

# **Trial: 8 Witnesses from 1-2 Peter**

## **Preaching & Theology Sermon Series Battle Plan**

Theological Contributions by Pastor Mark Driscoll

Tactical Contributions by Pastor AJ Hamilton

October 28, 2008

“Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war”.

– Proverbs 20:18

### **Preface:**

This proposal comes in hopes of improving our effectiveness overall as a church. Over the years, we have seen that the pulpit is our most visible and most authoritative ministry. Whether it is a push for membership, giving, conversion etc., the pulpit has proven to be the most effective. This is true both in and outside of Mars Hill as we have seen with our internet audience. To utilize the pulpit as much as possible for other aspects of our mission is, we believe, good stewardship.

Admittedly, we do not believe that everything should be connected to the pulpit. But, we do believe some things are more strategic and effective if they are. We believe that going forward this sermon series Battle Plan will aid all of Mars Hill in the following ways:

- A clear template for each series so that there is not confusion, causing branches and campuses who collaborate to have jurisdiction conflict.
- A clear set of deadlines and deliverables for Campus Pastors (CP) so they are able to better lead their local mission.
- A quality control assurance across all campuses.
- An assurance that we are not unnecessarily duplicating staff and projects.
- A clear concept for future CP to consider as they contemplate whether or not they want to be a MH CP.

# **Trial: 8 Witnesses from 1-2 Peter**

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# Part I – Guiding Principles for Preaching at Mars Hill Church

For each new preaching series, whether preached by Pastor Mark Driscoll or by the campus pastor teams and other approved elders (e.g. Jonah), a working battle plan is needed for the entire series. This document is that battle plan.

## **Guiding Principle #1 – Elders Lead from the Pulpit**

At Mars Hill the pulpit is used for preaching and teaching purposes, but it is also used for much more, including evangelizing lost people and leading the entire mission of our church. Subsequently, the most visible point of authority in all of Mars Hill is the preaching of God’s Word at one of our church services. Because this is such a weighty task, the Scriptures indicate is an elder duty in 1 Timothy 5:17, which says, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” Because of the importance of this role, along with the authority it bestows on the preacher and criticism it invites from others, as a general rule only Mars Hill elders who are approved by Pastor Mark Driscoll are allowed to preach at a Mars Hill church service. Any exception, (e.g. a guest such as Dr. D.A. Carson) must receive prior approval from Pastor Mark Driscoll as he oversees the preaching and theology branch of Mars Hill Church.

## **Guiding Principle #2 - Air War & Ground War**

The air war is the Sunday pulpit and the preaching series that is tied to the pulpit. At Mars Hill, we generally lead our ministry with the air war of the pulpit. The ground war works in conjunction with the air war so that such things as community groups, redemption groups, training classes, biblical counseling etc. coordinates with the preached Word so as to be as effective and unified as possible. Since most of the Community Groups are sermon-based it is imperative that the CG branch and the P&T branch collaborate on every series. This collaboration includes joint branded content online and Pastor Mark pushing CG discussion points and family devotional points each week in the sermon.

## **Guiding Principle #3 - Attractional & Missional**

An attractional series functions in large part to grow the church by increasing Sunday attendance and web traffic. In this way, an attractional series opens the front door to the church both online and on Sundays. Examples of attractional series include the Song of Songs and Vintage Jesus.

A missional series functions in large part to connect people to the church (e.g. membership, community groups, redemption groups, serving, etc.) to help them mature in their faith and serve the mission of Mars Hill. Ideally, a missional series follows an attractional series to connect the people who are drawn in by the attractional series. Examples of missional series include Doctrine and 1-2 Timothy.

#### **Guiding Principle #4 - Strikes & Campaigns**

Strikes are strategic sermon series intended to hit one big idea over the course of a few months or less. Examples of a strike include Ruth and Jonah.

Campaigns are lengthy sermon series that are broken down into multiple strikes lasting many months or even a year or more. The multiple strikes in a campaign are, for example, breaking down a lengthy book of the Bible into smaller mini-series dealing with focused issues as they appear in the book of the Bible. Examples of campaigns include Genesis and Nehemiah.

Is this sermon series a strike or a campaign?

#### **Guiding Principle #5 – Expository & Others**

Preachers are commanded to “preach the Word,”<sup>i</sup> although the Bible does not tell us exactly how this should be done or demonstrate it with a transcript of the model sermon. Therefore, how to “preach the Word” methodologically includes many faithful options that I have used and will continue to use according to what best serves the principle that I faithfully “preach the Word.” These methods include expository preaching, textual preaching, and topical preaching.

#### **Expository Preaching**

Among those who hold the Bible in high regard as they ought, expository preaching is increasingly popular. Expository preaching is simply going through a book of the Bible verse by verse. While the Bible never commands or really even illustrates this method, some practical reasons make it popular:

1. Because all Scripture is God-breathed and for our benefit, there is not a page of Scripture that is not helpful to our faith, so we should examine it all.<sup>ii</sup>
2. From church history we know that influential preachers such as Justin Martyr preached expository sermons that went through books of the Bible line by line.
3. It allows non-Christians and new Christians to follow along more easily than if the preacher jumps around the Bible.
4. It doesn't allow the preacher to avoid difficult texts and issues.
5. It helps teach the congregation to study the Bible for themselves.
6. It helps show the importance of context in Scripture.
7. It helps people to read and study along with the sermons each week.
8. It makes it easier for people to refer back to what they have learned in Scripture.
9. It forces the authority to reside in the text and not the teacher.

As a general rule, it is best to include preaching from all genres of biblical literature in both the Old and New Testaments over the course of a preaching ministry. Over the years, most Mars Hill preaching has been expositional and has rotated between Old and New Testament books. As a general rule, it is wise for the majority of a preacher's preaching to be expository while using other formats as needed.

### Textual Preaching

Textual preaching falls between expositional and topical preaching. Textual preaching is preaching on one section of Scripture from within a book of the Bible without preaching the entire book, as is done with expository preaching. Some practical reasons make this method popular:

1. It shows the consistency of Scripture by linking sections of Scripture together as a thematic series.
2. It allows the preacher with a revolving church where people move in and out a lot (e.g., college town, military town, major city) to hit central truths every year so that new people are given a basic theological framework through key sections of Scripture.
3. It allows the preacher to work in smaller chunks of four to eight weeks, providing flexibility to deal with issues as they arise. This is especially helpful if a church is adding new services and campuses and needs to remain nimble to synchronize new preaching series with changes in the church.
4. It allows the preacher to work around the Christian calendar with mini-series on the incarnation around Christmas, crucifixion in the dark winter months, and resurrection around Easter.

Examples of textual preaching would include such things as a series on the Beatitudes from Matthew, fruit of the Spirit from Galatians, or a Christmas series on the first two chapters of Luke.

### Topical Preaching

The most common type of preaching in evangelicalism is topical preaching. Topical preaching is using several texts from one or more books of the Bible or biblical authors to speak on an issue. When this is done it is good to have the verses on a handout and/or on PowerPoint so that people do not get lost trying to keep up. While we do not have the full transcripts of the sermons preached in the Bible, the portions we do have tend to show that topical teaching was common. Some practical reasons this method are favorable include:

1. The ability to trace a theme through multiple books of the Bible, showing the consistency of Scripture.
2. The ability to preach with multiple perspectives and avoid the common error of reductionism, which is looking only at what one section of Scripture says on an issue rather than at all that the Bible says on an issue.
3. The ability to address most thoroughly questions and controversies that arise.
4. The ability to select the most appropriate verses from Scripture on a given topic.

Examples of topical preaching include a twelve-week series called *Vintage Jesus*, which led to the book by the same name, and a twelve-week series on the

cross, which resulted in the book *Death by Love*. The danger of topical preaching is that it is really easy for the preacher to bring his own ideas to the people supported by a few passages. Topical preaching must always be expositional in the sense that it proclaims the message of the Scripture. When it becomes a place for the preacher's good ideas, then it is not exposition, but imposition.

As a general rule, it is best to have expository preaching be the majority of preaching and use the other forms as needed. The worst thing a preacher can do is become a legalist and only use one method of preaching as if that alone were biblical.

### **Guiding Principle #6 – Video & Live**

At Mars Hill Church, Pastor Mark Driscoll preaches 40-42 Sundays a year at the request of the Executive Elders (EE). The series he preaches are approved in advance by the EE, and he also submits difficult doctrines and issues he is preaching on to their counsel. On the days that Pastor Mark preaches he is live in Ballard, and appears via video at the other Mars Hill services and locations.

The Executive Elders have chosen to not have entire sections of a Bible book that is preached by Pastor Mark preached by the Campus Pastors, for the following reasons. One, it leaves gaps in the vodcast/podcast. Two, it leaves holes in series that may later be utilized by campuses for Sundays and other purposes. Three, each of Pastor Mark's sermons is now transcribed into a manuscript by Logos software and bundled with a searchable database that is sold and also made available free of charge in the Mars Hill media library and so complete sets are needed. Four, each of Pastor Mark's series are turned into books based upon the sermons which necessitates complete series.

On the 10-12 Sundays a year Pastor Mark Driscoll is not preaching there is live preaching at all Mars Hill campuses and services by an approved MH elder or approved guest. Nonetheless, it is important for momentum and unity, particularly considering that most of the Community Groups follow the sermon series, to remain unified in our preaching while allowing some diversity when Pastor Mark is out. Therefore, the preaching protocol in Pastors Mark's absence is as follows.

### **One Week Sermons**

When Pastor Mark is out for only a week, in an effort to keep the Community Groups on track and our promotions for the series in sync with the pulpit, those preaching live should connect their sermon to the current sermon series in one or more of the following ways:

1. When Pastor Mark is preaching along the storyline of a book of the Bible verse by verse, it is preferable for campus pastors and other elders preaching in the gap weeks of the series to preach across the storyline of the book of the Bible Pastor Mark has been working in. Pastor Mark will offer options for this kind of series to the campus pastors to consider. The following would be examples:

- a. Take a major character from the series to examine in greater detail in related Scriptures. An example would be tracing a Bible book author's history to learn from his life's biography, or pulling a secondary character from a Bible book like Barnabas that is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture and tracing his biography in Scripture.
- b. Take a major image from the series to examine in greater detail. An example would be the throne that appears through Revelation on which Jesus sits.
- c. Take a major theme from the series to examine in greater detail.
- d. Take a key word from the book of the Bible being preached and trace its usage.

Also acceptable for one-week sermons in the middle of a series Pastor Mark is preaching are the following kinds of sermons:

2. Pick an issue that has arisen among your people as a result of the series, note in the sermon that the series has raised the issue, and then use the sermon to teach on that issue with a textual (focusing on a section of a book of the Bible), or topical (pulling verses from various Bible books into a systematic whole) sermon.
3. Anything else you get approval from Pastor Mark Driscoll on.

### 1-2 Peter Campus Pastor Suggestions

For the weeks that Pastor Mark is out during the course of the 1-2 Peter series, the following sermons are offered as suggestions for Campus Pastor consideration:

1. PETER - Peter's biography – this could be done by hitting highlights in his life, or by tracing major snapshots in his life through one of the Gospels and possibly also Acts
2. PETER & JESUS - Peter was one of the first disciples called; he always stands first in the lists of disciples; he was also one of the three who formed an inner circle round the Master (Mk. 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; cf. 13:3). His impulsive devotion is frequently portrayed (cf. Mt. 14:28; Mk. 14:29; Lk. 5:8; Jn. 21:7), and he acts as spokesman of the Twelve (Mt. 15:15; 18:21; Mk. 1:36f.; 8:29; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29ff.; Lk. 5:5; 12:41). At the crisis near Caesarea Philippi he is the representative of the whole band: for the question is directed to them all (Mk. 8:27, 29), and all are included in the look that accompanies the subsequent reprimand (8:33). On any satisfactory interpretation of Mk. 9:1 the transfiguration is intimately related to the apostolic confession which precedes it. The experience made a lasting impression on Peter: 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:16ff. are most naturally interpreted of the transfiguration, and, for what they are worth, the Apocalypse and Acts of Peter show that their authors associated the preaching of this subject with Peter. In a measure, the disastrous boast of Mark 14:29ff. is also representative of the disciples; and, as Peter's protestations of loyalty are the loudest, so his rejection of the Lord is the

- most explicit (Mk. 14:66ff.). He is, however, specially marked out by the message of the resurrection (Mk. 16:7), and personally receives a visitation of the risen Lord (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).
3. SLANDER – Peter uses 3 words to describe the kind of slander one receives as a Christian by non-Christians who speak ill of them simply because of their faith (4:14, 16). These three words are slander (3:16), reviling (4:4), and mocking (4:14).
  4. GOD’S PEOPLE – Peter compares God’s people in the OT and the NT. He speaks of Israel as ‘called’ and ‘chosen’ by God (Deut. 7:6-8, 14:2; Isa. 41:8-9, 42:6, 43:20, 48:12). Likewise, he speaks of the church as chosen (1 Peter 1:1, 2:9, 5:13) and called (1:15, 2:9, 2:21, 3:9, 5:10).
  5. OT THEMES – Peter speaks of God’s people as a Holy Priesthood (2:9), sprinkled by the blood of Jesus (1:2), who are God’s holy temple set apart for worship (2:5).
  6. OT CONNECTIONS – Peter quotes the OT throughout his epistles. 1 Peter 1:19, 2:21-24 works from Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (especially 53:7, 10 and 53:12). Peter also quotes the OT in 1:16, 1:24, 2:6-8, 2:22, 3:10-12, 4:18, 5:5. He also has many OT allusions such as 1 Peter 1:2 echoes Exodus 24, 1:19 echoes Exodus 12, 1 Peter 2:3 echoes Psalm 34, and 1 Peter 2:9 echoes Exodus 19.
  7. SUFFERING – Peter speaks of suffering as existing in many forms (1:6), focusing us on God (2:19), a blessing if we suffer for good (3:8-13), means of eternal joy (4:13), exaltation (5:6), and only temporary (5:10). Peter uses suffering as a verb (2:19-21, 2:23, 3:14, 3:17-18, 4:1, 4:15, 4:19, 5:10) and a noun (1:11, 4:13, 5:1, 5:9).
  8. TRIAL - The reaction of the new Christians to trial was grief (1:6; 2:19), fear (3:6, 14), bewilderment (4:12) and anxiety (5:7). The dishonor they suffered in their communities made them ashamed of their new faith (4:16), and they were tempted to retaliate in order to regain their honor (3:9; cf. 2:23). Some contemplated returning to their former lifestyle and abandoning their faith in Christ (4:2–3; 1:14); this was the goal of their adversary, the devil (5:8–9).
  9. JUDGMENT – Peter exhorts Christians to live in light of the final judgment which he speaks of repeatedly (2:23, 4:3-7, 4:16-19). Peter writes as one who looks forward to the great unveiling in the last days, and he uses the Greek root *apocalyp*—(‘revelation’) to describe the return of Christ. So he reminds his readers that the unseen Christ is never far away, and points them to the glories they will share when Christ is revealed. Their salvation will be fully realized and they will enter into their full inheritance (1:5). Their faith will be finally honored (1:7; 4:13), and the full extent of God’s grace discovered (1:13). Christ’s glory will be shared (5:1) and faithful service rewarded (5:4). The expectation of Christ’s return is a most compelling argument for holy living and careful stewardship now (4:7–11, 17–18).
  10. GOD – God is often mentioned in 1 Peter, a full 39 times which is once every 43 words! The only books of the NT that compare are 1 John (God is mentioned once every 34 words) and Romans (God is mentioned once

every 46 words). God is spoken of by Peter as Trinity (1:1-2), the living God (1:23), whose will is done (2:15, 3:17), who foreknows (1:2), is holy (1:15), Father (1:17), redeemer (1:18-21), the judge (4:5), our Creator (4:19), and gracious (5:10).

11. GRACE – the word appears 10 times in Peter and is a good study to trace a theme throughout
12. CHURCH – Peter does not use the word ‘church’ (ekklēsia), but he identifies the Christian community with the OT people of God. He sees the Christian community as the true Israel of God and heir to the promises of God. Believers have entered into the new covenant (1:2; cf. Exod: 24:1–8) and await their inheritance (1:4; cf. Deut. 15:4; Dan. 12:13). They are the elect (1:1; cf. Deut. 4:37; Ps. 105:6) and ‘strangers’ of the Dispersion (1:1; Gen. 23:4; Lev. 25:23), and are properly called by titles previously ascribed to the people of God: ‘chosen people, royal household, priesthood, holy nation, people of God’s possession’ (2:9, author’s translation; Exod. 19:6; Is. 43:20–21). Christian women are called ‘daughters of Sarah’ (3:5–6) and typology connects baptized believers with Noah and others who were saved through the flood (3:20–21). Believers were formerly ‘not a people’ but now they are ‘the people of God’ (2:10; Hos. 2:23). They have been chosen by God (1:2) and their new existence as the people of God has given them the social stigma of being non-citizens and resident aliens (2:11; 1:1, 17). Although Elliott (A Home for the Homeless) argues that the readers were non-citizens before their conversion, Peter links their alien status with their election (1:1; 2:10–11). They are part of the ‘dispersion’ (1:1) scattered in this world and separated from their true inheritance, which is kept in heaven for them (1:4). Though rejected by their contemporaries, the Christians have a new social identity which is in continuity with that of the OT people of God and based on their new faith in God. Peter speaks of the church as God’s temple (2:4-8), God’s people (2:10), God’s servants (2:16), God’s family (1:22-23, 4:17), and God’s flock (5:2). Peter has a high regard for the corporate nature of the people of God, entered into by the individual believer at his or her new birth (2:2–5; cf. 1:22–23). The church is God’s building, on the foundation of Christ himself (2:4–8), and as such it is the inheritor of the blessings promised to Israel (2:9–10). Its twofold function is to offer worship to God and witness before people (2:5, 9). Already in Peter’s day the church had a corporate eldership, seen as a responsible and sacred office (5:1–4), but also encouraged the development and use of spiritual gifts by each member (4:10–11).
13. HOLY SPIRIT – Peter does not mention God the Spirit much, but he does on a few occasions as the Spirit of Christ (1:11), who sanctifies us (1:2), and inspires Scripture (1:11-12) and the encourager of Christians undergoing persecution (4:14).
14. JESUS TEACHING – 1 Peter often echoes Jesus teaching. 1 Peter 1:4 echoes Luke 12:23, 1:13 echoes Luke 12:35, 1:18 echoes Mark 10:45, 3:14 echoes Matt. 5:10

15. **WORSHIP** – 1 Peter has a number of hymns that were sung in the early church (1:3-5, 2:22-25, 3:18-22, 5:5-9)
16. **EVANGELISM** – Peter connects our lifestyle and conduct as part of our missional evangelism in 2:12, 3:1, 3:15-16
17. **HOPE** – Peter speaks of hope in 1:3, 1:13, 1:21
18. **GOVERNMENT** – 1 Peter 2:13-17 speaks of how Christians should deal with the secular state and to expand on this one could include Revelation 13:1-10, Mark 12:13-17, Romans 13:1-7
19. **CALLING** – 1 Peter speaks of God calling Christians to be holy (1:15), out of darkness into light (2:9), follow Jesus example of not returning evil for evil (2:21), to bless those who persecute (3:9), to God's eternal glory (5:10)
20. **ACCUSATION** – 1 Peter says that Christians will be accused of wrongdoing (2:12), spoken of in ignorance (2:15), insults (3:9), malicious and frightening threats (3:14, 3:16), personal abuse for not joining sinful activity (4:4), and further insults for just following Jesus (4:14).
21. **SHEPHERDS** – 1 Peter 5:1-4 speaks of pastors as shepherds and building on this theme would work well by investigating Ezekiel 34 and John 10:11-18
22. **THE CROSS** – 1 Peter teaches that Jesus death shows Christians how to walk with God (1:17-21), how to live in difficult situations (2:21-25), and how victory over evil is assured (3:18-22)
23. **JESUS CHRIST** – Peter calls Jesus the living stone to build on (2:4-8), Shepherd to follow (2:25, 5:4), and Lord to worship (3:15). Christ is sinless, obedient and prepared to suffer to the limit. This is an example for us (2:21–24). He died and rose again, so we must die to sin and live by his risen power (2:24; 4:1). His work is described in terms of redemption (1:18–19), reconciliation and being the sin offering and the substitute (3:18), and he was predestined for this very purpose by the Father's love (1:20–21). He is also the foundation of God's church, providing the ground of faith and hope, and inspiring to holiness and love (2:16; 1:21–22). Christ is the pre-existent one (1:20), who is 'revealed in these last times' and whose Spirit spoke through the prophets (1:11). In describing the activity of Christ, the author focuses on his sufferings and glories (1:11), which include his redemptive suffering (2:24; 3:18), his resurrection from the dead (1:3, 21; 3:18) and the proclamation (at his ascension) of his victory and authority over all demonic forces (3:19–20, 22; cf. 5:8–9; see W. J. Dalton, Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits). At present Christ is not 'absent'; he is 'veiled' from sight until the time of his revealing (1:13; Peter does not speak of his 'coming', parousia). The time of this 'unveiling' is not far distant (1:7, 13; 4:7, 13; 5:4); Christ will bring both salvation and reward for the believers (1:4–7; 5:4) and judgment for their oppressors (4:5). Though Christ is not seen, faith and love can penetrate the 'veil' which hides him (1:8). Believers have tasted his kindness (2:3, possibly a reference to the eucharist) and have come to him (2:4); Christ in turn brings them to God (3:18). It is through Christ that the worship of the

- community is acceptable to God (2:5). 1 Peter includes an extremely high Christology. Jesus is both Christ and Lord (1:3), and in 3:15 Peter applies the reference to YHWH (LXX *kyrios*) in Isaiah 8:13 to Christ: 'But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.' In 2:6 he interprets the 'stone' in Isaiah 28:16 messianically; people's relationship to it determines their eternal destiny (so also Paul in Rom. 9:33). In verses 7–8 he links this prophecy with Isaiah 8:14 and Psalm 118:22. But the transcendent and authoritative Christ also tenderly shepherds his sheep (2:25; 5:4) and has become their guardian (2:25). The author's descriptions of Christ's character are full of OT imagery. He is called 'the righteous (one)' (3:18; Is. 53:11); as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (Is. 53:9, 7, 4 and 12, and 6a are echoed in 1 Pet. 2:22–25) he 'committed no sin' (2:22). He inaugurates the new covenant through the sprinkling of his blood (1:2; cf. Exod. 24:3–8), and just as the paschal lamb was a ransom paid for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (1:18–19; Exod. 12:5–7), so his sacrifice redeems believers. He became a sin offering who bears the sins of the people (2:24; Heb. 9:28; Lev. 16:15–16).
24. JOY – Peter says we should rejoice in our trials (1 Peter 1:6), knowing that God is using them to reveal Jesus to us and in us (1 Peter 1:8), and that all of our life will in the end be used of God to glorify God (1 Peter 4:13).
  25. SALVATION - The scope and goal of God's purposes (1:3–9); The excitement of the prophets and eagerness of the angels to grasp this wonderful plan (1:10–12); The costliness of our redemption (1:18–21); The enduring nature of God's promises (1:22–25); The privilege of belonging to God's people (2:4–10); The example of Jesus (2:22–25); What Jesus has done for us (3:18–22); The confidence we can have in our Creator and his faithfulness (4:17–19); The certainty that God will triumph in the end, and that his own will share the victory (5:10–11; cf. 1:7).
  26. PETER'S MINISTRY - There are similarities with Peter's speeches in the Acts, e.g. Acts 2:23/1 Pet. 1:20; Acts 2:31/1Pet. 1:11; Acts 2:34–35/1 Pet. 3:22; Acts 4:11/1 Pet. 2:7; Acts 4:12/1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 10:34/1 Pet. 1:17; Acts 10:39/1 Pet. 2:24. These are the main places where ideas overlap, and a detailed study of the passages will show many more words and phrases in common.
  27. SCRIPTURE - The authority of Scripture is stressed by the way Peter appeals to the OT to support his teaching (e.g. 1:24–25; 2:6–8; 3:10–12; 4:18). Its source is seen to be in the guiding of the writers by the Holy Spirit (1:11; cf. 2 Pet. 1:21) and its enduring quality is underlined by a quotation from Is. 40:6–8 (1:23–25). Scripture is also pictured as a seed, by which the new birth is effected in human lives as people hear and respond to the preaching of the gospel (cf. 1:23 with 25), and as the means of Christian growth (if 2:2 is translated 'milk of the word').
  28. SOVEREIGNTY - The sovereignty and transcendence of God dominate the theology of the epistle, and are important for its readers, who have emerged from paganism and are undergoing persecution. God is the faithful creator (4:19), the author of salvation-history (1:2, 20), the eternal

one (implied in 1:25; 4:11; 5:10), the Almighty (4:11; 5:6, 11), and the God of glory (4:11, 14; 5:10), who keeps for believers their final inheritance (1:4), and who is judge of both the living and the dead (4:5; 1:17; 5:5b). Yet despite this emphasis on God's transcendence, the author is also keenly aware of his presence with his people. He is the source of their life (1:3, 23) and guards them for their final salvation (1:5). His eyes are constantly upon them and his ears are open to their petitions (3:12; Ps. 34:12–16); he is invoked as their Father (1:17; cf. Matt. 6:9), who has chosen them (1:2) and given them new birth according to his great mercy (1:3). He supplies his grace for believers to serve one another (4:10–11). His Spirit rests on those who suffer (4:14), and he gives grace to the humble and the oppressed (5:5, 10). Christians are conscious of his presence (2:19), and Christ, like a shepherd, leads them to God (3:18). In their adversity, believers can be assured of God's care for them (5:7). Yet Peter reminds his readers that the one whom they call Father is also their impartial judge (1:17; 4:17), whom they should honor with reverential fear (1:17; 2:17; 3:2). He is the holy one (1:15–16; Lev. 19:2).

