

Coming Just for the Show

Word

Scripture Reference

Ezekiel 33:30-33

Discussion Questions

1. What makes sports, current events, news, and showbiz gossips entertaining? Why do you think people look at church the same way (as something with entertainment value)?
2. Read Ezekiel 33:30-33. In this passage, the Israelites were in exile in Babylon because of their disobedience to God. Ezekiel, a prophet, was a captivating messenger of God's Word. The people were amazed and attracted to how he speaks, and so they come to listen to him and even brought others with them (v. 30). However, something was wrong. The people listened to Ezekiel with curiosity, but continued to live as they pleased. In short, they did not put into practice what they heard. It is sad that many people today see church as entertainment, coming just for the "show." Three things make worship become spiritual entertainment, and therefore a waste of time. First is when there is an action of inaction (v. 31a). It is when you decide to do nothing about what you hear. Discuss how this is manifested in many Christians' lives, especially outside church. As a follower of Jesus Christ, how can you actively live out God's Word when you hear it during worship?
3. Second, church becomes spiritual entertainment when the motivation is of self (v. 31b). When you pray for other people to change but you yourself do not change; when you say, "I'll change when it's convenient for me (when my circumstances are better);" when it becomes *my* schedule, *my* time, *my* desire, *my* convenience—these are all manifestations of what is truly in one's

heart. Discuss the possible spiritual dangers when you start to think that church is for self-satisfaction. What's your personal attitude and motivation in coming to church? Is church for you about the body of Christ, or is it about your personal gain and convenience?

4. Lastly, church becomes spiritual entertainment when the messenger becomes the entertainer and the message becomes the entertainment (v. 32). When does this danger happen? What do you think is the role of your pastor in the church? What does the Bible say is his role? What kind of message do you think should your pastor be preaching? Does it simply make you feel good, or does it challenge you to transform your life? Discuss how you can develop a right attitude towards church (as an individual or as a group of believers) so that being part of a church community will truly have an impact in your life.

Walk

The call to accountability and responsibility in verse 33 is very clear. You must have the innate desire to complete what God wants you to do. Examine your heart. Do you only enjoy the music, the people and the activities of the church, without taking the messages to heart? Have you reduced church services to the level of entertainment? Or do you ask the question, "What does God want me to do with what I just heard?"

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word that reminds me not to take You lightly. You're not there to entertain me, but to transform me. My pastor is not there to make me feel good, but to challenge me to obey. My fellow believers aren't there to make me feel important, but to encourage me to be relevant. Forgive me, Lord, for making church about me, and for making personal convenience and gain my priority instead of pleasing You. Give me the courage to give up self and own up to my responsibility in the body of Christ. Teach me to be humble and allow me to serve You and to serve other people. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Own Up! #2

The Responsibility of the Inheritance

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 1:1-12

Discussion Questions

1. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a Christian? How did you own up to that challenge?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:1-12. In this passage we see the apostle Peter encouraging the Christians living in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), who were being persecuted and possibly starting to waver in their faith. He reminded them that as Christians they have responsibilities, and these responsibilities are for a special purpose. What did Peter tell the persecuted Christians about their identity (v. 1)? What responsibility comes along with this identity (v. 2)?
3. In God's sovereignty He saved us through the death of Jesus Christ. You were sanctified (set apart) as a child of God through the work of the Holy Spirit, and as such you gain an inheritance that carries responsibilities. What is this inheritance and what are the implications? How is this inheritance described in our passage (v. 3-5)? How would you compare this inheritance with earthly ones that you received on earth? Why is this eternal inheritance so secured (v. 5)? Share how this inheritance will motivate you to live for something better.
4. The inheritance you received as a child of God is an inheritance that results in joy (v. 6-8). Peter knew that he was writing to a group of people who were going through trials and difficulties. He encouraged them to focus on the inheritance they have in Christ. Discuss the good things that result from trials (v. 7). Share how you have grown in your walk with God through a difficult situation.
5. Peter also says that the joy of a Christian should be independent of his or her circumstances—a joy that is beyond words. This kind of joy comes from recognizing an inheritance that is unseen and rejoicing in your salvation. Why do people who are persecuted because of their faith still experience joy? And why is it that many Christians who are free to live out their faith do not fully enjoy the freedom of living responsibly for Jesus? Share how you are rejoicing in your salvation. The Word of God promises that whatever happens to you today, if you have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you are saved and will be in God's presence forever. How does that impact your life?
6. The inheritance you received as a child of God is worth pursuing (v. 10-11). In your culture, when does a person usually receive his inheritance? The prophets in the Old Testament have been looking forward to the coming of the Messiah and His suffering. He did come, and He had to die so we can receive our inheritance. Share how it affects you, knowing that someone else died in order for you to gain an eternal and secure inheritance. How, then, should you live your life as a response to what Jesus did for you?

