

## LIVING A SIGNIFICANT LIFE

Folks, in this fifth and final chapter, Peter sort of sums up all that he has been trying to teach his readers about Christ Jesus his Lord. And in one sense, this book is a summary of what Peter learned from Jesus about living a significant life amidst an imperfect, unfair world! As we consider this last chapter, I believe Peter identifies five ways we can be like Jesus in maximizing our own life's significance and having the impact God wants for us! Peter's final words provide us with five simple ways to insure that outcome as we all seek to live out a significant life! Last week we saw Peter's first step.

**Step #1: Serve in life's opportunities!** In this lesson, we will consider the other four steps Peter challenges us to take.

*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time (1 Peter 5:5-6)*

**Step #2: STAY humble along life's journey!** In our relationships with others, he says to clothe ourselves with humility. The mental picture Peter had in mind was that of a servant putting on his apron to serve—the very picture of Jesus washing Peter's feet. Jesus is the perfect example, isn't He? God incarnate stooped to serve and not only talked about humility, but showed us how. Peter is saying that significant life impact is gained when genuine humility is worn like a servant's apron around our lives.

Humility is not merely the absence of pride or the awareness of personal limitations. Christian humility is a realism that recognizes the personal need for God's grace. The world's strategy for climbing the ladder of success is simple—to survive, you have to hang on to that ladder for dear life. To succeed, you have to claw your way to the top, not letting anything or anyone get in your way. But God is opposed to that strategy and to the pride of those who climb that ladder. One day before Him, they will learn how foolish they were to seek to gain the whole world while losing their own soul in condemnation.

Christian humility is a realism that trusts in God's grace. It is not in opposition to being great—that is, to make a significant difference or to accomplish wonderful things with our abilities. At times, we can confuse what humility really is. God is telling us here that there is a real connection between our desire to be great and our need to be humble. Humility is not denying my desire for greatness, for significance. Rather, it is translating my desires for greatness into actions of humility by depending on God for the timing and the outcomes. King David was a great example of this. He composed great songs, but only sang them to his sheep, perfecting his skills until God placed him before a king.

So don't give up your ambition, but let humility manage your ambition and direct your actions. Make it your goal to focus on your dependence on God over your independence from God. The *"mighty hand of God"* symbolized two things in the Old Testament: discipline to those who resisted Him, and deliverance of those who ran to Him! So let us submit our life goals, aspirations, dreams, ambitions, and strategies to God's timing and God's final determination! This can be hard to do because our humanity struggles to give up control of our lives to God!

*casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7)*

**Step #3: STOP worrying about life's unknowns!** Our growth comes when we choose faith over fear to live by. Fear is our concern that God won't do the good thing for me, while faith is our confidence that God will always do the right thing for me! Peter says we are to take all of our anxiety, distracting concerns, undirected alarms and hand them over to God because worry is like a weight that wears you out. Worriers don't leave much of a lasting impact in our world for two reasons: 1) they are so busy fighting imaginary dragons that they don't have any time or energy to fight real ones, and 2) worry is self-focused and blind to other people's needs. God says we can take that weight on our life and give it to Him because He cares more about our welfare than

we do! Maybe no one else understands your concerns and fears, but God understands. So talk to Him about it in prayer. Recognize the difference between worry and prayer. Worry is letting the problem work on you, while prayer is you and God together working on the problem! Take the time you spend worrying and use it to pray and be surprised by the tremendous impact God will have in your life!

*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9)*

**Step #4: STAY alert to life's dangers!** The ultimate culprit for so much of the world's pain is our adversary, the devil. *Adversary* reflected an opponent in a lawsuit. Satan is called a slanderer! Every fiber of his being is bent on defaming and defeating us. He does this by either sneaking around the edges of our lives or by shouting loudly into the center of our lives. Sometimes he sneaks around at the edges of our lives undetected, looking for the vulnerable unguarded moment in our lives to trip us up. In fact, his great hope is to be ignored and written off as a childhood fairy tale. Satan wants to work incognito in the shadows. The thing he fears most is the flashlight of God's word turned in his direction, revealing who he really is and what he is really up to.

