

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.

I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.

As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they must have longed for us to know Him as they did.

As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.

Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,

Margie Martin

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

Peter wrote this first letter primarily, if not entirely, to Jewish believers around A.D. 65 or a little earlier. Commentators note his knowledge of Paul's early letters of 1 Thessalonians and Romans and James' letter. Peter also seemed to be familiar with the letters Paul later wrote from prison: Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians.

Peter's emphasis in this letter reflected the suffering his fellow believers were enduring from those outside the faith and gave them hope in the midst of it because of what Jesus went through for them (and us).

Peter was martyred probably around A.D. 67-68 during Nero's 13th year as emperor. He is reported to have requested to be crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy to die the way his Savior did.



New Testament World

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:1-2

“To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered . . . who have been chosen . . . for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood . . . grace and peace be yours in abundance.”

This letter by Peter has been one of my most favorite manuscripts in the Bible for more than 30 years. I’ve read it, studied it, and even memorized part of it. But just now I noticed a contrast in this introduction that’s previously raced past me: either we have God’s perspective or the world’s.

Peter is writing to believers who are facing, and enduring, persecution so horrible that it could seem to force them to think from an earthly perspective. Their world sees them as strangers: they don’t fit in, they’re out of step, and they don’t feel like they belong. Their world also sees them as scattered: they’re at the mercy of governmental leaders rather than having their own organizational structure; they are individuals rather than a group.

However, Peter reminds these believers of these facts:

- They’re God’s elect.
- They’ve been chosen by God for a relationship with Him because of His Son.
- They’ve been forgiven and made clean because of Jesus’ death and resurrection.
- They have grace and peace available to them—in abundance.

Which perspective do you have today about your circumstances—the world’s or God’s? Do you feel like you’re out there on your own or right where God wants you to be?

God’s perspective isn’t pie in the sky, wishful thinking. The world may try to tell us differently, but Peter tells us that God’s perspective is what’s real. And as a converted coward, Peter should know!

It’s so easy to slip into the world’s way of thinking because it’s how we were born. I’ve found that I constantly have to be aware of how I’m thinking and continually course correct my thoughts, just as sailors course correct their boats.

Do you need to do some mental course correcting today as we begin 1 Peter? What a great start to make as we begin this amazing letter.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:3-12

"[All kinds of trials] have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Are you going in the midst of a trial today, this week, or this month? If so, you're probably feeling a mixture of emotions. Often we experience and feel without giving words to what we're going through. Would you take some time to bring words to your feelings right now instead of letting them run around in circles in your mind gathering steam?

Sometimes we face hard circumstances because we've done something stupid and face the natural consequences. Other times, however, our enemy throws his fiery arrows of doubts and accusations at us.

Peter tells us that these trials, however they come, have a greater purpose in our lives. These trials are purposeful and are actually a friend. These trials, when we stand up under them, prove that our faith is genuine. But prove to whom? Who needs to know? Well, we need to know, the angels need to know, other believers need to know, nonbelievers around you need to know, and our enemy and his legions need to know. Were you aware that you had such an audience? I often forget their presence and their watchful eyes—some cheering me on and others wanting me to fail.

Peter says our faith is more valuable than gold, and gold to become valuable must be put under intense heat so the dross—the impurities—will rise to the top so it can be skimmed off. This refining process is what trials do for our faith. The impurities of our thinking rise up to become evident so we can discard them.

Peter also tells us that when Jesus comes back, our lives of genuine faith will result in giving back to God what He deserves:

praise honor glory

Who will give Him this praise, honor, and glory? We will, the angels will, other believers will, nonbelievers will, and our enemy will.

Look back at what you wrote today about the trial you're going through. How are you viewing it now? Tell Jesus about it. What is He saying to you in response? The angels are singing for joy.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:13-25

“Therefore . . .”

You’ve probably heard the statement, “Whenever you see a therefore in Scripture, ask what it’s there for.” *Therefore*s lead us to conclusions and actions, but if we don’t understand the why behind them, we can become legalistic and superficial. The why’s of the *therefore*s give understanding and depth, which produce gratitude.

This section’s *therefore* refers to the salvation of our souls that the prophets wrote about, the apostles spoke about, and the angels long to look into—salvation that was made available because of Christ’s sufferings for us. This section’s *therefore* reveals to us that our response should reflect His gift. But before we look at Peter’s *therefore*s, think a while about what your *therefore*s could include. Now let’s look at Peter’s list of what a life looks like that reflects the dying to self that Jesus did for us.

