

1 Peter 4:12-5:14 ~ Suffering, Serving, Submission, Humility, Standing Firm

1. What is something for which you were wrongly punished when growing up—or even more recently? How did it come about? Were you at all to blame?
2. Peter has already written about suffering for doing good back in Chapter 3. Why is he writing about it again?
3. Peter says to rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. What if you live in a largely Christian community with mostly Christian friends and aren't really suffering. Are you left out and not blessed? (4:13-14, Colossians 1:24, Matthew 5:11-12, 2 Timothy 3:12)
4. Does it seem strange that Peter put a “meddler” in the same category as a murderer, thief and criminal? (4:15-16)
5. When have you been ashamed for being a Christian? How did it come about? Conversely, when have you been ashamed for not acting as a Christian?
6. How can participating in Christ's suffering prepare us for his second coming?
7. What people might consider you a leader or example?
8. To whom did Peter write next? In what capacity? What can we learn from this? What did he instruct them to do? (5:1-3)
9. Verse 5:5 has two encouragements: _____ to _____ and also _____ to _____. Have we heard this before? (Proverbs 3:34, John 13:2-16)
10. Why were these believers encouraged to humble themselves? Why is being humble so difficult? (5:6, Hebrews 4:16)
11. What should we do with our worries and anxieties? (4:7, Philippians 4:6-7)
12. What did Peter say about the devil and what we should do? (4:8-9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7-8a)
13. If you truly humble yourself, cast all of your anxieties on the Lord, and totally trust the Lord to help you resist the devil, do you really have to do anything yourself? You know that the Lord loves you. Won't the Lord care for you, protect you, and lift you up in due time to spend eternity with Him?

1 Peter 4:12-5:14 ~ Suffering, Serving, Submission, etc. ~ Leader's Guide

1. What is something for which you were wrongly punished when growing up—or more recently? How did it come about? Were you at all to blame?

2. Peter has already written about suffering for doing good back in Chapter 3. Why is he writing about it again?

Frequently, when something is repeated in the Bible, it is basically saying, “this is important. Pay attention.” But this seems to be different. The prospect of suffering here seems more intense being called a “painful trial” [NIV] or “fiery ordeal” [NASB]. The prospect of persecution may have grown graver for his readers from Roman magistrates but more likely Peter means that these sufferings are associated with the end-time (4:7). That is why he says his readers should “not be surprised.” This is the first stage of the last judgement (4:17) which begins with the family of God (including us!). “Not being surprised” also refers back to his earlier verses, specifically 1:6-7 and 2:20-21.

3. Peter says to rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. What if you live in a largely Christian community with mostly Christian friends are aren't really suffering. Are you left out and not blessed? (4:13-14, Colossians 1:24, Matthew 5:11-12, 2 Timothy 3:12)

Peter says to rejoice *that* you participate in the suffering or will be insulted because of the name of Christ, not *if*, implying that all Christians will suffer and be insulted. Actually it is quite likely that this will not happen to your face but there are several other ways it can happen. People can talk about you behind your back and perhaps take their business elsewhere or reject you for a job or not invite you out with the group. Also, as a Christian you may be tarred on an impersonal basis by what others in a position of power say. For example, as a Christian, how do you feel when president Obama says, “the U.S. is not a Christian nation” or when *USA Today* reports that a LifeWay Research poll says that 72% of non-church going adults say that Christians are hypocrites or 44% agree with the statement “Christians get on my nerves?” As a Christian, how do you like it that Christ is barred from schools and public buildings and that prayers at sporting events (except NASCAR) no longer say “in the name of Jesus Christ?” Do these things “insult you because of the name of Christ?” Of course. And you are blessed.

Colossians 1:24 – Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Matthew 5:11-12 – ¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

2 Timothy 3:12 – In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

4. Does it seem strange that Peter put a “meddler” in the same category as a murderer, thief and criminal? (4:15-16)

The Greek word in 4:15 is *allogotriepiskopos*, which, in various Bible translations appears as [KJV], meddler [NIV], mischief-maker [NRSV], prying into other people’s affairs [NLT]. or overseer of other people’s matters [Darby]. These last two are closest to the literal meaning of the Greek word, so Peter’s point may be that Christians are not to attract unfavorable attention by interfering in other’s people’s business. It’s a bit surprising that he put this in a category with murder and theft but from previous verses we see that he feels strongly about Christians obeying the laws of the land, not retaliating for injustice, living for God, and not doing anything to tarnish the image of a Christian.

The next verse (4:16) continues this theme by urging his readers and us not to be ashamed for suffering for your Christian beliefs but to praise God that you bear the name of Christian. The way Peter phrases this is interesting (“bear the name”) implying that you have chosen to be a Christian and not, in this instance, that others are accusing you of being a Christian (even though they might). It’s your choice to be a Christian and you should praise God that you made the (right) choice.

5. When have you been ashamed for being a Christian? How did it come about? Conversely, when have you been ashamed for not acting as a Christian?

Tough questions. Personally, I’ve occasionally been embarrassed to admit what I did was because I was a Christian. Also, in one instance, God answered a very unlikely prayer to fix a problem with my truck. Essentially it was a minor miracle. But I was embarrassed to tell people what happened thinking they might ridicule me. So I made up a story of how I solved the problem in a more conventional (and believable) way. Stupid: I took the credit for what God had done. Yes, he will forgive me for doing that, but it was really dumb on my part to not give God the credit and glory.

