



# Homeward Bound

**Week 4**

**1 Peter 3:8 - 4:19**

## Week 4 | Day 1

Almost everything in life is about attitude. Poet and statesman, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, once said: “A man sees in the world what he carries in his heart.” 10-time national championship winning coach John Wooden viewed attitude this way: “Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.” Life isn't perfect and no one we'll ever meet is perfect, but there is a perfect attitude to possess when walking alongside all the imperfect people like us.

### Be sympathetic and humble 1 Peter 3:8-9

So, if we began each new relationship with each imperfect person we'll meet with this one simple assumption, it would make the reality of others' imperfections much easier. If we just said to ourselves: “I know this person who could become my friend is broken. There is something unfinished in them that will turn up soon enough and that's OK, because they're going to find the same thing in me soon enough, too,” we would make our lives a whole lot easier and relationships a whole lot less strained. I know I've done it: I stupidly act shocked when somebody acts like a human inevitably does (like I have a thousand times) and I'm impacted negatively by their brokenness. Then, I get angry at their betrayal, their insult, their shortcomings, whatever it is. But, I'd do myself a solid (and them, too) if I would just anticipate their humanity showing up and be ready with a huge dose of grace instead of an attitude injury. I don't mean we should “anticipate” it as a cynic might, but as a compassionate counselor might. Or, better, as Jesus might. As the Father in the story of the Prodigal Son did. Offense is always just a

When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow.

Romans 12:15 TLB

matter of time when we are rubbing up against other people. Where there's motion, there's friction. So, if I'm not wrong to expect conflict or difficulty with others, then I could only be wrong to be over-offended by it when it shows up. But instead of getting angry, Peter suggests we become more “sympathetic . . . compassionate and humble” (3:8). *Sympathes* (soom-pah-THACE; the root of this translation, ‘sympathetic’) is the word used here and it's the adjective form of the Greek verb *sumpascho* which is to suffer or feel pain together. Instead of getting angry about feeling wronged, if we just thought of it as feeling their brokenness with

Now finally, all of you should be like-minded and sympathetic, should love believers, and be compassionate and humble, <sup>9</sup> not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you can inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For the one who wants to love life and to see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit, <sup>11</sup> and he must turn away from evil and do what is good. He must seek peace and pursue it, <sup>12</sup> because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their request. But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil.

1 Peter 3:8-12 HCSB

Blessings are  
Heaven's  
counter-punch

own brokenness and our victimization by it.) We should just **mourn the sin instead of moaning over the sin**, get me? To just feel the pain of brokenness with them, mourn over whatever pain must be at the root of their choices, and to just stay humble about it. But why adopt such an attitude towards others? Because they have to do the same thing with us when we're the ones painfully unaware of our frailty and grating qualities and hang-ups. And because the Bible commands it.

### **Seek peace and pursue it** 1 Peter 3:11

Connected to the above encouragement to be people with a grace-filled attitude is another directive: to **seek peace out: to intensify our exploration for peace everywhere**. To become the Christopher Columbus searching out whatever 'Land, ho!' we can get our spyglass on so we can plant even the smallest flags of Heaven's peace in others' lives. In the midst of the conflict. In the middle of disagreement. When they hate you, still you are looking for where Peace is.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:18 **ESV**

