- 1. This lesson can be summarized by the statement and question: "I've got problems, I believe in Jesus, now what do I do? That pretty much summarizes most Christians I know.
 - a) Peter wrote this letter to those who were under a death threat for their religious beliefs. Therefore, we have no right to complain in comparison. ⁽ⁱ⁾ Over and above that, this letter is designed as a set of instructions of how to life the Christian life especially during difficult times.
 - b) One of the main issues Peter gets into is the concept that one's perspective about life affects your circumstances, and not the other way around. The people Peter were writing to were focusing on their fears, and those fears can and does cause people to lose faith. Peter is teaching the opposite. To summarize Peter, "Understand what God has done for us as believers, let it change you from the inside-out, and with that fresh perspective, <u>then</u> deal with the problems the world is throwing at you.
 - c) In many ways, this letter is about "how to be happy during rough times. Don't get me wrong. We are not to artificially jump for joy when we are really hurting. Again, this is about changing our perspective about the reality that is around us.
 - d) With that surprisingly short introduction completed \odot , let's get going.
- 2. Chapter 2, Verse 1: Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.
 - a) To start, it would probably help to define some of the terms used in this sentence:
 - i) Malice is the intent to harm someone else.
 - ii) Deceit is to act in a misleading way in some action.
 - iii) Hypocrisy is act in a way that is not true to your nature.
 - iv) Envy is to want something that doesn't belong to you.
 - v) Slander is to make a false accusation.
 - vi) In summary, none of these are good. 😳
 - b) The sentence starts with the word "Therefore". Whenever you see the word "therefore", you should always ask yourself, where is the "wherefore of the therefore? The term "therefore" is a conclusion based on some previous statements.
 - i) Peter is asking us to rid ourselves of all these ugly things.
 - ii) He starts by saying "Therefore". We need to go back to the latter verses of Chapter 1 and find out the "what" aspects leads to this "therefore".
 - iii) The last sentence of Chapter 1 says, "And this is the word that was preached to you." Well, that doesn't help much. ^(c) Let's go back a little further.
 - iv) Let's go back to Verse 23. It says, "For you have been born again".... From there, Peter goes on to say, "all men are like grass (i.e., our time on earth is relatively short as compared to eternity)...but the Word of the Lord stands forever".
 - a) The point is we are born again into a new life in Jesus Christ. The "therefore" that opens verse 1 answers the question: "Now what?"
 - v) It would be like us asking, "Ok, I've committed my life to Jesus, now what?"
 - a) The answer is the first verse of Chapter 2. Those terms I defined are the specific's of the "now what".
 - c) Notice that to start a new life in Jesus does not mean the first thing we do is go out with a bible in our hands, konk people on the head, and tell them to repent. ⁽²⁾ It begins with our internal and external behavior. The first thing Peter is teaching, even before going out and telling others about Jesus is to watch our behavior.

- i) Does this mean Peter expects us to be perfect? Of course not. Remember this is the guy who denied Jesus three times! He's got no right to talk. ③ The advice Peter is giving applies to all Christians, including himself and myself.
- ii) The point is to <u>check our behavior</u>. With that said, let's get back to the list of bad things in Verse 1. Notice all of the actions listed are those that do harm to others. Most of the things on the list are not those actions already committed, but "actions of the mind". In other words, Peter is saying, "kill the bad thought before it becomes bad actions".
- d) OK, onto the why question: For starters, "if" we want to tell others about Jesus, and we have a reputation as a hypocrite or a slanderer, etc., who will take us seriously? Why should anyone want to "be like us", if we act this way?
 - i) Remember people judge our behavior as much as our words.
 - ii) Second, this is about our own maturity. The "world" <u>expects</u> you to get revenge. Our ego's say, "I got hurt, and I want to hurt them right back." In other words, "Vengeance is mine, so saith my ego!" ☺
 - iii) If we can learn to take our pain, and "give it to God", it changes our attitude. If we can see people as "those needing God" it changes our desire for revenge.
 - iv) I should add this is not about self-defense. I'm not arguing to sit there and take it if someone is about to hit you with a baseball bat. The issue is about willfully seeking revenge on someone. The issue is about slandering someone falsely because you are angry with them. The issue is internal malice due to your anger.
 - V) I once heard a famous pastor use the phrase, "Hurting people hurt people" (Rick Warren). When you see people who are miserable and want to harm others, it is usually due to some internal pain of their own. This doesn't mean God called you to go fix everyone's problems. It just means one has to have understanding of other's actions. It helps get us into proper perspective.
- e) Remember that Peter is writing to churches dealing with persecution. The first instinct is to want to harm them as much as they have been harmed. Imagine seeing family members and friends killed for believing in Jesus. We would want to harm back those that harm us. Peter is teaching, like Jesus and like Paul, there is a better way.
- f) Let me end this section with a practical prayer: Lord, right now, I'm really angry with this person for what they did to me. It is so wrong. I'm really hurt. It's not fair. First of all, I pray for that person (or group). I lift them up to you. Jesus taught us to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44) and I'm doing that right now. Now I take that pain and lay it at the foot of the cross. Lord, I am blind to my own sins and I am quick to accuse others. You said to pray to forgive others, (Matthew 6:12) and I'm asking that right now. This anger is blocking my peace with you. Therefore, this situation is now "your problem", so I can now once again draw close to you". Amen.
- 3. Verse 2: Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.
 - a) Here is a case where I prefer the King James and the NIV translation used above.
 - i) The NIV translation here "just" says, "crave pure spiritual milk".
 - ii) The New King James Version says, "Desire the pure milk <u>of the word</u>". I believe the best original Greek text includes the phrase that is translated "of the word".
 - iii) My point is that the "spiritual milk" refers to the Word of God.
 - b) To those readers who have ever been parents, remember the days when the babies were up around the clock craving milk. Peter is saying we should crave the Word of God the same way that babies crave milk. It doesn't mean we are to read at 3am feedings. It means that we are to depend upon it the same way a baby depends upon milk.

