



# RESILIENT FAITH



MARY JO SHARP

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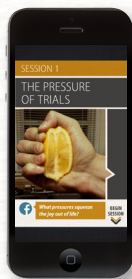
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## ***Life can be tough. We need a resilient faith.***

How would you describe your faith?

Faith may come easy to you, or you may be like so many who struggle with trust. For all of us, when difficulties knock on our door, that faith is tested. And for some of us, our faith is shaken.

How can we maintain a faith in God that is resilient, a faith that—no matter what happens— withstands the ups and downs of life?

In this study, we will look at the Book of 1 Peter, a short letter that shows us what resilient faith looks like. Mark Twain said, “Faith is believing what you know ain’t so.” This study from 1 Peter will show, however, that Twain’s idea of faith “just ain’t so.” In fact, a resilient faith grounded in Christ is quite the opposite.

We will discover that resilient faith:

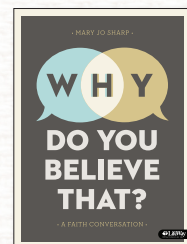
- ▶ provides an actual foundation for a sure hope for mankind.
- ▶ frees you to do what is good and right.
- ▶ helps you find joy even in a world of pain and suffering.
- ▶ is yours because of the sure resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It’s good to know that, because of Jesus, a strong faith—a resilient faith—can be ours. We can stand strong regardless of what comes at us.



*Mary Jo Sharp*

Mary Jo Sharp is an assistant professor of apologetics at Houston Baptist University in Texas and is the founder of Confident Christianity apologetics ministry. She is a former atheist from the Pacific Northwest who began to doubt her faith in God several years after becoming a Christian. Her search for answers to her doubts about God led her into the field of apologetics. She is the author of *Why Do You Believe That? A Faith Conversation*.



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# SESSION 1

# FOCUSED FAITH



*What situations tend to rattle you?*

**QUESTION #1**

#BSFLfocused

*Our faith is focused on a sure hope.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“I hope the weather changes.” “I hope my team wins!”

As a society, we typically use the word “hope” in the sense of wishing for something to happen (or not to happen). We’ve transformed hope into something cold and temporary—something unreliable—because we’ve connected it to a combination of luck and human skill.

This view of hope is dangerous for those of us who follow Christ. Why? Because the way we think about hope influences the way we think about faith. It’s our ability to hope for something better and bigger than our current situation that enables us to act in faith.

Thankfully, there is Someone we can trust even in the darkest of times—Someone who will never leave us hopeless. We don’t have to settle for anything cold and temporary; we have a living hope!

In the Book of 1 Peter, the author doesn’t just tell us about hope; he tells us about the foundation of a sure hope. And that kind of hope is the focus of a resilient faith.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## 1 Peter 1:3-9,13 (HCSB)

**3** Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

**4** and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

**5** You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

**6** You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials

**7** so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**8** You love Him, though you have not seen Him. And though not seeing Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy,

**9** because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

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**13** Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be serious and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

## Key Words

**Living hope** (v. 3)—Expecting with certainty the resources to face life's difficulties and the encouragement that comes when life is hard because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Revelation** (v. 7)—Disclosure of what has been hidden. Though presently with His people, Jesus is not seen, but at His second coming, He will be revealed physically.

**Hope** (v. 13)—Peter used hope in much the same way Paul used "faith": as trust in God for the future. It is the certainty God is working, not mere wishful thinking.





## 1 Peter 1:3-4

Peter opened his letter with a greeting of encouragement. He used the imagery of birth—of new life coming into the world—to imply that once we've trusted in Jesus for salvation, we're like newborn children. We've only begun our journey, and much will happen on the road to becoming a mature Christian.

*In what ways do human expressions of hope compare to the inheritance described in verse 4?*

### QUESTION #2

**We have also been born into a living hope.** This is a great encouragement for those of us who experience doubt, fear, or suffering. The hope established through Jesus' resurrection is a sure and certain hope, not something that depends on our circumstances or moods. That's because the guarantee of our hope is based on who Jesus is and what He has done.

Jesus' resurrection defeated not only the main consequence of evil—which is death—but also all evil in general. His death and resurrection provide a guarantee that all evil will be overcome and judged. Since Jesus isn't just any man, but also God, this defeat is final and binding. It cannot be overruled, changed, or taken away. The hope provided by the resurrection of Jesus is that good actually does prevail in the end. There is something better to come: the restoration of goodness.

Because our world can be full of trials and suffering, we sometimes despair or lose confidence in God's presence and work in our lives. But Peter pointed out that our inheritance through Jesus is a certainty that cannot be taken away when times are hard. It's a solid truth that withstands even the heaviest of storms. Since we can have confidence in Christ's victory over death, we can certainly have assurance of His power over every kind of pain or sorrow. This, then, is our firm anchor in times of trouble—a mighty foundation indeed for hope.