### **Give a blessing without expecting one in return (and, return, it will)** 1 Peter 3:9,12

The Apostle Peter suggests a paradigm-shifting idea to us: Don't pay back "evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this" (3:9). We've all run into someone like this, we've worked with someone like this . . . heck, we've all BEEN someone like this: there are times when we're all looking for a fight. The someone on the other end of the that fighting attitude, frankly, is incidental. Oh, yes, we'll find whomever that day's or that season's sparring partner will be, but, let there be no mistake: there are times we've decided to be an enemy spirit looking for a rival. Woe be to the one who crosses us! What gets our hackles up? What kicks us into gear? They cut us off on the road, they cut off our words. It may not take much, but we'll show up to a rubberband gun fight with 10 nuclear warheads and our own 101st Airborne Division of friends who'll maim, fight, and kill for us to finish off the wounded. But God commands us to, instead, return blessing to insults. **Blessings are our Heaven's counter-punch**. Heaven, one day, will be void of all insults, so it means it's not in the Christian arsenal of how Community happens. Consequently, if it's not a weapon of Heaven's love—if Heaven refuses to have it be an attitude or tactic used THERE—what on Earth would tell us it's viable for us HERE? So, if they insult, we bless. If they attack, we take it as a chance to be humble. If they criticize, we tell others of their incredible value. Jesus canceled out "an eye for an eye" when He commanded us to "turn the other cheek" to "pray for your enemies" and to "love your enemies." To "bless" everyone means to seek their highest good.

**Who do you need to "counter-punch" with love and a blessing today?**

## Week 4 | Day 2

This life isn't easy. Being a Christ-follower certainly doesn't make it any easier, either. And, depending upon who you are, how you live and how close to Christ-likeness that lifestyle is, and where you live, the degree of difficulty can be even greater. Persecution brings great heat to Christ's Church worldwide. While Christians in North America do not feel the hottest part of that heat as much as other areas of the world, we still need to understand it and also financially and emotionally support those who are going through the more intense conflicts. But no matter the temperature of our current level of persecution for following Jesus, we have instructions:

**Don't fear or worry about suffering. Christ walked straight through it and He was vindicated in and with Glory.** 1 Peter 3:14,16,18,22

The two most oft-repeated phrases God uses in the collective Bible are "Do not be afraid" and "I am with you." This use of repetition must mean something about God's understanding of our human heart and our prone-ness to fear and worry. And, one who would know jailings, beatings, excommunication, and even death, Peter still says, **don't become tarasso** (tuh-rah-SOH, v. "to be agitated") by fear of persecution or even during persecution itself (3:14). Along with looking our fears in the eye, by use of the term tarasso, the Apostle encourages us not to become agitated—a word picture of what happens when we chop our hands in and out of water in big ways. The waters are stirred, everyone ducks our flailing, and there is the opposite of calm.

So, simple enough, right?! Just don't worry or fear. Ahhhh! Problem solved! ("Facetious much, John?") No, how do we do this, Peter? Well, he said under inspiration of God (not only to write these words but to also live these words): "This is how I stem my fears and calm my inner spiritual-choppiness: **I remember Jesus' sufferings.** 'For Christ ALSO suffered'" (3:18–NIV, HCSB, ESV). Jesus made it through His persecutions and there's been no greater suffering than His, ever. So, to soothe us, Peter connects our suffering and Jesus' suffering. Now, he's not minimizing our pain or sacrifice at all (as if to say, "Geez, whiner, just cowboy up and take your lumps like a man. Jesus did SO MUCH MORE THAN YOU!") No, Peter isn't saying our pain in suffering and/or persecution aren't real, but that we are to lay our pain into His.

And, furthermore, Peter reminded himself how necessary and

Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. <sup>16</sup> But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. <sup>17</sup> Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! <sup>18</sup> Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit . . . <sup>22</sup> Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept His authority. . . . <sup>4:15</sup> If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs.

1 Peter 3:13-18, 22; 4:15 NLT

uncompromisable Christ's sufferings were in the scheme of loving and redeeming the world. Suffering isn't something to avoid, but one of Jesus' expectations of us on how love is bled into the world as He bled it into others (2:21). **Bleeding is a fact in Christianity.** Suffering and sacrifice aren't just something we expect done for us. We enter it when we come by way of the Jesus Door to Heaven (Matthew 7:13-14).

## Glory is just a matter of Obedience + Time

But—and here's a bit of the relieving news about re-living Jesus' Good News—while there's blood at the tip of the whip, there's also glory at the end of it.

Peter not-so-subtly says, “NOW Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God” (3:22). “Now” really sticks out. That was then. This is now! If we believe this whole thing is about our Home in Heaven, Glory is just a matter of Obedience + Time. Glory is coming. Pain, sometimes, paves the road.

