

OCTOBER 2016

# TODAY IN THE WORD™



*He has given us new birth into a living hope through  
the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

1 Peter 1:3

**OUR GREAT SALVATION:**  
1 and 2 Peter

A devotional from



MOODY  
GLOBAL MINISTRIES

# TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

## Strangers in a Strange Land



I grew up in Millard, Nebraska, which at that time boasted only about 1,000 residents. As a child, I could ride almost anywhere on my

bike without supervision, and I knew practically everyone in town. It was a place where I felt safe, comfortable, and completely at home.

Because we were a close-knit community, a stranger visiting Millard stood out like a sore thumb. And, as children, we were taught to view people we did not recognize with a parental-endorsed degree of suspicion. As an adult, I understand that all strangers aren't dangerous; I also know how to spot one as they struggle to navigate busy Chicago streets.

We easily forget that we are all strangers. Scripture refers to us as God's chosen ones, aliens in this world (1 Peter 1:1). When asked where "home" is, we might recite our most recent mailing address. But Peter reminds us that our citizenship is not of this world. Instead, we are children of God with an inheritance reserved in heaven (v. 4).

We may often feel ill at ease in a place we are tempted to consider our home.

The pull of wanting to fit in, or the assumption that the world's culture will align with our Christian values, can distract us from our true home. First Peter was written to believers living in a similar situation. The young church had grown and been well-established in several cities, but it was also facing an increasing amount of persecution. Believers faced discrimination, slander, threats, and even imprisonment.

Peter's letter encouraged these believers to stay focused on Jesus even when life got difficult, reminding them of the hope they have in Christ. Their trials were temporary. "In this you greatly rejoice, though now, for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials" (v. 6). As exiles in this world, we also place our hope in the One who saves us, keeps us faithful in the face of trial, and assures us of our eternal home.

With our feet planted on earthly soil, it is tempting to fix our minds and hearts on the here and now, to believe that this world is our home. But Peter reminds us that we are on a journey. We are strangers, exiles, aliens. Yet through it all, Peter calls us to follow Christ's example, be faithful and humble, and live with hope. ■

# THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

## Apostle and Elder

The New Testament emphasizes Peter's role as one of the leading apostles. Although Simon was his birth name, according to Mark 3:16 Jesus gave him the name *Peter*, which meant "rock" (cf. John 1:42; Matt. 16:18). Peter was the first of the apostles to see the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:3–5). He also spoke for the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14). Paul later called Peter a "pillar" of the early church, along with James (the brother of Jesus) and John (Gal. 2:9). But in 1 Peter 5:1 Peter describes himself as "elder."

The office of elder had its roots in the Old Testament, though elders in Israel functioned differently from elders in the New Testament church (see Ex. 3:16; 18:12). Scholar Thomas Schreiner observes that the similarities between the two "basically end with the fact of leadership and the use of the term." Peter describes the function of the church's elders as shepherding God's flock by serving as "overseers" (1 Peter 5:2). Paul used similar language in his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus in Acts 20:27–28. Shepherding the flock meant keeping watch over the church. This mode of leadership is both nurturing and protective. It is especially concerned with preserving and proclaiming biblical truth (Acts 20:29–30).

Peter did not see himself as the church's chief elder but as a "fellow" elder, and he warns the other elders not to serve by "lording it over" the flock (1 Peter 5:3). This implies that there was no hierarchy among elders. They functioned as peers in their relationship to one another and as servants in their relationship to the flock. Elders were not necessarily apostles, however. The number of apostles was limited, but every church was to have its own elders (Titus 1:5; cf. Act 14:23). In the Jerusalem church there were both apostles and elders (Acts 15:2).

The difference between an apostle and an elder is their sphere of responsibility. Elders exercised oversight over the local congregation. The sphere of authority for apostles was the church as a whole. Apostles were responsible for laying the doctrinal foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). The church's elders are responsible for preserving and protecting that foundation.

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more about elders, read *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* by Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Kregel).

# FROM THE EDITORS

by Bruce Everhart

## Bestselling Author's Journey with *Today in the Word*

Each of us has a unique testimony of how we first learned of Christ's love for us and how we grew in our spiritual journey. Recently, I learned that bestselling author Debbie Macomber is a faithful reader of *Today in the Word*. Here, she shares her faith story of her "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3).

Debbie Macomber is quick to credit God for her success as an author. She has sold more than 200 million copies of her books worldwide, and her novels have spent more than 950 weeks on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Her first published essays appeared in *Moody Monthly* magazine in 1985!

Success did not come easily. Her writing career began at age 30, at the kitchen table with a rented typewriter. "Only God would take a dyslexic woman who struggled all through school and didn't learn to read until the fifth grade, and turn that same woman into a best-selling author," Debbie says.

### A Life-Changing Invitation

Debbie was introduced to personal faith in Jesus when a neighbor invited her to attend a Bible study. That group of believers welcomed her, and she discovered, "This was home and this

was family. I accepted Christ as my personal Savior and as they say, the rest is history."

Debbie believes in the power of prayer and devotes regular time to Bible reading. "*Today in the Word* has been a part of my morning devotions for twenty years or more. It was this daily devotion that nudged me into digging deeper into the Bible, to read it from Genesis to Revelation every year," Debbie says. She often shares the devotional with others. "It's short, easy reading, and whets the appetite for more of God in our lives. I especially enjoy the question-and-answer section in the center, and even wrote in once when I had a question. And it was answered, too!"

Debbie has seen God work in her life, both as a follower of Christ and as an author. He has used her work to encourage millions of readers. "God created each one of us for a purpose. In my heart I know He wanted me to write books. I also know that I could never accomplish this dream without Him. My advice to those with daring dreams is to give that desire to God, follow Him, work hard, and believe God will make a way where there is no way." ■

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# TODAY IN THE WORD™

## Our Great Salvation: 1 and 2 Peter

Detective stories enjoy great popularity among readers, probably because we all like a little mystery. We are intrigued by the unknown. A good detective story leaves the reader guessing about the outcome of the investigation and the detective's train of thought. Finally, the clues are pieced together and the case is solved.

Our lives as Christians may not be the stuff of a detective story, but we all do encounter a mystery in our walk with Christ—the mystery of a different kind, defined in Webster's dictionary as “a religious truth that one can know only by revelation and cannot fully understand.” This month in *Today in the Word* we'll read about this mystery—the gospel and our salvation—that intrigues the angels but is revealed to all followers of Christ.

As we study the books of 1 and 2 Peter, we'll learn about the various aspects of our wonderful salvation through Christ's sacrifice: God's promises and faithfulness, salvation living and relationships, suffering and salvation, humility and serving others, and finally, the final culmination of our salvation with Him in the last days.

We pray that the Word of God will refresh your faith, and you will marvel anew at the mercy and love of our God who brought us into the glorious light of His Son. Praise Him for the mystery and the miracle of our salvation! ■

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*He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 1:3

## Source of Our Salvation

Poets who work in structured verse have to follow specific guidelines. A sonnet must have fourteen lines. Iambic pentameter requires strict adherence to a five-beat meter. A haiku has three lines: five syllables, then seven, then five. Every word has to be carefully selected for a poem to convey meaning and imagery within a limited space.

Today we begin a study of the books of 1 and 2 Peter. Just as with excellent poetry, each verse is filled with rich messages of truth and beauty. One scholar described 1 Peter as “the most condensed New Testament resume of the Christian faith,” and the great reformer Martin Luther believed that this short letter was filled with essential information for Christians.

In verse 1, we are introduced to both the author and the audience. The apostle Peter was writing to Christians in five regions that together would

be nearly the size of California. This large area had a diverse population of local people and Roman colonists sent to settle there when the empire expanded. Peter immediately notes a paradox in the identity of his recipients. They are “exiles,” or strangers in the world, and “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God” (v. 2). Throughout the rest of this letter, we’ll see these two contrasting poles used to describe the identity of believers. In relationship to the world, we are strangers and exiles, people who don’t fit in. In relationship to God, we are chosen and sanctified heirs.

Peter’s focus in these opening verses shifts quickly from his readers to God, as he begins to introduce one of his key themes: our salvation. Notice the work of the Trinity in verse 2, and glorious hymn of praise that begins in verse 3. God is the source of our salvation, and worthy of our worship.

### APPLY THE WORD

First Peter explores how our salvation through Jesus shapes our identity, especially in themes of what humility means in the Christian life and the work of the Trinity. Jot in a notebook all the action words used in these first five verses to describe God’s work for us; for example, we are *chosen*, *given new birth*, and *shielded* by His power.

### PRAY WITH US

Moody’s Bible department faculty are in our prayers today: William Marty, Timothy Sigler, Ronald Sauer, and Michael Wechsler. Pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance in their teaching and for their students’ spiritual growth and maturity.

*Your faith . . . may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Peter 1:7

SUNDAY  
OCTOBER

2

## Suffering and Salvation

The 2016 Summer Olympics were held in Brazil this year, the culmination of years of training and dedication for thousands of athletes. Psychologists have studied how athletes stay motivated to endure rigorous preparation for months and years before the pinnacle of competition. For many, when faced with yet another day of swimming laps or doing speed drills or perfecting their form, it helps to remember the goal: representing their country and winning a medal.

Our reading today is the second section of Peter’s opening doxology in verses 3 to 12, which is one long sentence in the Greek text. As we saw yesterday, God’s work through Jesus has provided us with a living hope and promised inheritance. But like an intricate symphony weaving together major and minor keys, Peter acknowledges that his readers, these foreigners and strangers, are also suffering and grieving due to “all kinds of trials” (v. 6).

Scripture never ignores the reality of our suffering. Peter does not instruct his readers to “just look on the bright side.” But God’s Word does give us perspective in our suffering. Enduring these trials strengthens our faith. Persevering through times of suffering deepens our joy. We are able to face these challenges, day in and day out, because we focus on God’s promise to save us—and we believe that our God always keeps His promises.

Notice how many times the words *rejoice* or *joy* appear in these verses. Scripture often juxtaposes suffering and joy (see Ps. 30:5; 1 Thess. 1:6). This seems contrary to our assumptions—we’re happy when things are going well, right? This spiritual mystery should encourage us when we go through challenging times: God uses suffering to bless us with joy, a joy that allows us to praise Jesus and keep our eyes fixed on Him.

### APPLY THE WORD

God doesn’t promise us *nirvana* or prosperity or freedom from pain. But He does promise that suffering and trials can never take away our eternal salvation or His love for us. If you’re in the middle of a difficult slog, ask the Lord to fill you with the “joy of your salvation,” to keep your focus on your eternal inheritance in Jesus (Ps. 51:12).

### PRAY WITH US

During your prayer time today, please remember again our Bible professors: Andrew Schmutzer, Michael Vanlaningham, and Ernest Gray. Pray that as they teach the truth of God’s Word, many lives will be touched and changed for Christ.

*After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.*

Isaiah 53:11

## The Gospel and Salvation

Mapmaking in the sixteenth century was a mix of information gathered by explorers and educated guesses about previously undocumented parts of the world. One persistent mystery for European mapmakers was what lay between the Americas and Asia—was it a land border? A vast body of water? Were the two continents connected? The Italian mapmaker Gastaldi is thought to be the first to draw a map of the Bering Strait in 1563, though his atlas was not published until it was discovered in a private collection of manuscripts in the 1920s.

Like those early mapmakers, the Old Testament prophets had some information about the coming of Jesus and the message of the gospel, but the Holy Spirit did not reveal the full details to them. They had to trust by faith that the message they were given would bless readers hundreds and even thousands of years later. As we look

back at the Old Testament today, we see Christ revealed there.

For instance, Isaiah 53, from which our key verse today is taken, paints a powerful portrait of the Savior who died for sins on our behalf. This chapter predicts “the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow” (v. 11; Isa. 53:10–12). Our salvation rests on this gospel: that Jesus, the Son of God, willingly became human in order to die for our sins, and God raised Him from the dead. He promises eternal life in relationship with God to all who trust Him (vv. 3–5, 12).

Peter mentions the gospel here in part to encourage his readers to rejoice in their identity. Yes, they were suffering—but so had Jesus. And just as Jesus was raised to glory, so too would His followers be given a glorious inheritance of salvation that is worth more than gold.

### APPLY THE WORD

Some think the Old Testament isn't relevant for Christians or that it features an angry god who punishes people. Neither view is correct; 1 Peter says that it is filled with grace and points to Jesus. Read Isaiah 53, and follow Peter's example by praising God that the gospel was made possible through the suffering and glory of Christ.

### PRAY WITH US

In conclusion of our prayers for the Bible department faculty on Moody's Chicago campus, please add Benjamin Wilson, Eric Redmond, Gerald Peterman, and John Goodrich to your prayer list. May they always seek God's guidance in their service.

*I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.*

Leviticus 11:44

TUESDAY  
OCTOBER

4

## Salvation Relationships: Obedient Children

When Kate Middleton was preparing to marry Prince William, heir to the British throne, she reportedly had to undergo what the press dubbed “princess training.” She was instructed on how to greet royalty and other dignitaries, to put on and remove her coat, and to conduct formal banquets. She would be royalty and was expected to act in a way that reflected her new identity.

Peter has begun this letter by describing the way that salvation forms our new identity. We are now followers of Christ, not this world, and although we experience suffering and trials, we know that God has promised us an eternal inheritance. With the reality of our new life established, Peter offers us “Christian training.”

Our verses today address the way our perspective and our relationship have changed through Jesus. First, rather

than be distracted by uncontrolled passions of the world, we have an eternal perspective of hope (v. 13). We are no longer limited to thinking that this life is all there is, so we’d better eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we’ll die. Instead, we can exercise self-control as we anticipate the return of Christ (see Gal. 5:22–23).

Second, we are the children of God. He loves us and claims us. He has called us (v. 15). Our growth in holiness does not come out of our own efforts to impress others or to prove that we’re good enough for God to love us. He has already shown His love for us through Jesus, and we become more like Him when we focus on who He is and what He has done and will do. Our holiness results from our relationship to God as His beloved children who are sanctified by the Spirit (vv. 2, 16).

### APPLY THE WORD

Peter’s first readers lived under a regime that actively persecuted Christians; our culture prioritizes personal passions over self-control and holiness. Prayerfully consider if there’s an area of life where you need more restraint. How can focusing on the return of Jesus and your identity as a child of God help you grow in holiness?

### PRAY WITH US

Today, Moody Radio starts its fundraising campaign, “Send One—Reach Many,” to support our students’ training at Moody. Collin Lambert, VP of Moody Radio, asks you to pray for the listeners who will partner with Moody Radio to make this event a success.

*You were redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Peter 1:18–19

## Salvation Relationships: Perfect Father

The first formal celebrations and services to honor fathers were held in 1908, 1910, and 1912 in various places in the United States. But Father’s Day, held on the third Sunday of June, did not become an official national holiday until 1972. Congress had resisted earlier efforts, with some claiming it would make the celebration of fatherhood too commercialized.

Most people agree that celebrating the role of fathers is a good thing. But it’s also true that many people experience painful relationships with deeply imperfect human fathers. Thankfully, each of us is offered the opportunity to know the perfect heavenly Father, described in these verses.

Peter has used the word *Father* three times in this chapter to describe God, and each instance reveals another facet. In verse 2, God the Father is described as part of the Trinity, along with Jesus

and the Holy Spirit. In verse 3, God is described as the Father of Jesus Christ, and in verse 17 He is identified as our Father. It’s important to see that God is not an abstraction or a distant Being—He is continually in relationship with Jesus and now also with us.

This perfect Father is not capricious or vicious (v. 17). As foreigners in this world, we too easily focus on those with earthly power, but we should instead remember that our reverence and awe is due to God. He is the one we are called to imitate, and He is the only one who knows all things and can judge perfectly in all situations (see Deut. 10:17; Gal. 2:6).

This perfect Father also has power over all things, including death (v. 21). In His love, He has redeemed us through the sacrifice of Jesus. And because He has raised Jesus from the dead, we have the confidence that He will also deliver us.

### APPLY THE WORD

What an amazing thing to be chosen and loved by this perfect Father! Why not have a “Father’s Day” celebration to praise Him? He doesn’t want a tie or a barbecue set—just our faith, love, reverence, obedience, and praise. You could devote a few minutes today to praising your Father, or plan a gathering of praise with family and friends.

### PRAY WITH US

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, welcomes your prayers for Moody’s education ministry to our graduate, undergraduate, and distance-learning students. We thank God for our legacy and for all He has for Moody’s future.

*The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.*

Isaiah 40:8

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER

6

## Salvation Relationships: Love Each Other

One joy in the autumn season in many parts of the United States is seeing the changing colors of the leaves. Cars filled with “leaf peepers” drive through New England or along the Blue Ridge Parkway, hoping to catch the peak moment of a landscape awash in red, orange, and golden leaves.

The most beautiful panorama of leaves won’t last, however. Eventually the leaves will fall, winter will come, and the colors shift to a muted palette of gray and white. Most things in life change: children grow, relationships ebb and flow, seasons pass, loved ones die. But the promises and Word of our God do not wither or fade or change (vv. 24–25). The absolute trustworthiness of God should shape our relationships.

We’ve already explored the Father-child relationship that we enjoy with God. But our salvation also affects our relationships with each other. As we

grow in holiness and obedience, we also grow in our ability to love others (v. 22; see 1 John 3:11). This love results from our new birth, our new hope, and our new identity in Jesus. There’s a sense here of God’s love pouring into our lives, transforming us, and then overflowing into the way that we live in love with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The command to love each other also requires our humility and grace. We can’t obey this command because we are perfect but because God is perfect. We don’t obey this command because other people are reliable but because God is reliable. We can love others, even when they fail or disappoint us, because the foundation of this love is the gospel—God’s expression of love for us (v. 25). His love and His promise will never fail or fade; gloriously, they endure forever.

### APPLY THE WORD

Appreciating God’s creation can be a helpful way to focus our attention and worship toward Him. When you notice the changing colors as the season changes from autumn to winter, praise Him for His unchanging Word. If you plant bulbs this fall, thank Him that your new birth in Jesus is from imperishable seed that is guaranteed to blossom for an eternity.

### PRAY WITH US

Integrated Marketing Communications staff use their skills to produce print and online materials for Moody’s ministries. Please pray today for Julia Baad, Lynn Gabalec, Larry Bohlin, Rhonda AuYeung, and Jamie Janosz.

