

## 1 Peter: Heading for Home

Welcome to our 10-week study of 1 Peter. A quick overview of Peter may lead you to believe this is a letter about suffering. Looking deeper we find Peter's words describing a life that no matter the circumstances leads us and others to glorify God.

The lessons were developed along 4 main lines of thought

- Critically engage with 1 Peter
- See God's glory in scripture and in our lives
- Live intentionally in accordance with God's word, reflecting on past experience as well as future goals
- Practice verbalizing why and what you believe

Before you jump into the studies themselves, the following steps will be really helpful:

1. begin by praying that God would use his word to build us up in Christ – for yourself as you sit under God's word in your own life, for your time in preparing, for your group members and for our church as a whole.
2. read 1 Peter from start to finish in one go. Read it a second time, taking note of any key themes you see coming up. In particular you will find it helpful to note when Peter helps us look back at the death and resurrection of Jesus and when he looks forward to his return.
3. read Tim Blagg's Background summary.
4. watch The Bible Project's video overview of 1 Peter at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/1-peter/>

When you do turn to the individual studies, you'll notice that the studies encourage us to share together how we've gone in responding to God's word since the last study and many of them have a specific encouragement to take time 'role playing' conversations as you share the hope we have in Christ. These are really important steps in putting God's word into practice, even if they feel a bit awkward at first, so please don't skip over them! Wouldn't it be tragic to spend hours learning about how to live distinctly as Christians without then supporting each other in the challenges and celebrating the wins. Wouldn't it be ironic if we were to study a book that encourages us to 'always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' and yet fail to spend time getting prepared in this way!

If you've got any questions at all, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

In Christ,

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Maturity Pastor, Trinity Church Adelaide, July 2020.

## **Study 1 – 1 Peter 1:1-12. Living Hope: Salvation**

*The Big Idea of this study is to grow in appreciation of God's gift of salvation in Christ. As we appreciate this more fully then even suffering is viewed in light of this great gift. There are many themes introduced in this passage that will be developed through the book, so it's fine to note them, but don't feel like you need to explore them all.*

The book was written by Peter, Jesus' disciple, around AD 63-64 before Emperor Nero's persecution which is consistent Peter's description of Christian persecution in terms of discrimination and slander (2:12, 3:14, 17, 4:4, 14, 16). (see notes by Tim Blagg for further detail)

As we think about Peter, the author and church leader, consider also Peter, the disciple. Peter, who had been a fisherman until responding to Jesus' call (Matt 4:18-20), who enthusiastically got out of the boat and walked on water (Mt 14: 29). He is the first recorded to have proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah (Mt 16:16). It was also Peter who denied Jesus three times during Jesus' trial (Mt 26:70-75). It was this same Peter whom Jesus to feed and tend his people (Jn 21:15-19). And, who preached with clarity and courage in the face of persecution (Acts 4:5-14).

Peter addresses his letter using three significant terms that all hint at links back to the Old Testament: 'Elect' – picking up on the theme of God's work in initiating relationship with his people from before time. 'Exiles' – which was a term loaded with the sense of being on the move and not in your permanent home. 'Scattered' – reflects the underlying idea of 'the dispersion' that was how Jewish people referred to themselves scattered abroad from the promised land, now applied to Christian people. The regions outlined in v1 are key Roman provinces south of the Black Sea and mostly in modern Turkey. ('Asia' doesn't refer to the continent, but the Roman province just East of the Aegean Sea). Elsewhere in the New Testament we know of these regions from Paul's travels through cities such as Iconium, Pisidian Antioch and Laodicea in Galatia, or letters to the cities of Colossi and Ephesus in Asia, or the region of Galatia as a whole, for example.

In these introductory verses Peter sets up his theme that our lives will result in praise and glory at Christ's return, not our praise and glory but Christ's.

The question about verse 2 seeks to highlight one of the clearest verses in the New Testament regarding the persons of the Trinity. The audience are described as "God's elect" in v1, and this is then expanded to describe the God who has chosen them: Father, Spirit and Son. The three persons of the Trinity are absolutely united in this saving work, but distinct roles are attributed to them. It's also helpful to see how we are called to submit to Jesus as both Lord (in our obedience) and Saviour (being sprinkled with his blood).

