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We will use the brains God has given us to evaluate our lifestyle and get rid of anything and everything which is not “godly.” And we will seek with God’s help to pattern our lives after Him — especially His love!



OUR PRIMARY MISSION IN LIFE

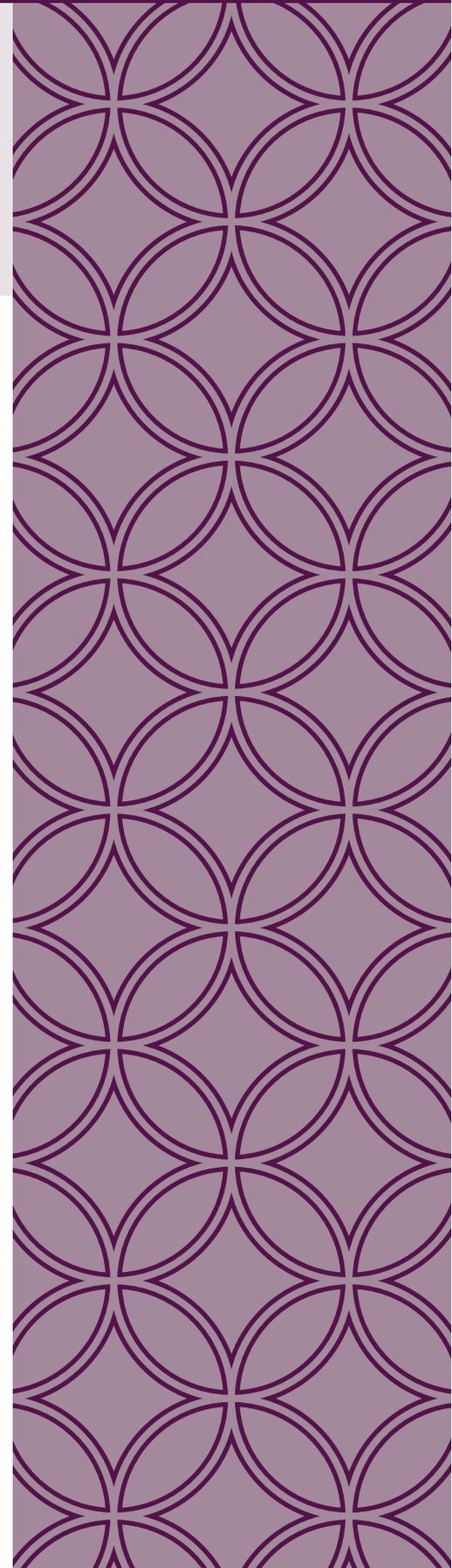
In the “preamble” (Lesson 2), Peter’s letter helped us to establish a solid base on which to develop our Personal Mission Statement. It helped us to clarify who we are and how we got to be who we are. Lesson 3 takes it a step forward to consider what should take place in our daily lives, in the light of what God has done for us.

OUR LIFESTYLE SHOWS WE REALLY ARE GOD’S PEOPLE

1 PETER 1:13-16

The word “therefore,” at the beginning of this section, hooks up the coming exhortation for holiness of living to everything that Peter has stated so far. “Therefore” is a “call to arms” for the sincere follower of Jesus. The great salvation, which God in His grace has provided for us, is designed not only to free us from eternal condemnation; it is also designed to free us up to be God’s people during our temporary stay on earth.

Without any hesitation, Peter calls his readers to “gird up your minds and be sober” (v.13). This figure of speech has its origin in the style of clothing for that day (Cp. Luke 12:35-37; Ephesians 6:14). Men and women wore loose-flowing robes. When they had manual work to do, they would take up the folds of their garments and tuck them under their belts so that movement of arms and legs would not be impaired. Today’s equivalent would be “Take off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and get to work!”



Peter's exhortation for us today is "Getting your minds in gear!" Living the Christian life is not a "no-brainer." It is not something we will simply drift into. It will require serious mental effort on our part. He informs us right "up front" that if we hope to live as God intends us to live we should expect a good mental workout.