### Campus Pastor Series

When Pastor Mark is out for more than one week, the preaching schedule will show when Campus Pastors can choose for themselves a series to preach. That series should be agreed upon across all campuses so that there can be unified support given from the Preaching and Theology Branch for such things as branding images, e-vites, viral marketing, press releases, promotions, etc. The goal is for the Campus Pastors to have first class service from the P&T branch for the series they are doing without pastor Mark so that there series can be well supported. The Campus Pastors are welcome to choose an Expository, Topical, or Textual sermon series. And, when they agree they should notify Pastor Mark and Pastor AJ so that support can begin to be organized for them. Also, Pastor Mark is happy whenever possible to have significant research done in advance for Campus Pastors to assist them in their preaching and is happy to speak to them in person, email, or phone if he can help them prepare for their sermons.

## Part II – 1-2 Peter Preaching Schedule (This will be made into a bookmark handed out with Trial Booklet)

### Trial: 8 Witnesses from 1-2 Peter

December 28, 2008 - Mark Gone Tim Smith Preaching @ Ballard  
January 4, 2009 - Mark Gone Tim Smith Preaching @ Ballard

*\*note 1: for Trial, we will have a few minute meet your neighbor time before the sermon intro video begins and the sermon starts*

*\*note 2: the dates listed below that work well for the prayer time with one's neighbor, baby dedications, and baptisms are suggestions as they fit with the sermon nicely, but not requirements. Ultimately, each CP can decide if they want to do these things at their campus on these days with the exception of Easter where we will do baptisms at every service on every campus.*

#### Trial

January 11, 2009 1 Peter 1:1-2 Trial and Sin

January 18, 2009 1 Peter 1:3-9 Trial and Jesus

*\* this is a good week to push VJ from stage & blog & works for baptisms @ campuses*

January 25, 2009 1 Peter 1:10-12 Trial and Scripture

*\* this week works well to push OT & NT books from stage & blog*

#### Witness #1 – Temptation

February 1, 2009 1 Peter 1:13-21 Temptation from Sin

*\* this is a good week for folks to pray with one another after the sermon*

February 8, 2009 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 Temptation from Hypocrisy

February 15, 2009 1 Peter 2:4-12 Temptation from Worldliness

*\* this is a good week for folks to pray with one another after the sermon*

#### Witness #2 – Submission

February 22, 2009 1 Peter 2:13-17 Submission to Godly Authority

March 1, 2009 – Mark Gone Tim Smith Preaching @ Ballard and CP or other elder at other campuses– see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

March 8, 2009 1 Peter 2:18-25 Submission to Ungodly Authority

• □ □ □ *Daylight Savings Time*

*\* this is a good week for baptisms and to push Death By Love from the stage & the blog*

#### Witness #3 – Marriage

March 15, 2009 1 Peter 3:1-6 Marriage and Women

March 22, 2009 1 Peter 3:7 Marriage and Men

#### Witness #4 – Suffering

March 29, 2009 1 Peter 3:8-17 Suffering to Bless

April 5, 2009 1 Peter 3:18-22 Suffering to Learn

April 12 1 Peter 1:3 Born Again

- □ □ □ *Easter*
- □ □ □ 25 minute sermon with salvation invitations & baptisms at each service

April 19, 2009 1 Peter 4:1-11 Suffering to Serve

*\* this is a good week for people to pray for one another*

April 26, 2009 1 Peter 4:12-19 Suffering to Worship

### **Witness #5 – Humility**

May 3, 2009 1 Peter 5:1-5 Humble Pastors

*\*this is a good week for each campus to introduce their elders & and candidates*

May 10, 2009 1 Peter 5:5b Humble Mothers

- □ □ □ *Mothers Day*
- □ □ □ Short sermon (35-40 min.) leaving room for baby dedications @ campuses

May 17, 2009 1 Peter 5:6-14 Humble Christians

*\* this is a good week for folks to pray with one another after the sermon*

May 24, 2009 – Mark Gone Tim Smith Preaching @ Ballard & CP or other elder at other campuses - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

- □ □ □ *Monday May 25 Memorial Day*

### **Witness # 6 – Faith**

May 31, 2009 2 Peter 1:1-4 Faith in Your New Birth

*\* this is a good week for baptisms*

June 7, 2009 2 Peter 1:5-15 Faith in Your New Life

*\* this is a good week for folks to pray with one another after the sermon*

### **Witness # 7 – Doctrine**

June 14, 2009 2 Peter 1:16-21 Doctrine from True Teachers

*\* this is a good week to push A Book You’ll Actually Read on OT & NT from the stage and the blog*

June 21, 2009 2 Peter 1:16-18 Doctrine from Dad

- □ □ □ *Fathers Day*
- □ □ □ Short sermon (35-40 minutes) leaving time for baby dedications

June 28, 2009 2 Peter 2:1-10a Doctrine from False Teachers (Part 1)

July 5– Mark Gone Bubba Preaching at Ballard & CP or other elder @ other campuses - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

- □ □ □ *Independence Day weekend*

July 12, 2009 2 Peter 2:10b-22 Doctrine from False Teachers (Part 2)

### **Witness # 8 – Perseverance**

July 19, 2009 2 Peter 3:1-7 Perseverance Until Judgment

July 26, 2009 2 Peter 3:8-10 Perseverance Until Jesus Returns

*\* this is a good week for folks to pray with one another after the sermon*

August 2, 2009 2 Peter 3:11-13 Perseverance Until the New Creation

August 9, 2009 2 Peter 3:14-18 Perseverance Until God is Finished With You

*\* this is a good week for folks to pray with one another after the sermon*

#### **4 Week Strike When Mark is Gone**

Mark Gone, Bill Clem preaching all services for 4 weeks at Ballard, CP or other elder @ other campuses.

**Note:** *My recommendation is to do the DDL (the Preaching and Theology Branch will need to meet with Bill to rename this something catchy for a book title) with one segment each of the four weeks. This would allow the CP to work this content into the core DNA of their church. And, it would allow Bill Clem to preach it at Ballard where we could capture it in audio/video form for ongoing training and also have him publish all of this content at a book with Re:Lit and use portions of the sermons for viral marketing. I am going to confirm this with the CP in early January but unless you hear otherwise plan on this happening.*

August 16, 2009 – Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

August 23, 2009 – Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

August 30, 2009 – Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

September 6, 2009 – Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

• □ □ □ *Monday September 7, 2009 Labor Day*

September 13, 2009 – Mark starts a new series, likely Luke’s gospel

# Part III – Sermon Series Architecting Questions

## Deadlines

1. When will the sermon series plan be released internally? **November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008**
2. When does initial marketing begin? **December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008**
  - a. **Posters up in campuses by 21<sup>st</sup>**
  - b. **Booklet in Printers' hands by the 15<sup>th</sup>**
  - c. **Booklet posted online by 22<sup>nd</sup>**
  - d. **Booklet passed out at campuses on Jan. 4th**
3. When does the series page debut online? **December 22nd**
4. When does the sermon series begin? **January 11, 2009**

## Preaching Pastor(s) Questions

1. What is the primary text(s) for the series? **1-2 Peter**
2. Who is/are the primary preacher(s)? **Pastor Mark Driscoll**
3. What are the purposes for the series? **Bring attention to multiple areas of life that may not be in line with God's word.**
4. Is this an attractional or missional sermon series? **Missional**
5. How is this series/message unique? **This series is a housecleaning exercise for each person's life by directing the Epistles of 1 & 2 Peter toward a Trial vernacular.**
6. How long is the series? **28 weeks**
7. When will the series begin and end? **January 11<sup>th</sup> – August 9th**
8. What is the exact preaching layout for the series including Scripture sections, breaks and preaching pastor lists by Campus and Service (attached as an appendix)? **See Part II of the Battle Plan for details**
9. Will the Campus Pastors and other elders be preaching all or part of this series and if so what research can be done to supplement their study? **See Part I for details especially "1-2 Peter Campus Pastor Suggestions"**

## Theming

1. What is the title? **Trial**
2. What is the subtitle? **8 Life Witnesses from 1-2 Peter**
3. What is the big idea for the sermon series? **We will be building off of court imagery that life is a trial, witnesses are brought in to testify to our faith and its genuineness. This court imagery builds off the following themes in Peters' epistles:**

## Principle #1 – Our life is a trial

- **1 Peter 1:7** you have been grieved by various *trials*, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though

- it is *tested* by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- **1 Peter 4:12** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery *trial* when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.
  - **2 Peter 2:9** the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from *trials*

Principle #2 – We are to live in light of God’s judgment

- **1 Peter 1:17** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile...
- **1 Peter 4:5** ... they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Principle #3 – Like Jesus we are to live in worship to God and witness to others.

- **1 Peter 2:23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Principle #4 – Trial in life is a purposeful opportunity for our sanctification, worship, and witness to God’s glory and our joy.

- **1 Peter 1:2** in the *sanctification* of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ
- **1 Peter 1:6-7** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in *praise and glory and honor* at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- **1 Peter 2:12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may *see your good deeds* and glorify God on the day of visitation.
- **1 Peter 3:15-16** in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile *your good behavior* in Christ may be put to shame.
- **1 Peter 5:10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to *his eternal glory* in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
- **1 Peter 1:6** In this you *rejoice*, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials...
- **1 Peter 1:8** Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and *rejoice with joy* that is inexpressible and filled with glory...
- **1 Peter 4:13** But *rejoice* insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also *rejoice* and be glad when his glory is revealed.

## **Staging**

1. What is the stage design for the series? Styled after “12 Angry Men” and “The Maltese Falcon” the stage will look like a 1950’s courtroom. Browns, blacks and hints of color will be utilized. The back wall will be floor to ceiling wood or a brown curtain. The LED may also be utilized to project a film grain image with etched plexi-glass to provide layers. “TRIAL” will be displayed on a piece of etched plexi-glass.
2. Will any props or additional items be used to image brand messages in the series on the stage Sundays? The TV will be mounted to look like a witness box, the cross will be varnished wood. The “justice” scales sitting on the desk. The pulpit will be replaced with an attorney’s courtroom desk including the old green-shaded desk lamp.

## **Graphics**

1. What is the imaging/branding for the series? Detective novel inspired “witnesses” in profile and silhouette. I.e. Sky captain, Dick Tracy, Spirit.
2. What Global templates need to be branded by P&T (e.g. Evites, handouts, posters, window treatments, banners etc.)? The Trial Study guide that includes articles, Dinner Table guide, CG questions, Dinnertime Bible Study, Bookmark Preaching Schedule.
3. What campus specific templates need to be branded by P&T and built for Campuses to pay for and have printed or made up (e.g. Evites, handouts, posters, banners, etc.) 1 image for each Witness for campus weeklies. PDFs of posters, Welcome slides for each Witness. The “Trial Witness” image will be used for each week that Pastor Mark is out of the pulpit to keep the theme consistent across all MHC campuses. Door Knockers and Movie Posters will be designed and posted to the “Downloads” section on the TRIAL Preview page. Also included will be vector files for the TRIAL logo window decals.

## **In-Sermon Multimedia**

1. Will videos, photos, slides, statistics be needed to support each sermon? If so, which sermons? These will be decided week by week. There will be some slides used, much like in Peasant Princess, and will be communicated to Patrick Sunday AM.
2. Will text messaging be a part of the series? Yes, for select weeks. Week 9 Marriage & Women (March 15<sup>th</sup>) Grace will be on stage with Pastor Mark fielding SMS questions. (In an effort to keep this feature fresh, we will take a break from Live SMS Q&A. Another alternative is to have the Campus Pastor wives on stage to hit certain weeks. This will be discussed between Pastor Mark and the Campus Pastors.

## **Branding**

1. What is the visual graphic for the entire series? The word Trial and the set design are the only static visual graphics. The Film Noir, 1940s detective novels are the static visual theme.



2. What is the weekly graphic for the church bulletin? The weekly graphic will change with the 8 life witnesses throughout the series.

## **Global Distribution on a MHC.org Main Page**

1. Personal study – recommended resources such as books and links
2. Family devotions – directives for family devotional times with children including dinner discussion questions and an intro video explaining the concept
3. Sermon Based Community groups – series introduction, discussion questions to be included in the sermon, guiding introductory video for the CITY and the CG page.

## **Internal Distribution at a Secondary Location**

1. Redemption groups – informing group leaders of topics in the book which will result in encouraging people into the groups

2. Supplemental classes at campuses – suggestions for Campus Pastors regarding ways to work off the sermon series
3. 1:1 counseling – a list of texts and weeks that counseling issues may arise, including after service prayer
4. Sermon notes for the campus weeklies
5. Research briefs for campus pastors on weeks Pastor Mark is not preaching to supplement their sermon preparation should be sent to the CP and posted on The City in the CP group
6. The entire sermon series plan should be distributed to the entire staff and eldership with permission to give it to anyone in MH they desire (e.g. CG leaders, worship leaders, etc.)

### **Promotions**

1. What marketing can be done to promote the series and who is responsible for executing on it (e.g. Press releases, postcards, Evites, mass mailings, radio, tv, print ads, posters in campuses, window treatments, banners on campuses, etc.)?
  - a. Ian Sanderson writes Press Release by January 4<sup>th</sup>. “We are putting people’s lives on Trial at MHC” Seeker insensitive.
  - b. Text based evites express a Warrant or Summons type situation, “you’ve been summoned to appear in the Trial of your Life”.
  - c. Mailers will not be globally utilized though they will be designed for each campus or Community Group to use as budget allows
  - d. Door knockers will be designed for campus or personal printing
  - e. Multi-sized Posters for download and printing
  - f. Computer Desktop Background
2. How can the main MH site be used for the series? Weekly Promos, Recent Sermon, Clips, Media Library enhancements to the Collection Preview Pages.
3. What weekly commercials on the MH site can keep the series promoted? Weekly Promos from Pastor Mark and 9 total video animations visualizing the overarching Trial theme and then each of the 8 life witnesses.
4. What viral marketing channels can be utilized to promote the series (e.g. Youtube, Facebook, t-shirts, bumperstickers, Itunes etc.)? At this time there is no plan to utilize new marketing channels specifically for this series.
5. What blogging will accompany the series, who will do it, and where will it be posted? Pastor Mark will write blog posts for the MH Blog covering the big idea each week.
6. What marketing can be done to promote the series and who is responsible for executing on it (e.g. Press releases, postcards, Evites, mass mailings, radio, tv, print ads, posters in campuses, window treatments, banners on campuses, etc.)? Graphics packs for campuses to print, the sermon series book will be a great piece to engage people, evites will be on the new series page,

window treatments, posters in campuses, door hangers will be made for campuses to print. These will all be completed by Patrick.

7. How can the main MH site be used for the series?  
Anthony is working on a new series page that will exist in the media library.  
  
Use the front page to show weekly commercials.
8. What weekly commercials on the MH site can keep the series promoted?  
Weekly previews of the next sermon.  
A longer video preview for each new witness.
9. What viral marketing channels can be utilized to promote the series (e.g. Youtube, Facebook, myspace, t-shirts, bumperstickers, Itunes etc.)?  
This series will be used to bolster the wide social network we already have. This is a missional sermon series, and it should be used to solidify our social media network as well as our congregation.  
Mike is working with Dustin to build a small volunteer team to increase interaction on facebook and twitter.
10. What blogging will accompany the series, who will do it, and where will it be posted?  
We should do a blog post for each of the 9 witnesses that can be used to drive traffic from the Resurgence to Mars Hill. Weekly blog post on [blog.marshillchurch.org](http://blog.marshillchurch.org) that gives notes and resources for further study.

### **Expansion**

1. What supplementary blogging needs to accompany the sermon series content from week to week?  
Ideally there would be a blog post each week with notes on the sermon and links to resources.
2. What are the online distribution channels for the series?  
The Mars Hill app is getting an upgrade by adding a series preview page. This will be significant in generating usage of the media library. Clips will be placed in the media library, Facebook, and Youtube.
3. Will the series be transcribed?  
The details are still in the works to get a contract with Logos to do this.
4. Will the series be published as a book?  
Possibly – no plans at this time.
5. What are the online distribution channels for the series? We will utilize the usual distribution channels – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, iTunes etc. We are looking into GodTube's new site as well as VideoTeaching.org and a new technology for video, flash based streaming.
6. Will the series be published as a book? Possibly, but this is not planned presently.

### **Additional Support**

1. What additional training needs to be done for church leaders in conjunction with the series? **Campus, Community Group and Worship Pastors will be hosted by P&T to go over all of the materials and vision for the series the week before we launch. P&T is looking into setting up a time for Pastor Mark to cast vision during and EE meeting as well as an All Staff Meeting.**
2. What additional conferences, books, or other resources could support the series? **None at this time.**

### **Campus Services**

1. How can the worship music serve the series? **At the close of the entire series we must have a celebratory, up-beat set to close on an up note.**

### **PR/Media Opportunities** **(These questions will be brainstormed with Ian Sanderson and the PR team at a later date)**

1. What possible media stories could the series generate for press releases?
2. What possible media attention positive and negative could the series generate?
3. What can be done in advance to head off potential negative reactions to the series?

### **Additional Thoughts or Ideas**

1. What else can be done to help get the word out for the series to attract people to each specific campus? **P&T would love to get feedback from Campus Pastors and their staff regarding this question. Please send any ideas you have to [aj@marshillchurch.org](mailto:aj@marshillchurch.org).**

## Part IV – 1-2 Peter Book Published in House

- Article 1 – Article on Peter by Pastor Mark
- Article 2 – Article on 1-2 Peter by Pastor Mark
- Article 3 – For Further Study Box by Pastor Mark
- Article 4 – Why to Join & How to Join Community Groups by Pastor Brad
- Article 5 – Community Group Questions by Pastor Brad
- Article 6 – Why and How of Family Bible Study by Pastor Mark
- Article 7 – Family Bible Study Questions by Pastor Mark
- Article 8 – 1-2 Peter Preaching Schedule

### **Article 1 – Article on Peter by Pastor Mark**

#### **Trial in the Life of Peter**

Peter.

He is arguably the easiest person to identify with in the Bible. No one in all of Scripture is as volatile and impulsive as Peter (cf. Matt. 14:28; Mark 14:29; Luke 5:8; John 21:7). On his worst days, he bossed Jesus around and denied even knowing him. On his best days, he wrote two books of the Bible and, according to church history, was crucified upside down at his own request because he did not believe he was worthy of dying as Jesus did.

Peter's life was filled with trials. After failing miserably with everything from cowardice in the gospels to racism in Acts, by God's grace he began to grow and change, showing that by God's grace anyone can become a world-changing servant of Jesus. In Peter, we see a normal disciple. Someone who really loves Jesus. Someone who really sins. Someone with whom God is patient as he grows and matures through his sin to love Jesus more and sin less. Perhaps this is why Jesus appointed him as the leader of the disciples as an example for all Christians. His imperfections are endearing and his progress is encouraging.

Peter's shadow looms over much of the New Testament. In the four lists of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13), Peter is always mentioned first because he is their recognized leader after Jesus. As their leader, Peter also acts as spokesman for the Twelve (Matt. 15:15; 18:21; Mark 1:36–37; 8:29; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29ff.; Luke 5:5; 12:41).

His father's name was Jonah (Matt. 16:17), he himself was married (Mark 1:30), and in his missionary days of evangelism and church planting his wife accompanied him (1 Cor. 9:5). The fourth Gospel gives Bethsaida, a largely Greek city, as his place of birth (John 1:44), but he also had a home in Capernaum in Galilee (Mark 1:21ff.). Both places were lakeside, where he worked as a fisherman, and in both there would be frequent contact with Gentiles. He spoke Aramaic with a strong accent (Mark 14:70), and knew Greek as his second language, as was common in that day. It is also likely that Peter

was influenced by John the Baptist's ministry (cf. Acts 1:22), since his brother Andrew was a disciple of John (John 1:39ff.).

## **Peter and Jesus**

Peter was first introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew (John 1:41). Peter was later called to be a follower of Jesus (Mark 1:16), and was eventually called to be among Jesus' twelve disciples (Mark 3:16ff.). Peter was also one of the three, along with James and John, who formed an inner circle around Jesus (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; cf. 13:3). This privileged access allowed Peter to be present with Jesus as much as anyone during his earthly ministry, including being an eyewitness to milestone events in world history. One such example is the day that Peter saw the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2–13). His experience in the inner circle was so significant in the life of Peter that he refers back to it as proof of the validity of his teaching about Jesus (1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:16).

It was as Jesus' disciple that Simon received his new title, the Aramaic *Kepha* ("Cephas"), which means "rock" or "stone" (1 Cor. 1:12; 15:5; Gal. 2:9), usually appearing in the New Testament in the Greek form *Petros*. According to John 1:42, Jesus conferred this title (not known as a personal name previously) at their first meeting. John's usual designation is "Simon Peter." Mark's gospel calls him "Simon" until 3:16, and "Peter" almost invariably thereafter.

Warren Wiersbe says, "Peter was a man with three names. Nearly fifty times in the New Testament, he is called 'Simon'; and often he is called 'Simon Peter.' Perhaps the two names suggest a Christian's two natures: an old nature (Simon) that is prone to fail, and a new nature (Peter) that can give victory. As Simon, he was only another human piece of clay; but Jesus Christ made a rock out of him!"<sup>iii</sup>

## **Jesus' Commission of Peter**

Matthew 16:16–19 records Jesus' commission of Peter:

Simon Peter replied [to Jesus], "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This section is one of the most debated passages of the entire New Testament and in some regards a dividing line between Protestant and Catholic opinions of the papacy.

Among Christians, there is still no unanimity in interpreting the passage. From early times two main interpretations have been held, with many variations.

The first opinion is that the rock is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ. This would mean that either Peter's faith or the confession of Peter's faith that Jesus is the Christ is in fact the "rock." This is a very early Christian interpretation. For example, the early church father Origen says, "Rock means every disciple of Christ." Therefore, in this view the function of the apostles (including Peter, who is nicknamed "the rock" by Jesus to emphasize this fact) is to have faith in Jesus as the Christ and declare that fact openly as the rock on which Christianity is founded. Echoing this interpretation is Ephesians 2:20, which says that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone."

The second opinion is that the rock is Peter himself. This is found almost as early as the other view as it is spoken of by the church father Tertullian. Its strength lies in the fact that Matthew 16:19 is in the singular, and must be addressed directly to Peter, even if, like Origen, we go on to say that to have Peter's faith and virtues is to have Peter's "keys."

The words to Peter about the "keys of the kingdom" should be contrasted with Matthew 23:13. There, Jesus said that the Pharisees had shut the door to the kingdom for people. Conversely, it would therefore make sense that Peter, in recognizing Jesus as the Son who is over the house and who holds the keys (cf. Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 21:25), finds them delivered to him (cf. Isa. 22:22) to open the kingdom. The "binding and loosing" here is addressed to Peter (Matt. 16:19), but elsewhere is assigned to all the apostles, showing that the authority Peter enjoyed was not his alone (cf. Matt. 18:18).

A final point worth mentioning is that even if this latter view of Jesus' commission of Peter is believed, the view does not endorse or even infer the subsequent teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Building upon this interpretation, the Catholic Church teaches that the Roman bishops are the successors of Peter and that in every generation the Catholic Church and pope essentially hold the keys to the kingdom.

## **Peter in the Apostolic Church**

The Bible records that following his resurrection from death, Jesus personally appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5). Also, the closing chapter of John's gospel reveals that in a painfully earnest moment following Peter's denial of Jesus and Jesus' resurrection from death, Jesus re-commissions Peter to pastoral ministry and the responsibility to "feed my sheep."

The book of Acts, which records the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church, shows that Peter is the leader of the early church prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:15ff.). Afterwards, he is the principal preacher (2:14ff.; 3:12ff.), the spokesman before the Jewish authorities (4:8ff.), and the president in the administration of discipline (5:3ff.). Though the church as a whole made a deep impression on the community, it was to Peter in particular that supernatural powers were attributed (5:15). In Samaria, the church's first mission field, the same leadership is exercised (8:14ff.).

Significantly, he is the first apostle to be associated with the Gentile mission, and is such by unmistakably providential means, as God forces Peter to extend gospel grace to non-Jews (10:1ff.; cf. 15:7ff.). This immediately brings criticism upon Peter (11:2ff.), and not for the last time. Galatians 2:11 gives us a glimpse of Peter at Antioch, the first church with a significant ex-pagan element, sharing table-fellowship with the Gentile converts, and then meeting a barrage of Jewish-Christian opposition, in the face of which he withdraws. In short, Peter acted like a hypocrite by preaching about the grace of God and then refusing to share it with non-Jewish Gentile Christians. As was his tendency, Peter did come to repentance and supported the full inclusion of Gentiles into Christianity without being burdened by Jewish custom and culture.

