

## PETER, A JEWISH FISHERMAN AND DISCIPLE-MAKER

### Introduction

Discussions about discipleship often center around the ministries of Jesus and Paul. However, Peter's life and teaching also make a major contribution to the pattern of discipleship in the New Testament. Peter had a unique ministry role among the Twelve. Peter's life and teaching demonstrate the expectations Jesus has for all disciples.

### Jesus' Relationship to Peter

From the day Andrew first led Peter to Jesus to the day Christ forgave and restored Peter for denying Him, the evidence of Christian discipleship is seen and becomes a pattern for other believers to follow. The call of Peter is clearly detailed in Luke 5:1-11.<sup>1</sup> In this account, Jesus is teaching by the Sea of Galilee and sees two boats that the fishermen had left while they were washing their nets (Luke 5:1-2). Jesus "got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then He sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat" (Luke 5:3).<sup>2</sup> After Jesus finished teaching, He asked Peter to move out to deep water and cast his nets to fish

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas and Gundry indicate that "the sequence of Luke's account, along with several differences in detail from Matthew and Mark possibly indicates this call came later than the one described in [Matt 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20]. . . . After responding to this second call, they seem to have remained with Jesus permanently. Following His crucifixion they did, however, return to fishing [John 21:1-25]." Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Stein asserts that "Luke did not mention any of the other men, such as James and John (5:10), in order to focus the reader's attention on the calling of the most famous and important disciple." Robert N. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 169.

(Luke 5:4). Peter acknowledges that he had been fishing hard all night and caught nothing but at Jesus' request he would "let down the nets" (Luke 5:5). When this took place, they caught such a large number of fish that the nets began to break. Peter, along with his fishing partners James and John, were amazed. The boat was so full that it began to sink (Luke 5:5-6). Luke 5:8 states, "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said 'Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!'" Jesus responds, "'Don't be afraid. From now on you will be catching people!' Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed Him" (Luke 5:10-11).<sup>3</sup>

In Luke 5:1-11, Peter experienced the transformational call to follow Jesus. Already Peter had come face to face with Christ's invitation to accept Him as the Messiah (John 1:29-51). Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, declared, "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41), and then brought Peter to Jesus. John 1:42 states, "When Jesus saw him, He said, 'You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which means 'Rock')." Even though Peter had already been confronted with Jesus as the Messiah, the call in Luke 5:1-11 is a call to be a disciple of Christ, a call to radical discipleship. Jesus responds, "'Don't be afraid . . . From now on you will be catching people!' Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed Him" (Luke 5:10-11). In becoming part of God's mission, Peter, James, and John "leave everything behind to

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<sup>3</sup> Buckwalter points out that "Luke depicts Peter, James and John responding intelligently to someone they already know. . . . Becoming 'fishers of men' is contingent upon following Jesus." Douglas Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 144. Brawley compares and contrasts how Peter saw himself and how he viewed Jesus, stating, "After the miraculous catch of fish, he assumes that Jesus has special status. In comparison, Peter deprecates himself as a sinner." Robert Lawson Brawley, *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 140. Kroll points out that Jesus issues an invitation "that has implications to change the world. Woodrow Kroll, *Luke: Glory to God in the Highest!* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 36.

follow Jesus.” These men, according to Hendriksen, “actually left their fish, boats, business, homes, families!”<sup>4</sup> Analyzing Peter’s call, Liefeld indicates:

Luke’s reason for including this incident may be not only to portray the confrontation of human sinfulness with Jesus but also to show that to receive the saving grace of Christ a ‘sinful’ man must repent. Long before Luke speaks of the Gentiles with their gross sins and their being included in saving grace, we are faced with the realization that even Peter . . . must take his place as a sinner.<sup>5</sup>

This encounter with Jesus involving repentance and leaving everything to follow Jesus “underscores the condition of discipleship Jesus taught later on (14:33).”<sup>6</sup> The pattern of discipleship established by Jesus stipulates that everyone “who does not say good-bye to all his possessions cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:33). Peter, in turning to follow Christ, becomes obedient to his Lord’s call to discipleship by leaving everything to follow Jesus.

### **The Confession of Peter**

A defining moment in Peter’s growth as a disciple is found in his confession regarding the identity of Jesus (Matt 16:13-17). While Jesus was in the region of

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<sup>4</sup> William Hendriksen, *Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 285. It should be noted that the Roman Catholic Church argues these verses help establish apostolic succession derived from Peter. Hornik and Parsons write, “According to tradition, these words imply the role Christ intends for Peter as leader of the apostles. . . . In the traditions that developed, all subsequent disciples, priests in the Roman Church, were invested with supreme authority, spiritual and temporal, were transmitted from Peter who, according to this tradition, was chosen by Christ as the Vicar on Earth.” Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Illuminating Luke: The Public Ministry of Christ in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Painting* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 49. This researcher states that the Catholic view of apostolic succession based on Peter may be based on tradition but is inconsistent with the biblical authority. Tavard points out that the primacy of the bishop of Rome is tied to Peter’s succession “even though Peter, the chief among the Twelve, was never a bishop of Rome and though the universal primacy, or Petrine office, cannot be traced back to the first bishops who occupied the Roman see.” George Henry Tavard, *The Church, Community of Salvation: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, vol. 1 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 113.

<sup>5</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, *Luke*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 877.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Caesarea Philippi, “He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’” (Matt 16:13). After naming several of the prominent prophets or “one of the prophets,” Jesus inquires, “But you, who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!” (Matt 16:14-16). Jesus responds to Peter, “Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven” (Matt 16:17).

The significance of the event is that Peter identifies Jesus as the “Messiah, the Son of the living God!” (Matt 16:16). Toussaint writes, “By Messiah, Peter identified Jesus as the One in whom all the Old Testament hopes had been placed. He was the fulfillment of their Scriptures.”<sup>7</sup> Speaking of Jesus, Peter identified Him not as “a Son of God” but “as the Son of the only genuine God.”<sup>8</sup> The long awaited Messiah had arrived. Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy. This important fact was not revealed to Peter based on his superior ability or intellect; it was revealed by God the Father in heaven, by His sovereign choice (Matt 16:17). The revelation of Jesus as the Messiah marks a crucial point of development along the pathway of Peter’s spiritual development. Carson writes, “Partial as it was (16:21-23), Peter’s firm grasp of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah set him apart from uncertainty and confusion of the crowd and

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<sup>7</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1980), 200-201. Noland writes, “Jesus is identified as the royal figure of Davidic descent through whom God will restore the fortunes of his people as long promised. . . . Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ is of a Christ who is to be worshipped as one in whom God is immediately encountered.” John Noland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 665. Mitch and Sri point out that “Peter figures prominently in this chapter as one who receives the revelation of Christ’s identity yet resists the revelation that his mission will lead to suffering and death.” Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 201.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

could only be the result of the Father's disclosure."<sup>9</sup> Soon after this impactful experience, Peter is confronted with his flesh and the disciple's powerful adversary, the devil. Jesus continues the pattern of spiritual development in Peter's life.

### **The Development of Peter**

Peter demonstrates the complexity of discipleship as he takes one giant step forward spiritually with his revelation of Jesus as the Messiah only to be soon rebuked by his Lord when Jesus announces His impending death and resurrection (Matt 16:21-23). Like all true Christian disciples, Peter remains a work in progress. Because of Peter's denial of Jesus' path to the cross and resurrection after three days, Jesus "rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind Me, Satan, because you're not thinking about God's concerns, but man's!'" (Mark 8:33). Arno Gaebelein suggests Peter may have responded this way because of the "words addressed to Peter by the Lord, the giving of a new name and the commission, lifted up Peter and gave him spiritual pride, which brought on his hasty action."<sup>10</sup> Whether that was the case or not, Jesus puts Peter in his place as well as stating Satan's role in this subversive act. Jesus rebuked Peter in such a public manner that it is

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<sup>9</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 367. Schnackenburg adds, "Contrary to all Jewish expectations, the Christian Messiah 'must' go the way of suffering and death-according to early interpretation, including Matthew's 'in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3; cf. Matt 21:42; 26:54, 56)." Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 161. Senior points out that "the figure of Peter serves in Matthew's gospel as the evangelist's way of assuring his community that the Christian practice of faithfully understanding and following Jesus' teachings will continue in the church both in its leadership and in the community as a whole." Donald Senior, *What are They Saying about Matthew?* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 96.

