

## TAKEAWAY ACTION

I CHOOSE, by faith, to have a RELATIONSHIP  
with God through Jesus Christ.

I CHOOSE, by faith, to trust in GOD'S GOODNESS,  
and not in my own.

I CHOOSE, by faith, to put MY FAITH IN HIM,  
not myself.

At [GraceLife Church](#), our mission is drawing people  
into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ!



### MY NEXT STEP TODAY IS TO:

#### □ Memorize:

- Accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.   □ 1<sup>st</sup> Time   □ Recommit
- I choose to receive salvation God's way, by faith.
- I choose to live every day God's way, by faith.
- I will apply today's message by \_\_\_\_\_

For podcasts, past messages, Wednesday bible studies,  
spiritual growth resources, and more, please visit us

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E-mail us at [Info@GraceLifeNow.org](mailto:Info@GraceLifeNow.org)

[GraceLife Church](#), 919 Lincolnwood Lane, Longwood, FL 32750

### UPCOMING EVENTS

⇒ Adult Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.

## Living with Integrity Because People are Watching Thriving During Difficult Times

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:11-25

November 21, 2021

*Pastor Dr. Stan Ponz / [GraceLifeNow.org](#)*

Memory Verse

**Order of Service:**

5 Before 5 (Last chance to get coffee)

Preparation for Singing – Prayer

Announcements

Prayer

Connection Card (please fill out and add prayer requests)

Singing

Video

Message

Prayer

Upcoming Events

Connection Card (time to get those praises & prayers listed)

Offering

Final Thoughts

We all sing “As we go”

Goodbye and God Bless

Please stay afterwards, talk and make a friend while having another cup of coffee.

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1) Keeping \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_

***“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” (v. 11)***

2) \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
***“Be subject [submissive] for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good...Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.” (vv. 13, 14, 17, 18)***

**Three ways to show you are an authentic Christian...**

(1) Show \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ Christians \_\_\_\_\_.

(3) \_\_\_\_\_ God and \_\_\_\_\_ the government.

3) \_\_\_\_\_ God \_\_\_\_\_  
***“For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (vv. 19 – 24)***

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## Living with Integrity Because People Are Watching *Thriving During Difficult Times*

*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

1 Peter 2:11 – 25 ESV

Peter says that people are watching your every move to see what kind of person you are. Notice 1 Peter 2:12, *“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God...”* Circle the word "see". The word there in Greek literally means "observe, intently watch". Not a passing glance but a concentrated effort. People are making mental notes on you. People are watching you whether you like it or not, particularly if you claim to be a believer.

What do they watch? They watch to see if your walk matches your talk. They watch to see if what you say you believe matches what you do. They watch to see if you have integrity. Peter says that the hallmark of the Christian life is integrity. He says that there are three things that test your integrity, and people are going to watch how you respond to these things: *Temptation, Authority, Suffering*. How you respond to these three things will determine if you're a witness or not, whether you have influence or not, whether you have integrity or not.

### **People Are Watching So Live with Integrity By...**

Last time we learned what God's Word said about us. Today Peter tells us, here is how you should live considering all those things and God says, because people are watching live with integrity by doing three things:

1. Staying away from temptation.
2. Yielding to authority.
3. Trusting God in suffering.

I want to focus primarily on the second one. I'll just mention a couple of things about the first one.

### 1. Keeping Away from Temptation

*"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul."* (v. 11)

Circle "*abstain*". That word simply means to "*stay away, steer clear, stop*". If something tempts you, get away from it. A person of integrity, if they're watching something on TV or a movie and they know this isn't what a Christian should be watching, they don't say, "Nobody knows I'm watching this." A person of integrity will change the channel. A person of integrity will leave the theater. A person of integrity will lock the refrigerator or whatever it is that tempts you. He's saying if you don't want to get stung, stay away from the bees. If you don't want to get burned, stay away from the fire.

Stay away from temptation. Why? He says, "You are sojourners and exiles or strangers and aliens here." The Living Bible says "visitors, temporary residents." The Greek word literally means "people who don't have citizenship". They may have a green card or temporary visa, or they are people just passing through.

What he's saying is this: Your real home, if you're a believer, isn't here on earth. It's in Heaven. You're just passing through. You'll be here 60, 70, 80 years so don't get hung up, don't get attached, don't get too cozy with this world because you're not going to stay here very long. When all those things tempt you to make this the most important thing in your life, realize "I'm just passing through."

