

Set Apart for a Purpose

January 25, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

1 Peter 1:13–2:3

Session Outline

1. A Call to Holy Living (1 Peter 1:13-16)
2. Temporary Residents (1 Peter 1:17-24)
3. Rid Yourselves (1 Peter 2:1-3)

Theological Theme

As believers, we are called to live an obedient and holy life, set apart from sin for God.



Leader Guide

Set Apart for a Purpose

Introduction

Have you ever seen the 2004 movie “The Terminal” with Tom Hanks? In it, Tom Hanks plays Viktor Navorski, an Eastern European man from the (fictional) republic of Krakozhia. Unfortunately, while Viktor was in the air flying to New York, a political coup in his home country rendered his visa and passport invalid, so he couldn’t legally enter the United States, or go home.

Unable to leave, Viktor is essentially trapped inside the airport terminal, forced to live there for almost a year (it’s as unglamorous as you think). In his time in the terminal, Viktor gets creative to find food, makes friends with the staff in the airport, helps strangers, and builds relationships in the unlikely place he finds himself in.

Eventually, things settle down in Krakozhia and Viktor is able to enter the United States as originally planned, but, for a while, this fictional character experienced life as a temporary resident in the most unusual place.

Did you know that Scripture calls us temporary residents, too? In this life, there are many places we may call home (it varies as seasons of life pass), but as believers, we are temporary residents, a bit like Viktor Navorski, living somewhere (for now) that isn’t truly our home.



When you think of “home,” what place comes to mind?



What do you think the Bible means when it calls us temporary residents?

Session Summary

As God’s children, we are called to be obedient to the ways God wants us to live, and that means living a holy life. Not a perfect life (none of us are perfect), but living a holy life means we are actively striving to live a life without sin.

As temporary residents of this world, our ultimate allegiance is with God, and not our country or culture. When we are aligned with God, we are seeking to live a holy life. Jesus's sacrifice on the cross should be all the motivation we need to live a holy and obedient life.

In practice, living a holy life means removing the desires of the flesh from our lives and actively seeking to know God better through spiritual development. There are many reasons we do (or should) want to put this intentional emphasis on spiritual development, but chief among them is that we have tasted and seen for ourselves that God is good.

1. A Call to Holy Living (1 Peter 1:13-16)



What do you think it means for us to “be holy” in all of our conduct (v.15)?



What do you think it means for us not to be “conformed to the desires of your former ignorance” (v.14)?

In this section of the text, Peter encourages the reader to live a holy life. We are only temporary residents here on earth and should live accordingly. We belong to God, and our lives should look different than those of nonbelievers around us.

Notice our passage here opens with the word “Therefore” (v.13), tying this thought to the ones that came before it. Since, in His great mercy, God gives us the gift of salvation (and with it, a living hope that cannot be taken away from us), our hope should be on the grace that is coming our way at Jesus's second coming (“at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” v.13). (See the idea of “living hope” make an appearance again? No one can take this away from us!)

We are children of God and are called to be obedient to God's commands. John made a similar observation in 1 John:

“This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and obey his commands. For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden” -1 John 5:2-3

When we are obedient, we are not “conformed to the desires of [our] former ignorance” (v.14). Before we knew Jesus, we were ignorant of what it meant to truly follow Him and be obedient to His teachings. In the bounds of our society, none of us truly live without any restrictions, but before we knew Christ, we made judgment calls based on what we personally thought best and wanted to do. We were ruled by the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-21). Scripture warns us of the dangers of living this way:

There is a way that seems right to a person,
but its end is the way to death.
Proverbs 14:12

Now that we follow Jesus, we know better. We have the Word and know we should be learning and following what it teaches. We have the Holy Spirit and know we should listen as He guides. We don't live in ignorance anymore. We are called to live a holy life.

What exactly does this mean? To be "holy" means that we are set apart from sin to God. Note that it doesn't mean we are perfect. We aren't.

If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. -1 John 1:8




We all sin, but as believers, we are called to strive not to sin—to live a life as God desires and commands us and to be open to correction when we discover behaviors in our lives that we should change. This requires us to be serious about the sin in our lives. Jesus illustrated the importance of this in the Gospels:

If your hand or your foot causes you to fall away, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hellfire. -Matthew 18:8-9

Jesus wasn't saying we should literally cut off our hand or our foot (the root of sin is the heart, not our hands or feet), but that we should be serious about not sinning. This is a part of living a holy life, like Peter wrote about in this passage. The bar we should be aiming for is living a holy life and modeling Christ ("Be holy, because I am holy," v.16).

This idea of being set apart for God has been around since the Old Testament. Prior to Jesus coming, God's intention was for His people to be set apart in how they lived because they were meant to follow His laws (though they often missed the mark). Today, we are set apart because we actively try not to sin. We hold ourselves to God's holy standards.

