



## Week 5: Holy Living

### Day 1 – 1 Peter 1:13-2:3; 2:11-17 (NLT)

*<sup>13</sup> So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. <sup>14</sup> So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. <sup>15</sup> But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. <sup>16</sup> For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."*

*<sup>17</sup> And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here as "temporary residents." <sup>18</sup> For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. <sup>19</sup> It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. <sup>20</sup> God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.*

*<sup>21</sup> Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.*

*<sup>22</sup> You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.*

*<sup>23</sup> For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. <sup>24</sup> As the Scriptures say,*

*"People are like grass;  
their beauty is like a flower in the field.  
The grass withers and the flower fades.  
<sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord remains forever."*

*And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.*

*2 So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, <sup>3</sup> now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness...*

*<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. <sup>12</sup> Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.*

*<sup>13</sup> For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, <sup>14</sup> or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.*

*<sup>15</sup> It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. <sup>16</sup> For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. <sup>17</sup> Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

Sometimes, when I read Scripture, I am comforted; other times, I am inspired; still other times, I am challenged. Our passage for today falls squarely in the third camp for me! Peter keys in on the command to "be holy just as God is holy", and I find myself thinking, "I am so far from that. Is it even attainable on this side of heaven? And if so, how?"

The list Peter lays out for us in these verses is not meant to be comprehensive. Instead, it is meant to offer us examples of the kinds of behaviors that spring from the life of a person who is pursuing this holy way of living. Some of the phrases within this list feel more doable than others, don't they? Yet there's something about this passage that still leaves me feeling a little overwhelmed and skeptical that I can ever embody the holiness "just as God is holy".

That is, until I look more closely at why Peter is saying we can and should seek this new kind of lifestyle—because of what God in Christ has done for us: paying a ransom to save us (1:18), cleansing us of our sin (1:22), and giving us eternal life (1:23). "So now..." (1:22): with that one phrase Peter signals the reason and ability we have to live a life that pursues holiness. We *want* to take this new life we have been given and respond not out of guilt but out of gratitude, not out of a frantic desire to try to make God love us more but out of a longing to reflect more and more of the God in whom we have life.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What is one habit, discipline, or other expression you regularly engage in to try to reflect God's holiness? What is something you'd like to add during this season of Lent?
2. Have you been a part of another faith tradition that taught or implied you had to earn your salvation through good works? If so, how does it feel to hear this take that the pressure is off, that our seeking a holy way of life is a response of gratitude for what God in Christ has done for us?

## **Day 2 – 1 Peter 2:4-10 (The Message)**

*4-8 Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life. The workmen took one look and threw it out; God set it in the place of honor. Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God. The Scriptures provide precedent:*

*Look! I'm setting a stone in Zion,  
a cornerstone in the place of honor.  
Whoever trusts in this stone as a foundation  
will never have cause to regret it.*

*To you who trust him, he's a Stone to be proud of, but to those who refuse to trust him,*

*The stone the workmen threw out  
is now the chief foundation stone.*

*For the untrusting it's*

*... a stone to trip over,  
a boulder blocking the way.*

*They trip and fall because they refuse to obey, just as predicted.*

*9-10 But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.*

### **Understanding the Reading:**

In today's reading, Peter uses the imagery of building materials to help drive home one of the fundamental truths of our Christian faith: Jesus Christ is the foundation to everything—our identity, our purpose, and our very lives. While we might be tempted to give a quick "Amen!" to that, though, Peter reminds us that allowing Jesus to truly be our foundation requires a huge level of trust. He is honest about what we all know to be true—it is not easy or natural to trust anyone fully, including Jesus, and not everyone wants to. But to those who are willing to relinquish some control and allow Jesus to take the center spot in our lives, we'll find ourselves part of something so much bigger than we could have dreamed up on our own.

As a musician, I particularly love the way Eugene Peterson translates our participation in God's kingdom work: by serving as God's "instruments"! Imagine using your God-given gifts to play an instrument loaned to you by God. As you do, you listen to and blend with the other musicians around you, as together we all contribute to a larger musical piece—a piece that doesn't just offer a beautiful moment of escape from the world, but that resounds hope into the souls of all who hear it, inspiring the audience to ask who the Composer is, and how they can join the work.

### Questions for Reflection:

1. Do you consider your relationship with Jesus to be foundational for your life? Why or why not?
2. What is one way you have worked on developing more trust in Jesus over the years?
3. How does it feel to hear that you are “chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted”? Do you feel empowered? Unsure? Or somewhere in between?