Some people might wonder about suffering and the 'proven genuineness of your faith.' This captures the idea of both testing and refining. So suffering can be a test of faith which shows it to be genuine in the way that precious metals can be tested to show they are the real deal. Suffering can also be a refining process that actually contributes to it's genuineness in the way that precious metals are refined to remove impurities. This doesn't

mean that we need to find suffering fun, but that we find joy within the suffering because we see something more than just the removal of our comfort – we see how our faith is actually precious and being made more so.

V10-12 highlight just how precious this reality is, that we are the beneficiaries of something that has been long awaited, much anticipated, only recently revealed. Something that even those closest to the throne of God long to catch a glimpse of ('long to look into these things' is in the present tense, the angels still delight in it!!)

If the application this week feels more 'reflection' than 'action', that's because that is intentional. It is good and right at times to simply pause and appreciate the wonder of God and the gospel. We'll have countless opportunities to be very 'practical' in the weeks to come.

## Study 2 – 1 Peter 1:13-2:3. Confident Hope: Redeemed

*The Big Idea of this study is to begin to make the connection between what God has done and what we are called to do. We start a list of exhortations that run through this series as a tool to see how broad-ranging our response is, but we also seek to ground that in the redemptive work of Christ – ‘that you were redeemed from the empty way of life’ to live a new life in him.*

In this section, we begin building a list of exhortations for living a Christian life. THIS IS NOT A CHECKLIST. Ultimately, this will provide a description of what a life lived in submission to Christ should reflect. Hopefully, it will reveal areas in believers’ lives that God wants them to continue and others to reassess.

As you discuss topics like redemption and resurrection, encourage your group to consider how they would explain without using “churchy” words. We’re looking to be able to give a defense to EVERYONE who asks (3:15). The last activity has your group discussing how to explain salvation to a non-believer. Next week, your group will practice sharing the explanation. This is not to be a long discourse but a short 30-60 second explanation.

As both an aid to your preparation and an encouragement to build your home library, the following article is taken from The New Bible Dictionary, [Third Edition, 1996], published by IVP. It’s an excellent resource to have on your shelf!

**Redeemer, Redemption.** Redemption means deliverance from some evil by payment of a price. It is more than simple deliverance. Thus prisoners of war might be released on payment of a price which was called a ‘ransom’ (Gk. *lytron*). The word-group based on *lytron* was formed specifically to convey this idea of release on payment of ransom. In this circle of ideas Christ’s death may be regarded as ‘a ransom for many’ (Mk. 10:45).

Again, slaves might be released by a process of ransom. In the fictitious purchase by a god the slave would pay the price of his freedom into the temple treasury. Then he would go through the solemn formality of being sold to the god ‘for freedom’. Technically he was still the slave of the god, and some pious obligations might accordingly be laid upon him. But as far as men were concerned he was thenceforth free. Alternatively, the slave might simply pay his master the price. The characteristic thing about either form of release is the payment of the ransom price (*lytron*). ‘Redemption’ is the name given to the process.

Among the Hebrews we may discern a different situation, well illustrated in Ex. 21:28–30. If a man had a dangerous ox he must keep it under restraint. If it got out and gored someone so that he died the law was plain, ‘the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death’. But this is not a case of wilful murder. The ox might not be stoned if it was kept under restraint. He could pay a sum of money and thus redeem his forfeited life.

Other usages of redemption in antiquity provide for the redemption of property, etc., but the three we have noticed are the most important. Common to them all is the idea of freedom secured by payment of a price. Outside the Bible the usage is practically unvarying. A few metaphorical passages occur, but these serve only to make clear the basic meaning of the word. The payment of a price for deliverance is the basic and characteristic thing.

It is this which makes the concept so useful for the early Christians. Jesus had taught them that ‘everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin’ (Jn. 8:34). In line with this, Paul can think of himself as ‘carnal, sold under sin’ (Rom. 7:14), sold as under a cruel slave-master. He reminds the Romans that in earlier days they had been ‘slaves of sin’ (Rom. 6:17). From another point of view men were under sentence of death on account of their sin. ‘For the wages of sin is death’ (Rom. 6:23). Sinners are slaves. Sinners are doomed to death. Either way the ancient world would have regarded the situation as crying out for redemption. Failing redemption, the slavery would continue, the sentence of death be carried out. The cross of Christ is seen against this background. It is the price paid to release the slaves, to let the condemned go free.

