

## Wearing the Brand Name Well

### Servival Kit, Part 6

*1 Peter 4:14-16*

### Discussion Guide

#### Main Idea:

Throughout the last two millennia, Christianity has been viewed by outsiders in many different ways. To some, Christianity looked like a threat. To others, it was just strange. People have accepted the presence of Christianity as the norm sometimes too, but in every case, true Christianity is always valued wrongly from those who do not know Christ as their Savior. It is not a mystical religion or a dangerous educational system indoctrinating hate. Misconceptions are common and there will always be those who persecute Christians. In this portion of his letter, Peter talks about how Christians can endure the hatred and glorify God through those trials.

#### Discussion Points:

Throughout this letter, Peter has warned his Christian audience that suffering and persecution are coming. Jesus also said that people would hate his followers in the same way that they hated him. Suffering is going to happen for Christians, but Peter is encouraging his listeners to see the bright side through the trial.

- What does Peter say is the result for the person who is reviled for the name of Christ?
- Is it natural to feel blessed in the midst of persecution?
- In what way does persecution show a Christian to be blessed?
- What does persecution do to your reliance on God's strength?
- What are some examples of people in the New Testament who were persecuted and were encouraged through it?

The name "Christian" was originally a term of mockery.

- What were the circumstances around the coining of the name "Christian" in Acts?
- Why would this term be used as a mocking nickname?
- Did the early believers who were called this name accept or reject being called Christians?
- What is the connection of identifying with the name of Christ and sharing in his sufferings?

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

Peter says that the presence of the Spirit with you in your suffering is a blessing.

- What is Peter referring to when he says “the Spirit of glory and of God”?
- How is the Spirit a blessing through suffering?
- How does the Spirit help us look past the present circumstances to the hope of the future?

Peter makes sure to distinguish between different kinds of suffering because trials can come for different reasons.

- Why does Peter need to distinguish between suffering for the name of Christ and suffering because of other circumstances?
- Should Christians feel the same kind of blessing for suffering because of sin as suffering because of persecution?
- How does suffering because of sin affect the reputation of a Christian?

Suffering because of your identity as a Christian should not bring shame according to Peter.

- How can a person rejoice and glorify God through suffering and persecution?
- How does shame for current suffering or the fear of suffering affect a person’s testimony in Christ?
- How does accepting the suffering that comes from persecution push you closer to Christ?

### **Gospel Connection:**

Being united with Christ means sharing in every part of Christ. Sure, there is the promise of a future of forgiveness and an existence without sin for eternity at his side because of what he did at the cross, but until he returns, there will be persecution. Jesus endured slandering his whole life. He was mocked and treated wrongly. He did nothing wrong, yet was murdered because of the truth he was preaching. He was hated because of who he claimed to be and he gave assurance to his followers that they would be hated because of him. Suffering is coming if you are a Christian, but if you really do believe in Jesus as your Savior, there is still plenty of room for hope because of his promise to come back. There is always a hope for the future where all of creation will be redeemed and Jesus will rule.

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

### **Practical Implications:**

- Think:** How do you react to suffering for the name of Christ? Do you have the right perspective about why suffering comes for Christians and what purpose it serves?
- Pray:** Ask God to continue refining you. Ask him for the strength to press on even in the difficult times. Ask him for guidance in encouraging others who are dealing with difficult trials.
- Do:** Keep your mind on the things that are above so that you can retain the right attitude through suffering. Remind yourself and others of the importance of relying on the encouragement of the Holy Spirit throughout all of your life.

# Wearing the Brand Name Well

## Servival Kit, Part 6

*1 Peter 4:14-16*

George Walton was born on May 15, 1907, in Rocky Mount, Virginia. As an estate appraiser, he often got the first look at rare coins, guns, jewelry and stamps – and he built up a large collection.

At one estate sale, a rare 1913 Liberty Head nickel was a part of the estate – it was one of only five nickels minted – and he jumped at the chance, scraping together everything he had. He paid just under \$4,000 for the treasure in 1945, which equates to \$60,000 dollars today. But he reassured everyone that it was worth a fortune.

After he died in an automobile accident, his family brought the nickel to experts who evaluated it and then, surprisingly, declared the nickel was a fake and returned it to his disappointed family.

For 60 years, the coin stayed hidden in a box on the floor of a closet. Eventually Walton's nephew, Ryan Givens, inherited the nickel.

In 2003, Ryan read in newspapers that the other four 1913 Liberty Head nickels were on display, along with a request for anyone with any knowledge of the missing 5<sup>th</sup> nickel to come forward.

