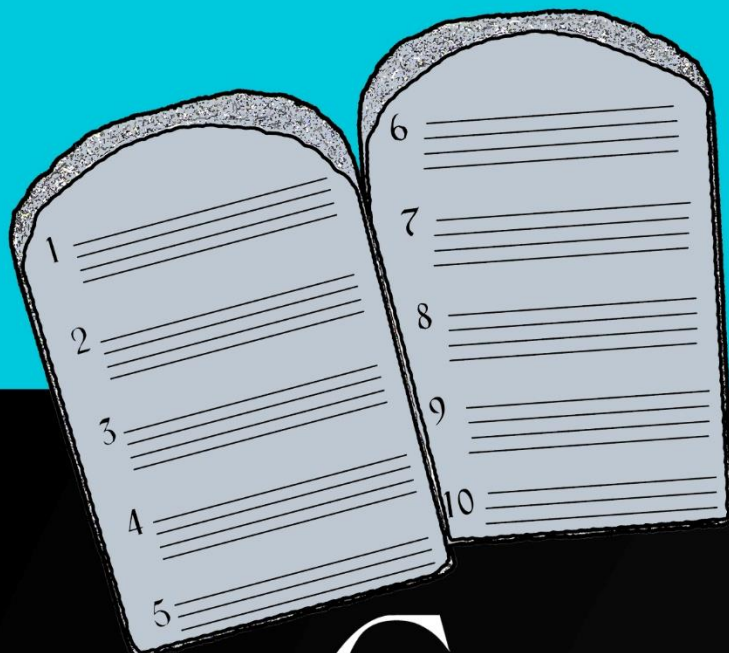


*A
Study of
1 Peter ch4*



10 Commandments for Living in Uncertain Times



Brad Simon



10 Commandments for Living in Uncertain Times

Produced by:

The Bible Teaching Ministry of Brad Simon

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Christian Growth Ministry

The Apostle Peter described ten principles that God commands for His children to follow. As we apply these principles in our lives, we will experience a peace of mind and a calm quiet spirit as we face the uncertainties and difficulties of life. When the world seems to be falling apart, when the storms of life come, as unpleasant as they are, we will not despair like the rest of the world, but we can stand firm exhibiting peace and joy and stability.

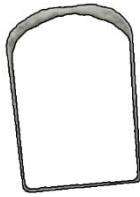


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Introduction

During my first year of college, the Rumble in the Jungle dominated conversations among the students. The Rumble in the Jungle was a historic boxing event held in Zaire, Africa. It pitted the undefeated world heavyweight champion George Foreman against challenger Muhammad Ali.

George Foreman was the stronger of the two boxers and he was known for his hard punches. Forman threw a powerful haymaker, a punch thrown with a stiff arm whipped sideways from the shoulder.

Muhammad Ali was quicker and more agile. He was known for “floating like a butterfly stinging like a bee”. He would dance around the boxing ring wearing his opponent down, then throw a series of stinging punches.

In reading the New Testament we are most familiar with the writing style of the Apostle Paul. He was a Pharisees and well educated, especially in the issues of theology. When you read his letters it's like Muhammad Ali ‘floating’ around the ring. He presents theological arguments dancing all around the subject and then he makes his point getting his ‘sting’ in.

While we are very familiar with the story of Peter from the Gospels and the book of Acts, we are not as accustomed to his writing style. As a result, his letters often get overlooked and not read or studied as often as

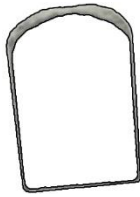
Paul's letters. Peter was not educated like Paul; he was a hard-working fisherman.

Peter was like George Foreman. In his letters he had one punch, and he threw it repeatedly. His two letters were written to Christians that are suffering. His message is how Christians are to live during difficult times. How to keep a positive attitude when you are going through trials, and he hits over and over and over on that same subject.

Reading his letters is not for the faint of heart for he doesn't beat around the bush but pounds his message un-ashamedly. His message is one of correction and reproof. If we read through his letters and seriously take to heart his message and examine our lives in comparison to his advice, we can easily come away feeling beat up. And yet his message is one of comfort and hope. For those Christians in the first century who were discouraged and distraught, Peter's message brought encouragement and hopefulness. In Peter's unique style his message truly comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.

The fourth chapter of his first letter is classic Peter. In just a few short verses he presents Ten Commandments for Christians to apply to their lives so that they can thrive, not just survive, in uncertain times.

