

T H E
DEE BRESTIN
B I B L E S T U D Y S E R I E S

A WOMAN
OF
Confidence

The Dee Brestin Series

From David C. Cook

BOOKS

The Friendships of Women

We Are Sisters

The Friendships of Women Devotional Journal

We Are Sisters Devotional Journal

BIBLE STUDY GUIDES

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A WOMAN OF CONFIDENCE

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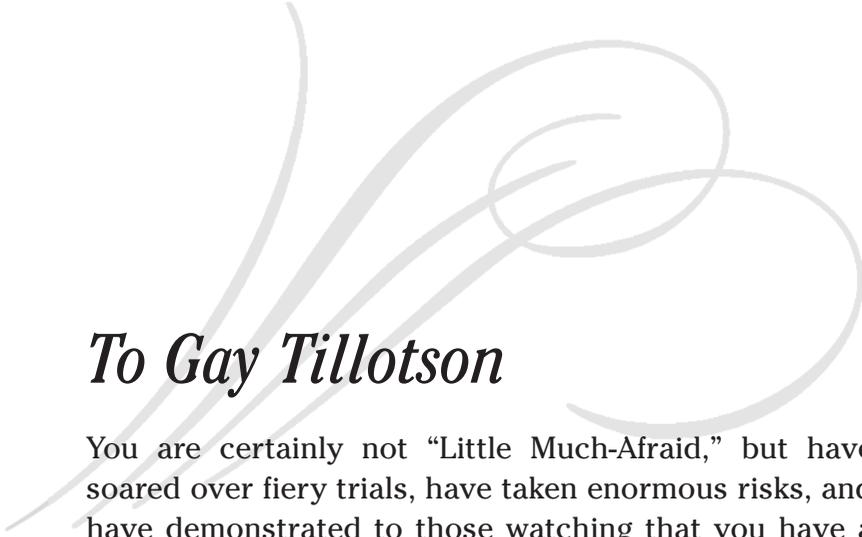
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Our life on earth is filled with trials, temptations, and snares. Peter calls us to set our hope on God and thereby to live holy lives, to realize that we are just passing through this earth to our real eternal home. This is the central message of 1 Peter. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a marvelous allegory by John Bunyan, helps us to visualize Peter's Wilderness



epistle. The above illustration by Robert Lawson is an overview of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian makes the Journey first. Later, his wife, Christiana, and the children come to their senses, and journey too. How do they face trials confidently? They look ahead to the hope set before them.



To Gay Tillotson

You are certainly not “Little Much-Afraid,” but have soared over fiery trials, have taken enormous risks, and have demonstrated to those watching that you have a very big God.



How I Thank God For:

My Editors:

Dorian Coover-Cox of Dallas Theological Seminary, who has advised me with knowledge, discernment, and a true servant heart. She helped me see the theme of confidence in 1 Peter.

My Assistant:

Gay Tillotson, who worked so hard getting the illustrations from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, who prayed so over this manuscript, and who gave me strength through her own radiance in Christ.

My Prayer Team:

How I wish I could name each of you—but I give thanks upon every remembrance of you. Oh, the power of intercessory prayer!

My Family, Including:

My children, my sisters, and especially and always, my dear husband Steve, whose love for *The Pilgrim's Progress* first inspired me. How blessed I was by our marriage—and your perspective, that we were coheirs in the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). How you lived that out. You arrived far earlier than either of us imagined at the Celestial City—and I am coming, Darling.

The Faithful and Gifted Servants of The Pilgrim's Progress:

John Bunyan, for the wonderful gift of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The illustrators who keep Bunyan's words vivid in our memories: Robert Lawson, George Cruikshank, R.H. Brock, Randolph Klassen, E.F. Brewtnall, and F. Barnard.



Introduction

Why do some Christian women live small and fearful lives, like little “Much-Afraid” in John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and others, like “Hopeful,” walk through life confidently and victoriously?

Peter learned the secret of joyful confidence as he walked with Jesus. His own life was transformed from that of a disciple who ran and hid to one who turned the world upside-down. This world is full of trouble—Jesus told us it would be! Yet the troubles we have, whether they are small, such as a colicky baby or an unfair boss, or large, such as breast cancer, an unbelieving husband, or persecution for our faith, need not undo us. If we have truly grasped the reality of the land to which we are journeying and the unfailing love and wisdom of the all-powerful God at our side, we would be filled with confidence, even in the midst of intimidation, and with an inextinguishable joy, even in the midst of sorrow. We are, Peter says, “aliens and strangers in the world” (2:11). We have been called to another country, to eternal glory, and this earth is simply a time to help us become, not happy, not comfortable, not rich—but like Jesus. First Peter is “a wilderness epistle.” We are strangers on earth. As we pass through, we will face trials and they will increase as the end draws near. “If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!” (Prov. 24:10) We need to learn how to face troubles now, even before they come, with confidence.

While imprisoned for his faith, John Bunyan wrote an allegory that was to impact the world profoundly. Released in 1678, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* soon was outsold by only one book: the Bible itself. The story begins when Christian realizes his city is doomed for destruction. He tries to warn his wife and children to flee the wrath to come, but they think he has lost his mind. So he sets out alone, with an enormous burden on his back. When he reaches the cross, the burden tumbles down and joy fills his heart. Yet his sojourn has just begun. As he travels toward his real home in heaven, he faces temptations, valleys, and skeptical friends. How does he face them? By setting his hope in God! *The key to living confidently is to set your hope in God, who loves you and has called you for a purpose.*

Nestled within the letter of 1 Peter is a section directed only to women. Peter begins by speaking to those early Christian wives who came to Christ and were facing persecution from unbelieving husbands. Then he broadens his scope to all women, telling them how to live lives filled with hope. In this study, we will slow down and look very carefully at this section—a section which has often been misunderstood and misapplied. The light you will discover can transform your life and your marriage.



Special Instructions for Preparation

Real women are women who have “a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4), but they are not like little “Much-Afraid.” They are strong and confident women who will take risks because of their trust in God. This kind of character doesn’t just happen, this grace flows into their lives, in part, through practicing the spiritual disciplines. Therefore:

1. Do your homework! Each day, at the same time, same place, to establish a habit. Each day, ask God to speak to you through His Word. Jesus says that “out of the overflow of our hearts” we speak. If you come to the study overflowing with insights from 1 Peter, you will fill your sisters’ cups.
2. Get a hymnal, as hymns will be suggested to enrich your quiet time. A few are suggested in the index, but you will want more. This life is a battle, and God often sent the musicians out ahead—our enemy is weakened by praise. Begin your time with praise.
3. In the discussion, be sensitive. The naturally talkative women need to exercise control and the shy women need to exercise courage to speak up.
4. Stay on target in the discussions. These lessons can be discussed in ninety minutes. If you don’t have that much time, you have two options:
 - A. Divide the lessons and meet for sixteen weeks. Do that week’s prayer exercise both weeks.
 - B. Do the whole lesson, but discuss half the questions.
5. Follow the instructions for group prayer at the close of each lesson. Keep confidences in the group. This life is hard, full of trouble, and we need each other’s heartfelt prayers and to know they will be kept within the group.

The Pilgrim’s Progress, Pajamas, and Popcorn

Because illustrations and quotations from *The Pilgrim’s Progress* are laced throughout this study, plan a women’s-night-out sometime in the first month of your study. There are many versions of this classic available through interlibrary loan. Your local Christian bookstore may have a video version of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* or you can purchase one on the Internet. A version of the book with especially lovely illustrations is *The Pilgrim’s Progress* retold by Mary Godolphin (published by Frederick Stokes, illustrated by Robert Lawson).

After viewing the video or reading a children’s illustrated version, have a time of discussion, allowing each woman to share a few highlights and how they might be relevant to her life. This will not only help you to know your sisters better, but it will help you to understand the big picture of 1 Peter. You can do this anytime during the study, but if you do it soon, it will have the added benefit of giving everyone an overview. Not ready to wear pajamas together? Then just come in casual clothes. I would also encourage you to read *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, either individually or to your family. A good modern translation is *Pilgrim’s Progress: In Today’s English* (retold by James H. Thomas, Moody Press).



Christian, feeling his load of sin, breaks out with a lamentable cry. He must begin the journey alone, leaving his family in the city doomed to destruction.

One

Strangers on Earth

This week you will be preparing for the journey. You will get to know your traveling companions (if you are doing this in a small group), you will meet your guide (Peter), and you will look over your itinerary, for you will get a glimpse of some of the key themes in 1 Peter.

Memory Work

Peter says to “prepare your minds for action” (1:13). To do this, we will be memorizing Scripture. Don’t throw up your hands and say, “But I can’t memorize!” Even if you have failed in the past, here is a plan that has helped many: take it a word at a time, a few words a day. If you spend just a minute a day, you will be amazed at what you will accomplish in eight weeks. On pages at the back of this guide, you will find all of the memory passages. Photocopy or tear out the page and put it on your bathroom mirror or your dashboard. Type your verse on your computer’s screen saver. Be faithful, not only to yourself, but as an example to the sisters in your small group. Each week you will have a required passage (in bold print) and an extra credit passage (in regular print).

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3–5)

WARMUP

Tell your name and a sentence about yourself. Then share, in a phrase, a feeling you recall when you were “a stranger” in a new city, new church, or new Bible study.

A Woman of Confidence

Scripture Study

DAY I

.....

A Confident Woman Plans Ahead

The amazingly confident Proverbs 31 woman laughs at the days to come because she has taken the time to prepare. This journey through 1 Peter will be so much richer if you have read the opening instructions carefully, if you get off on the right foot with memory work, and if you get an overview of where you are going. That’s what you will do today.

1. What is something that stood out to you in the opening instructions?

2. Spend a minute or a few minutes on the memory passage.

Praise

Praise be

Praise be to...

3. Read through the short book of 1 Peter in a standard translation such as the *New International Version* or the *New American Standard Bible*. Highlight words or phrases that talk about this life on earth being a dangerous journey—words like pilgrim, stranger, trial, fire, test, suffer, enemy—and you will begin to see a pattern.

4. Now look at each chapter again. Find a passage that addresses a danger in this life and tells you how to face it with confidence. Record the reference, the passage, and a summary of it in your own words. I’ve done one in chapter 1 as a model for you. Choose just one passage (though there are several) in each chapter, including one of your own in chapter 1.

A. 1 Peter 1: 1 Peter 1:6–7: In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Summary: On earth I will go through trials, but like fire that refines gold, those trials will prove that my faith is genuine. That refined faith will result in praise at the end of my journey when Jesus is revealed.

Strangers on Earth

Your turn:

- B. 1 Peter 2 (Find a verse directed to you as a stranger, write it out, and summarize it.)
- C. 1 Peter 3 (As women who are sojourners on earth, we should value what is permanent rather than the transitory. Find a verse about this, write it out, and summarize it.)

- D. 1 Peter 4 (Find a verse that describes the right attitude toward suffering that a stranger on earth should have. Write it out and summarize it.)

- E. 1 Peter 5 (Find a verse that particularly speaks to you today as you travel as a stranger on earth. Write it out and summarize it.)

DAY 2

The “Before” Peter

The Apostle Peter is your guide. How he models what he writes! In his preface to 1 Peter in *The Message*, Eugene Peterson observes:

From what we know of the early stories of Peter, he had in him all the makings of a bully. That he didn’t become a bully (and religious bullies are the worst kind) but rather the boldly confident and humbly self-effacing servant of Jesus Christ that we discern in these letters, is a compelling witness to what he himself describes as “a brand-new life, with everything to live for. (Colorado Springs, Navpress, 1993, 486)

The young Peter was confident, but that confidence was in himself, in his own strength. How different is the Peter we see in Acts, and the Peter who wrote this letter. Because of his responsiveness to his tests and trials during his journey on earth, Peter became the man God had called him to be. Instead of trusting in himself, Peter learned how to set his hope in Christ. This is the secret of an unshakable confidence, the kind which made Peter a rock.

- 5. Read Matthew 14:22–33 and describe what happened and the admirable quality you see in Peter in verses 28–29:

What weakness do you see in Peter in this passage?

A Woman of Confidence

How did Jesus rebuke him?

How did Peter respond to the rebuke? (vv. 32–33)

One of the primary themes of 1 Peter is hope. It is not the way we use hope in contemporary English (I hope it will snow), but instead is similar to faith, meaning a confident expectation based on what we know to be true about God. As you page back in Matthew, what are some of the miracles Peter witnessed that should have helped him be confident in Christ?

In your own life, what are some of the ways you have seen God’s power and goodness? (List at least three specific ways.)

Name one circumstance you are facing right now which could be frightening. How could your past experiences help you to trust God?

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:7)

6. Read Matthew 16:13–20. Describe Simon Peter’s confession.

The pronouncement [of Jesus] can be read either seriously, as if to say, “You are indeed a strong foundation,” or ironically, as if to say, ‘Some rock you are!’ The section as a whole favors an ironic reading. (J. Ramsey Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary*, “1 Peter,” [Dallas: Word, 1988.]

Is Jesus building His church on Peter or on Peter’s confession of faith? Why do you think Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter? Explain.

His given name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter, which means “a stone” . . . often he is called “Simon Peter.” Perhaps the two names suggest a Christian’s two natures: an old nature (Simon) that is prone to fail, and a new nature (Peter)

Strangers on Earth

that can give victory. As Simon, he was only another human piece of clay; but Jesus Christ made a rock out of him! (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Hopeful*, [Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1982.]

Following this, how did Peter show his feet of clay? (Matt. 16:21–23)

7. Whom did Peter call the rock stone in 1 Peter 2:4–8?

In 1 Peter 2:9–11, how does Peter tell you to see yourself? How might grasping this lead to genuine confidence?

8. What was Simon Peter privileged to witness in Matthew 17:1–8? (Another theme of 1 Peter is Christ's glory. Peter got a glimpse here!)

What error did Simon Peter make? How did God correct him?

How did Peter use this experience for good? (See 2 Pet. 1:16–18.)

9. Read John 18:1–11 and Matthew 26:47–54. What error did Simon Peter make here? How did Jesus rebuke him?

Another theme in 1 Peter is that God is the sovereign judge. Even when we face unfair treatment we can have confidence, for God will be our judge.

Read 1 Peter 2:19–23 and describe Peter's changed perspective.

10. Is there a situation in your life where you are being treated unfairly? How could you learn from 1 Peter 2:19–23?

A Woman of Confidence

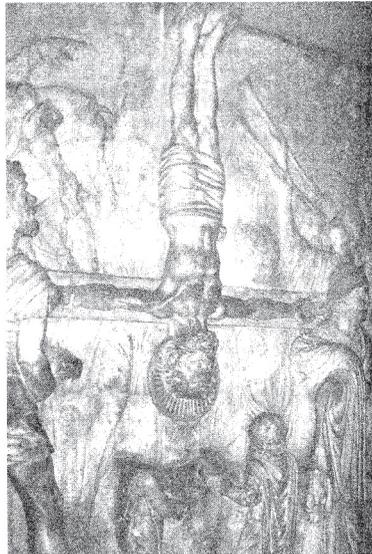
DAY 3

The “After” Peter

We love Peter for his bold enthusiasm, but perhaps the quality that Jesus loved most was his teachable heart. Our Lord talked to him more than any of the other disciples, rebuked him the hardest, and praised him the most. Peter learned his lessons during his journey through earth. He lived a blazing, confident faith and died a martyr’s death.

Like Peter, you will suffer trials. These trials can be used of God to transform you, to teach you what is eternal and what is transitory. The way we respond to the trials in this life also shows if our love for Jesus is genuine. Satan taunted God that Job only loved Him because God has been good to him—but Job showed there were believers who loved God even when God did not bless them. Peter also showed his love was genuine, for he persevered under trial.

I think, for me, the most moving interchange between Jesus and Peter is at the closing of John’s Gospel when, three times, Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” It reminds me of the song from Fiddler on the Roof when Tevya keeps asking his wife of twenty-five years, “Do you love me?” He wants to know—just like the Lord wants to know if we love Him! Golde tells Tevya that for twenty-five years she’s washed his shirts—but that doesn’t satisfy him. He still asks, “Do you love me?” If we said to Jesus, “For twenty-five years I’ve gone to church,” I think He would still ask, “Do you love me?” True love produces fruit: fruit of obedience, of trust in trial, and of abandonment of our own wills.



Tradition says Peter was crucified upside-down, for he did not feel worthy to die as his Lord had died. This relief is in Rome, Italy.

Strangers on Earth

11. Read Matthew 26:69–75 and describe Peter’s failure and repentance.

What evidence do you find of God’s reinstatement of Peter in Mark 16:7?

What did Peter learn from his failure? (1 Pet. 3:13–15)

12. Read John 21:7–8, 15–23

A. How did Peter respond when he realized it was Jesus on the shore? How does this show Peter’s feelings for Jesus?

B. What question did Jesus ask of Peter three times?

C. How does Peter feel and what does he say after the third time?

D. Why do you think Jesus kept asking Peter this?

There have been many theories, some linking it to Peter’s thrice betrayal. Certainly Peter was right—Jesus already knew Peter’s heart. I think Jesus often asks us questions for our sake. He wanted to strengthen Peter to feed his sheep, to face the hard trials ahead. True love is demonstrated in obedience and trust.