### Day 3 – 1 Peter 2:18-25

*18 You who are slaves must submit to your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. 19 For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unjust treatment. 20 Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.*

*21 For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.*

*22 He never sinned,  
nor ever deceived anyone.*

*23 He did not retaliate when he was insulted,  
nor threaten revenge when he suffered.*

*He left his case in the hands of God,  
who always judges fairly.*

*24 He personally carried our sins  
in his body on the cross  
so that we can be dead to sin  
and live for what is right.*

*By his wounds  
you are healed.*

*25 Once you were like sheep  
who wandered away.*

*But now you have turned to your Shepherd,  
the Guardian of your souls.*

### Understanding the Reading:

Our passage for today is a tough one, isn't it? It's hard for us to relate to. We also don't want to relate to it. We want to skip over this part or to pretend it's not there. There are so many layers of cultural complexities, it's hard even to know where to start in unpacking Peter's words from their original context.

In verse 21 and following, though, Peter explains why he has given this advice: “For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.” He goes on to remind us how Jesus responded to the suffering he experienced—not by retaliating but by using his wounds to heal us.

This kind of response to suffering feels totally foreign in our world today. Perhaps that's a compelling enough reason to keep us from skipping over this passage and instead lean in and ask ourselves, "How does Jesus want me to change my response to the suffering I go through?"

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. What do you do when you encounter a passage of Scripture that seems to be problematic, especially in light of our culture today?
2. Why do you think Jesus did not retaliate when he was insulted?
3. Why doesn't God spare us from suffering?

**Day 4 – 1 Peter 3:1-6**

*In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over <sup>2</sup> by observing your pure and reverent lives.*

*<sup>3</sup> Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. <sup>4</sup> You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. <sup>5</sup> This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. <sup>6</sup> For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.*

**Understanding the Reading:**

Today's reading is another difficult one! Is Peter judging women who wear nice clothes or jewelry or spend time on their hair? What about women who are in an unhealthy marriage? Or women who are not married? Is there anything in this passage that is relevant for today?

Perhaps one entry point is found in the opening phrase: "in the same way..." What way is Peter referring to? Let's look back at the preceding context in the chapter before ours, the one we looked at yesterday. Remember, in that passage, Peter lifted Jesus up as the example for us to emulate, even and especially when we are suffering. "In the same way", women are to look to Jesus as the ultimate example for how to spend their time, energy, and resources.

Still, this passage leaves us with more questions than answers. What do we do with those questions? One technique that helps me when I am stuck on a Scripture passage is to zoom out and ask, "Is what I am reading in line with the wider themes and truths in the rest of the Scriptural story? What other places in Scripture could I find a counter to or a conversation partner with this passage?"

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. How do you interpret this passage?
2. What is one way Jesus' example of spending time, energy, and resources inform your own decisions in daily life?

## **Day 5 – 1 Peter 3:7**

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

### **Understanding the Reading:**

As in our passages the past two days, today's Scripture begins with that little phrase, "in the same way". Once again, we are brought back to Peter's overarching point in chapter two that Jesus is our example, and we are to follow in his steps. This time, Peter is encouraging husbands to follow Jesus' example in their relationships with their wives who, Peter reminds them, are "equal partners in God's gift of new life."

Again, though, this passage leaves us with more questions. What does Peter mean when he refers to wives as "weaker"? What relevancy, if any, does this passage have men who are not married? As we continue to wrestle with these and other questions that arise from this text, we come away with the sense that Jesus cares deeply about all our relationships, and that He is inviting us to be more and more intentional about reflecting Him in every relationship we have.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

1. What is the significance of Peter's reminder here that wives are "equal partners in God's gift of life"?
2. Why do you think Peter says husbands' treatment of their wives has a bearing on the efficacy of their prayers? Do you agree or disagree?
3. If professing faith in Christ is an individual decision, why does Peter make the case that our relationships with others are important expressions of our relationship with Christ?

**Video Questions:**

1. Colin and Amy begin the video by discussing what holiness means and how it is experienced.
  - What places would you consider to be “holy” places?
  - What makes them holy?
2. Colin and Amy discuss John Wesley, the founder of our Methodist movement, and how his perspective on what it means for us to be “holy as God is holy” changed over time from trying to rigidly follow a prescriptive set of rules to instead experiencing a natural and deeply desired response of longing to reflect more and more of the God that we love with every part of our lives.
  - Has your perspective on what it means to be “holy” changed for you over time? If so, how?
  - Can you think of a person you would consider to be holy? If so, what would you say makes that person holy? What is one characteristic of that person you could try to emulate during this season of Lent?
3. Colin makes a helpful distinction in Peter’s cultural tactics in our passages this week: it’s not that he uses a deeper truth in order to try to justify slavery, it’s that he begins with his cultural setting to explain the deeper truth.
  - Do you find modern-day examples in sermon illustrations, podcasts, books, music, or other resources to be helpful tools in understanding deeper truths in Scripture?
  - If so, would you share a resource or two you’ve found particularly helpful?
4. The video ends with Amy outlining the steps she takes when she is confused by a passage of Scripture.
  - What were those steps?
  - What do you do when you are unsure how to interpret a particular passage?

**Prayer requests and other notes:**