SCATTERED · HEAR LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 6

1 Peter 3:13–22 Suffering for doing good, and the reason for your hope

45–60 MINUTES
ANY SMALL GROUP
ONLINE OR IN PERSON

The big idea. Peter asks a bold question: who can harm you if you are zealous for what is good? He doesn't promise that nobody will try. He says it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil, because Christ suffered once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. So set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts, live so that people ask about your hope, and when they do, answer with gentleness and respect.

Who this is for. Anyone leading a small group through this passage: a Discord voice channel, a Zoom room, a home group, a youth group. You don't need to be a pastor. Your job is to keep the group in the text and make room for everyone to speak.

Before you meet

- Read 1 Peter 3:13–22 twice this week, once out loud.
- Watch this week's session at https://thechurch.digital/scattered/ if you have time.
- Pray for each person by name. In an online group, check that everyone has the link and can unmute.

HEAR in one line each

- **Highlight**: the phrase that stops you.
- **Explain**: what it meant to its first readers.
- **Apply**: not taught; answer what people notice from the text.
- **Respond**: one thing you'll do, and a prayer.

· Open — 5 MIN

Welcome everyone. Ask each person to name someone whose hope they noticed before they knew where it came from. Open in prayer, or ask someone ahead of time to pray.

· Read — 5 MIN

Read the passage aloud twice, with two different voices. If your group uses different translations, let them; hearing two wordings helps. Ask people to listen for the questions Peter asks and the reasons he gives.

H Highlight — 10 MIN

Go around: which verse or phrase stood out to you, and why? Don't explain anything yet. Just collect the highlights.

1. Which phrase caught you, and what did you feel when you heard it?
2. Has anyone ever asked you about the hope you have? What do you think they noticed?

Listen for: In this week's session people stopped on verse 21 (baptism as the pledge of a clear conscience), verse 15 (sanctify Christ as Lord, and be ready to give the reason for your hope), verses 19–20 (the spirits in prison), verse 16 (a clear conscience when you are slandered) and verse 13 (zealous for what is good). One question kept coming back: if nobody is asking about your hope, is it showing? Any of these opens a good conversation.

E Explain — 10 MIN

Now ask what it meant to the people who first read it. Use the background below only as much as the group needs; this isn't a lecture.

1. Peter's first readers were scattered and spoken against (verse 16). What would 'Who can harm you if you are zealous for what is good?' have meant to them?
2. Peter links the flood in Noah's day with baptism (verses 20–21). What does he say the water stands for, and what does he say actually saves?

A Apply — 15 MIN

Don't teach the application. People will start to say what they notice for their own lives. When they do, respond by taking it back to the passage: "Where do you see that in these verses?" Read that verse again together and let Scripture confirm, sharpen or gently correct it. The text does the work, not the leader.

R Respond — 10 MIN

Ask each person: what is God asking you to do with this? Keep it to one concrete thing for this week. Then pray for each other's responses, briefly and by name.

1. What is one thing you'll do this week because of this passage?
2. Where, online or off, will you answer someone with gentleness and respect this week?

The passage

BSB

13 Who can harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even
if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear
what they fear; do not be shaken.” 15 But in your hearts sanctify
Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone
who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with
gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those
who slander you may be put to shame by your good behavior in
Christ. 17 For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good
than for doing evil. 18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the
righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to
death in the body but made alive in the Spirit, 19 in whom He also
went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago
when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was
being built. In the ark a few people, only eight souls, were saved
through water. 21 And this water symbolizes the baptism that now
saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge
of a clear conscience toward God—through the resurrection of Jesus
Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God,
with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.

Going deeper

> What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **Romans 8:31 (BSB)**

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" Paul's version of Peter's question in verse 13.

> While they were stoning him, Stephen appealed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Falling on his knees, he cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep. **Acts 7:59-60 (BSB)**

Stephen suffering for doing good and praying for the people who hurt him, the example the group came back to.

> if He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on its ungodly people, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, among the eight; **2 Peter 2:5 (BSB)**

Peter returns to Noah, a preacher of righteousness behind verses 20–21.

Notes for the leader

- Silence is fine. Count to ten before you fill it.
- In an online group, call on people by name, gently. Chat-only voices count: read their typed answers aloud.
- If someone shares something heavy, like grief, a crisis or thoughts of self-harm, pause the study and care for the person first. If anyone is in danger, contact local emergency services. In the US you can call or text 988. Outside the US, https://findahelpline.com lists local lines.
- Verses 19–20 can take the whole hour. Peter seems to draw on a picture also found in the Book of Enoch, a Jewish writing outside the Bible that Jude also quotes. Name it if it comes up, note that quoting a book doesn't make it Scripture, and bring the group back to verse 18: Christ suffered once for all to bring you to God.
- Some in your group may be suffering for reasons that have nothing to do with doing good. Don't suggest that suffering means weak faith, or that it will always be put right in this life. Peter's comfort is Christ, who suffered too, not a promise that things will get easier.

Next week. 1 Peter 4:1–11, loving one another deeply and using our gifts to serve one another. Find the next session at https://thechurch.digital/scattered/.

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain · theChurch.digital