

# Adult Teaching Resources

April 26, 2020



## Lent / Easter / Pentecost—All Things New

Psalm 118:1-4, 19-29—"A New Foundation"

Colossians 3:1-17 (RCL 1-11)—"A New Wardrobe"

1 Peter 1:3-9—"A New Future"

**1 Peter 1:13-25 (RCL 1:17-22)—"A New Birth"**

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# A New Birth

## 1 Peter 1:13-25 (RCL 1:17-22)

### FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Bible Background

1 Peter 1:23—*You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.*

New things are great. It could be a new outfit, a new car, or a new relationship—because it is “new,” we get excited about wearing it, driving it, or spending time with the other person.

The reality about “new” though is that once it’s been used, it’s no longer new. There’s wear and tear, or a sense of been-there-done-that. In our passage today, we explore a different kind of new, one that is born in Jesus and given to each one of us—a new birth.

### Opening

After everyone arrives, keep the group together in the large group. Ask each person to think of the last “new” thing they bought or acquired. Groceries and other food items don’t count.

Go around the room and have each person share their new thing with the class. Ask each person share their item, share the feeling they had when they got it, and share what they have done with it so far.

After everyone has shared, ask these other questions about the new items before moving to the Bible.

How long had you wanted your new item?

What is so great about your new item that makes you so happy?

If you could choose between a brand-new item and the same, but used, item, which would you choose? Why would you choose that one?

## Reading the Bible

What should we do? (prepare for action; discipline ourselves, set all our hope on the grace that Jesus will bring)

What are we not to be conformed to? (the desires we formerly had in ignorance)

How should we be? (be holy in all our conduct)

What was written? (You shall be holy, for I am holy)

How should we live during the time of our exile? (in reverent fear)

What were we ransomed from? (the futile ways inherited from your ancestors) What were we ransomed with? (the precious blood of Christ)

What have we received through Jesus? (have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.)

How are we to treat each other? (love one another deeply[c] from the heart)

What has happened to us? (You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God)

What happens to the word of the Lord? (it endures forever)

## Making Connections

When you read the words, “prepare your minds for action” from the Bible, what actions come to your mind? How do you need to prepare?

What issues and topics do you wrestle with your faith? Who, or what usually comes out on top? How do you determine a winner?

How do you discern truth in a world with truths, half-truths, and fake-truths? How does your faith impact your discernment?

Where do we place our hope in the church? Where do we place our hope in the world? How are those similar? How are those different?

Our passage says, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” How holy are you right now? How holy do you desire to be? What are you willing to do to get where you want to be?

Which has more of an impact on your life—Christ or culture? How do you know that?

How do you define a “right relationship with God?” Who do you personally know that exemplifies that kind of relationship?

What is grace? How do you know you have received it? How has it changed you?

In speaking of Christ’s death serving as a ransom payment, our Lesson Writer says, “It is a reminder that Christ died *for us*, and that in some way beyond our understanding, Christ’s death and resurrection opened the door for us to be reconciled and brought into a positive

## Making Connections *continued*

relationship with the Lord of all.” What do you say about Christ’s death serving as a ransom payment? How do you explain the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection to others?

Do you agree with the statement from our Lesson Writer: “The author of 1 Peter believed that loving God would naturally lead to loving others?” Why or why not?

What does it mean to you to “love deeply?” How is that expressed in a spiritual relationship? How do you know you have been loved deeply?

## So What?

Keep everyone in the large group. Ask everyone to think on these two questions:

In light of our passage today, what do you consider to be the good news?  
What is your understanding of how we are to proclaim the good news?

Give everyone time to think about their answers, then open floor for volunteers to share. Encourage everyone to share, even if someone else has already said the same thing. The important part of this exercise is to get people to claim their ideas to talk about them.

Spend time listening to your class and have conversation about good news, proclamation, and our understanding of both.

## The Challenge

This week, share the good news with someone. It doesn’t have to be someone who never heard it before; find someone who will listen to you and talk about Jesus.

## Prayer

*Loving God, you created us, love us, and you give us new life. Thank you! Your gifts of love and grace are wider and deeper than we can imagine. Help us to understand the good news so that we can proclaim it to others. Amen.*

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Less, and more**—The lectionary text from the epistles for the third Sunday after Easter is 1 Peter 1:17-22, which speaks of the redemption we have in Christ through the power of the resurrection. Those verses, however, are integrally related to a larger unit of the text, vv. 13-25. Since we are more concerned with understanding the scripture than with exact adherence to the lectionary, we will consider the larger text.

**Hope**—The word “hope” is used five times in 1 Peter, beginning in 1:3 (“he has given us a new birth into a living hope . . .” Believers are to “set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed” (1:13), so that their “faith and hope are set on God” (1:21). In chapter three, the author speaks of “the holy women who hoped in God” (3:5) and “the hope that is in you” (3:15).

