

*STUDY GUIDE & LIFEGROUP RESOURCES*

*1 PETER*  
**STRANGERS**

*HOPE FAR FROM HOME*



Early one morning, by the Sea of Galilee, the resurrected King Jesus appeared to his disciples to share breakfast with them and equip them to serve him. Among them was Peter, the leader of the disciples, who had betrayed Jesus three times during his trial and crucifixion because of fear.

At that beach, Jesus lovingly and powerfully forgave and restored Peter, calling him three times to feed Christ's sheep and lead the church.

30 years later, Peter was still the leader of God's church, and he was still answering the call which Jesus gave him. Peter was still feeding Christ's sheep, still teaching Christians how to live as followers of Jesus.

This letter, written to churches throughout modern-day Turkey, is one way that Peter helped those early Christians to live for Jesus. 30 years after Jesus, Christians were facing suffering and rising persecution for their faith. Worshipping Jesus was not yet illegal, but believers were mistreated and hated, and they were struggling to stand fast.

So, Peter writes to give them hope beyond their suffering for Jesus' return and their vindication.

He writes to give them identity as God's chosen and special people, whose home is in heaven and who are strangers in this world.

He writes to remind them that Jesus also suffered, and just as Jesus' suffering led to his glory, so the Christians' suffering will lead to their glory.

## ii | This Guide

Peter writes to equip the church to live for Jesus in a society which was pushing Jesus to the margins.

We're praying that God will use this letter to equip our church to live for Jesus in a society which is pushing Jesus to the margins. This letter will give our church hope, identity, and endurance to stand fast for Jesus in our own lives and in our day.

Thank you for how you are leading our church through 1 Peter, we are praying for you!

The St John's team.

# This Guide

This guide contains suggested activities and questions for each bible study in the series.

As the leader of your Life Group, you understand your group's needs best! Please adjust the studies to best suit your life group's needs and knowledge. Don't feel restricted by the questions and activities in each session; no doubt you will think of things we have missed!

We have tried to include lots of interactive activities to engage various learning styles and encourage participation by all members of your group. Spending enough time in preparation for each study will help you to lead these activities well and make each study a great experience for everyone!

Each study is divided into 3 main sections: **Introduction**, **Understanding the Passage**, and **Implications for Us**. It's easy to spend the whole session on Understanding the Passage, but please make sure you reach the Implications for Us section. This is where we consider how God's word shapes our hearts and lives, and it's the main point of the bible study!

## Suggested Resources

There are heaps of resources out there which can help you in your leadership and teaching of 1 Peter:

- *The Bible Project* has an excellent overview of 1 Peter: [thebibleproject.com/videos/1-peter](https://thebibleproject.com/videos/1-peter)
- “1 Peter For You” by Juan Sanchez is a very easy-to-read commentary: [thegoodbook.com.au/1-peter-for-you](https://thegoodbook.com.au/1-peter-for-you) (also available at Koorong)
- “Teaching 1 Peter” by Angus Macleay is a commentary specially written to help people teaching 1 Peter, available online at Koorong
- “Leading Better Bible Studies” by Karen & Rod Morris combines adult education insights with biblical principles to transform the way you run your bible studies, and is available at Koorong

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# 1 Peter 1:1-2

## ***Introduction:***

*\*Leader Note: this is a very short passage, so it's a great opportunity to think about the whole letter of 1 Peter and introduce important themes which will help your group through the rest of the series.*

**If you had to describe who you are in 3 words, what would you choose? Why did you choose those 3 words?**

OR

Write out these words on paper in the middle of the group: *cultural background, religion, where I live, career, family, education, friendships, hopes for the future.*

Have the group members mark whichever 3 words are most important to their identity. Ask: **which did you choose and why?**

OR

Have each group member describe another member, telling everyone who they are and what is most important to them. How similar or different is their description to how the person would have described themselves?

## ***Understanding the Passage***

What do you remember about who Peter was?

- *A leading disciple of Jesus, one of Jesus' inner circle of disciples (Mark 9:2-13)*
- *Peter was first to recognise Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 16:13-20) but also often got it wrong! (Matthew 16:21-23)*
- *Jesus promised Peter that he would be the rock on which the church is built, the first leader of the Christian church (Matthew 16:18-19)*
- *Peter tried to defend Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1-14) but also denied Jesus three times out of fear (John 18:15-27)*
- *Jesus forgave and renewed Peter (John 21:15-25)*
- *Peter was the first leader of the church, preaching the gospel to Israel (Acts 2-4)*

This is a letter which Peter wrote to Christians everywhere. Let's see how he greets them and then farewells them in his letter. **Read 1:1-2 & 5:12-14**

1 Peter 1:1-2

What do you notice about the way Peter greets these Christians? Who does he say that they are?

What does it mean for Christians to be elect exiles?

