

Feed My Sheep: 1 & 2 Peter

Living for God

Lesson #5 for April 29, 2017

Scriptures: 1 Peter 3:8-4:11; Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:1-11; 2 Samuel 11:4.

1. What does it mean to “live for God”? Does that mean to shun sin? Does it mean to do good? How did/does the death of Christ solve the problem of sin? And how does getting to know God and Jesus Christ change our lives? (See GC 555.1.)
2. Surely, the Bible writers understood the challenges of living sinful lives. Paul especially talked about his former sinful life. (See, for example, 1 Timothy 1:15.) But, each one of those Bible writers was keenly aware of the fact that their relationship with Jesus Christ—their faith—had impacted their lives.
3. But, none of them implied that new lives in Christ would be easy. (1 Peter 4:1) Is living a Christian life so difficult that we could call it suffering? In the beatitudes as recorded in Matthew 5, Jesus seemed to suggest that doing what is right will make you happy!
4. There is no question that Bible writers believed that Christians’ lives would be different from those of worldlings. John 13:34-35 suggests that it will even be apparent to everyone around.
5. If we learn to love as Jesus loved, how will we treat others—especially church members? In what sense does love “cover a multitude of sins”? (1 Peter 4:8) Loving and forgiving is certainly a characteristic of the Christian life. *Agape* love is a principle, not a selfish feeling.
6. Read 1 Peter 3:8-12 and 2:20-21. Compare the story of Job. Peter talked about suffering for doing what is wrong which should not be a factor in the life of a Christian. But, how often do we suffer for doing right? Who or what would cause that kind of suffering? In our day, do we suffer for doing right? In 2 Timothy 3:12 (*GNB*), Paul said: “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Is that still true?
7. In 1 Peter 3:8-12, Peter suggested that as Christians we need to be of “one mind.” What does that mean? Was Peter suggesting as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 12:1-26 that church members are to complement each other just as the different parts of the human body work together for a common good?
8. Is it easy for Christians to work together in love and complement or complete each other? How does Satan respond when he sees such a thing happening?
9. Read 1 Peter 3:8. In concluding this section of his discussion, Peter said: “You must all have the same attitude and the same feelings; love one another as brothers and sisters, and be kind and humble with one another.” (*GNB**)
10. Ellen White talked about Christian suffering in the following words.

Crucify self; esteem others better than yourselves. Thus you will be brought into oneness with Christ. Before the heavenly universe, and before the church and the world, you will bear unmistakable evidence that you are God’s sons and daughters. God will be glorified in the example that you set.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 9, 188.1.
11. Read 1 Peter 3:9. How easy is it for us not to return evil for evil, but rather, return blessing? Does that require a death to self? What would our lives be like if we followed Paul’s example suggested in Galatians 2:20 (*GNB*): “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” What would Jesus do if He lived in the 21st century in a modern city?

