

1 Peter 1:3-5 ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 3:13-17 ¹³Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed, and do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled, ¹⁵but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

1 Peter 4:13 But to the degree that you share in the suffering of Christ, keep rejoicing, so that at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

Key Point: The behavior of true living hope rises above and looks beyond our circumstances.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking: Pick a conversation starter for your group.

- Share a season in your life when you experienced great despair. How has knowing despair contributed to your growing in hope and your ability to share hope with others?
- Do you find people more hopeful than they used to be? What do you think are the primary contributors to this change in hope?

Steps of faith: Reflect on your recent walk with Christ.

- Share with the group a step of faith you recently took.
- If you do not have a personal example, think of someone else's step of faith that has been encouraging or inspiring to you.

Start thinking:

- Read 1 Peter 1:3-5 as a group. What are your key takeaways from the passage and why do you think Peter started his letter to the early church with these words?

- What has God done for us that has given us a living hope? How should recalling this help us in times of despair?
- Read 1 Peter 3:13-17 as a group. What are your key takeaways from the passage and why do you think Peter expects unbelievers will ask about the hope believers possess?
- What does the text say is better about suffering for doing good? Have you ever suffered from doing good and how was it different than suffering for doing what was wrong?
- What is the difference between how Peter uses the word hope and how we typically use it?
- What are the likely effects on a society where believers are unwilling to suffer with the behaviors implied and described in 1 Peter 3:13-17?

Start sharing:

- When thinking about living hope do you feel like your hope is growing? Why or why not? What should you pause and focus on when you are feeling hopeless?
- Have you ever fixed your hope on the wrong things? What do you think are the most common false or flimsy hopes that people hold on to?
- When was the last time you were asked about your hope? If we are not being asked this question in an increasingly unbelieving world, what behaviors could we display amid our suffering so that unbelievers may come to know Christ?
- Are you ready to provide an account, a defense, or give a reason for the hope that is in you? If not, what practical steps could you take to be more prepared? With what tone should this reason be delivered?

Start doing: Peter urges us to examine if our behavior is consistent with our true living hope. He also encourages us to rejoice in our salvation, rejoice that we can share in Christ's suffering now, and rejoice even more when Christ returns.

Next time you experience suffering recall what God has done to give you a living hope and rejoice that you can follow the example of Christ as you look forward to His certain return. And be ready - the unbelieving world might notice because there is undeniable power in living hope.

Prayer Requests: Spend time praying together about what you shared tonight. It may be helpful to pray the scriptures back to God.