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I AM JUST PASSING THROUGH



What place feels most like home to you? Why?

QUESTION #1

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THE POINT

Our lives in this world should reflect our eternal home.



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.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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 ably 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.

When I was a teenager, my family was at the Orlando airport preparing to fly home to Texas. The airline representative came over the loud speaker offering vouchers for anyone willing to wait an extra hour and take another flight. Jumping at the opportunity, my brother and I begged our parents to let us stay and take the next flight. Amazingly, our parents agreed.

After my brother and I were on that second flight for a while, I looked out the window and something just didn't seem right. I should've seen sandy, flat West Texas. Instead, I saw rolling green hills and beautiful blue bodies of water. In that moment the captain announced: "We will be landing in thirty minutes. I hope you enjoy your stay in Branson, Missouri." We had gotten on the wrong plane!

This will seem obvious, but my brother and I never treated Branson as home. Our brief stay there was nothing more than a temporary layover. Our focus was on getting to our final destination—on getting home.

The same is true with our lives on this earth. Our stay in this present world is merely a temporary layover; our ultimate destination is "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). That's why Peter called us "strangers and exiles." We won't find our true identity in any earthly address. And because the world is not our true home, Peter told us not to be seduced by the "sinful desires" that tug at us while we're here. Where do those sinful desires come from? "Each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire" (Jas. 1:14).

What are the practical implications of living as strangers and temporary residents?

QUESTION #2

Even as followers of Christ, the old sin nature still rears its ugly head and seeks to pull us down. Satan knows this. He constantly seeks to entice us to listen to the old sin nature. But in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can “abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul.”

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.”

The assumption behind Peter’s statement is that unbelievers are always watching to see how Christ-followers conduct themselves. They’re looking to see if our faith is sincere or just hypocritical posturing. Peter was also confident that when believers are faithful to Christ, unbelievers will have no choice but to glorify God.

1 Peter 2:13-15

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.

Even though this world is only a temporary dwelling place for Christians, it still matters how we live while we’re here. Our future hope and home should dictate our current conduct and attitudes.

While we’re on this earth, we’re under authority. We’ll always have people in authority over us, and Peter commanded us to “submit to every human authority.” Someone might use the excuse: “Well, if the authority over me were godly, I would be willing to submit. But why should a Christian submit to ungodly authority?”

How can we navigate the tension between submitting to earthly authorities and submitting to God?

QUESTION #3

IDENTIFYING AUTHORITY

Who are some of the earthly authorities to whom we are called to submit? Use the following categories to list people and/or offices that have authority in your life. (An example has been provided to spark your thinking.)

National Government

Local Government

Your Community

Police officers

Your Church

With which of the authorities listed above do you struggle to show respect? Why?

When we start thinking that way, we need to remember that Peter recorded these words while Nero was emperor of Rome.

If you're not familiar with that name, Nero was one of the most ungodly men to ever live on planet Earth. While still only a teenager, Nero murdered his stepbrother who stood in his way. He had his wife killed because he didn't like her. He married again and then supposedly killed that wife by kicking her while she was pregnant. The next year he married his third wife after her husband was driven to commit suicide. Because Nero's mother plotted against him, he likely had her killed, as well.

Nero was also the first of the Roman rulers to persecute Christians. He had Christians arrested, punished in horrific ways, and murdered. Yet, it was during his reign and under his leadership that the Holy Spirit led Peter to write these words—and he specifically mentioned submission to the emperor!

Paul also wrote to the Romans during the reign of Nero and addressed the believer's responsibility to authority: "Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves" (Rom. 13:1-2).

Why such an emphasis in the Scriptures on submission to earthly authorities? Because when we submit to authorities, we are really submitting to God.



1 Peter 2:16-17

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.

A person can never fully appreciate the value of freedom unless he or she has first experienced the bondage of slavery. In these verses, Peter was writing to believers who had experienced both. We know what it’s like to be in spiritual chains—bondage to our sin—but we also know freedom because we’ve been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. As the apostle John wrote: “If the Son sets you free, you really will be free” (John 8:36). Paul described Christians this way: “Having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness” (Rom. 6:18).

Since we are in Christ, we are free indeed. But in that freedom we’re called to live our lives in service to the Lord and others. What does this submission to authority as God’s slaves look like? Peter pointed to four actions:

- ▶ **Show proper respect to everyone.** Our true home is in heaven with God, but we must take care how we represent our Lord and ourselves while in this world. That begins with respect.
- ▶ **Love the family of believers.** God is love (see 1 John 4:8); therefore, as imitators of Christ, love should embody all we do—especially our relationships with other believers.
- ▶ **Fear God.** When we bow before God, we can stand before anyone. Living in proper awe and reverence toward God helps us be discerning in how we act toward others. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).
- ▶ **Honor the emperor.** Whoever is in a position of leadership, whether it be a mayor, a president, or a king, this principle remains the same. As believers, we are to respect and honor those who have civil authority over us. God calls us to be good citizens.

What are some ways Christians can abuse the freedom we’ve been given in Christ?

QUESTION #4

Which of the commands in these verses do you find easiest to obey? Which are difficult?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

How will the truths of this passage influence the way you live this week? Consider taking one or more of the following steps:

- ▶ **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.



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.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLmore**