



1 PETER – Living Out Our Identity in Christ Amidst a Challenging World

**Mile Marker 5 ... “A ‘Peculiar People’ Living a
Positively ‘Peculiar Life’ – CONDUCT That Says ‘YES!’”**

1 Peter 2:12-3:12

Introductory Reflection

We continue with our general focus on our CONDUCT as God’s *peculiar* people in Christ, those who are living a *peculiar* life. Specifically, these last two mile markers on 1 Peter are going to emphasize ***the POSITIVELY peculiar life we’re called to live out!***

Followers of Jesus in our culture today face a number of consistent critiques from broader society: from being judgmental to living as hypocrites to a host of other charges. Many of those critiques even have validity to them; there can unfortunately be plenty of evidence to back up such critiques. However, it would be a total misrepresentation of history to suggest that this is all there is to the story. Indeed, there are many ways that followers of Jesus have made a POSITIVE difference on earthly life and society over the past 2,000 years. ***What are some of the ways where Christianity has had a positive influence/impact even on general earthly life and society?***

Even still today, that continues to be true even on a more local/personal level. ***In the midst of all that Christians can get wrong, how have you seen Jesus’ people making a positive different in the lives of others right around them?***

A Reminder about Our Approach through the Rest of 1 Peter

For this broader portion of our look at 1 Peter, we’re looking at this letter according to themes. These two major themes (inter-related ones) are serving as our main areas of focus.

THEME #1 Our IDENTITY in Christ (MM 3)

THEME #2 Our CONDUCT as Christ’s people living in this world (MM4 onward)

**Here’s the link between the two: because of our IDENTITY in Christ – what should be the most foundational part of who we are!! – we live the life we do in the midst of this world!
*We are a peculiar people living a peculiar life!***

Review: The General Importance of Our Conduct according to 1 Peter

In Mile Marker 4, we focused on a couple of key texts on this broader theme of CONDUCT. We saw the basic emphasis such texts put on the way followers of Jesus should live as His people in the world. It's really the focus of the rest of the letter.

READ 1 Peter 1:13-17 and 2:11-12 again

Indeed, **it's all part of this PECULIAR life we're called to live amidst this world.**

Towards the end of Mile Marker 4, we turned the corner from CONDUCT in general to a specific emphasis on conduct that says "NO!" (see 1:14; 2:11 and 4:2-4). Part of this peculiar life we're called to is one that rejects the desires, passions and lusts of our unredeemed flesh. For Mile Markers 5 and 6, we are looking to see what Peter has to say about the other direction – it's a definite "NO!" to such behaviors, but a resounding "YES!" to other types of conducts. **Again, it's a POSITIVELY peculiar life we're called to live out in Christ!**

Before we get too far along, why would you say it's important for followers of Jesus to live such a life that makes a POSITIVE impact even on earthly society?

A CLARIFICATION: having a living hope and looking forward to our inheritance that awaits us in heaven/eternity should *never* lead to our ineffectiveness and irrelevance in this life! In fact, throughout the New Testament, our HOPE for what is to come consistently serves as a strong motivation for going about our lives in a certain way here-and-now (e.g. see Romans 13:11-14; Titus 2:11-13; see also Jesus' three parables in Matthew 25 – how we should be living *this life* in light of His pending return). As we pass through this life as "sojourners and exiles" in this world (2:11), we should be leaving behind ripples of POSITIVE influence and impact even on earthly society!

POSITIVELY Peculiar Conduct – The Basic Theme

1 Peter 2:11-12 is a key text for the basic theme of 1 Peter and this emphasis on CONDUCT. Together, we see a similar progression to the "FLEE/RUN from" vs. "PURSUE" that we see in 1 Timothy 6:11 or the "don't be conformed" vs. "be transformed" of Romans 6. Living out faith in Christ is a "NO!" that is also a "YES!" – a rejection of certain wrong/sinful behaviors and an embracing of other types of conduct. Indeed, verse 12 really serves as an UMBRELLA instruction for all that follows in 2:13 through most of the rest of the letter = this **POSITIVELY peculiar** conduct we are to live out in Christ!