- **Elect** – *Christians are chosen by God (see verse 2) for salvation, they belong to him because he has chosen them and made them his own*

- **Exiles** – Christians live away from home, in a place where they don't belong.

*\*Leader Note: these two words are really important for understanding the whole letter of 1 Peter. Because Christians are specially chosen by God **and** exiles in the world around us we live differently to the world and live for God instead. Don't be afraid to spend lots of time unpacking these words and ideas.*

*\*Leader Note: to help your group understand the imagery of 'exiles', you could talk about refugees today. Refugees live a long way from their home, and they are often vulnerable and marginalised. But the big difference is that Christians didn't flee their homeland, we wait to go home to our homeland in heaven!*

### 1 Peter 5:12-14

What do these verses tell us about:

- **The source of the letter?**

*\*Leader Note: "Babylon" is probably code for Rome. Peter was probably writing from Rome, and the reference to Babylon remember Israel's history of exile in Babylon. Just like Israel lived far from home in Babylon, Peter is far from his heavenly home in Rome.*

- **The purpose of the letter?**

Read-Through 1 Peter

## 4 | 1 Peter 1:1-2

Read the whole letter, writing down whatever you notice about who Christians are, and about how Peter equips Christians to 'stand firm'.

*\*Leader Note: it should take between 15 and 20 minutes to read through the whole letter. Don't be daunted! This is a great way to help your group members hear the letter in the same way that the original recipients would have heard it, and there are lots of things you'll only notice when you read the whole thing in one go. You could read the whole letter by taking turns around the group, by one person reading (as dramatically as possible!) or by listening to an audio bible if you own one.*

**What stuck out to you as we read the letter?**

**What was confusing?**

*\*Leader Note: don't try to answer every question about 1 Peter now, just acknowledge questions that will hopefully be answered throughout the series.*

**What more do we learn about God's people as elect exiles from the rest of the letter? Did any of the ideas from the greeting pop up again throughout the letter?**

**Write down one question that you have from reading through the letter that you hope to answer by the end of the series.**

## ***Implications for Us***

Peter calls Christians exiles in the world. In what sense are Christians out of place in the world? Do you feel like this is true for you?

**Where are you tempted to find your identity other than in God?** *For group members, it might be in their family relationships, career, potential, wealth, beauty etc.*

**What might it look like for you to look less like the world around you?**

## ***Other Ideas***

- This video from The Bible Project could be a really helpful tool, outlining 1 Peter's purpose and structure (approx. 8 minutes):  
[youtube.com/watch?v=WhP7AZQIzCg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhP7AZQIzCg)
- You could print the whole text of 1 Peter for group members to write on as you read through the letter. This will help them concentrate and remember their questions.

# 1 Peter 1:3-9

## ***Introduction***

*\*Leader Note: have a conversation about the group's future hopes. This study will help us understand the hope we have for our future as Christians, so we want to be talking about the future lots!*

If you could choose what your life will look like in 20 years, what would it look like? *Have a bit of fun here!*

What's your greatest hope for the future?

How do those hopes affect the decisions you make now?

## ***Understanding the Passage***

Re-read 1 Peter 1:1-2

- **What is the identity of God's people?** *God's people are **elect exiles**, chosen by God and living in a world where they don't belong*

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9.

**What is Peter praising God for from verse 3 onwards?** *For giving us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus...*

The second half of verse 3 is very rich! **What do those three phrases in the second half of verse 3 mean?** (He has given us new birth, into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead)

Living hope is a very important concept for Peter in his letter. **What do you think Peter means by calling hope 'living'?**

**How certain is the 'hope' in this passage? Why?** *Hope is certain, because it comes from God and is based on the resurrection of Jesus. The inheritance which we hope for can never perish, spoil or fade (1:4), and we are shielded by God's power until our hope is fulfilled (1:5)*

**How then is living hope different to our hope we talked about before?** *Our earthly hopes may or may not be fulfilled, but our living hope is guaranteed by God. Living hope is certain*

Read 1 Peter 1:3, 1:13, 1:21, 3:15. **What do we learn about Christian hope from these verses?**

### **Activity:**

Have group members write down everything they can see in 1 Peter 1:3-9 under three headings:

- What has God done in the PAST?
- What is God doing in the PRESENT?
- What will God do in the FUTURE?

