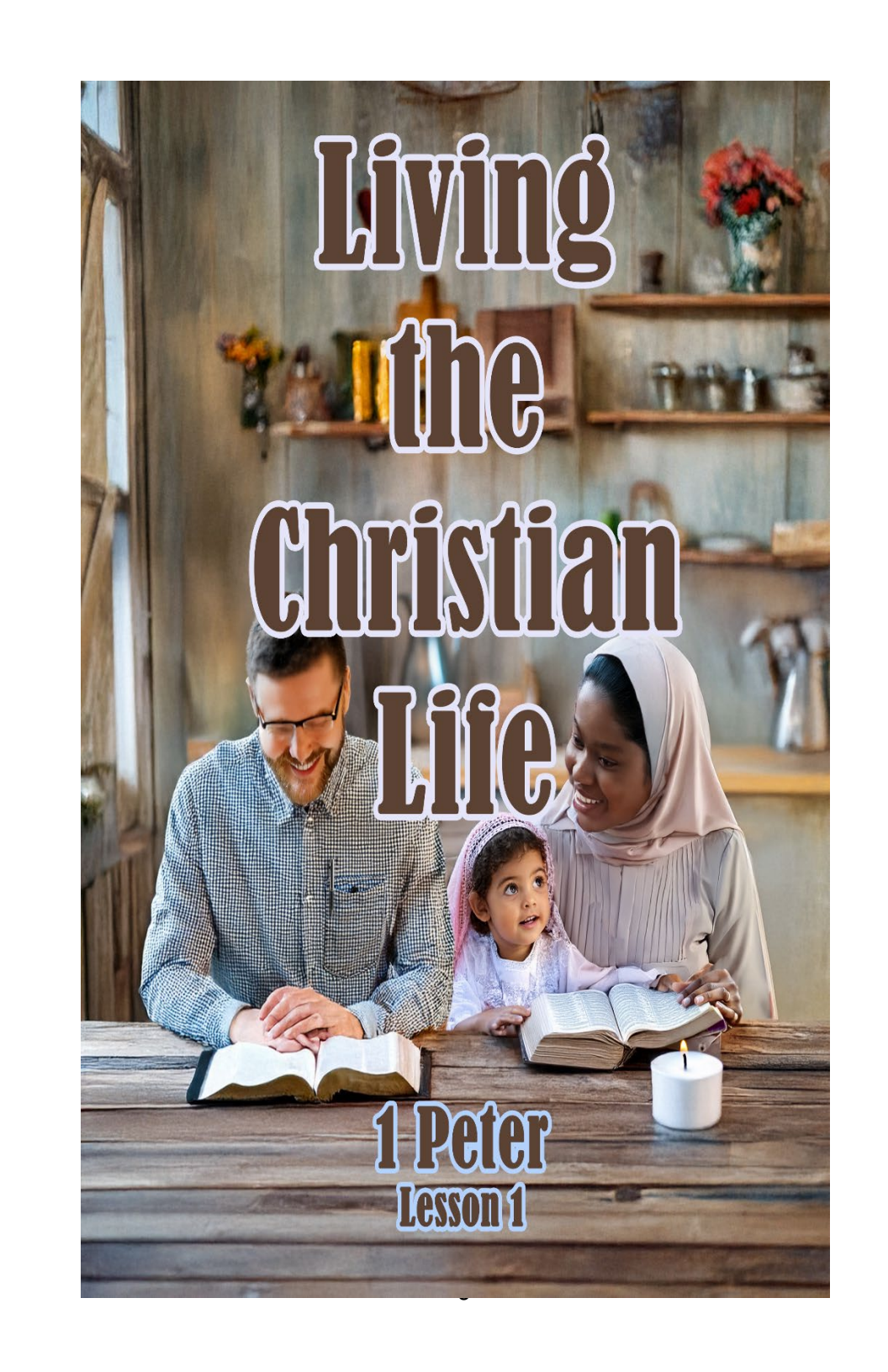


A photograph of a family of three—a man, a woman, and a young girl—sitting at a wooden table in a rustic kitchen. The man, wearing glasses and a checkered shirt, is on the left, smiling and looking at an open Bible. The woman, wearing a pink hijab and a light-colored dress, is on the right, also smiling and looking at the Bible. The young girl, wearing a pink headscarf and a light-colored dress, is sitting between them, looking up at the woman. There are two open Bibles on the table. A lit candle is on the right side of the table. The background shows a rustic kitchen with wooden shelves holding various items like jars, a vase of flowers, and a pitcher. The text "Living the Christian Life" is overlaid in a large, brown, outlined font.

