



Personal Bible Study Program 2007

1 Peter

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

To help you get the most out of bible talks on Sunday we have designed a daily bible reading program that will help you to read and apply each bible passage during the week before the bible talk. This can be a supplement to your existing bible reading program if you already have one.

We hope that you will make the most of this Bible reading program by setting aside the time to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”.

How to use the readings:

- Print the studies out double-sided and staple the pages as a booklet
- Set aside time
- Pray for understanding
- Read the passage
- Answer the questions
- Meditate on what you learn
- Apply what you learn
- Pray in response

**This Bible reading guide is available for download
from the ‘Resources’ page at www.bpc.org.au**

**Please note that we are open to feedback on how to improve this resource.
Please email your comments to office@bpc.org.au**

Introduction to 1 Peter

Over the coming weeks we will be spending time in the first letter of Peter. The Apostle Peter’s writings are as timely and relevant to his original hearers as they are to Christians today.

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the preaching of the Apostles, the first generation of Christians grew rapidly in number. Missionaries had taken the gospel all over the Roman Empire and had won many converts, and not just amongst Jews but increasingly amongst Gentiles. By the time Peter pens his letter at around 64-64 AD, it is not surprising then that his letter could be circulated to Christians scattered over such a large area (1:2) which we know as modern day Turkey. The spread of Christianity was such that there is evidence that the great city of Rome had an established church by the time Peter writes (see the reference to “Babylon” – code for Rome in 5:13).

But Christianity was not to go unchallenged. History records Nero, the Emperor between AD 54-68, as having instigated a fire that destroyed two thirds of Rome in AD64. To escape blame he made Christians the scapegoat for the fire and thus began wide spread persecution. Tacitus, a Roman historian records that the persecution was savage, involving the violent death of Christians by fire or their mauling by animals. Accompanying such heinous persecution would also come hate, hostility and insult from neighbours and local communities.

It is possible that the persecution initiated by Nero is the specific occasion of this letter but it is more likely that the trials and persecution spoken of in this letter are more general and well in place before Nero’s persecutions and due simply to bearing the name of Christ (4:14). Of course, opposition is something that Jesus told his followers to expect as normal (Jn 15:18-21).

The Apostle Peter writes to churches in the midst of suffering. In fact, *suffering* is one of the themes of this letter as the Christians endure all sorts of trials (1:6, 4:12; 2:12, 20-21; 3:14-17; 4:1, 12-19; 5:9). Peter writes as a pastor, to warmly encourage these Christians to live rightly in the face of fiery trial. He reminds them of who they are in Christ, he spurs them to live and suffer for the right reasons and he reminds them of their glorious destiny. *Hope* emerges as one of the key themes of 1 Peter (1:3; 13, 21; 3:5, 15). Hope that is founded on the resurrection of Christ and secure in its final outcome for the believer.

In some ways little has changed since Peter wrote this letter. Christians today experience opposition of all kinds. Whether it is the hate-filled words of atheists, the misunderstanding of family or the brutality of government regimes – persecution is still with us today. And that is why 1Peter is as timely and relevant as ever. For those who bear the name of Christ – how are we to conduct ourselves rightly with the living hope of Christ in a hostile world. Read on and find out!



Set aside time to read the whole section this week. If you are using these for group discussion please make sure that you have read the section prior to the study and completed the underlined questions.

Day 1 Living with an unbelieving husband (v.1)

Throughout the history of the Church, there has always been a problem for women who become Christians when their husbands were not. Precisely what Peter means by the word "submissive" is close to the phrase "...a gentle and quiet spirit..." (verse 4)

1. Is the conversion of an unbelieving husband enough reason to be submissive (rather than demanding your rights)?
2. Note that Peter says (v.5) that women whose husbands are believers also should have a submissive attitude towards their husbands. Is this still true for our time? What might that look like?

Day 2 Without A Word (vv.1-2)

1. Why does Peter say "...without a word."?
2. Is there such a thing as the 'Christian' ideal of femininity? If so is it sufficiently described by the words "purity, reverence," & "a gentle and quiet spirit" Are these strong or weak characteristics?
3. What kind of character was Sarah, whom Peter cites as an example? (Read Gen.21:1-13)
4. Reflecting on this passage, what kind of woman is most attractive to a man? What kind of man is most attractive to a woman?

