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I Am Just Passing Through



What place feels most like home to you? Explain.

QUESTION 1

#BSFLmore

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 backyards; 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 reminds us that Christians are all just passing through; this world as we know it is only temporary.

We have another big move in our future.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 Peter 2:11-12 (CSB)

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.

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.

Our parents agreed, and soon we were on our flight. Things were going well until I looked out the window; something just didn't seem right. I should've been seeing sandy, flat west Texas, but instead I saw rolling green hills and beautiful blue bodies of water below us. 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! Needless to say, our stay in Branson didn't last long. The airline fed us dinner in the Branson airport and put us on the next plane home—to west Texas.

This will seem obvious, but my brother and I never treated Branson as home. Our brief stay in Branson 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" (Revelation 21:1). That's why Peter called us "strangers and exiles" (v. 11). 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" (v. 11) that tug at us.

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 into sin. And Satan knows this. This “layover” can be brutal because the Devil is going to fight us. 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” (v. 11).

We are to abstain from living in sin—living like this world is our home—not just for personal holiness but also as a testimony to “the Gentiles” (v. 12), those outside the faith. Instead of 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” (v. 12).

The assumption behind Peter’s statement is that unbelievers are always watching to see how Christ-followers conduct themselves. They are looking to see if our faith is sincere or just hypocritical posturing. Peter warned that unbelieving Gentiles would be looking to blame Christians for the slightest of evils. However, Peter was also confident that, when believers are faithful to Christ, unbelievers will have no choice but to acknowledge and glorify God.

1 Peter 2:13-15 (CSB)

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 future home should dictate our conduct and attitudes now.

While we are on this earth, we are under authority. At work, we answer to supervisors, bosses, and boards (Ephesians 6:5-9). As members of the church, God places people in authority over us to lead us (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17). As citizens, we fall under the authority of the local, state, and federal governments (Romans 13:1-7).

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

QUESTION 3

We will always have people in authority over us, and Peter declared that we are to “submit to every human authority” (v. 13). Someone might use the excuse, “Well, if the authority over me were godly, I would be willing to submit.” Why should a Christian submit to ungodly authority?

When Peter recorded these words, Nero was emperor (54–68 AD). Nero was 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!

When we submit to authorities, we are really submitting to God.

1 Peter 2:16-17 (CSB)

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 was like to be in spiritual chains—bondage to our sin—but we also know freedom because we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

It may sound contradictory for Peter to call us “God’s slaves” (v. 16), because we are never freer than when we live in total submission to Christ as Lord. It’s through this slavery to God that we find true freedom. Paul described Christians this way: “Having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness” (Romans 6:18).

Since we are in Christ, we are free indeed, but in that freedom, we



What does it mean to be a slave to God yet live in freedom?

QUESTION 4



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

QUESTION 5

are 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.** When I visited some ministry partners in Cairo, Egypt, I soon realized how different Egypt was from America where I had grown up. As we took a break from the heat, I sat on a bench and crossed one leg over the other. When I did so, several locals gasped in horror. I quickly learned that revealing the bottom of your feet is a great insult in that culture. I certainly didn't mean to insult anyone; I just didn't live there, and so I didn't know that custom. Egypt wasn't my home, but while I was there, I did my best to show respect to everyone.

While our true home is in heaven with God, 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 (1 John 4:8); therefore, as imitators of Christ, love should embody all we do, especially in relationship with other believers. "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).
- » **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" (Proverbs 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. He wants our citizenship to count while we are still here, so we can influence our city, state, nation, and world toward the things of God.

"Having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness!"

ROMANS 6:18

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

How well are you expressing your freedom in Christ? Rate yourself on the following scales.



Showing respect to others



Loving other Christians



Fearing God



Honoring civil authorities



What steps can you take this week to increase your level of involvement in one of these areas?

LIVE IT OUT

How will the truths of this passage influence the way you live this week?

- » **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 are 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.

Whether you're from a big city or small town, there's no place quite like home. **For Christ-followers, our eternal home is with Christ, and we're called to live out this simple truth in our time here on earth.**



My thoughts