Walk

To sum it up, the responsibility of an eternal inheritance is to pursue it with joy! As an undeserving recipient of this eternal inheritance received through God's grace, are you joyfully looking forward to it, especially in the midst of trials and temptations? What should be your lifelong response for that amazing gift with which God has blessed you?

Worship & Prayer

Father, I am privileged to be called Your child. I am grateful that even though I don't deserve it, Your grace allowed Christ to die in my place so you can give me an eternal inheritance. Forgive me, Lord, for devaluing that grace and neglecting my responsibility as Your child. Allow me, Father, to live as someone set apart for Your purpose. Through Your Spirit enable me to live humbly, obediently, responsibly. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Own Up! #3

The Responsibility of a New Life

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 1:13-25

Discussion Questions

1. What are the things that Christians usually struggle with, knowing that it's wrong yet pretending not to know?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:13-25. The apostle Peter continued to encourage the Christians to own up to their faith. In this passage, he cited three characteristics of life change that need to be present in a Christian's new life. First is that your new life in Christ should be characterized by holiness (v. 13-16). You are no longer controlled by the flesh and should stop longing for earthly desires. What was Peter's exhortation in verse 16? Discuss why being holy is difficult. What does it mean to be holy in everyday situations? As a believer, what makes it doable for you to live a holy life?
3. How is it possible to live in purity and to think as God thinks? What does the passage mean when it says that you stand before God's presence and He will assess your life according to how you live it?
4. Secondly, new life in Christ is characterized by reverence or fear of God (v. 17-21). Peter tells the Christians to live in reverent fear. Respect cannot be demanded but earned, and God definitely deserves your reverence because of who He is. What did He do for you before the creation of the world? What redeems you from your sins? How do you respond to what He has done? Reverence does not come from set rules but out of a heart condition from your walk with God. Share with the group how you revere God in the way you live your life.
5. Thirdly, new life in Christ is characterized by love for others (v. 22-25). God wants us to live with a pure heart, loving one another and seeing other people as someone whom God loves. In Christ, we are brothers and sisters. It is easy to disassociate ourselves from other people and forget that Jesus loves them, too. Discuss what usually hinders Christians from loving another Christian. How can you love without prejudices? In your assessment, how does love show in the way you treat the people working for you, like your employees, your house helpers, and drivers? How can you show them that they, too, are precious in God's sight and that Christ died for them as well?
6. There is no substitute for the Word of God. The living and abiding Word of God is unchanging because the One who wrote it never changes. Culture, man's laws and habits may change, but the Word of God does not. How can your priorities reflect the truth that your life is short-lived while God's Word is never-ending?

Walk

As a Christian, you have the responsibility to live a new life in Jesus Christ. Is your life in Christ characterized by holiness, reverence for God, and love for others? What does your life say about your Heavenly Father? What step can you take right away in order to live a holy life, revere God and actually show love for others this week?

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word which reminds me time and again that You will hold me accountable for how I live my life. Forgive me for the times I chose to disobey You and follow my own desires. Forgive me for the times I made choices that say You're not the most important Person in my life. Forgive me for the times I thought and acted like I'm the only one deserving of Your love, blessings, and forgiveness. I'm not, and I want other people to know, too, that even though we're undeserving, You love us anyway, enough to let Your Son die in our place. Thank You, Father, that when You look at me, You don't see my sin but rather see Your Son's blood covering me. Give me the strength to live my new life in holiness, in reverence, and in love. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Own Up! #4

