



HOPE PROJECT
A 40-DAY JOURNEY

“ So get yourselves
ready, prepare your minds
to act, control yourselves,
and look forward in hope...

1 Peter 1:13

Welcome to The Hope Project: a 40-day journey. The global coronavirus pandemic combined with racial injustice unrest has resulted in an incredibly stressful and volatile climate in our world. Anxiety, addiction, and hopelessness are on the rise. The good news of the message of Jesus is that no matter how dark the world gets or how uncertain the future looks, there's still a way to look forward in hope.

In this 40 day devotional, I've personally written a few minutes of daily encouragement for you including practical application based on the book of 1 Peter from the Bible. 1 Peter is a letter written to a group of followers of Jesus who were also in the midst of crisis. My desire is that together we can fill our hearts daily with God's truth, and shine His light into the darkness around us.

Andy Wood

WEEK 1

STUDY PLAN

DAY 1 - June 15, 2020

I Peter 1:1-2 (NIV)

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”

Welcome! I’m so glad you are joining me for this journey. Over the next six weeks, we’re going to have some fun together. I pray that your heart will be stirred, your thinking will be stretched, and your life will be changed. I am certain that, by the end of this 40-day journey, you are going to love Peter and this beautiful letter. More importantly, I pray that you would encounter Jesus in a personal way and discover Him as the one and only true source of Living Hope.

By the time Peter writes this letter, he is older and wiser—probably in his 60s, maybe even 70s. Imagine yourself getting this letter from a fatherly (or grandfatherly) figure, writing to encourage you in crisis and suffering. His goal is to give HOPE!

This older, wiser image of Peter is not usually what comes to mind when I think of Peter. He started off as an entrepreneur running a fishing business. He understood payroll, cashflow, difficult conversations with employees, and what it felt like to have days when going out of business was a strong possibility. He came from humble, blue-collar roots. Think of Peter as the kind of guy who would shop at Bass Pro, wear Carhartts, and drink IPAs after work.

I tend to view Peter through the lens of all the stories about Jesus and his disciples in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. More is written about him than any of the other early followers of Jesus. He was loud, impulsive, brash, and overly confident. He probably told inappropriate jokes to get people to laugh, thus endearing himself to them. You might have a friend like that. You love them, but sometimes they drive you crazy—especially when you're ready to go to sleep, and they're still talking. That's Peter, particularly when he first meets Jesus.

So now when Peter, as an older, wiser grandpa, says, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus," it matters. It matters because he has become a different man. Instead of always trying to be the center of attention, now he is living as a conduit of hope and strength for his children in the faith.

Have you ever used The Aging App? I recently took a picture of myself with that app, and I look like my dad's twin. Though I can imagine what I'll *look* like in three decades, I often wonder what I will *be* like 30 years from now. Most of us change significantly in 30 years; Peter was no exception.

Peter's story gives us HOPE. Jesus changed Peter's identity, and his destiny. Jesus changes his young disciple's name from Simon to Peter, which means rock. Jesus likes to change people's identity. He likes to give people purpose and hope that is not based upon perfection or past performance.

Like Peter, we have all done things we regret, haven't we? What are those things that you think should disqualify you? I doubt they're any worse than Peter's regrets! Peter denied Jesus right before his crucifixion (Mark 14:66-16:72), but, because of Jesus's response to Peter, this misstep did not become the defining moment of his life.

After His resurrection, Jesus would reinstate Peter (John 21:15-19) and appoint him as the leader of his church by commanding him to “feed my sheep.” Thirty years after that conversation, Peter was still going strong, loving Jesus and feeding His sheep.

Jesus wants to give you HOPE today. Grace can rewrite your story. The same personal love Jesus displayed for Peter is the same personal love he has for you. He has a new name, a new destiny, a better tomorrow, and He is inviting you into it. Just imagine Him sitting down next to you like He did with Peter—His arm over your shoulder, speaking life into you as his son or daughter.

Take a minute now to write a personal note to Jesus inviting Him to write the rest of your story. Try to imagine what your life will be like in the future. Ask The Holy Spirit to help you imagine yourself older and wiser having followed Jesus faithfully for decades.