His other strategy is to roar loudly into our lives through trials and crisis, trying to convince us that God is uncaring or unfair. He hopes in so doing that we will break, either in rebellion against God, or run from God, where he will be free to pounce on us like a hungry lion. Balanced faith stops worrying about life's unknowns, but stays alert to life's dangers—the devil being number one.

Our simple strategy is to resist Satan and to flee temptation. If we reverse this and try to flee Satan and resist temptation, we will surely fail. So how does one resist Satan? We need to **respect his power!** Satan is dangerous – he is not a joke, so don't underestimate his ability to influence your mind. Peter did, and was sifted like wheat, and he never forgot as he warns us. **Recognize his presence!** Satan is a pretender, an accuser and a liar. He wants to convince you that your problem is a flesh and blood struggle instead of spiritual conflict in which your soul, your marriage, your family are the intended spoils of war. **Resist his purpose!** Satan is a defeated foe who, from God's perspective, is like a barking dog on the end of a leash. He can go no further than his master allows! Put your hand in the hand of the Master, which holds Satan's leash and he will not be able to stand up to you. So you will stay the course, finish your race, maximize your impact and have a significant life!

*After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ. (1 Peter 5:10-14)*

**Step #5: STAY confident of life's outcome!** In the midst of trials, suffering, heartache, and our real life struggle for personal significance and security, there are two concluding truths Peter wants to rivet to the walls of our hearts and minds. First, remember that our security is reflected in our suffering because it brings God's strength into our lives. God is not discarding us, He is refining us, molding us, shaping us for greater influence and lasting impact, and His grace is sufficient for each trial, His mercy is new for each day. Second, remember that our significance will be fulfilled when our temporal trouble brings us greater eternal triumph!

**Point to Ponder:** Our simple strategy is to resist Satan and to flee temptation. If we reverse this and try to flee Satan and resist temptation, we will surely fail. So how does one resist Satan?

**Question to Answer:** Do you find yourself reversing this pattern in trying to resist temptation instead of fleeing it?

## PASTOR BRYAN'S PRAYER POINTS

"It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses." Jeremiah 10:12-23

And as they sailed, he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?" Luke 8:23-25

Frontline Prayer Team,

As the nation is experiencing record breaking temperatures, we would like to spend some time in prayer. While we often think of weather as a natural phenomenon that is neither good nor evil, as children of God, we are invited by our Abba Father to make our requests known. We serve a God who often steps into the natural world to do a supernatural work. May we pray with great anticipation for God's will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven. As always, thank you for your faithfulness in prayer.

For the Gospel,  
Pastor Bryan

Pray for rain and that our heatwave and drought would begin to subside. Pray that God would provide rain and relief to cool temperatures and fill our lakes and reservoirs. Pray that rain would bring healing to our land.

Pray for crops that are affected by the weather. Pray that farmers would get the resources needed to grow and provide vegetables, fruit, and nuts that sustain life. Pray that God would grant them wisdom in how to farm and best steward God's resources.

Pray for the wildlife that is impacted by the weather. Pray that animals would have the food and water needed to survive. Pray for those that make decisions that affect the environment. Pray that God would grant them wisdom and knowledge to bring protection.

Pray for people who are without safe shelter. Pray that they would experience protection in this season and that their needs would be met by the love and generosity of people. Pray for the elderly and for those that are not able to care for themselves.

Pray for the Americans in their willingness to love and support people. Pray that we would be sensitive to God's prompting to care for people in need. Pray that people would make sacrifices to meet the needs of others and to leverage what God has given them to bless others.

Pray for firefighters and first responders who must respond to fires and other emergencies that come from the extreme heat. Pray for their protection as they serve the community. Pray that God would sustain them in this difficult season.

Pray for our local and national leaders, that they would be given wisdom beyond their human capacity as they lead our city, state, and nation. Pray that they would be motivated by what is in the best interest of everyone without regard to their self-interest. Pray that people would work together towards collaborative solutions.

Jesus, my Savior, You have never failed Your people. You always deliver in Your good timing and according to Your perfect knowledge. Yet I am weak and headstrong. We want everything now, now, now! Lord, give us peace and assurance that You will bring the needed rains. Help us to trust in You and find rest and assurance that You always provide. In Your holy name, I pray. Amen.