



# 1 Peter

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foreigners and exiles

*“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.” 1 Peter 2:11-12.*

**Leader’s Booklet**

**CAMPBELLTOWN**  
ANGELICAN CHURCHES

**Growth  
Groups**



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# Four Topics for Growth Group Leaders

## [1] About The Leader

Being a Growth Group leader can be a highly rewarding act of service – I pray that you will grow too in the process!

### 3 essentials for Growth Group leaders

1. **Be trained.** Look out for moments of leader training organised at church so that you can know and improve your skills in leading a Growth Group and understanding God's word.
2. **Partner with the church.** Operate in partnership with other groups in your congregation and with the plans of the church. Don't be a lone ranger.
3. **Be growing.** What is your own discipline and plan for Christian maturity?

## [2] About Growth Groups

We are about *growing* or maturing and doing that alongside one another. Let's describe these as 'coaching' and 'community'.

### Coaching

1. **Learn to Read.** The bible is a book and learning how to read it is so important to Christian **maturity**. The Growth Group study material is a tool only and must not overshadow the primary goal of learning to read and listen to God's word.
2. **Learn to Pray.** The primary way of learning how to pray is by listening to others and practising. Sing praises to God in your prayers and learn how to **magnify** God with your prayers together.

### Caring

1. **Learn to Care.** Growth Groups provide a close community of people who can be praying, sharing and caring for one another. One reason we encourage groups to be formed from the same congregation is for easier follow-up and strengthening the sense of church **membership**.
2. **Seek to Grow.** Your congregation is the **mission** field for your Growth Group. Remember, there's no such thing as a full Growth Group - only groups that are ready to multiply! A large group of 15, with two leaders added, can become two new groups of 8 or 9.
3. **Work Together.** What **ministry** or initiative could your group do together this year? Sunday morning-tea or supper? Letterbox leafleting for the church? A street party in your area? Gardening at the church? A BBQ at a church event? A dialogue dinner with friends?

### [3] Preparing The Study

In short, you want to be familiar with the bible text and the aim of the study before the group meets. Read the whole book once or twice before a series starts.

#### The Essentials of Preparation

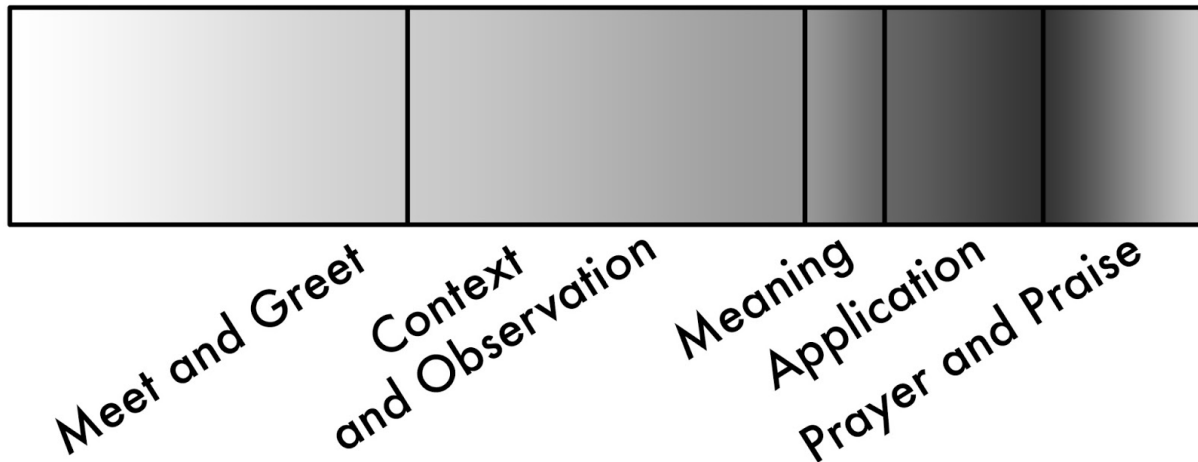
1. **Pray.**
2. **Read** the passage you are studying for the week.
3. **Make notes**
  - a. **Context** - What has happened previously in the book, testament and bible that helps illuminate this section?
  - b. **Observation** - What is obvious in the text? What words stand out? What seems weird, out of place, or abrupt in the text? Paraphrase each paragraph. Write down any questions that you have.
  - c. **Meaning** - What is the point of this passage? What is the purpose and meaning of it? And what is unique to this passage that the bible would be worse off for not having?
  - d. **Application** - How would you apply this passage? Be careful to find specific application instead of things like: have faith, or know that Jesus is Lord, or trust God.
4. **See the point.** What is your number one aim for this study?
5. **Pray.** Thank God for what you have learned and pray for his help in guiding the group to know him more too.

#### The Tools for Help

1. **Growthgroups.campbelltownanglican.org** contains a pastor's notes on each passage as well as other general resources.
2. **The study book material.** This is a tool to assist discussion and direction for the group and is in no way a mandatory book for the group to use.

## [4] The Meeting Plan

Meet and Greet. First 30 minutes: Members arrive, grab a drink and have good conversations which can be handed to God in prayer at the end of the study.



**Context and Observation.** Now, spend about 30 minutes reading and comprehending the bible together. The questions in the book are aimed at comprehension before moving to a meaning and application.

**Meaning.** Take a moment to try and summarise what the group has covered. Skillfully draw in all the ideas that have been discussed to show what the bible has taught the group tonight.

**Application.** Put forward an application for the group to discuss. It may have already been covered during the discussion but if not, draw everyone's attention to one area that you decided was a good application from the text.

**End in prayer together.** Make a point of encouraging prayer from everyone. This may take time and strategy but it is worth the effort.

About 90 minutes from the starting time, everything has been covered and all that is left is for people to hang around and chat some more. The aim is not to exhaust people but create a refreshing and sustainable plan for everybody.

# People in my Growth Group

Name	Things to pray for...



Name	Things to pray for...

# Study 1 - 1 Peter 1:1-12

He has given us...