Let the image of the future you override any image or voice that speaks against God’s identity or destiny for your life. Use the next 40 days to set the course for the next 40 years.



PRAYER

Father, I pray that you would help us encounter you in fresh new ways over the next 40 days. I ask you Holy Spirit to change my perspective. Help me to see me the way you see me. Please change me just as you changed Peter.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

DAY 2 - June 16, 2020

I Peter 1:1-2 (NIV)

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”

Welcome back. You have now read the Bible two days in a row. For some of you this might be the first time in a long time. I want to encourage you—way to go!! I’m cheering for you because I believe the Holy Spirit is going to do a special work in your heart each day as we continue to journey together through Peter’s letter.

Today I want to shift our attention to the people who received this letter from Peter. Peter writes to a group of churches from cities all over modern day Turkey. These precious followers of Jesus were near and dear to Peter’s heart. As you read through this letter, you can feel his compassion, care, and concern for their well-being.

Imagine being a part of one of these churches as they sat down to open the letter. You know that excitement you feel when your phone dings and you see a message from a good friend or somebody you love? They would have felt that same level of excitement and anticipation to read this letter from Peter. These friends were living in crazy times! A trip to the grocery store

carried more concern than correction for not wearing a face mask or weird looks for being less than six feet apart. These Jesus followers were living with fear and anxiety. They had the constant threat of fines, job loss, the murder of family members, or death sentences upon themselves. All of this is because they chose to yield their lives to King Jesus and believe in His resurrection from the dead!

This letter offered a lifeline, a source of hope. It contained words of life that could change everything for them. The letter was so potent that followers of Jesus copied and distributed it to fellow believers all over the region. I love thinking about this! Almost two thousand years later, God's word is still powerful, living and active, and able to change the way we think, feel, and live.

Now, Peter puts three very important new labels on them. First, He called them "ELECT." Was he allowed to call them "elect"? Only Jews were the elect chosen people of God. These churches were almost certainly made up of Gentiles (meaning everyone who is not Jewish). Peter was now bringing them into the powerful promises of the Old Testament and the tender faithful love of God. God's love and care is not exclusive to one nation of people. Actually, God desires that people from every nation know Him and do life with Him! That means you are now a part of this ELECT group.

On top of that, Peter called them "CHOSEN." At that point, they were utterly and completely rejected. These followers of Jesus were not accepted by Jews or Romans. In fact, both groups were persecuting them. In spite of their faithfulness, they had been labeled as rejects.

But then Peter totally shifted their identity. Rejected by man, CHOSEN by God!

Have you ever felt rejected? Maybe, like me, you were often one of the last ones chosen for the dodgeball team during recess in 5th grade. I understand how that can give you a little chip on your shoulder. What if I told you GOD PICKED YOU? Would you believe it?

I want you to say this out loud right now...

Say, "Your name, CHOSEN by Jesus Christ."

Say it, "Rafael, Nikki, Mike, Alex, Alejandra, Maria ..., CHOSEN by Jesus Christ."

He did it in advance "according to His foreknowledge." He knew and knows all the things you have done, will do, and won't do. He knows the times you will blow it or reject HIM, yet He still decided He wants you on His team.

Before Peter rejected Jesus, Jesus knew his loving disciple would falter. But Jesus still chose Peter. Because he's lived it, Peter understands how Jesus changes people. Based on this confidence, he relabels these scattered exiles.

That's the other label I want to briefly address. Scattered EXILES. Two really important things about the people of God being exiled. First, they were isolated. Undoubtedly, many of their meetings were happening in secret from house to house. Secondly, they were uncertain. They lived in isolation and uncertainty. Sound familiar?

Now, I am grateful for the fact that we will gather again. I look forward to that day when our church buildings are filled with people again. At the same time, I can still have confidence when we are scattered and we don't know what the future holds.

God will be FAITHFUL to continue to build HIS church with or without buildings!

So, to my CHOSEN, SCATTERED EXILES spread across the Bay Area, California, the USA, and the globe, your HOPE is the same hope these early Jesus followers had.