The Responsibility of Being Chosen

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 2:1-10

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever experienced being eliminated from a game/contest or being passed over for a promotion? How did it feel not to be picked? Share with the group.
2. Read 1 Peter 2:1-10. In life, there are two teams on which you can belong: Team Christ and Team World. People normally want to be chosen by others who they think are “cool.” The honest truth is that many Christians are envious of Team World because Christians have forgotten how it is to be chosen. In the passage, Peter explained that being chosen by God has responsibilities. How does verse 1 characterize those who are with Team Christ? As God’s chosen people, what should you crave for (v. 2)? How strong is your need for God’s Word? How has your personal devotion been helping you in your Christian growth? Share and discuss with the group.
3. The first responsibility of being chosen is to living an “all-in” life for Christ (v. 1-3). As being chosen by God’s grace, you need to be all-out in your relationship with Him. As part of Team Christ, do you do what you should do reluctantly? What does reluctance do to your joy as a Christian? Share how joy is evident in your Christian life.
4. The second responsibility of being chosen is living as someone of worth (v. 4-5). Every believer was chosen by God to build up Team Christ, which is the church—a special community of God. What does royal priesthood mean to you? In the Old Testament it means someone selected from a priestly family to offer sacrifice on behalf of

the people of God. But now, you can personally come to the presence of God through prayer in Jesus’ name. Does Team World have this privilege? How should the fact that you can have access to God lift your self-worth? How do people “sell” themselves cheaply? As a Christian, what actions should you take to avoid selling yourself cheaply?

5. The third responsibility of being chosen is living for God’s approval (v. 6-8). The very foundation of the church is not Peter, but Jesus Christ. You cannot live your life in Christ and do the things that He rejects at the same time. Discuss why you cannot serve two masters. Why should you not be happy when the world applauds you? How can you live a life that is approved by God?
6. The fourth responsibility of being chosen is living with purpose (v. 9-10). God’s royal chosen people rise above all generations regardless of age and race. What did Peter say should be the purpose of the faith of those who belong to Christ? What is your spiritual purpose in life? How does being chosen inspire you spiritually? Share with the group.

Walk

As a believer, you are chosen. You are set apart to belong to the living God, not for Team World. As such, you should live an “all-in” life for Christ, live as someone of worth, live for His approval, and live with a purpose. How do you live a life that is glorifying to God? As His child, do you think God can be proud of you? Remember, you are chosen. God picked you out. What should be your response to this truth?

Worship & Prayer

Father, You’ve chosen me and set me apart for Your purpose, and it came at the price of Christ’s blood. Thank You for that gift that I can never repay, but I want to spend my life trying by living my life all for Christ; by living as someone worthy, someone precious in Your sight; by living for God’s approval instead of man’s; and by living with a purpose. Beginning today, I want to take this responsibility seriously in order to bring glory to Your name. Give me the ability, help me nurture this desire, and grant me the strength to sustain this change. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.

Own Up! #5

The Responsibility of a Witness to the World

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 2:11-12

Discussion Questions

1. If God calls you to another place to serve Him, what would be the most difficult thing for you to give up? Would you allow it to hinder you from obeying God's call? Share with the group.
2. Read 1 Peter 2:11-12. Unless God specifically calls you to be a witness as a missionary to another place, you don't have to go too far to look for someone who is lost (someone who needs to hear the gospel). There are unbelievers everywhere: in your home, neighborhood, circle of friends, and work place or school. As a Christian, you have a responsibility to witness to the world. In this passage, Peter urges the Christians to do two things. First, he said, "do not love the world." (v. 11). What does loving the world mean? Why is it so easy to love the things in the world?
3. Peter gave two reasons why you should not love the world. He said that you are sojourners and pilgrims in this world. When you travel, do you pack a lot? How can luggage slow down your travels? How do material things hinder spiritual growth? Peter also used the word "pilgrims," or strangers, to describe God's people in this world. What did he mean by it? Discuss why Christians should not fit in or feel right in the world.
4. Peter also said that you are to abstain from your desires of worldly things because it is war against the soul. Why is it so difficult to refrain from sinful desires? Could you hold on to God if you are holding on tightly to the ways of the world at the same time? Discuss

why it's hard to love God the way you should when you are still attached to the practices of the world.

5. The second responsibility of a witness to the world is to do what is right (v. 12) for the following reasons:
 - (a) Because then, other people will have nothing bad to say about you. What do your non-Christian loved ones and peers say about you? Are they aware that you are a Christian? Is your reputation good enough that they won't have anything to say against you?
 - (b) Because people will be observing you. As the world watches and sees you, they will know your good works. Have you ever stood up for your convictions, or done something right that cost you something you value? Share with the group.
 - (c) Because God will be glorified. How does being a good witness allow you to give glory to God?

Walk

Lives are a vapor, eternity is forever, heaven is full of joy, and hell is horrific and terrible. These are the great realities of life, and so live as a witness for Christ. Think of good deeds you can do as a means to witness to the unbelievers around you with whom you have regular contact. Is there anything in your life that you should give up in order to be a good witness for Christ?

