

# 1 Peter

1 Peter is a short letter from the apostle Peter to Christians who were facing the hostility of the world.

Peter writes his letter to encourage them to persevere. He reminds them about Jesus. He urges them to live lives appropriate as followers of Jesus.



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

# Chosen strangers

## 1Peter 1:1-2

Welcome to the book of 1 Peter. Just like reading any letter it's helpful to first ask some questions about the writer, the recipients and the reason for the letter.

Read 1Peter 1:1-2

How does Peter describe himself? What do we already know about Peter from the gospels and Acts?

How does Peter describe the Christians he is writing to? Attempt to rewrite the descriptions in your own words.

Read over the whole of the letter and try to get a feel for it, (perhaps in a fresh translation such as the Message or J.B. Phillips) noting down anything you learn about:

(1) The people Peter is writing to.

(2) Their situation in life

Did you notice any repeated ideas?

Peter mentions suffering some 15 times in his letter. What sort of sufferings were Peter's readers facing?

Read 1Peter 5:12

What does this verse tell you about the purpose of this letter?

What differences are there between us and Peter's readers?

What similarities are there between us and Peter's readers?

Re-read 1 Peter 1:1-2.

Given the rest of the letter, what do you think Peter might mean in verse 1 when he writes: "strangers in the world, scattered..."

What comforts are there in these 2 verses?

What challenges are there in these 2 verses?

What things can we be praying for each other from 1 Peter 1:1-2?

## Our Living Hope

1Peter 1:3-9.

Read 1:3-9

HOPE: In verses 3-5 Peter encourages us by reminding us what God has done for us in the past, what he does for us now in the present, and what he promises us in the future.

What has God done for us already (v3)?

What does God keep for us in the future (v3-4)?

What is God doing for us now (v5)?

How was our living hope achieved? How does this help us understand what it is?

Why do you think Peter starts his letter with these things?

SUFFERING: In verses 6-9 Peter turns to their current suffering. How are they reacting to their suffering (v6-9)?

Read over the following passages. What evidence is there of Peter's readers living in a hostile world? 1v6,

2v11-12,

2:18,

3:1.

3:14-15

4:12-13

5:8-9

What particular things does Peter say in verses 1-9 that would encourage his readers in their situation?

What does it mean to rejoice in our grief(v6)?

Read Chapter 4:12-16

What should our reaction be to suffering for the gospel (v13)?

Why(v14-16)?

There is a clear pattern that Jesus set for us that we should expect to follow. What is it? (cf 1:11, 4:13, 5:6, 5:10)

What things, if any, might cause you to lose hope? What things can strengthen your hope?

In what ways have the trials you have faced strengthened your faith?

What suffering do you face? What can we be thankful for in it?

# People of holiness

1:13-21

So far in 1 Peter we have seen that Christians are God's chosen people who have a living hope. In the next part of his letter Peter goes on to urge us to consider how we are to live now as God's people. We are to be people of holiness.

Read 1Peter 1:13-16

Why is the word "therefore" in verse 13 so important?

The Bible divides the whole of humanity into 2 distinct groups:- those who belong to God and those who do not. How does Peter describe our old life apart from God (v14)?

How does Peter describe our new life as Christians (vv15-16)?

Read 1Peter 1:17-21

In Peter's day when a slave was "redeemed", a price was paid (called a ransom) and the slave was released. Write down everything this section tells us about our redemption and the one who redeemed us.

Why is it important to understand the price that Jesus paid for our salvation?

How do these verses help us to understand why God calls us to live holy lives(v15, cf 1v2) ?

What commands does Peter give us in v13-21. How do these fit in with what God has already done for us?

When do you struggle to be different to the world? Why do you think this is?

Christians should be 'in the world but not of it' but sadly many are 'of the world but not in it' Discuss!

Where do you think you have opportunity to be more different to the world? (at work, at home, with friends, with family, at sport, at leisure, in private?)