What gives the metaphor force is the constant presence of the price-paying idea. But it is precisely this that is disputed by some who think that redemption is no more than another way of saying

'deliverance'. The big reason for thinking this is that there are some OT passages where Yahweh is said to have redeemed his people (Ex. 6:6; Ps. 77:14f., etc.), and it is unthinkable that he should pay a price to anyone. But too much is being deduced. The metaphor has not been robbed of its point (cf. the saying 'he sold his life dearly'). Sometimes in the OT Yahweh is thought of as being so powerful that all the might of the nations is but a puny thing before him. But redemption is not used in such passages. Where redemption occurs there is the thought of effort. Yahweh redeems 'with a stretched out arm'. He makes known his strength. Because he loves his people he redeems them at cost to himself. His effort is regarded as the 'price'. This is the whole point of using the redemption terminology.

The characteristic NT word for redemption is *apolytrōsis*, a comparatively rare word elsewhere. It is found ten times in the NT but apparently there are only eight occurrences in all the rest of Gk. literature. This may express the conviction of the early Christians that the redemption wrought in Christ was unique. It does not mean, as some have thought, that they understand redemption simply as 'deliverance'. For that they use such a word as *rhyomai*, 'rescue'. *apolytrōsis* means deliverance on payment of a price, and that price is the atoning death of the Saviour. When we read of 'redemption through his blood' (Eph. 1:7), the blood of Christ is clearly being regarded as the price of redemption. It is not otherwise with Rom. 3:24f., 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood' (AV). Here Paul is using three metaphors, those of the law court, and of the sacrifices, and of manumission. Our concern is with the last. Paul envisages a process of freeing, but by the payment of a price, the blood of Christ. Redemption is linked with Christ's death also in Heb. 9:15. Sometimes, again, we have the mention of price, but not redemption, as in references to being 'bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6:19f.; 7:22f.). The basic idea is the same. Christ bought men at the price of his blood. In Gal. 3:13 the price of redemption is given thus: 'having become a curse for us'. Christ redeemed us by taking our place, by bearing our curse. This points us to the definitely substitutionary idea in redemption, an idea which sometimes receives stress, as in Mk. 10:45 ('a ransom for many').

Redemption not only looks back to Calvary, but forward to the freedom in which the redeemed stand. 'You were bought with a price, 'Paul can say, 'so glorify God in your body' (1 Cor. 6:20). Precisely because they have been redeemed at such a cost, believers must be God's men. They must show in their lives that they are no longer caught up in the bondage from which they have been released and are exhorted to 'stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free' (Gal. 5:1, AV).

### Study 3 – The Living Stone and Living Stones

*The Big Idea of this study is to see that every person either accepts or rejects Jesus. This theme will be developed further in later studies, but for now it helps us see that we each need to decide if we will join the Living Stone (as a living stone ourselves) or stumble on him instead. In the same way, this has implications for others in our life and the world at large.*

Repeated words and themes indicate importance. We've spent two weeks reading about salvation. This week the passage explores verses relating Jesus to OT verses regarding stones.

It is Jesus who is the living stone, the rejected stone, the cornerstone, and the stumbling stone described in these verses. We too are living stones building up the body of the church.

The question about v9-10 doesn't go into much detail so that you can work out as a leader how much time you want to spend on it, because you could spend a whole session on these verses alone! Here are a few comments (that still don't cover everything):