- c) Now let's tie Verse 2 with Verse 1.
 - i) Verse 1 is about things in our life we are to get rid in order to be better Christians and better witnesses to others.
 - ii) This is <u>immediately</u> followed by a request to be a diligent student of God's Word.
 - iii) I'm going to argue that "giving bad thoughts to God" <u>and</u> reading God's word go together. After you haven given those bad thoughts to God, in a sense, you have a hole in your head that has to be filled. I believe Peter wants us to fill that negative void with Scripture. If we expect to turn over our pain to God, we need to replace that negative thought with something positive and pleasing to God.
- d) Further, Peter is arguing that in order to grow in maturity, it requires regular reading of God's word.
 - Now in Peter's time, the bible was not canonized. Peter was probably referring to Old Testament and specific parts of the New Testament that were already making the rounds. In 2nd Peter 3:15-16, Peter refers to Paul's letters and puts them on the level as "other Scriptures" implying Paul's letters are part of God's word.
 - ii) My closing argument for the <u>regular</u> reading of God's word comes from Jesus himself. When he was tempted by Satan, one of his responses was, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on <u>every</u> word that comes from the mouth of God."" (Matthew 4:4 NIV, a quote of Deuteronomy 8:3). The point is if we are to live on every word of God, it means to regularly study every word of God!
- e) Verse 3 says, "Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."
 - i) This ties back to a baby's craving of milk. A baby takes one taste of milk and instinctively thinks, "Hey, good stuff. I'd like some more please".
 - ii) The same attitude should be toward us. Peter is preaching on maturity of the believer (Verse 3 says "you may grow up in your salvation"). Part of that maturity comes from a regular study of God's word. To "grow up in your salvation" implies that once you are saved, there is "more to it". There is a maturity process.
- 4. Verse 4: As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
 - a) From Verse 4 to Verse 8, we are going to have a study of "stones".
 - b) The name Peter means, "living stone". With that said, Peter is not talking about himself, but Jesus <u>as</u> the cornerstone of the "whole house of believers". Each of which is a "stone".
 - c) One thing to understand as you read the Old Testament is that when you see the word "stone", especially as it ties to some sort of miracle, is usually a word picture of Jesus.
 - i) Paul himself states this: "They (Israelites coming out of Egypt) were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and <u>that rock was Christ</u>." (1st Corinthians 10:2-4 NIV)
 - ii) When the Israelites were wandering through the desert, there was a point where they were all thirsty. God commanded Moses to strike a particular rock and water would come out. (Reference: Exodus 17:5)
 - iii) The funny thing is, years later, the Israelites were thirsty again. This time, God told Moses to just "speak" to the rock, and not strike it. Moses disobeyed and struck the rock. God punished Moses by refusing to let him enter the Promised Land (Ref.: Numbers Chapter 20). The reason God did this is "Moses blew the model of Jesus". Jesus only needed to die once for our sins, not over and over again. After the price is paid for our sins, all we have to do is "speak to the rock". Because Moses struck the rock again, he "blew the model" of Jesus only having to suffer once. Remember Paul stated this rock is a model of Jesus in 1st Corinthians.