- If you feel Afflicted, get ready to be Comforted.
- If you feel Comfortable, get ready to be Afflicted!



Prolog

The Wise and the Otherwise

Imagine for a moment that you are sound asleep at night and a loud clap of thunder suddenly wakes you. You hear the wind outside rustling through the trees and rain begins to fall. The soft pitter patter of raindrops begins to lull you back to sleep, but then the wind and rain intensify. A flash of lightning shines through your windows and for a moment, your bedroom is lit up as bright as the morning sun. The howling wind blows around your house and the down pour of rain is deafening.

Then you feel it. Could it be? No, of course not. You were only dreaming, you reason. But there it is again. Your house is moving!

The cracking of plaster is heard echoing through the house. Then the loud explosion of splintering lumber and bursting pipes. And your house comes crashing down around you! Far too late you come to the realization that your house was built on a foundation of sand.

This is the illustration that Jesus used to close His longest recorded sermon. Matthew tells us that Jesus went up a mountain to get away from the multitudes. When His disciples, His followers came to Him, He began to speak. (Matt 5:1-2) Three chapters later He finishes His teaching with these words.

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain

fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash." (Matt 7:24-27)

Both builders in the parable are followers of Christ, both are Christians. The difference for them is not concerning salvation, but obedience after salvation. Jesus isn't speaking in a literal way but figuratively. The house they built is a reference to building a life, establishing values, and making decisions. It is concerning our philosophy of life. Do we have a Biblical view of life built on the solid rock of God's Word, or a worldly view built on the shifting sands of human philosophy and opinions?

Both builders faced a storm of rain, floods, and winds. Again, the storm is not to be taken literally but symbolically. It represents the storms of life. Jesus is telling us how to build our lives so that we can withstand the trials and calamities of life in this world.

Both builders listen to and heard the words of Jesus, the only difference is one little word. Jesus said, *Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man* (v.24) Then He said, *Everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man* (v.26) The difference is the wise man acts on what he hears, and the foolish man doesn't.

We can listen to storm warnings on the radio and TV all day long. But unless we get up out of our chair and do something, we will not be prepared, and tragedy may strike.

The same is true of the Christian life. We can listen to all the sermons in the world and read and study the Bible every day, but unless we apply the teachings to our lives and do what God instructs us to do, we become the Foolish Christians Jesus spoke about. If we do not trust Jesus enough to apply Biblical truth to our lives, then we will not be prepared to handle the storms of life. However, a builder who is wise hears the Word of God, applies it to his life, and as a result, stands firmly through turbulent times.

Our spiritual foundation is vital to life. Spending time with God and submitting to His wisdom enables us to build a solid foundation based on His values. Then when difficulties and uncertainties in life happen—when the storms of life overwhelm us—we can stand firm on the solid rock of God’s Word and experience peace and joy and stability.

The intent of this Bible Study is not merely an intellectual exercise, to learn more about God. But a guide for that often-painful experience of examining our lives and comparing ourselves to the instructions given from God.

In the first century as the church was beginning to spread, James, a leader in the early church and half-brother to Jesus wrote these words.

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself,

goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does. (Jas 1:22-25)

It is our prayer and deep desire that this book will in some small way help you to be an effectual doer of the word and not merely a hearer only.

Brad Simon - Author

Christian Growth Ministry – Publisher



Thou Shall Expect the Return of Christ!

The end of all things is near; (1 Pet 4:7a)

Jesus said, “I’ll be back” long before Arnold Schwarzenegger ever said it in a movie!

As you read through the New Testament letters you will find that the writers believed Jesus was going to return in their lifetime. He was coming soon. When Peter wrote his second letter, there were those who thought that Jesus had not told the truth, that He was not coming back because He had been delayed so long. Peter replied, *Dear friends, don't overlook this one fact: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.* (2 Pet 3:8-9) Just because He has delayed His coming, doesn't mean that the promise isn't true. Here we are 2000 years later and still waiting, but Jesus is coming again. And that's a message of hope.

In writing to the Thessalonians Paul talked about their labor of love and their work of faith, but they had lost their hope. What did Paul tell them so that they would regain their hope? He told them about the second coming of Christ. That was his message in both of his letters to them and that is still why we can have hope today.

