

ENDURANCE

1 PETER



Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU) is a Bible-based institution for theological and professional studies. It is rooted in the great commission of Jesus Christ to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” and to “make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mark 16:15a; Matthew 28:19, 20), which is the primary emphasis of Southwestern’s parent body, the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

The purpose of Southwestern Assemblies of God University is to prepare undergraduate and graduate students spiritually, academically, professionally, and cross culturally so as to successfully fill evangelistic, missionary and church ministry roles and to provide quality educational and professional Christian service wherever needed throughout the world.

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PROLOGUE

The students of Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU) have the unique opportunity to enjoy a devotional time together once a week with either the students of their dorm or with just their hall of 25-30 fellow students who are in the same stage of life that they are in. It is during this one hour together that community is built and long-lasting spiritual relationships are developed. This particular devotional time is a time-honored tradition at SAGU that many generations have been able to enjoy.

During the Fall 2008 semester, the Residential Life Department decided to redesign the devotional program so that the students of SAGU could go through a book of the Bible together within the framework of the collegiate school year. This has proven to be a valuable experience for them that has provided the additional benefit of having shared themes within scriptural passages that everyone is discussing across the whole campus and Resident Assistants (RA’s) and Dorm Directors (Dorm Pastors) are leading on a weekly basis. In the Fall of 2014, a devotional based on the themes in 1 Timothy was assembled and printed for the students of SAGU for the very first time. The Residential Life Department at SAGU used this guide as a tool for discipleship groups on campus that we were encouraging students to be involved in to build each other up and to spur each other on to be more like Jesus. In continuation of this practice, this particular booklet is a 24 week (12 weeks a semester) devotional guide based on the book of 1 Peter. The purpose in putting together these devotional guides with writers that the students know and respect (professors, staff members, and administrators), is to inspire students today to be passionate about the living Word of God and to inspire discipleship to expand on campus.

We would like to thank our President, Kermit Bridges and the Administration of SAGU to allow us to compile this work and any future guides for the spiritual growth of our students. We would also like to thank the writers of the individual devotions for taking the time to invest in this project. We are extremely grateful for their endeavors, personal insight, and transparency in sharing their hearts with us. Our prayer is that the Lord continues to enlighten minds as students of His Word and disciple others in the path of Christ, but that we also heed His voice to “make disciples” for His Kingdom

Dr. Lance Meche
VP of Student Development

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER 1:1-2 LANCE MECHE, D. MIN

INTRODUCTION

In verses 1 and 2, Peter writes to God's elect (those in Christ), who were scattered among the 5 areas he mentions. These areas of Asia Minor, which is technically modern-day Turkey, were part of a trade route that also carried the mail and important communications. In this route, there were Christians who had been scattered due to persecution. These exiles were strangers or outsiders in a foreign place who came not only from a different land, but from an entirely different culture where they were having to fit in without losing their identity.

Have you ever moved from one place to a different place and had to learn to adapt to the place you moved to without losing your personhood? You take some things as your own and absorb them into your beingness (i.e. your core nature of how God uniquely made you while simultaneously embracing the ongoing discipleship that the Holy Spirit pours into your life) while at the same time releasing other things that no longer apply to you because you've moved.

You've moved from where you were to where you are now. The thing is, we never really stop moving. We're on the move. We're on the go in order to be where God has called us to be and in order to do that we have embrace where we are now. We may not always like where we are, but God has something for us in the nowness and presence of that place in order to form and reform us if we remain open to His move.

The exiles were in places of unfamiliarity, so Peter writes to encourage them of the living hope that Christ can provide them in the midst of persecution and/or suffering. He reminds them that they had been "chosen through the foreknowledge of God and cleansing of the Spirit to be obedient to Christ and the sprinkling of his blood." There's a trinitarian pathway in this section that's described as. . . "the Father chooses, Jesus sprinkles (saves), and the Spirit sanctifies."

Even though God chose us and the Holy Spirit drew us, we have the responsibility to respond... or not. Sometimes we reach out to God for forgiveness, but neglect obedience. Forgiveness and obedience are two concepts that are in relationship with each other. As we are forgiven by Christ, we follow Christ. Peter isn't condemning the exiles, he's charging them, encouraging them, to live out what is within them from where they are. The same encouragement extends to us...to live out the forgiveness provided to us and walk in obedience to His voice.

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1 PETER
1:3-5
JAMES
CARNELL

LIVING HOPE

Have you ever had a time in your life when you were in a dark place? A place where the struggle was so intense that you despaired of ever making it through the situation? I experienced this in 2001 when Tropical Storm Allison sat over Houston, Texas, and delivered 40 inches of rainfall. We awoke in the night to 2-3 feet of water in our home. We had to evacuate by boat to a shelter, wondering how we could ever recover after losing everything.

After the waters receded, we began the task of removing everything inside to a big trash pile in our front yard. Sitting inside the home early one morning, staring at bare floors and half walls, I reached a breaking point. I felt I had failed as a protector and provider for my family. I knew the Lord was my provider. I knew He said, “I will never leave you or forsake you,” but I felt alone, helpless... and hopeless.

