

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

Lesson 7– Study Questions

1 Peter 2:1-25

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3

1. Chapter 2 begins with a specific directive for Christian living. List those things which believers, as they grow in faith, should remove from their lives (verse 1).
2. Select one or two of the behaviors from the previous question and write a few synonyms that explain what they mean in everyday life. What common idea links these behaviors?
3. In verse 2 the author changes topics to that of spiritual growth. He uses the image of newborn infants to describe the longing believers should have for "pure, spiritual milk." What does spiritual milk mean to you?

NOTE: We are to be like newborn infants who long for pure spiritual milk needed for growth. Just as newborn infants need milk for growth, so Christians born of the Word of God need "spiritual milk" to grow. The "milk" here is the teaching of truth needed for growth—just what Peter himself is offering in his letter. But "milk" also means more broadly all the grace of Christ available to us, leading us to put on a new way of life. *Keating*

4. Peter tells us that the longing for pure, spiritual milk will lead to growth and salvation (verse 2). Evaluate your progress and maturity as a Christian. Can you see a connection between your spiritual growth and a hunger for the Word of God?
- 5a. What else is required to satisfy spiritual hunger according to verse 3? (Good memory verse)
- b. Peter's words in verse 3 use another metaphor related to human senses. Give a specific example of how we can "taste" of the Lord's goodness in our lives.

NOTE: The words of verse 3 would have been familiar to Peter's readers. Compare it to the words from Psalms 34:8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good."

6. CONNECTION: Today we read about tasting the Lord's goodness. God can be experienced and known through our senses; we are inspired by the sight of beautiful churches and art, we use our hands to bless ourselves with holy water, hold rosary beads and wear precious medals. We smell the fragrance of incense at liturgy. We hear the spoken Word of God and music that lifts our hearts and minds to heaven. How have your senses helped you perceive the presence of God? What sights, sounds, smells and other sensory experiences of your faith inspire you? Share some thoughts with your group.

In 2 Corinthians 2:14-15 we read, "Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the *aroma of Christ*..." Let this thought lead you into prayer.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Peter 2:4-8

NOTE: In this section the Church is pictured as a spiritual temple under construction. Believers are like living stones built up securely on Christ, who is the cornerstone of the entire structure (Ephesians 2:19-22). Since temples are not only dwelling places for God but also houses of worship and sacrifice, Peter can also describe Christians as a priestly people who make acceptable offerings to God through Christ. *Ignatius Study Bible*

7a. Our readings today begin as Christians are invited to "Come to him." Answer the following questions (verse 4).

To what is Jesus compared?

How was Jesus treated by men?

How was he seen by God?

b. Peter calls Jesus a living stone. What does this description mean to you?

8. Verse 5 contains four illustrations of the people of God. Select one of the images below and comment on how it describes the Church or the nature of Christian life.

living stones

a spiritual house

holy priesthood

offering spiritual sacrifices

9a. Record verse 6 which quotes a beautiful and memorable passage from Isaiah 28:16.

b. What is your understanding of the word cornerstone? Why do you think our bible study is called The Cornerstone Scripture Study?

10. In verses 7-8, Peter states that, for those who do not believe, "the stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner" and will make them stumble and fall. Comment briefly on how a stumble or failure can lead to change or correction for the better.

11. Today's verses are based on the Old Testament. Look up one of the following verses and record the relevant passage.

Psalms 118:22

Isaiah 8:14

Isaiah 28:16

NOTE: Jesus applied Psalms 118:22 to himself in the New Testament (see Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). Peter also quotes this Psalm in Acts 4:11.

12. CONNECTION: In today's verses, Peter compares Christians to living stones built into a spiritual house. Similarly, Christians are part of a diverse community that supports one another and worships together. Differences in culture, ethnicity, abilities and faith traditions bring greater riches and blessings to our communities. The many parts that make up the Body of Christ build a strong foundation in the house of God and enrich the lives of everyone. Share how diversity in your community has inspired your faith. How can we reach out to attract greater diversity to our communities?

Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Write a prayer today that all of God's people can come together in peace and love to build a strong foundation for his church on earth.

DAY THREE
Read 1 Peter 2:9-12

13. In verse 9 Peter addresses those who believe in Jesus as the Cornerstone naming them in four ways. Select one and record what you think that title means for us as believers.

a chosen race

a royal priesthood

a holy nation

God's own people

NOTE: These titles and privileges, once the exclusive prerogative of Israel, are now extended to the whole messianic people, who have come to share in the blessings of a covenant relationship with God. One responsibility of this relationship is the missionary vocation to announce God's goodness and salvation to the world. Here we learn of the "priesthood of all believers," the doctrine that Baptism makes every member of the Church a sharer in the priesthood of Christ (CCC 1268, 1546). This grace, which differs in kind and degree from the ministerial priesthood, enables every Christian to minister to the spiritual needs of others and offer sacrifices of love and praise to God in his daily life. *Ignatius Study Bible*

14. According to the end of verse 9, believers are chosen to proclaim the mighty acts of God. What mighty act of God, who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, can you proclaim today?

15. Peter makes two comparisons in verse 10. Select one and describe how it was accomplished by Jesus. (Good memory verses)

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

16. In verse 11 Peter calls his readers, "Beloved," and "aliens and exiles" as he begins a discussion of a second major theme of his letter, "the Christian life of witness in a Gentile world" (Commentary). What "war" does he alert them to in the rest of that verse and what do you think he means?

17. How are Christians to conduct themselves according to verse 12? Complete the phrases below.

Conduct yourselves

though they malign you as evildoers

and glorify God

18. CONNECTION: Peter reminds his readers they are aliens and exiles living in a world that is hostile to Christian beliefs so they must conduct themselves in a way that is both disciplined and distinctive from the Gentiles. The lifestyle of a Christian should set them apart. They are called to be a holy people, witnessing to God's goodness and mercy and giving honor and glory to God in all they do. How can you live your life as a faithful Christian in the world but not of the world? Can you think of someone who maintained Christ-like behavior among non-believers setting a positive example for others?

Read and record Matthew 5:16. Realize that the way you live your life can cause others to praise and glorify God. Spend some time with these thoughts as you begin your prayer today.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Peter 2:13-17

19. As we begin today, Christians are given further directions on how to live as good members of society. Complete verses 13-14 below that describe what they are called to do "for the Lord's sake."

accept the authority

whether of the emperor as supreme

to punish those who do wrong

20. Record the reason that the early Christians needed to show respect for civil authority (verse 15).

NOTE: Peter is concerned to ensure that Christians give no grounds by their behavior for accusations of immorality or sedition that were present in the early Christian community. *Keating*

21. See Romans 13:6-7. Comment on whether you think these same principles apply today.

NOTE: We have a co-responsibility for the common good, including the right and duty to voice just criticism of harm to the dignity of persons and the community as well as the obligation to disregard the directives of civil authorities when contrary to the demands of moral order. *CCC 2240, 2238, 2242*

22. In the beginning of verse 16, Peter directs the Christians to live as servants of God and free people. In your own words, what are Christians cautioned against according to the end of verse 16?

23. Even though Christians are to live as free people, there are limits on their behavior. From the four directives listed below from verse 17, select one or two and describe how they apply to your life today.

Honor everyone

Love the family of believers

Fear God

Honor the emperor

NOTE: The fact that Peter exhorts readers to honor the emperor in this unqualified way is a strong indication that he is writing *before* the days of government-sponsored persecution against the Church, which began in the mid-60's and intensified toward the end of the first century. His words would have been susceptible to misunderstanding in the late first century when the public display of devotion to the emperor was a life-and-death issue for Christians. *Ignatius Study Bible*

24. CONNECTION: In today's passage, Peter instructs the early Christians in their relationship with the larger world and governmental authority. For there to be peace and order, he urges obedience of earthly rulers, honor and respect for everyone including members of the faith community. As Christians, we too assume a dual responsibility to both fulfill God's will and respect worldly authority. The challenge for us is to deal honorably and peacefully with both church and state. What are some ways to resolve controversial issues and disagreements with others in a peaceful and civil manner? Share with your group how you have seen this happen recently.

Recall that in Mark 12:17 Jesus said, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's." Let thoughts of exercising your God-given freedom in a responsible and honorable way begin your prayer.

DAY FIVE
Read 1 Peter 2:18-22

25a. For the remainder of this chapter and part of the next, Peter uses the literary form of "household codes" to instruct his community. Refer to the discussion of these ethical lists in the Commentary on page 39 and summarize why these were needed so urgently in the newly forming Christian communities.

b. He begins these instructions by addressing slaves first. Why do you think that was?

NOTE: Slavery was deeply entrenched in Roman society. Peter never condones slavery, nor do other New Testament authors, but neither does he criticize it directly. Rather, by directly addressing Christian slaves, he establishes their dignity and treats them fully as equals with the Christian community. *Keating*

26. Slaves are instructed to accept authority with deference or submissiveness from two different kinds of masters. Who are they according to verse 18?

27. Peter praises the Christian slaves if, being aware of God's presence, they endure unjust suffering (verse 19). He goes on to state two other conditions regarding suffering in verse 20. Complete the phrases below.

If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong

But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it

28. Though there is no longer slavery in the United States, briefly comment on other social situations that are similar to the suffering and conditions of slavery to which these principles might apply.

29a. In verse 21 Peter makes the point that being a Christian means we unite with Christ by following his example and, as a result, we are not exempt from suffering. What phrase or phrases makes that clear to you?

b. The last phrase of verse 22 is a reflection on Isaiah 53:5. Read the verse from Isaiah and note how it relates to today's passage.

30. CONNECTION: Today we read that as Christians we are called to suffer, following in the steps of Jesus in all ways including unjust suffering. Peter tells us it takes a special kind of grace to endure suffering for doing the right things in life and, if we endure, we will earn the approval of God. Can you think of a time when you or another found the grace needed to withstand unjust physical, mental or emotional suffering? How can we prepare ourselves to respond like Christ when we encounter injustice or unfair treatment? What is your role when you see it happening to another? Record some thoughts to share.

Prayerfully read and record Matthew 5:11. As you begin your prayer be aware of following in the steps of Jesus through this suffering.

DAY SIX

Read 1 Peter 2:23-25

31a. Today, Peter continues his advice to slaves, but moves beyond to all Christians. According to verse 23, when Jesus was treated unjustly, he did not return abuse nor threaten. What action did he take in response to his abusers?

b. This is the third time in this chapter that Peter has mentioned verbal abuse against the Christians (2:12,15.) How hard is it for you to “not return abuse” when someone threatens you, an innocent person or a loved one? What type of action would be acceptable or Christian?

32a. What profound theological truth are we told about Jesus in the first part of verse 24?

b. The second part of verse 24 states that Christ died on the cross, "so that free from sins, we might live for righteousness." In addition to being an example to Christians of how to suffer conflict and even death (verse 21), what else do we learn about what Christ accomplished for us by his suffering?

33. The last phrase of verse 24 is a reflection on Isaiah 53:5. What is your understanding of the phrase, "by his wounds you have been healed"?

34a. There is a beautiful contrast in verse 25 between what people were in the past and what they are now. To what were the people compared and what change did they make? (Good memory verse)

b. Throughout Scripture there are many references to Jesus as the Divine Shepherd. Read the following verses and record a phrase referring to Jesus as our Divine Shepherd.

Isaiah 40:11

Ezekiel 34: 12

John 10:27

35. The title for Jesus, guardian of souls (verse 25), is the only time in the New Testament where this is used (Keating). Comment on how that title changes or affects your understanding of how Christ is at work in your life.

36. CONNECTION: Like shepherds who protected their flocks in Peter's day, Jesus is the Divine Shepherd. Call to mind all that you know about the relationship between a shepherd and his flocks. Apply this to the relationship between Jesus and his people, between Jesus and you. Record some thoughts to share with your group.

Pray today to the Shepherd, the Guardian of your soul, to keep you from foolish wandering and that you will always hear his voice.

Read pages 36-40 in the *New Collegeville Commentary, James, First Peter, Jude, Second Peter*, by Patrick J. Hartin. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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