And that will, quite naturally, require that you "be sober," Peter adds. This doesn't refer specifically to alcoholic excesses. It is used metaphorically to describe moral and spiritual alertness and sensitivity. Like a football coach giving his players a pep talk, Peter gives his "team" something to remember as they go out on the playing field of life to meet some tough challenges: "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." For those who take seriously the challenges of living the holy life, it will be very demanding. They can take heart. They know that when the game of life is over, they will experience the glory of Christ's victory when He comes again.

First of all, "as obedient children" (v.14) we will need to "roll up the sleeves" of our minds to carefully analyze and evaluate attitudes and behaviors that have become a part of ourselves over the years. In this process of evaluation we will be aware that many things, which were part and parcel of our personality, will have to be eliminated. Incidentally, the order of the words in Greek for "as obedient children" seems to suggest that we get closer to the meaning of this Hebraism by reading "as children of obedience." It would highlight the important concept that Peter wants to put across — that we are not just children of God who feel a strong obligation to be obedient; rather we are children who have inherited obedience. Thus it is our very nature to want to please our Heavenly Father. It's like we have received a whole new set of spiritual genes!

As "children of obedience," we have the right attitude to accept Peter's call to holiness (v.15). "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct." This echoes God's call to Israel in Leviticus, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

Some commentators point out that the Greek word for "holy" (*hagios*), as it refers to God here, may be a "virtual noun" to identify God Himself as "The Holy One." Translated this way it would read "Since it is The Holy One who has called you, you should be holy..." This makes God Himself the One we are to imitate. He is the model for our holiness (Matthew 5:48; Colossians 3:10; & Ephesians 5:1).

As with Judaism, Christianity is also a summons to holy living. Therefore, this makes it our #1 goal in life as God's people. It is the heart of our Personal Mission Statement.

THE PRICE HE PAID IS OUR MOTIVE FOR REVERENT FEAR

1 PETER 1:17-21

As an additional incentive to strive for holiness, Peter holds up the concept of the new and very personal relationship they have with God (v.17). It is a great privilege for them now to be able to think of the God of the universe as their loving "Father." This was very special for the early church. History tells us, it was the custom in those days to ask the catechumens not to join in praying the Lord's Prayer until they completed their instruction and had been baptized. In fact, catechumens were usually dismissed from the worship service before the Lord's Supper and the praying of the Lord's Prayer. So it may very well have been only recently that the recipients of this letter had begun to use the term "Father" in their worship.

The concept of “Father” implied not only that special relationship, it also played into the role of the Father as one who “judges each one impartially according to his deeds.” God is the loving, caring, comforting Father. But a father also has a big responsibility to show approval or disapproval of the behavior of his children and to do this in a fair and impartial manner. Peter urges them to remember this side of God’s “fatherhood,” recognizing the truth that God, their Heavenly Father — not just looks the other way when He notices unholy behavior on the part of His sons and daughters. His love for them wouldn’t allow it. In the light of this truth, Peter says to them, “conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.”

At first glance, it might seem that Peter is introducing a motive that really doesn’t fit with the basic idea of the Gospel. Doesn’t John tell us “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). What Peter means here by “fear” is a healthy respect and reverential awe, which grows out of mature love for God. It is not a servile fear, but a sensitivity to the reality that disobedience to His divine will is going to grieve our Heavenly Father. There is no real contradiction here.

As Peter strives to motivate his readers to take seriously the challenge to live holy lives, he lifts up the truth of what it took on the part of God to bring them into a saving relationship with Himself. They should never forget that God had paid a great price to ransom them (v.18). The Greek word for ransom usually had to do with the transaction, which freed someone from slavery. Incidentally, this involved a formal ritual, which was regularly accompanied by a sacrifice of one kind or another. Peter had heard Jesus use the same idea when He proclaimed that He had come to give His life as “a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

If you “read between the lines,” you sense Peter’s “hidden agenda” coming to the surface. He really

wants these new Christians to think of themselves not only as children of their Heavenly Father; but also, and especially, as “the New Israel!” The Israelites became the “People of God” when God called them out of Egypt. On the night of their deliverance, each family had been directed to pick out a lamb for sacrifice — not just any lamb. It had to be a lamb without spot or blemish. The blood of the lamb smeared on the doorposts of their homes would spare them from death. The meat of the roasted lamb would give them energy to start their journey to a new land and a new life. Peter wanted to get them to identify mentally with what happened for the Jews in Egypt. He wanted them to recognize that the bondage in which they were when God found them was really much worse than being slaves to an earthly tyrant. At that time they were literally slaves to “the futile ways inherited from their fathers” (v.18). Their lives then were just as pointless and meaningless as it was for the Israelites making bricks for the Pharaohs.

