

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life



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Introductory Material:

Author, Date, and Place of Writing

The author identifies himself as Peter (1:1a), however, some question if a Galilean fisherman could write using some complex forms of Greek in the letter. In 5:12 we get an indication that Possibly Silvanus/Silas has helped to write the letter and this might well explain the writing style within the letter. 1 Peter is a circular letter (1;1b), written to Christians in a wide area which matches up with a large part of modern day Turkey the date of the letter thought to be around 65CE. Peter uses the phrase Babylon to indicate the place of writing, based on the references to suffering and persecution in the letter a number of Bible scholars think this could be a 'codeword' for the city of Rome. Although the letter contains many references to Old Testament themes it is thought that the letter was mainly aimed at a Gentile (non-Jewish) audience.

Outline

- Greeting (1:1–2)
- Praise to God (1:3–12)
- God's Holy People (A new family identity) (1:13–2:10)
- Life in Exile (Suffering as followers of Jesus) (2:11–4:11)
- Steadfast in Faith (Suffering and Future Hope) (4:12–5:11)
- Final Greeting (5:12–14)

The Bible Project has produced an excellent introductory video to 1 Peter:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-peter/>

How to use this course:

Use these materials on your own, in your Growth Group or in your Micro Group.

It would be helpful to try to read the whole of the book of 1 Peter prior to starting this course.

The material is particularly designed to help us look at how to live as people of hope in the midst of the trials in life.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Each session contains the following elements:



Start Here:

A discussion starter that introduces a theme within the study.



Reflection:

These are notes, comments or questions that help provide additional insights into the passage we are studying together.



Bible:

We look at the Bible together and explore its message through some questions and discussion ideas.



Sharing Time:

An opportunity to relate the Bible passage to our own lives.



Life Application:

An opportunity to consider how to apply the material we have explored into our lives.



Prayer Activity:

An opportunity to pick up the theme(s) of the study in a shared time of prayer.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 1: Strangers? 1 Peter 1:1-2



Start Here:

Have you got any 'strange' interests, tastes or unusual facts about yourself? Share some of these things with the other members of the group.



Reflection:

Peter uses the phrase 'God's elect, strangers in the world' to describe Christians he is writing to. Why do you think he chose these words?



Bible:

If someone has a Bible atlas or a map in their Bible, you might like to identify the regions that Peter is writing to. This isn't a letter to a group of Christians in a particular place rather a circular letter to Christians in a number of regions.

Read 1 Peter:1-2



Sharing Time:

From v2 circle any words that stand out to you. Discuss with members of your group why you chose these words.

²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.



Life Application:

Knowing that you are chosen by God, what difference will that make to the way you live your life in the coming week?



Prayer activity:

Share together some situations where it feels difficult to live out your Christian faith. Pray for one another that we may know that we are God's elect and have been chosen by the Lord.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 2: Songs of Praise 1 Peter 1:3-12



Start Here: (Curry Paste revisited!)

There is a very big difference between Patak's Curry Sauce and Patak's Curry paste! - (other brands of curry ingredients are also available.) When using the curry sauce you pour in the whole jar, with the curry paste you are only meant to use three tablespoons to make a curry. I mistakenly used a whole jar and nearly blew the family's heads off with how hot the curry was! Share as a group cooking triumphs or disasters.



Bible:

1 Peter 1:3-9 is a bit like a jar of curry paste, there are a lot of ideas all condensed together and it can be a bit overwhelming. Read the passage together and give some time for the members of your group to pick out three phrases that stand out or strike them.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.



Sharing Time:

What have you picked and why? Share your thoughts together.

Have people in the group picked similar ideas and phrases or have they picked a wide range of themes?



Life application:

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care... What experiences have you had of people sharing prophetic words? Share together as a group.



Prayer:

Spend some time thanking God for what he has done in Jesus. You might like to use some worship songs as a way of giving thanks or use a phrase from 1 Peter as part of your time of praise and worship.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 3: Holy Living – 1 Peter 1:13-25



Start Here:

The Book of Leviticus has a repeated refrain from God 'Be Holy for I am holy' (e.g. Lev 11:44) that refrain is repeated here in verse 15. Working together as a group how would you define the word Holy?



Reflection:

1 Peter 1:13-25 is part of wider section (1 Peter 1:13-2:10) which explores our new identity as members of God's family. The whole section uses several ideas from the Old Testament including v13 in some versions translated as 'gird up your loins' (a reference to the escape from slavery in Egypt); the holiness references of Leviticus calling on God's people to reflect his nature; the people of the new exodus and Passover (Ex 12-15) redeemed by the blood of Jesus 1 Peter 1:17-21; The New Covenant people 1 Peter 1:22-25 (echoing Isaiah 40 and Jer 31): the new Temple 1 Peter 2:1-8; the new Kingdom of Priests 1 Peter 2:9-10 (Exodus 19:4-6)



Bible:

Read 1 Peter 1:13-25 and then consider the following three points.



Sharing Time:

Be Holy for I am Holy: 1 Peter 1:13-15. How much does your life reflect the character of God? Share some positive examples and some areas for improvement.