I began to pour out my heart to God, telling Him everything I was feeling, and then it happened! I opened my eyes and saw a single sparrow sitting on my kitchen counter. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing! There was a live sparrow in my home without obvious ways he could have gotten inside. He wasn’t afraid nor flying around, but instead, he just perched there looking at me as if to say, “what is wrong with you?”. At that moment, I heard the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit whisper to me this verse, “What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So, don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” (Mt 10:29-31)

I admit that I began to bawl like a baby at that moment. Peace, comfort, and HOPE came flooding back into my life! My situation had not changed, and my house did not miraculously become repaired. The difference was my perspective changed. He reminded me that my hope, my LIVING HOPE, was not in my ability or strength but in the One who spoke the worlds into existence. Jesus Christ, the risen Savior who suffered, died, but now lives, had my situation entirely under control! The sparrow was just a reminder that He has got this, and EVERYTHING else, under control.

The story doesn’t end there. God was already working behind the scenes on our behalf. The news of what happened began to spread to our friend network, and people worldwide began to send money or give resources to help. Within a few weeks from my sparrow encounter, we had enough funds to rebuild and furnish our home without incurring debt!

My LIVING HOPE proved Himself faithful again! You, too, can trust Him today with every situation of your life and your future because “he has given us new life and a hope that lives on.” (1 Peter 1:3)

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
1:6-7
CHELSEA
UTLEY

JOY IN SUFFERING

Suffering is not something I believe any of us would choose willingly, yet it is an inevitable part of this life and our journey with Christ. Jesus himself took on flesh, became like us, and suffered in the ultimate way so that we may be reconciled to the Father. If Jesus suffered, why would we think that our lives could go without it?

In 1 Peter 1:6-7 it says “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

What does it mean to have joy in suffering?

We can find out when we look to Jesus. He is the ultimate example of what humanity is meant to be. He shows us how to have joy, peace, grace, and love even in the trials thrown our way.

Rather than resisting what is inevitable in life, we can choose to have joy in the suffering. We can choose to press in to Jesus and keep our eyes on God. When we submit ourselves to Him and lay our lives down before Him, what we get in return is a joy that surpasses all understanding. We get His peace, His goodness, and His love.

Joy is a result of deep connectedness to God. Joy persists despite circumstances or situations. Joy remains through trials, suffering, and tribulation because it is a gift from our precious Father through the Spirit. It is in God alone that our joy can be found regardless of what is going on in our lives.

In light of eternity, our present suffering is nothing compared to the joy that is coming.

Trials reveal what is deep within us. They show us how genuine our faith is, where we need to grow, and where we need to be more dependent on God. I believe we are closest to God in our suffering.

Trials and suffering don't always make sense, nor are they fun to walk through, but when we allow them to work within us we can become more like Christ. John 16:33 says “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

As you ponder the words from 1 Peter 1:6-7, take time to think about the following questions as well. May the Lord bring you His peace and give you His joy, no matter the circumstance.

What is a practical way we can have joy in suffering? What does it look like to draw closer to God in our trials?

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
1:8-9
SAMANTHA
MAXWELL

JOY IN CHRIST

Part of being a Christian is believing in a God we cannot see. Believing in the unseen can be difficult for our logical, human brains to comprehend. The world can also be judgmental of our faith. We are asked by Paul to have joy that God is inconceivable to us.

What does it mean for you to have joy in Christ?

Thankfully, we don't have to figure out how to have joy in Christ without any directions. I know I prefer to have clear guidelines. Often, I feel like I don't know what the right thing to do is regardless of the situation. I'm always trying to do what is right and what God wants me to do. The wonderful thing about the Bible is that we can have God guide us in our lives when we are feeling confused. So, what does it really mean to have joy in Christ? What does it mean to have joy in Christ when we feel uncertain or lost by our circumstances?

Paul tells us that to have joy in Christ means to:

1. Love Christ
2. Believe in Christ
3. Rejoice in Christ

Through these things, we see the people, Paul addressed, receiving salvation. They are experiencing this even though, like us, they have never seen Christ in person. This is an encouragement for us that we can have joy in a God that is physically unseen today.

Loving God is the attraction to the preciousness of Christ. Faith is confidence in the reliability of Christ. As I mentioned earlier, the amazing thing about loving Christ and having faith in Him is that He will never leave us hanging out to dry. We know His encouragements and instructions for our lives are in the Bible. Whenever we don't know what to do, we can have joy in knowing Christ provides us the answers in His word.

When I am struggling to find joy in Christ, I turn to this verse: "Count it all joy my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." (James 1:2 ESV). I would like you to consider what verse you can use to remind yourself to have joy in Christ.

How can you practice Christ-centered joy?

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
1:10-12
SHALLEN
SLUSHER

BLINKING FOR JESUS

Picture this, you are a young child in the back seat of the car going on a drive with your family. Then all of a sudden you notice every time that we need to turn, a green arrow turns on to show us the way. You start to think; How does the car know where we are going? Are cars really that smart? My parents must have had a conversation with the car before leaving. That is the only explanation!

Though that sounds silly, as a kid growing up in the nineties, I truly believed that my parents talked to their cars before traveling. Cars were not quite that smart back then. It wasn't until much later than I care to admit that I realized there was a lever to turn on the blinkers. This was a HUGE revelation to me!