Therefore (the to-do’s):

1. *Prepare* your minds for action (watch what you’re thinking).
2. *Be* self-controlled (rather than out of control).
3. *Set* your hope fully on the grace to come when Jesus is revealed (not on wishful thinking).
4. *Do not* conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance (live differently now).
5. *Be* holy in all you do (because He who called you is holy, and He now lives in you through His Spirit).
6. *Live* as strangers here on earth in reverent fear (because our home is eternity, and we’ll be there because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, not because of any great or wonderful things we do).
7. *Purify* yourselves by obeying the truth (external actions do affect our internal lives) so you can sincerely love other believers.
8. *Love* one another deeply and from the heart (no holding back or being superficial).

How does your *therefore* list compare to Peter’s? Which of Peter’s commands do you need to hear today? I’m struck by #8. It’s all too easy for me to hold back and not get involved, protecting my time for what I want to do. How about you? As we both implement our action steps, let’s remember the why of what we’re doing so that reverence, fear, faith, hope, and love make up our foundation.

If you’d like to see more *one anothers* that describe how we are to live in God’s family, go to our website, www.WalksWithTheFather.com, and click on *Bible Studies*.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:1-3

“Therefore . . . “

Hmmm, another therefore; I wonder how many more we'll find in this letter? Peter summarizes the last section by saying it is “the word that was preached to them.” This word is all of yesterday's to-do's and all of their why's. If we only have to-do's, we can easily drift into legalism and performance, but if we understand the why's, we can do the to-do's with a sincere and whole heart. Need to review yesterday's to-do's?

When we became followers of Jesus, I doubt any of us knew that living His way would be so hard, but Peter is just getting started. He's saying that these steps, disciplines, or ways of living are for all believers, not just leaders. I've been a Christian for a long time, but this way of living challenges me to the tips of my toes. How about you?

So Peter says that since we're already living this way with the right motives, now we're to remove all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind from our lives. What does he mean?

rid of: Comes from clearing land—to make (something) free (of something else)

malice: Desire to inflict injury, harm, or suffering on another, either because of a hostile impulse or out of deep-seated meanness; extreme ill will or spite; feeling a need to see others suffer; wanton disregard for the rights of others or for the value of human life

deceit: Intentionally concealing or distorting the truth in order to mislead; fraud, cheating, trickery

hypocrisy: Pretense of having a virtuous character, moral or religious beliefs or principles, etc., that one really doesn't have; acting a part; an expression of agreement not supported by real conviction

envy: A feeling of discontent or resentment with regard to another's advantages, success, possessions, etc.; a longing to possess something awarded to or achieved by another

slander: Words falsely spoken that damages the reputation of another; an abusive attack on a person's character or good name

You know which of these words get to me? It's *all* and *of every kind*. Though I may be innocent of the literal meaning of these six words, I'm found guilty by their implications. And I bet you are too. So what's our solution since we have tasted that the Lord is good? Like newborn babies, we're to crave pure spiritual milk

What are you craving today—what the world offers that turns sour in our stomachs, or Jesus? I choose Jesus; how about you?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:4-12

“But you are . . . [so] live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

I remember the first time I saw today’s verse and realized the standard Peter was setting for how I was to live among those around me. At the time I was living in Silicon Valley in northern California in the 1980s and working at a high-tech defense electronics company. In this fast-paced, intellectual world, Peter was telling me that I was to live in such a way that the nonbelievers I worked with would have no basis for any accusation they may make against me. I was to expect accusations from them, but these accusations were to be based on their own conflict with God, not because of any hypocrisy in me.

Even today I know that this standard is impossible for me to live for even five minutes when I consider my thought life, much less my actions. So what hope do we have for being able to live this way?

Our hope comes from Peter’s descriptions of who we really are. In fact, whenever we read a command from Jesus through His apostles, we’ll need to immerse ourselves in the truth that comes before it; otherwise, we try to live on our own strength and abilities, a clear recipe for failure. So let’s look at Peter’s descriptions of who we are in this section. We are:

- Being built into a living house with Jesus as the cornerstone.
- A holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices [and giving up something is required for a sacrifice].
- A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.
- A people belonging to God.
- To declare praises because of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light.
- A people of God who have received mercy.
- Aliens and strangers in the world and so abstain from the world’s sinful desires that wage war against our souls.

In this list I notice that Peter is writing to us, not just me or you. While our Father and His Son know us individually, we’re to see ourselves as part of the whole of believers. I am not a holy nation; we are a holy nation.

I think Peter knows that we can’t make it on our own; we need others encouraging, motivating, and challenging us to live such good lives that pagans will have no basis for their accusations. And on the day that Jesus returns, they will actually glorify Him because of how we’ve lived.

