



*“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.*

**CAMPBELLTOWN**  
ANGELICAN CHURCHES

**Growth  
Groups**



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# 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?



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

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you



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

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

### 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.

Read 1 Peter 1: 13-2:3

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup> for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."<sup>w</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. <sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your

sake. <sup>21</sup> Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

<sup>22</sup> Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. <sup>23</sup> For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup> For,

“All people are like grass,  
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;  
the grass withers and the flowers fall,  
<sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord endures forever.”

And this is the word that was preached to you.

**2** Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

## Observation

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

- a. Be alert and fully sober?
- b. Be obedient children?
- c. Be holy?

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

- a. Not conform to the evil desires you once had?
- b. Be a foreigner (Verses 17-19)?
- c. Love one another (Verses 22-2:3)?

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

### **4. What is a practical way to ‘crave spiritual milk’?**

#### 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.

Read 1 Peter 2: 4-12

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—<sup>5</sup>you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says:

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

<sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”

<sup>8</sup> and,

“A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> 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.

## Observation

- 1. Discuss the importance of the ‘stone’ in this passage.**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. As we grow in faith, what do we need know (Verses 5-8)?**

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

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

## 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 .

Read 1 Peter 2: 13-25

<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup> Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

<sup>18</sup> Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those



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

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

#### 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.

Read 1 Peter 3: 1-7

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. <sup>3</sup> Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. <sup>4</sup> Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. <sup>5</sup> For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

<sup>7</sup> Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

## Observation

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

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

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

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

## 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.

## Read 1 Peter 3:8-22

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. <sup>10</sup> For,

“Whoever would love life  
and see good days  
must keep their tongue from evil  
and their lips from deceitful speech.

<sup>11</sup> They must turn from evil and do good;  
they must seek peace and pursue it.

<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous  
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,  
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

<sup>13</sup> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” <sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—<sup>20</sup> to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

## Observation

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

Behaviour	Reasons

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

## 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.

Read 1 Peter 4: 1-11

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. <sup>2</sup> As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. <sup>4</sup> They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. <sup>5</sup> But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

<sup>7</sup> The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. <sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

## Observation

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

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

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

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

### 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.

Read 1 Peter 4: 12-19

<sup>12</sup> Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. <sup>17</sup> For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

<sup>19</sup> So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

## Observation

- 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?**
- 2. What distinguishes foolish suffering for blessed suffering according to Verses 14-16?**
- 3. What do Verses 17-18 teach us about judgment?**
- 4. What is the conclusion in Verse 19?**

## 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.



## 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.

Read 1 Peter 5: 5-14

<sup>5</sup> In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

"God opposes the proud  
but shows favor to the humble."

<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

<sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.



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

**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?**

## 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.*