Worship & Prayer

Father, as I sit and ponder how I can give glory to You, I think of what Jesus Christ did. His life, sacrificed, willingly given for my sake, was a powerful witness of Your love. You do not ask me to die for You; what You ask is that I live for You. And so I pray, Lord, to give me the strength to let go of whatever I hold precious in this world and hold on instead to Your hand. Wherever You lead, whatever the cost, may I be always willing to live a life that tells others that I am a sinner saved by the blood of Christ. By the power of Your Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ I ask these things. Amen.

Own Up! #6

The Responsibility to Submit

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 2:13-25

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe the attitude you have towards people in authority, such as parents, teachers/bosses, government leaders, etc. Discuss with the group.
2. Read 1 Peter 2:13-25. It seems that in any society or culture, people want to be the boss more than being the one to submit. Most people view submission as giving up something personal and allowing someone else to win. In this passage, Peter gives us three principles of submission which as followers of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to cultivate. First is to submit to those in authority (v. 13-17). For what reason did God institute government (v. 13-14)? Does God expect you to submit to a corrupt government? What is the only exception as far as submitting to authority over you is concerned?
3. Laws and policies should encourage the people to do good whether it is in government, offices, home and school. Share with the group real-life examples of how law can actually encourage people to do well. What did Peter tell the Christians NOT to do with their freedom (v. 16)? How do people use their freedom “within the requirements of the law” as a rationale to do something wrong? Discuss.
4. The second principle of submission that Peter teaches us to cultivate is to submit to our masters, i.e. employees to their employers (v. 18-20). It is easy to submit to employers who are gentle and kind, but

Peter also encourages submission even in the face of unjust treatment. Share with the group the unjust treatments that a person could possibly experience at home, at work or in school. What praiseworthy act is distinctive among Christians (v. 19)? How did Peter distinguish just and unjust suffering (v. 20)? Does being willing to submit to unjust treatment mean that it is okay to stay in an abusive relationship?

5. The third principle is a reminder that the ultimate example of submission is Jesus Christ (v. 21-25). Christ suffered for our benefit. He didn't deserve to suffer and go through unjust sacrifice in our behalf, but He did. Jesus Christ's submission and sacrifice led to your salvation. Describe how the Jesus dealt with His suffering (v. 22-23). Why did Jesus shoulder all our sins (v. 24)? What should be your response to Christ's submission to death in order to save you from your sins?

Walk

*“Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, Nobody knows my sorrow;
Nobody knows but Jesus; Glory, Alleluia!”*

Are you having a hard time submitting to someone with an authority over you? What example did Christ leave for you to follow? What specific changes should you make in your attitude and actions in order to live in submission for Christ?

Worship & Prayer

Father, to submit is one of the most difficult things to learn because it's also a lesson in humility. It is times such as these that I realize how much pride I have, pride that has no place in my walk with You. And so I ask for You to teach me, Lord, to be humble. Allow me opportunities to learn how to submit, and grant me people—mature Christians—who can hold me accountable should I not act according to Your will for me to submit. Grant me also wisdom Lord, to know when to submit and when to stand up for my biblical convictions. I ask these in Christ's name. Amen.

Own Up! #7

The Responsibility to Our Family

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 3:1-12

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the many ways in which the roles of a husband and wife have changed in the last two decades.
2. Read 1 Peter 3:1-12. God designed married life. Unfortunately, there are many people who are unhappy in their marriage. Husbands and wives don't treat each other with love and respect. Instead, they model a negative picture of marriage to their children. In this letter to the Christians, Peter spelled out the responsibilities of different members of the family. First, he pointed out the responsibilities of the wife (v. 1-6). God created man and woman with equal importance, but He also designed the family to have specific roles and an order of authority to avoid anarchy. What is the challenge of being a wife (v. 1)? What's the reason why Peter urged wives to submit to their husbands (v. 1-2)? Why do you think a lot of men are not leading in their homes? Discuss what qualities a Christian wife needs to practice in order to witness to their non-Christian husbands.
3. The second responsibility that wives have is to cultivate inner beauty (v. 3-6). Outward appearance should not be the defining factor of genuine beauty. Share examples of how society is so obsessed with outward appearance. What do you think is more effortless, to be beautiful on the outside or from within? Discuss how you can develop a beautiful spiritual character, especially as a wife.
4. Peter also talks about the responsibilities of the husbands in verse 7. The first responsibility is that he should make an effort to understand his wife. What is the challenge of being a husband? What's the reason why husbands should treat their wives with respect?
5. Jesus Christ's love is the best example of how to love unconditionally. He chose to love you while you were still a sinner. How can a husband love unconditionally? If the husband loves this way, what would be the natural response of a wife?
6. The second responsibility of the husband is to honor his wife with respect as the weak one physiologically. Do you think chivalry is lost in today's generation? Nowadays, lots of women are independent. How can men still show consideration and graciousness to women?
7. In your Christian home, does the husband initiate prayer? How might the way a husband treats his wife get in the way of his prayers?
8. Peter also has exhortations for the rest of the family members (v. 7-12). What amazing challenges did Peter give the believers? How is it possible to treat each other with compassion and respect (v. 8), to be a blessing and not an enemy (v.9), to be watchful of what you say because words hurt (v. 10), and to seek peace (v. 11-12)? Share from your experience how you live harmoniously in your home.