Day 3 True Beauty (vv.3-4)

1. In a country of great abundance, a strange disease is killing our daughters – *anorexia nervosa*. In this disease, the girl is unable to see herself as she appears to others, and even when she is so thin that she might die, she still thinks she is 'fat'. What causes this deception? (see Amos 8:11-13)
2. Do you agree that real beauty is internal, not external? Do you see this as a 'liberating' idea? Does it show in the way you spend your time and money?
3. Is Peter saying that women *should not* wear jewellery or 'fix their hair'?

Day 4 Submission (vv.5-6)

Peter uses the 's' word again, but this time with the emphasis on women like Sarah whose husbands **are** believers. The *radical Christian feminists* reject the idea of submission because of their ideological stance. The *evangelical Christian feminists* take the view that we need to translate this text out of its ancient cultural context into our own – the conclusion being that submission can go in the same bin as hats. A *conservative Christian* has to wrestle with this *word of God*, in the light of other scriptures such as Galatians 3:28 & Ephesians 5:21ff.

1. What is your response to this scripture? What do you think it might look like in practice?

Day 5 Strong Men & Domestic Violence (v.7) (see also Eph 4:29-5:2)

As many as 20% of Australian women are subjected to domestic violence or threats of violence in their own homes. The Bible nowhere permits or encourages a man to engage in any kind of threatening, coercive, or violent behaviour. The Apostle Peter tells men that they should recognise their wives as 'heirs with them' of the Christian hope.

1. How do we, in practical terms, show *respect* and *consideration*, especially in view of the fact that men are physically stronger?



Please use this section to make notes, reflections, prayer points in both personal and group use.



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Day 1 Read 2:11-4:5 in one sitting again.

1. What indications are there in these verses of Peter's awareness that God is in control and will have the final say?
2. How does that conviction lie behind all he encourages us to do?
3. What are the similarities here between the attitude and behaviour of all and the attitude and behaviour he has already encouraged the slaves to show?

Day 2 (vv.8-12)

1. What does the good life look like?
2. Run through the list in v. 8 looking at your life, especially your interaction with your brothers and sisters. Do these things characterise you?
3. Look again at v. 9. Review the last couple of time you were under pressure and facing hostility – how did you respond? Why? What would need to change to help you respond like this?
4. Do you know yourself to be called to live like Christ in the world? (cf. 2:21-25)
5. What is the relation between our living this way and coming to inherit what is promised? (vv. 10-12, Ps. 34:12-16)

Day 3 (vv. 13-16)

1. Why should Christians reckon themselves blessed when they suffer for doing what is right?
2. What is the link between our experience and that of believers in Isaiah's time (Isa 8:12-14 [You might like to read Isa 7-9:7])
3. What is the content of the answer we should be prepared to give for our hope? What is the manner in which we should give that answer?
4. Are you prepared to give that answer? If not, how can you become prepared?

Day 4 (vv.17-22)

1. What support does Peter provide in vv.18-22 for his claim in v. 17 that it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil?
2. For the background to Peter's reference to the spirits in prison v.19 and to Noah see Gen. 6-8, and also Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4-5, 3:5-6.

This can be a difficult passage with some issues in translation and so these questions are only preliminary:

3. Where was Jesus going (vv. 19, 22)? Is there any suggestion in Scripture that there is an opportunity for people to repent after death? (Cf. Luke 16:19-31, Heb. 9:27)
4. How does the knowledge of Jesus' victory help you to persevere in doing good even when it means suffering?

Day 5

1. What is the link Peter draws between the experience of Noah and Christians? How does baptism 'save' you?
2. What is the relation between a 'good conscience' and Jesus' resurrection [and the death that the resurrection assumes?]
3. Can we be saved without baptism? (cf. Luke 23:42-43)



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1 Peter 4:1-11

for bible talk on 14 Oct



Set aside time to read the whole section this week. If you are using these for group discussion please make sure that you have read the section prior to the study and completed the underlined questions.

