

1 Peter, Teacher's Guide

Week 2: Called to Holiness

1Peter 1:13–25

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Peter 1:13–25 takes the great indicatives of the opening verses (new birth, living hope, a secure inheritance) and turns them into imperatives. The little word “therefore” in verse 13 is the hinge of the letter. What is doctrinally at stake here is the relationship between grace and holiness, between what God has done and what He now calls us to do. Peter roots the command to be holy in the very character of God (“be holy, for I am holy”), grounds our motivation in the infinite cost of redemption (the precious blood of Christ, not silver or gold), and anchors the whole new life in the imperishable word of God that brought us to new birth. The teacher should be ready to handle the nature of holiness (not earning salvation, but living out the new life), the doctrine of redemption and the blood of Christ, the reverent fear of God who judges impartially, and a high view of Scripture as the living and abiding word.

This passage also pushes hard against any version of Christianity that stops at forgiveness and never moves on to transformation. Peter assumes that people who have been ransomed at such a price will not go on living as they did before. Holiness is the family resemblance of those born into God's household. The teacher's aim is to help students see holiness not as a burden or a way of scoring points with God, but as the beautiful and natural shape of a redeemed life, and then to press them toward concrete steps: which inherited pattern needs to go, which old passion still pulls, where love has cooled into mere politeness.

Keep both targets in view. Students should leave understanding why holiness is commanded and how it relates to grace, and they should also leave with a sharpened sense of one specific place where God is calling them upward. The disciple we are forming is someone whose daily conduct is increasingly coming to look like the holy God who called them, growing in faith and in likeness to Christ one obedient choice at a time.

Question 1

Student Question:

Peter commands, “As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (vv. 15–16). What does it mean that God is holy, and why does Peter ground our call to holiness in the character of God rather than in a list of rules?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Holiness begins with God, not with us. The word translated holy carries the idea of being set apart, distinct, belonging to another order entirely. When Scripture says God is holy, it points to

His absolute purity and His complete otherness. He is not simply a better version of us; He is the Lord, and everything about Him, His justice, His love, His truth, is unstained and perfect.

Notice that Peter does not ground the command to be holy in a rulebook but in the character of God: “be holy, for I am holy.” This is a quotation from Leviticus (11:44–45; 19:2), where God called Israel to reflect His character to the nations. Peter applies the same logic to the church. Our holiness is meant to be a family resemblance. Because we have been born again into the household of a holy Father, our conduct should increasingly look like His character. This protects us from two errors: treating holiness as mere rule-keeping, and treating it as optional.

Be clear that this call to holiness is not a way of earning salvation. Peter has already established that these believers were born again by God’s mercy through the resurrection. Holiness is the response to grace, not the price of it. Yet it is genuinely commanded. The Christian life is not “believe and then live however you please.” It is “you have been redeemed, therefore become in practice what you now are in Christ.” Holiness is grace working its way out through a transformed life.

Stress that Peter says “in all your conduct.” Holiness is not reserved for Sunday or for religious activities. It reaches into speech, work, money, entertainment, relationships, and private thoughts. The goal is not a compartment of life labeled “religious,” but a whole life that increasingly reflects the holy God who called us. This is where the teacher can help students grow in faith by moving from the idea of holiness to its concrete shape in daily life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The holiness of God as His purity and otherness, the foundation of all Christian ethics
- Holiness as a response to grace, not a means of earning salvation
- The command to be holy grounded in God’s character (Leviticus 11:44–45; 19:2)
- Holiness as comprehensive (“in all your conduct”), not limited to religious activity
- The family resemblance: redeemed people increasingly reflecting their holy Father

Discussion Prompts

- Why does grounding holiness in God’s character protect us from cold legalism?
- Which area of life do we most easily exempt from the call to holiness, and why?
- How would you answer someone who says, “If we’re saved by grace, why does holiness matter?”