FRIDAY  
OCTOBER

7

*You have tasted that the Lord is good.*

1 Peter 2:3

## The Lord Is Good

Babies love to put everything in their mouths—toys, books, even their own feet! As they are just becoming aware of their senses, babies use their sense of taste to explore the world around them. In addition, a baby’s mouth has more nerve endings per square inch than any other body part, so mouthing objects is the best way for a baby to discover how things feel. This normal developmental milestone usually ends by age three.

Scripture uses the metaphor of taste often to describe our experience of God. The psalmist says, “Taste and see that LORD is good” (Ps. 34:8), and “How sweet are your words to my taste” (Ps. 119:103). The prophet Ezekiel was instructed to eat the scroll of the Lord (Ezek. 3:3), an image repeated in Revelation 10:10. And the book of Hebrews also describes tasting the goodness of God (Heb. 6:4–5). Taste indicates an intimate experience beyond the senses of seeing or hearing.

Peter says that we have had that kind of experience with God’s goodness! We can attest, in a deep and powerful way, that His love and salvation transform and sustain us. These first verses of chapter 2 are connected to Peter’s exhortation in the previous chapter about how we relate to God and others. God’s goodness to us should motivate us to reject habits and practices that destroy community. This list—malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander—describes the deadly poison that can infect relationships when we are seeking our own status and advantage (v. 1).

Instead, we should imbibe “pure spiritual milk” (v. 2). The contrast here is between purity and deceit and between nourishment and destruction. We have already tasted God’s goodness, and now we should continue to drink from His wells of truth so that we can thrive in community and grow in grace.

### APPLY THE WORD

Sins like envy and deceit can creep into our lives quietly. We resent the gifts or success of others; we try to present ourselves as better than we are. Proper humility is key: we must remember that our salvation depends on God’s goodness to us, not on our own status. Ask God to root out these sins and give you a renewed taste for His good gifts.

### PRAY WITH US

Please include in your prayers these employees from Integrated Marketing Communications: Kevin Mungons, Linda Piepenbrink, Elena Mafter, Nikita Kunigan, and Brian Regnerus. May they be encouraged as they help communicate Moody’s mission.

*I lay . . . a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.*

1 Peter 2:6

## The Lord Is the Cornerstone

Cosmologist (and atheist) Lawrence Krauss wrote, “Every atom in your body came from a star that exploded. . . . So, forget Jesus. The stars died so that you could be here today.” We shouldn’t be surprised when the world rejects Jesus, for whatever reason. After all, He was “despised and rejected” (Isa. 53:3), or as our passage today puts it, “the stone the builders rejected” (v. 7).

The structure of these verses reveals some important truths about Jesus and our identity as those who trust in Him. Jesus is the living Stone, and we are “like living stones” (v. 5). Believers are a spiritual house, and Jesus is the cornerstone of the house. Those who trust Jesus will “never be put to shame,” and believers view Jesus with honor and not shame (vv. 6–7; see Isa. 28:16). And rejecting the message of Jesus is the same as rejecting Jesus Himself, and leads to the same destiny (v. 8; Ps. 118:22).

Peter adapts quotations from the Old Testament and uses the metaphor of stones used to build a house in order to underscore that our identity is bound together with the person and work of Christ. We are able to experience new life because He is alive. We are able to please God because Jesus pleased God (v. 5). And we should not be surprised when our attempts to share the gospel are rebuffed or we encounter opposition as Christians, for Christ Himself was rejected.

Notice that Peter uses the word *precious* three times in these verses to describe Jesus. He is precious to God, the precious cornerstone, and precious to believers. We have the privilege of knowing and trusting in the Savior of great worth, and our salvation is a treasure—as Peter said earlier, “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (1:4).

### APPLY THE WORD

Is Jesus precious to you? Can you identify ways that your life reveals that He is your treasure? *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* by James K. A. Smith provides insightful perspective for believers who want to grow in their desire for God. One important way is participating with other “living stones” in worship and service in your local church.

### PRAY WITH US

Christine Gorz, VP of Marketing Communications, is grateful for all the communication channels that are now open to us due to digital technology. Would you uphold Christine and her teams in prayer as they interact with the public?

*Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

1 Peter 2:10

## Salvation Living: A Chosen People

In a 2012 naturalization ceremony in Atlanta, people from fifty-four countries gathered to take the oath of citizenship to the United States and then pledge allegiance to the flag. “Pledging allegiance to the flag was one of the proudest moments of my life,” said Stephen Park. “I believe strongly in the Constitution of this country. . . . I wanted the right to vote and I wanted the right to call myself an American.”

This metaphor of naturalization helps us to understand the weight of Peter’s message in our reading today. Recall that this letter was written to people spread across a wide geographical area (1:1). Yet despite their different ethnic backgrounds, different families of origin, and different cultural identities, they were now united in Christ as the people of God (v. 10).

In verses 9 and 10, Peter masterfully weaves together numerous phrases

and allusions from the Old Testament to describe the identity of believers in Jesus. “Out of all nations you will be my treasured possession . . . a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5–6). In contrast to those who deem the Cornerstone to be a stumbling block, those who trust Christ are joined in faith with all believers as part of the holy people of God (see Hosea 2:23).

Just as becoming a naturalized citizen confers both privileges and responsibilities, being part of God’s people shapes what we embrace and reject. Our new identity allows us to praise our great God who has chosen us, called us out of darkness, and showed mercy to us (vv. 9–10; see Isa. 43:20–21). It also motivates us to resist the sinful desires that try to pull us back into our old way of life. We are God’s chosen, royal, special people; praise and mercy triumph over sin and self-destruction.

### APPLY THE WORD

This passage gives us ammunition against temptation. First, remember who you are—God’s treasured possession. Second, the practice of praise—focusing on who God is—strengthens us against sin. Third, join together with other believers. We are not isolated atoms but part of God’s people who can intercede for and support one another.

### PRAY WITH US

Moody Aviation’s unique ministry prepares students to fly God’s love and mercy to remote areas of our planet. Pray that flight and maintenance instructors—Ian Kerrigan, Jay Bigley, Joel Powell, and Neal Avery—would see God work through their students.

*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

MONDAY  
OCTOBER

10

## Salvation Living: Submit to Authority

In 1908, John T. Dower was working as a secretary for the Y.M.C.A. in Worcester, Mass., when he learned that his uncle had died in Australia—and he was heir to a \$10 million fortune. Dower reportedly agreed to travel to Australia to handle his uncle’s postmortem interests, but he said that whether or not he received the \$10 million, he intended to keep working at his job in the local Y.M.C.A. branch.

At this point in 1 Peter, the letter has stressed our identity as the people of God, using words such as *chosen*, *holy*, and *special*. We have an eternal inheritance guaranteed by God Himself (1:4). So we might be surprised when our reading opens with the exhortation, “Submit yourselves . . . to every human authority” (v. 13).

Peter has outlined our identity, and now he turns to the practical implications for how we live in the world. As we’ll see throughout the next few chapters,

our status as God’s special possession does not exempt us from humility in human relationships. New Testament scholar Karen Jobes argues that the word *good* that occurs three times in verses 12 through 15 indicates a quality beyond the expected norm. In other words, obeying the law is expected for all people—but Christians should go beyond this to contribute good for the community. Christians not only submit by recognizing the appropriate human governing authorities, they also serve even “the pagans” and “foolish people” by participating in good initiatives that bless all (vv. 12, 15).

The purpose of this service is not to bring attention to our own humility or goodness but to bring glory to God. We submit “for the Lord’s sake”; we do good for others because “it is God’s will” (vv. 13, 15). Ultimately we are able to serve others because we recognize that our true Master is God (v. 16).

### APPLY THE WORD

For centuries, Christians have followed this instruction through initiatives that served communities, including building hospitals, staffing food banks, lobbying for prison reform, and volunteering in schools. How can you demonstrate humility by serving others? Look for opportunities sponsored by your church or other Christian groups.

### PRAY WITH US

Anthony Turner was recently promoted to VP and dean of Student Enrollment Services. Our prayer is that Anthony, along with his assistant Samuel Roller, will always be discerning and effective in helping our students follow God’s calling for their lives.

TUESDAY  
OCTOBER

11

*If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

1 Peter 2:20

## Salvation Living: Following Christ's Example

Many Greek and Roman philosophers, such as Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Seneca, composed household codes. These codes included instructions for proper family relationships between spouses, parents and children, and slaves. They assumed that the family unit was the sphere in which people fulfilled their social and political duties, with the roles divinely fixed by the gods.

In our reading today, Peter expands on the exhortation that began in verse 13. At first glance, 1 Peter 2:18–3:7 appears to resemble traditional household codes, like Plutarch's *Advice to the Bride and Groom* or Seneca's *Moral Epistles*, both of which were written in about the same time period as this letter. Peter's initial readers almost certainly would have been familiar with these codes. But notice how Peter applies the reality of Christian identity in a way that shifts the foundation for these relationships.

First, Peter addresses slaves (and later, wives) directly, something no Greek philosopher does (v. 18). Unlike the culture, God views slaves as full and equal persons. In fact, slaves are described as "called"—their identity in Christ was the same as other believers (v. 21). Second, the motivation for their behavior was reverence for God, not the power of their masters. Peter doesn't directly attack the social practice of having household slaves, but he shifts the locus of authority for a Christian slave from the master to God.