### Christ died to bring us ‘safely home to God’ 1 Peter 3:18

OK, what?! How does Peter intend to explain all of the bloody mess he says we should be expecting and still, straight-faced, say God is bringing us “SAFELY home” to Himself and Heaven? It must mean that the train ride we might call suffering on this side of eternity won't be what we'll call it on the other side. We must be set to discover that pain will have been the safest route to God and Glory. “That's cool, John. But I'm just gonna let you do that route. Give me the slow boat version. Glory isn't that big of a deal to me.” Yes it is. And it will be to you a whole lot more than you realize There. “Glory” won't be just some kind of boast where you and I flash fresh heavenly jewelry, a medallion audaciously hung down into an unbuttoned shirt, and fast cars with a golden stick shift. No, **our glory will be people.** All the people we safely brought Home with us to Heaven. Real people being brought into Heaven's Community is the glory of Jesus' bleeding . . . so it must correlate directly to our own, too. So, any of our blood necessarily spilled to get everyone there won't be a pain to us when we get Home even if it might feel like it here. Blood will be our story. Yeah, no one will want a blah-blah-blah story when we get Home. I paraphrase one of my favorite thinkers who said, “No great story ever ended: ‘And then he got his Audi. The End.’”

Whatever bloodshed you'd have to spill to save your son. To save your best friend. To save your favorite teammate. To save your mother. You'd do it. And you'd do it yesterday. Well, everyone is someone's son. Someone's best friend. Someone's favorite teammate. Someone's mom. If we viewed Christianity as a Bloodshed Belief System, we'd expect it more and probably enter it more. But somehow, Church-ianity is in danger of becoming a self-help religion. Becoming a what's-the-bare-minimum-I've-got-to-do enterprise. But when it's not about me, it's the most me I can acquire. Because it brings ME to US. And that's the very definition of Home. And of Heaven.

What do you need to do as a result of this passage: fear less or bleed more? Why?

Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit. <sup>3:19</sup> So He went and preached to the spirits in prison—<sup>3:20</sup> those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. <sup>3:21</sup> And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . . <sup>4:5</sup> [We all] have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead. <sup>4:6</sup> That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead—so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit. . . . <sup>3:12</sup> ‘The Lord turns His face against those who do evil.’

**1 Peter 3:12, 18-21, 4:5<sup>b</sup>-6 NLT**

## THEOLOGICAL BONUS STUDY

There are things in the Bible that even the longest-living theologians—for all their efforts and humble pursuit—can never quite get on top of:

—Ideas from Scripture we try to grasp that have eternal/infinite qualities that finite minds can only appreciate at conceptual levels—but can't understand comprehensively. (Yet.)

—We're asked, also, to observe things mentioned in the Bible that only get mentioned once or twice in all of Scripture. So, as a result, there's little way to generate a more comprehensive view of that one-off doctrine or idea. We're left to just read it as it's in the context it's in. If it remains murky there, then it remains mostly mysterious.

—Lastly, there are even things that might appear to the casual observer like contradictions in Scripture, though wiser students of God's Word realize these dynamic truths more fully inflate for us the larger view of a total theology. (Think of how a helium balloon works: helium is pressing in ALL directions inside the balloon, not just one. Thus, it isn't “contradicting” itself, but giving us the fullest view—that makes it rise the most. That's how theology works and why we pursue ALL of the Bible to gain a comprehensive picture of God in His self-description and presentation of the World by way of the words He gave to us.) Doctrine makes us rise.

Now, the larger set of verses we see in this reading contains a couple of these complexities. But we won't be afraid of them! We'll just let God tell us what we can hear!

### Jesus preached to the spirits in prison

1 Peter 3:19-20; 4:6

Most theologians I've had the chance to read have displayed little courage to touch these particularly confusing verses. Martin Luther—seeing that the Bible had never fully dealt with the things Peter introduces here (and that, on top of that, this constituted a doctrine packed into such a short span of explanation)—once humorously admitted that there was no “more obscure passage . . . in the New Testament, so I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.”

