

Some Closing Words from Peter

Framing the Flock, Part 9

1 Peter 5:11-14

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Peter closes his letter by recognizing a faithful brother in Christ and encouraging the church. He encourages the church to be willing servants in all areas of life. The church should be loving and kind to one another, which means the church cries with one another, complements one another, prays for one another, and is happy for one another. The church is the body of Christ and should be unified as well as standing firm in the gospel. The gospel should be at the forefront of the church. We should be sharing the gospel with everyone. We should be serving with an eternal perspective. It's not about us. It's not about our little corner of the world or our little church. It's about God and sharing who He is with others.

Discussion Points:

Unity can be a difficult subject. It's easy to get caught up in what we want and look for how we can accomplish that. We seek our desires and neglect to look to the needs of others.

- Why is unity so important in the church?
- What are some areas that people disagree or fight over in the church?
- What are some practical steps that will help the church move forward in unity?

We were reminded that it is important to remember the suffering of others. Suffering is everywhere. We see it all the time. People are going through some devastating trials.

- Showing compassion comes easier for some people and not for others. Does our culture today emphasize being compassionate towards others?
- Does showing compassion involve compromising our beliefs? Why or why not?
- How can we show others that we care and that they are not suffering alone?
- We know the peace that Jesus provides. How often do you share that with others?
- Find some passages that mention living peaceably and write down ways that Jesus is the ultimate Peacemaker.

Discussion Guide Cont.

Jesus is the only One who provides true peace. As believers, we know the peace that He can provide.

- We live in a world where all people want is “world peace” yet they are unwilling to bend or put the needs of others above themselves. What does living as a peaceful Christian look like in today’s culture?

Gospel Connection:

Living in unity, encouragement, peace, and compassion is only possible through the gospel. Because of Jesus, we can know how to live in unity and peace. We can know how to be compassionate and suffer with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We can know how to truly encourage and complement others instead of harboring jealousy or anger. The church has a unified purpose—to share the gospel with others, to make disciples. The gospel brings us together. We can have nothing else in common. But if we have Jesus, we have all we need to move forward in unity. We have a greater purpose that is so much bigger than our little corner of the world. A big God is doing great things all around us and through us. We need to be sharing that with anyone who will listen.

Practical Implications:

Think: How often are you sharing the gospel with others? How often are you being a faithful servant of God? What ways do you encourage others and walk in peace?

Pray: Ask God to give you a compassionate heart. Ask God to give you confidence and boldness in sharing Jesus. Ask God to help you walk in peace.

Do: Be thankful for who God is. Be thankful for all He has done in your life. Write down what God has done and how He has transformed your life. Share that with others.

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1 Peter 5:12-14

In the last eight years of ministry, we've spent our Sunday mornings studying together five New Testament Books of the Bible.

1. We studied the Book of James and it took us 31 sermons;
2. Then we went through the Book of Titus in 25 studies;
3. Then we went through the Book of Philippians and it took 41 studies;
4. After that we went through the Book of 1 John and it only took 26 sermons;
5. And now we've come to our final study in 1 Peter and this is our 52 sermon.

I don't know if I'm slowing down or speeding up. I might be speeding up; 15 years ago we finished studying through the Book of Romans and it took 159 sermons.

People were wondering if I got paid extra for making them suffer . . . imagine going through 1 Peter and having 100 sermons yet to go?

Well, it wouldn't be difficult . . . this has been such a practical, encouraging letter to study together with you . . . and truthfully, we've only skimmed the surface.

One thing's for certain – God's inspired word through Peter is as fresh today as it was when it was first read in churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire . . . to believers who were suffering for their faith in their Lord . . . believers who were wondering, "How in the world do you live for Christ when everything is turning upside down?"

So let's go back there together one final time – 1 Peter chapter 5. It's just three verses, but we're introduced to some pretty special people whom Peter wants to thank.

As we work through these last three verses, I want to structure our thoughts around eight principles that can be applied to our own lives

today – in a very real, practical, rubber meets the road kind of manner.

And the first principle is this:

1. Don't overlook the need for personal trustworthiness

Now notice as Peter begins writing:
Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him) I have written to you briefly.

1 Peter 5:12a

Stop there . . . and focus just on the introduction of Silvanus – a man Peter calls *a faithful brother*.

In every passage in the New Testament, whenever the word "faithful" (*pistos*) is used of a particular individual, it means to that they were the kind of person who could be relied upon for a particular mission or assignment.¹

Silvanus was that kind of guy who finishes the project everyone is counting on. Frankly, Silvanus is one of the overlooked biographies in the early church.