<sup>10</sup> Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1982), 354.

clear that the words were intended not only as a lesson for Peter but for the other disciples as well.<sup>11</sup>

Another milestone in Jesus' spiritual development of Peter took place when the disciples were in a boat during the night and suddenly faced an oppressive storm (Matt 14:22-24). Jesus walks on the water toward the boat during the storm. The disciples seeing Jesus were first terrified, believing Jesus to be a ghost, so they "cried out in fear" (Matt 14:26). Matthew 14:27-29 records, "Immediately Jesus spoke to them, 'Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' 'Lord, if it's You,' Peter answered Him, 'command me to come to You on the water.' 'Come!' He said." Peter climbs out of the boat and begins to walk toward Jesus, "But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" (Matt 14:29-30). Jesus reaches out His hand, catching Peter and spoke to him, "'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'" (Matt 14:31). After Jesus and Peter got back in the boat, the wind stopped, "then those in the boat worshiped Him and said, 'Truly You are the Son of God!'" (Matt 14:31-33). Peter provides a valuable lesson in discipleship of the need to always keep one's eyes upon Jesus and one's faith in the Messiah.

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<sup>11</sup> Walter W. Wessell, *Mark*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 696. Wilkins adds, "Peter is specified by Matthew alone to have a unique prominence, which swings to both positive and negative extremes." Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term Mathētēs* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 209. Kingsbury points out not only Peter's but all of the disciples' understanding at this point is in a stage of development and "although the disciples correctly understood who Jesus is, they do not as yet know that central to Jesus' divine sonship is death on the cross. Hence, they are in no position at this point to go and make disciples of all nations." Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term Mathētēs* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 75. Yarnell also points out Peter's inconsistent behavior, "What is amazing with Peter, the representative disciple and spokesman for the other disciples, is that he changes from one extreme to the other. . . . In one moment Christ is lauding him for confessing what the Father has revealed; in the next moment Christ is rebuking him for denying what the Son has revealed." Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church: A Theological Exposition of Matthew 16:13-20," in *Upon This Rock: The Baptist Understanding of the Church*, ed. Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 36.

While his fellow disciples expressed fear, Peter demonstrates faith. Peter demonstrates both faith and his impulsive nature as he ventures out of the boat and walks toward Jesus. Hendriksen notes, “Peter knows that without the Master’s permission he will not be allowed to walk on the water, and that apart from Christ’s power he will not be able to do so.”<sup>12</sup> Peter quickly learns an important lesson in discipleship, “as long as he concentrated his attention on Jesus all went well. But the moment he took notice of the boisterous winds and the surging waters he became frightened.”<sup>13</sup> As Peter slips into the water, even in the midst of failure, Peter exhibits faith as “he cried to Jesus for help.”<sup>14</sup> Turner provides a proper perspective on this text related to Jesus’ development of Peter as a disciple when he says, “In view of the discipleship context of the previous storm

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<sup>12</sup> William Hendriksen, *Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 601. Gundry indicates that Jesus makes “the incident an object lesson concerning discipleship.” Robert Horton Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans), 298. Kenner notes, “Of all the disciples, Peter alone begins to walk, but Jesus regards even his faith as less than what a disciple should have.” Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 406. Whittle points out that “Peter needed to learn another lesson . . . that we should not attempt the impossible, without the very presence and strength of His steadying hand upon us.” Rodney E. Whittle, *Exploring the Word*, vol. 1 (Maitland: Xulon Press, 2009), 40. Phillips indicates that Peter was following the pattern of Jesus by initially doing what Jesus was doing, the impossible, writing, “Peter had not mastered the theory of whatever dynamic was involved in walking on water, but his trust in Christ at that moment so linked him with Christ that Christ’s mastery was transmitted to him. Peter’s faith was the switch that turned on the power in his life.” John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips’ Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 300.

<sup>13</sup> Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 601-602.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Taylor points out that “Jesus’ calming of the storm was a miracle worked for the disciples alone—a very unusual occurrence in the New Testament.” Barbara Brown Taylor, *The Seeds of Heaven: Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 55. Harrington states, “Peter as representative of the Twelve tries to share in Jesus’ power and does so for a while—as long as his faith remains strong. When the ‘littleness’ of his faith shows through, he needs to be rescued from drowning by Jesus.” David Harrington, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 227. Schweizer sees this account in Scripture as an example of discipleship, noting, “Thus it becomes clear that Peter is being used once more to illustrate the meaning of discipleship in the ship of the Church.” Edward Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1975), 321. Osborne states, “Peter has a small amount of faith but not much understanding. After this, it is nearly always Peter who responds to Jesus (15:15; 16:16, 22; 17:4, 24; et al.) usually with only a modicum of understanding. Peter has a great deal of bravado but not a lot of wisdom, yet! His potential is obvious, and probably for that reason Jesus responds.” Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 575.

miracle (Matt 8:23-27), it is not a mistake to regard Peter's faith and doubt in the face of danger as exemplary of the trials of discipleship."<sup>15</sup> Jesus continues to develop Peter as a disciple, but greater times of testing remain in Peter's future.

### **The Restoration of Peter**

Peter, the disciple who proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah and the man who would briefly walk on water, faces what may be his greatest challenge in discipleship as Jesus nears the cross. In the garden of Gethsemane, as his Lord agonizes over His impending death, Peter, along with James and John, are caught sleeping (Matt 26:36-41). After Jesus finished praying, a large mob arrived to arrest Jesus (Matt 26:44-46). In an impulsive manner, "Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. (The slave's name was Malchus)" (John 18:10). After Jesus was arrested, Peter continued to follow behind Jesus. When confronted on three occasions as to whether or not he was a disciple and follower of Jesus, Peter denies his Lord not just one or two but three times (John 18:10-27). Matthew records, "And Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly" (Matt 26:75). Peter, who had spoken words of affirmation for Jesus, denies his Lord and for the moment is a defeated disciple.

On the third day after Jesus' death on the cross, Peter is informed by the women that Jesus had risen from the grave. The other disciples "did not believe the women" (Luke 24:9-10). Peter however, got up and "ran to the tomb; when he stopped to look in,

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<sup>15</sup> David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 373. Keener sees this account as Jesus wanting disciples to imitate His works. He states, "Although the proposal that Peter walk on the water is first Peter's idea (v. 28) Jesus' response indicates that he approves of it (v. 29)." Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 256.



he saw only the linen cloths. So he went home, amazed at what had happened” (Luke 24:11-12). Peter quickly responds to the good news of the resurrection of his Lord.

On the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection, the threefold restoration of Peter takes place. John writes in 21:15-19:

When they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “You know that I love You.”

“Feed My lambs,” He told him.

A second time He asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said to Him, “You know that I love You.”

“Shepherd My sheep,” He told him.

He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?”

Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You.”

“Feed My sheep,” Jesus said. “I assure you: When you were young, you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you and carry you where you don’t want to go.” He said this to signify by what kind of death he would glorify God. After saying this, He told him, “Follow Me!”

One of the greatest examples of God’s love in dealing with a sinful man is found in Jesus’ restoration of Peter. Morgan contends, “In all the story of the Master’s dealing with His disciples, there is nothing more exquisite than this account of the patience and power of His method with Peter.”<sup>16</sup> Peter’s denial of his Lord was brash, impulsive, and public. Jesus chose to restore Peter publically. Köstenberger states,

Although Jesus had expressed forgiveness to Peter and apparently had appeared to him privately prior to the present encounter (cf. Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5), the public nature of his denial of Jesus demands that his reinstatement to service be equally public in full view of his fellow disciples.<sup>17</sup>

In a clear and convincing manner, Jesus models a pattern of love, forgiveness, and restoration specifically related to Peter but also demonstrated as an example for the other

<sup>16</sup> G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 262.

<sup>17</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 595.

disciples to follow. The interchange between Jesus and Peter is interesting because of the key words that are used. Bruce writes, “Two words for ‘love’ are used (*agapaō* and *phileō*), two words for tending the flock (*boskō* and *poimainō*), two for the flock itself (*arnia* and *probatia*) and two for know (*oida* and *ginōskō*).”<sup>18</sup> In the process of restoring Peter and commissioning him for service, Jesus’ primary focus with Peter is both his love for his Lord and for others. Köstenberger states, “In this call to love, Jesus does not treat Peter differently from other individuals whom he called to follow him in discipleship.”<sup>19</sup> The call to love God is foundational for loving others. Bruce points out, “The risen Lord uses *agapaō* in his first two questions and *phileō* in the third; Peter uses *phileō* in all three replies.”<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in other places in his Gospel John uses the two “verbs interchangeably . . . What is important is that Peter reaffirms his love for the Lord and is rehabilitated and recommissioned. The commission is a pastoral one.”<sup>21</sup> No doubt Peter learned a major lesson from Jesus’ pattern of discipleship as he would designate himself as a fellow elder and would exhort his fellow church leaders to shepherd God’s flock in a Christ-like manner. Peter was restored and equipped for Christian service as he followed Jesus’ pattern for discipleship.