A straight-forward reading of 3:19-20, & 4:6 would ascertain that upon Jesus' death by crucifixion, His spirit was awaiting the Resurrection from the dead by the Holy Spirit three days later. So, He

somehow/somewhere preached a sermon to beings who had performed some kind of special rejection of Him. So, **what did Jesus preach? Salvation? Or judgment? Was Noah so bad of a preacher that even Jesus admitted these poor people deserved a second chance?! Who is Christ preaching to** during this time? What's going on here? Are these people in an eternal suspension of sorts—limbo or purgatory? How had they had “disobeyed God”?

Some theorize it's rebel angels who had taken as wives human women even though this kind of thing was forbidden (Genesis 6:1-6) and it broke God's heart. So God comes to complete the judgment of these beings.

Is it, rather, everyone who had rejected Yahweh before the Flood, but now God is opening the door for another response from them?

Is it everyone who had been temporarily held in Hades as they awaited God's big “once for ALL time” death on the Cross which offered forgiveness now to everyone? (It makes sense that forgiveness couldn't be offered if death had not been fulfilled to pay for Humanity's consequence for sin.) Now that the Debt was paid, everyone's set free!

Or, is it a simpler concept—a Cosmic Yell to all the “spiritual rulers and authorities” of the entire Spiritual Realm that He had won Eternity's Ultimate Battle? In this way, 3:19-20, 4:6 may not be describing a sermon, exactly, that Christ “preached” in some lowly place like Hell or Hades, but a Victory Yell that God shouts to the whole Universe that the Darkness had not won, but that He had done everything He needed to do to bring everyone back Home?! [See Colossians 2:13-15.]

**You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. <sup>14</sup> He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross.**

**Colossians 2:13-15 NLT**

What was His message—no matter when it happened or to whom? No one knows. All we know that we're not sure of the audience or the exact time frame, but we are the clear message proclaimed: the power of death, hell, sin, and evil had finally been broken by Him at the Cross! And that everyone has an eternal opportunity to decide they can now “live forever with God in the Spirit” (4:6). No matter what, God wins! And, furthermore, it reveals that God follows through for and on everyone.

**As the Flood revealed the need for Noah's Ark, Baptism reveals the Death we would have had without Salvation** 1 Peter 3:21

But, not to have the first obscure doctrine of preaching to the spirits be the only controversy, Peter hits us with another one: **Does BAPTISM save us like Noah got saved through floodwaters during the Great Flood** described in Genesis 7-8?

Well, let's pause a second, because if there was a controversy to rattle Christianity, this has been and would continue to be the biggest of all. For almost every denomination or sect of Christianity, **how and why we baptize** is of the most colossal importance. So, let's take a breath and think about these words of Peter's really closely. Here's what he wrote: “[the Flood's]

water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you.” So, there you have it, some theologians and church groups say. “Baptism is what saves us! Fill up the tub. Warm up the bus to the pond. Let’s get to dunkin’ or sprinklin’!”

But hold on. Hold your hoses. In the Flood, the waters didn't save anybody, did they? The Ark did. The waters were, in fact, the force that destroyed all Flesh outside the Ark, weren't they? The water judged and destroyed the Human Condition. And this is vital to understand when we're thinking about Baptism's dynamic in “saving” us. The choice to be baptized finishes off what was already on a path of death in our life: our sinful and broken Human Nature (or what the Bible sometimes expresses with the word “the flesh”). Let me explain. When one is immersed by the act of baptism, there are two people being symbolized in the act:

**1. Jesus is symbolized in the way we are baptized.**

(a) **Jesus was alive and perfect.** [Standing up prior to immersion under water.] (b) **He was crucified on the Cross, died, and then buried for the sins of the whole world.** [Laid down—submerged under the waters.] And, (c) **Jesus' Resurrection, the Holy Spirit brought Him back from the dead and into His glorified self.** [Rising up out of the water.]

