

SHINING THROUGH

Part 2 - While You're In It

We've been navigating the trauma facing first-century Christians as described in the New Testament book of Acts. We've discovered two interesting and instructive characteristics of the early church. First, when disaster struck, their first instinct was not to guess what God was up to. Instead they focused on what they should do to help those most impacted by the disaster. We were confronted with their seemingly irrational faith in the face of random acts of violence and persecution. This week, we are focusing on Peter's counterintuitive advice on what to do while we're in the middle of the storm, and the revolution in culture, ethics, and perspective on human suffering that occurred when the earliest followers of Jesus put his instruction into action.

Start Talking

1. If you had to pick one season to live in for the rest of your life (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall, or maybe a transition between), what would it be and why?

Looking Back

1. In what ways did you intentionally implement Peter's outlook on suffering last week? When did you struggle to do so?
2. How did a "living hope anchored to the resurrection of Jesus" change your view of what's happening in your life right now?
3. What did it look like for you to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence" when things went wrong this past week?
4. How did you do when it came to prioritizing this process?



What About You?

1. Have you ever found yourself drawn back into faith during a terrible season of life? When? How?
2. Have you ever been surprisingly emboldened into greater generosity when things aren't going well?
3. When your stability is shaken, what tends to be your default response? Are you a panicker? Planner? Obsessive pray-er? Do you shut down? What beliefs do you think underlie your behavior patterns?
4. Do you generally find it easy or difficult to put other people first? When is it easiest? Hardest?
5. The ancient Romans had national "myths" about what promised prosperity or ruin for their culture. Early Jesus followers often caused discord by living in ways that didn't jibe with these norms and political beliefs. What prosperity "myths" do we live by in our culture today?

Look It Up

Read the following passage before answering the questions below:

1 Peter 1: 3 – 7. 1 Peter 4: 1–10. 1 Peter 5: 12 – 13.

1. What do you think Peter means when he claims that "love covers a multitude of sins?" What is he getting at?
2. What line of reasoning does Peter provide to support each piece of instruction he gives followers of Jesus?
3. How are these instructions a part of the Good News of Jesus, rather than some tacked-on list of commands?
4. Where does Peter's advice for what to do during trials challenge the prevailing attitudes and assumptions of the culture around us?

Putting It All Together

1. Peter instructed his readers to: "Love each other deeply." This is above-and-beyond love for the sake of unity. Who needs a dose of deep love from you?
2. Peter instructed his readers to: "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Who needs an extra dose of hospitality from you right now?
3. Peter instructed his readers to: "...use whatever gift you have received to serve others..." What skills, resources or connections do you have that could be leveraged to serve someone else in this season?
4. Who in your life can you charge with keeping you accountable when it comes to maintaining Peter's posture towards suffering in your everyday actions?