Peter didn’t want them ever to forget what it had cost God. The ransom price was not silver or gold. Rather, it was at great personal cost to Him. His “only begotten Son” fulfilled the symbolism of the lambs that were butchered by the Israelites on the night of the original Passover, as well as the hundreds of thousands that shed their blood in the annual Passovers.

Peter goes on to describe the amazing greatness of that love. He tells us in verse 20 that it wasn’t just an impromptu or impulsive burst of love on God’s part. It had deep roots which went way back before time began. Already in eternity, God could see ahead to what would happen to His creation. Because He is love, God determined already then that He would do whatever it took to reclaim the world of people for Himself. What had been determined “before the foundation of the world... was made manifest at the end of time for your sake!” Peter wants them (and us) to be on the receiving end of such deep and abiding love.

*The “seed” for the new life comes from
God and the life that develops from
it has the stamp of eternity on it.*



ALL THIS SHOULD MOVE US TO A LIFE OF LOVE

1 PETER 1:22–25

Having issued the challenge to holiness, and having put forth several truths to motivate them, Peter brings this section to a conclusion by reminding them of what God considers His highest expectations for them. Above all, God expects them to “love one another earnestly from the heart” (v.22). The word for “love” is “agape.” It describes a kind of love which is an act of the will, (not a feeling), which expresses itself in a strong determination never to think about nor do anything which will result in harm of any kind to a fellow human being — especially our brothers and sisters in the faith. The word “earnestly” suggests that it’s to be aggressive and “pro-active,” as opposed to “reactive.” The emphasis upon loving people who are fellow believers is not meant to exclude the importance of loving all people. The topic here just happens to be love toward brothers and sisters in the household of faith. Sincere love for fellow believers is at the top of the list in our call to holiness.

In verses 23–25, Peter once again alludes to the idea that they will live lives of love for one another, not because it is expected of them, but rather because it is their very nature to do so. Christians ought to love one another not “as if” they were brothers and sisters, but because they truly are brothers and sisters in Christ. They have the capacity to do this, Peter says, because they have “been born anew.” Like Jesus, he pulls an analogy from nature. They all knew that everything a plant is going to be is predetermined by the seed, which is planted. Applied to them, it meant that they had their new life because of the miraculous power of the Word of God, specifically the “Good News” which was preached to them and had found a place in their hearts (v.25). The “seed” for the new life comes from God and the life that develops from it has the stamp of eternity on it.

THE WORD WILL HELP US TO GROW IN LOVE

1 PETER 2:1-3

Peter had been writing in figurative terms. In verse one of chapter 2, he speaks in very down-to-earth language. He writes “So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander.” Again, Peter seems to be referring to their Baptism experience for an illustration. As in the ceremony of Baptism they took off their ordinary “street clothes” and put on the “pure white baptismal garment,” so now, they will “put off” all ungodly behavior and “put on” appropriate behavior.

Incidentally, in the Greek, the phrase “So put away” (RSV) is the aorist participle, indicating a “point action.” It is not an imperative. Peter assumes that they had already made a clean break with these sins, and in effect cleared the way for their growth in holiness. At the same time, Peter recognizes their “newness” in the faith. He knew how daunting it would be for them to follow through on their baptismal vow to “renounce the devil and all his wicked works.” His advice to them is “Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.” The word translated “spiritual” (logikon) would be better translated “of the word,” as the King James version has it. That would make it “the milk of the word.”

