

CHOSEN AND SCATTERED

trial and joy in the life of a missional community

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INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

chosen and scattered

Who Wrote First Peter?

The five chapters that comprise First Peter were originally a general letter written by one of Jesus' closest followers, Simon Peter. Originally a fisherman (your average blue-collar worker), Simon – whom Jesus named Peter, which means “the rock” – was the first man Jesus invited to be a disciple, and he remained one of the closest companions of Jesus throughout his life and ministry. Simon Peter was present for almost all of Jesus' miracles, and often found himself right in the middle of the all the chaos and glory that followed Jesus wherever he went.

Throughout the gospels - the stories of Jesus' life - we see Peter emerge as the prominent leader among the 12 disciples. Though Peter is hotheaded, impulsive, and often mistaken, he seems to become the ringleader and spokesman for the group. As a result, Peter is often found at one of two extremes, either following hard after Jesus (he was the only disciple who experienced walking on water with Jesus) or stubbornly standing in Jesus' way (he was the only disciple to whom Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan!”).

Jesus loved Peter and chose him as the “the rock” on which Jesus would build the church after his death and resurrection. Peter was the first to realize that Jesus was the Messiah who had come to free God's people, and though he didn't understand why Jesus had to die, in time he became the rock Jesus said he was and led Jesus' baby church on mission to make disciples of Jesus around the globe.

Sadly, Peter is probably best remembered for his greatest failure. Hours before Jesus' crucifixion, Peter is hanging around the courtyard where Jesus is being falsely accused and condemned to death. During the few short hours of the trial, Peter flatly denies knowing Jesus – on 3 separate occasions! After his death and resurrection, Jesus graciously reinstates Peter as the leader of his church, and in fact uses Peter's failure as an opportunity to teach him to love and lead this new community of disciples.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Though Peter learned from his failure, and Jesus used it to mature him and refine him, Peter was never perfect. Years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the apostle Paul had to rebuke Peter for blatant self-righteousness and racism. Peter was a sinner who loved Jesus and was used by Jesus though he was far from perfect, and for this reason many of us easily identify with him. Peter is a man like us all; a man who has come to know grace – to see his own unworthiness, sin, failure, and rebellion and be healed through the suffering and resurrection of Jesus. And so Peter writes with the compassionate heart of a pastor who knows the difficulties and joys of following Jesus.

Context

At the time of the writing of this letter (likely AD 63-64), the early church is beginning to experience more wide-spread persecution. Peter's letter is written to encourage the early church to stand firm despite the suffering. For his own part, Peter is no stranger to suffering. He does not write this letter from the comforts of an air-conditioned pastoral office; in fact, Peter is writing from Rome where in only a few short years – perhaps only months – the Emperor Nero will launch an all-out attack on Christianity throughout the Empire. In the midst of this official persecution, Peter himself was crucified upside down for his witness to Jesus because he insisted he wasn't worthy to be crucified right side up like his Lord.

So Peter's letter was actually written just prior to widespread official persecution that broke out under the reign of Nero in AD 64. The book of Acts shows that from the earliest days Christians often faced misunderstanding, personal prejudices and rejection because of the gospel message. The hostilities they were facing mainly took the form of social pressure against the Christian community, expressed primarily in verbal abuse. According to 1 Peter, Christians were reviled (3:9), slandered (3:16), maligned (4:4) and denounced as criminals (2:12, 14; 4:15).

D. A. Carson explains exactly what kind of suffering is being referred to in 1 Peter: "The evidence from 1 Peter itself does not point to an official persecution. What is implied, rather, is the hostility Christians were known to have faced from the general Roman population. By refusing to engage in the quasi-religious customs surrounding the official Roman governmental structures, by resolutely setting themselves against some of the immoral practices prevalent at the time, and by meeting so often on their own to celebrate the Lord's Sup-

Suggested Resources:

Grudem, Wayne: 1 Peter: Tynadale New Testament Commentaries. Intervarsity Press, 1988

Clowney, Edmund: The Message of 1 Peter, The Bible Speaks Today. InterVarsity Press, 1988

Macleay, Angus: Teaching 1 Peter. Proclamation Trust Media, 2008

Other Resources Used:

Cedar, Paul A, James, 1,2 Peter, and Jude, Mastering the New Testament. Word, Inc, 1984

Jobes, Karen, 1 Peter (BECNT). Baker, 2005

Our Gospel Identities are worked out best in regular, daily Rhythms of life. We use the acronym BLESS to encapsulate the ways we live our Identities.

Bless: Each week we aspire to bless others in our Christian community and local neighborhood in word, action or gift at least three times. We'll do this by:

Listen: Each week we aspire to listen to God, looking for him to guide us through his word and Spirit. And we listen to people around us to understand their stories and the story of our culture. We'll do this by:

Eat: Each week we aspire to eat or have a drink with people outside our immediate family at least three times, offering friendship and community. We'll do this by:

Speak: Each week we aspire to tell people the story of Jesus and our story of Jesus, making Jesus a normal part of our conversations. And we speak to God through prayer, recognizing our dependence on him in all things. We'll do this by:

Sabbath: Each week we aspire to spend time in rest, praise, play, partying and creating beauty together. We'll do this by:

As a follower of Jesus and a child of God I covenant with _____ Missional Community to live these Gospel Identities and Gospel Rhythms together.

Name Date

Signature Email

per, Christians were regarded with suspicion and hostility. The readers of 1 Peter were probably being criticized, mocked, discriminated against, and perhaps even brought into court on trumped-up charges. This situation fully explains the references to suffering in 1 Peter.”

In other words, the suffering these communities of disciples are experiencing is no different to the difficulty and trial we might experience today for being willing to talk and live publicly for the sake of Jesus and his gospel. Anyone who wants to live faithfully for Jesus, both in Christian conduct and in public witness to Christ, is bound to experience varying degrees of slander, misunderstanding, social rejection, and mockery.

Peter is writing to people who are trying to figure out how to live out their new faith in Christ in a world that is opposed to them and the message of the gospel. He wants them to see that their suffering follows the pattern of the cross and resurrection, suffering followed by glory. This pattern is normal for all of life in Christ. The cross and resurrection defines how we live now as Christians. For these early Christians, the cross was not a piece of jewelry but the way of life; suffering, sacrifice, and self-denial were normative Christianity.

Peter wants to prepare and strengthen his readers for the trial that is even now coming upon them. His final exhortation, “This is the true grace of God... Stand firm in it,” brings his letter to a summarized conclusion. The true grace of God is the suffering but exalted Savior who calls a people to suffer on the way to glory with Him.

Main Themes of 1 Peter

The main theme of Peter’s letter is set forth in his introduction when he describes his recipients as “elect exiles of the dispersion” (1.2). Peter is writing to an “elect” people, chosen from the beginning of time by God the Father, being made holy by the Holy Spirit, and learning to walk in obedience to Jesus Christ. They are the community of Christ, purchased by his own blood. In this language, Peter is reminding them and encouraging them with the truth of what God has done to rescue them, adopt them, and call them his own special people. This theme of being God’s own children, born by the gospel word, and being formed by the Holy Spirit to walk in holiness like Jesus is repeated throughout the letter. Peter wants these suffering Christians to know that God dearly loves them and is using all things to refine them, mature them, and make them like Jesus!

MISSIONAL COMMUNITY COVENANT

Gospel Identity and Gospel Rhythms

But Peter is also writing to people who he calls, “exiles of the dispersion.” Peter uses the language of “exile” and “scattering” (dispersion means “scattered”) to underscore the reality that just as they have been chosen and called God’s children, they have also been scattered and “exiled” in the world for his purposes. This language is an allusion to God’s people in the Old Testament, scattered across a world which is emphatically not their home. They are experiencing conflict resulting from their new faith and way of life. They are increasingly at odds with their culture because they are now at home in Jesus.

The dual theme of being home in Jesus and being exiles in the world frame this first letter of Peter. Peter writes as a pastor and an apostle, a man who loves his flock dearly yet is unafraid to charge them with the responsibility of being faithful witnesses to Jesus in the midst of their “fiery trial.”

The themes of living in holiness – a reflection of the character of Christ – and the themes of witness – those whose lives reflect the work of Christ on our behalf – are uniquely tied together in this letter. Peter calls us to holiness and to good works in a world that is out of step with what God has done in Christ. In a world that is hostile to the message of the gospel, Christians are to live in such a way that though we are maligned for our refusal to participate in the debauchery, we are also questioned about the hope we have for the way we serve, bless, and sacrifice for one another and for those who persecute us.

Purpose of the Letter

The areas that Peter writes to - Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythnia - are scattered across what is modern-day Turkey. These small bands of Christians are united by both faith in Jesus and living for the purposes of Jesus. Karen Jobes says this: “The picture that emerges of the regions to which Peter wrote is one of a vast geographical area with small cities few and far between, of a diversified population of indigenous peoples, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. The residents practiced many religions, spoke several languages, and were never really assimilated into the Greco-Roman culture... And yet this untamed region became the cradle of Christianity... To this remote and undeveloped region, the apostle Peter writes his letter to Christians whom he addresses as ‘visiting foreigners and resident aliens’ (1:1; 2:11), scattered across the vast reaches of Asia Minor. We may surmise that, in no small part because of this letter and the faithfulness of those who received it, well-established churches flourished in all five of these regions by AD 180.”

Our Gospel Identities reflect who we are because of Jesus Christ as a gift of God’s grace. We’ve not earned these nor can we secure them. We believe this is who God has created us to be in Jesus in order to continue Jesus’ disciple-making work.

Missionaries – We live as missionaries sent to make disciples of Jesus. We believe we are sent to:

Servants – We eagerly serve our Missional Community and the People in our Mission as a demonstration of the Gospel. We are committed to serve by:

Learners – We take responsibility for our own discipleship and the discipleship of the people in our mission. We will devote ourselves to:

Family – We see it as our privilege to care for one another as well as those we are sent to. We will:

We speak: Each week we aspire to tell people the story of Jesus and our story of Jesus, making Jesus a normal part of our conversations. And we speak to God through prayer, recognizing our dependence on him in all things.

We'll do this by:

We sabbath: Each week we aspire to spend time in rest, praise, play, partying and creating beauty together.

We'll do this by:

In other words, though Peter penned this letter to very average people isolated and scattered across a vast geographical region, those who read and took to heart the message of this letter became the beginnings of a movement of gospel communities that took responsibility to make disciples of Jesus in their region. These Christians did not live under the assumption that a chosen few “professionals” would do Jesus’ work of making disciples and planting churches; rather, they took seriously the call of Jesus – echoed in Peter’s letter – to be a community of witness to the gospel of Jesus in both word and deed. There were no paid Christian leaders, no copies of the Bible, and incredible pressure to give up and turn away from Christ altogether. But this letter became for them a roadmap for living out the gospel in the midst of a hostile world, and doing it with humility, sacrificial servanthood, and an unwavering commitment to the message and mission of the gospel.

