



Session 6: 1 Peter 4:1–19

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, & doing.

Main Idea: As a result of knowing that at times God wills suffering for the purpose of purifying believers from sin and deepening their longing for glory with Christ, we should prepare to suffer while living a life of obedience to God through sacrificial love, hospitality, and service.

Head Change: To recognize our responsibility as Christians to prepare for suffering because it will be experienced at one point or another.

Heart Change: Always rest in the presence of God as the source of hope rather than our circumstances.

Life Change: To strive for a disciplined lifestyle of prayer and service to others.

OPEN

Have you ever wrongly judged something by what it looks like on the outside (a book, a house, a gift, etc.)? What made you realize your judgment was wrong? How did it change your outlook on that thing moving forward?

A lot of us wrongly judge one another based solely on what we see from the outside. To some degree, we can get an idea of what a person is about based on the kind of lifestyle that they live, but that does not give us the whole story. Today's session will help us gain clarity on what it means to truly demonstrate our Christian faith from the inside out.

READ

Read 1 Peter 4:1–19.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Kyle's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

Can we tell whether someone is a Christian by looking on the outside? How does Kyle answer this?

What were the two ways Kyle mentioned that we demonstrate to the world our faith in Christ?

What does Peter mean in verse 7 when he says, "The end of all things is near"?

Show Session 6: 1 Peter 4:1–19

DISCUSS

One of the fundamental truths of Christianity is that we are saved by grace from the inside out. Like Kyle said during the session, our faith is not revealed by a mere symbol, but by the fruit that grows from who we are. We are known by what we follow. For Christians, following Christ will lead us into some difficult spaces—perhaps even suffering—which is why we must prepare to face them with joy.

Someone read 1 Peter 4:1–19.

If asked, what do you think people would point to in your life as evidence of your faith? How do you demonstrate to others that you are a follower of Christ?

Verse 1 begins with “therefore.” So let’s start by asking the question we’ve discussed before. **What’s the “therefore” there for? How does Peter’s teaching here connect with what he has said previously?**

Looking back at 3:18–22, Peter focused his readers’ attention on the example of Jesus who, rather than being spared from suffering, died for our sins and rose from the dead. He has gone ahead of us to show us the way. Because Christ suffered, we should expect similar experiences as we follow Him. That’s why Peter begins here by calling us to prepare for how we will respond when those situations arise.

So how can we tell if someone is a follower of Jesus? Let’s re-read the two passages Kyle mentioned in the session to better understand how Jesus answers that question. Could I get two volunteers to read Matthew 7:20 and John 13:34?

What do these two passages teach us about the primary qualities of Christians? (That we are to be known by the fruit we bear and our love for one another)

To put it simply, we are known by the way we live and the way we love and that’s just as true in times of suffering as it is in times of comfort. Kyle explained that cultivating humility is one the primary ways we can prepare to live faithfully in times of difficulty.

How would you define humility? Who would you point to as an example of humility?

GO DEEPER

Read more about Christ’s example of humility in the following verses: Philippians 2:4–11

How does Jesus display humility in these verses?

How does the Father respond to the humility of his Son?

Since we are called to approach life with the mind of Christ (v. 5), what needs to change for you to live with a greater sense of humility? In other words, where can you invite God to shape you to look more like his Son?

Based on Kyle’s description of the “attitude of Jesus,” what are some practical ways you can strive for having that same attitude in the coming week?

Humility is essential, but it does not spare us from times of strained relationships.

As Peter makes clear in verses 3–4, even a humble pursuit of holiness can feel like an indictment on those who have committed themselves to worldly ways of living. They will be “surprised” that we no longer join in sinful activities like we may have done before.

What are some of the most distinctive ways your life has changed since coming to know Christ?

How has your faith changed the way you approach the relationships you had prior to knowing Christ? What are some ways others have been “surprised” by your choice to not join them in their lifestyle?

This is why our hope must be in Christ rather than our circumstances. Even when we strive to live holy and obedient lives, we’re prone to experiencing abuse from those around us. And if our hope is in those relationships or any other temporary thing it will fail us. But there’s another reason for hoping in Christ and that is that our time here is short, as Peter makes clear in verses 5–11.