12. Christians almost universally rejoice over the fact that God is forgiveness personified. Imagine Jesus forgiving the people who were nailing Him to the cross. (Luke 23:34) Is it hard for us to accept the fact that we are “accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 62.2?
13. The amazing thing which is harder for us to understand, accept, and live is that God not only pronounces us forgiven but also gives us the power to overcome sin.
14. Read 1 Peter 3:18,21; 4:1-2; and Romans 6:1-11; 8:3. Is there a relationship between suffering and victory over sin? Is that suffering caused by being willing to give up our favorite sins? Or, is that suffering caused by some external force? If we are really joined to Christ and begin living His life, will Satan be happy?
15. Read 1 Peter 3:18. There is a small Greek word in that in verse which has enormous implications. The word is *hapax*, suggesting that the suffering and death of Jesus was a comprehensive and permanent answer to sin. Do we understand the implications of that?
16. Read 1 Peter 4:1-2, and ask yourself how that results from what he said in 1 Peter 3:18-22. When we are baptized and make a decision to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, does that make it possible for us to live “controlled by God’s will and not by human desires”?
17. Through baptism we are supposed to experience a closeness to Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection that inspires us to live a new life. However, that surrender of self must be renewed every day. Paul put it this way: We must crucify “the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24, *NKJV*) We must not keep going back to our old ways!
18. Read Romans 6:1-11. In these verses Paul talked about what is supposed to be the meaning of baptism. When we have been baptized, are we really dead to sin? Paul suggested that we need to put to death the old man of sin while encouraging and feeding the new man of faith. How do we do that on a daily basis?
19. Do you frequently feel like you are “suffering in the flesh” in order to fight against sin? What does it mean to crucify self? Does that involve eating only what is healthy? Unselfishly going the extra mile in helping others at work and in our homes instead of expecting them to help us? Might we be mocked, even by family or friends, for abandoning the evil practices that we used to do? How much time do we spend reaching out to others with the gospel? Or, reading and studying our Bibles and praying? Do movies, television, Facebook, Twitter, even politics, etc. take up much more of our time than Bible study or witnessing?
20. Those who have become Christians in their adult lives and remember how they lived before they were Christians may have a better idea of the transformation that took place. Do those who have been raised in the church need to think carefully through why they have chosen to remain in the church? Should they—only in imagination—temporarily leave the church?
21. After talking about the changes that take place in connection with baptism, Peter went on in 1 Peter 4:3-6 to say that the former lives of those Christians had included “indecent, lust, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and the disgusting worship of idols.” (*GNB*) Do people in our day do any of those things? Would popular movies or other forms of modern entertainment fit into any of those categories? (Matthew 5:27-30)
22. It should be clear that drunken parties are not a part of the Christian way of life. But, do the people who live around us and work with us recognize that our lives are indeed different? Do we have to preach in order for people to realize that we are different?

The most difficult sermon to preach and the hardest to practice is self-denial.
—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* January 31, 1907, par. 5; *HP** 300.2;

RC* 232.4.

Our words, our actions, our deportment, our dress, everything, should preach. Not only with our words should we speak to the people, but everything pertaining to our person should be a sermon to them, that right impressions may be made upon them, and that the truth spoken may be taken by them to their homes. Thus our faith will stand in a better light before the community.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 2, 617.3.

Do we consider and realize that the greatest influence to recommend Christianity to our world is a well-ordered and well-disciplined Christian family? The world sees that they believe God's Word.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 13*,* 1888.

One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached. Such a family gives evidence that the parents have been successful in following God's directions, and that their children will serve Him in the church. Their influence grows; for as they impart, they receive to impart again. The father and mother find helpers in their children, who give to others the instruction received in the home. The neighborhood in which they live is helped, for in it they have become enriched for time and for eternity. The whole family is engaged in the service of the Master; and by their godly example, others are inspired to be faithful and true to God in dealing with His flock, His beautiful flock.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* June 6, 1899, par. 14; *AH** 32.1; *ML** 124.4; *YRP** 247.4. [Bold type is added.]

23. Peter went on to talk about the judgment which is coming. Other Bible writers discussed that as well. (See John 3:17-21; 5:28-29; 12:47-48; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27.)
24. Read 1 Peter 4:3. Two of the sins that Peter mentioned specifically have distinctive sexual connotations. *Aselgia* which means *sensuality*, and *epithumia* which means *lust* or *desire*. Considering how pervasive the world's idea of sexuality has become, it may be hard for us to remember that God created sex. The Bible is not against sex in the right context between a man and his wife. Sex can be a wonderful attraction and a great producer of closeness and intimacy. In fact, God has used the marriage relationship as a symbol of His relationship with His people. (See Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16, Hosea 1-3.)
25. Read 2 Samuel 11:4; 1 Corinthians 5:1; Genesis 19:5; and 1 Corinthians 10:8. Sexual sins have become the entertainment of our society. Are we committing sexual sins if we watch those types of entertainment? Sexual permissiveness and experimentation have led to crime, violence, and tragedy. A recent CNN report estimated that the total cost to society of a single rape is up to \$640,000.