Those who originally received this letter were Christians who were in danger of losing their way. Their new-found faith had severed the ties which had bound them to their non-Christian relatives and neighbors and was itself being tested because they were beginning to face opposition and suffering. This situation was probably not what they had expected when they had first heard the gospel, but it is an experience Jesus predicted would be faced by every generation of faithful Christians:

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5.11-12)

Imagine for a moment that your neighborhood had no churches, no paid professional pastors, and no bibles. The only Christians in your region beside yourself are a small community – 10 or 15 people altogether – who have somehow found one another and banded together in the love of Jesus. You and your small community of friends who believe in Jesus face constant threat of ridicule and slander for your commitment to the crucified and resurrected Messiah. What would you do? What encouragement would you need? How would you live as God’s people for God’s purposes?

Here is the reality: you live in this context now. Yes, there are a ton of churches in Spokane, but the reality is no one is going to them. In fact, roughly 1 in 10 people in Spokane go to church, which means that 90% - 9 out of 10 -

of your neighbors have not heard the gospel or experienced genuine Christian community. Whether or not they have church backgrounds, your neighbors have probably not seen or heard the gospel expressed in a way that makes sense to them. God has placed you in your neighborhood and in your city so that he can use you to bless, serve, and speak the gospel to your neighbors, that they, too might come to know God.

This letter is a handbook for missionary people sent to be witnesses of the grace of God in Jesus to a often hostile world. These Christians were learning to live as ambassadors of Jesus in a world opposed to the gospel. This world questioned, accused, maligned, and persecuted these Christians, and Peter urges faithfulness both in conduct and in witness, encouraging them toward perseverance through these trials.

The first letter of Peter encourages us to ask some serious questions about our commitment to Jesus Christ and his mission of making disciples. Do we live as a Chosen and Scattered people? Do we know deeply and truly our Identity as beloved children of God? Are we able to endure trial, hardship, and even persecution, knowing that Jesus is at work to glorify himself and make us holy? And do we believe that God's plan for making disciples of Jesus on our blocks, in our neighborhoods, in this city, is us?

We are Chosen: Chosen in the Father's love, paid for in the Savior's blood, and refined by the Spirit's fire. We are Scattered: Scattered by the God of mission who intends to make us faithful witnesses in every area of Spokane County.

We are the chosen and scattered communities of Jesus,
and Peter is writing to *us*.

A COVENANT OF GRACE

notes on our gospel rhythms

Our Gospel Identities need to get worked out in regular Rhythms of life. Who we are because of Jesus needs to become the pattern for our daily activity, to become concrete in order to bring God's real blessing into the real mess of life. Our Rhythms reflect the way we commit to live together.

We bless: Each week we aspire to bless others in our Christian community and local neighborhood in word, action or gift at least three times.

We'll do this by:

We listen: Each week we aspire to listen to God, looking for him to guide us through his word and Spirit. And we listen to people around us to understand their stories and the story of our culture.

We'll do this by:

We eat: Each week we aspire to eat or have a drink with people outside our immediate family at least three times, offering friendship and community.

We'll do this by:

STUDYING 1 PETER TOGETHER

thoughts on learning in community

Learners – We take responsibility for our own discipleship and the discipleship of the people in our mission.

- In what ways do you all need to grow spiritually this year?
- In what areas do you need to be better equipped in so that you will be faithful in making disciples?
- What specifically will you do to insure that the people you are sent to hear the gospel this year?

As Learners, we will devote ourselves to:

Family – We see it as our privilege to care for one another and those we are sent to.

- How will you insure that each of you is involved in regular accountability?
- How will you commit to the “one another” commands that are key to being God’s Family?
- How will you extend the family to those who are still “lost” or “dead” to the Father?

As Family, we will:

A Letter For Missional Communities

The communities that Peter wrote to were spread across the area now known as Turkey. These small communities of disciples were in danger of being swallowed up by the pressures of living for Jesus in a hostile world. They banded together to support one another in faithful obedience and sacrificial witness to Jesus. They shared life together, enjoying the fellowship of God the Father and their Christians brothers and sisters.

As we study 1 Peter, we want to do it in a similar context to that in which it was written. We’ll gather together on Sundays to learn and dialogue, but the real transformation will happen life-on-life through being involved in a missional community. A missional community is a network of people who are sharing life together, learning to be formed by the gospel, and doing the work of making disciples together. A missional community is not simply a mid-week bible study, another event to squeeze into your already busy schedule. A missional community is a family who cares for one another, serves together throughout the week, shares meals together, supports one another through prayer and by meeting practical needs, and prioritizes the work of making disciples together.

The focus of our study in 1 Peter will not be more Bible teaching or study. Rather, our focus will be on learning: allowing the text to shape our day-to-day living together. Each week we’ll highlight themes and ideas that have real-world consequences. We want to talk not only about how the text applies to my life personally but how it would shape us as a community to have received a letter like this from the apostle Peter. What does Peter want us to know? What does he want us to experience? What does he want us to be able to do? And how do we do it in a way that multiplies disciples of Jesus?

Our goal for each and every Christian in our community is that you would know that you are both chosen and scattered. God has brought you to himself, a radical call back into fellowship with him, and we want you to experience the fullness of life in him, a life of abundant joy and soul-level satisfaction. At the same time, God is sending you out, scattering you across our region for the

purpose of faithful, servant-like witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These two movements happen simultaneously, growing simultaneously holy in conduct and faithful in mission, and our missional communities try to live in the faithful balance of both the inward and outward activity.

For Daily Learning

Each week's study below has a short section of commentary, a page of questions for studying alone and in community, and space for taking notes, both from your own study and from our times together on Sunday. Spend as much time as you have each day reflecting on the text and questions. A good beginning idea is to spend about 20 minutes daily reading, reflecting, and praying about what the text says. You could also include in that time to pray for your family, your missional community, and your neighbors. It might be helpful to keep a journal, or to use the space provided, to write down your thoughts and reflections for each day. Use 1 Peter as a groundwork for good, gospel-centered conversations among your family and your missional community.

For Family Learning

Included in each week's study is a short section for parents. Each week will have a brief summary of how the text applies to the family, as well as a set of short daily questions that you could use to encourage dialogue and learning in your family. A good idea would be to use dinner time each night to read a bit of 1 Peter and discuss it together.

This is a great opportunity for dad to take the lead in teaching and training his kids in the word of God. Depending on the ages of your kids, this might mean good, deep discussion or a short, quickly hijacked time of learning. Remember to stay flexible and have a good time! The point is not necessarily to get through all the questions but to create an atmosphere of love for Jesus and grace-centered obedience to his word.

Both mom and dad have an intricate role in the formation of the children. When one parent isn't present, the other must, in reliance upon Jesus, take up the slack. Please know that your church community wants to support, encourage, and equip you for the task of training your kids. If we can do anything to help, please don't hesitate to ask.

A couple great Bible resources for kids are [The Big Picture Story Bible](#) by David Helm and [The Jesus Story Bible](#) by Sally Lloyd-Jones. Parents will learn lots from these books, too!

A COVENANT OF GRACE

notes on our gospel identities

Missionaries – We live as missionaries sent to make disciples of Jesus.

- Which people group or groups are you focusing on in your obedience to Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations?
- Start with your "Jerusalem", but you can also identify a "Judea," "Samaria" and "Other parts of the World" as well.

As Missionaries, we believe we are sent to:

Servants – We eagerly serve our Missional Community and the People in our Mission as a demonstration of the Gospel.

- What are specifically called to do in light of our Servant Identity to tangibly demonstrate the gospel to those who God has sent you?
- How might you also demonstrate the gospel to each other?
- What specific projects or events do you need to accomplish or get involved in to demonstrate the gospel to your community?

As Servants, we are committed to serve by:

THE COST OF TRUE GRACE

1 Peter 5.6-14: Notes & Reflections

CHOSEN AND SCATTERED

1 Peter 1.1-2: Commentary

To Whom It May Concern

Letters in the first century AD began with a typical greeting, but in the hands of the Apostle Peter, this greeting becomes an opportunity to teach, encourage, and admonish the recipients of this letter. Peter wastes no time in getting right to work on the main themes of his letter. Peter calls these small communities of Christ followers “elect exiles of the dispersion,” and each term requires some serious unpacking because the terms are loaded with Biblical imagery and each carries great significance to these early Christians.

First, Peter says that these Christians are “elect” or “chosen.” By using this language, Peter reminds his readers of their true identity and significance in the world. He is taking language that God applied to his people in the Old Testament and re-appropriating it for these New Testament believers. Israel was God’s “chosen servant” through which God planned to bring his blessing to the world again. To remind these believers - at the very beginning of his letter - that they are chosen would have greatly encouraged and bolstered their faith. They are not alone in the hardships they face because they are God’s special people, the one’s whom he has poured his grace and favor upon. *Throughout the letter Peter will use the language of Family to remind these Christians that they are God’s elect, the Family that he has chosen and drawn to himself in Christ.*

Second, Peter calls these communities of Christ “exiles” or “strangers.” By this terminology, Peter would be reminding his readers again of Israel and the way in which Israel was to live at odds with the surrounding culture. “Be holy as I am holy” was God’s command to them, and Peter will later apply the same thinking to these Christians. Because they are God’s chosen family, their way of life was to be different and to reveal that they are not in their true “homeland.” In particular, Peter’s reference should make us think of when Israel was sent into exile in Babylon (see Jeremiah 29). God instructed his people to work for the shalom - the peaceful flourishing - of the city to which he sent them in exile. The idea of living as exiles - that is, living differently but in a way to be a blessing to the people around them - is a consistent theme of Peter’s letter. *The*

theme of suffering as Christ's Servants appears throughout the letter to highlight the way obeying God should bless others, even those who persecuting these churches.

Third, Peter says these Christians are chosen exiles "of the dispersion." Dispersion literally means "scattering," and originally referred to the Jewish people being "scattered" around the Mediterranean, in contrast to them being in their native land of Israel. Again, Peter is taking language that applied to God's people in the Old Testament story and giving it new meaning and life by applying it to the Christian community, particularly as they are "scattered" throughout the Roman Empire. Peter understands the scattering of these Christians to be God's work of sending them as ambassadors into every area of the known world. Acts 8.4 uses the same word when it says, "And those who were scattered went about preaching the word." *Peter uses the idea of scattering to highlight the Missionary nature of these Christian communities, encouraging them to be faithful witnesses for Jesus wherever God has sent them.*

The Foundation for Christian Living

The foundation of these three Identities of Family, Servant, and Missionary is found in v.2. God the Father has done the choosing, the Holy Spirit is doing the work of "sanctifying" or setting these believers apart as holy servants, and the purpose is found in obedience to Jesus Christ, who gave the church the mission of making disciples. In all this, the church's foundation is the blood of Christ which has been "sprinkled" on them, reminding them that they have been bought at a great price and are no longer their own but have been set apart for the purposes of Christ in the world. Jesus gave up his life for these communities of persecuted believers, and in them he is advancing on the gates of hell. While Jesus never promises to keep them from suffering, he does promise to be with them, to refine them, and to use them for his good purposes.

Peter's Letter and Vintage Faith

These three themes - Family, Servants, and Missionaries - are woven throughout this letter, and reveal why 1 Peter is such an important letter for Vintage Faith today. Our hope as a church community is that each of us will embrace our common identity of a Family of Servant Missionaries, bought with the precious blood of Christ. Living this out will require suffering and sacrifice, a great deal of humble heart-searching, and a courageous faithfulness to live as a disciple-making community, following our crucified and resurrected Lord.

