautiful expression or picture of the waters of death.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Peter concluded this section by portraying Jesus sitting on the throne of heaven, with “all the angels and authorities and powers” bowing to Him (3:22). No human, no angel, no demon is greater than Jesus. Only by His descent into the grave could He emerge King of the universe at His resurrection.



Application: My Belief, My Response

By rehearsing the words of the creeds, we do more than simply affirm the historic Christian faith. These words also strengthen our faith in preparation for times of trial. How? Pastor Chuck points out two specific ways.

First, when unjust suffering seems unbearable, remember the crucifixion. What do you find most comforting about your shared suffering with Christ? How can this comfort strengthen your trust in Him the next time you face a season of suffering?



Hope Beyond the Creeds: Focusing Fully on Jesus Christ

1 Peter 3:18–22

Second, when fear steals your peace, remember the resurrection. What fears have been invading your mind lately? How can the hope that you will one day be resurrected with Jesus Christ expel those fears?

You may not know what the future holds, but you can have deep assurance that the truths Peter recorded in his letter will stand the test of time. And when you find your faith faltering, remember the words of one struggling follower of Jesus: “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!” ([Mark 9:24](#)).



A FINAL PRAYER

For your closing prayer, go back to the beginning of this study and read aloud the Apostles’ Creed as a prayer to God. As you speak these powerful truths, hear them as a declaration of faith in the life-changing work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in your life and in the history of the world.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY ELEVEN

Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

You and I are surrounded by lost people, people who do not know the Lord, people whose lives are marked by sin. And we who live in this foreign land, away from our heavenly home, live for the will of God. There should be a marked contrast in our lifestyles.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

If you've ever traveled abroad, an entirely new set of sensations likely hit you as soon as you stepped off the plane or train.

You saw people who didn't look like you wearing clothes you can't buy at your local stores. They spoke an unfamiliar language you couldn't even begin to comprehend. As you moved through the region, you smelled new combinations of meat, spices, and vegetables that stimulated your tastebuds with mouthwatering flavors.

You soon couldn't help but think, *I'm not at home anymore.*

Those who place their faith in Jesus receive a new citizenship. Because they now belong to the kingdom of heaven, they are no longer "at home" in this world. For now, they remain in this pagan world as exiles awaiting their full homecoming with their God and King.

So how should we act while we're away from home? The apostle Peter answered this question in his first letter, and this *Searching the Scriptures* study will explore his exhortation to remain faithful to Christ on our journey from earth to heaven.



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Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Bible study isn't merely an exercise for the head. It should engage the heart as well. Begin your time in Scripture today by speaking with your heavenly Father:

Father, I long to be united with Your Son in our heavenly home, but I recognize that You've left me here on this earth for a purpose. Through my time in Your Word, shape me and prepare me to serve You and Your purpose for my life. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The majority of Peter's readers lived on foreign soil. Each day, they interacted with people who looked, spoke, and acted differently from them. The most jarring discrepancy between the lives of Peter's audience and their foreign neighbors was evident in their religious experience.

The Christians worshiped and adored one God who loves them, while their neighbors sacrificed to many gods to pacify these false gods' anger. In fact, each foreign family likely pledged allegiance to a unique set of gods. But the followers of Jesus had no idols and offered no sacrifices.

In essence, the original recipients of 1 Peter were living in a thoroughly *pagan* world. So, in [1 Peter 4:1–6](#), the apostle Peter demonstrated how Christians can shine brightly for Jesus even in a dark, wicked, and hostile world.



Observation: Provision, Transformation, Reaction

As you read [1 Peter 4:1–6](#) and make observations, place yourself in the sandals of one of Peter's original readers. Imagine yourself in a foreign land. Those around you treat you with ambivalence at best, and at worst, they malign, ostracize, and persecute you.



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

His Provision—1 Peter 4:1a

With what word did Peter begin this section in *1 Peter 4:1a*? How does this word link this passage to the previous one? In your own words, summarize the key ideas from *3:18* and *3:22*.

In *4:1a*, Peter firmly told his readers to “arm themselves.” Although the Greek term here is usually used to describe military preparation, Peter put a twist on its meaning. Those who are in Christ must arm themselves with what?

Our Transformation—1 Peter 4:1b–3

According to *1 Peter 4:1b*, what kind of relationship with sin do those who suffer for Christ have?



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

What two kinds of dispositions did Peter contrast in *1 Peter 4:2*?

“You won’t . . .” _____

“But you will . . .” _____

In *4:3*, Peter expounded upon his point in *4:2* and reminded his readers what it was like before they knew Christ and when they chased their own desires. What kinds of “evil” behavior do “godless people enjoy”?

Their Reaction—1 Peter 4:4–6

According to *1 Peter 4:4*, what two reactions will non-Christians have when they see new Christians refuse to “plunge into the flood of wild and destructive” behavior of the world?

1. _____

2. _____

According to *4:5*, what future awaits those who slander followers of Jesus? And according to *4:6*, what future awaits those who accepted the gospel but now are dead?



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

First, we no longer serve sin as our master. Second, we no longer spend our days overcome by the desires we once had. Third, we now live for the will of God. Fourth, we have closed the book on godless living. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: To Remain Faithful

In [1 Peter 4:1b](#), the apostle offered some puzzling words: “For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.” Some think this verse suggests that only believers who have endured great persecution can achieve true sanctification. This assumption sees a cause-and-effect relationship between these two realities—as if only suffering *causes* sanctification.

It is better, however, to see an evidence-then-inference relationship in Peter’s words. Consider this statement: “If you have a runny nose, you are sick.” Your runny nose provides *evidence* that allows someone to *infer* that you are fighting an illness. Now reread [4:1b](#). What kind of inference can you make about a believer who endures unjust suffering because of his or her faith in Christ?

A key goal of interpretation is to develop evergreen theological principles based on your observation of a passage.¹ Using the following format, develop two or three timeless truths based on [4:1–6](#): *To remain faithful to Christ in this pagan world, Christians should . . . because . . .*



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

You and I live our lives as Christians away from home. We are citizens of another land, but we're left here to demonstrate what it is like to be a member of another country, to have a citizenship in another land, so we might create a thirst and an interest in that land.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Daniel's Example

The apostle Peter's instruction to remain godly while living in a thoroughly *ungodly* environment is perfectly demonstrated in the life of the prophet Daniel. Daniel spent his life in exile, away from his home of Israel. He was swimming in the waters of paganism—in constant contact with divination, idol worship, and sacrifices to false gods. Yet he didn't allow these influences to drown his faith in God.

As a result, King Darius witnessed Daniel's strong character and offered him a position of high leadership in the empire. The other rulers hated that their king gave special treatment to a foreigner, so they tried to show that Daniel didn't deserve his new prestigious role. What scheme did these rulers devise in [Daniel 6:5–9](#) in the hope of causing King Darius to turn against Daniel?

According to [6:10](#), what did Daniel do when he heard the king's decree? What does Daniel's response reveal about his character?