Finally, the example for how to live when oppressed under an unjust social and political order is Jesus Himself (v. 21). Isaiah 53 reminds us of the humiliation suffered by the perfect Savior and reinforces the truth that our identity is intertwined with His. Even people marginalized by our cultural notions of worth can place their trust in Jesus and find their true identity in Him.

### APPLY THE WORD

Peter doesn't pretend that we will always be treated fairly. Instead, he directs our focus to Jesus, who also suffered. If you are suffering with an irrational boss or a difficult neighbor or an unfair teacher, ask the Lord to renew your confidence in your identity in Christ. We can demonstrate salvation living when we follow His example.

### PRAY WITH US

Missions Conference begins today on Moody's Chicago campus. Many of our students will dedicate their lives to serving God in missions. Pray that their hearts will be encouraged, and praise God for the godly servants He is raising.

*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

Proverbs 31:30

WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER

12

## Salvation Living: Humility in the Home

Contestants from Venezuela have won more international beauty pageants than those from any other country. And beauty pageants have become a big business: some pay more than half their monthly salaries to send their daughters to one of the numerous beauty academies. As one young woman said, “Every girl here dreams of being a ‘Miss.’ . . . When you live in a country where a beautiful woman has greater career prospects than someone with a strong work ethic and first-class education, you are forced into the mindset that there is nothing more important than beauty.”

Peter’s words in today’s reading offer freedom and consolation to all who feel trapped by cultural notions of value and worth. *But wait*, we might say. *How can there be freedom in this exhortation to submit?*

Unlike any of the Greek or Roman household codes, Scripture addresses

wives directly, affirming their dignity. But Peter does not instruct Christian wives to ignore or undermine their unbelieving husbands. Instead, Peter calls for a humility that follows the example of Christ to inform domestic relationships. Wives were free to choose submission, rather than forced to follow a cultural mandate, as a way to make their Christian faith attractive to their husbands. Peter also notes that the worth and value of wives—and truly, all of us—is found in God, not in the cultural burdens of outward perfection.

Finally, Peter addresses husbands, who held the power and authority in Roman culture. They too are called to humility: they should not abuse their power, but rather treat their wives with respect and kindness (v. 7). Though according to the household codes they had all the privilege, in God’s sight their wives were also heirs of the eternal inheritance (see 1:4).

### APPLY THE WORD

Beauty, fame, wealth, power, fashion—these oppress us if we use them to measure our worth. How much better to have the beauty of godly character that will never fade (v. 4), an inheritance in heaven that will never spoil (1:4), and the power of God that guarantees our salvation (1:5). Find freedom from the world’s burdens in Jesus (2:21).

### PRAY WITH US

Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody’s president, appreciates your prayers today for Missions Conference that continues until Friday. Pray with him that all the messages and behind-the-scenes work will enhance students’ growth during this important week.

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER

13

*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry.*

Psalms 34:15

## Salvation Living: Blessing Others

Social media has intensified the scope of public insults. While politicians and celebrities have traded public barbs for centuries, today millions of followers on Facebook or Instagram can follow the barrage of insults in real time. Some websites have started lists such as “Top Ten Twitter Wars!” or “The Ten Most Epic Celebrity Twitter Fights!”

Our natural reaction when attacked is to strike back. We want to win the Twitter war. We want to have the last word. We want to hurt the other guy worse than he hurt us. Our text for today challenges us to the standard of salvation living instead. All of us—both the most and the least powerful in our society—should live in a way that follows the example of Jesus and blesses others (v. 8).

First, the community of believers should be characterized by love, humility, compassion, and harmony. As Peter will

discuss in much of the rest of this letter, Christians will encounter opposition from others. All the more important, then, that hostility, pride, and discord be rooted out from the church. We are called to emulate the character of Christ, and these qualities of love and humility are essential for Christian community to support one another and be a witness to the world.

Next, Peter addresses the Christian response to attacks from those outside the church. New Testament scholars describe these insults as “weapons typically employed in . . . publicly shaming and discrediting those who are different or regarded as one’s competitors.” Peter draws from Psalm 34 to remind believers that the ultimate audience for their speech is the Lord, not their accusers (vv. 10–12). Instead of responding with insults to defend their honor, believers should respond with a blessing, knowing that God will hear and defend them.

### APPLY THE WORD

Winning a battle of insults is worth less than inheriting the blessing of God (v. 9). As a way to help form your heart and mind toward love and humility, consider committing verses 10 through 12 to memory. This process of memorizing and meditating on Scripture can remind us to focus on the Lord, not our opponents.

### PRAY WITH US

Moody’s Library on our campus in Chicago is a useful information resource for students, faculty, and staff. Today, please pray for God’s blessings on its staff: James Preston, Christopher Ullman, Christine Cherney, and April Nelson.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:10

FRIDAY  
OCTOBER

14

## Salvation Living: Jesus Is Lord

King Pyrrhus of Epirus defeated the Roman army at Heraclea in 280 B.C., but sustained heavy casualties among his own troops. After a second victory over Rome a year later, Pyrrhus reportedly said, “If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined.” The term *Pyrrhic victory* means a win so costly that it actually leads to demise.

Throughout this letter Peter has reminded his readers that Jesus is our example. He was chosen before the creation of the world to make it possible for us to be chosen by God (1:2, 20). He is the cornerstone, and we are the living stones in God’s spiritual house (2:4–6). He suffered injustice without retaliation, and we can also respond with gentleness and humility (2:21–23). Now Peter encourages his readers with the example of Jesus’ ultimate victory (v. 22).

Jesus’ victory is the opposite of Pyrrhus. Jesus appeared to suffer the worst kind of defeat—a humiliating death while being taunted by His enemies (v. 18). But this defeat in fact led to His glorious victory, because He was obedient to the will of the Father who resurrected Him and vanquished the power of death and sin (vv. 17, 21). Now Jesus reigns in heaven “with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him” (v. 22).

This is more than a nice theological statement—it should affect how we live. We can endure suffering and even what looks like defeat because we know Jesus has been victorious. We can be free from fear of attacks from the world because we know that Jesus is our Savior. We can respond to others with “gentleness and respect” because we know that we, and all of creation, are ultimately subject to Jesus our Lord (v. 15).

### APPLY THE WORD

Do the people around you see the hope that you have in Christ? Do your gentle responses to criticism surprise them? When our lives follow the example of Jesus, we then might have an opening to share with others the wonderful truth of the gospel. Sometimes our most profound witnessing opportunities happen as a result of our response to difficulties.

### PRAY WITH US

As we continue to pray for the staff of our Library, please add Joy Houser, Kimberly Moore, and Nicole Tochalauski to your prayer list. We thank God for all the help they provide to everybody on campus with printed materials and online catalogues.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Hermeneutics

**Q I've always been taught that Deborah was chosen to lead as a judge in Israel because no men were willing to do the job. But I see no evidence of that in Scripture. From what I read, she was a judge because she had the people's respect, and they came to her to be judged. Is this accurate?**

**A** The story of Deborah is often taught as though God had a Plan A that didn't work out, and Deborah was the back-up choice when Barak defaulted. As you note, however, in Judges 4 and 5, Deborah was already leading Israel when the passage opens (4:4) and is respected as "she held court under the Palm of Deborah" (4:5). Barak doesn't come into the picture until Deborah is established as a leader and a prophetess. In Judges 4:6, Deborah summons Barak and speaks God's word to him before we know what he is going to do.

You're correct—this story has nothing to do with a man not being available. When Barak hears Deborah's message that he is commanded to go to war, he won't do it unless she goes with him (4:8). Deborah then tells Barak the consequences of his refusal. The honor will not be his (4:9) but will go to another woman, Jael, who kills Sisera by hammering a peg into his temple (4:21), a startlingly courageous act.

When one looks at the theme of Judges, consistently people disobey; they often do the wrong thing or only grudgingly do the right thing. We see this in Barak, who doesn't initially trust God. To describe Deborah's judgeship in Israel as the result of no men being willing to do the job is both incorrect and irrelevant. It also diminishes the truth of God's view of women. Everywhere in Scripture God shows how much He loves, defends, and values women.

**Q I am a Christian teenager wondering what to do when one of my parents, who claims to be a Christian, is living a sinful lifestyle. My parent is loving and provides for me but has made many life choices that are biblically wrong while continuing to use Christian language and talk about Jesus in warm, personal ways. Is it my place to speak up?**

**A** This is a painful position to be in, one I have seen often in my teaching career: young adults who follow God obediently while being let down by their parental models. That you have remained true to God is a work of grace.

Certainly you should continue to pray faithfully. While you should honor your parent for what he or she does well, I

*Everywhere in Scripture God shows how much He loves, defends, and values women.*

think there is a place for respectfully expressing your sadness over his or her choices and the way those affect you. Ideally, it would be good if a Christian adult whom your parent respects could point out these inconsistencies between proclamation and practice.

We should remember that Jesus taught that honoring parents was no excuse for failing to honor God. Following Him requires putting Him above all others, including mothers and fathers. That may mean that you cannot join your parent in certain activities, opinions, or discussions. And if his or her lifestyle runs any danger of weakening your Christian resolve, it might be necessary to separate yourself physically from the situation. Finally, if possible, find older Christians to parent you spiritually, someone with whom you can talk through the dilemmas you encounter and the decisions you make.