Living the Christian Life

1 Peter
Lesson 1

Purpose of This Study

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,
abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul...”*

I Peter 2:11

A spiritual war has been declared against the Truth by the father of lies and his “highly esteemed” false teachers! Where is the pure and holy church of Jesus Christ for which He shed His blood? Where are the faithful called out sons of God that are poor in spirit, meek in attitude, hungering for righteousness, pure in heart, upright in conversation, honest in all dealings, lovers of their neighbors, their families, and their enemies, and most importantly lovers of God with all their heart, soul, and mind?

Satan’s universally accepted lies daily deceive the “simple”, damning those who follow his doctrines of devils in their own selfishness, while professing to “know Jesus”. Theologians have “interpreted” the holiness of God right out of the Scriptures. Historians have “belittled” Scripture by “legitimizing” its teachings and using uninspired writings of fallible men. Psychologists have added human reasoning to make excuses for their disobedience, while unlearned and unstable “ministers of righteousness” wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. All of these, like spoiled rotten brats wanting their own ways, have counselled together with their father the devil to come up with an acceptable form of godliness that is pleasing to all their own selfish desires!

*“Be **sober**, be **vigilant**; because your adversary the devil,
as a roaring lion, walketh about, **seeking whom he may devour**:
Whom **resist steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same afflictions
are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*

I Peter 5:8-9

Satan, the enemy of the church, willfully deceives and with his well thought out twisting of truth mocks the very nature of God and condemns His command to holiness! They (his followers) do not live the Christian life; therefore, they oppose teaching the truth to others! Their “fruits” stink of death caused by their own selfish lusts. Their actions, speech, and association all scream much louder than their hypocritical teachings. They do not follow Christ in His steps, nor are they striving on the “strait and narrow”. They are not seeking God with all their heart, soul, and mind; nor are they desiring to be “holy as God is holy”. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God! They are not godly teachers, but are “excuse makers” that justify man’s love of sin as they try to serve two masters!

Satan's gospel is one of self-will, which appears to give you your own desires; but in truth enslaves you (the selfish person) by your sins putting you in bondage to your father, the devil. This is the opposite of the gospel of Jesus, which teaches the faithful to be "poor in Spirit" and meek in faith! Living the Christian Life is a daily putting to death the deeds, desires, and destructive thoughts of the flesh that you might live "like Christ" in His resurrection after putting to death your own flesh daily!

The Purpose of this study is to teach all seeking the truth to have the mind of Christ and think as Jesus thought; humble yourself as Jesus humbled Himself; deny yourself as Jesus denied Himself; to obey our Heavenly Father as Jesus obeyed His Father; to daily die to self as Jesus died; and to be resurrected to a New Life, "born again" to walk in newness of life... just as Jesus rose again from the dead! In order for you to do this, you must pray and live as Jesus prayed in agony in the Garden as He poured His heart out to His Father...

*"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me:
nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done."*

Luke 22:42

Why God Used Simon Peter

After understanding the purpose of this book, you can now understand why God used Simon Peter!

Peter was a common fisherman... that's right! Fisherman! What does a fisherman know about living the Christian life? Nothing in and of himself! But... what transformed Peter's life from a common fisherman to the faithful follower of Jesus Christ reveals to you the truth that set him free! To Peter was revealed "all things", for Jesus said, "...for ***all things*** that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." It was not who Peter was or what he knew. Peter had been hand chosen, taught, and sent out into the world by Jesus as one of the Apostles teaching the life-changing "Gospel".