Would you agree that it's easy to get caught up in our culture? If you live around sin long enough, pretty soon you start becoming comfortable with it. When you hear somebody curse and take the Lord's name in vain, pretty soon you start saying, "That doesn't bother me." It ought to bother you when Jesus' name is taken in vain. Or if you watch enough sex and violence on television and the movies and say, "It just doesn't bother me." Peter says this stuff wages against your very soul. You're in big trouble. If you don't mind watching other people, do it, eventually you're going to end up doing it.

So, he says, just stay away from temptation. People with integrity swim upstream. "Friends, this world is not your home. Don't make yourself cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul."

Peter writes, "*Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*" (v. 16) As a Christian you're free. You can't lose your salvation. Once it's been given to you, you can't lose it. The fact is, you're free from the law but don't use that as an excuse to sin.

I can get drunk all I want. I can cheat on my taxes all I want. I can take all the drugs I want to take. I can mess around with all the women I want to mess around with. But Jesus changed my want to. I don't want to do those things.

People ask me all the time, "Can you be a Christian and do [name your favorite vice]"? My answer is always the same. Yes, you can go out and do all kinds of sins and not lose your salvation. But integrity demands that you don't. It's not a matter of salvation; it's a matter of integrity. Integrity says, "My life backs up what I say." And if you claim to be a Christian, don't drag the name of Christ through the gutter, or don't call yourself a believer. He says, you're free, you're not going to lose your salvation. But integrity demands that you don't.

People often ask me, "What's God's will for my life? How can I know God's will?" This verse tells you what God's will is. Peter writes, *"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."* (v. 15) Circle "will of God". God's will for your life is that you live with integrity, that your life matches what you say you believe. It is God's will that you be an advertisement of Jesus Christ, at work, at play, at school and that you live above reproach. You are the only Bible some people will ever read. You're either a Bible or a liable for the name of Christ. We need show and tell Christians.

Would you agree that the world, especially the media, is looking for things to find fault within Christians? They never have any positive stories about believers. It's always these goof-ball tel-evangelists on the fringe. Obviously, you don't want to defend that.

You cannot control the lies that people say about you. But you can control the truth. You do have control over that. I want to live my life and I want you to live your life in such a way that people must make up stuff about you in order to accuse you. That's what it means to stay away from temptation, that they have to make up stuff, just to accuse you.

## 2. Yielding to Authority

*"Be subject [submissive] for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good...Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust."* (vv. 13, 14, 17, 18)

The second way your integrity is tested is how you respond to authority -- people in government, people in law enforcement, your boss, spiritual authorities like pastors, any authority figures in your life. How you handle that reveals your maturity. Peter writes, *"Be [submissive] subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good."* (vv. 13, 14) He says respect the king (the government) and the law enforcement (those who carry out the enforcement of the laws for good or for bad). Circle the word "be submissive". He says that you're to yield and that's a mark of a believer of how you yield to authority.

What does that mean? When you get to a yield sign while you're driving, what do you do? (Or what should you do?) Yield means you let the other guy have his way first. That is a mark of a true, mature believer. You don't have to have your way all the time. You're able to yield, you're able to give in, able to not be selfish, to submit. Submission, yielding, is not a sign of weakness. Yielding is a sign of self-control. It means I don't have to have my way all the time. It says, "I feel good enough about myself, I don't have to have my way all the time." Insecure people must have their way all the time. An insecure person says, "I have my rights!" Whenever anybody says that, they're saying, "I'm scared to death inside." Mature people are secure people, and they don't always have to have their way, they're able to let things slide; let things go. They don't always demand that it be their way.

Peter says, this is the way you ought to be. People are going to watch you to see how you as a believer respond to authority -- your boss, the government, law enforcement, police officers, everyone in authority.

Notice it says every human institution, emperor, and governor are ordained by God. He sends them. The King James Version says law enforcement people are ministers. God allows government in order to establish order, to set up laws. Even bad government, even the worse government is preferable to chaos, to anarchy. You are to respect them.

Why? It says, "*For the Lord's sake.*" Circle that phrase. You don't respect them because they deserve it. You respect them because the Lord has allowed them to serve you in that way. He's saying again, "If you call yourself a Christian, you represent Christ."