**Q So much seems wrong in our culture today. I feel like it's a struggle to get things done well, to get polite treatment in public institutions, and to hold people to the promises they have made. But, I hesitate at times to speak up because it seems like we're told as Christians to be nice. I need to know how to think about this.**

**A** I so appreciate this question. Christians often reflect the worst patterns of our culture. Somehow being nice, defined as being pleasant or not ruffling feathers, is mistakenly interpreted as how the gifts of the Spirit should be exercised. That kind of niceness may just be indifference or a desire to avoid conflict.

I once heard someone say, "Silence may be golden, but it can also be yellow." I can't help thinking of an intelligent essay entitled "Why Don't We Complain?" by William F. Buckley Jr. He bemoans the silence of the average consumer and citizen. Complaining, he implies, is not necessarily negative or petty. It can mean making your voice heard so that you and other people will benefit from things done well and in order.

Think about the word *courage*, one of the four chief cardinal virtues, also called fortitude, which is the capacity to do what is right or necessary even in the face of adversity or discomfort. We cannot live cowed by the laziness or shrillness of culture. Christ never did. We must confront evil and sloppiness when we see it; we must speak up because our small protest may make a difference. We cannot adopt a neutral posture that tolerates small and large abuses in and out of the church. Speaking up just may be an issue of moral life or death.

SATURDAY  
OCTOBER

15

*Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.*

Ephesians 6:13

## Living to Please God

Addiction to prescription opioid medications has devastated lives in many parts of the United States. One group of addicts struggling to stay clean shared their daily challenges: “I had to tell my son he can’t come to my house because he’s still using,” said one woman. “My friends don’t understand why I’d rather keep my job and my kids instead of hang out with them and get high,” said another. The group counselor gave this advice: “Don’t spend more than six seconds with someone—any longer you’ll start entertaining ideas.”

Many won’t understand or support the choice to turn away from destruction and toward life, as Peter’s readers knew all too well. They were mocked and derided for refusing to participate in the pursuit of pleasures (v. 4). Christians in the Roman Empire abstained from violent and erotic entertainments such as theater, chariot races, and gladiatorial contests. Along with debauchery that

often accompanied pagan worship, these were culturally approved occasions for an absence of self-restraint and the unbridled consumption of sex.

Note how Peter encouraged us to stay strong in the face of cultural pressure and persecution. Focusing on Jesus—His humility, suffering, and victory—helps provide us with armor to resist these temptations (v. 1). Just as Jesus chose obedience to the Father even though it resulted in His physical suffering, so also our choice of faithfulness over sin might result in suffering.

But though we might suffer, we know to whom we ultimately must give an account for our choices (v. 5). Though ostracism, persecution, and ridicule are difficult, it will be worth it when we stand before God, the Judge of all. Even those who have already died and appeared to get away with lives filled with lust and idolatry will not escape the judgment of God.

### APPLY THE WORD

**Has the Holy Spirit convicted you about something that you need to give up? Make a list of what you’ll need to turn away from: Are there places to avoid? People to see less often? Items to get rid of? Also make a list of what you’ll need to turn toward: Are there people who can help encourage you? Can you replace destructive habits with life-giving ones?**

### PRAY WITH US

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, oversees Moody Radio and Moody Publishers. He invites you to pray for the teams in these ministries and for the Holy Spirit’s work in the hearts of our constituents through media.

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

1 Peter 4:9

SUNDAY  
OCTOBER

16

## Living to Serve Others

A report from the bank HSBC in April indicated that British people spend fewer hours deciding whether to buy a house than they do on planning the menu for a dinner party. The process of mulling an offer for a new home took on average 26 hours, whereas the decisions about what food to serve to guests took 31 hours.

When we hear the word *hospitality*, we might think of a home with interior design fit for a magazine spread, an exquisite dinner party with several courses, and a hostess who has memorized Emily Post's book *Etiquette*. Is that the exhortation from Peter in today's reading? There's nothing wrong with a gracious hostess inviting people into her well-appointed home for a lovely meal—but Scripture is calling Christians to something even better.

Peter has just instructed his readers to remain firm in rejecting their former

pagan lifestyle. Now he tells them what to embrace: instead of drunkenness, be sober in order to pray. Instead of retaliating when wronged, choose love and forgiveness. Instead of the selfish pursuit of pleasure, offer hospitality to others even when it's inconvenient (vv. 7–9). These are important disciplines and practices of the Christian life; prayer, love, and hospitality distinguish believers from the cultural values around them.

The final verses in this passage remind us that all believers contribute to the strengthening and encouragement of the church through the use of our gifts. They are one means God uses to put His grace into practice in the community of faith (v. 10). Every gift should be used “with the strength God provides,” which blesses others and brings glory to God (v. 11). Though oppressed, marginalized, and mocked by the culture, the church has the limitless grace of God and the victory through Christ.

### APPLY THE WORD

**How can you offer hospitality?** The early church often offered travelers a safe place to stay; today missionaries often need a place to stay overnight. The early church needed people willing to host gatherings in their home; today small groups often need a place to meet. You could also share a meal with visitors, college students, or people in need.

### PRAY WITH US

Please remember in your prayers the operations staff of Moody Radio: Sam Beiruti, Jose Lemus, and Tracy Haney. They provide technical support for Moody Radio in Chicago, our Internet channels, and satellite networks.

MONDAY  
OCTOBER

17

*If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*

1 Peter 4:16

## Living Faithfully in Suffering

Tariku Fufa was thirteen years old when he decided to follow Jesus. Upon hearing the news, his father gave him an ultimatum: “Tariku, I give you a choice between Jesus and family.” When the boy remained firm in his commitment to Christ, his father beat him, cut his face with a knife, and threw him out into the streets of Begi, Ethiopia, to fend for himself. Without his medication, Tariku nearly died from an asthma attack, but felt God’s assurance that He had something else in store for this young man.

Believers in many parts of the world today know from painful experience what it means to suffer for the name of Christ. Our passage today contains two shocking messages about Christian suffering, specifically opposition from others because they know from our lives and our testimony that we are identified with Jesus.

First, we should not be surprised or find it strange that suffering befalls those who follow Jesus (v. 12). But in fact, many of us do assume that our Christian faith and good lives will make us popular and successful. As Peter has outlined throughout this letter, when we identify with Christ, our lives no longer align with the world’s values. And our Savior Himself suffered unjustly.

The second shocking message is that when we suffer, we should praise God (v. 16). It’s important to note that this is not Christian stoicism or fatalism. Just as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane (and in keeping with the prayers in the Psalms), we can ask God to protect and deliver us. But our perspective on being persecuted because we follow Christ should be shaped by praise: gratitude that we have the privilege of being identified with Jesus, and thankfulness that our God will be faithful (vv. 16–19).

### APPLY THE WORD

Six years later, Tariku’s father asked his forgiveness. Concluding that it was a miracle he was alive, Tariku’s siblings and many in his village accepted Christ. Today he ministers to Africans in 23 countries. Pray for persecuted believers around the world, for God’s protection and reasons to praise His name.

### PRAY WITH US

Keeping up in prayer Moody Radio’s staff, please include Tom Svoboda, Eric Hufford, and Phil Shappard in technical operations, as well as studio engineer Rod Simon, in your prayer time. May the Holy Spirit be their guide in serving our listeners.

*He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed.*

Proverbs 3:34

## Humility in Church Relationships

Stories about clergy abusing power have been all too common in recent years. Leaders across Christian denominations have been charged with sexual abuse of their congregants, including children. Others have used tithes and donations to furnish a lavish lifestyle, with private jets and luxurious mansions. Some develop a cult of personality, requiring church members to follow their every whim and dictate.

These stories are tragic for many reasons, but especially because they illustrate how far we fall from the call of Scripture to be characterized by humility in our relationships with each other. Peter has already described the humility of Jesus as our example for relationships in the home, and now he reminds all of us in the church to embrace humility.

Church leaders are to be “shepherds of God’s flock,” faithfully serving the people entrusted to their spiritual care

(v. 2). This was countercultural: leaders of organizations at that time, whether in business or the military or government, were expected to claim the perks of their position and demand subservience from underlings (see Matt. 20:25–27). But leaders in the church should view their position as an opportunity to serve. Rather than pursuing financial gain in this life, their motivation should be pleasing the Lord, “the Chief Shepherd,” to receive “the crown of glory that will never fade away” (v. 4).

Lest members of the church misconstrue this exhortation and conclude that their leaders can be ignored or undermined, Peter also calls them to humility. The church should not be a place where people jockey for power and control. It should be known for love, humility, and hospitality, a place where leaders serve and care for God’s people and where members support and pray for one another.

### APPLY THE WORD

Spend time today in prayer for the leaders of your church. They are human, and no doubt flawed. But pray that the Lord will strengthen their focus on the Chief Shepherd and their eternal rewards in order to faithfully care for the church. What are practical ways to encourage them? Can you volunteer to help with a program, or send them a note of appreciation?

### PRAY WITH US

Moody’s ministries seek to please God with the stewardship of the financial resources He had entrusted to us. Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer, asks for your prayers that the teams he leads would always keep this goal in sight.

WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER

19

*Cast all your anxiety on him  
because he cares for you.*

1 Peter 5:7

## Humility Before God

Kanika grew up in a devout Hindu home in Delhi, India. When she became a Christian at the age of 20, her daily life became filled with struggles: Kanika wanted to attend a Christian church, but her parents insisted that she join the family at the Hindu temple. When they found her Bible and prayer journal, they threw them out. She wants to marry a fellow believer, but her parents plan to arrange a marriage with another Hindu in their caste.

Like millions of Christians around the world, Kanika faces constant decisions about how to follow Jesus in a society and home that oppose her faith. Though not physically oppressed, the struggle of resisting her parents and friends day after day can be exhausting, and sometimes she thinks it would be easier to just give in.

Peter's first readers of this letter knew exactly what Kanika is experiencing,

and these verses were written to renew their focus on God and refresh their spirits for the ongoing spiritual battle. Humility in our relationships, as we've explored throughout this book of 1 Peter, ultimately derives from our humility before God. He is God, and we are not. He cares for us, and knows the end of our story. He is mighty to save us when we cannot save ourselves.

In contrast to our strong and loving God is the devil, who wants to destroy the lives and witness of believers (v. 8). Peter notes that standing strong in the face of these attacks of spiritual warfare requires an active resistance; we cannot be passive in the face of our spiritual enemy. How do we resist the temptation to abandon faith? By keeping our perspective on God's promise to deliver us in His time, and by embracing the fellowship of other Christians to encourage and sustain us.

### APPLY THE WORD

**If you are blessed with loved ones who support your desire to live for Christ, commit to praying for your fellow Christians who face the temptation to abandon faith because of persecution. If you don't have a Christian community to support you, look for small group or prayer partner to encourage you to stand strong for the Lord.**

### PRAY WITH US

Though the staff of Controller's Office on our Chicago campus work behind the scenes, they carry much responsibility and will appreciate your prayers. Today, please focus your prayers on Linda Wahr, Eunice Childress, Annita Smith, and Roger Sipes.

*The God of all grace . . . will himself restore you  
and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

1 Peter 5:10

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER

20

## Stand Fast

The Birth Hotel in Amsterdam offers men the opportunity to experience something previously reserved for women: the labor pains of giving birth. The birth-simulation machine uses electrical impulses to cause the abdominal muscles to contract. One man who went through this simulated labor process said, “The pain . . . is all-consuming, searing, and intense. I’m exhausted by the sheer effort of enduring it. It’s as though I’m no longer myself: my body’s sole purpose is to cope with wave after wave of agony as the contractions come thick and fast.”

Why would women endure such pain? Because the reward is worth it! The joy of holding a newborn baby puts the experience of suffering into perspective. A lifetime of parenthood is worth the hours of labor. In a similar way, Peter wants to remind believers that the suffering they endure is worth it. They will share eternal glory with

Christ, and God will restore them and make all things right (v. 10).

To have the right perspective on suffering requires having the right perspective of God. Notice all the theology that Peter packs into just two verses! Who is God? He is the Giver of grace and the Source of all power. He calls us, restores us, and strengthens us. This God of grace and power can be trusted to deliver us to “eternal glory.”

Peter closes this letter with a final exhortation and personal testimony. He could instruct these believers in Asia Minor to remain faithful to God because he himself had experienced the grace of God (v. 12). The phrase “she who is in Babylon” almost certainly refers to the community of Christians where Peter was, probably in Rome, (v. 13). These Christians were not alone—and they needed to encourage one another in love and faith.

### APPLY THE WORD

Review our study on 1 Peter. How have you been encouraged to live as a Christian, especially where your values might be countercultural? How have you been challenged to be a member of your church, practicing love, humility, and faithfulness? Has your perspective been shaped to think about who God is and what He has done for you?

### PRAY WITH US

Again, join us in expressing gratitude to God for the diligent work of Moody’s Controller’s Office: Alice Leighton-Armah, Marie Bailey, Marya Preston, Michael Duong, and Tom Jones. May they find joy in their ministry on campus!

FRIDAY  
OCTOBER

21

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him.*

2 Peter 1:3

## The Promises of God

Our culture doesn't value self-restraint. Advertising slogans urge us to buy products from cars to cosmetics "because you're worth it." We're told to "follow your bliss," "just do it," "have it your way," and "you do you." The limits on our wanting, taking, and having seem to be melting away.

Peter also lived in a culture pervaded by these messages, and this letter was written to warn the church to resist the siren call of false teachers of pleasure. While following the form of letters in his day, Peter modifies the traditional wish for good health into a prayer for a different kind of abundance: "grace and peace be yours in abundance" (v. 2). Throughout this letter Peter will remind his readers that the abundance promised by the world can't compare to the riches promised to us by God.

The world—particularly our modern consumer culture—constantly says

that we need more, more, more. In contrast, Peter affirms that God has already supplied what we need for a godly life. Through Jesus, we have faith in the Lord and His righteousness (v. 1). We are able to know God and be in a relationship with Him! And we have His promises, rooted in His own goodness and His own glory.

Some have misconstrued the phrase at the end of verse 4, "participate in the divine nature," to mean that we either are or will become god-like humans. But Peter is not suggesting that at all. Rather, he says that we're declared righteous before God and can live in a way that pleases the Lord. In other words, God has made it possible for us to reorient our desires away from the temptations that would destroy us and instead share in His promises for our future with Him.

### APPLY THE WORD

Scripture is not calling us to a life of asceticism in which we renounce all joys and pleasures. God is calling us to recognize—and desire—all His good gifts, which far surpass the temporary pleasure of the stuff we want. To think more about desire and the life of faith, you can read the book *Teach Us to Want* by Jen Pollock Michel.

### PRAY WITH US

Today, will you pray for Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy? His ministry includes coordinating our outreach to friends and donors who partner with Moody in prayer and financial support, and we thank God for this outreach.

*You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 1:11

SATURDAY  
OCTOBER

22

## Productive Faith in God

A man in China was delighted to get two puppies from a local farmer. Several months later, however, the puppies were exhibiting unusual behavior. They killed and ate his pet chickens. They had an insatiable appetite. And they were huge—each weighed over 100 pounds. But not until the man saw a pamphlet on endangered animals did he realize that his beloved dogs weren't dogs at all: they were Asian black bears.

Behavior and growth often confirm identity. Puppies grow into dogs; if they don't look like dogs or act like dogs, then they probably aren't dogs at all. In the same way, we expect those who identify with Jesus Christ and “participate in the divine nature” to grow more like Him.

The qualities listed in verses 5 through 7 remind us of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). Here, the exhortation is to “make every effort,” a phrase repeated

twice (vv. 5, 10). This passage is not saying that our effort brings about our salvation. Rather, these pursuits should claim our attention. And as we saw in our reading yesterday, it is through God's power and promises that we are able to live this way at all. Our daily concern should be to participate in the work that the Spirit is doing within us to make our identity as the children of God clearly evident to all (v. 10).

Finally, Peter includes another reference to the spiritual abundance that contrasts with the evil desires. These qualities, self-control and godliness and love, grow in our lives “in increasing measure,” a phrase that connotes a lavish outpouring and overflowing of goodness (v. 8). We can experience these blessings now, while we wait for our “rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 11).

### APPLY THE WORD

Reflect on your life as a Christian, and consider how you've grown spiritually in these qualities. Do you see evidence of more self-control and perseverance? Do you have more love for God and others? Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and encourage you as you rejoice in His work in your life and continue to “make every effort” to be more like Jesus.

### PRAY WITH US

Amelia Mendez, David Kocourek, Kyella Gilliam, and Patricia Fletcher in Donor Resource Management keep track of donors' contributions, process donations, and provide receipts. Pray for God's help and guidance in their work, for His glory.

SUNDAY  
OCTOBER

23

*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.*

Deuteronomy 6:6

## The True Word of God

Earlier this year *The Atlantic* published overwhelming evidence that what the papyrus scholars had named “The Gospel of Jesus’ Wife” was in fact an elaborate forgery and hoax created by a man in Florida. Forged historical documents have included diaries allegedly by Hitler, Mussolini, Howard Hughes, and Jack the Ripper, and “The Donation of Constantine” that supposedly documented the emperor’s transfer of much of Italy to the Pope.

Throughout much of this letter, Peter urges the churches to distinguish between truth and lies. They needed to remember what and whom to trust. From indications in the letter, these readers were established in the faith (v. 12). But since the assault of deception never ceases, it’s important to “refresh your memory” about God’s promises and power (v. 13). Standing strong against the temptation to embrace the world’s values requires an ongoing

commitment to remember the truth of God’s Word and His work in our lives.

As Peter neared the end of his earthly life, he was committed to “make every effort” to strengthen the faith of believers (vv. 14–15). Look at the evidence for trusting the message of the gospel! It begins with Jesus, and eyewitnesses could attest to His teaching and miracles. God the Father pronounced that He was indeed the Son of God, who was doing God’s will (v. 17).

Next, we can trust the message of Scripture. The Word of God helps to shine a light to guide us through the darkness of this world (v. 19; see Psalm 119). Reading, studying, and remembering Scripture will help us stay grounded in truth. Finally, we have the Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets as they penned the letters and poetry and history of Scripture. We have the truth, and a God whom we can trust.