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## Context

Peter was a fisherman, named Simon, before Jesus found him, called him to be a missionary and renamed him The Rock (sorry Dwayne). Like the rest of the Apostles, Peter had to come to know who Jesus really was and to take ownership of the job that Jesus had given him to do (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Peter was a pillar in the early Christian community (Galatians 2:9 - Cephas means Peter in Aramaic) and among the apostolic writers who, by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:21), spread the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world. As we read the opening of Peter's letter to the Christian community scattered abroad, let's appreciate how carefully God has been planning, over thousands of years, for you and I to enjoy his grace.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 1: 1-12

### **1. Why is Peter's letter to 'God's elect' and 'exiles scattered' still relevant for us today (Verses 1, 2)?**

- Like the readers of the Peter's letter, we share a choosing by God rather than a geographical location
- Like the readers of Peter's letter, we live in a time of Christian persecution, we are called to be united even though we are scattered over the world, we have been chosen by God therefore this world is our temporary home
- Like the readers of Peter's letter, we are in relationship with God because we have been chosen by him
- Like the readers of Peter's letter, God knew beforehand who would be saved and who would respond to him before we were even aware of this fact
- Like the readers of Peter's letter, the work of the Holy Spirit means that we have been set apart and made holy

- Like the readers of Peter's letter, we have been chosen by God to be obedient to Jesus so that we can be saved through him
- Like the readers of Paul's letter, we have been saved by Jesus' blood

**2. List the reasons Peter gives about why we need to praise God and focus our hearts and minds on his plans (Verses 3-5).**

- Jesus is indeed the son of God and is part of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
- God has shown us his mercy through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus
- We have eternal life because of God's plan
- Jesus is our living hope - due to his resurrection
- God's word, God's promises and the living hope (Jesus) endures forever
- Our salvation and inheritance is kept secure due to God's foreknowledge
- Our living Saviour has given us a living hope and we need to have faith in the things we cannot see until the time Jesus returns

**3. Why does Peter say we should rejoice when we experience trials (Verses 6-9)?**

- Our faith will stand the trials of this world
- God knows his elect will not fail the test
- The examples of Abraham and Job, who stood firm in their faith during trials and revealed their genuine faith and God's confidence **in them.**
- Our faith focuses on all that God has and is and will do for us through Christ
- Our faith requires knowledge, reflection and conviction of all that is real and lasting
- Our faith is more important than any material thing and won't perish- gold will perish
- Our faith is based on our growing understanding of who Jesus is, what he has done and our living relationship with Jesus through his word
- Our faith and love in Jesus will increase as our hearts increase with joy and peace in believing

- Our faith in what God is doing in us for the future.
- In trials our hope is grounded in our knowledge of the Holy Trinity

#### **4. Discuss what we can learn from the prophets of the Old Testament (Verses 10-12).**

- They wrote and spoke about God's plan revealed to the by the Holy Spirit
- They were serious seekers of God
- They understood that the mystery of the gospel would be revealed one day to all who would listen
- Their words in the Old Testament were completed in the death and resurrection of Jesus
- We should investigate the word of God just as they did

### Meaning

God is worthy of our praise and worship because, in the past, he knew us, chose us and called us to be his. He has given us knowledge of the gospel through the Spirit and by the blood of Christ, we can call God Father as he is Jesus' Father. The prophets of old knew there was something greater coming and we now live in the age where the gospel is freely preached. We may be living as strangers in this world but we are not to be pitied. Those who do not look into the salvation of their souls with serious endeavour are to be pitied. Our inheritance was pre-purchased and is kept safe for us. The suffering we endure today will be nothing compared to the glory that we will see and receive when this world has passed away!

### Application

- **Topic A - The faith that you know.** What would you say to a person commenting that Christians are just naive and brain-washed, wasting their life following a foolish faith?
- **Topic B - Memorise it.** See if you can memorise Verses 3 and 4!  
 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you."

- **Topic C - The faith that you love.** It is the greatest trial of any Christian to take our eyes off the things of this world and to keep them fixed on Jesus, the source of our living hope. "You love him...you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." Discuss ways you can keep working on the important things in life - our faith which is worth more than gold.

### Prayer of the Week

*Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks and praise that you have called us and given us an eternal hope that will never perish or spoil or fade. We pray that our lives will reflect the joy you give us in knowing you and putting our hope and trust in you. Deliver us from empty desires which promise nothing. Protect our souls forever. Amen.*

# Study 2 - 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

Live your lives as foreigners here in reverent fear.

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## Context

Peter is writing to God's chosen people who are scattered across the globe but who have come to know and believe in the gospel. He describes that Christianity is not to do with land or geography or material possessions but to do with our relationship with God the Father, which goes back before our knowledge of him. What was seriously sort after by the Old Testament prophets and even the angels in heaven, is now here for us. Although we have not seen Jesus, we know him, we believe in him and we love him because God's holiness is at work in us through the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ. We live in an age where Christ has been revealed and those God has chosen are growing in their joy, love and trust in him.

The structure of this section may remind us of the message of God to Israel once they had been rescued from Egypt and made a people of God. They were to set their minds on worshiping God in the promised land; they were to learn how to be holy; they were commanded to love God and love their neighbour; and all this because they had tasted that the Lord is good.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 1: 13-2:3

### **1. In today's world, what does it mean to:**

#### **a. Be alert and fully sober?**

- Be clear headed about being a follower of Jesus
- Know God's grace and hope in your life
- Put your trust in Jesus
- Remember we are a people of God and focus on where we are going

#### **b. Be obedient children?**

- Remember we are saved and should therefore choose obedience

- We need to remember to follow the teaching of repentance and forgiveness
  - Do not get frustrated with how the world thinks and acts
  - Focus on God's grace and truth
  - Be holy, righteous and graceful
- c. Be holy?
- Be in God's presence - read his word, pray and hold firm to His truths
  - Remember we are created in his image
  - Remember that the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit means we are being made like God again
  - We need to be holy because God is holy

## **2. Discuss what it means to:**

- a. Not conform to the evil desires you once had?
- To not live carelessly and remember God is merciful and gracious
- b. Be a foreigner (Verses 17-19)?
- To remember we are 'passing' through as we wait for Christ to return and be revealed
  - To hold firm to Jesus because whilst the precious things of this world will perish, he won't
  - To believe in God and his salvation because he raised Jesus from the dead and prepared the sacrifice before the creation of the world
  - To realise that our faith is grounded on the historic power of God through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead
- c. Love one another (Verses 22-2:3)?
- Listen to and understand God by reading his word, praying, being in fellowship with other Christians
  - Be obedient to him and his word
  - Love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself
  - Remember we know what love is when we look at Jesus dying for all sinners

