

Christian Living in Today's Culture

Finding Answers in 1 Peter



STUDY GUIDE

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PART 1: LIVING IN TODAY'S POSTMODERN CULTURE

Introduction

The BBC writes, "Postmodernism does away with many of the things that religious people regard as essential.

For postmodernists every society is in a state of constant change; there are no absolute values, only relative ones; nor are there any absolute truths.

This promotes the value of individual religious impulses, but weakens the strength of 'religions' which claim to deal with truths that are presented from 'outside', and given as objective realities.

In a postmodern world there are no universal religious or ethical laws, everything is shaped by the cultural context of a particular time and place and community.

In a postmodern world individuals work with their religious impulses by selecting the bits of various spiritualities that 'speak to them' and create their own internal spiritual world. The 'theology of the pub' becomes as valid as that of the priest.

The inevitable conclusion is that religion is an entirely human-made phenomenon."¹

A. CENTRAL QUESTION OF THIS STUDY

How are Christians to live in a postmodern culture in such a way that it brings glory to the Lord?

B. KEY WORDS

Culture: A way of life of a particular people based on their values and worldviews.

Pluralism: The view that there are many paths to and expressions of truth

about God and several equally valid means to salvation.²

Postmodern relativism: Meaning and truth are relative to each culture and historical period or to each person, situation, or relationship.³

C. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the biggest changes you've noticed in our American culture over the past years?
2. In what ways have these cultural changes affected churches in America?
3. Do you agree with those who say America is no longer a Christian nation? Why or why not?
4. Since the Bible is based on absolute truth, how can Christians today share it with those who hold the view that truth is relative?

D. SIX DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF TODAY'S POSTMODERN CULTURE

1. Truth is based on personal opinions.
2. Biblical morality is no longer valued.
3. Marriage is becoming more obsolete.
4. Our government is seriously divided.
5. Technology has affected just about everything.
6. Christianity has become marginalized.

E. SIX REASONS FOR STUDYING 1 PETER

1. It tells us how to flourish in a morally declining culture.
2. Peter's readers faced the same kind of social marginalization as we do.
3. It reveals why Christians are often shunned.

4. It explains how Christians are to face times of testing (trials).
5. It shows why the right kind of hope is so important for Christians today.
6. It helps Christians understand how to spread the good news in a postmodern culture.

F. BACKGROUND

1. Authorship

- The Apostle Peter, written by Silas, (also called Silvanus who was possibly an amanuensis, 5:12), with Mark, from Rome ("Babylon"). See 5:13

2. Peter's names

- Peter: Matt. 10:2 (Gk. Petros, a small movable stone)
- Cephas: 1 Cor. 15:5 (Ara. Kephaz)
- Peter synonymous with Cephas John 1:42
- Simon: Matt. 4:18 (Heb. Shimon)
- Simon Peter: Matt. 16:16
- Simon Barjona: Matt 16:17 (KJV, NKJ; "son of Jonah")

3. Peter's life

- Peter was married, and apparently his wife accompanied him in his ministry (Mark 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 9:5).⁶
- Peter was the first to speak (sometimes without thinking) among the twelve disciples
- He was part of the Inner circle: Peter, James, and John (e.g. transfiguration).
- He denied knowing Jesus to avoid being arrested himself.
- His Galilean accent gave him away (Matt. 26:73).

4. Place of writing

- Peter wrote that he was in "Babylon" (5:13). Babylon was also a Roman outpost in northern Egypt, but it is unlikely Peter was ever there.⁷

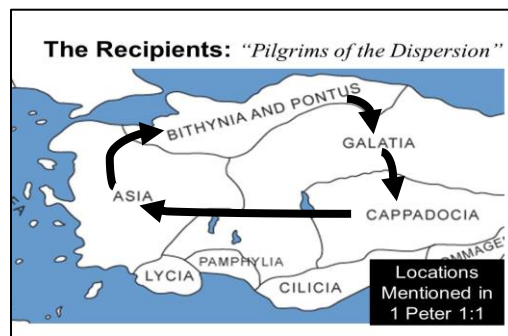
- Babylon was an ancient city in Mesopotamia, but is unlikely that Peter, Mark, and Silvanus had been at this location at the same time.
- It is generally understood that Rome is where Peter was at the time this letter was written.⁸
- In times of persecution, writers exercised unusual care not to endanger Christians by identifying them. Peter was at Rome at the end of his life.