Peter writes, "...governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to **praise those who do good...**" (v. 14) Eugene Peterson in *The Message* puts it this way, "Make the Master proud of you be being good citizens. Respect the authorities, whatever their level; they are God's emissaries for keeping order." Does that mean tax law? Unfortunately, it does. Traffic laws? One guy said, "The last thing to get saved on my body was my right foot. Every other part of me lives for Jesus but that right foot." That guy still puts the pedal to the metal. Show respect for authority.

Peter goes on to write, "*Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor [the government].*" (v. 17) **Three ways to show you are an authentic Christian...**

- (1) **Show respect for everybody.** Prejudice is inconceivable in the life of a believer. There's absolutely no place for racism. If you ever want to see your pastor mad, give a racial slur standing around me and watch the volcano. It's inexcusable for a believer. The ground is level at the foot of the cross and He loves every person -- size, shape, color, background, whatever.
- (2) **Love Christians everywhere.** You may not like everybody in this church, but you've got to love them. Why? Because He says we are to love each other. We're brothers and sisters in Christ. We're in the family of God.

**(3) Fear God and honor the government.** Jesus said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." I have a hard time with that verse when I think about who Peter was writing it to. Remember, when Peter was writing this book the Christians were the outcasts of society. They wouldn't be able to meet freely like we do. They were being hounded and hunted and persecuted and thrown to the lions. Peter says, "honor the emperor." Nero was the emperor of Rome at this time. Nero wasn't a bad emperor; he was an insane emperor. He was slaughtering millions of his own people. He burnt down his own town so he could rebuild it. He was an insane, dysfunctional person to the max.

"Honor the government." How? You honor the position not the person. And you pray for the position and the person. It's like honoring your parents. The Bible says, "Honor your parents." What if my parents were bad to me? A woman says, "How can I honor my dad. He molested me as a child?" or "How can I honor my parents; they were both alcoholics and they abused me?" You honor the position, not everything that they did. They may have been terrible in parenting but at least God used them to bring you into the world. You wouldn't be here if it weren't for them. So, you honor the position. Honor authority.

What if the government tells me to disobey God? Obviously your first allegiance is to God. He's not talking about mindless compliance here. Submission sometimes means being willing to suffer the penalty for doing the right thing. If there's a law that says, "Do this" and you know it's wrong, God says it's wrong. If you don't obey that, submission means at that point being willing to suffer for doing the right thing.

Peter moves on and tells us to honor our employer. Do you have an employer? If you do, that employer is in a place of authority over you. The Bible says that you are to yield and you're to respect your employer. "But you don't know my boss!" Doesn't matter. He writes, "*Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.*" (v. 18) What's your attitude at work say about you? Does it show your integrity? Do you quietly and gently just accept things that happen, or do you complain like everybody else? Or do you show grace?

Your integrity will be tested. Your integrity will be tested by how you respond to temptation. Your integrity will be tested by how you respond to authority.

### **3. Trusting God in Suffering**

*"For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to*

*him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”* (vv. 19 – 24)

The greatest test of all though will be how you respond to suffering. Nothing reveals your character quicker than problems and pain. That's one of the reasons why God allows it. When you go through suffering, it really reveals what you're like. Christians are like tea bags; you don't know what they're like inside until you put them in hot water.

As long as you live on this earth, you will experience suffering. You will have problems. You will have pain. Fortunately, God gave us a model of how to handle that suffering with integrity.

Peter writes, *“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”* (v. 21) Jesus is our model of how to handle suffering, particularly when we're mistreated unjustly.

How did Jesus handle it? *“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”* (vv. 22, 23) He didn't fight back. Is that opposite of our culture? Yes, it is. We live in a fight-back generation. We want to get even. The moment we think our rights are being violated we jump to defend ourselves. Instead, it says, Jesus Christ let God the Father defend Him. We love to jump at giving defense. We fight back, we retaliate, we get even or make the threat of getting even. We're quick to sue. We may not know any Bible verses, but we know our lawyers phone number.

What was Jesus' secret of defending Himself? Eugene Peterson in *The Message* puts it this way, "He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right." Jesus didn't defend Himself, He let God the Father defend Him. He said, I'm just passing through, this isn't My permanent home. God will eventually settle the score. He's going to balance the books. God says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." Who can do a better job at getting even, you or God? Let God defend you.

Instead of defending yourself you just say, "I'm going to let God handle this. I'm going to let Him settle the score."