Do you need to be in real fellowship with other believers, not just have superficial acquaintances? Do you need to live who you really are? What else do you need to know and do—or stop doing?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:13-17

“For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men [and women].”

So we’re aliens and strangers in this world. Paul says we’re Christ’s ambassadors to this world. (2 Corinthians 5:20) The writer of Hebrews says that the fathers of our faith knew and lived this truth, “. . . longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” (Hebrews 11:13-16)

We know how the world lives: each man for himself, the one with the biggest toys wins, whatever it takes. But how would those from a heavenly city live in this world? Peter gives us his inspired perspective that we’ll be looking at over the next few days. Are you ready for God’s opinion of how His children should be living? It’s only for the brave of heart.

Submit yourselves to every authority instituted among men: king, governors sent by the king, president, congress, police, bosses, homeowners’ associations, teachers, leaders of organizations we belong to

Live as free men [and women], but do not use your freedom in Christ as a cover-up for evil; we’re servants of God, not free to do whatever we want

Show proper respect to everyone: Yes, everyone

Love the brotherhood of believers: live as a family, not as acquaintances

Fear God: have a healthy respect of Him; see God as Job learned to do (Job 38-41)

Honor the king: remember the story of the little boy whose mother told him to sit in the corner because he had been bad? He told her that he may be sitting down on the outside, but on the inside, he was still standing up. Peter tells us to sit down on the inside too by honoring those in authority, as well as submitting to them.

By your actions, which world are you living in—this one or God’s? If this world, remember whose you are, what He had to do to buy you back, and what’s promised for your future. This world may seem attractive and the world’s ways seem pleasant at the time, but they lead to bondage, isolation, and anger—a far cry from what God offers. Good intentions are only the first step; we need to walk into what God has prepared for us through faith and obedience. (Ephesians 2:10)

Where are you going to start?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:18-21

“But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”

Are you tempted to dismiss this paragraph with its to-do's because you're an employee and not a slave? While we don't have to, and perhaps shouldn't, stay in an abusive or demeaning work situation, God may want us to stay put because He wants to change us where we are for the sake of others. But let's not focus on these extreme circumstances. Instead, let's look at two everyday situations most of us face.

We have a friend who disagrees with the direction his boss is taking the organization. This decision isn't moral or ethical; it's purely a business preference. Our friend has chosen to do what he thinks is best rather than follow his boss's direction, and now he is facing termination for cause.

Another friend works for a boss who wants an employee physically in the office 40 hours a week to answer the phone. However, the staff of five only gets a few business calls a day. This week our friend will be the only one in the office, so he isn't able to leave the building for any reason during the day, even for lunch. I'm indignant for him, but he's going to be in the office—with a good attitude—because of this passage.

Which of these possible attitudes do you identify with:

1. Doing what you want no matter what?
2. Following the rules but with a bad attitude?
3. Suffering (even a little) for doing good but enduring the suffering rather than fighting it?

If you chose option 3, your actions are “commendable before God.” If you chose option 1 or 2 (like I tend to), we'll need to work through the next section together about Christ's example.

I'm willing if you are.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:21-25

“To this [suffering for doing good and enduring it] you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

“I don’t deserve to be treated this way!” Do you ever hear yourself saying or thinking these words? This attitude is this world’s standard operating procedure. But God (those wonderful words) has called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (2:9), and we’re to live as aliens and strangers in this world. Our real home is with Him, and His ways are to be our ways.

The way of living that Peter is describing today is to endure suffering when we have done what’s right. Why? That’s the question we need to explore because I think if we understand *the why, the doing* will be much easier.

The why can’t be because God likes to see us squirm or be miserable; that motivation doesn’t reflect His character. The why can’t be because God is distant, aloof, lacks power to act, or doesn’t care because these traits don’t reflect His character. The why can’t be because we’re letting ourselves live as a victim. The why needs to come out of inner strength rather than giving up or giving in. So let’s look at Jesus’ example:

- Totally innocent
- Didn’t retaliate when insults (plural) were hurled (not tossed) at Him
- Didn’t threaten when He was in pain; He endured
- Took on our sins so we could live for righteousness rather than sin
- Became our Shepherd and Overseer of our souls so we no longer have to go our own way, wandering without direction or purpose. We now belong to God.

Jesus was innocent when He endured suffering for us; His choice opened the doors for God to act and redeem us. Therefore, when we suffer for good and endure it, those persecuting us have the opportunity to see God in us and be offered the gift of redemption. However, if we refuse to accept and endure undeserved suffering, others’ salvation may not happen. At the very least, we won’t get to be part of the process—we lose out.