5. Date

- It is most likely that 1 Peter was written as late as AD 64.⁹
- Nero was blaming Christians for the great fire in Rome in AD 64, and he began to viciously persecute them.

6. Recipients

- Exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.
- This was probably the travel route taken by the bearer of the letter as he traveled four Roman provinces in modern Turkey.
- Recipients were both Jewish and Gentile Christians.



7. Purpose of the letter

- The purpose of 1 Peter is to encourage these Christians to grow stronger in their obedience to God and to trust him especially when they suffer for his sake.¹⁰
- Christians are to endure suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ, looking back on his sufferings and forward to the completion of their salvation when he returns.¹¹

G. KEY VERSE IN 1 PETER

"So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you." (1 Pet. 4:19 NLT)

PART 2: SALVATION AND TODAY'S CULTURE

1 Peter 1:1-12

It seems that everyone has a different worldview today, so much so, that Christianity is simply seen as “just another way of looking at life.” Much of today's culture can creep into the Christian's life and values, often causing confusion. Understanding salvation will give modern-day Christians the perspective for living godly lives in today's pluralistic society.

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

How can a Christian's salvation affect the way they live in today's postmodern culture?

B. KEY WORDS

1. Elect (Gk. *eklektos*): People chosen by God from a group of others who are not chosen, and chosen for inclusion among God's people, as recipients of great privilege and blessing (Matt. 24:31; Rom. 8:33; 1 Thess. 1:4, etc.).¹²
2. Foreknowledge (Gk. *prognosis*): The personal, relational knowledge by which God thought of certain people in a saving relationship to himself before creation.¹³
3. Sanctification (Gk. *hagiazō*, holy): A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives. (See Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29).¹⁶

C. EXPLORING THE TEXT

1. You are saved because you have been chosen (1:1-2).

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of

God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” (1 Pet. 1:1-2 ESV)

[Note: The doctrine of election can often be difficult for believers to understand. To better understand this doctrine, readers are encouraged to read “Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election” by Norman Geisler].

2. You are saved because of God's great mercy (1:3-5).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”¹⁸ (1 Pet. 1:3-5 ESV)

3. Until Jesus returns you will experience trials (1:6-9).

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith-- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1 Pet. 1:6-9 ESV)

4. Salvation perplexed the OT prophets (1:10-12).

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” (1 Pet. 1:10-12 ESV)

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever been in a country that didn't speak your language, or share your Christian values? How did you feel at the time? How did you react to this situation?

2. In what local situations have you ever felt out of place? What is it that made you feel strange?
3. Peter says Christians will go through trials (difficult times of testing). What aspects of today's culture present "trials" for Christians?
4. Many people in today's culture have no hope for their future. How would you as a Christian explain the hope you have to someone who is not a Christian, especially when that person tells you that your hope is only wishful thinking?
5. How would you explain salvation to someone who is troubled with today's culture?

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. Christians today have a hope (1 Pet. 1:3) that enables them to see beyond the trials of living in today's culture.
2. Salvation helps Christians see the trials of living in today's culture as being temporary but having a great purpose (1 Pet. 1:6-7).
3. Living in today's culture can be difficult at times, but for the Christian there can be inexpressible joy in belonging to Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:8).

F. ADDENDUM: FIFTEEN WONDERFUL THINGS THAT HAPPEN WHEN YOU ARE SAVED

1. Salvation begins when you acknowledge that you are a sinner under God's wrath (Romans 2:8), and destined for eternal punishment (Romans 3:20, 23).
2. Salvation is acknowledging that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for your sins and you accept his forgiveness as a gift to you—something you cannot earn (Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5), as you place your faith in him and receive eternal life (John 3:16).
3. You are forgiven of all sins, past, present, and future (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; Psalm 103:12), and immediately declared "not guilty" (justified) before God and no longer under his wrath (Romans 3:24; 5:9; 10:10), since you now have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