Today there seems to be two categories of preachers and Bible teachers concerning the end times. There are those that just stay away from the subject altogether, they don't understand it and so they don't talk about it. Then there are those that have charts and maps and give you all the details of not only what will happen but where, how, and when. They sound like a self-appointed chairman of God's Planning Committee for the Second Coming.

Both extremes are wrong. While God doesn't need our help planning Christ's return, we are, however, on a committee for the Second Coming. God has appointed every Christian to the Invitation Committee. That is what our job is. We are to be inviting people to be part of the second coming. We need to tell those who don't know about Jesus Christ, and continually remind the rest of us.

That is our hope. It doesn't matter how uncertain the times are, it doesn't matter what we are going through Jesus Christ is going to return for his children. There is going to be a day when the trumpets in heaven will sound and Jesus will burst forth in the clouds, and in an instant we are going to be caught up in the clouds with Him.

I think of the musical Hello Dolly. There is a scene near the end where Cornelius Hackl is in court talking about falling in love with Irene Molloy. He says "It was in a minute. No! What's less than a minute? A second? No! What's less than that? In a moment." Then he sings the song, It Only Takes a Moment, about how he fell in love with Irene Molloy in just a moment.

We are going to be caught up to be with Jesus in less than a moment. It is going to be quicker than the time it takes for light to hit the retina in your eye. We are going to be caught up in the clouds with Jesus, and we are going to get glorified bodies. We will not have to worry about these bodies anymore. We will never have to go on another diet, we will never have to take another pill or get another vaccine. There will not be any sickness or disease, no ailment or deformity.

That is our hope, that is what we need to continue to look forward to as we go through uncertain times. We don't know when our Lord will return, but we know He is coming. As song writer Andrae Crouch sang, "Soon and very soon we are going to see the King. Hallelujah, hallelujah, we're going to see the King."

Jesus said, "*Yes, I am coming soon.*" The Apostle John replied, "*Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*" (Rev 22: 20)

Are you ready? Are you anxiously awaiting His return?



Thou Shall Stay Alert!

therefore, be alert and sober-minded (1 Pet 4:7b)

Jesus is returning soon so we need to stay alert and be sober-minded. We need to use sound judgment. We live in a world of competing ideas and perspectives. Christians are in a constant battle between the world's standards and God's standards.

Today Christians are bombarded with worldly values 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The world's standards are poured into our minds through Movies and TV Shows, 24-hour News cast, Talk Radio, Social Media, and so much more.

Advertisers spend five and a half million dollars for a 30 second Super Bowl Ad. Why do they spend so much money on a single Ad? It's because in 30 seconds they can convince the public they have a problem and cannot do without their product and influence them to go out and buy tens of millions of dollars' worth of their products. If a 30 second commercial has that much power over your mind, just think what an hour-long TV show, or two-hour movie can do!

Paul wrote to the Romans, *Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.* (Rom 12:2)

To the Colossians he wrote, *So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* (Col 3:1-2)

He told the Philippians *Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things.* (Phil 4:8)

Since Christians today are constantly feed worldly perspectives, how can we possibly follow Peter's advice to *be alert and sober-minded* and Pauls' counsel to *be transformed by the renewing of your mind; set your minds on things above; and if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things?*

The answer is the Holy Scriptures. We must be in our Bibles reading and studying. Unfortunately, this will not happen if you just spend five or ten minutes in God's Word and then spend three or four hours on social media, watching the News, or listening to Talk Radio.

While a total absence from worldly influence is not achievable, the best advice is for every minute you spend watching worldly media, spend another minute reading your Bible. If you watch the News for 30 minutes, then read your Bible for 30 minutes. If you read social media for an hour, get in God's Word for an hour. If you watch a 2-hour movie, spend 2-hours listening to a preacher teach the scriptures or reading devotional material or a Christian novel.

The only way to *not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* is to have a balance, to get into God's word daily. You are not going to be able to use sound judgment and stay alert during turbulent times if you are not reading and studying God's Word, listening to Bible teachers who know how to accurately handle the Scriptures, and reading good Biblically based books and devotions.

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping Your word. I have sought You with all my heart; don't let me wander from Your commands. I have treasured Your word in my heart so that I may not sin against You. (Ps 119: 9-11)



Thou Shall Continue to Pray

for prayer. (1Pet 4:7c)

Prayer is essential to maintain the balanced calm life that Peter speaks about. Prayers sharpens our awareness so that we will be more discerning than we would be normally and helps us stay in God's will.

