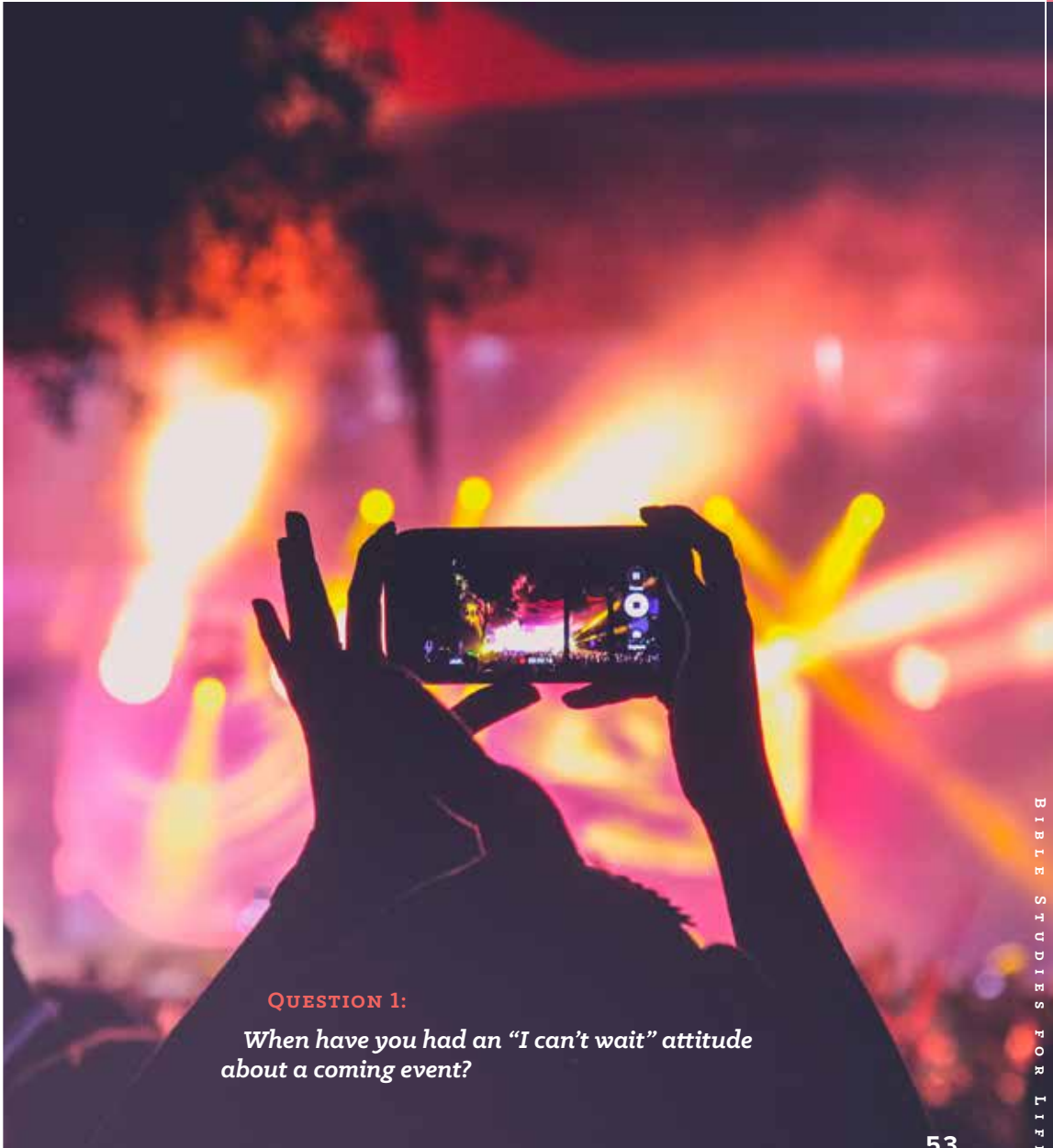


Session 6: The Culmination of Our Hope



QUESTION 1:

When have you had an “I can’t wait” attitude about a coming event?

THE POINT

What we hope for in Christ
will one day be fully attained.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

C. S. Lewis lived through two world wars and understood all too well the tumult and grief of that season of world history. Many were suffering greatly across his homeland of Great Britain and throughout Europe and the Pacific. Additionally, Lewis mourned the death of his wife, Joy, who passed away after an illness during their brief marriage. Yet, the sufferings and setbacks that dotted Lewis's life only seemed to fuel his writings. In one of his greatest accomplishments, *Mere Christianity*, for example, Lewis wrote: "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death."¹

Because Christians have been given eternal life in the coming kingdom of God, we have hope. The trials of this life will one day give way to a life of eternal joy and peace.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 PETER 5:5B-7

^{5b} All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.

Peter employed a most unique word which we translate into English as “clothe.” It’s the only time we see this particular word used in the New Testament, and it describes the apron worn by slaves. Slaves wore this apron over their outer garments, and it distinguished them from those who were free. Peter was commissioning believers to take up humility like the garment of a slave.

Peter surely must have had that in mind the moment Jesus tied a slave’s apron around His waist, took a basin of water, and washed His disciples’ feet. The apostle also likely recalled his own stunned reaction when Jesus clothed Himself and did the work of the lowest servant. Perhaps even offended that the Son of God would take such a degrading, humble posture, Peter had protested. To conclude the washing of His disciples’ feet, Jesus instructed them:

“Do you know what I have done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you” (John 13:12b-15).

Peter learned to follow this example, and now he was calling others to do the same: “clothe yourselves with humility.” Johann Bengel captured Peter’s words this way: “Put on and

wrap yourselves about with humility, so that the covering of humility cannot possibly be stripped from you.”²

QUESTION 2:

What are some characteristics of a person who is proud?

