

# *Off the Shelf*

## *Sunday School Lesson*

### *1 Peter*

#### **Background**

1. Scholars believe that 1 Peter was written by the apostle Peter around 65AD. There is a reference to Babylon in verse 13 of Chapter 5 that says the local churches send their greetings with this letter. This means that either Peter was in Babylon when he wrote this letter or that he was in Rome which was considered to be like Babylon (a powerful and evil place).
2. This letter was written to Christians in Asia Minor (Turkey) but has wide application to all Christians.
3. The purpose is to encourage believers to stand fast in their testimony and Godly living during times of suffering.
4. At the time this letter was written, Nero was the emperor (54-68 AD.) Nero began the intense persecution of Christians in 64 AD following the burning of Rome according to the Roman historian Tacitus.
5. Peter died in the 60s and spent the last decade of his life in Rome according to reliable tradition. The exact date of Peter's martyrdom is a matter of debate among scholars being either 64 AD or 67 AD.
6. Theologically this epistle is eschatological (dealing with the end times). Along with its eschatological focus there is much emphasis on holiness (personal, social, and communal), hope, salvation, community, relationship to the world, the Trinity and especially suffering.

#### **Introduction (1:1-2)**

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

1. Peter begins with a formal introduction that establishes his credentials and authority by reminding the recipients that he is an apostle.
2. What are credentials for apostles? (Mk 3:14-15; Lk 24:46-49; Heb 3:1; 1 Cor 15:3-7).
  - A. Apostles are appointed by God; they have seen the risen Christ; they are messengers of the gospel and they are pioneers in making converts and planting churches.
3. This letter is for the "elect" of God or born-again Christians. Peter lists the characteristics of Christians.
  - A. Strangers or aliens in the world. He uses the Greek word *parepidemoi* which means alien in both sense of nationality and temporary residence.

- B. They are scattered among many nations and cultures. When this letter was written, there were Christian Churches in Italy, Greece, Palestine, Asia (modern Turkey) and possibly Parthia (where Bablyon is located).
- C. Christians are chosen through foreknowledge of God. This means that God chose those to whom he gives the gift of faith in Jesus before they were born (Eph 1:4, 2:8-9; Rom 8:29-30). Likewise, God created some people who were not chosen for salvation (Rom 9:11-24).
- D. Believers are sanctified or made holy by the power and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells believers who are born-again transforming their minds in order to bring them into obedience and unity with the will of God. (1 Cor 6:19-20; Rom 12:2; Eph 4:11-13).
- E. Peter may have had Old Testament sprinkling of blood in mind when he wrote this verse. Sprinkling with blood in OT Israel resulted in cleansing. This brought the person sprinkled under the terms and blessings of a covenant (Ex 24:3-8). Christians are made holy through the blood of Christ sacrificed to pay for sins. (Col 1:19-22)
4. Peter begins this letter by reminding Christians of their identity and of the blessings which are grounded in the grace of God that gives them peace with God. Why does he do this? To enable them to rejoice in times of suffering.

### **The Blessings of Salvation (1:3-5)**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

1. Peter praises God the Father for his mercy in sending Jesus Christ to reconcile us to himself. It is his love expressed as mercy that has enabled Christians to experience a spiritual birth through faith in Jesus. (Jn 3:16-17; Ti 3:5)
2. This new spiritual birth is required to enter the kingdom of God. (Jn 3:3)
3. The presence of the Holy Spirit within provides a new spiritual life that gives believers "living hope" for salvation, perfection and resurrection of the body
4. This "living hope" is based on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In other words, because Jesus died for my sins, I am forgiven and able to be righteous with God.
5. There is hope for a better life in heaven where God promises there will be an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. (Mt 6:19-21)
6. This inheritance is given to each born again Christian. It is guaranteed because it is kept by God himself and it is tailored to each person. (Jn 14:1-3)
7. Faith is the basis of our assurance. The Holy Spirit within testifies to the truth of our relationship with God through Jesus. (Rom 8:16) Faith is referred to as a shield that provides protection from evil and so it represents God's power at work within us.(Eph 6:16) God has promised to protect and keep those who have faith (Ps 32:7-8; Jn 10:27-28).
8. Faith is what empowers the perseverance of the saints. Christians continue to

believe in the truth of the gospel and persist in good works despite sacrifices and persecution. Belief in the promise of salvation and perfection in the resurrection that will be realized “in the last time” motivates disciples. (Rom 6:5; 1 Jn 3:2)