THE COST OF TRUE GRACE

1 Peter 5.6-14: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

- What reasons for Hope does Peter offer us?
- What is Satan's role in our trials and hardships for Jesus?
- What is God's role? And how should we respond to God in trial?
- Why does Peter call this "the true grace of God?" How do we stand firm?
- Define these terms in light of the letter: Chosen, Exile, Scattered.
- Which of the three is hardest for you to embrace? Why?

Questions for Study in Community

- This week you'll be signing your Covenant together. Are you ready?
- What other things need to be added or subtracted from our Covenant?
- As you make your Covenant together, are you excited or anxious? Why?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- Multiplying your community is one example of the costliness of this grace...
- How will you multiply your missional community this year?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Introducing your kids to the reality of the spiritual battle we are in takes a great deal of discernment. You want them to have the full picture, but not to be scared or to give them more information than they can process. Peter's description therefore is quite helpful: Satan is at work, but God is bigger and God is in us so we can have victory over Satan's schemes!

Day One: What is God's "mighty hand?" Why should we humble ourselves under it? What does that mean?

Day Two: What are anxieties? What makes you worried? How can you give God your cares and concerns? Why should you do that?

Day Three: What does Peter say Satan is like? What does Satan want to do? How do we resist Satan?

Day Four: What are Christians facing around the world? Do you support any missionaries in persecuted countries? Start today!

Day Five: What will God do for us after we suffer for a while? What does that mean? How has Peter told us of the "true grace of God?"

should stand against him! Satan is no match for the power of Jesus that resides in every Christian!

Third, Peter encourages these suffering Christians by reminding them that throughout the world the Family of God is experiencing these same things. To follow Jesus necessarily implies some level of suffering and sacrifice, and to not be experiencing them may be a sign of a lack of genuine faith in Jesus.

Finally, Peter further encourages the missional communities with the reality of their future in God. God may be allowing hardship and suffering now, but in a short time he will call them into glory, restoring, confirming, strengthening, and establishing them forever with Jesus in his glory! What a great and certain hope for our momentary trials in this life!

The True Grace

Twice in this section Peter reminds us of the grace of God, his unmerited favor bestowed on us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Grace is the dynamic of the Christian life: all that we as Christians must always flow directly from what God has done for us in Jesus and our ongoing experience of it. God has punished Jesus for our sin, and caused us to be born again into His family through Jesus' resurrection. We are alive to God by his free grace!

Though this "true grace" of God is free to us, it does not come without great cost. To embrace the grace of God in Jesus is also to embrace Jesus' sacrificial way of life. The true grace of God will lead to sacrifice and suffering for the sake of Jesus because this true grace makes us chosen exiles. We are no longer walking in the patterns of this world, and we proclaim a message that many will choose to disobey. By embracing God's grace to us in Jesus we are embracing a life of ridicule and misunderstanding.

Living the Message of 1 Peter

The question that lingers as we conclude our study together is this: Will we choose to embrace the radical implications of this letter? Certainly, we can rejoice that we are chosen, adopted into God's Family because of Jesus! But can we rejoice in being scattered across our region to make disciples of Jesus? Will we embrace the call of Jesus to give up our lives for his sake and for the sake of the gospel? As your missional community gathers this week, you'll be making a Covenant around this reality of being radically called into God's community and radically sent out as God's ambassadors. Our hope for every Christian is that we'd fully live the reality of being *both* Chosen and Scattered.

CHOSEN AND SCATTERED

1 Peter 1.1-2: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter from beginning to end 2-3 times. What themes do you see? What stands out as important to Peter? Read 1 Peter 1.1-3 and 5.12-14. What words or phrases repeat? Why? Define each of the following: Chosen. Exiles. Scattered. Grace. In what ways does your life reflect those three words? How does it not?

Questions for Study in Community

How might Peter's introduction be encouraging for persecuted Christians? What are the implications of knowing that God has chosen us? What are the implications of knowing that we are in exile? What are the implications of knowing that God has scattered us?

Questions for Staying on Mission

Do you believe that your purpose in life is to be a disciple-maker? In what capacities are you - as a community - making disciples? What hinders you from living all-out for the purposes of Jesus today?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

What might it mean for you as a family to be part of a larger Christian Family, living as strangers in this world, but with a clear disciple-making purpose? What needs to change in the rhythms of your life? What needs to be cut out of your schedules in order to prioritize being in community and being on mission? The questions for Family Study this week revolve around these themes.

Day One: Who was Peter and why is he important? What do you know about him? What sorts of things do you think he learned by being with Jesus?

Day Two: Who is Jesus Christ? What do you know about him? Why does Peter mention Jesus at the beginning of his letter?

Day Three: What does "chosen" mean? Why use that word to describe Christians? How does it make you feel to be chosen by God?

Day Four: What is an "exile?" What does it mean that we are exiles here? How does Jesus want us to be different than people who don't know him?

Day Five: Why does Jesus "scatter" his church? How are we scattered?

CHOSEN AND SCATTERED

1 Peter 1.1-2: Notes & Reflections

THE COST OF TRUE GRACE

1 Peter 5.6-14: Commentary

Final Exhortations

Peter ends his letter with a final summary of all that he has been saying. Peter is a shepherd who cares deeply for these scattered missionaries, and he wants them to see that what they are currently experiencing - trial and suffering for their witness to Jesus - is nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, he says, "this is the true grace of God," and the same things are being experienced by Christians throughout the world!

As we conclude our study in 1 Peter, we take a step back to revisit the main themes and commit to living them together in our day. Throughout the world still today Christians are living as scattered exiles, God's chosen people, adopted and loved because of Jesus and simultaneously sent into the world to live as missionary servants for the sake of making disciples of Jesus. That is who Peter wrote to, and it is still what Peter would say to us today.

Submit to God, Resist the Devil

Peter begins his summary by reminding these Christians that they are in the midst of a spiritual battle. Jesus has won the decisive victory over Satan, sin, death, and hell, but the mop-up job still remains to be done. Though Satan has lost the war, he still tries to take as many casualties with him, and he is trying to destroy these Christians through the mockery, ridicule, and suffering they are enduring.

Peter offers a four-fold response to this spiritual battle. First, he urges a humble recognition that though Satan may be at work in their trial, ultimately it is God who is allowing it to continue, and God overrules Satan's work and uses the suffering for his own glory and the refinement of the saints. Peter is returning to his them in chapter 1 of how trial can purify our faith. To recognize that God is in control and that God cares are the 2 most important responses when we face trials for the sake of Jesus.

Second, Peter commands these small communities of Christians to resist Satan by staying firmly rooted in Jesus. Though Satan may have great power, Peter has the audacity to claim that these small bands of Christians can and

A SURPRISING MUTUALITY

1 Peter 5.1-5: Notes & Reflections

Learners Identity Statement

We Are Learners: We are disciples of Jesus who together are responsible for the maturity and mission of the church. Because God has begun this work in us and by His Spirit promises to bring it to completion one day, we recognize the need to continuously be learning together from him and being changed by him. Therefore, we are students and followers of Jesus, learning from him how to live life the way God intended, and helping one another to do the same.

GOSPEL-FORMED COMMUNITY

1 Peter 1.3-12: Commentary

Our Father and Our Second Birth

After his theme-packed greeting, Peter launches right in to the first of the major themes of his letter, giving a fuller description of what it means to be a chosen people. Peter - like many New Testament authors - begins by praising God for the work that he has done in bringing to life these Christians. God the Father has caused them to be “born again” through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Peter pictures these believers as united to Jesus in his death and resurrection, so that by faith in Jesus that are no longer the walking dead. They are alive to a new, living hope, a sure promise of God’s future for them in Christ. These new believers, now a part of God’s Family forever, are assured of a future inheritance that cannot be taken from them. Peter pictures the future world - a recreated and renewed earth - as being kept by God “in heaven” but soon to be revealed. The picture is not that the Christians will soon escape this world to go to heaven; rather, Jesus will soon return - be revealed - to bring a salvation so thorough and complete that the entire cosmos will be recreated.

In the meantime, though, these Christians face “various trials,” a part of God’s refinement of them until he returns for them. God has allowed these trials to come about in order to refine and purify their faith in Jesus in the same way that fire melts and refines gold. This purified faith - more fully centered on Jesus and him alone - will result in great glory and honor for Jesus when he is revealed. Interestingly, Peter doesn’t say “when Jesus returns” but rather when he is “revealed.” The implication is that Jesus is not far off, but rather quite near these suffering believers, and though he remains unseen now, he will soon show himself to the world and in doing so vindicate the suffering faithful.

The focus of the section is on God’s work in bringing about both the salvation and the sanctification of these suffering Christians. The result of this, as they hold on to Jesus in faith, is that they actually grow to love him more deeply and rejoice in him more fully. God allows the trial and suffering in order to wean us off of the way we continue to cling to the things of this world. God wants us satisfied in him alone, so that our joy may be “inexpressible and full of glory!”

Predicted and Preached

In vs. 10-12, Peter reminds his readers that this salvation that God has brought to them through the death and resurrection of Jesus is the fulfillment of what God has been doing from the beginning of time. The entirety of the Old Testament story is about the need for the arrival of the Messiah, God's anointed King, and Peter specifically mentions that the prophets looked forward to the Messiah's death and resurrection. This is salvation by grace: nothing in this section is about what the believers had to do in order to be chosen, saved, or born again. It has all been - and always been - God's work. Now this salvation by grace - called the good news, or gospel - has been preached by the apostles, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the gospel has caused these Christians to be born again into this new Family of God.

Faith That Leads to Rejoicing

The gospel is the entire biblical story of man's rebellion against God and God's gracious pursuit, culminating in sending his son into history to suffer, die and be resurrected, paying the penalty for man's rebellion and bringing man to abundant, joyful life again. This is the gospel of grace, and Peter emphasizes that it is all God's doing: there is not one command in this entire section! The only role that we have is to respond in faith and joy, two sides of the same coin. To place our faith in Jesus simply means we stop looking to our own performance to find our identity and significance, and begin to rely on Jesus' death to free us from the guilt and condemnation of our sin and to rely on Jesus' resurrection to bring us into a new Family as adopted and beloved children of God.

The ongoing work of being a Christian is to daily live in the reality of the gospel of grace. Our default mode is performance, or what is often called religion: "If I obey God, then he'll love me." When we function in a religious/performance mode, we lose joy because we are uncertain as to God's love of us. We often end up hiding much of our sin because we want to appear put together. By returning on a daily basis to the gospel of grace we are freed to admit the depths of our sin - because God already knows and has given his Son to pay for all of it - and to "rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" because he freely chose us, totally apart from our day-to-day performance!

The gospel is good news, and we must learn to live in it more fully and to help one another do the same. The gospel is "I can obey God *because* he loves me." As we learn to rest in the truth of that, we'll grow in both holiness and joy!

A SURPRISING MUTUALITY

1 Peter 5.1-5: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

- Who are the 2 groups Peter addresses? Which are you? Why?
- Why does Peter address the leaders specifically? What does he say?
- What does Peter command of those who are younger? Why?
- By elder/younger, does Peter mean age? Why or why not?
- What responsibility do you take for your missional community?
- What is your role, gifts, or abilities in your community?