This miraculous change **completely "converted" his thinking, actions, desires, and reason for living!** His transformation shows that you can be delivered of your sins, no matter what your status in life, if only you will obey the gospel.

He wrote two powerful letters or "epistles" to encourage his brethren in the Lord to be perfect, established, strengthened, and settled even through persecution! He commanded with authority "**be ye holy as God is holy**" and warned of the end of them that obey not the gospel of God! His divinely inspired writings will also change your life, if you will be "converted" upon the illumination of the Gospel that redeemed him!

Peter had some "common to man" struggles called self-will, but upon his conversion his life was so drastically changed that God used him to teach others also! Like the other Hebrew disciples, Peter had a misconception of the Messiah and the "benefits" that Peter would receive from Him. He had waited for the Messiah that would elevate physical Israel to superiority and would wipe out their enemies. This Messiah would not be "spiritual" but a political leader! Wanting this mold for Jesus, Who came to deliver the entire world from their sins, Peter stumbled around constantly in the flesh seeking his own will! **But... God had other plans for him!** Just as Jesus had said, when Peter was converted, he would be used by God to strengthen his brethren... spiritually!

He became a zealous preacher of righteousness and was first introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew:

*"He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him,
We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."*

John 1:41

Jesus changed Peter's name to Cephas (meaning rock or stone) upon meeting him in John 1:42. Peter was the first disciple called by Jesus as Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-18 records. From a humble beginning, he became one of the most important disciples during the life of Jesus, and then the main leader in the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts after the resurrection of Jesus.

He was busy working when Jesus called him, so we know him to be a hard worker. Perhaps God looked down, saw the zeal of the young man, and desiring to use that zeal purged Peter of his own self-will by causing him to see his own selfish flesh.

We know Peter was married, for his wife's mother lay sick of a fever and Jesus healed her in Matthew 8:14, Mark 1:30, and Luke 4:38. (I wonder how he could be the first "pope" with a wife???) He was always talking and volunteering information, because he was very zealous. As Jesus walked on the water, Peter asked if he could also walk on the water, which led to Jesus rebuking him for his lack of faith! When Peter "... saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me." (Matthew 14:30) These acts of "failed zeal" show us that God uses even the most common men that desire to serve Him, if they will only submit to Him and persevere unto the end by putting to death the flesh!

Peter was a very inquisitive disciple, yet Jesus marveled at his lack of understanding in Matthew 15:15-16,

*"Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said,
Are ye also yet without understanding?"*

This began to develop a pattern of "good intentions" of self-will not backed by strong faith. Peter was serving Christ with his own ideas of the outcome at this point. He jumped head long into the ministry in his own strength, only to be embarrassed or reproved for his own benefit or growth, but this did not stop him from being faithful! Peter zealously gave his famous confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God in Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29, and Luke 9:20,

*"And Simon Peter answered and said,
Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

What a wonderful stand Peter took, for it was upon Peter's statement of the truth that Jesus would build His Church! Yet, you see that just shortly after this wonderful statement, as Jesus was beginning to explain of His coming suffering and death that Jesus again rebuked Peter. Matthew 16:22 and Mark 8:31-38 record this story for us,

*"Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying,
Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee.
But He turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind Me, satan:**
thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest NOT
the things that be of God, but those that be of men."*

Was this love that Jesus showed by calling one of His disciples “satan”? Yes, it was, for it certainly opened Peter’s eyes to the truth of his own satanic selfishness! Jesus expressed that all who seek their own will, whether for good intentions (like Peter’s concern for Jesus) or for evil intentions of purposely trying to hinder the will of God, are fulfilling the desires and mission of satan, the enemy of God.

The entire world is full of people deceived into thinking that their “good intentions” are right, but very clearly we see that God’s will and yours are very different. This is expressed in Isaiah 55:8, which teaches us the difference in God’s thinking and ours.

