

## Study Guide - 23 February, 2020

Series: Redeeming Relationship

Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13-16



*This guide will help you facilitate a clear understanding of the Bible passage with a focus on applying God's truth to our lives together. You should spend at least half your time discussing questions that are application focused. Look at the Big Idea and What your CG Must Take Away sections at the beginning of the guide to keep the discussion focused.*

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## Introduction and Series Overview

The aim of the Redeeming Relationship series is to help us understand the various roles we play relationally, and how each of these is to be done under God empowered by the gospel. This gives us a proper framework for both redeeming broken relationships and relating to others, and how to generally relate to church members in a way that builds them up. It also helps us understand our own hearts and each other in relationships so that we can be compassionate and clear with them, as well as specific relationships that people find themselves in family, marriage, kids, work, etc.

## Big idea

Every Christian is simultaneously a saint, a sufferer and a sinner. We are to bear all three in mind, and wisely address a person through this holistic framework.

## What your CG must take away from this study

For your CG members to understand their identities as saint, sufferer and a sinner and to understand other people in their relationships in the categories of saint, sufferer and sinner and so move towards them in love.

***Read the following excerpt adapted from "Loving Others as Saints, Sufferers, and Sinners (Part 1)" by Mike Emler***

*Nearly everything we buy comes with instructions. Pieces of furniture come with assembly directions. Clothes come with laundering tips. Electronics come with operating instructions. And dozens of "how-to" books can help you learn any skill or trade. I tend to be rabid about seeking out instructions. But I know I overdo it. My family continues to tease me mercilessly about the book I bought on how to raise a puppy, years before we actually had a dog. And then once we got a dog, I never pulled it off the shelf. Sadly, our labradoodle Maddie is a poster dog for how not to raise a puppy! Operating instructions are clearly very important in navigating our world.*

*But don't you sometimes wish people came with operating instructions? "Just allow me to tighten your loose screw a bit and you'll feel better—and so will I!" Not that simple, right? People are complex. You and I are complex. How do we understand ourselves and each other? How do we move toward one*

*another in God-honoring ways? How do we love wisely in the context of everyday relationships and in more formal counseling settings?*

*We have to admit that the call to love one another that we see repeatedly in Scripture is not easy to carry out. There are many reasons for this but certainly one of them may be confusion and misunderstanding: “I don’t really understand this person. I don’t know where to begin to help.” Have you had that experience? Do other people ever frustrate or mystify you? Do you zig in a relationship and afterwards realize you should have zagged?*

*Where do we find guidance for loving family, friends, and counselees well? We go to Scripture. Though the Bible is not a technical operating manual like the detailed instructions that came with your new smart phone, it provides foundational categories to understand others—and yourself—in order to live fruitfully as his people (2 Peter 1:3–4). So, what is true of yourself and every Christian you meet, according to Scripture? What can you be sure about your spouse, your roommate, your child, your friend— even a brother or sister who is at odds with you?*

*First, you can be sure that they struggle with identity at some level— which means they are implicitly or explicitly asking, “Who am I?” And because this identity question is tied to mission or calling, it also means they are asking, “What is my purpose? What should I be doing with my life? How should I be living in light of my basic identity?”*

*Second, you can be sure that they struggle with evil. This has two manifestations. They experience evil from without (suffering), which means they are asking, “How do I deal with evil done to me? How should I persevere amidst the circumstantial hardships of my life?” They also experience evil from within (sin), which means they are asking, “How do I deal with the evil inside of me? How do I deal with the reality that ‘when I want to do good, evil is right there with me?’ (Rom 7:21). Why do I struggle to live out of my identity? How do I change?”*

*You and I, and every Christian we meet, wrestle with these questions about identity and evil. This has been true ever since Adam and Eve deviated from God’s original design for humanity. Thankfully, God brings a welcome sense of clarity to this complexity. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.” We all want truth that is simple and yet embraces the complex. Christians are blessed that Scripture offers this to us. It gives us basic—but not simplistic—categories for understanding our experience as God’s redeemed image bearers.*

*These categories become apparent as we watch how God moves toward his people. At a most foundational level, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ restores our identity as children of the living God (1 John 3:1–2) and he overcomes evil, whether in the form of suffering or sin (John 16:33; Acts 10:38). But the story of redemption is much more fine-grained than simply asserting and proclaiming these foundational truths. As we look closer, we see that Scripture models ministry to God’s people in three distinct ways. This, in turn, helps us know how to move toward one another so that we’re not just*

guessing or completely flying by the seat of our pants. So what does Scripture show us? Scripture reveals that God ministers to his people as:

- Saints who need confirmation of their identity in Christ,
- Sufferers who need comfort in the midst of their affliction, and
- Sinners who need challenge to their sin in light of God's redemptive mercies.

