

# Navigating toward Home

Navigating a Post-Christian Culture Series, January 14 & 15, 2023 | 1 Peter 1:13-25

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## **What's the value in knowing our true home?**

**That's one of the questions dealt with in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.**

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is a famous book in two parts written by John Bunyan in the 1600s.

It's the second most read book in the English language after the Bible.

Part One features a man named, "Christian."

Christian is on a journey that is an extended allegory for the Christian life.

### **Christian has to know his destination.**

Christian, who lives in the City of Destruction, learns that everyone is headed for judgment.

Their only hope is to leave the city and go to the Celestial City and there serve the King.

Christian decides to go. He hears from Evangelist that there is a path to the Celestial City on the other side of a small gate. Evangelist explains that the path is narrow and leads to multiple difficulties, but it is the only way to the Celestial City and the King.

Evangelist asks Christian if he can see the gate. The answer is no. Then Evangelist asks Christian if he sees a shining light in the distance. It's the Celestial City. Christian thinks he does. Evangelist tells him to keep the Celestial City, his true home, in sight: "Keep that light in your eyes, and go up directly thereto ..." Christian immediately starts his journey.

### **Knowing home helps Christian to deal with trials along the way.**

He comes to the Tomb of Christ and the Cross where he lays down a burden he had been carrying and is given a scroll that gives him permission to enter the Celestial City.

He deals with the Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair, and Doubting Castle.

He faces angry neighbors, talkative travelers, and monsters galore along the way.

Throughout, Christian is reminded that his goal, his true home, is the Celestial City.

Knowing home helps Christian on his journey.

### **Knowing our true home helps us to navigate the post-Christian world.**

We live in a post-Christian world. That means we live in a culture with beliefs and behaviors that at one time were shaped by Christianity but no longer are.

Disciples of Jesus find the post-Christian world a challenge to navigate. It's different and doesn't reflect our beliefs and behaviors. It's disorienting because everything has changed. It's hostile because we face pressure to conform and drop our Christian beliefs and behaviors.

How do we navigate a post-Christian world?

In navigating the non-Christian dreamscape of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian found knowing his true home to be helpful.

As we continue our study of 1 Peter today, we note that Peter says the same thing to us. Knowing our true home helps us to navigate a non-Christian or post-Christian world. How?

In the second half of chapter one, we find three steps the Apostle implies that we must take to know our true home and find the help that knowing our true home can give us as we navigate the post-Christian world. Let's dig in and find them together today.

## **Step 1: Realize that you have a true home.**

### **In 1 Peter 1:13, Peter tells us that we have a true home:**

*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

#### **"Set your hope" is the command.**

Peter begins this section with the word "therefore." He's referring to the Gigantic Nature of the Good News we discovered last week. "Therefore, because of the Good News."

Peter adds two ways we should approach life. We are to have our minds always prepared for action, and we are constantly to be sober-minded and able to think clearly.

However, his command is to set our hope.

As we said last week, hope is not wishful thinking. Rather, hope is the firm and certain knowledge that the Gigantic Nature of the Good News can and will hold us now.

#### **Our hope is focused on something in the future, something we do not see.**

Before we say where our hope IS focused, we need to begin with where it IS NOT focused.

Our hope is not focused on the world around us that we can see.

Instead, our hope is focused on the future, on things we cannot see right now.

We cannot see Jesus right now; he is hidden. When he returns, he will be revealed, and something more will happen to us.

When Jesus returns, we will receive more grace. We've received grace already if we are disciples—forgiveness of our sin, adoption as God's children, new life, and new gifts.

When Jesus returns, we will be given resurrected, glorified bodies and live with Jesus forever in the New Heaven and New Earth that he is now preparing for us as our true, eternal home.

Now we're at the question of our true home.

#### **We will either be at home in the kingdoms of this world or in the eternal Kingdom of God.**

The "kingdoms of this world" is a collective way of talking about the physical world coupled with sin. This is the place where Satan seems to be in charge on a day-by-day basis. Some people (many people) are at home here.

Jesus offers us the Kingdom of God instead. The Kingdom of God is the place where God is in charge, his rule is recognized, and his rule changes everything. If we are disciples of Jesus, we are citizens now of the Kingdom of God. However, the Kingdom of God will come in all its fullness only when Jesus returns.

