

A Stranger's Guide to Life



Studies In 1 Peter



Notes for Leaders

These Bible studies will be most effective if each member is able to look at the passage prior to meeting together and to write down some thoughts or reflections in answer to each question.

Each study is presented in three sections. **Open** questions are intended to start discussion and help people feel comfortable sharing in the group. The **Read** section accounts for most of the questions and should be the main focus of each session. With these questions, encourage people to answer *from the passage* rather than from knowledge of other parts of the Bible. The **Reflect** questions may be used for group discussion or private contemplation and reflection, whichever you think most appropriate.

Each study has **Themes for Prayer**, a short section from some other source touching on an aspect of the study. These may be read as a prayer or used to guide prayers in any way that is helpful.

It is God's Word we're studying. Ask for his help to understand it and put it into action. Begin and conclude each session by praying!

About 1 Peter

Shortly after the great fire of Rome in 64 AD, Peter, one of the Messengers of the early church, wrote a circular letter to churches in what is modern-day Turkey. In the letter Peter warns the Christians about persecution, a certainty for which he considers them unprepared. The Emperor Nero sought to blame Christians for the fire, but this was not the only opposition faced by Christians in the latter part of the first century AD.

As a shepherd, Peter uses his letter to encourage his flock amidst their hardship (1:6, etc) and to testify to the true grace of God (5:12).

As Don Carson observes, "Such encouragements, and such a statement of the grace of God, offer an equally firm foothold for Christian believers facing whatever the twenty-first century after Christ may bring."

Reflect

12. Can you recall any fiery trials that have refined your faith? How was your faith strengthened or purified?

13. What other results can suffering have in people's lives?

14. Simply put, the idea of "karma" says that doing good things means good things will happen to you and doing bad things will result in bad things happening to you. How do we know from these verses that this way of thinking is wrong?

15. Peter opened by calling his readers "strangers in the world," a description he repeats in verse 17. As strangers should Christians just live in communities with other Christians and cut off contact with the outside world?

16. In what areas of your life does Peter's call to holiness lay down specific challenges to you?

Themes for Prayer

A Prayer for Suffering Christians

Lord Jesus Christ, you were tempted in all points as we are, yet remained steadfast and loyal to the Father's will: hear us as we remember our fellow Christians in all parts of the world whose faith is being tested today:

Those suffering persecution for the gospel's sake;

Those who are withstanding the antagonism and ridicule of unbelievers;

And all who are tempted to turn back because the way is hard.

Give them, O Lord, the courage and patience to endure; uphold and strengthen their faith; and may their witness be the means of drawing others to you as their Saviour;
For your name's sake.

Amen.

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Study 2: 1 Peter 2:4 - 12

Open

1. Have you ever started a building, landscaping or renovation project and not finished it?
2. What caused you to abandon it?
3. How do you feel when you think about or see the half-finished project?
4. What do you value most about being together with God's people?
5. If a friend asked you to describe what it means to become a Christian, what would you say?

Read

Read 1 Peter 2:4 - 12

6. What does it mean today to "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" (verse 5)?

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7. Describe the meaning and significance of each of these phrases in a few words:

A chosen people

A royal priesthood

A holy nation

A people belonging to God

That you may declare praise

Called out of darkness

Once not a people

8. Which of these expressions speaks most clearly to you of our collective identity?

Why?

9. Are any of these hard for you to accept or hard to live in response to?

10. Read the Old Testament verses quoted here, in their original context. What are these passages saying to their original readers?

Isaiah 28:14 - 22

Psalms 118:5 - 25

Isaiah 8:6 - 15

11. What is Peter trying to communicate in assembling them here?

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12. From these verses what is God's purpose and intention for us?

13. Do you think our purposes and intentions line up with God's?

14. How is our temporary residence (verse 11) a motivation for behaviour?

15. How might you use these verses to encourage another Christian who is discouraged in their Christian life?

Reflect

16. How do your way of life, priorities and desires compare to God's intention expressed in this section?

17. How will the expression you identified earlier (from verses 9 - 10) shape your life this week?

18. How will the experience of Jesus (verses 6 - 8) shape your life this week?

Themes for Prayer

Psalm 118:19 – 29

¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.

²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.

²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

²³ the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.

²⁵ LORD, save us!

LORD, grant us success!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the LORD.

From the house of the LORD we bless you.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand,
join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.

²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

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Study 3: 1 Peter 2:11 - 3:7

Open

1. Are you someone who finds it easy to submit to authority, or do you have a rebellious streak?
2. Do you think Christians who live under oppressive governments have any advantage that we in free countries lack?

Read

Read 1 Peter 2:11 - 25

3. How is it that the relationship with God enjoyed by Peter's readers shapes their relationship to worldly authorities?
4. How do we "live as free people" (verse 16) but still submit to those in authority over us?

Read Acts 4:8 - 20.

5. Is Peter disregarding his own command in this episode? How can submitting to authorities include disobeying them?

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Read 1 Peter 3:1 - 7

11. What are the characteristics of a wife who is pleasing to God?

12. How would you explain this section to a teenage girl?

To a young mum?

