

## Refined

## Can You Take the Heat?

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Week 3

1 Peter 3

### 1. Do you generally try to do what is right? If so, what motivates you to do so?

There are times in life when doing the right thing makes life easier. Tell the truth and people trust you. Work hard and you get promoted. Treat people well and they treat you well. Make wise financial decisions and eventually you experience greater financial freedom. We like those kinds of equations. Do good → receive good.

And somewhere along the way, Christians can begin assuming that's how life with God is supposed to work. Follow Jesus, and life should get easier. Obey God, and things should work out. Make good decisions, and God should protect you from bad consequences. There's only one problem... That's not what the Bible teaches.

Sometimes you do exactly what God wants you to do—and things get harder. You tell the truth and lose the deal. You refuse to participate in something unethical and lose the promotion. You forgive someone and they take advantage of your kindness. You remain faithful in your marriage while your spouse seems indifferent. You stand for biblical conviction, and someone labels you intolerant. You do the right thing...and you still get burned. That's when we discover whether our faith has really been Refined. Welcome to week three of our series where we're working our way through 1 & 2 Peter.

### 2. When have you experienced something becoming harder after trying to do the right thing?

It's easy to follow Jesus when obedience is rewarded. The real test comes when obedience has a price tag. Someone once said, "In the Christian life, everybody wants to be a servant until someone treats them like one." How true it is! We say, "Lord, make me more like Jesus." And then God puts a difficult person in our life." No, Lord. I meant...spiritually!"

We want Christlike character without Christlike circumstances. But Peter won't allow that. In 1 Peter 3, he asks us a question: Can you take the heat? More importantly, can you keep doing what is right when doing what is right makes life harder?

Do good in your closest relationships.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Peter begins chapter 3 by talking about marriage. Sometimes the first place our Christianity gets tested isn't in the workplace, the university, or the public square. It's at home. It's one thing to act Christlike toward someone you see for an hour on Sunday. It's another thing when that person leaves wet towels on the bathroom floor every morning. Marriage has a remarkable ability to reveal whether sanctification is actually working.

Peter specifically addresses Christian wives married to unbelieving husbands. Remember the first-century context. Women possessed far fewer legal and social protections than they do today. A wife's decision to follow Christ when her husband did not could create enormous tension within the household. So, what should she do? Peter says: "Be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives." (1 Peter 3:1, ESV)

### **3. When has your faith been tested in your home?**

Notice Peter's evangelistic strategy. Not manipulation. Not constant argument. Not nagging. Godly character. Peter isn't saying the Gospel should never be spoken. He is saying there comes a point when your life must reinforce your words. A husband who refuses to listen to the Gospel might eventually become curious because he sees Christ transforming his wife. Her purity. Her respect. Her character. Her hope. Her life becomes evidence.

Peter then warns against defining beauty merely by external appearance. His point isn't that jewelry, hairstyles, or nice clothes are inherently sinful. The issue is where our identity is located. Peter says God treasures: "...the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Peter 3:4, ESV). Our culture spends billions helping us improve the outside. God begins inside. John Stott once wrote: "We cannot proclaim the love of God with any degree of integrity if we do not exhibit it in our relationships" (John Stott).

Then Peter turns to husbands. Verse 7: "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way..." (1 Peter 3:7, ESV). Peter commands husbands to know their wives, honor their wives, and recognize them as "heirs with you of the grace of life" (v. 7). In Peter's world, that was revolutionary. The wife is not property. She is not spiritually inferior. She is a co-heir of grace. And then Peter says something astonishing. A husband's treatment of his wife affects his prayer life. "...so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7b, ESV). God essentially says: "Don't mistreat My daughter and then come talk to Me as though everything is fine."

### **4. Letting our faith shine at home can be challenging, but essential as we follow Jesus. But how might your faith be tested when someone does you wrong?**

Do good when people do you wrong.

Read 1 Peter 3:8–12.

Peter widens the circle. "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind" (1 Peter 3:8, ESV). Then comes the difficult part: "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless." (1 Peter 3:9, ESV)

There it is. Can you take the heat without becoming like the person producing the heat? That's one of the great tests of Christian maturity. Anyone can be kind to someone who is kind to them. Jesus said even unbelievers do that. Christianity becomes visible when someone hurts you and you refuse to retaliate. Our natural instinct is: "You hurt me, I'll hurt you." "You embarrass me, I'll embarrass you." "You post something about me, just wait until you see what I'm going to post about you!" Social media has given humanity the remarkable ability to violate 1 Peter 3 instantly and publicly. Peter says: Don't retaliate. Bless. That's radical.