Ryan submitted his coin for evaluation once more. After hours of comparing and contrasting and testing, expert appraisers announced that Walton's nickel was the missing coin. And with that, Ryan put it up for auction and it sold for \$3.1 million.

Imagine – collecting dust in the back corner of a closet for decades because it had been valued at 5 cents.<sup>1</sup>

The moral of the story is to save all your nickels. No, the true moral of the story is that experts can miss the real value of something; often times, what most people devalue happens to be of great value. And that happens to be the testimony of every New Testament Christian.

Imagine a parable where you become that nickel – hidden away for most of your life, feeling forgotten, overlooked, ignored, perhaps even worthless.

Imagine what it would have been like for your owner to bring you to experts – to announce that you are of great value – but the experts of your world gathered around and looked at you and evaluated you and then came to the unanimous conclusion that you weren't worth much more than a nickel.

That's essentially what's happening in the First Century world where the believers are facing a downward shift in popular opinion.

Trouble is brewing. Frankly, the Christians are belonging to a marginalized group of people; their value is going south; they're wearing the wrong name brand, so to speak.

So how do you respond then? How do you respond now?

Well, the Apostle Peter is about to tell you how to respond to the low valuation people are attaching to you, but he's also going to take you deeper – he wants you to place a higher valuation on the suffering you endure.

So take your copy of the New Testament and turn back to **1 Peter chapter 4**. If I can put the following few verses into three principles, the first one would be this:

### **1. Suffering can revitalize our spiritual relationships.**

*Notice verse 14: If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (1 Peter 4:14)*

Let's not go too fast here; notice again:  
***If you are reviled for the name of Christ...***

At first glance, it sounds like Peter is raising hopes that this might not happen; however, in the original language Peter uses a conditional statement that actually assumes it's going to happen.

You could correctly amplify this text to read – If you are reviled for the name of Christ, and you will be...

Which means:

- Suffering is not “if”, but “when”;
- Being ridiculed for wearing the name brand of Christ isn't just conceivable, it is eventual.

The word Peter uses here for *revile* has to do with verbal attacks and insults and unjustified accusations.<sup>ii</sup>

This is the same treatment Jesus Christ endured even while hanging on the cross. (*Matthew 27:44 & Mark 15:32*)

So again, Peter is reminding you that you are fellowshiping in the sufferings of Christ whenever you are reviled – when you suffer unjust treatment, unjustifiable accusations, demotions, insults and unkindness.

It might be the laughter of your classmates or the rolling of the eyes when you speak in the boardroom or the cold shoulder at the water cooler or even outright mocking.

Peter makes it clear that your mistreatment ultimately is because of *the name of Christ* – because of your connection with His name.

- According to the New Testament record, believers were originally called followers of The Way (Acts 9:2).
- They were also referred to as the Disciples of Christ (Matthew 10:1).
- It isn't until the church grows at Antioch where believers are referred to as Christians – literally, belonging to the party of Christ (Acts 11:26).<sup>iii</sup>

That was a term unbelievers coined – not Christians – and it was a term of derision and mockery. “You're one of those Christ followers – you must be one of those Christians.” And you would immediately feel this sense of value

going down the tubes. They might as well be telling you, you're not worth a nickel.

But notice what Peter says here in this text: *If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (1 Peter 4:14)*

Let me read that again – *if you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed!* You could render it – *you are fortunate.*

But I don't feel fortunate. That's because we respond to the devaluation of the world by equally diminishing the privileges of suffering for His name.

And Peter gives us one of the privileges here. *The Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.* This is a reference to *Isaiah 11*, where the Messiah was promised that God's Spirit would rest on Him for His Messianic mission.

Imagine, Peter is now attributing that promise to the believer who suffers! In other words, the same empowering Spirit who rested on Christ now rests upon you, uniquely, to enable you to endure the reviling of the world.

Which means, suffering for His name isn't some kind of proof that God has *abandoned* you; suffering is an opportunity where God is going to uniquely *empower* you;<sup>iv</sup> he's going to be involved in your life like never before.

While the Holy Spirit already indwells you permanently, remember, *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)* – Peter says here that there will be an extra empowering and grace to meet the pressure of suffering.

According to Peter, trials become an opportunity to draw upon divine power.<sup>v</sup>

By the way, would you notice that although the word Trinity never appears in the Bible, this text is one more definitive reinforcement of that truth – you might circle in your text the references to *Christ* and *the Spirit* (capital S is a reference, not to your spirit, but to the Holy Spirit) and then the reference to *God*, which is the common New Testament reference to God the Father.

All three relationships are involved in your suffering and giving you strength to bear it.