*\*Leader Note: You could do this as one large group, or in pairs or individually, and then share with the whole*

*group. People will probably be most engaged in the task if they complete it in pairs and then the group shared together, but each group is different!*

PAST: What God has done for us in the past is the basis or foundation for our Christian hope. **What has God done in the past?** *Have group members share from the activity. Follow up any questions, and make sure that people understand phrases like 'he has given us new birth'*

FUTURE: we hope for what God will do in the future. **What do we hope for?** *Inheritance kept in heaven for us, the coming of salvation, proven genuine faith, Jesus Christ being revealed.*

### **An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade...**

- **What does Peter mean when he writes about our 'inheritance'? (verse 3-4)**
- Read Deuteronomy 4:37-38
- **What was Israel's 'inheritance' from God?** *The Promised Land*
- **How did they inherit it?** *God gave it to them*
- **How is the inheritance for Christians different to the inheritance for Israel?** *Israel's inheritance was the land of Israel; our inheritance is heaven itself. Israel were taken from their land into exile, our inheritance can never be taken away from us, because God protects it (verse 5).*
- **How confident can we be that we will receive our inheritance?**

**PRESENT**: what do we learn about what God is doing in our lives in the present? *Shielding us by his power, proving our faith through suffering*

**What do we learn from verses 6 to 9 about what life as a Christian is like?** *Christians rejoice, though they suffer grief in all kinds of trials, to prove the genuineness of their faith. They love and believe in Jesus.*

**How can Christians suffer (v.6) if God is shielding them by his power (v.5)?**

**How does that experience of life (rejoicing through suffering) make us look forward to Jesus coming back (verse 7)?**

## ***Implications for Us***

**If you're a Christian, how certain are you that you are going to heaven?**

**How do these verses (especially 3-9) make us more confident of heaven?**

**Do you think that hope for heaven affects the way you live? Do you think much about your future beyond this life?**

**How would it change your day-to-day life if you were more focused on hoping for heaven?**

**What sort of trials are you facing at the moment? How are these refining your faith in God?**

*\*Leader Note: In your prayer time, encourage people to pray for each other to have living hope for heaven, and pray that when we suffer through trials, we would know that God is protecting our faith.*

# 1 Peter 1:13-25

## ***Introduction***

If our society wrote a new “10 Commandments”, what do you think they would be?

*\*Leader Note: you could have a bit of fun with this, drawing up big stone tablets to write them on or debating different commandments which should make the top 10...*

**How do you think “right and wrong” has changed in Australia since you were born?**

We live in a rapidly changing moral landscape. As Christians, we can feel strange and out of place when our morals are increasingly different to the morals of our society. The Christian explanation of why some things are right and wrong, based on God’s revelation, is no longer acknowledged. Instead, there is little or no agreed basis for what is right or what is wrong – or, indeed, if the categories of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ even make sense anymore! Without God, it is hard to find a basis for building morals.

In this section of 1 Peter, we see an example of both the *content* and the *basis* of Christian morals – not just how Christians should live, but where these morals come from. It is a very different way of living from those around us!

## ***Understanding the Passage***

Read 1 Peter 1:13-25

**What are the 5 commands in this passage?**

1. Set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming (13).
2. Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance (14).
3. Be holy in all you do (15).
4. Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear (17).
5. Love one another deeply (22).

*\*Leader Note: these 5 commands will be important for our study, so you might want to write them up on butcher's paper or a whiteboard or something similar, for the group to keep track of.*

Split the Life Group into 5 groups and assign each command to a group. Have each group explore their command, asking:

- **What does Peter want Christians to do?**
- **What is the basis for his command?**
- **What would it look like for you personally, and for our church, to follow this command?**

Each group share their thoughts with the whole group.

*\*Leader Note: Just answering these questions might fill up all your **Understanding the Passage** time, or*

*you might want to use some of the questions below to guide the conversation. Either way, make sure you don't forget to talk about the **Implications** for Us!*

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*\*Leader Note: here are some questions you could use to further unpack each command as the groups share:*

1. **Set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming (1:13).**
  - Look back over 1 Peter 1:1-12. 'Hope' has already been a strong theme in this chapter. What have we already learned about hope? What are Peter's readers hoping for?
  - What kind of behaviour goes with setting your hope fully on Jesus?
  - What things might distract you from setting your hope fully on Jesus? How does verse 13 say that we can minimize these distractions?
  
2. **Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance (1:14).**
  - Read 1 Peter 4:1-5 for a more in-depth explanation of this command
  - Are human desires really evil? That's a bit strong, isn't it? *Without God, we desire to live for ourselves instead of living for God. That's what*

*sin is. Even though everyone does it, that doesn't stop it from being evil!*

### **3. Be holy in all you do.**

- What does 'holy' even mean?
- Is this an unrealistic expectation? Does Peter expect perfection from Christians?
- How does God help us to be more holy?

### **4. Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear (17).**

- Read 1:1, 1:17 and 2:11-12 to understand a bit more of what Peter means by calling Christians 'foreigners'
- What does it mean for Christians to live in fear of God? Should we be terrified of God? (*You could turn to Proverbs 1:7 to learn more about 'fear of the Lord'*)

### **5. Love one another deeply (22).**

- What are some experiences you have had of deep Christian love in your life?
- Read 1 Peter 3:8-10 and 4:7-11 for a more in-depth explanation of this command
- How could we as a life group love one another deeply? What would that look like?