Question 2

Student Question:

Peter says, “Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance” (v. 14). Name one specific desire or habit from your past, or from a careless season, that still pulls at you. What would it look like this week to refuse to be shaped by it and to be shaped instead by Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the call to holiness inward and concrete. Peter assumes every believer carries a “before,” a set of desires and habits shaped by life apart from Christ. He calls these “the passions of your former ignorance,” not to shame his readers, but to name honestly the pull they still feel.

Help students get specific without prying. The old passion might be a temper, a besetting appetite, a pattern of gossip, a love of money, a habit of cutting corners, a tendency toward self-pity or pride. The point is not to confess publicly but to name privately what still tugs, and to recognize that being a Christian does not mean those pulls instantly vanish. It means we no longer let them set the direction of our lives.

Move toward action. Peter’s antidote to old passions is not mere willpower but a new allegiance: being shaped by Christ instead of by the old self. Encourage one concrete step this week, whether removing a temptation, building a new habit, confessing to a trusted brother or sister, or replacing an old pattern with a Christlike one. Growth in holiness usually comes through small, specific obediences repeated over time.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reality of indwelling sin and old patterns even after conversion
- Sanctification as a gradual reshaping of desire, not instant perfection
- The difference between being tempted and being conformed
- Concrete, repeated obedience as the ordinary path of growth in holiness

Discussion Prompts

- Why do old passions often remain even after we come to Christ?
- What is the difference between merely resisting an old habit and being reshaped by Christ?
- What one practical step could help you refuse an old pattern this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Peter writes that we were ransomed “not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (vv. 18–19). What does this teach about the seriousness of sin and the cost of our redemption, and why does Peter call Christ a lamb “without blemish”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter reaches for the language of the marketplace and the temple at once. To be “ransomed” means a price was paid to set a captive free. He insists on what the price was not (silver and

gold, the most valuable currency of the day) before naming what it was: “the precious blood of Christ.” The contrast is staggering. The most precious things this world can offer are called “perishable” next to the blood of the Son of God.

The image of “a lamb without blemish or spot” reaches back to the Passover and the sacrificial system. A lamb offered to God had to be flawless, and even then its blood only pointed forward to something greater. Peter is saying that Jesus is the true and final Lamb, sinless and perfect, whose blood actually accomplishes what the animal sacrifices only foreshadowed (compare John 1:29; Hebrews 9:11–14). The sinlessness of Christ matters enormously here: only an unblemished sacrifice could take away sin, and only a sinless Savior qualifies.

This passage teaches the seriousness of sin by showing the cost of its remedy. We tend to minimize sin, treating it as a small thing easily overlooked. The cross says otherwise. If forgiveness could be purchased with silver, God would have used silver. That it cost the blood of His Son tells us how grave our condition was and how great His love is. Help students feel the weight of both.

Draw out the ethical force Peter intends. He does not mention the price of redemption to start a debate about atonement theories, but to fuel holiness. People who truly grasp what they cost do not go on living carelessly. The blood of Christ is both the ground of our forgiveness and the motivation for our obedience. This helps students grow in faith by tying gratitude directly to transformed living.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Redemption as a price paid to set captives free (the ransom)
- The blood of Christ as the basis of forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:11–14)
- Christ as the true Passover Lamb, sinless and without blemish (John 1:29)
- The sinlessness of Jesus as essential to His saving work
- The seriousness of sin shown by the cost of its remedy
- Redemption as motivation for holy living, not license for careless living

Discussion Prompts

- What does the cost of our redemption tell us about how God views sin?
- Why is the sinlessness of Christ essential to His work as our Lamb?
- How should remembering what we cost shape the way we live this week?

Question 4

Student Question:

Peter says we were ransomed “from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers” (v. 18). Where have you simply inherited a way of living, thinking, or reacting, perhaps from family or

culture, without ever asking whether it fits a person redeemed by the blood of Christ? What needs to change?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter says his readers were ransomed “from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers.” Much of how we live is simply handed down to us, absorbed long before we ever examined it. Some of that inheritance is good, but some of it is, in Peter’s blunt word, futile, empty ways of living that lead nowhere.

