

Several years ago, I was doing a lot of running. I wanted to be able to keep running for many years as I entered the second half of life, but I knew a lot of people my age were getting injured in the sport. A friend of mine introduced me to a book called "Born to Run" by Christopher McDougall.

The author writes that humans were built to run for long stretches of time. And he describes how your posture when running will play a distinct factor in your longevity. It turns out that human legs have a built in suspension system, but when we began making shoes with thick heels, we stopped using our muscles and tendons to cushion our bodies as we land on the ground, and instead we straighten our leg out and every time our foot strikes the surface of the earth it jolts our bones, creating problems in our shins, knees, hips, and backs. He makes a case that the key to running longer is not softer cushions on the heel, but a different posture! I began buying shoes with a zero mm drop from heel to toe, **changed my posture** and found that it has helped keep me healthy over the past 10 years of running.

I think it's like this in our faith journey too. The key is not a softer, more comfortable environment, but a sustainable posture that can help us endure the pressure over an extended period of time. Life comes at us hard and Jesus teaches us that persecution will come. So if we don't have the right posture, we will buckle under the pressure.

A shift in posture will not make things go easier or protect us from hardship. Instead, it will help to frame new perspective that shapes resilience in us in the midst of suffering. Peter's goal is not to make things easier for Christians in this life, but to help us win people to Christ... and the instructions he gives throughout this entire letter are all designed primarily to help his readers stand under the pressure so that we can introduce people to Jesus.

Peter is calling us to develop a posture of resilient faith that will draw others to Christ.

Two of the most important ways to develop this posture are through Scripture reading and prayer. This is why as a church we have created a 90-day Bible Reading Plan and we have redesigned the Prayer Room around the themes of 1 Peter. We encourage everyone to designate a time to come alone, with family or friends or your life group and pray for an hour or more. You can learn more and register for a time to pray at thecreek.org/resilientfaith.

Well, let's get into 1 Peter 3 to learn how our Posture can help draw others to Christ.

1. Develop A Humble Posture (3:8)

⁸Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and **humble**.

Peter is talking in this verse about how we treat one another within the church... he says, "Love *One Another*". Humility is the foundation for this relationship. The root of our word humble is "humus" in Latin. *Humus* is the decomposed soil that is most fertile for growing. Humility comes when everything we took pride in dies away and the old self is buried and gets decomposed making a fertile space for something beautiful to grow. For most of us the virtue of humility arrives in the wake of our mistakes. And when we bring these mistakes into the light, our failures become the good stuff that make way for flourishing. Recently Brock and Andrew led many of us through an Ash Wednesday service. And we were reminded that from dust we've come, to dust we shall return. We enter into the season of Lent, preparing our hearts to encounter the death and resurrection of Jesus with an awareness of our sin and our frailty.

But humility does not mean a poor self-concept... I'm a bad person, not good enough. It's not living in shame.

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less." - C.S. Lewis

It is living my life with the intent of lifting others up.

Peter describes four other virtues here that must be present in the life of a mature believer. You could say that these other virtues grow out of the fertile soil of humility:

1. Be Like Minded

When I am humble, being of one mind... unity is natural because I am not concerned about getting my way. For instance, the goal in life group is not to have what I want, but to have a spirit of unity. I become willing to defer to the other person's preferences because my conviction is that unity is essential. When I was growing up, a lot of the older folks in the churches I went to were fighting over things like what kind of music we worshipped to, whether there were drums, how long men's hair, what you wore to church. It was sad to see that these preferences took priority over unity. I want

to commend our older generation at this church. You model a spirit of unity and support and it is contagious. Thank you. Well done.

The next virtue Peter names is sympathy.

2. Be Sympathetic

When I am humble, I can show sympathy toward a brother or sister.

The prefix "sun" means with or alongside.

The root word "pathos / pascal" means to feel or to suffer (think the pascal mystery or the Passion of Christ).

Sympathy is the quality of entering into another's joys and sorrows (to feel alongside of) so fully that their experience becomes one's own. Romans 12:15 says we "rejoice with those who rejoice and we weep with those who weep." A friend of mine in our life group has been updating us this week with prayers for his father who has been in intensive care all week long. I have loved seeing the "sympathy" of everyone in our group toward Ryan this week. Another friend is taking his daughter for a massive operation in Chicago this week and I'm watching men "suffer alongside" him as he walks through this challenge.

This virtue is indispensable for life in the covenant community, because it reflects God's own heart toward His people.

[Hebrews 4:15](#) portrays Jesus Christ as the ultimate example: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to *sympathize* with our weaknesses..."