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

Despite Daniel's valuable service to the kingdom, he ultimately defied Darius' decree. The king wanted to keep his trusted ally by his side, but the law was the law. So he begrudgingly threw Daniel into the lions' den to be devoured. According to [Daniel 6:19–23](#), what happened the morning after Daniel entered the den?

When Darius witnessed Daniel's faith, he made a proclamation to the whole kingdom:

"I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel.

For he is the living God,

and he will endure forever." ([Daniel 6:26](#))

That's the joy of being left on foreign soil. You get to acquaint non-believers with that life that is now yours, and it can be theirs too. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: A Shocking Way of Life

Today, you may feel like Peter's readers or Daniel—as if you're living in an entirely foreign land. If you're wondering how you can navigate life in this dark world, Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers this counsel:

1. *Continue living for Christ.*
2. *Expect to be misunderstood.*
3. *Keep your eyes fixed on Christ.*



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

What kinds of worldly influences most tempt you to chase “your own desires” and dampen your desire “to do the will of God” (*1 Peter 4:2*)? How does knowing that you have a new heavenly citizenship strengthen you to resist these influences?

Have you ever felt misunderstood by those who don’t follow Jesus? Have they ever mistreated you because of your commitment to Him? How did you respond in these situations? How did Christ strengthen you to persevere?

As you consider your circle of relationships, who are the closest non-Christians in your life? How can your faithfulness to Christ be a positive witness of the good news of His kingdom? Write down some practical ways you can do this.



Hope Beyond the Culture: How to Shock the Pagan Crowd

1 Peter 4:1–6

Do you feel far from home today? Does your soul ache for the day when you will dwell with Christ? Don't despair in your feelings, but rejoice, knowing that one day He will lead you out of exile. Until then, remain faithful to Him. Your example may very well inspire others to join you on your journey.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, it's not easy living in this world that is hostile to You, Your message, and Your people. Give me the strength to continue living for Christ. Even if I am misunderstood or mistreated for my faith, help me keep my eyes on Him. Though I'm eager to enter my true home, I will faithfully carry out the purpose You've left me here to fulfill. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY TWELVE

Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11

What I find in these verses are four commands and one goal. Notice the commands and observe how urgent and simple Peter keeps the goal. Since time is short, we must heed Peter's words.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN time is short, things get urgent and simple. When you see a small child fall into water, you jump right in regardless of what you're wearing or what's in your pockets. When your home catches fire, you might think about your possessions burning only after your whole family makes it out safely. When you receive the call that a loved one has just a few hours to live, you drop *everything* to go and be by his or her side.

Though these are costly decisions, they are usually not difficult to make. In these tense moments, your priorities almost naturally set themselves in the right order. When time is short and when the stakes are high, worldly possessions, busy schedules, and personal aspirations become inessential.

Central to the message of the New Testament is the imminence of Jesus' return. He *will* come back to rid from His beautiful creation the powers of sin and death for good, and He *will* do it soon. And those who follow Him must *always* be ready for His return.

So how do we prepare for Jesus' arrival? The apostle Peter answered this question in his first letter. He knew that time was short, so he offered simple instructions for how believers can set their priorities straight and live faithful and focused lives—while maintaining a posture of poise, not panic—as they await the return of their Lord.



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Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11



PREPARE YOUR HEART

For Christians, prayer should sit at the very top of the prioritized “to-do” list. Our regular communion with God reminds us of our dependence on Him while aligning our desires with His. This is why King David wrote:

*“Morning, noon, and night
I cry out in my distress,
and the LORD hears my voice.” (Psalm 55:17)*

In Bible study, prayer prepares our hearts to hear and receive God’s Word. Before you turn to 1 Peter, offer your own prayer to God. Ask Him to help you see the urgency and importance of Christ’s coming return.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The world is ending.

Have you ever felt this way—especially during difficult seasons of life? The original readers of 1 Peter certainly felt like their world was coming to an end. Many of these committed believers had lost their jobs, their homes, their families, and even their lives because of their faith in Jesus Christ. So Peter offered a word of comfort . . .

“The end of the world is coming soon.” (1 Peter 4:7)

But what is comforting about the end of the world? For Peter, the end of the world wasn’t *bad* news at all. Instead, he knew it was *good* news because it meant that Christ would return to restore creation to its God-designed state of goodness and wholeness. In [4:7–11](#), Peter wrote to address how believers in Jesus Christ should live in light of this hope.



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11



Observation: Four Commands

You can't understand and apply the truth of God's Word if you don't first know what the actual text says.¹ Read [1 Peter 4:7–11](#) two or three times using different Bible translations. As you read, pay attention to the sense of urgency in Peter's words.

Peter opens this section with the heavy words, “The end of the world is coming soon” ([4:7](#)). What word immediately follows this statement? What kind of literary relationship does this word create between Peter's words about the end of the world and the statements that follow?

In [4:7–9](#), Peter offers three commands. List them below:

[4:7](#): _____

[4:8](#): _____

[4:9](#): _____

According to [4:8](#), which of these three commands is the “most important of all”? Why does Peter have such a high view of this particular practice?



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11

According to [1 Peter 4:10](#), what has God given to each believer of Jesus Christ? In light of this reality, what fourth command did Peter offer to his readers?

What two gifts did Peter specifically address in [4:11a](#)? For those who have one of these gifts, how are they to use them?

According to [4:11b](#), what is the result of a believer carrying out these four commands?

Since He gets the glory, we're comfortable leaving the results with Him. Since He gets the glory, our limited umbrella of love is expanded. Since He gets the glory, our interest isn't in ourselves, but in showing courtesy and hospitality and warmth to others. Since He gets the glory, our spiritual gifts are exercised, not as a chore or a duty, but as a gift.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11



Interpretation: One Goal

Though Peter gave his readers four specific points of instruction, he had one goal in mind: *to glorify God*.

God's glory is a theme that pops up in nearly every book of the Bible. Yet this all-important term is often difficult to define. Using your Bible-study tools, do some digging on the meaning of the word *glory*. For a free online resource, check out [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) available at [biblestudytools.com](#). Pastor Chuck's favorite Bible dictionary is *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*.

What spiritual gems did you uncover as you researched this term? What is God's glory? Why is it so important for believers of Jesus Christ to glorify God with their lives?

How does following each of the four commands Peter discussed in [1 Peter 4:7–10](#) help us achieve the goal of glorifying God?



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11

Of the four commands, Peter used the most ink discussing the proper use of spiritual gifts. Yet speaking and serving aren't the only gifts God gives and uses for His purpose. The apostle Paul also discussed spiritual gifts in [Romans 12:6–8](#), [1 Corinthians 12:28–30](#), and [Ephesians 4:11–12](#). In the space below, list every spiritual gift addressed in these passages. What stands out to you about your list?