E. What prophecy did Jesus give Peter in John 21:18–19?

13. Sometimes it is helpful to know that the journey to heaven may be rough. What instructions did Peter give in 1 Peter 4:12–13?

A Woman of Confidence

- 14. The book of Acts shows us Peter, a mighty man of God who preached the first sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2), performed the first miracle (Acts 3), and much more. Read Acts 2:14—4:22 and record several phrases that show the boldness and faith of the transformed Peter.

- 15. Consider some of the failures in your life. Have you learned from them? If so, give evidence.

- 16. Consider some of the trials in your life. Was your faith proved genuine? If so, what did you believe about God which gave you confidence?

Memory Work

1 Peter 1:3.

DAY 4

.....

Making This Journey Come Alive!

As a child my parents took me on some wonderful trips abroad, yet I remember the swimming pools better than the cathedrals and catacombs. As I matured I studied the history before we traveled, and it made all the difference. Likewise, an understanding of the situation of the early Christians will make 1 Peter come alive.

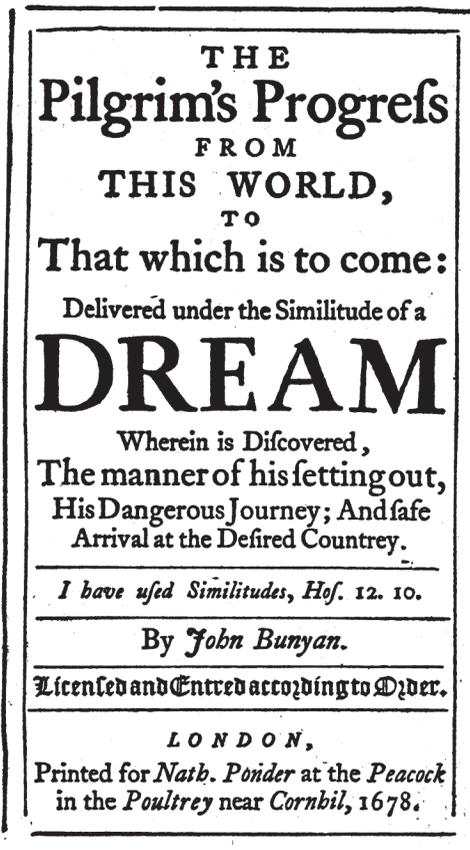
Peter wrote this letter at a time of savage persecution against Christians. On July 19, A.D. 64, Rome was burned and citizens blamed the emperor, Nero. Needing a scapegoat, Nero had Christians arrested instead, blaming them for the fire. This led to widespread martyrdom.

Their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn in pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle. (Tacitus, as quoted in *1 Peter James: Living through Difficult Times* [Littleton, CO: Serendipity, 1995], 8)

- 17. The persecution scattered the believers, spreading them out from Jerusalem.
 - A. Find some of the continents on a New Testament Bible map that Peter mentions in 1 Peter 1:1. If they were in Rome, how far away were they driven? (Estimate if your map has a scale.)

Strangers on Earth

B. What do you think it feels like to be driven from your home, to be a refugee fleeing for your life?



Above is the title-page of the original edition of The Pilgrim's Progress. The letters that look to us like "f" show an old way of making the letter "s."

A Woman of Confidence

Personal Assignment

Imagine persecution coming to you or your children. Read through 1 Peter in a paraphrase (Phillips, the New Living Translation, or The Message). Star the verses that tell how we should respond to persecution.

Another way to make this journey come alive is by understanding the rich history of The Pilgrim's Progress and looking carefully at the illustrations in this guide by artists from the 17th century to the present. Look carefully at the details and you'll be surprised by what you discover.

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 1:3.

DAY 5

Getting to Know Your Traveling Companions

God has blessed women with a gift for intimacy. You are going to have an opportunity in this study to get to know each other soul-to-soul. Of the following four descriptions, choose the one that comes closest to describing the start of your spiritual journey. Then write one sentence (and one sentence only) describing your journey's start. Be prepared to share your sentence in closing at the first study or, if your group is planning a pajama party soon, you could do it then and share in greater depth (several sentences each). (You will be given the freedom to pass.)

18. Which of the following descriptions comes closest to your spiritual journey?

- A. Like Timothy, I came to know Christ as a little child and have never been far away from Him.
- B. Like Paul, I came to know Christ when I was older in a dramatic conversion experience.
- C. Like Timothy, I came to know Christ as a child—but I fell far from Him and rededicated my life when I was older.
- D. I have not yet put my trust in Christ, but I may be on the way.

Strangers on Earth

Which comes closest? Write one sentence summarizing your story here:

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 1:3.

Prayer Time

This guide will lead you gently into various prayer exercises. Today, stand in a circle and hold hands. Moving clockwise, each woman will bless the woman on her right with one short sentence. She may say something like “Thank you, Lord, for giving Dawn her gentle spirit.” If she doesn’t know Dawn, she can say, “Lord, please bless Dawn.” If she doesn’t want to pray audibly, she can pray silently and squeeze Dawn’s hand so that Dawn knows it is her turn.

Two

The Purpose of Our Journey

Jesus warned us that in this life we would have trouble. Peter told us not to be surprised by fiery trials. James told us to count it all joy when we face trials, for trials build character. Yet many believers are surprised by trials, feeling that if God really loved them, He would spare them.

Joni Eareckson Tada has spent most of her life in a wheelchair and has certainly considered the problem of pain. She says, “God’s purpose for us is not to make us healthy, or wealthy, or even happy (though it pleases Him to do so), but to make us holy.” Joni writes:

First, despite Christ’s compassionate death for our sins, God’s plan—not plan B or C or D, but his plan—calls for all Christians to suffer, sometimes intensely. To encourage us, he may write some light moments into the script of our lives—he may include adventure or romance. An amusing situation will get us chuckling, an occasional twist of plot may delight us to tears, for God loves to give. But without fail, some scenes are going to break your heart. . . .

Second, God’s plan is specific. . . . He doesn’t reach for a key, wind up nature with its sunny days and hurricanes, then sit back and watch the show. He doesn’t let Satan prowl about totally unrestricted. . . . He’s not our planet’s absent landlord. Rather, he screens the trials that come to each of us—allowing only those that accomplish his good plan, because he takes no joy in human agony.

Third, the core of his plan is to rescue us from our sin. Our pain, poverty, and broken hearts are not his ultimate focus. He cares about them, but . . . God cares most—not about making us comfortable—but about teaching us to hate our sins, grow up spiritually, and love him. (Joni Eareckson Tada and Steven Estes, *When God Weeps* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 56)

A Woman of Confidence

All of Joni's statements can be corroborated by 1 Peter. We are on a journey through this earth, headed to the Celestial City. The purpose of our journey is to make us holy, and that simply cannot happen apart from suffering. Holiness begins with salvation, but it is also an ongoing process. Trials, Peter tells us, are part of the plan. Trials don't automatically make us holy, but when we set our hope on the grace to be given when Christ is revealed, those trials, do, indeed, produce confidence and character. Why suffer for nothing? Why not receive the benefit of character and confidence? You can, by following Peter's instructions.

First, Peter reminds us to look ahead to "an inheritance incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:4 KJV). This is vividly illustrated in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as some look ahead, and others do not. When Christian sets out on the narrow road toward the Celestial City, his neighbors, Pliable and Obstinate, chase after him to return to the comforts of home. Christian says:

"That can never be. You dwell in the City of Destruction. Be convinced, good neighbors, and go along with me."

"What!" exclaimed Obstinate. "And leave all our friends and comforts behind?"

"Yes," said Christian (for that was his name), "for all that you seek is not worthy to be compared to . . . an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that will never fade away, safely laid up in Heaven, to be bestowed at the appointed time to all who diligently seek it. Read it, if you will, right here in my book." (1 Peter 1:4)

Obstinate: "Oh, bosh! Away with your book! Will you go back with us or not?" (John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* [England: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., n.d.], 13-14)

How I would encourage you to be diligent in your study, not like "Slothful" in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Day 5 of this week contains the most important lessons. Don't miss them.

Memory Work

Review last week's passage. If you didn't memorize last week, begin fresh with this week's verse in bold. Extra credit? Do 1 Peter 1:6 as well.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*** (1 Pet. 1:6-7)

WARMUP

Can you think of a trial you faced with genuine confidence? In one breath, what was it and what did you believe about God which strengthened you?

Scripture Study

DAY 1

Overview of 1 Peter 1

1. What stood out to you from the introduction to this lesson?

2. Read through 1 Peter 1.
 - A. What evidence can you find that trials are part of God's plan?

 - B. What reasons can you find for God's allowing trials in your life?

 - C. What exhortations can you find for the believer facing trials?

3. Peter uses many phrases which would trigger memories within his audience of another journey, that of the Israelites from slavery into freedom.
 - A. Compare Exodus 12:1–13 with:

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Pet. 1:18–19)

What parallel do you see?

 - B. Compare Exodus 12:11 with:

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober. (1 Pet. 1:13a KJV)

What parallel do you see?

 - C. Compare Exodus 24:4–8 with:

. . . who have been chosen . . . for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood . . . (1 Pet. 1:2)

What parallel do you see?

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D. Compare Deuteronomy 12:9 with:

... and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you. (1 Pet. 1:4)

What parallel do you see? What difference?

4. Not only the Exodus generation, but continuing on through the following generations, Israel showed a pattern. Find it in Psalm 78:9–20 (esp. v. 11) and note it here.

5. When we face trials, we need to remember God’s character and goodness from the past and therefore “hope” (trust) in His promises for the future (1 Pet. 1:13). How might you apply this to a concern you are facing right now?

Sing “Rock of Ages” in your quiet time.



The Slough of Despond is a place where the doubts and fears of sinners awakened by the Holy Spirit have settled. Both Pliable and Christian fell in; Pliable has had enough of seeking God and retreats to the City of Destruction but Christian sets his hope on the joy set before him and persists through the slough to the other side where a new friend, Help, is there to pull him out.

Memory Work

Spend a minute memorizing 1 Peter 1:7.

DAY 2

An Apostle Writing to Exiles (1 Peter 1:1–2)

An apostle is one who had been with Jesus, who saw Him firsthand. Read how Peter elaborated on this in his second epistle.

For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming again. We have seen his majestic splendor with our own eyes. And he received honor and glory from God the Father when God's glorious, majestic voice called down from heaven, "This is my beloved Son; I am fully pleased with him." We ourselves heard the voice when we were there with him on the holy mountain. (2 Pet. 1:16–18 NLT)

6. How would Peter's firsthand knowledge of Jesus help his recipients to trust his words?

Read 1 Peter 1:1–2 in *The Message*:

I, Peter, am an apostle on assignment by Jesus, the Messiah, writing to exiles scattered to the four winds. Not one is missing, not one forgotten. God the Father has his eye on each of you, and has determined by the work of the Spirit to keep you obedient through the sacrifice of Jesus. May everything good from God be yours!

7. Trials and troubles can make us feel forgotten by God. How does Peter assure the recipients of this letter?

How might you apply the above truth to a concern in your personal life?

Personal Action Assignment

Think about a trial your husband, friend, or another loved one is facing. Pray in faith for him, using 1 Peter 1:7. One way to pray confidently is to pray through Scripture, for that is always in God's will. Here's a model using the above passage.

Father, as my husband faces challenges working with a man in authority who seems unfair, I ask that You would anoint my husband with discernment, grace, and peace.

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May he trust in You and discover Your faithfulness. May this trial result in an even stronger faith, of greater worth than gold. And may this all result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Pet. 1:7)

Read 1 Peter 1:1–2 in a standard translation.

8. Each Person of the Trinity is involved in preparing believers for their journey through life.

A. What did God the Father do? (See the doctrine of election also in 1 Peter 2:9–10.)

B. What does God the Spirit do?

C. What did God the Son do?

Memory Work

Spend a minute memorizing 1 Peter 1:7 (p. 24).

DAY 3

*These Trials Have Come to Test Faith
(1 Peter 1:3–9)*

I remember speaking in Stone Mountain, Georgia where four churches worked together to put on a wonderful woman’s seminar where God’s Spirit was intensely present and many lives were changed. At a dinner for the committee the night before, I asked what they had learned from God. Together they told me, “To walk by faith.” Fran, a perky brunette, elaborated:

A few weeks before, the registration numbers just weren’t coming in. We were in a panic. We’d done everything we could think to do. As we were praying, we realized we were doing this in our own strength and not trusting God. Our confidence had been in ourselves. We got down on our knees, weeping, repentant, telling Him we would walk by faith, we would put our confidence in Him.

How vital it is we learn this lesson. When Pilgrim is on his journey, he must pass between two lions. Frightened, he stops. But Watchful calls out to him:

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Is thy strength so small? Fear not the two wild beasts for they are bound by chains, and are put here to try the faith of those that have it, and to find out those that have none. Keep in the midst of the path and no harm shall come to thee. (The Pilgrim's Progress [HarperCollins, n.d.], 30)



It is hardest to trust God and keep on the path when the trials are intensely personal. We ask: "How can a loving God allow slander, a miscarriage, or a betraying husband?" He has the power to swoop down and stop it, so why, so often, doesn't He? The best answer we have is the one He gave Job, which you will consider today. Our vision is earthbound, myopic—but God can see eternity. God cares about our pain, but He has something far greater in mind than our ease or comfort. He wants for us a purified faith, a sanctified life, and a total salvation.

Read 1 Peter 1:3–9.

9. Explain how our salvation involves the past (v. 3), the present (v. 5), and the future (v. 4).

10. Have you received the new birth? If so, give some evidences. How would your life be different if you had not received Christ and if the Holy Spirit were not living in you?

11. How does the protection of believers take place? What is God's part, and what is our part? (v. 5)

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At the cross: Christian's burden tumbles off, and he is born anew into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Share a time when you trusted God in the midst of difficulty and sensed His presence and protection.

12. What happens when we trust God in the midst of trials? (v. 7)

13. Hope, meaning “confident expectation,” is a theme of 1 Peter, introduced here in verse 3. Meditate on that verse and look ahead to its uses in 1 Peter 1:13 and 3:15. Often, we set our hope on a change in our circumstances (If only my extended family could be less angry, if only I could have a baby . . .). What is the object of our hope in these passages?

My husband, Steve, loved 1 Peter. I believe God gave him a love for this letter, in part, because He knew the trial that lay ahead for Steve. Since the original writing of this guide, Steve suffered with colon cancer and has now crossed that river and is with the Lord. Though his suffering was intense, he glorified God to the end. Though he had sorrow, and wept as he said good-bye to each of our five

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children, he also had an inextinguishable joy. His hope was in Christ, and he looked ahead to the Celestial City, knowing too, that one day we would all be together there.

14. When a trial comes and your circumstances are not changed, how can you still be okay? What is the secret, according to the above Scriptures?

One woman said: "I have come to realize that if God never 'fixes' my husband's drinking problem, I can still be okay."

Is there an application to your life? If so, what?

15. Job suffered intensely and wondered why. Read God's fascinating answer to him in Job 38—41. Write down the phrases that impress you and then summarize God's answer.

How does Job 19:25 exemplify Peter's command in 1 Peter 1:3?

16. Though God hurts with us in our pain and cares for us (see 1 Pet. 5:7), there is something much more important to Him than our ease and comfort. What is it, according to 1 Peter 1:7, 9?

Memory Work

Spend a minute memorizing 1 Peter 1:7.

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DAY 4

Prophets and Angels Longed to Understand (1 Peter 1:10–12)

I was a young wife and mother when my sister Sally visited me in order to tell me about Jesus and urge me to trust Him with my whole life. But what if the Bible was simply a cluster of well-written fables? I didn't want to give up the worldly things I thought might fulfill me if Jesus was a fairy tale. Sally was making me uncomfortable and I was eager for her to return to Ohio. To my dismay, a blizzard delayed her departure. During that time Sally showed me prophecies in the Old Testament that pointed to the coming of Christ. Though David lived a thousand years before Christ and Isaiah seven hundred years before, both detailed exactly how Jesus would die. As the snow piled up outside our window, I read their prophecies with my sister, and the "Spirit of Christ," the same Spirit who spoke to the prophets long ago, the warm breath of the Lion of Judah, began to thaw my icy heart.

Peter tells us the prophets themselves longed to understand when their prophecies would be fulfilled. He also makes the intriguing statement that "even angels long to look into these things" (1 Pet. 1:12). The phrase, "look into" is a picturesque phrase meaning "peer over." Like humans, angels are not omniscient. If even angels are interested in this, how much more should we, to whom the good news has come, be longing to know more about it.

We will suffer on this earth, but that suffering, if we follow in the steps of Christ, will end in glory. You can see how Peter, in his life, finally came to understand suffering was part of God's plan. Though Peter was familiar with Old Testament prophets and their words about suffering and glory to come, he failed to grasp them. Then he witnessed the suffering of Jesus firsthand. He was confused, he was afraid—but he kept seeking. He witnessed the glory of the Transfiguration and finally the glory of the resurrected Christ. At Pentecost and again in his letters, we see an enlightened Peter, as the same "Spirit of Christ" who thundered through the prophets thundered through this transformed fisherman. Those who met him were astonished at his confidence (see Acts 4:13).