Peter’s reference to “newborn babes” may have hinted at their newness in the faith. But the point he wants to make is not this

so much as it is to encourage their devotion to the Word. The word that is used here for “long for” (epipotheesate) is the same word that is used in the Greek Septuagint translation of Psalm 42:1, “as the hart panteth after the waterbrook.” As an infant has an intense yearning for its mother’s milk, so should they (and we) have an intense interest and longing for the Word of God, so we may be nourished and strengthened in our faith to a life of holiness.

Probably without stopping to take a breath, Peter adds (v.3): “For you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.” Without saying it in so many words, Peter gives us a special incentive to be “people of the Word.” It is in the “milk of the Word” that we have our contact with God Himself. They had already had a “taste of God” in the Gospel. In essence, it is the Word that enables us to “feed” upon God Himself and thus to receive for ourselves the spiritual strength we need to be empowered for holiness of living.

In summary, this section of 1 Peter teaches us that our reason for living is to be holy as God is holy, and gives us “the basics” for being able to grow in that direction. We will use the brains God has given us to evaluate our life-style and get rid of anything and everything which is not “godly.” And we will seek with God’s help to pattern our lives after Him — especially His love!

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 PETER 2:4-10

Heavenly Father, my heart is filled with joy, wonder, and gratitude as I come into Your presence. There is joy in my heart as daily I seek to follow Your "Call to Holiness." There is wonder when I think of what my salvation cost You. There is gratitude that I am among the people whom You call Your "Chosen Ones." In the precious Name of Jesus. Amen.

1 Peter 2:4-5

- 1. How do these verses tie in with the thought expressed in 2:2? What is the topic in verse 2?

What does Peter say we should do in order to "be built up?"

- 2. Who is the "him" to whom we are to come?

From whom did Peter get the notion to refer to Jesus as a "stone?" See Isaiah 28:16 and Matthew 21:42.

What is the significance of Peter's referring to Jesus as "the living stone?"

In what way are we also "living stones?"

What kind of "house" are we a part of?

- 3. In the minds of the Jewish people, what was the fundamental purpose of the Temple at Jerusalem? See I Kings 8:6 & 10-12; Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 43:4-7.

What does Nehemiah 10:39 call it?

What does Jesus call it (John 2:16)?

In what special room of the Temple would the "Divine Presence" dwell? (Hebrews 9:2-3)

How was this special room shielded from the rest of the Temple area (Exodus 26:31-33)?

What happened to the “shield” at the moment Jesus died on the Cross (Matthew 27:51)?

What did this signify?

4. What do you suppose Peter means when he declares that we who are believers are “God’s house” in our world today?

What does the Apostles’ Creed call it?

5. Whose sons had been chosen by God to do service in the Tabernacle? (Numbers 3:4)

Which tribe was designated to be responsible for everything which went on in the Temple (Numbers 1:53)?

How did a priest become a high priest (Hebrews 5:4)?

What was the special privilege of the high priest? See Hebrews 5:1

In the light of what you know about the job description of the priesthood, what does it mean for you, personally, to think of yourself as a member of the priesthood (2:5)?

6. Peter writes that as priests before God we are privileged to “offer spiritual sacrifices” (2:5). What specific role of the Old Testament priesthood do you think he might be referring to?

List below the sacrifices other than animals and fruits of the field, which Scriptures encourage:
Psalm 107:22

Psalm 50:14

Philippians 4:18

Romans 12:1

Psalm 51:17

Hosea 6:6

Hebrews 13:15

7. When Peter uses the term “acceptable” (v.5) with regard to “sacrifices” what was he referring to? See Leviticus 22:17–25; 1 Peter 1:19.
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What does Peter say will make our “spiritual” sacrifices acceptable to God (v. 5c)? See Hebrews 9:13–14.

1 Peter 2:6–8

8. In what way can Jesus “the Rock” also be a stone that will “make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall” (2:8)? See 1 Corinthians 1:23.
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According to verse 8, what is the real reason that some people reject Jesus and the Gospel?

Does the phrase “as they were destined to do” (v.8) mean that they had no choice? What else could it mean?

1 Peter 2:9–10

9. Peter (v. 9) ascribes all of the cherished titles of God’s chosen of the Old Testament to believers in Christ. What do you think was his purpose in doing this?
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10. How does verse 10 keep us from taking a wrong kind of pride in the titles God gives to us?
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