The goal is to glorify God. Without that, your teaching becomes a drudgery, your helping leads to burnout, your evangelism is an intense thing that allows you to never rest. No, when the glory of God is your goal, it is amazing what it does to your spiritual health.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Good Soldiers of Jesus Christ

As the apostle Paul sat in prison and recognized his own time was short, he penned a letter to his protégé Timothy. He wrote to pass the torch of ministry and to share key bits of wisdom he gathered in his decades of service to Jesus Christ. Yet the letter of 2 Timothy is no theological *magnum opus*. Rather, it is a deeply personal and practical reminder of God's faithfulness.

In [2 Timothy 2:3–4](#), Paul refers to Timothy as “a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” What did Paul want Timothy to do as a soldier?



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11

Paul shared these words because he knew what challenges stood on the horizon for Timothy, and he wanted his spiritual son to have his priorities straight. According to [2 Timothy 3:1–5](#), what will happen “in the last days” ([2 Timothy 3:1](#))?

According to [4:1–5](#), how did Paul want Timothy to respond in light of the reality that time is short until these dark last days arrive?

Paul knew his time left on the earth would soon expire, so he encouraged Timothy to live as if his time were short as well. And we, too, are wise to heed Paul’s instructions as we seek to live as good soldiers of the cross today.



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11



Application: Urgent Living

In *1 Peter 4:7–11*, the apostle built his instruction on the truth that “the end of the world is coming soon” (*1 Peter 4:7*). How does knowing that time is short until Jesus’ return affect the way you view your time here on earth? How does the nearness of this event realign your priorities?

In what ways are you most tempted to seek out your own glory over God’s? In what practical ways can you cast aside your own preferences, desires, and agendas and set your eyes on God and His glory?

Look back at the list of gifts you compiled in the interpretation section. Read through the list and circle one or two gifts you believe God has given to you. You may not have a public gift like teaching, but God still wants to use you to serve His greater purposes. In what ways can use your gifts to serve others better and to bring more glory to God?



Hope Beyond Extremism: Marching Orders for Soldiers of the Cross

1 Peter 4:7–11

Time is short. Jesus is coming back soon. Let's get our priorities straight. Thankfully, what He expects of us is clearly and simply laid out for us in God's Word. Pray deeply. Love fervently. Care hospitably. Serve selflessly. Do these things, and everything else will fall into place as your life shines as a beacon of hope pointing toward God and His glory.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I eagerly await the day of Christ's return. I know that my time here on earth is short, so help me understand the urgency of being a good soldier of the cross, of being a faithful witness to the gospel. Give me the wisdom and the courage to realign my priorities around loving others and glorifying You. In Jesus' glorious name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY THIRTEEN

Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

Tests are never wasted. God never says, “Oops, I made a mistake. I shouldn’t have given you that one.” It’s not like that. He specifically arranges our trials with our weaknesses and immaturity in mind. He bears down and doesn’t let up. And we groan, and we hurt, and we weep, and we pray, and we grow, and we learn.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FOR millennia, one of the most valuable natural resources has been *gold*. Though not as practical as resources like lumber or oil, gold has captured the eyes and hearts of many due to its brilliance, elegance, and beauty. Yet, the journey that a piece of gold takes to become a shiny ring is not an easy one.

The gold that miners extract from the earth is rarely pure. It is dirty, jagged, and often alloyed with other metals. To separate the pure gold from its contaminants, the metal must undergo an intense refining process.

The refiner begins by placing the metal into a crucible and heating it to nearly 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. At this point, the gold melts, and the impurities slowly rise to the top of the glowing molten mixture. With sweaty brow and steady hands, the refiner gently stirs the mixture and carefully skims all the impurities off the top until only liquid gold remains.

Finally, the refiner pours the molten gold into a mold. Once the liquid cools and the metal solidifies, the process is complete. And that newly minted gold ring is ready to shine brightly for all the world to see.



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Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

For Christians, the journey of spiritual growth is remarkably similar to the journey of that gold ring. The Master Refiner uses fiery trials to purify our character and cleanse our hearts. The process is often painful, but the results are undeniably beautiful.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God’s Word and prayer are essential in our growth—no matter the process God may choose. Say this prayer as you prepare to engage with Scripture today:

Father, I want to live a life that glimmers with Your goodness and glorifies Your greatness. Use my time in Your Word to show me how You can use my trials to “create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10). In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The apostle Peter knew that suffering is an unavoidable reality. But he argued that “it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong” (1 Peter 3:17). Righteous suffering is a central theme throughout Peter’s first letter, and he reiterates the same idea in 4:12–19, while adding a new spin.

Peter sees a trial, not merely as a struggle to endure, but as a challenge to enjoy. Why? Because it cultivates unspeakable joy deep within the heart of a believer. The kind of joy grounded not in our wavering circumstances, but in our unchangeable God.



Observation: React, Remember, Rely

Take several minutes to read 1 Peter 4:12–19. Then read it again. Reread it as much as your schedule allows! The better you know what the passage says, the better you will be able to understand its meaning and apply its truth.



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

How to React—1 Peter 4:12–13

Peter opens this section of the letter with two commands. One negative, saying what *not* to do. One positive, saying what to do *instead*. What did the apostle say *not* to do in [1 Peter 4:12](#)?

According to [4:13](#), what should believers in Jesus Christ do *instead*? Why can they act this way?

What to Remember—1 Peter 4:14–18

According to [1 Peter 4:14](#), what is true of those who are insulted because of their faith in Christ? Why is this the case?



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

What two causes for suffering did Peter contrast in 1 Peter 4:15–16?

According to 4:17–18, what truths did Peter affirm about the reality of God’s judgment?

On Whom to Rely—1 Peter 4:19

What central goal of Christian suffering did Peter describe in 1 Peter 4:19? According to this same verse, how can a believer practically achieve this goal?

Are you going through a fiery trial today? This is an opportunity to draw upon maximum power from God. Maybe the suffering you’re going through is deserved, but most suffering should in no way cause you to feel ashamed. In fact, your suffering may be timely and needed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19



Interpretation: Truths about Trials

A central goal of interpretation is to use your observations of a passage of Scripture to develop timeless theological truths that always remain valuable for any follower of Jesus.¹ This passage is full of truth that God wants to use to refine you.

Odds are, you aren't a murderer, a serial thief, or a convicted criminal. (And even if you are, God's grace is abundant enough to forgive *any* sin.) However, Peter elevated one particular sin—one that is *very* easy to commit—to the same level as these more intense sins.

The term translated “prying into other people's affairs” used in [1 Peter 4:15](#) describes a pot-stirrer, a busybody, or a meddler—someone who tries to oversee or manage the affairs and lives of others. What might cause someone to be tempted to act this way when facing trials? Why is this kind of behavior problematic for followers of Jesus?

What did Peter mean in [4:17](#) when he said, “For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household”? Write a timeless principle on Christian suffering and God's judgment. For some help, read pages 151–152 of Pastor Chuck's Swindoll's commentary *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*. Or look at [Constable's Notes](#), a free online commentary available at netbible.org.



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

In what ways does this passage reveal that God uses fiery trials to refine and sanctify believers?