*“For **My thoughts are NOT your thoughts**,
neither are your ways **My ways**, saith the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are **My ways higher than your ways**, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Peter thought that Jesus “needed his help”, but Jesus only desires that we trust or rely upon Him and do as He has commanded us. He does not need us to figure out our “ministry” for Him. We need to only surrender our lives to Him, and wait for Him to guide us through faith by yielding to His Holy Spirit that He has given us to guide us into all truth.

Multitudes like Peter are looking at the temporary and immediate, but Jesus was looking at the future of the entire world. Like most men, Peter was thinking only about Peter! This was part of Peter’s character until his conversion. Matthew 17:1-5 records that Peter again was only thinking about the temporal “mountain top” experiences, as he desired to build temporary tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He was very excited to be on this mountain, yet when Jesus went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was rebuked for not staying awake. He really needed to stay awake and learn to pray as Jesus did!

Peter continued this temporal thinking, when it was God the Father’s will that Jesus be taken away by His betrayer. Peter tried to interfere with God’s will (by using force in John 18:10, Matthew 26:51-54, and Luke 22:50-51), not understanding the high stakes that were involved; that is, the eternal destiny of the entire world. Peter, only looking at the immediate, did not understand that Christ came to be a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus foretold of Peter’s denial of Him, yet Peter’s response contradicted our Lord in Luke 22:33-34,

*“And he said unto Him, **Lord, I am ready to go with Thee,**
both into prison, and to death. And He said,
I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day,
before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me.”*

Being ashamed, he followed the Lord Jesus afar off. Then, when he was asked about his relationship with Jesus, he denied the Lord three times, the last time with an oath. Matthew 26:74-75 says,

*“Then began he to curse and to swear, saying,
I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew.
And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him,
Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny **Me thrice**.
And **he went out, and wept bitterly.**”*

How could a disciple who had witnessed firsthand all the miracles of Christ, heard all the teachings and doctrines of the Kingdom, promised to die before he would be disloyal, and witnessed firsthand the power of God, ever have denied, cursed, and been ashamed of his Lord? Until you put to death your own desires, deny yourself, take up your cross to follow the will of the Lord, you cannot be Christ’s disciple! When you’re not walking with God in spirit and in truth, you can do the same thing! This is human nature and it is in you, unless you put it to death, daily! Peter was just like the majority of people that serve God according to their own thinking.

Although, as a young disciple, he had some problems with zeal without knowledge and zeal without stability. We find that this devotion paid off when he was finally converted. When Peter changed his thinking from his opinion to the will of God, he was converted! Jesus told him in Luke 22:31,

*“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, satan hath **desired to have you**, that **he may sift you as wheat**: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, **strengthen thy brethren.**”*

Jesus can do something that we cannot. He could read Peter’s thoughts, and He knew that Peter still did not understand that Jesus had come for eternal reasons instead of the establishment of an earthly kingdom. Jesus warned Peter that satan sought to destroy him as wheat is sifted (devoured)! Jesus prayed for Peter as you must pray for those who are bound in self-will that they might be loosed from their own selfish lusts and be converted. Peter proved Jesus correct the night that Jesus was betrayed as he fought for Jesus’s freedom, denied the Lord, and wept bitterly to repentance!

After Jesus rose from the grave, the angel in His sepulcher announced to Jesus’ disciples that He had risen and purposely named Peter among those who should be told the news. This is recorded in Mark 16:7! Jesus knew that Peter had repented, and the angels of God desired to encourage Peter to be steadfast unto the end!

*“But go your way, tell His disciples **and Peter** that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.”*

He appeared to Peter and the others. However, in John 21:15-22, you will see that Jesus had a heart-to-heart talk with Peter. He commanded Peter to feed His sheep. Jesus asked the same question three times, (matching the three times that Peter had denied Him) which grieved Peter. When Peter, thinking of himself, was concerned with what John would do instead of minding his own business, Peter again was mildly scolded by Jesus in verses 20-22,

*“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple
whom Jesus loved following... Peter seeing him saith to Jesus,
Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him,
If I will that he tarry till I come, **what is that to thee?** follow thou Me.”*

In Acts 1:15-26, you will see again that Peter was very hasty and decided to “elect” an apostle, instead of waiting for Jesus to handpick one. Acts 1:2 tells us that Jesus chose all the apostles personally. Peter in his haste gave God a choice of the two that he had “appointed”. Matthias was chosen, yet you will never hear anything about him again. Surely, Peter would grow up and learn to practice what Christ had been teaching. In the next chapter, God sent the Holy Ghost which filled Peter, and you see from this point onward that Peter was converted (Luke 22:32)!

