

FIRST PETER



MARANATHA
BIBLE CHURCH

SMALL GROUP STUDY

FIRST PETER

Have we, as English speaking Christians in the West, adjusted to public opposition to our faith? Until recent years even our government advised citizens to attend the “church of their choice.” No longer. It seems that the government, educational facilities, the media, judges and courts are used to misrepresent Bible-believing Christians. Everywhere we look-television, radio, movies, newspapers, etc. promote everything that is opposed to what we hold dear. Christianity is now the “counter-culture,” and believers today need to learn the lessons that the Apostle Peter teaches in his first epistle. If our Lord tarries, we need to be prepared for life in the twenty-first century.

Thirty years after the resurrection of Christ persecution against the followers of Christ spread throughout the Roman Empire. Nero blamed Christians when the city of Rome burned. Even though it is believed that Nero himself started the fire, the intense hatred was turned toward the followers of Christ. Christians were despised, and the suffering for believers intensified. This entire epistle is written against a backdrop of persecution and suffering. Peter’s purpose when he wrote I Peter was to encourage these dear saints, give them hope and an eternal viewpoint, as they continued for the Lord.

Before beginning the study of I Peter pray and ask Lord to give you insight into Peter’s heart in order to discern the intent of the book for the believers in the first century and then to find applications for us today. Begin by reading the whole book of I Peter and try to glean an overall impression, so that you can see it as a whole.

STUDY SUMMARY

Prayer Journal

At the beginning of the study in I Peter is a good time to begin to use a prayer journal. Every believer should have an effective prayer life. Using a journal to record not only your requests, but also your praise, thanksgiving, and confession of sin gives structure and practical ways to prepare to meet with God. And be sure to record answers; it will strengthen you on this journey of faith.

"Did we not know who wrote this letter we should be forced to say: 'This is a rocklike man who writes thus, whose soul rests on a rock foundation, and who with his mighty testimony undertakes to fortify the souls of others against the pressure of the storms of suffering advancing upon them and to establish them upon the true rock basis.'" – Wiesinger

1. In verses 1-2 Peter identifies himself and his readers. Read these two verses and explain who Peter was and to whom his letter was addressed.

Peter _____

Readers _____

2. Consider the four progressive steps of salvation in verse 2 and explain in your own words what you observe about salvation from these four truths.

3. How is each person of the Trinity involved in salvation according to verse 2?

4. What is the sinner's response?

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being." – Psalm 146:1-2

1. Praise is making statements about who someone is and what he has done in order to honor him. In I Peter 1:3-5 Peter lists character traits and actions for which he praised God. List them and choose one that stand out for you and explain why it does.

STUDY SUMMARY

Cross References

We have a responsibility as believers to know the Word of God-comparing Scripture with Scripture. A good way to do this is by cross-referencing. Other passages of Scripture can often shed light on what you are studying. If you have a study Bible, the cross-reference verses are found in the center column or margin of each page.

2. In verse 3, Peter writes that God has caused Christians to be "born again" to a living hope. Look up the following cross-references and explain what they teach about the new birth. From these three verses, go ahead and do some more cross-references on your own about the new birth! Plan to share those verses and your insights with your group!

John 1:12-13 _____

John 3:3-6 _____

Galatians 4:4-7 _____

3. Verse 3 explains that a "living hope" has been given to us. Look up the following three cross-references and explain what they teach about having living hope. From these three verses, go ahead and do some more cross-references on your own! And plan to share those verses and your insights with your group!

Romans 8:22-25 _____

I Corinthians 15:19-26 _____

I John 3:1-3 _____

4. In your own words, write what you think “new birth” and “living hope” means and how that hope for the future changes how you live each day.

5. How would you explain what it means to be born again to a person with no religious background?

STUDY SUMMARY

Testimony

How to write and share your personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ:

- a) Before - start with your life before Christ
- b) How - how did you come to Christ
- c) After - finish with how your life has changed since coming to Christ

6. In verses 4-5 Peter writes about the inheritance reserved in heaven for believers because of our salvation through Christ. It is set-aside for us without any loopholes, it is undefiled, and there is no risk of losing it. Think about what you treasure; think about your desires. What on your list will not fade away, get old, become spoiled or stained, and is completely secure forever? How does the reality of this truth shape your world when you contemplate the death, burial and resurrection of Christ? (1 Corinthians 15:14-17).