As evidence of his repentance, Peter readily recognized his mission to Jews and Paul's to Gentiles as part of the same ministry (Gal. 2:7ff.). Also, at the Jerusalem Council, Peter is recorded as the first to urge the full acceptance of the Gentiles on faith alone without additional Jewish customs such as circumcision (Acts 15:7ff.).

Peter's career after the death of Stephen in Acts 7 is hard to trace. The references to him in Joppa, Caesarea, and elsewhere suggest that he undertook missionary work in Palestine (with Jesus' brother James no doubt now assuming leadership in Jerusalem). He was imprisoned in Jerusalem, and on his miraculous escape he left for "another place" (Acts 12:17). Attempts to identify this place are hopeless. We know that he went to Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff.); he may have gone to Corinth, though probably not for long (1 Cor. 1:12). He is closely associated with Christians in Northern Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1), and possibly the prohibition on Paul's entry into Bithynia (Acts 16:7) was due to the fact that Peter was at work there. Peter's residence in Rome has been disputed, but on insufficient grounds. First Peter was almost certainly written from there because he calls it "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13). First Peter shows signs of being written just before the Neronian persecution, and 1 Clement 5 implies that, like Paul, he died in this outburst.<sup>iv</sup> Concerning the death of Peter, Bible commentator Karen Jobes writes: "There is virtual unanimity that the apostle Peter died in Rome in the mid-60s during the reign of Emperor Nero."<sup>v</sup>

### **Peter the Author**

While some critics argue that Peter is not the author of the letters bearing his name, the evidence against such critics is more than sufficient. They are prone to argue that he could not have written the letter based on Acts 4:13, which says that Peter was not formally educated. However, this charge is not credible for five reasons.

First, Peter is described in Acts 4:13 as "uneducated," and the style of Greek in which the letter is written is said to be too good for a Galilean fisherman to have used. Also, quotations in 1 and 2 Peter are taken from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, rather than the Hebrew version. The style is, however, not so "educated" as some would like to make out and in places it is much more the language of ordinary people. There is evidence that in

Peter's time, Greek, as well as Aramaic, was spoken in Galilee, and as a fisherman living in Capernaum on one of the great trade routes, he would have had to speak Greek regularly. The fact that his own brother's name, Andrew, is a Greek one suggests that from boyhood Peter grew up with this language. Some thirty years' work of evangelism and teaching in a church that contained an increasing proportion of Gentiles would have made him more fluent in Greek and prepared to quote the Septuagint. Furthermore, the charge in Acts 4:13 comes from Peter's critics and may not in fact be true; opponents are prone to lie, as exemplified by the advertising that accompanies every modern-day election.

Furthermore, even if Peter was not formally educated, it does not logically follow that he lacked the intelligence to pen the letter. As an example, Bill Gates was not formally educated in college but nonetheless has succeeded because of his intellect. In Peter's day, his first language was likely Aramaic, and Greek (in which the letter was originally written) was probably his second language, and that fact alone is indicative that he was intelligent.

Second, 1 Peter 5:12 says, "By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." While there is a question as to whether or not Silvanus was the courier or co-author of the letter, it is certainly possible that Peter had writing and editing assistance. In addition, Silvanus was seemingly a very capable man as he is noted as a senior leader in the early church (Acts 15:22) and a prophet of God (Acts 15:32).

Third, the internal evidence of both 1 and 2 Peter emphatically states that Peter is the author of both letters. First Peter 1:1 begins by saying, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." In 1 Peter 5:1 the author claims to be "a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." Second Peter 1:1 opens by saying, "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Second Peter 1:16–18 says of the author's presence at the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ,

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

As well as this direct evidence that Peter the apostle was the author, the letter frequently alludes to the life and teaching of Jesus, which Peter was present to witness. Subsequently, the verdict of F. H. Chase is that "no Epistle has caught so much of the spirit of Jesus."<sup>vi</sup>

Fourth, from the language of 1 Peter 4:14–16, some have built a case to suggest that the letter was written at a time when the very fact of being a Christian was a crime, and this is known not to have been the case until long after Peter's death. Peter's argument in 1 Peter 2–4, however, is that Christians must take care to live an innocent life so that if they are falsely accused, such slander will be without foundation. The book of Acts reveals that from the earliest

days, misunderstanding, personal prejudices, and rejection of the gospel could lead to persecution because of the name of Christ (e.g., 13:50; 14:5, 19; 16:19–24; 17:5, 13; 18:12–13; 19:23–29). In fact, Peter’s own words suggest that he was speaking only about individual and not state-sponsored persecution of Christians (1 Pet. 2:13–14). The relationship between the church and the authorities indicated in the letter is basically the same as in Acts, which also precedes the horrendous and murderous persecution that was inflicted upon Christians in the time of Nero some years later.

Fifth, 2 Peter 3:1 reveals that the author of 2 Peter is in fact the same person who wrote 1 Peter: “This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.” Despite some scholarly doubt concerning the authorship of 2 Peter, David H. Wheaton writes:

The writer leaves us in no doubt on the matter. He says he is “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). He was on the mount of Transfiguration with Jesus (1:16–18) where only Peter, James and John were with him (Mk. 9:2–12). He had written on a previous occasion to the recipients of this letter (3:1) and is on familiar terms with them (3:1, 8, 14, 17). Furthermore, he calls Paul “our dear brother” (3:15), and at the time of writing he was expecting to die quite soon (1:14).<sup>vii</sup>

Furthermore, the early church consistently recognized Peter as the author of the two letters bearing his name. This includes Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, among others. Simply, 1 and 2 Peter were penned by Peter. D. A. Carson calls Peter Achtemeier’s commentary on 1 Peter “the fullest commentary in English at the exegetical level” and “a masterpiece of careful scholarship.”<sup>viii</sup> Thus, the greatest technical commentator on 1 and 2 Peter concludes, “The majority of the evidence, both external and internal, would appear to support the traditional view that Peter the apostle wrote this letter.”<sup>ix</sup>

## **Article 2 – Article on 1 and 2 Peter by Pastor Mark**

### **Trial: Nine Life Witnesses from 1 and 2 Peter**

*“This epistle of Peter is one of the grandest of the New Testament, and it is the true, pure gospel. For Peter . . . inculcates the true doctrine of faith—how Christ has been given to us, who takes away our sins and saves us.” — Martin Luther*

Peter’s two letters are a mere 166 verses. Nonetheless, they are packed with keen wisdom from a seasoned pastor about how to live amidst life’s trials in light of the person and work of Jesus, who also suffered unjustly.

As the opening lines of 1 Peter indicate, he is writing to a multi-campus church scattered over a wide geographic region. The ancient cities of “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” were located in modern-day Turkey.

Bible commentator Karen Jobes says, “This is a vast area of approximately 129,000 square miles. . . . (As a comparison, the state of California covers about 159,000 square miles.)”<sup>x</sup> She goes on to say,

The residents practiced many religions, spoke several languages, and were never really assimilated into the Greco-Roman culture. . . . And yet this untamed region became the cradle of Christianity. . . . We may surmise that, in no small part because of this letter and the faithfulness of those who received it, well-established churches flourished in all five of these regions by AD 180. Their bishops attended the great councils of the second through the fourth centuries, where the doctrines were forged that Christians hold dear yet today.<sup>xi</sup>

### **Where and when were 1 and 2 Peter written?**

In 1 Peter 5:13 Peter says he is writing from “Babylon.” This seems like a reference to the local church in Babylon, but it is unlikely that Peter would have gone to the former capital of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire. This is because by Peter’s time it was a sparsely inhabited ruin (fulfilling Isaiah 14:23). In Revelation 16:19 and 17:5, “Babylon” is used as a cryptic name for Rome, and Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24 (most likely written in Rome) show that Mark was there with Paul.

In 2 Timothy 4:11, Mark is in Asia Minor, and Paul sends for him to come, most probably to Rome. The fact that neither Peter nor Paul mentions the other in the list of those sending greetings from Rome merely suggests that they were not together at the time of writing their letters. All this points to the theory that Peter was writing from Rome, which is supported by the evidence of Tertullian<sup>xii</sup> and Eusebius.<sup>xiii</sup>

Regarding when 1 and 2 Peter were written, a date in the reign of Nero (AD 54–68) would seem best. Since Peter makes no reference to Paul’s martyrdom, which is thought to have taken place during the outburst of persecution in Rome in 64, the letter was probably written before then (see also 1

Peter 2:13). Links with other writings are thought to suggest a date after 60. So far as we can draw any conclusions from the evidence, the letters were probably written c. 63–64.

### **Why were 1 and 2 Peter written?**

The churches and Christians who received Peter's letter would have been tremendously honored and encouraged at the willingness of such a noteworthy Christian leader to take the time, although he had never even met them, to speak into their life with practical pastoral affection. Also, the fact that Peter took the time to pen not one but two letters indicates that there were serious concerns that had escalated to the point of urgency.

The original audience of 1 Peter was a suffering audience. What was the nature of this suffering? Jobes writes, "Virtually all commentators understand the persecutions referred to in 1 Peter to be sporadic, personal, and unorganized social ostracism of Christians with varying intensity, probably reinforced at the local level by the increasing suspicions of Roman officials at all levels."<sup>xiv</sup>

Bible commentator Peter Achtemeier agrees that the persecution in 1 Peter is

due more to unofficial harassment than to official policy, more local than regional, and more at the initiation of the general populace as the result of a reaction against the lifestyle of the Christians than at the initiation of Roman officials because of some general policy of seeking out and punishing Christians. That does not rule out the possibility that persecutions occurred over large areas of the empire; they surely did, but they were spasmodic and broke out at different times in different places, the result of the flare-up of local hatreds rather than because Roman officials were engaged in the regular discharge of official policy.<sup>xv</sup>

Peter's underlying concern was about what we today call tolerance, diversity, and religious pluralism. Subsequently, the letters, although a few thousand years old, are incredibly timely to our current culture in which Christians are welcome to love Jesus so long as they agree that other religions and spiritualities are equally valid, do nothing to discourage others from patronizing their spiritualities and religions by speaking against them or evangelizing people, and are willing to actively participate as requested with practitioners of other religions and spiritualities so as to be loving, tolerant, and non-judgmental in the eyes of the world. One wonders if they also had an ancient great-grandmother of Oprah on their televisions in Bithynia.

Christianity spread to the region where Peter's letter was originally sent as those converted to Jesus at the Pentecost holiday recorded in Acts 2:9 returned to their hometowns. Following regeneration by God the Holy Spirit, their minds, desires, and actions changed, which made them unpopular with mainstream culture. They would have looked to Peter as something of a spiritual father

because the first converts from their area who brought the message of Jesus were converted under Peter's evangelistic sermon in Acts 2.

The unpopularity of Christians was in large part due to the fact that their moral conduct had changed. The Christians were no longer willing to eat too much, drink too much, party sinfully, or engage in sex outside of marriage (1 Pet. 4:1–4). Those who had known them and enjoyed sinning with them prior to their conversion to Jesus considered their life change negatively. The drinking buddies who lost their wingmen and the boyfriends who got dumped by their live-in girlfriends who moved out to walk with Jesus were not pleased with the influence Christianity was having on their friends because it was upsetting their own life.

The unpopularity of Christians was also due to the fact that their devotion to Jesus above everyone and everything else caused them to be viewed as subversive people overturning long-held familial and cultural norms. Simply, once people became Christians, their lifestyle changed and they stopped worshiping the gods of their empire, city, trade guild, or family.

In that day, paying religious homage to the gods and goddesses of the nation was akin to waving a flag or saying the pledge of allegiance in our cultural context. So, when the Christians refused to participate in any religious homage, worship, or devotion to the state gods, they were seen as unpatriotic.

Cities had their own gods and goddesses who were honored in various city-wide events and considered a unifying aspect of culture that brought people together. So, when Christians refused to be involved in any city-wide events that included honoring gods and goddesses other than Jesus Christ, they were seen as bad neighbors.

Various professions were held together by trade guilds, akin to our unions, that included meetings with religious rites and ceremonies dedicated to various gods and goddesses. So, when Christians refused to participate in any religious aspects of their trade guild, they were considered unprofessional. They were likely even demoted or terminated from their job, suffering financial loss for their unyielding devotion to Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, families were held together in large part by religious traditions that included holiday parties and meals dedicated to various gods and goddesses who were honored by the family at both home and temple events. So, when Christians refused to participate in these kinds of holiday events, they were considered disrespectful to their families.

### **How does 1 and 2 Peter relate to us today?**

The truth is that the people in that day were not generally loyally devoted to their gods and goddesses. Rather, the gods and goddesses were simply part of the cultural tradition. This would be akin to the spiritual customs and traditions in our own day that have some vague spiritual connection. To help illustrate this point, I will use some examples from my own pastoral experience.

One woman was raised in a family that celebrated Halloween as a major holiday, complete with her parents' home being decorated up with witches, skeletons, spider webs, and more. The entire family would gather at the home

dressed up as witches, warlocks, and the like to hand out candy to the neighborhood children. They also set up a false graveyard and a small haunted house in which they showed fake murders and other things intended to frighten children. Upon her conversion, the woman (who was by this time a mother with her own young children) refused to dress up like a witch, dress her daughter up like a witch, and participate with her extended family in their annual Halloween celebration. As a result, her family regularly criticized her, exerting pressure on her to coexist with the rest of the family by violating her Christian conscience.

A man who was baptized as an infant in a very dead church that was as likely to preach the gospel as a man is to get pregnant, grew up as a non-Christian whose family virtually never entered church other than for weddings and funerals. Later in life, he was saved and grew quickly as a Bible-believing Christian. He married a godly woman and God blessed them with a healthy, beautiful baby boy. His non-Christian parents pressured him to have the baby baptized in the church they never attended as a sort of superstitious rite; they wrongly believed that by baptizing the baby he would automatically go to heaven if he died as an infant. The man lovingly tried to explain to his parents that he would do no such thing because it was not his church and he did not share their beliefs. Eventually, the entire extended family formed something of an alliance against him as each of them had had their own children baptized in the parents' church even though none of them was living as a Christian. He lovingly and graciously held his ground but was in many ways ostracized by his entire family and his deeply hurt parents even threatened to cut him out of his inheritance for dishonoring them.

The threat that Peter responds to is one that we face in our own day. That threat is that Christians will fold under trial, as Peter often did until God put some steel in his spine. Second Timothy 3:12 promises, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Sometimes this persecution is life-threatening, or even life-taking. This degree of persecution broke out a few years after Peter penned his letters, when the madman Emperor Nero burned Christians alive as torches for his parties, threw them into the arena to be killed by gladiators and eaten by lions, and killed their pastors including Paul and Peter. In this way, Peter's reference to "fiery trials" may in fact have been a very literal warning of impending persecution. Still, the kind of persecution faced by Christians is more frequently the kind that 1 and 2 Peter address.

In a word, the Christians were marginalized as weirdos. They were weirdos who loved Jesus so much that they lived their life and viewed their faith in a way that made them holy, or different, than other people. Because they would not get drunk, sleep around, or practice other religions and spiritualities—or even endorse such things by their approval—they were viewed by everyone else as basically just plain weird, and way too serious about Jesus.

Subsequently, they suffered shame, discrimination, mockery, half-truths, lies, vicious rumors, slander, harassment, abuse, economic persecution, rejection, and mob violence on occasion, although such persecution was not yet state sponsored. Basically, Christians stepped out to live with, for, like, and to Jesus. In response, the world pushed back and tried to get them to go back in

the closet with a private faith that did not affect their external life and role in the greater culture. Thus, and this point is vital to a correct understanding of Peter's letters, they were suffering not because of their sin but rather because of their faithful devotion to Jesus.

However, they were wavering in their devotion. Like so many college students who weary of being mocked by their professors for being Bible-believing Christians, husbands who are mocked for not looking at porn or partying with their buddies, wives who forego a professional career to stay at home and be a wife and mother, singles who are the butt of jokes at the office for waiting until marriage to have sex, and net surfers who can't stomach one more nasty blog or negative news story about their faith and church, their resolve was tried. They responded in one of four ways.

One, some were enticed by the limp-wristed liberal route of compromise. They wanted to cut out—or at least explain away—the parts of the Bible that they were being criticized for holding fast to. In our day, this would be most typified by the mainline liberal Christian denominations with pastors who endorse all religions and spiritualities under the oversight of unsaved bishops who appreciate their tolerance, pluralism, and minds so open that their brains fall out. This is one of the central issues contended with in 2 Peter.

Two, some were compelled to privatize their faith. Sure, in private they would pray to and worship Jesus. But in public they would shut their mouths and keep their faith to themselves so as to not be considered the weirdo for Jesus on the block, possibly even putting a rainbow triangle sticker on their camel in an effort to be considered normal and left alone.

Three, some were considering junking their faith altogether. They were tired of being the butt of jokes in the press and on the late-night talk shows and wearied of being the Jesus freaks. Why? Because most people simply do not like being the oddball, misfit, and outcast—especially those who are young and want to be cool and those who are old with privileged social positions to uphold.

Four, still others were attracted to the fighting posture of fundamentalism. They were preparing to separate from the culture, set up their own subculture, defend themselves, and talk trash about the non-Christians who were criticizing them, all in the name of a culture war.

### **What role does trial play in Christian faith?**

With a steady hand, the now-seasoned Pastor Peter penned Spirit-inspired wise counsel. His big idea was that Christians are “exiles” on mission for Jesus in a world that is not their home. Subsequently, their life is filled with trial. God uses trial for much good in us, for us, and through us. In particular, Peter gives us four guiding principles for Christian trial:

#### Principle #1 – Our life is a trial.

- “You have been grieved by various *trials*, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is *tested* by

- fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 1:6–7)
- “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery *trial* when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” (1 Pet. 4:12)
  - “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from *trials*.” (2 Pet. 2:9)

Principle #2 – We are to live in light of God’s judgment trial at the end.

- “And if you call on him as Father who *judges* impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.” (1 Pet. 1:17)
- “They will give account to him who is ready to *judge* the living and the dead.” (1 Pet. 4:5)

Principle #3 – Like Jesus we are to live in worship to God and witness to others in the midst of trial.

- “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” (1 Pet. 2:23)

Principle #4 – Trial in life is a purposeful opportunity for our sanctification, worship, and witness to God’s glory and our joy.

- “. . . in the *sanctification* of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ . . .” (1 Pet. 1:2)
- “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in *praise and glory and honor* at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and *rejoice with joy* that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” (1 Pet. 1:6–8)
- “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may *see your good deeds* and glorify God on the day of visitation.” (1 Pet. 2:12)
- “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile *your good behavior* in Christ may be put to shame.” (1 Pet. 3:15–16)
- “But *rejoice* insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also *rejoice* and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (1 Pet. 4:13)
- “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to *his eternal glory* in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” (1 Pet. 5:10)

- “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.” (2 Pet. 1:3)
- “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2 Pet. 3:18)

In summary, trials come to all Christians. Trials come without warning. Trials do not necessarily come one at a time, and sometimes it feels like we're at war on every front for the simple reason that we are. Trials can repeat, which means that just because you've lived through it does not mean that it is over. Trials range in severity and duration from the momentary annoyance to lifelong anguish.

Still, as Peter will show us, every trial is either from God's hand or through God's hand. Thus, if we embrace trials as an opportunity from God, they can and do result in his glory and our good. Furthermore, each trial that we face is a witness to the genuineness of our faith, to reassure us that God has saved us, and reveal to others the difference that salvation makes.

As a final point, Peter's own words serve as a matchless closing exhortation, which is the purpose of this entire series. In 1 Peter 5:12 he says, “I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.”

### **Article 3 – For Further Study (Box in Handout) by Pastor Mark**

#### Technical Commentaries

- Peter Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (421 pages)
- Karen Jobes *1 Peter* (384 pages)
- Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (377 pages)

#### Non-technical Commentaries

- I Howard Marshall *1 Peter* (184 pages)
- Edmund Clowney *1 Peter* (234 pages)
- Wayne Grudem *1 Peter* (239 pages)
- Thomas Schreiner *1-2 Peter, Jude* (400 pages)

#### Simple Bible Study Guides

- 1 Peter: A Navpress Bible Study - The Lifechange Series (144 pages)
- 2 Peter and Jude - The Lifechange Series (144 pages)

## **Article 4 – Community Groups by Pastor Brad**

### **What is a Community Group?**

Community Groups (CG) are small gatherings of people (Christian and non) that meet regularly for friendship, accountability, study and prayer, laughter, and occasionally tears. CG are an essential expression of the mission of Mars Hill Church where we learn more about Jesus and life together. CG are the place where we wrestle with the truths of the Bible and encourage one another toward the life that God intends for us.

Each CG is unique, as it reflects the neighborhood in which it exists and people who attend. However, you can expect a weekly gathering in a residence that involves food, conversation, prayer, discussion for applying the Bible to practical living, and service in the neighborhood. At the heart of each CG is the desire to see an authentic community marked by love for Jesus, one another, and their neighborhood.

### **Why should I join a Community Group?**

The God of the Bible is a Trinitarian God who is one and three persons Father, Son and Spirit. God has made us in his image which means we are made for community and friendship. And, when we are not living in community we suffer because life in a sinful world is too complex and tempting to journey alone. Therefore, CG are a place where we can live in relationship with one another through the ups and downs of life.

### **How do I get connected to a Community Group?**

The easiest way to get connected is to stop by the kiosk before or after the service you attend at your Mars Hill Church campus. The volunteers will personally walk you through the process and connect you to a group. That will include joining “The City” which is our safe online social network. If you are already on “The City”, you can click the Community Group Tile or search for a group under the “more” tab. Now is a great time for you to begin to participate in the community of Mars Hill and we are glad to welcome you.

## **Article 5 – Community Group Questions by Pastor Brad**

## Witness #1 – Trial

January 11, 2009 1 Peter 1:1-2 Trial and Sin

Big idea: Peter writes this letter to believers scattered throughout modern day Turkey reminding them that they belong to God. Their faith and their circumstances are intentional and have a purpose even in the midst of trial. By remembering we belong to a loving and sovereign God allows us to find peace and purpose in every circumstance; giving us strength to press onward toward sanctification and obedience to Jesus.

Dinner provocation:

What does it mean to be citizens of the Kingdom of God?

Understanding the text:

Who is the original audience for Peter's Letter?

What does it mean to be the elect?

Verse 1 calls them elect exiles (ESV- sometimes translated strangers or aliens), what does it mean to be an exile or an alien?

What does verse 2 say about the purpose of our election?

How do the persons of the Trinity participate in this purpose?

Read exodus 24: 1-8, what is the significance of sprinkling with blood?

Bringing it Home:

In what ways are we like Peter's original audience?

How does idea of being an alien, a citizen of a different kingdom, resonate and how does it feel abstract?

How does our identity shape our interpretation of our circumstances?

Where have you become too at home in this world?

How do those things compete with the purpose of our election?

How does election express the love and compassion of God?

In what ways do you feel encouraged to respond to God's love?

January 18, 2009 1 Peter 1:3-9 Trial and Jesus

Big Idea: Despite our circumstances, we have confidence in Jesus, and our inheritance of eternal life through him, that eclipses the temporal trials of life. In fact, these trials serve as a purification of faith that results in the glorification of Jesus.

Dinner provocation:

What is our inheritance?

Understanding the text:

What is the living hope we are born in to? Why is the resurrection so significant with regard to our hope in Jesus?

How does Peter describe our inheritance?

What is the significance of the words, imperishable, undefiled and unfading?

What is different about the way Peter uses the term salvation in this passage?

To what does Peter attribute the purpose of trials in our life?

How does our tested faith result in glory and honor?

What is the connection between faith, joy and salvation?

Bringing it Home:

What does it look like for hope to transform the way you live?

In the midst of trial are you more apt to desire comfort or the "tested genuineness of your faith"?

How have you seen your faith tested and Christ glorified through trials in your life?

How do express your love for Jesus?  
How is the inexpressible joy of verse 8 manifested in your life?  
What things in your life, or issues of identity, subdue that joy?

January 25, 2009 1 Peter 1:10-12 Trial and Scripture

Big Idea: As Peter continues to encourage believers in the midst of trial he reminds us that the Scriptures were written in anticipation of the coming Christ, but we have seen the scriptures fulfilled in Jesus. Therefore, we should be that much more encouraged and resolute in the promises of God.

Dinner Provocation:  
How does our perspective in redemptive history affect our faith?

Understanding the Text:  
What does Peter mean by the “grace that was to be [ours]”?  
What were the prophets trying to discern?  
Who was the author of their writings?  
What is meant by the idea that they were serving us and not themselves?  
Explain the good news that has been revealed to you by the Holy Spirit.

Bringing it Home:  
What are the implications that we have been given more grace than the prophets?  
What is the significance that angels long to look into the things announced to you?  
How have you been served by the writers of the Bible?  
In the midst of trial, where do you look first for comfort?  
How does understanding the scriptures give you hope during suffering?  
Describe a time when you have gone to scripture for comfort in the middle of a trial and found peace in God?  
How is God’s character reflected in the gift of Scripture?

### **Witness #2 – Temptation**

February 1, 2009 1 Peter 1:13-21 Temptation from Sin

Big Idea: In light of God’s gift of revelation, we are called to turn away from sin and temptation and live holy lives of obedience. We can do this because of the death and resurrection of Jesus that gives life to our faith and hope.