Peter calls it the “sprinkling of Jesus blood” and “sanctifying work of the Spirit” which helps us obey and live this new life of HOPE. My hope is strengthened when I look back and consider what He did for me on the cross. He chose to die for me before I even thought about disobeying Him. He chose me before I first rejected Him. He decided to pursue me before I even knew His name. He knocked on the door of my heart before my heart was ever tender towards Him. His faithful love was chasing me before I knew I was a sinner.

He saw you as a five-year-old girl with pigtails, as an insecure twelve-year-old boy, and as a rebellious college student. He saw you in your tears, brokenness, and emptiness. In your abuse, your fear, your addiction, your pain, your loss. He sees it all and knows it all. He still calls you CHOSEN!!

The Holy Spirit totally transformed Peter. The same Spirit of the Living God is next to you right now as you read HIS word. If you are a follower of Jesus, He lives in you, goes before, walks beside you, sustains you, and gives you exactly what you need for each new day.

So today, I wonder if you would receive this new label: ELECT, CHOSEN EXILES of Jesus. You belong to Him. He picked you! He is with you. He is for you. He is strengthening you.

When you feel rejected today by people or circumstances, remind yourself you are CHOSEN by God. Would you take a moment to thank God for choosing you in spite of all your fears and failures? Invite Him today to lead your life! May grace and peace be yours in abundance today.



PRAYER

Father, thank you for changing our identity. Please help us have confidence during this season of uncertainty. Help me today to receive the new labels you have given to me.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY 3 - June 17, 2020

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NIV)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

You remember what Peter told us yesterday? He said we are **CHOSEN** by God. I am praying that this word gets imprinted deep within your heart. I’m praying for you, church, that you carry this word at the front of your mind through our journey together.

Yesterday we experienced a measure of **HOPE** because of what Jesus has done for us in the past. Today we are going to get a better understanding of His love for us and what it means to be **CHOSEN** by God.

Stacie and I have three children. We say that two grew in Stacie’s stomach, and the other one grew in our hearts. We adopted our middle child, Sammy, when he was just shy of two years old. He is the only one we actually got to choose. The other two just came out. Of course we love Caedmon and Karis, even though we didn’t have a choice in the matter.

Now, I love these few rich verses from the Bible because Peter talks about this idea of being reborn into God’s family. Just like there was a day where everything changed for Sammy, there is

a day when everything changes for those who put their trust in Jesus. Sammy got new clothes, new food, a bigger home, new siblings, and new parents.

Those of us who follow Jesus got a massive upgrade the day we were born into His family! On that day, everything changed. I actually remember it changing! I remember HOPE, JOY, PEACE, and PURPOSE filling my heart and mind for the first time.

Like many of you, I came to believe in Jesus during hard times in my life. My parents were going through a divorce; I was a chunky, pimply-faced 12-year-old. Then I began to feel Him changing me. I was gaining confidence and a passion I could not shake. It was almost like my FUTURE HOPE of eternal friendship with Jesus began to change my present struggles.

If I told you that a good friend of yours decided they were going to give you 1,000 shares of Google or Apple stock, how would you respond? You'd be ecstatic. What if I told you that you had to wait until COVID was over to cash in the shares, how would you feel?

Undoubtedly, you would wake up every day thinking and feeling differently because of what lay ahead for you. You would almost be changed today by what you expect tomorrow!

That's the power of HOPE!! Hope is the confident expectation that God will come through.

Eternal life is not something you have to die to receive. Jesus said after raising His friend Lazarus from the dead, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (John 11:25).

You are invited to do life with Jesus. That life becomes a source of HOPE and strength in the midst of uncertainty and isolation.

Unfortunately, you can't have complete confidence in the stock market. But you can have confidence in your future with Jesus.

He gives us LIVING HOPE. Having a HOPE-filled future changes how we view today. HOPE is a light that shines in the darkness and reminds our soul that when we follow Jesus the best is always ahead. HOPE will never perish, spoil, or fade.

So, how do you keep walking with HOPE when you don't feel it?

Peter tells us...by FAITH!