### **Purpose & Perspective of Suffering (1:6-9)**

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

1. The trials and afflictions of this life come from within and without. Spiritual growth brings an increase in the awareness of our sinful condition and discernment of sinful conditions in the world. This makes us realize our helpless estate and our absolute dependence upon God. Even the aging process of the body testifies to futility of this life and the need to be renewed. (2 Cor 4:17-18)
2. Why trials are necessary for spiritual growth. (James 1:2-4)  
The world philosophy is work hard to make something of yourself which is “Do to Be” thinking. This is opposite to that of Christian thinking which is to let your good works flow as you become like Christ though grace imparted and the work of the Holy Spirit within (“Be to Do” thinking).
3. The benefits of enduring suffering:
  - a. Trials strengthen and purify faith like fire refines gold.
  - b. It is through trials that faith is proved to be genuine.
  - c. God use trials to discipline believers. This is a sign of his love. Believers are his children who are being instructed and trained in righteousness. (Heb 12:5-11)
  - d. Successful endurance of trials brings joy and praise from God (Mt 25:21)
  - e. Faithful endurance of trials makes us more Christ-like resulting in being glorified (2 Cor 3:18; 4:17)
  - f. Suffering to bring honor to Jesus will bring us honor and glory (Rom 8:17-18)
4. Today Christians love and believe in Jesus whom we have not seen.  
How is this possible? This is due to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. (Gal 5:22-23)
5. Believers are filled with inexpressible and glorious joy. What causes this joy?  
Are there any other human experiences that cause joy like this?
6. Believers receive blessings from the presence of the Holy Spirit which culminates in the realization of their faith which is the salvation of their souls. The Greek word used for soul is *psychon* which means the total being. The idea is that faith in Jesus will result in the salvation and glorification of the body, mind and spirit.

### **The Witness & Expectation of Salvation (1:10-12)**

**Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and**

**circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that now have been told you by those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.**

1. The Old Testament prophets spoke of the grace that was to come to believers in Jesus. The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit. Believers are blessed in many ways:
  - a. They are indwelt by Holy Spirit and “moved” to obedience (Ez 36:26-27)
  - b. They “know” or have an intimate relationship with the Lord that does not require others to teach them (Jer 31: 34)
  - c. Spiritual knowledge of mysteries is given: incarnation, redemption, resurrection, church (Is 61:10-11; Mt 13:11)
2. Jesus suffered for the sake of those who put their faith in him. There was also joy present in the redemption and glorification of Jesus and his followers. (Heb 12:2) Persecution, rejection and even death is the path chosen by Jesus and it is also the experience of those who follow him. (Jn 15:20)
3. Prophets and even angels have partial understanding of future events. The gospel of Jesus Christ is given by the Holy Spirit through the books of the Bible. (2 Pet 1:21)
4. Why do you think Peter mentions these things?  
Peter is encouraging believers to trust that God is in control during times of trials and suffering. He wants them to know that their sufferings are normal and confirms their union with Christ. They are to persevere with the certain hope that Jesus will guide and bring them to a glorious state of being.

### **Living a Life of Holiness(1:13-16)**

**Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”**

1. Paul says “therefore” or because of our faith and living hope in Jesus which guarantees our inheritance, resurrection, salvation, joy, glorification, blessings and spiritual knowledge stemming from who we are in Christ.
2. Prepare your mind for action. How? Focus your thoughts on God and train yourself by prayer and reading the Bible to discern God’s will and transform your mind. This will enable you to discover the good works that God desires for you. (Phil 4:8-9)
3. Be self-controlled (Titus 2:11-14)
4. Set your hope on the grace of God which he gives us and which will be fully realized in his presence. How does this grace impact our behavior?
5. “As obedient children” is translated better “as children whose spirit is obedience.” Stop letting the desires of our flesh control our thinking and behavior. (Rom 12:2) Self-indulgence is a characteristic of those who are ignorant of God. The

redemptive work of Jesus shows the love of God which is other rather than self-focused. As disciples of Jesus, we are commanded to love God and others and so follow the example of Jesus in loving others. (Jn 3:16; Mt 22:37-40)

6. Do not continue to live with sinful habits and desires that characterized your life before you believed in Jesus. Faith in Jesus brings new life and perspectives that shows us our ignorance of spiritual life. Before being born-again, we lived in ignorance, without understanding and separated from the life of God. (Eph 4:17-19) *How has your life changed after believing in Jesus?*
7. The Holy Spirit dwelling within transforms the mind and life of believers to produce Christ likeness and holiness. (Lev 11:44-45; Phil 1:6) Becoming holy is not based on human effort but on the transforming work of God. In the Old Testament, Israel was commanded to obey the Mosaic Laws to be a holy nation. They failed to obey and showed that holiness is not achieved by human effort. Failure to keep God's commands shows us our hopeless condition. (Rom 3:19-20)
8. The goal of Bible study is not to accumulate knowledge but to get to know God better. We need to pray that God would make his views ours and that we would desire to act in obedience to the truths we see in the Bible. This is the path of holiness. (1 Jn 1:7)

