

Day 1
August 12



Pray / Praise God for His truth revealed in the Bible

Restore hope by recalling God's promises revealed in His Word.

In our primary passage of study this week, Peter is writing a letter of encouragement and support to the young church of Jesus Christ. The church is scattered and is facing great trials and persecution. Because of the stressful conditions, the Christians were very focused on the promised return of Jesus, desperately hoping for that return to bring relief from their struggles. The wait was getting long and they were beginning to doubt that Jesus was actually going to return. Peter recognized this situation and he wrote these letters to encourage the church and help restore their confidence. In these letters, Peter calls the church to wholesome, disciplined, and sincere thinking, asking them to recall and focus their minds on the source of their original confidence—God's words spoken by the prophets and apostles of Jesus Christ. Like the members of the early church, it's very easy for us to let our minds slip into anxiety and worry, shaped by the problems facing us today. God calls us to the same disciplined thinking, focusing our thoughts on His Word for the confidence and courage that can only come from the truth of His great story and His great promises.



Read / 1 Peter 1:1-13, 2 Peter 3:1-2, 2 Corinthians 10:5



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

What situations in your life are causing anxiety and worry? Make a list and then bring that list before God in prayer. Ask God to reveal the truth of His Word and His promises that make it possible for you set aside your anxiety and truly trust God.

Both Peter and Paul write about to this idea of disciplined and wholesome thinking—taking every thought captive. At some level this is very much like the trendy discussions around mindfulness. Take a few minutes to reflect on situations where you face worry, anxiety, and stress. How do you handle those situations? Rather than letting your mind go to worry, anxiety, and stress, is there an opportunity to take your mind to God's word and His promises? Spend a few minutes in prayer asking God to help you “take your thoughts captive”.

The young church of Jesus Christ had leaders like Peter and Paul encouraging them and drawing them back to God's word and His promises. We have the body of believers, in the form of the church of Jesus Christ, to do the same. If you are not yet a participating member of a church, it's so important that you get connected with one so that you to can be reminded and supported in your journey here on earth. Take that step this week and find a church. If you are already a member of a church, take a few minutes to thank God for that church and pray for the strength of the leaders of that church.

Day 2

August 13



Pray / Ask God for clarity to see Satan's lies in the world around you

Satan's primary tool of deception is lies and half-truths.

As we saw yesterday, because of their beliefs and distinct nature, the young church of Jesus Christ was under great pressure from the world around it. Peter acknowledges one source of this pressure as coming from people he calls "scoffers". These were people who knew about God and Jesus in their minds, but that knowledge had not transformed their hearts and minds. Because of that, these scoffers had become tools of the devil, seeking to draw the Christians away from their faith. In true "Satan fashion", the scoffers were using half-truths and lies to try to deceive the followers of Jesus and cause them to doubt the words and promises of God. Jesus faced the same challenges when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness; and we face similar scoffers today. We can draw strength from Peter's assurance that the appearance of scoffers is all part of God's plan. We can also draw confidence from the fact that our Lord and Savior faced and overcame the same challenges. How did He do it? He recalled the words and the promises of God. Are you sensing a theme?



Read / Matthew 4:1-11, 2 Peter 3:1-7



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

The scoffers that Peter mentions in 2 Peter 3:3-5 are deliberately ignoring entire portions of God's story in an attempt to justify their beliefs and ridicule the Christians. Isn't it amazing how that story is still playing out today? If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, how are your beliefs being challenged by scoffers today? Go to God in prayer asking Him for the vision to see His truth in those situations. If you are not yet a follower of Jesus Christ, perhaps God is speaking to you today. Don't ignore that call—go to God in prayer—share your heart and thoughts and ask God to reveal His truths and to transform your heart and mind.

When tempting Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), the devil tried to take advantage of common human desires and weaknesses to draw Jesus away from truly depending on God. It's critical to remember that the devil uses the same tactics with us today. In what areas is the devil tempting you to depend on yourself or things of this world rather than depending on God? Take those situations to God; ask Him to reveal His truths to you so you can resist the temptation and stay truly dependent on God.

The early church was desperate for Jesus' return to bring relief to their stresses and anxieties. What stresses and anxieties in your life are you desperate to find relief from? What lessons can you learn from the perspective of the early church?

Day 3



August 14

Pray / Give God glory for His incomprehensible greatness, patience, and love

God is God; we are not—not even close.

The young church of Jesus Christ, to which Peter is writing, is anxious—desperate even—for Jesus to deliver on His promise to return and establish His kingdom on earth. In our scripture reading today, Peter gives the young church a gentle shake, reminding it that God’s timing and God’s view is incomprehensibly larger than we as humans can possibly imagine. What seems like an “eternity” to us is just a blink in time to God. Problems that seem so huge to us look so trivial when viewed through the eyes of the creator of the universe. That is not to say that God does not love us and care about our issues. In fact, Peter tells us that God loves us and His entire creation so much that He has chosen to delay His return to give more time for more people to be reconciled to Him. For those who are already reconciled to God, this means waiting patiently—joyfully enduring the trials we face here on earth and trusting that God’s plan for His entire creation is playing out exactly as God intends—knowing that we will ultimately be reunited with our creator in heaven.