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

– Hebrews 11:1

We have reason to rejoice due to the "living hope" we have talked about in verse 3. Peter tells us that sometimes we fail to respond to God's generous love and the promise of living hope, and verse 6 tells us why.

1. What ONE WORD in verse 6 describes the reason why we fail to respond and robs us of our joy?

2. Compare 1 Peter 1:7 and James 1:2-4 and give reasons why God permits Christians to face troubles and trials.

3. In light of these reasons, why can a believer find joy in adversity?

4. Think of a challenge or a difficult set of circumstances that you are facing at this time of your life. Specifically, how does 1 Peter 1:6-9 help your perspective when you apply these truths to your trial?

In this next portion of Peter's letter, he gets to the point with ONE word -THEREFORE...what is it "there for?" Therefore is a connecting word the author uses to make a point!

DID YOU KNOW?**Connecting Words**

Connecting words such as by, to, for, therefore, in order that, if, then, however, and but are clues to how statements before and after the connecting word are related to each other.

1. What is the emphasis that Peter is making in verse 13?

2. Why is he making this point here? (*Clue: What does it have to do with what comes before and after in this chapter?*)

3. The NKJV says to "gird up the loins of your mind" in verse 13. In ancient times to "gird up the loins" would mean to tuck the outer long garment into one's belt so as to be free to hurry, or to move quickly for flight or battle. In this verse it means to prepare your minds for action. How do we "gird up the loins of our minds" making us equipped for action?" (Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 6:10-18)

4. To achieve victory in trials with prepared minds filled with hope for the future, Peter gives encouragement and admonition in verse 13 to insure spiritual victory. How do these two statements – "prepare your minds for action" and "fix your hope completely upon the grace to be brought to you" wrap up Peter's points that we studied in 1:1-12? (Philippians 1:6; II Corinthians 4:18)

Meditate

Meditate means to contemplate, muse, ponder, and have thoughtful study. Like a cow chewing her cud, mediation is a mental exercise where we mull over and over in our minds a verse or a passage of Scripture...thinking about the truths that God is teaching us. (Psalm 119:97)

5. Meditate on verses 13-16...prayerfully asking the Lord to make you aware of changes that need to be made in your thoughts and in your life. Are there any concrete decisions you have made that you can share to encourage the group?

6. We are in the world, but not part of it. How do verses 17-21 motivate us to live in the light of that truth? (Romans 3:24-25; Hebrews 9:11-15)

7. Verse 22 says we are to “fervently love one another from the heart.” To love somebody fervently means to meet someone at their point of need. When is the last time you met another Christian at their point of need? (Galatians 6:2) Would you change anything in your life tomorrow to obey this command? (I John 4:11)

8. In verses 22-25 Peter ends this chapter with an exhortation for believers, also reminding his readers about the brevity of life. In verses 23-25 what becomes the most important truth to hold on to in this “journey” and why? (Isaiah 40:8)

Here's another THEREFORE beginning chapter 2. It is a challenge to keep going...to continue because we have learned that we possess, even as we face suffering, an inheritance, genuine faith, and we know how to live right. Peter is now determined to forge ahead with instructions and exhortations for these dear believers and gives a list in verse 1 of five sins that must be "put aside" to continue on the path to holiness:

- *Malice – the harboring of evil thoughts against a person, holds grudges*
- *Deceit – any form of dishonesty*
- *Hypocrisy – insincerity, lies, selfishness*
- *Envy – bare-faced jealousy*
- *Evil Speaking – gossip, backbiting, slander*

1. In light of James 2:8: "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well," write down which of these five sins you are not struggling with.

2. I Peter 2:2 teaches us that by the "pure milk of the Word" a believer receives essential nourishment spiritually. This nourishment sustains and stretches a Christian on to maturity. Look up the following verses and explain how God's Word is always pre-eminent for every believer's spiritual growth.