When Jesus finished teaching his disciples at the Last Supper, they went to the garden of Gethsemane. And what did Jesus do? He prayed. What did he tell James and John and Peter to do? He told them to pray. What did they do instead of praying? They fell asleep. Three times Jesus said to watch and pray He said to them *couldn't you stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray* (Matt 26:40-41)

While Jesus prayed, the disciples slept. Peter and his fellow disciples had promised to be faithful unto death, and yet they fell asleep!

Jesus prayed and as a result He willingly obeyed God and remained in His will during the events leading up to his death. This obedience made salvation possible.

The disciples did not pray and as a result were out of God's will throughout the events that night. Jesus willingly and calmly surrendered Himself to the soldiers. But Peter resisted and drew a sword. Being a fisherman and not trained as a soldier was evident as Peter swung the sword like a fisherman throwing a net. Trying to cut off his head, Peter

missed so badly he only clipped his ear. Running ahead of the Lord, he did not wait for Jesus' instructions but rushed ahead and trusted his sword rather than God.

After they arrested Jesus, Peter and the other disciples ran away in fear. Then later Peter denies even knowing Jesus three times. Why? Because in the garden of Gethsemane he slept instead of spending time in prayer.

Jesus prayed and stayed in God's will. Peter and the disciples did not pray and spent time outside of God's will. The correlation is obvious. A consistent prayer life is necessary to remain in God's will. The more time we spend talking with Him in prayer and reading His Word, the easier it is to walk in His ways and remain faithful and obedient to His perfect will. If we want to stay in God's will, especially in uncertain times, we need to spend time in prayer.

Paul wrote, *Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* (Phil. 4:6-7)

Can you imagine God sitting on His throne in heaven fretting and worrying about anything? Of course not! Paul says that same peace that God has, can be ours if we pray. If you want to be calm and at peace in uncertain times, spend time in prayer. Through our continual prayers we can remain in God's will and exhibit a peace of mind that the world cannot understand nor comprehend.



Thou Shall Love One Another!

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Pet 4:8)

Earlier in his letter Peter said, *show sincere brotherly love for each other, from a pure heart love one another constantly. (1 Pet 1:22)* We need to stay fervent in our love for one another. If there is ever a time to stretch our love for one another to the limit it is during uncertain times. And what reveals our love better than forgiveness. *Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers all offenses. (Prov 10:12)* This kind of love requires the Christian to put another's spiritual good ahead of his own desires in spite of being treated unkindly, ungraciously, or even with hostility.

Peter says *love covers a multitude of sin*. This does not mean that we can forgive the sins of others. Only God can do that. The guilt and penalty of sins can only be removed by the blood of Christ. Neither should the statement be used to condone sin or to relieve a Believer from their responsibility to discipline and disciple an offender. It means that true love is able to overlook the faults and failures in other Christians.

Love disregards the offenses of others. True Christian love will not publicize the faults and failings of other believers but will protect them from public view. Someone has said, "Hatred makes the worst of everything. Love is entitled to bury things out of sight."

If we hear that another Christian commits a sin. What are we prone to do? We gossip about it. “Do you know what I heard about so-and-so?” And we have become real spiritual in our gossip. Instead of just saying “Do you know that ...”, we get spiritual about it and we say, “so-and-so needs our prayers because he did this-and-that so be praying for him.” It's just spiritual gossip.

There is nothing more loving, than to pray for someone who sinned, and keep it to ourselves. Leave it between us and God. You can't hide it from God, but there is no reason not to hide it from others. It does no good to share it, it just causes division especially in turbulent times.

Jesus said *I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* (John 13:35)

When a crisis erupts the world thinks of themselves and points fingers at everyone else for causing the crisis. Christians, however, are to be different. Our love for each other is to be stretched during a crisis and not blaming one another or finding fault with them. When we do this the world will take notice that we are behaving differently.

Peter is not calling for some kind of mushy sentimentalism, a “sloppy agape”. Instead, he is calling for an intense, sacrificial love for one another. A love that overlooks a person’s failings when things are tough and reaches out to build them up.

As the Apostle Paul wrote in that great discourse on love, *Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant,*

is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
(1 Cor 13: 4-7)

It is easy to love that way when things are going well, when we are on the top of the world. But in times of difficulty, when the future seems uncertain our love is put to the test.

