

FAITH: TRIED, TESTED, AND TRUE

LISTENING FOR GOD THROUGH 1 PETER 1:1-12

SUMMARY

Most of us don't enjoy tests. Whether it's undergoing a medical examination, getting your driver's permit, or taking the ACT, tests can be stressful. Even so, we all experience them.

Peter, too, had his share of tests. He experienced firsthand his faith being tested to the limit. But Peter also knew the amazing feeling of passing a test and receiving the reward for his effort and endurance.

Some days can seem like a series of tests. We may feel as though we are only one decision away from passing or failing. Yet we turn in our papers to God—all of the right and all of the wrong—and we commit it all to Him.

Peter learned that God's tests have eternal rewards. Your faith, like Peter's, which is worth more than gold to God, can grow stronger through every test and trial.

PREPARATION † FOCUS YOUR THOUGHTS

Think of a time when you failed a test. How did you feel?

Now, remember a time when you prepared for a test and passed it. How did you feel?

What are some rewards to passing life's daily tests?

READING † HEAR THE WORD

Holiness. Suffering. Mercy. Testing. Peter's first letter is one of hope and encouragement. Hope, because we know what Christ has done for us. Encouragement, because we're never alone in any trial.

In this life, it's not a question of *if* trials will come but *when* they will come. When we realize that trials are inevitable, we can prepare spiritually for anything that may come our way. This is the message of 1 Peter.

It's been said that you don't know the strength of your anchor until it has weathered the storm. Think about a time when you saw a news report of an approaching storm and how people were preparing for the severe weather.

As you read these opening verses of 1 Peter, try to imagine Peter's environment and the political/religious climate. It's a few decades after Christ's resurrection. Nero is reigning over

most of the known world. It's just after the great fire in Rome, and Christian persecution is widespread. Feel the sense of urgency. Sense Peter's passion. He has a message that must get out. "Don't give up. Live a life of holiness. Be filled with joy!"

Read the first 12 verses of this book slowly and purposefully. They were relevant then. They are relevant now.

MEDITATION  ENGAGE THE WORD

Meditate on 1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter the apostle. This is obviously a new and improved Peter, one who had matured since his earlier days with the Master. *Apostle* means one sent on a mission. What do you think Peter's mission was?

Have you ever felt that God was giving you a mission? Did you obey? What type of mission did God call you to go on?

Spend a few moments quietly asking God if there is a mission or purpose that He may be asking you to fulfill. Write down any thoughts or key words that come to your mind. At the same time, pray for another person in your life that is getting ready to embark on their own personal mission.

Read the quote by Billy Sunday on page 16. We often look to people with the most talent to provide us with examples. Yet,

God is looking for those who know their purpose and who will follow it at any cost. Do you know your purpose? What steps could you take in the next few days to follow through with the purpose God has for your life?

More men fail through lack of purpose than lack of talent.
—Billy Sunday

Think of how many times a day you obey someone. (Parents, teachers, coaches, and so on.) Do you find it easy to obey God? Why do you think obedience is so important to Him? Are there things in your life right now that are keeping you from doing what you know He would want you to do?

Read the quote by John Wesley. Stop at the end of each sentence and allow time for reflection. To recognize the real meaning of this quote, take out the word *you* and insert your name.

God loves you; therefore love and obey Him. Christ died for you; therefore die to sin. Christ is risen; therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth ever more; therefore live to God till you live with Him in glory. So we preached; and so you believed! God grant we may never turn therefrom to the right hand or to the left.
—John Wesley

Meditate on 1 Peter 1:3-9

If grace is getting what we don't deserve—forgiveness—then mercy is not getting what we do deserve—punishment. When Peter mentions mercy in verse 3, he is speaking from experience. As he thinks about the new life he has been given in Christ and all of his second chances, he reminds us that without mercy we would not have hope.

Read Ephesians 2:4, and take time to reflect on how God wants to speak words of mercy and grace to you today. In your own words, write what God's mercy means to you. In what ways can you see His mercy at work in your life?

Peter's encouragement builds as he says in verse 4 that a believer's inheritance will never perish, spoil, or fade. Another contemporary version of the text puts it this way: "For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay" (NLT). In the face of severe persecution and trials, how must the assurance of an indestructible, incorruptible, unshakable faith have boosted the readers' hope? How does it increase the depth of your own hope?

If your faith is "of greater worth than gold" as Peter says, how does that change the way you think of your salvation? Look up or discuss other uses of the word *gold* as you think about the value of your faith.

Meditate on 1 Peter 1:10-12

This section of the Scripture is like morning fog that fades as the afternoon sunshine comes closer. It was hard for the prophets to understand how or when salvation would come to earth. But now, we can see clearly what the Spirit has revealed to us—Christ has come! How does knowing Christ has come and is alive today affect your hope and level of encouragement each day?

The last part of verse 12 is another reminder of how privileged we are. Salvation, faith, and hope are all privileges of grace, respected even by angels. Of all created by the Creator, humans can be redeemed, forgiven, and adopted into God's family. And angels look on. Think for a moment of your most valuable possession. What makes it valuable? Think of your faith in similar terms. What makes it valuable to you and to God?

PRAYER  ASK AND LISTEN

Seek the face of God. Ask, "Lord, what are You saying to us today?"

Rejoicing through real-life trials is Peter's challenge and encouragement to us. Take as much time as you need to pray the following prayer: "Lord, show me how I can trust You always and in all ways. Teach me to rejoice in every situation. Remind me again of the eternal value of my faith."

CONTEMPLATION ✝ REFLECT AND YIELD

Read the quote from Charles Spurgeon. How does it make you feel?

Faith untried may be true faith, but it is sure to be little faith, and it is likely to remain dwarfish so long as it is without trials. Faith never prospers so well as when all things are against her. —Charles Spurgeon

GROUP STUDY

- What is your definition of obedience?
- Look back in this chapter where it says, “If grace is getting what we don’t deserve—forgiveness—then mercy is not getting what we do deserve—punishment.” Have you ever thought about that before? How does this make you feel?
- How would you describe God’s mercy in your own words?
- How can you trust God more in every situation?
- If you were to face persecution tomorrow—a trial or some kind of spiritual battle—how would you handle it?

1 & 2 PETER

- Do you consider your faith a “greater worth than gold”? If so, why?
- Write down the things that test your faith most. What will you do this week to pass these tests and show evidence of God’s mercy at work in your life?