

# STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of  
him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

A SERIES IN 1 PETER

# small groups

LIFE TOGETHER

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

**1PETER 2:9**



# LEADER'S NOTES FOR THESE STUDIES

These studies are written in a simple format with around 6–8 questions a week, including some background. They should take about an hour in a group of 8–12 people and are designed to be helpful for people across a broad range of ages and stages of life and across different cultures. If you desire some harder studies, we encourage you to read a commentary and write a few extra questions for your group. If you find them too hard, cut a few questions out and write some simpler ones. Remember there are different levels of Biblical understanding in each group.

A few things will help you get the most out of these studies:

- **Prepare beforehand** – do the study on your own. If you don't, you will be OK, but if you do, you and others will probably benefit a lot more.
- **Read the Bible passages while you are together.** Some of them are very long, but this is God's word and reading it together is one of the most important parts of Bible study.
- Usually, the studies suggest you **read a bit, then answer questions, then read a bit more.** This is probably the most helpful way to use the studies. If you read all the passages at the start, it can be more difficult to remember all the details, especially in longer readings.
- Skip questions if you are running out of time. **Try not to skip the last question(s)** – they are usually the ones that tie the whole passage and the application to our lives together. Missing the last question is usually missing the most interesting discussions too!

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO 1 PETER

**1 Peter** is a message of profound challenge and encouragement to us to keep following Jesus. You may have wondered sometimes if following Jesus is worth it; maybe it seems too hard, uncertain or alienating to be a Christian? Is it worth it? Peter's answer is an absolute YES!

He says yes because the gospel of Jesus is true, powerful and the only hope for life and eternity. Peter reminds us that God has, in his mercy, 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 - kept in heaven for you...'* (1 Peter 1:3b-4)

This is worth not only believing but rejoicing over and 1 Peter shows us how. What does Peter say to his first readers and to us?

Peter knew firsthand what opposition, persecution and alienation was like as the Roman Empire's persecution of Christians was getting underway. Peter felt its full force as he was martyred in AD 67/68 under the emperor Nero.

**He was therefore well acquainted with the challenges that following Jesus brought and gives us a profound encouragement to keep on following Jesus wholeheartedly and enthusiastically in the midst of a world that is opposed to Jesus.**

Why follow Jesus? We follow Jesus because we have a sure hope, a certainty, which will result in glory!

It's almost certain that 1 & 2 Peter were written by the Apostle Peter during in the mid sixties of the first century AD. Peter wrote 1 Peter from Rome with the help of Silas (5:12).

Although 1 Peter is full of Old Testament allusions such as references to prophets, quotes, references to us being a royal priesthood, a holy nation, aliens and strangers (or exiles), Abraham and Sarah and Noah as well as a note that he wrote from 'Babylon' (probably code for Rome) it is likely that it was written primarily to Gentile Christians who lived in Asia Minor (in modern day Turkey).

As the first readers were challenged to keep on following Jesus in their day, so are we in our day. We have been born again, we have a sure and certain hope for eternity, we are saved! We are therefore to live holy lives, lives that please our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus even if that brings persecution and suffering, knowing that we are headed for 'glory'.

The following studies explore this great message in six parts.

- |                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Part 1) <b>Hope</b>       | 1 Peter 1:1-12    |
| Part 2) <b>Holiness</b>   | 1 Peter 1:13-2    |
| Part 3) <b>Home</b>       | 1 Peter 2:4-10    |
| Part 4) <b>Submission</b> | 1 Peter 2:11-25   |
| Part 5) <b>Suffering</b>  | 1 Peter 3:8-4:11  |
| Part 6) <b>Glory</b>      | 1 Peter 4:12-5:14 |

We encourage you to familiarise yourself with 1 Peter by reading it through. It's fairly short so it's not hard to read and re-read.

**As you do so, as God's chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, may you declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

***1 Peter - Living Hope ('Reading the Bible Today' Series)***  
by Paul Barnett. Aquila Press, 2006

***1 Peter (Word Biblical Themes series)***  
by J Ramsey Michaels, Zondervan Academic, 2020

***1 Peter for you (God's Word for You series)***  
By Juan R Sanchez, The Good Book Company, 2016.

***Bible project overview video.***  
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-peter/>

## study one

# HOPE

## 1 PETER 1:1-12

### PRAY FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

#### **Read right through 1 Peter.**

If possible, watch the Bible project overview video at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-peter/>

1. Discuss the Bible Project's summary of 1 Peter. What was helpful? What issues did it raise for you about living as a Christian in the 21st century?