READ 1 Peter 2:12

¹² *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

It's not as clear in English translations, but the same Greek word is used twice in this verse: it's the adjective often translated simply as "**GOOD.**" First, it's what should characterize our conduct among unbelievers – see "HONORABLE" in the ESV or "live PROPERLY" in the NLT. Second, it's also the kind

of deeds that others should be able to see from us as followers of Jesus. In some instances, it's a word that describes what is aesthetically beautiful or pleasing; when applied to conduct, it's what might be considered to be excellent (hence "honorable"). This is *not* about living *as a show for self-glorification* (see Jesus' warning against such hypocrisy in Matt. 6:1-18). Instead, it's living our lives in such a way that others cannot help but see (they are, after all, watching!), take note and even respond eventually by worshiping God! According to Peter, that doesn't happen by believers simply being experts on "NO!" (as important as that is); it happens through **POSITIVELY peculiar** conduct.

Matthew 5:14-16 provides a great parallel text for this kind of living (read that text). Just as the purpose of light is to shine in darkness, so is our purpose as "the light of the world" as those who are in Christ. We shine in the midst of our world's darkness in a way that is POSITIVE – both in that our deeds are GOOD *and* in the sense that our lives become attractive to unbelievers. Of course, this simply cannot happen if our lives are no different than those of unbelievers around us!

As much as holiness is about being different from the wrong behaviors of unbelievers, why is this more positive angle important for us to reflect properly God's character through our conduct?

Practically speaking, in the midst of your everyday, ordinary life, what are some ways that you can shine light in such a positively peculiar kind of way?

POSITIVELY Peculiar Conduct within Christian Community

This is one of the basic contexts in which Peter writes about this kind of conduct. How God's people interact with the family of believers should serve as a shining example of true community to a world desperately longing to experience it. As Jesus Himself says in John 13:35, our love for one another within the community of believers will prove to the world that we are His! There are certainly many ways God's people fail to live up to this standard. That should never stop us from being clear about the ideal for which we should be striving. Peter reminds us of that.

READ 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (esp. 1:22 and 2:1); 2:17 (the second command); 3:8 and 4:8-11.

From these verses, write down the conduct that should characterize our interaction with others in Christian community. Reflect on how that serves as a contrast to many earthly groups.

How does that sort of POSITIVE conduct POSITIVELY portray God and Christ?

POSITIVELY Peculiar Conduct within Broader Society

Peter's message is going to extend far beyond the Christian community, however. Just as we are called to be holy "*in everything we do*" (1:15 – NLT), this kind of conduct should be evident throughout every arena in our lives as followers of Jesus! Here are the basic categories Peter is going to address specifically: (1) within human governing authorities, (2) within work structures (the 1st century slave-master relationship was much different than the employee-employer relationship today; there are, however, some definite similarities and (3) within marriage. There is also a broader section of review in 3:9-12. These are some concrete examples of basic earthly society in which we should be living out positively peculiar conduct as God's people!

READ 1 Peter 2:13-3:7 and 3:9-12

Overall, how do Peter's words in these texts point to a POSITIVELY peculiar life within society? In other words, how is it different in a good way from others around us?

Peter puts a significant emphasis on "SUBMISSION" (oh, how we hate that word!). In Scripture, we always have a higher authority to answer to in God. Yet, *unless something contradicts what God has commanded*, His people are to live in submission. This is a theme that truly deserves far more attention than we can give it here. ***Regardless of the context, what is challenging about the kinds of "SUBMISSION" called for in these verses?***

How does Peter appeal to the example of Jesus within such a context?

What are the positive impacts such conduct has according to Peter (e.g. see 2:15 or 3:1-2)?

Concluding Application

Whenever we come to such texts, we should see these specific categories for sure. However, we should *also* see such categories as representative of a more general reality. In other words, these are best seen as instructions that apply *throughout our participation in earthly society!* ***Spend some time reflecting on ways these words should apply to the (POSITIVE) way you live as a follower of Jesus amidst earthly society.***