## ***Implications for Us***

Which of these commands do you find the easiest to follow? Why?

Which of these commands do you find the most difficult to follow? Why?

Have each member share their answers to these 2 questions. *These answers would make great prayer points for prayer time.*

It feels harder and harder to follow God's commands when our society gives us very different commands and morals. **How can we keep thinking like God instead of thinking like the world?**

**How can we, in our group, help each other to follow these commands?**

## ***Other Ideas***

- To read a brief and helpful piece about how our society views right and wrong, check out: [au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/introducing-pain-pleasure-worldview](http://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/introducing-pain-pleasure-worldview)

# 1 Peter 2:1-10

## ***Introduction***

If you have a Jenga set, play a game of Jenga with the whole group. This will connect to the study, which talks about Christians being built up together like stones in a building, and to Jesus being the Cornerstone which holds the whole building together (like the bottom level of a Jenga tower).

OR

**What are the different community groups you can think of in our community?**

**What is it that holds each group together?**

**What is it that holds our group (the church) together?**

## ***Understanding the Passage***

Read 1 Peter 2:1-10.

3 questions:

- **What does the passage say about who Jesus is?**

*He is: good (v.3), the living Stone, rejected by humans, chosen by God, precious to God (4), chosen and precious (6), precious, cornerstone (7), stone that causes people to stumble and rock that makes them fall (8), called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (9)*

- **What does the passage say about who Christians are?**

*We are: like living stones, being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood (v.5), those who believe (7), chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's special possession (9), people of God (10).*

- **How does the passage say that we are connected to Jesus?**

*We are connected to Jesus by: being living stones like the Living Stone (4-5), we trust in him (6), we believe in him (7), we declare his praises, we were called by him (9), we have received mercy from him (10).*

*\*Leader Note: you could have the group work through these 3 questions as a whole group, or in pairs then share with the group, or another arrangement if you prefer!*

## Living Stones, the Cornerstone, and the Stumbling Stone

*\*Leader Note: there's a lot of Old Testament quotations and allusions in this passage. Use as much of what follows as you're able with the time you have to help your group understand the OT influence on 1 Peter 2:1-10. You might want to read the paragraphs written below, and/or use some of the questions (or your own).*

This passage is dripping with Old Testament references that we might not understand at first. Remember, a lot of Peter's first readers were Jews, and they knew all these quotations and understood the allusions. We might need to do a little work to get up to speed!

To understand this passage - with its living stones and spiritual houses, its chosen peoples, and royal priesthoods - we need to remind ourselves of all that has gone before in Israel's story. It's a long story, we'll have to skip large parts of it, but it begins with God choosing Israel out of all the nations of the world to be his own people, with the ultimate purpose of blessing the whole world through them. You might know Genesis 12, where God promises Abraham that his descendants would be a blessing to the whole world! Throughout the history of this small nation, God made them his own. He brought them out slavery in Egypt to take them to the land he had promised to give them, and on Mt. Sinai he gathered them together and said to them:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my **treasured possession** among all the peoples; and you shall be to me a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation** (Exodus 19:5-6).

This one nation was to be different from the rest (i.e. holy): they would be like a kingdom of priests, standing between God and the rest of the world (like a priest standing between God and the rest of the people).

Yet there was a condition wasn't there? *"If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant"*, and Israel did not obey God's voice or keep the covenant! The history of Israel is a story of them failing to obey God over and over again...

And then Jesus came to be everything that Israel was meant to be and make a new people of God from every nation and culture. Peter's readers, we must remember, were descendants of the nation of Israel, which was supposed to be God's royal priesthood but failed to live it out. They had no temple to worship in, no land because it was occupied by the Romans, no priesthood, nothing. Now, at last, all that was promised through the prophets is being fulfilled through Jesus Christ. In coming to him, they have become heirs of the promise once again. They have been born again and are receiving, once again, a temple, a priesthood, and much more besides. All of those promises are fulfilled in Jesus! He is the foundation stone of a new spiritual temple, and as people believe in him, they become the building blocks of that temple. As each new believer is added to the building, it rises up to become a "spiritual house" made with living stones, not physical stones like the old temple.

