

Living for the End

March 15, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

1 Peter 4:7-19

Session Outline

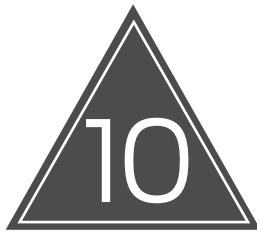
1. End-Time Ethics (1 Peter 4:7-11)
2. Suffering for Being a Christian (1 Peter 4:12-16)
3. Judgment and the Righteous (1 Peter 4:17-19)

Theological Theme

Christians are to live righteously every day.

Call to Action

Recognizing that Christ's return is imminent, we are called to live with a sense of righteous urgency.



Leader Guide

Living for the End

Introduction

In football, two-point conversions can be risky. Statistically speaking, you have around a 50 percent chance of success when you go for two, whereas kicking a field goal ramps up your chances of success to over 90 percent.¹ But sometimes, the risk is worth the potential reward.

In 2018, the Los Angeles Chargers beat the Kansas City Chiefs at home. With just four seconds remaining in the game, instead of kicking for the extra point to tie the score, the Chargers went for two and scored, clinching the win in a dramatic finish.²

You might play differently at the end of the game, at the end of the season, considering what is ahead. For a football coach, this might mean going for two instead of the safer route. For believers, this means living with our eternal future in mind. In today's passage, Peter wrote about this idea.

- What are some other ways we might make different choices based on timing?
- When was a time you acted with greater urgency in light of the moment you faced?

Session Summary

We don't know when Christ will return, and should therefore live righteously every day, mimicking Christ. Peter wrote we should be alert in our prayer life, maintain love for one another, be hospitable (without complaining), and use our gifts and talents for the benefit of others. When we do, we act as good stewards of the blessings God has entrusted us with, glorifying Him and mimicking Christ.

Peter continued to the suffering church in this portion of his letter, saying they should not be surprised by fiery ordeals coming their way. Suffering for our faith is to be expected, and when this happens, we can rejoice without shame, knowing Jesus suffered too, and our trials glorify Him and point others to Him.

We will all one day be judged for our actions in this life. So, even when suffer unjustly, we should entrust our circumstances to our faithful God, who works things out for our ultimate good (as He defines it). In the meantime, we are called to do the right thing, even when it is hard.

1. End-Time Ethics (1 Peter 4:7-11)

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- What prompted Peter's sense of urgency in these verses?
How often do you recognize and respond to this urgency in life?

- ?
- What makes it challenging to live sober minded for Christ on a daily basis?

Peter encouraged readers to live in a certain, righteous way, in light of “the end of all things” (v. 7). By “the end of all things” (v. 7), Peter meant Jesus’s second coming, which the apostles believed would happen soon. They knew this to be the next expected prophetic event after the coming of the Messiah.³ They also understood, as we do today, that the Jewish prophets couldn’t see the full picture of God’s will and plan. We are still awaiting Christ’s return, but the warning to live vigilantly still stands:

“Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father.

“Watch! Be alert! For you don’t know when the time is coming.” —Mark 13:32-33

Peter called us to live righteously right now. We can’t predict when Jesus will come back any more than Peter could, but we must stand ready.

His first exhortation? “Be alert and sober-minded for prayer” (v. 7), an advocacy for spiritual and mental alertness to aid in effective prayer, which is a vital practice for the believer. Paul exhorted likewise in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Colossians 4:2.

His next exhortation is similarly echoed through the New Testament: our charge to love one another. This is so important that Jesus also commanded it of His followers:

“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

By “love covers a multitude of sins” (v. 8, an echo of Proverbs 10:2), Peter meant that, loving relationships offer forgiveness for a multitude of offenses. A Christian community steeped in love is more easily able to forgive each other when disagreements arise.

Peter’s third exhortation concerned hospitality, which was critical in Jewish culture (it still is today!), and remains important in Christianity. When under stress and persecution, complaining comes more easily, but Peter charged readers to be hospitable without complaining. We should be willing to open our homes and meet needs that exist in the body.

The final exhortation from this passage concerns our gifts. Whatever spiritual gifts we have are from God and meant to be used to serve others. God can use gifts that may seem small or insignificant to us for His glory and to help others. Do you enjoy cooking? Entertaining? Yard work? Do you own a business? Whatever the “thing” is in your life, consider how can you use it to serve those God has placed in your life.