Faith is the voice inside of my head that reminds me that my present struggle is worth it. Faith tells me you can keep going another day. Faith tells me wake up, read your Bible, pray, Jesus will speak to you.

Faith reminds me of my decision almost three decades ago to follow Jesus, almost as if it were last week. Faith reminds me of all that I've read and studied about the historical events of Jesus's life. Faith reminds me of the powerful transformation of Jesus's friends who were eyewitnesses to His death, burial, and resurrection.

Faith shields me as deception, fear, and uncertainty try to overwhelm me with despair.

So today, I will walk by faith and not by sight. I will walk by faith and not feelings based on the news, the stock market, or my bank account balance. I will walk believing my God will reward those who seek Him with their whole heart!

Let's join with our persecuted brothers and sisters scattered across the world and remind our souls that for those of us who are among the tribe of Jesus our best days lie ahead. Our hope is strengthened as we look back over our shoulders at the

empty tomb and then look ahead to the day He will descend from the sky and take us home for all eternity.

Keep stepping, soldier! You are a man of faith. You are a woman of strength. You are empowered by the Holy Spirit. You have an inheritance that can't be touched based upon the great mercy of God and your faith in His deliverance.

Today, I want you to try and imagine the day when you will see Jesus face to face. What will you say to Him? What would you say to Him if He walked into the room right now and sat down next to you?

Good news. He's right there. He's waiting for you. He's available whenever you need him. So go ahead and talk to Him. Welcome Him into your fears, your doubts, your anxieties and struggles. Ask Him for fresh FAITH and HOPE for today. He is willing and able!!



PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit. Fill our hearts with hope. Give us excitement for our eternal life with you. We give all of our anxieties to you. Please strengthen us today.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY 4 - June 18, 2020

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

“In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

How are you doing today? Over the next couple of days, we’re going to dive deeper into our perspective regarding trials. Peter uses the phrase “many trials.” The original Greek word literally means “many colors.” Because trials come in all different shapes and sizes, the notion of many colors rings true. Sometimes they are physical. You come down with a cold, you get stuck in bed for weeks, you injure your back, or you’re diagnosed with a terminal illness. At times, trials are financial. You or your spouse lose your job, you find out you owe more taxes than you expected, or your car unexpectedly breaks down. Other times, it’s the pain of something you’ve been waiting for. You thought you’d be married, be pregnant, have started your career, or bought a house by a certain point in your life.

Life can feel like it’s crushing us at times. In the last year, people I love have lost jobs, lost spouses, gone through cancer, had kids go crazy, had friends at school betray them, or have a close friend take their own life.

How in the world can Peter have the audacity to tell us to rejoice in the midst of our pain? A part of me wants to shake Peter and tell him, “You don’t know my situation.”

Anybody else? If you had my situation, Peter, you wouldn't be telling me to rejoice. You'd be saying, "Sorry, bro, that sucks!"

Now, maybe he would say that first. In fact he uses this phrase, "you have suffered grief." I love that he doesn't minimize the struggle. A trial is a trial. Someone else's struggle may seem easier than yours, but until you are under the weight someone else carries, you should never judge their strength!

Part of walking through trials is recognizing that they do cause pain—emotional, physical, spiritual, relational, financial, and mental pain!

Perhaps your greatest challenge is spiritual. Maybe you're angry that God is allowing you to go through this. Listen, although I don't know your situation, I can relate to that emotion.

God, why? Couldn't you make it easier? Couldn't you have given me a different struggle? I want her issues, not my issues. I want his problems, not my problems!

What is your trial? What's the thing you keep hoping would go away? You have looked, searched, and prayed asking God to take this situation away, but it's still here.

I love the image that Peter gives us about faith that has been tested and purified like gold. When you want to purify gold, you heat it up so that all the impurities come to the surface. Once that happens, it's much easier to scrape off all the impurities. I am not a piece of gold, but if I were, I would imagine that the scraping would be painful. I would want to hide when the goldsmith comes out with his scalpel.

That's how I feel about my trials. Pressure, difficulty, and trials have a way of revealing the impurities. During difficulties, we see nasty

traits inside of ourselves. My fear, worry, selfishness, laziness, anger, pride, and insecurity rise to the surface.