- 'A chosen people' implies more than 'a chosen person', it carries the idea of a chosen people group in the sense of 'race' or 'family.' This emphasizes our corporate identity together, not just as individual believers. It also points us back to the OT understanding of Israel as a chosen people, a nation from among the nations, upon whom God has bestowed his blessing.
- 'a royal priesthood' brings together the two great threads of kingship and priesthood that runs through the OT and it is about as close a reference to how God described Israel as you could get (Exodus 19:6. Note that Peter's quote matches the Greek translation of the OT which has 'Royal Priesthood' compared to the Hebrew which has 'Kingdom of Priests.' They're essentially the same idea).
- 'a holy nation' again echoes Exodus 19:6 and attributes to God's people in Christ what was attributed to Israel.
- 'God's special possession' is an idea that comes up in various places in the OT, that he is the one who created his people as a people and therefore he 'owns' them. Of the various places that Peter might have had in mind, in addition to Exodus 19, Isaiah 43:21 is the most likely because there God says of Israel that their God-given purpose is to proclaim his praise, just as Peter now says of Christians.
- So what has God done, well he's shown us mercy and made us a people (v10), but more than that it is the kind of mercy and we are the kind of people that only the Israelites in the OT experienced. God's promises to Israel are now being carried forward through his work in Jesus and shared to all included in Christ. We share the remarkable privilege of the identity and role that is described here.
- Some people might wonder if God is a bit self-interested if he has created a people (including us) for no other purpose than to declare his praise. That would be the case if he was not praise-worthy, but his very act of showing mercy, calling a people to himself, providing us with a new identity and purpose and all despite our sin (not because of our merit) demonstrates his great praiseworthiness. It is his great act of

love that we get to see his praiseworthiness, which in turn enables us to declare his praiseworthiness.

- Finally, the strong links to Exodus 19 help us see that Peter has the same framework in mind of identity before behavior. We see that in Exodus 19 where this new identity is given before the law is provided. And here in 1 Peter, a book with loads of exhortations/commands, it is all grounded in our identity in Christ (as we saw in chapter 1).

#### **Study 4 – 1 Peter 2:11-17. Respect, Honor, Love, Fear**

*The Big Idea of this Study is to set up a discussion that will carry through week 6. As followers of Christ our lives should be distinct from those who don't follow him. That distinction is to draw others to glorify God.*

1 Peter 2:11-12 is worth spending a bit of time on because it serves as a heading that sits over the section that runs through to at least 3:7, but probably 4:11. Note again that Peter describes Christians as 'foreigners and exiles', which emphasizes that we are different from non-Christians around us, even if we share the same postcode or national citizenship. This distinction has both an inner element (sinful desires waging war against your soul) and an outer element (how we are viewed by others around us). As with 1 Peter from start to finish, the current time is always viewed in light of the return of Jesus, as the end of v12 emphasizes.

On this note, there is a bit of ambiguity about whether those onlooking unbelievers will 'glorify God on the day he visits us' as fellow believers (won over by our witness) or still as unbelievers yet finally recognizing God as sovereign ruler. It could be either way and the text isn't clear. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter. We are called to long for the salvation of the lost, so let's act and pray that our conduct would commend the gospel. But even more than that we long for the glory of Christ, so even if people are not won over and only bow the knee begrudgingly (as seems to be implied from Phil 2:10), then this is still a profound motivation to live distinctly for God.

There are lots of different ways to read the text carefully, but we thought it was worth spending a bit of time on v17 because it is so easy to skip over. The repetition and pairing of words and ideas seems very deliberate and is a good reminder to people to pay close attention to God's word. (The more literal ESV translation shows this repetition even more clearly). It's important to let the 'positive' speak clearly, without implying the 'negative' opposite. So we are positively instructed to honor/respect non-believing people, but love our fellow believers. But that doesn't mean we should imply the negative and presume that we aren't to love non-believers. Let Peter make his point without implying things he's not saying! There is a lot that you can draw out using the comparisons in the table – what is the difference between fearing God and honoring the emperor? Why do we need to be specifically told to honor the emperor if we've already been told to respect everyone? What does it mean to show special love for fellow believers, even as we love all our neighbors?

At each step remember that v12 says our behavior should lead others to glorify God at Christ's return.



## Study 5 – 1 Peter 2:18-25. Follow Christ’s Example

*The Big Idea of this study is to explore how Jesus serves as an example for all of us in suffering for the sake of doing good. The conceptual leap is to realise that we don’t simply follow Jesus despite suffering, but that suffering gives a context to actually follow Jesus more fully.*

This section directly addresses slaves/servants. Obviously, slavery is illegal in this country, but these verses can guide us on responding to abuse in a variety of situations and especially those where we don’t have power to change our circumstance, as was the case for a 1<sup>st</sup> century slave. The example of Jesus in his suffering is provided here in chapter 2, but it is not uniquely applied to slaves as we see when Peter connects our suffering for the sake of doing good with Christ’s example of suffering again in chapter 3 and 4. As Peter says in v20, Jesus serves as an example in the sense that he suffered for doing good and endured it. This does not reduce Jesus’ suffering to the generic idea of suffering for the sake of others – his suffering was unique as he is the unique sin-bearer. In that sense we cannot follow his example and bear sin, but we can and should follow his example of suffering for doing good.

