

Seek First His Kingdom: What Wheezy and the Apostle Peter Teach Us

By Mary J. Ferrill



When I was teaching in California in the 1990s, it was obvious to anyone entering my office that I was a Disney fanatic. The husband of one of my students worked for Pixar, so she and I had a lot to talk about. I enjoyed hearing about the projects her husband worked on. One day, she brought me a few promotional items from the new movie he was working on, *Toy Story 2*. I was excited to add these to the growing Disney collection in my office. One of the items was a Wheezy rubber toy penguin (see photo). In the movie, Wheezy was one of Andy's favorite toys until Wheezy's squeaker accidentally broke. Andy's mother placed Wheezy high on a shelf with all the other broken and forgotten toys where Andy could not see them.

About that time, I was asked to give a speech at a CPFI meeting at another school. I decided to take Wheezy along with me to the meeting, to use as a spiritual life lesson. Upon arrival I placed him on the podium and watched the reactions of students as they entered the room. Some probably wondered if they had come to the right place.

I discussed how easy it is for students to become overly focused on their studies and the academic environment, having tunnel vision as if they're wearing blinkers. "Blinkers" (also called "blinders") are special gear that restricts a horse's peripheral vision during training or racing. When the horse is wearing blinkers, he is only able to see in the forward direction. I explained to the students that I was wearing blinkers when I was in pharmacy school, and I didn't want the same thing to happen to them. I had justified not going to church or reading the Bible, with the shortsighted reasoning that God would understand since I was so busy with school and work. After all, He had called me to be a pharmacist, so of course He would understand that I needed to focus on obtaining a PharmD degree. However, Matthew 6:33 (NIV) states: *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* I failed to rely on the Lord and His Word, and instead assumed that everything was up to me. What does the Lord tell us about "all these things?" Verses 25-32 reveal the answer:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 'And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.



Although I had turned my back on God and placed Him high on a dusty shelf, He had not forgotten about me. No one knows how this feels better than the Apostle Peter. All four Gospels (Matthew 26:34, Mark 14:29, Luke 22:34, John 13:38) document Jesus' prediction that Peter would deny Him three times before a rooster crowed. Peter's denial is recorded in Matthew 26:74-75, Mark 14:72, Luke 22:61, and John 18:25-26. As Jesus predicted, Peter did deny Him and afterward he "wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62b). After literally living with Jesus for 3 years, listening to His teaching, witnessing countless miracles, and even declaring that Jesus was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), Peter still turned his back on Him. Peter must have thought he had fallen so far from grace that there was no way to return. Luke's account adds a key pearl the other Gospels do not include: after Peter heard the

rooster crow, *“the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter”* (Luke 22:61a). Peter realized that the Lord had seen what he had done. In describing the events surrounding the resurrection, Mark 16:7 includes the statement, *“But go, tell His disciples AND PETER”* (emphasis mine). The other three Gospel writers did not single out Peter. Only Mark’s Gospel specifically mentions that Peter should be notified about Jesus’ resurrection, likely because Mark’s Gospel represents the recollections and impressions of Peter himself.

A message of grace is unforgettable to the one who receives it. If Christ was willing to go to the cross for you, why would He stop loving you no matter what you have done? Like Peter, we can also receive that grace, no matter what we have done. God does not put us on a shelf next to Wheezy, nor will He ever turn His back on us. He calls us by name, as He did for Peter. When you read the words *“and Peter”* in Mark 16:7, insert your name instead. Just as the Lord did not desert Peter, He will not leave you. As it tells us in Hebrews 4:16 (NIV): *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our special time of need.”* And when we read Luke 22:61a, let’s try not to think (as Peter likely did) that Jesus was looking at him in disappointment. Instead, we should see Jesus embracing Peter with a heart of grace and unconditional love. After all, Jesus wasn’t surprised at Peter’s denial – He expected it to happen, so He wouldn’t have been disappointed by Peter’s failure. When we need strength, conviction, and forgiveness, we can use Peter’s example of seeking the face of Jesus.

I acted like a pagan when I was in pharmacy school. I was the person God was referring to when He stated *“you of little faith.”* My heart breaks for the lost time I could have spent sitting at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). I recall getting choked up when I admitted my shame to the students in the audience. I also told the students that they could learn from my and Peter’s examples, and hopefully not make the same mistakes.

When there are areas in life that are scarred by sin, shame, silent battles or sorrow, we don’t have to ignore them by treating them like Wheezy. We might be broken, but we don’t have to shove them aside or place them high on a shelf out of sight. God is always right there with us, His grace is amazing and sufficient, and He is willing to carry the burdens that we would rather keep hidden.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging: A Biblical Perspective Compared with Secular Definitions

By Brittany Vickery

First and foremost, let me make a personal disclosure: I identify as a Christ follower with a Biblical worldview, which means that I view life and every situation through the lens of scripture. Scripture is fully accurate and reliable; it is the inspired (or “breathed-out”) word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). This is referred to as verbal plenary inspiration, meaning that God supernaturally guided the authors of the Bible to write exactly what He wanted to communicate. In this article I will compare and contrast the Biblical and secular definitions of 4 specific words that we hear so often in today’s culture: **equity**, **diversity**, **inclusion**, and **belonging**. I imagine over time we will see more of these buzz words added to the vocabulary of our culture. I also encourage anyone reading this article not to take my words as truth, but to spend the time researching this for yourself – both the Biblical and secular perspectives. I assure you it is worth your time

and it is paramount to how you will live out your calling as a Christian pharmacist.

In scripture, **equity** is related to fairness and justice, while **diversity** refers to variety. The Bible teaches us that God is sovereign (Acts 4:24-25) and that He creates diversity among all His created beings, including humans (Acts 17:26). *“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together”* (Colossians 1:16-17, NIV). This means that God creates some of us to be talented in certain areas while others are talented in different areas; some are created for leadership and some for service; some are created to live with prosperity and others more modestly. Proverbs 22:2 NIV tells us, *“Rich*