Weakness also means, "sickness, malady, or moral frailty." To sympathize means that rather than using another person's weakness *against* them, even if that weakness is a sin, I can feel their sin so fully in my heart that it's as if it's my own.

Which means that rather than judging and condemning others in their weakness like the Pharisees did, we sympathize.

Someone in your life group confesses a sin and we welcome them into a community of grace instead of ostracizing them because we are afraid of the risk it puts us in, right?

This is really important. Remember when the people wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery, what does Jesus say to the crowd? "the one who is without sin, be the first to cast a stone." He is calling people to *Sympathize*. Jesus looks at this woman and says, "neither do I condemn you..."

The third virtue Jesus names is love.

3. Love One Another

- Loving one another is the relational glue that will hold the community together even under immense pressure. Love is at the core of who God is and to love your neighbor as yourself is at the core of what it means to be the people of God.
- Is there anyone in our faith community that you are having a hard time loving? Anyone you can't sympathize with? Anyone you think that you are better than?
- Of the virtues listed here, love is right in the center.

Finally, the virtue of compassion.

4. Be Compassionate

- This is a tender-hearted disposition toward others that moves us into acts of mercy.
- In Mark 6 it says that Jesus had compassion on the crowds because he saw they were hopeless and helpless.
- Psalm 103:8 tells us that "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in mercy."

Our witness to the world begins with how we treat others in the family of faith. When the world out there notices the love that exists "in here" it's a compelling witness and people are hungry for it.

Developing a posture of humility and harmony within the community provides the foundation for us so we can be a witness in the world.

2. Develop An Honoring Posture in a Culture of Hostility (3:9-14)

⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (and now he quotes from Psalm 134:12-16) ¹⁰For,

“Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep their tongue from evil
and their lips from deceitful speech.

¹¹They must turn from evil and do good;
they must seek peace and pursue it.

¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.”

Peter calls the Church to repay evil with blessing. One of the most powerful acts of witness occurs when someone does something evil to you and you return with honor.

When we repay evil for evil, it multiplies evil, like Gremlins in the 1980’s film. When we repay evil with honor, we make a pathway forward toward healing and reconciliation. Evil words and actions tarnish another person’s reputation and dignity. When I honor another person, I am lifting them up in front of others. The more evil I lash out on others, the more difficult and drawn out the reconciliation can be. How do you respond to someone who insults you?

To repay evil with blessing is to honor someone.

This is the model we find in Jesus just a chapter earlier when Peter writes,

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to Him who judges justly.

- 1 Peter 2:23

Dallas Willard says that the mark of a mature believer is love for the enemy. What is your posture toward your enemy?

When I was a youth pastor in Elkhart, there was a young lady in our youth group named Amanda Byars. Amanda had a heart of gold and sensed a call to ministry. Eventually she fell in love with Davey Blackburn.

They got married and planted a church in Indianapolis. On November 10, 2015, three men broke into their home and murdered Amanda. It was dark. It was evil. It was devastating. I was so inspired to watch Davey during the days that followed. He was brokenhearted. And he was marked by a **posture of resilient faith that was deeply devoted to drawing others to Christ**. When Davey was called to the witness stand to testify against one of the perpetrators, he used it as an opportunity to share the Gospel with him.

He recounts the story in his book, "Nothing is Wasted."

Davey looked this man in the eyes and said,

"Diano, I want you to know that I have chosen to forgive you. And while this doesn't absolve you from the consequences you face because of what you have done, as for me, I have chosen not to carry bitterness against you. I have chosen not to hold this against you ... I'm hoping you turn your life over to something much bigger than yourself. Our entire family is praying that you surrender your life to Jesus and you let Him turn your life into something beautiful and life-giving to everyone you come into contact with."

When Diano was called to the stand, tears streamed down his tattooed face. He sobbed uncontrollably. Eventually he gained his composure, looked directly at Davey and spoke these words:

"I'm so sorry. I could have stopped all of this from happening, and I didn't. And I don't know how I'm going to be able to live with myself for this." If I were you, I would hate me. But to hear you say that you've chosen to forgive me, I can't believe it. I don't know what to say to that. I'm just so, so very sorry."

After the trial, Diano's grandmother gave Davey a hug and said, "Before your wife was killed, I had given up on humanity. But to see how you and your family have handled all of this has restored my hope, not only in humanity, but in Him."

When Davey returned evil with forgiveness and words of honor, it opened a window for the Gospel to touch a life.