Who was he? For starters, he was a converted Roman citizen – cultured and well educated. He was best known, not by his formal, Latin name, Silvanus, but his shortened Greek name, Silas.

By the time you're introduced to him, he is a leading man in the early church – part of that epoch council that decided in Acts 15 that Gentiles could be considered full members of the church, right alongside the Jewish members.

Then later, during the Apostle Paul's first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had along with them a young man named John Mark. But something happened during that journey that caused Mark to simply quit.

It was sudden, unexpected and unbelievably disappointing. Whatever happened, John Mark

had seen enough and packed his bags and went back home.

Later on, when Paul and Barnabas began preparing for their second missionary journey, John Mark volunteered again – and Barnabas wanted to take him along. But Paul refused. There's no way we're risking our missionary journey with that quitter on the team.

Their difference of opinion about John Mark grew into a heated debate and eventually, it divided Paul and Barnabas after years of close friendship and ministry companionship. We know later on they patched things up, but in the meantime, Barnabas left with John Mark as his companion, and Paul joined up with this church leader by the name of Silas – and off they went.

Silas was Paul's kind of ministry companion: faithful . . . hard working . . . resilient . . . positive . . . and always ready.

They both served time in jail for their faith – in fact you're probably aware of that duet by Paul and Silas who started singing from their prison cell one night at midnight.

Silas would later spend time serving with Peter, who by the way, had taken John Mark – known later as Mark – under his wing. More on that later.

Now, some 25-30 years later years later, you find Peter dictating this letter to Silas.

The original construction of verse 11 can be understood to mean,

Through Silas . . . I have written to you briefly. In other words, Silas is Peter's secretary, or scribe.

Just as the Apostle Paul concluded his letter to the Romans by allowing us to learn that a man by the name of Tertius was actually doing the writing of Paul's inspired thoughts, we now discover there's been another guy in the room with Peter. his battle tested, well educated, Roman citizen by the name of Silas.

And this helps explain the polished Greek language of this letter – when Peter was a rough, uneducated fisherman with little or no education.

We know from history that scribes used a form of shorthand in recording dictation and

then wrote it all out later in longhand. The scribe would arrange the sentences and thoughts and smooth out the language – and the author, would edit and approve the final copy. ⁱⁱ

This is exactly what Silas and Peter did together. And what this also means is that Peter now personally takes the quill from Silas and **verses 12, 13 and 14** are written as closing comments by Peter own hand – and not surprising, some of the grammar and vocabulary changes, as this old fisherman takes up the quill.

It occurred to me that Silas is not known for this project, to the average Christian today. He was never added to the cover of this best seller. This Book of 1 Peter was never known as the Book of 1 Peter and Silas.

In fact, if Peter hadn't made this little comment, we'd have never known Silas was in the room.

But from what we can piece together about Silas, he would have been perfectly happy with that . . . he was entirely content to play second fiddle to the Apostles and the early church.

Without hardly any recognition, applause and absolutely no royalties from publishers, Silas simply goes down in history as a faithful, trustworthy servant of Jesus Christ.

And what's so bad about that? Jesus will never say to any believer, "Well done thou good and faithful author; thou famous and well known singer; well done thou brilliant and well-spoken leader."

No . . . He hands out commendation to a lot of people who played second fiddle in the orchestra of life.

Listen, there are a lot of people today who are willing to do great things for God . . . but not enough people willing to do small things for God . . . simple things . . . redundant things . . . boring things . . . unseen things.

But the truth is – the church then and this church today – cannot survive and will not thrive without them!

By the way, learn something from Peter here too . . . and let me make this our second principle;

2. Don't withhold compliments from those who are faithful

This is no throwaway line here – notice, tucked into this text –

Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him) . . .

1 Peter 5:12a

In other words, I've noticed this about Silas – he is a faithful brother – and I want you to know about it. This was Peter's way of tipping his hat to a faithful brother who deserved to hear the words, "Well done" not just from Jesus, but from the church as well.

It made me wonder, have we thanked anyone lately? What about those people in your early years who taught you, encouraged you, marked you, motivated you . . . and in more recent years, they challenged you, or perhaps sat next to you when you were ill, or wrote a note of encouragement to you when you were down.

What about people who will serve you today behind the scenes in the church body . . . rocking your baby in the nursery and singing to them while they scream their heads off; teaching your toddlers who can't sit still, discipling your teenagers through transitions of life; making coffee in the Café or greeting visitors or leading the small group, or planning the activity or setting up the chairs – and on and on and on.