- Love because we know what God is like and we have his eternal and imperishable word
- Remember God's word is living and enduring and from God

### 3. How and why do we rid ourselves of all malice, etc (Chapter 2:1-3)?

- We rid ourselves of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind so we are obedient to God's word and able to experience his grace
- We need to live like citizens of the kingdom of God rather than citizens of this world by holding firm to our hope and faith in God

### 4. What is a practical way to 'crave spiritual milk'?

- Read the entire word of God so that we learn God's truths and are able to teach, correct, rebuke and train others in righteousness and realise that God's word lasts forever

## Meaning

There are six commands given in this section which all relate to our new life as children of our Heavenly Father:

1. Set your hope on God's promises (Combine 1:13 with 1:3-5);
2. Do not conform to your ignorant past (1:14);
3. Live your life as foreigners here in reverent fear (1:17);
4. Love one another deeply (1:22);
5. Rid yourselves of evil (2:1);
6. Crave the living and enduring word of God (combine 2:2 with 1:23).

## Application

- **Topic A - Set your hope on the promises of God.** How can you train your mind to be set on the future which God has prepared for us and avoid being fixated on the things of this temporary world? Do memory verses help? What about deliberate times to meditate and talk about the future? Is it sad that we don't talk about it more often in our community? How can you change your habits or habits among your Christian friends to set your eyes and attention on the things to come?
- **Topic B - Living as foreigners in this world.** What ways do you think Christians can or ought to appear as foreigners in this world? How does being a born again Christian change the way we do life here? Would you



say you are living your life as a foreigner or would you say you are blending in quite well with this world?

- **Topic C - Craving the living and enduring word of God.** It is a vivid image to think of a baby guzzling down milk like it cannot wait! What an amazing image to think of us reading, learning, retaining and devouring the word of God like we cannot get enough! Here are 3 suggestions to help you get back to loving the scriptures like this:
  1. Write notes during Growth Group and during sermons - it will help engage your brain;
  2. Invite a friend to read the bible with you, once a week for 7-8 weeks - speak to your Growth Group leader or one of the ministry team if you want to do this but not sure how;
  3. Sign up to a bible or theological class and learn something new about the bible and God this year - God's Big Picture Plus is an excellent course or try on online course through Moore College Distance Learning.

### Prayer of the Week

*Lord God, we thank you for the new life that we share through Jesus. We thank you for the hope of grace that you have placed in our hearts. Make us a blessing in our community by loving one another deeply and set our hearts truly on the eternal treasures of life with you. May we live as foreigners here in reverent fear and crave your word as life giving food. Amen.*

# Study 3 - 1 Peter 2: 4-12

But you are a chosen people...

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## Context

In writing a letter to Christians scattered across the world, Peter encourages his readers to remember the promises of God fulfilled in Jesus. What joins us together is not this world or geography or heritage but the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been born again into a the family of God. We are no longer part of this world but must set our minds on our eternal future. Everything in this world will pass away, but the promises of God stand forever. He instructs us to live like we are God's children in this world and not like we are making this world our eternal home.

The next section continues the theme of our new identity in Christ and uses words and concepts which harken back to the book of Leviticus. While preserving great links between the Old Testament and the New, Peter describes a great divide in this world between those who come to the living Stone and those who reject him.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 2: 4-12

### **1. Discuss the importance of the 'stone' in this passage.**

- Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14
- Our foundations lie in the fact that we have been chosen by God
- Jesus is the living stone (Verse 4)

### **2. As we grow in faith, what do we need know (Verses 5-8)?**

- That our foundations are found in Jesus
- That others will reject and disobey Jesus but we need to remain faithful
- Jesus is the cornerstone and we are the stones making up the same spiritual house
- God's dwelling place among humans is in the lives of his chosen people - those who accept the living Stone

- We need to be living sacrifices acceptable to God because of what God has done of us through Christ
- As true believers, Jesus is precious to us
- God's word is available for all to read and respond to - either accepting the 'living stone' or 'stumbling over the living stone'

### **3. What does Peter remind us of as God's chosen people (Verses 9-10)?**

- We need to praise God (Verse 9)
- We need to proclaim to all that God is mighty and sovereign
- We need to declare that salvation is through Jesus
- We have received God's mercy

### **4. Explore how we are called to live in a pagan world (Verses 11-12).**

- Abstain from sinful desires (Verse 11)
- Combat your inner conflict - all God's chosen, holy and royal priesthood will need to do this
- Live good lives so that God is praised (Verse 12)

## Meaning

There are two type of people in this world: those who love Jesus and those who do not. The difference is huge! The former are called the chosen people of God - set apart to worship him with their whole lives, while the latter remain in darkness, receiving no mercy from God and destined to remain in that state. Those who come to Jesus do so at the mercy and grace of God and are called to live wholly for him.

## Application

- **Topic A - Rejecting or accepting Christ.** Can you say that your faith is based on a living relationship with Jesus? How can we remove human obstacles and create as many paths for people in our community to come to Jesus and receive him? We cannot force people to love him but we can certainly try to make him known. Who are you praying for at the moment to bring the gospel to ?
- **Topic B - Declaring the praises of God.** How can you express your gratitude to God for calling you from death to life, darkness to light, outside his mercy to inside his grace? Consider how our praises can be displayed in prayer, in song, in our conversations with Christians and those outside our Christian community.

- **Topic C - The war against your soul within.** To what extent are you aware of a battle going on within you? What is your strategy for combat? James says to resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:8); do you have a method for resistance? Being aware of the particular temptations that 'get' us is a good place to start. Think of, or even share with others, the particular sins to which you are most vulnerable.

### Prayer of the Week

*Our Lord God and King, may we live our lives grateful for your salvation and always ready to declare what you've done in us. Thank you for embracing us as your people. Please help us in our ambition to live holy and exemplary lives for you and your glory. Amen.*

# Study 4 - 1 Peter 2: 13-25

Live as free people - live as God's slaves.

