

1 Peter

Lesson 5 Chapter 3:8-22

Leader Guide

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David R. Steele

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Lesson 5

1 Peter 3:8-22

Life in Christ

But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. 1 Peter 3:15

“Always seek to do good for others; it will impress some and amaze the rest!” Mark Twain

Prayers

Read 1 Peter 3:8-22

^{1Pe 3:8} Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

^{1Pe 3:9} Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

^{1Pe 3:10} For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

^{1Pe 3:11} He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

^{1Pe 3:12} For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

^{1Pe 3:13} Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

^{1Pe 3:14} But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.”

^{1Pe 3:15} But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ^{1Pe 3:16} keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

^{1Pe 3:17} It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

^{1Pe 3:18} For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

^{1Pe 3:19} through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison

^{1Pe 3:20} who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

^{1Pe 3:21} and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

^{1Pe 3:22} who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Discuss

1. What qualities should characterize our life in Christ, verses 3:8-9?

These qualities are highlighted in verses 8-9: living in harmony with others, sympathy, brotherly love, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and blessing others.

2. Why should Christians repay insults with blessings? See verse 3:9, Luke 6:35-36, and Romans 12:20.

^{1Pe 3:9} Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9)

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:35-36)

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” (Romans 12:20)

Repaying insults with blessing is our calling and demonstrates our unity in Christ. We might win over our enemy to Christ, but we should not expect that to be the case. Our human nature might wish to see our enemies hurt, but the context of the Romans passage is that vengeance against our enemies belongs to the Lord. Our blessing for the insults of our enemies is the response Christ commands.

3. Why is it important to live in harmony – like-minded, with fellow believers? Also, refer to the following verses:
 - a. Matthew 18:19-20 “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”
 - b. John 17:20-21 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
 - c. Romans 12:4-5 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Christ calls believers to unity in such a profound way that they share his unity with the Father. Unity brings us power and purpose to reach the world with the gospel and for our prayers to be answered. Without unity, the church body is not equipped for its mission because Christ gives each of us gifts and talents that are only made complete when working with the gifts of others.

4. How does verse 11 suggest that living at peace with others may not be easy? How have you experienced this?

Peter uses words like seeking and pursuing peace, suggesting it hasn't already happened. We should expect to be confronted by selfishness, ambition, and evil and not expect peace with others to be easy. For our part, we should make every effort to be at peace with others.

5. Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16 in verses 10-12, relating righteous behavior with God's blessing of a long and good life. Peter immediately contrasts the desire for a good life with suffering and courage.

Ps 34:12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,
Ps 34:13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.
Ps 34:14 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.
Ps 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;
Ps 34:16 the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
Isa 8:12b “do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it.”

To be sure, every good and perfect is from above (James 1:17), but we are not exempt from suffering. What is a pitfall if we only focus on receiving blessing and ignore suffering and sacrifice?

I often imagine life in Christ as a jewel with many facets. Receiving God’s abundant blessings is certainly one of those facets, but there are many more – including suffering, sacrifice, service, and receiving God’s comfort and peace during sickness and trials. If we focus only on receiving God’s blessing, our thinking can become very black and white, confusing comfort, prosperity, and circumstance with righteousness. We might think as the disciples did in their early days with Jesus, who thought God blessed the righteous with wealth, health, and eternal life and punished the wicked with sickness, poverty, and condemnation.

6. Peter encouraged believers who were suffering for their faith to look on their suffering as a blessing (verse 14) and encouraged them to respond to maliciousness with gentleness, respect and the reason for their hope and faith in Christ. Can you think of a time when you didn’t respond this way? What was the result?

Peter said our consciences would be clear if we responded with gentleness and respect. Our conscience is definitely not clear when we respond with anger. Sometimes we might be able to apologize and set the relationship right; other times, the conflict seems to remain as an impenetrable wall.

7. Read the following verses and discuss why it is so important to be able to praise God in all circumstances.

Phil 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, Phil 1:30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

1Th 5:16 Be joyful always;

1Th 5:17 pray continually;

1Th 5:18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

Phil 4:11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

Phil 4:12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Phil 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

If we truly live by faith, we believe God will make everything work for our good. Suffering and hardship become means to shape our character, refine our faith, and be united with Christ. It is easy to give God thanks when he provides abundantly, but we also need to thank him for suffering and hardship. This is a very difficult lesson, but nearly every Christian I know has experienced more growth in trials than in times of plenty and ease.

8. Let's hear it, give your "15-second elevator pitch" for the hope you have in Christ – with gentleness and respect to someone hostile to Christ.

Most of my friends at work are agnostics who think religion is foolish, but they acknowledge that creation is a miracle (of evolution). I find it logical to believe in God. All creation is a witness to him. The Bible says that God is holy, and we are separated from God by sin. It is self-evident we are not holy. The Bible says God loved us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. My hope in Christ is that he has reconciled me to God and will bring me into loving relationships with others so that I might be a blessing to them, and they will enrich my life too. I hope he will bless my work and family and welcome me in heaven with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

9. Verse 3:18 is one of the great truths in the Bible. Verse 18 and the verses that follow may be Peter's answer to anyone who asks for the reason for his hope in Christ, ^{1Pe 3:18} For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. What great truth does this verse hold for you?

The Good News of Christ is that he died for my sins – all our sins so that we could become God's children through our faith in Christ's sacrifice.

10. Verse 19 is difficult. As Martin Luther put it in his Commentary on Peter & Jude, "A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means." Luther cites 1 Peter 3:19 as a proof text of the Apostles Creed that Christ descended into hell after his death to proclaim victory over his enemies. This interpretation is consistent with a similar statement of Peter in verse 4:6, "For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit."

You are not alone if you are a bit confused by this verse. Perhaps it means what it says – Christ descended into hell after his death to preach to the spirits of the dead before his resurrection.

11. How does the account of Noah and the flood symbolize baptism, Verse 20-21?

It is not obvious, but the flood and baptism have the action of faith and God's purposes in common. Noah and his family built and entered the ark with faith that God would save them. The flood was God's way of removing sin from the world, and giving mankind a new beginning. Likewise, in baptism, God removes sin, rescues us from spiritual death, and gives us a new spiritual beginning - a new life through the Holy Spirit. Regardless of the age when we were baptized, we accept the promises of baptism and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit by faith. Martin Luther reminds us to remember our blessings through baptism daily and live a new life in Christ.

12. What are some issues confronting your group, church, and the world your group can pray for?

Closing Prayer