Peter directly quotes Is 53:9 but alludes to other ideas in this section of Isaiah closely enough that many translations (including the NIV) put sections of v24 and 25 in quote marks.

Isaiah	1Peter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pierced for our transgressions/crushed for our iniquities</li><li>• By his scourging we are healed</li><li>• Sheep gone astray</li><li>• Did not open his mouth</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bore our sins on his body</li><li>• By his wounds we are healed</li><li>• Continually straying like sheep</li><li>• Did not revile or threaten</li></ul>

When you as you close the section, consider asking your members to write a sentence or 2 to explain why Christ died on the cross before you have them speak the explanation aloud. It may help to have the receiving partner ask, “Why did Christ die?” to help it be less awkward. The idea with this exercise is to allow members to verbalize aspects of salvation (in this case Christ’s death) in a safe environment to alleviate fear of sharing with non-believers.

## **Study 6 – 1 Peter 3:1-7. A Spirit of Great Worth**

*The Big Idea of this study is to see how God's word speaks into the specific relationship of marriage, but also exhorts us to gentleness and respect in all our relationships. As an outworking of 1 Peter 2:11-12, Christian wives are called to submit themselves to their husbands and husbands are called to direct their greater physical strength for the care of their wives. This provides a very focused example of choosing to do good, even if it may involve suffering.*

*As is stated in the study guide itself, this passage does not command women to remain in abusive relationships. Peter wasn't specifically addressing such a situation, nor should we imply that this is the only passage that needs to be considered to respond to such a difficult, destructive and complex situation. This passage has been used by non-Christians to attack the faith for a demeaning view of women. Sadly it has also been used by some to promote a hyper-masculinity and devalue women or to demand submission from wives. It's important that we are sensitive to these distortions of this passage and seek to understand what God's word actually says, rather than react emotionally to how we think others might manipulate it.*

*If questions arise about the misuse of this passage to justify domestic abuse of any sort it is helpful to consider whether the question comes from a situation of personal concern or simply hypothetical scenario. In either case it's really important to acknowledge the issue with great compassion, but in the former it would be good to encourage discussion in another context where the issue can be considered more broadly and personally, while in the latter you might like to simply point out that v7 leaves no room for a husband to exercise greater physical strength to abuse his wife. In either instance, please feel very welcome to refer people to the pastoral staff for further assistance.*

This is the longest study in this series, but we think it is worth the time because of the tendency to simply read this passage with our own assumptions in mind, whatever those assumptions may be. As you prepare you will recognize that the questions provided guide the group through the passage much more closely than most of our studies to help us be particularly careful in reading the text. You might not need to use them all, but many of these questions are observation questions that can be pretty quickly answered by simply reading from the relevant verse. The reason for including them is to make sure we don't skip over some of the important points being made.

As we begin the section remember that 1 Peter 3:1 isn't a random rail against women. It fits within the context of submitting to those in power or authority, with the over arching goal of bringing people to glorify God because of our behavior. During this period, when women married they normally took on the faith of their husbands. Wives accepting Christ were going against the norms of society and so verses 1-6 particularly guide a woman to live a godly example to win her unbelieving husband to Christ. Similarly, for a husband to follow Christ set in motion a set of circumstances that "obligated" his wife to follow. Yet forgiveness of sins and salvation isn't obtained through obligation but rather personal choice, and the gospel sets forth a different model of relationship than obligation. Either

way it involves setting aside personal preference for the sake of the other person, even if that involves hardship.

Let's work through the questions together, not so that you have to give the 'right' answers, but so that you might feel more confident wrestling with this passage as a group.