The real question is, do I want to get rid of all that stuff? Do you want a faith that is purified, or would you rather just stay as you are now? God is testing your faith, and a faith that has been tested is a faith that can be trusted.

God doesn't test you because he's mad at you. God is testing and refining to help you have a faith that is of greater worth than gold. I love that image. Don't we all value gold? Peter says it would be better to have faith formed through the fire than treasures of gold.

I've found Jesus to be a really good friend. He is kind, loving, and gracious. I've also found Him to be surprisingly willing to work with our desires. When your deepest desire is to walk by faith, He will use trials to make you into a person of deep character.

When your deepest desire is ease of life and comfort, He may give you space to do life as you wish. But this choice on your part will not be without regret. In fact, it's very possible that the thing you think you want—a life without hardship or pain—will push you further into the thing you are trying to avoid: pain.

The pain of regret is far worse than the pain of walking with Jesus and embracing a life of faith.

Comfort is not found in ease of life. Instead, it's found in the fact that you are not alone and your suffering is not without purpose. Every follower of Jesus has walked through trials. Even Jesus, the King of Heaven and Earth, went to a cross and suffered for you.

Unfortunately we don't get to choose the size, the shape, or duration of our trials. We can't shorten them or even avoid them. The choice we get to make comes in allowing the trial to do its

work in us to make us more like Jesus. God is a God who speaks. He loves you and wants to speak to you as you speak to Him. Today the Holy Spirit is in the room with you.

What is your trial? Write it down. Talk to Him about about it. Ask Him for eyes to see how He is using it to shape you. Ask Him to help you endure and persevere. Ask Him to give you a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Ask Him to give you a faith that is of greater worth than gold.



PRAYER

Father, we ask for your help with our trials. Help us have perspective to see that you are using our struggles for our good. Help us endure!

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY 5 - June 19, 2020

1 Peter 1:8-9 (NIV)

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Good day! I'm glad you're back. Today is going to be a great day. I can feel it. This is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.

I wonder if you would say that out loud. Go ahead. “This is the day the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Don't you love how God meets with us in both space and time. We love to look back and look ahead, which are both helpful exercises. But did you know that God is most concerned with your response to Him *today*?

He wants to meet with us in His Word.

How you holding up? Has this season gotten the better part of you? I wonder if, like me, you need to remind yourself that you're not going to put your hope in circumstances, but you're going to put your hope in Jesus.

I love the words in today's verses from 1 Peter. Peter got to see Jesus. That makes me a bit jealous. I often wish we had some

YouTube clips of Jesus's live teaching. I would love to see Him even if it were only him dancing with his disciples on a TikTok video.

At the same time, we don't have to see Him to love Him. The other day I was imagining what it would be like if Jesus walked into the room in the morning while I was sitting on my couch reading the Bible. I actually stood up and walked over and gave Him a huge air hug. I know that may sound a little weird, but I love to visualize the moment when I'll see Him face to face. His eyes blazing like fire, His nail-pierced hands, Him enveloping me in His love. I doubt I'll be able to stand very long in His presence.

Friends, that day is coming. The Day of The LORD. He will return or we will go to Him!

In the meantime, we can still love Jesus with our whole being. We can live for Him with all that we are. Jesus said that it's better that He go back to heaven because He would send His Holy Spirit to live in us and apply all that is His to our hearts and minds.

Right now in this moment, He can fill you with an inexpressible joy that comes only from His presence. That filling with His presence gives you a hope that one day you will get to wrap your arms around The One who gave His life for you.

Today He wants to do life with you! He wants to walk with you. He rewards those who seek Him with everything they have and everything they are.

Would you get down on your knees, maybe even lie face down before Him right now? Imagine that He's right there in the room with you. Give him a hug, then bow down before Him, and ask Him to fill you with His joy. Ask Him to give you a heart to know Him.

The outcome of your faith in response to His faithfulness is the expectation of eternal life with Him. That eternal life is happening

right now. Jesus is living water, the bread of life, the resurrection and the life. The source of HOPE. Let Him fill you right now.