No matter the source, no matter the intensity, there’s something about suffering that draws us back to the basics. Invariably, especially during the most intense trials, I go back to what I really believe. I go back to prayer and dependence and getting quiet and waiting on God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Wisdom on Trial

Peter is not the only biblical author who addressed the relationship of suffering and sanctification. Jesus’ half-brother James discussed this theme, approaching the topic with a focus on God-given wisdom.

According to [James 1:2–4](#), how should Christians respond *when*—not *if*—they “encounter various trials” (NASB)? Why should they respond in this manner?



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

That’s easier said than done, James! James likely expected this response from his readers, and he offered his reply in [James 1:5](#). What should Christians do when struggling with trials? According to [1:6–8](#), in what manner are they to carry out these actions?

How does James’ message in [1:2–8](#) help round out your understanding of [1 Peter 4:12–19](#)?

Prayer is one of the many instruments God uses to refine us during our fiery trials, yet He uses another key tool in the polishing process: *remembrance*.



Application: Personal Growth through All the Heat

When you faced your own fiery trials in the past, you may have felt burned by God—as if He had forgotten or even abandoned you. But your hurting is not His harming. God allows you to face the heat to refine you into the complete, beautiful person He designed you to be. Pastor Chuck offers two points of application from [1 Peter 4:12–19](#) on achieving growth through trials.



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

First, when trials come, remember that God is faithful. Rest in Him! In what ways has God shown His faithfulness to you throughout your life? Take some time to reflect on this question. Then thank God for His rock-steady character. How can your memory of God’s faithfulness help you stand strong and withstand the heat of a trial that might come in the future?

Second, when trials stay, remember to do what is right. Hide in Him! When the fiery trials of life burn hottest, what vices do you tend to pursue in an attempt to cool off the flames? What kinds of pure, Christlike virtues should you pursue instead in order to please God (*1 Peter 4:19*)?

What practical steps can you take today to find more joy in your trials?



Hope Beyond Our Trials: “When Through Fiery Trials . . .”

1 Peter 4:12–19

Hundreds of years ago, an unknown believer composed a hymn called, “How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord.”² As you conclude your study, reflect on the second and fourth stanzas, sung from the perspective of Jesus speaking to the Christian facing a fiery trial:

“Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
for I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand. . .

“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
my grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
the flames shall not hurt thee; I only design
thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.”

Fiery trials await each one of us on our path. Only by God’s grace will you be able to endure the painful heat. And when you emerge from the flames, though you may bear some burns and scars, you will be refined and “come out as pure as gold” (*Job 23:10*). Take heart in that truth.

Only then will you find joy in your trials.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, give me the strength to withstand the fiery trial I am facing today. Though I am often tempted to turn away from You because of the pain, help me remember Your faithfulness, so I can endure this trial in a Christlike way that is honoring to You. I trust You to use this experience to purify, refine, and sanctify me. In Jesus’ faithful name, Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “How to Study the Bible for Yourself.”
2. K— [pseud.], “How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord,” 1787, hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/how_firm_a_foundation_ye_saints_of.



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY FOURTEEN

Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

No textbook, no course can make you a shepherd. It is a calling. If you do not have that calling, do not pursue the pastorate because it requires the heart of a shepherd.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE role of the pastor is unlike any other. So it can be difficult to determine what kind of qualities make someone a *good* pastor.

Many view the pastor as a CEO who manages the administrative side of the church, grows the congregation, and never loses sight of the bottom line. For some, the ideal pastor has the polished looks and smooth speech of a politician—one who casts a bright vision for the future and campaigns for a few key causes. Others prefer pastors to have the iron will of a commanding officer who offers weekly marching orders that keep the church in line.

While any pastor would benefit from having skills in management, administration, and leadership, the picture that Scripture paints of the ideal pastor spotlights a different set of qualities. In fact, a great Christian leader must have the qualities of a *shepherd*.

While a worldly leader may be forceful, a shepherd is *gracious*. While a worldly leader may be obstinate, a shepherd is *patient*. While a worldly leader may be callous, a shepherd is *understanding*. While a worldly leader may be narcissistic, a shepherd is *loving*.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will explore these Christlike qualities of shepherds to demonstrate how Christian leaders can faithfully tend to those whom God put under their care.



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4



PREPARE YOUR HEART

No minister of the gospel can shepherd God's sheep without looking to the *true* Shepherd for guidance, nourishment, and protection. As you prepare to explore Peter's vital direction, pray the words of [Psalm 23](#):

*"The LORD is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD
forever."*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The first four chapters of 1 Peter contain teachings that would challenge even the most seasoned believer. Peter called his readers to endure the most unjust kinds of suffering by clinging to their hope in Jesus Christ. Yet Peter wasn't a fool, and he knew that this was easier said than done. He recognized that these struggling believers needed someone who could lead by example.



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

So, in *1 Peter 5:1–4*, Peter addressed the Christian elders—those mature believers whom the community held in highest regard. Yet, instead of calling them to step up and take command, he exhorted them to bow down to Christ and to follow Him as their Chief Shepherd.



Observation: Guidelines for Shepherds

Begin your study by reading *1 Peter 5:1–4*. Read it slowly. Read it carefully. Read it deliberately. As you read, observe the words. Examine the details. Notice the exhortations. Doing so will help you understand the passage's meaning and apply its message later on.

According to *1 Peter 5:1*, what group of individuals within the Christian community did Peter specifically address? _____

Notice how Peter includes himself in this group. What hopeful experience will Peter and this group of struggling believers share in the future?

In light of this future hope, what central command did Peter extend to this group in *5:2a*?



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

In 1 Peter 5:2a, Peter offered a command, and in 5:2b–3, he explained how to do it. What steps did Peter give to obey his central command?

According to 5:4, what awaits those who heed Peter's commands upon the return of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd?

We pastors must watch our tendency of wanting to gain dominion over others—of wanting to think of them as underlings. No, think of yourself as a servant, not as sovereign. This wonderful section of Scripture is a good reminder that, as important as it is to be in authority, it is never appropriate for us to lord it over others. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4



Interpretation: The Role and Attitudes of Shepherds

Peter wrote [1 Peter 5:1–4](#) specifically for “elders” of Christian communities. This term may feel unfamiliar to you, but Peter’s readers were closely familiar with the roles and responsibilities of elders.

Using your Bible-study tools, look up the term *elder*. (For a free online resource, check out [Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) available at [biblestudytools.com](#).) Look up some New Testament passages that discuss elders and write down some key takeaways. What kinds of things did elders do? What is the modern-day equivalent of an elder?

Some Christian leaders might feel a sense of pride in their position, but the call to act like a shepherd is a call to abandon any illusion of self-importance.

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, shepherds lived on the furthest fringes of society—both literally and metaphorically. They settled down in fields alone, separated from the comforts and excitement of city life. They worked with hard-headed and soft-witted animals, and the foul stench of mud, feed, and dung followed them and their woolly companions everywhere.

For these reasons, people usually only worked as shepherds when they had no other choice. Though there was little honor in living the lowly life of a shepherd, God used this occupation to illustrate the high honor of serving in ministry.



