



A Study in 1 Peter

Life

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Living Hope

1 Peter 1:1-12

Connect

There has been an amazing transformation in Peter over the years since Jesus' death. From being an uneducated fisherman he has become a church leader and a very eloquent writer. Describe in your group, or in twos and threes, some of the changes that the Holy Spirit has brought about in your life since coming to know him?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 1:1-12

- 1) We believe in one God in three Persons. What work does each Person do, as described in verses 1 and 2?
- 2) The believers are scattered across Asia Minor because of the great persecution under Emperor Nero. What would the blessing, 'grace and peace be yours in abundance', mean to them at that time?

Verses 3-5 are packed full with the gospel truth that Peter means to be an encouragement to Christians in times of trials and great suffering.

- 3) As a group, go through these verses phrase by phrase and remind yourselves of the amazing work of God in Christ. If you face persecution, how will these statements help you?
- 4) What, according to Peter in vs. 6-9, is the reason for and consequence of the trials they are facing?
- 5) What does Paul mean by "the goal of our faith"? How can this help to put your present day trials into perspective?
- 6) What do vs. 10-12 tell us about the work of the Holy Spirit and the importance of the hope we have been given.

Respond

What have you learned today personally and as a group from studying this passage?

Prayer Points

- Thank God for your salvation – the goal of your faith
- Pray for God to give you a godly perspective on your present sufferings

Thank God that there is more to be revealed, '*even the angels long to look into these things*'.

Be Holy

1 Peter 1:13-2v3

Connect

What does being holy mean to you?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 1:13-2v3

- 1) In what ways can spiritual discipline help you set your mind for action? (v.13) Use this quote to guide your thoughts:

A farmer is helpless to grow grain; all he can do is provide the right conditions for the growing of grain. He cultivates the ground, he plants the seed, he waters the plants, and then natural forces of the earth take over and up comes the grain. This is the way it is with the Spiritual Disciplines-- they are a way of sowing to the Spirit.

Paraphrased from **Spiritual Disciplines, Richard Foster.**

- 2)
 - a. How does the Father judge people? (v.17)
 - b. How should this judgment, and the high cost of our ransom (v.18-19), influence us to live in reverent fear?
- 3)
 - a. How does obedience to the truth purify our soul? (v.22)
 - b. Why are truth and love inextricably combined?
- 4) To be holy in God's sight, do we have to live a holy life? (1v23-2v2)
- 5) v24-25 highlights that everything but the word of the Lord will endure forever: how does that help you focus your life on Jesus?

Respond

What pure spiritual milk do you long for? What are you doing to get it?

A Life Used for Building

1 Peter 2:4-12

Connect

What does it mean to you to be a 'living stone' like Jesus?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 2:4-12

- 1) Peter identifies Jesus as the Living Stone, chosen and precious to God (which Isaiah prophesied about, as Peter quotes). He is the foundation of the Spiritual House, what part do you think you can be in His house?
- 2) Peter has the Temple in mind as the basis for his metaphor, the place where God was worshipped. But these stones are 'living': what, specifically, are they doing?
- 3) Peter marks the difference between believers and unbelievers. How can you tell the difference from the way Jesus impacts the life of an unbeliever, compared to that of a believer?
- 4) Unbelief and disobedience have serious consequences: what are they?
- 5) In verses 9-10, Peter remembers the promises and purposes God revealed to Israel (compare Ex.19:5-6), and insists that all believers in Christ now have the precious gift of being called "people of God". What characterises this people? What can we give Him back?
- 6) In verse 11, Peter calls us "aliens and strangers in the world".
 - a. In what ways has he just demonstrated this?
 - b. What should be the effect on both our inward and

outward morality?

c. How does our testimony affect the world and bring glory to God?

Response

As a group, consider and memorise the following verse:

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.

1 Peter 2:6

Your Conduct Will Win Them Over

1

Connect

Which fruit of the Spirit (from Galatians 5 v 22) have you needed most in your life this week and why?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 2:13-25

- 1) Verses 13-17 command us to submit to governing authorities. In New Testament times the Roman rule was authoritarian and a citizen was duty bound to obey and pay their taxes without question (see also Romans 13 v6+7, Matthew 22 v 21). Why was Peter so keen to see the early church following the instructions in these verses? What would have been the effects of rebellion, or even of grudging compliance?
- 2) Today we live in a democracy. Is the same submission to the State required of us and how is that applied with all our freedoms? When might it be right, or even required of us as responsible citizens, to speak out against the government?
- 3) How can v17 be lived out in our daily lives? Why do you think we are to fear God, but not the king?
- 4) It is generally recognised that the slaves and masters scenario can be likened to our modern employee and employer situation. Yet slaves could be tortured, killed, left to die, separated from their wives and family, beaten for no reason – all without any legal redress. It would be almost impossible to bear such evil without retaliation or even resentment. How can these verses still be relevant to us today?

5) In both public life and in work, most people had limited control over how they were treated, and in the choice of what jobs they did. Yet Peter has insisted they have a choice over how they behave: he even raises their status to a “calling”, and counts them privileged to follow Christ.

a. In what ways does Christ’s *example* in suffering show you how to behave? (V 21-23)

b. In what ways does Christ’s *saving purpose* in suffering make retaliation unthinkable and righteous reactions possible? (V 24)

Respond

- Is there anything in my attitude towards my fellow believers, my work colleagues, my employer or the current government that I need to change?
- Look up and memorise 1 Peter 2 v 17.