Day 1 Suffering bodies? (read vv.1-11)

1. Who does Peter want us to live for?
2. Peter gives some reasons as to why we should live good lives. What are they and how do they affect us? see verses 1, 5 and 7.
3. Peter starts with a “therefore” which means he is continuing an idea. Read over 3:17-18. How does this make sense of what it means to have the same attitude as Christ?

Day 2 The strange life of a Christian (read vv.1-6)

1. Becoming a Christian means living for God, not evil human desires. List the things that Peter says we ought to avoid.
2. Have you ever (or do you still) struggled with any of these?
3. What should be our motivation for changing? see verse 5.
4. Why would non-Christians heap abuse on us for wanting to live for God?
5. What should we remember when we are being abused for living for God?

Day 3 Love: the ultimate cover-up? (read vv.7-8)

1. Peter declares that the end is coming. What should our response be? Should we be worried as Christians?
2. How does being clear minded and self-controlled help us pray?
3. Why are we to love each other? Does this seem a bit selfish? Is Peter saying that loving someone will undo the bad things we have done? Check out Romans 12:14-21, 1 Peter 3:8-10, James 5:20, 1 John 4:7-12

Day 4 Gifted service (read vv.10)

1. What is the purpose of God giving us gifts?
2. What implication does this verse have for participating in church? see Romans 12:3-5
3. Peter implies that everyone has gifts and the point is to get on with using them. What do you think your gifts are and how can you use them?

Day 5 The focused life of a Christian (read vv.9-11)

1. The Christian life involves service. List the things that Peter wants us to do. What characterises each of them?
2. What are we to speak and how are we to serve? Why is this important?
3. Do you live your life in a way that causes people to praise God through Jesus?

Notes for prayer and application



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Suggested launch questions for group bible study:

Have you ever been picked on for wanting to live a Christian life? Have you ever been excluded or ridiculed because of it?

What motivates you to change? Is it the example of others? Good teaching? Fear of the alternatives? Something else?



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Day 1

1. List the different types of suffering mentioned in the passage.
2. When Peter refers to their suffering, is he talking about all suffering or specific suffering? What reasons do you give for this?
3. Think of some situations that Christians might experience this type of suffering. Think of some examples where Christians might experience this type of suffering in physical ways as well.

Day 2

1. What reasons might a Christian have to be ashamed of suffering for being a Christian?
2. In our society is suffering seen as a good or bad thing? Why?
3. Does Peter view suffering for being a Christian as foreign or expected? Does this help or hinder you?
4. What good thing is suffering a sign of? Sometimes we might suffer for bad reasons but think they are good. From these verses, what would be a good test of how we should suffer?

Day 3

1. Christians in the West don't experience physical persecution but might experience "insult because of the name Christ" (v.14). Give some examples of how Christians are insulted for the name of Christ.
2. In what ways are we tempted to avoid suffering for being a Christian? How can we suffer in a way that praises God? (v.16)
3. The Christians in 1 Peter would have suffered because they stood out in their words and actions as Christians. Think of practical ways in which you could you 'stick out' more in comparison to those around you.

Day 4

1. In verse 17, Peter seems to be speaking of Christian suffering as a type of preliminary judgement from God. How is this suffering as a type of judgement of Christians different to the judgement experienced by those who don't obey the gospel?
2. Why is suffering as a Christian both a confirmation of judgement for those who reject God and also a comfort for Christians?
3. Experiencing suffering is never pleasant. Look at the passage again and see what reasons there are for joy and comfort in suffering. Pray that these might be present in your life.

Why not visit these websites, print out some prayer points and pray for our brothers and sisters that are experiencing extreme suffering for being Christians.

(www.persecution.com.au or www.barnabasfund.org)



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Day 1 Peter the Elder (v.1 see also 1Tim 3:1-7; John 10:11-13)

The word translated elder here is also sometimes translated “presbyter” – from which we get the word 'Presbyterian'. In Presbyterian churches we have two kinds of elders – teaching elders (pastors) and ruling elders (session members).

1. Why do you think that Peter refers to Christ's sufferings as a prelude to talking about the role of the elder? And why does he mention the fact that he witnessed the suffering and death of Jesus?