4. You are given a right standing (made righteous) before God, even though you are still a sinner. God exchanges your sins for the righteousness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21), and you are now "in Christ." (Romans 6:11; 8:1, 39; Gal. 3:28; Ephesians 2:6, 7).
5. You enjoy a new, intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9), the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14) and God, the Father (1 John 1:3).
6. God begins the process of sanctification by making you more like Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling you to live a holy life (Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18).
7. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in you (1 Cor. 6:19; John 14:16-17), giving you a new heart and a new spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:26a) through his renewing and regeneration putting within you a desire to turn from sin and to live a holy life (2 Tim. 1:9).
8. You are placed in the "body of Christ," the church (Romans 7:4; 1 Corinthians 12:27), and given Spirit-empowered abilities to build up other believers (Ephesians 4:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 12:11), and to be built up by others (1 Corinthians 12:20, 21).
9. You are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) whose presence is a "deposit" showing that you belong to God, guaranteeing that salvation is yours now, and that you will receive so much more when Jesus Christ returns (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).
10. The Holy Spirit teaches you spiritual truths (1 Corinthians 2:13), guides you (Romans 8:14), reassures you that you are God's child (Romans 8:16), baptizes you into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), will fill you (Ephesians 5:18), and makes intercession for you before God expressing to him what you cannot express yourself (Romans 8:26).
11. You are adopted into God's family and are receiving all the privileges of God's family, including an inheritance waiting for you in heaven (Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:3-4).
12. You will be given a new glorified physical body, like Jesus Christ's, which will complete God's salvation in you (Philippians 3:20-21).
13. You become accountable to God for what he has given you (Luke 12:48b), and you will be rewarded someday for doing good works (2

Corinthians 5:10; Ephesians 2:10).

14. You have a place in heaven being prepared for you by Jesus Christ so that you will be close to him forever (John 14:2), and where sin will no longer reign (Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15).
15. All these things are a gift from God, and not because of anything you do to try to achieve salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).

PART 3: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HOLY?

1 Peter 1:13-25

For many Christians living a holy life in today's culture seems almost impossible. For others it means trying harder to live a sinless life before God and others. Yet, the Bible states that Christians are to live holy lives so how can this be achieved, especially today?

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

What does it mean to be holy and how does a Christian live a holy life in today's morally declining culture?

B. KEY WORDS

1. Holy (Gk. *hagiazō*): To be "set apart" from the world unto the Lord. It means to live by God's standards, not the world's standards. However, it doesn't mean to be sinless, but to be distinct from the world. (1 Peter 1:15)
2. Redeem (Gk. *lytrōsis*): The act of "buying back" sinners out of their bondage to sin and Satan through the payment of a ransom (though the analogy should not be pressed to specify anyone to whom a ransom was paid which would make Jesus accountable to that person). (1 Peter 1:18)
3. Purify (Gk. *hagnizō*): To be fully devoted to following the Christian way of life. A person is purified when he or she obeys the truth (1 Pet. 1:22).

C. EXPLORING THE TEXT

1. I am to be holy because God is holy (1:13-16).

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

2. I am to be holy because God will judge my works (1:17-21).

"Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." (1 Pet. 1:17-21 NIV)

3. I am to be holy by loving my fellow believers (1:22-25).

"You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart. ²³ For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. ²⁴ As the Scriptures say, 'People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. ²⁵ But the word of the Lord remains forever.' And that word is the Good News that was preached to you." (1 Pet. 1:22-25 NLT)

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can I be holy when I know I am a sinner?
2. In what ways does living a holy life conflict with the values of today's culture?
3. How can Christians today live holy lives without giving a "holier-than-thou" impression to others?
4. Will God's judgment of my works (1 Pet. 1:17) mean I might lose my salvation? Why, or why not?
5. How would you explain the term "Good News," as used in the Bible, to someone who is not a Christian and has never been to church?

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. Living a holy life means having a right relationship with God by believing in Jesus Christ as Savior (accepting His gift of eternal life).
2. If we truly are believers, then we recognize that our position in Christ

automatically sets us apart from the world.

3. Having a relationship with the living God means not trying to "blend in" with the world, but instead living according to God's Word as we study the Bible and grow in it.
4. To avoid having a "holier-than-thou" attitude, humility, not self-centeredness, should characterize the life of a believer.

PART 4: AM I GROWING?

1 Peter 2:1-10

S. Michael Houdmann reminds us, "At the moment we receive Christ as our Savior, we are born again spiritually into God's family. But just as a newborn baby requires nourishing milk for growth and good development, so also a baby Christian requires spiritual food for growth. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:2-3). Milk is used in the New Testament as a symbol of what is basic to the Christian life."¹⁹

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

How can Christians know if they are actually growing spiritually?