We get upset over the smallest inconveniences. If your food gets delayed, you get hot under the collar. If someone cuts you off in the parking lot or you're shortchanged at a store, you're quick to let everybody know how irritated you are. When was the last time you took an injustice and just kept your mouth shut and accepted it with grace? God says that shows integrity.

I know that there are unhealthy people that can take this verse to the extreme. "I'll just be a doormat in life." Nobody is talking about mindless compliance. The fact is that for most of us that's not our problem. We're so worried about being co-dependent we go to the other extreme and we never let God have a chance to



defend us because we're too quick to defend ourselves. He says, "Be like Jesus in this."

For 20 years Dr. Helen Rosenver was a medical missionary to the Congo. In 1964 when the Simba rebellion occurred, she was attacked and captured by rebel forces. She was beaten repeatedly, and she was raped repeatedly. A few years later she had this to say in an interview about that experience, *"The rebels had decided to execute several of us. Only too quickly the moment came when we were actually standing in front of the firing line. If someone had asked me earlier if I could be a martyr, I would have answered 'No, I'm not built that way.' But as we were facing those guns, certain to be killed at any second, we were actually singing the praises of God. We suddenly experienced God's presence and joyfully anticipated our reunion with Him in heaven. God simply swept our fears away. Miraculously, at the last moment, the rebels decided not to execute us. In fact, I can remember one other late-night experience, when this overwhelming consciousness of God's presence came to me, that He was there, and He was in charge and that He knew what was happening. It was almost as if He said to me, 'They're not beating you, or raping you. These are not your sufferings. These are My sufferings. All I'm asking is the loan of your body.'" Later, she wrote, "In 1981 I had breast cancer. I was 36 years old. My mother had died 32 years earlier at the age of 36 with cancer. In 1983 I had a second mastectomy and learned that my husband was having a mid-life crisis affair. In 1986 our bright, beautiful 18-year-old son took his life. No warning, no sign that he'd been unhappy. My husband and I were at home when he quietly hung himself in the basement. In 1988 after 21 years of what I thought was a good marriage, my husband moved in with his Friday night rendezvous. Because of all the hell we'd been through I was certain nothing could break us apart. When he left me, the pain was gut wrenching. But I got through it. How have I overcome all this grief in my life? It was due to the help I received and loving support of my church family, my family, and friends. But above all it was my belief in the presence of God in my life."*

The acid test of your faith is how you react when you're mistreated. I'm not talking about those stupid things we bring on ourselves; we cause a lot of our own problems. I'm talking about when you're mistreated unjustly.

The Bible says that people are watching you to see how you respond to temptation, how you respond to authority, and how you respond to suffering.

Jesus says it like this: "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:13, 14 NIV) He says, Be a light.

What would the people you work with say about your testimony? If I were to go and talk to the people you work with on a daily basis and ask, "Is this person a real genuine Christian or not?" What would they say? What would they say about you? What would

your reputation be? What's going to be on your obituary when you die? Because people are watching you.

Do you know the story of Alfred Nobel (Nobel Peace Prize)? Alfred Nobel woke up one morning and read his own obituary in the newspaper. They had made a mistake, a journalistic error. His brother had died, and they thought it was him and put in an obituary for him. The obituary for Alfred Nobel said this, "Alfred Nobel was the inventor of dynamite. He was a manufacturer of weapons. He was a merchant of death." He said it so shocked him of how people saw him. He said he, at that point, committed the rest of his life to working toward world peace and donated his vast wealth to establish the Nobel Peace Prizes for people who themselves worked for peace.

People are watching you. But not only are people watching you, God is watching you. Which of these three areas do you have the most trouble with? Which of these three areas do you have the most problems with integrity? Is it in the area of temptation? That when nobody is looking you let things slide and you get away with things that you wouldn't do if everyone was watching? God's watching, looking at your integrity. Do you do what you say you believe. How about authority? Do you want to be like the devil? Be rebellious. That's how Satan got kicked out of heaven. You're most like the devil when you're rebelling; you're most like Jesus Christ when you're yielding. In any situation.

In a marriage -- you take two insecure people, put them in a marriage together; they're both going to demand their rights and have problem after problem. Marriage should be a submission contest, a yielding contest. Who can do the most for the other person? Do you have a problem with suffering? Do you gripe and complain and secretly try to get even with people? Or do you by grace say, "God I'm going to let you handle this."

Live with integrity because people are watching you!

*\* Ideas for this sermon from Rick Warren and John MacArthur*

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***An expanded outline of this message is available upon request!***