**Read 1 Peter 2:4-10. When the bible uses the metaphor of a rock to describe God, what do you think that metaphor means?** *He is strong, dependable, a firm foundation, reliable.*

Here in 1 Peter 2, the metaphor of a rock has two meanings, a positive and a negative meaning. **What are they?** *From verse 6, Jesus is like a firm foundation to*

*build on, he's the cornerstone which the whole building is built on. But from verse 7 & 8, Jesus is a rock which some people reject, and which causes people to stumble and fall.*

Read Luke 20:9-19. **How might this episode help us to understand Peter's teaching?**

**How is the community of believers (the church) like the Old Testament temple?** *They represent God to the world, they bring worship to God, they tell the world about who God is, we are the place where God lives.*

**How is the community of believers (the church) different to the Old Testament temple?** *The church is made of people not rocks, and people can meet God directly through Jesus rather than indirectly through the priests in the temple.*

## ***Implications for Us***

**How do the descriptions in this passage about what the church is line up with what you see in our church? How do we fall short of our identity as God's temple on earth?**

**How could we as a community fulfil our call to be God's spiritual temple on earth?**

**How can we make sure that we are always building our spiritual temple with Jesus as the foundation stone?**

# 1 Peter 2:11-12

## ***Introduction***

This week, we have a very significant and very short passage of 1 Peter. In 1 Peter 2:11-12, Peter writes:

*Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

This is a central moment in the whole letter. Peter has spent chapters 1 and 2 reminding Christian of who they are in Christ, as God's people together. They are God's elect exiles, redeemed by the blood of Jesus and his special possession.

In this passage, Peter reminds them of their **identity** (verse 11) and then commands them to **'live good lives among the pagans'** (verse 12). The whole rest of the letter involves Peter explaining what it looks like to live good lives among the pagans. He will help Christian citizens, slaves, wives & husbands, leaders and converts to live good lives.

Because this is a very short passage, and because we are halfway through our series and the term, this is a great week to do something a bit different in your group. Here are 3 suggestions for how you might use your Life Group time this week:

## 1. Watch the film *The Insanity of God*.

This film is the true story of missionaries Nik and Ruth Ripken. This ordinary couple journeys into the depths of the persecuted church, discovering how faith survives and even flourishes amidst darkness and oppression.

The film is a collection of stories of persecuted believers and provides wonderful and inspiring examples of Christians who know that they are foreigners and exiles in this world and live good lives among the pagans to the glory of God (1 Peter 2:11-12).

The film is 90 minutes long; it would be great to have a discussion of the film after watching it to help group members reflect. Here are some suggested reflection questions:

- Talk to the person next to you about one of the stories that stood out to you and why
- Read Revelation 7:9-17 together. How does this picture help us to understand and process the stories in the film?
- How can we pray for our brothers & sisters who are persecuted for their faith?
- How might this film challenge us in our own faith and life?

You can purchase a DVD of *The Insanity of God* at Koorong for \$14.99. If you would like to watch this film as a Life Group but the cost is an issue, we have several copies in the St Johns office which we can lend.

## 2. Life Group Testimonies

This passage calls believers to live for Jesus because of who they are in Jesus. This week could be a great opportunity for you as the group leader, or one or more members of your group, to share their story of how they have come to know Jesus and how they try to live for him. Testimonies are a great encouragement to those who hear them and will also deepen the relationships in your Life Group.

You could have several people share their testimony and give the group members a chance to ask questions. Make sure to pray together, giving thanks for how he is working in the lives of your group members.

## 3. Life Group Check-In and Review

Hopefully your Life Group has some sort of *Group Covenant*; an agreement about the purpose of the group and how that purpose will be achieved. If you haven't reviewed your *Group Covenant* already, this could be a great week to revisit it and reflect on how things are going.

Here's a simple process you might like to use to help you to review your covenant together.

1. Start by asking each person to share one way, big or small, that they've seen God at work in your Life Group.
2. Pray together and thank God for who he is and what he is doing.

3. Give everyone a copy of your Group Covenant and ask them to do some silent reflection by themselves. For each section of the Covenant, ask them to write a mark out of 10 (10 = perfectly achieving that goal, 1 = completely failing at that goal). Encourage people to think deeply; how effectively is the group actually achieving its agreed purpose? Does the purpose need a revision?).
4. Gather the group together and get an overall picture of how people scored each section of the covenant.
5. Talk through sections where the scores warrant some further investigation. E.g. If the section in the covenant titled 'What do we expect of each other as group members as we care for each other?' has really varied scores, that might indicate that some people are being cared for more effectively than others. E.g. If all the scores are low for the section title 'When will our group meet?', this may indicate there are some issues with attendance.
6. At the end of the discussion it's important to act on the issues that have been raised. Does the covenant need to be revised? Does the group need to commit afresh to the covenant and maybe change some of its practices or break some bad habits? Do the leaders of the group need to seek some further training/coaching in certain areas? Write these actions down and bring them up again in 3-4 weeks.

If your group does not have a covenant, now could be a good time to write one. They are not required for the group to be successful but they can be very helpful.