B. KEY WORDS

1. Mercy (Gk. *eleeā*): God's giving forgiveness to those who do not deserve it.
2. Goodness (Gk. *aretē*): God's whole work of our salvation; also, his splendor and glory.²⁰

C. EXPLORING THE TEXT

1. Grow by having an increasing desire to study God's Word (2:1-3).

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation-- 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (1 Pet. 2:1-3 ESV)

2. Grow by making Jesus Christ the cornerstone of your life (2:4-8).

⁴As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a

cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."⁷ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"⁸ and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (1 Pet. 2:4-8 ESV)

3. Grow by telling others how God has [changed your life](#) (2:9-10).

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Pet. 2:9-10 NIV)

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can Christians put a high priority on digging into God's Word when there are so many distractions in everyday life?
2. What are some steps a Christian can take to make studying the Bible more interesting and fruitful?
3. How do you make Jesus Christ the cornerstone of your life?
4. If you had an opportunity to share how the Lord impacted your life, what would you say?

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. You know you are growing when you have an increasing desire to [dig into God's Word](#).
2. You know you are growing when you have an increasing desire to [build your life on Jesus Christ](#).
3. You know you are growing when you have an increasing heartfelt desire to [worship the Lord God](#).

F. ADDENDUM: FIVE WAYS TO KEEP YOUR BIBLE STUDY FRESH

1. Explore your [interests](#).
 - Begin with prayer...ask God to guide you.
 - Make a list of books or topics that interest you.
 - Topics: Money, worship, music, spiritual gifts, governments, etc.
 - Books: Ephesians, Philippians, Revelation, Genesis, Isaiah, Proverbs.
2. Guard your [study time](#).
 - Earlier in the day is usually best.
 - Allow at least 30 minutes.
 - Minimize distractions.
 - Get comfortable.
3. Use a [study Bible](#).
 - NIV, ESV, Bible software (BibleWorks, Logos, etc.).
 - Choose a translation you like.
 - Consider also having a paraphrased Bible (The Message, Living Bible, etc.).
4. Memorize [exciting verses](#).
 - Use 3 x 5-inch flashcards.
 - Use online flashcard apps.
5. Keep [personal notes](#).
 - Is there a promise to claim?
 - Is there a lesson to learn?
 - Is there a blessing to enjoy?
 - Is there a command to obey?
 - Is there a sin to avoid?
 - Is there a new thought to carry with me?²²

PART 5: LIVING HONORABLY IN TODAY'S CULTURE

1 PETER 2:11—3:12

The only “Bible” that many people read today is the Christian. Living life every day before others whose desire is to say, “Look, they are no different from us,” presents the need to live honorable lives. Christian living in today’s culture involves demonstrating Christian values through good deeds, which ultimately bring glory to God. Simply put: “Actions speak louder than words!”

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

How can Christians live honorable lives in today's postmodern culture so that they bring glory to the Lord?

B. KEY WORDS

1. Glorify (Gk. *doxazō*): To give honor to God; Christians are to glorify God by living lives of obedience so that others too will glorify God and praise him, perhaps by becoming believers.²³
2. Honor/honorable (Gk. *timaō*): To hold in esteem or place value on someone or something.
3. Righteous (Gk. *dikaios*): To be justified; sometimes it describes those who set their goal to live a holy, God-fearing “righteous” life.²⁴
4. Submit (Gk. *hypotasso*): A voluntary submission, generally in the context of a hierarchy.

C. EXPLORING THE TEXT

1. Live honorably by respecting those in authority (2:11-25).

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles

honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. ¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. ¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (1 Pet. 2:11-25 ESV)

2. Live honorably by nurturing [godly marriages](#) (3:1-7).

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your adorning be external-- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear--⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

3. Live honorably by demonstrating [Christ-likeness](#) (3:8-12).

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰ For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him

seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Pet. 3:1-12 ESV)

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Peter calls for a lifestyle of submission. In general, how do those living in our culture today view the idea of submitting to others? Explain your answer.
2. What reasons does Peter give for submitting to those in authority? (2:13-15) What does Matthew 22:21 tell us about this?
3. Does being subject to those in authority mean we must always obey them? (See Daniel 3:13-18 and Acts 4:18-20).
4. Why are wives to be subject to their husbands? (3:1)
5. How are husbands to treat their wives according to Ephesians 5:22-25?
6. Does a wife's submission to her husband mean that the husband never involves his wife in family decisions? Explain.
7. How can a husband's prayers be hindered according to 3:7?
8. How can Christians genuinely care for each other when they are often separated by great distances and see each other only occasionally?