I am sure we all have similar stories of revelation that we can all think back on with laughter from when we were kids.

In today's scripture, we read that the prophets spoke of salvation of the Messiah. They searched for the signs of the times. The semiotics that the Messiah would come. However, it was revealed to them that they may never see the fulfillment of these things. They had a revelation that the salvation they were seeking would come to future generations.

A car's blinker is not required for a car to function. We already know where we are going, so why use it? The car turns on when you want it to and stops when needed. Yet, the blinkers are absolutely necessary to help other drivers keep traffic flowing smoothly. We all know how frustrating it is to be behind someone who doesn't use their blinkers appropriately!

As Christians we need to remember we are sometimes like those blinkers. It may seem like we play a small role in God's story, but we are necessary to spreading the message of salvation. The life we lead tells others exactly who we are by the legacy we leave behind. The Old Testament prophets never got to see the Messiah firsthand. But without their greatest efforts to search and signal, the future generations may not have been prepared for Him.

The call that God has given you matters. No matter how big or how small. It matters. You impact the world. You leave a legacy!

Keep blinking for Jesus. Those around you and those who come after you will appreciate it.

As you go through out today, think about these questions:

Am I doing my best to serve God with the gifts He has given me?

How do my actions/words/thoughts portray my relationship with Jesus?

What legacy am I leaving the next generation?

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
1:13-16
CALEB
ESSICK

EYES AHEAD

When I was learning to drive, I had a problem. I would frequently find myself drifting towards cars parked on the side of the road. I was scared to hit them so I would stare at them to avoid them. But, I ended up drifting towards them anyway! I remember my dad teaching me that we tend to move in the direction we are focusing. So when I focused on those parked cars, I started drifting towards them. If, instead, I focused my eyes down the road where I was heading, I did not drift towards them.

This story illustrates a very important point that is just as true spiritually as it is when driving: our focus determines our direction. Peter understood this and includes this idea twice in this passage. The first time is when he says to “set your hope fully on the grace [...] of Jesus Christ” (vs 13). If we set our hope in Jesus Christ and His grace, that is the direction we will head. If, instead, we focus on other things like our past, sin, our career, even ministry opportunities, we lose focus on where we should be heading and start to drift off the side of the road. Just like I had to learn to focus ahead on the direction I wanted to go, we need to focus ahead on God, not the distractions (even the good ones) that come up along the way.

The second time Peter includes this idea is at the end of verse 16 when he quotes Leviticus, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (vs 16, Lev 11:45). In the same way that we should direct our hope towards God’s grace, we should direct our lives towards God’s example. Praise God that we don’t have to figure out how to “be holy” on our own. God could have just called us to “be holy” and left it that, but He gives us more than that. He tells us how to do it: by focusing on Him.

I love the way the ESV starts this passage saying, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action” (vs. 13). If our spiritual life was stagnant, we would not have to worry about where we were looking or focusing. It would be like sitting in a parked car – it would not matter where you looked or if you had your eyes open at all! But this is not the case. We are always moving somewhere spiritually, we just have to choose what direction that is. We choose our focus, not just to sit around and think about where we are headed, but to actually go there. If our focus truly determines our direction than we need to first focus on God and then head towards Him.

Ask yourself:

Am I focused on God or am I focused on distractions along the side of the road?
What steps do I need to take towards God today?

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
1:17-21
GREG
THURSTONSON

THE PRICE OF SALVATION

In the late 1990's, MasterCard started a long-running "Priceless" campaign, which was a series of commercials. In one, we watched a dad taking his son to a baseball game, paying for the tickets (\$28), snacks (\$18), and an autographed souvenir (\$45) with his MasterCard. After listing all the expenses, the commercial stated that the best part of the experience was the real conversation the dad was able to have with his eleven-year-old son, which was "priceless." Their slogan was, "There are some things money can't buy. For everything else there's MasterCard."

Of course, we know we need money to buy things. There are plenty of costs associated with education at SAGU alone: \$774 per credit hour, \$84 per textbook, and \$6 for each latte you buy at the café. However, your cash or credit card cannot purchase some of the most important things in life: true friendship, hard-won life lessons, and most importantly the redemption of our souls. These things are, as MasterCard would say, "priceless."

Dictionary.com defines priceless as "having a value beyond all price." We can agree that the cost of our redemption, "the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect," has value beyond anything we ourselves could pay. Being sinless, He laid down His life for us. In response to this gift, we are to "live in reverent fear" and dedicate ourselves to holiness. We are not to take the sacrifice of Jesus for granted, living however we want, expecting mercy the way some children think money grows on trees.

A mistake many people make is to think that we must live holy lives because we have to earn God's love. However, Scripture tells us that God's love cannot be earned, and neither does our righteousness count for our salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). A life lived fully for God, in righteousness, is an appropriate response of appreciation to what He has given us. It shows God that we don't want sin to separate us from Him; closeness to Him is our ultimate aim, because relationship with Him is our priority.

You've heard it said that salvation is free. But is anything in this life really free? Just like when you're offered a free gift from a company, it may be free to you, but someone pays for it. You may not have to pay the price for your salvation, but someone did.