- d) Now let's get back to Peter. He says in verse 4 that we are to come to Jesus, "the living stone". I believe Peter understood 1st Corinthians Chapter 10! Peter understood that he was comparing Jesus to a rock or stone. In particular, Peter said, "living stone".
- e) The next analogy has to do with building a house. In particular, Peter is stating that a house built out of rocks is like the Christian church. We are each a stone that together make up one large house. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of this house.
 - i) With this in mind, the Old Testament references to monuments <u>now</u> get a lot more interesting. Whenever, God commanded the Israelites to build some sort of monument, the specifications were to build it out of stone, and to not cut or carve any stones (e.g., Deuteronomy 27). In other words, they were just to take a pile of rocks and make a monument, without any cutting of the stones.
 - ii) <u>That</u> is now a word-picture of "Christians working together" for the purpose of glorifying God, again, with Jesus as the cornerstone.
 - iii) Ah, you bible scholars say,
 what about the temple? That was made in the days of Solomon with cut stones. In fact, those stones were not cut at the temple site, but at a quarry and then shipped to the temple site to fit in place. (Ref.: 1st Kings 6:7). My response is "that is different". That "temple-model" is a word-picture of how God is shaping us and molding us so that for eternity we "fit together" as a body of believers for the purpose of worshiping God.
 - iv) I actually take this a step further and argue that the "tabernacle", the portable structure built by Moses (in the latter chapters of Exodus), is a model of Christians working together in our life here on earth. The tabernacle is meant to be a portable structure, just as we are "in this world, but not of this world" (this is a paraphrase of John 17:15-16). The "Temple", but centuries later by Solomon is a permanent structure, and can be read of as a model of "fitted, mature Christians" living in heaven for eternity as a finished work for the Glory of God. "

a) If I've just lost you, don't worry, let it go. ③ Time to get back to Peter.

v) With all of this understanding of "Christians as a house of stones", lets re-read Verse 4 and 5 again: "As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--⁵ you also, like living stones, are <u>being built</u> <u>into a spiritual house</u> to be a holy priesthood."

vi) Ok, I've beaten the stone house analogy to death. It's now time to move on. ③

- f) The next phrase to notice in Verse 5 is "a holy priesthood".
 - i) Did you ever realize that as a Christian, you <u>are</u> a priest? And you didn't even graduate from seminary! ⁽ⁱ⁾
 - ii) The Book of Revelation teaches us that we are "kings and priests" to God the Father. (Revelation 1:6, and 5:10).
 - a) That does <u>not</u> mean that God will say to us in heaven, "OK, Bob, Sally and Tom will be priests while Jennifer, Allison and Ted are to be kings". ©
 - b) It means that <u>all</u> believers are kings <u>and</u> priests to God.
 - c) We are "kings" in the sense that God has given us every spiritual blessing that can possible be in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3). Further, we are adopted as God's sons (Ephesians 1:5). When Jesus comes back to rule over the earth, we rule with Him (2nd Timothy 2:12).
 - iii) Onto the main point. We as Christians are like the "priests" that one reads about in the Book of Leviticus.
 - a) Old Testament priests were "chosen" by God. You had a descendant of the tribe of Levi. In a sense, those priests were "pre-destined" by God.
 - b) Those priests were to live separate, holy lives and "not like everyone else".