Send them an email or phone call that says, "Hey, I'm pretty sure a lot of people don't even know what you do, but I want you to know that I've taken notice of your faithful service and I just wanted to pass along my thanks!

If you do that in person, you might want to carry some smelling salts because that person is likely to faint with shock that someone noticed.

The church cannot survive and it will not thrive without that kind of observation and commendation!

And by the way, don't just notice them – and thank them – consider joining them in that role of service. The fact that you noticed them might be God's way of moving your heart toward that

ministry position or role – it won't matter to you if it's up front or out back, or behind the scenes.

You're just glad to pick up your fiddle and play along.

Number 3.

3. Don't keep the good news to yourself

I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God.

Stand firm in it!

1 Peter 5:12b

This is the message of the gospel – the word gospel simply means "good news". Peter writes, I've written you to encourage you and confirm for you the truth about the grace of God. And he's referring here to the gospel message.

And Peter says, this is what motivated me to write to you. Listen, it's easy to overlook the fact that Peter didn't just sit there.

He could have easily convinced himself that he wasn't an author . . . even with the proofing and editing help of Silas, he probably thought, "What do I have to say to anybody?"

Besides, everyone in the church knows that Peter has been a man who had often spoken without having anything to say.

Why would anyone want to listen to me . . . why risk some new project? Who would ever read it? Life is safer without changing the routine. I'm not prepared for this!

One man wrote recently, there are people who never go anywhere in life without a thermometer, a raincoat, an aspirin and a parachute . . . just in case.ⁱⁱⁱ But not Peter. He simply wasn't the kind of man to keep good news to himself.

Have you ever thought about the fact that God did not choose to give this church and this generation another Augustine . . . another Martin Luther . . . another Charles Spurgeon or Amy Carmichael or William Wilberforce or Jim and Elizabeth Elliott.

No, God actually chose to give this church – and this city – and this generation and this world

- a testimony of the gospel – to be lived and communicated and demonstrated – through you!^{iv} You're it!

So as Peter writes here, take your stand in the gospel of Christ – make your commitment . . . stand fast! Today you are His mouthpiece . . . His ambassador . . . His representative in that home, that workplace, that classroom. So who have you told in the last few weeks and months the good news of Jesus?

How about your children? How about your grandchildren? How about that dorm-mate or co-worker or the mailman?

Listen, if the dissemination of the gospel literally depended upon you and me, who would hear it, this year?

Let's not keep the good news of the grace of God to ourselves . . . and let's not budge from our commitment to this gospel of grace alone.

Fourth,

4. Don't ignore the reality of suffering in the lives of others

Notice how Peter pens this next phrase –

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings.

1 Peter 5:13a

She who is in Babylon is a figure of speech to refer to the church located in the world – perhaps Rome, or less likely, Babylon on the Euphrates.

What Peter seems to be doing is simply referring to the church as *she* – and that's not really a stretch of the imagination . . . the church is seen as feminine – as the bride of Christ. In fact the noun translated the church – is a feminine noun.

I don't want to bore you with a tedious debate, but some have argued that Peter is sending greetings from his wife.

We do know that Peter was married (Mathew 8:14) and we also know that his wife traveled with him at times in his ministry assignments (1 Corinthians 9:5).^v

But it would have been out of place for him to send greetings from his wife without giving us her name.

We don't know of any woman so well known in the early church to be known without any need to reference her name.

I would agree with the majority of commentators – in fact, going all the way back to the earliest commentators of the early church – Peter as writing of the church. She (the church) who is in Babylon . . . sends you greetings. And it was typical for letters between believers to include greetings between churches.

Over the years, as I've traveled to churches in different countries and regions of the world, in many places it was typical – if not expected – for me to give them greetings from you, my home church.

Now notice again – *she who is in Babylon*. Again, if not understood figuratively, it's confusing to know what Peter means here.

We do know that in Jewish literature, Babylon was a word used for Rome – and Babylon would be a fitting term for Rome.

A first century author and church leader known as Beda – wrote that Paul could refer to Rome as Babylon because of its idolatry and immorality.

It was Babylon that had carried the people of Israel into captivity (2 Kings 24); in the past, Babylon was the Jew's worst enemy and now, Rome was the worst enemy of the early Christians.^{vi}

Most believe, and I would agree, that Peter used the word Babylon for Rome, simply to protect the church there – should this manuscript be found – and as we've already discussed – should Peter's potentially treasonous words be taken out of context.