Only one of these two places can be our true home.

We can either be at home in the kingdoms of this world that we see all around us right now, or we can be at home in the Kingdom of God that is still to be fully revealed.

### **Recognize that you have a true home in the eternal Kingdom of God.**

If you are a disciple of Jesus, your true home is with God forever.

You will never be fully at rest or peace until you are in your true home.

If you are a disciple of Jesus, then the kingdoms of this world are not your true home.

You will never be fully at rest or peace as long as you are in the kingdoms of this world.

Can you accept that idea? That question leads to a second step.

### **Step 2: Accept that the kingdom of this world is not your true home.**

**In 1 Peter 1:14-19, the Apostle explains how and why the kingdom of this world is not our true home:**

*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

### **There is a battle over who and what will shape us.**

Look back again at verse 14. Peter tells us not to be conformed any longer to the passions of our old lives. Before we became disciples of Jesus, we were being shaped the beliefs and behaviors of the kingdoms of this world. Peter calls them passions. They shaped us in the past.

Instead, Peter says, "as he who called you is holy, you also be holy ..." What he means is that we are to be conformed to and shaped by the nature of God. God is holy, so we are to be shaped by God's holiness. That's what being shaped by the Kingdom of God looks like.

We will be shaped by and conformed to the kingdoms of this world or the Kingdom of God, one or the other. There is a battle over which will shape us.

Which home will shape us? We want to leave our old home in the kingdoms of the world and stop allowing that old home with its destructive passions to shape us.

### **There are things we must leave behind.**

Peter says that we started life caught in the futile ways of our ancestors.

Peter isn't making any distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. If we came from the pagan ways of the Gentiles, then we have come from a tradition that is empty and unable to save us. If we have come from Jewish legalism, that is empty as well and unable to save us.

We have to accept that the same is true of our culture here and now. We may have been born and raised in a country that had a great deal of Christian influence, but that history and tradition do not save us.

We have to leave all of that behind because its futile and can't save us.

I know that leaving everything behind can be tough.

**However, we have been ransomed at great cost which recalibrates how we view what we leave behind.**

Peter says that we have been ransomed from our old, futile life and home.

He says that the ransom didn't happen by silver or gold.

Peter is referring to the process whereby a slave in the Roman world was set free.

When a slave owner set the slave free, a transaction happened in the temple of one of the Roman gods.

The slave would take a sum of money to the temple and give it to the priests.

Then the temple treasury would pay the slave's former owner a price with the thought that the former slave was now free in the eyes of the former owner and of society, but the slave would then be considered as belonging to that god or goddess.<sup>1</sup>

That's the image Peter uses here of what happens to us.

We were slaves to the kingdoms of this world, Jesus has paid the price to buy our freedom, and we now belong to the Kingdom of God.

While it may be difficult to leave behind the kingdoms of this world, we have been ransomed at a very high price. Let's not squander what Jesus has done for us by grieving and going back to our former, false home.

**The fact that the kingdoms of this world are not our true home is why Christians navigating a post-Christian culture feel like strangers living in a foreign land.**

Our society is filled now with many beliefs and behaviors that are not Christian.

We've been told that greed is good. That's not Christian.

We've been exposed to many unbiblical visions of human intimacy.

At school our children frequently encounter things that we know are untrue and flatly contradict the Bible, and it's tough helping them sort out and hold to what's true.

At work we are pushed to support and facilitate policies that make no sense.

You're a stranger living in a foreign land. This is not your true home. Accept it.

**Step 3: Choose the beliefs and behaviors of your true home.**

**In 1 Peter 1:20-25, Peter addresses the question, "Then what do I do now?"**

*He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, p.118.

**As disciples, we draw beliefs and behaviors from a new source.**

In the previous section, we discovered that we were born into passions, ignorance, and futile ways.

In these verses, however, Peter tells us that now (instead) we have faith and hope in God.

Our hope attaches us to the Gigantic Nature of the Good News.

God is filling us with faith, and we are fueled by the resurrection of Jesus.

We draw our beliefs and behaviors from a new source.

**We are to follow a new standard in loving one another.**

Peter says that our ability to love one another says a lot about us.

The ability to love the people around us comes from what God has done in our lives.

Plus, the way we love one another shows the condition of our hearts.

