

# Discussion Guide

Week of December 1, 2013

1 Peter 4:1–11

**Passage Overview:** In this passage, Peter again explains how believers should live as exiles amid a world that rejects their message. They bear witness to the gospel when they live in a way that pleases God. This is especially demonstrated in how Christians respond to suffering. The suffering of Christ again serves as a model and inspiration for believers. When believers are willing to suffer, the nerve center of sin is severed in their lives. Although believers will never be totally free from sin in this life (James 3:2, 1 John 1:8), when believers endure suffering for the sake of Christ they show that their purpose in life is not to live for their own pleasures but according to the will of God and for his glory.

## Understanding God's Word—Read 1 Peter 4:1–11.

- “Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,” according to 1 Peter 4:1. What does this mean, and why does Peter ground the rest of chapter 4 in this truth?
- In 1 Peter 4:6, we might think that Peter offers a second chance for salvation after death for those who rejected Christ. How is this view inconsistent with the immediate context of 1 Peter? How is it inconsistent with the teaching of the rest of Scripture? (Read Luke 16:26 and Hebrews 9:27, but think also about 1 Peter 4:1–6 and the coming judgment of “the living and the dead”.)

## Living and Applying God's Word

- According to 1 Peter 4:7–11, what should anticipation of the end times motivate believers to do?
- What does Peter mean in 4:7 when he says “the end of all things is at hand”? To what is he referring? Given that Peter had experienced the death and resurrection of Christ and nothing more, what does this say about the work of Christ? What are the implications of this statement for us today?
- How are Christians to act today while we wait for Christ's return? What adjectives does Peter use to describe believers?
- What does 1 Peter 4:8 mean? What should this look like in the local church?
- How are believers to use their gifts, according to 1 Peter 4:11? Where does their ability and strength originate? How does this change the Christian's sense of responsibility and significance within the body of Christ?

## Turning to God in Faith and Repentance

- Unbelievers do not have the last word; they will give account and face God's judgment (v5). How should this shape our relationships with unbelievers? How should you change your sense of urgency with unbelievers?
- Verse 9 says to “show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” What does this look like? How can you turn from grumbling to joyful hospitality toward your brothers and sisters? Toward unbelieving friends and strangers?
- All believers receive spiritual gifts from God, and they are not to hoard these gifts but use them faithfully as stewards of God's grace. Still, spiritual gifts are seen sometimes as points of pride or self-centeredness (“What am *I* good at? What makes *me* special or usable by God?”) or excuses (“I don't evangelize—it's not my gift to do that.”). How can you better steward the gifts God has given you? Take time as a group to share ways you see each other specially gifted to serve God's people.

**Prayer:** Pray for members of your group, asking God to bless each of you with hearts to serve the body of believers. Repent of any creeping worldliness or love for the world that supersedes love for God's commands and righteousness. As the holiday season gets into full swing, pray for one another's hearts (and schedules!) and family interactions. Pray also for Scott and Maria Carpenter who serve with Pioneers in Southeast Asia.

## Announcements

- Starting Pointe, membership class (Dec. 6–8)—[robert@insidecrosspointe.com](mailto:robert@insidecrosspointe.com)
- Children's Ministry Orientation (Dec. 15)—[christy@insidecrosspointe.com](mailto:christy@insidecrosspointe.com)
- Ski Retreat (Jan. 2–5)—[will@insidecrosspointe.com](mailto:will@insidecrosspointe.com)