God loved us enough to pay the price to redeem us, even when it cost the life of His own Son. How much do we love Him in return? Enough to turn from our sin? Enough to live sacrificially? Enough to believe we've been saved by faith?

Ask yourself:

Do I truly believe my salvation is fully paid, or am I trying to earn it?

Am I living my life in a way that honors the sacrifice Jesus made, or am I taking it for granted?

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
1:22-25
JAMES
BRIDGES

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

You may have heard the song “Power of Love” by Huey Lewis and the News, immortalized and featured in the 1985 hit motion picture *Back to the Future*. The song’s lyrics proclaim “and with a little help from above, you feel the power of love.” Am I reaching a little bit for this illustration? Perhaps, but did you know that the Bible addresses “love” over six hundred times, (pulling the averages of the most popular translations) so we know that it’s certainly an important subject, right? In a shifting cultural landscape, love can be a tricky subject to address – to the world, yes – but even amongst fellow believers. It seems that everyone has their own idea of what love is supposed to look like, but what should love between fellow believers look like? For the answer, we must be diligent in our understanding of God’s word.

Peter closes the first chapter by addressing holy conduct among fellow believers. As important as his emphasis is on love amongst believers, he explains that divine love only comes through obedience to the truth (in specifics, meaning the word of God.) Here, Peter is communicating the same principles of Jesus’ teachings in John 13:34. True believers must make the distinction between themselves and false professing “nominal Christians” by examining their love for and obedience to Jesus Christ and their loyalty to God’s holy Word. Once that distinction is made, we must realize that anyone who possesses a living faith in Jesus and remains loyal to the Word of God while standing firm against whatever happens to be the popular thing to do or say in society, is my brother and sister in Christ. As such, these individuals deserve our special love and respect.

Even as we practice loving all genuine Christians, including those church bodies that hold different beliefs than we do, it doesn’t mean that we need to compromise or accommodate our particular Biblical beliefs or doctrinal differences. Christians must never compromise God’s holiness. Love for God and His plans revealed by His Word must dictate our love for others, but our Love for God must always be first. Remember, we are a new covenant people, with God’s word hidden inside us to restore our hearts and renew our minds. Our “Power of Love” comes from our obedience to His truth.

Ask yourself:

What kind of actions can I take in my personal life to better show love to my fellow believers?
How can I apply these principles when carrying out the Gospel?

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
2:7-8
JUAN
PADILLA

THOSE WHO STUMBLE

Growing up I would hear these two words “trust me” pretty frequently. This would eventually go one of two ways. One, it went smoothly and the words “trust me” carried weight, or two, these words fell through the cracks and one time I ended on the ground face planted on the floor. We also know people within our parameters who we can trust and who not to trust. Yet, it never fails when trust is placed on someone who is untrustworthy and causes you to stumble because their words meant nothing at the end of the day.

In 1 Peter 2:7 Peter says, “Yes, you who trust him recognize the honor God has given him. The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone”. Peter walked along side Jesus and knew that he is trustworthy. Despite the challenges that were brought upon Peter, he knew that Jesus was the foundation, the cornerstone that sustain him and God’s people. Shouldn’t we fully trust the one who will always keep his promise?

Why approach a stone that will cause you to stumble? When we lose sight of what is in front of us and what will provide that proper stepping stone that will sustain us and not misdirect us. 1 Peter 2:8 says “And He is a stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they do not obey God’s word and so they meet the fate that was planned for them”. What may be considered right in the eyes of people, can be considered disobedience in the eyes of God. Which leads to the question - What are we putting out trust on? The trust in this world leads to temporary satisfaction, it can trip an individual on the very main thing that was meant to help us.

If we believe in Jesus and obey his word, we come to his comfort, his joy, his love, his grace and mercy and we aren’t put to shame. What Jesus offers can’t be found within our group or mirrored exactly by others, but we do have a choice and a freedom to decide which path we want to take. Both paths lead to something, but why stumble when we can be elevated and have a purpose like no other.

We can all acknowledge that there is no perfect person. We are bound to fail and fall short when we disobey, but if we can recognize it and what we do after can determine the foundation that will help and place us in the right direction that we are destined to be on. Our choices will determine the direction we take, so we must choose wisely.

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
2:9-10
JULIE
PEARSON

CHOSEN PEOPLE

What does the Bible say about Christians? Let's consider 1 Peter 2:9-10, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

God calls us:

- Chosen – God chose us before time began. We can rest in His love for us.
- A Royal Priesthood – We are sons and daughters of the God, the King of all. And, we are members of the Priesthood – spiritual servants to minister to all.
- A Holy Nation – Both the Old Testament and the New Testament encourage us to "Be holy for I (God) am holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:16)
- God's Special Possession – What do you think of being called "God's Special Possession? To me, it makes me very humble and very grateful. Take some time to consider what this means to you.
- He called us out of darkness into His wonderful or glorious light. This speaks of God giving us understanding, wisdom, guidance and lighting our path for the journey we are on in this life.
- Lastly, God called us "His people" and has given us mercy. Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us." We were not His people, but then by believing in Jesus and asking for mercy, God made us His people. Incredible!