**2. The New Believer is also symbolized in the way we are baptized.**

(a) While, yes, we were alive physically before Christ came into our life, alive-ness was only an appearance. We were, in all actuality, the walking dead—spiritually in a death state in our souls. But, we're not only in a state of spiritual death, but also heading to physical death. [Standing up prior to immersion.] (b) Once we realized our soul was beyond self-repair due to our sins and broken nature, we understood we had to trust Christ to destroy our old broken nature: “The Flesh,” as it were. Our Human Nature’s death, thus, was buried inside Jesus’ death and burial. [Laid down—submerged under the baptismal waters to symbolize our sinful flesh was buried in Jesus’ death.] So, then, (3) **Jesus’ death takes our death for us and forgives us. And then His Resurrection raises us up into a completely new person!** [Standing up out of the water.]

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

First Corinth. 5:17 NLT

Perhaps this might serve to give a theological understanding of not only Peter’s teachings here, but also how and why baptism does what it does. Baptism buries the part of us that needs to be killed off so we can finally be a “new person” (First Corinthians 5:17). Baptism’s killing force is only overcome by the fact that God saves us through “the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (3:21b)! So, Peter connects the Flood’s catastrophic killing power as a necessary part of being saved from ourselves: we can't get saved if we don't think we need saving from anything. So, reentering the symbolism of Noah's Flood: the coming death (physical death and eternal death) demands we humbly enter the Ark. There’s only one way to live in a Flood—and swimming ain't it.

**Judgment is the necessary back side of Free Will** 1 Peter 4:5; 3:21

Now, we pivot with perfect timing to the Big Idea connecting ALL of these concepts we've been skimming thus far: (1) we saw those who had been holding in some kind

of suspended judgment as the Spiritual World and the Sinning World awaited the ultimate consequence—Death, Jesus’ death—the punishment for all of Human disobedience to God, (2) the finality of the Flood’s judgment and the need for salvation from what the Water does, and finally, (3) this teaching Peter soberly tells all of us: we all “have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead” (4:5).

Peter the Apostle explains that coming Judgment is a reality. But, not in a wild-bearded street preacher kind of a way, but in a simplified way: IN ALL OF LIFE, WE MAKE DECISIONS. THESE DECISIONS DEFINE US. And, in every case, there is Consequence for our Decisions. Ultimately, these books point a sobering reality out: God will judge our free decisions.

The really great Good News: He already judged all of these sins with Death. Only, instead of US having to take the Death ourselves, JESUS took death on the Cross instead. The prisoners were set free! You can leave the prison. The Ark is offered for anyone who’ll get on! But you’ve got to walk on before the Flood starts. You can face God because Jesus will speak on your behalf to the Father! But, you’ve got to allow Him to in your place. **Sins have been forgiven and Salvation is already yours.**

You just have to walk out of prison since the barred gates have been flung wide open.

You just have to walk on the Ark.

You just have to say, “Jesus, be my Advocate at the trial and sentencing for my sins.

You already paid the sentence.”

## Week 4 | Day 3

If we may not be currently living in a society where Christianity is illegal and punishable, and if our culture's predominant "persecution" of Christ-following believers is primarily found in the mockery our traditional tendencies get on Saturday Night Live or wherever cynics may talk about us, does 1 Peter really hold much relevancy for us? Yes, of course, it does, but we may have to finger our way through the strands a bit to find some of the more immediately applicable lessons. Let's definitely allow these books to increase our awareness of persecution and build our courage for if we ever face that. But, let's still find the other things these teachings press us towards.

### Suffering is a virtuous attitude that teaches us to focus 1 Peter 4:1-3

Difficult seasons—more than just regular days in our lives—teach us to say 'no' to things that don't help us with the heaviness of handling life rightly when we feel at risk. Adversity teaches us we have no alternative but to employ a lot more 'no's' than we normally would because we hunger to get to the amazing 'yes's' we live for. Let's take a stab at explaining this. Those who strive to govern their own bodies into health will add physical training to their nutritious eating. But to be healthy isn't just saying 'yes' to eating celery and doing crunches. It's saying NO to Ho-Ho's! NO to a beer or a Coke and YES to water. NO to sleeping in so we're ready to jump up with a YES when the alarm goes off to head to the gym. While being focused on physical health isn't 'suffering' anywhere on the same end of the spectrum as being beaten or abused for our faith (as some Christians in Peter's audience were), it's an example to help us to wrap our hands around the idea. [Health in life requires No's so we can say Yes to meaningful choices.](#)