To do now or during the week: Jot a list of all the things you have to do today, or tomorrow. How does 'be holy in all you do' effect the way you do these things?

# Born again!

1Peter 1:22-2:3

Read 1Peter 1:22-2:3

What does it mean to be born again? Where have we already seen this idea in 1 Peter?

We live in a changing, temporary & perishing world. What encouragement is there in these verses for us to stand fast in our faith?

How do these verses help us to understand how & why God calls us to live holy lives?

In this part of his letter, Peter helpfully gives us 2 areas of life to particularly focus on as people of holiness. 2 Commands: love and crave.

**1. Love!** Read 1Peter 1:22.

Who are we to love and why, and how?

If being holy means conforming to God, why does this command make sense?

Peter lists some 'unloving, unholy' actions in 1Peter 2:1 Do you struggle with any of these? How can you be rid of them?

**2. Crave!** Read 1Peter 2:2-3

What are we to crave and why?

If being holy means conforming to God, why does this instruction make sense?

As a Church we try to value the word of God by making it central to all that we do. But how central is it to our lives, if we consider the evidence of our lives.

In what ways do you do lip service to the word of God?

In what ways do you crave the word of God?

"long for, crave, desire" This is primarily not a command to do something, it is a command to desire something. This is a word of desire and passion, it is the same word used in Philippians 1:8, 2:26 and 1 Thes 3:16 and 2 Tim 1:4? How can God command in us a passion, and how do we obey such a command?

**Action:**

Pick one thing you can do to love others more deeply.

Pick one thing you can do to crave the Word of God more deeply.

# A Holy Nation

1Peter 2:4-10

Let's start by reading Exodus 19:5-6

God is explaining to the people of Israel how they fit into his plan for the world. He rescued them from Egypt so as to represent him on earth. Israel were to advertise what God was like.

From your knowledge of the OT, how well did Israel obey these instructions from God? (See 2Kings 24:8-20)

Now read 1 Peter 2:9-10

What effect do you think verse 9 might have had on Peter's original readers?

What effect does verse 9 have on you?

What was the role of a priest in the Old testament? (Heb 5:1) How was Israel as a nation, in relation to the nations around them, a nation of priests?

Israel here was give the role to serve the world by her separateness, just as a priest serves by his separateness.

By obeying God (Ex 19:5) Israel would be a holy nation, and thus serve the world in a priestly role – drawing the nations to God.

What does it mean for us to have this role?

How is our role different to Israel?

How is it similar?

Read v11-12 of chapter 2.

In chapter 1 we saw the importance of living holy lives to be like God. Here another reason is given. What is it?

We often want to fit in and be the same as our friends and colleagues instead of being different.

Why is it hard to be different (v11)?

Why is it important to be different(v12)? How does this fit with our role in verse 9?

Share some areas that you would like prayer for in living a life that is different to the people around you.

# Radical Slavery

1 Peter 2:13-25

Read 1 Peter 2:13-25

What is Peter's command to slaves?

What sort of masters did Peter have in mind?

What might a slave of an unjust unbelieving master be tempted to do?

If a master is beating his slave unfairly, what is the slave to do?

Why does Peter expect his readers to suffer injustice and not fight against it (v19,23)?

We don't have slavery in Australia today, but where might we be treated unfairly, and need to endure it rather than stand up for our rights?

We might think that God doesn't care about our suffering if we are to endure unjust suffering without retaliating. But the following verses show us that he does care.

Read 2:21-25

Why did Jesus have to die?

How is Jesus the great example of how to suffer?

In the face of injustice & hostility where did Jesus place his trust (v23)?

When have you had to suffer for the gospel, at work, or in a family or other situation?

Is suffering an optional extra according to 2 Tim 3:12?

Pray :

- thanking God that he has spared you from suffering,
- thanking him for the suffering you have endured,
- and asking him to enable you live a godly life.
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# Alien wives and husbands

1Peter 2:11-3:7

Read 3:1-7

What is Peter's command to wives?

Why does Peter tell wives to be subject to their husbands and not the other way round?