Questions for Study in Community

- In what ways do we need to grow spiritually this year?
- How can we each take responsibility for what our community becomes?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- If you all were the only Christians in Spokane, what would you do?
- What role does each of us have in Jesus' disciple-making mission?
- How do we need to be equipped to be better disciple-makers this year?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

One of the main biblical requirements for elders is that they are able to shepherd their homes well. As you lead your family this week, reflect on whether or not you lead them like a small "flock" of God. Invite your wife and kids to help you evaluate how you might grow up to become an elder. If dad is not present, mom has to carry the weight of dad, but a missional community should help!

Day One: What is an elder? What do they do in the church? Do you know who the elders are in our church? Should dad be an elder? Why or why not?

Day Two: Why does Peter call the church a "flock?" What is he referring to? Are you a sheep?

Day Three: How does an elder act as a shepherd in the church? What does it mean that they should be "examples to the flock?"

Day Four: Who is the Chief Shepherd? What is his role in the church? Why does Peter remind everyone about the Chief Shepherd?

Day Five: How should the "younger" people act? What is their responsibility in the community? Are they less important than the elders? Why not?

In vs.5 Peter urges those who are “younger” to “be subject to” the elders. Repeating the emphasis in chapters 2 and 3, Peter insists that the community voluntarily submits itself to the caring leadership of the elders. This humility encourages the elders to lead well, lightening their load, and puts the community in a place to be shaped and molded by the leaders Jesus has given it.

The overarching command for both elders and the community at large is the rule of humility toward one another. Though elders have a special role in the community, the whole church together is responsible for the maturity of the community. In the church - what we call the missional community - everyone takes seriously the task of making mature disciples of Jesus, and everyone must model humility for the sake of keeping the church on her mission.

The Chief Shepherd

In between his instructions to the elders and those who are younger, Peter reminds both groups of the Lord Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. Jesus is the true Shepherd of this exiled people, and he is ultimately responsible for the maturity and mission of the community. For the elders, this is a reminder that each of them is primarily a sheep, and therefore they must humbly submit themselves to Jesus and his leadership of their own lives. For the rest of the community, this is a reminder that each of them is personally responsible to Jesus for the way they mature as disciples who make disciples, and therefore they must continue to trust Jesus as he leads his church through imperfect human leadership.

Covenanting Around Mutual Responsibility

To be a part of the church is to take responsibility for one’s own spiritual maturity as a disciple of Jesus. Each Christian has within them the “DNA” of Jesus, both in character and in purpose. We call this the Identity of Learner to emphasize that each of us is a disciple of Jesus and each of us called to be a disciple-maker. As we covenant together around this Identity, we are calling one another to a mutual responsibility for what our missional community becomes. If we grow as a community, both in character and in mission, it will happen because each of us “clothes ourselves” with humble seriousness about call of God on us.

As you discuss your Learner Identity this week, take time to evaluate the level to which you personally own your own maturity and your own role in Jesus’ disciple-making mission. As you do, consider whether Jesus is wanting you to take a more active role as an elder or shepherd in your community.

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 1.1-12 as regularly as you can.
Where does Peter begin his letter? Why do you think he begins here?
Highlight all that God has done in this section. What has he done?
Underline what we have done in this section. What do you notice?
What is the main point of v.10-12? Why does Peter highlight this now?
Choose a verse to memorize this week, and begin by writing it out.

Questions for Study in Community

What trials did you face this week because of being a Christian?
Why does God allow suffering? What is he doing when he does?
How is this section encouraging for a church suffering trials?
Are you “rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory?” Why or why not?

Questions for Staying on Mission

How does someone become “born again?” What is our role? God’s role?
How will we preach the gospel this week to our neighbors?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Your immediate family is part of a larger Family. Your family is not an end in itself, but a means through which God wants to work, both to refine you and to proclaim the gospel to the world. Have you made an idol out of your family, giving it more priority than the mission of the gospel? What needs to change?

Day One: Talk about being “born again.” What does it mean? Why would Peter use that metaphor? What does it mean that God is our Daddy now?

Day Two: Sometimes God allows hard things into our life. Why do you think he does that? How does trial make our faith stronger and purer?

Day Three: Peter says Jesus is going to be revealed soon. What will happen when he is? Why should that make us happy?

Day Four: What is joy? Why does being a Christian mean being full of joy? When we don’t have joy, what should we do?

Day Five: The gospel is Jesus’ death and resurrection. Why is that good news? Why do angels want to look into it? Why should we proclaim it?

GOSPEL-FORMED COMMUNITY

1 Peter 1.3-12: Notes & Reflections

A SURPRISING MUTUALITY

1 Peter 5.1-5: Commentary

Covenanting Together

Peter is almost finished with his letter to these scattered missional communities, but before he closes he wants to speak directly to the relationship between the leadership and the rest of the community. Though leaders often have different roles in the church community, the biblical model is that everyone is a sheep of Jesus, and everyone is responsible for Jesus' disciple-making purposes in the world. The distinction between leaders and the community at large is simply that leaders take the initiative to lead by example as they care for, encourage, and challenge the community to faithful Christian living.

As we come to the end of our study in Peter's letter, our own missional communities will be covenanting around the ways that we will live out our Identity as a Family of Missionary Servants. In order to do this, we need to embrace our fourth Gospel Identity, that of Learner. To be a Learner is to recognize that each of us is a disciple of Jesus called to make disciples of Jesus. We are all - leaders and followers - responsible for the maturity and mission of the church as a whole. Peter addresses both leadership and the community at large with this very emphasis.

Shepherds and Sheep

Peter is writing as a "fellow elder" to the elders of these churches. "Elder" is one of two official leadership positions in the church; Paul describes the character of elders in 1 Timothy 3, but here Peter describes the function of an elder. An elder is a shepherd, an overseer, and a leader. As a shepherd, an elder gives guidance and direction to the flock of God's sheep. As an overseer, an elder takes care to protect and direct the flock. As a leader, an elder is an example of how to follow in Jesus' steps, live the pattern of suffering and glory, and be a faithful witness for Jesus in the midsts of a hostile world. Peter insists that eldership is not "top-down" leadership. Elders shepherd the flock of God "that is among you," implying that elders do their work from within the community. In addition, Peter urges that elders don't "domineer" those in their charge, but sacrificially serve them, leading by example.

A SURPRISING SACRIFICE

1 Peter 4.12-19: Notes & Reflections

Servant Identity Statement

We Are Servants: We are servants of God who serve Him as we serve others around us. Because God has sent his Son as a sacrificial servant, taking our place on the cross and thereby healing and forgiving us in his substitutionary death, we then are freed from our self-love and self-reliance and empowered by him to serve those around us. Therefore, we model our lives after the Servant-King, increasingly being freed by Him from slavery to self and so empowered to serve others.

GOSPEL-TRANSFORMED PEOPLE

1 Peter 1.13-2.3: Commentary

Children of the Father

The commands of the New Testament are always preceded by a “therefore” because our obedience to Christ always comes as a response to what God has done for us in the cross and resurrection. The degree to which we obey is a direct reflection of the degree to which the grace of God in Jesus has truly taken root in our hearts, filling us with “joy inexpressible and full of glory!”

But before he speaks of obedient action, Peter speaks of preparing our minds and being “sober-minded.” He wants these Christians to make a mental decision to rest their hope fully on the grace that is coming when Jesus is revealed. Christian obedience always begins with a decisive move to rest our lives on the reality of the gospel, to find our identity fully and completely in our adoption as children of God (v.14). As our minds begin to rest in this new Identity, our lives begin to be drawn into greater godliness and holiness. We begin more and more to reflect the character of our Father in heaven and less and less to be conformed to the way we used to live. Peter wants these believers to be certain of their identity as beloved children, to set their minds and the hope of their hearts, on his grace to them about to be revealed. Before he commands lived obedience, Peter commands mental preparedness and heart-level hope in God’s grace in Jesus.

Become Like Dad

As we set our minds and our hope in the grace of God, we begin to be transformed into the likeness of God. We become holy, a word that summarizes God’s perfect moral character, his graciousness toward his people, and his righteous hatred of evil. God is a judge, and therefore we ought not take our sin lightly. At the same time, this judge is our Father, and he has given his Son up to death for us so that we can be adopted into his family. The judge has not only forgiven us and declared us not guilty; he has also adopted us into his family at great cost to himself! Our obedience to him should reflect his righteous standards, but should be motivated not by the hope of becoming lovable but by the reality that he has already set his love on us, adopted us, and

brought us into his family. As we come to understand the price he paid for us - the “precious blood of Christ” - we’ll be motivated to greater obedience to Him.

Live Like a Family

The most practical way our obedience gets worked out is among our new Family. As brothers and sisters in God’s family, our love for one another must be sincere, earnest, and pure. Our love for one another is the key sign that we’ve been brought into God’s family, and Peter emphasizes key ways that love should manifest itself among us. As we live together as God’s missionary family, we should flee from malice, lying, hypocrisy, envy, and gossip. Our words should build each other up, reflect truthfulness and sincerity, and be the conduit of blessing and serving one another.

Peter again uses the metaphor of “exiles” to highlight the way of life he is describing. Because we are children of God, we are living in a world that is not home to us and our behavior seems odd or out of step with this world. But when Jesus returns to establish his kingdom, the world will once again reflect his rule and reign, and those who believe in Jesus now will live like him forever.

Gospel Motivation

Our living in holiness and obedience to God must flow from the grace that he has shown us in the gospel. Throughout this section, Peter highlights that obeying God comes from being “born again” by the “good news that was preached to you.” New life comes through the preaching of the gospel, and as we hear it, believe it, and come to rejoice in it, our lives begin to reflect our new Identity as children of God.

Peter commands in 2.2 that we long for the pure spiritual milk of Jesus Christ. By setting our hopes and longings on Jesus and not on anything in this world, we’ll gradually be transformed into people who reflect his love and grace. Our lives actually change not by trying hard to be obedient but by preparing our minds, setting our hopes, and longing with our heart to know Jesus more. The more we long for him and find our hope in him, the more we’ll desire to be obedient, the more we’ll love our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the more our community will be a beautiful picture of the gospel.

As we grow together in holiness, we need to not only hold each other accountable for our behavior, but more importantly, for the state of our hearts. Are you rejoicing in Jesus? Are you longing for him alone? Are you setting your hope on anything other than his grace? Taste and see that the Lord is good!

A SURPRISING SACRIFICE

1 Peter 4.12-19: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

- How are you suffering currently? What trials are you going through?
- How is God at work in your trial? Do you know?
- Re-read this week’s passage. What is surprising about trial?
- Are you insulted for the name of Jesus? In what ways, if any?
- Why does Peter bring in the idea of judgment here? Why is it important?
- Does your life reflect the cross - suffering followed by glory?

Questions for Study in Community

- What would it be like to truly be a Servant of Jesus?
- How can we commit to regularly bless each other as Servants?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- What ways do we need to tangibly demonstrate the gospel this year?
- Is God calling us to more in this area? What else?
- What specific parties, events, or projects do you need to engage in?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

The Servant Identity is the most challenging to live out, especially in the home! We can serve in lots of places, and be totally self-absorbed in our homes with those we love the most. The challenge this week is to embrace your role as a Servant with your kids, modeling for them what following in Jesus’ foot-steps looks like. They will imitate you in selfishness or selflessness!