- According to v1 what is the exhortation for wives and what is the reason given?
  - To submit to their husbands, in the hope that they might be won over to Christ.
- How does Peter say wives can do this? (v2)
  - By living in purity and reverence. This fits closely with 2:11-12, revering Christ as Lord, which brings a moral distinctiveness to un-believers.
- How does Peter expand on this idea in v3 and 4?
  - Rather than seeking to win favour through outward adornment, the encouragement is to consider qualities of character, and in particular 'a gentle and quiet spirit.'
- Is being gentle and quiet a unique command for married Christian women? What do the following passages tell us about gentleness and quietness?
  - Each of these passages affirm the general relevance of this to Christians of any situation – as we model on Christ who described himself as humble and gentle, we see that gentleness is part of the fruit of the Spirit, all Christians are encouraged 'to lead a quiet life' (the same word as 'quiet' in 1 Peter) with the goal of winning the respect of outsiders, and in all this we follow the example of Christ who endured even unjust suffering for the sake of others.
- In v5-6 how are hope and fear contrasted?
  - This is one of the nuggets of this passage that is easily overlooked. We'll unpack it later on, but at this point simply observe that the contrast is made between those who 'put their hope in God' and the encouragement 'not to give way to fear.'
- Verse 7 starts with "in the same way" but the exhortation is different, with no directions to submit. Look back at the review we did at the start of this session. How does the "in the same way" for husband's link to the previous sections?
  - This leads right back to 2:11-12. While it may not seem like the husband is being asked to give up much, genuine consideration of others will always involve self-sacrifice. Even aside from how he lives this out at home, a bloke in the paternalistic society of the first century would likely cop a fair bit of flack from his mates at the club if they don't think he's manly enough to push his wife around (as 1 Peter 4:4 might suggest).
- In v7, Wives are described as the "weaker partner." 'Weaker' simply refers to the general difference in physical strength between men and women. What it can't possibly mean is 'inferior' because of how it is paired with the inheritance husbands and wives share. Recalling 1 Peter 1:3-4, what is this inheritance and how does it affirm the equality of husbands and wives before God?

- The irony for those who find it offensive to describe wives as the weaker partner is that it demonstrates that they've implicitly elevated strength as a characteristic of worth. If we live in a world where 'might is right' then 'strong' might mean superior and 'weak' might mean inferior, but this is not the case for a household shaped by the gospel. Instead worth is defined by the shared inheritance of eternal life, the great identity-shaping gift from God that ultimately defines our worth. This is not self-esteem but 'Christ-esteem.'
- Therefore, how are husbands exhorted to behave towards their wives?
  - 'be considerate... treat them with respect' If we think that's trite, then that's probably because we don't tend to work hard enough at genuine respect and selfless consideration. (Those reading from the ESV will see that 'respect' has been translated as 'honour' which helps us see that there's nothing trivial about this kind of respect)
- What is the reason for this that Peter gives at the conclusion of verse 7?
  - At this point it is sufficient to simply note that it is 'so that nothing will hinder your prayers' We will return later to consider why this link is made.
- Now, having carefully read through the passage, let's consider how it applies in the context of marriage and beyond.
  - A basic principle of applying the Bible is to take the time to apply it to the specific situation first and then consider whether there can be wider generalisations made. If we jump to generalisations we not only miss the primary application but we also risk running off in all kinds of directions that have little relevance to the authors intention.
- How does hope in God empower people not to give way to fear (v6)? Noting that Peter concludes his remarks about wives submitting to their husbands with the comment about not giving way to fear, in what sense is this view of submission the opposite of fear?
  - We often picture submission as a posture of fear, but here Peter describes it as a position of courage. So often it is fear that leads us to assert our own preference (usually a fear of missing out or a fear of being disrespected), but this is put in context by placing our hope in God who has already secured our worth and our care.
- What insight does this give us into what a Christian wife's submission should look like (v1)?
  - At a simple level, the passage doesn't say, so the point is that we shouldn't be too prescriptive. However, we can say that her submission is voluntary (she can offer it, but her husband can't demand it of her), her submission is born of courage and self-worth-in-Christ not fear and self-loathing, it is motivated by a deep confidence in God and a desire to glorify him.
- How might a husband's failure to show consideration and respect hinder their prayers? What does this teach us about the significance of this exhortation.
  - At a very simple level, a failure to show consideration and respect is to sin against his wife, which unless repented of will hinder his prayers in the same way that Jesus says we should not leave sin outstanding between one another (Matt 5:23-24, 6:14-15). This link helps us see that a failure to treat

his wife well is very significant. In God's eyes there is nothing trivial about a husband's failure to respect his wife.