What reasons are given for a believing wife to submit to her husband even if he is not saved?

Why would this be hard to do?

Why would it be a temptation for a Christian woman of an unbelieving husband to focus primarily on her outward beauty?

What does Peter say is more important than outward beauty in a godly wife if she is trying to win her husband over to Christ? What characteristics does he specifically mention? (The word here for quiet appears also in Luke 23:56, 1Th. 4:11, 2Th. 3:12, 1Tim. 2:2& 12, if you want a feel for what it means.)

Why do you think Peter suggests a wife's actions are stronger than her words?

What might wives have to fear in such a situation(v6)? (cf 3v14)

Are there any principles that Peter draws on in this passage that appear in the rest of the letter and apply to all Christians, not just wives?

What does Peter command Christians husbands to do(v7)?

What has this to do with their prayers?

If you are married, how can you do better at living an outstandingly good life within your marriage? What would you like prayer for?

# Blessing & Suffering

1Peter 3:8-4:11

Group Discussion: 'Bad things happen to good people, sometimes precisely because they are being good people.' Why?

Read 1Peter 3:8-4:11

1. living God's way brings blessing - 3:8-9

Peter gives us some final instructions as to how we are to live in the world.

In what manner are we to love one another (3v8,cf 4v8-10) within our church family?

How does being a Christian affect the way you deal with people outside our church family (v9,15-16)?

What is the confidence we have in being obedient to verses 8-9 (v9)?

In v10-12 Peter quotes from Psalm 34 to describe the blessing that results from living God's way. Read 3:10-12 How is the person living God's way described?

Living God's way brings blessing. That is our confidence. However our present is lived out in a world hostile to God. So...

2. living God's way may bring suffering - Read 3:13-17

What does "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened" mean? (look up Isaiah 8:12-13. What ideas do you see there that are in 1 Peter?)

Who should we fear? (cf 1v17,2v17,3v6)

When living with opposition at work, home, school etc, what 2 things should we do (v15)?

1.(v15)

2.(v15)

It is no accident that God wants us to give testimony to Jesus in our suffering. it is all part of his plan. Read 1Peter 3:18-22.

Noah was a righteous man in the midst of evil (Gen 6:5-10). Jesus preached through Noah to the people who are now dead and in prison. (cf 4v6) What do Peter's first readers (& us) have in common with Noah?

Like Noah, we can give an answer to the people around us and have Christ preach through us, and like Noah, we are to be righteous.

Read 4v1-11.

Make a list of the practical encouragement and commands Peter gives to us in 4v1-11 on how to live differently in a hostile world, and pray about them together.

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# Future Glory

1Peter 5:1-14

As you read the paper or watch the news, what things have you seen that may cause suffering for other Christians?

1Peter 5:1-4 Peter has been encouraging us all to follow Jesus example. Now he turns to Jesus as an example for our leaders. (cf 1Peter 2:24-25) How are leaders to be like Jesus (v1-4)?

The leaders desired by Peter are to be humble. But humility is not just for our leaders....  
Read 1Peter 5:5-7 What is the hardest thing about clothing ourselves with humility?

Why is it that humility, and not pride, is the only appropriate response to God's graciousness?

As we hear the call to humility, the question can arise "But who's going to care for me?" How do these verses answer us (v7)?

What do you think might be some signs or symptoms of pride?

Read 1Peter 5:8-9  
According to Peter, how does Satan attack our faith? (cf Mark 8:31-33)

How then can we resist him(v9)?

What is a practical way we can help Christians in other parts of the world who are suffering?

## FUTURE GLORY

Read verse 10. How can Peter describe his many years of suffering as 'a little while'? How is it a good summary of the whole letter?

Look back over Chapter 5, how many times does Peter talk about our future glory?

How much do you look to your 'future glory'? How should it shape our lives?

Make a list of 4 or 5 words that cover the main ideas in 1 Peter.

Now write a sentence on how we should live that includes those words.