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<sup>18</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 404.

<sup>19</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 296.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 404.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 405. Hoskyns indicates that the Apostolic responsibility is not only to the unconverted but “to care for the converted is also the duty of the Apostle. The scene in which the capture of the fish is regarded is therefore completed by a picture of the apostolic ministry under the imagery of the Shepherd and a flock of sheep and lambs. . . . Peter is both fisherman and shepherd.” Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 556. Burge writes about the redemptive nature of Jesus’ encounter with Peter, asserting, “True ministry now was impossible for Peter. . . . Peter could have become a man filled with despair. . . . The work of the church can only go forward when we are unburdened of our destructive memories through the gracious forgiveness of God.” Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 595. Gangel notes that “the flow of the text emphasizes humility and service rather than primacy over the other apostles.” Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, Holman New Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville: B&H, 2000), 387.

### **The Importance of the Word**

The foundation of Peter's teaching was both the revealed Word Jesus Christ and the written Word, the Holy Scriptures. Biblical discipleship begins with salvation that comes through faith in Jesus Christ who is revealed in God's Word, the Bible. Salvation is described as the new birth. When Jesus explained God's plan of redemption to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, in John 3:3 Jesus said, "I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus further explained to Nicodemus that the person who is born again is born of the Spirit, stating, "The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

Everyone who is born again has been born of the Spirit through faith in Christ. Jesus speaks of His ultimate death and resurrection indicated in John 3:14-15: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life." This eternal life is a result of God's love: "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:15).

Addressing the concept of being born again, Peter acknowledges the necessity of the Word of God and the proclamation of the gospel message which is foundational for Christian discipleship. Peter follows the pattern of Jesus with an emphasis on the importance of the Word of God. Jesus condemned the religious leaders of His day by stating, "[I]n this way, you have revoked God's Word because of your tradition" (Matt 14:6). Peter confirms God's saving work through the Word of God, stating, "Since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living

and enduring Word of God” (1 Pet 1:23). The seed which God uses in salvation is “invincible and incorruptible.”<sup>22</sup> Schreiner continues by stating that the “means by which God begets his people is the seed of God’s word, the preaching of the gospel. Peter’s theology matches Paul’s here, for the later teaches, that ‘faith comes from hearing the message’ (Rom 10:17).”<sup>23</sup> Peter follows the pattern of Jesus with a strong emphasis on a person being born again. A person was born again as a result of the Word of God. The Word in this context refers to the totality of Scripture and the gospel proclamation.<sup>24</sup>

God’s Word is described by Peter as living and enduring. He may have used the word living since “the word produces life, and he used the word ‘enduring’ because the life once activated will never cease.”<sup>25</sup> Grudem reinforces this concept by pointing out the Peter places an “emphasis on the fact that the Word of God is living (cf. Heb 4:12) [and] suggests its power—unlike any merely human words—to awaken new life.”<sup>26</sup> The fact that it is enduring “reinforces the idea of the permanence of the new life generated by it.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 94.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Walls explains the content of Peter’s use of the term, Word, “includes the Old Testament Scriptures, the New Testament apostolic proclamation, and the presentation of both in the message of the first-century evangelists.” David Walls, *I & II Peter, I, II, & III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 15. Ryrie states, “Peter and James, by including the reference to the Word of God in connection with regeneration, shows that the Word of God (like faith) is involved in the whole process whereby God gives men the new birth.” Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 91.

<sup>25</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 95.

<sup>26</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 96.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

The Christian disciple must understand the importance of the Word of God in the miracle of salvation. Commenting on 1 Pet 1:23, McGee writes, “You cannot be saved, you cannot be born again apart from the Word of God. This book is the miracle that is in the World today.”<sup>28</sup> God has chosen to reveal Himself through His Word. Criswell comments, “We know God only as He discloses Himself, reveals Himself in His holy Word. There is no possibility of a man knowing God apart from the Word of the revelation.”<sup>29</sup> God has chosen to reveal Himself through His Word.

Being born again through the living and enduring Word of God has great implications for Christian discipleship. Helm states, “Peter claims that love not only comes from being born again, but from being born again through the imperishable Word of God.”<sup>30</sup> It is through the Scriptures that the believer learns about the love of God. Grudem indicates that one should never try to “separate the Word of God from God who speaks that Word. . . . These considerations indicate that Peter is thinking specifically of

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<sup>28</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *1 Corinthians-Revelation*, Thru The Bible, vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 687.

<sup>29</sup> W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Epistles of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 32.

<sup>30</sup> David R. Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, Preach the Word Series, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 66. Boice contends that if supposed conversions come apart from the “faithful preaching and teaching of God’s Word, the ‘conversions’ that result are spurious conversions, which is to say that those who respond become Christian in name only. The only way the Holy Spirit works to regenerate lost men and women is by the Bible.” James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?: Rediscovering the Doctrines that Shook the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 75. Miles writes, “The apostle Peter was likewise clear that it was ‘through the living and enduring Word of God,’ . . . that his hearers were ‘born again.’” Todd Miles, *A God of Many Understandings?: The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 26. Ascol reinforces these ideas by indicating how the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God, writing, “Repentance and faith are created through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, however, does not do this work apart from the Word.” Thomas K. Ascol, “The Great Commission Tension: God’s Work and Ours,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God’s Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: B&H, 2010), 160.

the Word of God as the life-giving ‘seed’.<sup>31</sup> The greatest act of love the world has ever known is evidenced by the Father sending His only Son so that those who believed in Him might have eternal life (John 3:16). The concept of salvation was first spoken by Jesus (Heb 2:13). Peter follows Jesus’ pattern and confirms that salvation only comes through the Word of God.

Peter also places an emphasis on the permanent nature of the Word of God. Quoting from Isa 40:6-8, Peter states, “All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower drops off, but the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Pet 1:24-25). Peter goes on to add, “And this is the word that was preached as the gospel to you” (1 Pet 1:25). Grudem writes:

These verses intensify the idea of the permanence of God’s Word by contrasting it with the fading glory of human achievement. Strength, power, wealth, beauty, fame—all the ‘glory’ of man—will quickly fade. Christians who have been ‘born anew’ (v.23) will live with God for ever.<sup>32</sup>

Recognizing the permanency of God’s Word and the beauty of human life, John Wesley revealed a deep yearning for salvation and eternal life with God:

I am a creature of a day. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God. I want to know one thing: the way to heaven. God himself has condescended to

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<sup>31</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 96. MacArthur states, “All true Christians possess an incorruptible seed of eternal life (1 Peter 1:23-25) meaning no satanic deception can take them out of God’s saving hand (John 10:28-29). . . . Those truly born again have been given not only a supernatural insight into the truth (Luke 10:21) but a love for it as well (Pss 1:2; 119:97, 113,159, 167; cf. 2 Thess 2:10; 1 Peter 1:22) and a discernment that protects them from apostasy (cf. Mark 13:22; Heb 10:39).” John MacArthur, *1-3 John*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 5 (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 158. Referring to Christians, Barclay writes, “They had something of the very seed of God in them and therefore, had in them a life which neither time nor eternity could destroy.” William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 199. Pink advocates a different viewpoint, stating that this refers “not to the original communication of spiritual life to the soul, but rather to our being enabled to act from that life and induced to love and obey God by means of the Word of Truth, which presupposes a principle of grace already planted in the heart.” Arthur W. Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Mulberry: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2002), 54.

<sup>32</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 98.

teach me the way. He has written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book.<sup>33</sup>

The book to which Wesley refers is the Bible, God's inerrant and infallible Word. Peter understood the importance of the prophetic Word of God. He was an eyewitness of the majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter refers to the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain and says in 2 Pet 1:17-18, "For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, a voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!" Peter goes on to indicate that the transfiguration was a confirmation of the prophetic Word of God: "So we have the prophetic word strongly confirmed. You will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dismal place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19).