Humility creates an atmosphere of intimacy with God. No human can strut before the Savior. Humility is directly related to our submission to God and His authority. As we submit under His mighty hand, we recognize His sovereign control over our lives, His grace and provision in our suffering, and the sacrifice of His only Son to give us a living hope. Humility acknowledges that none of those gifts could have come from our own hand; rather, they are a gift of grace from a powerful, loving Father who cares deeply for us.

In this position of humble surrender to God, we yield all our cares and anxieties to Him. We humbly acknowledge we can do nothing about those things that burden us, but the One who cares for us can. Humility, though, is not our ultimate state. One day when God’s kingdom has fully come, we will be exalted. We will be lifted up by the grace of God.

1 PETER 5:8-9

⁸ Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.

Even as we humble ourselves before God, we should also be ready and watchful. We should not grow lax or underestimate the fierceness of the enemy. Peter described the devil with the vivid image of one who is strong, loud, and relentless. Certainly, these verses weren't intended to scare us, but to wake us up. The battle is raging, the enemy is real, the days are evil, and the time is short! We can't afford to take a nap while Satan is on the prowl.

QUESTION 3:

How would you describe the way the devil works in our culture?

The devil is strong, but our faith is the foundation for our resistance. We don't resist through sheer determination or effort. We resist the devil in the firm assurance of our belief that he is a defeated foe, and we serve a conquering King.

It's interesting that Peter brought attention to the similar suffering of believers around the world even as he sought to bolster the courage and resolve of his readers. How could they resist the devil and stand firm? They could fight in the understanding that they're not alone and that fellow believers were experiencing—and resisting—the same temptations and sufferings all over the world.

The same is true for us today. When faced with persecution or trials or difficult days, we need to be reminded that we are not alone; other members of the body of Christ are experiencing even more severe sufferings around the world. Do a quick Internet search on the persecuted church, and you will quickly be brought to a sobering realization of what believers in other parts of the world face on a daily basis. Our hardships pale in comparison when we read or hear the stories of those who risk beatings, torture, imprisonment, kidnapping, family separation, and even death for the sake of following Christ.

Every month, on average:

- ▶ 358 Christians are killed for faith-related reasons
- ▶ 154 churches and Christian buildings are burned or attacked
- ▶ 262 Christians are detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned³

As we become aware of the persecuted church around the world, let's turn that knowledge into prayer. Let's pray for the persecuted church around the world: Don't allow their stories to merely stir our emotions, but let them push us to action through our intercession.



“FUTURE HOPE,

EVEN IN THE MOST STAGGERING OF APOCALYPSE,

IS SUSTAINED BY CHRIST’S CONTINUAL PRESENCE,

A HOPE NOT SIMPLY FOR PEOPLE BUT FOR

THE ENTIRE CREATION.”

David H. Jensen

1 PETER 5:10-11

¹⁰ The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. ¹¹ To him be dominion forever. Amen.

Peter magnified the brilliance of God from whom every single grace is given. The things we've been given—the hope, calling, provision, strength, restoration, joy, endurance, and reward—all flow from God's grace.

God exhibits His strength through us (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

▶ **Support.** God has laid the foundation of our lives; with Jesus Himself as our Cornerstone (see 1 Peter 2:6-7). Jesus used this same word when He described the wise man building his house on the solid rock foundation, thus enabling it to withstand the rains, rising water, and winds (see Matthew 7:24-25).

QUESTION 4:

In what ways have you experienced strength and support from God?

Look at the actions of God that Peter stacks like building blocks upon the firm foundation of our hope in Christ.

- ▶ **Restore.** God is able to mend anything that may need repair. This conveys the idea of mending a net or restoring a bone to its right place when out of joint. God will set us right as He shapes us into the image of His Son.
- ▶ **Establish.** Once He has restored us, God gives us a firm foundation under our feet as we live out our salvation in a manner worthy of the gospel (see Philippians 1:27).
- ▶ **Strengthen.** Peter's use of this word is pretty self-explanatory, as it comes from a root word meaning strength. It is reminiscent of God's promise to the nation of Israel: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). In our weakness,

I love the stunning beauty with which Peter closed his letter, as he ushered us to the bigger picture. We may "have suffered a little while," but it's as if he gently placed his hand under our chins and lifted our gaze from the temporary to the eternal. We've been called to eternal glory in Christ.

Four words shine like bright beams of light in any darkness and difficulty: "for a little while." With a view to eternity, any suffering we experience is short and has an end. It will not last forever, and it will not overshadow the whole of our lives with Christ.

QUESTION 5:

How does your hope for eternity influence your everyday life?

HOPE FULFILLED

*Often, we focus on current adversaries and adversities,
but keeping our eyes on eternity can give us hope for the present.
Choose one of the promises from 1 Peter 5:10 and write a short sentence
to express how you anticipate God will fulfill that promise.*

Restore:

Establish:

Strengthen:

Support:

LIVE IT OUT

What will you do to maintain an eternal perspective regarding the blessed hope that is yours in Christ?

- ▶ **Write a summary.** Review what this session—or the whole six-session study—has taught you about hope. Write down your understanding of hope and its impact on you.
- ▶ **Surrender through prayer.** Write out 1 Peter 5:5b-11 and use it as a guide for praying. As you pray, surrender to the Lord and His eternal purposes for your life.
- ▶ **Pray together.** Gather with a few other believers and pray together for the persecuted church. Helpful prayer lists can be found online.

Despite the trials of this life, Christians have hope. **We will one day experience joy and peace in the coming kingdom of God.**

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1952), 136-137.
 2. Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies Vol. 1: Synoptic Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of Peter, James, and Jude*. Accessed via Wordsearch.
 3. www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution.