

1. Have you ever known situations where social pressure made it harder to live as a Christian? What gave that social pressure its power?

Some people might say yes but not feel comfortable being specific! That's OK, discuss only where people are comfortable. Maybe you as the leader can think of an example. Try to identify what was at stake that makes us want to give in to the pressure – eg being liked or thought well of, fitting in.

2. **Read 1 Peter 4:1-11.** What is the “same attitude” that Peter refers to in v.1? (Hint: Look back to 2:20b-24)

Jesus suffered in his body rather than sin, and his death on our behalf means that we can now die to sin (as our master) and live for God.

3. Over the centuries, some have taken vv.1-2 to mean that physical suffering can help you to stop sinning so that you can lead a sinless life. Is this what Peter meant? Try to refer to anything in 1 Peter to explain your answer.

No! The very logic of Jesus dying for our sins means that we cannot remove our sins & their guilt ourselves. And 4:8 (just 7 verses later!) suggests that Christians will go on sinning against each other – what we need is love, grace and forgiveness, Peter does not expect sinlessness. This is about dying to sin so that it is no longer the driving force in your life. Even if we struggle with sin, the struggle is a sign that it is no longer our master and that we are, in fact, living for God's will, not our own.

4. The list in v.3 refers to behaviours and desires that have no moral constraint, especially in the areas of sexuality, violence and alcohol (substance) abuse. “detestable idolatry” would refer to pagan worship that often combined the other things in the list. Does this verse really apply to us too?

Try to help people feel the tension here – most in the group (all?) probably have not lived in the past like this. But Peter's point is that unbelievers (the word “pagan” is translating “Gentile”, ie unbeliever) “choose to do” these things – they live by their own choices and desires, not God's (v.2). This list is an expression of what that looks like. So however the members of your group lived, before they came to Christ, they were living under the same standard.

5. Verse 4 describes the extreme of what all Christians face when they live with the attitude of Christ (v.1) Have you ever experienced such surprise or even abuse for no longer living as your unbelieving friends or colleagues do?
6. List the reasons Peter gives in v1-6 for not giving in to sin (human desires that are opposed to God's will).

At least: Christ set us an example to follow v.1; Christ died for those sins! V.1 & 2:24, 3:18; we have a new master now – the will of God v.2; we've already lived that way for long enough v.3; we will all have to give an account of our lives to God v.5.

Verse 6 is probably best understood as referring to Christians who have already died. It is a reassurance to those alive that they did not die unprepared – even though Jesus has not yet returned, they were saved and so the account they give to God will be 3:18.

*Verse 7 does not mean that the end is near in terms of time (2000 years has already passed!). It means that every major thing that must happen before the end has now happened (God's King has come, died and risen again and ascended to God's right hand.) All that remains is for Jesus to return, and that could happen **any time**.*

7. Do we really live like people who know that the end of all things is near? What does Peter say we should be doing? List them below and think of practical ways we can encourage each other to be doing these things.

***Be clear minded & self controlled** – keep learning from God's word and being faithful to apply it.*

***So you can pray** – be regular & thoughtful in prayer, develop habits for yourself privately and for praying with others – perhaps share suggestions of things that people find helpful in their own lives.*

***Love each other deeply** – we need to invest in our relationships. On eg is...*

***Offer hospitality** – open our homes & our lives, get used to having people in when it's not a 'special occasion' but when we're living normally.*

***Speak God's word to & serve one another** – grow in other-person-centered habits.*

8. Spend time praying for some of these things, that our lives would be lived to the Lord's praise and glory.