Walk

No one is perfect. God created each person differently and uniquely. You are by nature incompatible with each other. If all people agree on everything, then one of them is unnecessary. What happens when no one is taking his or her responsibility because of entitlement? What happens when parents abdicate their responsibilities to their children? How does forgiveness and unconditional love undergird a good and solid family relationship? What changes do you need to make in your life so that you can enjoy being "happily incompatible" with your husband/wife/family members?

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank you for blessing me with family (husband, wife, children, siblings, etc.). It's not always easy living with them, but thank You for Your Word that reminds me of my responsibility to treat them with compassion and respect, to be a blessing to them and not an enemy, to watch what I say, and to seek peace. Enable me, Father, to be a witness of Your love to them. Strengthen and equip me to responsibly take on my role: a man who gently and courageously leads, a woman who humbly and graciously submits, a child who trustingly and willingly obeys. I ask these in Christ's name. Amen.

Own Up! #8

The Responsibility to be Prepared

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 3:13-22

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever crammed or prepared last minute for something that is very important? How did it go? Share your experience with the group.
2. When a situation arises, when faced with the storms of life and the challenges of the world, many Christians fail in their Christian walk because they are not prepared to take the onslaught. What situations must you be prepared for as a follower of Christ? Read 1 Peter 3:13-22. The passage gives three situations for which Christians need to be prepared. First is that believers need to be prepared to suffer (v. 13-14). What does Peter mean when he asked, “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” (v. 13). In what way is suffering for doing something right a blessing? Why is it considered a high privilege to suffer for Christ? Share with the group about an experience when your suffering turned into blessing.
3. Verse 17 states, “For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” Oftentimes, Christians are afraid to do the right thing because they fear the “consequences.” Share and discuss examples of the wrong things that Christians choose to do because they are afraid that if they do what is right, the results would be too bothersome. As a believer, how can you avoid falling into this trap?
4. Secondly, you need to be prepared to defend your faith (v. 15). Ask yourself these questions: (1) Am I able to explain the important things about my faith? (2) How did I come to my decision to become a Christian? (3) Why did I choose Christianity over other religions? How would you prepare yourself to defend your faith in a hostile environment where your faith could be shaken?
5. A very important thing to remember when you defend your faith verbally is that your life should match what you say. How do you think can your actions be the greatest defense of your faith? Is there anything in your life right now—places you should not be going, things you should not be doing, shows you should not be watching—that may compromise your faith? Share and discuss.
6. Thirdly, as a follower of Jesus Christ, you need to be prepared to be identified with Christ (v. 18-22). Noah endured suffering because he was prepared to suffer and defend what was right. He preached to the people although they ridiculed him. What do the floodwaters from which Noah and his family were rescued now symbolize, according to Peter (v. 21)? What is the meaning of baptism? Could it save you from your sin? Why is it important to be baptized if you have believed in Jesus as your Savior? If you are a believer but have not been baptized yet, what’s keeping you from publicly identifying with Christ?

Walk

Preparation doesn’t assure victory; it assures confidence. When you are prepared, you don’t have to be afraid. You can sleep in the midst of trouble. When you are prepared to suffer for Christ, prepared to defend your faith, and prepared to identify with Him, then you will be more at peace. Are you willing to count it a blessing to suffer for Jesus? In your walk with Christ, what measure can you take to become more geared up to answer questions about your hope and faith in Him? Are you identified with the One who controls the world instead of with the world? Whose team does your allegiance belong?

