



SESSION 5

I AM JUST PASSING THROUGH

▶ **The Point**

Our lives in this world should reflect our eternal home.

▶ **The Passage**

1 Peter 2:11-17

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Some people live in the same house most of their lives. Me? It takes a while to add up all the houses.

As a child, my family lived in six different homes. Each one was unique. Some homes were small; some were large. Some had big back yards; others didn't. Some homes were in the city; some were in the country. As an adult, we have continued the trend of frequent moving. My wife and I have lived in eleven different residences in three different states. The thought of carrying a couch through a narrow front door ever again makes me want to pull my hair out. Few things are more exhausting than the moving process.

When you move a lot, it's difficult to determine where "home" really is. But whether you've lived in many places or if you were born and raised in just one place, Peter reminded us that Christians are all just passing through; this world as we know it is only temporary. In other words, we all have another big move in our future.

▶ **The Setting**

In one sense, the home of Peter's first readers was Asia Minor. We know the region as modern Turkey. In another sense, Peter's readers were foreigners in this world and to this world's system. They faced many pressures and temptations in their culture. They needed to know how to live with integrity as good witnesses whose lives would glorify God and reflect their eternal home with Him. Peter wrote to help them meet this challenge.

What does the Bible say?

The Gentiles (v. 12)—A term Peter used to refer to unbelievers in the culture generally, since he referred to believers with terms usually applied to Israel. (See 1 Pet. 2:9.)

The day he visits

(v. 12)—Probably refers to the day of Jesus' second coming (see 2 Pet. 3:3-10), which is the day of final glorification for believers and final condemnation for unbelievers.

1 Peter 2:11-17

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul.

¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

¹³ Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority

¹⁴ or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.

¹⁵ For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.

¹⁶ Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves.

¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

STUDY THE BIBLE

NOTES

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1 Peter 2:11-12

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

READ: 1 Peter 2:11-12 on page 111 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read first three paragraphs on page 111 of the PSG to find an illustration about our desire for our true home in heaven.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 111 of the PSG: **“What are the practical implications of living as strangers and temporary residents?”**

Note: All Christians understand that we will not be on this earth forever. The goal of this question is to help group members engage and discuss how that knowledge should change the way we live.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 10**, “Strangers,” to help group members think critically about what it means to be strangers and temporary residents in our culture. Encourage group members to contribute adjectives that describe strangers today and record them in the blank spaces. Then use the list of descriptors to compare the experiences of strangers and exiles in biblical times with the experience of strangers and exiles today.

RECAP: Read aloud the second paragraph on page 112 of the PSG:

We are to abstain from living in sin, which is living as if this world is our home. We do this not just for personal holiness but also as a testimony to those outside the faith. Instead of others seeing us live like them, they will see our good works—our selfless, self-denying, love-filled lives—and they will be drawn to “glorify God on the day he visits.”


TRANSITION: As we move to verses 13-15, we’ll explore a concept that is difficult for many: submitting to authority.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When have you had an opportunity in recent weeks to live out the commands in these verses?

STRANGERS

BIBLICAL TIMES		OUR TIMES
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Foreigner	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nomadic	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sojourner	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Migrant	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Desperate	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncertain	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hopeful	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Welcomed	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>




1 Peter 2:11-12 Commentary

[Verse 11] While we live as **strangers and exiles** in this world we have the responsibility of representing our eternal King well. The idea of God's people being strangers in a land that is not their home has deep roots in the Old Testament. Jacob and his sons were strangers in Egypt. The people of Israel were strangers and exiles in Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego experienced being strangers in a foreign land. As believers, we live in this world now, but we are "temporary residents on the earth ... seeking a homeland ... a better place—a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:13-16). "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Jesus has gone there to prepare a place for us. (See John 14:2-3.) Our home is with Him.

While we are in this world we are to **abstain from sinful desires**. The danger of sinful desires is real because they **wage war against the soul**. That is, they can do great damage to and even destroy the soul. Though you have been redeemed from "the desires of your former ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14), you still have a battle to fight with them. In fact, you and I are probably more aware of the conflict with sinful desires as believers than we ever were before we belonged to Christ. Feeling the conflict intensely is a common experience for people serious about growing in godliness. We should expect the conflict and be vigilant.

[Verse 12] Instead of succumbing to sinful desires, you are to embrace virtue. That is, you are to **conduct yourselves honorably**. We are to be honorable men and women in our communities and work places where we are **among the Gentiles**. When Peter referred to "the Gentiles," he was referring to the many unbelievers among whom his readers were living. As believers in Christ, we are to represent our God in the sight of the unbelievers among the nations, "the Gentiles."

Though your conduct is honorable, some of "the Gentiles" might **slander you as evildoers**. When we do not embrace the culture's moral norms, we may be labeled bigots, narrow minded, haters, and enemies of societal progress. This is unfair, but it's not new and should not be surprising. In fact, the situation presents an opportunity. Slanderers and opponents and others **will observe our good works**. Some will take note of our integrity, purity, courage, and reliability. They will see that we help our neighbors, give generously, and love and serve even our enemies.

Because of believers' honorable lives and good works, unbelievers will **glorify God on the day he visits**. Peter seems at this point to be echoing Jesus' words: "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). "The day he visits" probably refers to "the day of the Lord" (2 Pet. 3:10) when Christ will come.

Be encouraged in doing good works that point to Christ. They will not go unnoticed. Our deeds can have eternal affects on other peoples' lives!