Dinner Provocation:  
What does it mean to fear God?

Understanding the Text:  
Recap what the “Therefore” in this text is referring to.  
Why should we fear God?  
What are the futile ways of inheritance?  
Why did Jesus humble himself and come into human history?  
How have we been spared from eternal judgment?  
What was the cost of our salvation?

Bringing it Home:  
What are you setting your hope on that is not Jesus?  
Why does Peter balance the idea of “setting your mind for action” and being “sober minded”?  
What are the passions of your former ignorance?  
How does our sin reflect the true objects of our hope?  
How does your life reflect or not reflect a healthy fear of God?

What does it look like to live a holy life? What are the obstacles that you face?  
Describe the futile ways of salvation that God has ransomed you from?  
How does that affect your compassion for those in your neighborhood that don't believe?  
What would your life look like if it were a testimony to your gratitude for salvation?

February 8, 2009 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 Temptation from Hypocrisy

Big Idea: Through the new birth in Christ we are called to love one another as a testimony to the love and grace of God. When we fail to live this way our lives preach a false gospel.

Dinner Provocation:

How does our treatment of one another reflect our faith in Christ?

Understanding the Text:

Why does Peter tie obedience with purification of our souls?

What is the expected outworking of that obedience?

What does John 17 tell us about the purpose for loving one another?

What is the imperishable seed through which we have been born?

What is the connection between the proclaimed word and living out our faith in community?

How does abiding in the word of God help us to love one another?

What is hypocrisy?

What is the implication of a life filled with 1 Pet 2:1?

Read Psalm 34. What is implied by the question at the end of this passage?

Bringing it Home:

How has your faith in Jesus changed the way you relate to people?

What gospel are you preaching with your relationships today?

What opportunities do we have to love one another as a community?

How is hypocrisy a temptation?

Where are you holding on to bitterness despite the gospel?

What issues of hypocrisy do we need to deal with as a community?

What are the things that you long for in your life?

How can we encourage one another to a renewed longing for spiritual milk?

February 15, 2009 1 Peter 2:4-12 Temptation from Worldliness

Big Idea: As a believer, you have been chosen by God to be set apart as a holy priesthood to reflect His glory. As such we are challenged to rise to the level of our calling by resisting the temptation of worldliness that seeks to defile our reputation and the gospel.

Dinner Provocation:

What does it mean to be "living stones of a spiritual house"?

Understanding the Text:

What is a corner stone?

What is the function of the priesthood?

How do we expect people to react to the truth of the gospel?

What does it mean that Jesus would be stumbling block?

What titles are we given in verse 9, and what is the significance of each?

Why is important to maintain a good reputation with unbelievers?

Bringing it Home:

In what ways are you surprised by the lofty designs for your life?

Does it bother you that Jesus would be stumbling block for people? Explain.  
What darkness has Christ called you out of? What does the light look like in your life?  
Who were you before you received His mercy?  
What are the passions of the flesh that wage war with your soul?  
How does your identity help or hinder your battle against these things?  
Why does worldliness have such a damaging effect on our reputation with nonbelievers?  
What is your reputation with nonbelievers in you life?  
What is our reputation with nonbelievers as a community?

### **Witness #3 – Submission**

February 22, 2009 1 Peter 2:13-17 Submission to Godly Authority

Big Idea: Peter explains how this living as God's people applies to civil authority. Peter calls us to submit to authority and live as servants of God.

Dinner Provocation:

What is the place for government and its authority in the story of God?

Understanding the Text:

Revisit the previous passages, what was Peter calling us to in those verses?  
How does he apply living as God's people to civil authority?  
What is the expectation of governing authorities?  
What is the product of doing good and submission to authority?  
How are expected to use our freedom?  
How is verse 17 slightly subversive with regard to honoring the emperor?  
How does it put God in his right place of authority?

Bringing it Home:

How is our response to authority a reflection on our faith?  
What or who has authority over you?  
What is your attitude toward people in authority?  
What are some ways that we can do good in our neighborhood as a community?  
How can our freedom be used to cover up evil?  
When is it appropriate to disobey civil authority?  
How does Peters commands to submit challenge your view of authority?

March 1, 2009 – Mark Gone – see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

Big idea: A major theme in Peter's letters is the reality of the Sovereignty of God and how that informs our lives and our faith.

Dinner provocation:

What does it mean that God is Sovereign?

Understanding the text:

Look up passages that speak to Gods Sovereignty: (1 Pet.1:2,4,20 1:25; 4:11; 5:10.)  
What do these passages indicate about Gods Sovereignty?  
Look up passages that indicate Gods presence: (1 Pet. 1:3, 5, 17, 23, 3:12, Ps 34:12-16)  
What do these passages indicate about God's Sovereignty?

Bringing it Home:

How do the passages above work together to give you a picture of Sovereignty?  
Which of these verses challenge your idea of what Sovereignty is?  
What is comforting to you about God's Sovereignty?

What do these scripture reveal about God's character and compassion?  
How do you attempt to exert your own sovereignty in your life?  
What doubts do you have about God keep you from resting in his sovereignty?  
What truths from Scripture help you to put those doubts to death?

March 8, 2009 1 Peter 2:18-25 Submission to Ungodly Authority  
· *Daylight Savings Time*

Big Idea: How should we respond to ungodly authority? Jesus provides our example and gives us inspiration to endure hardship.

Dinner Provocation:

What credit is it if you endure a beating for a sin you committed?

Understanding the Text:

How does addressing submission to unjust masters give Peters audience perspective?

What is the difference between suffering unjustly and suffering for sins we commit?

Why does God call some into this type of suffering?

How did Jesus respond to unjust authority?

Why did Jesus respond in this way?

How did Jesus' death change our relationship with sin? What ability did we attain?

Why did Jesus have to suffer unjustly and die on the cross?

Bringing it Home:

Where in your life are you subject to authority that is unjust?

How does our reaction to authority preach the gospel?

What does it look like for you to entrust yourself to God in the midst of unjust treatment?

What does it mean to "die to sin"?

Where in your life do you need to entrust your life to Jesus and die to sin?

How has Jesus healed you by His wounds?

Describe how Jesus is your Shepherd and Overseer.

#### **Witness #4 – Marriage**

March 15, 2009 1 Peter 3:1-6 Marriage and Women

Big Idea: This week we will focus on the spirit of the wife toward her husband and its ability to preach the gospel.

Dinner Provocation:

What is the purpose of submission in marriage?

Understanding the Text:

Who's husband should a wife be subject? Why is that significant?

What is one of the goals of wives submitting to their husbands?

How are foolish husbands best won over to righteousness?

What is the difference between internal and external adornment?

What was Sarah asked to do that called her to submit to Abraham?

What would have been frightening to Sarah?

Bringing it Home:

Why does this statement by Peter stir up so much controversy in our culture?

What are the distortions about headship and submission that pervert it?

How have you seen conduct have a greater effect than words?

What is a quiet and gentle spirit?  
How is this idea counter cultural in our world today?  
In what way is submission to ones husband an internal adornment?  
What do you spend more time on adorning, internal or external?  
How is your fear subdued by obedience to God or heightened by disobedience?

March 22, 2009 1 Peter 3:7 Marriage and Men

Big Idea: Marriage is reflection of our understanding of the gospel. As such, husbands have a responsibility to love and honor their wives in response to the gospel and the sake of their ministry.

Dinner Provocation:  
How does a husband go about understanding his wife?

Understanding the Text:  
What are the responsibilities of the husband toward his wife?  
What does it mean that the woman is a weaker vessel?  
Think through the idea of being heirs of the grace of life?  
How does this passage support the idea that men and women are equal but different?  
What effect does a man's behavior and attitude have on his ministry?

Bringing it Home:  
Husbands: where do you need to grow in your understanding of your wife?  
How does your behavior preach the gospel to your wife and others?  
What does showing honor to your wife look like?  
How does your answer to that question differ from your wife's?  
What does it look like to treat your spouse as an "heir with you of the grace of life"?  
How does your attitude and behavior affect your prayer life and ministry?  
How does the way you treat your wife reveal your relationship with Jesus?

### **Witness #5 – Suffering**

March 29, 2009 1 Peter 3:8-17 Suffering to Bless

Big Idea: It is better to do God's will and suffer than to do evil. Suffering is a part of life, so let us be prepared to suffer well, in community, for the sake of Christ, through which we will receive blessing...even if not in this world.

Dinner Discussion:  
How can suffering be a blessing?

Understanding the Text:  
Discuss how we are called to live in community?  
Why does peter contrast repaying evil with evil and blessing?  
How have we been called to such a counter cultural idea of response to evil?  
What is the relationship of doing good and suffering?  
Who receives blessing from suffering for righteousness?  
How are we to use the truth of the gospel in dealing with suffering for Jesus?  
Why is it important to suffer well when suffering for the sake of righteousness?

Application:  
Give an example of when you had to suffer for the sake of righteousness?  
What are the temptations you face when you are suffering for righteousness?  
What are the consequences if you give in to those temptations?

What does it look like to repay evil with blessing?  
Do you tend to desire good days and the face of the lord or revenge when hurt by others?  
How have used the truth that is not in line with Peter's exhortation?  
How do you practically "set apart Christ as Lord" in your life?  
What is the difference between shaming someone and letting your behavior put them to shame?  
When have you received blessing through suffering?

#### April 5, 2009 1 Peter 3:18-22 Suffering to Learn

Big Idea: Jesus suffered that we might be brought to God and receive new life. As we suffer for righteousness we can find strength in the truth that Jesus did the same and was victorious over evil.

Dinner Discussion:

How does the Resurrection affect our confidence in the face of suffering?

Understanding the Text:

What was the result of Jesus' suffering?

What does Peter mean by us being put to death in flesh and made alive in the Spirit?

What is the significance of Jesus proclaiming to the spirits?

Why does Peter draw a similarity between Noah and baptism in this passage?

What does it mean that Jesus is at the right hand of God?

Who and what is now subject to Jesus? What are the implications of this?

Application:

In what tangible ways have you put your flesh to death and been made alive in the Spirit?

Read Romans 6:2-4: how does our baptism connect us with Christ's suffering?

How does the victory of Jesus encourage you in your faith?

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you personally?

How does your life testify to the fact that Jesus is on the Throne?

What other things compete for space on that throne in your life?

How does the image of verse 22 inspire your worship of Jesus?

#### April 12 1 Peter 1:3 Born Again

Big idea: We have been born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus. This week we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death and the hope that we have through Him.

Dinner Discussion:

What does it mean to be born again?

Understanding the text:

What does verse 3 indicate as the cause of being born again?

Read John 3:1-21: What does Jesus tell Nicodemus about being born again?

Read John 11:17-27: what does Jesus say about the resurrection?

Application:

What is your reaction to the idea that God caused you to be born again?

Why do you think Nicodemus had such a hard time understanding the idea of being born again?

What hang-ups do you share with Nicodemus?

What is the hope that we have in Jesus through his resurrection?

How would you describe a "living hope"?

How is your life marked by this kind of hope?

April 19, 2009 1 Peter 4:1-11 Suffering to Serve

Big Idea: Suffering against the temptations of the flesh offers us an opportunity to think of others and serve them with the gift given us from God.

Dinner Discussion:

How does love cover a multitude of sins?

Understanding the Text:

How has Jesus provided us an example of suffering in the flesh?

What is our temptation as Christians with regard to our old ways of living?

How will those that malign you be held accountable for their actions?

What comfort is verse 6 for those who never see reward in this life for righteous living?

What does it mean that love covers a multitude of sins?

How should our understanding of the gospel inform our conviction about community?

Why does God give us spiritual gifts?

Application:

What does it mean to suffer in the flesh like Jesus?

What things in culture do you need to reject that will set you apart among your friends?

How can you reject those things in loving way to your friends who don't know Jesus?

What does living for the will of God look like in your life?

What worldly behavior do you need to repent of today?

Are you self controlled and sober minded?

Why does Peter command us to love one another?

Is community optional for Christians?

How is God glorified through our service for one another?

How does that hospitality preach the gospel that we believe?

Where are you serving your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Where do we need to repent our apathy toward hospitality toward one another?

April 26, 2009 1 Peter 4:12-19 Suffering to Worship

Big Idea: Suffering for the sake of the gospel allows us to share in the suffering of Jesus and leads us to worship and glorify Him.

Dinner Discussion:

Can we rejoice in suffering if it inspires us toward worship?

Understanding the Text:

Why does Peter tell his audience not be surprised?

Why can we rejoice and worship in the midst of suffering?

What is the difference between suffering for good and suffering because of sin?

What will be the judgment for those who do not obey the gospel?

What does it mean to entrust your soul to the faithful Creator?

What does this passage reveal about the nature of God?

Application:

How do your expectations prepare you for suffering well?

Are you willing to suffer so that Jesus could be glorified?

How did Peter himself fail this trial when Jesus was being imprisoned?

How does shame play into your suffering?

How are you tempted look at suffering as a result of sin and call it suffering for Jesus?

What makes that particularly wicked?  
How does your life reflect or not reflect the imminence of judgment?  
Do you see God as trustworthy and faithful? Explain.  
What would it look like to entrust your soul to God?

### **Witness #6 – Humility**

May 3, 2009 1 Peter 5:1-5 Humble Pastors

Big Idea: In light of the suffering and trials of life in store for the Christian, Peter exhorts the elders and leaders of the church to shepherd with a spirit of humility.

Dinner Discussion:

Why is humility paramount in the for the character of a leader?

Understanding the Text:

What credential does Peter lend to his exhortation?

What does Peter call the elders to do?

What does he expect the motivation for their shepherding to be?

What are the possible distorted motives for leadership?

What is the reward for elders who lead as examples for the flock?

How is the flock to respond to the leaderships of the elders?

At whom is our humility to be pointed toward?

What are the consequences for being proud?

Application:

How do you think elders join in the suffering of Christ like Peter in verse 1?

Why is character as or more important for leadership than aptitude?

What are the temptations that leaders must overcome?

What are the implications that God has set up the leadership of the church?

What does it mean for you to subject yourself to the elders?

Why is this important for the health of the church?

How can we clothe ourselves in humility toward one another?

How have we failed in this and where do we need to repent?

When have you seen Gods grace for humility or his opposition to the proud?

May 10, 2009 1 Peter 5:5b Humble Mothers

Big Idea: Mothers have a unique opportunity to influence their children as well as their husbands. A mother who clothes herself in humility pours grace on her family and preaches the gospel to generations. Give thanks to God for a mother who loves the Lord and clothes herself in humility.

Dinner Discussion:

What are the marks of a godly Mother?

Understanding the Text:

What are the particular challenges that moms face that test their humility?

Why is her work often unrecognized?

How does a mom show love to her family?

What does humility look like for a mom?

Application:

Why is it so important for moms to walk in humility?

How has your mother shaped your attitude in relationships?

For women: How does your attitude affect your husband?

How does your attitude affect your children?  
What does it look like to abide in Jesus during the heat of hard day?  
How does your reliance of Scripture affect your attitude in the home?  
Who has been a humble mother in the faith to you?  
What can you do to show them your appreciation for their love of Jesus?

- [Mothers Day](#)
- [Short sermon \(35-40 minutes\) leaving room for baby dedications @ campuses](#)

May 17, 2009 1 Peter 5:6-14 Humble Christians

Big Idea: Humility is powerful weapon in the war against sin and satan. Resist his schemes and rest in the assurance that we will be restored by Christ in the end.

Dinner Discussion:

How does humility protect us from the schemes of satan?

Understanding the Text:

What should be our state of mind as Christians toward life?  
How does verse 6 give us a picture of our position before God?  
What give the devil opportunity to devour?  
How do we resist the devil and his schemes?  
What is the reward at the end of a life of obedience and humility?  
What does Peter say is the true grace of God?  
What would be the cultural equivalent of the greeting with a kiss?

Application:

What does it look like to be sober minded and watchful in your life?  
Why is it hard for you to be obedient to Peters command to humble yourself?  
Where in your life are you struggling with pride and anxiety?  
Can you give an example of casting your anxieties on Jesus?  
What effect comes from minimizing the danger of satan and his schemes?  
Where do you need to be more active in resisting him?  
How has your hope in being called into his eternal glory affected your daily life?  
How has this book given you strength to stand firm in the true grace of God?  
How has God's character been revealed to you through this book?

May 24, 2009 – Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

Big idea: As we look back at the trials and the encouragement to live as God's chosen in the midst of them, lets us consider the role of the church in the call to righteousness.

Dinner Discussion:

How is our identity in Christ related to our corporate identity as a church?

Understanding the text:

In what ways does Peter describe his audience (the church) in his first letter?  
What makes up their corporate identity?  
What are the implications of the church being: God's temple (2:4-8), God's people (2:10), God's servants (2:16), God's family (1:22-23, 4:17), and God's flock (5:2).  
Are the admonishment toward holiness directed individually or corporately in this letter?

Application:

Do you tend to see your faith in personal terms or corporate terms?  
What is the disadvantage of seeing yourself only in personal terms?  
How do you participate with other believers in being the temple of God?  
How does God use our community in the process of sanctification?  
What is your responsibility to others in our community?  
How has the community helped you in your walk with Jesus?  
What can we do to develop a stronger sense of corporate identity in Jesus?

· *Monday May 25 Memorial Day*

**Witness # 7 – Faith**

May 31, 2009 2 Peter 1:1-4 Faith in Your New Birth

Big Idea: Through faith and new birth we have been given everything we need to live lives that glorify Jesus.

Dinner Discussion:

What does one need to live a life that glorifies God?

Understanding the Text:

How has the setting changed from the book of 1 Peter?

Who is Peter writing to and why?

How does someone obtain a faith in equal standing with an apostle like Peter?

What is the medium through which grace and peace are found?

What are the things we have been granted for life and godliness?

What are the great promises we have been granted?

What does it mean to partake in the divine nature?

Application:

What do you think of the idea that you can have the same level of faith as Peter?

Where do you go to seek grace and peace? How is that different from verse 2?

If we have been granted all we need for godliness why do you we still sin?

How are the gifts and promises made manifest in your life?

How is your ability to take hold of the promises of God related to our faith?

What corruption have you escaped through the resurrection of Jesus?

How will you pursue faith to obtain the promises of God?

June 7, 2009 2 Peter 1:5-15 Faith in Your New Life

Big Idea: Peter, fully aware of his imminent death is consumed with reminding us to continue to press onward and grow in our faith so that we can be assured of our election.

Dinner Discussion:

What does it mean to grow in your faith?

Understanding the Text:

For what reason do we make every effort supplement our faith?

Discuss the supplements to our faith and give practical examples of each.

Why does Peter culminate with brotherly affection?

What are the consequences for neglecting and promise for practicing these qualities?

What is the condition of the man who does not grow in his faith?

How does Peter's intentions implicate how we should encourage one another?

What is Peter's focus and desire as he faces his own death?

Application:

How are you seeking growth in your relationship with Jesus?  
How are we seeking growth in our faith as a community?  
What does it look like for our faith to work itself out in brotherly affection?  
Are there any of these qualities that you are not practicing?  
How does our growth or lack of it affect our ministry?  
Why is the blind man a good reason to be in community?  
How does the goal of our prize in heaven excite you for waking up tomorrow?  
Do you feel the same sense of concern for your community that Peter does for his?  
What do you want to be your legacy in the faith?

### **Witness # 8 – Doctrine**

June 14, 2009 2 Peter 1:16-21 Doctrine from True Teachers

Big Idea: The greatest gift that you will ever receive, apart from your salvation, is the Scriptures, which are a light to guide us in a dark place. Pay attention.

Dinner Discussion:

What priority do we give Scripture for guiding our life decisions?

Understanding the Text:

What is the source of Peter's revelation of Jesus?  
Why does he go through the trouble of establishing the source?  
What was Peter an eye witness to?  
Why is Scripture more sure than eye witness accounts?  
What is the source of revelation for Scripture?  
What is man's role in the writing of the Bible?

Application:

How is the power of the word established itself in your heart?  
How does Peter's experience calibrate your faith in the Bible?  
How are you tempted to ignore or diminish Scripture in your life?  
How do you use the Bible as a guide and light for your life?  
In what way does verse 20 give you confidence in the Bible?  
What give you confidence in a teacher of the Bible?

What is your attitude toward the proclaimed word when we gather on Sunday?  
Where have you gotten soft in your love and desire for the Word?

June 21, 2009 2 Peter 1:16-18 Doctrine from Dad

Big Idea: Fathers should have a love for the Bible and rely on it to guide their lives and the decisions they make for their family. Thank God if you have a father that fears the Lord and loves His Word.

Dinner Discussion:

What does a good dad do?

Understanding the Text:

What is the responsibility of Dad with respect to sound doctrine?  
How does a dad show love to his family?

Application:

Why is it important for dad to have sound doctrine?  
How has your dad shaped your doctrinal beliefs for good or bad?  
For men:           What legacy do you want to leave for your children?  
                          What are you doing today to insure that legacy?

How does your reliance of Scripture affect your legacy?  
Who has been a good father in the faith to you?  
What can you do to show them your appreciation for their love of Jesus and the truth?

- *Fathers Day*
- Short sermon (35-40 minutes) leaving time for baby dedications

June 28, 2009 2 Peter 2:1-10a Doctrine from False Teachers (Part 1)

Big Idea: False teachers are inevitable so be aware and on guard. As for those who presume to teach: do not enter lightly. Destruction will come to those who are false teachers and pervert their office.

Dinner Discussion:  
How do you spot a false teacher?

Understanding the Text:  
What is the guarantee that Peter makes in verse 1?  
What are the marks of a false teacher?  
What are the tricks of the trade to draw people away from the truth?  
How does the goal of a false teacher reveal his true master?  
What company does Peter put exploitive preachers in?  
What will happen to false teachers?  
What does it mean to "indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority"?

Application:  
How does this warning open your eyes to the teachers you listen to?  
What are the sources of false teaching in your life? (blogs, TV, Movies, music)  
What does it look like to be on guard against false teaching from every avenue?  
Which are the hardest for you to detect?  
How do they use sensuality to entice you?  
How have you seen Gods wrath burn against false teachers?  
What does this reveal about God's passion for the truth?  
Where do you need align your passion for the truth with Gods?

*July 5*– Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under "One Week Sermons" for pulpit directives on this week

Big Idea: When considering the question of what makes a teacher good or false we need look no further then their reverence for and submission to Scripture.

Dinner Discussion:  
How is the Word of God living and active?

Understanding the Text:  
How does Peter appeal to Scripture? See (1 Pet 1:24–25; 2:6–8; 3:10–12; 4:18)  
How is an appeal to the Old Testament an appeal to Scripture?  
Where does Peter appeal to New Testament writings as Scripture?  
What is the source of Scripture from 1 Pet 1:11; 2 Pet 1:21?  
What does 1 Pet 1:23-25 say about the enduring quality of Scripture?

Application:  
What does it mean that Scripture is a seed? (1 Pet 1:23,25)  
How is Scripture a seed in your life?  
To what authority do you tend to lean in your life?  
How has Scripture become a friend to you in your new birth?

What is the difference between reading to know about God and reading to know God?  
How do you typically approach the Bible?

July 12, 2009 2 Peter 2:10b-22 Doctrine from False Teachers (Part 2)

Big Idea: Continuing the warning against false teachers, we must be firm in our faith so that we are not enticed by these brutes of destruction.

Dinner Discussion:

How do we guard our hearts and minds against false teachers?

Understanding the Text:

What is the nature of false teachers?

How will they be repaid for their evil?

Why is false doctrine sometimes difficult to detect?

What is the significance of Balaam in this passage (see numbers 25)

Who is the target of false teachers and how are they deceived?

How is the promise of false teachers the same as the lie in the garden?

How is what you receive from them the same as the curse?

Why is better for someone to not know the way of righteousness then to turn back after knowing it?

How is this fulfillment of Proverbs 26:11?

Application:

What makes false teachers so dangerous?

Where do you see this type of boldness and blasphemy in your word?

How does the boastfulness and loudness of the false teacher point to the source of his doctrine?

How has your doctrine been weakened by worldly wisdom or sinful desire?

What will you do to be confident in your faith when false teachers come?

Why does Gods wrath burn so hot against false teachers?

What defilements of the world has Jesus saved you from?

How do you keep from being entangled in them again?

### **Witness # 9 – Perseverance**

July 19, 2009 2 Peter 3:1-7 Perseverance Until Judgment

Big Idea: In light of the attack on the gospel that is sure to come, remain steadfast in the scriptures and your faith until the day of judgment that is coming.

Dinner Discussion:

What is the day of judgment?

Understanding the Text:

What is Peter's purpose in writing his two letters?

How does being steeped in the Bible prepare us for scoffers?

What is the argument that scoffers will use?

What must they do to make this argument?

What is the significance of the word being present at the birth, cleansing, and judgment of the world?

What will happen on the day of judgment?

Application:

How is Peter's heart for us revealed in this passage?

Why is it important to be reminded of these things?

What tendency do you have to get busy and forget about Jesus and the realities of judgment?  
When have you faced a scoffer or scoffers in your daily life?  
What other sources of scoffers can you see in our culture?  
How would your life be different if you considered the coming judgment on a daily basis?  
How does the reality of a judgment of fire change your urgency with the gospel?

July 26, 2009 2 Peter 3:8-10 Perseverance Until Jesus Returns

Big Idea: With the coming judgment also comes the return of Jesus. So, although judgment will be a sober day it will also usher in eternity with our loving savior as he fulfills his promise of eternal life.

Dinner Discussion:

What will be our condition when the day of the Lord comes?

Understanding the Text:

What is our hope in the face of the day of judgment coming?

Why has Jesus not returned yet?

When will the day of the Lord come?

What will be left of this world when Jesus returns?

Application:

Do you long for the return of Jesus?

What does this passage reveal about the character of God?

How is our sense of time different then that of Jesus?

Where is God asking you to be patient?

Who has God called you to encourage toward repentance before the day of the Lord?

What will the fire expose in your life?

August 2, 2009 2 Peter 3:11-13 Perseverance Until the New Creation

Big Idea: In light of the return of Christ we ought to live holy lives as we wait in hopeful expectation of the promises of God.

Dinner Discussion:

What will the new heaven and new earth be like?

Understanding the Text:

Why should we live holy and godly lives?

What will remain after the return of Jesus?

How can we be sure that the judgment is not the end?

What dwells in the new heaven and new earth?

How does verse 13 depict the designed outcome for mans redemption?

Application:

What in our life will be burned away at the return of Jesus?

How will your concerns and priorities change when He returns?

How does that speak to the way you live today?

What of your works will stand through the fire?

How are you preparing for your home in the new heaven and earth?

What does this reveal about the heart of God?

How does this picture encourage you to persevere in your daily life?

August 9, 2009 2 Peter 3:14-18 Perseverance Until God is Finished With You

Big Idea: In his conclusion Peter challenges us one last time to live holy lives in light of the coming of Jesus. God has much left to sanctify in us so we ought take care, study the word, and place our faith in Jesus.

Dinner Discussion:

How have the letters of Peter changed the way we look at life?

Understanding the Text:

How does Peter want us to be found by Jesus when He returns?

What does Peter think about the letters of Paul?

How do false teachers twist the words of Paul?

What should be our attitude toward difficult Scriptures?

What is Peter's fear for us if we are not biblically solid?

What does it mean to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus?

Application:

How do you want to be found by Jesus when He returns?

What needs to be addressed in your life to be found in that state?

How does abiding in Jesus make it possible to live like Peter encourages us to?

How does Peter's warning and encouragements change the way you live day to day?

Take time this week to write out how following witness would testify about your life: Trial, Temptation, Submission, Marriage, Suffering, Humility, Faith, Doctrine, and Perseverance.

## **Article 6 –**

### **Pastoral Parenting** by Pastor Mark Driscoll

Because parents love their children the deepest, know them the best, and are with them the most, they are best suited to be a child's primary pastor who evangelizes them, teaches them, loves them, prays for and with them, and reads Scripture to them.

On this point, Deuteronomy 4:9 says, "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children." Likewise, Proverbs 1:8 says, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching." Also, Ephesians 6:1–4 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Both mothers and fathers are exhorted to make it their responsibility to pastor their children. This does not mean that such things as church activities or Christian school education are forbidden, but rather that they are supplements to the loving biblical instruction of Christian parents.

### **Integrated Parenting**

Because parents are with their children at the most opportune times, they are wise to integrate their biblical instruction as God providentially provides teachable moments. It is wise for families to have regular and planned times for such things as Bible reading, prayer, and worshipful singing. Nevertheless, there are moments throughout the course of a child's day when his or her heart is open for strategic instruction. A Spirit-led, prayerful parent will capture sacred moments to instruct and/or correct their child as needed.

One example is the common occurrence of one child stealing a toy from another child. The parent present for this inevitable moment can stop what they are doing and integrate their instruction into that teachable moment. This would include sitting the children down and explaining to the child who stole the toy that one of the Ten Commandments forbids stealing and when we steal we are sinning against God and the person from whom we are stealing. We can then explain that repentance includes seeing that what they did was wrong, handing the toy back to the child they stole from, looking that child in the eye and apologizing for their sin by name and asking to be forgiven, the other child looking them in the eye and forgiving them, and then the two of them hugging while the parent prays over both children out loud, thanking God that forgiveness is possible because Jesus died for our sins.

This kind of integrated parenting will help to ensure that the child does not grow up as a hypocrite who knows what to do but does not do it because their instruction was not integrated into their life. Perhaps the clearest command for integrated parenting is Deuteronomy 6:4–9 which says, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

### Preemptive Parenting

Sadly, much parenting is reactive rather than preemptive. What I mean is that rather than cultivating a biblically informed love for Jesus and others, some parents are careless in their instruction and correction until a child’s attitude and/or conduct become critically concerning.

Examples include the parents of an angry boy who don’t work with him until he’s facing expulsion from school for fighting and even then merely take him to church, hoping that alone will fix him. Or the junior high girl who has become sexually active with her boyfriend and her parents who have not pastorally parented her but suddenly sit her down to read Bible verses to her without any relationship, hoping that magic will happen and she’ll immediately act differently.

Preemptive parenting means making daily deposits of love, grace, instruction, correction, and trust in the bank of a child so that when crisis moments come there is a wealth of investment from which to draw. Subsequently, preemptive parenting should begin from the womb when parents should be praying for their unborn child, and include Bible reading and instruction with the children from their earliest days.

One example of preemptive parenting is found in the life of Timothy. He is widely regarded by many as one of the finest and most trustworthy young men in all of Scripture because of his faithful and fruitful ministry with the apostle Paul. Paul recognizes the important role preemptive parenting had in shaping Timothy: “from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

### Practical Pastoral Parenting

While likely every Christian parent would agree with these principles of pastoral parenting, most would likely also admit they struggle to know how to make this happen practically. So, as a pastor and daddy I hope to be of some help.

First, I would encourage all Christian parents to pray to God that the Holy Spirit would give them an ongoing commitment to pastor their own children in love. Second, I would encourage all Christian parents to continually read good books that help shape a biblical view of parenting. Among the best are

[Shepherding a Child's Heart](#) and [Instructing a Child's Heart](#), both by Tedd Tripp. Mars Hill was honored to have Tedd Tripp teach on parenting, and the audio and video recordings of his sessions are available for free at [http://www.theresurgence.com/shepherding\\_a\\_childs\\_heart\\_conference](http://www.theresurgence.com/shepherding_a_childs_heart_conference). Parents of teens will also be well served by Paul Tripp's book [Age of Opportunity](#). Third, it is important for Christian families to have friendships with other Christian families so that there is mutual learning about God, marriage, parenting, and the like in community. So, getting plugged into a church community group and pursuing friendships with other Christian families is vital. Fourth, the key is to simply develop biblical habits with your children, such as praying together, reading Scripture, and attending church.

## **Article 7 –**

### **The Dinner Bible Booklet** by Pastor Mark Driscoll

Dinner is one of the great highlights of my day. Why? Because I get to sit in my home with the woman I love, laughing, chatting, and eating with our five children whom we deeply love and enjoy.

Every time I sit at the table with my family I am reminded of the words of Psalm 128:3–4, which says, “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.” As Scripture says, I am blessed.

Some months ago we started a new tradition at the Driscoll dining table that has also been a blessing. Whoever is taking their turn setting the table ensures that our “dinner Bible,” as the kids call it, is sitting in front of “Poppa Daddy,” as the kids call me.

Throughout the course of our dinner together, we chat about how the day went, how everyone is doing, and whom we can pray for, and we discuss a section of Scripture. Over the years we have always made it a point to read Scripture to the children when they were little (especially at bed time), and help them develop personal daily Bible reading habits once they learned to read for themselves. However, we struggled to find a way to do regular family devotions with five children of different ages and attention spans.

Still, the dinner Bible discussions led by Grace and me have been a huge hit. Every time we sit down for dinner the dinner Bible is in its place on the table, opened to the section of Scripture we will discuss that evening by one of the enthusiastic kids. We often have some really insightful conversations around the dinner Bible as the younger kids, especially the boys, seem to be able to handle longer and more reflective discussions when their hands are busy as they eat. Also, with the casual conversation over dinner I have noticed that everyone gets an opportunity to speak as we take turns chewing our food, and our dinners last longer than they had before because everyone is engaged.

The following steps are offered based upon my experience with our children over dinner. These steps are intended to help direct theological discussions between parents and their children while also building the children’s theological vocabularies so that they are increasingly familiar with biblical concepts.

- Step 1. Eat dinner with your entire family regularly.
- Step 2. Mom and Dad sit next to one another to lead the family discussion.
- Step 3. Open the meal by asking if there is anyone or anything to pray for.
- Step 4. Someone opens in prayer and covers any requests. This task should be rotated among family members so that different people take turns learning to pray aloud.
- Step 5. Start eating and discuss how everyone’s day went.

- Step 6. Have a Bible in front of the parents in a translation that is age appropriate for the kids' reading level. Have someone (parent or child) open the Bible to the assigned text and read it aloud while everyone is eating and listening.
- Step 7. A parent then reads the corresponding definition of the word for the day and gives the definition by reading what is written in the Dinner Bible Booklet and/or paraphrasing the word's definition at an age-appropriate level.
- Step 8. Ask the discussion questions in the Dinner Bible Booklet, and if your kids are older (i.e., junior high and up) then you can also consider using the Community Group discussion questions if they are better suited for your children.
- Step 9. Let the conversation happen naturally, carefully listen to the kids and let them answer the questions, and fill in whatever they miss or lovingly and gently correct whatever they get wrong so as to help them.
- Step 10. If the Scriptures convict you of sin, repent as you need to your family, and share appropriately honest parts of your life story so the kids can see Jesus' work in your life and your need for him too, which demonstrates gospel humility.
- Step 11. At the end of dinner, ask the kids if they have any questions for you.

In closing, do not fret if you miss a night, a conversation gets off track, or one night your family just wants to talk about something else. Follow the Spirit's leading and don't be a religious parent who is rigidly inflexible, thereby making this sort of thing something they must be do in duty rather than something they get to do in delight. The big goals here are to have your children reveal to you what they are thinking about God, know and love Jesus as God and Savior, and learn to articulate and explain their Christian faith, and for their parents to lovingly instruct them and a create a family culture in which every member freely and naturally talks about God and prays to God together. Lastly, this will also require a sense of humor, so make sure to have some fun, enjoy some laughs, and build some memories.

## **Bible Questions: Family Discussions from 1 and 2 Peter**

The following discussion questions are offered in hopes of helping you and your child(ren) grow in relationship with each another and Jesus. They are meant to be supportive and not constraining. Therefore, do not feel bound by any questions or pressured to follow these helps too rigidly. Do not stress if you miss some questions or some days, which is inevitable. The goal is simply that your family would open the Bible and grow in love for Jesus, one another, your church, and the world. Also, because I am out of the pulpit some weeks of this series, you can use those weeks as opportunities to catch up by discussing any days or weeks that you may have missed.

The title for our study of 1 and 2 Peter is “Trial: Nine Life Witnesses from 1 and 2 Peter.” The theme of trial is taken directly from the two books. Peter uses the theme to teach that a trial is an opportunity God uses in our life to help us become Christians, or grow in maturity as Christians. Therefore, a trial is an opportunity for us to learn about Jesus and grow to be more like him. The trials that we will cover as we study 1 and 2 Peter fit within the eight categories of temptation, submission, marriage, suffering, humility, faith, doctrine, and perseverance. How we respond to each trial is a witness to whether or not we are Christians, and how closely we are walking with Jesus. So, discussing each trial will be a wonderful opportunity to see into the heart of your child(ren), and reveal your heart for them and Jesus’ heart for you all.

### **Witnesses**

#### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Peter

Peter is the author of 1 and 2 Peter and so today the focus of the dinner discussion is helping your children learn about Peter. You can begin by asking them the following Bible questions:

1. Who was Peter?

The following are examples of things the kids might want to explain or discuss:

- a. He was the disciple Andrew’s brother.
- b. He was a fisherman.
- c. He was married.
- d. He was Jewish.

2. What do you know about Peter’s life?

- a. He became a disciple of Jesus.
- b. He spent three years with Jesus.
- c. Jesus made him the leader of the disciples.
- d. He wrote two books of the Bible (1 and 2 Peter).
- e. He was a pastor who loved people.

- f. He was crucified upside down for being a Christian.

You can also read my article in this booklet titled “Trial in the Life of Peter,” which will help you learn more about his amazing life. You can then summarize it or pull out some major points to explain to your children some of the important details of Peter’s life.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Jesus Christ

Peter begins his letter by speaking of Jesus Christ. So, today the focus is on who Jesus is and what he has done by discussing the following Bible questions:

1. Where was Jesus born? Bethlehem.
2. Where did Jesus grow up? Nazareth.
3. Who was Jesus’ mommy? Mary.
4. Who was Jesus’ adoptive daddy? Joseph.
5. Who were Jesus’ half-brothers? James and Jude.
6. Who was Jesus? God.
7. Did Jesus ever sin? No.
8. Did Jesus ever marry or have kids? No.
9. Did Jesus love and play with kids? Yes.
10. How did Jesus die? Crucifixion.
11. Why did Jesus die? For our sins.
12. What happened to Jesus three days after he died? He resurrected.
13. How did Peter know Jesus? They were friends, Peter was Jesus’ disciple, and for three years he was with Jesus to see his miracles, hear his preaching, and be with him after he rose from death.
14. Where is Jesus today? In heaven.

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Elect

In 1 Peter 1:1 Christians are called the “elect.” Peter means that they are people whom God chose to love, save, forgive, and adopt into his family. People are sinners and the Bible says that no one would ever look for God or choose to love God (Rom. 3:10–11). Yet Jesus is such a loving and good God that he came to earth looking for us and chose to love us and make us Christians. The following Bible questions can help you explain election to your children:

1. What does election mean? God chose to love us, forgive our sins, and make us Christians.
2. How does election show us God’s love? As sinners we are God’s enemies, and by electing to love us and make us Christians, God is loving his enemies to make them his friends.

3. What would happen if God did not choose us? No one would choose God and everyone would go to hell as a non-Christian.
4. Does God only elect good people? No, God elects some really bad people and changes their hearts so they live as Christians.
5. How is election like adoption? Adoption is when a family decides to welcome in a child as their own and love them just like God adopts us into his family as Christians and loves us as his own.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Trinity

Peter speaks of God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. Christians call this the Trinity. Trinity means that the one divine nature is a unity of three persons and that God is revealed as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This biblical revelation of God is distinct from any other religion's view of God. It shows us that God is relational, loving, and communicative. The following Bible questions can help you enter into a discussion with your children in which you explain the Trinity:

1. What does Trinity mean? One God in three persons.
2. Does the Bible use the word "trinity"? No, it is a word that Christians use to explain what the Bible teaches.
3. How is God a person? He thinks, feels, talks, loves, etc.
4. Does God have a body? No, only Jesus had a body when he came to earth but God the Father and God the Holy Spirit do not have bodies.
5. Is there only one God? Yes.
6. Are God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit equally God? Yes, they have all the same attributes, such as knowing everything, having all power, and being the Creator of the world and people.
7. Do other religions believe in the Trinity? No, only Christians believe in the Trinity.

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Foreknowledge

First Peter 1:2 speaks of the "foreknowledge" of God. This means that God knows the future and knows exactly what will happen before it actually does. This is because God is all-knowing (omniscient) and rules over everyone and everything (sovereign). The following Bible questions will help you discuss God's foreknowledge with your children:

1. What does foreknowledge mean? God knows the future and controls it.
2. Is there anyone who has foreknowledge other than God? No.
3. Is there anything that God does not know? No, God knows everything.
4. Did God know you would be born? Yes, he did.
5. Does God know everything that will happen in our lives? Yes.

6. How can God help us if he knows the future? He can help us get ready for the future and if we walk with him he prepares us for what lies ahead in our life.
7. Does it make you happy that God knows the future? Why or why not?
8. What things in your future do you wish you had foreknowledge of?

## Friday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Sanctification

First Peter 1:2 says that Christians undergo sanctification in life. The word *sanctification* means “to be set apart” and “to be made holy.” Because Jesus died for our sins, Christians have been made holy through faith in Jesus. We grow as Christians in this life by learning more about Jesus and becoming more and more like him, which is sanctification. So, sanctification is about being more and more like Jesus. This is made possible by the power of God the Holy Spirit who lives in a Christian and helps him or her to be like Jesus and live a holy life. Like a seed, God the Holy Spirit takes root in our life and helps us grow to be more like Jesus. The following Bible questions will help you discuss sanctification with your children:

1. For the parent(s), how has God sanctified you? Tell how you became a Christian and how God has grown you to be more like Jesus. Ask your child(ren) if they have any questions about anything you share in your testimony.
2. What things can help us in our sanctification? Examples include prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, Christian friends, obeying our parents, etc.
3. How do you want to be more like Jesus?

## Saturday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Trial and Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Grace

First Peter 1:2 speaks of God’s grace. The word *grace* is one of the most important words in the Bible because it tells us how God acts toward us. Grace means that God’s love is seen in all the kind things he does for us even though we do not deserve them. Simply, grace is getting good things we do not deserve. God gives grace to everyone, as evidenced by the fact that they are alive, can eat food, and can have fun. God gives extra grace to Christians by giving them Jesus so that their sins are forgiven and God is their helpful friend. The following Bible questions can help start a discussion with your child(ren) about God’s grace in their lives:

1. What is God’s grace? Good things we do not deserve.
2. Why does God give grace? Because he is loving and good.
3. What has God given you in grace? Examples include life, health, a family, friends, fun, favorite possessions, etc.

4. How have people given you grace? Examples include love, forgiveness, friendship, gifts, teaching, etc.
5. What are some ways you can give grace to someone? Examples include loving them, serving them, praying for them, giving a present to them, etc.
6. Do other religions believe in God's grace? No, other religions say you have to work hard to get God to be nice to you. Only the Bible teaches that God is good and takes care of us out of his grace.

## **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Cross

In this week's reading of 1 Peter 1:3–9, Peter focuses on the fact that Jesus died for our sins and conquered sin and death through his resurrection. So, this week we will focus on Jesus Christ's resurrection from death and examine a different reason each day why we believe in Jesus' resurrection. Today we will look at the facts surrounding Jesus' death and burial by discussing the following questions:

1. What is a cross? It is where they would kill people in the days of Jesus by nailing them through the hands and feet.
2. Why was Jesus crucified? He did not ever sin, but he died in our place for our sins so that we could be forgiven.
3. Did people know Jesus was going to die and resurrect? Yes, seven hundred years before Jesus was even born, God promised in Isaiah 53:8–12 that Jesus would die and rise. Jesus also promised that he would be crucified, die, and then resurrect in Matthew 12:38–40; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34; and John 2:18–22. (You can look up and read these verses so that the children get an example of God's foreknowledge, which we discussed the previous week.)
4. Did Jesus really die on the cross? Yes. Prior to his crucifixion, Jesus had not slept all night, was beaten, and then was scourged, which killed many men in and of itself. Then he was crucified with nails in his hands and feet. He was declared dead by an executioner, and a spear was run through his side, which pierced his heart sac. He was buried like a mummy in upwards of a hundred pounds of linens and spices, and then placed in a cold tomb cut out of rock without medical attention, food, or water. So, Jesus really did die on the cross.
5. Was Jesus' tomb easy to find? Yes. Jesus was poor and did not own a tomb because he could not afford one. So, after he died, a powerful and rich man named Joseph of Arimathea let Jesus be buried in his personal tomb in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9, which promised Jesus would be buried "with a rich man in his death." A large stone was rolled over the tomb to ensure the body of Jesus was not stolen, the government's seal was placed on the stone to keep people out, and soldiers were placed on duty to guard Jesus' tomb. So, lots of people knew where Jesus was buried.
6. Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross? Why or why not?

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Communion

Communion is how Christians remember that Jesus' body was broken and blood was shed on the cross in our place for our sins. The bread of communion reminds us of Jesus' broken body for our sins, and the drink of communion reminds us of Jesus' shed blood for our sins on the cross. This is a good day for parents to decide if their children have come to personal faith in Jesus and are ready to partake of communion in church on Sundays, if they are not already. The following questions will help you open a discussion with your child(ren) about communion:

1. What is communion? It is eating bread and drinking wine or juice, depending upon age and conscience.
2. What does the bread of communion represent? Jesus' body broken on the cross for our sins.
3. What does the drink of communion represent? Jesus' blood shed on the cross for our sins.
4. Would people have started taking communion as Christians if Jesus had not resurrected? No. People would not have done this kind of sacred thing if Jesus was still dead and did not forgive their sins through his resurrection.
5. Can non-Christians take communion? No. Communion is only for Christians.
6. What should a Christian do before they take communion? They should spend some time in prayer confessing their sins to God and asking to be forgiven because of Jesus.
7. Do you take communion? Why or why not?

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Resurrection

Today we examine the resurrection of Jesus. By resurrection, we mean that Jesus physically died and three days later his body rose from death in victory over sin and death. The following questions will help you discuss why Christians believe in Jesus' resurrection with your child(ren):

1. What is resurrection? Resurrection is when a dead person's body comes back to life.
2. How do we know Jesus' body resurrected from death? The following are some examples of answers: Following Jesus' resurrection, many people touched his physical body: his disciples clung to his feet (Matt. 28:9), Mary clung to him (John 20:17), and Thomas the doubter put his hand into the open spear hole in Jesus' side (John 20:20–28). Jesus also appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, but they were uncertain if he had truly

- physically risen from death. But Jesus was emphatic about his bodily resurrection and went out of his way to prove it (Luke 24:36–43).
3. How many people saw Jesus after his resurrection? Jesus appeared to people for forty days to crowds as large as five hundred people after his resurrection and before he returned to heaven (Acts 1:1–2; 1 Cor. 15:1–8).
  4. Did people keep visiting Jesus' grave after he resurrected? No, people did not visit Jesus' grave after he resurrected because he was not there anymore.
  5. Do you believe Jesus resurrected from death? Why or why not?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Christianity

Christianity is the religion that worships Jesus as the only God because he died for our sins and resurrected from death. Today, a few billion people on the earth claim to be Christians who believe Jesus rose from death. The following questions help to explain how Jesus' resurrection caused the growth of Christianity:

1. What is Christianity? Christianity is the people who worship Jesus as God because he rose from death.
2. How did Jesus' resurrection change people? Before Jesus' resurrection, his disciples were timid and fearful, even hiding when Jesus appeared to them (John 20:19). Following Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were very bold for Jesus and even suffered and died without fear because they knew he was God and even if they died they would be with him. If Jesus had not resurrected, the disciples would not have boldly preached about Jesus or suffered courageously.
3. Would the disciples have lied about Jesus' resurrection? No. They suffered and died because they believed Jesus rose. They would not have suffered and died for a lie. Plus, the disciples were honest men who lived good lives and were not the kind of men who tell lies about God.
4. Would Christianity exist if Jesus had not resurrected? No. If Jesus had not risen from death, people would not have been so devoted to him for Christianity to spread around the world. Today more people worship Jesus as God than anyone else.
5. What do you think it means to be a Christian? You love Jesus as God.
6. Are you a Christian? Why or why not?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Worship

Worship is living our whole life for someone or something. Everyone worships someone or something. Christians worship Jesus as God because he died for their sins and resurrected from death. The earliest Christians started worshipping

Jesus as God because of his resurrection and the following questions will help you discuss with your child(ren) why you worship Jesus:

1. What is worship? Living your life for someone or something that is most important to you.
2. On which day did people worship before and after Jesus resurrected? The early Christians stopped worshiping on Saturday, as Jews had for thousands of years, and suddenly began worshiping on Sunday in memory of Jesus' Sunday resurrection. The Sabbath was so sacred to the Jews that they would not have ceased to obey one of the Ten Commandments unless Jesus had resurrected in fulfillment of their Old Testament Scriptures.
3. Why did people start worshiping Jesus as God after he rose from death? One of the Ten Commandments is that we should worship God alone. After Jesus resurrected, people began worshiping him as God because he was and is God.
4. Would people have worshiped Jesus as God if he did not resurrect from death? No. He would have been just another person who lived a good life but no one would have thought he was God.
5. Who started worshiping Jesus as God after he resurrected? People who worshiped the risen Jesus as God included his half-brother James (1 Cor. 15:7), Jesus' other half-brother Jude (Acts 1:14; Jude 1), and Jesus' mother Mary (Acts 1:14). Because they were all Jews, they would not have worshiped Jesus as God unless he had resurrected. Even one of Jesus' most bitter enemies, Paul, stopped killing Christians and started worshiping Jesus and became a pastor because Jesus resurrected (Acts 7:54–60; Acts 9; 1 Cor. 15:1–9; Phil. 3:4–6).
6. How can we worship Jesus as God? Examples include believing in Jesus, confessing our sins, obeying God, serving and loving people, singing songs, being involved in church, etc.
7. Do you worship Jesus? Why or why not?

## **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Baptism

Baptism is when a Christian is dunked under water and brought back up out of the water. Jesus was baptized by his cousin John the Baptizer. Christians are baptized to identify themselves with Jesus. They are baptized to show that Jesus was buried under the ground like they are dunked under the water, and then he resurrected like they are pulled out of the water to cleanse them from sin like water cleanses us from dirt. This is a good day for Christian parents who have not been baptized to sign up to be baptized at church, and for parents with children who have not been baptized to see if they have come to faith in Jesus and are ready to be baptized. The following questions should help:

1. What is baptism? It is a Christian being dunked under the water and then brought back up to show that Jesus was buried and resurrected for them.
2. Would people have been baptized if Jesus did not resurrect? No. Because baptism shows Jesus' resurrection, it would have not made any sense to baptize people if Jesus did not rise from death.
3. Who can be baptized? Any Christian who loves Jesus as God.
4. For the parent(s), have you been baptized? If so, please explain why you were baptized and what it was like to your children.
5. Are you a Christian who loves Jesus as God?
6. If you have not been baptized, do you want to be baptized? Why or why not? Or, if you were baptized, why were you baptized?

## **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:3–9 (Trial and Jesus)

**Word of the Day:** Gospel

Today concludes our weeklong study of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death. Because this is such an enormous truth, we will spend today reviewing what we have learned this week to ensure that the child(ren) understand and believe in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in our place for our sin is called the gospel. *Gospel* means "good news." The following questions are intended to help you discuss the gospel with your child(ren):

1. What is the word *gospel* mean? Good news.
2. What is the gospel? Jesus is our God who lived without sin, died on a cross for our sins, was buried, and resurrected three days later.
3. Why was Jesus crucified? He did not ever sin, but he died in our place for our sins so that we could be forgiven.
4. How do we know that Jesus really did die on the cross? Prior to his crucifixion, Jesus had not slept all night, was beaten, and then was scourged, which killed many men in and of itself. Then he was crucified with nails in his hands and feet. He was declared dead by an executioner, and a spear was run through his side, which pierced his heart sac. He was buried like a mummy in upwards of a hundred pounds of linens and spices, and then placed in a cold tomb cut out of rock without medical attention, food, or water. So, Jesus really did die on the cross.
5. Where was Jesus buried? In a rich man's tomb that was sealed by the government and protected by soldiers.
6. How does communion show us Jesus' death? The bread reminds us of Jesus' body broken on the cross for our sins, and the drink reminds us of Jesus' blood shed on the cross for our sins.
7. What happened to Jesus' body three days after he died? He resurrected from death.
8. How does baptism show Jesus' resurrection? When a Christian goes under the water and comes back up, they show how Jesus was buried and resurrected.

9. Why do we worship Jesus? Because he is God and saves us from Satan, sin, and death.
10. What happens to a Christian when they die? Their spirit (the non-physical part of their being) goes to be with Jesus. One day, their spirit will go back into their body and they will resurrect like Jesus did to live in heaven forever.

## **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophets

In 1 Peter 1:10–12 Peter speaks about the Old Testament prophets. Prophets were people who spoke for God by preaching and/or writing what God told them. Prophets often foretold the future, letting people know what would happen before it actually did. This week we will focus on prophets and prophecy from the Old Testament to help the child(ren) see that God knows the future, controls the future, and tells us the truth in the Bible.

1. What is a prophet? A person in the Bible who preached and/or wrote for God.
2. How did someone become a prophet? God chose them to be a prophet.
3. Does God know the future? Yes, he knows the future and he controls it.
4. How did God tell the prophets about the future? God the Holy Spirit told them about the future and exactly what God wanted them to preach and/or write about the future.
5. Did the prophets ever prophesy something that did not come true? No, the Bible teaches that a true prophet of God does not lie and they always tell the truth (Deut. 18:21–22).
6. What are most of the prophecies in the Old Testament about? Most of the Old Testament prophecies are about Jesus coming down from heaven to the earth.
7. Do any other religions have prophecy like Christianity? No, other religions do not have prophets who tell the future like Christianity because their prophets are false prophets who do not work for God.

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophecy

First Peter 1:10–12 speaks of prophets who prophesy about Jesus in the Old Testament. These prophecies are very specific and were given hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. These prophecies reveal to us that God knows and controls the future, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, we will spend this week examining some specific Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. We will look each day at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus' mother would be a virgin who conceived by a miracle and that Jesus would be God who became a man.

**Promise:** "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

**Fulfillment:** "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)" (Matt. 1:18–23).

1. How long before Jesus was born did Isaiah prophesy? Seven hundred years.
2. What did Isaiah prophesy? That Jesus would be born to Mary.
3. Did God's promise come true? Yes.
4. How did Mary get pregnant with Jesus? Through a miracle by the Holy Spirit.
5. What does Jesus' name "Immanuel" mean? God is with us.
6. Who adopted Jesus and became his daddy? Joseph.
7. Did Jesus have brothers and sisters who were born after him? Yes (Matt. 13:53–56).
8. What do you think it would be like to have Jesus as your big brother?

## Tuesday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophecy

First Peter 1:10–12 speaks of prophets who prophesy about Jesus in the Old Testament. These prophecies are very specific and were given hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. These prophecies reveal to us that God knows and controls the future, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, we will spend this week examining some specific Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. We will look each day at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would perform many miracles.

**Promise:** "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy" (Isa. 35:5–6).

**Fulfillment:** “Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (Matt. 11:2–5).

1. What did Isaiah prophesy that Jesus would do when he came? Perform miracles.
2. Did Isaiah’s prophecy that Jesus would perform miracles come true? Yes.
3. Name as many miracles you can think of that Jesus performed.
4. Which of Jesus’ miracles is your favorite? Why?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophecy

First Peter 1:10–12 speaks of prophets who prophesy about Jesus in the Old Testament. These prophecies are very specific and were given hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. These prophecies reveal to us that God knows and controls the future, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, we will spend this week examining some specific Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. We will look each day at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

700 BC: Micah prophesies that Jesus would be born in the town of Bethlehem.

**Promise:** “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days [eternity]” (Mic. 5:2).

**Fulfillment:** “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. . . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Luke 2:1–7).

1. In which town did Micah prophesy that Jesus would be born? Bethlehem.
2. Did Micah’s prophecy come true? Yes.
3. Did Jesus’ parents, Mary and Joseph, live in Bethlehem or Nazareth? They lived in Nazareth.

4. How did Jesus' parents get from Nazareth to Bethlehem? They traveled there when Mary was pregnant to register for a census with the government.
5. When Jesus was born, where did they lay him? In a manger because they were not at home and Bethlehem was full of people and there was no other place to stay.
6. How old was Mary when Jesus was born? She was probably a teenage girl.
7. What do you think it was like for Mary to be a young mom far away from home when Jesus was born?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophecy

First Peter 1:10–12 speaks of prophets who prophesy about Jesus in the Old Testament. These prophecies are very specific and were given hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. These prophecies reveal to us that God knows and controls the future, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, we will spend this week examining some specific Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. We will look each day at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

400 BC: Malachi prophesies that Jesus would enter the temple. This is important because the temple was destroyed in AD 70 and no longer exists; subsequently, the prophecy could not have been fulfilled anytime after AD 70.

**Promise:** “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 3:1).

**Fulfillment:** “Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law . . .” (Luke 2:25–27).

1. Where did Malachi prophesy that Jesus would visit? The temple.
2. Did Malachi's prophecy come true? Yes.
3. What was the temple? It was like the church of the Old Testament where people would go to worship God.
4. Who was the prophet Malachi promised would come preaching before Jesus to get people ready for him? Jesus' cousin John the Baptizer.
5. When was the temple destroyed? AD 70.
6. Does the temple exist today? No.

7. Since there is no temple and Malachi prophesied that Jesus would visit the temple, can the prophecy be about anyone other than Jesus who was born later? No.

## Friday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophecy

First Peter 1:10–12 speaks of prophets who prophesy about Jesus in the Old Testament. These prophecies are very specific and were given hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. These prophecies reveal to us that God knows and controls the future, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, we will spend this week examining some specific Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. We will look each day at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

500 BC: Zechariah prophesies that Jesus' betraying friend would be paid thirty pieces of silver for handing him over to the authorities and that the payment would be thrown in the temple in disgust (again, the temple was destroyed in AD 70, so this prophecy could not have been fulfilled after that time).

**Promise:** "Then I said to them, 'If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.' And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter" (Zech. 11:12–13).

**Fulfillment:** "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:14–15); "And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers" (Matt. 27:5–7).

1. What did Zechariah prophesy? That Jesus would be betrayed by Judas.
2. How much did Zechariah prophesy Judas would be paid to help kill Jesus? 30 pieces of silver
3. Was that very much money? No
4. Did everything Zechariah prophesied come true? Yes
5. Jesus was friends with Judas for three years before Judas betrayed him, how do you think Jesus felt about Judas sin against him?
6. Have you ever had a friend hurt your feelings by sinning against you?
7. Is there anyone you have not been a good friend to?

## Saturday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:10–12 (Trial and Scripture)

**Word of the Day:** Prophecy

First Peter 1:10–12 speaks of prophets who prophesy about Jesus in the Old Testament. These prophecies are very specific and were given hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. These prophecies reveal to us that God knows and controls the future, and that the Bible is true. Therefore, we will spend this week examining some specific Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. We will look each day at an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.

700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would resurrect from death.

**Promise:** “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:10–11).

**Fulfillment:** “For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:25–32).

1. What did Isaiah promises would happen to Jesus after he died and was buried? That Jesus would rise from death
2. Did Isaiah’s prophecy come true? Yes
3. Is there anyone who has even risen from death like Jesus? No
4. Can you think of any way Isaiah would have known 700 years before Jesus was even born that he would die and rise?
5. What do you think it will be like to resurrect one day like Jesus did?
6. What do you think heaven will be like? Parents, it is good here to explain to your child(ren) that heaven is a new creation and like this world without sin and the curse. The Bible speaks of heaven as a place where the sun shines, people have fun, everyone is safe, no one gets hurt, and we get to do anything but sin which means that such things as going swimming and playing ball are allowed in heaven for kids who get to meet all the Christians from the Bible and history and also spend time with Jesus forever.

## **Witness #1 – Temptation**

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Mind

Peter tells us to prepare our minds so that we can think like God wants us to, which helps us to live our life like God wants us to.

1. What things help you learn about God and how he wants you to think and live?
2. How does prayer to God help you learn about God?
3. How does reading the Bible help you learn about God?
4. How does going to church help you learn about God?
5. Why do we talk about God as a family?
6. What things have you learned about God lately?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Father

Peter teaches us that God is a father. Christians are like God's kids who are adopted into his family to be loved, taught, and cared for by him.

1. What does it mean that God is a Father, or a perfect Daddy?
2. What does it mean that when we become Christians it's like getting adopted into God's family the church?
3. Do you know anyone who was adopted?
4. Did Joseph adopt Jesus? Yes.
5. What does it mean that other Christians are like brothers and sisters?

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Obedient

Peter says that Christians are supposed to be like obedient children. This means that we are supposed to obey God our Father like a good child obeys his or her parent.

1. Why do God and parents ask children to do good things and not do bad things? Because they love the children and want the best for them.
2. What does it mean to obey? It means that because of the love in your heart, you do what your parents and God ask of you.
3. What happens to children who do not obey God and their parents? They get into sin and their life is ruined.
4. Can you think of any times in your life when you did not obey God and your parents and something bad happened?

5. Are there any rules from the Bible or your home that you don't think are fair or right? Why?
6. Which rules from God or your parent(s) are most difficult for you to obey? Why?
7. Parents, this is a good opportunity to demonstrate humility and repentance. Take a few moments and explain to your child a time in your life when you did not obey your parents or when you did not obey God and you suffered for it so that they learn vicariously through your life. Invite them to ask you any questions they may have about what you share.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Holy

Peter tells us that God is holy and that Christians are to be holy. The Bible says God is holy more often than it mentions any of his other attributes, which means that holiness is very important. The word *holy* means “to be set apart.” So, to be holy is to be different in a good way. As Christians we do some things differently than other people because God loves us, we love God, and we want to be holy.

1. What does holiness mean? To be “set apart” or different in a good way compared to what some other people say and do.
2. What is the opposite of holiness? Unholiness or sin where we disobey God.
3. What are some things that Christians do that are different than other people? Examples include believing Jesus is God, reading the Bible, praying, worshiping God, going to church, confessing our sins to God, and not doing sinful things like swearing at people, getting drunk, or being violent.
4. Have you ever had someone make fun of you for being holy and not sinning? Explain what happened and how you felt.

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Judgment

Peter teaches that eternal judgment belongs to God. Judgment is what the Bible means when it says that God looks at our life and determines what we do that is right and wrong. The Bible teaches that one day there will be a final day of judgment when God fairly judges everyone for the life they lived. For Christians this judgment will be for our rewards in heaven. For non-Christians this judgment will be for their punishment in hell.

1. Why is it good that God judges? Examples include that it shows God does not approve of all the sin and hurt people are doing, that God will one day put an end to all evil and make the world perfect again, and that Satan does not win.

2. How does knowing that at the end of our life God will reward us for anything good we have done make it easier to live a holy life?
3. Is there any sin in your life right now that God wants you to stop doing so that he does not have to judge you for it?
4. Should we be more concerned about what other people think of us or about what God thinks of us? Why?
5. Can we judge who is going to heaven and hell? No, that is God's job.
6. Can we judge people's actions and decide if they were right or wrong? Yes, especially people who say they are Christians.

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Ransomed

Peter says that Christians are people who have been ransomed by God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Think of it this way. Sin includes our thoughts, words, deeds, and motives. Sin also includes not doing what we're supposed to do (sin of omission), and doing what we are not supposed to do (sin of commission). Now, imagine if every time we sinned throughout our whole life we owed God ten dollars—how deeply in debt we would be to God! But our sin is actually worse than that because we owe God more than ten dollars for every one of our sins and there is no way we can ever repay him. Jesus came as God into history to live without any sin, die for our sin, and pay our debt to God. So, Christians have been ransomed by Jesus, who paid our debt of sin to God.

1. Who pays our debt to God for our sin? Jesus.
2. How did Jesus pay our debt to God for our sin? He died on the cross for our sins.
3. Where was our sin judged and our ransom paid? At the cross of Jesus.
4. If we are Christians who believe in Jesus, will God judge us and send us to hell? No, because of Jesus we are forgiven. We get to be friends with God today and one day we will live with God in heaven forever.
5. How should we feel about Jesus because he ransomed us?
6. Can you think of any other time in life when someone ransomed you by paying for something you could not pay for? Explain.

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:13–21 (Temptation from Sin)

**Word of the Day:** Faith

Peter speaks of Christians as being believers in God. This means that Christians are people who have faith in God. To have faith in God means that we know who God is from the Bible, believe what the Bible says, and trust in Jesus as our God.

1. What does faith mean? It means that we know what God says in the Bible and believe it.
2. Who is our faith in? Jesus because he is our God.

3. Can you be a Christian without faith in Jesus? No, if you don't trust Jesus then you are not a Christian.
4. Who do you know that has faith in God?
5. Do you have faith in God?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Soul

Peter says that people have a soul. This means that God made people different than animals—we have both a physical body and a spiritual soul. Our soul continues to live even after our body dies.

1. What is a soul? The non-physical part of who we are.
2. Does our soul continue to live after we die? Yes, our soul continues to live after our body dies.
3. Do animals have souls? No, they only have physical bodies but not spiritual souls.
4. Does God have a body? No, he is a Spirit but Jesus did come to the earth in a body.
5. Do you have any questions about your soul?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Truth

Peter says that we should obey the truth. It is very important to know that God tells the truth. Truth is what is real and not a lie.

1. What is truth? Truth is what is real and from God.
2. What is the opposite of truth? Lies are the opposite of truth.
3. Where do we learn the truth? In the Bible.
4. Who always told the truth? Jesus always told the truth. Jesus says, "I tell you the truth" more than fifty times in the Gospel of John alone.
5. Who tells lies? Satan tells lies and Jesus says he is the father of lies in John 8:44.
6. Should we lie or tell the truth? Tell the truth like Jesus did.
7. What should we do when we lie? We should apologize to God and whomever we lied to because lying is a sin.

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Love

Peter says that Christians are to love God and one another. Love is one of the most important teachings in all of Christianity. Love comes from God because God is perfect love. When we love we are doing what God wants us to do.

1. Where does love come from? Love comes from God because God is love (1 John 4:8).
2. Who has loved you the most besides God?
3. What are the most loving things people have done for you?
4. What are some things you can do to love people?

### Wednesday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Word of God

Peter says that we become Christians by hearing and believing the Word of God. The title “Word of God” refers to the Bible. This is because the Bible is the literal words of God and the perfect way that God speaks to us.

1. What is the Word of God? The Bible is the Word of God.
2. How many books are in the Bible? Sixty-six books.
3. How many books are in the Old Testament? Thirty-nine books.
4. How many books are in the New Testament? Twenty-seven books.
5. How does God speak to us? Through the Bible.
6. What has God taught you from the Bible?

### Thursday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Repentance

Peter says that we should put our sin away from us because it is bad. The word *repentance* is often used in the Bible to explain how we put our sins away from us. Repentance is very important because it shows us that when we do sin we can ask Jesus to forgive us and he will help us to turn around and walk away from sin and be close to God.

1. What should we do when we sin? We should repent of our sin.
2. What is repentance? Telling God and whomever we sinned against we are sorry, asking their forgiveness, and letting God help us to stop sinning and do the right thing.
3. Have you recently repented of any sin and stopped doing a bad thing? Explain.
4. Parents, this would be a good opportunity for you to speak from the example of your own life in an appropriate way. Tell your child(ren) some sin you wrestled with and how Jesus helped you to repent of it and put it away. Invite your child to ask you any questions they may have about your repentance.

### Friday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Born again

Peter says that Christians are people who have been born again. What he means is that when we are born we are physically alive but spiritually dead in

that we don't love Jesus for being our God. However, when we become Christians we are born a second time so that we are both physically alive and spiritually alive to God.

1. Parents, take a few minutes and explain to your child(ren) what they were like when they were a baby. Tell the funny stories and describe how much you loved them. Ask them if they have any questions about what they were like as babies. You may also want to show them some of their baby photos.
2. What do babies like to eat when they were born? Babies eat a lot of milk.
3. What are new Christians hungry for when they first become Christians and are born again? Peter says they are hungry for the Bible and like to learn about God from the Bible just like babies are hungry for milk.
4. Parents, explain to your child(ren) what new appetites for God and Scripture that you experienced when you became a Christian and were born again. Invite them to ask any questions they may have about changes in your life since you were born again as a Christian.

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 (Temptation from Hypocrisy)

**Word of the Day:** Good

Peter says that God is good. What this means is that God never does anything bad or wrong because he is perfect and without any sin. Because God is always good we can always trust him and he will always help us.

1. Is God good? Yes.
2. Does God ever do anything bad? No, God never sins, never lies, and never does anything wrong.
3. Does God make people sin or do wrong things? No, God does not want anyone to sin and when they do it makes him sad.
4. What are some ways in the Bible that we see that God is good?
5. What are some ways in your life that God has been good to you?
6. How has God been good to your family?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** Priesthood

Peter says that Christians are a priesthood. In the Old Testament the priests were God's people who served God in ministry. In the New Testament, Peter says that all Christians are priests, which means that we can have a direct relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and that our whole life is ministry for God.

1. Who were the priests in the Old Testament? They were like pastors who did ministry for God, taught the Bible, prayed, and helped people.

2. Who are the priests in the New Testament? All Christians are called priests in the New Testament.
3. What is your ministry? Examples include helping out parents, serving kids in school, looking after siblings, etc. Talk this point through with your children at length and help them to see how they have opportunities to do ministry and help people.

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** Cornerstone

Peter says that Jesus is our cornerstone. In Jesus' day many buildings were made out of stones cut out of rock, kind of like bricks. When a building was made, the very first stone that was laid on the bottom of the building was called the cornerstone. The cornerstone was the most important stone because it held up the entire building. So, when Peter says that Jesus is our cornerstone, he is saying that Jesus should be first in our life and everything in our life needs to be built on him.

1. What is a cornerstone? It is the first and most important stone that is laid down to make a building.
2. What does it mean that Jesus is our cornerstone? It means he is the most important person in our life and that our whole life should be built on him.
3. What happens to a building that has a bad cornerstone? The entire building breaks and falls to the ground.
4. What happens to someone's life if Jesus is not the cornerstone? Their life is not built for God and it falls apart, like a bad building.
5. If Jesus is the cornerstone, who are the other stones in God's building, the church? God's people are the other stones stacked together as the church.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** Stumbling stone

Everyone has tripped over a rock and fallen down. Peter says that, sadly, for some people, Jesus is like a rock that they trip and fall over. What he means is that some people do not believe Jesus is God or that he rose from death and so they are not Christians who love Jesus. Peter says that they trip over Jesus because they are offended by him saying he is God and that we are sinners who need him.

1. What does it mean that Jesus is a stumbling stone for non-Christians? It means that they do not love Jesus as God and they are offended by and disagree with what he said and did.
2. What are some things Jesus said and did that people are offended by and disagree with?

3. What would you tell people who have questions about or problems with Jesus?
4. Do you know any non-Christians whom we should pray for and love in hopes that they become Christians?
5. Parents, take some time as a family to regularly pray for non-Christian family, friends, neighbors, etc., to become Christians.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** God's people

Peter says that Christians are God's people. What he means is that Christians believe in Jesus and live together as the church, kind of like a big family that loves and serves one another, or a team that works together.

1. What does it mean that we are God's people? It means that all Christians belong to God and are like a family or a team.
2. How many of God's people can you name that you know personally?
3. What are the benefits of being God's people? Examples include our sins are forgiven, the Holy Spirit lives in us to help us, we get to pray to God, we get to have Christian friends and be involved in church, etc.
4. What do you like best about being one of God's people?
5. Parents, explain why you like being among God's people and how that has benefited you and your family.

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** Mercy

Peter says that all of God's people have received mercy from God. The idea of mercy is very important to understanding God and the Bible. The Bible often says that God is merciful. For example, Exodus 34:6–7 is the verse most often quoted in the rest of the Bible and there God tells us that he is "The LORD, the LORD, a God *merciful* and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty." By "mercy," the Bible means that although we do not deserve it, God is good to us; he gives us goodness that we do not deserve and withholds from us punishment that we do deserve because he is loving.

1. What does it mean that God is merciful? Because God is loving he treats us good even when we are bad.
2. Do other religions teach that God is merciful? No, other religions teach that you get what you deserve and have to earn God's love and forgiveness by suffering, doing good works, or going to purgatory to pay God back for all your sins.
3. Do you think it is a good thing that God is merciful? Why?

4. Parents, explain the ways in which God has been merciful to you and your family so that your child(ren) can see firsthand the mercy of God in your home.

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** Darkness and light

Sometimes word pictures are the best way to understand something. Peter uses the word picture of darkness and light to explain life with Jesus. He says that life without Jesus is like living in the dark and that life with Jesus is like living in the light.

1. What do you think about the dark? Examples include that it is scary, lonely, and bad.
2. What does Peter mean that living without Jesus is like living in the dark? Examples include that you are lonely, scared, and don't know God.
3. What do you think about warm sunlight? Examples include that it is fun, feels good, and makes you feel alive and happy.
4. What does Peter mean that living with Jesus is like living in the light? Examples include that you are living and growing, happier, and not scared or lonely.
5. Do you ever get scared going to bed in the darkness? Explain. Parents, make sure to pray for your kids at bedtime and teach them to pray to Jesus themselves whenever they are scared at nighttime.
6. What is the most fun you have ever had in the sunlight?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:4–12 (Temptation from Worldliness)

**Word of the Day:** Good deeds

Christians are supposed to love people just like Jesus has loved them. Sometimes it is hard to love people because they are mean to us or not thankful for the things we do for them. Still, Peter encourages Christians to do good deeds for people even when it is difficult so that they will see that God loves them and we love them too, in hopes that they will love God and us.

1. What are good deeds? Things we do for people because God loves them and wants us to love them too.
2. What are some good deeds your parent(s) have done for you?
3. What are some good deeds people have done for you recently?
4. What are some good deeds you have done for people recently?
5. What are some good deeds you should do for someone whom God wants you to love?

### **Witness #2 – Submission**

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Submission

God is in charge of everyone and everything because he is in ultimate authority. God also puts people in authority over us to help us learn and grow. As long as the people in authority over us are not telling us to do something sinful against God, we are supposed to submit to them and do what they ask us.

1. Who is in ultimate authority in charge of everyone and everything? God.
2. What human authorities has God put in authority over you? Examples include parents, teachers, coaches, Sunday school teachers, police, etc.
3. Should you submit to someone who tells you to sin? No.
4. Should you submit to people in authority who tell you to do good things? Yes.
5. What are some ways you have submitted to godly authority?
6. Parents, it is good to explain to your child(ren) that you are submissive to godly authority as well. Take some time explaining how you have to obey God, the government, police, your boss, church elders, etc.

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Consequences

Peter teaches us that our actions have consequences. This means that if we obey godly authority over us we are rewarded. However, if we sin and disobey godly authority over us we are punished. This is what the Bible means elsewhere when it says we reap what we sow.