- c) Old Testament priests were not given an inheritance in Israel, but were scattered through the nation to minister to other believes. Boy does that ever describe Christians here on earth! We are to be "in this world, but not of this world". Like those priests, we are to be living witnesses for God.
- d) If you haven't figured it out yet, I'm trying to give you a new perspective when you read the Book of Leviticus. Next time, personalize it!
- g) The next phrase Peter uses is, "offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God..."
 - i) Let's face it, when we go to church, we don't bring sheep to sacrifice.
 - ii) The comparison to priests "ends there". Here is why:
 - a) "Unlike the other high priests, he (Jesus) does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins <u>once for all</u> when he offered himself." (Hebrews 7:27 NIV)
 - iii) If Peter says we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices, what does he mean?
 - a) That's the Christian life. Look at what Paul says on the same topic:
 - b) "Offer your bodies <u>as living sacrifices</u>, holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1b, NIV)
 - iv) Here is two more examples from the Book of Hebrews:
 - a) "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God <u>a sacrifice of</u> <u>praise</u> – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such <u>sacrifices</u> God is pleased." (Hebrews 13:15-16 NIV)
 - v) To summarize, how we live as Christians consists of "spiritual sacrifices". To sacrifice is to voluntarily give something up for the benefit of others. Since we are living to please God, we do "offer sacrifices" by living the Christian life: This is the acts of obedience that is taught all throughout the Scriptures. This is praising God. This is being a witness to others. All of these are examples of "offering spiritual sacrifices" to God. Peter is just giving "obedience and worship" a title we may not have used before.
- 5. Verse 6: For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."
 - a) This is a quote of Isaiah 28:16.
 - b) Peter validates Isaiah as Scripture. That's good enough for me. 😳 Jesus does that too.
 - Mount Zion is a particular mountain that is part of the City of Jerusalem. Zion has become a nickname for Jerusalem itself. Zion also refers to a "New Jerusalem" (Hebrew 12:22). In particular, a "heavenly city" that will be set upon the earth as part of the events of Jesus Second Coming. (Rev. 3:12 and 21:2).
 - d) What Isaiah is predicting is that part of the events of Jesus first coming is to become the "cornerstone" of the house of believers. It is about the birth of the church.
 - e) Notice the <u>promise</u> that comes with Verse 6: Whoever trusts in Jesus will never be put to shame. What does that mean in particular?
 - i) Does that mean Christians will never be shamed publicly in front of others? If history is any judge, that is not the case.
 - ii) I believer this refers to judgment day. God will not put us on the stand and say, "OK, I'll forgive you of all of your sins, but before I do, here's a few highlights! ©
 - iii) If God says we will never be put to shame, I trust in that promise! That means when God welcomes us into heaven, we are not shamed first. God forgives <u>and</u> "forgets" all of our sins, period. Take comfort in that thought.
 - f) This verse is also an argument against "purgatory". This is a term invented by the Roman Catholic Church with no biblical support. Purgatory is a "temporary hell" to purge us of our sins. Peter says, "We will never be shamed". Purgatory sounds like shame to me. ©

- 6. Verse 7: Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," ⁸ and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for.
 - a) Jesus is compared to a "living stone". That same living stone that we depend upon as our cornerstone (i.e., the foundation of all we believe) is the same stone that nonbelievers "stumble upon". Since we've already talked about Jesus as "our living stone", I'm going to focus a little on Jesus as the nonbelievers' "stumbling stone".
 - b) Notice the judgment of the last sentence: They stumble because they disobey the message--which is also what they were destined for.
 - That's a scary statement. People <u>willfully</u> choose to disobey the Gospel message. Why is that? I believe the most common reason is people don't want to change their lifestyle based on what Christianity teaches.
 - ii) Nonbelievers would rather live for pleasure or some other issue than accept the fact that God <u>must</u> die for their sins in order to be saved.
 - iii) People want to approach God based on their own ego's (i.e., "I deserve to go to heaven because I'm a good person") rather than accept the idea that a perfect God requires perfection to be with Him forever. We can only be perfect by accepting the "perfect punishment" on our behalf, which is Jesus dying for our sins.
 - iv) The fact that people refuse to accept that means they desire to approach God on their terms, and not on God's terms. The other reason is they don't want to change their lifestyle in order to please God.
 - v) This leads back to Peter's last comment. To paraphrase Peter, "So, you don't want to accept Jesus? Well, that's God's "terms" for salvation. You don't want to accept it? Ok then, but I'm sorry, you can't get into heaven on your terms." That is why it is their "destiny" as Peter says in at the end of Verse 8.
 - c) This leads back to the big issue of dealing with suffering and pain. Peter is writing to people dealing with persecution. We see nonbelievers as people who are hurting us and we want to hurt them back. Peter is saying, "Their destiny and punishment is far worse than anything and everything we have to deal with in our lifetime.
- 7. Verse 9: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
 - a) Peter is contrasting the destiny of the nonbeliever versus the believer. In Verse 8, Peter teaches about the eternal destiny of those who refuse to believe the Gospel message and "stumble" over Jesus.
 - i) Verse 8 is meant to be read in contrast to Verses 9 and 10. In these verses Peter focuses on <u>all</u> believers and what we are called to do.
 - b) First of all, Peter says we are a "chosen people".
 - i) As I stated in the last lesson, Peter is primarily writing to Jewish Christians. That does not mean these lessons are to be ignored by non-Jewish Christians. It simply means that the illustrations and examples used are "best understood" by someone with a Jewish background. Don't forget Peter is a Jewish Christian himself.
 - Peter deliberately is comparing Christians to Jews in the sense that God "formed" the Jewish nation when they were in Egypt. They were specifically called out of Egypt to form a nation. They were formed to be a witness to others about God and to corporately worship God as a nation.