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## Context

Peter has intended his letter to travel abroad to all Christians scattered across what is modern Turkey (then Asia Minor). He explains to all who come to Christ in faith that they are the people of God! They must not find their identity in the passing things of this world but on the truth that gives eternal life. Christians are born again into a family where God, their Father, has given Jesus as the sacrifice for their sins. The truth they are given to live by is that Christians are given an eternal hope and destiny that will never perish or fade.

Peter has already warned his readers to not gloat over their position but to live out their time in this world as strangers (not identifying primarily as a citizen of this world) and in reverent fear of a Father who judges justly. We are to be holy as God our Father is holy. We are to rid ourselves of all kinds of evil. And now, Peter continues his exhortation on what type of people we ought to be as God's people .

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 2: 13-25

**1. What does 'submit' mean according to Peter in this passage (Verses 13-15)?**

- Submit to all human authority
- Silence ignorance by doing good

**2. How should we live as 'free people' (Verses 16-17)?**

- Show proper respect to everyone
- Love believers
- Fear God
- Honour rulers

### 3. Why should slaves submit to their masters (Verses 18-20)?

- In reverent fear of God (v18)
- Be conscious of God by suffering unjust treatment at the hand of masters (v18-19)
- Suffer for doing good and endure it as this is commendable to God (v20)

### 4. Discuss what we can learn about the idea of 'submission' from Jesus (Verses 21-25).

- We are called to follow in Christ's footsteps because he suffered for us (v21)
- Jesus' example of submitting to earthly rulers (v22-24)
- Jesus' sinless nature (v22)
- Jesus' non reaction (v23)
- Jesus bearing our sins at the cross (v24)
- We have been returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls because of Jesus (v25)

## Meaning

In Christ, we have been adopted into the family of God and so free from the impact of this passing world. God calls us, however, to live conscious of him, the righteous judge, the redeemer of souls and the perfect example of a Master. Let us live in peace with earthly authorities because we answer ultimately to our Lord, our Shepherd and protector.

## Application

- **Topic A - Who has authority over you in at this present stage?** List them all, from the Queen down, and discuss how you go at submitting to them as Peter has instructed.
- **Topic B - Responding to injustice.** You may have some stories to share of injustice in this world. If you are able to share them with objective

restraint, discuss how Peter is teaching us to respond as people of God? What would happen if you took up Peter's challenge?

- **Topic C - Conscious of God.** Ignorance or short-sightedness can influence our responses to people and events in this world. We are likely to try to fight for justice, to deceive ourselves or others about who or what is right and true, and to create unjust situations so that we come out on top. But when we live conscious of God, his just judgement, his sacrifice for sin and his invitation to be his children, our responses in this world ought to be affected tremendously. We are much more likely to live good lives to silence the ignorant talk of foolish people because we are not seeking our own 'cred' or justice but leaving it to God. Discuss.

### Prayer of the Week

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever. Psalm 23*

## Study 5 - 1 Peter 3:1-7

In the same way: wives and husbands...

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### Context

Peter wants his readers to praise God because they have been adopted by him as his children - the people of God, set apart to declare his praises to the world! In this life, we are to live reverently and conscious of God, and not fighting against authority but doing good - so that those around us might be silenced by their ignorance. We are not citizens of this world but we do live in it. We must continue to shape our thinking by the love and authority of God rather than the love and endeavours of this world.

We turn to some words in Scripture which can be hard to swallow in our modern minds. But the bible always commands us to listen and learn before we reach a conclusion. We are also to make sure we use the bible to critique our culture rather than the other way round. Just as we needed to rethink the word 'slavery' in the last passage, we need to be careful how we read the word 'submit'. Finally, we must remember that our God is a loving and caring God, and his commands are wonderful. With this much longer context section out of the way, let's look at what the bible says about husbands and wives.

### A Special Note Before Proceeding

The teaching from God on marriage in the bible is wonderful, beautiful and celebrates the church's relationship with Christ. Men and women are designed by God to work in unison together. Both for the same purpose of glorifying God in all that they do. Marriages in this world, however, are broken, and there can be hurt and damage both outside and inside the church of God. Sin is sin. Peter does teach for wives to submit to husbands and for husbands to be protective of their spouse. A man who has temper issues, anger management issues, insecurities, and the like will only be twisting and distorting the word of God if he thinks a woman should or must remain faithful in a violent and dangerous marriage. A woman living with domestic violence must not be afraid of the word of God at this point. No marriage in this world is perfect and, while many problems can be helped through counseling, households ought to be safe places to live. As we read



the word of God, please be aware of the sin present in people's families, promote awareness of domestic violence and make a plea for people to seek help if needed. Let us learn to love what the bible teaches on marriage without encouraging people to pretend that their marriages are perfect.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 3: 1-7

### **1. What are wives called to do?**

- Submit to their husbands
- "In the same way" refers back to 2:18 which says that "in reverent fear of God"
- *Choose* to submit
- Be adorned with a gentle and quiet spirit

### **2. Why does Peter write this?**

- To demonstrate what a woman whose hope is in God looks like
- Because it is highly valued by God
- Unbelieving husbands will be surprised by this - since Christians were notoriously anti-cultural and yet the wives show themselves to be good spouses - not fiery or difficult

### **3. What are husbands called to do?**

- Behave in reverent fear of God (2:18 "in the same way")
- Be considerate, thoughtful, understanding, respectful
- Live with your wife
- Be gentle

### **4. Why does Peter say this is important for husbands to do?**

- Because prayers may be hindered otherwise. This flows from the statement that they are to live in reverent fear. Treating your spouse improperly will not impress God - quite the opposite.
- Our attitude to one another should not be forged from a battle for equality (a man's dominance against a woman's struggle to be heard and appreciated), but an understanding that we are equal (as heirs together of the gracious gift of life). A man and woman ought to love and respect through gentle submission and gentle care.

## Meaning

God has created and designed marriage in a specific way and it is beautiful and right. Our relationship with God is affected by and reflected in the shape of our marriage. The wife is encouraged to pursue marriage as God intended it without fear. The husband is reminded to live in consideration of his position. Both are to live in reverent fear and submission to God.