*You can download a template for a Group Covenant at [stjohnsdc.org.au/teaching](http://stjohnsdc.org.au/teaching).*

# 1 Peter 2:13-3:7

*\*Leader Note: this a complex passage which might raise difficult intellectual questions or strong emotional responses. We have included more Leader Notes and suggestions than in other studies to help you through a tricky study. Please be pastorally sensitive to your group as you work through the study. Although it will be tempting to spend the whole study on controversial topics, please make sure to reach the **Implications for Us** section, so that the group can consider how this part of the bible calls all of us to live.*

## **Introduction**

*\*Leader Note: there is lots to get through, so don't spend too long on the introduction this week!*

**Can anyone share a funny story of rebelling against your parents' authority, or your kids rebelling against your authority?**

This passage is about how Christians should understand and respond to human authority. Let's get stuck in!

## **Understanding the Passage**

This passage begins with a central instruction, and then the rest of the passage gives clarity to this central instruction. **What's the central instruction?** *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority.*

*\*Leader Note: this central instruction is really important to the whole passage (and study). You could write it up and stick it to the wall or something similar to keep it in people's minds.*

**What does it mean for one person to submit themselves to another?**

**It is a good thing or a bad thing for one person to submit to another?**

Who are Christians called to submit to in this passage? *The Emperor (2:13 & 2:17), governors (2:14), slaves to their masters (2:18), wives to their husbands (3:1, 5-6). (In 1 Peter 5:5 Peter also calls young men to submit to those who are older.)*

**Why should Christians submit to every human authority in Peter's central instruction? 2:13 - For the Lord's sake**

**How could submitting to human authorities be for the Lord's sake?**

Peter gives more detail about the **why** ('for the Lord's sake') for Christian submission in 2:15, 2:21, 3:1. **What are they?**

- *2:15 - 'to silence the ignorant talk of foolish people'*
- *2:21 - 'to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps'*
- *3:1 - 'so that they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives'*

**How do each of those 3 reasons help us understand why Christians should submit to human authorities?**

In verses 13-17, Peter calls Christians to submit to governing authorities. **Why should Christians submit to their governments? Why does it matter?**

In verses 18-25, Peter addresses the 1<sup>st</sup> century reality of slavery. **How does Peter call Christian slaves to behave with their masters?**

**How is the behaviour of Christians slaves like that of Jesus? None of us are slaves; what can we learn from verses 18-25?**

*\*Leader Note: it is very counter-cultural and empowering here for Peter to address slaves and wives directly. In a society where male household heads made decisions about the worship and behaviour of their household, Peter calls slaves and wives to make their own decisions based on their identity as followers of Jesus.*

### 3:1-7: Wives & Husbands

This is a challenging section of scripture to understand! But remember that Peter has just called *all* Christians to submit to human authorities; some just and some unjust.

In Peter's context, husbands had legally-enshrined rights over their wives, and were human authorities over them. **What does Peter say it looks like for Christian wives to submit to their husbands?**

## **How does Peter call Christian husbands to treat their wives?**

*\*Leader Note: Peter describes wives as ‘the weaker partner and heirs with you of the gracious gift of life’ (verse 7). Wives (generally) possess less physical strength than their husbands and so are more vulnerable to abuse. In Peter’s context, wives also possessed far less social entitlement and empowerment than their husbands, and so were even more vulnerable. Yet, Peter reminds husbands that their wives are ‘heirs with you of the gracious gift of life’; the wellbeing and faith of wives is just as important to God as the wellbeing and faith of husbands. This was radically counter-cultural in Greco-Roman culture and encouraged husbands to treat their wives with radically counter-cultural respect and understanding.*

## **How do we see God’s good plan for the relationship between husband and wife (see Genesis 2:19-25, Matthew 19:1-6) in Peter’s teaching here?**

*\*Leader Note: please make sure to say the following: Sadly, there have been churches that have used passages like this one to encourage women who are in abusive marriages or relationships to remain in those relationships “in order that their husbands may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives”. That is a tragic misunderstanding of scripture. The God of the bible is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) who hates wickedness and violence (Psalm 11:5) and delights in kindness, justice, and righteousness (Jeremiah 9:24). Ephesians 5:8-14 calls Christians to expose evil deeds*

*done in darkness, in order to bring goodness, righteousness and truth. Peter calls husbands to be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect (3:7). If you have been a victim of abuse, contact the police. "Safer" ([saferresource.org.au](http://saferresource.org.au)) includes resources and advice for Christians and churches in responding to family violence.*

Peter commends women who are able to submit and not give way to fear. **For all Christians (women, citizens, slaves, young men etc.) who are called to submission, why would we fear submission?**

**So, how can we overcome fear and be willing to submit to authorities?**

Christians are called not to give way to fear of human authorities. But we are called to fear God instead! (2:17). **What does it mean to fear God?**

**How might fearing God help us to not fear human authorities?** *Christians submit in order to be like Jesus and honour God, not because they are afraid of human authorities. Sarah submitted to Abraham because she feared God, not because she feared Abraham. Knowing that God is the ultimate authority makes other authorities less powerful.*

## ***Implications for Us***

How do you think this biblical teaching about submission to authorities lines up with Australian culture?