### APPLY THE WORD

How can you refresh your memory about the truth of God? One way is to keep a spiritual journal in which you keep a record of answered prayers and times God has worked in your life. Another is to memorize Scripture, even just a verse or two at a time. Listening to sermons that focus on teaching God’s Word can also encourage you to stand strong in your faith.

### PRAY WITH US

Please add to your prayer list Sharon Cluff, Sean Wiedenfeld, Samuel Slennett, and Ruth Velaer-Wheeler from Donor Resource Management. We pray that they would have joy and fulfillment in their service.

*Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things.*

2 Samuel 7:28

MONDAY  
OCTOBER

24

## The Greed of False Teachers

The term *confidence man* or *con man* was coined in the 1800s, a time one historian described as the “Golden Age of Schemes.” A.V. Lamartine perpetrated a strange con: he’d check into a hotel room and then pretend to ingest poison to commit suicide. After giving him medical treatment, kindhearted strangers would raise funds to help him on his way; it appears he made a living by “attempting suicide” for several years.

Hucksters, false prophets, and con artists today send emails from supposed Nigerian princes or promise health and wealth with one more donation. As Peter notes, false teachers infiltrated Israel and will try to distract and destroy the church (v. 1; see Jer. 23:16).

Notice the red flags of false teaching. First, they question the nature of God. Is He the sovereign Lord? Are His power and love the bedrock of our faith? Or do we need to do something

to help Him out? Perhaps we need access to a magic formula or someone else to connect us with God. These “destructive heresies” attempt to undermine our confidence in the truth that the Lord is sovereign, He is trustworthy, and His promises are good.

Second, false teaching rejects the truth about how we should live (v. 2). As we’ve seen, the life of a Christian should demonstrate the saving power of God through goodness and self-control, not a life of depraved passions. The unbridled pursuit of human pleasure contradicts the truth of God’s Spirit in our lives.

Finally, false teachers are motivated by greed (v. 3). Rather than encourage and exhort God’s people, they exploit them. Instead of proclaiming the truth of Scripture, they make up feel-good stories. Their focus is on how to line their own pockets, not on how to bring spiritual profit to the church.

### APPLY THE WORD

The motives of false teachers are pride, lust, and greed. We should prayerfully assess the ministry of anyone who claims to be a Christian leader by whether their teaching promotes these sins that oppose God or promotes faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13). Ask for discernment to avoid the traps of false teaching and strength to stand for truth.

### PRAY WITH US

Please uphold in prayer Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer at Moody, that as part of the leadership team he would follow God’s guidance with wisdom and discernment, focused on God’s purposes for Moody’s ministries.

TUESDAY  
OCTOBER

25

*The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.*

2 Peter 2:9

## The Doom of False Teachers

Many scholars think that the false teachers that concerned Peter were influenced by Epicurean philosophy, which rejected the notion of divine providence. Without the gods (or God) intervening in human affairs, there was also no divine judgment, and so the most important thing was to pursue and fulfill human desires. The Roman historian Plutarch said this about the Epicurean beliefs: “The procrastination and delay of the Deity . . . destroys belief in providence.” If there’s either no god or God can’t punish wickedness, why not do whatever you want?

In these verses, Peter demolishes the notion that false teachers will escape the judgment of God. He relies on what has already been established as the unshakable foundation for truth: God’s character and His Word.

From the beginning, God has declared divine, holy judgment on those who

oppose Him. The angels led by Lucifer were cast out of heaven (v. 4; see Isa. 14:12–15). The Lord ended the reign of ungodliness that had filled the earth by bringing the Flood, saving Noah and judging those who mocked him (v. 5; see Gen. 6:13). The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which not even ten righteous people could be found, was punished by God through utter destruction (v. 6; see Genesis 19).

All of these examples are documented in Scripture, testifying to God’s holiness and sovereignty. And as we’ve seen in chapter 1, we can rely on Scripture as the reliable and inspired Word of God. In the midst of judgment, however, God is also faithful to save the righteous. Noah and Lot are proof that God keeps His promises (v. 9). The wicked can be assured of God’s judgment, and the righteous can be assured of His deliverance.

### APPLY THE WORD

These words should encourage our hearts. We can look at the world and identify reasons for fear and dismay: people profane the name of the Lord, the greedy oppress the needy, and sinful desires are encouraged. But we have God’s promise to deliver us, both from the trials and temptations of life now and from the judgment on the world to come.

### PRAY WITH US

Moody Central provides centralized student services to all Moody schools and campuses from its offices on the second floor of Culbertson Hall in Chicago. Please include its staff, Janet Gibbs and Jeremiah Hill, in your prayers today.

*God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind.*

Numbers 23:19

WEDNESDAY  
OCTOBER

26

## The Pride of False Teachers

Recall the story of Balaam (Numbers 22–24). Frightened of the vast nation of Israel moving through the land, King Balak of Moab hired Balaam to curse them. Balaam, a powerful prophet or sorcerer, was eager to accept the assignment—and the payment that came with it—but encountered a problem: the Lord would not allow him to curse His people. Instead, blessings poured from his mouth.

There has been no shortage of those who are willing to lead God’s people into destruction as long as they can make a profit from it. Peter describes the arrogance of these false teachers, who disregard the power of God and spiritual reality. Their pride infects both their blasphemous teaching and their sacrilegious lifestyle, which openly celebrates the pursuit of pleasure (vv. 12–13). They don’t respect God’s authority over either their beliefs or their actions.

These false teachers demonstrate a shocking disregard for others. They will seduce others into adultery, if it suits their whim. They will exploit others for financial gain, if they feel like it. They will profane the gathering of believers for worship and celebrations such as the Lord’s Supper, if they can get away with it (v. 14). The trinity worshiped by these heretics is Me, Myself, and I.

In the midst of this fiery pronouncement of judgment on the pride of these false prophets, don’t miss the note of reassurance for believers. God used a donkey to restrain Balaam, and He is able to protect His people today from the curse of false teachers (v. 16; see Num. 22:21–35). When we are tempted to despair, remember that if God can make a donkey speak, He is able to curtail the power of false prophets and the devastation of their heresy.

### APPLY THE WORD

Peter uses the story of Balaam to warn of ungodly teachers and to remind us of the protection of God. Take some extra time to read those chapters in Numbers, noting the ways that Balaam opposed Israel and also the ways that God thwarted his plan. Note especially the prophecy about Jesus, the best promise of all (Num. 24:15–19).

### PRAY WITH US

Your prayers will be an encouragement for Debbie Zelinski, vice president of Human Resources on Moody’s Chicago campus. Pray for wisdom and discernment in serving Moody’s staff and faculty.

THURSDAY  
OCTOBER  
**27**

*They have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 2:20

## The Judgment on False Teachers

Setan’s life seemed to be turning around. She had been sold by her family to a brothel owner in Phnom Penh when she was 12 years old, with the hope that she would earn money for her family. But two years later the police raided the brothel and declared that she was free. A local couple offered to take in several of the young girls and provide them with schooling. But this salvation was actually a ruse: the couple intended to force the girls into yet another prostitution ring.

Such stories should horrify and anger us. Abuse of vulnerable children is a grievous sin, and even worse is the promise of freeing children from bondage only to enslave them again (see Matt. 18:6). This should help us understand Peter’s feeling about the false teachers who are ensnaring new believers, young children in the faith, and leading them away from the truth of freedom in Christ.

Scripture certainly doesn’t mince words about the sin of these deceivers and the judgment that awaits them. They promise life and freedom but deliver death and slavery (vv. 17, 19). They tell believers that following Jesus doesn’t mean giving up your sinful habits and desires—in fact, they claim that their pride and lust and greed are perfectly acceptable to God (v. 18). *Doesn’t God want you to be happy?* they hiss, an echo of the first deception perpetrated by Satan in the Garden of Eden (see Gen. 3:1–5).

Judgment will come: “Blackest darkness is reserved for them” (v. 18). What makes their embrace and propagation of heresy even more tragic is that these false teachers have heard the gospel (vv. 20–21). They have rejected the marriage supper of the Lamb in order to feast on vomit (v. 22; see Rev. 19:19).

### APPLY THE WORD

If you are a new follower of Jesus, make every effort to grow in your faith: read Scripture, attend a Bible study, find a spiritual mentor, or take a course through Moody Distance Learning ([moody.edu/distance-learning](http://moody.edu/distance-learning)). If you’re an established believer, make every effort to support the spiritual growth of others!

### PRAY WITH US

Today, join us in prayer for the staff and administration of Moody Theological Seminary in Plymouth, Michigan: campus dean Christopher Brooks, Amber Tucker, Paul Wilson, and Micah Jelinek. May they be godly examples to students!

*By God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed.*

2 Peter 3:5

FRIDAY  
OCTOBER

28

## Remember God in the Last Days

Graham Lawton, a cognitive psychologist and an avowed atheist, recently said in the *New Scientist*, “Atheism is psychologically impossible because of the way humans think.” He and other researchers argue that metaphysical belief—whether you call it spirituality or religion or faith or superstition—is deeply ingrained in what it means to be human. Pascal Boyer wrote in the journal *Nature*, “A slew of cognitive traits predisposes us to faith.” To claim to reject all spiritual beliefs not only rejects a notion of God, it also rejects part of what makes us human.