Loving one another is the new standard we get from the Kingdom of God.

**To do so, we rely on a new birth through the imperishable Word of God.**

We have already been born once as citizens of and residents in the kingdoms of this world.

Then the Good News of Jesus Christ is preached to us, and it is like a seed that is planted in us.

Peter says that the Word of God isn't a perishable seed. It's imperishable and powerful.

When the Word of God takes root in our lives, it does something. It causes us to be born again.

Peter says that our old life, our life in the kingdoms of this world, is perishable and fading.

Everything about the kingdoms of this world is fading.

However, the Word of God does not perish or fade.

We have been born by the imperishable Word of God into the eternal Kingdom of God.

**Therefore, choose the beliefs and behaviors of your true home, the eternal Kingdom of God.**

As I think about the beliefs and behaviors of the Kingdom of God, I think about Valley's Friendship Community.

This is a group of 20-30 people of diverse abilities and family members who get together on Thursday evenings for fun and fellowship. They are led by Mary Swank and Rebecca Wilhite.

Making space for people with diverse abilities, serving their families, and reminding them that they are important to God and to us are exactly the kind of beliefs and behaviors that come flowing out of the Kingdom of God.

How can you choose the beliefs and behaviors of the Kingdom of God here and now?

That's what Peter is telling us to do.

***Knowing our true home helps us to navigate the post-Christian world.***

**John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, showed us what it looks like to know our true home.**

Bunyan lived in the late 1600s in England.

During a revolution led by Parliament and those looking to purify the Church of England, John Bunyan served in the military, and became a Christian.

Bunyan eventually became a passionate advocate for Baptist causes.

But when Parliament's Revolution ran into trouble, the people longed for a king. They brought in Charles II who favored the Church of England and High-Church worship. He was suspicious of Puritans, Baptists, and anyone who separated from the Church of England.

Bunyan navigated this chaotic world of competing visions of Christianity. It felt hostile to him and his vision of Christianity the way the post-Christian world can feel hostile to us.

### **Bunyan realized that he had a true home in the eternal Kingdom of God.**

He was arrested and spent twelve years in jail.

However, Bunyan didn't give up when he was jailed. Instead, he kept working.

He worked hard to provide for his family. He made many hundreds of pairs of shoelaces while in prison to provide for his wife and four children.

Bunyan had limited freedom within the jail, so he received visitors, wrote letters, and taught.

He wrote at least nine books, including *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Bunyan knew his true home was in the Kingdom of God, so he kept hope and faith.<sup>2</sup>

### **Bunyan accepted that the kingdoms of this world were not his true home.**

He was actually sentenced to perpetual banishment, a punishment that was never carried out but always hung over his head. At any time, he could have been sent so far away that his family would never see him again.

He particularly feared for one of his daughters who was blind. He frequently thought about what her life would be as a blind orphan without her parent. It tormented him.

Bunyan could have made it all stop at any time. If he promised not to preach or teach what he knew to be the Gospel, he could have been freed.

But he knew that the kingdoms of this world were not his home, so he refused to stop.<sup>3</sup>

### **Instead, Bunyan chose the beliefs and behaviors of his true home.**

There were people close to him who advocated the violent overthrow of the monarchy and the forceful establishment of a new government in England.

That wasn't Bunyan's way. He called people to faith, he suffered at the hands of the government, he prayed for a king who never changed, and he worried about the future.

However, he refused to become violent or give up hope. He chose the beliefs and behaviors of the Kingdom of God, instead of the violence and hopelessness of the kingdoms of this world.<sup>4</sup>

### **Knowing our true home helps us to navigate the post-Christian world.**

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/musiciansartistsandwriters/john-bunyan.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-11/pulling-flesh-from-my-bones.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-11/tinkers-dissent-pilgrims-conscience.html>

Our true home is the eternal Kingdom of God. We know where we are going.  
We know that the kingdoms of this world will never be home and never again satisfy us.  
We've decided to choose the beliefs and behaviors of our true home.  
That's not everything we need to say about navigating the post-Christian world. But it's a start.  
We have hope firmly grounded in the Gigantic Nature of the Good News.  
We can see the shining light of the Celestial City on the horizon.  
Now, as we navigate the post-Christian world, let's consistently, resolutely chart our course toward our true home in the eternal Kingdom of God.