Day One: What is a “test?” What does a test do? Why would Peter call hardship and suffering a test? What does it prove?

Day Two: Have you ever suffered? Why did you suffer? Was your suffering because of your own sin or because of obedience to Jesus?

Day Three: How does suffering glorify God? How does being a Christian who suffers glorify God? What does suffering have to do with following Jesus?

Day Four: What ways do we need to sacrifice for others more? How can we do that in our family this week? What about in God’s Family?

Day Five: How can we sacrifice for our neighbors this week? What could we give up in order to be a blessing to them? Is that really a sacrifice?

Peter even goes so far as to say that the trial and suffering these Christians are enduring is God's judgment. God is ready to judge and purify the world, and he begins by purifying his own people. Through hardship and trial, God is able to identify those who are his because they are those who willingly choose to suffer for his name sake.

Sacrifice and Surrender

And that brings up some hard realities for each of us. Are you currently suffering in any way for the sake of Jesus and his gospel? What have you given up, sacrificed, or surrendered in order for Jesus to be made great? Suffering doesn't make us loved by God; rather, it reveals that we are loved and chosen! If you aren't suffering for your faith, you ought to search your heart and evaluate whether or not you are in Christ!

Peter encourages these Christians to not be ashamed of the name of Jesus; rather, the only reason for shame is if we are NOT suffering for Jesus! We ought to be constantly in a place where we have to entrust ourselves fully to God as we sacrifice and serve for the sake of Jesus' fame in our city.

Covenanting Around Servanthood

To embrace the Identity of Servant is by far the most challenging call. Following Jesus is fine as long as we are safe, comfortable, and protected. As long as I don't have to rearrange my life, my values, my priorities, I will be a Christian. Unfortunately, that is not Christianity. That is not discipleship. That is not following in Jesus' steps.

So we need one another in this Covenant. We need to be a part of a community that is working to live as Servants together. We need to encourage one another and challenge one another to put to death our selfishness, our self-protection, and our self-centeredness so that we can live freely and fully for Jesus, without shame.

As we Covenant around the Servant Identity, don't be afraid to ask really hard questions of one another, recognizing that our very salvation is at stake. Peter says to not endure suffering for Christ is to not "obey the gospel of God." Those are heavy words! The degree to which we are willing to give up everything for Jesus is the degree to which we'll experience the joy of following him. Suffering followed by glory is the pattern of the cross-shaped life, and it is the life Jesus calls each of his disciples to embrace. Together, we choose to sacrifice for the good of others, practically meeting needs, and offering hope.

GOSPEL-TRANSFORMED PEOPLE

1 Peter 1.13-2.3: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 1.13-2.3 as regularly as you can. What imagery does Peter employ repeatedly? Why does he do that? What is the "therefore" there for? How does these two sections connect? What is Peter's instructions in v.13? Why start with the mind and hope? How might a reminder that we are God's children encourage obedience? Choose a verse to memorize this week, and begin by writing it out.

Questions for Study in Community

Where do you see Peter talking about our Identity of Family? What sort of Family are we to be together? How does this show the gospel? How do you need to bring your conduct in line with your identity as Family? How can you serve each other as Family throughout the week?

Questions for Staying on Mission

How does the gospel community connect to the gospel mission? How is your gospel community on mission together? What needs to change?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

True obedience only happens in the context of grace. You can scare or manipulate your kids into obedience, but joyful obedience only comes as your kids experience grace and begin to desire to obey. How can you foster an environment of grace in your home like your Father has done for you?

Day One: Recall what you talked about last week and catch up. Show your kids that "therefore" always means obey because of what God has done!

Day Two: What is grace? How do we "set our hope" on grace? Why does this have to start in our minds first?

Day Three: What is "holy conduct?" What are ways we can show each other what our Father in heaven is like?

Day Four: Make a list of ways you can show "sincere brotherly love" in your home. Use 1 Peter 2.1 to get you thinking.

Day Five: Talk about how the gospel is like milk. What is Peter conveying? What does it mean to taste that the Lord is good?

GOSPEL-TRANSFORMED PEOPLE

1 Peter 1.13-2.3: Notes & Reflections

A SURPRISING SACRIFICE

1 Peter 4.12-19: Commentary

Covenanting Together

Peter is writing this letter to Christians scattered across the Roman Empire who are beginning to experience the reality of suffering for Jesus. Jesus made it clear during his life that following him involved suffering, but these Christians - like us - are surprised when it actually starts happening! Their new faith in Jesus is leading them to act and speak in ways they never imagined, and they are increasingly at odds with their surrounding culture. Peter is urging them to hold tightly to Jesus and to one another and to live faithfully as witnesses for Jesus despite the suffering that it entails.

As we look at Peter's letter this week, we'll be focusing again on our Covenant to live out these themes - what we call Gospel Identities - together. Over the last 2 weeks we've looked at our Missionary Identity and our Family Identity. This week, in what is really a summary of everything Peter has been saying, we'll focus specifically on the Servant Identity. To be a follower of Jesus means sacrifice, suffering, and servanthood.

Something Strange?

Peter insists that we ought not be surprised by suffering, by the "fiery trial" that is upon us. The trials come to test us, to reveal how deep our belief in the gospel actually goes. When hardship comes, it is like a fire that reveals what our faith is really made of. For many, trial reveals that we only trust God when life is good and easy, a faith which is empty and mostly a facade. Peter insists that we rejoice in our suffering because it is a clear sign that we are united to our suffering and resurrected King!

Being united to Jesus in his sufferings is proof positive that we'll be united to Jesus in his future glory! The pattern of the Christian life is quite simple: suffering followed by glory. Most Americans want to get right to the glory part, assuming that the gospel is about meeting my consumerist needs. Peter reminds us that the gospel is about following Jesus who suffered and died. No matter what kind of persecution or suffering comes our way for the sake of the gospel, we ought to remember that Christ promised such things would come.

A SURPRISING COMMUNITY

1 Peter 4.1-11: Notes & Reflections

Family Identity Statement

We are Family: We are God's Children who are fully accepted and adopted, and who love one another as His family. Because God has restored us to himself, forgiven our sin, and removed his wrath from us by placing it on his own Son, we have become children of God, holy and dearly loved by our Father! Therefore, we are God's children and his people in the world, a community that does for each other what God has done for us in Jesus, that the world might taste and see the goodness of our Father.

GOSPEL-PROCLAIMING PEOPLE

1 Peter 2.4-10: Commentary

Stones and the Living Stone

Peter builds off of what he has been saying about being “born again” through the gospel word, and lays out an incredible vision of the purpose of God in calling us to himself. The metaphor Peter employs has roots in a couple of Old Testament passages which he quotes in this section. Jesus is a cornerstone, the foundation of a new Temple, in which each Christian is being built together as a spiritual house where God is worshipped. The metaphor initially seems a bit strained, but the point Peter is trying to make is simple and clear: we are chosen for a purpose.

In the metaphor of being “living stones” Peter is highlighting our privilege of being called by God to be a living house for his Spirit to dwell. We are connected to Jesus, the “head of the corner,” the foundation on which this living temple is being built, and the one through which our “spiritual sacrifices” become acceptable and pleasing to God. Just as Jesus is chosen and precious in God's sight but rejected by men, so, too, are we. God's people are always chosen and precious to Him, and always rejected and called to sacrifice in the world. Peter is encouraging these believers to faithfulness by reminding them that they suffer like Jesus did.

The Stone of Stumbling

Not all who hear the gospel message will be born again. For some, the precious cornerstone becomes a “stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” There are many who refuse to believe in a crucified and resurrected Messiah. Peter is speaking specifically of the religious leaders of his day, those who “stumbled” over Jesus because he did not look like the Messiah they expected. They disobeyed the the gospel word and rejected Jesus by nailing him to a cross. The irony, of course, is that by doing so they were actually fulfilling God's will, and “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

The gospel is a double-edged sword. One one hand, it offers grace and mercy, adoption into God's family, and the honor of being called a chosen child of God. On the other hand, the gospel divides the world into two separate

communities, those who throw themselves on the rock and those whom the rock crushes. Many will stumble over Jesus and harden themselves into unbelief, just as they were destined to do. As Jesus said, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." The offer of the gospel is that we throw ourselves upon the chosen and precious cornerstone and have our lives dismantled and then rebuilt into a holy temple. Or we don't, and in our unbelief, the rock crushes us.

To Proclaim His Excellencies

The purpose for which God has chosen and saved a Family is described in vs. 9-10. God has shown mercy to a people who do not in anyway deserve it, a people who could not in any way lay claim to being "God's People." But he has done it, and in choosing the church God has created a new race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, his own people. These are rich Old Testament metaphors by which Peter highlights the church's Missionary Identity. God chose Israel in the Old Testament to be his agent of blessing, the people he would dwell amongst in order to make himself know to the world. Israel never fully lived into its Identity as a missionary people and instead turned in on itself, worshipped false gods, and held tightly to whatever blessings God gave. But now, in Jesus, God has called a new Family to himself, given this family a new heart, and commissioned this family to declare how great God is to every corner of the world. These small missional communities are God's "excellency proclaimers," who in word and deed display the greatness of God in his Son Jesus Christ.

Scattered for Mission

God has not given his Son for us simply so that we can experience the joy of being chosen in him; rather, he wants us to experience Jesus, to "taste and see" that he is good, so that we can become a community of people who live as missionaries, a people who "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light." Peter wants these Christians to understand and live in light of who they are as missionaries throughout the Roman Empire. They are struggling and making huge sacrifices for their faith in Jesus, and Peter stirs them up by reminding them of their glorious identity as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. But he also wants them to remember that their salvation, as glorious as it is, also has a purpose: They have been scattered in order to bear witness to how good God is by proclaiming what He has done in the gospel!

A SURPRISING COMMUNITY

1 Peter 4.1-11: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

- What do you look to for your primary sense of Identity? Who are you?
- What happens when we don't believe we are accepted and adopted?
- Why does the list in v.3 end in idolatry? What is idolatry?
- Are you more aware of your sin or aware of God's love to you in Christ?
- The cross removes your guilt and shame - do you feel free from them?
- The cross means God treats you as if you are obedient - do you sense that?

Questions for Study in Community

- How can we encourage one another as beloved children of God?
- In what specific ways do you struggle to believe you are accepted & loved?
- How can we commit to fulfilling the "one another" commands as Family?
- How can we ensure that each of us is in regular accountability?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- Who is not in our Family yet that needs to be? How can we invite them in?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

What you believe about your Identity as a Family of God is reflected in how you actually spend your time. If you only show up on Sundays, and maybe to a mid-week meeting, you reveal that Family is an event, not an Identity. Reflect together on how your immediate family can become more a part of God's Family, and take some radical steps to Covenant with other believers!

Day One: Who is in our church family? How often do we see them? Why? If they were biological family, would we see them more often?

Day Two: What does it mean to love our Family earnestly? Are we doing that? What could we do this week to love our church Family better?

Day Three: What is hospitality? How often do we have other people, particularly non-Christians in our home? What does that say about the gospel?

Day Four: What gifts and abilities has God given our family? How can we use them to serve our Church Family?