If we tend to squirm out of difficult situations, perhaps we need to revisit what Jesus did for us. Our gratitude to Jesus for what He did for us should be the catalyst to offer life to others by dying to ourselves. What does your gratitude look like these days?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:1-6

"[Your beauty] should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a quiet and gentle spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

Now Peter is really getting personal, right ladies? So how are God's women to be, whether married or single? Men, it'll be your turn soon.

1. We're to be as submissive to our husbands as Jesus was to His Father.
2. We're to win over husbands if (and when) they're not believing the Word through our behavior rather than our words. (Ouch!)
3. Our lives are to manifest purity (so much for today's styles of low necklines, tight pants, and snug tops).
4. Our lives are to exhibit our reverence for God, our Creator and King, the One who has the right and power to be in charge.
5. Our outward appearance should compliment our inner life with God rather than draw attention to ourselves.
6. We're to stop fighting with God, which will produce a quiet spirit; this doesn't mean not speaking, rather it's having a *quieted* spirit that is not at war with God or others, especially our husbands.
7. We're to be gentle in our spirits, not forcing our opinions or overwhelming others, but deeply caring for them with humility.

Remember yesterday's discussion of the *why's*? Let's use that thinking with today's subject. When we die to our desire to be in charge and choose instead to live out any of today's *to-be's*, God is free to work through us to touch our husband's heart and win him to Himself. Even if your husband is a Christian, I know he doesn't always live out truth, just like you and I don't. So how do you usually respond? From today, how do you want to—and will choose to—respond? How about sharing this observation with a close friend who can ask you how you're doing?

But back to why I chose today's verse. Years ago when first I read this section, I decided I needed to put it in action as a single woman. I knew I needed to be quiet and gentle. The problem was that I thought it was my personality that needed to change. So I decided to be like my friend, Linda Broesamle, who to me was the epitome of quiet and gentle. After a couple of months (way too many), I realized it was my spirit, my inner person, that God was interested in changing, not my personality. While my personality needed to be redeemed, it was a gift from Him. So I went back to being me, and another friend, Charlene, told me welcome back.

Who are you in your inner self—a citizen of this world who needs redemption or a child of God? We are of such worth to our Father that Jesus was willing to die a horrible death so we could live with Him the life for which God created us. Do you know your real worth? If so, you'll live so others can see Jesus in you. Now aren't you glad Peter got so personal?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:1-6

“You are [Sarah’s] daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”

When did Sarah face fearful situations? Let’s look at her life.

1. God asks Abram (and Sarai) to leave what is familiar. *Gen. 12*
2. Abram passes her off as his sister to the Pharaoh of Egypt (she was a half-sister), and she is added to the harem. *Gen. 12*
3. Abram gives Lot the first choice of land—her future. *Gen. 13*
4. Abram goes off with the men to rescue Lot, leaving the women undefended; then he refuses to accept a reward (salary to live on). *Gen. 14*
5. Sarai feels pressured to produce an heir but is too old to do so, so she offers Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant. *Gen. 16*
6. Hagar gets pregnant and makes life horrible for Sarai who isn’t able to give her husband what they both want. *Gen. 16*
7. God changes their names to Abraham and Sarah and tells Abraham that He will bless her—God doesn’t tell her Himself—but the parents-to-be are so old that Abraham falls down laughing. *Gen. 17*
8. God hears Sarah silently laughing in her tent. *Gen. 18*
9. Abraham calls Sarah his sister (again) to protect himself. *Gen. 20*
10. God gives her a son—the 10-year promise is fulfilled. *Gen. 21*
11. Hagar begins mocking her as her son is weaned and doesn’t need his mother as much. *Gen. 21*
12. God asks her husband to sacrifice their son whom they both love so much but then provides a substitute sacrifice. *Gen. 22*
13. When she dies, Abraham has to buy land to bury her because they didn’t have a permanent home; he has to come to her, so she dies without her husband around. *Gen. 23*
14. She dies with her only son unmarried; she didn’t know if God would fulfill His promises to her husband. *Gen. 24*

Are you facing some fearful situations today, situations that threaten your heart, safety, or security? I am. Sarah did. While God talked to her husband, He was proving to her that He was faithful, dependable, powerful, and the Lord God Almighty—her God.

What is God proving to you and me in our circumstances? We can be Sarah’s daughters if we trust the God of the universe— who formed us, loves us, and saved us—as we walk through the fiery furnaces of life. If married, we live this trust in God as we submit to, listen to, and follow the lead of our husband instead of nagging him to do what we want or being passive and ignoring God’s leading through him. This submission is how we live as aliens and strangers in this world. Is this how you’re living?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:1-6

“For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful . . . like Sarah.”

For those of us who are women, these six verses offer us amazing insight into God’s view of how to be beautiful.