Job 23:12 _____

Psalms 1:1&2 _____

Psalms 19:7-11 _____

Jeremiah 15:16 _____

Isaiah 55:10&11 _____

Hebrews 4:12 _____

Matthew 4:4 _____

Psalms 119:11 _____

Quiet Time

A quiet time with God or a devotional pause in your day is a time to be at rest and undisturbed with the Lord alone. Read the Word of God with a spirit of expectancy and spend time in prayer.

I PETER 2:4-12 LIVING STONES AND BUILDING PROJECTS

A metaphor according to Webster's is "a figure of speech in which a word denoting one object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them."

1. In verses 4-8 why does Peter refer metaphorically to Christ as a precious cornerstone and compare Him to a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense? (Matthew 21:42-44)

2. In verse 5, why are Christians called living stones? (I Corinthians 3:9-10; Ephesians 2:19-22)

3. How can you know for sure that Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone on which your life is built? (I Peter 2:9-10; Psalm 118:21-24)

4. Read verses 11-12 – We all understand that to “keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles” in verse 12 is more than embracing some form of religious externalism, right? We understand that showing up, putting out, trying hard, doing what’s right, getting your “stuff” together by pulling yourself up by your own religious boot straps isn’t the bottom line in these two verses. (Isaiah 64:6) We need help!! Explain in your own words where the motivation comes from to live a life where our behavior is “excellent.” (I John 4:19; I John 4:10)

5. Excellence seems like a pretty tall order. If we are serious about our behavior in this world, how do we practically pull this off? (Psalm 19:14; Matthew 5:16; Philippians 4:5; 2 Timothy 2:24-26)

Submission is a Greek military term meaning “to arrange under (troop divisions) in military fashion under the command of a leader.” In non-military use, it is “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.”

SUBMISSION TO GOVERNMENT – VERSES 13-17

1. Peter’s admonition is clear in verse 13 – “...submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution (government).” What if the government is anti-God and anti-Christian? What is our responsibility then?

2. How do you think that the phrase “for the Lord’s sake” should affect the way we submit to authorities? (Romans 13:2)

3. Read Acts 5:29 and share some surrounding circumstances in which we, as believers, would not have to submit to the laws of the land?

4. In your opinion would no government at all be better than a government in which the rulers are tyrants and dictators? Why or why not? (Romans 13:1-7)

SUBMISSION TO EMPLOYERS – VERSES 18-25

1. For Christians to submit to an unjust employer is much more important than getting a pay check. What reasons do you find in the following verses to prove this?

Ephesians 6:5-8 _____

Colossians 3:22-25 _____

I Timothy 6:1 _____

James 1:2-4 _____

2. Reviewing I Peter 2:18-25, explain in light of Romans 12:17-21 how Christians should respond to unfairness, being misunderstood, and being treated poorly.

3. Can you think of any useful ways to apply the principles we have learned to your life right now?

SUBMISSION TO HUSBANDS – 3:1-6

Part of the curse in Genesis 3:16 is that a woman's desire (desire means to control; have authority over) will be to lord and rule over her husband, but her husband by God's design and command, has the responsibility for headship and leadership in his family. (Ephesians 5:22-24)

1. Why is there never a command in Scripture for a husband to demand that his wife submit to him?

2. What does the phrase "without a word" bring to your mind in the context of verses 1-2?

3. What is a “quiet and a gentle spirit” and how is it cultivated? (Proverbs 31:30) If you can, use verses to clarify your answer!

4. Why is inner beauty precious to God?

5. Based on your answers in questions 1-4, what then does biblical submission for a wife look like?

RECIPROCAL SUBMISSION – 3:7-12

1. In verse 7 Peter instructs, “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives...” What way?

2. “Vessel” was a common Greek metaphor for “body.” It literally means wives are physically weaker. Why do you think that Peter mentions this?

3. Share some of your thoughts on how a husband may “show his wife honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.”

4. Why does Peter give the admonition at the end of verse 7 “that your prayers will not be hindered” in the section addressing husbands?

5. In verses 8-9 Peter lists five attitudes telling his readers how they, as Christians, should treat each other. List each of the five, choose one of them, and define how you will work it out today in the 21st century church.