Read 1 Peter 1:10–12.

17. What did the prophets speak about? What was their attitude? (v. 10)

What Spirit was in the prophets and what did He predict? (v. 11)

What did that Spirit reveal to the prophets? (v. 12)

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Who else longs to understand these mysteries? (v. 12) What does this teach you about these beings?

18. What do you imagine the angels thought when they saw the humble circumstances of Christ's birth? The degradation of the cross?

19. In 1 Peter 1:11, Peter uses the phrase "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." Read the following prophecies and describe the sufferings of Christ and the following glory they predicted:
 - A. Psalm 22

 - B. Isaiah 53

Sufferings now, glories to follow. Peter wants to encourage Christians who face the first to look for the second. . . . Now he would have us remember that the Christ of glory is the Christ of the cross. . . . Likewise the message of the prophets pronounces God's judgment on the sin of his people, but it does not stop with judgment. The final vision of the Old Testament is not of dry bones in death valley. Rather, it is renewal beyond conceiving. (Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* [IVP, 1988], 55-57)

20. Look ahead to 1 Peter 2:20–21 and describe our calling. According to 1 Peter 2:22–23, how did Christ respond when He suffered? Find the secret to His amazing submissiveness in verse 23.

21. Is there an unfair situation you are facing? How could you follow in Christ's steps?

Memory Work

Continue memorizing 1 Peter 1:7.

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DAY 5

Therefore, Be Holy, as He Is Holy (1 Peter 1:13–25)

I've been listening to messages by Dr. Stephen Olford on this letter. If you are familiar with Dr. Olford's preaching, try to imagine his booming voice, his rolling r's, his intensity! As if I were hearing the prophets of old, I hear the roar of "The Lion of Judah."

In a day of suffering? What is the answer? The yielded heart! Set apart Christ as Lord! You will never know victory, fullness of Spirit until Jesus Christ is unrivaled, undisputed, and unchallenged Lord!

Can you honestly say without reservation that He is:
Lord of every thought and action
Lord of my speaking, giving—Lord of all!
Lord of my friendships.

Lord of my love, courtship, marriage,
Lord of my business, money, pleasures,
Lord of my home, devotions, family altar,
Lord of my eating, praying, sleeping—Lord of all?

Is there any area in your life that is not surrendered? Is there any bridgehead the devil can use to bring you down? . . . From Genesis to Revelation God blazes out His message: Be ye holy as I am holy! The reason He has called us, predestined us, elected us—was that we be conformed to the image of Christ! (Dr. Stephen Olford, *"The Reality of the Yielded Heart,"* cassette tape, Memphis: Encounter Ministries).

22. How would you answer Dr. Olford's challenging questions?

Read 1 Peter 1:13–16.

23. The word "prepare" (v. 13) conjures up the picture of people in biblical times tucking up their flowing robes for walking and running. (See 1 Kings 18:46.) Spiritually, we must also be unencumbered. Compare this to the word picture given in Hebrews 12:1. What do you see?

Is there a sin encumbering you, keeping you from running well? Describe what your life might be without it.

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24. We are to be “self-controlled.” What do you learn from Peter’s elaboration on this phrase in 4:7 and 5:8?

How could you better apply this to your life?

25. What is the closing command of verse 13?

You show me a person who walks across the stage of life with a quiet certainty—not cockiness, but hope—and they’re going to be followed by a thousand people. (Dr. Olford, *“The Reality of the Yielded Heart,”* Ibid.)

List some of the reasons you have to be hopeful as a believer.

26. How would you describe obedient children?

What command is given in verse 14?

What were some of the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance?

27. Would those closest to you say that hope (confidence in Christ) and purity radiate from you?

28. Put verses 15–16 in your own words.

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Sometimes being holy can seem like a myriad of commands, but it is really quite simple. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian asks Goodwill how he can be sure not to lose his way as he sojourns. Goodwill replies:

There are many roads branching off from this one, but you can distinguish the right way from the wrong, for the right way is the only one that is straight and narrow. (John Bunyan, retold by James H. Thomas, *The Pilgrim's Progress* in *Today's English* [Chicago: Moody, 1964], 30)

Read 1 Peter 1:17–25.

29. How does Peter tell us to live our lives here? (v. 17) What does this mean to you?

How could you apply this to your life?

30. Describe who redeemed us and how. (vv. 18–21)

31. How is an ungodly heritage described in verse 18? If you did not grow up in a godly home, what hope can you find here?

32. How do we purify ourselves? (v. 22)

33. The Christian life is not difficult to understand. Here, Peter sums it up in one command. What is it? (v. 22b)

In *A Woman's Journey to the Heart of God*, Cynthia Heald encourages us, as sojourners on earth, to travel light. "Let go of the grudges, the hurts, and the bitterness that are so heavy, so cumbersome, and so draining!" (Nashville: Nelson, 1997, 39-42)

Personal Action Assignment

Are you holding onto any sins? Any grudges? Any past hurts? Kneel before God and imagine you are at the foot of the cross. One by one, lay each burden down. Then sing the "Cares Chorus" (see p. 121).

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34. What do you learn about the Word of God in verse 23? In verses 24–25?

35. What do you think you will remember from this week's lesson?

Memory Work

Review your memory work.

Prayer Time

Pair off in twos. Read aloud Stephen Olford's opening challenge on Day 5.

Then confess to each other an area where you have neglected to allow Jesus to be Lord.

Pray for each other. If someone does not want to pray audibly, she can pray silently.

Three

Precious, Chosen, and Beloved

This journey through earth is difficult, and just like Christ, you will experience suffering—but you are God’s own. He has called you, He loves you. He sees you as precious and beloved. Just as He chose the Israelites and cared for them, provided for them, and led them in their journey across the desert to the Promised Land, so will He do that for you. He also has a purpose for your life. Have you ever felt like a second-class citizen as a woman? The world may treat you like that, but that isn’t the way God sees you. Note that the memory work showing the high calling of God on your life is not gender specific—it is a call to all of God’s children: male and female. You can be confident in God’s love and calling for your life.

Memory Work

Memorize 1 Peter 2:9–10 by memorizing the song “Chosen Generation” on page 122.

WARMUP

In 1 Peter 2:9–11, it is clear that God has called you for a purpose. He has a plan for your life. In one breath share just one purpose that seems clear to you. Be specific and personal. (For example: Amy might say: “I’m a new mother and I am called to raise Benjamin to love and serve God.” Linda might say: “I’m a stylist and I am called to show my clients Christ’s love and to be ready to give an answer for the hope within me.”)

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Scripture Study

DAY I

Like Newborn Babies (Overview of 1 Peter 2)

How I remember those precious days when I was breastfeeding. A tiny little head would grope frantically until he found the nipple; then he would seize it and guzzle intently, perspiration soaking his downy head. Eventually he would slow down, satisfied and sleepy, his tiny eyelids at half-mast. It amazed me to see my baby grow big and strong on breast milk alone.

This is the metaphor Peter uses in the opening of 1 Peter 2. Just as we have been born again by Jesus, the Word of God (1:23), we are now to be nourished by the written Word of God, and to desire it as earnestly as a newborn babe desires his mother’s breast.

1. Describe, in detail, how a newborn evidences his desire for milk.

Do you have that same desire for the Word of God? If so, give evidence.

2. With the same hunger of a newborn, read 1 Peter 2 as an overview. Find evidences that though this life is difficult, God loves you intensely and is caring for you. Be ready for God to show you something for today. Write it down here and explain how you will apply it.

Read 1 Peter 2:1–3 out loud to yourself. Sometimes the picture of milk is used to mean “elementary teaching” (1 Cor. 3:1–3) but here the emphasis is on purity. Just as pure mother’s milk can nourish a baby, so can the pure teaching of God’s Word nourish us, and help to rid us of the pollution of sin.

3. Peter lists five relational sins in the opening verse of chapter 2. Find them and define them.
4. The following women exemplify the above sins. Explain how the sin affected the woman and/or others.
 - A. Malice (Herodias in Matt. 14:3–12)
 - B. Deceit (Leah and her father in Gen. 29:16–35)

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C. Hypocrisy (Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11)

D. Envy (Miriam in Numbers 12)

E. Slander (Potiphar’s wife in Genesis 39)

Personal Action Assignment

As you are still before God, do you see any of these relational sins in your life? Kneel before Him and ask Him to search your heart. If you are having a problem in a horizontal relationship, it is almost always because you have a problem in your vertical relationship with God. Rid yourself of any sin through confession and repentance. Is there any person you have wronged and from whom you should ask forgiveness? If so, do.

5. What reasons are given for craving God’s Word in 1 Peter 2:2–3?

6. In verse 3, Peter is alluding to Psalm 34:8, to which he will return in chapter 3. In this psalm we are told “taste and see that the LORD is good.” Give one example of how God has shown you His goodness recently.

Memory Work

Sing “Chosen Generation” several times.

DAY 2

The Rock: Your Demise or Your Salvation?

When Peter sat at the feet of Jesus, he was often confused by His mysterious parables. When Jesus told the Parable of the Tenants, He said one group would come to a “wretched end,” the other group would be blessed. The disciples were confused. Gently Jesus asked:

“Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become

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the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes? . . . He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”
(Matt. 21:42b, 44)

What could the Master mean? Edmund Clowney writes:

Peter had learned that the death of Christ was not an unthinkable defeat for the Son of God and the Kingdom of God. Rather, by the cross and the resurrection God’s eternal purpose of salvation had been fulfilled. Those who had crucified Jesus had accomplished what God’s power and will had decided beforehand should happen (Acts 4:28). In their rejection of Christ, the builders, in spite of themselves, served to put God’s Stone in place. (*The Message of 1 Peter* [IVP, 1988], 85)

As you read the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, as you study the stirring sermon of Peter at Pentecost, stand in awe of God. Do not resist this mighty God, seek refuge in Him!

7. What do each of the following prophecies teach you about Jesus?

A. Isaiah 28:16

B. Psalm 118:19–23

Read Matthew 21:33–46.

8. The tenants represent the Jews, the servants represent the prophets, the son, Jesus. What did the tenants do to the servants? To the son?

What will the owner of the vineyard therefore do to those tenants?

Read Acts 4:1–22.

9. Describe what happened to Peter and John. What was Peter’s message?

How did Peter and John respond when they were told to obey the order from the government to stop teaching in the name of Jesus?

Read 1 Peter 2:4–8.

10. Record *everything* you can discover about those who do not believe.

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In verse 6, the phrase “never be put to shame” is an especially strong negative construction, like our English “never, never” or “absolutely never.”

11. Describe what the rock does in each of the following.

A. Isaiah 8:14

B. Psalm 18:2

C. What makes the difference between the Rock being a stumbling rock or a place of refuge for you?

In your personal quiet time, sing “Rock of Ages.” Find shelter in the Rock today for this day’s storms.

12. Not only can those who trust daily in Christ find shelter, but Peter gives some other promises. Find them in 1 Peter 2:5–6.

Memory Work

Sing “Chosen Generation” in praise to the Lord. Can you sing it by heart?

DAY 3

.....

You are a Chosen Generation, A Royal Priesthood

You belong to God, you are His precious daughter, and He has chosen you for a purpose. Again, Peter parallels our journey as Christians through earth with the journey the children of Israel made from Egypt, through the desert, to the Promised Land. Just as God chose them, called them out of Egypt, cared for them in the desert, and loved them, even in their rebellion, so He does the same with us who have been grafted in to the branch of Israel. We too are chosen. We too are beloved and cared for by our Heavenly Father.

Read 1 Peter 2:9–10.

13. According to this passage, describe your identity in detail (vv. 9a and 10).

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Read Isaiah 43:16–21.

14. Isaiah is painting a mural. Describe what you see. (vv. 16–19)

Are there any enemy chariots chasing you? If so, what are they?

What will God do for you if you trust in Him? (v. 19)

15. What does Isaiah call God’s people? (v. 20b)

What is God’s purpose for our lives? (v. 21b)

Find the similarities between the preceding passage and 1 Peter 2:9–10.

Read Exodus 19:1–6.

16. What message from God does Moses communicate to the Israelites?

How is this similar to 1 Peter 2:9?

17. Read Exodus 12:1—19:6 and list some of the ways God cared for, nourished, and protected His people.

(You will be blessed as you realize that God is saying in 1 Peter: “Just as I cared for the children of Israel, I am caring for you. You are My chosen people.”) Not only are we a chosen people, we are called to be a holy people, a royal priesthood.

Recording artist Kathy Troccoli and I are doing some women’s conferences together. Recently she told me, “Before I went out there, God told me, ‘Kathy: you’ve got to be holy.’”

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Beth Moore, speaker and author, mentioned the same thing. Before she was going to speak at a conference, her daughter wanted to turn on the TV in the motel room. Beth said, “No, honey—I can’t have any of the world in me. I need to be holy when I go in to those women.” (Beth Moore, *A Woman’s Heart: God’s Dwelling Place* [Nashville: Lifeway, 1995], 121)

Just as we who are speaking and singing at Christian women’s conferences need to be holy, so do we as women in general. A priest is one who presents God to the people (and the people to God). Is this not our calling as mothers, mentors, and women who are in this world? Do we not want the Spirit of God to fall upon our homes, our offices, and our hearts? Then we must be pure, holy. We are a royal priesthood!

In the Old Testament, only the high priests could enter the holy of holies. Today, because of Christ, all believers are able to enter the holy place. Just as the priests needed to purify themselves before entering, so do we. We cannot expect to receive from God in our time with Him if we have unconfessed sin, evil motives, or a proud heart.

18. Moses and Aaron carefully followed the rules God laid down for a priest. Describe how God responded in Leviticus 9:23–24.

19. In Leviticus 10:1–3:

- A. How did Aaron’s sons show disrespect for God? (v. 1)

- B. What happened to them? (v. 2)

- C. What reason did Moses give for their deaths? (v. 3)

- D. How did Aaron show his respect for the Lord? (v. 3)

This judgment seems harsh to us, but we must understand that God was using this generation of priests to teach all subsequent generations how to approach Almighty Yahweh. Moses’ explanation was clear: those who share the privilege of being nearest to God must also bear the awesome responsibility of exemplifying His holiness through obedience. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required . . .” (Luke 12:48 KJV).

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20. Are you a pure woman, a holy woman? Pray through Psalm 139:23–24 and record any thoughts for yourself which these verses prompt.

If you have a family, do they think of you as a pure woman?

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 1:3.

DAY 4

.....

A People Belonging to God

The Bible says we are “a people belonging to God” (1 Pet. 2:9). This brings images of betrothal to my mind, a picture God often uses in Scripture to show us that just as a husband and wife belong to one another and must be true to one another, so do we belong to Christ and must be faithful to Him, as His treasured wife.

21. God told the Prophet Hosea to marry an adulteress as a picture to Israel of their relationship with God. Read the following passages from Hosea and list what you learn about Israel in 2:5; 2:8; and 2:13.

God disciplined Israel for her unfaithfulness and then He called her to Him. What do you learn about this in Hosea 2:14–23?

How is Hosea 2:23b similar to 1 Peter 2:10?

22. How does it make you feel to know you are chosen, you are holy, you are betrothed and belong to God?

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Are you faithful to God? Is He first? Do you always spend time with Him daily? Do you run to Him first? Do you converse constantly with Him?

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 1:7.

DAY 5

.....

A Stranger on Earth

Peter tells us we are strangers on earth, just passing through. We must hold this world loosely or it will be a snare to us. God gives us good gifts to thankfully enjoy, but if we set our hearts on them they will lure us off the path of true joy and into destruction.

23. Read Luke 17:26–33.

A. Describe the spiritual insensitivity of people in the days of Noah. What happened to them?

B. Describe the spiritual insensitivity of people in the days of Lot and what happened to them.

C. God promised to rescue Lot and his family from judgment. What did Lot’s wife do? (Need help? See Gen. 19:15–26.) Why was this wrong and what did it show about her attitude toward life?

D. What warning does Jesus give in Luke 17:33?

In *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian and Hopeful are tempted on their journey by Money-Love and Demas, who ask them to leave the path and come to the silver mine to get rich. Hopeful says, “Let’s go and see.” But Christian resists, reminding Hopeful of how the desire to get rich can be a snare. As they travel a little further they come upon a monument of salt in the form of a woman. On it was written: “Remember Lot’s wife.”

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We belong to a different country. This world is not our home, and we must not cling to it. The King James Version translates “a people belonging to God” in 1 Peter 2:9 as “a peculiar people.” We have a different Master, belong to a different country, and have a different purpose than the people of this world.



*Hopeful says: “I marvel that I have not been punished as she was.
Our sins are the same. She only looked back. I wanted to go to the silver pit.
Thank God for his grace and let me be ashamed of my desire.”
(The Pilgrim’s Progress, [Chicago: Covenant Press, 1978], 48, 50)*

24. How does Peter describe us in verse 11a?

Think of a sin that tempts you because you deceive yourself that it will be the easier road. What is that sin? What truth do you need to speak to your soul when you are tempted? (v. 11b)

How can you apply this today?

How does Peter tell us to live and why? (v. 12)

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25. It is hard to travel through this world and not adopt its customs. The children of Israel often failed in this. Read each of the following rebukes from the prophets and describe how Israel had become like the world. What personal warning do you see in each?
- A. Isaiah 1:1–17
 - B. Isaiah 2:6–8
 - C. Isaiah 3:16–24
 - D. Malachi 2:13–16
 - E. Malachi 3:6–12
26. Consider the customs of your world: the ways people spend their time, their money, and the way they relate to one another. Are there any customs you have picked up that take you away from or reflect poorly on Jesus, your First Love?
27. What do you think you will remember from this week's study?

Memory Work

Sing "Chosen Generation" by heart.

Prayer Time

In circles of three or four, lift up your own request in prayer. Then one or two can support you with a sentence. When there is a pause, another person lifts up her own request. For example:

Annie: Please help me to establish the habit of a quiet time.

Sally: Please help Annie get out of bed in the morning, hungry for You.

Beth: I agree, Lord.

Pause

Four

Understanding Submission in the Context of 1 Peter

Outside football stadiums filled with Promise Keepers marched women with placards from NOW, the feminist National Organization for Women.

Promise Keepers Unfair to Women! Equality for Women!

Though these protesters had not heard the whole message, they were deeply offended by the soundbites they had heard: “The man is the head of the home” and “Be the spiritual leader in your home.”

How important that those seeking the truth hear the whole message. The passage we are approaching, 1 Peter 3:1–7, is a prime example. Many women have been told they cannot speak to their unbelieving husbands, they cannot wear any jewelry (even wedding rings), and they must obey their husbands in all things, even if the demand is to submit to an abortion. All of this is false, a distortion that comes from ripping verses out of context. The reader who doesn’t take the time to see the whole picture may misinterpret the soundbites.

Because this passage is directed to us as women, we are going to spend three weeks on it. Before we examine the details closely next week, we must understand the overview. If we don’t, we may miss the forest for the trees. The whole context of 1 Peter deals with submission, not just for wives, but for everyone. And who is our model? Jesus. Come, explore the whole truth.

Memory Work

Memorize 1 Peter 2:23 (bold print). Extra credit? Do the whole passage below.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found

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in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet. 2:21–25)

WARMUP

Call out some painful or embarrassing mistakes that occurred because you failed to slow down and look carefully. (You brushed your teeth with diaper ointment, hugged a man you thought was your husband from behind, put a cup of salt in the cake . . .)

Scripture Study

DAY 1

Submit Yourself to Every Authority

In a few days we will look at Peter’s admonition to women who are married to men who do not obey the Word: “Wives, in the same way be submissive.” What does Peter mean by “in the same way”? James Slaughter explains:

“In the same way” refers to the more all-encompassing exhortation to submit for the Lord’s sake to others in various relationships instituted among human beings. . . . He spoke to mistreated slaves (2:18–21), to harried wives (3:1–6) and hassled husbands (3:7), to believers struggling in civil affairs (3:8–4:19), to church elders threatened by younger people (5:1–4), and to younger people in the church chafing under the leadership of an older generation (5:5). In all those relationships they were to carry out the exhortation of 2:13–17. . . . The behavior of believers when they encounter unfair circumstances should reflect a spirit of deference in all relationships as they follow Christ’s example and anticipate future glory. (“Submission of Wives in the Context of 1 Peter,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153. January-March 1996, 66)

Read 1 Peter 2:13–3:7 as an overview.

1. List all the persons who are told to submit, to whom, and why. Give verse references.

Read 1 Peter 2:13–17.

2. Who is told to submit here, to whom, and for whose sake? (v. 13)

Understanding Submission in the Context of 1 Peter

What do you think Peter means by “for the Lord’s sake”?

Of course, everything we do should be for the glory of God and the good of His kingdom! But Peter was careful to point out the Christians in society are representatives of Jesus Christ. (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Hopeful* [Chariot Victor, 1982], 58)

3. Why should you obey laws about speeding, littering, etc.? Do you?

4. What will silence the ignorant talk of foolish men? (v. 15)

“Doing good” is a powerful tool, whether you are dealing with an unfair government, boss, husband, or mother-in-law. If possible, share a time when you (or someone else) were treated unfairly, responded with love, and saw God’s power displayed.

Did this increase your confidence in God? Explain.

Sometimes, even when we fail, our humble response can be a display of God’s power. I remember how angry a Seattle neighbor became with me because I failed to keep my puppy out of her yard and he defecated on my neighbor’s lawn. I was in the yard and I heard her swearing at him and at me and then go into her house and slam the door. I ran over and scooped up after him and put him in the house. Then I rang my neighbor’s bell to apologize, to promise to keep the puppy out, and to give her a fresh salmon. She said, “Fish! I’ve a freezer full of fish!” Then she slammed the door, leaving me holding the salmon. So, I went back, this time with a box of fresh oranges. Her frown turned to a small smile and she said, “You don’t give up—do you, honey?” After that she was friendly to me. To me, it was a demonstration that God’s love can overpower evil, even if that evil was, in part, mine!

5. Some of the early Christians felt their freedom in Christ freed them from the law. What does Peter say in verse 16?

In Romans 12:17—13:5, what thoughts parallel 1 Peter 2:13–17?

6. In 1 Peter 2:18–20 who is told to submit, to whom, and why?

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To what two kinds of masters are they to submit?

Slavery was an unjust institution. The rise of Christianity has often meant its demise. Many American slaves were people of faith who obeyed the above command in true faith, bearing a powerful witness to their unjust masters. One movie with a strong historical basis on slavery in America is Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*.

7. Read the following accounts of the apostles taking unjust punishment for the sake of Christ. How do you think this impacted witnesses?

A. Acts 5:40-42

B. Acts 16:22-25

Memory Work

Write out 1 Peter 2:23 and put it on your mirror to start work on it.

DAY 2

Entrusting Ourselves to the One Who Judges Justly

Corrie ten Boom tells of hiding a little Bible under her dress as she walked past the guards in the concentration camp:

It made a bulge you could have seen across the Grote Markt. I flattened it out as best I could . . . but there was no real concealing it beneath the thin cotton dress, And all the while I had the incredible feeling that it didn't matter, that this was not my business, but God's, that all I had to do was walk straight ahead.

As we trooped back out through the shower room door, the S.S. men ran their hands over every prisoner, front, back, and sides, The woman ahead of me was searched three times. Behind me, Betsie was searched. No hand touched me. (*The Hiding Place* [Fleming, 1971], 176)

As you travel through this world, you will experience pain. As you seek to serve God, you will experience spiritual warfare. Peter reminds us: If you do what is right, and if you follow in the steps of Christ and commit yourself to the One who judges justly, God will be your Advocate. How that wonderful truth leads to confidence!

Understanding Submission in the Context of 1 Peter

Read 1 Peter 2:21–25.

8. How does Peter begin verse 21?

9. Find all the reasons Christ suffered. (vv. 21, 24)

10. Describe how Christ suffered. Find His secret. (vv. 22–23)

We need not be concerned about maintaining our rights. Jesus trusted his Father, the righteous Judge, to do that; and so should we. . . . This is the life of Christian pilgrims in this world. (Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* [IVP, 1988], 127-128)

How does Paul tell us to handle unjust treatment in Romans 12:19?

Is there a situation in your life right now where you are being treated unfairly?

Commit your case to God. He cares and He is a God of justice.

Peter is quoting from Isaiah, who predicted Christ's sufferings seven hundred years before they happened. Isaiah also prophesied Christ would respond with quiet confidence (Isa. 53). When my husband was dying, and suffering greatly from cancer, he often asked me to pray that he would trust the Lord enough to give Him glory, no matter how bad it got. The Lord answered that prayer and Steve left a legacy of confidence in God in the midst of great suffering.

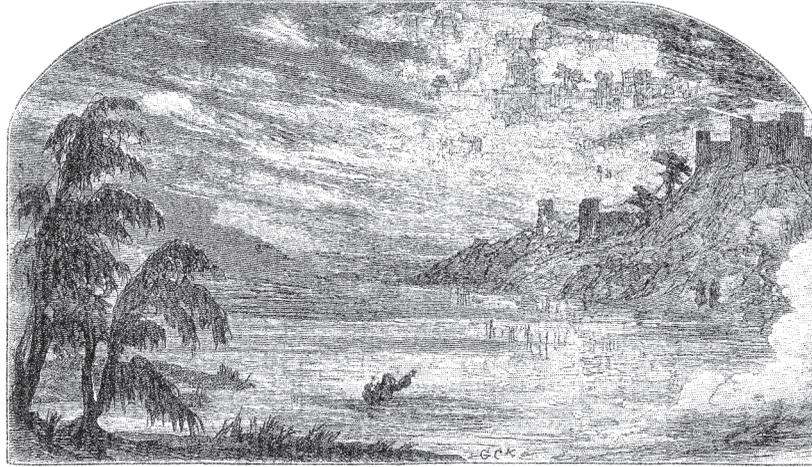
11. Isaiah and Peter tell us we are like sheep who have gone astray. Now we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. List three specific differences that truth is making in your life.

Sing: "Surely Goodness and Mercy" (Hymns Index)

A Woman of Confidence

Memory Work

Memorize 1 Peter 2:23



The pilgrims cross the river of death to the Celestial City, "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. . . ." (Isaiah 53:11)

DAY 3

Wives, in the Same Way

Are you beginning to see why the context of this passage is so crucial? The primary purpose of Peter's whole letter was to help believers of all kinds prepare to suffer for Christ—the fiery trials and persecutions had begun, and they were going to intensify. Believers in general would be persecuted, Christian slaves would be treated harshly, and women who came to faith apart from their husbands could expect an angry reaction. James Slaughter explains: "Relating to others in a godly way always presents a challenge, but this is especially so when people are treated unjustly. This was the case with Peter's audience."

Slaughter writes,

Here Peter addressed the severest relationship for a wife, namely, marriage to an unbelieving husband. A wife is to submit to her husband even if he is "disobedient to the word." Vaughn and Lea comment that "disobedient" (in the Greek) is a strong word, implying open and active hostility to the gospel."(James Slaughter, "Submission of Wives in the Context of 1 Peter," 64.)

Read 1 Peter 3:1–7 as an overview.

Understanding Submission in the Context of 1 Peter

Today, make as many observations as you can concerning the first four verses. See if you can come up with at least five for each verse, though ten would be better. (They are there—you just have to keep looking! Howard Hendricks, a teacher of Bible study methods for many years, had a reputation for making his students find ten observations from a single verse. They would come back proudly and he'd say: "Do it again!" This would go on for days—even weeks.) Note comparisons, warnings, word pictures. Explore cross-references and different translations. Ask questions—don't worry if you don't have the answer, it will provoke thinking—and that's how a good detective gets to the truth. You will be amazed at how much you discover simply by making observations. I've gotten you started on verse 1a; you can do 1b.

12. Look carefully at each word or phrase, for you are mining for gold. Ask questions.

Look again!

3:1a

This is addressed to wives of husbands who do not obey the Word. Is this husbands who are unbelievers or could it be believers as well? The Greek (comment above) implies active hostility, so these were wives who were experiencing active hostility from their husbands concerning their faith. It says "in the same way" so a comparison is being made. Is that comparison to Jesus? Is it to slaves? Is Peter saying wives are slaves? If I look at context, I see wives are called co-heirs (v. 7) so wives are not slaves.

3:1b

3:2

3:3

3:4

13. What stood out to you from this exercise?

Peter talks about winning without words. Saint Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) says:

Preach the gospel at all times—if necessary use words.

In many ways that sums up what Peter is saying. It isn't that wives married to unbelieving husbands could not speak, it is that they had to be cautious—for nagging and arguments would not win their husbands.

14. If you keep reading in 1 Peter 3, how can you see from verse 15 that a wife may have to use words in order to win her husband to Christ?

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Describe, on the basis of 1 Peter 3:15, how she should speak those words.

15. What do you learn about how she should not use words according to the following passages?

A. Proverbs 19:13b

B. Proverbs 21:9, 19

C. Proverbs 27:15–16

D. 2 Timothy 2:25–26

A tangent to interpreting Scripture in context is not to press the details when a parable or word picture is given, but to look for the main point. For example, when Psalm 91 talks about finding refuge in the wings of God, it does not mean God has wings! In 1 Peter 3:1 you will find what grammarians refer to as antanaclasses, commonly known as a pun. (JHA Hart, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, "First Peter." 5 vols. [Eerdmans, 1974], 5:63)

A pun, like a parable, paints a memorable picture, but you need to take the whole idea and not press each detail. Here it is in a translation and a paraphrase, with the pun underlined:

NIV: "If any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."

J.B. Phillips: "If they do not obey the Word of God they may be won to God without any word being spoken, simply by seeing the pure and reverent behavior of you, their wives."

16. What is the main point of 1 Peter 3:1?

Why might pressing all the details in a parable, word picture, or pun lead to misinterpretation? What might happen, for example, if you did that with 1 Peter 3:1?

Understanding Submission in the Context of 1 Peter

DAY 4

Husbands, in the Same Way

Again, we see a pattern in Peter—it isn't just women who are told to submit, but all believers. A man is not to take advantage of his position as head of the home, but to remember that he must submit to God! Peter has some severe warnings for the husband who doesn't do that. As an Internet student at Covenant Seminary, we would have chat rooms to discuss the passages we were studying with other seminary students. Here is a discussion I had with fellow student Max Sager.

Dee: What do you think Peter means when he calls the wife the weaker vessel?

Max: The first thing that comes to mind would be physical strength, but I also believe that the cultural norms of the time treated women as second-class citizens. It is probable that many men saw women as being of less value both physically and spiritually than they themselves. But the way v.7 finishes "as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life" shows us that God sees things quite differently in that both men and women are precious in his sight and share equally in the blessing of his salvation. Likewise we as men should promote the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of our wives.

Dee: I like that. It certainly fits with the culture. Do you think it might also mean, in context, that because women have just been told to submit that a husband better not take advantage of that for his own purposes?

Max: Yes, I agree. A wife shows an extreme amount of vulnerability when being submissive to her husband. If he is in fact taking advantage of that he is sinning and puts his wife and children at risk as a result. I am sure God does not look favorably on him for his behavior.

17. Continue your observations of 1 Peter 3:1–7, beginning with verse 5.

Find at least five, but try for ten for each verse. Remember not to be afraid to ask questions. Pray that God will show you the answers as the study continues.

3:5

3:6

3:7

18. What stood out to you from the above exercise and why?

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Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 2:23. Extra time? Begin memorizing the context: 1 Peter 2:21–25.

DAY 5

The Importance of Context

One of the devices of false teachers is to take Scripture out of context. For example, the book of Ecclesiastes was written, in part, to show the futility of living a life apart from God. Many of the statements made are from the desperate lips of a person who is trying to find meaning apart from God—but he cannot. He continually cries throughout the book:

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher.

“Utterly meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.” (Eccl. 1:2)

Taken out of context, you might conclude that God’s Word says there is no meaning in life. However, that would be false, for God’s Word is clear that when you know Christ there is great meaning in life! Haven’t you read again and again in 1 Peter that you have been called for a purpose?

One of the reasons I’ve encouraged you to ask questions when you are observing a passage of Scripture is to cause you to look at the context of all of Scripture. Perhaps you have come up with some interesting questions through your observations of 1 Peter 3:1–7. I hope so, for it is a passage that is often misinterpreted—and you need to find the truth. From the first verse alone you might have asked:

Is Peter saying wives are the same as slaves?

Is Peter saying that if a woman is married to an unbeliever that she can’t talk to him about Jesus?

If you take verse 1 out of context, you might answer “yes” to both of the above questions. However, placed in the context of all of Scripture, the answer is “no” to both of the above.

19. When Peter says, “in the same way,” he is referring back to the model of Jesus and His unjust treatment, and to slaves and their unjust treatment, but the whole context moves all the way back to 1 Peter 2:13. What does that say?

The opening words [of 1 Peter 3:1–6] are not intended to equate the submissiveness due from wives with that expected from slaves. Rather, as in [verse] 7, the Greek adverb harks back to 2:13, implying that the patriarchal principle of the subordination of the wife to her husband is not a matter of human convention but the order which the Creator has established. (J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistle of Peter and Jude* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 127)

Understanding Submission in the Context of 1 Peter

20. When you come up with a question, it is good to try to answer it by looking not only at the verse that provoked the question, but also at other Scriptures on the same topic. For example, we know that other Scriptures refute the equation of wives to slaves. What do you learn concerning this from each of the following?
- A. 1 Peter 3:7b

 - B. Genesis 1:26–27

 - C. Ephesians 5:25–33

Since wives are not slaves, then why is there a comparison? It is because if they were married to men who did not obey the Word, they might experience the same kind of harsh treatment that a slave might experience from a harsh master—and they, like slaves, and like Jesus, needed to entrust themselves to Him who judges justly (see 1 Peter 2:23b). One beneficial result is that this is the most effective way to win an unbeliever to the Lord.

21. This leads to our next question: Are wives not to talk about Jesus to their unbelieving husbands? Answer, using scriptural support.

22. What do you think you will remember about this week's lesson?

Memory Work

Review your memory verses from the first four weeks.