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for reminding me through Your Word that believing in You means I have to be prepared to suffer for You, that I have to be prepared to defend my faith in You, and that I need to prepare to be identified with You. You never promised an easy life when I chose to follow Your Son, but You promised me Your Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide me as I try to live for You in a world that has rejected You. And so I claim that promise, Father. As I do my best to study Your Word, grant me the wisdom to understand and open my heart to receive Your instructions. Grant me opportunities to own my faith, and allow me the privilege of sharing it with others. I ask these in Christ’s name. Amen.

Own Up! #9

The Responsibility to Live for God's Glory

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 4:1-11

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever done anything where you can honestly say you humbly gave back the glory to God? Share with the group.
2. The ultimate purpose of a Christian should be to live to give glory to God's name. Your action will never add to or diminish God's glory because His glory is consistent and intrinsic to who He is. But as a believer you do reflect and highlight the glory of God by the way you live. What does living for God's glory look like practically? Read 1 Peter 4:1-11. Peter tells us in this passage that to live for God's glory is to obediently follow His will (v. 1-3). Since Jesus died for you, you should live as a new creation. As a new creation, you have a choice whether to follow God's will or to continue living for the acceptance of a world who would never understand what living to do God's will means. What are the things that a new creation should no longer be doing (v. 3)? Discuss what human desires do Christians still struggle with and why. How can you overcome them?
3. Secondly, to live for God's glory is to live faithfully, even in small things (v. 4-6). Peter clearly stated that everyone will be judged. Those who did not believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior will be punished for rejecting salvation, while the Christians who believed will be judged based on how they lived their lives. You will give an account to God; that's why small things matter. If you allow small things to slip in your character, it will affect the big things in your disposition. Name examples of the "little things"—wrong actions that a believer does thinking it's not a big deal, e.g. not stopping at a red light or parking in handicapped parking slot. Why are those little things not glorifying to God? How can you live a glorifying life to God even when no one is looking? How is your life reflecting God's glory to those who are observing your life intently?

4. Thirdly, to live for God's glory is to serve others (v. 7-10). How do you serve others? Share and discuss the following with the group:
 - (a) Peter says in verse 7 that Christians should be clear-minded and self-controlled so that they can pray. Praying for others reflects God's glory. Is a majority of your prayers about yourself or about others? How do prayers often reflect the selfishness of one's heart?
 - (b) What did Peter urge his readers to do (v. 8)? How does love cover a mass of sin?
 - (c) How did Peter encourage the Christians to love each other (v. 9-10)? Discuss why sometimes it is difficult to love other believers. What do you think can make it easier?

Walk

*To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son
Who yielded his life atonement for sin,
and opened the life gate that all may go in.*

1 Peter 4:11 sums it up: everything should be done for the glory of God. Individual achievements only highlight the glory of God when it serves others. In the midst of your personal accomplishments, do you turn the spotlight to God or just focus it on yourself? Before you say "To God be the glory," run it through these filters:

1. Am I living in obedience to God in accordance to His will as He has stated in His Word?
2. Did I faithfully live out my life in recognition of God's authority?
3. Did I do what I did (or am I doing what I'm doing) as modeled by Jesus Christ, to serve others?

Worship & Prayer

Father, thank You for reminding me through Your Word that I have a responsibility to give glory to Your name. It's so easy, Lord, to take credit for what You have enabled me to do and for what You have blessed me to have. It's also so easy to simply say "to God be the glory" or "praise God" even if I don't really mean it, just to make it look to others that I'm a grateful and obedient Christian. Forgive me for letting pride and selfishness creep into my heart. Cleanse me from those sins, Father, and open my mind to understand and obediently follow Your will. Teach me to genuinely care for others by serving them with humility, just as Christ had done. And should I have the privilege of being in the spotlight, hide me in the shadow of Your grace, so that Your glory may shine through. I ask these in Christ's precious name. Amen.

Own Up #10

The Responsibility to Suffer for Christ's Sake

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 4:12-19

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever suffered for something good? Share with the group how you handled it.
2. No one wants to suffer, and yet it is the Christian's responsibility to endure suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ. How you deal with suffering will determine whether what you do is right according to the Scriptures and whether you are maintaining your Christian witness to the world. When your heart is unprepared to suffer for Jesus, the response is often anger and bitterness. How then do you take on the responsibility to suffer for Christ? Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. Why did Peter say that you as a believer should not think it strange to suffer for the sake of Christ (v. 12)? What did he tell the Christians to do instead (v. 13)? What do you emulate when you are ready and willing to suffer for Christ? How does suffering give glory to God?
3. The apostle Peter advocates a change in one's attitude in order to take the responsibility of suffering for Christ. Firstly, as a believer you must have a mindset to rejoice when you have the opportunity to suffer (v. 13-15). This suffering does not refer to the consequences of doing wrong, which a person deserves as a result of his or her own doing. Discuss the sufferings that Christians may endure because of his/her identification with Christ. How could these sufferings be turned into rejoicing? How do difficulties help you be more intimate with Christ and grow in your spiritual character?
4. Secondly, Peter advocates that Christians should recognize that there is no shame in suffering for the sake of Christ (v. 16). Every believer should not be ashamed of making a stand for Christ, whether in the midst of