Even though Peter had the privilege of being an eyewitness of the ministry of Christ, His death and resurrection, and of the glory of God revealed in the Transfiguration, he points his readers to evidence much stronger than simply an eyewitness account. Writing about Peter's reinforcement of the importance of the Scriptures, Helm states, "So he quickly moves beyond that which he saw with his eyes and heard with his ears to speak of a light more sure and reliable than both – the prophetic word that God so graciously gave us to read."<sup>34</sup> Peter was speaking of the

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<sup>33</sup> John Wesley quoted in Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 69.

<sup>34</sup> Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 216. Green points out that "Peter claims that he and his associates were witnesses of what, in the end, gives their testimony transcendent authority." Gene Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, Baker's Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 223. Harvey and Towner add, "Peter knows that the apostles did not make up their teaching any more than the Old Testament prophets made up theirs when they spoke of the ultimate coming of Messiah with power and glory." Robert Harvey and Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter and Jude*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 65. Wiersbe points out Peter "was refuting the false teachings of the apostates that the kingdom of God would never come." Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Alert (2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude): Beware of Religious Impostors* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 37.

totality of the Word of God. Until Jesus returns, careful attention should be given to the totality of the written Word of God. Schreiner reminds his readers:

Since the transfiguration indicates the proper interpretation and verification of the prophetic Word, believers should pay careful attention to that word, for it is like a lamp illumining the darkness. Believers will need that word for direction until the day of the Lord comes when Jesus returns, the prophetic word will be fulfilled, for he will illumine our hearts with his light, and the prophetic word will be eclipsed forever by the living Word.<sup>35</sup>

The Christian disciple eagerly anticipates the day when the living Word, Jesus Christ, rules and reigns forever.

God's Word is not the product of human effort but rather divine inspiration. Peter writes, "First of all, you should know this: no prophesy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:20-21). Hiebert writes, "The Holy Spirit, not human volition, is the originating power in prophecy."<sup>36</sup> In its totality, Wiersbe notes, "all Scripture is inspired by the Spirit it must all 'hang together' and no one Scripture should be divorced from the others."<sup>37</sup> Peter provides instruction to the church that the Scriptures are God's Word which was given as men were moved by the Holy Spirit. Each disciple must build his or her life on the sure foundation, the Word of God. Based on 2 Pet 1:19-21, Wiersbe reminds the disciple of the eternal nature of the Word of God:

Men die, but the Word lives. Experiences fade, but the Word remains. The World grows darker, but the prophetic light shines brighter. The believer who builds his life on the Word of God and who looks for the coming of the Saviour is not likely

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<sup>35</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 318.

<sup>36</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude* (Greenville: BJU Press, 1989), 83.

<sup>37</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), 445.



to be led astray by false teachers. He will be taught by the Spirit and grounded on the sure Word of God.<sup>38</sup>

Of false teachers, Peter writes, “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. . . . In their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Pet 2:1, 3). Peter follows the pattern of Jesus in addressing false prophets and teachers. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves” (Matt 7:15). Also, Jesus indicated that false teaching would be an issue even to the end of the age. In Matt 24:11, Jesus reminded His disciples that “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” Peter following the example of his Lord did not back away from controversy or addressing critical spiritual growth issues.

The false prophets and teachers will be judged, according to Peter, “For uttering bombastic, empty words, they seduce, by fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error” (2 Pet 2:18). The most effective way to combat the false teachers was to expose their evil deeds by the truth of God’s Word. The false teachers spoke their own false words. Peter admonishes, “No prophesy of Scripture comes from one’s own interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20). It came instead as men were “moved by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God” (2 Pet 1:21). Divine inspiration, not human

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 446. For additional insight into the importance of the Word of God in combating heresy and false teaching see: John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on False Teaching in the Church* (Chattanooga: ATRI Publishing, 2011); Ron Carlson and Ed Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teaching* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1994); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Peace: Freedom and Conscience in the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 49. Regarding Peter, Bredfeldt reminds his readers, “He knew that Satan’s primary method of leadership is through false teaching and that God’s primary method of leadership is to teach that which is true.” Ibid. Bredfeldt goes on to indicate that Peter came to this understanding “from his teacher—Jesus—that’s how.” Ibid. Sproul addresses the importance of Peter’s instruction and writes, “We cannot do even a cursory reading of the Word of God without seeing the enormous emphasis accorded to doctrine and that unsound doctrine and false teaching are not merely errors in abstraction but are profoundly destructive to the life of the people of God.” R. C. Sproul, *1-2 Peter*, St. Andrews Expository Commentary (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 242.

effort, provided the Scriptures. The Word of God becomes the best weapon for the disciple to face the false teachers. This is why it is absolutely essential for believers to grow in their understanding of the Word of God. Peter states, “Therefore I will always remind you about these things, even though you know them and are established in the truth you have” (2 Pet 1:12). Since growing in the knowledge of God’s Word is an ongoing process, this may explain why Peter was concerned about new believers growing in their faith.

Peter recognized the importance of the Scriptures in spiritual growth. He writes, “Like new born infants, desire the unadulterated spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it in [your] salvation” (1 Pet 2:2). Although Peter was addressing recent converts, the application for this verse is much broader. A newborn baby craves the milk of her mother. Likewise, a new believer must be taught to crave the spiritual nourishment of God’s Word. An older Christ-follower should also crave the instruction of the Scriptures no matter how long he has been a believer. According to Kistemaker:

Peter describes the word milk with the adjectives pure and spiritual. He does not say that the readers eventually will receive solid food when they mature, but that their nourishment is pure and spiritual. Only here in the entire New Testament the Greek adjective pure occurs. It denotes an absence of fraud and deceit. The term *spiritual* in this context points to the Word of God. . . . The spiritual food the believers consume comes to them verbally through the Word of God.<sup>39</sup>

Hiebert indicated that Peter wanted “those who had been born again to maintain the distinction characteristic of baby-like eagerness for spiritual nourishment.”<sup>40</sup> As a baby never wants to go a single day without being fed, the believer must be craving the Word of God on a regular basis.

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<sup>39</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 81.

<sup>40</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 2008), 123.

A key purpose of craving the Word of God is so that spiritual growth can take place. Active consumption of the milk, the Word of God, is not the “final goal: it is rather the means whereby spiritual growth is realized. The new life cannot grow without the nourishing milk of the Word.”<sup>41</sup> It must be pointed out that “milk in this context does not represent eliminating Christian teaching (as it does in a different metaphor in 1 Cor 3:2 and Heb 5:12-13, where milk is contrasted with meat or solid food), but rather something to be eagerly desired for nourishment.”<sup>42</sup> Grudem continues:

Reading or listening to God’s word involves a process of taking information into oneself, a process more readily represented by a metaphor of drinking milk (taking it ‘into’ one’s body) than some other activities—such as prayer or worship—which more clearly involves ‘giving out’ words of prayer or praise.<sup>43</sup>

When a believer has an intake of the Word of God it brings him into “direct contact with the Lord who gave the Word.”<sup>44</sup> The true objective of Bible study is “never a mere mastery of its contents, but a transforming experience with the Lord who reveals Himself in his Word.”<sup>45</sup> The ongoing spiritual transformation with Christ through the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 125. For further explanation of the Word of God being a foundational means of spiritual growth, see: John MacArthur, *The Keys to Spiritual Growth*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001). Downs writes, “It is possible to know the Bible and not be spiritually mature, but it is impossible to be ignorant of God’s Word and be spiritually mature. Spiritual maturity begins with a knowledge of the Bible.” Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 199. Koessler states, “Those who grow spiritually do not merely enjoy the Scriptures: they have a desire for it that is equal to the most fundamental longings of human experience.” John Koessler, *True Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 83.