1 Peter 2:13-15 Commentary

[Verses 13-14] As a part of living honorably in this world, believers are to **submit to every human authority**. It's not that the authorities are more important than we are, nor that they are more powerful than we are. Instead, we submit **because of the Lord**. It's the Lord's desire and command for us to submit rightly to earthly authorities. We submit to them because we submit to Him.

Peter first named **the emperor as the supreme authority** in the Roman governmental framework. The emperor of Rome when Peter wrote this letter was Nero. Peter then referred to **governors as those sent out** by the emperor. Pilate is a New Testament example of a governor. Just like Peter's early readers, we have the responsibility of submitting rightly to authorities. We may be able to see many flaws in governmental authorities. Nero and Pilate had many flaws for Peter to see. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, yet was a coward in the face of mob pressure and condemned Him to crucifixion. Nero grew increasingly cruel over the course of his reign. When Peter was writing this letter, Nero's flaws were already on display. Peter nonetheless required submission. This should lead us to be very cautious about appealing to flaws in leaders as justification for a refusal to submit to their authority.

Though human authorities are flawed, an important purpose of human government is **to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good**. Of course, the Bible recognizes there are limits on obeying human authorities. In Egypt, Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill newly born male children. The midwives disobeyed the command because they feared God. (See Ex. 1:15-17.) God was pleased with them. Hundreds of years later in Babylon, a powerful, earthly king commanded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to fall down and worship a gold statue. They refused. (See Dan. 3:16-18.) God was pleased with them.

If obeying a human authority means disobeying God, we are to obey God. Barring such unusual circumstances, believers are to submit to government authorities.

[Verse 15] Again, Peter pressed home the reason for submission: **it is God's will**. Our ultimate allegiance is to God, not to Caesar or to a president. Submission to the authorities God has placed over us is an act of submission to Him. We obey government authorities because we obey God.

Further, it's God's will that through consistent submission to authorities **you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good**. In Peter's day, critics and slanderers made much of Christians not participating in idolatrous sacrifices and civic and social events that were morally off limits to believers. These slanders ignorantly labeled Christians troublemakers, societal problems, and even anarchists. The fact is that sincere Christians are great assets to any society. Peter envisioned that by obeying just laws and living honorably as citizens and residents, believers would show that the inaccurate criticisms against them were baseless.

1 Peter 2:16-17 Commentary

[Verse 16] Peter turned at this point to practical counsel regarding our attitudes and motives as we submit to human authorities. Peter's practical counsel is for believers to **submit as free people**. We are free because we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. (See 1:18-19.) That is, we've been purchased out of slavery. We're no longer slaves to the desires and behaviors that formerly controlled us. We're free to act in love and respect toward authorities.

Further, believers are to submit **not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil**. We all know freedom can be misused. Christian freedom is not a license to unnecessarily oppose and offend human authorities. At times, believers do well to forgo exercising rights out of consideration for others. We are free to do even more than authorities require of us!

Believers are also to submit **as God's slaves**. "Slaves" is an appropriate word here. It conveys that we belong to God. He owns us, having bought us at a price. (See Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.) Every human being is a slave either to sin or to God. (See Rom. 6:16,20-22.) Because believers are enslaved to God, they have true freedom from sin. They are free to obey God. When we submit to human authorities, we don't need to think of ourselves as "under the thumb" of the government or "kept down" by powerful people. Instead, we are obeying our God. We are choosing to live in keeping with His high calling.

[Verse 17] It's God's will that believers **honor everyone**. All human beings bear God's image; therefore, we are to treat all human beings with dignity. Further, God's invitation to receive eternal life in Christ and become children of God has been offered to everyone. (See John 3:16.) Therefore, we are to love and honor everyone. We are especially to **love the brothers and sisters** in Christ. Peter encouraged believers to love one another two other times in this letter. (See 1 Pet. 4:8; 5:14.) When believers are slandered in the world, love from their brothers and sisters is precious to them. It also makes an impression on the world. Jesus taught that a key feature of our witness to the world is our love for one another. (See John 13:34-35.)

Peter concluded his instructions on submitting to authorities with contrasting commands: **fear God** and **honor the emperor**. The message is powerful. Peter did not write "fear the emperor." God alone is worthy of the fear (or "reverence," see 1 Pet. 1:17) that shows in absolute obedience. We are not to fear people. We are only to fear God.

A Roman emperor or other authority may inflict temporal suffering. Only God has the power and prerogative to assign eternal suffering. (See Matt. 10:28.) If our choice genuinely comes down to obeying a human authority or obeying God, then we are always to obey God. We are always to honor human authorities and we are always to fear God. If we do, God will lead us to relate rightly to authorities and reflect His greatness and our eternal home.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 116 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider these suggestions for allowing the truth of this session to influence their lives this week:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Set a reminder.** Place something in your home to remind you this world is not your final destination. Remind yourself that you were made for heaven.
- ▶ **Take inventory.** Evaluate your life in light of the four statements in 1 Peter 2:17. Ask yourself, “How am I doing in showing proper respect to everyone, loving the family of believers, fearing God, and honoring the leaders in our city, state, and nation?”
- ▶ **Serve.** In our freedom, we’re called to serve God and others. Write down ways you can intentionally serve God and others this week. Make this a matter of prayer and commitment as you seek to live your life in a way that honors the Lord.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 116 of the PSG:

It doesn't matter if you live in one house or twenty houses during your stay here on earth. Your true home is still to come. Remember that fact as you live and work each day.

PRAY: Conclude by accepting your position as both God's slave and a free member of His heavenly kingdom. Pray that God's Spirit would continually remind you and your group members of those realities throughout the week.

**GROUPS
MATTER.**

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