

**How Then Shall We Live**  
**Week 1: Focus your minds (1 Peter 1)**

**Why the topic**, "How then shall we live? In this brief letter Peter is helping these new Christ followers in these new churches learn **how to live within a culture that is diametrically opposed to the Kingdom of God**. The culture has different **priorities and goals from what Jesus passed on to the apostles**, like Peter who passed them to these brothers and sisters in Asia Minor.

Before we get into all of that, let's talk about **how to get the most out of this series**. Or a more accurate way to say it, "**how can we best position ourselves this winter to hear God's voice and experience new life.**"

This is what we are calling the... **Winter Challenge**.

**This is where we test God** to see if the Bible, His Word, is powerful and alive. If we really dive into this, what might happen.

**First, we have a gift for you**. It's really a tool that can help you hear what God is trying to say to you. (**Introduce journals and study guide**.) If you are **watching at home**, you can stop by the church during office hours and pick one up or call us and we will send you these.

- The journal is to **capture what you are learning and what God is saying** to you. We will encourage you to **mark the scripture pages** as a way of helping draw out of it what we need.
- If you have a journal, **you wont need to have to consult the outline**. This is for those who don't have, or prefer to use their own Bible, instead of a journal. It will have key words, **which I will encourage you to write in your journals** so that everything is in one place.
- **The Study Guide** on the inside has a different activity to help you **learn to handle scripture for yourself**. The inside becomes significant only if we get to the three questions on the back. **With these questions we are getting information about God**. We are commanded to **"teach them to obey," not simply to understand**.

1. Listen to each sermon, preferably in person, if possible.

Obviously, if you have health issues that make it not safe to be here, then please join us online. If you are **out of town** for business or pleasure, get caught up with the rest of us.

2. Read 1 Peter straight through. This is to get the quick fly over, seeing how it all fits together.
3. Read each section as we teach through the book. This is where we dig into one section at a time.
4. Use the weekly study ideas in your study guide...You can do this before you come to see the sermon on each section or during the sermon, or after.
5. Discuss and reflect in a Bridge Group...This is so important to have all of this land in a relational environment with brothers and sisters in Christ. Turn your outline over and you will see meeting times for these groups that discuss the Sunday sermons.

Let's dive right into 1 Peter, chapter 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> 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 Peter 1:1-2

**Bible Study Rule #1**...What type of writing is this book of the Bible? This is important, because you read a **letter differently** than you do another type of writing, like poetry or history.

Who is the **sender** and who is the **receiver**? What can you learn from this introduction?

**Peter is the sender.** What do we know about Peter from the rest of the Bible?

- He is a first hand, **eyewitness** to the life and teaching of Jesus.
- He is an **apostle**: meaning, he was called personally by Jesus himself for the **special purposes of establishing the church**.
- Peter was a **fisherman** on the Sea of Galilee
- His name was changed from **Simon to Peter, or Rock**. He was **foundational for the building of the church** in Jerusalem and as it spread to Rome.
- He was in **Jesus' inner circle**.
- He was the **first to acknowledge Jesus** as the Christ or Messiah, Son of God
- When he says something it **carries weight**
- He tried to **walk on water**.
- He **denied Jesus and was restored by Jesus**.
- He preached a **powerful sermon** about unity between Jewish and non-Jewish Christ followers.
- He was **miraculously released from prison**.
- He was **martyred**.

**The most important** is that he was an eyewitness and risked his life to spread the message of King Jesus.

The next question for any letter is, to whom is it **Addressed to**:

Mark the word "Elect" in your journal page. The word we are going to use today is **chosen**...This word, Elect, means **chosen to receive God's grace**. In other words, **God got there first**. These people didn't come to God. He came to them specifically. They responded by following Jesus.

**He is writing to people who have heard the message about Jesus**, probably after becoming familiar with the God of Israel by **being at a synagogue**. Scholars believe that they are mostly non-Jews who were **seeking God through a local synagogue**.

**There are two more words** that describe the addresses. These next two are to be **taken literally**. No evidence that they are a **metaphor**.

Exiles or strangers in a foreign place, **resident alien**.

1. They are socially marginalized people from the **lower or slave class** making them poor and without any real power. **They were the working poor, who weren't born there.**
2. **"Their faith led to an association that had no social acceptance and, therefore, at the very least, exacerbated their social condition."**<sup>51</sup>

Diaspora/**scattered**...

