



Peter's Perspective on the Resurrection

1 Peter 1.3 - 6

OPEN:

What is one thing you hope to do before you die? What is one thing on your bucket list?

DIG

1. 1 Peter 1.3 - 6. What do we learn about the resurrection from this passage?

When God saved you and transformed you, He gave you “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away” (1 Pet. 1:4). As a result, Christians can live in the hope of that eternal inheritance.

Why is this hope important? Unbelievers do not trust Him, so they cannot hope in Him. But as a believer, you have seen that God has been faithful in your past and present and that gives you the hope that He will be faithful in the future. And that gives Him glory.

Simply put, God is glorified when you trust Him. He's glorified when you believe Him. And He is glorified when you hope in His future promise. The God who has given you such a great salvation is worthy of your hope. — John MacArthur, *Truth for Today : A Daily Touch of God's Grace* (Nashville, Tenn.: J. Countryman, 2001), 81.

2. The resurrection is a historical fact. What difference does it make to our Monday morning?

IT'S EASY TO THINK THAT THE HISTORICAL FACTS SURROUNDING the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are just that—dry, intellectual truths.

“Sure,” we muse, “it's important to know who Jesus was and what he did, but I'm too busy to get enmeshed in the nuances of theological discursion. I need information that will make a difference in my life right here, right now.”

Then difficulties come or tragedy strikes, and suddenly the teachings and truths of the Bible seem much more relevant.

My friend and former colleague Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Church and the author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, has taught about the truth and relevance of the Bible for decades. But

in recent years he, together with his wife, Kay, discovered anew the power of Jesus' resurrection. This happened when they went through the devastating loss of their twenty-seven-year-old son, Matthew, who took his own life after battling depression and mental illness for many years.

About a year after this unthinkable loss, Rick said, "I've often been asked, 'How have you made it? How have you kept going in your pain?' And I've often replied, 'The answer is Easter.'

"You see, the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus happened over three days. Friday was the day of suffering and pain and agony. Saturday was the day of doubt and confusion and misery. But Easter—that Sunday—was the day of hope and joy and victory.

"And here's the fact of life: you will face these three days over and over and over in your lifetime. And when you do, you'll find yourself asking—as I did—three fundamental questions:

"Number one, 'What do I do in my days of pain?'

"Two, 'How do I get through my days of doubt and confusion?'

"Three, 'How do I get to the days of joy and victory?'

"The answer is Easter. The answer . . . is Easter." — Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg, *Today's Moment of Truth: Devotions to Deepen Your Faith in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).

3. What is hope? How would you define it?

Biblical hope is the confident expectation that God is willing and able to fulfill the promises he has made to those who trust in him. The Bible refers to this as "living hope," and it is directly linked to the work of Christ on our behalf. — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

4. How is biblical hope different than the way we use the word in ordinary life?

Another hopeful attitude is blind optimism. It's good to have a positive outlook, but some optimists are prone to seeing everything through rose-colored glasses. They paper over their problems as if those problems don't exist; they avert their eyes from the ugly aspects of the world; they act as if, for them, everything will be fine all the time.

There's a story about the parents of two young sons. One boy was a terrible pessimist, the other, an incessant optimist. The parents were worried because each son's personality was quite extreme. So at Christmastime the father said to his wife, "We need to do something drastic to break these boys out of their molds."

The parents filled up the pessimist's room with dozens and dozens of brand-new toys, and they filled up the optimist's room from floor to ceiling with horse manure, hoping this would help moderate their sons' attitudes.

Christmas morning finally came. The children were in their rooms for a couple of hours, and then the pessimist finally came out. The father asked him, "Did you play with your new toys?"

The pessimist moaned, "Nah, I didn't take them out of their packages. I was afraid that if I touched them, they'd just break, and then I'd be disappointed."

Then the optimist came bounding out of his room that had been filled with horse manure, and he was all smiles. His dad asked, "Why are you so happy?"

"I just know that if I keep digging long enough," replied the boy, "I'm going to find that pony!"

Do you know people like that? Optimists who are convinced everything's always great, who gloss over problems in their lives? Their positive attitude might seem admirable, but, again, it doesn't change reality. — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

5. Hebrews 6.19 is a good cross-reference. How is hope like an anchor?

The resurrection is an actual, physical event in history that sealed Jesus' identity as God Incarnate, who loves us and is committed to helping us.

Hebrews 6:19 says, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Now, I hate being on boats, so I don't like to use boating illustrations. I usually have to wear a seasick patch just to talk about the subject, but an anchor really is a great analogy. That's because our hope is only as good as whatever we anchor it to.