Acts 2 shows us a new man that was full of the power of the Holy Ghost, and he was used by God to win multitudes to Him on the Day of Pentecost. He began to use the Lord’s power to heal the sick and preach very boldly and powerfully. God used him to stand before the religious leaders in Acts 4:19 and 5:29.

He rebuked Ananias and Sapphira for lying to God, and they fell down dead in front of him (Acts 5:1-11). This was not the old Peter. **This was the new man that was now converted and usable by God, because he was not seeking his own will but the will of God.** He was now a man that depended upon God for everything in his life as you see the evidence in the power of God that he possessed.

As the new church was persecuted after the martyring of Stephen, Peter began to spread the Lord’s Word to all quarters. He was able to discern that Simon the Sorcerer may have “believed”, but that he was still in the “*gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*” This was the same selfishness that Peter had gotten victory over! Peter told him to “*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness....*”

In Acts 10, Peter’s life was again changed by a vision from the Lord. He submitted to the Lord and preached to the Gentile family of Cornelius. This, of course, ruffled the feathers of those Jews in Jerusalem who believed that they being Jews were the only people to be saved. Notice, that right after the door was opened to go to the Gentiles, there was a severe persecution of the Christians, who were scattered abroad taking with them the strength that they gained by being in the church of Acts 2:41-47! God had prepared them through their obedience to His plan for the church! (Read “*I Will Build My Church*” Series.)

God allowed them to grow together and learn the truth, so it could be effectively taught throughout the world. Unfortunately, the world is having a strong impact upon the social club “church” as professing “Christians” or religious pretenders look for the approval of man, instead of the blessings of obedience from the Lord. God blessed His church that He had founded upon Peter’s statement, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

The “Rock” up to this point was not Peter as you have seen, though God had used Him greatly. Jesus is the Rock that the church (the fellowship of believers) has been built upon! Peter was an instrument greatly used of God in this.

We are told that Peter faithfully preached the Gospel for more than 35 years before he was sentenced to death by the Emperor Nero. He was crucified upside down at his own request. He felt very unworthy to be crucified as His Savior had been. He was approximately 70 years old when he went to be with His Savior. Peter died as Jesus had prophesied to Him in John 21:18-19,

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God.”



The Apostle Peter being crucified upside down in Rome on orders of Nero, AD 69

You can see what a faithful witness that Peter was up to the very day of His death. He started out very shaky in the flesh, but God got a hold of his heart and he was converted. The perfect mixture between the grace of God and the obedient temperance of Peter propelled him to endure unto the end in faithfulness! Oh, that God would convert some professing “Christian” religious pretenders today; so that you might trust Him completely to the saving of your own soul, first, and then work the works of God in the hearts and minds of those who also so desperately need the Truth.

Peter was not “a great man”, for he was just a common everyday fisherman who battled his flesh until he finally surrendered all to the Lord and became a “new creature” in Christ! He was not a learned orator, nor was he rich or famous in this world. He was just a common humbled man that possessed faith in a spectacular, all-powerful God who allowed him to cure the sick, build the church, change the destiny of people from hell to heaven, and spread the truth throughout the entire world. Praise God that you have the ability to have a relationship with the same God!

This short history of the writer of I Peter will help you to understand this book much better. There is so much “meat” in the book of I Peter. You will see how Peter looks at the suffering of the flesh and how he tries to encourage those who may someday give their life for Christ as a martyr (witness). He explains the life of a Christian very simply, yet his teachings convict and stir the heart to repentance. May God use them to open your heart and eyes, not to the greatness of Peter, but to the power of God unto your own reconciliation to God!



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