6. Peter quotes Psalm 34:12-16 in verses 10-12, which gives Christians the recipe for “the good life.” What is the “cause and effect” found in these verses?

To sanctify the Lord means to make Him the Sovereign of our lives. All we do and say should be in His will, for His pleasure, and for His glory. The lordship of Christ should dominate every area of our lives – our possessions, our money, our occupation, our spare time, our marriage, our family – nothing can be excluded.

1. Suppose a Christian should suffer persecution because of his loyalty to the Savior. In verse 14 it says that suffering for the sake of righteousness will bring blessing. What possible blessings can result in suffering? (James 5:10-11; Luke 6:22-23)

2. After contemplating verse 14, read verse 15 three times slowly. Meditate on this verse and paraphrase it.

STUDY SUMMARY
Paraphrase

A Paraphrase is your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else. When paraphrasing Scripture, restate a text or passage of Scripture giving the meaning in your own words.

3. What question should you always be prepared to answer?

4. How will you prepare yourself to answer that question?

How To Share Your Faith

There are several tools you can use to share your story. Some of them are:

- The Romans Road
- The Outline of the Plan of Salvation
- The Bridge Illustration

5. If verses 18-22 have nothing to do with water baptism, what baptism, using Christ as our example, is Peter describing? (Luke 12:50; Romans 6:3-7)

6. How do these verses give hope for unsaved sinners? (II Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4; Hebrews 11:7)

7. How is this baptism relevant for suffering Christians? (II Corinthians 4:17-18; I Peter 4:19)

"When God permits His children to go through the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. His loving heart knows how much and how long.

– Warren Wiersbe

DID YOU KNOW?

Suffering

The word suffering and its derivatives are used twenty-one times in this epistle. It is natural for Christians to think about trials and persecution as strange and out of the ordinary, but Peter tells us in verse 12 - 19 that there are benefits to suffering, and we should consider it as a normal Christian experience.

1. According to verses 1-2 what is one reason God allows suffering in the life of a believer? (Psalm 119:67; Hebrews 12:5-11)

2. Does "ceased from sin" mean that a Christian is completely free from ever sinning again? (I John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13)

3. What do you learn from the following verses about the purpose suffering?

James 1:2-3 _____

Romans 5:3-4 _____

II Corinthians 12:7 _____

II Corinthians 1:4 _____

Job 42:5-6 _____

4. Read Philippians 3:10. How can we share in Christ's sufferings? (I John 3:13; John 15:18-21; John 17:14)

5. Think about Peter's warning in verse 7 – "...the end of all things is near..." In your own words using verses 7-11 (a) describe the state of mind and the behavior that confronting the seriousness of this fact should produce in us and (b) how this will affect you in your life as a believer.

Verse 7 _____

Verse 8 _____

Verse 9 _____

Verse 10-11 _____

6. Verse 14 is the highest point and the culmination in Peter's treatise on persecution and suffering for the sake of the Gospel. Cross-reference this verse (there are many), and prepare to share your verses and insights of what victorious purposeful suffering is with your group. And then challenge each other to memorize this verse!

STUDY SUMMARY

Scripture Memory

Saturate your life with the Scriptures, hiding the truths in your heart.

The keys to effective scripture memory are: **desire, discipline, and dedication.**

7. Having stubborn peace as we go through struggles and suffering is absolutely imperative for a child of God. Going to the heart of the issue, Peter wraps it up by telling us to "commit our souls...to a faithful Creator." Paul wrote a cutting-edge verse in II Corinthians 12:10 – "Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." How can we, along with the Apostle Peter and Paul, develop a faith that will not only withstand trials, pressure, and persecution, but will bring contentment and victory through them? By looking back on what we've learned in our study on suffering, define and specify any decisions or plans you made to insure spiritual growth during trials.

Concluding his letter Peter gives a summary of how elders should function in the church. Times of suffering and persecution call for the faithful leadership of these men. Peter humbly referred to himself as a “fellow elder” of the church – not the “supreme pontiff,” and he has a lot to say about what being a servant leader is all about.