Help students examine their inheritance honestly. We inherit ways of handling money, conflict, anger, alcohol, grudges, and prejudice. We inherit assumptions about success and worth. Some patterns passed down through a family or a culture quietly contradict the way of Christ, yet we follow them simply because they are familiar. Redemption includes being set free from these inherited futilities.

Move toward change. Invite students to name one inherited pattern that does not fit a person bought with the blood of Christ, and to consider what breaking with it would require. This is often tender work, because it can feel like criticizing the people we love. Encourage students to honor what is good in their heritage while letting Christ reform what is not, so that the next generation inherits something better.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Redemption as freedom from inherited, futile ways of living
- Discernment between good heritage and patterns that contradict Christ
- The courage to break with familiar but harmful family or cultural patterns
- Passing on a Christlike inheritance to the next generation

Discussion Prompts

- What good things have you inherited from those who came before you?
- What inherited pattern does not fit a person redeemed by Christ?
- How can we honor our heritage while letting Christ reform what is broken in it?

Question 5

Student Question:

Peter calls his readers to “prepare your minds for action” and to be “sober-minded,” setting their hope “fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (v. 13). What does it mean to set our hope “fully” on future grace, and how does the return of Christ shape the way a Christian thinks and lives now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter opens this section with vivid commands. “Prepare your minds for action” translates a phrase that literally means to gird up the loins, to tuck in a long robe so you can move and work without tripping. He calls for mental readiness and sober-mindedness, a clear and disciplined inner life. And he aims all of it at one object: hope set “fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

To set hope “fully” on future grace means to stake everything on the return of Christ and the completion of our salvation, rather than dividing our hope between Christ and the securities of this world. The revelation of Jesus Christ here is His second coming, when grace already begun in us will be brought to its fullness. This is the consistent New Testament expectation: Christ, who is reigning now at the Father’s right hand, will return to bring His people their final salvation.

Help students see that the return of Christ is not meant to fuel speculation but to shape everyday thinking. Because grace is coming, we live alert and clear-headed now. The hope of Christ’s appearing steadies us in trial, restrains us from sin, and frees us from clinging to things that will not last. A mind set fully on future grace is a mind that can face the present with courage.

Be careful to keep the focus where Peter puts it. He is not encouraging timelines, charts, or predictions about the end. He is calling for disciplined, hopeful living in light of a certain future. The grace at Christ’s revelation is sure, and that certainty is meant to produce alert, holy, hopeful disciples today. This helps students grow in faith by linking the future hope to present obedience.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Setting hope “fully” on the grace to come, rather than dividing it with the world
- The revelation (second coming) of Jesus Christ as the Christian’s certain future hope
- Christ presently reigning, who will return to complete our salvation
- Future hope as the engine of present alertness and holiness
- Avoiding speculation and end-times charts in favor of disciplined, hopeful living

Discussion Prompts

- What does it look like to set your hope “fully” on Christ rather than dividing it with worldly securities?
- How does the certainty of Christ’s return change the way you face a hard present?
- Why does Peter aim our hope at the future without encouraging speculation about dates?

Question 6

Student Question:

Peter urges his readers to be “sober-minded” and mentally ready for action (v. 13). Where is your own mind most undisciplined or distracted right now, in ways that dull your hope and weaken your walk? What is one practical step toward the alert, hope-filled mind Peter describes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the command to be “sober-minded” into the realm of the everyday mind. Peter knows that the battle for holiness is largely a battle for the thoughts. A scattered, undisciplined mind is easily discouraged, easily tempted, and slow to hope.

Help students name where their minds are most undisciplined. For many it is the endless scroll of a screen, the rehearsing of grievances, anxious spirals about the future, or simply a clutter of distractions that crowds out God. None of these is dramatic, but together they dull hope and weaken the walk Peter describes. Sober-mindedness is not grim seriousness; it is a clear, alert, unintoxicated mind, free to fix its hope on Christ.