- iii) In Verse 9, Peter calls Christians, "a chosen people" and "a holy nation". The same way the Jewish people were separated and chosen by God to be a special nation and a chosen people, so is the Christian church. There is a parallel in the Exodus story with what God has been doing with the Christian church for the past 2,000 years!
- iv) Earlier I talked about how since we are a "royal priesthood", that should give us a new appreciation when we read about the duties of the priests in books like
 Leviticus. It is meant as studies of how God wants <u>us</u> to live separate and holy lives just like those priests.
- v) Now I'm trying to show how we can have "a whole new appreciation" of the Book of Exodus. Exodus is not just a historical study of how God first formed the Jewish nation. It is also there as an <u>example</u> of when people commit their lives to God, they are now called to be a holy nation.
- vi) Exodus is not just a story about the Jewish nation being redeemed by God. It is a "word-picture" of how those who commit their lives to God are called by God and separated (that's what "holy" means) for the purposes of glorifying God. How do we glorify God? By praising Him, by being witnesses to others, by spending time with other believers and spending time alone with God. <u>That</u> is why we "called" by God as a separate nation.
- c) The last part of Verse 10 says", once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy".
 - i) Mercy is about forgiveness for things we have done.
 - ii) A tendency among all Christians is that we tend to have bad memories about our own sins and have wonderful memories about those who have hurt us. ③
 - iii) We forget that God <u>has</u> shown mercy on us for forgiving our past sins. That is Peter's point here. Again, Peter is writing to people dealing with suffering. It is that reminder that God has been merciful to us, and we need to be merciful to others. (Don't confuse being passive with being merciful!)
 - a) Jesus said, "But go and learn what this means: '<u>I desire mercy</u>, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13, NIV, with Jesus quoting Hosea 6:6)
- 8. Verse 11: Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.
 - a) Now we're back to the issue at hand: Since we are this "special people" that God called out, what do we do? How exactly do we live this life?
 - b) Here Peter reminds us first of all that we are "aliens and strangers" of this world.
 - i) That does not mean Christians are to live as isolated hermits. Jesus calls us to be "in the world", but not "of this world" (again, a paraphrase of John 17:15-16). The point is we as Christians are supposed to <u>act differently</u>.
 - c) Now that the idea of "strangers to this world" is understood, the very next issue Peter brings up is to abstain from sinful desires.
 - i) We tend to think of this as sexual sins, but this verse encompasses a much bigger range. It is the idea of abstaining against <u>all</u> things that draw us away from God.
 - ii) This does not mean I'm anti-hobby or anti-interests. You have permission to go to a movie. ⁽ⁱ⁾ What this does mean is that any interest you have in things other than God should be very limited. If you love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, how much desire "should" you have for other things?

- d) This leads to a topic of dealing with sins.
 - i) Remember how God the Father dealt with sin. He crucified it. Crucifixion is a slow, painful, tortuous way to die. Let's face it, there could have been other, less painful ways for Jesus to die for our sins. One of the reasons crucifixion was picked is that it is a model of just how we are to deal with sins.
 - ii) To explain this, I always liked the illustration of a charcoal briquette. For those of you who have ever used a "manual" barbeque as opposed to a gas-lighted barbeque, you will understand this illustration. In order for charcoal briquettes to be effective, they have to work as a group. If you take one charcoal briquette and place it by itself, it will go cold. It only remains hot if they are lumped together.
 - iii) That illustration applies in both a positive and negative aspect for Christians. As believers, God intends for us to work as a team. Christianity was never meant to be a solo act. In order to be an effective witness for Jesus, it is required and necessarily for it to be a team effort.
 - iv) That same charcoal illustration also applies for how we should deal with sin. The best way to "kill" sin is to <u>isolate</u> the sin. Whatever sin issue we have to deal with, we need to isolate it and "crucify it". Yes, the process is painful just as crucifixion is painful. Our minds and bodies are "accustomed" to such sins and our human desires don't want to give them up.
 - v) I do believe all people are born with certain strengths and weaknesses. Some people can never drink alcohol their whole lives and that is a "non-issue". For others, to be around it is a great temptation to be a part of it. (By the way, the bible condemns drunkenness, not drinking, that is a separate issue. Here I'm using the alcoholic as an illustration of a form of temptation.) Since we all have different weaknesses, it is important for us to abstain and avoid people and places that are bad influences to our lives.
 - vi) I am also in favor of support groups. Having accountability groups helps to stay away from their problem issues.
 - vii) The point Peter is making is that there are things that Christians need to abstain from, period. It is not a matter of "mind of matter", it is a matter of realizing we are a "new creature in Christ" and we are no longer slaves to whatever was keeping us down. With that realization, we can come to God and let Him help us deal with the issue and "walk away" from it like an isolated charcoal.
- e) The last part of Verse 11 states these things, "war against the soul".
 - i) The purpose of your soul is to have a close relationship with God. Our soul is designed to communicate with God, pray and worship God and just be with Him. When we desire other things, that blocks our relationship with God. In that sense, other things are warring against our soul.
- 9. Verse 12: Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.
 - a) Persecution usually begins with false accusations. The Romans did that to the Christians.
 - b) When someone is making a false accusation against you, that means they are <u>focusing</u> <u>upon you.</u> Since they "happen to be in the neighborhood" ③ it is a good time to show them what Christians are supposed to be like.
 - c) You can't stop someone from making a false accusation against you. You can show them what you are really like when they are busy focusing upon your lifestyle. That is the point Peter is making here.
 - d) For most of us, we don't face the type of persecution that is common among much of the world. We do however, deal with false accusations about our lifestyle. (For example, many think Christians want to force government to change everyone's behavior and force everyone to live by the bible. God wants us to change people's heart, not by force.)