True Christian love can take anything from anybody at any time. It believes the best. It hopes for the best. It endures the worst. It forgives, and forgives, and forgives, and forgives.



Thou Shall Be Hospitable!

Be hospitable to one another without complaining. (1Pet 4:9)

Our love is not only to be forgiving but it should be practical as well. We are to be open and friendly to one another and generously helping those among us who are in need. One of my greatest concerns this past year with the Coronavirus, is what's called 'Social Distancing'. My view is if it is at a distance it is not social.

Life is not meant to be lived all alone. We need contact with each other we need Christian Fellowship. We need interaction with people and the encouragement of other people. *And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.* (Heb 10:24-25)

Hospitality is a virtue that is commanded and commended throughout Scripture. Moses included it in the Law (Exod 22:21, Duet 14:28-29) Jesus enjoyed hospitality when He was on earth, and so did the apostles in their ministry (Acts 2:42-47, 28:7, Phlm 22)

Human hospitality reflects God's hospitality to us. (Luke 14:15-24) Jesus taught that when we share with others, we share with Him (Matt 25: 31-46) The writer of Hebrews taught, *Let brotherly love continue. Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it.* (Heb 13: 1-2) Abraham was hospitable to three

strangers and discovered he had entertained the Lord and two angels. (Gen 18)

On Thursday mornings I meet with three other men for breakfast. As we arrive and while we eat, we talk about what is going on in our life. Just a general conversation about life. What is going on in our families, concerns we may have in our community or nation, or anything that is on our minds that morning. Then after we eat, we share what God is speaking to us through what we have read in the Bible that week and close with prayer with and for each other.

The first part of our breakfast is just as spiritual as the second part. We need to be a part of what is going on in each other's lives and encourage one another, just as much as we need to study the Bible together. We need to stay connected - we need to be hospitable.

That little phrase that Peter tacked on to the end is the most crucial. He says we are to do it *without complaining*. We need to be excited and enthusiastic about being hospitable, and not do it grudgingly and resentfully.

The world puts limits on hospitality. Poor Richard's Almanac says, "Fish and visitors smell in three days." Christians are to be different. Believers are to exhibit a generous attitude toward others without grumbling, without murmuring, and without limits.



Thou Shall Minister

#6 Using Your Spiritual Gifts!

Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides.
(1 Pet 4:10-11a)

Every Believer has graciously received a Spiritual Gift from the Lord, some special function to perform as a member of the Body of Christ. Partial lists of the categories of Spiritual Gifts are found in Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11, 28–30.

The spiritual gift we have been given is to be used to build up the church, they are to be used to serve one another. They are intended to be channels through which God's blessing can flow through us to others.

These gifts are a stewardship from God. They are not given to us to make us look good. It's not for us to get a pat on our back, or to be used for selfish gain. A steward is responsible for another's resources. A Christian does not own his gift, but God has given it him to use in the church for the good of others and His glory.

The Apostle Paul taught that the church is the body of Christ and just like the human body has different parts, so does the body of Christ. Each one of us is a different part of Christ's body and each part has a unique function to perform. God has given each of us a unique Spiritual Gift for us to perfectly carry out that purpose.

No one on earth has the exact same gift as you do. Each of us has a unique combination and blend of the Spiritual Gifts. While many are given the gift of teaching, each of us teach the Bible differently. Every teacher has a unique style of presentation and understanding of scripture. While many have the gift of serving, everyone performs their service through a variety of methods and in different areas.

When a Christian does not utilize their Spiritual Gift, the church misses out on their unique ministry. No wonder Paul said, *So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.* (1 Cor 12: 26)

When we teach, we should not speak our own opinion about the philosophies about life, but we are to speak God's word. When we serve, it is not to be on our own strength, but it needs to come from the strength God provides. If you want to get burned out quickly try to serve God in your own strength.

When Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity and began to rebuild the temple, the prophet Zechariah said, *This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by strength or by might, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord of Armies.* (Zech 4:6)

Zerubbabel could not rebuild the temple in his strength or might nor by the power of the Jewish people. Only by the power of God's Spirit could they accomplish the feat. We are no different today. It is impossible to serve God in our own strength or might. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us that we can truly serve God with the gifts He has entrusted to us.