A few years ago, a group of us were studying 1 Peter. When we came to these verses, we started praying them over and claiming them for our unsaved family members. As we did this, miraculously, several people we were praying for started believing in Jesus and came to know Him as Savior. We continue to be thankful for this and every time I read these beautiful verses I pray for and think of those who gave their lives to the Lord during that time. I also continue to pray for those who have not drawn closer to God yet.

I encourage you to:

- Believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved. (a daily recommitment)
- Accept what the Bible says about you – 1 Peter 2:9-10.
- Pray for your loved ones to accept this too.

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1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER 2:13-17 LAUREN CRUISE

LOVE = HONOR

1 Peter 2:13-17 is framed around honor. Peter is encouraging the church of Asia Minor to honor those that are in authority over them.

Sometimes honoring those that are in authority can be hard for various reasons such as the lack of agreement we feel with their decisions, the way they treat others, etc. But I think God honors those that love their authority despite what they may feel towards them. God has shown me that Love=Honor.

During the summer of 2014, I became a lifeguard at a local pool where I lived. I was so excited because younger Lauren had always dreamed of becoming a lifeguard. I think Gabriella Montez in High School Musical 2 was the true reason behind this dream!

But my first day was a rude awakening that my first job would not be as glamorous as Gabriella's. My manager was absolutely awful. He would call our lifeguarding team names, spout off rude remarks, you name it and I probably experienced it with him. As I went about that summer, I prayed that the Lord would use me to show His character through my actions. So, every day I would go in and I would serve my boss. I would do each task that was given to me, with a smile on my face and A+ effort. I began to see my work as something I didn't do just for my boss, but something I did for the Lord. I would use the time that I was doing tasks for my boss to pray. I would pray that the Lord would give me the kindness and grace to respond in love even if my boss didn't deserve it. By doing this, it softened my heart towards my boss; allowing me to love him better.

At the end of the summer, my boss said "Hey Lauren, have a great weekend" with a smile on his face. I left almost speechless that my boss who had never once said anything nice to me, told me to have a nice weekend let alone, give me a smile. I was overjoyed!! I felt like God had answered my prayer.

I think there is truth in saying that when we honor our authority figures, God honors us for it. The human in me did not want to put up with the criticism and rude behavior I had to put up with from him, but I did. I tried my best to do it unto the Lord. I wasn't always perfect, but I did try my hardest to honor the Lord. I think that's truly what God wants more than anything, to see his children honor our Heavenly Father in everything we do.

At the end of this passage, in verse 17, it says "Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor". Love and Honor are commandments from God, and maybe you have found yourself in a similar situation where you need God to soften your heart towards your authority figure.

I encourage you to go to The Lord and ask him to:

1. Soften your heart towards your authority figure
2. To give you eyes to see them, the way He sees them
3. To help you honor him through your actions

By doing this, it allows God to be at the center of your situation so that He can transform the hearts and minds of each individual.

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
2:18-25
CLANCY
HAYES,
D. MIN

SLAVES, BUT NOT ENSLAVED

The apostle Paul often differentiates between slaves and masters in his writings. Peter uses the term slave in this passage a bit different than Paul. He chose a word that represents a wider group of people beyond those who had no option but to obey their master. Peter refers to anyone who is under the authority of another person.

Peter is clear that he is addressing Christians. His instructions are designed to help his fellow believers to be faithful witnesses to the One they serve. Peter understands that the way Christians respond to authority reflects the way they view their relationship with the ultimate authority in their lives. If Christians rebel against authority, they are actually rebelling against God.

It is interesting that Peter clearly states that the decision to submit to authority has nothing to do with the way that authority exercises their authority. It is easy to submit to someone who treats you well. The true test of the Christian's faith is the willingness to submit to authority when that person treats you cruelly and unjustly. Peter uses Jesus as his example of a person who was willing to submit when the situation was unfair.

Notice what Peter says about Jesus' reaction to unfair treatment. Jesus did not shout about the way He was being treated so everyone would be aware of how unfair His treatment was. He did not try to change the circumstance by pointing out the fault in others. He didn't even attempt to defend himself. He simply submitted to the authorities recognizing that they would ultimately be judged by God. It takes a great level of faith in God to trust Him during the difficult times. As a student at SAGU, you find yourself living under the authority of a lot of people. You are not a slave, because you are free to leave, but you must grapple with this idea of submission. How you respond to your RA, Dorm Pastor, teachers, coaches, campus security, student leadership, and the administration says a lot about your trust in Jesus. Peter makes it clear that those in authority don't always get it right. Hopefully, those in authority at the University will treat you with Christians love, be fair, and always have your best interest at heart; but this might not always be the case. How will you respond when you feel the rules are unreasonable? How will you react when someone in authority says something you disagree with?

Peter, nor Jesus, want you to be a doormat that everyone can walk on. There are appropriate methods to address unfair treatment built into SAGU's system. Use those systems, but do so with an attitude that reflects the humility and respect that was demonstrated by Jesus.

All Christians are in submission to some authority. We are all slaves of Jesus. Our willingness to submit to authority reflects our trust in Jesus. Understanding this will help us deal with the difficult times when we don't fully agree with those who are above us in the organization.