When Peter writes, “the end is near” we shouldn’t read that phrase in the sense of doomsday. Rather, the end is our great hope because it means we will be with our Savior as He makes all things new. **What would change about your daily life if you were able to keep “the end” at the forefront of your mind? What would you become more urgent about?**

Peter offers a couple of practical ways the temporariness of life should shape us, the first being prayer (v. 7). He says to be alert and sober-minded in order to pray effectively. **Would you say these terms characterize your prayer life? What are some of the consistent obstacles you have to overcome for a disciplined prayer life?**

Kyle compared this life to a turbulent plane ride: the flight itself can be rough, but we’re going to land soon. **How does suffering affect your commitment to prayer? How should the truth that we’re going to “land” soon with Christ change the way you pray?**

The most important command Peter gives is to “love each other deeply” (v. 8). And he applies that in two ways—hospitality and service. **What role does hospitality play in the way you express your faith? How do you practice it?**

Kyle noted how the Greek term for hospitality is a compound word that combines the terms for “love” and “strange” into one. Literally, it means, “love strangers.” Of course, there’s nothing wrong with being hospitable to those we know well, but biblical hospitality extends beyond that to those who are not a part of our group, regardless of their faith or lack thereof.

Who is a “stranger” in your life that you could show hospitality to this week?

In addition to hospitality, Peter tells his readers to serve one another with whatever gift they have received from God.

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The term Peter uses in verse 10 for “gift” is *karisma*, which generally refers to earthly goods given by God. In this context, it likely has a more spiritualized meaning, referring to those intangible gifts, like those he mentions in the following verse. That said, the principle here is simply that whatever gift we have received—whether tangible or intangible—it is meant for the purpose of serving others and encouraging fellow believers in Christ. God does not gift us for the sake of our self-esteem, but to give ourselves away in service to others. When we do so, we display the love of Christ and faithfully steward God’s grace in sight of a watching world.

What would you consider some of the gifts God has given to you?

Leader: *These don't necessarily have to be overly spiritual gifts, like prophecy or tongues. Rather, try to steer the direction where Peter takes it in verse 11 to suggestions like teaching or service itself. Other options could be financial means or general giftings like cooking, singing, writing, etc.*

How are you serving others with your gifts? What are some ways you could be more intentional about using your gifts to encourage the body of Christ?

Up to this point, Peter has been describing ways for us to live that prepare us for times of suffering. Humility, love, hospitality, and service should not vanish from our lives when things get difficult. Rather, they help us stay engaged with people—especially other believers—so that we can remain faithful. In verses 12–19, Peter reminds us once again not to be surprised when testing comes. Instead, we are to be joyful because our suffering partners us with the suffering of our Savior.

According to verses 14–16, when should we rejoice in suffering? (When we suffer for the sake of Christ—not when we suffer for deserving reasons, like murder, theft, or any other kind of criminal activity)

This is an important point for us to remember. Peter's statement does not apply to every kind of suffering. Some forms of persecution are deserved as punishment for breaking lawful rules. We rejoice when our suffering comes as a result of our obedience to Christ. It is not something we should seek, but it is something we should be willing to embrace when it comes trusting that God will use it to refine our faith, reveal his blessing, and confirm the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

How has God used suffering in your life as a way of deepening your faith in him? What did you learn about him in the midst of your suffering?

Based on what you've heard in this session, what can you begin doing to prepare yourself for suffering? How can you begin cultivating habits that will help you to remain faithful when things get difficult?

LAST WORD

When suffering comes, we are told to do two things—praise God and continue to do good. That's not something that we'll magically decide to do unless we're cultivating those habits when things are going well. Like an athlete training for an important match, we as Christians ought to prepare ourselves to suffer well.

The primary ways Kyle explained we do that is through regular study of God's Word and participation in the local church. Make those your priorities in the days ahead. Look for ways to use your gifts in service to others and rejoice in the fact that God has made you his own through Christ.

LIVE IT OUT

Pray: Wherever you sense doubt, ask the Lord to strengthen you and help you to persevere when difficulties arise that challenge your faith in him.

Encourage: If there's a fellow believer in your life struggling today, reach out to them and offer your encouragement by reminding them of God's faithfulness.

Serve: Look for a practical way to serve your local church with the gifts God has given you this week. If you do not yet have a clear idea of your gifts, reach out to another believer this week and talk about that with him or her.