## Application

- **Topic A - Domestic Violence.** Can you identify ways that Verses 1-7 could be used to excuse domestic violence? Discuss reasons why such a reading is not correct.
- **Topic B - Beautiful women.** Separately with just the women, discuss the implications of Verses 3-4.
- **Topic C - Godly men.** Separately with just the men, discuss the implications of Verse 7 and how can you apply this to yourself? Please note that if you are not married, what do you see as universal in these verses?

## Prayer of the Week

*O God, help us to never hurt and never to grieve one another. We pray for marriages inside the church that they may honour you as men and women love sacrificially. Help us in all of our relationships to live in love as you have shown love to us. Protect holy marriages, Lord. May our prayers not be hindered by our disobedience and may our lives shine as servants of your word. Amen.*

# Study 6 - 1 Peter 3:8-22

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

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## Context

Peter's letter is written for Christians around the world. He describes his readers as the chosen people of God, not because of race or geography but because they have come to put their trust in the living God. We have received new life into a living hope through Jesus Christ. We are a royal priesthood and a holy nation called to live differently to those who are of the world.

Peter describes us as being built into a living house with Christ as the chief cornerstone. Our lives must be moulded and shaped by Christ. We are to put off all the sin and desires of our old lives, and embrace the freedom of living in Christ. But this freedom is not anarchy. As servants of Jesus, we are to submit to all kinds of authority. Having given specific instructions to slaves, wives and husbands, Peter now turns to instruct all of us who have been saved by Jesus.

## Observation

Leaders note - the end of this passage (Jesus and Noah vs19-20) is obviously quite tricky to understand and hotly debated. It will be easy for your group to get caught up in asking questions about this, but the reality is that we just don't know for sure what it is talking about. So aim for them to work through the passage systematically and to understand the big themes and how it all holds together, rather than getting bogged down in those verses. There's much more to learn here than simply working out the Jesus and Noah stuff. You might want to flag this before or after you read the passage. =)

### Read 1 Peter 3:8-22

**1. Look through Verses 8-12 again. List what behaviours are instructed and any reasons given for these behaviours.**

*Note to leaders: you may want to break into small groups for this question and then come back together as a larger group and share what stood out or any questions you have from this task.*

Behaviour	Reasons
Be like-minded v8 Be sympathetic v8 Be compassionate v8 Love one another v8 Be humble v8 Repay evil with blessing v9	We are called to repay evil with blessing so that we might inherit a blessing v9
Keep tongue / lips from evil v10 Turn from evil, do good v11 Seek peace v11	If you want to love life and see good days, do these things v10  Because God's eyes / ears are on the righteous but his face is against those who do evil v12

**2. As we read this list, we could begin to think the passage is saying, 'if you do good, you will be blessed by God'. Read Psalm 34:8-14. Does**

**the psalm or what we have read in 1 Peter so far support this interpretation or lead us to a different conclusion?**

- The Psalmist is teaching people how to fear the Lord (Psalm 34:9, 11). The behaviors listed are what it means to fear the Lord. Thus it's not that if you do these "good" things you're blessed by God. Rather, God's people are to fear the LORD, and this is what it looks like... (keeping tongue from evil, turning from evil to do good etc). And yes, you will be blessed if you live God's way because His way is best.
- The idea of fearing the Lord also appears in Chapter 2:18 where slaves are instructed to submit to their masters because ultimately they fear/trust the Lord ie Christian living because they fear God.
- Recall also the example in Chapter 1 - you have been called by God FOR obedience to Jesus (v2). We are children of God called to be Holy like our Father (v14-17), and now that we are his children we have an amazing inheritance awaiting us (v4). So if we are God's children (calling on our Father, fearing the Lord, and thus living according to the family code of practise) there is great blessing for us both now and in the future.

**3. Re-read Verses 13-17. What does it mean to revere Christ as Lord? How does this relate to Verses 8-12?**

- It means not fearing the threats of people or the suffering you might face (v14, 17).
- It means answering for the hope you have (explaining it, defending it) with gentleness, respect, not sinning in the way you do this (v15-16).
- This connects to the previous section which was about fearing the Lord. Now as NT people (not OT people) we specifically revere Christ as Lord and King. We are to keep watching our tongues (Psalm quote), but especially use our tongues to talk about Christ and the hope we have in him.

**4. Peter alludes to a part of the Noah story that his readers were likely familiar with, even though we are not. Legend has it that Noah's ark came to rest in the very region to which Peter is writing and there were a number of flood stories which were commonly known in Peter's day. Unfortunately, we are not privy to them. Read from Verses**

**18-22 and list what things we can know for certain. What is the main point of these verses and how do they connect to the whole passage so far?**

- Christ suffered - to bring us to God
- He suffered to the point of death but was made alive again
- After Jesus was made alive he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison from Noah's time
  - We can probably assume that the message Jesus proclaimed was something about his victory over evil in this world (v22).
  - If we were to think of the worst example of evil we might come up with the evil spirits influencing the world in its most evil moment! And Christ is greater than them.
- Noah and his family were saved through water (ie through the flood). Similarly, we are saved 'through water' but the water of baptism. Not a physical washing but a conscience being cleared.
- The symbol of baptism refers to a movement from being apart from God to being with God. Like the flood waters destroyed the things of this earthly world and carried the saved ones in the ark, so too believers are redeemed from this world.
- We are saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has been made alive and is victor over all!
- Link to previous section - We were previously called to revere Christ as Lord, which involves not fearing what others say, and being willing to suffer and speak about him. This section adds that we are not called to do something that Christ himself was not willing to do, rather we follow Christ's example. He suffered - and that for us!!!! We are not to fear the malicious attacks of this world because Jesus has conquered death and evil.

## Meaning

As people who fear the Lord, all Christians are called to distinctively Christian behaviour. Specifically, Christians are called to revere Christ as Lord, which means not fearing other people, being willing to suffer, and boldly speaking about Christ our King. Christ is also our example of one who suffered. He suffered to bring us to God, and yet was made alive again, then ascended to rule

over all. We don't need to fear what others will say or do, because we are on Jesus' side and he is the eternal victor!