- e) Notice Verse 12 says that <u>non</u>believers are the ones who will glorify God on the day he visits us. How do "they" glorify God?
 - i) For starters, if some convert, they are thankful for us as a witness.
 - ii) Notice the remark by Peter, "on the day he (God) visits us. That is a reference to the events of the Second Coming of Jesus. God gets glorified by the fact that He correctly ("righteously") judges those who refuse to submit to God. Their actions (or lack thereof) gives God the opportunity to show that "Yes, there is a judgment day coming, and here it is".
 - iii) My point is that nonbelievers "glorify" God by their actions. We tend to think of glorifying God by Christians praising Him and praying to Him. In a sense, nonbelievers "lack of action" will also glorify God in His planned judgment.
 - iv) Getting back to Peter, let me paraphrase: "When judgment day comes, nonbelievers will think back about Christians and say, "You know what, those people had an inner peace despite the fact we tried to harm them. Now here I am, a nonbeliever facing judgment, because I refused to change." Their lack-of-action gives an opportunity for God to be glorified with their judgment.
 - v) Now that I've picked on nonbelievers, it is time for me to hit where it hurts.
 This verse also means that Christians <u>are</u> supposed to act differently. We <u>are</u> supposed to act and behave in a way where the world is supposed to take notice of us. To paraphrase the late Walter Martin, "Congratulations, some of you are wonderful secret agents for Jesus Christ. You're neighbors don't suspect in the least that you are a Christian!"
- f) Last thing: Let's talk about the phrase "on the day he visits us".
 - i) Jesus' Second Coming has not happened yet. When it happens, the whole world will be aware of it. (See Matthew 24:27). The point here is that we don't know when our life is going to end. When the bible teaches that Jesus is "coming soon", it is correct. It may be tomorrow, it may be in another thousand years. That isn't the point. For us, "judgment day" is either the time era when Jesus comes back or when we die. Since we don't know when that is, we assume it is soon. Ask any senior how fast life has gone by. That moment "is" soon.
- 10. Verse 13: Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.
 - a) This idea of submitting ourselves to <u>all</u> government authority is taught by both Peter and Paul. Romans Chapter 13, Verse 1-5 are Paul's "parallel" passage to this one here.
 - b) Here are some modern applications: We have to pay our taxes whether or not we agree with how the money is to be spent. We have to obey all laws past by our government whether or not we agree with them. It is not about the laws being right or wrong, it is about being a good witness to those placed in authority over us.
 - c) There are exceptions to these verses. There is a principal called "higher law". Peter refused to obey the Pharisee's when they told him to not preach about Jesus . That is invoking "a higher law" (Ref. Acts 5:29). For example, if the government passes a law outlawing Christian worship, I would either leave the country or worship in secret. That is what the early church did and they understood and obeyed these verses as well. We also have to be willing to pay the price when we disobey such laws.
 - i) So where do we "draw the line" in protest? I would argue it is only in "extreme" cases, especially those that violate God's commandments.
 - ii) What about abortion? Shouldn't we not pay taxes because the government funds such things? Yes, I believe abortion is wrong. Yes, we should peacefully try to change people's hearts on this issue.