1. In the NASB chapter 5 begins with the word THEREFORE. We look back in chapter 4:12-19 and wonder what it has to do with Peter’s point or with the overall aim of the letter. Write some thoughts that you believe tie this together.

2. Verse 2 gives the elders a strong admonition to “shepherd the flock of God.” The tasks of a near eastern shepherd were to:
 - a. watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep
 - b. defend the sheep from attackers
 - c. guide the sheep to food, water, and shelter
 - d. heal wounded and sick sheep
 - e. find and save lost or trapped sheep
 - f. love them, sharing their lives and so earning their trust

From this list of responsibilities, draw similarities and examples of what a man in the office an elder should do for those he leads.

3. Through the “lens” of verses 5-6, who should Christians be humble towards?

Verse 5 _____

Verse 6 _____

4. Using Philippians 2:3-4 write your own definition of humility.

5. Look up the following verses and write down what you discover about a humble Christian.

Luke 6:41-42b _____

Luke 18:10-14 _____

John 13:3-16 _____

Romans 12:3, 16 _____

James 4:1-6 _____

A preacher once said, "Worry is a sin because it denies the wisdom of God; it says that He doesn't know what He's doing. It denies the love of God; it says He does not care. And it denies the power of God; it says that He isn't able to deliver me from whatever is causing me to worry." Something to think about!

1. In verse 7 believers are told to "cast" (throw something on something) all of their cares, anxiety, and worries on the Lord. Why is it an act of humility to "cast all of our cares on the Lord?"

2. Can you think of an example in Scripture where a godly person gave all their worries and concerns to the Lord? What was the result? Give chapter and verse on the example.

3. We have an enemy – a deadly enemy whose goal is to tempt, persecute and discourage believers. The devil has different poses. Sometimes he comes like a snake, seeking to lure people into moral corruption. Sometimes he disguises himself as an angel of light, attempting to deceive people in the spiritual realm. Here, in verse 8, as a roaring lion he is determined to terrorize God's people through suffering and persecution. As powerful and influential as he is, why does verse 9 encourage you?

4. What four things in verse 10 does God promise to those who have stood firm through suffering? Use a concordance or a dictionary to learn the meaning of these words and write how each one changes the depth and purpose of suffering in your life.

5. As we approach the end of this epistle about suffering with a humble heart, becoming rooted and grounded in the faith, and finding joy amid trials, what should our determined mind-set be as we continue to live this life of faith? Cross-reference Hebrews 12:1-2 and go deep into the heart of the Lord Jesus and learn from His example! You will be blessed!

Silvanus, our faithful brother, was probably Silas (a Greek version of the name) who traveled with Paul and is often mentioned in the epistles. Peter dictated this letter to him, and he was probably the person who delivered it to the suffering and dispersed believers.

Mark was undoubtedly John Mark, and Peter considered him his spiritual son. It is believed that Peter helped Mark write the gospel of Mark (Acts 12:12), and it is this same Mark who disappointed the Apostle Paul and deserted his ministry (Acts 13:13), but later had a change of heart and became useful once again for the Lord (II Timothy 4:11).

"She who is in Babylon" in verse 13 was a synonym for the church in Rome who was sending greetings. (Revelation 17-18)

1. Peter's affectionate farewell in verses 12-14 shows much about his heart for the early church. Love for one another has always been a standing order for the church, even though the manner of expressing it may vary in cultures and times. Peter uses four words to convey his determined sentiment—"brother, son, love, and peace." How are these terms relevant in churches today?

2. Concluding this letter, Peter testifies and exhorts in verse 12 that "this is the true grace of God. STAND FIRM IN IT!" Looking back over the study of I Peter, what have you learned about "standing firm" in the true grace of God? Use Scripture to validate your answers.

In his study Bible John MacArthur reminds us "Peter wished to impress on his readers that by living an obedient, victorious life under duress, a Christian can actually evangelize his hostile world." St. Augustine reminded the Christians of his day to "Go into the world and preach the gospel...use words if you must." It is safe to assume that the unsaved world is watching as we go through trials and as we suffer...and sometimes we are the only "Bible" unbelievers will ever "read."