Prayer Time

One effective way to pray is to pray through Scripture. Pair off and pray through 1 Peter 3:4 for one another. For example:

Julie: Father, please be with Karen as she raises her toddlers. When they are disobedient, help Karen to be firm but gentle—to have that calm and gentle spirit which is so precious in Your sight.

Karen: I agree, Lord. I would ask the same for Julie—especially as she raises her strong-willed daughter. May we so radiate Your gentleness and love that our children will be drawn to You.

Five

Winsome, Winning Women

A perfume commercial seductively asks: “What is she wearing?” Singer and author Kathy Troccoli answers:

*“Jesus, the answer must be Jesus . . . Jesus is my beauty
He is my loveliness, my confidence, my charisma.”*

Have you ever met someone whom you suspected was a Christian because of the beauty and quiet confidence that flowed from her spirit? Kathy tells of meeting a flight attendant like that:

An undeniable radiance exuded from her person. I was sure she was a Christian—the way she smiled, the way she showed patience, kindness, and grace to everyone she encountered. . . . While I’d never done anything like this before, somehow I had to ask her . . . I even surprised myself as I asked, “You love Jesus, don’t you?”

She looked up at me, and with a glow in her eyes, she said, “Yes, how did you know?” I told her I had watched her and that her actions and her countenance spoke loudly to me about her love for him. The river of life inside of that flight attendant splashed onto everyone around her. And if she had never spoken a word that day, all those coming in contact with her would have seen clearly the God of the universe living inside of her heart. (*My Life is in Your Hands* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], 39)

That’s what Peter is talking about in this passage. When the river of life is flowing inside us, unhindered by sin, we are beautiful women. Without even speaking a word, people are drawn to the One who is consecrated in our hearts.

A Woman of Confidence

Memory Work

Memorize 1 Peter 3:4. Extra credit? Do the whole passage below.

*Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. **Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.***

(1 Pet. 3:1-4)

WARMUP

Have you ever suspected that someone loved Jesus because of her countenance and behavior? If so, what did you particularly notice?

Scripture Study

DAY I

.....

It Wasn't Easy Being a Woman

Christ was radically different from the culture to which He came in His treatment of women. Women were not seen as equals, but as property. Remember how shocked the disciples were when they found Jesus teaching the Samaritan woman? Or how ruffled Martha was that her sister Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet instead of helping her in the kitchen? Jesus was a revolutionary: He shocked the world then and He is still in the business of changing prejudiced hearts today. I so appreciate men like John Dawson, founder of International Reconciliation Coalition, who humbly confessed in a foreword to the book *Women of Destiny*:

I am part of a patriarchal religious culture in which women who serve ministries are usually treated with great kindness but seldom taken seriously as leaders. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1998, 16)

I believe the Spirit of God is doing a new work in allowing women in the church to be treated seriously. We have come a long way because of Jesus. I have a young friend who is committing her life to helping oppressed women in countries where the influence of Christianity has been minimal—the stories she tells make me so thankful for the light of Christ. If you lived in those countries, or if you lived in Peter's day, you would realize how much Christ has freed women and how radically different Christianity is from all the other major religions, not only in being a grace-based salvation, but also in how it views women as co-heirs in that grace and as equals in God's sight.

B.C. Caffin explains:

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Christianity was in its infancy; it was to be the means of abolishing slavery, and of raising woman to her proper place in society; but as yet slaves were cruelly oppressed, and women were ill treated and despised. . . . Christianity would introduce a great and sweeping change in the relations of the sexes, as well as in the relations of master and slave. But the change must be gradual, not violent; it must be brought about by the softening and purifying influences of religion, not by revolt against recognized customs and established authority.”(B.C. Caffin, *The Pulpit Commentary*, eds. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Excell, “1 Peter.” Vol. 22. [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, n.d.], 35)

1. In each of the following find evidence that the attitude toward women in biblical times was in great need of enlightenment.

A. Genesis 19:1–8

B. Judges 19

C. Ruth 2:5

D. 1 Kings 11:3

E. Esther 1:10—2:4

F. Luke 24:9–11

In the last example Luke, who was a physician, used a Greek word (translated “nonsense”) which means “the delirious talk of the very ill!”

2. Find evidence that Christ’s attitude toward women was revolutionary:

A. John 4:27

B. Luke 10:38–42

C. John 20:10–18

Because women were seen as property, as inferior, as servants rather than coheirs, a wife was expected to adopt the religion of her husband. Plutarch reflects these sentiments:

A wife ought not to make friends on her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. . . . (Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation and the Fall* [Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990], 74)

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When a wife refused to worship her husband’s gods because she had come to know Christ, James Slaughter explains that “she became vulnerable to sharp criticism and harsh treatment from him” (p. 201). She also became suspect of the state for, as Edmund Clowney explains:

This became an issue in Roman history when many women were attracted to the cult of Bacchus. . . . The rituals of Bacchus had been banned by the Roman Senate. . . . In the eyes of imperial Romans, here was another subversive Eastern religion threatening the stability of the home and of the state. (*The Message of 1 Peter*, 129)

3. How does understanding the culture of the day help you to understand Peter’s counsel to women in 1 Peter 3:1–2?

4. Why do you think Peter says “to your own husbands”?

The above point is crucial, showing that Peter was not saying that all women are under the authority of all men. This was revolutionary, reflecting the light of Christ.

[The Greek phrase translated “to your own” is used] to clarify and limit a wife’s responsibility to submit. Peter underscored his focus on subordination within marriage, not outside it. As Beare remarks, [the Greek phrase] is perhaps needed to prevent ambiguity, to make clear that it is subjection in the marital relationship, not a general subjection of women to men that is required. (James Slaughter, “Submission to Wives in the Context of 1 Peter,” 72–73)

Memory Work

Begin memorizing 1 Peter 3:4.

DAY 2

Unequally Yoked

In her book, *Beloved Unbeliever*, Jo Berry gives a word picture of what the Bible calls being “unequally yoked” (a partnership, whether it is a marriage or a business partnership between a believer and an unbeliever):

One of the favorite events at the Little League picnic was a father/son three-

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legged race. . . . It was amusing for those fathers and sons to be linked together in that race, as mismatched as they were in size. . . . we laughed so hard we got tears in our eyes. . . . But I noticed that the first thing each father and son did, when they either dropped out or crossed the finish line, was untie the cords that were binding them together. . . . I wonder how many of them would have considered staying tied together for the rest of their lives? . . . Doesn't sound like much fun, does it?" (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981, 11–12)

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the husband comes to faith first. However, after he crosses the river of death, doubts assail his wife. The Holy Spirit awakens her from her apathy. One day she is mulling over her thoughts when a messenger named Secret appears:

Peace be to this House! . . . I dwell in the city where Christian has gone. It is thought by the people where I live that you desire to go there. It is reported that you are sorry for the way you treated your husband in setting yourself against his good life, and in keeping your children in ignorance of the way everlasting. (John Bunyan, retold by James H. Thomas, 159–160)

"Then she said to her children, 'Sons, we are all undone.'"



After Secret leaves, Christiana calls her children to her and tells them of the guilt she feels for the great sin of not going with their father.

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5. What reasons are given in 2 Corinthians 6:14–18 for not entering into an unequal yoke?

The wives Peter was addressing had probably not entered into an unequal yoke, but instead had converted after they were married. But whether a marriage is an unequal yoke because of disobedience, ignorance, or conversion after marriage, the advice Peter gives applies. There is hope, if you are in such a situation, that you can win your husband to Christ through your behavior.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:12–18.

6. What counsel is given here to the wife in an unequal yoke? (v. 13)

Why? (v. 14)

Sanctified means “set apart.” The unbelieving spouse is “set apart” by God for special treatment. God is wooing him that the marriage might be a Christian unity.

7. Sometimes the unbelieving partner will come to Christ—other times, he or she wants to leave. According to 1 Corinthians 7:15, what should the wife in an unequal yoke do if the husband wants to leave?

What hope does Paul give the spouse in an unequal yoke? (v. 16)

8. To what three institutions among men has Peter thus far referred? (2:13; 2:18; 3:1)

Slavery was an evil institution that did not have God’s blessing. However, God ordained both government and marriage. “Marriage should be honored by all,” Hebrews 13:4a tells us. Just as God can move in the hearts of unbelieving kings, He can move in the hearts of unbelieving husbands to accomplish His goals. In *Beloved Unbeliever*, Jo Berry tells of a young wife who never sought her husband’s counsel because he was an unbeliever, but became convicted by the Word that she was wrong.

Susie learned that she dare not shut out her husband from any facet of her life. The unequally yoked wife must respect her spouse’s position as God’s

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representative authority, trusting that He will work through her husband to accomplish His will in her life and marriage. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 45)

Personal Action Assignment

Spend some time in prayer for the women you know who are in an unequal yoke. Pray 1 Peter 3:1–4 and 2 Timothy 2:24–26 for them.

Memory Work

Keep memorizing 1 Peter 3:4.

DAY 3

.....

1 Peter 3 Wives

This passage is referred to so frequently to counsel women married to unbelievers that these wives have come to be known as 1 Peter 3 wives. My dear friend Lee Petno was such a wife. She took Peter’s admonition very literally and did not say a word about coming to know Christ, though she did mention she’d been attending a Bible study I was leading. The first time I met her husband, Vince, he asked me: “Are you the one who is responsible for the dramatic change in my wife?” (Lee had really been practicing her gentle and quiet spirit!) I smiled and said, “No—Jesus is the One who has changed Lee.” A few months later Vince put his trust in Christ. Today Lee and Vince have raised three godly children who are raising their own godly children. Lee and Vince are regular short-term missionaries to Haiti in their retirement years.

Augustine’s mother, Monnica, was a 1 Peter 3 wife. In his journal to the Lord, Augustine wrote:

She served her husband as her master, and did all she could to win him for You, speaking to him of You by her conduct, by which You made her beautiful . . . Finally, when her husband was at the end of his earthly span, she gained him for You. (Edmund Clowney, 130)

There is no guarantee, but a strong possibility. I have another dear friend who has been living out the instructions in 1 Peter 3 for nearly thirty years and, outwardly, we see little change in her husband. However, there has been a tremendous change in her—she is one of the most Christ-like women I know.

When I weep for her situation she tells me how God has refined her through this marriage, teaching her to trust Him. She exudes a quiet confidence. Her faith is as genuine as pure gold.

A Woman of Confidence

9. Review what Peter says about trials in 1 Peter 1:7. How could being married to an unbeliever help you to grow spiritually?

When Christian was journeying on earth, he reached the House Beautiful. There Charity asked him if his behavior nullified his testimony to his wife and children. He answered: "Well, indeed I cannot commend my life, for I am conscious of many failings; and I realize a person by his daily living may annul his good arguments and persuasion. Yet I was very careful not to give my family any occasion for offense at my unseemly conduct. I did not want them to be averse to going with me. But they often told me that I was too precise, that I denied myself of things in which they could see no evil." (John Bunyan, retold by James H. Thomas, 51)

10. Describe winning behavior according to 1 Peter 3:2.

11. The *Word Biblical Commentary* clarifies that "reverent" refers to the wife's attitude toward God. How do you see this pattern in the following?

1 Peter 1:17

1 Peter 2:17-18

12. In contrast, she is not to be frightened by her husband. How do you see this in 1 Peter 3:6b?

How is this phrase repeated in 1 Peter 3:14?

13. The above is extremely important, for women are not to submit because they fear their husband's reaction, but because they fear God. If they fear their husband's reaction, they might submit to sin, which we are never to do. Give some examples of how a woman who fears her husband but not God might cooperate with sin.

14. How did the Hebrew midwives demonstrate reverence toward God in Exodus 1:15-21?

How did God bless the midwives because of their reverent and pure behavior?

Winsome, Winning Women

How is this an example of 1 Peter 2:23b?

15. How would you define purity or chastity? (1 Pet. 3:2)

If you are defining purity as not sleeping with your unbelieving husband, read 1 Corinthians 7:2-5! Your marriage bed is honorable, even if your husband is an unbeliever, and you are to love him well in this way too.

Memory Work

Complete your memorization of 1 Peter 3:4.

DAY 4

God's Intention for Marriage

My friend Pam often makes me laugh, like the time she said: "I had two big surprises when I became a Christian. One was that Jesus was coming back. The other was that I was to submit to my husband!"

The world definitely doesn't understand this topic, but I have found many Christian women have failed to grasp it as well. Before we can understand submission, we must understand God's purpose for marriage.

Read Genesis 2:18-25.

16. Over and over, God said during Creation, "It was good." Now something is not good. What? (v. 18a)

How does God plan to remedy the problem? (v. 18b)

17. Right after He said He will make a helper suitable for man, He does something else! What does He do? (vv. 19-20)

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Why do you think God does this?

In *A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling Place*, Beth Moore says:

God's task was to have Adam confront his need . . . as He gathered all those animals before Adam, that would be the first time that Adam would realize: "I'm alone here, I look across all these creatures and there is not one like me." . . . He was alone. And you see, that's God's way. He will confront us with our need and then He will appear to show us that He is the answer to that need . . . (*New Starts and Barren Hearts*. Video tape, Nashville: Lifeway, 1995)

18. A wife is called a helper. Who is also called a helper in Deuteronomy 33:29?

In Psalm 10:14?

In Psalm 27:9?

Do you think helper implies inferiority? Why or why not?

19. When God does make woman and brings her to Adam, what is Adam's response? (v. 23)

20. Why do you think Adam was so excited? List all the reasons you can.

21. What are some ways a woman could be truly helpful in a marriage when it comes to making decisions?

How might she be unhelpful?

Winsome, Winning Women

- 22. Find and summarize God’s central teaching concerning marriage from the following passages: Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; and Ephesians 5:21. What is it?

- 23. Oneness facilitates God’s three main purposes for marriage. What are those purposes according to the following Scriptures?
 - A. Genesis 2:18

 - B. Malachi 2:13–15

 - C. Ephesians 5:31–32

- 24. God longs for a husband and wife to be emotionally, sexually, and spiritually one. If you are a wife, insofar as it depends on you, what could you do to increase your harmony and intimacy with your husband:
 - Emotionally?

 - Sexually?

 - Spiritually?

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:7.

DAY 5

The Power of Biblical Submission

When we realize the overwhelming teaching concerning marriage in Scripture is not, “Who’s in charge here?” but, “The two shall be one,” submission takes on a whole different light. J. B. Phillips helped me to receive this truth when I was a young wife through his paraphrase of Colossians 3:18:

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Wives, adapt yourselves to your husbands, that your marriage may be a Christian unity.

When a marriage is harmonious, it is able to accomplish its three central purposes (1) intimacy, (2) raising godly children, and (3) reflecting the relationship of Christ and His bride, the Church.

Submit comes from the Greek word *hypotassō* which means “to put under” or “to subordinate.” It is a voluntary act. Our word *submit* catches that voluntary connotation as when used in the phrase “submit an idea.” I often would “submit” my thoughts to my husband. Most of the time God will cause us to be like minded—but if not, I accepted his authority that our marriage might be a Christian unity.

The idea that submission means a wife is to be a doormat is erroneous. A husband needs his wife’s ideas, prayers, and even gentle confrontation at times—for it was God’s plan that she be his helpmate. However, if they cannot agree, then she is to willingly go under his authority. There is one exception. She is never to submit to sin.

25. Read Ephesians 5:21–33 carefully.

- A. Verse 21 sets the tone for the whole passage. Who is to submit and why?
- B. In marriage, to whom has God given the headship?
- C. How is that headship described in verses 25–30?
- D. What is the purpose of the servant authority of the husband and the respectful submission of the wife according to verse 31?
- E. In a mysterious way, what does the relationship of a Christian husband and wife reflect? (v. 32)
- F. How is this passage summarized in verse 33?

The woman who kicks against the commandment to respect and to submit to her husband is missing so much. Not only is she like the foolish woman of Proverbs 14:1b who tears down her house with her own hands, but she is missing the joy, peace, and confidence that comes from a marriage that is “a Christian unity.” You may be thinking: *That’s fine for you, Dee—your husband was godly, but my husband is far from the Lord. How can you expect me to submit to him?* And yet, that is exactly what Peter is asking. Things begin to happen in the heart of a man who has a submissive wife that soften him toward God.

First, a prideful and adversarial attitude builds walls, but a humble and submissive spirit breaks them down, making you and your husband closer.

Winsome, Winning Women

26. When you have an opposing viewpoint from others, what kind of attitude on their part is most apt to make you listen to them with hearing ears? What kind of attitude is apt to make you close your heart?

Second, God is real. He blesses obedience.

27. How does God respond to a gentle and quiet spirit in each of the following passages?

1 Peter 3:9

1 Peter 3:11–12

1 Peter 3:15–16

Finally, the woman who radiates peace because of her trust in God will cause her husband to consider the reality of God. Wellington Boone, the fiery preacher whom God has used greatly through Promise Keepers, explains that when he realized the confidence he saw in Kathryn, his future wife, was because of Jesus, he was drawn. Wellington said: “She wouldn’t kiss me because I wasn’t saved. That boldness put inside me a dedication to know Christ.”