Peter calls us to:

1. Develop a Humble Posture
2. Develop an Honoring Posture

And now he calls us to:

3. Develop A Hopeful Posture (3:15-16)

¹⁵But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the **hope** that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

It was just after midnight on July 30, 1945, when a torpedo from a Japanese submarine hit the USS Indianapolis. Within minutes the ship sunk. 900 men went into the water. Some on life rafts, some just in life jackets. For days, they faced extreme heat, shark attacks, dehydration and hypothermia. Only 316 men survived. The ship's chief medical officer, Dr. Lewis Haynes reported that "when the sailors lost hope ... they would go fast." The ones who could cling to hope were the ones who survived.

Whether we are shipwrecked at sea, facing persecution or enduring hardship in our everyday, ordinary life, holding onto hope is an essential feature to surviving and thriving.

Romans 5:3-5 says, "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; character, **hope**.⁵ And **hope** does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit ...

And when our hope is aimed at revering Christ as Lord, then we trust Him and His good plan for us.

Peter says that we need to be prepared to share about this hope and when we do, it is important that we do so with gentleness and respect.

I was talking with a friend last night who has been experiencing some challenges at work. He has been wrongly accused. He has been jeered for his refusal to look at inappropriate images and for his clean language. All the while, he has loved his

colleagues well. He has sought reconciliation. He has been above reproach. He has cared well for people's hearts. The other night his wife said, "I think you're about to see some fruit from your faithfulness." And she was right. Later that week, a person who had been maligning his character made things right with him. Another man said he and his wife want to start reading the Bible together and one co-worker said he's ready to start going to church.

The greatest apologetic is not arguing or dominance, but faithful endurance under pressure.

Developing a resilient faith requires us to have a **humble** posture, an **honoring** posture, a **hopeful** posture, and finally, a **heavenward** posture.

4. Develop A Heavenly Posture (3:17-22)

Let's read verses 17-22.

Peter says,

¹⁷For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— ²⁰to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into **heaven** and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. So much suffering in 1 Peter. So much suffering in the life of most Christians. Why? Dietrich Bonhoeffer who resisted the Nazi's during WW2 and was eventually executed wrote:

"Suffering has to be endured in order that *it* may pass away. Either the world must bear the whole burden and collapse beneath it, or it must fall on Christ to be overcome in him. He therefore suffers vicariously for the world. His is the only suffering which has redemptive efficacy. But the Church knows that the world is still seeking for someone to bear its sufferings, and so, as it follows Christ, suffering becomes the Church's lot

too and bearing it, it is borne up by Christ. As it follows him beneath the cross, the Church stands before God as the representative of the world.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer in “The Cost of Discipleship”

Our suffering is not a waste. It transforms us. It provides us a platform to bless others. And when we suffer, we stand before God on behalf of the world.

As the waters that would pour out judgment on the world in Noah’s day would rise, so they would lift up those who were saved. In the same way, God strengthens the church during persecution and the church grows!

Now this passage says that “after Christ suffered, he was made alive and then he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water ...

This is a fascinating passage. One that Martin Luther said was the most difficult to interpret in all the Scriptures! And he may be right. We aren’t going to get to the bottom of this in these few minutes, but one thing is certain from this text: **the living, resurrected Christ is not afraid of death, not afraid of hell, not bound by space, not restricted by your choices, Jesus is separated from you because of sin. He is willing to go anywhere to proclaim the Good News to anyone at anytime! For some of you that place is here and that time is now.**

Recently I’ve been moved by the lyrics of a Ben Fuller song called, “Black Sheep.” After struggling with a drug & alcohol addiction for 14 years, his life was transformed by Jesus. You can just feel it in this song:

*Guess the good news is He'll never leave you be
Jesus loves you black sheep ...
Can't tell you when, I ain't no prophet
But there'll come a point in time when you can't stop it
The Good Shepherd's love smells like smoke
There ain't no hell so low
Where He won't let the hounds of Heaven go.*

No matter how deep into the pit of hell you think your life has sunk, “The Good Shepherd’s love smells like smoke...” He is not bound by time. He is not afraid of hell. He is in the heavenly realms and inviting you to come home.

And the flood of Noah is a picture of this.

“This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Friends, if you feel like your life has been set on fire by the heat of hell, Jesus calls you, step into the waters of baptism. Quench the fires of sin and death and experience the cleansing rush of life in your heart because of the salvation of Jesus. This is the Good stuff my friends. Everyone is welcome in Jesus. You are invited.

Prayer.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. – 1 Peter 3:18

Every time we celebrate communion, we remember this sacrifice. After a moment of silence, we invite you to take the bread and the juice, symbols of Jesus' suffering ... His body broken and blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. There are tables around the worship center. We welcome you to come.