Oh, how we need the Lord! When faced with excruciating trials, we easily come to the end of ourselves; every Christian can easily become

- mentally confused,
- emotionally drained,
- physically exhausted,
- and spiritually spent.

In fact, from a purely human perspective, we think that these are the worst of times, but from a divine perspective, these are the best of times to draw us closer to God.

That is why Peter wants us to change our valuation of suffering. In fact, notice how he adds to the text, the words – *the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you*. The word for *rest* here literally means to give refreshment.

In other words, as you revitalize your dependence on the Spirit of God, the Spirit imparts His grace and strength for endurance and perseverance and gives you refreshment.<sup>vi</sup>

*Reveling* by the world can bring *refreshment* from the Spirit of God – as you draw near to Christ.

This was the experience of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, more than 100 years ago. He once wrote, “The issue is not where the pressure lies, but that it presses us closer to Christ.” —Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

Suffering can revitalize our spiritual relationships.

Secondly,

## **2. Suffering can result from a poor reputation.**

Peter adds a warning: *Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer or a troublesome meddler. (1 Peter 4:15)*

Murder and thievery were serious crimes in the first century, often resulting in capital punishment.

Peter adds to murderers and thieves, evildoers – this is a general term for someone who engages in any other kind of criminal behavior.

What Peter is saying here is that the believer can’t say as he’s taken to jail or to the gallows, “Man, am I ever about to suffer for being a Christian; woe is me.” You might be a Christian, but you’re about to suffer for sinful behavior.

Peter is warning the believer not to assume that the consequences of sin are the same thing as suffering.<sup>vii</sup> You’re not even close.

To use a more modern illustration, don’t speed down Tryon Road because you’re late for church on Sunday morning, run the red light there at the intersection, and then when the policeman turns on his siren and chases after you – don’t pull in here – pull in the Methodist parking lot.

When he gives you a ticket, don’t tell him that he’s persecuting you because you wanted to get to church on time – in fact, don’t tell him you go to this church. You’re a Methodist now.

Don’t tell him you come here, he might know me – “You drive just like your pastor.” Leave me out of it! This illustration is too convicting – let’s move on.

Notice Peter adds an interesting character to the list here – *a troublesome meddler*.

This is a reference to a nosy agitator. They don’t want to be a part of the solution to any problem, they just want to be in the know, and they develop the reputation of being a troublesome – *a troublemaking meddler*.

One author writes, this word refers to someone who usurps a role that doesn’t belong to them in an attempt gain influence and prestige because they’re now in the know.<sup>viii</sup>

In other words, they’re only really interested in running people down in order to build themselves up. Listen, this kind of behavior diminishes the quality and character of the gospel of grace.

Peter says, “Don’t be known by this kind of behavior out there in the world of people who evaluate you and watch you.”

And in the meantime, don’t think that the consequences of sinful behavior and selfish and immoral behavior and any other kind of

criminal or self-centered behavior is the same thing as suffering for Christ.

And I say this with all seriousness: if you're going to live like the world and the devil, please don't tell people you belong to Jesus Christ! It only diminishes the glory of God and the integrity of the gospel.

If you want to keep away from *murder* that also means you're going to keep away from anger and resentment and revenge and selfishness; and if you want to keep away from *thievery and criminal activity and meddling*, that means you're going to keep away from envy and greed and manipulation and deception and unkindness and arrogance.<sup>ix</sup>

**Suffering can revitalize our spiritual relationships.**

**Suffering can result from a poor reputation.**

Third,

**3. Suffering can remind us of the value of our Redeemer.**

Notice: *But if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. (1 Peter 4:16)*

It's interesting that Peter doesn't launch immediately into how to handle it, but how to simply get ready for it and not to be ashamed when it happens.

The truth is, you can't prepare for most of the things that happen to you in life!

I received recently a rather funny series of steps for expecting parents to take in order to prepare for parenthood.

It reads: "Preparation for parenthood is not just a matter of reading books and decorating the nursery. "To truly prepare for parenting, go to the local pharmacy, tip the contents of your wallet on the counter and tell the pharmacist to just help himself.

"Next, go to your local grocery store and arrange to have your paycheck direct deposited

to them. Then go home, pick up the newspaper and read it, for the last time.

"Can you handle the mess your toddler will make? To find out, smear peanut butter onto the sofa . . . hide a fish stick behind the bookcase and leave it there all summer. Get out a box of crayons and color the wall nearest you.