Peter’s words about Sarah’s example are amazing: she obeyed Abraham and called him her master, yet she wasn’t a wimpy woman. The authors of my NIV version say that she thought for herself, she spoke her mind, and she exerted all the influence she was allowed, and then some. Twice she had her rival Hagar driven out of their home and into the desert. She had the nerve to laugh at what God said about her becoming a mother at the age of 90, but she also had the grace to admit that the joke was on her when Isaac was born.

When she was 80, the Egyptians thought of her as a very beautiful woman, and Pharaoh took her into his harem (Gen. 12:14-15). The Egyptians knew about beautiful women, but no woman I’ve ever known about could be thought of as a playmate at that age, or even when she’s 50. So what is God’s beauty strategy for His women?

Don’t *Depend on outward adornment, such as special haircuts and styles, costly jewelry, or fine (and expensive) clothes.* Does this mean we should be covered up like some women are in the Middle East? I don’t think so. Peter isn’t saying that we should be covered up but that our *beauty* doesn’t come just from our external appearance. Paul talks to the Corinthian women about being respectful while in worship and that a woman’s long hair is her symbol of being under authority in that culture. (1 Corinthians 11) I think our external appearance should *highlight* our inner beauty.

Do *Have an inner self that has stopped arguing with God about being under authority; the war and the battles are over—He’s won.* We’re not in charge; we’re no longer just daughters of Eve. Because God loves order and pictures, God’s daughter knows that her role in the world is to be a picture to all of how a follower of God is to live—in trust and humility.

So what does living this way do for a woman’s beauty? I think it relaxes us, takes away stress lines around the mouth and eyes, calms us so we can concentrate on others, frees us to notice and appreciate what and who are around us, softens our tone of voice, eliminates critical words, turns us into a friend instead of an adversary, keeps us from being defensive and having to defend ourselves, and allows us to let others be right and have the last word. What does your beauty regimen look like these days?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:7

“Husbands, in the same way . . . so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

When I think of men, I see them taking on new territory; conquering enemies; having strength, power, and dominion. So if a woman submitting to God means behavior more than words and time spent on internal beauty rather than on emphasizing external decoration, what does a man submitting to God look like? (While this section is written to married men, single men can certainly learn from this challenge!)

Peter says that such a man will be considerate of his wife as he lives with her, rather than ignoring her or running rough shod over her. He'll slow down for her and think of how she's doing.

Peter says he'll treat his wife with respect as his weaker partner and co-heir with him of the gracious gift of life that God has given and that Jesus made available by being submissive Himself to death on the cross. Men on the move rarely have time for someone weaker or slower, much less respect them. But Peter says God's men have both and see their wives as God sees them: as partners and co-heirs of the grace of life.

I wonder if this way of thinking is as hard for men to swallow as it is for women to be submissive to their husbands?

Peter holds out a carrot (or a stick?) to men for living with their wives this way, as well as with other women. My paraphrase of this carrot/stick is, “If you aren't considerate of your wife and respect her, God won't listen to you when you try to talk to Him.”

Oh. How we live with our spouse affects our relationship with God? It's really that important? Yes. But why? Because we're aliens and strangers in this world, and we're to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against our souls. (Remember 1 Peter 2:11?)

Peter says that we're to live in such a way that when nonbelievers meet God they will glorify Him because of how we've acted because they know how differently they would have acted. Oh. Will pagans respond to God this way because of how you treat your spouse?

Women, are you experiencing fear? If so, then submit to the authority God's provided you.

Men, are your prayers being answered? If not, then look at how you're treating your wife.

Will nonbelievers glorify God because of how you've been responding to God within your marriage? If your answer is *no*, what changes do you need to start making?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:8-12

“Finally, all of you, . . . ”

As aliens and strangers in the world, how are we to live with each other? Peter answers this question in this section as he concludes his instruction about submitting ourselves to others to further God’s kingdom that we represent in this world. Let’s look at our options:

This World

1. See ourselves as individuals, independent from each other
2. Getting ahead is better than getting along
3. Be challenging, critical, and condescending
4. See others as strangers that we’ll never have to interact with again
5. Expect others to listen to us, make concessions for us, make room for us
6. One up-man-ship; make them pay so they won’t mess with us again
7. End of life is going to hell, certainly not a blessing!
8. Free to say whatever we want about others, okay to be critical and condemning
9. Free to do whatever we want, regardless of how it affects others; stand up for ourselves
10. Not accountable to anyone; no “higher power” exists that sees, knows, and evaluates

God’s World

1. All of you
2. Live in harmony with each other
3. Be sympathetic
4. Love as brothers [and sisters]
5. Be compassionate and humble
6. Repay evil and insults with a blessing
7. Called to #6 so can inherit a blessing [*inherit* is what we get from a loved one after he or she dies— interesting]
8. Keep tongue from evil and lips from deceitful speech
9. Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it
10. Eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

Which world are you actually living in, regardless of your intentions? If you don’t like your answer, what are you going to do about it?