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

In light of this background and the context of the passage, what kinds of attitudes and character traits should Christian leaders cultivate in their lives?

The central goal of interpretation is to develop theological truths that remain valuable for all believers across time.¹ Write two or three timeless principles based on *1 Peter 5:1–4* by completing the following phrase:
Christian leaders can shepherd God's flock by . . .

Shepherd the flock of God with these three attitudes: willingness, eagerness, and meekness.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Following the Good Shepherd

In a paradoxical twist, Peter acknowledged that these shepherds of the church are *still sheep* because they follow the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ (*1 Peter 5:4*). This reality was deeply personal for Peter because he spent three years of his life walking closely with his Shepherd. As he penned these words, the memory of one particular conversation with Jesus likely stood out.



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

In [John 10:11](#), Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd. What does the Good Shepherd do? According to [10:12–13](#), how is the behavior of the owner of the sheep different from the behavior of one hired to help manage the sheep?

According to [John 10:27](#), what kind of relationship do sheep have with their Good Shepherd? According to [10:28](#), what is the Good Shepherd's ultimate goal for His sheep?

In what way is Jesus' example instructive for those He has called to steward a portion of His flock? What does it look like to follow the model of the Good Shepherd rather than a hired hand?



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

Though God calls some to help shepherd His flock, He remains the Chief Shepherd. Everyone who confesses Jesus as Lord is like a sheep dependent upon Him for divine protection, spiritual nourishment, and eternal comfort. So what does it look like practically to be a shepherding sheep?



Application: Shepherding and Being Shepherded

Whether you're a shepherd serving in vocational ministry or whether you're a faithful member of a local church community, this passage has valuable application for everyone. Pastor Chuck Swindoll identifies two key applications.

First, *to those who are shepherds, keep a healthy balance*. Teach truth, but never stop learning. Counsel well, but never without listening. Lead your allotted portion of God's flock, but never forget that every believer—including *you*—follows the Good Shepherd.

What flock has the Chief Shepherd given you to steward? It could be your congregation, your employees, your neighborhood, or your family. What practical steps can you take to display the self-giving heart of Jesus as you shepherd others?

Second, *to those who are being shepherded, be a reason for rejoicing*. Encourage your pastor. Pray for your church. Model gratitude and love with everyone in the community.



Hope Beyond Religion: A Job Description for Shepherds

1 Peter 5:1–4

In what way can you be a tangible encouragement to your pastor or another ministry leader this week? Write down three or four ideas and commit to one. Making a sacrifice will show your gratitude for all the sacrifice this person has made for you!

The life of a shepherd is not a glamorous one. It is a life often characterized by messy service and unrequited sacrifice. Yet such a life is pleasing to God, and He will one day bestow that lowly shepherd with “a crown of never-ending glory and honor.”

So, when ministry gets hard, take heart. God sees you. Continue to serve Him and His flock faithfully. Your special reward lies ahead.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for shepherding me throughout my life—for protecting me from evil, for nourishing my soul, for caring for me despite my stubbornness. Cultivate these shepherd-like qualities within me so that I might serve You and meet the needs of Your flock. I pray these things in Jesus’ gracious, patient, understanding, and loving name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY FIFTEEN

Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7

No attitude is more important to those who wish to be truly successful than humility before the mighty hand of God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT does success look like? Is it the businessman whose savvy financial decisions amassed millions of dollars? Maybe it looks more like the famous actress whose face is recognized by people across the globe? Or is “success” synonymous with “power”—like the political authority a nation’s leader wields? Perhaps the successful person is the one who maximizes personal pleasure—someone whose life mantra is, “Eat, drink, and be merry”

Countless people across the globe have achieved grand wealth, global fame, great power, and endless pleasures. Yet many of these “successful” people will admit that their hearts have deep desires for something more . . . *relief*.

If we find ourselves tempted to see success as the world does, then it’s time to reconsider what true success is. And instead of living for those fleeting idols, we must choose to let *God’s* definition of success shape our convictions.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will open the letter of 1 Peter to consider the one character trait that will lead someone toward achieving success by God’s standard. Only by cultivating this quality will someone be able to find true contentment in his or her soul.



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Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7



PREPARE YOUR HEART

When you feel shackled by the anxieties of life, humbly admit your need to God, and allow Him to release you from your heavy bonds. As you prepare to open His Word today, pray to Him, and allow Him to lift the weight of worry off your soul.

Father, I want to achieve success by Your standards—not by the standards of the world. As I search the Scriptures today, help me find true relief as I pursue Christlike virtues like faithfulness, love, and humility. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the previous section of 1 Peter, the apostle offered specific instructions to the “elders” of the church community—to those revered servant-leaders whose lives reflected the character of Christ (1 Peter 5:1–4). He exhorted these elders to serve God’s flock as caring shepherds.

In the next section, Peter by contrast turns his attention to “you who are younger” (5:5). What kind of relationship did Peter exhort these younger people to maintain with their spiritual shepherds?

In the remainder of 5:5–7, Peter described the one virtue that allows a believer to carry out such a command.



Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7



Observation: A Command, a Reason, a Result, a Means

Peter carefully constructed his instructions in [1 Peter 5:5–7](#). He opened the passage with an essential command. Then, he went on to offer a *reason* for the command, a *result* of the command, and a *means* by which a believer can carry out this command. Look for these elements as you observe this passage.¹

A Command: What charge did Peter give to “all of you” in [5:5](#) regarding their relationships with one another?

A Reason: According to [5:5](#), why is it important for communities of believers to obey Peter’s command?

A Result: In [5:6](#), Peter reiterated his initial command, but this time he added some additional color. What will happen in the future to those who heed Peter’s words? What contrast do you see in this verse?



Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7

A Means: According to 1 Peter 5:7, how can a believer practically carry out Peter's command from 5:5?

“He cares about you” (5:7). *What a relief!* Jesus cares about even your smallest fears and worries. So give them over to Him. As you cast off your anxiety, you will grow in dependence on Him and so clothe yourself with true humility.



Interpretation: Relief for the Soul

As Peter brought his first letter to its conclusion, he narrowed his gaze on one essential virtue: humility. The Greek noun for humility is *tapeinophrosyne*, and the Greek verb that describes humble behavior is *tapeino*. Look up these words in the Greek dictionary available at billmounce.com. Based on your study, define biblical “humility” in your own words.



Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7

In the Old Testament, “the mighty hand of God” (see [1 Peter 5:6](#) NASB) referred to the absolute power of the God of Israel. Look up [Exodus 3:19–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 9:26–29](#). Based on these passages, what kinds of actions does this mighty hand of God accomplish? (For help, look at page 266 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*.) How does trusting in God’s mighty hand lead a believer to better cultivate humility?

When we truly humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we willingly accept His discipline, and we gratefully acknowledge His deliverance from those awful days and nights of loneliness and shattering disappointment and humiliation. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to [1 Peter 5:7](#), a believer demonstrates true humility by *not* worrying. In what ways can worrying about life’s troubles reveal pridefulness?