In and of itself, hope doesn't have the power to change reality. We hope for this, we hope for that, and we might feel better for awhile. We might fool ourselves into thinking that everything will be okay.

But the only way hope has any impact is when we anchor it to the One who has real power. And not only does he have power, but he also has the strong desire to help. Anchoring our hope to Christ means we live with a confident expectation that he will therefore fulfill his promises to us.

Since I began following Christ, I've increasingly experienced that kind of hope. In fact, I want to discuss two important areas where I've drawn hope from him. I'm confident these areas will be encouraging to you as well. — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

6. What does an anchor do for a ship? How is that similar to what hope does for our souls?

You don't need to be told what an anchor is. You've held those iron castings with the pointed edges. Perhaps you've thrown one from a boat into the water and felt the yank as the tool found its lodging place. The anchor has one purpose—to steady the boat. To weather a blast of bad weather, you need a good anchor. You need one like the tattoo on Popeye's forearm—strong and double pointed. You need one that can hook securely to an object that is stronger than the storm. You need a good anchor. — Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope: Building Our Lives on the Promises of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018).

7. How important is this anchor? Is it a nice to have optional accessory, or is it a necessity? How important is hope?

Major Harold Kushner was a prisoner of the Viet Cong for more than five years. Kushner describes one of his fellow American prisoners, a tough twenty-four-year-old Marine who had made a deal with their captors. The Marine agreed to cooperate with the enemy, and in return the commander of the prison camp promised he would let him go.

The young Marine did whatever was asked of him. He became a model prisoner, and he even became the leader of the camp's thought-reform group. But before long it became clear to him that the camp commander had lied to him and that the Viet Cong had no intention of actually releasing him.

This is how Major Kushner described what happened next to the Marine: “When the full realization of this took hold, he became a zombie. He refused to do all the work, and he rejected all offers of food and encouragement. He simply lay on his cot, sucking his thumb. In a matter of weeks, he was dead.”¹

The cause of this prisoner’s death might be summarized in one word: hopelessness.

There’s little doubt that hopelessness can kill. In World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, many prisoners died from a condition doctors nicknamed “give-up-itis.” The prisoners faced grim conditions and had no apparent prospect of freedom, and some of them became demoralized and deeply mired in despair. After a while they turned apathetic. They refused to eat or drink. They spent their time staring blankly into space. Drained of hope, these prisoners gradually wasted away and died.

The human spirit needs hope to survive and thrive. Said Dr. Arnold Hutschnecker, “Since my early years as a physician, I learned that taking away hope is, to most people, like pronouncing a death sentence. Their already hard-pressed will to live can become paralyzed, and they may give up and die.”²

The Bible set forth the essential nature of hope almost three thousand years ago, when King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 13:12: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.” – Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

8. Jeremiah lived in a troubled time, and yet, he found hope. What do we learn about living a life of hope from Lamentations 3.21 - 23?

First, there’s hope because I’ve been absolved of my past. The Bible says in Lamentations 3:21-23, “This I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning.”

In other words, we can live with hope because even though we fail God, fail our families, and fail ourselves, God’s compassion is a renewable resource. It’s fresh and available every day, and he’s willing to offer us a new start.

I was thinking about this while I was watching the comedy *City Slickers*. Do you remember that film? It’s about three guys from New York City who were in various stages of midlife crisis, so they decided to break out of their familiar settings and head out West on an adventure vacation that included riding horses on a cattle drive. This gave them lots of time to talk about their lives.

One of the guys was named Phil, and his life was a wreck. He was in a dead-end job at his father-in-law’s grocery store, and he was facing a divorce. In one scene, he and his buddies were in a tent when Phil broke down and began crying.

“I’m at a dead end!” he sobbed. “I’m almost forty years old. I’ve wasted my life!”

One of his friends tried to console him. “But now you’ve got a chance to start over,” he said. “Remember when we were kids and we’d be playing ball and the ball would get stuck up in the tree or something? We’d yell, ‘Do-over!’ Look, Phil, your life is a do-over. You’ve got a clean slate!”

But Phil wasn’t so sure. “I’ve got no place to live. I’m going to get wiped out in the divorce because I’ve committed adultery, so I may never even see my kids again. I’m alone!” he said. “How’s that slate look now?”

As I watched that scene, I thought, How is a guy like Phil ever going to really be able to start over? And the answer is only through the kind of do-over he can get from God. After all, God is in the do-over business! He's the one who offers us a new birth (John 3:3), who proclaims "the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17), and who finally declares, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21:5).