Evaluate yourself today and ask how you respond to the authorities in your life. How might this change if you viewed these individuals as agents of Jesus? The ways you respond to authority is up to you. Can you trust God in this area of your life?

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
3:1-7
ROBERT
HERRERA

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

During my time at SAGU, I have had the awesome opportunity to compete and coach for the University on the Track and Cross-Country team. I've been blessed to not only become a National Champion myself, but to also coach one of my runners to win their own. Although I will always cherish these accomplishments, I cannot think of anything greater than recently having the privilege of marrying the woman of my dreams, Skyla J. Herrera!

My wife is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. She has always made my eyes sparkle and my heart rumble, but her inner beauty is what ultimately convinced me to pursue her. Her gentle and quiet spirit, respect for herself, and heart for Jesus has been by far, the most beautiful gifts she possesses. This is true beauty; one that never fades (1 Peter 3:3-5). While we courted, it was evident to me that she was submissive to the Lord through being trusting and obedient in her walk. She has been able to transition these traits into our marriage by being trusting and submissive to me as her husband. I have the privilege daily to respect her as my wife, while trusting and obeying in God's authority over us. Our marriage is a constant reminder of what a miracle, and most of all, an answered prayer looks like. I am challenged daily with the opportunity to love my wife as Christ has loved the church. Together, love and cherish each other as you both are a significant gift to each other. Seek to pursue and glorify God as one in your marriage (1 Peter 3:5-7)

Today, you may find yourself in a season of exhaustion, confusion, and even lividity towards your spouse. Through this season, remind yourself and each other of the love Christ gave for you. A love so great to be crucified for us while we were undeserving of it. At times, we may get stuck in the heat of the moment, whether that's an argument or disagreement. Through these trying times, Satan aims to create division and disparity in your marriage. Remind each other that you are on the same team, regardless of what or who is at fault. The ultimate goal is to bring glory to God through your marriage. I challenge you to seek a love that is sacrificial, merciful, and selfless.

Questions/Reflection:

Husbands/Wives

- How can you be loving/serving to your wife this week?
- How can you be more loving/trusting to your husband this week?
- How can you better glorify God in your marriage?
- How can you be more loving, respectful, and intentional this week?

Singles

- Are you seeking to grow more in your inner or outer beauty?
- Are you pursuing someone who is seeking the Lord?

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
3:8-12
JOSH
UTLEY

GOD'S CALL

Peter begins to close his letter in this passage. While he starts off giving instruction to the “elect exiles of the Dispersion”, this passage quickly shows us the sobering reality of suffering for righteousness and the hope of vindication in Christ.

v. 8-12: Peter commands we have 5 qualities that are going to be key when walking through times of suffering:

Unity of mind, Sympathy, Brotherly love, A tender heart, A humble mind

When we face evil, our response is blessing. (“Bless those who curse you.” – Luke 6:28)

Peter then draws from Psalm 34:12-16, showing us that when we sow the seeds of righteous living, we’ll reap the harvest of loving life and seeing good days, though bad days might happen along the way.

v. 13-16: Peter’s question here shows us the mentality of someone zealous for doing good. Though harm may come to us, there’s nothing that can harm the Kingdom.

“... even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake...” Some versions have this as “suffering for doing what is right”. Both mean the same, and neither show us what that “suffering for righteousness’ sake” looks like. Nonetheless, Peter shows us to not be troubled by, or afraid of, those who try to bring suffering on us: honor Christ as holy, and always be prepared to give a defense for the hope in you. He urges to do the latter with gentleness and respect.

v. 17: Here, we come to another turning point of thought, and one that is an especially difficult pill to swallow. It’s better to suffer for doing good, if it’s God’s will, than for doing evil. Sometimes it’s God’s will for us to suffer for doing good. That sounds wrong, but Peter’s quick to show us how we partner with Jesus in the midst of suffering.

v.18-22: Christ’s suffering brings us to God. And we’re brought to new life from our spiritual death through the suffering, redemptive work of Christ. There’s a lot of debate around the verses concerning Noah, but Peter makes it clear that baptism is the overlap with both our story and Noah’s. Through Christ, we are saved through the waters of judgment, just as Noah and his family was saved from the waters in the ark. Our baptism in the resurrection saves us. Going into the water isn’t about removing dirt from the body, but is symbolic of the saving power of Christ.

Ponder these questions on your own or discuss them with friends:

Circle back to verse 8; with our greater understanding of suffering, why are those 5 qualities so important in the life of the suffering Christian?

What does ‘suffering for righteousness sake’ look like in our context?

What kind of defense should we be ready to give for the hope in us?

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
4:1-6
TIFFANY
WEAVER

LEG DAY

I'm not one of those people who thoroughly loves to work out. I'm more the type of person who endures the workout, who begrudgingly makes it through a workout and the type a person who skips workouts when it's not entirely convenient to get all hot and sweaty. I'm not a 'gym rat' but my brother is. He loves it. He works out twice a day if he can schedule his day that way. I've seen him push his body in a workout to the point of vomiting. I think it's insane but he sees the purpose of the pain. I, on the rare occasion, have worked out with him and have had him coaching me through the workout. When I get ready to quit, he repeats something that always keeps me going. He says "This is the point in the workout that it becomes a mind game. Your body can do more. You just have to own your thoughts."