Redeemed: When did you first become aware of what Jesus had done for you on the cross, what does the death and resurrection of Jesus mean to you now?

Heart transplant: ...*Love one another deeply from your heart* (1 Peter 1:22) What's special for you about belonging to God's family?



Life Application:

Try to identify some practical steps that can be taken as individuals and as a Church Family to better reflect God's character in our lives.

What might help us achieve these goals?



Prayer:

Spend some time thanking God for his nature and for the cross of Jesus. Let us pray for the Church family and ourselves to faithfully live out our calling to be the people of God.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 4: A New Temple – 1 Peter 2:1-8



Start Here:

What is the most impressive building you have seen or visited?



Bible:

Read 1 Peter 2:1-8



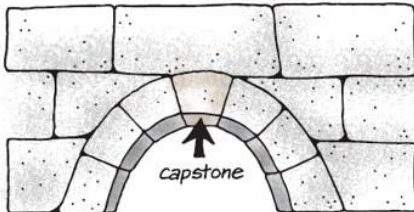
Reflection:

After the initial verses (1 Peter 2:1-3) which seem to indicate that many of the Christians who received this letter are still quite young in the Christian faith babes in Christ; Peter uses the picture of the Temple in Jerusalem and the idea of a new Temple as the focus for his teaching. He uses the imagery of stones to emphasize the centrality of Christ and our place in his body, the church.



Sharing Time:

Why do you think Peter uses the language ‘living stones’?



The writer also uses the imagery of a capstone (keystone) that is central to supporting an arch and a cornerstone the stone which is the reference point for the construction of the rest of the building.

What do we understand about Peter’s understanding of who Jesus is based on these analogies or illustrations.



Life Application and prayer:

⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

⁸ and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”



Identify five people you know who don’t currently have a relationship with Jesus and commit to praying for them on a regular basis.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 5: A Chosen People - 1 Peter 2:9-10



Start Here:

In the film 'Toy Story' there is a moment where the aliens inside an arcade game say 'He has been chosen' as the aliens speak their voices are filled with awe and wonder.

What associations does the word 'chosen' have for you?



Bible:

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



Sharing Time:

Select three words or phrases from the reading above. Share with your group what you have chosen and why.

In the passage there are three very distinct contrasts

Darkness → Light

Not a people → the people of God

not received mercy → now you have received mercy.

Share the story of how you have moved from the first position to the second.

Life Application:



Read the passage again. What difference are the statements Peter makes going to make in your life? Perhaps chose one of the promises from this passage and make a special effort to remember this Christian truth.



Prayer:

Pray for one another that we might know our true identity in Christ. You might like to pray for particular issues or challenges members of your group are facing.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 6: Setting an Example – 1 Peter 2:11-20



Start Here:

What level of skill do you have in a foreign language?

Can you say Hello? Thank you? Order a drink or a meal?



Reflection:

The idea of being a foreigner or stranger reappears in Peter's letter, the repeated theme of suffering also appears again in this passage and several of following studies. The theme of suffering is like a thread that runs through the whole of this epistle.



Bible:

Read 1 Peter 2:11-20.



Sharing Time:

Peter uses the picture of being in a foreign country to express what it's like living as a Christian in the world (v11) is this an illustration you relate to? Try to explain your answer.

Peter also indicates that Christians will often be misunderstood by those who are nonbelievers (v12) Has this been your experience? [Early Christians were even accused of being cannibals for eating the body and blood of Christ]

From very early on in the life of the church there was a difficult relationship between Christians and the state (Romans in this instance). v13-17 seem to say keep your head down be good citizens and everything will be alright – what do you make of Peter's advice? Why do you think he wrote what he did? Is civil disobedience or resisting the state ever acceptable or the right thing to do? Try to give some examples to illustrate your point of view.

v18-20 also follow a similar theme: The freedom in Christ that many who were slaves and who were also now Christians was also a challenge to the established social order. What is your reaction to Peter's advice?



Life Application:

Can you identify some issues that Christians should be making a stand on and challenging those in authority?



Prayer:

Focus your prayers on those who are persecuted for their faith and on issues of social justice.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 7: The Suffering Servant – 1 Peter 2:21-25



Start Here:

When you are ill do you suffer in silence or moan and groan and tell everyone how poorly you feel.



Bible:

Having explored the idea of suffering at the hands of those in authority Peter takes the opportunity to remind his readers about the suffering of Jesus.

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” ²⁵ For “you were like sheep going astray,”^[1] but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.



Reflection:

In the crucifixion Jesus suffered in many ways. Physical beating, insults and taunts, being abandoned by his disciples, physical pain, spiritual separation from his Father which of these was the worst form of suffering? Give some reasons for your responses.

Sharing Time:



It has been said that suffering and hardship strengthen our character and can have a positive effect on our faith. Do you have experiences that support this statement or that present a different perspective. Share at the level you feel comfortable with.



Life Application:

What practical steps can you take to support those who are suffering at home and overseas.?



Prayer:

Pray for those around the world and at home who are suffering.