Move toward one practical step. It might be a limit on a screen, a return to regular time in the word, a practice of casting anxious thoughts on God in prayer, or guarding the first and last minutes of the day. The aim is not a perfectly ordered mind overnight, but one concrete step toward the alert, hope-filled thinking that holiness requires.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The battle for holiness as largely a battle for the mind
- Sober-mindedness as alert clarity, not joyless severity
- The way distraction and anxiety dull hope and weaken obedience
- Practical disciplines for guarding the mind (Scripture, prayer, limits on distraction)

Discussion Prompts

- Where is your mind most undisciplined or distracted right now?
- How does a cluttered or anxious mind weaken your hope and your walk?
- What is one practical step toward a more alert, hope-filled mind this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Peter says that we call on God as Father, who “judges impartially according to each one’s deeds,” and so we should “conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile” (v. 17). How do we hold together the truth that God is our loving Father and the truth that He judges our deeds, and what kind of “fear” is Peter describing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter holds together two truths that we often pull apart. We call on God as “Father,” which speaks of intimacy, belonging, and love. And this same Father “judges impartially according to each one’s deeds.” Because both are true, Peter says, we should conduct ourselves “with fear” during our time as exiles.

The fear Peter describes is not the cringing terror of a slave who expects abuse. It is the reverent awe of a child who deeply loves and respects a great Father, and who takes seriously that this Father cares how His children live. Scripture calls this the fear of the Lord, and it is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). It does not cancel intimacy; it deepens it. We come boldly to our Father, and we come reverently, because He is God.

Help students see that God’s impartial judgment of deeds is good news as well as sobering news. A Father who judged by favoritism or ignored how His children treated one another would not be worth worshiping. That God judges impartially according to deeds means He is perfectly just, takes our lives seriously, and will set all things right. For the Christian walking in faith, this is a comfort; it also keeps us from presuming on grace as if conduct were irrelevant.

Guard against two distortions. On one side is a cold, fearful religion that forgets God is a loving Father. On the other is a sentimental religion that treats God as an indulgent grandfather who never minds how we live. The biblical balance is a loving, reverent relationship with a Father who is also Judge, which helps students grow in faith that is both warm and serious.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God as both loving Father and impartial Judge
- The fear of the Lord as reverent awe, not cringing terror (Proverbs 9:10)
- God’s impartial judgment according to deeds as just and good
- Avoiding both cold fear and sentimental presumption
- Reverence and intimacy held together in the Christian’s walk with God

Discussion Prompts

- How can we hold together God as loving Father and God as impartial Judge?
- What is the difference between healthy reverent fear and unhealthy cringing fear?
- How does remembering that God judges deeds impartially shape your daily choices?

Question 8

Student Question:

Peter calls his readers to “love one another earnestly from a pure heart,” since they have been purified by obeying the truth (v. 22). Think honestly about your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Where is your love more polite than earnest, or more guarded than pure? What would earnest, heartfelt love cost you this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Having been “purified” by obedience to the truth, Peter says, believers are now to “love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” Notice the order: the truth obeyed produces a purified people, and purified people are called to a particular kind of love. This is the family love of those born again into the same household.

Help students feel the force of the words “earnestly” and “pure heart.” Earnest love is stretched, effortful, fervent, not the minimal politeness that passes for love in many congregations. Love from a pure heart is sincere, free of pretense, hidden agendas, and quiet resentment. Peter is describing a church family that genuinely, actively, and honestly loves.

Press the self-examination gently. Most of us are capable of being pleasant on Sunday while holding people at arm’s length, nursing small grudges, or loving selectively. Invite students to ask where their love is more guarded than pure, more polite than earnest, and what earnest love would actually cost: a reconciled relationship, a sacrifice of time, an act of service, a word of honesty spoken in love. This is concrete growth in Christlikeness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love for fellow Christians as the fruit of obeying the truth
- Earnest, fervent love versus minimal politeness
- Purity of heart as sincerity, free of pretense and resentment
- The local church family as the primary arena for this love

Discussion Prompts

- Where is your love for fellow believers more polite than earnest?
- What hidden resentments or agendas keep love from being “pure”?
- What would earnest, heartfelt love cost you in a specific relationship this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Peter says, “You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (v. 23), and then quotes Isaiah that “the word of the Lord remains forever” (vv. 24–25). What does this teach about the new birth, the power and permanence of God’s word, and the place of Scripture in the life of the Christian and the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it ties the whole passage back to its source. Peter says the new birth comes “through the living and abiding word of God,” and then quotes

Isaiah 40: all human glory is like grass that withers, “but the word of the Lord remains forever.” The contrast is between everything perishable and the one thing that endures, the word of God.