1. What bad consequences have you experienced for not obeying godly authority? Examples including getting in trouble or hurt when a parent's orders were disobeyed, or getting in trouble in school or Sunday school for not obeying the teacher.
2. What good consequences have you experienced for obeying godly authority? Examples include getting good marks on a report card for good behavior, or being chosen to be a leader at school or on a sports team.
3. Why did God give you parents to make rules for you?
4. Parents, it is important for you to use your own life as a positive and negative example for your child(ren). Tell some stories about negative consequences in your life for disobeying godly authority, and about positive examples in your life for obeying godly authority.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Servants

Peter says that Christians are supposed to be servants. This is because Jesus is a servant (e.g., Mark 10:42–45; Phil. 2:5–11) who has served us by coming to earth, living without sin, dying for our sins, and rising for our salvation. Jesus did all of this out of humility and love even though he was God. Since Jesus has

been so good to us, we want to follow his example and humbly serve others in love.

1. How is Jesus the greatest servant who has ever lived? Jesus is God and was humble enough to come to earth to serve people. Jesus has served more people than anyone who has ever lived and died for our sins, which is the greatest act of service anyone has ever done.
2. Who has served you and how have they served you?
3. Why do we serve people? Because Jesus has served us and we want to share God's love with other people.
4. Who does God want you to serve and how does he want you to serve them?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Freedom

Peter says that Christians are people who are free. This means we are free from Satan, sin, and selfishness. We are also free to love God, live new lives, and serve people in love.

1. What are Christians free from? Examples include free from Satan, sin, and selfishness.
2. What are Christians free to? Examples include free to love God, worship God, live a new life, and serve other people in love.
3. Are Christians free to sin? No, Christians are free from sin, which means we should not sin and when we do we should ask God to help us stop sinning.
4. Are Christians free to hide their sin? No, because we are free from sin we are free to tell Jesus and our parents when we sin so they can love and help us.
5. Is there any sin you have been hiding from me/us?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Honor

Peter says that Christians are supposed to honor everyone. This does not mean that we agree with everyone, or that we like what everyone is doing. However, it does mean that we treat people with respect and love because that is how God treats people.

1. What does it mean to honor people? Examples include that we treat people with love and respect even if we disagree with them.
2. Can you remember a time when someone did not honor or respect you (e.g., called you a name or was mean) and how you felt?
3. Is there anyone you need to do a better job of honoring? How can you do that?

4. Is there anything that I/we (the parent(s)) do or say that you don't think is honoring? Parents, this is a good time for you to examine your own life and parenting to see if you have been disrespectful to your child(ren) by being harsh, mean, or curt. If so, apologize to them, ask their forgiveness, and pledge to them and God that you will repent and grow in that area to do a better job of honoring them and setting a good example.

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Love

Peter says that Christians are supposed to love one another. This is because God is loving and wants us to treat one another the way he treats us. To help us love our Christian friends and church, God gives Christians the Holy Spirit who gives us love to share with others (Rom. 5:5). Love is doing what is best for other people.

1. Where does love come from? Love comes from God.
2. How has Jesus loved us? Examples include that he came into history as a person although he is God, lived without sin, died for our sins, rose for our salvation, sent the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out, and is preparing a place for us right now in heaven.
3. What does it mean that Christians are supposed to love one another?
4. Which Christians have loved you well? How did they love you?
5. Whom have you loved well? How did you love them?
6. Is there anyone you need to love better and if so how can you do that?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:13–17 (Submission to Godly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Fear

The Bible often says that we should fear God, and Peter says this also. What he does not mean is that Christians whose sins have been forgiven by Jesus should be scared of God. What he does mean is that Christians should respect God enough to live in reverence for God.

1. What does it mean to fear God? Examples include that it means to respect God, obey God, love God, etc.
2. Should Christians be scared of God? No, God loves us and is only loving and kind to Christians.
3. Name the people you respect and revere the most and why.
4. Why should we respect and revere God?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day:** Trinity

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is

once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the appearance of the Trinity in 1 Peter 1:1–2.

1. What does Trinity mean? One God in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. Does the Bible use the word “trinity”? No, it is a word that Christians use to explain what the Bible teaches.
3. How is God a person? He thinks, feels, talks, loves, etc.
4. Does God have a body? No, only Jesus had a body when he came to earth but God the Father and the Holy Spirit do not have bodies.
5. Is there only one God or are there three Gods? There is only one God.
6. Are God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit equally God? Yes, they have all the same attributes, such as knowing everything, having all power, and being the Creator of the world and people.
7. Do other religions believe in the Trinity? No, only Christians believe in the Trinity.

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day:** Living God

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the reference to God as the living God in 1 Peter 1:23.

1. What does it mean that God is the living God? Examples include that God is not a dead thing like a rock or dirt, and that God has always been alive and will always be alive.
2. How do we know that Jesus the living God? Even when they killed him, he came back to life because he is the living God and not dead.
3. Where does all life come from? Life comes from God because God is the living God who makes things alive.
4. Could we be alive without God? No, God made the world and made us to be alive and without God there would be no life.
5. Will God ever die and stop living? No, God will live forever.
6. If we belong to God will we live with him forever? Yes, Christians live with God forever and after we die and go to heaven we will never die again.
7. Moms, this is a good opportunity to explain to your child what it was like for God to put the life of your child in you. Tell your child how excited you were to see and feel them growing and moving in your tummy. Answer any questions they may have about human conception and life.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day: Creator**

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the reference to God as the Creator in 1 Peter 4:19.

1. Who created the universe and everyone and everything in it? God did.
2. What chapters of the Bible tell us about God creating everything? Genesis 1–3.
3. What is the first verse of Genesis? “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
4. How did God make everything? By his powerful word from nothing (Heb. 11:3).
5. Did people evolve from monkeys or did God make us? God made us in his image.
6. Who were the first people God made? Adam and Eve.
7. What parts of creation are you most thankful God made and why?  
Examples include trees to climb in, animals to have as pets, sun to play outside, dirt to dig in, flowers to smell, etc.

**Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day: Holy**

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the reference to God as holy in 1 Peter 1:15. By “holy,” the Bible means that God is altogether good, without any sin, and perfect.

1. What attribute of God is mentioned the most in the Bible? God is called holy more than anything else in the Bible.
2. What does the Bible mean when it says that God is holy? Examples include that God is perfect, good, and without any sin.
3. Does God ever sin or do a bad thing? No, everything God does is holy and good.
4. What is the opposite of holiness? Unholiness, sin, or doing bad things.
5. What kinds of holy things should Christians do?
6. What kinds of unholy things should Christians not do?

**Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day: Judge**

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is

once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the reference to God as our judge in 1 Peter 4:5.

1. Why does God have the right to judge people? Examples include that we have sinned against him, he alone knows everything, he is truthful, and he never makes a mistake.
2. Why is it good that God judges? Examples include that it shows God does not approve of all the sin and hurt people are doing, that God will one day put an end to all evil and make the world perfect again, and that Satan does not win.
3. Does God judge our actions? Yes, God knows everything we do.
4. Does God judge our words? Yes, God hears every word we say.
5. Does God judge our thoughts? Yes, God knows every one of our thoughts.
6. Does God judge our hearts? Yes, God knows what we are feeling.
7. Should we be more concerned about what other people think of us or about what God thinks of us? Why?
8. Can we judge who is going to heaven and hell? No, that is God's job.

## **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day:** Redeemer

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the reference to God as our redeemer in 1 Peter 1:18–21. The idea of a redeemer is taken from the exodus (Ex. 15:1–18; Deut. 7:8; 15:15). There, God's people were in slavery to the cruel Pharaoh and God came as their redeemer to set them free. Likewise, people are slaves to such things as Satan, sin, and death until Jesus redeems them. This is why Titus 2:13–14 says, "Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for us to redeem us."

1. What are people slaves to (meaning they cannot get free from it)? Examples include Satan, sin, and death.
2. Who is our redeemer who frees us from slavery to live new lives? Jesus is our redeemer.
3. How does Jesus redeem us? He died on the cross for our sins and rose for our salvation as our redeemer.
4. Why does Jesus redeem us? So that we can live new lives with God.
5. Parents, this is a good opportunity to explain what God has redeemed you from through Jesus Christ. Explain to your children the sins that have stopped in your life since you met Jesus. Answer any questions they may have about what has changed in your life since you started walking faithfully with God.

## **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** Various Scriptures

**Word of the Day:** Gracious

This week we will examine what 1 Peter teaches us about God. God is often mentioned in 1 Peter; in fact, he is mentioned a full thirty-nine times, which is once every forty-three words! God is mentioned more frequently in 1 Peter than in any other book of the New Testament. Today we are examining the reference to God as the God of all grace in 1 Peter 5:10. By speaking of God as gracious, the Bible means that he is patient, loving, selfless, generous, kind, and altogether good.

1. What does it mean that God is gracious? Examples include that he is patient, loving, selfless, generous, kind, and good.
2. How has God been gracious to you?
3. How has God been gracious to your family?
4. Do other religions believe God is gracious? No, they believe that you only get from God what you earn by working hard, but the Bible teaches that God is gracious.
5. How would life be worse if God was not gracious?

## **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Suffering

Sometimes we get in trouble because we sin. Sometimes we suffer not because we sinned but because someone is sinning against us. When Peter wrote his letters, the Christians were suffering because other people were being mean to them just because they worshiped God. Some of the Christians were even slaves whose masters hurt them and they could not do anything about it because slaves were not protected by the law. So, Peter wrote them a letter teaching them how Jesus suffered when people sinned against him and how he is our example of how to treat mean people who do bad things to us.

1. What is suffering? Suffering is when you are hurt by someone who sins against you.
2. Should we stop being Christians because some people make fun of us or are mean to us? No, we should ask them to stop, pray for them, and keep living as Christians.
3. Did Jesus suffer? Yes.
4. How did Jesus suffer? Examples include Judas betrayed him, his friends did not help him when he needed them, he was arrested and accused of bad things he did not do, he was beaten, and he was killed.
5. How did Jesus treat people who made him suffer? Jesus loved them, forgave them, and did not sin against them.
6. What can we learn about suffering from how Jesus suffered?

## Monday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Sorrow

Peter tells us that some things in life will give us sorrows, or make us sad. This is because sometimes life is difficult. In hard times it is okay to be sad and even to cry. After all, even Jesus was sometimes sad and Isaiah 53:3 calls him “a man of sorrows.” The shortest verse in the Bible says, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). So, Christians are allowed to be honest about their feelings like Jesus was, which means sometimes we have joy and sometimes we have sorrow.

1. What are some times in the Bible when Jesus had sorrow? Examples include Jesus’ sadness that his friend Lazarus had died, when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died, and when he saw his mother Mary at the foot of his cross.
2. What does the shortest verse in the Bible say? John 11:35 says, “Jesus wept.”
3. Is it okay for Christians to sometimes be happy and sometimes be sad? Yes.
4. What are your happiest memories?
5. What are your saddest memories?

## Tuesday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Endurance

Peter says that Christians are to have endurance when we face hard times. Endurance is the determination to keep doing what is right and living like Jesus wants us to no matter what. Everyone has things in life that they want to give up on but they need to endure. So, today we will discuss endurance, or what the theologians call *perseverance of the saints*.

1. What does it mean for Christians to endure or persevere?
2. What are some things that you want to quit doing because they are difficult (e.g., school work, chores, loving a difficult friend)?
3. What are some things you can do to help yourself endure better?
4. Parents, this is a good opportunity to share with your children struggles in your life that are difficult for you to endure (e.g., illness, unemployment, financial shortfalls, a tough job). Explain to them what you are doing to endure and persevere and why.
5. How can we be praying for each other to endure? Parents, this is a good time to take a few moments over dinner and pray for each other in areas needing endurance.

## Wednesday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Atonement

Peter says that Jesus bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. What he means is that because Jesus died in our place for our sins, we can put our sins to death and live a new life by the power of God the Holy Spirit. The word that Bible teachers use to explain this is *atonement*. Atonement means we can be at-one with God because of Jesus so that our sinful life goes away and our new life comes.

1. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Jesus died in our place for our sins.
2. Since Jesus died for our sins, what can we do with our sins? We can put our sins to death, or stop doing a sin and instead live a better life as a Christian.
3. What kind of sins can Jesus help you to stop doing?
4. What kind of good things can Jesus help you to start doing?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Healing

Peter quotes Isaiah 53:5 and says that we can be healed because of Jesus' death on the cross. This means that in this life some people are healed of sickness. It also means that all Christians are healed after they die and resurrect with new bodies that never get sick or hurt ever again.

1. What does healing mean? It means that God heals our sickness by a miracle.
2. Does God want us to pray for sick people to be healed? Yes (e.g., James 5:14).
3. Are there any sick people we should be praying for? Parents, this is a good opportunity to take some time and pray with your child(ren) for sick people your family knows.
4. Is every Christian healed in this life? No.
5. Is every Christian healed in heaven? Yes.
6. What do you think it will be like in heaven where no one gets sick, hurt, or dies?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Sheep

Peter says that people who sin are like straying sheep. Sheep are mentioned more than any other animal in the Bible, roughly four hundred times altogether. Sheep often wander away from their shepherd who looks after them. This is dangerous because sheep do not have any way to defend themselves and wolves and other animals will kill them. When we sin and wander away from God we are like sheep who are in danger of being hurt.

1. Which animal is mentioned the most in the Bible? Sheep.

2. How are people like sheep? We need to stay close to God for protection and if we wander away from God we are in danger like sheep.
3. Are sheep a strong and tough animal? No, they are nice but cannot fight back if other animals like wolves try to hurt them.
4. In what ways do you wander from God like sheep wander from their shepherd?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 2:18–25 (Submission to Ungodly Authority)

**Word of the Day:** Shepherd

Peter says that Christians are like sheep and that Jesus is like our Shepherd. Shepherds look after their sheep, protect their sheep from animals that want to hurt them (like wolves), and make sure the sheep have food to eat and water to drink. If you want to study more about sheep and shepherds, Psalm 23 explains them in great detail.

1. Who looks after the sheep? The shepherd.
2. What kinds of things does a good shepherd do? Feeds the sheep, protects the sheep, leads the sheep, etc.
3. If a sheep wanders away from the shepherd, what does he do? He goes and finds the lost sheep and brings them back to the flock and takes care of them.
4. How are Christians like sheep? See yesterday's discussion for various examples of possible answers.
5. How is Jesus like a shepherd to Christians? Examples include he leads us, protects us, feeds us, takes care of us, etc.

### **Witness #3 – Marriage**

#### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** Marriage (Part 1)

In 1 Peter 3:1–6 Peter speaks of marriage. God is the one who made us male and female and invented marriage for one man and one woman (Gen. 2:18–25). The Bible also teaches that Jesus is like a husband and the church is like his wife whom he loves (Eph. 5:22–33). This means that Christians who get married are supposed to love one another like Jesus and the church.

1. Who is supposed to get married? One man and one woman.
2. Who invented marriage? God did.
3. Who were the first people to ever get married? Adam and Eve.
4. Parent(s), this is a good opportunity to answer any questions your child(ren) may have about marriage. Explain your own marriage and how you met one another and courted (if you are married). Also explain to them the importance of being a Christian and marrying a Christian and why and how you will help decide whom they date and marry.

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** Marriage (Part 2)

Peter was a pastor who wrote the letter that became a book of the Bible to help his people. Some of the women in his church were Christians who were married to men who were not Christians. The Bible teaches that Christians are only supposed to marry Christians (2 Cor. 6:14–15). But some Christians sin and marry non-Christians. Also, sometimes two non-Christians marry and then one of them becomes a Christian. It is very difficult for a Christian to be married to a non-Christian because they do not worship God together, pray together, study the Bible together, or want to do everything that God says.

1. Should a Christian marry a non-Christian? No.
2. What are some reasons a Christian might be married to a non-Christian? Examples include sinful reasons (e.g., a Christian marrying a non-Christian) and not sinful reasons (e.g., two people were not Christians when they married and then one became a Christian).
3. How is it difficult for a Christian to be married to a non-Christian? Examples include they do not worship God together, study the Bible together, or go to church together, and they will want to raise their children differently.
4. Parents, this is a good time for you to explain why you want your children to be Christians who only date and marry Christians. Answer any questions they may have about this important subject.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** Submission

Peter says that a wife should submit to her husband. What this does not mean is that men are better than women, or that a husband can be mean to his wife in any way. What this does mean is that a wife is supposed to respect her husband so that he knows she loves him, as Peter says.

1. What kinds of things are disrespectful for a wife to do? Examples include yelling at her husband, throwing things at him, saying mean things about him to other people when he is not around, etc.
2. What kinds of things are respectful for a wife to do? Examples include speaking nicely to her husband, not saying bad things about him when he is not around, and speaking the truth to him in a way that is not mean.
3. If people treat one another with respect, how does it make their relationship better?
4. Is there anyone who is disrespectful to you? If so, how? How does it make you feel?
5. Is there anyone that you need to work to be more respectful to? Who?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** Good deeds

Peter says that Christian women should be known for their good deeds and conduct.

1. What are good deeds? Good things we do out of love for God and other people.
2. What are some good deeds a loving wife does for her husband?
3. Why is it good to start serving other people when you are little to help you get ready to be married one day?
4. Parents, this is a good opportunity for everyone in the family to give some examples of good deeds they have seen in the actions of other family members so as to encourage good deeds in one another.

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** True beauty

Peter says that Christian women should dress with modesty. This does not mean that they should not dress attractively and nicely, but rather that they should not dress seductively. Too often girls and women are pressured to be only concerned about what they look like on the outside rather than the inside. However, since God looks at our hearts, we should look at people's hearts also and see that their true beauty is their love for God and holy character.

1. What is true beauty? True beauty is what is in the heart of someone who loves God and other people.
2. What is a gentle spirit for a woman? Loving, kind, encouraging, and truthful.
3. What is a quiet spirit for a woman? She speaks wisdom and truth in a way that is loving and helpful for other people, including her husband.
4. How does a woman's character make her beautiful?
5. What are some characteristics of a woman with beautiful character?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** Sarah

Peter says that there are parts of Sarah's life from Genesis that are a great example for other women. She was a very old woman, barren, and without any children. Yet God promised her that she would have a baby. Hebrews 11:11 says she had such great faith in God that she believed God would give her a baby. Therefore, Sarah is one example of a woman who trusted God to take care of her even when life was very difficult.

1. What does the name Sarah mean? Sarah means "princess."
2. How old was Sarah when God told her she would have a baby? Sixty-five.

3. How old was Sarah when she had the baby? Ninety.
4. Did Sarah trust God for the baby even though it required a miracle? Yes (if you want you can read Hebrews 11:11 where it says this).
5. What was the name of Sarah's son? Isaac.
6. What does Isaac mean? Laughter.
7. What can girls and women learn from Sarah's life?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Marriage and Women)

**Word of the Day:** Holy women

Peter says that women (young and old) can learn a lot by studying the lives of the holy women who lived in the days of the Old Testament. So, today we will discuss some of the godly women in the Old Testament.

1. Name one godly woman at a time from the Old Testament, tell what you know about her story, and share what good things we can learn from her life. Examples include that Sarah trusted God for a miracle baby, Ruth loved God and worked hard after her husband died, Esther loved God and saved God's people, the Proverbs 31 woman worked hard and took good care of her family, etc.
2. Who are your favorite women in the Bible? Why?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Love

Peter says that Christian husbands are to be loving, kind, tender, and sweet to their wives. This is because marriage is a picture of Jesus' relationship with the church and husbands are to love their wives like Jesus loves the church. Love includes the words we say, the gifts we give, the time we spend together, how we serve, and how we touch one another.

1. Why does Peter say that husbands must love their wives? Because husbands are to act like Jesus.
2. How can our words be loving? How can our words be unloving?
3. How can our service be loving? How can our service be unloving (e.g., we only serve people who serve us)?
4. How can our gifts be loving? How can our gifts be unloving?
5. How can our time together with people be loving? How can we be unloving when we spend time with people?
6. How can the way we touch people be loving (e.g., hugs)? How can we touch people in a way that is unloving (e.g., shoving, hitting)?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Understanding

Peter says that one way that a husband can love his wife is to be understanding. This means he is considerate, thinks of things from her point of view, listens to her, and tries very hard to always think of her and do things that are best for her.

1. What does it mean to be an understanding person? Examples include being a good listener, thinking of other people and not being selfish, trying to understand other people, being patient, kind, considerate, etc.
2. Who do you know that is an understanding person who listens to you and helps you?
3. How good are you at being understanding toward other people?
4. Are there any people you can do a better job being understanding with?
5. What can you do to be more understanding with people?

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Honor

Peter says that husbands are supposed to honor their wives. This means that a husband should not be rude to his wife, mean to his wife, speak in a mean way to his wife, ever threaten her or make her scared, or ever hit or hurt her in any way. Sadly, some men do not control their tempers and they are mean to their wives and children, which is a sin.

1. What does it mean to honor people? Examples include it means we are to speak lovingly, act kindly, and treat people with respect.
2. What do we call it when people do not honor other people? Sin.
3. What are some ways in which you have not honored someone?
4. What are some ways in which you have honored someone?
5. Is it easier to be friends with someone who honors you? Why?

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Weaker

Peter says that when someone is stronger than another person it is a sin for the stronger person to bully and push around the weaker person. Sometimes men sin terribly by pushing around and bullying their wives and children just because they are not as strong and tough.

1. How should we treat someone who is weaker (e.g., younger children)? We should love and protect them and not push them around or bully them.
2. Is it a bad thing to be weaker than someone else? No, everyone is weaker than someone else.
3. What kinds of things do bullies do? Examples include they call names, they hurt people's feelings, they push or hit others, they make people do what they do not want to do, etc.
4. Is there anyone that you sometimes bully? If so, explain.
5. Is there anyone who sometimes bullies you? If so, explain.

## **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Heirs

Peter says that Christian husbands and wives are both heirs of God's grace. An heir is someone who is part of a family and gets all the benefits and rewards of being part of that family. What Peter is saying is that for Christians, God is our Father and he shares with us every good thing. So, when we go to heaven we will live in God's house, eat God's food, and enjoy God's kingdom, which the Bible says even has streets lined with gold.

1. What is an heir? Examples include someone who gets to enjoy everything in their family and has a huge inheritance waiting for them.
2. Who are God's heirs? All Christians.
3. What kind of things do you think God will have for you to enjoy in heaven?
4. What do you think heaven will be like?
5. Who do you want to meet in heaven?

## **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Prayer

Peter says that husbands who are mean to their wives will not have their prayers answered by God. What this means is that husbands who do not lovingly serve their wives will not be lovingly served by God until they change and stop sinning against their wives. God says this because sometimes people can be really mean to other people and God wants them to stop being mean and so he warns them to be nice.

1. What is prayer? Examples include that prayer is talking to God.
2. When we pray, do we have to get the words perfect or does God know our heart and what we are trying to say? God knows our thoughts and hearts and so our prayer should be sincere but need not be perfect.
3. How often do you pray to God?
4. Is there anything about praying to God that is hard for you?
5. What are God's answers to our prayers? Yes, no, or later on.
6. Why does God sometimes not answer the prayers of people? If they are being mean to other people, God wants them to stop being mean and so he tells them he will answer their prayers and help them only if they want to be nice to people.

## **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:7 (Marriage and Men)

**Word of the Day:** Marriage

The first marriage in the Bible is in Genesis 1 and 2. There, God made our first parents Adam and Eve. Then God brought them together and married them. Therefore, God created marriage to be for one man and one woman.

1. Who created marriage? God did.
2. Who can be married? One man and one woman (Gen. 2:18–25).
3. Do you ever want to be married? Explain.
4. What kind of person would you want to marry? Examples include a Christian, a woman who is respectful, or a husband who is loving and kind.
5. Do you have any questions about marriage?

### **Witness #4 – Suffering**

#### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Unity

Peter says that Christians should have unity of mind with other Christians in their church. By unity of mind, Peter does not mean that we agree on everything. But he does mean that we all think the same regarding the most important things. The kind of things that all Christians are supposed to have unity of mind about are things like believing the Bible is God’s Word, there is only one God, that Jesus is God who died for our sin, that Jesus rose from death to give us new life, and that when we sin we should repent and when we are sinned against we should forgive.

1. What is unity of mind? Examples include agreeing on the most important parts of Christianity.
2. How can Christians have unity of mind? By reading and studying the Bible with the help of God the Holy Spirit.
3. What should Christians do if they do not have unity of mind and disagree about something important? They should pray for God to teach them, study the Bible to find the truth, and learn from other godly people to help them.
4. What happens when Christians do not have unity of mind? Examples include they sometimes fight, or even stop being friends.
5. Are there any things that your parents believe that you don’t agree with? Explain.

#### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Sympathy

Peter says that Christians are supposed to have sympathy. What this means is that Christians are supposed to be loving and consider other people and their feelings and needs. No one is perfect, everyone sins, and God is working on every Christian all the time. Sympathy is when we are loving, patient, kind, and helpful with one another. Sympathy is understanding that some people are just not good at some things, or that they won’t be good at some things until they

learn more, which takes time. Sympathy is not demanding that people be perfect, but loving them to help them always grow to be more like Jesus.

1. What are some ways that we can act without sympathy? Examples include being mean, impatient, demanding, or expecting everyone to be like us.
2. Who has shown you sympathy? How?
3. Who have you shown sympathy to? How?
4. How does God have sympathy with us? Examples include he is patient with us, serves us, and works hard to help us all the time.
5. When you are with younger children, how is it hard for you to have sympathy for them?
6. Are there any people it is hard for you to treat with sympathy? Who?