My brother's workout mantra quickly came to mind as I was reading 1 Peter 4. Paul says "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose..." This is a mind game. It's a decision that disciples of Christ must make when considering their journey through this life. It's not in our nature to want to walk into suffering. Jesus himself had to make the decision to suffer: "No one takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:18). We're built to avoid suffering if we can. Yet, Paul calls us to suffer in this verse. Jesus- the creator of the universe and Savior of the world- chose suffering as his earthly job and called us to take up our cross and follow him and in doing so, find real and everlasting life. Paul highlights our purpose is to suffer with him.

This is about the time in the workout that I set the weights down and walk my sweaty self to my car and leave. This is when I quit the workout. But this, what Paul is calling us to do, too is a mind game. It's owning our thoughts. It's choosing to lay down our lives, just as Christ laid down his life. When Paul calls attention to this moment he says to "arm yourself with the same attitude Christ had" towards suffering. The question is, what was Jesus' attitude towards his suffering? Possibly the clearest picture of the attitude Jesus took on regarding his suffering is seen when Jesus is praying in the garden. He steals a moment away from the disciples to pray and in his moment of solitude. Jesus is heard crying out the Father to please "let the cup (of suffering) pass" from him (Matthew 26). Jesus knew the suffering he was walking towards. Moments after asking for a second plan, Jesus paints a clear picture of his attitude towards suffering; Jesus says "nevertheless, your will, not mine, be done." (Matthew 26) Submission. Jesus looks in the face of suffering and submits to the will of the Father. This is the attitude Paul is calling us to adopt towards our own suffering. Paul is calling us to choose to suffer and to make a clean break from sin. This comes down to denying our flesh and our worldly desires. Those desires that do not aid us in our run toward Christ but rather distract and entangle us as we try to run the race.

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
4:7-11
ABIGAIL
CRUZ

CHRISTLIKE SERVICE

When serving in a posture of Christ, three things are necessary: prayer, love, and hospitality. When you genuinely discover the goodness of God and the grace he has for you, these three things become more natural.

Prayer is a powerful thing, it heals, it moves mountains; it's truly a powerful thing. A disciplined prayer life is one where it challenges yourself and covers other people. When we cover not only ourselves but our friends, family, and neighbor in prayer, evidently, you are doing a Christlike service for them. Praying for someone in private is not boastful; it is something you secretly do between you and God. It is something that's not asked out of you or an obligation. It is out of service and the goodness of your own heart. I challenge you to serve others in your prayer life today.

The next of the three is love; love is vital in transforming one's situation or attitude. Love transcends beyond all understanding in its power to change one's life. When we choose to love a person, it's powerful, forgiving, caring, and so much more. We are called to love one another as we love ourselves. A Bible commentator named Wayne Grudem once said, "Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offenses, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound – to Satan's perverse delight." Love changes atmospheres! When we begin to love people in the same room as us, we change the room. I challenge you to love those who are around you today.

Hospitality comes at a cost of your own expense, whether it's time, effort, comfortability, or money, hospitality takes sacrifice and action. Thinking back to when someone was hospitable to you, how did that make you feel? Loved, accepted, cared for? In your daily life, how can you mirror that to someone else? It doesn't need to be in the same way. When we use the gifts and abilities God has given us to care for another person, it changes someone's life in a way where not only your love but God's presence is unforgettable. If you are good at cooking, comforting, painting, or even hugging, that is what can be used to mirror hospitality. I challenge you to find what you can use to be hospitable to someone today.

You can pray, love, and be hospitable to someone today. Choose to serve other people in the light of Christ. You may be surprised by what God can do through you today.

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
4:12-19
JOSH
MARTINEZ

CHRISTLIKE FAITH

Growing up in a Christian household, I was taught and brought up in the church. My parents were firm believers of Christ, and were senior pastors in a few locations across the United States. Although they were doing what God was calling them to do, I found myself struggling at times to understand why God had us moving every couple of years due to my parent's ministry not panning out the way they envisioned.

Not only was it difficult moving from state to state every couple of years, but the personal process of moving from school to school was hard for me to make lasting friends was tough at times. Although having faith that God was doing His work in our lives, it was hard to see it, and growing older into high school made it harder than ever to stand firm in who God was to me.

Sharing my faith with those around me lost me certain friends, which was very valuable at that point in my life. The social acceptance and disapproval of my peers waivered my faith after seeing the emotional toll of the church planting my parents were experiencing. I began to shy away from sharing who God is to my peers since I did not want to be viewed as someone who was weird or too religious. Even though I grew up in church and with Christian parents, I needed to find my own faith and relationship with God in order to make it through the attacks the enemy was threatening me with.

After an encounter with the Lord at my youth group, and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit my freshman year of high school, I was a changed person. I not only knew who God was to me, but I understood who God was to humanity as a whole. I understood that it was not enough to say I knew God, I needed to actually learn and talk to God myself. And, after consistently reading my bible and spending alone time in prayer every night, the only person I cared about what they thought of me was God. No one else mattered. Who cares what they think?