Who are the human authorities in our lives? What human authorities are similar or different to Peter's day?

What might it look like for you to submit to those human authorities in a way that follows the example of Christ and witnesses the gospel to them (i.e. for the Lord's sake)?

*\*Extra Leader Note: for other passages which encourage Christians to submit to human authorities, see:*

- *Romans 13:1-7*
- *Ephesians 5:21-6:9*
- *Titus 3:1-8*

# **1 Peter 3:8-22**

## ***Introduction***

Show video testimony of persecuted believers suffering for doing good:

[youtube.com/watch?v=dd46BOaywLg](https://youtube.com/watch?v=dd46BOaywLg)

**Do you think your faith would survive under the kind of persecution that Hae-Woo experienced? Why or why not?**

It's pretty unlikely that we will experience the kind of intense persecution that Christians in North Korea face. But lots of Christians around the world do, and we might experience different types of persecution in our own lives, either now or in the future. 1 Peter 3:8-22 shows us how to understand these experiences.

## ***Understanding the Passage***

Read 1 Peter 3:8-22.

Verse 8: Our Relationships with Those in the Church

**How does Peter call Christians to treat one another in verse 8?**

**Do you think our church is like this? How do you see our church loving one another in these ways?**

How could we deepen our love for one another in our church?

Verses 9-16: Our Relationships with Those outside the Church

Have the group work through verses 9-16 and answer the following questions:

1. How does Peter expect Christians to be treated by others?
2. How does Peter call Christians to respond to this treatment?
3. What reasons does Peter give for Christians to live this way?

*Psalm 34:12-16 in 1 Peter 3:10-12*

Peter quotes Psalm 34 (from the Old Testament) here to remind Christians what God is like across all of history (both in the Old Testament, in the New Testament and today).

**Read Psalm 34 together.** Alternatively, listen to this musical interpretation of the psalm ([youtube.com/watch?v=DciMh\\_ciwkk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DciMh_ciwkk)) and follow along in your bibles. It's a beautiful, comforting psalm!

What do we learn about how God cares for his people when they are suffering?

What does Psalm 34 teach us we should do when we are suffering?

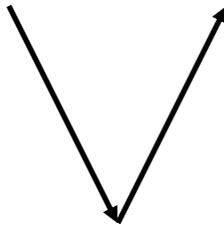
*\*Leader Note: you could have the group work through these questions all together, or in pairs, or individually, then share with the group.*

### Verses 17-22: Our Relationship with Jesus who Suffered

Verses 17-22 are a bit confusing! The links between Jesus' death, Noah, the 'imprisoned spirits' and baptism are complex and multi-faceted. It is helpful to think first about Jesus' life and ministry as a V shape:

Jesus came **down** from heaven, suffering and even lowering himself to death on a cross.

Then Jesus was raised **up** from death, ascended to the Father and is glorified by God.



This V-shape is the same shape as Noah's life, as baptism, and as the Christian life. **Can you trace each of those stories (Jesus' life, Noah's life, baptism, and the Christian life) on the V-shape?**

When Christians suffer for their faith, we are doing the same as our Lord did! Peter calls it *participating with Christ* (4:13). **How might this change the way we feel about suffering as Christians?**

*\*Leader Note: it might be helpful to draw or print a picture of this V shape to use as you talk it through with your group*

## ***Implications for Us***

**Do you suffer for your faith? How?**

**If so, how might these verses comfort you and change the way you feel about your suffering?**

**If not, do these verses mean that we should seek out suffering? *No, but they do challenge us that the more we live for Jesus, the more it attracts opposition and suffering. If we never suffer for our faith, perhaps we aren't being bold in our faith...***

# 1 Peter 4:1-19

## ***Introduction***

If you weren't a Christian, how do you think your life would look different? In your family, career, ethics, spending etc.?

What do you think would be the thing that you really lived for if you weren't a Christian? What makes you think it would be that? *e.g. wealth and security, travel, prestige, sex, a perfect family, your career, comfort...*

## ***Understanding the Passage***

This passage is closely connected to 3:8-22, which we studied last week. **What can you remember from last's week study? Can anyone remind us of the V-shape of Jesus' life and the Christian life?**

Read 1 Peter 4:1-19.