What’s at stake is #7 under the *God’s World* column: inherit a blessing.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:13-22

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.”

As you were reading yesterday’s section, did you find yourself asking, “How can I live in harmony with an argumentative person; how can I be sympathetic, compassionate, and humble with my caustic neighbor; how can I return evil and insults with a blessing?”

While we’re not focusing on abusive situations but on the everyday life situations we all face, perhaps today’s truth can also help those horrible situations of life, especially when we realize the world in which Peter was living and writing. Rome didn’t look favorably on Christians, and human life wasn’t valued. What do you know of the first century world? Perhaps Peter’s words do apply for us. What do you think?

But our question today is, “How can I _____ when he, she, or they are _____?” Peter’s answer is, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.” I think the meaning behind Peter’s question is the difference between emotional bondage and freedom, oppression and joy, spiritual death and eternal life.

Here’s how I’d describe how to set apart Christ as Lord: Jesus, as Lord of my life, has the right to put me wherever He wants whenever He wants. He has the right to choose my spouse (or if I even marry or remarry), my friends, how I spend my time and my money, where and if I work, and where I worship. He has the right to set the standards for how I think, speak, act, and respond to situations He allows to come my way.

Jesus has this right because He “died for [my] sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring [me] to God. He was put to [a horrible] death in the body but made alive by the Spirit . . . [and] has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities, and powers submissive to Him.” (1 Peter 3:18, 22) Jesus has this right because He is our great high priest:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we have—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16

I think that setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts is to be the normal Christian life. What do you think? Have some areas in your life come to mind in the last few minutes that you need to take to Jesus as your Lord? Perhaps a relationship or a way of thinking? What’s at stake if you don’t?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 4:1-6

“ . . . because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.”

My spiritual birthday is this Sunday, so I've been remembering all that led up to the night that I gave up and asked Jesus to take over and do what I couldn't. I knew I wasn't living the life I longed for. I was doing things I knew were wrong, but I didn't have the power to change me on the inside, to change the need in me that was taking me down the path I was living. I felt like my life was going in a downward spiral, and I couldn't do anything about it.

But God . . .

That night He infiltrated my life, my heart, and my mind, and I never want to start down that other path again.

I think this experience is what Peter is writing about in this paragraph. He's saying that if we've suffered in these bodies as Jesus did on earth, then we're done with sin because of the way out He has provided. We're done with living the way we used to and the way that nonbelievers still live. We know the futility of living that way, and so we choose to live as aliens and strangers in this world, abstaining from sinful desires that war against our souls. We know that if we don't let God set the standards of how we live here on earth, we won't have any confidence or hope as we face Jesus as the One who will judge the living and the dead.

Do you know where you've come from spiritually? Have you owned up to what you're capable of even now if you're not living with Jesus as Lord? I find that if I'm not painfully honest with myself as I view myself through God's eyes, then I'll excuse my behavior and rationalize my thinking. I'll become like those around me who don't know Him, and I'll begin going down the wrong path again.

When's your spiritual birthday? What if it were today? Wouldn't today be a great time to remember, take stock of where you are, and determine how you're going to continue living—not for evil human desires, but for the will of God?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 4:7-11

“The end of all things is near. Therefore . . .”

So Peter thought that the end of the age was just around the corner, and Jesus was poised to return. This was Peter’s thinking, and probably the thinking of the other apostles who were still alive. But it’s been 2000+ years since Peter wrote this letter; what about us?

Perhaps God wants His people in every generation to believe that the end is near. We know from Scripture that when this time does come, life will be really tough for believers, regardless of how we view the timeline for the tribulation. So how are we to live at such a time: cower, hide, be self-protective, and fight back? Peter has a different perspective—God’s perspective. We’re to:

Be clear minded: free of concerns, worry, fear, pride

Be self-controlled: actions are to flow from being clear minded so fear isn’t in charge

So we can pray: for others, for ourselves; connect with the One in charge

Love each other deeply: in depth, without reservation, wanting the best for others rather than picking them apart

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling: looking out for others’ needs because God is looking out for our needs

Use spiritual gifts to serve others: whether as speaking the very words of God or serving with the strength God provides

*So that in all things God may be praised through
Jesus Christ, who deserves all glory and power for all time.*

Is this how you act when the pressure’s on, when life is tough, when people are on your case? The end of all things is near. Therefore:

- I will _____
- I will _____
- I will _____

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 4:12-19

“So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”

Are you suffering today? Your answer is probably yes because of the world in which we live. Every day it seems like we hear of another case of child abduction, domestic violence, gang activity, murder, and suicide. But Peter brings up a good point: are we suffering because of doing God’s will or because we’ve done something wrong, foolish, or stupid? I’ll have to admit that much of my own emotional suffering over the years has been because of my own foolish choices, but I think a few times I have suffered because of Jesus. How about you?