Day Five: Does our involvement in God's Family show the world how great God is? How could we show the world more by being more connected?

be the most important and weighty thing in your life. When something other than God has your heart, you spend your life for sinful purposes, trying in vain to bring satisfaction to your life through unbridled sin.

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are switching the allegiance of our hearts to God again. Jesus take out our hard, idolatrous hearts and gives us soft hearts that love God again. Elsewhere Peter has talked about this as being “born again.” We are no longer alive to our old gods, but are now really, truly alive, part of the new Family of God. We must learn to find our Identity in this new Family. Peter is not saying we should cut off all ties from non-Christian friends; rather, we switch our allegiance to Jesus and his church in order to be free to serve and bless our non-Christian friends. We are welcomed into a new Family and invited to a new party of earnest love and gracious hospitality.

Welcoming Family, Serving Family

In our new Family we experience genuine love and gracious hospitality. The love God gives us in the gospel - free, full, gracious - makes us free to love one another and to create space in our lives for others. Hospitality is the practice of making room for others to share their lives, and we do so joyfully in Christ!

Additionally, each of us in the Family has been given gifts, abilities, and experiences which God expects us to steward well. We are to use what God has given us to build up the Family together, whether we are gifted to speak or to serve. Peter commands that we do it all with as much passion and strength God gives us, and in doing so we honor our Father who adopted us (vs.10-11)!

Covenanting Around Family

Our Gospel Identities belong to all of us. Each one of us is a missionary, and we are learning to do Mission together; each one of us is a part of the Family, and we are learning to do Family together. We cannot be effective missionaries on our own, and we can't live as “obedient children” on our own, either! The primary role of the Family of God is to learn to live in the reality of our adoption as sons and daughters of God. It takes great humility to admit where you are weak and in need of encouragement, support, and accountability. At the same time, it takes great courage to challenge each other on areas of disobedience and sin, and to serve one another with the gifts we have. Only the gospel can create such humility and courage at the same time. As we remind each other of our Identity in the gospel, we are helping one another to more fully believe God's forgiving, accepting, adopting love. We call this “gospeling” one another.

GOSPEL-PROCLAIMING PEOPLE

1 Peter 2.4-10: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 2.4-10 as regularly as you can.
Can you follow his reasoning with the “living stones” metaphor?
What does he want these gospel communities to believe about themselves?
What is the purpose for which God has saved them? What does that mean?
Judging by how you use your resources, what is the purpose of your life?
What would change if you believed your sole purpose was to proclaim God?

Questions for Study in Community

Unpack each of the metaphors Peter uses in 2.9-10. What is his point?
Do you see yourselves as this kind of people? Peter is talking to you all!
What difference would it make practically if you believed these verses?
What specific changes will you make in order to embrace this purpose?

Questions for Staying on Mission

Mission is building relationships, welcoming community, and gospel telling.
Which of these 3 are you doing? What do you need to prioritize?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Do you as a family live with a gospel proclaiming purpose? Or are you stuck in an American dream purpose? As a family, you need to be a part of a community on mission, working to proclaim the gospel among a people. How might you take your family on mission with you here in Spokane?

Day One: Who is the “living stone?” Why do you think Peter calls Jesus that? Why is Jesus both “chosen and precious” and “rejected by men?”

Day Two: Peter says we are living stones, too. What does he mean? How are we built into a spiritual house with Jesus?

Day Three: Read and explain the OT quotes. Why do some people not believe in Jesus? Does Jesus choose the wise and powerful or the humble?

Day Four: What does v.9 mean? What are all the metaphors pointing to?

Day Five: What are the excellencies of God? How do we proclaim them together as a family? Who do we know that needs to know how good Jesus is, and how will we show them?

GOSPEL-PROCLAIMING PEOPLE

1 Peter 2.4-10: Notes & Reflections

A SURPRISING COMMUNITY

1 Peter 4.1-11: Commentary

Covenanting Together

We will continue to look at the end of Peter's letter with a view towards living out the main themes - chosen, exiles, scattered - in our missional communities. We are chosen as God's Family, exiles who live according to the Servant ways of Jesus, scattered across our region for the sake of being God's Missionary people.

This week we explore what it means to be a part of a Christian community, to live together in the reality of our Identity as chosen and beloved children of God. When you gather this week as a Missional Community, you'll discuss the ways in which you will agree together to be a supportive, challenging, and welcoming gospel community.

A Different Kind of Party

Peter begins in chapter 4 right where he left off, speaking of the suffering of Jesus on our behalf. The assumption continues that if we are giving up our lives for the sake of Jesus' work in the world we will most certainly experience suffering, hardship, and trial. But Peter says we ought to "arm ourselves with the same way of thinking," fully aware that being united to Jesus implies suffering. Jesus suffered, Jesus bled, Jesus died, and then Jesus was exalted into glory. The pattern is the same for anyone who would come after him: "He must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." Following Jesus is dying, and we ought to be prepared for it when we say yes to Jesus.

Unfortunately for most American Christians, we've been sold a bill of goods that says Jesus died to make our lives easier. We've bought the lie that if we trust Jesus to save us when we die we can live however we want in the meantime. We relegate faith and salvation to something that is important when we die, and we fail to see the implications of suffering in the here and now.

Peter challenges these young Christians to make a radical break from their old ways life. They can no longer live as people who don't know God, wasting their time in drunkenness, sensual passions, and sexual perversions. These all result from what the Bible calls idolatry, allowing something other than God to

A SURPRISING HOPE

1 Peter 3.13-22: Notes & Reflections

Missionary Identity Statement

We are Missionaries: We are sent by God to join him in restoring all things to Himself. Because God has come to restore and redeem all of creation through Jesus, his healing work extends to people, systems, cultures, and all of creation! Therefore, we are God's ambassadors or representatives, sent into our culture by the Holy Spirit, commissioned to proclaim and demonstrate that God is restoring the world to Himself through Jesus.

GOSPEL-DEED PEOPLE

1 Peter 2.11-17: Commentary

Beloved Exiles

Peter's magnificent description of these scattered Christians as a chosen, holy, royal people of God immediately hits the ground not only in the purpose of proclaiming God's excellencies but also in how these people now live in this glorious identity. Being a Gospel-proclaiming people is directly connected to being the kind of people in deed that backs it up, and Peter describes 2 directions that our living is to take. Peter addresses these believers as "beloved," a term which both reflects Peter's pastoral heart for these people as well as their new identity as God's specially favored ones, adopted children that God - and Peter! - dearly love!

In addition to calling them beloved, Peter uses 2 other words that return us to our main themes. First, he calls them "sojourners," a word that refers to someone who is passing through a land that is not their own. He also uses the word exile, repeating what he said in 1.1. By combining these words, Peter is reminding these Christians of their Identity as God's people living in a world that is not their home and is indeed quite hostile toward them, their message, and their Lord. Both these words have strong grounding in the Old Testament people of God, the Israelites. Abraham, for example, was called a "sojourner" because he was traveling around on his way to the Promised Land of Canaan. He, like the rest of Israel later on in the Story, was an "exile" because he was not in his homeland. Peter uses this imagery to talk about the way we are to live as God's people in the world. We are not to "live like the natives," so to speak, but rather to live in way that is consistent with our true identity and our true homeland.

Abstain and Engage

One one hand, as chosen and beloved children of God who are exiled in a land not their own, Peter urges these Christians to a holiness of life that reflects their true home in God. They are no longer to give in to the "passions of the flesh," those impure longings for things that are not God. The desires that they had before they came to know the grace of God in Jesus actually "wage war

against [their] souls.” The picture is that each Christian has been given a new heart by God and that new heart now longs for holiness and righteousness; to continue to give in to the desires of the old life is to fight against the new desires God has given you! You end up fighting yourself!

On the other hand, as chosen exiles, sojourners in a foreign land, we’re called to more than simply abstain from impure passions; rather, we are called to a humble, servant-hearted, good-deed engagement with the natives. Peter says to keep our conduct “honorable” so that, though we might be maligned or persecuted for the message of Jesus, our good deeds which flow from our new Identity might so bless and delight our persecutors that they might actually come to faith in Jesus and so glorify God when he comes to set all things right!

Freedom to Serve

Peter drives home his point in very practical terms in vs.13-17. God has set us free in Jesus; we are no longer slaves to the passions of this world, so we don’t have to give in to evil deeds. Rather, since we have been set free, we ought to use our freedom in Jesus to become servants to those around us, for the sake of God’s glory in the world. Peter says it is the good deeds of Christians - not their message - which will silence those who think of Christianity as a foolish, useless religion. When we put our faith in action in good deeds to all people, the Christian message becomes harder to dismiss.

In this section, Peter really highlights our Identity as Servants of God in Jesus. Over the next few sections, Peter will work out how this freedom to serve gets applied at work, in the home, and in the church community. Our chosen status as God’s special people does not remove us from the world to await the return of Jesus. It does not free us to be self-centered and self-absorbed. On the contrary, the freedom we have in Jesus allows us to be in the world for the good of the world and yet to remain unstained by the ways of the world. In other words, we become very much like Jesus, who walked in our world as a man, experienced all the temptations of this world, and yet never gave in to sin. Not only did Jesus not give in to sin, he gave his life to doing good deeds, blessing, serving, and eventually dying for those who hated him.

Our Identity as Servants flows directly from our Identity as Beloved Children of God, his special people. Because we are his, and our Identity is secure because of Jesus, we no longer have to be held captive by sinful desires nor do we need to hold on to our rights. We are free to serve wherever God sends us.

A SURPRISING HOPE

1 Peter 3.13-22: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

- Suffering for Jesus is world-wide... Why not in America? Or is there?
- What have you given up or suffered for the sake of Jesus’ mission?
- What does Peter promise to those who sacrifice and suffer for Jesus?
- What 2 ways are we to witness as missionaries for Jesus?
- Which is easier for you, good deeds or giving a reason for your hope?
- In what ways do you need to change in order to embrace mission?

Questions for Study in Community

- Who do you believe Jesus has sent you to?
- Who is the “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth” for you?
- How will we prioritize making disciples beyond any other purpose?

Questions for Staying on Mission

- What “good deeds” would be good news for the people we are sent to?
- What “reasons for the hope” do people need to hear? How do we speak it?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Parents, you have an opportunity to make a radical decision to give your lives to the mission of Jesus. You can want your kids to grow up safe and comfortable, or you can lead them in the abundant life of giving your all for Jesus’ work in the world. Which do you choose? Which are you choosing right now? Invite your kids to come with you as a missionary family... to Spokane!

Day One: What is the purpose of our family? What has God called us to be together? How are we living for Jesus’ disciple-making mission?

Day Two: What would change in our family if we went as missionaries to Africa? What sacrifices would we make? Why?

Day Three: Imagine our family has been sent as missionaries to our neighborhood. What should we sacrifice in order to be good missionaries? Why?

Day Four: In what ways can we serve people who don’t yet know Jesus? Make a list of people you want to come to faith in Jesus, and pray for them!

Day Five: As you think about the people you are sent to, how would you explain the gospel to them? What would be good news for them? Bless them!

friends. Many others are martyred, killed simply because they belong to Jesus. As we pursue living as missionaries together in our context, God may ask you to change jobs, move houses, or sacrifice the pleasures of a comfortable American life. We likely won't be killed for our faith, but as we scatter around our region for the sake of the gospel, we'll experience the pain of being separated from close friends, of losing a comfortable community, of giving more money away than we feel we can. These real sacrifices come as a result of embracing the mission God has given to the church.