#### **Re-read 1 Peter 1:1-12.**

2. Does the idea that we are 'elect strangers' in the world comfort you, concern you or something else?

3. Verse 2 says that Christians have been chosen by God. How does that view of your identity change how you think about yourself (your self-worth, your pride, your purpose, etc)?

4. We are told that we have an inheritance that will NEVER perish, spoil or fade in verse 4. Does this challenge your view of money and possessions in our materialistic culture? How?

5. Where is your joy or rejoicing (verses 6 and 8)?

6. Noting verses 10 to 12, as well as our historic and national context, how privileged do you think we are? Give thanks for our spiritual and practical privileges!

**PRAY TOGETHER TO CLOSE**

## study two

# HOLINESS

## 1 PETER 1:13-2:3

### PRAY FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Peter 1:13-21.

1. Identify an area of your life where you struggle to obey God. Try to work out how your thinking and the things you put your hope in contribute to your disobedience. Consider how thinking and hoping differently could help you change to be more faithful.

Discuss some of your thoughts about the things above if you feel comfortable doing so.

2. Discuss how your conversations and behaviours indicate what you consider most important in your life.

3. In what ways are you aware of present or past obedience leading to spiritual growth and blessing and how could those experiences help you to greater obedience?



**Read 1 Peter 1:22-2:3.**

4. How does your attitude to, and love for, your brothers and sisters at church match up against the exhortations of this section?

5. Who (perhaps identify this to yourself silently!) do you find it hardest to love? Do you tend to love people by 'doing what's commanded' or remembering, giving thanks for and enjoying the gospel?

6. Are you, or others around you, aware of the differences between how you live now and how you used to be? Perhaps you could take some time to encourage each other by sharing the areas in which you've seen each other grow.

7. If 'craving spiritual milk' (2:2) involves reading the bible, how can you develop your desire and your practice of reading and hearing the bible?

**PRAY TOGETHER TO CLOSE**

## study three

# HOME

## 1 PETER 2:4-10

### PRAY FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.

1. Verses 4 to 10 are thoroughly corporate – thoroughly communal (verses 5, 7, 9 and 10). How much do you think of yourself as part of the ‘body’ of Christ, the church, rather than as an individual Christian who ‘goes to’ church?

2. How does this description of the church change your view of your church?

3. Verse 6 tells us that those who trust in Jesus will never be ‘put to shame’ (eternally secure in Jesus). What difference does this make to you as you live for Jesus and sometimes face opposition because of your faith?

4. How precious is Jesus to you? Which area of your life is the most difficult one in which to hold on to the truth of God's sovereign control and commitment to bring you to glory?

5. Verse 9 says that our purpose as God's people is to 'declare his praises'. What does this mean?

6. Who are we to declare God's praises to (see Acts 2:11 and 26:15-18)?

7. Brainstorm some ways in which you and we as a church could be better at declaring God's praises.

**PRAY TOGETHER TO CLOSE**

## study four

# SUBMISSION

## 1 PETER 2:11-25

### PRAY FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Peter 2:11-17

1. In study 3 we discussed the command to declare God's praises. What role does the way we live our lives (verses 11 & 12) have in declaring God's praises?
2. As a church how well do we declare and display the gospel to each other and our community? How could we do these things better?
3. In what ways do you find it is easy or difficult to submit to authorities?
4. Are there laws that you are concerned about or think you should, with 'proper respect' (verse 17), voice concerns over? How can you do this with 'proper respect'?

## **Read 1 Peter 2:18-25.**

*Unjust suffering, for Christians and for those who aren't Christians, is still very much a fact of life for many people around the world. It was also the case in the first century for both slaves/servants and those who weren't.*

*In verses 21 to 25 Peter challenges his first readers and therefore us to endure suffering in the same way that Jesus did, following his example.*

5. Have you experienced opposition, ridicule or persecution for your faith? If appropriate, share some examples of this with each other.

6. To what extent do you prefer serving Jesus over being comfortable?

7. How does hearing other people's stories and reflecting on Jesus' example help you and challenge you follow in Jesus' footsteps?