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. Christians are to live honorably in today's culture so that others will see their good works and ultimately glorify God (2:12).
2. Christian are live honorably when they submit to human authorities as long as they do not compel Christians to violate God's Word (2:13-15; Matt. 22:21).
3. Christian marriages are honorable when husbands and wives fulfill their God-given roles (3:1-7).
4. Christians are to live honorable lives by demonstrating a genuine care for fellow believers. (3:8-12)

PART 6: RESPONDING TO CULTURAL HOSTILITIES

1 Peter 3:13--4:6

About 200 million Christians around the world face the continual threat of harassment, torture and even death because of their faith in Jesus Christ. It is believed that more Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in the previous nineteen centuries combined! Why does an all-powerful, all-loving God allow such evil and suffering?

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

Why must Christians suffer for being Christians and how are they to respond to strong opposition from those in our culture today who openly oppose them?

B. KEY WORDS

1. Answer/defense (Gk. *apologia*): A speech in defense of oneself, a defense of the gospel message from false teaching. It is where we get the word apologetics.
2. Conscience (Gk. *syneidēsis*): That part of the brain that performs moral judgments and ethical evaluations.
3. Slander/blaspheme/abuse (Gk. *blasphēmeō*): To insult, especially with regard to speech.
4. Suffer (Gk. *paschō*): To suffer is to feel pain or distress, to sustain loss, injury, harm, or punishment; to be tormented, to struggle against something especially for being a Christian. It is where the term "passion week" comes from.

C. EXPLORING THE TEXT

1. Responding to hostile [intimidations](#) (3:13-15A).

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, (1 Pet. 3:13-15a ESV)

2. Responding to hostile arguments (3:15B-17).

"...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." (1 Pet. 3:15b-17 ESV)

3. The impact of hostilities toward Jesus (3:18-22).

"Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. ¹⁹ So he went and preached to the spirits in prison-- ²⁰ those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. ²¹ And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ²² Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority." (1 Peter 3:18-22 NLT)

4. Responding to hostile suffering (4:1-2).

"So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. ² You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God." (1 Peter 4:1-2 NLT)

5. Responding to slandering (4:3-6).

³ You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy-- their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols. ⁴ Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. ⁵ But remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead. ⁶ That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead-- so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit." (1 Pet. 4:3-6 NLT)

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever been mistreated, or slandered, for being a Christian? How did you deal with it?
2. Jesus was rejected and despised by many people during his ministry years. In what ways are Christians also rejected and despised today?
3. 1 Peter 4:4 says, "Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do." Why would unbelievers be surprised when Christians don't join them in these activities?
4. If God is all-powerful, and all-loving, why do you suppose he allows his people to go through terrible sufferings?
5. Case Study: Wayne often felt like an outcast. He loved his job and he liked the people he worked with but they often went to places that were very immoral and did things that would jeopardize his marriage to Leann. His coworkers kept telling him he needs to be part of the corporate team if he wants to succeed, and he should learn to do things they all like to do. Wayne became very discouraged and felt that he was not being a good witness for Christ since his coworkers began to dislike him and they even made fun of him for his "holier-than-thou" attitude toward them. Over the next years Wayne was passed over for promotions and his salary increases were much, much less than his coworkers. Wayne felt that he was a very poor witness for Christ and wondered if he somehow missed God's will for his life. How would you advise Wayne if he was a close friend of yours who went to the same church?

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. Suffering for being a Christian can glorify God.
2. Suffering for being a Christian can strengthen your faith.
3. Suffering for being a Christian can strengthen the church body.
4. Suffering for being a Christian can make you hungrier for God.
5. Suffering for being a Christian can make you hungrier for heaven.

F. ADDENDUM: FOUR WAYS TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING

1. Encourage them to express it.

It is evident from Scripture that when we suffer it is not unnatural to experience emotional pain, nor is it unspiritual to express it (Ps. 62:8).