To an older woman?

13. What are the characteristics of a husband who is pleasing to God?

14. How else could you describe someone who has “a gentle and quiet spirit”?

Themes for Prayer

A Prayer for Husbands and Wives

Almighty God, who by joining man and woman together taught us from the beginning that we should not separate what you have joined as one; we praise you that you have consecrated the state of matrimony to such an excellent purpose that in it is signified the spiritual marriage and unity between Christ and his church.

Look mercifully on your servants, that those of us who are husbands may love their wives, according to your word, as Christ loved his bride the church, and gave himself for it, cherishing it as himself; and also that wives among us may love their husbands, according to your Word. We thank you, as heirs together, of the gracious gift of life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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Study 4: 1 Peter 4:1 - 19

Open

1. Are you someone who avoids breaking the rules on principle or simply to avoid getting caught? (Would you speed on the Freeway if you knew there were no police or speed cameras along your route?)
2. What thoughts and feelings do you have when you experience suffering or witness suffering in someone else's life?
3. Does the problem of suffering in the world ever trouble you deeply?
4. Do you think Christians today are prepared to experience or witness suffering?

Read

Read 1 Peter 4:1 - 19

5. What stands out for you as you read the description of the Christian life in verses 1 - 11?

15. 1 Peter was written in an era when Christians were being persecuted to the point of death. We think that Peter himself was killed in Nero's persecution of Christians shortly after this letter was written. In such a context, why is it so important that Peter encourages his readers to "offer hospitality to one another" (verse 9)?

Is this still an important exhortation for Christians today?

16. What does it mean to "participate in the sufferings of Christ" (verse 13)?
17. What reason do we have to rejoice in our sufferings?
18. What would you say to someone in the midst of suffering who asked you to explain this section to them?

Themes for Prayer

A Source of Comfort in Suffering

The sovereignty of God is the one impregnable rock to which the suffering human heart must cling. The circumstances surrounding our lives are no accident: they may be the work of evil, but that evil is held firmly within the mighty hand of our sovereign God.

All evil is subject to him, and evil cannot touch his children unless he permits it. God is the Lord of human history and of the personal history of every member of his redeemed family.

Grace Grows Best in Winter

Margaret Clarkson

Acknowledgments:

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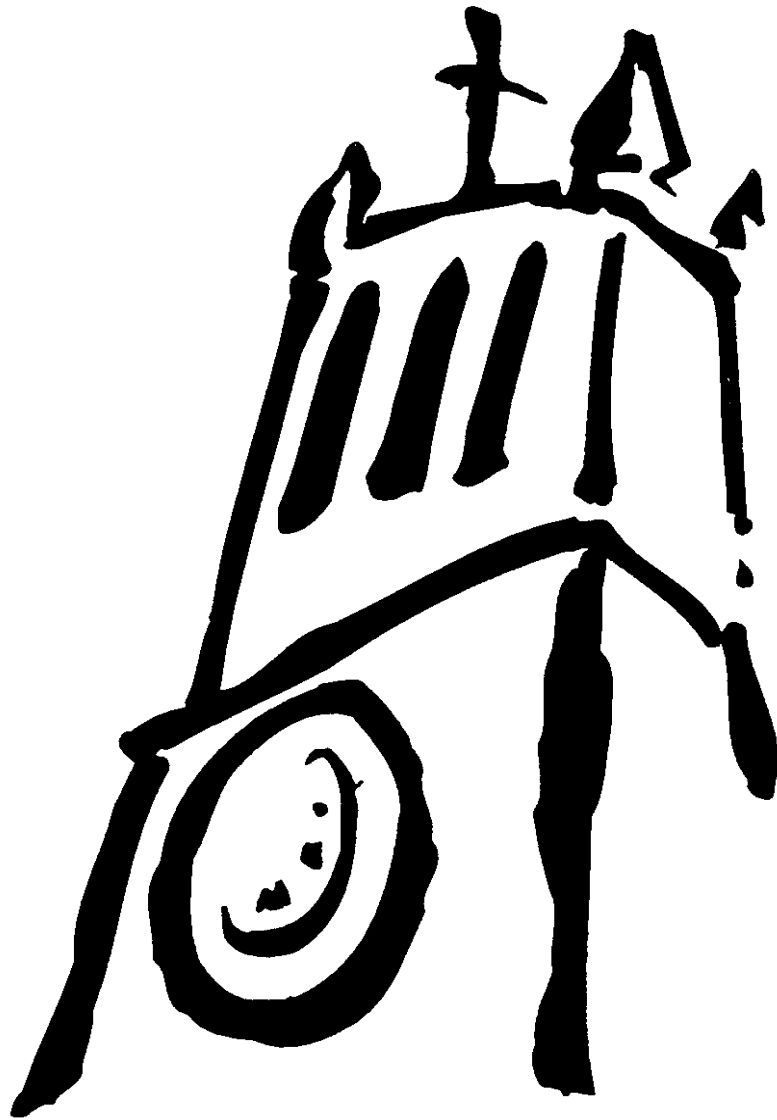
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