So, in 4:1 Peter begins with "therefore..." to connect what he's about to say back to what he just said. **What's the connection between last week's material and 4:1?**  
*Because of Christ's V-shaped life (suffering and then glory), we can have the same attitude: enduring suffering now because of the glory afterwards.*

**What do you think Peter means that 'whoever suffers in the body is done with sin' (4:1)?**

For these Christians, people responded to their faith with surprise and confusion (verse 4). **How do your friends, colleagues etc. feel about your faith?**

**For any group members who became Christians as adults, what were the hardest things to leave behind once you started following Jesus?**

Unbelievers judge Christians for the way that they live. But they themselves will be judged by God (verses 5-6). **How does God's future judgment affect the way you live?** *God's future judgment motivates us to live for Jesus so that we will be judged as righteous in him and motivates us to share the gospel with those who will be judged as unrighteous.*

*\*Leader Note: in verse 6 Peter says that 'the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead'. Peter is not suggesting that people can hear the gospel and come to believe after they die. Rather, he is saying that physical death does not exempt a person from God's coming judgment. All people will be judged when Christ returns, not only the people who are alive on that day.*

Have the group read verses 7-11 in pairs or small groups, asking **what 3 things stick out to you about how Christians should live together? Why?** This might take 5-10 minutes. Share answers with the whole group.

**Why do you think Peter includes this small section about Christians loving one another in between sections about suffering for faith in Jesus?**

**Read verses 12-19 together. How would these verses encourage Christians who were suffering for their faith? How does Peter strengthen them?**

**Read Romans 5:1-5 together. What do we learn about how God uses Christian suffering for good?**

## ***Implications for Us***

When we suffer, it can be hard to trust that God really cares for us. **How can 1 Peter 4:1-19 (and Romans 5:1-5) help us to see God's purposes in our suffering?**

**In our society, what parts of the Christian life might attract opposition and suffering? What might that suffering look like?**

**Can anyone share any stories of suffering for your faith?**

- **If so, how could these verses help you?**
- **If not, why not?**

*\*Leader Note: the bible sees suffering for faith as a core experience of living totally for Jesus. If our Christian lives don't attract any opposition or suffering, we should be challenged about the depth of our faith and our lifestyles. As the leader of your Life Group, this is a great opportunity to challenge your group about living radically for Jesus, even if that life attracts suffering. Don't be afraid of it feeling uncomfortable or awkward, that's the Holy Spirit working on people's hearts!*

# **1 Peter 5:1-14**

## ***Introduction***

What do you think a perfect church community would look like?

How would that perfect church community look similar to our church community?

How would that perfect church community look different to our church community?

In this passage, Peter gives some final instructions to churches everywhere about how to live together and in the world. Let's see what we can learn for our own lives, individually and in our church community!

## ***Understanding the Passage***

Read 1 Peter 5:1-14

Peter begins by addressing pastors (called elders) in verses 1-4. **What is Peter's message for pastors?**

**Do you think our pastors lead like this? How do you see them carrying out these instructions?**

**Why is it important for Christian leaders to be eager to serve and examples to the flock?**

**For those who are ministry leaders (in kids ministry, Life Groups, music ministry etc.), what lessons can we learn about leadership here?**

In verse 5, Peter calls those who are younger to **submit** to their elders (the words 'elders' means leaders, not just older people). **What might it look like to submit to our leaders in the church?**

Read verses 5-7. **What does it mean to have humility/be humble?**

**How does God show favour to the humble? Can you think of times or stories in the bible where God shows favour to the humble over the proud?** *God favours Abel over Cain, Noah, David over Saul, Jesus shows favour to children and the poor, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) etc.*

**What does it look like for us to 'clothes ourselves with humility towards one another'?** Read Philippians 2:1-5 together to help your group better understand what 'humility' means.

Read 1 Peter 5:8-11.

**What attitude (along with humility) should Christians have? What does it actually mean to 'be alert and of sober mind... standing firm in the faith'?**

**What is the promise here for those who do stand firm in the faith?**

Peter reiterates the call to stand firm in his farewell. Read 5:12-14.

**What is ‘the true grace of God’ (verse 12) that they should stand fast in?**

Verse 13: Peter is writing this letter from Rome and refers to that city as ‘Babylon’. **Why would he do that? How does this connect to other language he has used in his letter?** *Babylon was the powerful city where God’s people went into exile in the Old Testament, and in Peter’s day Rome is the powerful city that represents the world in which Christians are in exile. Peter called Christians “exiles” in 1:1, 1:17 and 2:11, to show that this world is not their home, and he reminds them again at the end of his letter here.*

**From this passage and from all of 1 Peter, how can we as Christians see that this world is not our home?**

**How might it change the way you live to think of yourself as a foreigner in this world?**

## ***Implications for Us***

We’re at the end of our series in 1 Peter. Give the group 5-10 minutes to skim-read back through the letter, and answer:

- 1. How has 1 Peter equipped you personally to stand fast in your faith?**

- 2. What's the number 1 thing you've learned from 1 Peter?**
- 3. How will you live differently because of the teaching of 1 Peter?**

Share answers with group, and let these answers shape your group prayer time.