## Application

- **Topic A - To this you were called.** Verses 8 to 12 describe the virtues and character of those who fear the Lord. Which do you find the hardest and how can you train yourself to respond or grow in these areas?
- **Topic B - Be prepared to give a reason.** Some people use Verse 15 to say "I'm prepared to explain my faith if people ask me, but I don't put myself out there". However, this verse doesn't give us licence to fly under the radar until someone possibly asks us something about our faith. If we are really living as people who fear the Lord and revere Christ, our counter-cultural living will be obvious to people, and so questions will come! The urge is to be prepared to answer when people ask you, not if they do! So, why do you hope in Christ? Why do you love him? What difference does Jesus make to your life?
- **Topic C - Who do you fear?** Peter instructed us to be people who fear God and revere Christ as Lord. How much are you changed by this? In what ways do you tend to fear people? How does Jesus' victory over death and all kinds of evil spur you on?

## Prayer of the Week

*Heavenly Father, thank you that as your children we are so blessed. Please help us to continue to fear you, not people. Help us to revere Christ as Lord, to speak boldly about him, and to be willing to follow his example of suffering. Thank you that we have nothing to fear because he is the eternal victor over all. Amen.*

# Study 7 - 1 Peter 4:1-11

The end of all things is near...

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## Context

Peter has reached the end of a major section in the book. He began in 2:11 to describe what it looks like to be foreigners and strangers in this world. We are not part of this fallen world because we have been made alive again into a living hope. We are to put to death the misdeeds of the flesh and the sinful desires which wage war against our souls. But as those who are brought to God, his chosen people, we are to be set apart from this world.

In this section he reminds us of a few themes that he has already discussed and reflects on two realms of our life: living with the living God who judges and living in this passing age for the eternal king. The former motivates us because we revere God. The latter motivates us because this life is not forever.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 4: 1-11

### **1. Looking at Verses 1-6, what will Christians choose to do and what is their motivation?**

- Take note of Christ's suffering and so engage the same attitude toward bodily pain that Christ had.
- Be done with sin - consciously choose to reject sin. It is not a necessity and rejecting sin will not be easy. It will be accompanied with suffering - either the very pain of saying no to the flesh (Romans 8).
- Choose to follow the will of God which goes against evil human desires.
- Keep preaching the gospel (v6) in the hope that others will deny themselves and turn to God.
- Not wish to be judged by him who judges the living and the dead!

### **2. In contrast, what is the mindset of the pagan?**

- Sin is their companion in that they do not wish to reject it.



- Evil human desires will not be rejected in them.
- The list of evils in Verse 3 are not meant to describe everybody's attitude and behaviour all of the time when they are not redeemed. It covers the gamut of sin to which men and women are drawn. Sin is attractive and our flesh wants to have it. Sin will desire to have us and those who are not pursuing the will of God will let sin win. But for us who are in Christ, we must rule over it (Genesis 4:7)
- Sin is natural and normal to those outside of Christ and it surprises people that we don't just engage in fun!
- They are presently dead outside of Christ.

### **3. In Verse 7, what motivates Christians to say no to sin?**

- Coming judgment - the end of all things is near.
- God's plans are in their final stage and so we are to be ready for the end at any moment. Engaging in sin, being relaxed in this world, is a sure fire way of being unprepared.
- Praying is a way to remain faithful. Someone has said that you cannot pray and sin at the same time. While this statement can't be pushed too far - there is truth in it. While our minds are sober and actively pursuing the will of God, sin can be pushed aside. Pray for God's mercy and for the gospel to go forward in this wicked world.

### **4. List and discuss the advice that Peter gives in Verses 8-11. How does this list relate to Verses 1-7?**

- Love one another - it allows us to overlook people's sins. Love does not keep a record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13). It is kind and patient.
- Open your homes and don't judge or be too precious about how others behave, etc.
- Engage in serving others - sin is selfish while love serves.
- When we say no to sin, we don't replace it with nothing! We replace sin with love and good deeds. Peter outlines how the community of believers can help one another to live godly lives together.

## **Meaning**

Life before salvation was motivated by indulging our earthly bodies but God's people will say no to putting the love of the body before the love of God. We reject the passing things of this world and replace them with an active service to

the living God, who is our judge and the giver of all good things. Christians value different things to pagans.

## Application

- **Topic A - Done with sin.** That's easier said than done, isn't it? We will struggle with sin all of our days on this earth but we are informed here that we will say no to ungodliness. What are some pleasures of this world that you cling to and crave too much? What takes too much of your time away from pursuing the will of God?
- **Topic B - The end is near.** A present awareness of this will help to sober our minds for God's service. How can we weave into our church community are constant reminder that we are in the last days?<sup>1</sup>
- **Topic C - Using the gifts that God has graciously given.** 'Gifts' in the church refers to anything that you are able to do in service and love for the gospel and Christ's church. Setting our chairs, calling people who are absent, welcoming people, cleaning, tidying, leading, administration, IT work, playing music, chatting over a cuppa for encouragement and pastoral care, rostering, teaching, gardening, designing and anything you can imagine that serves the people of God for the sake of building the kingdom in love - all are gifts given by the grace of God. As a rule of thumb, it is helpful to step into serving in at least one area at church. Share with the group what your act of service is or tends to be (Note, some ministries get rostered but some just happen through the love of the saints).

## Prayer of the Week

*Lord God, help us to put our hope on your return and to leave this world behind. But while we wait, may we serve one another in love, teach all the world that you are Lord, and learn to set aside our glory for yours. To you be all glory and power, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> A note on 'the end of all things' and 'the last days'. Despite a common misunderstanding in the church, 'the last days' began at the time of Christ's ascension into heaven. It is not a phrase to refer to the very final events that take place before Christ's return (like markings of the beast and the arrival of an anti-Christ). We have been living in the last days since Peter stood up and told his Jewish friends that Christ is the promised Messiah (Acts 2).

# Study 8 - 1 Peter 4:12-19

Those who suffer according to God's will...

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## Context

Peter, a 'sent one' of Jesus Christ, has written to God's chosen people scattered across the world. His readers are not defined by a specific town or geographic area but by their calling by God to be holy and saved by the blood of Christ. It is their faith that defines their identity, not as part of this world but as part of the hope of grace in Jesus Christ.