**Past or future?**—A closer look at the author’s word choices near the end of v. 13 raise a question. The NRSV translates it as “set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed.” The NET has “set your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” Most modern translations follow the same pattern.

The passive participle translated as “will bring you,” “will be brought to you,” or “to be given you” (NIV), however, is in the present, not in the future tense. In his life, work, death, and resurrection, Christ has already brought grace to the world. “When he is revealed” probably refers to Christ’s future return, however, so translators tend to give the participle a future sense.

Richard Vinson comments: “Either orientation makes sense: Christ’s appearance brought God’s grace to the world and would serve as grounds for the readers’ hope, while Christ’s second coming will complete God’s work of grace and may also be the resting place for their hope. If the author meant the second coming, then one can either fudge the translation of the participle (the NRSV translates it “will bring” as if it were future), or infer that he was looking at the future with such confidence that the readers could count the delivery as already made” (“1 Peter,” in *1 & 2 Peter, Jude, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentaries* [Smyth & Helwys, 2010], 66).

**Holiness**—Peter’s call for believers to consciously follow Christ rather than being conformed to the world calls to mind Paul’s similar challenge in Rom. 12:1-2: “*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*”

## Digging Deeper *continued*

**Strong love**—Peter’s call for real and reciprocal love is emphatic. The Greek word behind “mutual love” is the root of our word “Philadelphia” – famously known as the “city of brotherly love.” The modifier is *anupokriton*: “not hypocritical,” thus, sincere or genuine.

**The Word**—While Peter made it clear that his use of “God’s word” was in reference to the good news about Jesus, we are reminded that the Fourth Gospel connects God’s word with Jesus himself: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

**Exiles**—Whether prompted by forced exile under the Assyrians and Babylonians, famine, discrimination, or economic opportunity, Jewish emigrants had spread to every corner of the known world by the first century, a scattering commonly known as the “diaspora.”

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## How can we understand the atonement?

Several theories for understanding the atonement have developed through the years, all of them based in one way or another on varying interpretations of scripture.

The “*ransom theory*,” a view held by some early church fathers, holds that Christ offered himself as a ransom for human sin. The “*Christus Victor*” theory is a modified view of this, arguing that humankind was held hostage by a hostile power and that Christ died to win our freedom. Both of these imply that the debt of our sin was paid to Satan, but Satan could not keep his prize, and Christ arose victorious, setting sinners free.

The “*recapitulation theory*,” argued in the second century by Irenaus, sees Jesus as a new Adam, as one who undoes the damage and rights the wrongs caused by the first man.

The “*satisfaction theory*,” developed by Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th century and reflecting medieval views of defending one’s honor, holds that God’s honor was so affronted by human sin that only the death of Christ could provide satisfaction to the besmirching of God’s honor. In this view, God in Christ pays humanity’s debt to God’s self.

The “*penal substitution theory*” became popular among the reformers in the 16th century. They began with Anselm’s view but argued that it wasn’t God’s honor that human sin offended, but the moral law centered in God’s justice and holiness. Humanity’s sin had to be punished, according to this view, but the sin was so great that no human could pay the penalty for it, so Christ took our punishment upon himself, paying our debt to God.

The “*moral influence*” or “*moral example*” theory, attributed to Peter Abelard in the 12th century, sees no reason to insist that Christ had to die in order to appease God’s sense of honor or justice. Rather, this view holds that Christ’s death was an open declaration of God’s deep love for humankind, a sacrifice so amazing that people would be drawn to repent, follow Christ’s example, and live for God. In this view, Christ’s death doesn’t pay a necessary debt to either Satan or to God, but displays sacrificial and exemplary love for the people of God’s creation.

A “*governmental theory*” of the atonement was developed by Hugo Grotius in the 17th century. It argues that God has the ability to forgive whomever God wishes to forgive, and that no payment or penalty is required. Jesus’ death, then, was to uphold divine standards and demonstrate how seriously humans had violated God’s moral governance of the world, thus moving them to accept God’s offer of forgiveness.

These are not the only theories of the atonement, but are the most prominent. What should we conclude? Should we study each view far more deeply than this brief review, with an eye

## The Hardest Question *continued*

toward determining which one is correct, or should we acknowledge that the mystery of the atonement is much too complex and close to God for any human to fully understand?

The late Australian scholar Leon Morris saw profit in trying to learn something from each of the differing views, while leaving the full answer to God:

So we need all the vivid concepts: redemption, propitiation, justification, and all the rest. And we need all the theories. Each draws attention to an important aspect of our salvation and we dare not surrender any. But we are small-minded sinners and the atonement is great and vast. We should not expect that our theories will ever explain it fully. Even when we put them all together, we will no more than begin to comprehend a little of the vastness of God's saving deed ("Theories of the Atonement," in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd edition, ed. Walter Elwell [Baker Books, 2001], 116-19).