### **Living a Life of Reverence (1:17-21)**

**Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.**

1. Since or because disciples of Jesus are God's adopted children, they have a Father in heaven. (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6)
2. Every person is accountable to God for their actions which will be judged with justice and impartiality. (Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:13-15)
2. Christians are told to seek and follow God's will. This will make their actions different from the world. Believers in Jesus long for a heavenly home and so they increasingly feel like foreigners and strangers who don't fit the ways of the world. Reverent fear of God comes from knowing his awesome holiness and power. (Heb 12:28-29; Prov 9:10)
3. Peter reminds them that they have been kept from the just punishment due for sins by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. To redeem means to buy or purchase from one owner to another. Who are the owners involved in the redemption of believers? (Rev 5:9; 1 Cor 6:20)
4. Jesus was chosen before the foundation of the world. What does this mean? (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28)
5. "Through him (Jesus) you believe in God"—What does this mean? Faith comes through the revelation of the words of God (Bible). Jesus is the Word of God so the Bible is his truth told to mankind. (Rom 10:17)

6. The foundation of Christian faith and hope are based upon the redemption, resurrection and glorification of Jesus. The conclusion is that our faith and hope are in God. This only makes sense if Jesus and God are one. (Jn 10:30-33).

### **Living a Life of Love (1:22-25)**

**Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached to you.**

1. Peter says that Christians are purified through faith in Jesus. This purification process (sanctification) continues through the presence of the Holy Spirit within. Believers love each other because there is a common spirit which binds them in love and unity to form the Bride of Christ. We do not need to love one another *as though* we were brethren. We can love one another because we really *are* brethren. (2 Cor 11:2; Col 3:12-15)
2. Peter says Christians are born again of imperishable seed. What does this mean? In human birth, the embryo is the seed which determines the characteristics of the adult. In the same way the spiritual seed that comes through faith in Jesus will one day produce a glorious state of being like Jesus. For the seed to be imperishable means that it can't fail to produce Christ likeness. (1 Jn3:2)
3. Isaiah 40:6-8 is quoted to contrast the transitory character of nature with the eternal nature of spiritual life. In nature, everything changes and eventually dies and disappears. (Mt 24:35)

## ***Off the Shelf Sunday School Study 1 Peter 2***

### **Believer's Response & Duty (2:1-3)**

**Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

1. Peter begins with “Therefore,” which means, because of the previous discussion about God's blessings and who are in Christ (children), it is time to act with a proper response.
2. Christians are to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and are not to follow sinful human tendencies. (Rom 8:6-9). Therefore, believers are to rid themselves of evil which is like taking off a soiled garment. Peter lists sinful natural tendencies that are to be put away from our thoughts and actions: malice, deceit,

- hypocrisy, envy and slander. (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; Rom 12:29-31; 1 Tim 1:9-10)  
 Discuss these different sinful tendencies and provide examples. *What actions can be taken to avoid or overcome them?*
3. Sins incompatible with brotherly love (vs 22). Attitudes and behaviors tolerated in Churches?
  4. Christians are to crave the Word of God like babies crave milk in order to grow in wisdom and be transformed into Christ likeness. *How does the Word do this?* (Rom 12:2; 2 Tim 3:16-17)  
*What happens to Christians that do not crave the Word and grow by following it?* (1 Cor 3:1-3; Heb 5:12-13)
  5. *What does Peter mean that born again believers have “tasted that the Lord is good?” How does this relate to the craving reference?* The knowledge that comes from reading the Word are revelations that change the mind. *What are some of these changes of the mind that you have experienced?* Some possible changes are related to priorities, values, perspectives and what motivates you. Divine revelations of truth are like adding more sources of light in a dark room. The more light there is, the better the details of the room are seen.