Thus in 1:1-2, Peter gives both their **spiritual status (chosen or elect)** and their **social location (resident alien who are scattered)**. <sup>51</sup>

Obedience and **sprinkling of his blood**...this gives a **sense of allegiance to Jesus, whom we belong to.**

**Section 3-12 speaks of their salvation in Jesus and the hope it brings.** That hope is important because of their status as sojourners and that leads us into **"How then shall we live," and verses 13-25.**

**The importance of this section is to establish one's identity upon who we are in God's family, not who we are in social perception.** <sup>57</sup>

**In the next part of chapter 1, Peter builds on the only foundation and that is our salvation because of Jesus. God has rescued us from our sin, through Jesus and it is faith in him that allows us to rest on that foundation.**

Peter digresses in this explanation of their salvation to **act as a pastor for these marginalized, outcasts of society.** <sup>6</sup> **In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> 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. 1 Peter 1:6-7**

**Trying to apply these verses to how then shall we live now demands some humility and a good dose of reality.** Our situation is in a free country where there is a separation between church and state. **It's not what these**

**poor marginalized people were going through** and it isn't like our brothers and sisters in places like Iran and India, where their lives are at risk when they gather to worship or when they tell people about their faith.

**Don't trivialize suffering because people in other situations or parts of the world are really suffering.** Open Doors USA

**That being said, what we have in common is a desire to live as followers of Jesus in a culture that has completely different priorities and goals. Yes, there is resistance and push back. There is great pressure to be squeezed into the mold that is the American dream, consumerism, postmodern thinking.**

Let's pick up at verse 13. **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. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19**

**There is a command given in the very first verse.** Mark that and write this phrase beside it on the journal page...**Focus your attention here.**

Another phrase we use, particularly in sports, but it applies in all areas, **"get your head in the game."**

**Be aware** of your surroundings. **Being chosen, resident aliens, scattered,** you need to put your attention on the right things if you are going to make it in this culture.

**Life is coming pretty fast for us.** There is no shortage of voices, telling us what to do and what to care about. There are all kinds of **shiny things, or beeping things,** that draw our attention.

**These people had to be alert, because no one was looking out for them. They needed to feed their families and find a place where they could be safe and accepted.**

Peter gives **four things** that they are to keep their minds focused upon. 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.** <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19

**You can probably spot the first thing** that they are to focus their minds upon. Look at the second part of verse 13, "**set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**" Across from that write the phrase...**Real Hope.**

Understand where this is going. **If you think he is good now, you haven't seen anything. He wins.**

**These people couldn't put their hope in anything in the society** of that time that could help them. **They had nothing other than Jesus, and his people** who were for them and who supported them.

**We are tempted to put our hope in our income, our education, the company we work for, in a politician or political party, the belief that good things happen to good people, that the American dream** of a house and things will always get better...

**Those are crutches. Real hope is something so solid, something that is right now and forever into eternity.** When Jesus was revealed to these people and they knew that **their old lives were death and life was in**

**Jesus, was Jesus**, everything changed. Jesus was not an **add-on, or a supplement** to what they had.

**We have a lot, therefore**, it is tempting to have, **"I hope this goes well because it has in the past,"** versus real hope that now Jesus is here I'm on solid ground.

Let's keep moving through these verses to find out how we are to focus our minds. This is where we look for repetition. **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. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19**

**Mark those phrases so that they stand out to you.** Then write the word **Holiness**...across from them in your journal.

This word and how it is used in the Bible **can cause some confusion and even discouragement** if wrongly viewed.

When something was considered **holy in the temple in ancient Jerusalem** it was consecrated for a special use for God's glory and use. **There might be a bowl**, but it wasn't just a bowl, because it was set aside for only God's use and glory. The clothing the priest wore was set aside and, therefore, holy. The priest wouldn't take it home and use it to make a **Caesar salad** for the family, returning it before it is noticed.

**There are two things we need to understand** in order to see holiness as something **realistic to pursue**.

1. **Because you have been converted and “set apart” for God's use and glory.**

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 2 Corinthians 5:17

2. **As obedient children, we reflect God's holiness.** Obedience is referred to here in vs. 14, but also in **the intro**, “for obedience to Jesus Christ.”