C. S. Lewis wrote: “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” (C. S. Lewis) That’s the Gospel. We don’t bless people because they deserve blessing. We bless because we’ve received grace we didn’t deserve.

## **5. When was a time that you could not take the heat?—When someone did you wrong and you retaliated or you at least wanted to retaliate?**

Peter then quotes Psalm 34: “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.” (1 Peter 3:10, ESV)

One of the clearest indicators of a refined life is a refined tongue. How do you speak when you’re angry? How do you talk about someone who hurt you? How do you describe the person with whom you strongly disagree? How do you speak about political leaders? How do you speak about your former spouse? How do you speak about the coworker who got the promotion you wanted? Peter says: Your reaction reveals your refinement.

Do good even when it hurts.

Read 1 Peter 3:13–17.

Here Peter comes directly to the central issue. “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” (1 Peter 3:13, ESV)

Normally, good behavior produces good consequences. But not always. Verse 14: “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.” (1 Peter 3:14, ESV)

Imagine the Christian businessperson pressured to falsify numbers. The teenager invited to participate in something everyone knows is wrong. The employee expected to laugh at degrading jokes. The student pressured to compromise biblical convictions to gain acceptance. The Christian who refuses to participate in gossip. The friend who lovingly speaks an uncomfortable truth.

Doing right can cost you. Reputation. Opportunity. Relationships. Money. Acceptance. Peter says: Do it anyway! Why? Because Obedience to God is more important than approval from people.

Then comes one of the best-known verses in 1 Peter: “Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” (1 Peter 3:15b, ESV). Notice what Peter assumes. People are asking questions. Why? Because these Christians are responding to suffering differently. “Why aren’t you bitter?” “Why didn’t you retaliate?” “Why do you still have hope?” “Why did you forgive them?” “How can you have peace after what happened?”

And Peter says: When they ask...tell them about Jesus. But notice the next phrase: “Yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15c, ESV). Christians can win an argument and lose a person. Peter is NOT calling us to become obnoxious defenders of Christianity. He’s calling us to become gracious witnesses to Christ. Truth without love becomes harsh. Love without truth becomes empty. Jesus perfectly embodied both.

## **6. When was a time that following Jesus cost you something, but you do what was right anyway?**

Look to Jesus when doing good brings suffering.

Read 1 Peter 3:18–22.

Now Peter brings everything back to Jesus. Verse 18: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18, ESV). Jesus didn't suffer because He did something wrong. Jesus suffered precisely while doing what was right.

- He healed people...They accused Him.
- He loved sinners...They criticized Him.
- He spoke truth...They rejected Him.
- He demonstrated compassion...They mocked Him.
- He obeyed the Father perfectly...They crucified Him.

If perfect obedience led Jesus through suffering, why would we assume faithful obedience will always lead us around it? At the cross, Jesus took our sin upon Himself. The innocent suffered for the guilty. The righteous died for the unrighteous. Our salvation was purchased through suffering. And then came resurrection.

In Peter's final verses he references Christ's proclamation to “the spirits in prison,” the days of Noah, and baptism. Faithful evangelical interpreters differ on some of the details. But Peter's central point is unmistakable. Jesus suffered—but Jesus won. The cross wasn't the end. The tomb wasn't the end. Rejection wasn't the end. Verse 22 says, “(Jesus) Has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” (1 Peter 3:22, ESV). The suffering Christ is now the reigning Christ. That's Peter's encouragement. When you suffer for doing good, your suffering is not the final chapter either. Jesus has already written the ending.

## **7. So, what next step can you take in being prepared to “take the heat”, even when your faith might cost you?**

When doing the right thing costs you, remember four things:

- First, Choose obedience over comfort.
- Second, Choose character over retaliation.
- Third, Choose witness over winning.
- Fourth, Choose trust over fear.

God is refining us until people see Jesus reflected in us. And sometimes that requires heat. But the question isn't merely: “Can you take the heat?” The deeper question is: Can you become more like Jesus in the heat?

Keep doing good. Keep trusting God. Keep pointing people toward Jesus. Because The fire doesn't get the final word. Jesus does. When doing right produces suffering, don't run from Jesus. Run toward Jesus. Let the fire refine you. Let your response reveal Him. And let a watching world see what happens when ordinary people become so convinced that Jesus is

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Lord that they are willing to do what is right...even when doing right hurts. That's refined faith. And that's a faith that can take the heat.