- iii) Let's face it if we avoid paying taxes because we don't like how the money is spent, people will think we are "just" Christians in order to avoid paying taxes and not out of our love of God. This is an example of why Peter wants us to have authority over those in charge of us. It is about being a good witness for Jesus at the expense of putting up with a lot of bad things.
- iv) If you read through the New Testament, you never once read of Jesus or any of the New Testament writers calling to overthrow the Roman government. They never called for an violent revolution. Christianity is about having joy from within despite whatever circumstances we are in. Christianity is a reminder that our home is in heaven, and therefore we have to put up with whatever the world throws at is, with some extreme exceptions as I've just outlined.
- d) There is another point in this verse: Peter says that God uses government leaders "to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."
 - i) Never underestimate the idea that God can use government leaders to punish wrongdoers, whether they are Christian or not.
- 11. Verse 15: For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. ¹⁶ Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.
 - a) Verse 15 mentions a key phrase: God's will. We often wonder what is God's will for our life and I love to bring up that topic. Here, the term is bluntly used.
 - b) Peter says that by "doing good" we <u>are</u> doing God's will. We don't need a burning bush to discern whether or not we are "doing good". Usually the actions speak very loudly all by the themselves.
 - c) Peter is warning against false accusations against Christians. Peter is implying that these accusations <u>will</u> come and there is nothing you can do to avoid it. Being a good witness for Jesus makes others feel guilty about their lifestyle, and the false accusations come. Peter's point is to <u>expect it.</u>
 - d) Peter's next point is we don't combat the false accusations with verbal testimony about how wonderful our lives are. We let the "action speak for itself".
 - e) This does not mean we are to be perfect. This does not mean we are to look down upon others as being inferior to us. This is about when non-Christians accuse "us" of sin.
 - i) How do we combat this? Peter tells us: "Love the brothers, fear God and honor the king (those in authority over you)".
 - f) Next, notice the phrase, "but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil".
 - i) Let me give you an example: As a Christian, I can drink all the alcohol I want. As a Christian, I can engage in any sin. It may ruin my life on earth and my heavenly rewards, but if I'm trusting in Jesus as forgiveness of my sins, I <u>am</u> forgiven. The point is "why would I <u>want</u> to do any of these things? If these things are displeasing to God, and I truly love God, why would I want to displease Him?
 - ii) Yes, we are given total freedom as Christians to live however we want. We are free from the <u>payment and punishment</u> of sin. We are not free from the consequences of sin here on earth. That is why Peter is teaching us to avoid sin. Not because we "have to", but because we should "want to". The secondary reason is as a witness to those around us. Again, if we are living just like everyone else, why would entice anyone to join the church in the first place?
- 12. Verse 18: Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

- a) In the world of the Roman Empire, most people were slaves. Slavery could be a temporary time span as a punishment for a crime or a life-long situation.
- b) Here is the tough part Peter is saying in effect, "Slaves, submit yourself to your master even if the guy beats you".
- c) First of all, is Peter condoning slavery? I don't believe so. Slavery was a part of that culture. I do believe if Peter was ever the Roman Emperor, he would outlaw slavery. Peter was busy trying to save souls and didn't have the time or the inkling for politics. This is <u>not</u> about the politics of slavery. This is about the proper attitude during suffering.
 - i) If someone is mean to you and beats you, let's face it, they <u>expect</u> you to hate them. If you can have joy despite the fact you're being hurt, they will eventually look at you and say, "How do you do that? How do you have joy despite the way I treat you?" That is the opportunity to tell how God loves us so much He was willing to die for us. I have a love for you so much I am willing to suffer for you.
- d) OK, let's get in the modern world. We don't have slavery. The worse we have is abusive bosses at work or an abusive spouse. In such situations, should we stay or go?
 - i) First of all, when it comes to abusing children, that is a different issue. Peter is addressing this letter to adult believers and talking about <u>their</u> suffering.
 - ii) What if I have an abusive spouse? Should I just "take it" in order to be a witness to them? I'm not sure I have the perfect answer here. You can make a biblical case for staying as well as leaving. There are times in the Gospels and Acts where Jesus or the apostles escaped and got away from life threatening situations. Yet here, Peter says, "stand there and take it".
 - Since you can argue it both ways, it then depends upon the situation and what you believe is "God's will" for you in that situation. There are situations where it is best to run. There is nothing wrong with leaving, say a physically abusive spouse. There may be other situations where God is calling you to stay in that relationship.
 - iv) Peter was writing to people who <u>didn't have a choice</u> about slavery. If those Christians choose to run away, nonbelievers would say to them, "You just want to be a Christian so you could run away from your duty as a slave. You don't really care about God". Peter's point is our witness to nonbelievers takes precedent over whatever situation we are in.
 - v) If God calls you to "stand there and take it", the secret is to draw upon God's strength to deal with the pain. That is one of the main themes of this letter.
- 13. Verse 21: To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."
 - a) Let me try to paraphrase Peter: "Folks, Jesus suffered for you out of His love for you. He expects you to do likewise. That doesn't mean we commit suicide or just be passive for the sake of nonbelievers. It means that God suffered out of the love for nonbelievers, and He expects us to suffer out of the love for nonbelievers. It is better to suffer in this lifetime than to have to suffer for eternity.
 - b) Verse 22 is Peter quoting Isaiah 53, Verse 9.
 - i) Chapter 53 of Isaiah is one of the most famous passages in the Old Testament to Christians. It gives one of the best descriptions of what Jesus did for us on the cross, centuries before it ever happens.
 - ii) Here, Peter is quoting Isaiah 53 and attributing it to Jesus.
 - iii) So why did Peter pick this verse to quote? I believe the point is the second phrase where it said, "no deceit was found in his mouth". Peter's point is that Jesus had a good reputation because he didn't speak out when others abused him on the cross.