We can wish we'd never committed the wrongs that we've committed. We can attempt to cover them up as if they never really happened. We can try to deal with them on our own. But Jesus would tell us, "I can erase your sins so you can truly start over. I can forgive you, and I can help you heal and find hope again." – Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

9. Hope does not mean that God will keep all bad things from happening to us. What does it mean?

The McCombs were the picture of the all-American family. Two young, beautiful children. Terrific marriage. Jonathan worked ranches. Laura sold pharmaceuticals. They were God-fearing, happy, busy, and carefree. Then came the storm. Rain was in the forecast. But a once-in-a-century flood? No one saw it coming. The Blanco River rose twenty-eight feet in ninety minutes and roared through the South Texas hill country, taking homes, cars, and bridges with it. Jonathan and his family sought safety on the second floor of the cabin in which they were staying, but safety was nowhere to be found. The house was yanked off its foundation. They found themselves clutching a mattress, riding white water.

Jonathan survived.

No one else did.

When Denalyn and I visited him in the hospital, he could hardly move from the pain. But the broken ribs and hip were nothing compared to the broken heart. Jonathan tried to talk. But he mustered only tears.

A couple of weeks later he found the strength to speak at the funeral for his wife and two children. It seemed the entire city of Corpus Christi, Texas, was present. The church had no empty seats or dry eyes. For well more than half an hour, Jonathan described his wife and children. He spoke of their laughter and joy and how empty his house had become.

Then he said:

People have been asking me how I am doing and how I can stay so strong and positive in a time like this. I have told them that I have been leaning on my family, my friends, and most importantly my faith. . . . After church every Sunday, Laura would always ask, "How do we get more people to come to church and learn about salvation?" Well, Laura, what do you think? They're here.

A particular verse that I have loved over the years has also helped me along. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). I have no explanation for why such a tragic event like the flood takes place and lives are lost, but I know that God is not going to give us anything we can't handle. I know that we are here for a little while, but trust me –if I could have every bone broken in my body to have them back, I would do it, but it is not our call. . . . Yes, I know that this entire tragedy is horrible, and I have been angry, upset, confused, and left to wonder why. I have cried enough tears to fill that river up a hundred times. But I know

that I can't stay angry or upset or confused or continue to ask myself why, because I will find out that answer when my time comes and I am reunited with them in heaven. But trust me, that will be the first question I ask.

I took note of the number of times Jonathan used the phrase "I know."

I know that God is not going to give us anything we can't handle.

I know that we are here for a little while . . .

I know that this entire tragedy is horrible.

I know . . . I will [be] reunited with them in heaven.

Jonathan was not naive or dismissive. He didn't react with superficial, shallow belief. He knew the tragedy was horrible. But in the midst of the storm, he found hope, an unshakable hope. He found no easy answers, but he found the Answer. He made the deliberate decision to build his life on God's promises.

Jesus encouraged his followers to "always pray and never lose hope" (Luke 18:1 NCV). — Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope: Building Our Lives on the Promises of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018).

10. How is it that our past sins keep us from future hope? What can we do about it?

Some people need a do-over from God because guilt has squeezed the hope out of their lives. This is what had happened to a woman who wrote a letter to our church. Several years earlier she had been living with a man, and she got pregnant. Even though she wanted the baby very much, her boyfriend persuaded her to have an abortion. Then, later, he abandoned her.

The woman wrote, "For years I was miserable. I was ashamed of myself for not being strong enough to stand up for myself or my baby."

Do you see how guilt tries to convince us that our failures disqualify us from ever starting over? Guilt robs us of hope.

Remorse haunted this young woman for years. Finally, in desperation, she turned to Christ and, in effect, asked for a do-over, for a fresh start from God. He not only forgave her and wiped her slate clean, but he has healed her emotions as well.

Now that God's forgiveness has renewed her hope, it's like the darkness has been lifted and a new day has dawned. This is what she wrote before she was baptized as a follower of Jesus: "I can't thank God enough for all the grace I received from him." She later declared through her baptism that this God who had given her a new beginning is the God she wants to follow and serve forever.

How about you? Is it time to ask God for a do-over in your life? If you're lugging around a backpack filled with guilt over mistakes you've made, a marriage that went bad, kids you've let down, or promises to God that you've broken, don't keep carrying your past—whatever it is—into your future. — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

11. Perhaps there is one who is thinking, “I have sinned to badly in the past.” There is no hope for me. What would you say to someone who might be thinking that?