The best available research tells us that crime victimization costs the United States \$450 billion annually (National Institute of Justice, 1996). Rape is the most costly of all crimes to its victims, with total estimated costs at \$127 billion a year (excluding the cost of child sexual abuse). In 2008, researchers estimated that each rape cost approximately \$151,423 (DeLisi, 2010). Sexual abuse has a negative impact on children's educational attainment (MacMillan, 2000), later job performance (Anda et al., 2004), and earnings (MacMillan, 2000). Sexual violence survivors experience reduced income in adulthood as a result of victimization in adolescence, with a lifetime income loss estimated

at \$241,600 (MacMillan, 2000). Sexual abuse interferes with women's ability to work (Lyon, 2002). Fifty percent of sexual violence victims had to quit or were forced to leave their jobs in the year following their assaults due to the severity of their reactions (Ellis, Atkeson, & Calhoun, 1981). In 2008, violence and abuse constituted up to 37.5% of total health care costs, or up to \$750 billion (Dolezal, McCollum, & Callahan, 2009).—<http://endsexualviolence.org/where-we-stand/costs-consequences-and-solutions>. Accessed February 6, 2017.

26. Of course, those who understand the teachings of the Bible do not need anyone to tell them that.
27. Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. Peter then concluded that “the end of all things is near.” So, how should we behave? We need to be self-controlled, alert, and prayerful. We need to love one another earnestly. We need to open our homes to each other without complaining. We need to use the special gifts we have received from God, using them for the good of others.
28. Read 1 Peter 4:8. What does it mean to say that “love covers a multitude of sins”? Compare Proverbs 10:12. If we have love for our fellow church members, is it easier to overlook and forgive their sins? Are we supposed to overlook and forgive every sin committed by a fellow believer? In light of the soon coming of Jesus Christ, Christians need to come together, fellowship, and practice loving one another. We need this kind of support as we face the time of trouble that is coming. If we reach out with love and care for others, it will reflect on us as well.

The love that suffers long and is kind will not magnify an indiscretion into an unpardonable offense, neither will it make capital of others' misdoings. The Scriptures plainly teach that the erring are to be treated with forbearance and consideration. If the right course is followed, the apparently obdurate heart may be won to Christ. The love of Jesus covers a multitude of sins. His grace never leads to the exposing of another's wrongs, unless it is a positive necessity.—Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students** 267.2; compare *FE* 279.1.

29. The story of how Jesus dealt with that woman caught in the very act of adultery is familiar. (John 8:1-11) But, there are many more details in that story that we need to remember. The sins of those men who brought her and who undoubtedly set her up were probably much worse than her sins. Jesus could have written their sins into the marble walls of the temple; but, He did not. He wrote them in the dust of the ground; with a few puffs of wind or a few footsteps, they would be gone. We do not know exactly what He wrote; but, it is clear from their responses that there was enough detail so that they individually felt guilty. Does Jesus like to make us feel guilty? Only if that leads to a change in our behavior.
30. Peter talked specifically about those who were living drunken party lives. But, in our day, what about tobacco and street drugs? Aren't those just as bad? Is it just a matter of losing self-control?
31. Read 1 Peter 3:8-9 and 4:7-8 again. Consider what commands Peter laid out in these passages.

1 Peter 3:8-9: To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.—*New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.** (1995). (1 Peter 3:8). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

1 Peter 4:7-8: ⁷...self-controlled and alert, to be able to pray, ⁸Above everything, love one another earnestly, because love covers over many sins.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., 1 Peter 4:7). New York: American Bible Society. [Bold type is added.]

32. Are we, as Christians awaiting the near coming of Jesus Christ, willing to be humble and kindhearted? Are we practicing daily sympathy, love, and compassion for others? *Agape* love is something other-worldly! It is not natural for human beings. So, how can we promote that in our own lives?
33. First Peter 4:1-2 suggests that suffering physically prevents us from being involved with sin. How does that actually work?
34. We can think of the example of Jesus. He never sinned; and yet, He suffered a great deal. In what sense did Jesus become perfect through suffering? We must never suggest that Jesus was not fully God and fully perfect before He came to this earth. But, He had set before Himself a specific course to follow while on this earth. He proved Himself perfect by finishing that course and actually living the way He had planned to live, refusing to be detoured by the temptations of Satan.