28. What does Peter tell us not to do in verses 6b and 14b of chapter 3?

First Peter 3:14 is a quote from Isaiah 8:12. What does Isaiah 8:12–14 say?

What are some things that people in the world fear that we do not need to fear because the Lord is our sanctuary?

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 2:9–10 by singing “Chosen Generation.”

Prayer Time

In circles of three or four, lift up your own request in prayer. Then one or two can support you with a sentence. When there is a pause, another person lifts up her own request.

Six

The Hidden Person of the Heart

How I love the phrase, “hidden person of the heart.” Peter uses this to contrast the lasting inner beauty to our fading outer beauty. Ironically, every male commentator I’ve read is quick to stress that Peter isn’t saying women should let themselves go. They make me laugh—so great is their concern! And certainly, we shouldn’t think it is spiritual to be dowdy or to stop caring about our outward appearance. But perhaps you need to be a woman to understand the enormous pressure we feel from the media to be amazingly beautiful. It is so easy in this mixed-up world to begin to put our confidence in our outer beauty instead of the “hidden person of the heart.” Then, when we begin to wrinkle and turn grey, our confidence erodes. We also need to understand how extremely important the hidden person of the heart is to God. This is the part that will never fade. We need to hear Peter’s message with hearing ears, as badly as one lost in the desert needs an oasis. So we are stopping for a long, cool drink.

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 3:4 and go on to verses 5–6.

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

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WARMUP

The key phrase for inner beauty is “put their hope in God.” That is the secret of confidence. It helps us choose purity when temptation is strong; it helps us be gentle and assured when maligned; and it helps us to be submissive when we wonder if our husband is making the wisest choice. Think of a time in the last year when you “put your hope in God” and He was there for you. Prepare to share it here in one sentence.

Scripture Study

DAY I

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Your Adornment Must Not Be Merely External

J. B. Phillips paraphrases 1 Peter 3:3a: “Your beauty should not be dependent on an elaborate coiffure . . .” It isn’t wrong to look nice, but our beauty must be dependent on the inner person of the heart. In Peter’s day, as in ours, priorities for women were on outer rather than inner beauty. The wealthy women of Rome had memorable hairstyles! J. Balsdon, in *Roman Women: Their History and Habits*, writes:



A bust of Julia, daughter of Titus, who lived in the time of Peter

Curl climbs on top of curl and over the forehead there arose something which at its best looked like the chef d’oeuvre of a master pastry cook and, at its worst, like a dry sponge. At the back the hair was plaited, and the braids arranged in a coil which looks like basketwork. (*Roman Women: Their History and Habits* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1962], 240, 246)

Patricia Gundry said that “the wealthy woman had a full-time servant just to care for her hair!” (*Heirs Together* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980], 129)

The Hidden Person of the Heart

Correspondingly, much time and money was spent in the selection of jewelry and clothing. And while our hairstyles and fashions have changed, women today are not any less obsessed. That monster begins when we are very young and is fed heartily throughout our lives.

1. What are some things a wise mother can do to instill godly values in her daughter concerning fashion, diet, and true beauty?

What concepts from 1 Peter 2:9–10 might a mother endeavor to impress on her daughter's heart?

2. What is important to God in a woman, according to 1 Peter 3:3–4?

Though some have interpreted the above to mean we cannot wear jewelry, to be consistent, we would then not be able to wear clothes. Moderation is the point.

3. Clothing in Scripture is often a metaphor for conduct. What do you learn from each of the following about what clothing is important to God?

A. Proverbs 31:25a

B. Colossians 3:12

C. 1 Timothy 2:9–10

4. Peter elaborates on the kind of clothing that is precious to God. Describe the “garment” in each of the following verses in chapter 3:

A. 1 Peter 3:8a

B. 1 Peter 3:8b

C. 1 Peter 3:9

D. 1 Peter 3:10

E. 1 Peter 3:11

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5. Then he tells us the secret for wearing this kind of clothing in 1 Peter 3:15a. What is it and what does this mean?

Peter tells us if we put our hope in God, if we sanctify Christ in our hearts, then out of the wellspring of the heart will flow the beautiful virtues of purity, humility, gentleness, and quietness. We will then be like Sarah and the holy women of old who put their hope in God.

6. In each of the following explain how the “holy woman of old” exemplified Peter’s standards. Then evaluate how well you are doing in the particular area.

A. Purity: Rebekah in Genesis 24:16

B. Reverence for God: Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1—2:11

C. A gentle and quiet spirit: Ruth in Ruth 2

D. Put their hope in God: Leah in Genesis 29:31–35

E. Submissive to their own husbands: Sarah in Genesis 18:12

This is the example that Peter uses in 1 Peter 3:6, so it is important that we use the same example concerning Sarah. It is an intriguing example because she’s not being particularly respectful in her laughter and in what she says, but as Robert Johnstone discerningly observes in a commentary from 1888: “In speaking to herself, Sarah refers to Abraham as ‘my lord,’ showing the true way she respected him and thought of him. (*The First Epistle of Peter* [Edinburgh: Clark, 1888; reprint, Minneapolis, MN: James Family, 1978], 205)

In 1 Peter 3:6 we are told Sarah “obeyed” Abraham. This is the only place in a Christian setting where the word obey is used in regard to wives. Everywhere else obedience is for children (and children of God) and submission is the word used for wives. Submission differs from obedience in that it implies a voluntary cooperation, which certainly seems to be the overall picture of Sarah and Abraham’s marriage. In the *Word Biblical*

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Commentary, J. Ramsey Michaels cautions “not to read too much profound theology into Peter’s simple language,” (p. 165). And Charles Swindoll writes:

Here the Greek verb means “to pay close attention to” someone. It’s the idea of attending to the needs of another. . . . (*Strike the Original Match* [Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980], 49)

7. Do you pay close attention to your husband’s needs? Does he get priority over the others in your life? Give evidence.

8. Is the Holy Spirit speaking to you concerning any of the above? If so, how?

9. If a woman blessed with outward beauty does not have inner beauty, what is she like according to Proverbs 11:22?

Memory Work

Begin your memory work with 1 Peter 3:5.

DAY 2

Sarah’s Daughters

Peter is encouraging us to be like Sarah, and then, as daughters are often like their mothers, we will be her daughters. It is similar to:

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matt. 5:44–45)

Sarah was a godly woman, a submissive woman, and Josephus said the fame of her beauty and modesty had spread throughout the land, (*Josephus: Complete Work*. [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1981], 33). However, Sarah failed, as we all do, and Peter is not urging us to imitate those failures. Though that may seem obvious, it needs to be stated. For example, some have taught that if your husband asks you to do something immoral (as Abraham did twice with Sarah), you should submit and trust that God will deliver you in

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the nick of time (as God did with Sarah). I'll never forget a woman who came to me after she had undergone an abortion at her husband's request. She said, "Dee, why didn't God deliver me in the nick of time?" How angry I felt at the false teaching that led her astray! In *The Glory of Suffering*, Robert B. Oeffinbaugh writes:

I want it to be very clear that I do not embrace the position that women are to imitate Sarah by submitting to every request of her husband, whether sinful or not. As with our submission to others in authority, we must always limit our obedience to those things which do not clearly violate God's commands. Sarah was wrong to participate in the deception that she was Abraham's sister rather than his wife. She should have said, as Peter later would do, "We must obey God rather than men." Wives are to submit to their husbands when they doubt the wisdom of their leadership, but not when they know it requires them to sin. (*The Glory of Suffering: A Study of 1 Peter*, [Biblical Studies Press, 1996])

Read 1 Peter 3:6 carefully.

You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

10. In order to be Sarah's daughters, what two things must we be sure to do according to the above?

11. One of the prevailing themes of 1 Peter is to be like our Lord and do what is right. Skim the whole letter, looking for passages which have this concept, and summarize the essence of each.

12. Explain, on the basis of each of the following verses, why it is never right to go along with sin.
 - A. 1 Peter 1:15

 - B. Romans 14:12

 - C. Acts 4:18–19

 - D. Acts 5:1–11

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In addition to supporting Abraham in his deception, there is another incident in which Sarah gave way to fear. Read the account in Genesis 16.

13. What mistake did Sarah make here—and why was it wrong?

Who suffered because of it?

Read Genesis 21:1–20.

14. How does Sarah give glory to God in verses 6–7?

How does her old sin come back to haunt her in verses 8–9?

What does Sarah ask Abraham to do and how does he respond? List everything you discover in verses 10–14.

Why do you think God tells Abraham to submit to Sarah?

How does God look after Hagar and Ishmael?

15. Generally Sarah was a wonderful role model, doing what was right and not giving way to fear. Put yourself in Sarah's shoes in the following situations. How do you think she felt? Why did she trust?

A. Genesis 12:1–5

B. Genesis 13:7–18

C. Genesis 18:1–6

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D. Genesis 22:1–19

16. Read Hebrews 11:8–19 and explain what Abraham (and we assume, Sarah as well) believed that helped them to live exemplary lives.

v. 10

v. 11

vv. 13–16

vv. 17–19

It amazes me that Abraham believed God would bring Isaac back to life after the sacrifice. What faith! It can be frightening to be married to a spiritual giant unless you too are fully convinced that God is faithful.

17. Is there an area where you need to better trust God? If so, where?

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 3:4–5.

Memorize 1 Peter 3:6.

DAY 3

Do Not Fear What They Fear

Prepare your heart by singing “Surely Goodness and Mercy.”

Peter specifically addresses the issue of intimidation. Wives who were married to unsaved husbands were experiencing hostility to the Christian message. Believers in general were experiencing persecution, and it was easy to give way to fear.

In *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the pilgrims come upon little Much-Afraid in Doubting Castle. Because she has failed to set her hope in God, life has overwhelmed her.

The Hidden Person of the Heart

18. Look carefully in 1 Peter 3:1–16 and find commands for wise behavior in the face of intimidation. Find as many as you can.
19. In verse 4, when Peter talks about a “gentle” spirit, it means not insisting on one’s own rights, not demanding one’s own way. A “quiet” spirit has the sense of being calm and peaceful as opposed to restless, rebellious, or insubordinate. Does this describe your spirit? Give evidence.



Much-Afraid

How is a woman able to have this spirit according to 1 Peter 3:5?

20. In verse 6, when Peter says “do not give way to fear,” he is alluding to Proverbs 3:24–26, particularly verse 25. What does that say?

Again, what is the secret to having that kind of confidence? (Prov. 3:26)

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21. Describe the spirit we should have when facing intimidation (1 Pet. 3:9–11).

Again, what is the secret to having that kind of spirit? (1 Pet. 3:12)

22. In 1 Peter 3:14 the quote, “Do not fear what they fear” is from Isaiah 8:12–14a. What does that say?

Man fears man, but we are to be different because we know man has no ultimate power. Whom are we to fear and what will be the result? (Isa. 8:13–14a)

“The fear of man” may be not only the fear of what they can do to you, but the fear of losing their favor. How is this seen in John 12:42–43?

Explain how the above kind of fear might cause a wife to make the wrong choice. Give an example that might be applicable for you.

23. What application would the woman who is married to a hostile unbeliever or a carnal believer be able to make from all of the above?

The Christian wife might often experience cruel treatment from an unbelieving husband, but she was not to live in a flutter of excited terror; she was to be calm and quiet, trusting in God. (B.C. Caffin, 130)

24. What application would the woman who is sharing her faith with unsaved friends or relatives be able to make from all of the above?

If our pride rises up, if we speak out of anger, we may actually be contributing to hardening the heart of someone we love! On his radio broadcast, Stephen Olford said: “Without

humility the unconverted person is put off.” (Faith Under Fire, [Memphis, TN: Encounter Ministries])

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 3:4–6.

DAY 4

Don't Be Afraid To Speak the Truth in Love

Though Peter began by addressing the wife who is married to a hostile unbeliever, the introduction of Sarah as an illustration broadens the scope, for she was married to Abraham, that spiritual giant who is the father of all who have faith. Their marriage was an exemplary one, and a very unusual one in a day when women were not valued. Their marriage was a wonderful model of mutual submission, of mutual sharing, and of mutual respect. Each loved, cherished, and respected the other and therefore their marriage was an example of harmony. When Abraham left his people and his land to obey God, Sarah went with him, trusting God and supporting her husband. When Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar away, though it was very difficult for him, he sought God's face and then returned “to do what Sarah requested.”

There were times, however, when they were each wrong and it would have been helpful if the partner had not submitted but had said, in love, “I love you, but before God I cannot do that, for I believe it is wrong.” That would have been a good thing for Abraham to do when Sarah asked him to sleep with Hagar, and a good thing for Sarah to say when Abraham asked her to deceive the Pharaoh.

Jane Hansen, in *Fashioned for Intimacy*, writes about our responsibility as “coheirs” (1 Peter 3:7) and as “suitable helpers” (Gen. 2:20–24). God expects us as wives to be in prayer about choices and to gently submit our opinions to our husbands. He expects us to gently take a stand when we feel our husband is making a choice that is not honoring to God. And He expects us to share our hearts with our husbands: not to manipulate them, but to be as iron sharpens iron.

As women, because of the nurturing nature God gave us, we are generally more open to sharing soul-to-soul than are men, and our husbands may throw up a wall when we try to share with them or probe the depths of their souls. While I have often counseled women that it is unreasonable and inappropriate to expect men to be like women in the way they share, grieve, and comfort—it is also true that we shouldn't withhold our gift of intimacy because their response in the early years of marriage may have been discouraging. Commenting on the phrase “not be afraid with any terror” in 1 Peter 3:6, Hansen writes:

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“Terror” in the original Greek denotes “to scare or frighten” and is perhaps akin to a word that means “to flyaway,” like a bird that hears a loud noise.

As a woman begins to share her heart with her husband—even if she is gentle and kind—he may immediately become defensive and self-protective. Instinctively he may throw up smoke screens of anger and intimidation. These tactics are an attempt to drive her back so as to protect his inner safety. He wants to keep her away from that inner sanctum where he has been able to hide from his feelings and emotions for many years, probably since childhood. If the woman will stay in relationship, though, stay open and not respond by retreating again into her own inner self-protectiveness, life and healing will eventually begin to come forth. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1997, 91)

25. Comment on the above thoughts about sharing your heart honestly with your husband. How might this also apply to friendship with sisters in Christ?

26. A good marriage is the ultimate in friendship. What do you learn about the power of a good friendship from the following proverbs?

A. Proverbs 20:5

B. Proverbs 27:9

C. Proverbs 27:17

How might you apply the above proverbs so that you will be a better wife? If you are single, so that you will be a better friend?

27. What do you think God would have a wife do if her husband is resistant to sharing soul-to-soul?

DAY 5

Heirs Together

Only the Spirit of God could have caused Peter to make the revolutionary statement that he did to husbands, to see their wives as “coheirs.” Stuart Briscoe comments on the term coheirs:

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In the days in which Peter was writing, women were still regarded as property, little better than slaves. The New Testament teaching on the place of women must be seen in this context, and we will realize what a positive, liberating effect it had on the women and what joy it could bring to marriage. By insisting that men see women in Christ, marriage was elevated into a new and glorious position, which we must affirm in our day. Peter insists the husbands see their wives in this light, as inheritors of God's grace. (*When the Going Gets Tough*, [Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1982], 132–133)

28. How does God rebuke or caution husbands in the following passages?

A. Proverbs 5:18–21

B. Malachi 2:13–16

C. 1 Peter 3:7

29. What other observations can you make from 1 Peter 3:7? Look for key phrases, reasons, and warnings.

Tradition says that Peter lived out 1 Peter 3:7, encouraging his wife in her ministry. In *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius reports that Peter and his wife had children and she was actively involved in women's ministries. (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1. 1:1—9:50 [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994], 436)

30. The key word in 1 Peter 3:7 is coheirs. What light does Romans 8:17 shed on this term?

Do you show reverence for your husband as a coheir in the grace of life? Give evidence.

31. Do you support your husband as a father, as a servant in the Lord's work—in the same way that you desire his support for you? Give evidence.

In *Heirs Together*, Patricia Gundry warns against doing the fathering for your husband, though it may seem like a favor. She shares some advice that a pastor's wife gave to the young wives of men at Talbot Seminary:

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When our children were small, I tried to free my husband as much as I could from home duties so he could do his work unhindered. I wouldn't do that again, if I had it to do over. I think I denied him some of the pleasures of caring for his children, getting to know all those things mothers are there to see. (p. 132)

32. In addition to “coheirs,” there are three other interesting phrases in 1 Peter 3:7. The first is: “In the same way.” What do you think that means here, in regard to husbands?

Another intriguing phrase is “live together” (or “live with your wives”), Stuart Briscoe writes:

In contemporary English we sometimes talk about people “living together,” but what we really mean is that they share the same bed. Peter's word has the same emphasis and suggests “living together” with particular reference to sexual mutuality, the sharing of bodies which is an integral part of marriage. (p. 134)

33. Although Peter is addressing husbands, we as wives are also to understand the mutuality of the sexual relationship. What do you learn from 1 Corinthians 7:3-5?

How do you think God would have you apply the above to your life?

Under what condition and for what purpose might a couple abstain from sexual relations? (1 Cor. 7:5a)

Finally, consider the phrase: “weaker partner.” What do you think this means? Why?