## Heaven is our Yes!

No one likes to hear someone say, "You CAN'T HAVE that." Or, "You CAN'T DO that." 'No' is one of Christianity's healthiest self-disciplines. Peter says that [when we suffer \(or when we prepare for suffering via self-discipline\), we build a muscle we don't expect to in the process: being "done with sin" \(4:1,3\).](#)

Here's how I see it: the more mature we become, [the nature of our 'No's' grow up along with us.](#) You know how it is: when we're young and filled with vigor and hormones and wild ambitions, our harder No's seem to have to be mustered up for us to shout 'No!' at temptations to seemingly-fun-but-really-dumb sins. Those No's early on can be really, really hard, but the more muscle memory of those self-

Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. <sup>2</sup> As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. <sup>4</sup> They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. <sup>5</sup> But they will have to give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

1 Peter 4:1-6 NIV

denials, the stronger the muscle for all the right ‘Yes’s’ seem to pop up like biceps in spiritual growth’s short-sleeves. You see, the longer and stronger we get in our faith, the difficulty of lifting a ‘no’ to temptations becomes a lighter bench press. And our ‘no’s’ seem to no longer center upon denying ourselves bad things, but focusing more on getting to a ‘yes’ to more good. And walk that road of doing good even more in our maturing faith, we realize we are now wanting to spend our energies, finances, growth, and efforts on the best things—not just good things. The more we know Jesus and His Spirit, the more ‘no’s’ we even say to good things so we can say ‘yes’ to great things that give us more pleasure than a college fraternity could ever plan for a Saturday night. When we’re young, we have to [say a lot more no's to TEMPTATIONS to SIN](#). The stronger we become, the more we choose to [focus our no's on TEMPTATIONS to SETTLE](#). So, [this self-discipline of ‘no’ simply tightens how we live our lives and for whom](#). As Peter gladly shouts out, we live, “rather for the will of God” (4:2).

### **Christianity, necessarily, has lifestyle boundaries** 1 Peter 4:3-4,6b

So Peter’s primary audience must have had some real experience with the fraternity life in the movie ‘Animal House’ before they knew Jesus because he boldly tells them he knows how they used to roll: “you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry . . . reckless, wild living” (4:3,4). Is this an exhaustive list of things his readers (and us) should ultimately say ‘no’ to? Nowhere close. But, it does teach us [there are boundaries in the Kingdom of God](#). God forgives us of all our former sins—those days when we said ‘yes’ to all kinds of things we had no sense of what they really were or how they could tear us (and others) up. But, the zealous Apostle does speak right into our life when he reminds us that we’re supposed to have better sense . . . now . . . because we have God’s Spirit living in us.

In 4:2, Peter insinuates we ought to “live the rest of our earthly lives” for heavenly desires. That’s our ‘YES!’ Heaven is our Yes! Heaven’s lifestyles and standards are our Yes. And when we turn that pocket inside-out, it feels a lot less like we’re saying ‘no’ to things that are out there than saying ‘yes’ to all the life that’s coming! Do you have a moral muscle memory that’ll be ready for Heaven’s wild lifestyle?

[What do you have a harder time saying ‘no’ to at this point in your life: TEMPTATIONS TO SIN or TEMPTATIONS TO SETTLE?](#)

## Week 4 | Day 4

How often do you connect the thought that the world will come to an end with the practicing of your spiritual gifts? They're not common twins in our thinking, are they? But in Peter the Apostle's mind, they're identicals. One looks like the other. But even more than being identicals, they're conjoined twins. Yes, their heads might be turned towards their own unique curiosities, but they're always moving the same way together. So, let's see how they're connected.