The first time I suffered for the gospel came when I was working for a doctor. He practiced good medicine, but one day he asked me to schedule a D&C for a female patient. Because my job included billing the insurance companies, I had to read the charts. She was pregnant through an affair and didn’t want her husband to know. The doctor knew I was a Christian (in fact, a very new one), and without me saying a word, he told me he would take responsibility before God for this decision. In essence, he was letting me “off the hook” before God. Two weeks later he laid me off because he wanted to work part-time and travel more with his wife who was a flight attendant. True? I don’t know, but my sense was that he didn’t want to feel guilty every time he saw me. I had never talked about my views on abortion, and we never discussed this medical decision, but I knew he had been raised as a Christian. As I look back over this relationship, I know I always respected him as a doctor and as my boss. I can’t remember a time of being religious while in the office, but I certainly could have seemed obnoxious to someone who had walked away from faith.

So I was let go the end of the week. I had no money, no job prospects, and no hope. But I had God. And my heavenly Father provided me with food and temporary jobs through friends from church. One temp job turned into a full-time job with a wonderful missionary organization. While I didn’t enjoy the actual work, I needed this safe and loving cocoon for my soul to heal and my feet to be put on firm ground. The lessons I learned then became the foundation of my faith. God turned suffering into joy as I walked with Him.

What’s your story? Are you in a situation of your own making? Then you probably know what to do. Or is God allowing you to face the consequences of someone else’s choices? If this is the case, your emotions may be all you know. But the truth is this: God is working. Although life seems like it’s out of control, God isn’t. In time, as you walk by faith through this valley, you’ll see where you’ve come from and begin to give thanks for the process because of what He’s producing through it. So now, what’s *your* story?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 5:1-5

“To the elders among you . . .”

Are you an elder or a young man in the faith? Either way, Peter has some words for us, whether we're male or female. While I think that Peter is addressing men in local bodies of believers who have been set apart by God to look out for the spiritual well being of other believers, let's look at what Peter is also saying to us, you and me, as we're growing up in the faith.

Admonitions

1. *Be shepherds of God's flock, serving as overseers:* we work for someone else whom we need to please; we're the go-between person who's been chosen for the position.
2. *Serve willingly and eagerly:* we're to gladly accept the responsibility, no holding back
3. *Be examples to the flock:* we're to live the way we tell them they should live; they shouldn't be able to see a gap between our words and our actions.
4. *When the Chief Shepherd appears we'll receive our reward:* we should value delayed gratification; we're to keep our eyes on the eternal goal and not give up because the task is unrewarding.

Warnings

1. Those we look after in the faith don't belong to us or answer to us; we're not in charge.
2. We're not to serve because we *have to* or because of what we will get from the responsibility, whether status or money.
3. We're not to lord it over others, telling them what to do and how to do it. We are to live as Jesus did with His disciples, letting them see the Father in every word and action.
4. We should never expect a reward or even a thank you for what we do as we serve others. We're in the service of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd; His reward, His thank you and *well done*, will more than compensate us for all we've done for others.

Years ago a friend was asked to lead the singles group for our church. Being a deliberate and serious thinker, he took this section of 1 Peter seriously. He understood what God was asking of him, and he counted the cost, especially in leading willingly and eagerly, without holding back. I've always appreciated and remembered how seriously he took this responsibility; thank you, Bill.

How do you view spiritual leadership as you're growing older in the faith? How has Peter challenged you?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 5:1-5

“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older.”

Which role do you think is harder?

- An older man (or woman) who willingly looks out for others and will be an example to them without recognition or pay
- A younger man (or woman) who willingly submits to the leadership of those who are older

Your answer probably depends on whether you're older or younger. I think both roles are extremely difficult because pride, prestige, recognition, and independence are the unspoken goals we all pursue . . . unless we're living as aliens and strangers in the world, abstaining from sinful desires that wage war against our souls.

The phrase that intrigues me in today's section is in the same way. The way that a young man can be submissive to, listen to, seek out, follow the input of those who are older is the same way older men and women willingly and eagerly look out for others in the faith.