His subject matter has turned to suffering in this world. Chapter 4 began with the lesson of denying the body and being passionate about serving God. Those who suffer in the body are done with sin. Peter continues the theme of suffering now but in the domain of others inflicting injury or hardship on Christians because of their faith.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 4: 12-19

**1. Compare Verses 12-13 with Chapter 1:6-7. The 'fiery ordeal' corresponds with the image of metal being refined. How should we perceive suffering according to these verses?**

- They are fiery. We will see that Peter has in mind persecution (see v14-16).
- It ought to be expected, not a surprise or strange.
- They are here to test us and to prove the genuineness of our faith.
- It is something that 'happens to you' - an external influence.
- It is to be perceived as a blessing in disguise! Rejoice! Look forward to being 'overjoyed' when Christ's glory is revealed (AKA after this life).
- We participate in the sufferings of Christ - in like nature since he suffered because of who he is, not because of anything stupid he had done...see next question.

## **2. What distinguishes foolish suffering for blessed suffering according to Verses 14-16?**

- Being a Christian - bearing Christ's name - is the suffering we can rejoice over.
- Choosing to face persecution over the name of Christ demonstrates the Spirit resting on you. This is part of the testing criteria - a false Christian is more likely to give in while one of his elect will stand firm despite the hurt and suffering.
- Fools will suffer because they hurt others - note especially the category of 'meddler'. Busy bodies and know-it-alls and pushiness will produce conflict in others. That's not Christian persecution.
- See also 1 Peter 2:20-23

## **3. What do Verses 17-18 teach us about judgment?**

- Judgment begins with God's household. The redeemed and elect of God who have the Spirit resting on them - they will receive judgment first!
- If the chosen people of God must face judgment, how much harder will it be for those who have rejected Christ (disobeyed the gospel of God!)?
- "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved" - this phrase teaches us that the suffering and persecution that we face right now is God's judgment - or refinement - on the church. Those who stand firm in the gospel will be saved! Judgment to the household of God is not something we anticipate on judgment day but a way we need to understand our life right now. It is God's will to judge/test us in this life. See John 3:36.

## **4. What is the conclusion in Verse 19?**

- Suffering is part of the will of God. It is not his failing but part of his refining process on the church.
- The response to suffering and persecution is to hold even stronger to your faith than before - commit yourself to God who is faithful.
- Keep on doing good - remember Peter's instruction to repay evil with good (1 Peter 3:9).

## Meaning

It is God's will that this world dish out persecution and suffering in all forms and that the church of God - the scattered people of God - will receive suffering for their faith. This should not surprise us. Judgment day is coming for all and the church are the first to experience refinement through fiery ordeals. Although it is hard to remain faithful to Christ, it is way easier than what is coming to all who reject the gospel. Remain committed to our Creator and Redeemer.

## Application

- **Topic A - Suffering for Christ.** Discuss ways you have felt 'under fire' because of your faith. How did you react at the time? Would you react differently because of the message from 1 Peter 4?
- **Topic B - Proud to bear the name of Christ.** It is tempting to withdraw and keep our faith personal and quiet in order to fly under the radar of this world. What are the ramifications of responding to persecution in that way? Consider what Jesus teaches in the parable of Matthew 25:14-30. Or consider what Jesus teaches in Matthew 5:13-16. Does God call us to be sheepish sheep?
- **Topic C - The time of tribulation.** Peter describes this life as the time of testing for the house of God (1 Peter 4:12) and that judgment comes first to Christians. Read Revelation 7:9-17 to hear what becomes of those who have 'come out of the great tribulation'. How does it change your attitude to this life to believe that we are now living in the time of tribulation?

## Prayer of the Week

*Mighty God and redeemer, salvation belongs to you who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to you, our God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

# Study 9 - 1 Peter 5:1-4

To the elders among you...

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## Context

Peter's letter has been addressed to all Christians despite their location or walk of life and across the ages. At times, he has addressed people directly, like slaves and masters and husbands and wives, but the bulk of his letter has been to all who have been called by God to be part of his royal and priestly house of God. Now he turns to people he calls elders.

The definition of an elder is one of those subjects in the churches which creates peaceful division. It is most helpful in areas like this to do some word studies in the bible to compare and contrast what the bible says about elders, deacons, shepherds, overseers, pastors and bishops.

## A brief overview of church titles used in the New Testament

### **1. Elders, Deacons and Priests are the only titles supplied in the New Testament**

- a. Elders - Acts 20:17-38; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:1-20; Titus 1:5-6; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5.
- b. Deacons - Romans 16:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-12; Acts 6:1-7
- c. Priests - Romans 15:16; Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16; Leviticus 10:11

### **2. Shepherds, Pastors and Overseers are descriptions of what elders do.**

- a. Shepherds - Acts 20:17-38; 1 Peter 5:2; Jude 12
- b. Overseers - Acts 20:17-38; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-2; Titus 1:7
- c. Pastors - Ephesians 4:11
- d. Bishop - this is an english transliteration of *episkopos* which is always translated as overseer. We use it as a title which describes someone who looks over a cluster of churches.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 5: 1-4

### **1. How do these verses depict the structure of the church (especially Verses 1-2a)?**

- Peter was the lead apostle and yet sees himself as a fellow elder and recipient of the same reward as his fellow elders.
- He speaks as one elder instructing other elders over a large area. So the local flocks are united although separate.
- The church is always God's flock.
- The elders are described as shepherds who are to care for God's people under their care.
- Jesus is the boss (v4)
- So, the people of God gather in their close geographic areas and have people assigned as elders to care for them like shepherds. The elders and the flock are all recipients of God's grace and mercy through Christ's suffering. And he, as the Chief Shepherd (v 4), is an example to those who will oversee God's flock.

## **2. What is the nature of an elder as described in Verses 2b-3?**

- Their strategy is to be watchful (hence, the description of overseer).
- An elder must want to do this job. Any elder who feels like they are there because no-one else can do it and so they must - must step down or repent of their attitude.
- Know that you have God's blessing.
- No hint of strategy for self-gain - this is a position of service to others.
- An elder is to be humble and not see their position as something to boast about.

## **3. In what ways is Jesus Christ the real prototype shepherd?**

- He is described by Peter as the Chief Shepherd.
- Christ suffered in laying down his life for his sheep.
- He demonstrates humility in his becoming human for us (Philippians 2).