- Some of these exhortations feel very counter cultural for us! How does 2:11-12 guide our understanding about God's guidance for all relationships?
  - Whatever our situation we are all called to live counter-culturally. We should expect that this will seem odd, or perhaps even wrong to unbelievers. We need to be continually reflecting on whether we're being guided by a biblical worldview or the world's perspective.
- This passage is set in the context of husbands and wives but has relevance more generally to any Christian: male, female, married and unmarried.
  - You may not want to tackle all of these – feel free to pick and choose according to your group.

## **Study 7 – 1 Peter 3:8-22. Ready to give an Answer**

*The Big Idea of this study is to explore our readiness to share the hope we have in Christ with others.*

This is another tough passage, not because it has culturally challenging topics, but because the final few verses are pretty tricky. The unit of v8-18 stands on its own, with v19-22 providing an obscure but fascinating side note. The danger of getting bogged down in v19-22 is that it will distract from the important application of the rest of the study.

This section begins with “finally” or “to sum up” which begins to wrap up the section started in 2:11-12, however it’s a long summary that continues through to 4:11, depending on how you think the line of thought ends. The point is that whatever our circumstance (slave, wife, husband, none of the above...), we live differently from society around us to draw others to join us in glorifying God. As we live in accordance with Christ’s example, we also need to be ready to give the reason for our hope.

This study focuses on the ‘memory verse’ of 1 Peter 3:15 while still reading it in context of the wider passage. You might decide to skip over some of the individual questions under each of the three headings, which is fine, but we’d encourage you to follow the basic idea of the study and allow each of these headings to shape your time in prayer. We would also have missed the point of this passage if we didn’t talk and pray about actually sharing the hope we have in Christ!

## **Study 8 – 1 Peter 4:1-11. Living for God**

*The Big Idea of the study is to see that Peter sums up two ways to live in v2: 'not for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.' As with this whole letter, it is helpful to see how the future return of Christ provides perspective on this choice.*

The end of verse 1 presents some interpretation challenges. It is clear from both scripture and experience that suffering doesn't make you suddenly sin-free. Rather, the suffering that Peter has on view is the particular suffering he has been discussing throughout: suffering for the sake of doing God's will. The sense of being 'done with sin' is 'having decided to pursue the will of God rather than sin.' This is what it means to 'arm yourselves also with the same attitude' as Christ who suffered in his body, who suffered on the basis of a deliberate decision to do the will of God. As verse 4 indicates, this will seem foolish and reckless, or perhaps even perverse or harmful, by others who do not share our concern for God's will, and so 'they heap abuse on you' (v4). In all this, we know that we continue in our struggle with sin – the very fact that Peter needs to offer so many exhortations to stop sinning and grow in godliness is testament to this fact!

Peter states in 4:7 that the end is near. Although it is nearly 2000 years since Peter first wrote that 'the end of all things is near,' this statement was true then and remains true now while we live in these 'last times' (1:20). The end is near in the sense of 'immanent' – any moment now. We do not know when Christ will return, but it could be before you finish reading this sentence, so let's live prepared for his immanent return. We cannot assume that we'll have time to live as the pagans choose to live and still have time repent and lead others to repent. How different would our drive be to share the gospel if we knew that Christ would be returning next week. We see this perspective come through in another famous verse Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:8.

The fact that Peter repeats ideas implies importance. Loving each other and acting in a sober manner are repeated through out the book. Depending on the age of your group and the dynamics of the members you may want to talk about what "sober" means and doesn't mean. Often non-believers see Christian life as boring, yet soberness doesn't mean not having fun or even not having a drink with friends. Rather, Peter is reminding Christians to be in control and thoughtful in their actions.

Remember that throughout Peter's letter he's encouraging Christians to live in such a way as to draw others to glorify God.