### **Growing In Godliness (2:4-6)**

**As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”**

1. What does it mean to *come to Jesus*?  
 As you obey him you experience more of him and this creates an ever-increasing appetite to know more of him. This process is spiritual growth.
2. Jesus is called a living stone. God is referred to as a rock or stone in many places in scripture. *Why?* (Dt 32:3-4; 18; 30-31, Ps 18:2, 118:22; Mt 16:17-18)
3. Christians are also like living stones since our spiritual life is founded in Jesus. The Bible says that we are being transformed into his likeness. Therefore, we are “chips off the old block.” (1 Jn 3:2; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49)
4. Peter calls Christians a royal priesthood. What does this mean?  
 We are royal because we bear the likeness of Jesus through faith. It is the righteousness of Jesus and his holiness applied through his blood that enable us to bear his royal image and glory. (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 5:10)
5. What are the spiritual sacrifices that we are offering?  
 Christians are called to daily die to self and live in the will of God and for his glory. (Mt 16:24-25) This process of spiritual growth is transforming us into a royal nation and priesthood suitable as the Bride of Christ. (2 Cor 11:2; Rev 1:5-6)
6. It takes a collection of spiritual stones to build a spiritual house. The stones must be placed correctly according to their size and shape for the house to be built properly. This verse helps us appreciate how much we need each other as Christians. God gives different spiritual gifts to build his house which is the

- church. (1 Cor 12:4-7; 14:12; 1 Pet 4:10)
7. God has a purpose for all of us to fulfill that we cannot fulfill individually. The Christian who is not working in relationship with other Christians as fellow stones, (as well as with Jesus Christ as his or her foundation), cannot fulfill God's complete purpose for him or her. While every Christian has an individual purpose, we also have a corporate purpose that we cannot fulfill unless we take our place in the community of Christians that is the church. Peter will explain this purpose more fully, but here he tells us that it involves worship and service (Rom 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18).
  8. Because we are living stones like Jesus, Peter exhorts believers to be holy (1:13-16); hold God in high respect and fear (1:17); love believers (1:22) and feed on the Word (2:2)
  9. Peter tells Christians to be or act out what you are. Live according to the new spiritual life and identity you have in Christ. A frog does not bark. (Lk 6:43-45)

### **Building On Christ (2:7-8)**

**Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe; “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for.**

1. Jesus is the cornerstone or capstone of the spiritual house—believers rest on him as the foundation. Also, like stones of a house we lean or rely on each other.

*Jesus Christ was the stone that would have completed Israel had Israel's leaders accepted Him as their Messiah, Israel's keystone. Instead, the Israelites cast the stone aside by rejecting their Messiah. God then proceeded to make this stone the foundation of a new edifice that He would build, namely, the church. Israel's rejected keystone has become the church's foundation stone. (Expository Notes of Doctor Thomas Constable, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/1-peter-2.html>)*

2. Peter says some people are destined to stumble. In other words, these people are not given grace to understand and believe in Jesus. This is the doctrine of election (Acts 13:48; 1 Cor 15:10-11; Rom 11: 5-10; Eph 1:4; Phil 1:29). People choose to believe in Jesus because he first chooses them (Jn 15:16; Rom 8:28-30). Without the call or grace of God, humans are spiritually dead and in a state of rebellion against God. (Eph 2:1-10)

### **Summary Affirming the Blessings In Christ (2:9-10)**

**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

1. Peter points out that Christians (the Church) have the same privileges as the nation Israel: both are chosen people (Dt 7:6); a royal priesthood and a holy nation (Ex 9:6) belonging to God. Both are descendants of Abraham. Israel in a literal sense and the Church in a spiritual sense. Both are to be the means through which God's message of salvation reach those in spiritual darkness. In the Old Testament, God dwelt in the temple and drew people to himself through the prophets, sacrifices and miracles. In the New Testament, God dwells within Christians and draws people to himself by their transformed lives which essentially brings his presence to the nations. (Is 42:6-7; Mt 28:19-20)
2. The Church consists of people "called out" by God to receive grace and mercy from among many nations and cultures and so it was not a nation like Israel. It is a spiritual nation made holy by the blood of Jesus and sharing in his identity. (Hos 2:23)

### **Mission As Light Bearers (2:11-12)**

**Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 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.**

1. Because Christians are adopted citizens of God's heavenly kingdom, there is tension as our thinking and desires increasingly are at odds with the world. Peter sums this up by referring to Christians as aliens and strangers in the world. However, the customs of the world are in many ways working upon the sinful desires of the human nature waging war against the desires of the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Rom 8:5-14; Gal 5:17-22)
2. *What are some of the sinful desires of the human nature?* (Eph 5:3-4; 2 Tim 3:2-4)  
What are the consequences of following these sinful desires?  
They conform Christians to the customs of the world so that they appear to be hypocrites. They quench the transforming work of the Holy Spirit and bring dishonor upon God and his Church. (Eph 4:30-32; 1 Jn 2:15-16) We must take our standards of behavior, not from the culture in which we live, but from our "home" culture of heaven, so that our life always fits the place we are headed to, and where we belong rather than the temporary lodging in this world.
3. The accusation of doing wrong may be a reference to the persecution of Christians started by Nero around this time because of slanderous accusations. Christians were falsely accused of starting a great fire in Rome and of indulging in human sacrifice and cannibalism as part of the communion rites of religious ceremonies.
4. How does good deeds bring glory to God? (Mt 5:16)
5. A day of reckoning is coming when Jesus will return to judge sinful conduct and to rule as king over a new heaven and earth. (Rev 20:11-15; Phil 2:10-11)