- iv) The interesting thing is that most non-Christians "respect" Jesus. They will complain about Christians day and night, they may make fun how Christians worship Jesus, but as a general rule, respect Jesus as a person. Even most religious Jews who deny Jesus as God still respect Jesus as a living human.
- v) My point is that just as people respected how Jesus <u>behaved</u> is how people ought to look at our behavior. Yes, being a Christian is all about faith. However, our faith dictates our behavior. Part of that behavior is how we react during difficult situations.
- 14. Verse 23: When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.
 - a) Let me paraphrase Peter: "Do you Christians want an example of how to handle suffering? Look at how Jesus handled the suffering of the cross. He didn't retaliate, even though He had the power to retaliate. He didn't insult his accusers. Instead Jesus put the judgment in the hands of God the Father."
 - i) That is what Peter wants for Christians. The idea is "Vengeance is mine, so sayth the Lord, <u>not</u> so sayth us!" ☺ (Reference to Deuteronomy 32:35).
 - ii) If we are trusting in the fact that God loves and cares for us, then we <u>have</u> to trust in the fact that God will "pay back" those who harm us. It is not "our job".
 (Again, there are cases where it is "biblical" to run, but I've made that point.)
- 15. Verse 24: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.
 - a) A <u>purpose</u> of Jesus dying for our sins is stated in Verse 24. It is so that we might (our choice!) "die to sins and live to righteousness". What does that mean? It means that if we accept Jesus payment of our sins, then we entrust God to <u>deal</u> with our sins and the sins of others. It is not our job to fix everyone around us, but to be a living witness to them. It is not our job to avenge those who hurt us, it is God's job. If God loves us enough to want to die for us, then He loves us enough to "take care" of those who harm us.
 - b) We can also spend a lot of time on the phrase "by his wounds you have been healed". This is quote of Isaiah 53 again, this time of Verse 5.
 - i) It is one thing to understand that by Jesus' sacrificial death, the price of our sins has been paid in full. It is another to understand the concept of Jesus "wounds" that we have been healed.
 - ii) Peter's point here is that Jesus <u>suffered</u>. He didn't just die instantly, He suffered. He suffered to give us an example that we too, will have to suffer.
 - a) Paul said, "In fact, <u>everyone</u> who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus <u>will be persecuted</u>" (1st Timothy 3:12, NIV).
 - b) Now there is a promise of God we don't take to heart every day! ^(c) Peter and Paul's point is that "suffering is going to happen, so we might as well learn how to deal with it." That is one of the main themes of this letter.
- 16. Verse 25: For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.
 - a) Peter's point is that "no one" is born a Christian. All believers come to Jesus at some point in their life. For some people, this is a more-than-once experience. All believers need to look back at some defining moment in time where they first committed their lives to serving Jesus. (If you don't have one, start one now!). Even as believers, we like sheep are prone to wander and constantly need to get back where we belong.
 - b) Peter's point here is about the fact we <u>have</u> committed our lives to be a follower of Jesus. Since we have made that commitment, we are to act differently.

17. Let's pray: Father, First of all, we pray for Christians who are dealing with strong persecution. We tend to forget that there are those around the world who face life-threatening situations just for believing in You. Protect them and help them to be a good witness for you. As for us, help us to have the proper perspective about whatever difficulty we are going through. Help us to realize that our home is in heaven, and this life is but a short time span. Help us to have internal joy despite our circumstances. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.