Saint, sufferer, and sinner. All three of these are simultaneously true of every Christian you meet. If this is the way God sees and loves his people, then we should do the same and use these broad biblical categories to guide our overall approach to the people in our lives. They are signposts for wise love. They help you to prioritize one-another ministry, whether it's to your friend, husband, wife, roommate, child, coworker, or counselee.

**Read 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13-16**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, <sup>16</sup> since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

1. In the article we read, we saw that we have three identities as Christians - saint, sufferer and sinner. Where do you see those identities in the section of 1 Peter we just read?

2a. Knowing that we are sinners and sufferers, what hope does the gospel give us for our present condition?

2b. Why do we need to be reminded of this hope regularly?

2c. Why is this important to remember for our relationships with other Christians?

3a. How does 1 Peter describe the suffering we experience as Christians?

3b. How does understanding others as sufferers help you to empathize with them?

3c. What hope do we have when we suffer?

4a. How can a Christian be a saint and sinner at the same time?

4b. How does Peter exhort his readers in light of this tension in our identity?

4c. How should we then relate to others in light of our common identity as sinners?

**Case study for a comprehensive framework of saint, sufferer and sinner**

Sanjit has come from a typical traditional and Asian family. Although he wasn't born into a Christian family, God has met him powerfully shortly after he graduated from university. He began to attend church. Initially, he was attending church X where he enjoyed the worship and the fellowship with fellow Christians. At the same time, Sanjit also began to develop a desire for ministry. He often perceived gaps in how the word was preached and how ministry was done in church X. As a result, Sanjit began knocking on doors and sharing the gospel with lots of families who lived near church X, but stopped attending church. At the same time, Sanjit also shared his complaints about his church X widely, with his friends in church X. The church leaders, who came to learn about Sanjit's views, clamped down hard on him – forbidding Sanjit to do ministry on his own accord and also forbidding Sanjit to share his views with people at church X. This resulted in an acrimonious split between Sanjit and church X.

Subsequently Sanjit began to attend church Y, mainly due to how he appreciated the preaching and the emphases of church Y. You attend church Y. While Sanjit participated actively in church Y, such as attending Adult Sunday School and CG, his CG members find him somewhat guarded and not easy to draw near to. After a while folks in church Y realized that Sanjit wasn't the easiest to speak to – there is a sense that Sanjit was difficult to speak to, especially on topics such as evangelism and Bible Study, because Sanjit tended to have very strong opinions on how these activities should be conducted. At the same time, Sanjit is very hospitable – opening his home to visitors and also members of church Y alike, even though Sanjit's family is still very young.

5. How is Sanjit a sinner, sufferer and saint?

6. If you meet Sanjit at church Y, how would you get to know Sanjit better?

7. If you were to meet Sanjit for 1-1 Bible study, how would you encourage or counsel him? Think about each of the three categories from Q5. Which would you start with?

8. Pair up with someone you know well, and share about one difficult relationship you have in your life. Together, discuss how these categories of sufferer, saint and sinner help you to see the other person differently. Be careful that you do not gossip about the other person while sharing, and don't share their name if they are known or if you are tempted to gossip.

8a. How do you see aspects of the grace of God in their life? (If they are not a Christian, consider, In what ways is this person an image-bearer of God?)

8b. How has that person been shaped by the evil in the world or by the sins of others? How is that person a sufferer living in a fallen world? (If you do not know the answer to this question, you probably don't know enough about this person.)

8c. How is that person a sinner in need of grace? (This may not require a lot of time if you are sharing about a difficult relationship, and if that's the case, do not dwell on this question)

9. How does understanding this person in those categories help you to understand them better?

10. How can you move towards that person in love?

**Apply Practically**

Pray together in your pairs for your relationship with that person.