Read 1 Peter 3:7 in the New Living Translation:

In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

34. What warning does Peter give to husbands who fail to “treat their wives in an understanding way”? (1 Pet. 3:7b)

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If you are married to a believer, do you pray together? If not, how might you, as a suitable helper, gently initiate prayer? An easy routine recommended by Luis Palau is to simply, at the close of the day, allow the wife to lift up her concerns while the husband supports her. (“*A Biblical Look at the Family*,” cassette tape, Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1984, 1996).

For example:

Wife: Father, help me to be closer to our daughter.

Husband: I agree, Lord. You know why Jenny is so withdrawn right now—please give us both wisdom and favor with her.

Wife: Help me not to be hurt by her silence.

Husband: I agree, Lord. Help us to know how to love Jenny well and wisely.

Then the husband lifts up his concerns and the wife supports him.

35. What stood out to you from this week’s study?

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 3:4–6.

Prayer Time

Following the model above suggested for husbands and wives, huddle in groups of three or four. Each woman should lift up her own concern and allow her sisters to support her. When there is a pause, the next woman should lift up her concern.

Seven

Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

It is sobering to walk through the ruins of the Roman Colosseum, where Christians were thrown to the lions, or to tour the dark, dank catacombs where they hid, and to reflect on Peter's instructions. They died nobly, with gentleness and reverence for God, and the effect was to bring countless others to God. Tertullian wrote: "The blood of the martyrs is indeed the seed of the church." (*Tertullian*, as quoted in Edmund Clowney, 145)

Memory Work

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, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Pet. 3:15–17)

WARMUP

Giving a blessing means, in part, to speak well of someone. Depending on the time your group has, choose one of the following:

- A. Brief Blessing: Go around the room, each woman giving a brief blessing to the woman on her right. For example: "I appreciate Julie's unselfishness. She is always drawing others out in conversation and serving others."
- B. Showers of Blessing: Do the same as above, but after each woman has been blessed, two (at most three!) others may share sentences of blessing about her as well.

A Woman of Confidence

Scripture Study

DAY 1

.....

Like One Big Happy Family

And now this word to all of you: You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. 'Don't repay evil for evil. Don't snap back at those who say unkind things about you. Instead, pray for God's help for them, for we are to be kind to others, and God will bless us for it. (1 Pet. 3:8-9 TLB)

The Bible compares the body of Christ to a healthy family. My sister and I may exchange hurtful words, but she is my sister, and I will always love her and always be there for her. My mother may tell me I need a face lift, but I'm not going to cross her off my Christmas card list. In the same way, we are to give one another grace in the family of God.

1. List the commands Peter gives in 1 Peter 3:8 for achieving the harmony of "one big happy family." Record your reflection on how each command might achieve this goal.
2. Compare 1 Peter 3:8 and 1 Peter 4:8. What key do you discover here for achieving the goal of "one happy family?" What does this mean?

Ethel Barrett tells of a teenager who was always fighting with her mother. After yet another emotional fight, the teenager stormed out, but something made her go back:

My mother was sitting at the kitchen table and her face was all sort of bent out of shape and she was just sitting there with her hands clasped on the table and staring straight ahead. And she looked so sad. She didn't know I was there for a minute, and then I cleared my throat and said it. I said, "Mama, I love you," and it came out sort of strange and I didn't even know my own voice. My mother looked up at me and then she began to cry, with her shoulders shaking and not making any noise. And then it was like some sort of wall was down between us and I was over there by her with my arms around her and I was crying, too. And then we talked a long time and suddenly things that were bugging us about each other didn't seem so awful any more. The important thing was that we really wanted to try to get along. (*It Only Hurts When I Laugh*, [Glendale, CA: Regal, 1973], 152)

3. Often the root problem is not the particular topic of disagreement, but the sense that love is lacking. Can you think of an incident in your life that is similar to the above incident Ethel Barrett describes? If so, what do you learn from this to apply to others?

Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

Is there someone in your family or family of God who needs to hear and see your love?
If so, who—and how will you express love in word and deed?

4. How should we respond to evil? (v. 9)

What two reasons are given?



*When Mercy decides to accompany Christiana on her Journey,
Mrs. Timorous says, "Well I see you have a mind to go a-fooling too."*

The passage you will study tomorrow, which is a quotation from Psalm 34, tells us what God requires of us in the face of persecution and mocking from those who do not believe. How we respond to unbelievers tests our character, for the natural response is anger or defense.

A Woman of Confidence

Memory Work

Begin memorizing 1 Peter 3:15.

DAY 2

.....

The Eyes of the Lord Are on the Righteous

Peter tells us how to respond in the face of mocking, persecution, and trial. Whether this comes from unbelievers or even those who claim to be believers, our response is to be the same. Like Christ, we are to live for that audience of One, committing our case to Him, knowing that His eyes are on us, and that He will make all things right in His time.

5. Read 1 Peter 3:10–12

- A. To whom is this passage addressed? (v. 10a)

- B. What two-part instruction is given in verse 10b?

- C. Find both the negative and positive command in 11a.

- D. What command is given in 11b—and how do the two verbs show the earnestness with which we should obey?

- E. Give an example of how you might apply verse 11 in responding to someone who is speaking or being unfair or unkind to you.

- F. What positive and what negative promise do you find in verse 12?

Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

6. Peter is quoting from Psalm 34. Read this psalm slowly.

A. With what commands does Psalm 34:1–3 open, and what reason is given?

B. What did the psalmist do and how did the Lord respond? (vv. 4 and 6)

C. What does the psalm promise will happen to those who look to Him and to those who fear Him? (vv. 5 and 7)

You may be thinking, Does God really deliver those who fear Him out of all their troubles? My husband feared God and together we cried out for his healing, but he went to be with the Lord. However, I know Steve is healed now and delivered out of all his troubles. The promise does not say that we will be delivered from all our troubles in this life. But truly, we simply move from one sphere to another, and this life as we know it is not the end. Jesus Himself was crucified, yet, as 1 Corinthians 2:9 (quoting Isaiah) reminds us: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.”

D. In Psalm 34:9–10, what exhortations do you find? What word pictures are given?

E. What does the psalmist want to teach us in verse 11?

Martin Luther often said that fearing and loving God were inseparable emotions. I know that when I consider who God is in all His holiness and power, I cannot help but fear trifling with Him. Yet I also know He died for me and has a good plan for me, even if the plan involves temporary pain on this earth, and I cannot help but love Him. It is because of who He is that I simultaneously fear and love Him. One day, when I love Him perfectly, fear will be cast out—but that will not happen until heaven, when I am completely transformed to be like Him.

F. The following section (Ps. 34:12–15) is the section Peter quotes. Have you learned any new insights by seeing it in the context of Psalm 34?

G. What else do you learn about the righteous in Psalm 34:15–22?

A Woman of Confidence

H. How can you see Christ in the above passage?

I. What applications to your life can you make from Psalm 34?

Memory Work

Complete 1 Peter 3:15.

DAY 3

Suffering for Right and Wrong

We should not be surprised by ridicule and scoffing. We shouldn't even be surprised if our faith results in martyrdom. In the 20th century there have been more Christians martyred than in all the history of Christendom. Many think that the situation in America is changing as well—and we will soon move from ridicule to persecution. If we must face severe persecution, if we must face martyrdom, may the words of Peter ring in our hearts.

How we react in the face of mild or severe persecution reveals if we are living for the praise of man or the praise of God. Our reaction may also profoundly impact our persecutors. Our model? Again, it is Jesus. Peter tells us that Jesus died an undeserved death in order to bring us to God (3:18). As we follow in His steps, as we set Him apart in our hearts as Lord, we must be gentle, we must have a clear conscience, and we must be confident of God's care.

7. 1 Peter 3:13–17. What admonitions and encouragements does Peter give to us if we face persecution?

A. Verse 13

B. Compare the above to Luke 12:4–5. What further insight does this give you? Obviously, Christians can and have been harmed physically for their faith, but the promise seems to be that man's harm is limited to the body but cannot touch the soul.

C. Verse 14

D. What further light does Matthew 5:10–12 give to the above verse?

Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

E. Make at least ten observations about your memory verse (1 Pet. 3:15.) List commands. Observe elaborations on how we are to be in carrying out these commands. Define the meaning of words. Look for reasons.

F. If your conscience is clear, what may happen to those who defame you? (v. 16) They may not come to Christ, they may not even repent, but they may be ashamed.

G. With what warning does Peter close this section? (v. 17)

H. Share a time when you suffered for doing right and also, another time when you suffered for doing wrong. What did you learn from each?

8. Read of the first Christian martyr in Acts 6:8–7:60, for Stephen exemplifies the confidence Peter describes.

A. Describe Stephen in the face of his persecutors in Acts 6:15.

B. In Stephen's sermon, he shows historically how people failed to recognize ones sent by God and persecuted them. What examples does he give? (7:2–50)

C. How does Stephen attempt to awaken them to their sin in 7:51–53?

D. Whom does Stephen see? (7:55–56)

E. Who is among the witnesses? (7:58; 8:1)

F. What does Stephen say as he dies? (7:59–60)

G. How does Stephen exemplify Peter's teaching?

A Woman of Confidence

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 3:15 and ask God to give you an opportunity to share the reason for the hope within you.

DAY 4

The Waters of Death and Life

The passage you will study today (1 Pet. 3:18-22) has confounded the wisest of theologians. Martin Luther called it the most obscure passage in the New Testament. Edmund Clowney comments that study of this passage has progressed since Luther's day, but Luther's confession warns against overconfidence (p. 156). Therefore, before you begin, consider a couple of rules for sound biblical interpretation:

Don't press individual phrases too hard, and don't take them out of context. Peter paints in bold, broad strokes. If you press the details, you could come away from this passage saying that "baptism saves," which not only goes against all of Scripture, but against Peter's subsequent clarification (see v. 21).

Interpret unclear passages in the light of clear passages. Some have interpreted this passage to say Christ preached to those in hell and gave them a second chance to be saved—however, that goes against the clear teaching that we do not get a second chance after death (1 John 5:12; Heb. 9:27).

First, let's look at the general context. There is a unifying theme of water in this passage, and water represents both death and life. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, all of the pilgrims must pass through the icy waters of death in order to get to their life in heaven.



Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

Between them and the gate was a deep river, dark and cold, and there was no bridge.

At the sight of the river the pilgrims turned pale, and were silent. The two men said, "You must go through, or you will never get to the gate."

"Is there no other way?" they asked. "Yes," said the men, "but since the foundation of the world only two, Enoch and Elijah, have been permitted to go that way, nor shall any others ever be so permitted until Christ comes again.

Then they accepted the inevitable. Entering the water, Christian began to sink. He cried to his good friend Hopeful, "I sink in deep water; the billows go over my head: all the waves go over me." (John Bunyan, retold by James H. Thomas, 151)

Read 1 Peter 3:18–22.

Peter begins with the example of Christ, which shows the theme of death and life. Then he shows how water represents this theme. He looks back to the days of Noah and to those who stubbornly refused to listen to the Spirit of God being preached through Noah. The water of the flood meant death to the disobedient, but that same water meant life to the eight who put their trust in God when it floated the ark that saved them.

Likewise, baptism symbolizes death and life: death to ourselves and life with God. Just as Christ died and was buried, so must we die (to ourselves and at the end of our lives). Just as Christ was raised, so must we live for Him and know that we too will be raised in spiritual bodies after we pass through the icy waters of death. How wonderful to know we will see our loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord again. They live! We will recognize them, embrace them, and have sweeter fellowship than the very best we experienced with them here.

Read 1 Peter 3:18–22 again.

9. What is the first picture that Peter gives in verse 18?

10. What historical event does he then refer to in verses 19–20? How many people were saved through the water that floated the ark? How many died?

11. How did the waters in Noah's day represent both life and death?

Noah and his family were delivered from that evil age by the judgment, the waters of the flood. Yet the judgment of the flood was only provisional, and the deliverance of Noah but a prefiguring, or "type," of the final and full salvation of Jesus Christ. (Clowney, 164)

A Woman of Confidence

Questions that have puzzled readers are: Who are the spirits in prison? When did Christ preach to them? Theologians have wrestled with that and offer several possibilities. This one is often offered as the most likely interpretation:

Christ's Spirit preached through Noah at the time of Noah to those whose disobedience brought eternal condemnation. [Thus they are in the prison of hell.] (Clowney, 164)

12. How does the water of baptism symbolize both death and life?

13. What does baptism not do according to the parenthetical thought in verse 21?

Lest his readers mistakenly attribute a magical or mechanical power to the sacrament, Peter states that the means of salvation is not performance of the external rite, but what it symbolizes—union with Christ in His death and resurrection. (*The Reformed Study Bible*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995], 1975)

14. Why is it vital that your confidence is in Christ rather than in a sacrament?

Read 2 Peter 2:4–9.

15. Whom did God not spare? (Find 3 illustrations.)

Whom did He spare? (Find 2 illustrations.)

16. Will God deliver you? Give a Scripture from 1 Peter to show the basis for your trust.

Memory Work

Review 1 Peter 3:15. Has God given you an opportunity to share the reason for the hope within you? If not, stay alert!

Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

DAY 5

Arm Yourselves with the Same Mind

Have you ever *known* you were going to have to go through something extremely difficult? Noah knew he faced a flood, but he also knew God had a plan for good. Pregnant women *know* they must go through labor, but many “arm” themselves with a positive attitude, knowing a beautiful baby will follow their labor. My husband *knew* he was going to have to go through a painful death with colon cancer, but he “armed” himself with prayer and with faith that God would be with Him and that the Celestial City awaited. (Steve often asked me to pray that he would glorify God to the end, and Steve did, to his dying breath.) Christ knew He was going to be crucified, but for the joy set before Him, He did it in a way that brought great glory to God. One thing each of us should know, for Jesus warned us, is that for all of our lives in this world, we will face trouble. (John 16:33) Yet, He also encouraged us to be of good cheer, for this world as we know it, is not the end. We are to follow in His steps, for like Him, we are to live for the glory of God, no matter what difficult waters we must go through, for we are, indeed, headed for unimaginable joy.

17. Read 1 Peter 4:1–6.

- A. Whenever there is a “therefore,” it is important to recognize to what the verse is being linked. Here, 4:1 is being linked to 3:18. Write down 1 Peter 3:18.

- B. What good thing was the result of Christ’s suffering, according to 1 Peter 3:18? Who helped Him?

- C. Write down the main exhortation of 1 Peter 4:1. 1 Peter 4:1 could be misinterpreted to mean that Christ was sinful, but that would go against what Peter has already taught us, that Christ “committed no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22). Instead, we know that He suffered temptation, suffered because of the sin of others, but that now that is finished, and He is done with that suffering. Unlike Christ, we are sinful, but we can find victory over sin by arming ourselves with the same attitude Christ had—to live, not for this world, but for the joy set before us.

- D. Describe what our attitude needs to be for victory, according to 1 Peter 4:2.

A Woman of Confidence

- E. What have we spent enough of our earthly lives doing, according to verse 3? What “lusts” does Peter list?
- F. How might our old friends respond when we take a turn, according to verse 4?
- G. What similarity do you see between 1 Peter 4:4 and 1 Peter 3:15–18?
- H. To whom will those who scoff give an account, according to 1 Peter 4:5?
- I. Interpreting “the dead” of verse 6 as believers who have now gone to be with the Lord, what do you learn about what has happened to them?

The Christian may be called to account before an earthly tribunal; his enemies will be called before the tribunal of heaven. (1 Peter, *Word Biblical Commentary*, [Dallas, TX: Word, 1988], 234)

18. Galatians 2:20 teaches a similar principle as found in 1 Peter 4:1–6. Meditate on this.
- A. What does this passage say?
- B. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? To what are we to die? With what attitude are we to arm ourselves to make this possible?
- C. How are we to live? How can we possibly do this?

Set Apart Christ in Your Heart as Lord

19. This teaching is the heart of living victoriously as a believer. Ask the Lord how He would have you apply this. If you are willing, share this in your small group for prayer.

20. What do you think you will particularly remember about this week's lesson?

Prayer Time

Cluster in twos or threes, lifting up your answer to question 19 or another need. Support one another with sentence prayers.

Eight

Called to His Eternal Glory

How are believers who are asked to deny Christ or die a martyr's death able to stand firm to the end? How are believers who face the enormous sorrow of losing a spouse or a child able to not give up? How are believers who face the ridicule of an unbelieving spouse or boss able to keep from responding in anger? They arm themselves with the same attitude Christ had. Their confidence is in a God who exists, a God who has called them for a purpose, a God who will, indeed, make all things right in the end.

Memory Work

Memorize 1 Peter 4:8. Extra credit? Do the whole passage below.

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in it various forms. (1 Pet. 4:8–10)

WARMUP

Share one way this small group has dispensed God's grace to you.

A Woman of Confidence

Scripture Study

DAY I

Called to Dispense God's Grace

Love covers a multitude of sins. If you are irritated with the people around you for little things, then sin in your life is blocking the flow of God's grace. God's love should flow from us like a river, refreshing others. Peter was also trying to prepare the recipients of his letter for persecution—so it was vital that they be united in love.