The other way we might suffer for the sake of the gospel is a result of our verbal testimony to Jesus. In v.15, Peter urges us to be prepared to explain the hope we have whenever we are asked. The assumption is that our life of "good deeds" will be so surprising that many will ask us to explain ourselves! If we are prepared with an answer for our "surprising hope," chances are many may not like the answer. We may be slandered, reviled, and publicly humiliated. But Peter urges us to speak with "gentleness and respect," explaining our hope without being defensive, argumentative, or combative.

Covenanting Around The Mission

The tragedy of the American church today is that we want it both ways. We want God's blessing, but we don't want to suffer. We want to experience more of Jesus, but we don't want to have to sacrifice anything in the process. The first part of our Covenant together will be an agreement to re-order our lives around the mission of Jesus and not around our own mission of comfort, approval, and control.

In choosing to Covenant together for Jesus' disciple-making mission, we are choosing a life of sacrifice. We will be called to give up our lives for his sake and the sake of the gospel. The pressure to not make this Covenant will be strong, both from our own selfish desires and from our enemy, Satan. God is calling us to the next step in living for him, and it will be costly.

So Peter concludes this section with the same great words of hope and encouragement that he has woven throughout this letter! He recognizes that living for Jesus' mission involves suffering and sacrifice, so he points us again to Jesus. Jesus died for us. He bled for us. He went all the way down for us, and is now exalted at the right hand of God, with all things subject to him. Because of Jesus' great victory, we can embrace sacrifice today, knowing that we belong to Jesus and will one day be with him!

GOSPEL-DEED PEOPLE

1 Peter 2.11-17: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 2.11-17 as regularly as you can.

Unpack each of these terms: Beloved, Exiles, Sojourners

What does he want them to abstain from? Why? What does that mean?

What does Peter want them to engage in? Why? For what purpose?

Do you honor everyone? What does that look like on a daily basis?

How does the gospel free us to honor and serve everyone, even enemies?

Questions for Study in Community

How does our identity as God's Beloved free us to be a Servant people?

How have we served and blessed each other this week?

Questions for Staying on Mission

Is the focus of this section the church or the world? Why?

What does it mean to be a "gospel-deed" people?

What deeds are we doing for the sake of gospel demonstration?

How do gospel proclamation and gospel deed connect?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Is your home characterized by humble service of one another? If it is not, please don't blame your kids! They imitate you, whether you like it or not! Take time this week to discuss how to live as a Servant family, specifically as you connect it to living in God's love for us in the gospel.

Day One: Why does Peter call them "beloved?" Why does he call them sojourners and exiles? What is he reminding them of? Why is that important?

Day Two: What are the "passions of the flesh?" A good translation is "over-drives," desiring good things too much. How do good things become wrong?

Day Three: Why do "over-drives" wage war against our souls? Why is it a good idea to abstain from these things?

Day Four: Discuss v.12. What is Peter teaching? How does it connect with v. 15-16? Why does he want us doing good deeds?

Day Five: What do good deeds show the world? How was Jesus a Servant? How has he served us? How can we become Servants like Jesus?

GOSPEL-DEED PEOPLE

1 Peter 2.11-17: Notes & Reflections

A SURPRISING HOPE

1 Peter 3.13-22: Commentary

Covenanting Together

As we round the bend and begin to head toward the end of this amazing letter, we'll be using our time to talk practically about how to live the Identities of Family, Missionaries, and Servants together. Peter has woven these three themes together throughout his letter, urging these chosen and scattered exiles to live as God's Family, sent throughout the Roman Empire to faithfully witness to a suffering and resurrected Messiah, both in deed and in word.

We will not be asking questions about what it might look like in theory to live this out; rather, we'll be focusing in on the daily rhythms and activities that we want to embrace together as we actually do it. At the end of the next 5 weeks, each Missional Community will put together a Covenant around which they will agree to structure their lives. A Covenant is a mutually binding agreement, and in this case we'll be agreeing to live our Gospel Identities together in community for the sake of making disciples in our own scattered region.

If you are not currently in a Missional Community, now is the time. Even if you don't particularly share the mission focus of the community, live your Servant Identity and volunteer your time, energy, and abilities to help anyway. Eventually, sometime in the near future, you'll be "scattered" to your own mission field, and you'll need others to come help you!

Start With A Mission

In 3.13, Peter assumes that a missional community will be "zealous for what is good." In particular, Peter is talking about the good deeds that a community of Christ will naturally want to be giving itself to. Take careful note of this: doing good deeds is the assumed activity of a community of Christians who believe the gospel and seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

But Peter also realizes that seeking to do good together will almost always involve a degree of suffering. Suffering will come in 2 distinct ways. On the one hand, in order to devote your life to the mission of Jesus, you will have to give up many good things. Christians all around the world are suffering terribly for their decision to follow Jesus. Many suffer the loss of jobs, houses, family, and

EASTER: RESURRECTION HOPE

Notes

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & WORLD

1 Peter 2.18-25: Commentary

Working It Out

After laying out the basic framework of both abstaining from the passions of the world and engaging in humble service of the world, Peter proceeds to give 3 different contexts in which this gets worked out (praxis). This week we'll look at how it works in the world, particularly at work. Next week we'll explore how it works in the home, between husband and wife. Finally, we'll look at how it works out in the church community itself. In all three situations, our Identity as beloved children of God who live as Servants of God is the main focus, and Peter invites us to learn how to live as Servants who follow Jesus in making radical sacrifices for the good of others.

In v. 18, Peter addresses "servants," a word which referred to those who were hired to work in households. This class would include many that today we'd consider professionals, such as teachers, doctors, cooks, and managers. As we reflect on Peter's instructions for servants, recognize that they apply to almost any job situation which includes taking orders from a superior.

The Just and The Unjust

Like those who are bosses or managers over us today, some of the heads of households in Peter's day were "good and gentle" while others were "unjust." Surprisingly, Christian service requires the same response to both kinds of masters: "Be subject... with all respect." To be subject means to voluntarily place yourself under someone else's influence. Peter is describing the posture that a Servant of God takes when he or she realizes the freedom one has in Christ. Though we are not servants of any man, we have become Servants of God, and we have the freedom to voluntarily subject ourselves to those above us in order to shower God's grace upon them.

Peter says it is a "gracious" thing - an action full of grace - when we voluntarily place ourselves under others, especially those who are unjust and cruel. It is no credit to us when we voluntarily place ourselves under good and gentle bosses, who treat us well - anyone would do that. True Christian freedom is most on display when we voluntarily submit to the cruel and unjust boss, even

to the point of suffering harm at their hands, because we are “mindful of God.” Peter is describing the kind of patient endurance we can show as Christians who suffer harm from our bosses or managers when we intentionally do good, aware of God’s call on us, that we are His Servants, and that he has called us into a life of suffering for the good of others.

Like Jesus

It is clear that Peter is pulling this principle directly from the life of Jesus: Peter listened to Jesus teach the way of the cross, and then watched as Jesus stayed the course all the way through the crucifixion. Peter argues that our work should imitate the suffering of Jesus, reminding us of Jesus’ example, and urging us to “follow in his steps.” Jesus committed no sin, but suffered brutally like the worst of criminals. Jesus was reviled, but he did not return evil for evil. Jesus suffered unjustly, but did not threaten his persecutors, but rather prayed for them and committed himself to his Father. Peter is calling us to a way of life that is so contrary to our “entitlement” culture. We are ready to run from any job where the boss doesn’t kiss our feet, and yet Peter says the greatest sign of Christian freedom is when we voluntarily serve the worst of masters!

Because of Jesus

Peter doesn’t end simply with Jesus’ example; if he had, all we’d realize is the impossibility of following “in his steps.” Who could possibly endure, in their own strength, unjust suffering in the workplace? But Peter insists it isn’t simply the example of Jesus that we need; rather, we need the substitution of Jesus, the reality that he took our sin upon himself when he suffered. In other words, we aren’t simply urged to suffer injustice like Jesus did; we are also reminded that Jesus’ suffering was for our own sin, and that his death was for us. Jesus is not only our example, but also our Savior, our own rescue from ourselves! In Jesus we are no longer overpowered by sin, and are now alive to God, healed by Jesus’ wounds! He suffered for you! He suffered for me! He suffered to bring us to God!

The more deeply you understand and bring your heart to rejoice in what Jesus had done for you, the more free you will be to subject yourself to others, even to an unjust manager. The power to be a Servant of God who serves others comes from first being served by Jesus. Jesus came “not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10.45). When you see the price Jesus paid to free you, you’ll be free and empowered to be a Servant!

EASTER: RESURRECTION HOPE

Easter Week Readings

The Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 26-28

The Gospel of Mark, Chapters 14-16

The Gospel of Luke, Chapters 22-24

The Gospel of John, Chapters 18-21

Many people have claimed to speak for God; however, there is a very short list of people who've claimed to be God, and only one whose life could actually back it up. Buddha, Krishna, Muhammad, and Gandhi did not claim to be God. Jesus, in contrast, repeatedly said that he was, in fact, God.

Reason #5: Jesus foretold the future.

Luke 22.34: Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

On repeated occasions Jesus not only predicted but promised future events outside his control.

Reason #6: Jesus forgave sin.

Mark 2.5: And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

All sin is ultimately committed against God, and only God has the power to forgive them.

Reason #7: Jesus accepted worship as God.

Matthew 14.33: And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Though the 10 commandments forbid such action, Jesus openly welcomed people to worship him.

Reason #8: Jesus performed miracles including rising from the dead.

Mark 10.33-34: See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.

His many miracles demonstrated his rule over the physical world. His greatest miracle was rising from the dead, which proves that he is God because only God can conquer and overthrow death!

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & WORLD

1 Peter 2.18-25: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 2.18-25 as regularly as you can. What do the words "be subject" mean? What do you picture? Does your boss fall in the "good and gentle" or "unjust" category? Why? Why ought we be subject to both kinds of bosses? What's the purpose? What sort of conduct does Peter urge us toward in the workplace? What are the practical implications of this passage for your job? How does Jesus' example and Jesus' substitution help you endure?

Questions for Study in Community

Why does Peter mention Jesus' example in suffering here? Why does Peter mention Jesus' substitution here? How does it help? What practical ways can we live out this Servant Identity at work?

Questions for Staying on Mission

Do you take the posture of Servant of God at work? Why or why not? Who in your workplace might be impacted by your Servant Identity?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

This week we'll continue to focus on being Servants of God together. Peter applies it specifically to the workplace, but it can apply just as easily to the way a Christian family lives together, enduring one another's sin, forgiving each other freely, and seeking opportunities to outdo each other as Servants!

Day One: What is a "servant?" What does it mean to "be subject" to some one else? Make the connection between parents and kids!

Day Two: Why does God want kids to "honor and obey" their parents (see Eph 6.1)? What if your parents are being unkind, selfish, or unfair?

Day Three: Why does Peter say being a Servant is a "gracious thing?" How can we show grace to each other as Servants this week?

Day Four: How is Jesus our example in being a Servant? What kind of servant was Jesus? How did he treat those who hated him and hurt him?