### Once you realize that time is running out on this life, begin thinking by the timing in the life to come 1 Peter 4:7

In our bonus study this week, one of the main characters spoken of by Peter was a guy by the name of Noah. Noah's an intriguing guy—once we remove the felt board Sunday School version of him. Noah's a guy who had patient urgency. If we read Genesis straightforwardly, God will tell Noah he has to build a massive boat to survive a global flood. At the most conservative reading of Genesis 6-11, he'll have decades to complete this bizarre but commanded task. 6:22 reports “So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.” Not sure how you build a Carnival Cruise Ship for all the residents of the San Diego Zoo, but Noah set about trying to figure it out. And, because he was a prophet and not just a boat-builder, he'd also occasionally set down the boards, the saw, and the tar and he'd tell his neighbors that their lives and eternities were on a clock. This wasn't welcome news to most of them. Actually . . . to exactly none of them, because only Noah's own family decided to join him in the great saving boat. But, to ol' Noah's credit, **he followed through with a patient urgency** about

### ESCHATOLOGY

The theology concerning death, judgment, eternity, and God and Humanity's role in all of it.

**they definitely weren't first.** This is how we begin to think in Heaven's Time. It's setting our priorities and our family life by Heaven's mission and reality. You know, we're not a bit different from Noah. Not. One. Bit. We often think that God must have given the old boy a big digital countdown clock in the backyard where he was building the Ark to remind him—to mark the timing of the coming of the rains that would start the Big Flood. (But

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. <sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:7-11 NIV

the Hard News and the Good News: “Hey, a Flood's coming, but God wants you and your family to live. Help me build some boats—I've got blueprints! Let's start this weekend.” Noah understood the “end of all things” was nearing every day and he had a job to do: Preach and build. His life was set to Heaven's timing—and not his own or his culture's assumptions about a life well-lived. He didn't seem to buck God that his kids had to go to college, he'd have a mortgage to pay, 401(k)s, big plans for a cabin by the lake. **Those things weren't forbidden, mind you, but**

there weren't digital clocks back in his day and he wouldn't have been given one if there were.) No, God just said, "Get started. The day will come. Trust Me. You'll need a sermon-on-tap and a saw everyday."

We're no different than Noah. Life in its most obvious daily forms has a timer on all of us. You. Are. Going. To. Die. Someday. (Then when you add the eschatological timers God has in motion concerning the way and timing of the End of the Human Experience, we're all set for an end so that the Beginning of Home can start.) God told Peter that the end was "near" (4:7). Now, I've stopped trying to search the Bible for hidden clues about when all that will go down because Jesus already let us know even HE didn't know (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32-33). If Jesus can't get an A on that test, then I'm only auditing the course when I have the time. [But we DON'T have a lot of time . . . and that's your first course in Christian Eschatology 101: Be like Noah.](#) Be patiently urgent with the Good News and your neighbor. You have a job to do. Do it quick and sure.

### **Spiritual gifts** 1 Peter 4:9-11

So Peter reminds us about Noah and his mission. He reminds us all that the timer is running. And then God says: "Each of [you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others](#), as faithful stewards of God's grace" (4:10). Yes, Peter will end up listing a couple of these spiritual "gifts" but leaves the figuring out and the factoring in to you and me. But what we do know from start to finish: [The End fuels the Mission.](#) Now, if you don't think there's an "end" to worry about, but have accepted the fact that you were made for a purpose . . . you'll probably do some kind of Christian-ish tasks, but think you can do it at a pace like you've got forever. (But what you'll rather find is you've begun to focus on the kids' college bills, mortgages, 401(k)s, and the cabin by the lake.) On the other hand, if you don't believe you have your own job to do in and through the church but do believe there's an End coming, well, that's a formula for real anxiety . . . since you'll be over-excited, but nothing to do with your hands. And no one to put your hands around. Well, the best way to look at it is this: your spiritual gifts are your Ark to build. And your Ark--steadily growing in size—reminds people around us that God gives "grace" and a way out.