rejection, being laughed at, or being an outcast. In what situation did Peter find himself being ashamed to stand for Christ? How did he feel afterwards? Share with the group about a situation where you had to make a stand for Christ. How did it go? Did you fail or win?

5. Verses 17-18 contrast the suffering of Christians today to the future sufferings of those who reject Christ. Describe the intensity of the judgment that a non-Christian will experience in the future. As a Christian whose suffering is but for a moment, how should you feel and react to those who persecute you?

Walk

Peter concluded this passage by exhorting those who suffer for Christ to commit themselves to God and to continue to do good (v. 19). In other words, you as a follower of Jesus Christ need to put your hands in the hand of God. He'll take care of those who suffer for His sake. Think of ways in which you can rely on Him when you face suffering. Do you have faith that God is there to strengthen you even in the worst situation with promise and hope? How can you entrust your life to Him for safekeeping?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, one of the most difficult things to do is to be thankful for the hard times I go through. But today, I want to thank You for every trial, every pain, every insult and jeers I received and will receive as a believer, because those are opportunities to trust You, Lord. Those are opportunities to say, "My God is my strength and my guide. I trust in His wisdom and take refuge in His arms." You never promised me an easy life when I chose to follow You, but You did promise that You will never leave me. I claim that promise Lord. Continue to strengthen me and allow me to show others that You are an amazing, all-powerful God who is also loving, gracious, and full of mercy. Enable me as well to be an encourager to other believers who are also suffering for Your sake. May we as a church find encouragement and comfort together as we look to Your Word. In Christ name I pray. Amen.

Own Up #11

The Responsibility to Care

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 5:1-4

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe that actions speak louder than words? Why?
2. Read 1 Peter 5:1-4. The world looks at Christians through the lens of how they access them. The saying that “actions speak louder than words” rings no truer than when followers of Jesus Christ care not only for one another but also for the people outside the Christian community. In this passage, the apostle Peter clearly stated that we have a responsibility to care. To whom did Peter specifically address his call to care (v. 1a)? Discuss why change must come from leaders at the top.
3. Why is the testimony of a leader so important? Are leaders in the church the only ones who should model the life of a Christian? Do you think Peter’s exhortation includes you, a simple church member? Discuss.
4. Peter is an elder of the church who emulated Christ’s servant-leadership and lived out his instructions to others. In our passage, he teaches three principles on how you can care for others. First is that you need to be willing, which is the biblical core of caring. What instruction did he give the elders (v. 2a)? What does “shepherding” mean? Is it enough to tend or feed the sheep? How can a leader care for the entire being of a person under his/her care, whether at home, in church, or at work/school? Do you serve others willingly and not by force? How does the way you care make a difference in someone else’s life?
5. The second principle of genuine, biblical caring is that you need to have a pure motive (v. 2b). Caring for others means not expecting anything in return, allowing them to see Christ in you. It means sharing the gospel with someone who does not know Christ, not for church gain but simply for that person’s salvation. When you pray for a loved one who is sick,

do you do it because you honestly care and genuinely trust God with his/her welfare, or do you do it only because it’s the most convenient way to show you care? Share other examples that Christians tend to do to show care for others, but with other motives in mind. How can you care with a pure motive?

6. Thirdly, biblical caring must be modeled personally (v. 3). You cannot command someone to care. As a follower of Christ you need to exemplify it. People who look up to you as a leader will copy you whether your action is right or wrong. How did Peter describe to church leaders how NOT to lead? How should they lead instead (v. 3)? Discuss how people in your circle of influence (your children, siblings, co-workers, classmates, etc.) are affected by your actions. How can you be a better example to your friends, family members, co-workers/classmates?
7. Peter encouraged the leaders to keep on caring because there will be a reward that is beyond their expectation. What reward were they to receive when the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, appears? Don’t you think it’s the best motivation for selfless service?