### **Live Like Servants (2:13-17)**

**Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's**

**will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.**

1. Christians are told to submit to **every** authority **instituted** among men (examples?) who punish evil and commend what is good.
  - A. *How are we to act related to government, religious and other authorities?*
  - B. *What made this difficult for believers in Peter's day?*
  - C. *Is there a place for criticism in submitting to government?*
  - D. Christians should practice civil disobedience only when the government *requires* its citizens to disobey God, not when it only *permits* them to disobey Him.  
*What do you think of this statement?*
  - E. Currently the United States government permits abortion, for example, but it does not require it. *What do you think of those who bomb abortion clinics?*
2. Christians are called to live as servants and to respect others. (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3). This is counter-cultural to American society which promotes individualism through stressing the importance of rights and entitlements. This is evident in many popular commercials and expressions such as: "go for the gusto, have it your way, you deserve a break today, pull yourself up by your bootstraps...."
3. How does living in God's will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men? Doing good and being good through loving and serving others convicts others of their short comings such as a lack of integrity, lies, etc. Light exposes darkness.
4. In what sense are Christians free men?  
Christians are accepted by God through his mercy and so they are freed from trying to earn it. (1 Cor 6:20; Gal 5:13)
5. Peter clarifies that being free from the penalty of sins does not mean that Christians can or should do evil so that the grace of God may abound. (Rom 3:7-8; 6:15-18)
6. Peter says that we must live as servants and show respect, love and honor for others but especially for other Christians.

### **The Attitude & Service of Slaves (2:18-25)**

**Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

1. Peter begins by calling Christians slaves. This is an offensive word in America but during Peter's time, most Christians were slaves or came from the middle or lower classes. (1 Cor 1:26-29)
2. Peter tells them to submit respectfully to those in authority regardless of how they are treated. *How does this apply to us today? Are we servants of others in society? How are we to conduct ourselves?*
3. It is commendable to bear unjust suffering for the sake of following God's will. Jesus set this example for us through his life and death on the cross to fulfill the Father's will. Jesus was insulted and rejected for righteous behavior yet he did not retaliate. (Mt 26:67) He placed himself in Father's will and trusted him. (Mt 16:24)
4. Suffering for the sake of following Jesus is expected. (2 Tim 3:12)  
*How does this apply to us today?*  
Suffering for doing good fosters spiritual growth. How? (James 1:2-4)
5. Jesus is our Shepherd & Overseer. We were like sheep who strayed but have returned. (Mt18:12-14; Jn 10:14-16).  
*Why does Peter choose this analogy? (Psalm 23)*  
*How does this help in times of trials?*

## ***Off the Shelf***

### ***Sunday School Study***

### ***1 Peter 3***

#### **Believer's Conduct At Home (3:1-7)**

*Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

1. Wives are told to be submissive "in the same way." *What way is this?* (1 Pet 2: 18-23)
2. The husband has been given authority by God to be the head of the family. (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23-24)

3. Women with unbelieving husbands can bear witness to the power and truth of the gospel through reverent and submissive living. It is possible to be a powerful witness to the lost through example rather than debate.
4. During Peter's time, women were expected to follow the religion of their husbands. They might have their own religion on the side, but the family religion was that of the husband. Christians are to submit to human authorities except where this conflicts with obeying God's commands. *How might this be a problem for a Christian woman living with an unbelieving husband during Peter's time? How might this be a problem today?*
5. The priority of Christian women should be to develop inward beauty rather than outward. This is not to say that Christian women should not dress well but that they should not focus on being attractive through following worldly fashions if these are improper. Christian women are not to dress in a provocative manner or to draw attention to themselves. The identity of Christians comes from within and not outside appearance.
6. Submissive living is part of loving others and honoring God so it should characterize the life of every Christian. The Greek word *hypotasso* ("to submit") has in view the maintenance of God's willed order, not personal inferiority of any kind. This word may denote either voluntary or forced behavior, but not any sense of inferiority.
7. Peter tells Christian husbands that they must cherish, nurture and lead their wives. They are to be considerate of their needs and cultivate understanding. Both of these require good listening to discover what the wives desire and what they are thinking. Husbands are to love their wives like Christ loved the Church. This means putting others first, discovering what is needed and being willing to sacrifice to provide it. (Eph 5:25-28)
8. Why does Peter refer to women as the weaker vessel? This seems to fly in the face of modern thinking that women are equal to men in every aspect.
  - A. Women are generally physically weaker than men.
  - B. Women have a strong desire for security that can make them vulnerable.
  - C. Women tend to be more emotional and sensitive.
  - D. Men tend to be more rational in decision making.
9. *How are prayers hindered if husbands and wives fail to cherish and serve each other? Unity, unselfishness and humility grow in married couples who pray together several times each day. How often do you pray with your spouse?*