The question is not “Will God grant you a do-over?” The Bible promises, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God is anxious to give you a do-over; the question is whether you’re willing to reach out and ask for one.

Or maybe you can relate to Phil’s character in *City Slickers* because you’re realizing that, like him, you’ve been wasting your life. You’ve pursued your own hopes and dreams long enough to accumulate a bunch of stuff that, in the end, has failed to satisfy your soul.

A successful executive sat across from me at lunch and told me how empty he felt despite all he had achieved in his business. There’s nothing wrong with what he had accomplished, but he said to me, “I’ve been a casual Christian all my life, and I’m sick to death of it.” He almost spit out the words. “It’s a boring and frustrating life, and I want to stop, but I don’t know what to do.”

I’ll tell you what I told him: it’s not too late for a do-over. To say to God, “I don’t want to squander my one and only life any longer. Let me start over, and this time I’ll keep my compass pointed in your direction. I want to experience the adventure of being your follower. I want to feel the exhilaration of having a mission in life that really matters. I want my life to add up to something more than just a bunch of material things.”

God is the God of do-overs, and that should give us great hope. We really can be absolved of our past. — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

12. Let’s be realistic. The fact is, our health will tend to get worse and worse. Then, we will die. What hope is there?

Second, we can have hope because we can be assured of our future.

Sometimes I think back to the days when I was convinced there was no God. I would lie awake at night and think about the ultimate hopelessness of life. I believed that when we die, that’s it. Lights out. There’s nothing more.

That’s a terrifying thought, isn’t it? About one out of four Americans thinks that death is the end of their human existence,⁴ and that idea breeds hopelessness—a hopelessness so dark that many can’t face it, so they revert to false forms of hope. They engage in wishful thinking: “Maybe when I die, I’ll be reincarnated or something.” Or they leap into blind optimism: “I just won’t think about it. By the time I get around to dying, they’ll have a cure for whatever I’ve got.” Others pursue hopeful dreams by saying, “I’ll watch my carbs, run the treadmill, cut my weight, and lengthen my lifespan.”

Those defense mechanisms may make people feel better, but they don’t change the reality that death still plays a perfect game: one out of one ends up dead. And death has an annoying habit of being completely unpredictable. — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

13. John 14.1 - 4. How does the hope of eternal life affect our lives today?

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14. Has anyone had an experience where you really thought you might die? Who has a story? How did your hope affect you in that moment?

I was talking about the inevitability of death with a computer salesman named Jeff Miller, who attended our church. He told me about a fateful flight he had taken from Denver to Chicago. About forty minutes before they were to land at O'Hare International Airport, there was a muffled explosion, and the plane swung to the side so violently that the book Jeff was reading flew out of his hands. As it turned out, the engine in the tail had exploded, and the plane's steering was severely crippled.

As the plane made the approach for an emergency landing in Sioux City, Iowa, it became clear that the situation was desperate. Jeff told me that some of the people around him began trembling and crying from fear. Others put on an air of optimism and kept telling themselves there was nothing to worry about. But Jeff, who had been a Christian for several years, spent the time praying a simple prayer that was anchored in hope.

He said, “Thank you, Lord, that you're mine and I'm yours. God, I want to live, but I know if I don't, I'll be with you, and you'll care for my family.” Jeff had a confident expectation that God would fulfill his promises to him.

You may have seen the video of that plane when it scraped awkwardly onto the runway, broke apart, cartwheeled, and exploded into orange flames. Jeff braced himself for a violent death, but it never came. His piece of the fuselage tumbled into a cornfield, where it came to a stop, upside down. Jeff hung there, suspended in his seat, with not a mark on him.

I asked Jeff, “What was it like when everyone knew the plane was going down? I mean, people don't usually survive airplane crashes. Was there a feeling of being in a hopeless situation?”

He said, “Lee, I'll tell you the truth. It was scary, but at the same time I felt like I was full of hope. I mean, there was hope if I lived, and there was the hope that if I died, I'd be with Christ. It's like it says in Psalm 118:6: ‘What can anybody do to you if your hope is in the Lord?’ ” — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

15. John 14.4. Let's make sure we are all really clear on this. What is the way to have eternal life?

Acts 2:21 (NIV) And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Don't make it more complicated than it is. Everyone who wants to be with God, will be with God. Everyone who wants to be forgiven, is forgiven. Everyone who asks to be saved, is saved.

16. How is it that Christ's death can give us hope of eternal life? How exactly does that work?

Earlier in this chapter I told a story about a prisoner of war that illustrated how hopelessness can drain life from us. Now I want to end with another POW story, one that illustrates the hope we can have in Christ.