Day 2 If You Are Not Willing, Go Find Something Else to Do (v.2 see also Ezek. 34:2-4)

Peter doesn't pull his punches! He tells elders that they should only accept the office of elder if they are eager to serve – there is no place for those who accept it as a position of honour, or out of duty, or – worst of all out of greed. So there!

1. How can you tell if an elder has the proper motivation?
2. What is the significance of Peter's use of the words 'shepherd' and 'flock'?
3. Have you benefited from the ministry of elders? Pray for the elders of our church with these thoughts in mind.

Day 3 No Place for Arrogance (vv.3-4 see also 1 Tim. 4:12-14; Philippians 2:7,8)

The minister or elder who thinks that their position is one which allows them to push people around is way off track according to Peter (and God). Rather, Peter commends the leadership style of the “Chief Shepherd” who “...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,....”(Phil. 2:7) The elders among us need to measure themselves against this word. Not all of us are elders but we all have responsibilities so there's a lesson here for everyone.

1. How do you treat those that you have authority over at work and at home?
2. Keeping in mind v.3-4, how should we treat those we have authority over?

Day 4 Respect Those Who Are Older (v.5 see also Prov.16:31; Rom. 12:9-18)

There's that pesky “s” word again. It seems that, in the church at least, the young should respect the old. In any organisation where one group is expected to be 'submissive', there is always the possibility of abuse by those in power. However, as Peter has already hinted, no-one is expected to submit to leaders who 'lord it over them'.

1. What would happen to a) the church; and b) Society, if the young had no respect for their elders?
2. Do you respect those older than you? Why is it hard? Why is it important?

Day 5. 1 Tim 3:1-7 The Characteristics of Good Elders

Paul certainly backs up what Peter says about elders, and adds a few clues as to the qualities needed to be an elder (including gender).

1. Why do you think that Paul says “If anyone sets his heart on being an elder.”?
2. Make a list of the qualities that Paul sets out here. These are good qualities for all Christians, how can you foster these in your life?
3. Do you qualify as an elder? Will you 'set your heart' on being an elder?



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1 Peter 5:6-14

for bible talk on 4 Nov



Set aside time to read the whole section this week. If you are using these for group discussion please make sure that you have read the section prior to the study and completed the underlined questions.

Day 1

1. Think of the major themes of the last few chapters - What might "humility under God's Mighty hand" look like?
2. How is casting your anxieties on God, and trusting him an act of humility?
3. Why is it difficult for us to cast our anxieties on God? How do we do this practically and why is it necessary?

Day 2

1. Do you often view God as someone who cares for you, who is looking to lift you up or as someone who is looking to punish and correct you for everything you do wrong?
2. List the words used to describe God (vv.6, 7, 10, 11). What picture do they paint of God
3. Focus on the promises of God in these verses. How are they a comfort for those who are suffering? How are they a comfort for you?

Day 3

1. What commands are given in vv.8-9?
2. There is a strong assurance of final salvation in 1 Peter, yet here we find a very strong warning of Satan's malicious presence. He poses a very real threat, even to Christians. What might be some of the prominent ways in which the devil will "devour people" in our culture? Are there any particular challenges that Christians might face from Satan during a time of suffering.
3. What practical strategies do you have to resist Satan in your own life? In what ways can we help each other to be "self-controlled and alert"?

Day 4

Peter writes "She who is in Babylon". This is most likely a code for the church in Rome. But Peter uses the term to remind them of both his identity and their identity as *exiles* in a land that they don't belong in. Remember they are aliens and strangers in the world (1:1, 17, 2:11).

1. Spend time in the next 2-3 days filling out the table on the other page. Look back over the whole of 1 Peter. Write down in one column the ways in which Christians should stand out as strangers in this world. Write down in the other column the things that Christians look forward to when Jesus returns.

Pray for brothers and sisters that are suffering for being Christians.

(www.persecution.com or www.barnabasfund.org)

Notes for prayer and application



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Ways in which we should stand out as strangers in this world	Things we look forward to when Jesus returns

Use these lists to help your prayers. Pray that God might grow these characteristics in your life and the life of other Christians.