## **Meaning**

Wherever there are Christians gathered around the world there will be elders who have the responsibility and the joy of taking care of God's people as we wait for Christ's return and endure suffering during that time. The elders are to be like shepherds who protect the sheep in their care. Church leaders must serve at the pleasure of the Chief Shepherd, for eternal rewards and joys and not for dishonest gains found in this world.

## Application

- **Topic A - Who should become elders in the church?** Peter has outlined motives and responsibilities of elders in the church. Have you wondered if this is something for which you are gifted? Who can you identify as elders?
- **Topic B - Do you serve because you want to?** All 'servants' in the church ought to follow the same drive as ministers - to serve God because he/she wants to. It is a true blessing to a church when people step up to share their gifts for the benefit of others - to grow the church - and do it because they want to. There are plenty of jobs that can be rostered but there are so many jobs that only those who are gifted in that area should step into and do. What are your gifts and how can you use those talents for the household of God?
- **Topic C - Working for the church or working for God?** Similar to Topic B, do you see your participation in the church as helping the church organisation or as working for God? Just because a church exists, doesn't mean that it is God's household (if they teach something other than the gospel of the kingdom of God, they are not his household). Once you find a local church (of whatever denomination) that is preaching the gospel and teaching the truth through God's word, attach yourself to that church and ask how you can work for God in the company of that body of Christ. Is that what you are doing?

## Prayer of the Week

*Protect us we pray, Jesus Christ, Shepherd of our souls, and bless those ministers who serve under you. May they find joy in their service. May they grow in the own maturity and good examples of following you. Protect them from the evil one and the desires of their own flesh. May they pursue godliness and teach those under their care well. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*



# Study 10 - 1 Peter 5:5-14

She in Babylon sends you greetings...

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## Context

We've reached the end of the letter by the apostle Peter to the church scattered in the northern regions of the Mediterranean. He has not addressed the letter to several churches named but to the elect of God dispersed across parts of the world. What binds the readers together is their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the hope of grace that comes through him. He has been encouraging Christians to stand firm in their faith despite suffering through persecution in this world. This world is not their home. His letter concludes with the returned theme of encouraging believers across the globe to trust God, who is in charge and who cares. In the previous verses, Peter has been specifically addressing the elders of God's community whose task is to shepherd God's flock.

## Observation

Read 1 Peter 5: 5-14

### **1. According to Verses 5-6, how does humility and submission stem from our relationship with God?**

- "In the same way" refers to the statement in Chapter 2:18: "in reverent fear of God submit yourselves." It is the motivation of slaves, wives, all Christians toward the government and younger Christians.
- Because "God shows favour to the humble."
- Because, though we have gifts and talents, we are subject to God's might hand.
- The younger ought to submit to older Christians - NB: there is a Christian maturity at stake here and learning from the wise as well as a simple courtesy to the older. Elders in this context refers primarily to those recognised by the church to be overseers.

### **2. Compare the power ascribed to the devil with the power ascribed to our God in Verses 7-11.**

- The devil: he prowls as if he is confined by his 'skin'; he has a roar and so the appearance of danger; he is able to devour if he finds the

right victim; his damage stretches throughout the world BUT he can be resisted.

- God: he cares for his people and is always ready to hear their prayers (in contrast to the prowler); he has promised eternal glory in Christ and is aware of this time of suffering; he will restore his people and make them strong, firm and steadfast - equipped to resist the devil; his power is eternal.

**3. What do you see in Verses 5-14 that reflect teachings Peter has already given in this letter?**

- v5 Prayer (casting your anxiety on him who cares) - see 3:7, 12 and 4:7
- v5 Humility - see 3:8
- v6 God's mighty hand - see 1:5; 4:11
- v8 "Be alert and sober minded" - see 1:13; 4:7
- v9 "Standing firm in the faith" - see 1:5, 7, 9, 21
- v10 called by God - see 1:1-2
- v9-10 suffering - see 1:6; 2:19-23; 3:17-18; 4:13-19
- v13 She from Babylon - this is a metaphor for God's people living in exile which picks up the overarching theme in Peter's book of being aliens and strangers in this world - see 1:1; 2:11

**4. In what way is the conclusion to Peter's letter, in Verses 12-14, a particular encouragement to the people of God scattered in the world?**

- She from Babylon is probably code for all the rest of the people of God scattered in other parts of the world. The readers of Peter's letter can be encouraged that they are not alone.
- Silas was the famous companion of Paul's, who travelled through parts of the world this letter is addressed to bringing the good news.
- Across the globe, there is a brotherhood of believers who have given their lives for the "true grace of God".
- Finally, they have one another to lean on and have peaceful, loving fellowship with in this world of trials.

## Meaning

Peter's final note is for all who are in Christ to stand firm and know that God is more powerful than any enemy we can face. While the dangers of this world are

real (even if unseen), our defence against the devil and his attacks is to stand firm in the faith. We can be encouraged that this is the same faith shared across the globe by God's faithful household. Even in the midst of the worst of humanity, the church of God is there and will survive. More than that, at the right time, God's elect will be delivered to their eternal glory in Christ. Do not be concerned about the evils of this age, when you know that God cares and his power is above all and forever.

## Application

- **Topic A - Helping yourself and the church grow.** Peter provides a formula for the younger Christians to submit to the overseers in the church. To the younger, it is wise to submit because there is much to learn in the Christian faith. To the elder, it is important to show wisdom with humility. This is a wonderful formula for church growth and maturity. Do you see where you fit in the process of maturing one another in the faith at church?
- **Topic B - Anxious prayer.** We must understand how important prayer is. What causes you worry, concern or anxiety? Do you take it to the LORD in prayer? Read Psalm 55 to hear how the psalmist talks to God and listen for the echoes to 1 Peter. Perhaps you could use this Psalm in your groups to pray together.
- **Topic C - The community of saints across the globe.** We can always bring our brothers and sisters in Christ to God in prayer who are scattered across this planet. We are not identified by race, class, culture or denomination but as those who stand firm in the true grace of God. We don't wear badges. We don't have a secret handshake. But we call Christ our LORD and Redeemer and we have all been born again into a living hope through the blood of Christ. Do you identify with this community?

## Prayer of the Week

*Lord God, we thank you for your universal church, not known by race, gender or class, but set apart by your Son and your call to stand firm in the faith. May we be sober of mind and encourage one another daily while we wait for your kingdom to be revealed. Amen.*