[What do you need to focus upon with greater passion:  
\(1\) the urgency of the small time life \(and eschatology\)  
gives us or \(2\) patiently and faithfully serving others?](#)

## Week 4 | Day 5

To most of the world around us, joy is an elusive possession. Fun isn't hard to pay for or come by, but lasting joy certainly is. Add that life's train rarely runs on time or runs on perfect tracks and terrain. Add to this the fact that people can suck us into self-inflicted conflict; it means that holding on to joyfulness becomes like trying to grab smoke. How do we overcome life's difficulties and people's cantankerous qualities to become people of "wonderful joy" (4:13)?

### View conflict as the fast track to joy

1 Peter 4:12-13,19

One of my biggest lessons I'm learning in this life is to stop avoiding conflict. I hate conflict. I would rather burn every people-pleasing calorie in me than have to have people displeased by something about me or something I've said. Every fiber of my being hates conflict, so I try to manage a life free of it. But it's impossible because there are wings we need to fly with in the future that haven't been unfurled because we've avoided having to muscle the cocoon open. There is unity still unattained with someone because we keep talking with them in half-smiles as if everything's fine, but no one thinks it's fine. We're both faking it and we can see it on one another's faces. My wife seems to get a crack out of when I try to join her in sipping a glass of red wine. She's a fan of red wine, but every time I try it, my nostrils {almost} indiscernibly flare. I can't help the flaring because my face is just reacting to my taste buds—which are offended at the bitter taste and the unpleasant smell of the alcohol in the fancy glass. That

*"Reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears."*

Marcus Aurelius

micro-expression on my face shows up as macro to my wife who is looking for the reaction.

The same is true of conflict that's being treated as if it's nothing. Our faces show our distaste no matter how much we try and control those over-reacting micro-expressions of ours! Peter talks about mistreatments and "fiery trials," here, that his first audience was immersed in. The folks on the receiving end of Peter's letters were amidst constant conflict with the as-yet-to-believe-but-still-

spiritually-resistant people around them. Conflict was just a part of the oxygen of these communities of people with whom they were neighbors. This conflict of belief was, unfortunately, unavoidable with the people around them who held power, but who

Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in His suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing His glory when it is revealed to all the world. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. . . . <sup>16</sup> But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by His name! <sup>17</sup> For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News? <sup>18</sup> And also, "If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?" <sup>19</sup> So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for He will never fail you.

1 Peter 4:12-14, 16-19 NLT

didn't also hold the Christians' worldview and morality. So, their neighbors didn't like them because they didn't want the Christians' lifestyle making them feel guilty or judged about their own. But while this conflict was unsolicited by the Christians and painfully unavoidable, it didn't mean it had to go unaddressed. The Apostle taught: instead of acting like victims or martyrs or offended parties, “Get some more joy, yo! ‘Be very glad . . . have the wonderful joy’” (4:13)! Joy may not solve the person's problem on the other side of the conflict, but it will definitely solve ours. Like Jesus—when He forgave those who crucified Him—it’s possible, within ourselves, to turn others’ insults and injuries into an entirely other thing than they intended for us:

***“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”*** (Luke 23:34).

Marcus Aurelius is said to have viewed it thus: “Reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears.” Joy often begins with consciously choosing not to see injury . . . but deciding to compassionately see the hurting people underneath their pain's flailing.

Who are you having conflict with but  
you need to just have compassion on?

## Group Conversation ||| WEEK FOUR

1. What was the hardest part to grasp in this week's passages of 1 & 2 Peter?
2. What lit a fire in you from this week's readings?

### DAY ONE

3. Who do you need to "counter-punch" with love and a blessing today?

### DAY TWO

4. What do you need to do: fear less or bleed more? Why?

### DAY THREE

5. What do you have a harder time saying 'no' to at this point in your life: temptations to sin or temptations to settle?

### DAY FOUR

6. What do you need to focus upon with greater passion: (1) the urgency of the small time life (and eschatology) gives us or (2) patiently and faithfully serving others?

### DAY FIVE

7. Who are you having conflict with but you need to just have compassion on?