**Neither of these is to make this a command to perfection in our performance as followers of Jesus.** Only God is holy in that way, only holy.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2

Another word we use that is from the same root word “**hagios**” is **Sanctification** is...**You are made new and being made new.**

**Think about how much this would have meant to these resident aliens, working poor, just above slaves.**

**One of the closest equivalents would be a Christ follower going off to a university to live and study.** The culture is very, post Christian and hedonistic. **What is Peter's word to our students who are finding themselves excluded?** It is twofold: (1) **Maintain the course of a loving, holy lifestyle,** and (2) **find your identity in being part of God's family, not in being part of a society that does not accept you.** It ought to be noticed that Peter does not tell them to be coarse, rude, and arrogant, nor does he tell them to segregate themselves into separated communes. Rather, he tells them to live their godly lives right in the midst of the society that rejects them, always ready to answer people with a reason for their hope (3:15). He informs them that their very lives are a witness to God's glory. *“The NIV Application Commentary, 1 Peter Pg. 64*

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Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." <sup>17</sup> And if you **call on him as Father who judges impartially** according to each one's deeds, **conduct yourselves with fear** throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19

There's more that these new Christ followers, in a **difficult situation, need to focus their minds** and it is found in verse 17. Write the phrase, **Fear God** across from verse 17 in your journal.

This is where we see God as wholly, **completely other** than anything we know or could conceive. **God is good and I am at his mercy.** I don't have a "yeah but," when I see God for who he is. That's what it means to fear God.

**God is judge and all things are judged based upon his holiness and perfection. Everything I say, think and do will come under that kind of Judgment.** Because of Jesus and aligning my life with his **putting my trust in him, I do not bear the judgment** of all that I have said, thought and done. That is because of **God's grace** and mercy. **But if I only think of God that way, then I don't really know him. And I will take for granted what he has done for me.**

**They, we need to focus our attention on real hope, holiness, and fear of God if we are to know how to live in a world that doesn't cheer us on or give us participation trophies for being Christians.** But there's one more it comes down in verse 22.

Let's skip ahead to verse 22 for our final thing to focus on. <sup>22</sup> **Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart...1 Peter 1:22**

**Love one another.** The church isn't a thing you do. It's a relationship.

**They desperately needed the church.** We think, "I'll be fine, after all, it's just me and Jesus." That's such bad theology. **The church is the body of Christ.** It isn't an option. For these resident aliens it was their family, the "got your back," these were the people that **understood** why they operated like they did which was **very different** from everyone else.

Sometimes we treat the church like a **public restroom.** We use it if we have to or for convenience, but it's in and out as quickly as possible.

I've said this before, but **you are one relationship from having the person who God will use in your life when it really hits the fan.** The church is like **sunscreen,** by the time you really know you desperately need it, then it's too late, the damage is done.

### Steps of Obedience:

- **Accept the Winter Challenge.**

Listen to each sermon, preferably in person if possible.

Read 1 Peter straight through.

Read each section as we teach through the book.

Use the weekly study ideas in your study guide.

Discuss and reflect in a Bridge Group.

- **Pray.**

I want us to respond by reading this together. Then I want you to **pray this all week to focus your attention, get your head in the game.** This could be the **best winter ever** and I don't mean because it is 50 until March and then 60. **No, because you heard the God of the universe speak to you and you responded.**

**Father, sometimes following you in this culture makes me feel like a resident alien, somehow not belonging, out of step in this life. Remind me of my true identity as someone chosen by God. Help me to focus my mind on these facts:**

**I have hope that no matter what struggles this world brings, you are with me through them and ultimately you will provide a place for me in an eternity without pain, suffering and struggle.**

Your **holiness** is what you want for me. You have set me apart to be transformed into your image. I was made new when you saved me and I am being made new through your spirit.

Remind me to **fear** you. That means that I am reminded that you are the judge who cannot allow sin. This type of "fear" is not dread but amazement that you sent Jesus allowing you to be both just and merciful.

Convict me if I've marginalized my brothers and sisters and Christ and have not loved them in a way that demonstrates the crucial part they are intended to play in my life. Use my **love** for them as a witness to this world of your goodness.

As I keep my eyes on Jesus I will be able to make His Kingdom present for those around me. Amen