You want a simple formula for relief? Watch closely. Submission plus humility minus worry equals relief. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula
That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7



Correlation: Humble Wisdom

In 1 Peter 5:5, the apostle quotes *Proverbs 3:34*, which sits nestled within a series of similar proverbs that share a similar theme. As you read *Proverbs 3:32–35*, note the contrast in each verse between the actions and characteristics of a faithful follower of God and the one who rejects God and His ways. Record the descriptions in the chart below.

Proverb	Faithful Person	Unfaithful Person
3:32		
3:33		
3:34		
3:35		

As you look at your chart, what kinds of characteristics go with humility?



Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7

Based on these proverbs, how does God treat those who pursue humility? How do these verses relate to the message of 1 Peter 5:5–7?

Humility is an essential ingredient in the recipe for godliness. And a godly life is a full life . . . a *successful* life. And living a life pleasing to God is the only way to find contentment, satisfaction, and relief for the soul.



Application: Our Great Need

In his application of 1 Peter 5:5–7, Pastor Chuck identifies three “needs” for every Christian who wants to succeed by God’s standards and find true relief for the soul:

1. *We need discipline to restrain our own hellish pride.*
2. *We need direction so we can know to whom we should submit.*
3. *We need discernment so we can spot the beginning of anxiety.*

Which of your personal successes leads you to feel a sense of sinful pride? What practical steps can you take to restrain these feelings of pride and embrace humility?



Hope Beyond Dissatisfaction: A Formula That Brings Relief

1 Peter 5:5–7

Whom has God placed over you in a position of authority? In what ways do you find it difficult to submit to these authorities? How can pursuing humility help you better navigate your relationships with these people?

What worries burden your soul today? What would it look like for you to admit humbly that you cannot bear the weight of them any longer? In what practical ways can you cast your anxieties on to Jesus and allow His mighty hand to carry the load for you?

What does success look like by God's standards? *Humility*. This virtue is the glue that binds us to our loving God who cares deeply for us. So stop grasping on to your fears, worries, and anxieties. You can't bear them on your own. Hand them over to Him. It is His joy to carry them for you.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I can't make it through this life on my own. So thank You for caring for me—for always being willing to carry the burden of my deepest fears and worries. Help me trust Your mighty hand, and give me the strength to clothe myself with humility today, tomorrow, and for the rest of my days. I pray these things in Jesus' strong name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY SIXTEEN

Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

Maybe you've never thought of it like this before, but the devil is a prowler. He comes by stealth. He is working in secret. His plans are shadowy. He never calls attention to his approach and to his attack. He is "like a roaring lion." His roaring is like the howl or the growl of a hungry beast. He is starving for anyone!

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE you're on a safari on an African savanna. As you move across the quiet landscape, you see a lone gazelle lapping water from a river. When you cast your gaze aside, you notice a slight rustle in the distant bushes that disturbs the peace of the moment. You grab your binoculars and pull them to your eyes to find a lion crouching in the shadows.

With eyes locked on the vulnerable gazelle, this lion begins to move—slowly, silently, subtly. The predator must wait for the right moment, or else the prey will escape his eager claws. Step by step, the beast inches closer until he crouches in anticipation of his attack. The gazelle turns around and looks into the lion's eyes just feet away. The gazelle freezes. It's too late. The lion has already won.

The frightening image of this prowling lion is how the apostle Peter viewed Satan. The devil is hungry, and he's on the prowl. If you don't keep a careful watch, you will be like that helpless gazelle. Satan will sneak up on you to destroy and devour you.



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Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

So how can we stay vigilant in our watch and stay safe from Satan's relentless prowling? This *Searching the Scriptures* study will look at Peter's answer to this question so that, when you stand nose-to-nose with the adversary, you will be able to stand strong against his ferocious attacks.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The greatest weapon we have to defend us from Satan is prayer. Ask God to come to your defense as you prepare to study this sobering topic.

Father, I often feel like that lonely gazelle—so vulnerable to the devil's violent attacks against my soul. I want to resist him and continue to fight the good fight of faith. Equip me to do so through my time in Your Word today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Those living in many regions of the world today maintain what's called a *naturalistic* worldview. Under this system of beliefs, everything that happens in the world occurs according to the unbreakable laws of nature. Similarly, nothing exists that you can't experience with your five senses. No God. No miracles. Does that sound common in your cultural climate?

Yet the biblical worldview is *supernatural* in its outlook. It affirms the existence, not only of a sovereign creator-God who became flesh in Jesus Christ, but also of other spiritual beings. And, in [1 Peter 5:8–11](#), the apostle Peter introduces the chief spiritual enemy of God and our world.



Observation: Identifying the Enemy

Read [1 Peter 5:8–11](#). As you read the passage, ask yourself, "What does it say?"¹ We will determine the meaning of Peter's words and their application later in this study.



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

According to *1 Peter 5:8*, who is the “great enemy” of Jesus and His followers? What two exhortations did Peter offer at the beginning of this same verse regarding the existence of this enemy?

To what creature did Peter compare this enemy in *5:8*? How does this creature—and by extension, this enemy—act?

In light of the reality of the presence of this fearsome foe, what command did Peter extend to his readers in *1 Peter 5:9*?

Peter knew that carrying out this command was easier said than done. So, in *5:9*, how did Peter encourage his readers to persevere?



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

Despite this encouragement, Peter recognized that many of his readers would still feel uneasy regarding the presence of this enemy. So, in [1 Peter 5:10–11](#), he offered a final word of hope. In your own words, summarize the key ideas from these verses.

I wish I could tell you that resisting the devil is easy or painless. It's not. I wish I could tell you that it's always a victorious result. It's not. We don't always stand firm. But Jesus gives us hope beyond the pain. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Knowing the Enemy

Stay alert. Watch out. Resist him. These three imperatives demonstrate how a believer should respond to Satan's presence. Yet, in order to resist your enemy, you must first know a thing or two about him.

In Scripture, this chief enemy of God goes by many names, each spotlighting a different element of his crooked character. Take some time to review the names (and their Greek or Hebrew transliterations) below:

- Satan (Hebrew, *satan*): This term refers to an accuser in a courtroom who levels charges against another.
- The adversary (Greek, *antidikos*): The Greek translators of the Old Testament picked this word to translate the Hebrew term *satan*. In the Greek literature, this term referred more broadly to opponents or enemies.
- The devil (Greek, *diabolos*): This word, though referring to the devil, carries the sense of a slanderer. From this term, we derive the English adjective “diabolical.”



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

How do these three names paint a full picture of our chief enemy? Write your own description of Satan below, explaining his personality and activities. If you want to dig into this topic deeper, check out [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) available online for free at [biblestudytools.com](#).

How does knowing these things about Satan allow a believer to watch out for him and resist his attacks?

Satan not only sinks his teeth into individuals, but he also rears his claws against communities as well—families, churches, and entire nations. In what ways can Satan subtly influence a group of people? How can a group of believers resist this influence?