**PRAY TOGETHER ASKING FOR WISDOM AND COURAGE TO SERVE JESUS WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN OUR INCREASINGLY ANTI-CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.**



## study five

# SUFFERING

## 1 PETER 3:8–4:11

### PRAY FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Peter 3:1–7.

While this series focuses more on our communal response to following Jesus as a community a few comments on this part of the 'household code' (Peter's instructions to various aspects of life for Christians within their homes) are worthwhile. By all means, discuss this section but we encourage you not to dwell on it.

First, in verses 1–2 Peter seems to speak primarily to the context of Christian women who are married to someone who doesn't yet follow Jesus. They are especially encouraged to allow their actions and respect to commend the gospel to their spouse. Of course, whenever there is opportunity to helpfully share the gospel in word as well, they are encouraged to do so (see verse 15).

Second, this 'submission' (or gracious, willing service) is not to all men but to their husbands.

Third, Peter is not advocating submission in an abusive relationship. In such a case, help and safety should be sought immediately.

Fourth, the command to Christian husbands is to be considerate and respectful towards their wives, not domineering, coercive, controlling or violent. Peter acknowledges that this care is to be exercised bearing in mind that, generally speaking, women are smaller and less physically strong than their spouses. It's not referring to personal character or spiritual 'weakness'.

Fifth, as in Ephesians 6, Christian husbands are to love their wives with the same profound, sacrificial, costly love that Jesus displayed for his bride, the church.

In short, God's desire is that all marriages display mutually expressed service, care, support and encouragement, of and by both partners, with a view to both partners growing in lifelong faith and love for each other and Jesus.

**Read 1 Peter 3:8-17.**

*Note again the communal or corporate nature of the exhortations in verses 8 to 22.*

1. We are all, as a church, called to a radical commitment to loving one another in verses 8 to 12. Encourage each other with some examples of this kind of service that you have seen.

2. How eager are you and we as a church to do good?

3. Can you explain how it is that we are blessed if we suffer for doing good – what does this mean?

4. Can you embrace Peter's (and Jesus') view of suffering?

5. What steps can you take to be better prepared to 'give an answer for the reason for the hope that you have'?

**Read 1 Peter 3:18-22.**

*Verses 18b to 20 likely mean that Jesus announced or declared his victory over sin, evil and death to the evil spiritual realm.*

6. Share with each other the ways in which Jesus' death, resurrection and victory over evil encourages you and helps you to face unjust suffering.

7. Discuss your understanding of the 'baptism that now saves you'.

**Read 1 Peter 4:1-11.**

8. How has your life, your behaviour and values, changed since you became a Christian?

9. What gifts do you have that you could start using or use more or to serve others in and beyond church?

**PRAY TOGETHER FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR OUR  
CONGREGATIONS TO BE GENUINELY 'GOOD' GROUPS TO BE PART  
OF AS WE ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO FOLLOW JESUS**

## study six

# GLORY

## 1 PETER 4:12-5:14

### PRAY FOR YOUR TIME TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

1. Many Christians around the world view prosperity and success as marks of blessing. Peter expects that genuine Christian faith will result in suffering. Does the idea that suffering is to be expected for Christians surprise you? Why or why not?

2. What is your response to the picture of suffering for Jesus that Peter has painted? Does this encourage and embolden you in your discipleship? Are you more willing and able to suffer joyfully as a result of reading 1 Peter? How has 1 Peter helped you to see that these two things can go together?

#### Read 1 Peter 5:1-14.

3. Elders, also referred to as shepherds and overseers, are to serve the church willingly and humbly (verses 1-3). How can you encourage and help leaders to do this?



4. What should you pray specifically for your leaders? Think of specifics as well as the general descriptions given here.

5. For those who are in various forms of leadership or responsibility, what do you need to ask for prayer for and how do you need to change in your leadership?

6. Verse 5 to 7 urge humility on everyone! What things do you need to be more humble about?

7. Give thanks for the promise of verse 10 and 11 that God restores and strengthens!

**PRAY TOGETHER, THANK GOD FOR HIS PROMISE TO BRING US TO GLORY.**





**small  
groups**  
LIFE TOGETHER

**ST PAUL'S CASTLE HILL**