In our reading for today, Peter reminds his readers of the difference between the truth of the gospel and the lies of the false teachers. One key way to distinguish between saving truth and deadly deception is to examine their views of Scripture.

As he did in chapter 1, Peter affirms the truth of Scripture and connects both

the Old and New Testament writings to “wholesome thinking” (vv. 1–2). The word God spoke through the prophets, the letters written by the apostles, and the testimony of Word Himself—Jesus, our Savior—are all life-giving sources of the truth that help us grow in discernment and faith. We can have confidence that the Bible reveals the truth about God.

In contrast, the false teachers question the truth of God’s Word. They allege that His promises are fanciful statements that have no bearing on our lives today (v. 4). They “deliberately forget” that the Word of God has proved powerful and true throughout history: He created the world by His word, and His word will also be powerful and true when He fulfills the promise of judgment on those who have opposed the Lord and tried to deceive His people (vv. 5–7). Their choice to forget God guarantees their own destruction.

### APPLY THE WORD

We live in a world with many religions and competing truth claims. How can we know whom to trust? One way is to examine their view of the Bible. Is it historically interesting literature but not relevant for our lives today? Is it one religious book among many that contains some nice ideas and weird stories? Or is it the true, inspired Word of God?

### PRAY WITH US

Today and tomorrow, as we continue to pray for the MTS campus in Michigan, let’s lift up to God the seminary’s professors—Eric Moore, Eugene Mayhew, and James Wood. Pray that their teaching will always be grounded in Scripture.

SATURDAY  
OCTOBER

29

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise.*

2 Peter 3:9

## God's Faithfulness in the Last Days

Last year, an 80-year-old woman in Treton, France, was stunned to receive a letter in the mail. The message itself was unremarkable, simply an order for some yarn. But the letter had been mailed to her great-grandfather 138 years earlier from a town six miles away—and only now had made its way through the post to be delivered. Her great-grandfather had died in 1897, presumably without filling the order for yarn that he had never received!

Sometimes we might feel as though God's promises are like that letter—perhaps lost in the cosmic postal system, only to arrive too late and too irrelevant for our lives. Peter's readers might have wondered too. They were assailed by those who mocked their faith and propagated a lifestyle of lust, pride, and greed. Would judgment come? They seemed to continue to flourish and revel in their sin (see Job 21:7; Ps. 37:35).

Peter continues to urge his readers to remember—in contrast to the false teachers who “deliberately forget”—that God is faithful (v. 9). First, we must remember that God is not like us. He is not bound by our concepts of time. He is eternal, omniscient, and perfectly good (v. 8). Second, we need to remember that God is patient. Unlike us, He does not act rashly. He is not driven to exact vengeance out of some misguided need to prove His power.

Third, we should remember that God is love. He wants to be in a relationship with the people He has made (v. 9). His goodness, patience, and love mean that He will extend the opportunity for repentance for all who will accept Him. But God's faithfulness also means that judgment will one day come for those who reject Him (v. 10).

### APPLY THE WORD

Psalm 37 is David's magnificent poem with a proper perspective on God's faithfulness and the fate of the wicked. Peter encourages us to remember the truth of Scripture, so take time to read through Psalm 37. Note the descriptions of what awaits those who oppose God, and also note the commands to those who trust Him.

### PRAY WITH US

Please commit to prayer the rest of the MTS faculty in Michigan, John Restum and Joseph Tucker. Ask the Father to bless their calling and ministry of teaching the eternal Word of God in our changing world.

*You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God.*

2 Peter 3:11–12

SUNDAY  
OCTOBER

30

## God's Promise in the Last Days

In the American legal system, closing arguments are made by both the prosecution and the defense counsel after all the evidence has been presented. The attorneys highlight and summarize their key arguments, remind the judge and jury of critical evidence, and then ask for a decision in their favor based on the case they've presented.

As we come to the end of this letter, Peter presents a type of closing argument. He has presented the evidence: we know the false teachers are wrong about God because they contradict the testimony of Scripture. They will be judged, just as others—like Sodom and Gomorrah—have been judged. The question now looms: What will you decide? How will you live? “What kind of people ought you to be?” (v. 11). Our verses today provide both an answer to that question and an additional motivation to remain faithful to God.

Peter reminds us that our lifestyle matters, for it reveals the truth about what we say we believe. Just as the false teachers denied God's power and then embraced a lifestyle of debauchery, so too Christians who claim to trust in a loving, faithful, powerful God should “live holy and godly lives” as a witness to the truth (v. 11). Peter repeats his exhortation to “make every effort” to grow in godliness (v. 14).

Our motivation to pursue holiness encompasses more than just fear of judgment, however. Following Christ is not so-called fire insurance, preserving the status quo to escape the fate of fire and brimstone. Instead, we have confidence that being identified with the Lord means that we are looking forward to something even better: “a new heaven and a new earth,” where we will live forever in perfect relationship with God no longer marred by sin (v. 13; see Rev. 21:1).

### APPLY THE WORD

Are you “looking forward” to being with Jesus in the new heaven and new earth (vv. 13–14)? The challenges of daily life, though real, can distract us. We have to be intentional in our commitment to look forward. Consider a special time of prayer or listening to praise music to help focus your attention on God's promise for your future.

### PRAY WITH US

Please pray for the staff of our IT department headed by Frank Leber, VP of Information Technology Services. They facilitate every ministry of Moody with today's computer technology, and we thank God for these faithful and talented servants.

MONDAY  
OCTOBER

31

*Our Lord's patience means salvation.*

2 Peter 3:15

## God's Salvation in the Last Days

In 1972, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission began requiring child-resistant packaging for medicines in response to the number of children who were accidentally poisoned by ingesting aspirin, medications, or other household products. After the requirement, the number of child deaths plummeted, from 216 deaths in 1972 to 29 fatalities in 1999. These prevention measures have saved many lives.

Peter is also urging his readers to take preventive measures to inoculate themselves against the poison of the false teachers. The core ingredient of their poison was misrepresentation of the Word of God. These blasphemers were not ignorant of God's commands; rather, they distorted and twisted Scripture—including the teaching of Jesus and the apostles—to justify their own immorality (v. 16). Satan in the Garden of Eden had questioned the nature of God's command to not eat

from the tree; now the false prophets questioned the nature of God's character, arguing that their lives of lust and greed proved that God's judgment was an empty threat.

Not so, says Peter! They've misconstrued the evidence. The delay in God's judgment doesn't reveal His impotence—it is evidence of His patience! His grace and mercy abound, giving sinners opportunity for repentance (v. 15). Judgment will come, but so will God's salvation.

The best way to prevent the deadly poison of apostasy is to continue growing "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (v. 18). We grow in our knowledge of Him through prayer and the study of His Word, and we grow in grace through our commitment to live in a way that reflects His character of love, humility, and truth. May we stand strong in our faith, and may our lives bring Him glory!

### APPLY THE WORD

God's patience extends salvation to us, His Word guides us, a relationship with Him brings us joy, and we have the promise of eternal life forever in His presence. Make a list of the blessings of God for which you're thankful, and when you face the temptations from the world, use it as a reminder of who God is and what He has done for you.

### PRAY WITH US

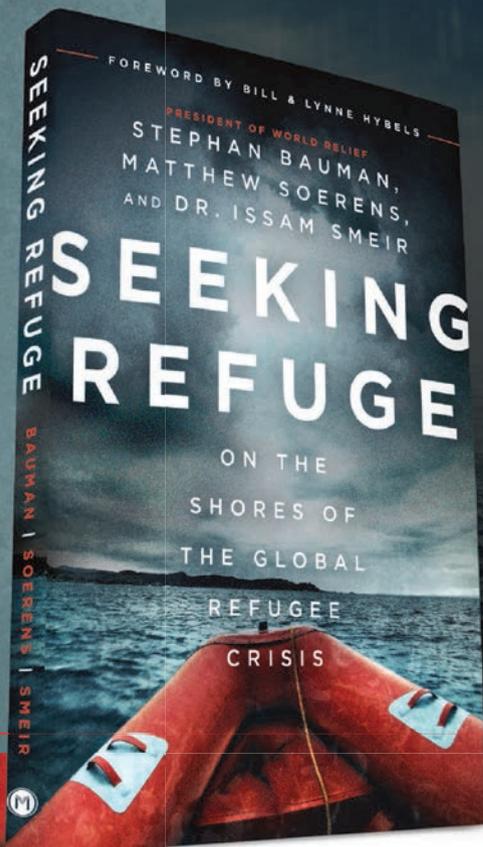
Concluding our Bible study with *Today in the Word* this month, let us thank the Lord for the gift of salvation given to us through His sacrifice. May we never lose sight of the future that awaits us with Him and always remember the price He paid.

“”

**Some people—including some Christians—have allowed fear to dominate the refugee conversation.** This book thoughtfully counters the falsehoods that give rise to much of that fear, and calls each of us to be bold agents of Jesus’ transforming love.

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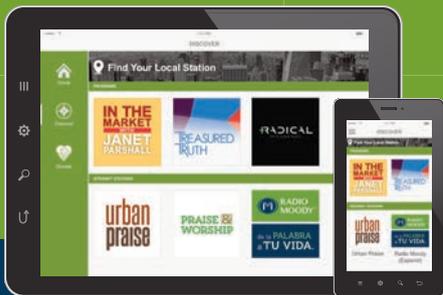
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