## **Study 9 – 1 Peter 4:12-19. Bearing Christ's Name**

*The Big Idea of this study is summed up in the quote from Professor Dumbledore! Suffering is to be expected for the Christian, not only because we live in a fallen world but because we 'bear that name.' But that is actually a reason for joy, not despondency, because we get to choose the right – to bear that name with joy!*

The end of chapter 4 continues to build on the idea of living godly lives for the sake of sharing the hope we have in Christ. In verse 13 Peter encourages his readers to persevere through testing and trials that they may rejoice. Peter does not minimize the difficulties and suffering Christians can and will experience by following Christ, but he does promise that we are trusting a faithful Creator.

As you discuss verse 15, you may not have many murderers, thieves or other criminals in your group. But we have all been guilty of meddling in business we don't belong. Meddling doesn't seem to fit with the other sinful activities of the verse. This is an opportunity to discuss how meddling (and other criminal behavior) will not draw others to God and preserve believer's witness within the community.

Verse 17 and 18 pick up on two Old Testament themes. First in v17 is the idea that 'judgment begins with God's household', which the prophets repeatedly spoke of in terms of the expectation that God's judgment was first for Israel who had special knowledge of him and relationship with him (see Ezek 9:5-6, Amos 3:2, Mal 3:1-3). But Peter's point is not that judgment will be a terrifying experience for the Christian (for he has already emphasised the confidence we have in Christ), but rather to emphasise dire position for unbelievers, as his quote of Proverbs 11:31 sums up. The difficulty in the salvation of the righteous is not implying that it was hard for God (as if he was only just able to achieve it), nor that it is hard for us (as if we can do anything to achieve it), but rather that salvation has always been through the 'narrow gate' as Jesus taught and on a path that brings opposition and suffering with it. The point of Proverbs 11:31 is not to emphasise the difficulty of salvation for the righteous but the hopeless situation of those outside of relationship with God – the ungodly and the sinner. In technical terms this is called an 'a fortiori' argument: "we know that salvation is hard for the righteous (it's on a narrow road marked with suffering), so there is no hope for those who persist in ungodliness and sin."

All this serves to encourage us not to give up, to commit ourselves to God's care and continue in faith and obedience, come what may.



## **Week 10 – Firm and Steadfast**

*The Big Idea of this study is that standing firm in the truth of God's grace takes a big dose of humility – before God and alongside each other.*

We've reached the end of 1 Peter. While we've spent 10 weeks studying the book there's so much more that we weren't able to dive into.

Peter picks up the theme of authority and power again. In this case he's encouraging pastors and church leaders to lead according to God's will not selfish desires. Verses 5 & 6 speak of humility and humbleness three times. As with so many of Peter's subjects this is counter cultural. Still, we're promised that as we strive to live humbly, we can trust Christ to exalt us in the proper way at the proper time.

We can see how pride and humility are at play in all the exhortations here. Elders who are puffed up with pride and self importance will throw their weight around, seek selfish gain and live with little regard for the impact they have on others. Those characterized by humility will follow the way of the Chief Shepherd, humbly trusting in him for their reward rather than trying to secure it themselves. Having recently spent time in Proverbs we'll all be familiar with the theme of the humble fear of the Lord, summed up in Proverbs 3:34, which Paul quotes in v5. In the same way, even our prayerful attitude in times of anxiety is actually an act of humility (v7). When we are anxious we should carefully consider whether we're actually being proud in thinking we should (or could) fix our situation, rather than humbly depending on God's care. In a similar sense, pride often drives complacency with respect to sin and the devil. Humility forces us to recognize the danger and heed God's warning to resist the devil, depending not on our own ability to overcome temptation but on God's power in Christ. Finally, even the doxology (fancy word for praise) of v10-11 is a humble perspective, recognizing that we don't arrogantly presume that we can fix our problems and deal with our suffering, but rather depend on God to restore us and strengthen us.

It's essentially this posture of humility that enables us to review the table of exhortations from 1 Peter and see in them not a list of tasks that we must (or can) accomplish, but rather a description of a humble heart seeking to be shaped by our Lord. It is detailed and broad, profound and simple, practical and deeply spiritual, which is a great reminder that living for the glory of God is all these things too! The list may highlight an area that a believer needs to talk to God about. It may also reveal how much a believer has changed since coming to know Christ.

Peter wrote his letter encouraging and testifying to God's true grace. Stand fast in it, brothers and sisters!