Read / 2 Peter 3:8-9, Psalm 90:1-6



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Peter reminds us that God’s timing is not our timing and that God’s “slowness” is really patience (2 Peter 3:9). One area of our lives in which we experience this is in God’s answers to our prayer. Reflect on the times you experienced the reality of God’s perfect timing in answer to your prayers or have seen this play out in the life of someone you know. Give God thanks for His patience and His promise to answer prayers.

Psalm 90 was written by Moses to acknowledge the greatness of God. Go back and read through all of Psalm 90. Spend some time reflecting on the greatness of God and the absolute miracle that He loves you and cares for you.

So often we try to apply human rules and expectations to God and in doing so, we minimize our view on what God can accomplish through us and in the world. Spend a few minutes reflecting on areas of your life where your thinking may be limiting what God can accomplish through your life. Go to God in prayer and ask Him to reveal what He can accomplish through you until He returns.

Day 4
August 15



Pray / Ask God to help you to live life truly anticipating Jesus' return

Jesus' followers are called to be patient in anticipation of His return.

Peter has called the suffering church of Jesus Christ to disciplined thinking, recalling the words and promises of God. He has reminded them of God's patient love for His creation and His desire for everyone to repent and be reconciled to Him. Finally, Peter gives them guidance on how they are to behave while they wait for God's plan for the entire creation to be completed. Peter's guidance is so basic but, like the early church, all followers of Jesus need to hear these reminders and be called back to these truths regularly. First, we are called to model our lives after the life of Jesus—living holy and godly lives that prioritize love for God and love for neighbor. Secondly, we are called to live lives of anticipation—truly looking forward to the day when Jesus does return and God's plan is completed. A life lived in anticipation is a life filled with hope, and hope is energizing and contagious. Imagine the good an energized, loving, and hope-filled group of Jesus followers can do in this world!



Read / 2 Peter 3:10-13, Lamentations 3:25-26, Micah 7:7



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Take a moment to reflect on the things you are most eagerly anticipating right now. Consider how your list aligns with the direction to eagerly anticipate Jesus return and, where needed, ask God to help you align your hopes and desires with His.

The entire story of God, from the fall of humans into sin to Jesus death and resurrection to today, has been focused on a time in the future when Jesus will return and God will restore his creation to its original perfection. If you have made Jesus your Lord, take a few minutes to reflect on the greatness of God, His story, His love for you, and the great reward that awaits you when Jesus returns. If you have not yet made Jesus your Lord, please know that this reward is for you as well. God is waiting patiently for you to make that choice. Today is the day to make that decision!

Day 5

August 16



Pray / Ask God for clarity on your role in accelerating Jesus' return

Jesus' followers must fill their days with actions that will expedite His return.

The early church of Jesus Christ was desperate for the return of Jesus. In our study this week, we've seen Peter encourage and guide them in their thinking and behavior; we've seen him remind them of God's nature and how God's plan is so much bigger than any human can possibly comprehend. But, other than simply surviving and enduring, is there a greater purpose to all this thinking and hoping and loving and obeying? Yes! Peter summarizes this in 2 Peter 3:12 when he says "... *as you look forward to the day of God, and speed it's coming.*" Amazing! Followers of Jesus Christ can influence the timing of His return. By obediently living godly, holy, love-filled and hope-filled lives, we draw others to Jesus Christ and ultimately accelerate Jesus' return. This was a tremendous source of encouragement and motivation for the persecuted early church. It should be the same for the church today, but is it? Is it possible we need a little less comfort and a little more persecution to be truly desperate for Jesus' return and motivated to "speed its coming"?



Read / 2 Peter 3:10-13, Matthew 28:16-20



Reflect / Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

As you think about your role in "speeding the coming" of Christ, it can be overwhelming. It's important to remember that you're not in this alone—you have a ton of help. God has sent the Holy Spirit to live in you, to strengthen and guide you, and God has established the church of Jesus Christ as a community from which you can draw support, help, and strength. Go to God in prayer—thank him for your mission, all your support, and ask him for the courage and confidence to step out in new and greater ways to help "speed Jesus return".

Prayer is another powerful way to speed the return of Jesus. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus explicitly prayed for God's "*Kingdom to come and God's will to be done—on earth as it is in Heaven*". Take a minute and pray through the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) and meditate on the significance and meaning of these words.

Reflect on the confidence, desire, and anticipation in the words of the last verse of the classic hymn "*It is Well with My Soul*" by Horatio Spafford.

***And Lord haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.***

Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version® (NIV®)*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.