PRAYER

Jesus, I love you! Fill me with the joy that comes from knowing you. I yield my life to you today. I choose to walk in friendship with you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY 6 - June 20, 2020

1 Peter 1:10-12 (ESV)

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”

As we continue our journey together, I am praying for you today. I can imagine you sitting right now with a cup of coffee in hand, journal open, and a heart that's ready to hear from God about your day. I can see others of you trying to squeeze it in between washing dishes and caring for kids. I can also imagine those of you who are students scrolling back and forth between this devo and 15 other apps. Whatever your situation, I'm cheering for you!!

You know what gets me excited? Thinking that you are here pursuing Jesus. Trying to get to know Him, seeking Him, and asking Him to speak to you and lead your life. As your pastor, there is nothing I want more than for you to encounter Jesus personally and know His Spirit as the greatest friend one could ever experience.

When we open up the Bible to hear from God, it's so powerful to imagine ourselves joining with millions of men and women from other countries and other generations searching and inquiring

carefully to get to know the Great and Good God of the universe. I love how Peter brings the OGs (Original Gangstas) into the equation in these few verses. He points to all the original writers of the Bible. Peter knew it as his whole Bible; for us it's the Old Testament. Peter wants these churches to know that the writers of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit and a huge part of their writing dealt with what they were experiencing.

In fact, one of the best ways to understand the Bible is to see it as a story with one hero—His name is Jesus. This entire first part points forward to His coming, and the second part points back at what happened, as well as His return.

The writers of the Old Testament didn't have a screen shot or IG story of Jesus' life, but they wrote down a lot of really important details. Each wrote at various times and places over the course of hundreds of years. They gave crazy details like where He would be born, what kind of life He would live, how He would die, and how he would eventually be resurrected. If you are interested in further study, this is worth your time and would certainly increase your faith. Although we don't have time to cover these hundreds of prophecies, we do have enough time to be encouraged.

Peter tells us that the many friends who lived and died before Jesus' time wrote words of Scripture for a specific purpose: to serve us! They wondered about when it would all happen and how the details would come together. Most of them had only the puzzle piece the Holy Spirit revealed to them, but they were faithful to place their little piece on the table. When you put the tapestry of the images together, you get a picture of Jesus. Many scholars say the OT reveals close to 2,000 prophecies. If you have time to go count them, go for it.

What encourages me is the thought that each of them played a part in the bigger story of the moment when HOPE would come in person. They looked forward with vision, Peter looked physically with

his eyes, angels look down in wonder, and we look back with hope. None of this would have been possible if these faithful followers weren't willing to let themselves be a conduit for a message that was bigger than their individual lives. Their willingness to play their role was enough, and now we benefit from their obedience.

When I get to heaven, I first want to thank Jesus. After that, I want to go up to Jeremiah and thank him for being thrown into a well. Then I hope to find and thank Ezekiel for eating his food cooked over poop. A lot of people have suffered so we can know Jesus. Their sacrifices ought to make us grateful!

Their example also inspires me to serve the next generation with my obedience. God has a specific role for you to play in this generation. It might be hosting a group on Zoom, training your sons and daughters, or carrying out a dream that he's putting in you right now as a sophomore in high school.

Although the pieces have been placed on the table, things are still coming together. When will Jesus return? What will it look like when He does? How much suffering will He allow in our world and in our generation? Unanswerable today.

The thing we can do today is recognize the wonderful gift we have in Jesus and ask Him to show us our role in making this Good News known. There is somebody you know who may not have another example of faith other than your life.

Sometimes God calls us to live with obedience while embracing ambiguity. This, too, is an act of faith. This, too, requires hope that is not based on my circumstances but on a PERSON.

I may have unanswered questions, but I am not going to live with an unwilling spirit. I will obey even when I don't see how it all will play out. Today I'm giving Jesus my yes and trusting that all these clues will come together at the right time.

At the right moment He will return on the clouds and make everything right. For today, I have a mission; I have a purpose and a calling. I have GOOD NEWS. I have HOPE. I have POWER and the assurance that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of Scripture will empower and strengthen me to be a light in the midst of darkness.