Read 1 Peter 4:8–11 in the Phillips paraphrase.

Above everything else be sure that you have real deep love for each other, remembering how love can "cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to each other without secretly wishing you hadn't got to be! Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you, as faithful dispensers of the magnificently varied grace of God.

1. As an overview of the above passage, list all the ways you can find of dispensing God's grace.

2. Meditate on 1 Peter 4:8–11 in your own Bible.
 - A. What are we told to do above all else?

 - B. What do you think Peter means when he says: "Love covers a multitude of sins"?

 - C. Proverbs 10:12 also tells us that love covers sins. What contrast is given in this verse? How does this give light to the phrase, "love covers sins"?

When I was in college in my pre-Christ days, I had a roommate for a semester who drove me crazy. Pretty soon I found I couldn't even stand the way she walked across the room. (Poor girl—she certainly wasn't getting any grace from me!) On the other hand, when my dearest friend borrowed my blouse and ruined it with a ketchup spill, I easily forgave her, because my love for her covered her "sin."

- D. What application might you make to 1 Peter 4:8?

Called to His Eternal Glory

In *What's So Amazing about Grace?* Philip Yancey explains that grace is absolutely free to the recipient, but very costly to the giver (Zondervan, 1997, 100). We don't want to forgive when we have been hurt. We want the perpetrator to suffer. That's why grace is amazing and not of ourselves. We must get out of the way for God's grace to flow.

3. What are we commanded to do and how in 1 Peter 4:9?

The Greek word for "hospitality" is *philoxenia*, which means loving strangers, or fond of guests. Hospitality differs from entertaining in that hospitality is a means of dispensing God's grace, whereas entertaining often has selfish motives such as impressing others or seeking a return favor. (*A Woman of Hospitality*, a guide in this series, goes into this in detail.)

4. List a few ways you have seen believers practice hospitality. Why do you see it as hospitality rather than entertaining?

5. What are some ways God's grace has been dispensed to you personally through hospitality? How you could imitate her (or his) example?

6. When someone is preaching or teaching on Scripture, what should characterize his speech if he is dispensing God's grace? (v. 11a)

7. How are we to serve? (v. 11b)

We may be tempted to think that the ministry of the word needs special grace, but waiting on tables, collecting money, or caring for the sick is just a matter of rolling up one's sleeves and getting the job done. Not so, if God is to be glorified by ministry in his name, it must be ministry performed in his strength. (Edmund Clowney, 186)

How could you apply this specifically to your life?

A Woman of Confidence

8. How did you dispense God's grace yesterday?

How could you today?

Memory Work

Begin memorizing 1 Peter 4:8.

DAY 2

.....

Called to Suffer for Christ

Peter warns: Suffering is coming. In fact, the present participle shows it has already begun. (Be not astonished at this burning among you.) Often we are astonished by suffering because we are under the erroneous theology that if God really loved us, we wouldn't suffer. Yet Jesus was loved and called to suffer. If God allowed His own Son to suffer, why not us?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19.

9. When we suffer, how should we respond? (v. 12)

Whether the suffering is due to persecution or sin in the world, Joni Eareckson Tada writes in *When God Weeps*:

God hasn't taken his hand off the wheel for thirty seconds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997, 69)

10. What evidence do you find from the following that suffering must pass through the hand of God?

A. Exodus 4:11

B. Lamentations 3:37

Called to His Eternal Glory



In The Pilgrim's Progress, Faithful continually committed his case to the one who judges justly; even in his martyrdom. Soon a chariot came and whisked him into the clouds to the Celestial City.

C. Amos 3:7

“How can this possibly be?” someone asks.
“Welcome to the world of finite humans pondering an Infinite God.”
(Joni Eareckson, 69)

11. Peter has given one answer in 1 Peter 1:7. Review this. What is it?
12. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 again.
 - A. What kind of suffering is described in verses 12–13?
 - B. What blessings accompany this kind of suffering? (v. 14)
 - C. What kind of suffering is described in verse 15? Have you suffered, in your life, for any of these actions? Be honest and specific.

A Woman of Confidence

D. How are we commanded in verse 16? How might you apply this right now?

13. One reason for suffering is the fact that God is allowing Satan some freedom during our pilgrimage. Of what did Jesus warn Peter in Luke 22:31–32?

Why does Satan have to ask for permission to cause trouble?

Why might God give permission according to this passage in Luke?

14. What was Job's reason for loving God, according to Satan? (Job 1:9–11)

15. How are Satan's accusations against Job and against God answered when believers suffer willingly for Christ?

What impact does it have on the world?

16. With whom must judgment begin? (4:17)

The judgment for believers is not unto condemnation (see 1 Cor. 11:32). It is the fiery trial (1 Pet. 1:7) which refines. (B.C. Caffin, 176)

How different is the purpose of the fire in God's house from the fire of the last judgment!

17. What are we to do in the midst of suffering? (4:19)

Memory Work

Continue memorizing 1 Peter 4:8.

DAY 3

Called to Lead Humbly Before God

When God grants you a leadership position, whether it is as a Bible study leader, a mother, a speaker, or a recording artist—one thing is clear, you are not to become a dictator or a diva. You are not to use your position to take advantage of the weak, but to serve God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and one day we shall all give an account before Him.

18. Read 1 Peter 5:1–5.

A. When Peter appeals to the elders, he gives three descriptions of himself. What are they? (v. 1)

B. With what command does verse 2 begin? What pictures does this bring to mind?

C. Find the three negatives (not) and the three positives (but) in verses 2–3.

D. What promise does verse 4 give?

19. List any leadership positions you have and how you could apply the above. (Take time with this question.)

20. Peter returns to his theme of submission in verse 5. To whom are we to submit?

How are we to clothe ourselves? (v. 5)

Be clothed is a remarkable word. It means to put on a certain article of dress worn by slaves above their other clothing. [Like an apron]. . . Did not Peter's memory go back to that scene in the upper room . . . when the Master had girded himself with the towel, and stooped to the slave's task of washing the disciples' feet? (Edmund Clowney, 195)

A Woman of Confidence

21. How could you clothe yourself with submission and serve others today?

Memory Work

Complete 1 Peter 4:8.

DAY 4

Casting Our Cares on Him

The secret to confidence is to set your hope on God. Satan wants you to concentrate on your earthly cares. Today, begin your personal quiet time by singing the “Cares Chorus.” Every time Satan tries to distract you from the Word of God with a worry, cast your cares upon the Lord and go back to the Word.

22. Read 1 Peter 5:6–7.

- A. What command and promise is in verse 6?
- B. How did you see the above in the life of Christ?
- C. How did you see the above in the life of Peter? (John 18, 21)
- D. What comfort could the promise of verse 6 bring to persecuted Christians?
- E. Where do you need to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God?

23. What command and promise are in verse 7?

24. Peter is quoting from Psalm 55:22. Read Psalm 55.

Called to His Eternal Glory

- A. What is the opening plea of the psalmist? (vv. 1–2)
- B. What terror is he facing and how does he feel? (vv. 3–8)
- C. What makes this care particularly painful? (vv. 12–14)
- D. Find some phrases in Psalm 55 which describe the psalmist’s solution. Give verse references.

Peter is calling for humility in situations of hostility, betrayal, and persecution. Precisely in such situations, Christians are tempted to react in pride . . . [but] Christians can trust the power of the Lord, for his hand is mighty; they can trust the faithfulness of the Lord, for their cares are his concerns. (A. Maclaren, *The Pulpit Commentary*, eds H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S Excell, “1 Peter,” 219)

- E. Is there a situation where you are being treated unfairly and are tempted to react in pride? What should be your reaction and why?

Personal Exercise

Reflecting again on “Casting all your cares on Him, for He cares for you,” list your cares.

- 25. Read 1 Peter 5:8–9.
 - A. With what two commands does Peter open verse 8 and why?
 - B. What three phrases in verse 9 will help us overcome the enemy?

Memory Work

Complete 1 Peter 4:8.

A Woman of Confidence

DAY 5

The God of All Grace

As Peter began his letter, now he closes it, with a prayer for grace to fill his readers' lives, to build Christ-like steadiness and character in their lives, and to give them the confidence that these trials are temporary: ETERNAL GLORY IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!



Christiana is received at the Celestial City with all of the rejoicing that her husband received earlier.

26. Read 1 Peter 5:10–14.

- A. The primary theme of 1 Peter and of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is summarized in verse 10. What is it?

- B. The phrase which is translated “restore you and make you strong” is the same word that is used to describe the repairing of broken nets. As we persevere in trial, God will repair and bring to completion what is lacking in character. How has God done that in your life during this journey through trials? Through 1 Peter? (Be as specific as possible.)

Called to His Eternal Glory

27. Without looking at any notes, what do you think your main take-away will be from this study? How will you be applying this to your life?
28. As you consider the story of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, what stands out to you? Why?
29. What particular impact has 1 Peter 3:1–6 had on you as a woman?
30. What have you learned from 1 Peter which will help you with confidence?
Be specific.

Memory Work

Turn to the index and review your verses.

Prayer Time

In groups of not more than six, each woman should lift up her answer to question 26 and two or three others should support her in prayer. Close with the “Cares Chorus.”

A Woman of Confidence

Memory Verses

WEEKS 1 AND 2

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3–5)

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Pet. 1:6–7)

WEEK 3

Chosen Generation

For you are a chosen generation, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, A peculiar people,
That you should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness, out
of darkness, Out of darkness into His marvelous light, Into His marvelous light.

WEEK 4

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet. 2:21–25)

WEEK 5

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (1 Pet. 3:1-4)

WEEK 6

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (1 Pet. 3:4-6)

WEEK 7

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, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Pet. 3:15-17).

WEEK 8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Pet. 4:8-10)

A Woman of Confidence

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Hymns Index

Cares Chorus

KELLY WILLARD

KELLY WILLARD

I cast all my cares up - on You, I

lay all of my bur - dens down at Your feet. And

an - y - time that I don't know what to do, I will

cast all my cares up - on You.

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A Woman of Confidence

179 Chosen Generation

Words and Music by
JEANNIE CLATTENBURG and RICK POWELL

For you are a cho - sen gen - er - a - tion, A roy - al
 priest - hood, A ho - ly na - tion, A pe - cul - iar
 peo - ple, That you should show forth the prais - es of
 Him Who has called you out of dark - ness, out of
 dark - ness, Out of dark - ness in - to His mar - vel - ous
 light, _____ In - to His mar - vel - ous light.

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Rock of Ages

AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

THOMAS HASTINGS



1. Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in Thee;
2. Not the la - bors of my hands Can ful - fill Thy law's de - mands;
3. Noth - ing in my hand I bring, Sim - ply to Thy cross I cling;
4. While I draw this fleet - ing breath, When mine eyes shall close in death,



Let the wa - ter and the blood, From Thy riv - en side which flowed,
 Could my zeal no res - pite know, Could my tears for - ev - er flow,
 Na - ked, come to Thee for dress; Help - less, look to Thee for grace;
 When I soar to worlds un - known, See Thee on Thy judg - ment - throne,



Be of sin the dou - ble cure, Save me from its guilt and pow'r.
 All for sin could not a - tone; Thou must save, and Thou a - lone.
 Foul, I to the foun - tain fly, Wash me, Sav - ior, or I die!
 Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in Thee.



A Woman of Confidence

Surely Goodness and Mercy

JOHN W. PETERSON
ALFRED B. SMITH

JOHN W. PETERSON
ALFRED B. SMITH

1. A pil-grim was I and a - wan-d'ring, In the cold night of
 2. He re-stor-eth my soul when I'm wea-ry, He giv-eth me
 3. When I walk thro' the dark lone-some val-ley, My Sav-ior will

sin I did roam, When Je - sus the kind Shep-herd found me,
 strength day by day; He leads me be-side the still wa - ters,
 walk with me there; And safe-ly His great hand will lead me

CHORUS

And now I am on my way home.
 He guards me each step of the way. Sure - ly good-ness and
 To the man-sions He's gone to pre - pare.

mer-cy shall fol - low me All the days, all the days of my

life; Surely good-ness and mer-cy shall fol - low

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Surely Goodness and Mercy

D.C. ★ 3

me All the days, all the days of my life. And I shall

dwel in the house of the Lord for - ev - er, And I shall

feast at the ta-ble spread for me; Sure - ly good-ness

and mer-cy shall fol - low me All the days, all the

CODA (after last chorus only)
p *Slowly*

days of my life. All the days, all the days of my life.

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the hymn 'Surely Goodness and Mercy'. It consists of five systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system includes the instruction 'D.C. ★ 3' above the staff. The lyrics are: 'me All the days, all the days of my life. And I shall dwel in the house of the Lord for - ev - er, And I shall feast at the ta-ble spread for me; Sure - ly good-ness and mer-cy shall fol - low me All the days, all the'. The second system continues the lyrics: 'dwel in the house of the Lord for - ev - er, And I shall'. The third system continues: 'feast at the ta-ble spread for me; Sure - ly good-ness'. The fourth system continues: 'and mer-cy shall fol - low me All the days, all the'. The fifth system is a CODA section, marked 'CODA (after last chorus only)' and 'p Slowly', with the lyrics: 'days of my life. All the days, all the days of my life.' The score ends with a double bar line.

★ Opt.D.C. The following section may be reserved for use with final chorus only.

A Woman of Confidence

Leader's Helps

CHAPTER ONE

STRANGERS ON EARTH

Question 6. 1 Corinthians 3:11 makes it clear that “no one can lay any foundation other” than Jesus. So it is Peter’s profession of faith in the Christ rather than Peter himself.

Question 15. Be willing to lead the way, modeling vulnerability and brevity.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PURPOSE OF OUR JOURNEY

Question 8. God the Father elected believers, God the Spirit sanctified them, and God the Son died for them.

Question 11. Our part is faith (though even faith is a gift from God) and His part is to keep us through His power.

CHAPTER THREE

PRECIOUS, CHOSEN, AND BELOVED

Question 3. Malice: harboring evil intent toward someone

Deceit: a subtle form of lying, where you tell a partial truth or withhold truth

Hypocrisy: saying one thing, doing another

Envy: wanting what belongs to another

Slander: telling untruths about another, defaming her character

Question 23C. Looking back, first, was disobedient—because they had been told not to look back. Secondly, it showed symbolically how she was longing for the old way of life instead of trusting God and moving on.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNDERSTANDING SUBMISSION IN THE LIGHT OF 1 PETER

Question 21. 1 Peter 3:1 is a pun, not to be pressed too precisely. The fact that we are to be ready to give an answer in 1 Peter 3:15 shows wives should answer their husband's questions in an attitude of humility. The emphasis seems to be that our lives will be so filled with the power of Christ that it will provoke curiosity. Each situation requires sensitivity to the Spirit, for there is a time to speak and a time to be silent.

CHAPTER FIVE

WINSOME, WINNING WOMEN

Question 7. The phrase translated "not bound" is very strong—it truly means set completely free. She is not bound any longer to the covenant she made, she is set free to marry another. However, if she drives the unbeliever out, God will hold her accountable for that, for He is not mocked. God is holy, but He is also merciful. His heart breaks for the victim that has been abandoned, and truly, He gives her His blessing for a new beginning.

Question 12. A woman should not be afraid to set boundaries when her husband is requesting immoral behavior. She can say, "I love you, but before God I cannot: lie to your boss and say you are sick when you are not; cheat on our income tax; have an abortion; watch pornographic movies . . ."

Question 21. It is important that she see herself as a coheir rather than one of her husband's children. She should pray, research, and seek God—and then gently submit any wisdom she has. She should not give orders or nag.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HIDDEN PERSON OF THE HEART

Question 13. Sarah asked Abraham to sleep with her maidservant, Hagar, so that he could "build a family through her." We can be empathetic with Sarah's choice—for this practice was accepted in this culture and God had not yet made it clear that the promised child would come not only from Abraham, but also from Sarah. Yet God never leads into sin—never asks us to make "a deal with the devil to get over the bridge." The Spirit of God would not have given Sarah peace about this—it was a move that lacked faith and led to all kinds of heartache, not only for this family, but for generations to come. Even if a practice is accepted in our culture, we have a responsibility to be still before God, and to obey only Him.

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Question 15. Examples of Sarah's faith:

A. Genesis 12:1-5

Not only Abraham but Sarah left her country, her people, and her father's house and went to an unknown land.

B. Genesis 13:7-18

Abraham gave Lot first choice of the land—Sarah had to trust God that this would work out for the best.

C. Genesis 18:1-6

Abraham knew he could ask her to help prepare a large meal quickly and she would cooperate wholeheartedly. That kind of response often comes from faith that God is leading your husband.

D. Genesis 22:1-19

If Sarah knew what Abraham was planning to do, this too required faith on her part.

Question 27. She could pray for God to help him overcome his fears, she could affirm when he does, she could model vulnerable sharing, and she could resist nagging.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SET APART CHRIST IN YOUR HEART AS LORD

Question 14. A sacrament cannot save. Only Christ can save. Our faith is only as reliable as the object in which it is placed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CALLED TO HIS ETERNAL GLORY

Be sure to leave at least half of your time for the last four questions in the guide. Go around with at least two of these, giving women the freedom to pass.