2. Encourage them to draw comfort from God's Word.

Reflect on Scriptures which assure us that God knows and cares about our situation, and promises to be with us to comfort and uphold us (Isa. 53:3; Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Rest assured that God will ultimately bring good out of evil (Rom. 8:18, 28).

3. Encourage them to receive comfort from others.

When we suffer, those who love us will comfort us with their care (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

4. Remind them that evil and suffering are only temporary (Rev. 21:1-4).²⁶

PART 7: MAINTAINING HEALTHY CHRISTIAN LIVES IN TODAY'S CULTURE

1 PETER 4:7—5:14

Peter now describes how to live a healthy Christian life, especially while living in a culture that is either indifferent or opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and his church. He emphasizes the need for Christians to use their gifts, to respond properly to opposition, to be humble at all times, and to resist the enemy.

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

How can a Christian maintain a healthy spiritual life while living in today's postmodern culture?

B. KEY WORDS

Elder (Gk. *presbyteros*): The term is used in connection with seasoned spiritual maturity of those who lead in the church. It is also a term for older men (Acts 2:17).

Gift (Gk. *charisma*): Spiritual endowments given to believers intended to strengthen and build up others in the body of Christ.

Hospitality (Gk. *philoxenia*): Being generous to guests.²⁷

C. EXPLORING THE TEXT

1. Use your **gift** (4:7-11).

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet. 4:7-11 NIV)

2. Be prepared to **suffer** (4:12-19).

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." (1 Pet. 4:12-19 NIV)

3. Instructions to **elders** (5:1-5).

"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. ⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'" (1 Pet. 5:1-5 NIV)

4. Advice to all other **Christians** (5:6-11).

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet. 5:6-11 NIV)

5. Peace to all who are **in Christ** (5:12-14).

"With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast

*in it. ¹³ She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are *in Christ*." (1 Pet. 5:12-14 NIV)*

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. (4:10) What is the purpose of these gifts? (See also Ephesians 4:8-12).
2. (4:11) What are the two categories of gifts Peter presents here?
3. (4:11) What did Peter mean by "the strength God provides" when referring to "gifts"?
4. (4:12-19) How should Christians today view these verses on suffering even though they are not being persecuted like the readers of this letter?
5. (5:1-3) Both Peter and Paul lay out strict qualifications for elders in the church. (See also 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9)? Why are these qualifications so strict?
6. (5:7) What does it mean to "cast your anxiety on God"? Why is this sometimes difficult to do?
7. (5:8) How does Peter describe the devil here? What additional advice does James 4:7 give us?

E. CONCLUSIONS

1. Discover and use your spiritual gift(s) to benefit other believers (4:7-11).
2. Be prepared to be hassled, or even suffer, for being a Christian in today's culture (4:12-19).
3. Pray for and respect your church leaders (5:1-4).
4. Maintain a constant attitude of humility toward others (5:5-7; see also Phil. 2:3-4)
5. Recognize and resist the enemy at all times (5:8-10).

F. ADDENDUM: SEVEN SIGNS OF A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN LIFE

1. You desire to spend more time in genuine praise and worship.
2. Your response to sin is quick and followed by genuine repentance.
3. You see trials and temptations as opportunities for growth.
4. Your desire to obey becomes more intent and sin is less attractive.
5. You experience an increasing awareness of God's presence.
6. You view service for Him as a high honor and not a burden.
7. You jealously guard your private time of prayer and Bible reading.

PART 8: DEVELOPING A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Applying What You've Learned



After reviewing this study of 1 Peter develop a personal action plan based on what you've learned.

1. List those things that stand out most to you from this study:
2. List at least five key verses in 1 Peter you'd like to memorize:
3. Describe at least three specific actions you'd like to take based on this study:

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END NOTES

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- ¹⁴ (Grudem and Hughes Glossary)
- ¹⁵ S. Michael Houdmann, <<https://www.gotquestions.org/predestination-foreknowledge.html>> Accessed July 27, 2017.
- ¹⁶ (Grudem and Hughes Glossary)
- ¹⁷ See Grudem for other ways the sprinkling of blood was used in the OT (W. A. Grudem 56-57)
- ¹⁸ "Last time" → καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ; an end time appointed by God.
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