What gifts has God given you? How might you use them to bless and serve others?

In doing so, we are good stewards of the blessings God has entrusted us with, and we bring glory to Him. As we live this way, we model Christ, who constantly served others in His ministry.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. —Mark 10:45

2. Suffering for Being a Christian (1 Peter 4:12-16)

How is it possible for Christians to rejoice in suffering?

What is the difference between suffering for Christ compared with suffering for evil?

Much of Peter’s writing in this letter addressed right behavior during unfair suffering. Peter spoke to this again in these verses.

Peter didn’t elaborate on what, exactly, he meant by “fiery ordeal” (v. 12) but this imagery paints a vivid picture. Fire can be destructive and painful. It can also be beautiful and useful when handled safely. Our trials and ordeals, too, can be destructive (destroying things like relationships) and painful, but they can also be useful, teaching us things we wouldn’t have learned otherwise, and drawing us closer to God.

Peter wrote that we shouldn't be surprised when ordeals come our way. It's not unusual. Jesus warned us this would happen:

"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."
—John 16:33

"Remember the word I spoke to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they don't know the one who sent me." —John 15:20-21

When we take Jesus's words to heart, we won't be surprised. In fact, Peter wrote that we should rejoice when this happens, because we share "in the sufferings of Christ" (v. 13). He sought to turn his readers' perspective here, offering hope. We can rejoice in current suffering now, knowing Christ came before us (and we are following His example), and great joy awaits at Christ's return!

The suffering Peter had in mind here was suffering for the sake of our faith, for which Jesus said we would be blessed:

"You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you." —Matthew 5:11-12

The word "Christian" only appears three places in the New Testament. This is one of them (the others are Acts 11:26 and Acts 26:28).⁴

Suffering for Christ is worth rejoicing. Our suffering glorifies God and models Christ! But, suffering because of unrighteousness (Peter specifically named murder, thievery, doing evil, and meddling, v. 15) is not acceptable. Suffering for such sinful behavior (and make no mistake, sin leads to suffering) does not glorify Christ.



How does focusing on the example of and promised return of Christ help us suffer well for Him now?

3. Judgment and the Righteous (1 Peter 4:17-19)



What type of judgment did Peter refer to here?



What does it mean to entrust ourselves "to a faithful Creator while doing what is good" (v. 19)?

Why should we live with the end in mind? Because we will all one day have to give an account for how we lived this life at the final judgment, and this judgment begins with God's people.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
—2 Corinthians 5:10

Peter went on to compare the plight of the believer versus the nonbeliever. If fair judgment begins with us, how much worse will it be for those who rejected the gift of salvation ("who disobey the gospel of God," v.17)?

The quotation here is from Proverbs 11:31. Because the Christian life brings suffering, it is difficult, but not as difficult as for the nonbeliever, who, if they do not accept Christ, will be condemned.

This chapter ends with a call to entrust ourselves in all situations to our faithful Creator, while doing what is good. Many people in Scripture embody this idea. Esther, who was taken from her home and made to participate in the king's search for a wife, entrusted her fate to God, acting faithfully. Paul, who was whipped, imprisoned, and endured ailments, entrusted his fate to the Lord, continuing faithfully until his death.

Endure in Suffering

Peter urged his friends to prepare themselves for a coming trial by commitment and stamina. Instead of offering complaint, they should rejoice that their suffering allowed them to share in Christ's glory. Peter warned his readers against disgracing Christianity by evil deeds or indiscreet action. Peter argued in 4:17-18 that even if believers must face difficulty, the fate of unbelievers would be absolutely terrifying.



How does remembering God's past faithfulness to us and other believers spur us on to faithfulness in the present and future—even in suffering?

When we suffer, we can adapt a similar attitude, trusting God with our situation. When our suffering is destructive, when it's painful, and when we feel alone, God remains faithful. He sees us and is working things together for our good (meaning, our sanctification, or the process by which we are molded to look more like Christ in the way we behave) behind the scenes.

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28

Our call in the meantime, even when our suffering is completely unfair and unjust, is to do what is good.

Conclusion

Peter urged believers to live righteously, like Christ, in light of His promised second coming. We don't know the timing of His return, but we are charged to be ready for it. Peter gave four exhortations for believers in this passage: Be alert for effective prayer, maintain love for one another,

be hospitable (without complaining!), and use our gifts and talents to serve others. When we do, God is glorified, and we reflect Jesus Himself.