Throughout the rest of high school, I made strides to share my faith with others and bring more people to my youth group. Even if they rejected my offers of invitation, I would return to my room at night in prayer and continually praise God for who he is and who he will always be.

In 1 Peter 4:13, it says, "But rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his Glory is revealed."

How often do you find yourself rejoicing to the Lord? And, if you do so, are you rejoicing AS MUCH as you are suffering for the Lord?

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
5:1-4
ALYSEN
RALSTIN

CHECK YOUR MOTIVES

You are called to love and be loved in community with those around you. This is one of the primary reasons we meet together for church services and/or small groups. It's about bringing believers together so they can sharpen one another, serve one another, and ultimately love one another. In this passage, Peter is specifically speaking to elders in the church. He is championing them to take care of "the flock". Meaning, fellow believers in their community. More so, he calls them out. He essentially has them check their motives.

Even if you are not an 'elder' in the church, this message is still for you. There are several other passages in the Bible (1 John 1:11, John 13:35, Romans 13:8, etc.) in which God calls us, regardless of age, to love and care for those around us. With that calling being placed on each and every one of us, I think we all need to check in on our motives every once in a while.

Have you ever found yourself dragging your feet when it comes to serving others? Have you ever said, "ugh, people are the worst"? I know I have. I mean, sometimes I'M the worst. We are people. We are complicated and imperfect beings. We mess up, we struggle, and we don't always feel up to the challenge of our calling. We often get stuck in our own head about whether someone is deserving of our care, or on the flip side, maybe we question whether what we can give them is enough. We might even ask, what's in it for me? So, what can we do when we catch ourselves feeling stuck in these thought traps?

We have to check ourselves! We have to challenge the way we think of the people we're supposed to be caring for, supposed to be loving. It's easy to fall into grudgingly or compulsively caring for others when we think of them just as that, others. Or, when we only identify them based on traits we don't like. But what if we thought of them as God's child? What if we called them Gods beloved? What if we remembered that God specifically set aside time to create that human piece by piece; that He uniquely designed them and knew them before they were ever born? And THEN after spending all that time on them, He entrusted them into YOUR care. Would we speak differently then? Would we speak differently if we also remembered those same things about ourselves? God calls you beloved.

We have to think beyond ourselves. Not everything is about us. Sometimes caring for others is HARD, but why do we do it? We do it because we are eager to serve GOD. If you put this practical application to good use there may be days when you feel like you're lying to yourself or being "fake" because you are having to force yourself to think these positive things. It's not fake. It's PRACTICE. If you, an imperfect human, want to live out an example of God's perfect love it's going to take plenty of self-discipline and practice. Just because you're not instantly good at something doesn't mean you shouldn't or can't do it. Does this mean you won't have off days? No, but it does mean you are capable of pushing forward even when it's hard.

NOTES

1 PETER ENDURANCE

1 PETER
5:5-11
ALEXIS
PURSLEY

HOLD STEADY

“Worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere.” Back in 2017 when I was only 27 years old, my husband of 7 months passed away unexpectedly. It was devastating and surreal and I found myself in a season of life I didn’t want or ask for. My husband and I had made plans, weeks before, to move to another state for an incredible opportunity he received. So, we quit our jobs, turned in the keys to our apartment, loaded up our moving truck, and began our journey to our new home. When he passed during our trip, my life was turned upside down in the blink of an eye. I had nothing—no job, no house, and no husband. Yes, this time in my life was so sad and so hard, but I don’t share it to make you feel sad in this moment—I share it to give you hope.

In this passage of Scripture, we are reminded to stand firm and planted in God, casting our anxieties upon him. The question is: how do we stand firm when the storms of life come at us and attempt to throw us further away from Him? The answer is simple: remind yourself daily of who God is and the promises He has spoken in His Word. Sure, this is easier said than done, but there is power in speaking the name of Jesus and verbalizing His promises over your life and circumstances. Whether you are overwhelmed at how you will pay your school bill, how you will make friends, what you will do after college, or how your family will stay together, you can speak the promises that remind us that He is faithful, He is enough, and He is always with us. We have no reason to fear and waiver in our faith. It won’t help us to worry about tomorrow because we know that won’t lead us to a healthy place.

It is important that we also notice how, in verse 5 of this passage, we’re reminded to humbly submit ourselves to our elders and one another. There is wisdom in learning from others and seeking Godly counsel as we strive to stay grounded and walk through the various seasons of life. In our world right now, there are a lot of things trying to drive us into a fear-filled life where we lean more on the world and less on a God that is ever-present. That season of my life when everything seemed to be in disarray led me to a place where I humbly relied on God to sustain and carry me. What’s amazing is that I can look back and see how God moved and provided for me each day. In a practical sense, I wrote Scriptures down on notecards and had them in my car and on my bedroom mirror where I could read them daily. And, you better believe it, I had worship songs playing constantly. Why did I do all of that? I did it to remind my soul daily that God is in control and that I could (and can!) stand firm knowing that His promises are true and will never change. This gives us hope!

Ask yourself:

Question 1: Right now, what situation come to mind that has you worried or anxious?

Response: Write down a promise God has spoken in the Bible that speaks to your situation(s).

NOTES



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