<sup>42</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 100.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>44</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 126. Anders writes, “God gave the Bible to man to reveal how man can know God and grow spiritually. . . . Hiding the word in our own heart contributes mightily to the process of transforming us into the character-image of Jesus.” Max Anders, *What You Need to Know About Spiritual Growth in 12 Lessons* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 48-49; Tozer addresses the issue of experiencing fellowship with the Father through His Word in A. W. Tozer, *God’s Power for Your Life: How the Holy Spirit Transforms You Through God’s Word*, ed. James L. Snyder (Ventura: Regal, 2013). Also, see: Gary L. Thomas, *Thirsting for God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Word leads to spiritual maturity. Peter’s aim for believers, according to Helm, is to “grow up into Christ as members of his family. He is longing for the church to be mature, adult-like, strong.”<sup>46</sup> Another reason to crave the Word of God and for Christian growth to take place is “since you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Pet 2:3). The word good is also “translated ‘kind’ and serves as a synonym of ‘gracious.’”<sup>47</sup> Kistemaker goes on to say, “Peter wants to say that when the believer reads the Bible, he meets his personal God is Jesus Christ, who grants him numerous blessings. The child of God, joyfully exclaims that the Lord is good and kind.”<sup>48</sup>

With the Word of God as the foundation for spiritual growth and maturity, Peter encourages believers by informing them that God has provided everything necessary to grow in the Christian faith. Peter writes, “For His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness” (2 Pet 1:3). Again, there is a relationship to the Word of God, as Peter indicates, “By these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desires” (2 Pet 1:4). Because of God’s divine power, He has given the believer everything necessary to live the Christian life. Kistemaker writes, “Peter

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<sup>46</sup> Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 70. While not referring directly to the church, Perkins indicates that “the righteous trust God’s promises of participation in the eternal, new creation.” PHEME PERKINS, *First and Second Peter, James and Jude* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 165. Boring and Craddock see believers because of the very great promises as “moving from this corrupt world into the realm where God is.” M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The People’s New Testament Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2009), 737. For additional insight, see: Craig L. Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos: An Introduction to Acts Through Revelation* (Nashville: B&H, 2006); Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, 82.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

exclaims that he and the readers are the recipients of untold blessings; the word everything sums up this idea.”<sup>49</sup> In this instance God is the provider, and the disciple is the responder.

God provides the believer everything needed for life and godliness. These promises are stated in God’s Word. Wiersbe indicates, “These promises are great because they come from a great God and they lead to a great life. They are precious because their value is beyond calculation. If we lost the Word of God, there would be no way to replace it.”<sup>50</sup> Through the “great and precious promises” (2 Pet 1:4) the believer is able to “share in the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4) of God. Helm writes, “True knowledge of God is always attended by a fixed belief in God’s promises. So often people want to claim relationship with God while at the same time they abandon the words of the Bible.”<sup>51</sup> Helm goes on to address the issue of ultimate authority: “It is as if we want a God in our own making—one who exists under the authority of our own word.”<sup>52</sup> Through these

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 246. McKnight sees the promises being rooted in the apostolic tradition. He writes, “Such a knowledge effectively transmits the ‘precious and very great promises’ which enable the believers (1) negatively, to ‘escape’ the sinfulness of their world and (2) positively, to become ‘participants of the divine nature.’” Scot McKnight, *2 Peter*, Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible, ed. James D. G. Dunn, John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 1504. Davids points out that “pairs of words like ‘life and godliness’ are common in *2 Peter* and often function as a hendiadys, two terms standing for a single entity.” According to Davids, “In other words, there is no excuse for not living a godly life, for believers have already received everything that is necessary to do so.” Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 168. Green writes, “The epistle demonstrates a particular interest in moral progress of the believers. . . . Whatever progress they experience is, however, front of the divine initiative.” Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 176.

<sup>50</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 437.

<sup>51</sup> Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 194. Picirilli indicates, “[T]he gracious bounty provided by Christ has been made available to us by the knowledge of God which we have come to experience in consequence of His call. That call, in turn, is directly related to God’s glory and excellence.” Harrison Picirilli, *James, 1, 2 Peter and Jude*, The Randall House Bible Commentary, ed. Robert E. Picirilli (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 1992), 235.

<sup>52</sup> Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 194.

promises the Christian disciple follows Jesus' pattern of discipleship and becomes more like his Lord.

Kistemaker states that the term "nature" is chosen "because it indicates growth, development and character."<sup>53</sup> As a result of the promises of God in Christ, Kistemaker indicates, "We obtain God's holiness. God has called us into the sphere of holiness in which we have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3)."<sup>54</sup> With God's promises as a foundation the believer shares in God's divine nature, resulting in "escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desires" (2 Pet 1:4). Helm addresses this aspect of spiritual growth and points the reader to the necessary element of God's Word:

One can almost envision men, women, and children being pulled loose from much of this world and ascending to Heaven's skies solely by holding fast to the strong cord of God's Word. If we need rescuing from the world, that will require holding even more tightly to the 'very great promises' of God.<sup>55</sup>

Through Peter's theology it becomes increasingly evident that a believer's spiritual life and growth hinges upon a love and devotion to God's revealed Word.

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<sup>53</sup> Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, 248. Swindoll writes, "This magnificent truth provides no excuse for passivity but is an invitation for participation. While God provides everything necessary for us, still we must act. The fact that we must use the power God has given us in no way negates the fact that God is completely responsible for the cause and the effects." Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James, 1 and 2 Peter*, Swindoll's New Testament Insights (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 269. MacArthur states, "At conversion Christians do not become little gods, but they are regenerated; that is, they become 'new creations' by virtue of having been born again unto Christ." John MacArthur, *1 & 2 Peter*, MacArthur Bible Studies (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 71. For a contrary view, see Lewis R. Donelson, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 220, where Donelson states, "To partake of the divine nature means, first of all, to partake of immortality." Perkins holds a similar viewpoint to Donelson and writes, "The goal of Piety is assimilation to the divine nature since God calls the righteous to share his glory (1:3-4). Nothing that belongs to the changing material world and its passions can belong to the divine world." Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James and Jude*, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 194.

## The Model of Jesus

### Sufferings and the Glory of God

The suffering of Jesus functions as a key example and pattern for each disciple to follow. Peter states, “Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same resolve—because the One who suffered in the flesh has finished with sin” (1 Pet 4:1). The pattern of Jesus’ suffering becomes the foundational example for each believer as he accepts this concept as a necessary part of the disciple-making process of following Christ.<sup>56</sup> The Christian disciple is challenged to take up his or her cross and follow Jesus (Matt 14:24-25). Taking up one’s cross and following Jesus invariably leads to suffering. Based on the model of Jesus, suffering plays a necessary role in Christian discipleship.<sup>57</sup>

In challenging believers to examine the subject of suffering and the sovereignty of God, Piper says his prayer is that God would “show us his crucified and risen Son who

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<sup>56</sup> Bonhoeffer connects this concept of suffering to the body of Christ, the Church: “In the fellowship of the crucified and glorified body of Christ we participate in his suffering and glory. His cross is the burden which is laid on his Body, the Church. All its sufferings borne beneath this cross are the sufferings of Christ himself.” (*The Cost of Discipleship* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995], 244). Joanna Dewey sees “suffering as God’s will for Jesus and part of discipleship” and that “suffering is a condition of discipleship” that happens to “true disciples.” Joanne Dewey, quoted in Raquel Annette St. Clair (*Call and Consequences: A Womanist Reading of Mark*) [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2008], 46). Addressing the utilization by Mark of a literary device known as an intercalation when two stories or concepts are sometime brought together in the context of one story, Deppe writes, “Both the intercalations and the frames in the Gospel of Mark call attention to a suffering Messiah and the cost of discipleship in following this Messiah.” (*All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiring Into The Bible* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011], 360).

<sup>57</sup> Steven J. Binz describes Jesus’ intentional plan related to suffering and discipleship: “He dramatically reverses the standards of the world and shows that Isaiah’s Suffering Servant—to one who gives his life for others—is the model both for his life and that of his disciples . . . Jesus wants them to see that he is to suffer and die, and to see the significance of this for their discipleship.” (*Jesus, the Suffering Servant, Part Two, Mark 9-16* [New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2012], 4). Douglas John Hall writes regarding suffering playing a necessary role in discipleship, “There is, therefore (as Bonhoeffer long ago instructed us) a cost involved in discipleship. It cannot be undertaken without suffering. But the suffering is not more than we can bear as friends of the crucified one who continues with us and in our midst.” (*God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987], 133).

has all authority in heaven and earth, and awaken in us the strongest faith in the supremacy of Christ, and the deepest comforts in suffering, and the sweetest fellowship with Jesus that we have ever known.”<sup>58</sup> Piper seems to indicate that suffering plays a key role in faith development and the believer’s growing intimate relationship with his or her Lord. Through the grace and strength God provides, each disciple should have the same resolve Jesus demonstrated when faced with suffering.