### **Believer's Conduct In Public (3:8-12)**

**Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insults with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a**

**blessing. For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

1. Live in harmony, sympathetic, love as brothers, compassionate, humble.
  - A. Harmony—Is cooperation when there are individual differences. This is summed up in the expression: “In fundamentals of faith, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in everything, love.” Christians do not all need to sing exactly the same tune, but our tune should harmonize with those of our brethren. We should be able to work together as the different parts of the body work together.
  - B. Sympathetic-- Means suffering with another by entering into and sharing the feelings and experiences of others rather than by having compassion on others from a distance. It implies bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).
  - C. Love as Brothers—By loving each other we bear witness to the spiritual bond and presence of the Holy Spirit within fellow Christians. This is the basis of our identity in Christ; a special and eternal family relationship rooted in the calling of God. (1 Pet 1:22).
  - D. Compassionate—Means being sensitive to the feelings and needs of others.
  - E. Humble--The person who is "humble in spirit" is willing to put someone else's interests and needs before his or her own (Phil. 2:3-4).
2. What does it take to do these things which are contrary to the selfish and ambitious human nature?

God’s transforming grace through the work of the Holy Spirit. It involves prayer to know and obey God’s will. There must be commitment to changing attitude, thinking and behavior.
3. There are three types of response to evil: return good for evil, evil for evil or evil for good.
  - A. Christians are to respond with good for evil reacting with kindness and forgiveness when we suffer ill treatment. This response is based on the knowledge that we too are guilty of evil but have been forgiven much more by God than the present offenses. Taking this approach pleases God and results in blessings.
  - B. Returning evil for evil damages relationships and evil is perpetuated. This response springs from an unforgiving and hardened heart attitude. We can insult another person by hiding (the quiet method) or by hurling verbal or physical abuse (the noisy method). Returning insults can lead another person to clam up or to blow up which produce bitterness and isolation.
  - C. Responding with evil when others do good is unusual but can happen when there is mistrust, envy or malice present.
4. Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16
  - A. Control of the tongue so that what is said is loving, proper and forgiving leads to a life full of love and good days. This promotes peaceful relationships and a good reputation.
  - B. *Think of times when you said something that you regretted. How did this make*

*you feel?* There is a kind of self -torture that comes from harboring bitterness and trying to justify evil speech and behavior. This produces days of anger, restlessness and anguish that are like acid to the soul.

### **Suffering for Doing Good (3:13-17)**

**Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.**

1. Who will harm you for doing good? What does this mean? (Psalm 27:1-3; Prov 16:7) What happens when good is returned for evil?
2. You will be blessed if you are harmed for doing good (Lk 6:22-23; 27-36; Mt 5:10)  
Have you ever experienced God’s blessing as a result of suffering for doing what is right?
3. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” What do we fear that drives our behavior to do what is contrary to what we know is right?  
How can we not be afraid of these things?
4. What do you think Peter means when he says to set aside Christ as Lord in your hearts?
5. Peter says that we should be prepared to give an answer for the hope that casts out fears. What is this hope? How do we prepare to do this?
6. Peter says that we should speak with a clear conscience with honesty, sincerity and truthfully so that those who attribute evil motives to your behavior will be ashamed. What happens when we don’t keep a clear conscience? (Titus 1:15; 1 Tim 4:2)
5. How is it better to suffer for doing good than to do evil? (2 Cor 4:16-18; 5:10)

### **The Vindication of Christ (3:18-22)**

**For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.**

1. Jesus suffered by doing good (offering himself as a sacrifice) for the evil done by humans. He took God’s wrath for sins resulting in his death to reconcile those who

have faith to God. (2 Cor 5:17-21) Note the reference to the Trinity. This verse states that all three persons are involved. (Jn 3:16-17)

2. Jesus was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. What does this mean?

Jesus predicted his death and was determined to see it through. From a human perspective, this was illogical and contrary to self-preservation. However, Jesus saw beyond the cross and his actions were vindicated in his resurrection and glorification. (Mt 26:2; Heb 12:2)

As disciples of Jesus, we are to follow example and daily take up the cross which means to die to self and live for God's will to be done in us. (Mt 16:24-25) We are to put to death the sinful desires of the flesh and live according to the new spiritual life.