2. Temporary Residents (1 Peter 1:17-24)

-  Why is it important for us to keep in mind that we are “temporary residents” during our time on earth (v. 17, NLT)?
-  What does it mean to “conduct yourselves in reverence” (v. 17)?
-  In what ways were our old ways of life “empty” (v. 18)?

As we think of what it means to be holy, we should remember that we are “living as strangers” (v. 17) here. We are “temporary residents” (v. 17, NLT). The way we live our lives shouldn’t look like any nonbelievers around us. Our choices and actions should look more like Jesus’s (or at least how He would live if He were in our shoes!).

God judges us impartially (what a concept for our flawed human minds!). One day we will stand before Him and give an account of how we lived our lives (“each one’s work” v. 17), and that thought should produce a healthy dose of fear (reverence, respect) of the Lord. That makes you stop and think, doesn’t it?

Another reason we should live a holy, obedient life is that we were redeemed, thanks to “the precious blood of Christ” (v. 19). Paul said it this way:

Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body. -1 Corinthians 6:19-20

A holy lifestyle glorifies God. A lifestyle where we do whatever we want to do, living according to the desires of our flesh doesn’t.

Peter called us to a higher standard. Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross should be all the motivation we need to live a holy and obedient life. God planned this redemption for us before the foundations of the earth were even laid. As believers, we know God and have faith thanks to Jesus. Belief in Jesus is the only path to salvation:

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” -John 14:6-7

Another element of a holy life is to love one another sincerely, just like Jesus commanded:

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” -John 13:34-35

Look what Peter says about God’s Word here. It endures forever. We are born again “through the living and enduring word of God” (v. 23), the gospel. The quotation here in verse 24 that may seem familiar to you comes from Isaiah 40:6-8.

When we look at Peter’s writing about holy living here, we can uncover a few ways to decide if our actions are right (as God defines it) or wrong:

1. Does this action mirror God’s character?
2. Is it a natural response to a life redeemed by the “precious blood of Christ” (v. 19)?
3. Will our motives and actions hold up to the Lord’s impartial judgment we will all one day receive?

3. Rid Yourself (1 Peter 2:1-3)



What does Peter tell us to do in this passage?



How does God’s goodness factor into what Peter is telling his readers?

Chapter 2 begins with the same word we kicked off with today: Therefore. As God’s children, called to a holy and obedient life, people who will one day be judged by our fair and impartial God, believers who were redeemed thanks to Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross, we should therefore ... (do what Peter will tell us next!).

Peter’s list of attributes to rid ourselves of is reminiscent of the desires of the flesh listed in Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. -Galatians 5:19-20a

Peter’s words implore us to take this seriously (like Jesus’s commands about sin that we read earlier). None of these things have a place in a

life that is set apart for God, and we should earnestly work to remove them from our lives.

Rather than desiring these fleshly things, we should desire pure spiritual milk. “Milk” here means things like prayer, knowledge of God (one of the ways we find this is in the Bible), the instructions for living we find in the gospel, obedience to God’s will and plan for our lives, and God’s preached and spoken word. Incidentally, as we do this, we will also more naturally want to kick the negative attributes Peter mentioned in verse 1 out of our lives. Note that Peter had to tell his readers to desire these things. This impulse isn’t automatic. It is learned and worked for and becomes more natural over time (the pursuit is worth it!). This will carry us along the path of sanctification.

There are many reasons we do (or should) want to put intentional emphasis on spiritual development, but chief among them is that we have tasted and seen for ourselves that God is good. Getting closer to Him and getting to know Him better is worth the effort.

Conclusion

With the living hope that comes from the gift of salvation believers enjoy, we should look to Jesus’ second coming with hope, and in the meantime, seek to live a holy life here on earth. Peter issues a call to that holy living in the passage we studied today.





As God’s children, we are called to be obedient to the ways God wants us to live, and that means living a holy life. When we live a holy life, we are by no means perfect, but we are actively seeking to live a life without sin and live a life that looks more like Jesus than it did when we were living out the “the desires of [our] former ignorance” (v. 14) before we knew Jesus.

We are only temporary residents on this world, and the ultimate authority we answer to isn’t our government or culture, it’s our God. One day, the Lord will judge us all impartially for how we have lived our lives. How will our motives and our actions stand up to this? Will what seemed so important today seem as important then, when we are before God’s throne making an answer for our choices?

This is yet another reason we should live a holy life. One day we will answer for how we live.

Peter also gave us another... our salvation and eternal life were bought with “the precious blood of Christ” (v. 19). This knowledge should inspire us to live as Christ desires us to.

As we get serious about this idea, we should rid ourselves of the negative qualities of the flesh and instead earnestly seek to deepen our relationship with God through our own spiritual development. There are many reasons we do (or should) want to put this intentional emphasis on spiritual development, but chief among them is that we have tasted and seen for ourselves that God is good.