The necessity of Jesus’ suffering was prophesied in the Old Testament as illustrated in Ps 22, Isa 53, and Zech 12. In Zechariah a reference is made to the suffering of Jesus. Zechariah 12:10 states, “Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem and they will look at Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for Him as one weeps for a firstborn.”<sup>59</sup> The focus in Psalm 22 is on the Messiah’s triumph through suffering.<sup>60</sup> Psalm 22 is referenced four times in Matt 27 (vv. 35, 39, 43, 46). Psalm 22:1 includes an important phrase Jesus proclaimed in the midst of His suffering on the cross, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46 records this statement made by Jesus on the cross as occurring at “about the ninth hour.” Jesus,

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<sup>58</sup> John Piper and Justin Taylor, eds., *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 18. Dietrich Bonhoeffer maintains the perspectives that “suffering remains distance from God, but in community with the suffering of Jesus Christ, suffering is overcome by suffering. Communion with God is granted precisely in suffering.” (*Discipleship*, vol. 4 [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003], 90).

<sup>59</sup> For additional discussion of the messianic prophecies in Zechariah, see Mark J. Boda, *The NIV Application Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004); Carl L. Laney, *Zechariah*, Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1984); Goerge L. Klein, *Zechariah, New American Commentary* vol. 21B (Nashville: B & H, 2008); Carolyn J. Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> For additional explanation of the concept of triumph through suffering, see Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001); J. Clinton McCann, Jr., *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); Henrietta C. Mears, *What the Bible Is All About Handbook*, rev. ed. (Ventura: Gospel Light, 2011); Michael E. Travers, *Encountering God in the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003).



knowing what kind of suffering was to take place on the cross, faced this suffering with “resolve,” according to 1 Pet 4:1. Jesus accepted the suffering of the cross.

The most prominent prophetic example of the suffering of the Messiah is found in Is 53.<sup>61</sup> Isaiah 53:3-10 states:

He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of suffering who knew what sickness was.  
He was like someone people turned away from;  
He was despised, and we didn't value Him.

Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses,  
and He carried our pains;  
but we in turn regarded Him stricken,  
struck down by God, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced because of our transgressions,  
crushed because of our iniquities;  
punishment for our peace was on Him,  
and we are healed by His wounds.  
We all went astray like sheep;  
we all have turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has punished Him  
for the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet He did not open His mouth.  
Like a lamb led to the slaughter  
and like a sheep silent before her shearers,  
He did not open His mouth.  
He was taken away because of oppression and judgment;  
and who considered His fate?  
For He was cut off from the land of the living;  
He was struck because of my people's rebellion.  
They made His grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man at His death,  
although He had done no violence  
and had not spoken deceitfully.

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<sup>61</sup> For further theological study into Isaiah 53, see Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, eds., *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012); Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2009); Bruce DeMarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1997).

Yet the Lord was pleased to crush Him severely.  
 When You make Him a restitution offering,  
 He will see His seed, He will prolong His days,  
 and by His hand, the Lord's pleasure will be accomplished.

In vivid detail, Isa 53 illustrates the role of suffering in both the life and death of the Messiah. Isaiah 53 indicates that this suffering did not take place by chance but by the sovereign plan of God the Father. The suffering of Jesus became an integral part of God's plan of redemption for sinful humanity.

Peter, as well as the other disciples, was slow to understand God's plan of redemption that involved suffering and the cross. Matthew 16:21 states, "From then on Jesus began to point out to His disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day." This was the first prediction of Jesus' suffering and death. The second prediction of Jesus' suffering and death is recorded in Matt 17:22-23, "As they were meeting in Galilee, Jesus told them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day he will be raised up.' And they were deeply distressed." The third prediction of Jesus' death is recorded in Matt 20:18-19 as Jesus is going to Jerusalem and then takes His twelve disciples away privately to explain to them what future events must take place: "Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the Chief Priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death. Then they will hand Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, and crucified, and He will be resurrected on the third day."

Immediately following this third prediction Jesus still had to explain to the mother of James and John that His mission involved both suffering and service. Jesus further explained that He was about to "drink the cup" (Matt 20:22), and James and John in

following Jesus would “drink the cup” as well. The cup in this instance refers to Jesus’ upcoming suffering. In a state of anguish in the Garden, on the eve of His death, Jesus would pray, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt 26:39). Jesus continued on and prayed a second time, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done” (Matt 26:42). The Father’s will for the Son involved suffering and ultimately death on a cross. Prior to the resurrection, Peter at times displayed a lack of understanding of the necessity of the role of suffering in the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>62</sup> Experiencing Jesus’ death on the cross followed by the resurrection proved to be life-changing events not only to Peter but to the other disciples as well. The death and resurrection of Christ were necessary for each believer who puts his faith and trust in Christ for his or her salvation. The suffering servant became the sacrificial lamb. Peter came to understand that Jesus’ model of suffering becomes the example and pattern for each disciple.<sup>63</sup> The example of the suffering servant becomes the model for each believer to follow.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Dennis M. Sweetland points to Peter’s lack of understanding as being part of the fulfillment of prophesy, stating, “Referring to the impending suffering of Jesus also appears in the passage that foretells Peter’s denial (26: 31-35). This is seen in the citation of Zechariah 13:7 about the striking of the shepherd and the dispersing of the flock.” Dennis M. Sweetland, “The Passion and Resurrection,” *The Bible on Suffering: Social and Political Implications*, Anthony J. Tambasco, ed. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2001), 128.

<sup>63</sup> For additional insight into how Jesus’ pattern of discipleship impacted Peter in other key areas see the Appendices at the end of the dissertation, “The Christian Home” on pp. 175ff; “Holiness and the Christian Life” on pp. 183ff, and “The One-Anothers” on pp. 190ff.

<sup>64</sup> Understanding that disciples are called to follow Christ in suffering, John Piper reminds his readers of the uniqueness of Jesus’ suffering, “He was a substitute sufferer. We can never duplicate this. It was once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous. Divine, vicarious suffering for sinners is inimitable.” (*Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2006], 93).

## Peter's Pattern of Sufferings and the Glory of God

While John shows Jesus' example concerning servant-leadership, Peter in his writings states that Jesus left all disciples an example of suffering to follow. Even more, every reference to suffering in Peter's letter has a reference to the glory of God in direct proximity. The Spirit of Christ "testified in advance to the messianic sufferings and the glories that would follow" (1 Pet 1:11).

Believers are challenged to endure suffering which occurs as a result of doing good. This type of suffering brings favor with God (1 Pet 2:20).<sup>65</sup> Suffering plays a key role in the sanctification and discipleship process. Believers are called to suffer following Christ's pattern and example. Peter writes, "For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps" (1 Pet 2:21). While the "you" (1 Pet 2:20) "emphasizes the significance of His experience for those house servants" noted in 1 Pet 2:18, the example of suffering applies to each believer.<sup>66</sup> Hiebert continues, "Christ left his followers 'an example' (*hupogrammon*), another rare term appearing only here in the Greek Bible, denoting a model to be copied by the novice."<sup>67</sup> This example to be followed is "literally an 'underwriting', the term

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<sup>65</sup> Witherington writes, "Credible or grace filled (*charis*) behavior in God's eyes is when one suffers for or with the doing of what is right. The focus is on doing right here, not on developing a martyr complex or seeking out suffering." Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 153. Osborne and Comfort state their belief that "[c]ertainly Peter would have seen the mounting persecution, leading him, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to warn believers of . . . suffering for doing good!" Grant R. Osborne and Philip W. Comfort, eds. *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 1996), 9. Kendall notes the relationship between the example of Joseph who endured unjust treatment in the Old Testament and Peter's writing and states, "As Peter put it, [you need to] follow in the steps of Jesus." R. T. Kendall, *God Meant it For Good: A Fresh Look*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wilkesboro: Morningstar Publications, 1986), 51.