3. Jesus may have gone to Hades between his death and resurrection and announced the coming of the kingdom of God.
  - A. God patiently waited for 120 years while Noah built the ark and witnessed to the coming wrath of God. Only eight people (those in Noah's family) believed and were saved.
  - B. The phrase 'in the days of Noah' may well be based on the Gospel tradition and on Jesus' analogy between Noah's time and the time immediately preceding the end of the age (Matt 24:37-39//Luke 17:26-27)
  - C. They were saved by going through water in the ark which represents God's mercy and grace. The "baptism" of Noah and his family in the ark by passing through the torrential rains and floods was based on their faith. This baptism was an expression or actions they took because of their faith. Baptismal water does not save but it is a sign of peace with God.
  - D. The death and resurrection of Jesus are a form of baptism in that Jesus went through the wrath of God on the cross and emerged to a resurrected life. (Mk 10:38) Jesus proved through this baptism that he is the Messiah, Savior, and God who reigns in power and all authority in heaven. Everything is subject to him. *How do these facts encourage believers in times of suffering?*

## *Off the Shelf*

### *Sunday School Study*

#### *1 Peter 4*

#### **Attitudes & Behaviors (4:1-6)**

**Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, 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. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same food of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him**

**who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body but live according to God in regard to the spirit.**

1. Therefore...*in light of what? What did Christ achieve through suffering?* (1 Pet 3:18-22)  
Christians are to “arm themselves with the same attitude” of obedience and persistence despite difficulties for the sake of doing God’s will.
2. To be done with sin means that we do not live for evil human desires but for the will of God. Peter lists some common examples of living for the pleasures and customs of the world. *How do these evil human desires differ from those of following God?*
3. *What types of persecution and abuse have you experienced because of changes that the Holy Spirit has made in you? Why do you think those who follow their natural evil desires dislike Christians and persecute them for not going along?*
4. Everyone will be held accountable for their actions (2 Cor 5:10; Mt 12:36; Rom 2:6-16)  
*Do you think believers will be judged more severely than others for joining in their sinful ways?*
5. Christians are to share the gospel because of the coming judgment of God for each person. *Who judges men for their actions?* (Rev 20:11-12)  
*What does it mean to live according to God regarding the spirit?*  
(1 Jn 1:7; 3:4-10)

### **Believer’s Conduct (4:7-11)**

**The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.**

1. In stressful times, Christians are to be clear minded. This means maintaining focus on God through prayer. We are to seek his will and persevere in living to honor Jesus.
2. Christians must be in a community of believers for support and to share the talents and gifts that God has given for the common good. This is necessary to learn to love other believers. (1 Cor 12:4-11; Rom 12:6-8)
3. Peter says that Christians are to practice hospitality. *Why do you think this is mentioned first as an essential characteristic of expressing love?*
4. The goal of using spiritual gifts is to glorify God. It is through God’s grace that spiritual knowledge and blessings flow to and through his people by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, believers are to live in humble recognition of their dependence upon God’s grace. Thankfulness, praise and worship are the proper responses.

## **The Blessings of Suffering for Christ (4:12-19)**

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

1. Jesus is the head and herald of a new race of humans that have been redeemed from the penalty of death by his blood. Jesus said that the miracles he did were evidence that the kingdom of God had come upon mankind. (Mt 12:25-28; 1 Cor 15:20-22) Christians have been adopted by God as his children, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus. (Jn 1: 12-13; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Rom 12:1-2) Therefore, Christians are in a spiritual war with the system of the world, unbelievers, their sinful nature and the devil. (Eph 6:12) Christians experience suffering from this conflict as they strive to follow Jesus (2 Tim 3:12). Jesus said that believers would be persecuted because he was. (Jn 15:20)
2. *What are some forms of painful trials that surprised you because of your Christian walk? How are these trials comforting? How do they strengthen your faith?*
3. *How does suffering for doing wrong differ from that of suffering for being a Christian?*
4. *How does the knowledge of sin bring judgment and why does this begin with Christians? (Rom 2:1-4; 3:20-24)*
5. Read Proverbs 11:31. Jesus said that the way to salvation is narrow and that he is the only way. (Mt 7:13-14; Jn 14:6) *What are some reasons that it is hard for humans to be saved?*