# HOPE

## 1 Peter 1:5-7

Peter declared that believers are protected by God's power. Maybe you're wondering: *If that's true, then why didn't He stop \_\_\_\_\_ from happening?*

God's protection and power can be a sensitive issue for those who've suffered or grieved over difficult circumstances. It's true that His protection may include your physical circumstances, but it also goes far beyond that to the spiritual realm of your faith (v. 7). Remember: your physical body is not the whole "you." You are also a soul.

Modern culture bombards us with a naturalistic view of the world that focuses only on the material. Consequently, we can fall prey to thinking that if God doesn't save us from physical suffering or death, He isn't saving us at all. We forget that the person who is "you" resides in the spiritual realm as well. Peter reminds us to focus on our salvation in Christ—the result of faith—rather than on the current suffering in the body. In this life, it's our genuine faith that endures.

We tend to look to faith as a last resort when all else fails. This is backward! Faith should come first. It's the driving force of life. Faith is grounded in the sure hope of resurrection. The physical part of us may fail, but our hope isn't based on protection from the physical ills of this life. Our hope is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which points us toward eternity.

*So why am I suffering?* We may not understand our suffering now, but we'll find clarity with the appearance of Jesus at the end of time. We'll see the beauty of our trust in God that withstood the evils of this world. For now, though, the trials we experience in this life show the genuineness of our faith. And the genuineness of our faith will result—as Peter pointed out in verse 7—in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

***How have you seen faith tested and strengthened because of a trial?***

**QUESTION #3**

***How have you experienced the connection between faith and joy?***

**QUESTION #4****1 Peter 1:8-9,13**

When we greatly love someone, we go “above and beyond” to express that love. That certainly describes the way God has expressed His love to us, and it can be mirrored in our own love as Christians. Christians have a love that originates from the One who created us and everything else. This love is unfailing, pours out in great joy to others, and extends beyond the limits of this life.

Such radically faithful love can appear foreign in a world that too often experiences disappointment more than faithfulness. How do we show the truth of an unfailing love to such a world? The answer is that our love for God—and how we display that love to others—is tied to our trust in Him.

As we face daily problems and wade through struggles, our actions and attitudes must be informed by the trust we have in our future hope—the sure confidence that things will get better, either in this life or the life to come. Granted, such trust isn’t always easy. That’s why we must make a conscious decision to improve in our own trust of God.

How do we improve in that way? Begin by trusting God in the small things. If you don’t start there, you won’t trust Him in the big things.

In verse 13, Peter called us to do two things:

1. Be sober-minded and serious, with our minds in a state of readiness.
2. Set our hope in the salvation that comes through faith in Jesus’ resurrection.

When we begin to understand our hope as something real and grounded in the reality of the resurrection, we should see a change in the focus of our daily activities and lifelong goals. Everything we do should point back to the reality of the sure hope we have in our resurrection at the end of time.

***How can our group reflect hope in a fallen world?***

**QUESTION #5**

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Choose two.

Record how hope in Christ can influence your perspective on these elements of life.

- My health
- My relationships
- My finances
- My work
- My future

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"Our future hope is not simply a theological doctrine with little or no practical application. It is, in fact, an ethical hope. It has behavioral consequences!"

—THOMAS D. LEA

# LIVE IT OUT

How can we respond to the reality of a sure hope?

- ▶ **Trust in the small things.** Seek out situations in which you can consciously and intentionally express your trust in God each day.
- ▶ **Prepare your mind.** Move your focus beyond the material world by reading a book or listening to a sermon series that solidifies your understanding of basic Christian doctrines.
- ▶ **Proclaim the gospel.** When you encounter someone who has lost hope, choose to share the good news of Jesus' resurrection and your sure hope for eternal life with Him.



Walking in the sure hope of Christ won't help the weather get better or spur your favorite team to victory. But it will give you a foundation on which you can stand and say, "I may get rattled, but I won't be moved. So bring it on!"

## The Calm in the Storm



*In typical Monday-morning style, with a coffee stain on my favorite pair of khakis and a Toy Story band-aid covering the shaving cut on my ankle, I took a deep breath when we finally got in the car about 7:30. Strapping on my seatbelt and backing out of the driveway, Sam was complaining about my musical selection when I saw blue flashing lights in my rearview mirror. In disbelief I pulled over, approximately*

*400 yards from my front door. Another Monday had begun, and peace was the farthest thought from my mind.*



To continue reading "The Calm in the Storm" from *HomeLife* magazine, visit [BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles).



# My group's prayer requests

A series of 15 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

## My thoughts

# FAITH MATTERS.

Faith may come easy to you, or you may be like so many who struggle with trust. Our faith is tested when difficulties knock on our door. And for some of us, our faith is shaken. How can we maintain a faith in God that is resilient, a faith that—no matter what happens—withstands the ups and downs of life?

*Resilient Faith* examines the Book of 1 Peter, a short letter that shows us what resilient faith looks like and helps us find a faith that endures the adversity that is sure to find its way into our lives. You will discover that resilient faith provides an actual foundation for a sure hope for mankind; frees you to do what is good and right; helps you find joy even in a world of pain and suffering; and is yours because of the sure resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, a strong faith—a resilient faith—can be yours. You can stand strong regardless of what comes your way.



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