Day Five: How has Jesus served us? What did he do for us, and how does that help us to Serve others? How has Jesus shown us grace in his death?

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & WORLD

1 Peter 2.18-25: Notes & Reflections

EASTER: RESURRECTION HOPE

8 Reasons Why Jesus is God

Reason #1: Jesus claimed that he came down from heaven.

John 6.38: For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Occasionally someone will claim to catch a glimpse into heaven, but no religious leader has ever claimed to have dwelt eternally in heaven and then to have come down to earth.

Reason #2: Jesus claimed to be the only way to Heaven.

John 14.6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Not only did he claim to have come from heaven, but he also said he was the only way back to heaven. His words are singular ("THE way," "THE truth," "THE life") and exclusive ("NO ONE comes").

Reason #3: Jesus claimed to be sinless.

John 8.46: Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

In the history of the world, no one has claimed with any credibility to be without sin because the claim would be easily disproved by even a casual observer. Even the most devout and holy people have never made this claim, including people like Gandhi and Mohammed. Jesus claimed to be morally superior to everyone and in fact is claiming to be God because God alone is sinless.

Reason #4: Jesus claimed he was God.

John 10.30-33: "I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & CHURCH

1 Peter 3.8-12: Notes & Reflections

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & HOME

1 Peter 3.1-7: Commentary

Servants In the Home

Peter continues his practical application (“praxis”) of 2.16: “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” Peter has described Christians as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” but the implication of this glorious identity is that Christians are free to become servants of all. We’ve been given a glorious new Identity in Christ in order that we might give our lives up in humble service of those around us. In this section, Peter applies the same principle to the home, between husband and wife, and particularly applies it to wives living with unbelieving husbands.

To Her Own Husband

Peter’s command to the wife is to “be submissive” to her own husband. The word “submissive” is initially a tough word for women in our culture to hear, particularly because of the way that women have been abused, and often within the church. But Peter’s instructions are revolutionary, and beautiful, if only we can listen without bristling and getting defensive. Peter is simply calling wives to the way of the cross, to following in the footsteps of Jesus, and to reliance upon Jesus to show grace to their husbands.

Peter commands that the wife be submissive “to her own husband.” This is by no means a blanket statement for all women to be submissive to all men; rather, within the marriage relationship, the wife is called to come under her husband to serve him and bless him. She is to do this “without a word” - no nagging, whining, or complaining - but simply serving him in the inner beauty of a heart loved by and satisfied in Jesus. A wife is not to make her primary focus outward beauty, though Peter is far from saying she ought not care about her appearance. Peter simply argues that the primary focus should be the heart, cultivating a quiet manner of life that reflects humility, grace, and the lordship of Jesus in her life. Outward beauty is commended throughout Scripture, and there is no doubt that a godly woman can and should be as beautiful as she can. Peter is simply cautioning women from thinking that outward beauty is

what counts. Outward beauty perishes, fades, and sags, but the inner beauty of a gracious heart is not only pleasing to God but also pleasing to a husband, drawing him near to both his wife and - hopefully - to God!

Likewise Husbands

Peter also has strong words for how the husband is to live out his identity as a Servant in the marriage. Peter uses the word “likewise” to begin his instructions to husbands, reminding us that the basic principle - suffering for the sake of others - is what he is applying to husbands in this verse.

For the husband to be a servant to his wife means he lives with her in an “understanding” or considerate way, showing her honor. A husband serves his wife by honoring her, by lovingly leading her through his selfless example. A godly husband follows Jesus, the crucified and resurrected king, walking in his footsteps of humble servanthood, even unto death. The challenge for a husband is to show gentleness with his wife as the weaker vessel, recognizing that she is not like him in many ways, and that she needs his gentle, gracious, honoring love in order to flourish as a godly wife. She is an heir of grace, just as he is, and to see her as a precious child of God the Father will help him to bear with her weaknesses, caring for her as his sister and bride.

Marriage and the Church

If the gospel identity of Servant is not being worked out in your home, in your marriage relationship, then it is foolishness to believe that it can be worked out anywhere else. God designed marriage to be a picture of the gospel: the husband sacrifices and serves his wife in love while the wife humbly submits to and honors her husband. Just as Jesus gave us his life for the church, so the husband gives up his rights, day by day, in order to serve his bride. Just as the church submits to Jesus, allowing Jesus to lead, so the wife submits to her husband, helping him to become a strong and gentle man of God.

Peter is not encouraging chauvinism, nor is he supporting the accepted values of his day. He is calling husbands and wives back to the original way God intended marriage to work out, in humble service of one another. This mutual service does not erase or remove role distinctions - the husband is still called to lead and the wife is still called to be his helper. What Peter is wanting us to see is that the husband serves his wife by his leadership, and the wife serves her husband by her gracious submission. In both cases, the spouse’s service is first and foremost to God himself, as His Servant, and then to one another.

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & CHURCH

1 Peter 3.8-12: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 3.8-12 as regularly as you can.
“All of you” reminds us that Peter is writing to a community. Who is yours?
Define each characteristic listed in v.8. How do you see these in Jesus?
Which of those characteristics least reflects you? Why?
How have you failed to live these character traits in your community?
What is Peter saying by quoting the section from Psalm 34?

Questions for Study in Community

Does our community reflect these character qualities? In what ways?
Are we a community of blessing to one another?
In what ways have you been blessed by God?
How will you bless this community this week?

Questions for Staying on Mission

God’s blessing on us is for the good of our city. Do we believe that?
How are we seeking the shalom of our city together? What else can we do?

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Is your immediate family your primary community? According to the Scriptures, your new Identity as a Family of God supersedes your biological family! Life in genuine community is not optional, and to live it to the fullest we will often need to rearrange our lives according to this gospel principle. Let your kids help you evaluate this, and take steps together to live into your new Family.

Day One: Who is a part of our Gospel Family? What other Christians are we really sharing life deeply with? How could we unite ourselves more fully?

Day Two: Look at these characteristics. How have we shown them to each other this week? How have we shown them to our church family?

Day Three: How do we respond when people are unkind? Do we bless?

Day Four: How has God blessed us? How can we use our blessings to be a blessing to others? Choose 3 people to bless together this week!

Day Five: Does our family believe that our Church Family is more important than our immediate family? How do we show that? How do we not?

don't think of ourselves more highly than we ought because we trust that our brother or sister is wiser, godlier, and more gifted than we. So many conflicts in the church community would be avoided by embracing the humbling work of the gospel, assuming you are in the wrong, and seeking to understand one another's concerns!

Blessed To Be A Blessing

Peter expands on the idea that we are called to be Servants by saying that we are called to bless. The idea again comes from an Old Testament description of Israel, whom God called to himself in order to bless so that they might be a blessing to the world. This is the pattern of grace, that God pours himself out on this people in order that they may turn to one another and to those outside the community in blessing. We are enabled to absorb evil and reviling because Jesus absorbed our sin, and in turn we are empowered to give blessing in return, just as Jesus has given blessing to us.

God calls us to actively look for ways that we can absorb the evil and sin of our world and bring God's blessing in return. This is God's call on the church, and in doing so we experience more of his blessing in our life. Peter is urging these communities, scattered across the Roman Empire, to embrace suffering as a way to release the blessing of God. Peter sums up what he has been saying in this entire section by quoting from Psalm 34 again. Abundant life is found not in holding tightly to your rights but in giving up your rights by becoming a Servant of God. As a Servant, we are called to a conduct of life that reflects the way Jesus lived as well as a posture of sacrifice because Jesus did so for us.

A Community for Blessing

The missional community is a network of people who are endeavoring to be a pipeline of God's blessing. As we learn to bless each other, we also learn to actively bless those outside our community, even those who would seek to do us harm. Psalm 34 commands us to "turn away from evil and do good," to "seek peace and pursue it." The word peace is translated from the Hebrew word "shalom," a word used in Scripture to describe the perfect state of things in the Creation. Peter is urging us to be a shalom-creating people because "to this [we] were called." Jesus came to restore and redeem the world, and he has entrusted the church with the continuation of his work, both within the community and beyond the community. Are we a community of shalom that is restoring shalom in our city together?

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & HOME

1 Peter 3.1-7: Study Guide

Questions for Personal Study

This week, read through 1 Peter 3.1-7 as regularly as you can.
Underline the commands given to the wife. What is she to do? Why?
Underline the commands given to the husband. What is he to do? Why?
How do their command compare? What's the same? What's different? Why?
Do you sense these instructions are damaging or freeing? Why?
What specifically needs to change in you to embrace these instructions?

Questions for Study in Community

How were you challenged this week by these commands?
If you are single now, what does it look like to obey these commands today?
Who in our community models this well? What is attractive about it?
How can we encourage stronger marriages in our community?

Questions for Staying on Mission

Do you know marriages that are struggling? How could you all help?
Pray for the marriages in our community and in our city.

Thoughts and Questions for Parents

Mom and Dad, the Servant Identity will never flourish in your home unless you embrace it in your marriage. No matter how much you tell your kids to care for one another, they will inevitably follow your example, not your instructions. So invite them to critique your marriage this week, and repent in front of them!

Day One: Recall the main principle in 2.16. What does Peter want us to do for one another? Have we been doing this as a family? Recall examples.

Day Two: In what ways do you see mom being submissive to dad? How does she honor him? How can you help mom honor dad more?

Day Three: Is mom more beautiful on the inside or the outside? Why do you think so? How can mom become more beautiful in both ways this week?

Day Four: Does dad treat mom in an "understanding way?" How does dad serve mom? How can you help dad serve mom better?

Day Five: Is dad a good leader in our home? How can he be a better husband? Does dad lead us in prayer often? How can dad grow in this area today?

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & HOME

1 Peter 3.1-7: Notes & Reflections

PRAXIS: GOSPEL & CHURCH

1 Peter 3.8-12: Commentary

All Of You

So far, we've seen how "living as Servants of God" works itself out in the workplace and in the home. Before Peter leaves this subject, he applies it directly to the christian community and the relationships within the church. Sadly, Christians often forget their Servant Identity in the way they relate to one another, and it is often within the community where the most selfish, self-centered behavior comes out. Peter urges us to live the way of the cross together.

United Humility

The way of the cross begins with "unity of mind." Peter wants the gospel community to agree together to the commands of 1.13, to have minds prepared and hearts set together on the grace of God in Christ. The gospel ought to be the framework through which we see life, particularly life in the community of Christ. United minds are those which agree together to be about the purposes of the gospel while relying on the power of the gospel.

Second, Peter urges sympathy for one another. The Greek word translated sympathy means to enter into one another's thoughts and feelings, to share together in each other's needs or concerns. It requires acknowledging one's own weaknesses and inviting others to carry your burdens, even as you endeavor to bear the burdens of others.

Third, Peter urges the familial love of the new Family of God. Love in the Christian community is not optional, but ought to express itself in tangible acts of kindness and blessing toward one another. The missional community shows its relationship to God as Father by its relationships to one another as brothers and sisters.

Fourth, Peter commands tender heartedness, or compassion. He wants these Christians to be moved deeply by one another's needs. He urges us to feel for one another deep in our hearts.

Finally, Peter instructs his readers toward humble mindedness. Above all, the gospel brings a great humility to the believer. We learn in the gospel that we are the worst sinner we know, and we are humbled by our own deep sinfulness. We