



1st and 2nd Peter Bible Study

March 3 – June 17

At Laguna Woods – Tues. 6am, Wed. 10am, 6:30pm
At Aliso Viejo – Tues. 6:30am, 5:30pm, Sun. 10:30am

Session #6, April 14th – 19th

Suffering for Doing Good - 1 Peter 3:8-22 Life Application Notes

3:8 Peter lists five key elements that should characterize any group of believers: (1) harmony-pursuing the same goals; (2) sympathy-being responsive to others' needs; (3) love-seeing and treating each other as brothers and sisters; (4) compassion-being affectionately sensitive and caring; and (5) humility-being willing to encourage one another and rejoice in each other's successes. These five qualities go a long way toward helping believers serve God effectively.

3:8-9 Peter developed the qualities of compassion and humility the hard way. In his early days with Christ, these attitudes did not come naturally to his impulsive, strong-willed personality (see Mark 8:31-33; John 13:6-9 for examples of Peter's blustering). But the Holy Spirit changed Peter, molding his strong personality to God's use, and teaching him tenderness and humility.

3:9 In our fallen world, it is often deemed acceptable by some to tear people down verbally or to get back at them if we feel hurt. Peter, remembering Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), encourages his readers to pay back wrongs by praying for the offenders. In God's kingdom, revenge is unacceptable behavior, as is insulting a person, no matter how indirectly it is done. Rise above getting back at those who hurt you. Instead of reacting angrily to these people, pray for them.

3:10 For more about controlling your tongue, see the notes in James 3:2-18.

3:11 Too often we see peace as merely the absence of conflict, and we think of peacemaking as a passive role. But an effective peacemaker actively pursues peace. He or she builds good relationships, knowing that peace is a by-product of commitment. The peacemaker anticipates problems and deals with them before they occur. When conflicts arise, he or she brings them into the open and deals with them before they grow unmanageable. Making peace can be harder work than waging war, but it results not in death but in life and happiness.

3:14-15 Rather than fear our enemies, we are to quietly trust in God as the Lord of all. We must believe that Christ is truly in control of all events. When he rules our thoughts and emotions, we cannot be shaken by anything our enemies may do.

3:15 Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. It is true that we shouldn't be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our life-style, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

3:16 You may not be able to keep people from slandering you, but you can at least stop supplying them with ammunition. As long as you do what is right, their accusations will be empty and will only embarrass them. Keep your conduct above criticism!

3:18-20 The meaning of preaching "to the spirits in prison" is not completely clear, and commentators have explained it in different ways. The traditional interpretation is that Christ, between his death and resurrection, announced salvation to God's faithful followers who had been waiting for their salvation during the whole Old Testament era. Matthew records that when Jesus died, "the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people" (Matthew 27:52-53). A few commentators think that this passage says that Christ's Spirit was in Noah as Noah preached to those imprisoned by sin (but now in hell). Still others hold that Christ went to Hades to proclaim his victory and final condemnation to the fallen angels imprisoned there since Noah's day (see 2 Peter 2:4).

In any case, the passage shows that Christ's Good News of salvation and victory is not limited. It has been preached in the past as well as in the present; it has gone to the dead as well as to the living. God has given everyone the opportunity to come to him, but this does not imply a second chance for those who reject Christ in this life.

3:21 Peter says that Noah's salvation *through water* symbolized baptism, a ceremony involving water. In baptism we identify with Jesus Christ, who separates us from the lost and gives us new life. It is not the ceremony that saves us, but faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism is the symbol of the transformation that happens in the hearts of those who believe (Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27; Col. 2:12). By identifying themselves with Christ through baptism, Peter's readers could resist turning back, even under the pressure of persecution. Public baptism would keep them from the temptation to renounce their faith.

Study Questions and Materials - As you read 3:8-22, think about how it relates to what has gone before: the reminder of our hope; the exhortation to holiness; the images of stones, priests, and strangers; the commands to submit and respect.

Basic attitudes (3:8) In verse 8, Peter lists five adjectives describing the attitudes with which Christians should treat other people, especially other Christians. These qualities should underlie all our actions, but in this context particularly our response to abuse. Peter urged Christians to . . .

Live in harmony with one another. Literally, “be of one mind.”

Be sympathetic. That is, “to enter into and share the feelings of others.”

Love as brothers. See “Love because . . .” in lesson three.

Be compassionate. Literally, “of good heart or affections.” 51 In NASB, “kindhearted”; in RSV, “have . . . a tender heart.”

Be . . . humble. Lowly. In the man-centered Greek world, lowliness/humility was considered “shameful” —the cringing of a slave or a lack of self-respect. In the God-centered world of the Bible, however, lowering oneself is the first step to a right relationship with God and others. Jesus modeled the servant attitude He expected of His followers.

1. Why is harmony among Christians crucial? (*Optional*: See Matthew 18:19-20; John 17:21.)
2. How can Christians disagree while maintaining harmony? Read the following verses, and record Jesus’ and Paul’s teaching on how to settle disagreements (Matthew 5:21-24; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-6)
3. Which of the attitudes in 1 Peter 3:8 do you find hardest to live by and why?

Blessing for evil (3:9-17)

4. Peter tells us to give a “blessing” to those who insult or injure us (3:9). What do you think he means by this command? (*Optional*: See Luke 6:27-38.)
5. In 1 Peter 3:10-12, Peter is quoting Psalm 34:12-16. Explain in your own words what these verses say we should do to attain joy in life and answers to prayer.
6. Verse 15 tells us to “set apart” (NASB: “sanctify”; RSV: “reverence”) Christ as Lord in our hearts. What does this have to do with returning blessing for insult, not fearing intimidation, and explaining the hope within us?

Motivation Christ’s victory (3:18-22) “For” in verse 18 introduces the reasons for the teaching of verses 14-17. It explains why and how “you are blessed” if you “suffer for what is right” (verse 14).

Preached to the spirits in prison (verse 19). Some interpreters believe Jesus went to the underworld between His death and resurrection, and preached the gospel to unbelievers of Noah’s day. Others think Jesus proclaimed judgment to those dead unbelievers. (Against these interpretations, Irving Jensen asks, “why did not Christ preach to *all* unbelieving dead, of all time? Or if He did, why does Peter just cite those of Noah’s day?”)

Another view is that “the preincarnate Christ preached *through Noah* to unbelievers of his day.”

A third view is that “the preincarnate Christ preached to fallen angels.”

7. According to verses 20-21, Noah’s experiences foreshadowed Christian baptism. How is baptism like Noah’s adventure? (If necessary, read about Noah in Genesis 6:9-9:17).
8. Verse 21 says that baptism saves you not by removing physical dirt but by embodying your “pledge of a good conscience toward God” (NIV), or “appeal to God for a good conscience” (NASB, RSV). In this pledge or appeal, baptism involves you in Jesus’ resurrection.
9. Read Romans 6:3-7. How does baptism . . . identify you with Jesus’ resurrection? appeal to God for a good conscience?
10. In 3:8-22, Peter seems to move from thought to thought by free association rather than step-by-step logic. Still, he follows a general structure: *Do this* (verses 8-9, 14-17) for *these reasons* (verses 10-13, 18-22).
11. Consider the commands and reasons Peter gives in 3:8-22. Do any of them encourage you to concentrate on a particular area of your life for growth? If so, pray for grace to become more Christ-like in this area and for guidance with any practical steps you might take in obedience to grace.

Bible Memory Verses: 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. 1 Peter 3:15