Walk

Everyone is a leader on a certain degree. Whatever your part, your leadership should be in line with the way you care. Does make a difference in others’ lives because you willingly serve them? Do you care with pure motive? Do you model it in your life? When you lead, ask yourself if this is the way Jesus would lead.

Worship & Prayer

Father, oftentimes when I study Your Word, I learn things about myself that I don’t want to know. I learn that sometimes I’m more of a “leader” than a servant, unwilling to put others first before my own comfort. I learn that I show care for other people so they’d think I’m a caring person, not because I actually care. I learn that I expect other people to care for me, but I don’t do so first. Father, when I look through the lenses of Your Word, I don’t like what I see in my heart and in my life. But search me, God, and know that I want to change. I want to model the care that Jesus showed me to my family and friends, not because of anything else, but simply because Jesus cared enough to die for them, too. Cleanse my heart from selfishness. Teach me and allow me to serve others. In Christ name I pray. Amen.

Own Up #12

The Responsibility to be Humble

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Peter 5:5-14

Discussion Questions

1. How can you tell if a person is genuinely humble or just faking it?
2. The Apostle Peter encourages Christians to own up their personal responsibilities when it comes to their inheritance, their new life, their being chosen, and being a witness to the world. Furthermore, their responsibility to submit, toward one's family, to be prepared, to live for God's glory, to suffer for Christ's sake, and to care. He then concludes by charging Christians to own up their responsibility to be humble.
Read 1 Peter 5:5-14. After admonishing the elders to lead, what did Peter urge the young men to do (v.5)? How does lack of humility create bad feelings between the elderly and the young people? Why do some young people find it hard to submit to those in authority over them?
3. When Peter charged Christians to clothe in humility, he further explained what humility is all about:
 - a. Humility is submitting to God's timing for your exaltation in this life or the next (v.6). In other words, God's acknowledgment should count more than other people's praise. God, who makes all things in His time, might not recognize your achievements in this lifetime, but will certainly do in eternity as everything you do is being written down in your biography book in heaven. In our culture, how does a person market oneself so they can be recognized? Is it wrong to speak well of yourself when building credibility is a necessity? There were many famous people in the past that didn't set out to be famous but were faithful in what they did, which is what God sees. What does faithfulness in what you do entail?
 - b. Humility is casting all your cares on Jesus recognizing your inabilities and inadequacies (v.7). It is recognizing that there is someone more powerful or greater than you. Unless you see the smallness of your greatness, you can't see His greatness. Discuss why many Christians end up carrying their own

daily struggles, worries and stresses in life instead of fully trusting God? How is it possible to be confident and humble at the same time?

4. Peter closed his admonition with a word of caution: The adversary is ready to devour (v. 8-9). To whom does the adversary refer to? How does he use pride to take you down? Share with the group how you can resist and fight the adversary in your life.
5. Peter concluded this passage with a word of encouragement: The God of all grace has an amazing plan for your life (v. 10-11). God looks for humble men and women to pour out His grace. You could look at His plan with a short view or a long view, knowing that His best plan for you might not be here on earth. How does the knowledge of having an eternal life in Christ help you deal with sufferings that keep you humble? How does realizing that Jesus died for us help in keeping us humble and trusting His plan?
6. Peter's concluding greetings. Who did Peter mention in his greetings? Who sent greetings along with him? How did Peter tell these brothers to greet one another (v.14)?

Walk

Peter ended this book with the responsibility to be humble, removing your attention from yourself, but focusing on God instead. Peter knew that without taking the responsibility to be humble, it would also be hard to take on the other responsibilities. Unless your attention is geared and shifted from yourself back to God, you will not understand the truth that decreasing yourself is increasing Christ. How do you understand your standing before God? Do you believe that it is in the 'smallness of your greatness' that you will see His greatness? In what certain area in your life would you ask God to help you be humble?

Worship & Prayer

Dear God, I thank you for making me realize how important humility is in my life. Forgive me for the times when I did things out of a motivation to be recognized and be honored by people. I admit that, sometimes I think too highly of myself and forget how small I am compared to your greatness, which causes me to depend on my own abilities and strength. Thank You for reminding me that, what counts the most is Your acknowledgement of me in Your own time. I have also come to the realization of how much I am in need to trust You more than myself, which is an expression of humility. Take away any pride that you see in me that I may be delivered from the lies of the adversary. And I look forward to what You have in-stored ahead of me. May I continue to decrease so that You may continue to increase! In Christ name I pray, Amen.