Thou Shall Glorify God!

so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 4:11b)

When we keep God's glory uppermost in our minds. It's amazing how everything else just seems to fall into place. Since He gets the glory, we are more comfortable leaving the results with him.

Paul said *I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)* If you are a Christian you have died. You no longer live, it is Christ who lives in you.

We have all probably seen movies where there is an open coffin at a funeral and the corpse sits up. Sometimes it is done for humorous effects, sometimes to scare you. When we take the glory for what we do for God, it is like the corpse sitting up and waving and saying, “that was me I did it”. We just need to lay back down we’re dead, we’re the corpse. God is to get the glory, not us.

How many times do we take the glory for what God does in our life? If we want to get through uncertain times, get through trials and turmoil in our lives, we need to give the glory to God.

After the events in Acts chapter 2 it would have been easy for the Apostles to get a big head and think they were something special. All

they had to do was stand up and speak and 3,000 people were saved, a simple day's work. At that rate they could evangelize the world in a few months, a year at most.

But in chapter 3 we see that wasn't the case. As Peter and John were walking to the temple to pray, they saw a man who was lame from birth. Luke says, *Peter, along with John, looked straight at him and said, "Look at us."* (Acts 3:4) As Jesus had done so many times, Peter and John saw an individual, had compassion on him and ministered to him. They were not seeking a large crowd; they simply saw an opportunity to minister and acted.

When the people saw what happened, they were amazed and rushed toward Peter and John. Humanly speaking it would have been easy for Peter and John to think they were something special. But instead, as humble servants, they gave God the glory and honor. *When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus."* (Acts 3:12-13a) Then they took the opportunity to witness to them. As a result, many more people were saved, and the church grew that day to well over 5,000 (Acts 4:4)

Peter and John saw the opportunity before them, shared what they knew about Jesus, and relied on the Holy Spirit to give them the courage to do so, and gave God the glory for the results. What a great example for us to follow. We all would do well if we would do the same.



Thou Shall Rejoice in Suffering!

Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. (1 Pet 4:12-13)

What are you talking about Peter? How can we rejoice with great joy when we are suffering?

James said it this way, *Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. (Jas 1:2-4)*

When a fiery ordeal comes our way, our response generally is “I can't believe this is happening to me”. But Peter said, *don't be surprised*, fiery ordeals are going to come in our life. James said, **when** you experienced various trials, he did not say **if** you experience various trials. They're going to come, and we're to rejoice.

Why are we to rejoice? Because the trials bring maturity. They draw us closer to Jesus Christ. God has a purpose for them. In the book of Acts we read in the fifth chapter about Peter and John. *After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. Then they went out from the presence of the*

Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name. (Acts 5:40-41)

Wow, they rejoiced after being flogged. That is the way we should be. That is what our attitude needs to be when we go through trials because that means God is working in our lives to bring us to maturity in him. That's the purpose of the trial.

At a Church Men's Breakfast an elderly gentleman was asked to pray. He stood up and with every head bowed and every hand folded, he spoke and in a loud voice said, "God, I hate buttermilk." Then after a long pause he said, "Lord, I hate lard." As he paused again you could begin to feel the uneasiness in the crowd. He then said, "And Lord you know I hate flour." At this point the people are starting to open their eyes and looking around at everybody. Then after an even longer pause the man said, "but mixed all together and baked, Lord, You know I love biscuits! Lord, help us to understand that when we don't like things in our lives, it's because you are not done mixing and whatever you are baking, we are going to love a whole lot more than biscuits."

The Apostle Paul said, *We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* (Rom 8:28) Paul does not say all things are good. There are things happening in our lives that we hate. There are difficulties and hardships that are painful to go through. Paul said, *all things work together for the good.* We are not to be surprised by the events taking place. God uses those events, those circumstances to draw us closer to Him, to help us to mature in our faith and form us into the image of Christ.



Thou Shall Not Be Ashamed!

But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name. (1 Pet 4:16)

As he wrote those words Peter must have thought about that morning he denied Jesus. He was ashamed to be associated with Jesus, afraid of what they would do to him, and Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

Peter also wrote, *But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear them or be intimidated, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (1 Pet 3:14-15)*

If a situation presents itself for you to share your faith, but you don't, are you being ashamed of Jesus because you were not willing to speak up for him? How many times has that happened in our lives?

It is easy to speak up about our faith when we are in church or a Bible study. It is easy to talk about Jesus when the people around us agree with us. But what about other times. It is a whole different situation when we are in a group of people that don't agree with us. Do we stay quiet or do we speak up?