More often, I haven’t done what I should have done as a Christian. One night, someone asked me for help towing his truck out of deep sand. It was late, I was tired, and I had a 3-hour drive in front of me to get home. I rationalized: there were other guys a lot younger than me that could help; the guy got stuck because of his own stupidity and should pay the price; it wasn’t my problem; etc. But in the end, I agonized all the way home and for the next couple of days that I should have helped. Another half hour wouldn’t have killed me and it might have shown someone else what Christian love was all about. Stupid, stupid.

6. How can participating in Christ’s suffering prepare us for his second coming?

As mentioned above (Q 2) suffering for and with Christ is the first stage of the last judgement (4:17) which begins with the family of God, i.e., us! It is important to realize that if Christians find themselves suffering, they are blessed if, *and only if*, it is purely their faith, and *not* any criminal, meddling or anti-social behavior

that has provoked opposition against them. In other words, the sufferings or persecutions that believers were undergoing and that believers of today will continue to undergo were and are divinely sent judgements intended to purify God's people.

The second part of 4:17 and 4:18 says that if God brings judgement and suffering on his own people, how much more serious will the judgement be that he brings on unbelievers. Indeed, says Peter, since your present sufferings are a sign of your vindication (i.e., you are shown to be right), you should rejoice (v. 13) and entrust yourself to God (v. 19), continue to do good and demonstrate your faith.

7. What people might consider you a leader or example?

You may or may not have a formal title or role as a leader or official in your company, school, church, sports team, or club. Whether you do or not, you are probably looked to as a leader or example by someone: your son, daughter, sister, brother, friend, teammate, co-worker, neighbor, or fellow usher. But beyond that, nearly everyone sets an example in innumerable ways: how you dress, being polite or not, patiently waiting in the checkout line, being forgiving of getting the wrong order, how you respond to a teenager selling raffle tickets, etc.

8. To whom did Peter write next? In what capacity? What can we learn from this? What did he instruct them to do? (5:1-3)

Peter addressed the elders of the church. In the beginning of his letter he identified himself as an apostle (1:1) but now he chooses to identify himself with the elders of the church, a much more modest position. This would have been heartening to church elders in light of their great responsibilities and difficult situation faced by the church.

What can we learn from this? All too often when speaking to a group we want to be introduced (or introduce ourselves) with something focusing on our greatest accomplishment. I want to be introduced as the founder of the first personal computing magazine or author of a million-selling book not as a someone who helps mixing concrete with a missions group in Guatemala. But which introduction will help me relate better to the people I'm talking to?

Peter then told the elders to be shepherds of God's flock. This is a metaphor that Jesus used and it was etched on Peter's mind. In John 21:15-17, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" "Yes, Lord, you know I love you," replies Peter. "Then feed my lambs" says Jesus. By this he means to furnish nutriment (education) to young and new believers. Jesus goes through this again but next tells Peter to "take care of my sheep" meaning to give care, guidance, and protection to young but maturing believers. The third time, Jesus says to "feed my sheep" meaning to continue to educate more mature Christians.

Clearly, Peter is fulfilling this command as he writes this letter. He added to the idea of being a shepherd to also being an overseer or pastoral oversight which they are to do not because they are being paid to do it ("greedy for money") but because they are willing and eager to serve. Peter is not addressing the question of whether

pastors or church leaders should be paid but rather emphasizing that they must eagerly and willingly care for believers entrusted to them.

Peter also said not to lord it over the people entrusted to you but to be an example to the flock. Peter sets the example here: although he has full apostolic authority, he doesn't lord it over the readers of the letter, but exemplifies the virtues he recommends to them.

9. Verse 5:5 has two encouragements: _____ to _____ and also _____ to _____. Have we heard this before? (Proverbs 3:34, John 13:2-16)

The first is for young men to be submissive or accept the authority of those who are older. Although Peter has just spoken of the elders, here he broadens the definition to all those who are older and, one would hope, wiser.

Second, he encourages all of his readers to be humble, not just to elders, but to everyone with whom you interact. Peter paraphrases Proverbs 3:34 – He [the Lord] mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.

Peter has emphasized submission and humility earlier in his letter with respect to all people and earthly authority, slaves and their masters, and husbands and wives. In saying, “clothe yourself with humility,” Peter may have had in mind Jesus washing the apostles’ feet in which Peter said, “No, you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” At that time, Peter was rebellious, but now he writes with greater understanding and maturity.

10. Why were these believers encouraged to humble themselves? Why is being humble so difficult (5:6)

Peter says that God will lift you up “in due time” [NIV] or “at the right time” [NLT]. In other words, God’s help will come when you need it, actually when God determines that you need it (in His time), not when you think you need it.

Hebrews 4:16 – So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

11. What should we do with our worries and anxieties? (4:7, Philippians 4:6-7)

Cast your anxiety on God because he loves you and cares for you.

Philippians 4:6-7 – ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

12. What did Peter say about the devil and what we should do? (4:8-9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:7-8a)

First Peter said to be self-controlled and alert, perhaps remembering falling asleep repeatedly on the night that Jesus was arrested. He also encourages everyone to resist the devil and stand firm in your faith. You’re not alone in your suffering or in the devil tempting you.

1 Corinthians 10:13 – No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

James 4:7-8a – ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you.

13. If you truly humble yourself, cast all of your anxieties on the Lord, and totally trust the Lord to help you resist the devil, do you really have to do anything yourself? You know that the Lord loves you. Won't the Lord care for you, protect you, and lift you up in due time to spend eternity with Him?

Have fun with this one in your group!