<sup>66</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 182.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* Green states, "Peter will demonstrate the way of Jesus Christ was the path of suffering and glory . . . that the model of Jesus Christ interprets and is interpreted by the Scriptures of Israel, and that this pattern is characteristic of those who follow in his footsteps." Joel Green, *1 Peter*, (Grand Rapids: Wm.

could refer to a writing or drawing that was placed under another sheet to be retraced on the upper sheet by the pupil.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, Helm writes, “The example was not left merely to be admired but to be followed line by line, feature by feature.”<sup>69</sup>

Jesus is the perfect example for the believer to follow. Wiersbe writes, “All that Jesus did on earth, as recorded in the four Gospels, is a perfect example for us to follow. But He is especially our example in the way He responded to suffering.”<sup>70</sup> Any philosophy or theology that teaches Christians should never have to suffer must be rejected based on the Scriptures and the experience of Jesus during His earthly ministry:

Jesus proved that a person could be in the will of God, be greatly loved by God, and still suffer unjustly. There is a shallow bend of popular theology today that

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B. Eerdmans, 2007), 19. Donelson notes the example of Jesus, stating, “The narrative of Jesus forms the paradigm when Jesus was abused, he did not return abuse for abuse rather he ‘handed over himself to the one who judges justly.’” Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 22. Harink reminds his readers that Peter is challenging servants to follow the messianic example that “those servants who have taken up the messianic way of doing good, and nevertheless suffer unjustly, are given a very particular ‘grace,’ . . . the grace of following in the steps and participating in the pattern of Christ’s suffering.” Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 82. Myers addressed how this concept of suffering impacted medieval believers, writing, “When we embrace suffering in this life, we join in Christ’s sufferings. Medieval believers referred to this as the *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ. . . . *imitatio Christi* means to follow in Christ’s footsteps, to be identified with him and especially to join in his passion.” Glen E. Myers, *Seeking Spiritual Intimacy: Journeying Deeper with Medieval Women of Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 170.

<sup>68</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 183.

<sup>69</sup> Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 194. Goppeit addresses this issue from a societal perspective; “Because responsible, critical conduct in the structures of society was only possible through the willingness to suffer in every situation, *1 Peter* attempted to give to the willingness to suffer for the sake of good conduct; it did so from section to section of the letter in increasing proportion.” Leonhard Goppeit, *The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ, Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 2, trans. John Alsup (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 174. Referring to believers Hillyer writes, “They are to treat their situation as a daily opportunity to witness by bearing up, as Jesus did, under every grade of persecution, from a small injustice to actual bodily harm.” Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 4. Myers writes about an additional reward of suffering that God provides, contending, “Unfair treatment provides an opportunity to rejoice . . . and enjoy His favor and security in a special way.” Ruth Myers, *The Perfect Love: Intensely Personal, Overflowing, Never Ending* (Colorado Springs: Water Brook Press, 2011), 252.

<sup>70</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 406.

claims that Christians will not suffer if they are in the will of God. Those who promote such ideas have not meditated much on the cross.<sup>71</sup>

Suffering was such a part of the life of Christ followers are called to imitate<sup>72</sup>: “because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps” (1 Pet 2:21). Grudem connects Jesus’ example of suffering as an example for believers to follow with the glory of God. He writes:

Peter here emphasizes that Christ’s obedience through unjust suffering has left us an example to imitate, an example of the kind of life that is perfectly pleasing in God’s sight. When one is suffering unjustly, trust in God and obedience to him are not easy, but they are deepened through underserved affliction, and God is thereby more fully glorified.<sup>73</sup>

The believer must undergo suffering with the right attitude and motivation. The correct attitude and motivation is to bring glory to God and never to oneself. Kistemaker comments, “If we submit punishment for the sake of glory, we are defeating ourselves.”<sup>74</sup>

While suffering could result in sympathy among people, the suffering should be endured

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. For additional theological insight into the subject, see: Roger Omernson, “Suffering for Righteousness’ Sake (1 Peter 3:13-4:11),” *Rev Exp* 79 (1982): 439-50; T. P. Osborne, “Guidelines for Christian Suffering: A Source-Critical and Theological Study of 1 Peter 2:21-25,” *BiG* 64 (1983): 381-408; D. Edmond Hiebert, “Selected Studies from 1 Peter. Part 1: Following Christ’s Example – An Exposition of 1 Peter 2:21-25,” *BS* 139 (1982): 32-45. Goodwin writes about Peter’s concept of suffering, “The symbol of Christianity is not a Cadillac, BMW or Mercedes Benz; it is not a big bank account, an expensive house or a wall full of degrees. The symbol of the Christ-like life is the Cross.” Bennie Goodwin, *Luke’s Portrait of Jesus* (Chicago: Urban Ministries, 1993), 85.

<sup>72</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 136. Pink explains why an example is better than a precept, “because a precept is more or less an abstraction whereas an example sets before us a concrete representation and therefore has more aptitude to incite the mind to imitation.” Arthur W. Pink, *The Nature of God* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 302. For additional theological insight, see: Paul J. Achtemier, “Suffering Servant and Suffering Christ in 1 Peter,” in *The Future of Christology*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (New York: Crossroad, 1993); Charles H. Talbert, “The Educational Value of Suffering in 1 Peter,” in *The Future of Christology*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks (New York: Crossroad, 1993); Charles H. Talbert, *Learning Through Suffering: The Educational Value of Suffering in the New Testament and in its Milieu* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991).

<sup>73</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 137.

<sup>74</sup> Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, 106.

“patiently without complaint, for then we know that we are doing God’s will and receive his commendation.”<sup>75</sup>

The theme of suffering and the relationship to the glory of God is continued by Peter in 1 Pet 4:13; 5:1, and vv. 6-10. Addressing his fellow believers as “dear friends” in 1 Pet 4:12, his admonition is not to be surprised by a “fiery ordeal” which “arises among you to test you.” Peter goes on to say that as they “share in the sufferings of the Messiah” they should also “rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory” (1 Pet 4:13). He included himself as a “witness to the sufferings of the Messiah, and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed” (1 Pet 5:1).

Being aware of spiritual warfare in the life of the believer means that the Christ-follower must constantly be vigilant and aware because “your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour” (1 Pet 5:8). The disciple is to “[r]esist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your brothers in the world” (1 Pet 5:9). The testing, spiritual warfare, and suffering which the believer faces in reality is never faced alone because of God’s promise of ministry to the believer. Peter states, “Now the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little” (1 Pet 5:10). According to Grudem, “All loss

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. House and Grover point out, “Far from encouraging us to avoid all pain, Peter affirms . . . [w]e are to rejoice when we suffer in God’s will! . . . To take up our cross means to suffer in God’s will.” H. Wayne House and William Grover, *Does God Feel Your Pain?* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2009), 90. Swindoll writes that after suffering the believer should “then quietly and calmly submit yourself to the sovereign will of God.” Charles R. Swindoll, *Jesus: The Greatest Life of All* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 201.

will soon be made right, and that for eternity.”<sup>76</sup> The promise of God’s restoration should bring hope for the believer. Grudem indicates:

This comforting thought is strengthened by the reminder that God is the God who has called you to (or ‘into’, eis) his eternal glory in Christ. That is the realm that really counts, for it lasts forever. In that realm, the manifold excellence of God’s character is given spectacular expression in ‘his eternal glory’—something that ordinarily would cause us to remain distant in fearful awe.<sup>77</sup>

Suffering, though unpleasant for the moment, allows each Christian to follow Christ’s example knowing that the strength of the Lord is always present and through this process will share in God’s eternal glory, “partially now and more full in the life to come.”<sup>78</sup>

God’s sustaining grace is indeed “sufficient to overcome any suffering in this life.”<sup>79</sup> To a

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<sup>76</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 205. Schreiner points out to encourage the disciples “to persevere in their troubles because of the promise of end-time salvation. Sufferings cause grief and represent God’s purifying judgment of his flock, but their sorrows are short-lived compared with the final inheritance that believers will receive when Jesus returns.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 35. Duren points out that disciples should expect to see suffering and persecution until the end of the age, writing, “There seems to be no exemption from this principle for any single generation from the birth of the Church to the return of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation.” James Duren, *The Overcomers: The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Maitland: Xulon Press, 2009), 99. Acknowledging that suffering and persecution prepares a believer for eternity, MacArthur challenges his readers, “Ask God to continually grant you the grace to follow Christ’s example when difficulties come your way.” John MacArthur, *Drawing Near: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993), 27.

<sup>77</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 205.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Wall distinguishes between Peter and Paul’s concept of suffering, stating, “Paul rarely speaks in his writings of Christ’s suffering (as distinguished from his death) and almost never of Christ’s suffering in terms of God’s salvation (as the writer of 1 Peter, for instance, does in 1 Pet 2:20-22).” Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 87. Vargas reminds his readers, “It is of so much greater joy and value to suffer in the spirit and manner of Christ, than it is to escape the suffering by rejecting His example.” J. Gene Vargas, *The Modern Church* (Maitland: Xulon Press, 2005), 87. Bassali writes, “The suffering of the Christian will last only a while, yet his glory in Christ, to which He has called us, will be eternal. . . . Considering the relationship between affliction and glory, there is a divine order: first humiliation, then exaltation. . . . Suffering and glory all inseparably connected.” Maurice Bassali, *Destined For Glory: The Glorification of God’s People* (Maitland: Xulon Press, 2006), 120. Referring to Peter’s writings, Trask writes, “Our decision to follow our Christian convictions hold a tremendous reward. It gives a peace and assurance that this world could never provide. You may not be popular when you decide to obey your godly convictions, but as Peter says, if you ‘suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God’ (1 Peter 2:20).” Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit: Becoming the Person God Wants You to Be* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 119.