First, note what this teaches about the new birth. In the opening verses Peter said we were born again through the resurrection; here he says we were born again through the word. There is no contradiction. The new birth is accomplished by God through the gospel message, the word of truth, which proclaims the risen Christ. The word is the “imperishable seed” that, received in faith and obeyed, brings new life (compare James 1:18). This is why preaching and teaching the word is central: it is the God-appointed means through which people are born again. People are not regenerated by some inner experience apart from the word; they are born again as the word is heard, believed, and obeyed.

Second, note what this teaches about the permanence and authority of Scripture. The word of the Lord “remains forever.” Human opinions, cultural trends, and even mighty empires fade like grass, but God’s word stands. This grounds our conviction that Scripture, and especially the New Testament as the covenant for the church, is the abiding authority for what we believe and how we live and worship. We do not get to revise the word to fit the age; we submit the age to the word.

Third, draw out the place of the word in the ongoing life of the Christian and the church. The same word that gave us birth also sustains and matures us. This is why the gathered church centers its life on the reading, preaching, and obeying of Scripture, and why each believer is called to feed on it. A church and a Christian cut off from the word will wither like the grass; a church and a Christian rooted in the abiding word will endure.

Help students grow in faith by moving from doctrine to devotion. If the word is imperishable seed and living food, then neglecting it is spiritual starvation, and feeding on it is life. Invite students to consider their actual intake of Scripture and to let this passage rekindle a hunger for the word that gave them new birth.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The new birth accomplished through the word of God, heard, believed, and obeyed (James 1:18)
- The word (gospel) as the imperishable seed that produces new life
- Preaching and teaching the word as God’s appointed means of regeneration
- The permanence and abiding authority of Scripture (Isaiah 40:6–8)
- The New Testament as the abiding pattern and authority for the church
- The word as ongoing food for the maturing of the Christian and the church

Discussion Prompts

- How do being born again “through the resurrection” and “through the word” fit together?

- Why does the permanence of God's word matter when culture pressures the church to change?
- What does your actual intake of Scripture say about how you treat the word that gave you life?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole passage. Peter calls redeemed people to holy conduct, disciplined hope, reverent living, and earnest love, all flowing from the imperishable word that gave them new life. Name one specific way you sense Jesus calling you toward holiness through these verses. What is the single truth from 1 Peter 1:13–25 you most need to carry into this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole passage. Peter has called redeemed people to disciplined hope (v. 13), holy conduct (vv. 14–16), reverent living (v. 17), grateful remembrance of their redemption (vv. 18–21), and earnest love (vv. 22–25), all flowing from the imperishable word that gave them new birth. The question asks each student to name one specific way Christ is calling them upward through these verses.

Resist generalities. Walk students back through the movement of the passage as a prompt: the old passion that still pulls, the inherited pattern that needs breaking, the undisciplined mind, the cooled love, the neglected word. Invite each person to identify the single point where the call to holiness lands most directly on their life right now.

Close by reminding students that holiness is not achieved in one heroic leap but in steady, Spirit-empowered steps. The goal of the study is transformation, becoming in daily practice what we already are in Christ. Encourage each person to leave with one truth to carry, return to, and obey this week, so the living word continues its forming work.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Holiness as the comprehensive shape of a redeemed life
- Transformation as steady obedience rather than a single heroic effort
- Self-examination that leads to one concrete step
- The word of God as the ongoing engine of growth in holiness

Discussion Prompts

- Which call in this passage lands most directly on your life right now?
- What is one concrete step toward holiness you can take before we meet again?
- How can this group support and pray for you in that specific step?