Peter was protecting the identity of the church as a whole. Which leads me to make the point – Peter was sensitive to the fact that his brothers and sisters were suffering. He didn't want to add suffering upon suffering and put their lives in any more peril than they already were.

Let me make another principled point from this phrase – number 5;

5. Don't forget you're not the only church that matters

Peter carefully makes all of these churches equally elect – notice again:

She who is in Babylon, co-elect – is the word used – chosen together with you . . .

1 Peter 5:13a

As if to say, we're in this together! The churches that bear the gospel of truth and grace in Cary – throughout North Carolina, throughout the United States and around the world – all matter.

We are all members of one Body of Christ, worshiping and serving in distinct local churches. And it's important to greet one another . . . and pray for one another.

Typically, as I'm driving to church on Sunday morning, I spend time confessing my sinfulness and need of Christ's forgiveness and strength . . . then I pray for every pastor I can think of by name and then every pastor in general who will stand and preach on this Lord's Day the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We're in this together.

Beloved, it's easy to think that God only cares about our little world around us – our little movement – our little association – our little denomination – our little local church – our local region – our native country.

I fear that many people think God is a Baptist – and that every good thing is going to come out of the Baptists; or worse yet, I fear many Christians in this country think God is an American. That prophetic fulfilment is somehow tied to what's happening in America. God is not an American any more than He's a German or a Romanian.

God is calling a church to Himself, by the gospel of grace – from all around the world; and it's a church made up of Americans and Germans and Romanians. But as Paul

essentially reminded us all – our citizenship isn't Roman or German or Romanian or American . . . our citizenship is in Heaven.

And one day the nations of the world will cease to exist as Jesus creates a new earth and new heavens and we all as one holy nation (1 Peter 2:9) finally get to worship Him forever as members of the nation of the Redeemed.

Number 6;

6. Don't ever conclude that someone's failure is permanently fatal

Paul adds that not only are churches in his region sending their greetings – notice,

And so does my son, Mark.

1 Peter 5:13b

Yes, the same young man who quit the missionary journey while traveling with Paul and Barnabas. Yes, the same young man who caused the infamous split between Paul and Barnabas and how the strife must have spread.

He is a deserter . . . he had thrown in the towel . . . he had failed the Lord and Paul and the church.

No one saw any potential in young Mark – no one would have guessed that he would end up, with the help of Peter, writing what we know as the Gospel of Mark.

Just as Paul referred to Timothy as his son, so Peter had taken in Mark as his spiritual son; and we know from other passages, along with a truckload of church history, that Mark had flourished where he had once failed.

And here in this text, decades after he failed, he's sending greetings through his spiritual mentor, serving alongside the Apostle Peter in the church.

By the way, who better to befriend and disciple and encourage Mark than a man who had felt the shame of deserting Jesus – of denying the Savior. Who better than Peter? The disciple who blew it . . . the disciple who forever became associated with failure at the worst moment possible.

Peter writes from experience . . . an old man who knew what it was like to be given 2nd chances and many more.

Another principle needs to be mentioned – number 7;

7. Don't hold back your enthusiasm when you come to the assembly.

Peter writes in the next verse;

Greet one another with a kiss of love
1 Peter 5:14

I love this phrase – as a teenager this was my life verse. It's biblical!

And by the way, if you have trouble with Paul's command to greet one another with a *holy kiss* – which he commands 4 different times (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26) – a holy kiss – imagine Peter calling it a kiss of love.

The word is from *philia* which refers to deep affection. Greet one another with a kiss of brotherly love. Which means – don't complain about germs when you come to church and are asked to shake hands! Imagine being commanded to greet those around you with a kiss.

Now what exactly does this mean? We know from church history that all the believers kissed one another on the cheek when they assembled. Disciples kissed their Rabbi on the cheek when they greeted one another – which is what Judas did to Jesus in Mark 14:44.^{vii}

The kiss became an essential part of the worship service – in fact, Tertullian, the second century church leader wrote, “How can prayers be completed [in the assembly] if the kiss is missing?”^{viii}

Why? Because, as one historian pointed out – the kiss was the sign that all injuries were forgotten and all wrongs forgiven and that those who sat at the Lord's Table were united in the Lord.

So this was a cultural symbol of unity and appreciation and love. In this culture and at this time it wasn't awkward – it wasn't sensual – it wasn't inappropriate – it didn't include embracing along with the kiss – it was a brief kiss at that.