Close Relationships

Connect

1 Peter 3:1-7

Consider the close relationships you are in. Are they primarily with believers or non-believers? How do you reflect God to these people?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 3:1 – 7

In verses 1-6, Peter is addressing women who had come to faith before their husbands.

In every sphere of ancient civilisation, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was owned by her husband in exactly the same way as he owned his sheep and goats; on no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her at any moment. For a wife to change her religion while her husband did not was unthinkable.

William Barclay

It was a brave woman indeed who became a Christian without her husband doing so first. Peter does not encourage her to argue rationally for her new faith (this again would have been unthinkable).

- 1) What does he urge her to do instead?
- 2) In what way is the advice given to husbands in v 7 radical?

- 3) Given the vast differences in the way marriage was seen in Roman times and the way we see it today, how is the advice for both husbands and wives still relevant to us today?
- 4) As a church how can we best support those who are part of our fellowship whose partners do not believe?

Respond

Spend some time praying for:

- a) Those in close relationships and friendships with those who do not believe.
- b) The relationships you are in, asking God for power to reflect him in all circumstances.

Suffering for Doing Good

1 Peter 3:8-4v19

Connect

How do we live in harmony with people in secular Britain today? What happens if our core beliefs come up against what society believes, do we still have to live in harmony?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 3:8-4:19

- 1) How does blessing come from suffering? v13-14. Can you think of any personal examples that might encourage the group?
- 2) Peter calls us not to be frightened, but in our hearts to set apart Christ as Lord. What does that mean practically? (Some ideas are in vv.15-16).
- 3) In 4:1-6, Peter expands on the argument he used earlier (2:24): we have now done with sin. So, we are called not to live our lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. How can we discern between the two? (4v3-11)
- 4) Which kind of sufferings are “participating in the sufferings of Christ” and which are not? (4v12-16). Is anyone you know suffering now because of being a Christian?
- 5) Many people predict that persecution will increase for us in the future. What encouragement can we get from 4v12-19?

Respond

Prayer and Love (4v7-8) are two key points of encouragement at the end of this letter. How are you doing with Prayer and Love?

For further discussion:

V.19: Where did Jesus go between crucifixion and resurrection? Two viewpoints:

- i. The reference to people of Noah's day is as a typical example of sinners before the incarnation. When Jesus descended into Hades, he offered all the people an opportunity to hear the Gospel.
- ii. Martin Luther's view is that Jesus descended into Hades not to announce good news and offer deliverance to those who were there, but to declare and complete his victory over Satan and pronounce a sentence of condemnation.

"To sum up the passages cited as evidence of a descent into Hades: they are at best vague or ambiguous, and the attempt to piece them together into a doctrine is unconvincing. While they may be interpreted as implying that Jesus descended into Hell, there is insufficient evidence here to warrant setting forth a descent into hell as a definite doctrine of Christianity. In light of the difficulties that attend interpreting these verses as proof of an actual descent of the spirit of Jesus into Hades between crucifixion and the resurrection, it is better not to be dogmatic on this matter." *Millard J. Erickson Christian Theology*

Christian Service (1)

1 Peter 5:1-4

Connect

Addressed to “elders”, Peter’s instructions are valid for all who serve in the Church. In pairs, tell each other briefly some ways in which you serve at Holland Road. (These can include very simple things: for example, just by “being there” your presence can encourage others.)

Grow

Read 1 Peter 5: 1-4

- 1) In verse 1, what three things qualify Peter to teach on leadership and service?
- 2) Consider Peter’s instruction in verses 2 and 3:
 - a. What are the dangers of serving “because you must”?
 - b. Where does greed lead to, whether for money or any other personal gain from service?
 - c. In what ways could we try to rule over others?
- 3) The image of the leader as shepherd would have been rich with meaning for Peter (John 21:15-17).
 - a) What can we learn about our calling from his language: “shepherds... flock” and “under your care... entrusted to you”?
 - b) Whose flock is it, and what difference does that make to how we serve?

Note: The word for “overseers” means “guardian”, and has more to do with service and responsibility than with managerial rule.

- 4) Read verse 4. What reward is it right to look forward to, and why? How can this encourage us?

Respond

Peter refers to Jesus as the Chief Shepherd. Read John 10: 1-18 and consider the example we can take from Him.

Christian Service (2)

1 Peter 5:5-14

Connect

As we conclude our series on 1 Peter, begin by sharing what has influenced you most from this letter. What, do you believe, is Peter's main message?

Grow

Read 1 Peter 5:5-14

- 1) Submission to one another has been a frequent theme in this letter:
 - a) How does humility help relationships, whatever our age or position in the Church?
 - b) In what practical ways can we honour one another?
 - c) Consider the effect upon you of being (i) opposed by God, (ii) given grace and lifted up by God (vv.5-6).
- 2) Suppose that an issue between you and a fellow-member were giving you real anxiety: how would v.7 help you to act with humility and grace?
- 3) Pride and anxiety (vv.5-7) provide access points for the devil: how do humility, trust, self-control and staying alert help us to resist (v.8)? What other tools has God given to help us? Compare Psalm 119:9-11, James 4:7-10, Eccl.4:12.
- 4) Consider each phrase in v.10: in how many ways does this verse encourage you?

Respond

“Cast” (v.7) is a strong word for decisive action. Share with one another, perhaps in pairs, how you actually do this with your anxieties. What blessings have resulted, for you and perhaps also for your ministry?

Pray that you will be able to live out the teachings of Peter, resulting in a more godly life to come.

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