While certainly Christians are not to be ashamed to speak about Jesus Christ, scripture reveals another time we are not to be ashamed. The Psalmist said, *You have commanded that your precepts be diligently kept.*

If only my ways were committed to keeping your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed when I think about all your commands. (Ps 119:4-6)

The Apostle Paul said, *Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)*

When we stand before God will we be ashamed of how we treated His instructions? If we are not committed to keeping God's Word. If we are not faithful in reading and studying Scripture so that we can accurately apply it to our lives. Then we will certainly feel ashamed when our name is called in heaven and we stand all alone before His throne.

A worker who can stand approved of God, who correctly obeys His Word will bring glory to God when they suffer during the difficulties and uncertainties of this life. Because we stand firmly on the Solid Rock of Scripture, we stand unashamed in times of tribulation.



Thou Shall Commit Yourself to God!

So then, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good. (1 Pet 4:19)

We are to entrust or commit ourselves to God the faithful Creator. The Psalmist said, *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday. (Ps 37:5-6)* At the dedication of the temple, King Solomon told the whole congregation of Israel, *"Be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord our God to walk in his statutes and to keep his commands."* (1 Kgs 8:61)

A story is told of a pig and a chicken walking down a country road. They came upon a diner that had a sign advertising a special on their bacon and egg breakfast. Seeing the sign, the chicken said to the pig, "those people eating that breakfast, don't understand what kind of sacrifice we have to make for them to eat their breakfast". The pigs replied, "You may have made a single sacrifice, but I have to make a total commitment." Do we sacrifice for God or do we make a total commitment?

I once heard an African missionary say, "Americans don't understand what Christianity is all about. You describe your relationship to Christ as a commitment. A commitment is something you do; therefore, you are able to keep control. In Africa we surrender to Christ. Surrender means giving up control and turning over all to the Master Jesus. Surrender is giving up all rights to one's self. You Americans don't like to do that so instead, you make a commitment."

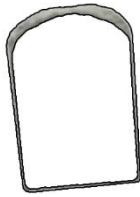
Whether or not you agree with his broad generalization of American and African Christians, he makes a point that is worth pondering. Whether we use the term sacrifice, commitment, or surrender have we made a one-time vow to Christ to gain salvation, but kept control of our lives? Or have we made a complete, total, all-inclusive submission to His will?

Only in the Christian life does surrender bring victory. Judson Wheeler Van De Venter learned that lesson for himself. Even though he grew up in church and attended regularly, he felt something was missing, his life felt empty. Friends encouraged him to resign his teaching position and enter full time music evangelism. Finally, after a five-year struggle with the discission, he fell to his knees and prayed, “Lord, if You want me to give my full time to Thy work, I’ll do it. I surrender all to Thee.”

Later he would write the words to the beloved hymn, I Surrender All. “All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give. I surrender all. All to Thee my blessed Savior, I surrender all.”

He moved to Tampa and taught at the Florida Bible Institute. A student of his said, “One of the evangelists who influenced my early preaching was Rev. J. W. Van De Venter. He was a kind, deeply spiritual gentleman and we students would often gather in his home for an evening of fellowship and singing.” That student was the late Dr. Billy Graham.

When the future looks uncertain, and we experience difficult times, we need more than ever to surrender our lives to Christ and wholeheartedly commit our way to following His will. Not only will our burden be lifted, but we never know who may be influenced by our devoted life.



Epilogue

A Mighty Warrior Prays for You

It was late in the evening, and the Passover meal was finished. The sunlight that once filled the upper room had long since left the small windows. The light that now shone from the torches on the walls cast a warm glow across Jesus' face. In the most beautiful way, Jesus then took the elements of the meal, the bread and wine, and transformed them from the Jewish remembrance of the Passover into a memorial for Him. The cross was now only a few hours away, and Jesus spent the evening teaching His disciples one last time before His death.

Then right in the middle of His teaching, the expression on His face changed. Jesus abruptly shifted the conversation as He turned toward Peter and made this shocking statement, "*Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat.*" (Luke 22:31) And the implication is that Jesus gave Satan permission to do so.

What questions must have entered Simon Peter's mind as Jesus said those words. Satan did what? Why me? Why didn't you stop him?