Thank God that God himself, in Jesus, has fully experienced what it is to suffer.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 8: Setting an Example part 2 – 1 Peter 3:1-12



Start Here:

If you were going to give some practical advice to a couple in a relationship, what would be your top tips?



Reflection:

It is very important to understand the cultural context as we look at today's passage. Peter is very conscious that following Christ challenges the status quo. This presents difficulties for Christians trying to live faithfully in a culture that operates with some very different values. He is also addressing situations where one partner may be a Christian and the other worshipping other gods. Much of his advice is based on trying to help people live faithful lives without causing too many waves and thereby opening themselves up to further persecution.



Bible:

Read 1 Peter 3:1-12

Share honestly your responses to the passage and be gracious to one another as it is possible there may be differing understandings in the group.



Sharing Time:

Inward and outward beauty (v1-6): There are lots of cultural references in this section try to see beyond these to the ideas Peter is trying to get across. What spiritual point is Peter trying to make here?

Advice to husbands (v8): Once again try to see beyond the cultural context that has shaped Peter's writing. What advice is Peter giving and what principles can be drawn out from his words?



Life Application and Prayer

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For,

“Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Use the words above to identify some practical steps that you could take to be a positive witness to Christ. You could also use these words as the basis for your prayer time together.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 9: Setting an Example part 3 - 1 Peter 3:13-4:6



Start Here:

When and where were you baptized?



Reflection:

This section of 1 Peter is a bit like a sandwich; the bread either side is a reflection on suffering and in the middle is a reflection on baptism.



Bible and Sharing Together:

Bread: Read 1 Peter 3:13-17



Once again, the theme of suffering appears in Peter's letter. From the section you have just looked at what stands out as good advice from Peter? What are the reasons for the choices you have made?

Filling: Read 1 Peter 3:18-22

Peter again refers to an Old Testament theme - how Noah was 'saved through water' (v20). This is then linked to how we are saved symbolized with the water of baptism. What have been the key moments where you have made a new or deeper commitment to follow Christ? Share your stories together.

Bread: Read Peter 4:1-6

Peter draws a contrast in behaviour between Christians and 'pagans' and how 'being different' can lead to misunderstandings and persecution. What behaviours should Christians avoid or reject in order to be a positive witness to Christ. You might want to use the examples in the passage and also come up with some examples of your own.

Life Application:



Have you identified any behaviours that need to change in your life? How might the group help you as you move forward?



Prayer:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15

Pray for the five people you have committed to pray for who don't yet know Jesus (Session 4). Ask God to give you opportunities to speak about the hope that you have and to do so with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 10: Service and Suffering – 1 Peter 4:7-19



Start Here:

If you could have a servant to do a task that you don't enjoy, what would you choose for them to do? Washing up, gardening, clearing up dog poo...



Reflection:

Once again, the thread of suffering appears and again there is a practical encouragement to live a good life, have a positive attitude and try to get through the tough times. How good are you at being patient when things are tough and how resilient would you say you are?



Bible:

Read 1 Peter 4:7-19



Sharing Time:

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Are there any of the ideas expressed here that particularly 'ring bells' for you. Share your thoughts together.



Life Application:

*¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ **But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.** ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

Is suffering something to be rejoiced in? In what case might this be true?



Prayer:

Focus your prayers on people who are having a tough time.

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 11: Setting an Example part 4 – 1 Peter 5:1-9



Start Here and Reflection:



Share some examples of Christian Leaders you have admired or appreciated.

What qualities or attitudes did you particularly admire?



Bible and Sharing Time:

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4



What are the qualities and characteristics Peter wants to see expressed in the lives of Church Leaders. Also, what attitudes does he not want to see? Why do you think Peter mentions the attitudes he has written about?

Read 1 Peter 5:5-7

Peter moves from Church Leaders to offer advice to all Christians. Why do you think he particularly focusses on humility?

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9

Are there any times when you have felt under spiritual attack from the evil one? Share your experiences at a level you feel comfortable with.



Life Application:

Are there any ideas that have come out of this study that you need to apply into your life?



Prayer:

Spend some time together praying for Church leaders and those involved in ministry.

Pray also for people who are experiencing spiritual attack.



Next time you meet you might want to do a shorter study and have a Growth Group party together!

1 Peter – Hope in the Trials of Life

Session 12: And Finally... - 1 Peter 5:10-14



When you meet for this session you might want to do a shorter study and have a Growth Group party together!



Start Here:

Is there someone in life who has been a particular help or support to you. What is/was it about them that you particularly appreciate(d).

(In today's passage we get a little clue that Peter's letter writing has been assisted by Silas/Silvanus. Possibly Peter spoke out his ideas and Silas wrote them down; this might explain why the way the letter is written is in a style that doesn't immediately reflect the language of a Galilean Fisherman)



Bible:

Read the passage (1 Peter 5:10-14)

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

¹² With the help of Silas whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.*

¹³ She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. ¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

*(This can also be translated as Silvanus)



Sharing Time:

What words or phrases stand out to you in the passage above?

Has looking at 1 Peter helped you find ways of living faithfully as a Christian in a culture that can at times be challenging?



Prayer:

Thank God for one another and enjoy the party!