Much of the letter of 1 Peter is about how to behave when suffering unjustly. Peter continued that subject here, reminding believers that suffering for the sake of our faith isn't surprising, it's expected (Jesus warned us this would happen!). Though fiery ordeals in life can be destructive and painful, we can rejoice in them without shame, knowing Christ suffered, too. While suffering that comes from faithful obedience honors Christ, hardship caused by sinful behavior has no place in the life of a believer.

Peter reminded believers that all will one day stand before Christ to give an account for how they lived, and this judgment begins with God's own people. When we suffer, Peter said to entrust our situation into God's hands. He is faithful and working things out for our good. In the meantime, even when it is hard, and what is happening to us isn't right, we should continue to do what is good.

- ① How should not knowing when Jesus will return impact our actions today? What gifts or talents has God given you that you could use to serve others?
- ① What types of "fiery ordeals" might we face today? How does our passage today inform how we should respond to these moments?
- ① How might suffering well give us opportunity to tell others about Christ?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His faithfulness in every season and for the hope of Christ's return. Ask for His help as you walk through trials. Ask Him to show you where He is refining you through hardship and how He is working for your good in every moment.

Memory Verse

If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. —1 Peter 4:14

Additional Resources

- *1 Peter* by Wayne Grudem
- *Exalting Christ in 1 Peter* by Daniel Akin
- *Be Hopeful* by Warren Wiersbe



Historical Context of 1 Peter

Purpose

First Peter emphasizes that suffering is normal for believers because they are temporary residents in this world. As such, they lack rights and receive no justice in this foreign land. Though suffering occurs on earth for temporary residents, their inheritance and exaltation await them in their eternal homeland.

Author

The author of 1 Peter identified himself as “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (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 (5:1). Further, he described Christ’s crucifixion with an intimate knowledge that only a disciple would have of that event (2:21–24).

Setting

The recipients of 1 Peter are identified in 1:1. Peter wrote to the “exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” These were Roman provinces located in the northern part of what is now modern Turkey, unless Galatia includes the Galatia in the southern region of Asia Minor. These people were likely persecuted Gentile Christians. They had earlier been involved in idolatry (4:3), were ignorant (1:14) and “empty” (1:18) before they came to Christ, and formerly were “not a people” but now were “God’s people” (2:9–10).

Special Features

First Peter 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.

Extended Commentary

1 Peter 4:7-19

4:7-11 Peter encouraged believers to maintain their unity while doing everything to God's glory.

4:8 The phrase love covers a multitude of sins means that love repeatedly forgives (Pr 10:12).

4:9 When being persecuted, it is easy to snipe and complain even at other believers; thus Peter's command to be hospitable to one another.

4:10 The gift that each one has received refers to a spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are divine endowments that God entrusts to believers as stewards.

4:11 Christians should manage and use their spiritual gifts to God's glory, just as God intends.

4:12-19 Believers are to rejoice in the test that suffering brings for being members of God's household. Suffering for Christ in this world characterizes believers as strangers, with heaven as their future place of eternal residence.

4:15-16 Peter encouraged his readers to live in such a way that their sufferings were caused by their devotion to Christ and not by any evil acts; they would glorify God by doing so.

4:17 If even believers in Christ will be judged, then what terrible punishment must surely await unbelievers, who pay no heed to the gospel of Christ?

4:18 Because Christians suffer (v. 16) and will be judged (v. 17), they live out their salvation with difficulty (cp. Pr 11:31).

4:19 By suffering according to God's will and doing what is good, believers can trust that God is faithful to keep his promises.⁵

References

1. "Two-Point Conversion," Wikipedia, accessed January 29, 2026, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-point_conversion.
2. "KC Masterpiece: Chargers Shock Chiefs 29-28," Los Angeles Chargers, accessed January 29, 2026, <https://www.chargers.com/news/kc-masterpiece-chargers-shock-chiefs-29-28>.
3. Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible, One-Volume Edition*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 1260.
4. "1 Peter: Notes," Sonic Light: Bible Study Resources by Dr. Thomas L. Constable, accessed January 29, 2026, <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/1peter/1peter.htm#d-the-importance-of-mutual-love-in-end-times-living-47-11>.
5. CSB Study Bible, general ed. Trevin Wax (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).