Then Jesus, filled with compassion, gave one of the greatest statements in all of Scripture. "*But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.*" (Luke 22:32a)

When we face difficult times in our lives, it is so encouraging to know other Christians are praying for us. But how much more meaningful it is

that we can have the confidence that God the Son is praying to God the Father on our behalf!

While Jesus spoke that night specifically about Peter, the promise is for all His followers. The apostle Paul wrote, *Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.* (Rom 8:34) The writer of Hebrews said of Jesus, *He always lives to intercede for them.* (Heb 7:25)

No matter what trials you are going through, no matter what difficulties you face, Jesus is at this very moment in heaven at the right hand of God the Father praying for you.

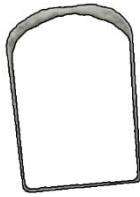
Luke concludes this story with one last statement from Jesus. He explained the reason for allowing Satan to cause Peter to suffer. He said, *“And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”* (Luke 22:32b) Near the end of his life Peter wrote his two letters that we have preserved for us in Scripture, and we have studied in this book. Over and over Peter encourages Christians and gives them hope in the midst of their suffering. Jesus allowed Satan to bring suffering to Peter so that Peter could bring hope, comfort, and peace to the lives of countless other during their times of trials and conflict.

His words have been so encouraging to countless millions of people throughout the years since he wrote them. Not only are the words themselves encouraging but they are so meaningful to us because we know they were written by someone who had experienced and overcame suffering of his own.

Peter could write those words because he knew Jesus is a man of prayer. During His earthly ministry, whenever the disciples were looking for Him, they found Him praying. He would get up early in the morning to pray. He would pray during the middle of the day. He would pray late at night. He even prayed all night long on several occasions. Peter saw Jesus fight the spiritual forces of Satan the only way you can—on your knees in prayer. Jesus is an expert in spiritual warfare, that warfare where hand-to-hand combat is performed by folding your hands together in fervent prayer. When it comes to prayer, Jesus truly is a Mighty Warrior.

Peter could suffer for Jesus and encourage others to persevere in their suffering, because he had seen the pain and suffering Jesus went through. Peter could rise above his circumstances by keeping his focus on God and seeking first His Kingdom. What a great example Peter is for all of us to follow when we face trials and conflicts in our life. These Ten Commandments that he presented is not some untested theory. They were born in the crucible of conflict and strife. Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus as He exhibited these qualities in His earthly life and how He was able to withstand the suffering He endured. And Peter himself applied these principles to his life as he endured Satan sifting him like wheat.

Peter was also comforted knowing that God the Son, that Mighty Prayer Warrior - Jesus Christ - was sitting at God the Father's right-hand interceding for him. No matter what problems you face you can experience victory by depending on Jesus. Knowing that you have Him a Mighty Warrior standing beside you on the battlefield, praying on your behalf as you work to develop these qualities in your life and grow to maturity in your faith.



Conclusion

We are living in uncertain times. We are going through trials and tribulations. There is heartache in our lives. There are hard things in our lives, things that we hate, things that we don't like. God gives us these commandments through his Apostle Peter concerning what we need to do to stay positive, to be a witness for him, and to continue to grow strong in the Lord.

From the very first verse of the first chapter of Genesis to the very last verse of the last chapter of Revelation there are two dominate themes woven throughout Scripture. The first is The Way to God. God's plan of salvation including a saving belief in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, and making Jesus the Lord of your life. The second theme of scripture is The Walk with God. God desires to spend time with and develop an intimate relationship with each of His children.

Just like an earthly father wants the best for his children, so our Heavenly Father desires the best for His children. The prophet Jeremiah said, *“For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. You will call to me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. I will be found by you”*—this is the Lord’s declaration. (Jer 29:11-14a)

The principals presented through these 10 Commandments for living in Uncertain Times will not gain you salvation. However, if you are a Christian, then applying these principles that God commands for us to follow will provide us a peace of mind and a calm quiet spirit as we face the uncertainties and difficulties of life.

About the Author

With a unique blend of storytelling and Bible exposition Brad Simon has shared God's Word for over forty years, encouraging Christians to grow in their faith and walk closer with the Lord. Originally from Illinois, Brad and his wife Debbie have made Spartanburg, SC their home. Brad is a retired Master Jeweler and was a popular speaker and author in the jewelry industry. His one guilty pleasure is being a fan of St. Louis Cardinals baseball.



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