## ***Off the Shelf Sunday School Notes 1 Peter 5***

### **Instructions to Elders (1 Pet 5:1-4)**

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will

**never fade away.**

1. Peter appeals to church elders as a peer but he also reminds them that he has been with Jesus. *Why do you think he does this?*
2. Elders are mature Christians who have demonstrated their commitment through their faith and service. Peter addresses elders as a group of Christians who provide church leadership. (Phil 1:1). Churches are to have more than one leader.
3. The qualifications for church leaders are found in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. However, these qualifications alone are not sufficient. Elders must not be elected, appointed or pressured into service.
4. Church leaders must be humble and lead by example. They must care for the growth and well being of the church members and eager to serve them. They are not to command others, be proud of their status or desire money or power.
5. Faithful service that honors Jesus and promotes the growth and health of the church will be rewarded. There are various crowns that will be given for faithful service. These crowns are rewards but also are part of our identity and perhaps authority as heavenly stewards.
  - A. Crown of glory—1 Pet 5:4
  - B. Crown of righteousness—2 Tim 4:8
  - C. Crown of glory and joy—1 Thes 2:19-20
  - D. Crown of life—James 1:12; Rev 2:10

## **More Instructions (1 Pet 5:5-9)**

**Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.**

1. *Why should those who are younger respect those who are older? Do you think Peter is talking about older in age, faith or something else? How does this message compare with the commandment to honor your father and mother? (Ex 20:12)*
2. Peter says that Christians are to put on humility. This imperative implies an act of the will to do something like putting on clothes. *Why is humility something that does not come naturally?*
3. Humility is necessary for a proper view of who we are as sinful people. *Why is God’s grace given to those who are humble but not to those who are proud? (Ps 34:18; 51:17)*
4. Peter tells us to humbly trust that God will take care of us. We are his sheep and he has promised to lead us, feed us and keep us in his love and mercy. One day, Jesus will complete the redemption of our bodies and we will share in his glory. (Ps 23:7-8; Jn 10:25-29)

5. There is a command to place your worries on Jesus because he cares about taking care of you. Worries are a burden that can consume our thoughts and energy. Believers are to take these burdens in prayer to Jesus and trust that he will resolve them. The resolution may not be what we want but it will be for our good because he is working all things for the good to those who love him and submit to his will. (Rom 8:28)
6. The devil prowls or sneaks around looking for opportunities to destroy people. Peter commands believers to be alert and stand fast against the devil using the shield of faith. (Eph 6:16-17)
7. Resisting the devil is not easy and causes suffering. Christians are called to patiently endure suffering in order to honor Jesus and be faithful to him. *What are some ways that the world, the flesh, and the devil have caused you to suffer? Can there be joy in the midst of this type of suffering? Is there comfort in knowing that other Christians are experiencing similar difficulties?* (Rom 5:3-5; James 1:2; 1 Cor 10:13)

### **Benediction & Greetings (1 Pet 5:10-14)**

**And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.**

1. Peter concludes by reminding believers that God has and will provide for them through his loving grace which brings blessings and enables us to endure. The eternal glory with Jesus far outweighs the temporary sufferings of this life. (2 Cor 4:16-18)
2. Suffering for the cause of Jesus strengthens our faith and commitment to persevere while enduring trials. The strength we need comes from God. We need to seek his will and trust that he will provide what is needed to accomplish it. God is almighty and he graciously gives Christians what is needed to become more like him.
3. The reference to Babylon is unclear but it may refer to Rome or to the city on the Euphrates River. In either case, Peter says that he is writing from a place where there are Christians who likewise have been called and saved (chosen) by the grace of God.
4. Likewise, the reference to Mark could be his actual son or a younger believer who is a son in a spiritual sense (perhaps John Mark who wrote the gospel?)
5. Love among Christians is a sign of the presence of God. We love other Christians because we share the same Holy Spirit, faith and identity in Jesus Christ. We serve the same Lord; we desire to please and follow Jesus; we love his word and cherish it as sacred; we desire to become more like Jesus and we look forward to the coming of his kingdom and being perfected in his glory. A kiss is one way to

express this affection and common bond. Many families kiss or hug to show this affection and God given relationships.

6. Peter concludes by reminding them that their faith in Jesus has enabled them to be at peace with God and have a joy and peace that surpasses all understanding. (Php 4:6-7)