My friend, author and speaker Cliffe Knechtle, recounts the story of a group of Allied soldiers who were being held prisoner by the Japanese army during World War II. Each day, they were taken into a field to do hard labor. One day, at the end of their long shift, the guards counted the number of shovels and discovered that one was missing. They lined up the prisoners and said, "Who stole the shovel?"

Nobody stepped forward to confess. They again demanded an answer, and nobody responded. With that, the commander shouted, "All die! All die!" The guards cocked their rifles and aimed at the prisoners' heads.

At that moment, all hope appeared lost. The men braced themselves for the bullets.

But before the triggers were pulled, a Scottish soldier stepped forward and said, "I stole the shovel." Instantly, the guards turned their guns on him and shot him dead.

The other soldiers carried his body and the remaining tools back to the prison camp. When they arrived there, the Japanese guards counted the shovels once more, and do you know what they discovered? There was no shovel missing. They had miscounted.

The innocent Scottish soldier had sacrificed his life so that his comrades could live.

That story serves as a rough metaphor for what Jesus Christ has done for us. The Bible says we're all in a hopeless situation. We've all violated God's laws in one way or another, and because of our sins, we deserve a severe penalty. That penalty is spiritual death, which is separation from God for all of eternity in a place of utter hopelessness.

That's the predicament we face, and no amount of wishful thinking, blind optimism, or hopeful dreaming can change it.

But because of his great love for you, Jesus Christ stepped forward to willingly take your death penalty so that you could be absolved of your past and assured of your future. And, frankly, the only reason we can have hope is because Jesus is saying, "All you need to do is trust in me and accept my payment on your behalf." – Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

17. What do you look forward to about Heaven?

How we face death tells us a lot about how we'll face life. The Bible says that because followers of Christ have the hope of eternity, they can live their lives with boldness and strength.

When you have the confident expectation that God will live up to his promises, it changes the way you think about death. I know it has for me.

When I was a fairly new Christian, I remember watching television one day, and they were featuring a world-class figure skater named Nancy Kerrigan of Boston. While she was skating, the camera showed her mother at the side of the rink with her nose pressed up against a large television set. Nancy's mom had been struck virtually blind when she was thirty-one years old, so she needed to get right up to the big screen to see anything.

The interviewer asked her what she was able to make out. She said, "Well, I can see some shapes and movement when she jumps." And then she broke down and started to cry. Between sobs, she said, "But I can't see her face! I can't see my daughter's face!"

Her words grabbed me. They helped me understand something I'd been feeling, because Mrs. Kerrigan's experience with her daughter was a little like my relationship with Christ. I've been able to sense his comfort in my life; I've experienced his presence; I've felt him guiding me and loving me. But I can't see his face.

Yet I have the confident expectation that one day I'll stand before him, and at that moment I'll finally be able to look straight into his eyes. That's not something to fear for those who know him; it's something to anticipate with excitement. God has taken me from a state of hopelessness about death to having real hope.

Let me encourage you to pray a prayer as you continue reading this book. Say to God, "I want to know for certain, with your help, that I've been absolved of my past, and I want to be confident, through Christ, that I've been assured of my future." — Lee Strobel, *The Case for Hope: Looking Ahead with Confidence and Courage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015).

18.Luke18.1 How do we live lives so that we never lose hope?

Jesus encouraged his followers to "always pray and never lose hope" (Luke 18:1 NCV).

Never lose hope? Never be fainthearted? Never feel overwhelmed? Never get sucked into the sewer of despair? Can you imagine? No day lost to anguish. No decision driven by fear. This is God's will for you and me. He wants us to "abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13 NKJV).

Abound. What an extraordinary verb to use with "hope."

For about half an hour last week, the sky became a waterfall. I had to pull my car off the road. Windshield wipers stood no chance against the downpour. Every square inch of the highway was drenched. Rain abounded. God will drench your world with hope.

I once spent a day in Yosemite forest. I could no more number the trees than I could count the stars. Tall ones, small ones. To the right and left. Behind me, before me. Yosemite abounded in trees. God will turn your world into a forest of hope.

I remember, as a child, walking through a cotton field near my grandparents' home in West Texas. The farm abounded in cotton. I saw no end to it. North, south, east, west: puffy white balls on all sides. God will grant you a summer harvest of hope. — Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope: Building Our Lives on the Promises of God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018).

19. What do you want to remember from today's discussion?

20. How can we pray for each other this week?