What would keep a young person from being submissive? The older I get the more I see the arrogance of my own youth. When I was young, I thought that knowledge was wisdom. I thought that maturity came with being able to drink legally. I thought that professionalism meant lack of warmth in relationships. I thought that what I could see in front of me was the whole story. I thought that people should treat me well if they wanted me to treat them well. I had no idea of what I didn't know.

What would keep an older person from caring for others? How about the belief that I've put in my time and I've raised my kids; now it's the next generation's turn, and I deserve my free time and my discretionary money.

I think Peter is reminding us that submission is to be a hallmark of our lives as Christians, just as Jesus was submissive to His Father for our sake. As aliens and strangers in this world, our lives are to reflect Jesus' life, not the sinful desires that wage war against our souls.

To be an elder, we must have had years of being a young man or woman, giving up our rights and desires for the sake of the kingdom, over and over again. Elders in the faith don't happen overnight; wisdom and humility come from a life that's been submissive to God, the authorities, our spouse, and the body of Christ through humility. This section is quite a standard to live by, isn't it? How are you matching up?

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 5:6-11

“To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

What were you like before you became a Christian? Were you brash, arrogant, full of pride? Or were you timid, wishy-washy, tossed around by others' strength of personality? We were probably one or the other.

This section shows me the power of God—our hope for the future. Think back to the Gospel accounts about Peter, especially in Mark's Gospel. In my NIV Student Bible, the editors describe him this way:

You can't miss Peter in the four Gospels. He stands out like a bumpkin, pushing to the head of the line and blurting out loud, outrageous assertions. Every list of the disciples names him first, and Peter is often seen elbowing his way to center stage.

Peter was likable enough, with a big heart and unlimited enthusiasm. He just had too many rough edges. He swung like a pendulum, bold and courageous at one moment, yet cowardly when it really counted.

Yet this isn't the Peter we see in today's section, is it? Peter now tells us gently, lovingly, but honestly to:

Clothe ourselves with humility because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Humble ourselves by being submissive to God so He can lift us up when He knows the time is right.

Cast all of our anxieties and cares on Him because He cares for us instead of thinking that we're in control.

Be self-controlled and alert so our enemy the devil won't devour us.

Resist the schemes of the devil by standing firm in the faith, knowing that all Christians everywhere suffer in the same way. We're not the only one.

Then we'll be restored. God will make us *strong firm steadfast*.

If God can so change Peter, who denied Jesus, God's own Son, to save his own skin, then He can change you from being _____ to _____. What hope!

About six years ago God changed my name from *Marge* to *Margie* just like he changed Simon's name to Peter. I'm learning how to be more light hearted, warmer, and more open to others instead of matter-of-fact, protective, and hiding behind work.

Does God have a nickname for you that describes how He wants to change you? Why don't you ask Him? Let me know what He says.

Walking With the Father Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 5:12-14

“Silas, a faithful brother . . .”

If you’ve spent much time in the New Testament, you’re probably familiar with the name *Silas* (or Silvanus), but since Peter holds him up as a faithful brother in the faith, let’s look at who he is—because if you’re like me, we want to be known as *faithful* brothers and sisters.

Acts 15

- The council in Jerusalem (which includes Peter) recognized Silas’ leadership and sent him with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to deliver the decision about how Gentiles were to live as believers.
- Silas, with his gift as a prophet (one sent from God to explain Him), encouraged and strengthened the Gentile believers; they accepted him.
- Paul and Barnabas parted company (!), and Paul took Silas with him.

Acts 16

- Silas traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey. In Philippi, they were arrested, severely beaten, and thrown into jail in stocks.
- Silas and Paul prayed and sang hymns well into the night. God caused an earthquake. Result? The jailer and his household were saved, and Silas and Paul were released.

Acts 17

- Silas and Paul’s presence in Thessalonica resulted in new life for some but also caused a riot.
- Silas, Paul, and Timothy went to Berea; new life for some, but the crowds got stirred up. Silas and Timothy stayed, and Paul went to Athens alone.

Acts 18

- Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth and financially set him free to preach full time. Silas stayed in Corinth, while Paul left for Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila.

Conclusion: Silas was a prophet, he encouraged and strengthened believers, he had the confidence of the early church leaders, he could either be a great #2 man or a leader of a team, he didn’t run or hide from trouble, he stayed with a young church after the dynamic leader left and grew it into an active body of believers.

Does Silas’ example describe you as a faithful brother or sister? I certainly see areas of growth for myself! I know that on my own I can’t begin to be what Silas was. But Silas was faithful where he was, and God made him into the man we’re looking at today. God can do the same with you and me as we’re faithful *today*. This is our choice and our hope.

“Peace [don’t worry, fear, or be anxious about what is or what is to come] to all of you who are in Christ.”