In the early church, whenever a person was baptized, they were kissed by the entire assembly; a kiss was added to the vows of marriage and a kiss between the bride and groom concluded the ceremony.

However, given the accusations of immorality in the early church by the unbelieving world who misunderstood their kiss of love and their agape feasts – their love feasts – which celebrated communion – the practice faded and by the 13th century, it was reserved for men to men and women to women.^{ix}

Here's the point – in whatever cultural setting is appropriate, it's not only encouraged – Peter here commands it – show appropriate affection and unity and love toward one another.

Today in our culture that might look like a holy handshake – and a smile! But just make it count. Don't hand somebody a limp washrag of a handshake but a firm handshake and a big smile and a greeting along with it.

Imagine the unity and comradery and encouragement coming to church could be if everyone in the assembly obeyed the command of Peter.

Don't come in here and mumble hello . . . or refuse to meet someone's eyes . . . or sit there . . . and leave complaining that no one said hello! When you arrive – Peter is actually commanding this – you're to be kind and encouraging and affectionate toward your brothers and sisters in Christ. So don't hold back.

One more principle from Peter's closing thoughts;

8. Don't forget that peace doesn't come from anywhere, or anyone, but Jesus Christ.

Peter ends with a prayer – notice the last line of his letter;

Peace be to you all who are in Christ.
1 Peter 5:14b

You could understand this to read, Peace be to all of you who are *connected* to Christ.

This peace, by the way, isn't an attitude – Peter isn't saying, you need to feel peaceful now.

This Greek word refers to the state of peace – it is the opposite of being in the state of war. Kittle writes that this word was linked to the treaties of peace in the ancient world.^x

Which is why Jesus would arrive in that upper room after His resurrection from the dead and say to his disciples this same phrase – which Peter evidently never forgot – ***Peace be with you (John 20:19).***

Their lives were anything but peaceful! Are you kidding? Jesus was simply telling them He was victorious. They could now live in a state of peace with God through His death and resurrection.

Paul wrote it this way:

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1

The peace treaty has been written in the blood of Jesus Christ. And all who come to Christ by faith in Him alone can sign their names to that peace treaty . . . and have everlasting peace and security with the living God of the universe.

Yes, Peter has been absolutely clear; the days aren't peaceful . . . the days are dark . . . there's an invisible lion on the prowl . . . the war has been won, but the enemy refuses to lay down his arms . . . suffering and persecution are imminent . . .^{xi}

But you – believer – happen to live in the state of peace – within the borders of belonging to God . . . and as Peter closes he wants to emphasize – we belong to one another in Christ.

So how do we live in this world for Christ?

Especially as culture grows hostile and unloving? How are Christians supposed to live?

Peter wraps up his letter by reminding us of just a few action points – let me close by rehearsing them with a comment after each one – there were 8 of them if I counted correctly:

1. First, don't overlook the need for personal trustworthiness

God isn't asking you to do something great – He's simply asking you to tackle your assignments and do the right thing – today.

2. Secondly, don't withhold compliments from those who are faithful

Look around . . . start sharing compliments and kind words.

3. Third, don't keep the good news to yourself

Live as if the gospel is waiting on you to be delivered to your world . . . guess what – it is . . .

4. Fourth, don't ignore the reality of suffering in the lives of others

Don't minimize the suffering of others – in fact, do your part to relieve it, not condemn it.

5. Fifth, don't forget you're not the only church that matters

God is actually just as interested in other people and other churches besides yours.

6. Don't ever conclude that someone's failure permanently fatal

It could be the prelude to fruitful service for Christ. He might just end up writing a best seller for the glory of Christ.

7. Don't hold back your enthusiasm when you come to the assembly.

Come to church prepared, so to speak, to kiss someone with gestures of kindness and encouragement and hope.

8. Don't forget that peace doesn't come from anywhere, or anyone, but in and

through Jesus Christ, our Lord and soon coming Redeemer.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 06/24/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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- i Adapted from D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1984), p. 327
ii Hiebert, p. 327
iii Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, Hope Again (Word Publishing, 1996), p. 269
iv Adapted from Matt Chandler, Take Heart (The Good Book Company, 2018), p. 117
v Hiebert, p. 329
vi Life Application Bible: 1 & 2 Peter/Jude (Tyndale House, 1995), p. 140
vii William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 279
viii Ibid
ix Adapted from Barclay, pp. 280-281
x Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume (Eerdmans, 1985), p. 207
xi Adapted from John Phillips, Exploring the Epistles of Peter (Kregel, 2005), p. 211