The regular gathering of believers reminds us we are not in the battle alone. And when you face the enemy, you're not in a lonely battle. You are in the same battle being experienced by other believers stretching around the world. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11



Correlation: Preparing to face the Enemy

Since the apostles were key pieces in the foundation of the church, they were very familiar with the devil and his schemes that attempted to tear down the church. Just like the apostle Peter, the apostle Paul addressed this topic to instill in believers a confidence that the church is safe from the attacks of its greatest foe.

If you asked the earliest Christians, “Who is your greatest enemy?” many might have felt that their chief opponent was Caesar, not Satan. Throughout the time of the early church, many Roman emperors sponsored an empire-wide persecution of Christians since they rejected Caesar’s imperial cult and bent the knee to King Jesus only.

Despite the bleak reality of opposition, oppression, and persecution from the Romans, Paul offered a different answer to this question in [Ephesians 6:10–18](#). According to [6:12](#), who are believers “not fighting against”? Who are their *true* enemies instead?

Since the church isn’t battling flesh-and-blood enemies, iron and steel weapons are useless. So Paul encouraged his readers to put on a different kind of armor that would allow them to “be strong in the Lord” ([6:10](#)) and to “stand firm against all strategies of the devil” ([6:11](#)). According to [6:13–17](#), what Christlike virtues make up the armor of God?



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

According to [Ephesians 6:18](#), what is the greatest weapon a Christian can use in the spiritual battle against Satan?

Don't run scared of the enemy. Don't play with him. Don't invite him. But don't be afraid of him. Resist him instead. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Resisting the Enemy

As you apply the message of [1 Peter 5:8–11](#), let the reality of Satan's existence really sink in. Read [5:8](#), and insert your own name into the blank space: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for _____ to devour."

Seeing your name in that sentence might fill your heart with terror. You may even feel like you're helpless against the enemy's attacks. But Jesus Christ—the holy and mighty Lion of Judah—will protect you. In light of that, Pastor Chuck Swindoll developed two application principles:

1. *Let's never confuse confidence in Christ with cockiness in the flesh.*
2. *Let's always remember that suffering is temporal and that its rewards are eternal.*



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11

In what ways has your study of this passage shaped the way you understand Satan and the reality of spiritual warfare? What wisdom have you gained that will affect your day-to-day walk following Jesus Christ?

Have you ever stood nose-to-nose with the devil? Even if you've never had a vivid demonic encounter, you've likely battled with Satan several times. Remember, Satan often works in subtle ways, so something like a moment of intense temptation could have come directly from him. How have you felt Christ strengthening you to resist Satan's attacks throughout your life?

As you conclude your study today, reread [1 Peter 5:10](#) and write your name in the blank spaces: "And the God of all grace, who called _____ to his eternal glory in Christ, after _____ [has] suffered a little while, will himself restore _____ and make _____ strong, firm and steadfast."

It's not too late for you. It's too late for *Satan*. God has already won the battle. "To him be the power for ever and ever" ([5:11](#)).



Hope Beyond the Battle: Standing Nose-to-Nose with the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–11



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, Satan is strong—stronger than me. But You are stronger than him. Give me Your strength so that I can stand strong and resist his attacks. When I find my strength faltering, remind me of the truth that the battle is in Your hands. Thank You for securing the victory for me and for my suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. I pray in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

STUDY SEVENTEEN

Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

This letter is a masterful presentation of the truth that your suffering is not the end. It's a means to the end. And God's end for us is maturity. It is growth. It is a reason for living and going on. And this book will help you know how to do it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

LET your mind wander back in time . . .

My orders arrived. I hunted him. I arrested him. And I'll never forget the day I killed him.

As a Roman soldier, I loved my empire. I embraced the vision: Roman rule, imperial benevolence, global "peace." So I pledged my allegiance to Caesar—and only Caesar. After all, I believed that he was my only hope to provide true serenity and to secure eternal honor.

Eventually, I learned about this group of radicals who bent the knee to a different king. They claimed a Jewish commoner named Jesus resurrected from the dead. They regarded him as the highest king and the true Son of God. Quickly, I realized these "Christians" and their treasonous beliefs threatened to unravel everything my king had worked to accomplish . . . and I hated them for that.

So I dedicated my service to combatting this cult of Christ and defending the glory of Rome. Every time I spilled the blood of a Christian, the self-satisfying feeling of vengeance pumped through my veins . . . and I loved it. That is, until I met the Galilean fisherman named Peter.

Peter had helped spark the spread of Christianity in Rome, and my fellow soldiers and I celebrated the day our orders came in to arrest him. If we can get Peter, we thought, we will finally be



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Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

able to extinguish this deplorable religion for good. But we didn't have to look for long. His Jewish kinsmen seized him and turned him over to us. We prepared a cross. Either he would renounce his faith, or we would nail him to a tree to die just as his Lord had died.

"No," he said as I led him to the cross, "I won't do it." I raised my eyebrows. Was the threat of a gruesome crucifixion going to cause this great apostle to desert Jesus? I had heard about his countless beatings and imprisonments. So I assumed he just couldn't handle any more pain. I grinned. Rome wins again.

As I reached over to loose his chains, Peter spoke up, "Hold on." I paused. "I refuse to die in the same manner as my Lord. I don't deserve that honor. If you must kill me, crucify me . . . upside down. I will endure the pain. I know I will be reunited with Jesus soon."

I trembled and thought, How can I kill a man like this—a man of such courage and poise? But a good soldier marches on. So I willed my shaky hands to turn the cross over. Then, I pounded the spikes into Peter's hands and feet and slipped the head beam into the ground. As I waited for the final breath to leave his body, I found myself fighting to breathe as well.

In that moment, everything changed. I looked at Peter's pale and lifeless face, and I saw a man who had lived an abundant life. The peace of his heavenly kingdom was truer than the so-called "peace" of Rome. His hope in his Lord shone far brighter than the dim confidence I had in Caesar. I needed to learn more about Peter.

More importantly, I needed to know more about his Lord.

So secretly I searched Rome for a Christian willing to share Peter's writings with me. When I finally got a copy of the letter called 1 Peter, I learned the truth about Jesus Christ and how he offers a suffering world true peace. When I finished reading the letter, I made my choice. No more false gods. No more worldly rulers. No more reviling. A new King. An everlasting peace. A living hope.¹



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The apostle Peter was able to see past his immediate suffering because of his eternal hope in Christ. As you prepare to open God's Word today, express your own confidence in Christ and His promises to you.

Father, I trust that You can carry me through my greatest seasons of suffering. Give me the strength to follow Peter's example so that I can stand strong for You when the pain is sharpest. Equip me to do so through my time in Your Word today. In Jesus' name, amen.



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The message of 1 Peter still resonates in the hearts of Christians today, even though Peter wrote the words nearly 2,000 years ago. Although Peter’s original audience faced a unique set of challenges, Peter offered timeless principles that will encourage any Christian. Peter’s letter focuses on two central themes: (1) living a holy life in a hostile world and (2) finding hope amid suffering. You can see how Peter developed these themes in Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s chart below.