PRAYER

Father, thank you for this Good News. Thank you for the Scriptures. Thank you for giving us a book to encourage us and remind us of your love. Help us be faithful to share your Good News with others. Please show us people who need to know your love for the first time.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

DAY 7 - June 21, 2020

1 Peter 1:13-16 (ESV)

“Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

All right, today we’re going to shift gears. But before we jump in, you might want to stand up, go splash some water on your face, and do a few push ups and jumping jacks. Let’s get ready to have Grandpa Peter push us.

This passage starts with the word “Therefore.” It’s “there for” a reason. Peter is going to challenge us to respond to everything he’s said so far in the letter. That’s Peter’s style—to encourage, then challenge. Perhaps this is a good example for those of us who teach, coach, train, and lead others. We need to encourage, and we need to challenge. That’s what the Bible does, that’s what Jesus does, and that’s what Peter is doing now.

Peter literally uses these words: “Gird up your loins.” We translate that as “prepare for action.” Men in their culture wore long, flowing robes. So, before they went into battle, they tightened up their clothing to ready themselves for a fight. Put on your Under Armour, paint your face, lace up your boots, and let’s get going...

Surprisingly, Peter says all that about our minds. Usually when I think of action, I think of my body, not my mind. He then links it together with being “sober-minded.” In the Greek that means “not drunk!”

He is saying that the war for HOPE is won and lost in your mind. Your mind needs a boss, and that boss should be you. You get to determine if your mind is set on HOPE or DESPAIR.

Sometimes the battle isn't that simple though, right? It may be one negative thought about your life or situation that quickly turns into jealousy—something as simple as an image on IG where you see friends hanging out without you. Other times, you're tempted to listen to the negative voice in your head that keeps telling you that you'll never measure up.

It might be lies of laziness telling you it's okay to coast, that you don't need to challenge your thinking and wrestle your beliefs to the ground. It may be the voice that keeps telling you to check your email, text messages, or social media—activities that keep pulling you from the greater work you know needs your full, undivided attention.

Laziness, confusion, apathy, and a weakened will all start in your mind. If you're not careful, you can be easily pulled back to something you used to do, something you've already moved on from. Suddenly, you are emotionally engaging what you were just mentally entertaining.

It might be bitterness, jealousy, pride, selfishness, gossip, or insecurity. When it comes to battles of the mind, the list goes on and on.

Today we are going to declare war in our minds. We are going to roll up our sleeves and say, “You can't have my thoughts any more.”

Right at this moment, I want you to write down the thing that's occupying space in your mind unnecessarily and kick it out. Give it a name, drag it over to the trash can, and hit delete.

We are HOLY. We are set apart. We are called to live lives that are different. We have purpose. We have a higher calling, so we are going to let go of the lesser distractions.

We have barely enough space in our garage for our car and my makeshift home gym. I am ruthless about getting rid of stuff because I know if I don't, I won't work out, and if I don't work out, I might put back on the weight I worked so hard to lose. And if I put back on the weight, I might have anger issues (more so than I do now). And if I have anger issues, my kids might think I am crazy (more crazy than they think I am now)...and so on. So I have to get rid of stuff.

I'm kind of joking about the garage, but I'm not joking about your mind and your thoughts. The Holy God of the Universe wants to help you pick up the broom and start sweeping it clean.

You do this by fixing your mind and ambitions on good things: the hope we have in Jesus, the calling He's placed on our lives, and the mercy He gives to our lives.

Where is your mind fixed today? Would you be willing to do some summer cleaning and get rid of some junk so you can live more fully and lean into the person He created you to be?

He's declared you HOLY because of what He's done. That's IDENTITY.

You decide if you live Holy by your choices. That's OBEDIENCE!

Now is that time when you turn to Him and ask Him to strengthen you to live a HOLY, set-apart life, full of HOPE. We keep our lives pure when we keep our eyes fixed on Him.



PRAYER

Father, help us live holy lives. Help us identify the trash in our minds and take steps to get rid of it. Help us replace our destructive thoughts with life-giving thoughts from you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