<sup>79</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 205.



world which so desperately needs to experience the salvation of Christ and to see the Christian examples of victorious living through suffering, Peter in the conclusion to his first letter calls for praise to the sovereign God, “To Him be the dominion forever. Amen” (1 Pet 5:11).

## **The Commissioning of Disciples**

### **Leadership Development**

Peter recognized the importance of every-member ministry, as found in the doctrine of the priesthood of believers, and in the spiritual development of local church leaders. The priesthood concept was not first introduced in the New Testament. As seen with Peter’s use of the Old Testament, the priesthood concept was originally intended for the entire nation of Israel. In the church, every disciple is a priest according to Peter. He writes, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Peter labels Christ-followers as a select, chosen people. With his understanding of the Old Testament and leadership and ministry of the Holy Spirit, Peter applies an Old Testament passage for his readers to see themselves as God’s chosen people.<sup>80</sup> The passage is Isa 43:20-21 which says, “The animals of the field will honor me, jackals and ostriches, because I provide water in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people. The people I formed for Myself will declare My praise.” Describing Christians as a chosen people identifies believers as “descendants of a common ancestor and thus designates a people with a common heritage, sharing the unity of a common life

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<sup>80</sup> Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, 92.

. . . a people united by their common heritage through the new birth.”<sup>81</sup> Wiersbe writes, “We do not come to God through any person on earth, but only through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:1-8). Because he is alive in glory, interceding for us, we can minister as holy priests.”<sup>82</sup> Believers bear the designation of “royal” and “holy” (1 Pet 2:9). “Royal” (1 Pet 2:9) identified “the dimension of kingdom and king. In the kingdom of priests . . . there is a king. In fact, the Messiah is both priest and king.”<sup>83</sup> Recognizing that “citizens of a ‘holy nation’ . . . have common characteristics through Jesus Christ, Peter portrays God’s people as a holy nation, which means that the citizens have been set apart for service to God.”<sup>84</sup> As citizens of this nation and kingdom the believers’ priority is to glorify God and serve Him forever.

As a key aspect of service and ministry is to glorify God, Grudem declares, “The answer to our search for ultimate meanings lies in ‘declaring the excellencies’ of God, for he alone is infinitely worthy of glory.”<sup>85</sup> Another part of Christian service is to “proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet

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<sup>81</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 142.

<sup>82</sup> Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 401. Regarding the priesthood of all believers, Snyder writes, “The New Testament doctrine of ministry rests, therefore, not on a cracked clergy-laity foundation stone on three parallel pillars: the priesthood of all believers, the gifts of the Spirit, and servanthood in the spirit of Jesus.” This results in the ministering community, the Church being “comprised of priests of God who are servants of Jesus Christ and gifted by the Spirit.” Howard A. Snyder, *The Community of the King*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 113.

<sup>83</sup> Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, 92.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* It is important to note from an historical perspective that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was instrumental in shifting the perspective from the priesthood of the believer to the priesthood of all believers. The reformers saw the priesthood of all believers emphasizing not a single isolated disciple but instead “a band of faithful believers united in a common confession” in a local church. Daniel L. Akin, “The Single-Elder-Led Church,” in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity*, ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B&H, 2004), 37.

<sup>85</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 119.

2:9). This means “to speak of all He is and has done.”<sup>86</sup> Every believer has the obligation and responsibility to serve God as a witness to His infinite glory.

### **Church Leadership**

Peter identifies that none other than Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and church leaders are to imitate the shepherding role of Jesus Christ and His under-shepherds. Peter reminds his readers that he was a “witness to the sufferings of the Messiah, and also a participant in the glory about to be revealed” (1 Pet 5:1). “Peter witnessed Jesus’ agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the trial before the high priest, and the condemnation of Jesus that caused him to stand trial in the presence of Pilate.”<sup>87</sup> Peter indicates that he is both an eyewitness of Christ and a fellow minister and leader of the Church. Kistemaker states, “The context of verse 1 permits the interpretation that he is not only a fellow elder but even a fellow sufferer for the sake of Christ. Suffering leads to glory in which Peter shares.”<sup>88</sup> Jesus Christ provided the greatest example of suffering, “and hence believers should not be surprised (4:12) that they are called to do the same.”<sup>89</sup> Elders are encouraged to follow Christ’s pattern, “enduring suffering so that they will receive the eschatological reward in the future.”<sup>90</sup> The pathway of faithful service and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*, 188.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>89</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 232. For a biblical and theological perspective on how joy and pain are both essential parts of the life of service, see: Ajith Fernando, *The Call to Joy & Pain: Embracing Suffering in Your Ministry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007). Morris indicates that “suffering is not treated as something to be shunned. Nor is it regarded as a hindrance to Christian service. . . . He must bear in mind the cost of discipleship.” Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 26.

<sup>90</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 233.

ministry to the Lord is difficult because each disciple must take up his cross and follow Christ.

As leaders in the church, elders are to “shepherd God’s flock” (1 Pet 5:2). The flock consists of God’s children, not those who belong to any man. The word used for shepherd is *poimainō* and “includes all that is involved in the work of the shepherd: guiding and guarding, feeding and folding. The aorist tense conveys a sense of urgency.”<sup>91</sup> Criswell points out that Peter was very familiar with the concept because this is the word found in John 21:15 where Jesus speaks to Peter during the threefold restoration of Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? . . . ‘Feed My lambs.’”<sup>92</sup> Possibly remembering his restoration Peter understands the leadership role is one of service and should not be done, “out of compulsion but freely, according to God’s [will]; not for the money but eagerly, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2-3). When Jesus returns the faithful under-shepherd “will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet 5:4).

This passage reinforces the idea “that God himself is our example to imitate (Eph. 5:1) and that Jesus is our perfect example for a human life pleasing to God (1 Pet 2:21, 1 John 2:6, etc).”<sup>93</sup> Church leaders and all believers are to follow the pattern of Jesus. Grudem writes, “The early Christians expected all their leaders to live in a way which others could imitate as well: they did not have to be perfect in order to be ‘examples to

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<sup>91</sup> Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 302.

<sup>92</sup> Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Epistles of Peter*, 92-93.

<sup>93</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 196.

the flock.”<sup>94</sup> Also, according to Jim Elliff, “if a pastor would like to be like Christ in his shepherding, efforts must be made to know the sheep and to allow the sheep to know him . . . is intrinsically about being intimately related with the sheep.”<sup>95</sup> Jesus has never lost a single sheep and intimately knows each of His sheep. The under-shepherd must understand the importance of His ministry and according to Grudem in all “leadership positions in the church should realize that the requirement to live a life worthy of imitation is not optional—it is a major part of the job challenging through such responsibility may be.”<sup>96</sup> For the faithful church leader there is hope of a reward, but the ultimate glory must always be directed to God.

### **Conclusion**

From the initial point when Andrew led Peter to Jesus to the day Christ forgave and restored Peter for denying Him and to Peter’s ministry in the early church, the evidence of Christian discipleship is seen and becomes a pattern for other believers to follow. The pattern of discipleship found in Peter’s life and teachings involves central concepts of the Christian life as well as the not often considered aspects of discipleship such as sufferings and the glory of God. Peter suffered following the example of His Lord and challenged other believers to also follow Christ’s example. The pattern of Christian

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. For both a biblical and practical perspective on the shepherding ministry in a local church, see: Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005); Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church: Effective Spiritual Leadership in a Changing Culture* (Chicago: Moody, 1997). To gain insight into a pastor shepherding his own family, see: Brian and Cara Croft, *The Pastor’s Family: Shepherding Your Family through the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

<sup>95</sup> Jim Elliff, “The Cure of Souls: The Pastor Serving the Flock,” in *Reforming Pastoral Ministry: Challenges for Ministry in Postmodern Times*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 153.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

discipleship which believers were to follow included having a foundation based on the Word of God, holiness, mutual love, hospitality and service. Peter provides an example of failure and restoration. As he has followed His Lord's pattern of discipleship, Peter is able to be a servant leader of the church who also challenges fellow believers to imitate Christ's pattern.