-  How does a holy life look different than the way the average person lives in America today?
-  Why do you think it is a struggle to leave “the desires of [our] former ignorance” (v. 14) behind when we become a Christian? How can we overcome them?
-  How have you seen that the Lord is good in your life?
-  What is something you could begin doing over the next couple of weeks to start prioritizing your own spiritual development?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for the precious gift of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. Ask Him to help you honor this sacrifice through the way that you live your life. Ask Him to show you areas in your life where you need to make changes so that you can live a more holy lifestyle, like He desires. Praise Him for all the ways that you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

Memory Verse

Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. -1 Peter 1:13

Additional Resources

- *1 Peter* by Jen Wilkin
- *Exalting Jesus in 1 Peter* by Daniel Akin
- *1 Peter* by Wayne Grudem

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of 1 Peter

Purpose

Peter wrote to encourage suffering believers in Asia Minor to stand firm for Christ in the midst of persecution. He urged them to do so by focusing on their spiritual privileges and, more specifically, the place where their rights and privileges lay: the next life. Believers in Jesus are “temporary residents” (1 Pet 1:1; 2:11) and “strangers” (1 Pet 2:11) in this world, a land of sojourn where they have no real rights or privileges. Inheritance rights, privileges, and justice for Christians really belong to another realm to which God has delivered believers—heaven, their ultimate home.

Author

The author of 1 Peter identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:1). He viewed himself as a divinely ordained, directly commissioned, authoritative representative of the Lord Jesus Himself. Several statements in the letter indicate that the Peter who plays a prominent role in the Gospels is the author. For example, he called himself an “elder and witness” to Christ’s sufferings (1 Pet 5:1). Further, he described Christ’s crucifixion with an intimate knowledge that only a disciple would have of that event (1 Pet 2:21-24).

Date Written

1 Peter was probably written sometime between a.d. 62-64. While Paul was under house arrest from a.d. 60-62, he did not refer to Peter in Rome. Peter likewise did not mention Paul as being in Rome; only Silvanus and Mark were his companions (1 Pet 5:12-13). These facts suggest that Peter wrote 1 Peter some time after a.d. 62 and before the writing of 2 Peter.

Key Themes

The theme of suffering appears throughout 1 Peter. The recipients of the letter are the sufferers in four of its five chapters. Given a composition date of about a.d. 62-64, 1 Peter was written during the persecution of Christians under Nero’s reign. The persecution arose in Rome and was spreading into Asia Minor.

Special Features

1 Peter is considered one of the General Epistles. This epistle provided encouragement to suffering believers living in northern Asia Minor who faced intense persecution. The letter encourages faithfulness while under oppression. Specifically, God’s holy people should lead distinctive lifestyles as temporary residents in a foreign land. Although they will suffer for Christ while in this non-Christian world, they should remember that heaven is their future homeland.

Excerpted and paraphrased from the Holman Christian Standard Study Bible, Holman Bible Publishers, 2010.

Extended Commentary

1 Peter 1:13 - 2:3

In this section Peter informed his readers that they were always to fix their hope on the “grace” that would be theirs at the second coming of Christ.

1:13-21. As resident aliens sojourning in this world, Christians are to live distinctively as those who belong to God.

1:13. The grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ refers to the culmination of God’s redemptive activity in Jesus that will occur at His return (v. 5).

1:14. The phrase former ignorance means “without knowledge of God” and suggests that the recipients of this letter were mostly Gentiles who, before coming to Christ, practiced pagan religions.

1:15-16. God is the Christian’s standard for holy living (Lv 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

1:19. The metaphor of a lamb without defect or blemish points to Christ’s sinlessness (Lv 22:19-25). He is the sacrificial Lamb of God (Jn 1:29; Rev 5).

1:20. The plan for Christ’s sacrifice on behalf of sinners was fixed in eternity past, a sure reality set to unfold at a divinely appointed time in history (Gal 4:4).

1:22-25. Peter exhorted his readers to love their brothers (i.e., other believers; v. 22) as those who are born again through the living and enduring word of God, the gospel.

2:1-3. As newborn infants, believers are to avoid acts of dissention and feed on the spiritual milk of the word. “Spiritual milk” is a metaphor that refers to the divine sustenance drawn from the gospel. The statement you have tasted that the Lord is good (cp. Ps 34:8) means they had found God to be gracious. This realization begins at conversion.

Extended Commentary

¹ Terry L. Wilder, “1 Peter,” in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1976.

² <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/1peter/1peter.htm>

³ <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/1peter/1peter.htm>

⁴ NIV Life Application Study Bible, p2075

⁵ NIV Life Application Study Bible, p2075