FIRST PETER

	Salutation (1:1–2)	Our Living Hope and Holy Life	Our Submission and God’s Honor	Our Suffering and Christ’s Suffering	Conclusion (5:12–14)
		“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3) ... for the hope we claim (1:3–12) ... by our walk of holiness (1:13–25) ... for our new identity in Christ (2:1–12)	“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake” (2:13) ... to the government (2:13–17) ... at work (2:18–20) ... like Christ (2:21–25) ... in the home (3:1–7)	“Since Christ has suffered” (4:1) Keep a good conscience (3:16) Share the sufferings and rejoice (4:13) Commit yourselves to God (4:19) Be humble (5:6) Cast your anxiety on God (5:7)	
		CHAPTERS 1:3–2:12	CHAPTERS 2:13–3:7	CHAPTERS 3:8–5:11	
Emphasis		Informing	Exhorting	Encouraging	
Grace		... to go on	... to live faithfully	... to stand firm	
Hope		A <i>living</i> hope through Christ’s resurrection (1:3)	A <i>righteous</i> hope through personal submission (2:15)	A <i>trusting</i> hope through faith (4:19)	
Theme		Holy living in a hostile world; hope in the midst of suffering			
Key Verses		1:3–5, 13–16; 2:21; 4:12–13, 19; 5:10–11			
Christ in 1 Peter		Jesus is the living stone rejected by men, who has become the Cornerstone of the church and the Shepherd of our souls (2:4–10, 25).			

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As long as there’s hatred of Christ and suffering, 1 Peter will remain an essential companion to Christians. Let’s review what Peter has to say about a believer’s holiness and hope.



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5



Observation: Holiness and Hope

As you peruse Pastor Chuck's chart, you'll notice how Peter weaved together the themes of suffering, faith, and hope. Peter anchored his discussion of these topics at two key transition points: [1 Peter 2:11](#) and [4:12](#). Observe how he begins each major section of the letters by addressing his "dear friends."²

Claiming the Living Hope—1 Peter 1:3–2:10

In [1 Peter 1:6](#), the apostle exhorted his readers to "be truly glad" even though he knew that they would soon "endure many trials." According to [1:7](#), how can believers rejoice even during their trials? What is the relationship between faith and trials?

In [1:6–7](#), Peter described the *mindset* of the faithful suffering Christian, and in [1:13–16](#), he addresses the *behavior* of the faithful suffering Christian. According to [1:13](#), what is the central hope of believers of Jesus Christ? According to [1:14–16](#), how should believers act in light of this hope?



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

Walking the Pilgrimage of Faith—1 Peter 2:11–4:11

In the next section, Peter instructed his readers on what it looks like for believers to live “as temporary residents and foreigners” in this fallen world ([1 Peter 2:11](#)). His instruction in this section all flows from the source of one principal command. According to [2:13](#), what is this central command?

This command may feel counterintuitive—as if it would only result in *more* suffering. Yet Peter saw this kind of behavior as essential for living a Christlike life (see [2:21–25](#)). According to [3:13–18](#), what kind of results await those who maintain this Christlike posture?

Enduring the Fiery Trial—1 Peter 4:12–5:11

As Peter reached the final section of his letter, he reiterated some of the key themes he already discussed. Specifically, believers should not “be surprised” when they face trials ([1 Peter 4:12](#)). Instead, they should “be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering” ([4:13](#)).



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

First Peter 4:19 reviews several of the major themes of the letter. Summarize this verse in your own words.

According to [5:5–7](#), what kind of character trait must a believer maintain in order to properly heed the instruction Peter presented throughout the letter?

Do you struggle with enduring fiery trials? Call to mind the sovereignty of God. Nothing touches you that hasn't come through the willing plan of God. It must all pass through His fingers before it reaches you. He is in control. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Finding Hope in Suffering

Throughout this series on 1 Peter, several key themes and ideas have stood as pillars upon which we have built the interpretation of Peter's words and the application of his message. These pillars are so essential to the structure of the letter that they are visible from the vantage point of nearly every single paragraph.

Take time to reflectively read [the entire letter](#). As you do so, gradually fill in each of the spaces below, noting what Peter says about the topics of suffering, faith, and hope. After you finish reading the letter and filling in the spaces, write one timeless truth that summarizes what 1 Peter teaches about each theme.



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

Suffering

Faith

Hope



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Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

Based on your reading of 1 Peter, how do the elements of suffering, faith, and hope work together in the life of the Christian?

If you want to know how to claim the living hope that God offers, it will require faith in the living Lord. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Peter's Example

These lessons from Peter's letter weren't just nice ideas that Peter thought up one day. No, his teaching was based on personal experience. All throughout Peter's Christian life, he endured fiery trials that put his faith to the test. And each time, he emerged from the flames with stronger faith—all because of his iron-clad hope in Christ.

The book of Acts records several instances in which Peter's fellow Jews arrested him for preaching about Jesus. And in [Acts 5:29–32](#), Peter explains why he acted contrary to the wishes of his kin.

According to Peter's words in [5:29](#), why did he continue to preach about Jesus even though the Jewish leaders forbade it? What does this verse reveal about the strength of his faith?



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

In what ways did Peter's eternal hope dictate the way he handled his temporary suffering?

Peter's faith may seem extraordinary, but any ordinary believer can follow his example. Peter simply held fast to his hope in Jesus Christ and his trust in a few key timeless truths.



Application: Lasting Lessons

Peter's first letter is rich both theologically and practically, and Pastor Chuck shares five lasting lessons that emerge from this brief yet powerful work.

1. *When our faith is weak, joy strengthens us.*
2. *When our good is mistreated, endurance stabilizes us.*
3. *When our confidence is shaken, love supports us.*
4. *When our adversary attacks us, resistance shields us.*
5. *When our departure is forced, grace strengthens us.*

Which of these five lessons speaks most directly to your circumstances right now? How does this lesson simultaneously encourage and challenge you in your walk with Jesus Christ?



Hope Beyond Misery: Lasting Lessons

1 Peter 1–5

How have you seen yourself grow through this study of 1 Peter? What practical steps can you take as you move forward to remember Peter's lessons and to maintain this pattern of growth?

There is no foundation stronger than Jesus Christ. Peter held fast to the Savior until his dying breath, and his life is a testimony of the truth that *any* follower of Jesus Christ can remain faithful amid suffering. The seasons of suffering will come, but they will *never* shake Christ and His promises. Take heart in that truth today.



A FINAL PRAYER

As you conclude your study of 1 Peter, write your own prayer in the space below. Praise God for His faithfulness. Ask Him to remind you of your hope in Him. Remember that He's using that fiery trial you're enduring *right now* to strengthen your faith in Him.

ENDNOTES

1. This fictional testimony is based on the church tradition that Peter chose to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ did. Peter's words and the soldier's response are improvised and illustrative in purpose.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