Had Christ come to this world and spent His allotted time in peace and contentment, guarded by heavenly angels and protected from the hazards and temptations common to man, He would not have been perfected for His office. He would have had no opportunity to demonstrate what He would do under pressure. Had He not been tempted in all points, men would have wondered what He would do if He were really hungry, tired out, sick; what He would do if men should revile Him, curse Him, spit upon Him, scourge Him, and at last hang Him on a cross. Would He still retain His composure and pray for His enemies? If those whom He trusted should forsake Him, deny Him, betray Him, and desert Him in His supreme hour, would He, undiscouraged, commit Himself to God? If, as a climax, God Himself should appear to forsake Him and the horror of darkness envelop Him and nearly crush Him, would He still drink the cup or would He draw back? Such questions men would ask if He had been shielded from temptations and suffering.—Nichol, F. D. (Ed.). (1980). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,** vol. 7, 405. Review and Herald Publishing Association.

35. Read Hebrews 5:8-9. The *SDA Bible Commentary** on this verse says:

By becoming man and by facing the temptations of life as a man, Christ gained this knowledge. He thus met one of the essential qualifications for the high priesthood, namely that the appointee belong to the human family (see on Heb. 5:1-3).—*Ibid.** 430.

36. Are we saying that God's omniscience was defective so Jesus had to come and live as a human being in order to understand how hard it is to be good?
37. Peter suggested—and others seem to agree—that only those who are truly trying to live a Christian life will suffer for doing what is right. Have you found that to be true?
38. Read 1 Peter 3:18-22. Many commentators regard this as one of the most difficult passages to interpret in all of Scripture. It clearly suggests that through baptism we are raised to a new

life by participating symbolically in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is not a matter of washing off external body dirt; but rather, it acknowledges before our fellow believers that we have committed ourselves to live a new life.

The difficult part of the passage, in verses 19 and 20, introduces the story of the great Flood in order to set up the idea of Noah's ark as a symbol for baptism (*1 Pet. 3:21*). The "spirits in prison" (*NKJV*) refer to the antediluvians, "who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built" (*1 Pet. 3:20, NIV*). Christ preached the gospel in the Spirit "to those who are dead" through the preaching of Noah so that there would be a basis for their judgment (*1 Pet. 4:6, NKJV*). They are referred to as spirits in prison because they are metaphorically held or reserved for judgment at the last day (*compare with 2 Pet. 2:4, 9; Jude 6; and Rev. 20:1-3*).—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 67.

39. So, in conclusion to our study of this section in 1 Peter, what evidences do we show in our lives that we are dedicated to God with a sense of the imminence of His coming? How would we live differently each day if we believed it was our last? Would it be different if we knew that Jesus was coming tomorrow?
40. Read 1 Peter 3:12 and 4:7 again. We know from the story of Jesus that He often spent large portions of His nights—sometimes entire nights (For example, see Luke 6:12.)—praying to His Father, apparently in preparation for what was coming the next day. Could we have that kind of relationship with God? With Jesus?

Christians were often misunderstood by their neighbors and in their communities. Their meetings often were considered to be secret rites because they met in private homes and worshiped in unusual ways. Because they ate the "body" and drank the "blood" of the One they worshiped in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, they were accused of cannibalism. Because they called one another "brother" and "sister," celebrated "love feasts," and kissed each other like family members with a "kiss of love" (*1 Pet. 5:14, NKJV*), they also were accused of practicing incest and various other immoral vices. In view of these mischaracterizations, Peter wants believers to represent Christianity rightly before their neighbors so that there will be no misunderstandings or basis for false accusations. Still, Christ was put to death, although He was innocent of any evil-doing; believers should not expect to be treated any better.—*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 68-69.

Do our friends, neighbors, and coworkers think we are strange or bizarre? How can we best put to rest those kinds of thoughts or accusations? What does your community think of the Adventist church of which you are a part? What can we do to improve that impression? One of the best ways that we can improve our own feelings and the impression we leave in our community is by serving others.

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