"And if you think buying that mini-van prepares you for clean, convenient transportation, in order to prepare for the future, go buy a chocolate ice cream bar and put it in the glove compartment. Leave it there for a week. Take a bag of Oreo's and crumble them up in the back seats and mash them into the fabric. And get a quarter, or maybe a couple of pennies and stick them into the CD player. Finally, get a garden rake and run it down both sides of the van.

"Oh, and before your child is born, find a couple who are already parents of a preschooler and lecture them about their methods of discipline, their lack of patience or how they allow their kids to run wild. Suggest ways in which they might improve their child's self-control, table manners, sleeping habits, potty-training, and overall behavior. Enjoy yourselves – it will be the last time in your lives you will have all the answers."

For those of you planning to have children, we just want to be an encouragement to you today.

Peter doesn't give us a laundry list on what to do in order to handle the pressure of pain and suffering; it probably wouldn't be all that encouraging.

However, once again, Peter speaks with reality; he uses that conditional statement – *if anyone suffers as a Christian* – and they will – *he is not to be ashamed*.

When it does happen, don't hang your head. Don't buy into the valuation of your community. Don't be ashamed at the snickering and the joking and the mocking and even the derision and cursing that may come.

- This is the Christian student in high school who sits in a class and the science

teacher asks, “Raise your hand if you believe that God created everything?” And his hand is tempted to stay down.

- This is the college student who’s invited to a party but turns down the invitation. When asked why, he is tempted to say he is not feeling well.
- This is the guy who is invited to go golfing on Sunday with men from the office, but instead of saying he goes to church, responds with, “I’m just not a good golfer.” That might be the honest truth, but it isn’t the honest reason.
- This is the businessman or woman who is asked, along with all the other employees going through diversity training in their company, “Is there anyone here who believes homosexuality is wrong?” And they are tempted to remain quiet.

I remember standing in a visitation line waiting to greet the family members of a deceased man – a well-known man in our community. Standing in front of me was a believer I knew, although he attended another church, and while we were standing there I asked him if the deceased man was a believer and this man immediately got tears in his eyes and said, “You know, we worked together and actually carpoled together for years – I never told him I was a Christian. Even though I knew he was an unbeliever, I never brought up God.”

Oswald Chambers in his classic work wrote, “When you fear God you fear nothing else; but if you do not fear God you will fear everything else.”—Oswald Chambers<sup>x</sup>

Don’t feel ashamed, Peter writes, of what others think – the phrase can be translated, *don’t feel dishonored*.<sup>xi</sup>

You are wearing the brand name – Christian! The term Christian was initially a slur – it was an insult – wear it well!

Just as with English believers several years ago, who desired to live lives marked by integrity and purity, were nicknamed derisively Puritan. It was a slur and an insult.<sup>xii</sup> Never mind; it fit them well as Christians.

Peter never says to rejoice in what the world says about us. We don’t go home and write down one more word we were called and then say, “Thank you God that they called me that!”

We rejoice in that we are reviled *because of His name*. Notice – **glorify God** – literally, praise God! You are wearing the name of His Son as our badge of honor. We are in the party of Christ; we are Christians.

In the world’s eyes you are not worth a nickel, but in God’s eyes, you have been redeemed to an inheritance of wealth beyond words that will last forever.

Why? Because we follow a Redeemer who was devalued, mistreated and ultimately crucified by a nation that did not realize who He was.

Isaiah prophesied of the coming Messiah, ***He was despised and forsaken by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isaiah 53:3)***

No one esteemed Him. In other words, no one considered Him to be anyone special or important or valuable. “He’s not worth much more than a nickel either.”

No, the believer says, “Hold on; let me praise my great and glorious God for I belong to that name – to that Redeemer – to that Man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief. I wear His name brand – Christian.”

Beloved, let’s wear it well – especially when the heat is turned up and the pressure is on! The issue is not where the pressure lies, but that it presses you closer to Christ.

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i *Stovall Weems, The God-First Life (Zondervan, 2014), page 67*

ii D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1984), p. 286

iii Adapted from Peter Davids, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 4, 1 Peter (Zondervan, 2002), p. 144

iv Adapted from Juan R. Sanchez, 1 Peter for You (The Good Book Company, 2016), p. 166

v Charles R. Swindoll, Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Zondervan, 2010), p. 229

vi Adapted from John MacArthur, 1 Peter (Moody Publishers, 2004), p. 253

vii Sanchez, p. 167

viii Adapted from Doriani, p. 195

ix Adapted from Daniel M. Doriani, 1 Peter (P & R Publishing, 2014), p. 195

x Oswald Chambers in The Highest Good, quoted in Christianity Today, Volume 39, no. 1

xi MacArthur, p. 255

xii Doriani, p. 196