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Brothers

Peter says that Christians should have brotherly love for one another. What he means is that because God is our Father, the church is like a family, and we should treat other Christians kind of like brothers treat one another. Brothers love one another, spend time together, do things together, help one another, and sometimes disagree or even fight but always work it out because they love one another.

1. How is the church like a family? God is our Father and Christians are like brothers and sisters.
2. How do loving brothers treat one another?
3. What are some ways that brothers sin against one another?
4. What does the Bible mean when it says Christians should love one another like brothers do?
5. Is there any Christian who has loved you like a brother? Who?
6. Is there any Christian whom you have loved like a brother? Whom?

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Tender heart

Peter says that God the Holy Spirit helps us to have a tender heart. A tender heart is a heart that loves God, loves people, feels bad when someone has been hurt or sinned against, and wants to do the right thing. The opposite of a tender heart is a hard heart that does not submit to God, treat people nicely, or apologize when something wrong is done. Everyone gets a hard heart sometimes and needs to pray to Jesus, asking him to help us have a tender heart.

1. What is a tender heart?
2. What is the opposite of a tender heart? A hard heart.

3. How is a tender heart different than a hard heart?
4. Are people with tender hearts loving and happy? Why?
5. How is your heart lately, more tender or hard? Why?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Humble mind

Peter says that Christians need a humble mind. A humble mind believes that the Bible is true, is willing to learn, does not pretend to know everything, listens to teachers and parents, and does not brag about what it knows and how smart it is. The opposite of a humble mind is a proud mind—like Satan’s—that does not obey God or humbly learn.

1. What is a humble mind?
2. Why do proud people not learn very much?
3. What does the Bible say about pride? Parents, good verses to read and even memorize about pride include:
  - “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes.” (Prov. 6:16–17)
  - “Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.” (Prov. 8:13)
  - “Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.” (Prov. 16:5)
  - “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov. 16:18).
  - “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (1 Pet. 5:5, cf. James 4:6)
4. Was Jesus humble or proud? Parents, if you want you can follow this point up by reading and discussing Philippians 2:1–11.

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Suffering

Sometimes Christians suffer because they sin or do something foolish. But Peter says that sometimes Christians suffer not because they have sinned or done anything wrong, but just because other people do not like Christians. The suffering that Peter speaks of happens when others make fun of you because you are a Christian, they don’t want to be your friend, or they don’t understand why you read the Bible, pray, and go to church because they do not do those things so they think you are weird.

1. What kinds of things do Christians do that are different than what non-Christians do?
2. What kinds of things do Christians sometimes get made fun of for?
3. Has anyone ever picked on you because you are a Christian? Explain.

4. Did people pick on Jesus because he loved and obeyed God? What did they do to him?
5. How did Jesus respond to people who made fun of him and picked on him?
6. How can you be like Jesus when people pick on you for being a Christian?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:8–17 (Suffering to Bless)

**Word of the Day:** Apologetics

Peter says that Christians should lovingly answer any questions non-Christians have about Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity. This is called *apologetics*.

Apologetics is when Christians study the Bible and Christian books and articles to find answers to people's questions to help them become Christians.

1. Are there any people who have asked you questions about the Bible or Jesus or Christianity? Who asked, and what questions did they ask?
2. Are there any questions you have about Jesus or the Bible or Christianity? Parents, there are a number of good articles and book recommendations for apologetics at [www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org) if your children are old enough to start doing further study on big questions about their faith.
3. Why is it better to try and answer people's questions rather than argue and fight with them if they are being mean to you for being a Christian?
4. Parents, this is a good time for you to share the big questions you have wrestled with and how God helped you through books, friends, sermons, etc., to get the answers you needed.

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Hero

Peter says that because Jesus' life was without any sin, he is the perfect example for us to learn from and follow. In this way, Jesus should be our hero. Unlike the heroes of cartoons and video games, Jesus is real and helps us be like him. Furthermore, when Jesus suffered because people were sinning against him, he forgave them and loved them.

1. What is a hero? Someone we look up to, want to be like, etc.
2. Who are some of your heroes? Why?
3. Why is Jesus the best hero of all?
4. What can you learn from how Jesus treated his enemies?
5. Are there any people sinning against you? Explain.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Reconciliation

Even though we were God's enemies because of our sin, Peter says that through Jesus we can be reconciled to God as friends. Reconciliation is when enemies

become friends, when people who are not close become loving, and when conflict is replaced with peace. Because Jesus died for our sins on the cross, all our sins are forgiven and we can be reconciled to God through Jesus. Also, when people sin against one another, Jesus can forgive that sin and take it away so that people can be reconciled as friends too.

1. What is reconciliation?
2. What is the only way that people can be reconciled to God?
3. How does Jesus make it possible for people to be reconciled to one another?
4. What happens if people are not reconciled but are enemies?
5. Are you reconciled to God through Jesus? Explain.
6. Is there anyone you need to be reconciled to? Explain.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Noah

Peter uses Noah as an example for us to learn from. Noah lived in the desert when God told him to build a huge boat called an ark. Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah had faith in God. Noah demonstrated this faith by building an ark in the middle of the desert with the help of his sons for about 120 years. The ark was an enormous 1.4 million cubic feet, or the size of 522 modern railroad boxcars and was shaped like a battle ship. Noah suffered because people did not believe that a flood was coming. They made fun of Noah even though he preached for them to have faith in God. The flood eventually came and everyone but Noah and his family died because no one else got on the ark to be saved. Like Noah, today we live by faith that one day Jesus will come back and everyone will be sent to heaven or hell. Until that day comes, people will make fun of Christians like they made fun of Noah. We should still love people and preach the gospel to them like Noah did in hopes that they will have faith in God and will not suffer in hell like the people suffered in the flood.

1. Tell me/us the story of Noah as best you can.
2. What did Noah do that showed he had faith in God? He spent 120 years building the ark.
3. What did people think of Noah while he was building he ark? They made fun of him.
4. Did Noah stop building the ark so that people would stop making fun of him? No.
5. Should we stop doing what is right because people make fun of us? No.
6. Will Jesus judge people one day like he did in the flood of Noah? Yes.

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Cleansing

Peter says that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from death to cleanse us from our sins. He also says that Christians show that they belong to Jesus by being baptized. In baptism, we are put under the water like Jesus was put under the earth, and then brought up like Jesus rose from death. In doing this we show that we believe in and belong to Jesus and that he cleanses us from sin like water cleanses us from dirt.

1. How does baptism remind us of Jesus?
2. Does baptism make you a Christian? No, believing in Jesus makes you a Christian but Christians who believe in Jesus get baptized to show they believe.
3. Have you ever seen someone get baptized? What did you think?
4. How does Jesus cleanse us from sin like water cleanses us from dirt?
5. Have you been baptized? If so, what was it like? If not, are you a Christian and would you like to be? Parents, this is a good time for you to see if your children are truly regenerated Christians and whether they are ready to be baptized.

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Heaven

Peter says that after dying for our sin and rising from death, Jesus returned to heaven, where today he rules as God. In heaven, Jesus sits at the right hand of God, which is the seat of power and honor. From there he rules over all people and angels.

1. Is Jesus dead today?
2. Where is Jesus today?
3. Who does Jesus rule over today?
4. Is anyone more powerful than Jesus?
5. What do you think it will be like in heaven to see Jesus on his throne?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Angels

Peter says that Jesus rules over all the angels. Unlike God, angels were created. Unlike God, an angel does not know everything, cannot do anything because they are not as powerful as God, and cannot be everywhere at one time. Angels are good spirits who love God, worship God, and serve God by helping God's people. Unlike people, angels do not have a body and they never die.

1. What is an angel?
2. Are angels as powerful as God?
3. Who made angels?
4. How do angels serve God?
5. Do angels have bodies like people do?

## **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 3:18–22 (Suffering to Learn)

**Word of the Day:** Demons

In saying that Jesus rules over all angels, Peter is also saying that Jesus rules over bad angels, which are also called demons in the Bible. Bad angels do not love God. Instead, they follow Satan, who was a bad angel that tried to defeat God and was kicked out of heaven for sinning. Demons came with him to earth and they do bad things to people. Satan and demons tempt people to sin, tell lies about God, and hurt people. Because Jesus is more powerful than demons, Christians can pray to Jesus for protection and he will keep us safe from demons.

1. Who is Satan?
2. What are demons?
3. What kinds of bad things do demons do?
4. Is Jesus more powerful than demons?
5. How does prayer to Jesus protect us from demons?

## **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)

**Word of the Day:** God's will

Peter says that Christians should live their lives according to God's will for them. This means that we cannot always do what other people tell us, or even what we want to do. Instead, we are to trust that God is smarter than we are, loves us, and that doing what he says is always best.

1. Why is it best to do God's will for our lives?
2. How does reading and studying the Bible help us know God's will?
3. How does prayer help us know God's will?
4. How do Christian family and friends help us know God's will?
5. In what other ways can we learn of God's will for our lives?

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)

**Word of the Day:** Idolatry

Peter says that sin is ultimately caused by idolatry. Idolatry is when we love something or someone more than God. Sometimes, idolatry is taking good things (like sports, video games, or friends) and making them more important to us than God so that they become bad things because we are not using them rightly.

1. What is idolatry?
2. Which people and their opinions of you could become more important to you than God?
3. Which things do you enjoy so much that they could become more important to you than God?

4. How is Jesus better than idols? Examples include he loves us, serves us, and lets us enjoy the good things he gives without worshiping them.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)

**Word of the Day:** Hospitality

Hospitality is opening our life and home to welcome people in and build friendships with them. Hospitality begins with God who has become our friend and welcomes us into his home for a huge party in heaven (Isa. 25:6–8). Hospitality includes having friends and family over, and especially neighbors and non-Christian friends. People do not often have others over to their homes for dinners and parties anymore, so this is an important ministry for Christians to love people.

1. What is hospitality?
2. What are some fun times you have had eating and playing at other people's homes?
3. What are your happiest memories of having people over to eat and play at your home?
4. When you have people over, what can you do to be unselfish and serve them?
5. Which people should you invite over to your home? Parents, you may want to start planning more hospitality (if you don't do much at present) by hosting a community group, scheduling play dates, or having the neighbors over for a social time or holiday party.

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)

**Word of the Day:** Grumbling

Peter says that a common sin for people is grumbling. Grumbling is when we talk back, argue, complain, and generally just have a bad attitude. The best-known grumblers in the Bible were the Israelites in the Old Testament. God made them walk around the wilderness for forty years because they would not stop grumbling against their leader, Moses, and God himself. They grumbled about everything from the food God gave them to eat to the water he gave them to drink.

1. What is grumbling?
2. Is grumbling a sin?
3. How long did the Israelites grumble in the days of Moses?
4. When was the last time you grumbled?
5. What do you grumble about most often?
6. Does grumbling help anything or make anything better?

## **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)

**Word of the Day:** Spiritual gifts

Peter says that rather than grumbling, Christians should try and make the world a better place by using their spiritual gift(s) to serve people. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, and some Christians have more than one. Spiritual gifts are abilities God gives us to do ministry. When we use our spiritual gift(s) we are often happy because we are doing what God made us to do. Some of the spiritual gifts are teaching, leading, evangelism, helping, mercy, service, biblical counseling, encouragement, wisdom, administration, giving, faith, discernment, and hospitality.

1. What is a spiritual gift?
2. Who has spiritual gifts?
3. What kinds of things do you like to do for other people?
4. What might your spiritual gift be?
5. Why is helping people better than grumbling about them and more like how Jesus treats us?

**Friday****Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)**Word of the Day:** Ministry

Peter teaches that every Christian, no matter how young they are, has important ministry to do. In this way, every Christian is like a pastor who loves and helps people. Peter teaches that our ministry is with our hands and our mouths. With our hands we serve people for Jesus, and with our mouths we speak to people about Jesus.

1. What is ministry?
2. Who is in ministry?
3. What are the two kinds of ministry?
4. Do you feel you are better at helping people with the works of your hands or the words of your mouth?
5. Why is it nice of God to let us each do ministry?

**Saturday****Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:1–11 (Suffering to Serve)**Word of the Day:** Glory

Peter says that all glory belongs to Jesus. He means that Jesus should be the most important person in our life and that we should do everything we can to make sure that other people see how wonderful he is. The word *glory* means something like the blazing glow that happens in a fire. When we sit around a fire and put a stick in, the end of that stick glows red from the fire, or glories. So, when we walk with Jesus and stay close to him, we too burn with the glory of God so that other people see how Jesus changes our life and he gets all the glory for the good things we have and do.

1. Who should get all the glory?

2. How is glorifying in Jesus sort of like putting a stick in a fire?
3. Do angels glorify Jesus? Yes, they serve him and sing songs of worship to him.
4. How does our singing worship songs to Jesus glorify him?
5. Is it possible to glorify Jesus in every area of life?
6. Is there any area of your life in which you are struggling to glorify Jesus?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Rejoice

Peter says that even though life can be very difficult, we need to find reasons to rejoice in God. God is good, and he is always good to us. Yet, when life is hard it can be difficult to see the ways God is being good to us. So, we should work even harder in tough times to see God's grace and love in our lives. One day when Jesus returns and sin is gone there will be nothing but rejoicing forever.

1. Why should we rejoice in God?
2. Why is rejoicing in God sometimes harder when life is tough?
3. What reasons do you have to rejoice in God?
4. What has God done in your life that you should be thankful for?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Spirit

Peter says that Christians can worship God because they have the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God and the third member of the Trinity. He has forever lived in relationship with God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ) in perfect love, communication, and joy. Because the Holy Spirit lives in Christians, he teaches us about God, convicts us of sin that separates us from God, and enables us to worship God.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. How does the Bible teach us that the Holy Spirit is a person and not just a force? He is a person who can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), and insulted (Heb. 10:29).
3. Is the Holy Spirit God? Yes (Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 3:17–18).
4. Does the Holy Spirit live in everyone? No, only Christians (Eph. 1:13–14).
5. What does the Holy Spirit do for Christians? Examples include he saves us, convicts us of sin, teaches us the Bible he inspired to be written, gives us spiritual gifts, gives us love for Jesus, helps us to pray, and helps us to worship God.

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Worship

Everyone worships someone or something. Worship is giving ourselves for someone or something because they are most important to us. Worship includes singing but is much bigger than that and is our whole life. Some people worship their job, or their hobby, or their sport, or what other people think of them. Christians worship God the Father through God the Son by the power of God the Holy Spirit. Peter says that when people are being made fun of for being Christians it is a good time to worship God by staying devoted to him and doing what is right.

1. What is worship?
2. What is the opposite of worship? Idolatry, worshiping someone or something other than God.
3. Is worship just singing or is it singing plus all of life?
4. Why do some people stop worshiping God when people make fun of them for being a Christian?
5. Do you worship God? Why, or why not?
6. Is there anything we could do to include more worship singing in our family? Parents, this may include buying some worshipful music for your child's iPod, listening to worship music in the car and singing together, etc.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Consequence

When we sin, there are consequences. Peter says that Christians should not be people who suffer because of their sinful choices. Peter says that we should not be murderers who hurt people, thieves who steal from people, evildoers who sin against people, or meddlers who gossip about people and stick our nose in things that are not our business. When we sin in these ways there are bad consequences for us and other people. By seeing the harm that is caused by the consequences of our sin, we learn the importance of worshiping God in all of life.

1. What is a consequence?
2. What are the consequences of sinful choices for us and other people?
3. What is murder?
4. What is stealing?
5. What is evildoing?
6. What is meddling?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Shame

Peter says that people who sin and do not repent and change feel shame. This means that they feel guilty, bad, sad, and frustrated. People who have shame tend to hide their sin from other people and often try to pretend that things are fine when they are not. However, Peter says that Christians should not be stuck in feeling ashamed. This is because Jesus died to forgive our sins and by the

power of the Holy Spirit we can repent and change so that we no longer do the things we are ashamed of.

1. Why do people feel shame?
2. What is shame?
3. What kinds of things do ashamed people often do?
4. How should Christians deal with shame from sin?
5. Is there any secret sin you are ashamed of?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Trust

Peter says that when our life is difficult and people are making fun of us for being a Christian it is more important than ever to trust God. This includes trusting that he does exist, does love us, will help us, is ultimately in control of our lives, and in eternity will sort everything out and make it right. This trusting in God is one of the ways that we worship God.

1. What does it mean to trust God?
2. Why is it sometimes harder to trust God in tough times?
3. Have you ever struggled to trust God? Explain.
4. Parents, take some time to explain to your child(ren) a season or circumstance in which you struggled to trust God, what you learned through that struggle, and answer any questions they may have about your experience in trusting God.

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 4:12–19 (Suffering to Worship)

**Word of the Day:** Good works

Peter says that even when life is tough and people are making fun of us for being Christians, we still need to do good works. Good works are those things we do because God loves us and we want to obey him because we love him. Good works is simply doing the right thing even when no one sees us except God and even when people are not thankful for what we do.

1. What are good works?
2. What good works did Jesus do even when life was difficult?
3. Why should a Christian do good works?
4. What kind of good works does God want you to do?
5. What things make it hard for you to keep doing your good works?

### **Witness #5 – Humility**

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Elders

Peter speaks of the leaders of the church and calls them *elders*, which is a word that means the same thing as the word *pastor*. Elders are the male pastors who teach the Bible, care for the people, and lead the church. Peter also says that he is an elder-pastor of the people in his church.

1. What is an elder-pastor?
2. What kinds of things do elders-pastors do?
3. Do you know who the elders at your Mars Hill campus are? Parents, if not and you want to find out, the Executive Elders are listed on the Mars Hill Church website ([www.marshillchurch.org](http://www.marshillchurch.org)) under "About," and the campus elders are listed on each campus' page.
4. What would happen to a church if it did not have good pastors?
5. What can you be praying about for your church and pastors?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Witness

Peter says that he was a witness to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. This means that he knew Jesus personally and was with him for three years. Peter saw Jesus get arrested, crucified, and rise from death. In a day when there were no video cameras or audio recorders, the testimony of an eyewitness was the best way to know the facts about someone's life. So, Peter is one of the best people to tell us the truth about Jesus.

1. What was Jesus' relationship with Peter?
2. How many years was Peter a disciple of Jesus?
3. Was there anyone who saw more of Jesus' three years of ministry than Peter? No, Peter saw Jesus the most.
4. If people disagree with Peter about Jesus' life, should we believe Peter or them?
5. How do we know Peter is not lying about Jesus? He suffered for being a Christian and was crucified upside down, which is not something he would have endured for a lie.

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Chief Shepherd

Peter says that in every church, Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. What this means is that Jesus is ultimately the senior pastor. This means that all other pastors work for Jesus and he is their boss. So, pastors are supposed to read the Bible and pray so that they do what Jesus wants.

1. Who is the senior pastor of our church?
2. How do the pastors know what Jesus wants them to do?
3. Whose church is Mars Hill, the elders' or Jesus'?
4. Is there anyone at Mars Hill who is above Jesus?

5. What kind of trouble happens when a pastor acts like he can do whatever he wants and not what Jesus wants?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Crown

Peter says that pastors, like all Christians, do not get their reward in this life. Rather, those who faithfully served Jesus will get a crown of righteousness in Jesus' kingdom. In Peter's day princes and princesses, along with victorious athletes, wore crowns. So, crowns were very special and it was a great honor to wear one. To get a crown from Jesus will be the greatest honor we will ever receive. Once we get our crown we can take it off our heads and lay it at Jesus' feet to honor him for allowing us to live a life that honors him.

1. Do faithful Christians get their ultimate reward in this life or heaven?
2. Who wore crowns in Peter's day?
3. Who will crown us in heaven?
4. Do you think not getting our reward in this life will be worth it when we see Jesus face to face and he crowns us?
5. If you live as a faithful Christian, what do you think you will do when you meet Jesus and he crowns you?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Authority

Peter says that elders-pastors are to graciously, humbly, and lovingly exercise their authority in the church. This authority means that when a pastor asks a Christian in their church to do something because it's in the Bible, they are supposed to respect their pastor and do what he asks.

1. Why does God give some people, like pastors, authority over other people?
2. What should you do if someone in authority tells you to do something that is a sin?
3. What should you do if someone in authority (e.g., parent, pastor, teacher, coach) asks you to do something that is in the Bible?
4. What happens to people, including children, who do not obey godly authority?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Young people

Peter says that sometimes young people have a hard time listening to and obeying older people. For children, this includes parents, grandparents, and teachers. Still, younger people need to learn to listen to and obey older people

who love them and love Jesus. This is so that the older people can help teach and train the younger people.

1. Why do young people sometimes not listen to older people?
2. Which older people in your life are you supposed to listen to?
3. Are there any things that older people tell you to do that you do not feel is right?
4. Why should you be thankful that there are older people in your life to love you and help you grow up?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:1–5 (Humble Pastors)

**Word of the Day:** Humble leaders

Peter says that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Pride is a terrible sin, and so God cannot bless proud people. Humility is a great virtue, one that Jesus had while on the earth. Peter warns that people in authority (like pastors) can get proud and need to be humble so that God can bless them and help them. So, every Christian—beginning with the pastors—should pursue humility by the grace of God and repent of pride whenever it shows up.

1. Why is humility better than pride?
2. Why are humble people easier to live with than proud people?
3. In what areas of your life do you struggle with pride?
4. Who do you know that you think is humble? Why?
5. Who looks up to and follows you and needs you to set a humble example?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** Exaltation

Peter says that Christians should not be like other people who always do everything they can to be noticed, be in charge, and be lifted up. Instead, Christians should humbly work hard and do what God wants them to do. Then, if God wants to raise them up to be leaders, famous, or powerful, he can do that for them.

1. In what ways do humble people treat others better and nicer than proud people do?
2. Why are humble people better leaders than proud people?
3. Have you ever had to work with a leader who was proud and selfish? What was that like?
4. Is there anyone whom you have been proud with and need to be humble with instead?
5. What kinds of things do we do when we are acting proud?
6. What kinds of things do we do when we are acting humble?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** Anxiety

Anxiety is anything that makes us worried, stressed out, and frustrated. Everyone has anxiety in their life at various times for various reasons. Peter tells us the best thing to do when we are anxious is to cast our anxieties on God because he cares for us.

1. What is anxiety?
2. Does God care for us? Explain.
3. Since God cares for us, how can we cast our anxieties on him?
4. What can you do to turn to God when you have anxiety (e.g., pray, get some alone time to journal or think, read the Bible, sing worship songs to God)?

**Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** The devil

Peter says that the devil is like a lion roaming around looking for people to hurt. The devil is a bad angel who does not love God, does not tell the truth, and wants us to sin and disobey God. Peter tells us to resist him, which means we are to love God, believe the truth of the Bible, do what God wants us to do, and ask God to help us and forgive us when we sin.

1. Who is the devil?
2. What kinds of things does the devil want us to do?
3. How can we resist the devil?
4. Is Jesus more powerful than the devil? What things can Jesus do that the devil cannot do (e.g., forgive our sins, change our hearts, help us be good)?

**Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** Dominion

Peter says that Jesus Christ has all dominion. The word *dominion* refers to how big Jesus' kingdom is. Jesus is a king who rules over all peoples, times, places, and things as the King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no one more powerful than Jesus. Peter promises that because he loves us, Jesus our powerful king will right every wrong in his wonderfully perfect kingdom.

1. What does dominion mean?
2. How far does Jesus' rule as king reach?
3. Is there any king or ruler above Jesus?
4. Is Jesus a king that loves his people? Explain how we know this.
5. What do you think Jesus' kingdom of heaven will be like?

**Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** Eternity

Peter says that Jesus will rule as king forever and ever. The word that explains this is *eternity*. Eternity means that there will be no end in heaven. Christians will live forever with Jesus and there will not be any death or any end to our lives with Jesus.

1. What does eternity mean?
2. Will we die in heaven, or live eternally with Jesus and each other?
3. How nice will it be to live with people we love forever and no one dying?
4. Who do you want to meet in heaven (e.g. from the Bible or church history or deceased Christian family and friends) other than Jesus?
5. What kind of fun things will you want to do in heaven forever and ever?

**Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** Amen

As he nears the end of his letter, Peter says “amen.” That word means “let it be” or “yes, I agree.” When people say “amen,” they are agreeing with God and saying with their mouth that what God says is good. Nearly every time “amen” is used in the Bible, it is spoken by worshipers who agree with a portion of Scripture that has been taught or read, or a word that has come from God. So, it is okay when we hear a sermon in church or hear someone teach the truth of the Bible to say “amen” out loud to show that we agree with it.

1. What does “amen” mean?
2. Why is it a good thing for us to sometimes say “amen”?
3. Why is it good for us to close our prayers with “amen”?
4. Are there any parts of the Bible or worship songs you like so much that when you hear them you want to say or shout “amen”? Which ones?

**Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 1 Peter 5:6–14 (Humble Christians)

**Word of the Day:** Friends

Peter tells the Christians that they should greet one another with a holy kiss. In that day, that was how people who were friends said hello to one another. In our day, some people still greet one another with a kiss, like a husband and wife, or a parent or grandparent who gives a kiss to their children or grandchildren. But most of the time shaking hands or hugging is how we say hello and only a parent or grandparent should give a kiss on the head or cheek to a child. The big idea Peter is teaching is that Christians are to be friends with one another and greet one another in love.

1. Why did Peter tell people to kiss one another?
2. Should we kiss people we meet? No, only our parents or grandparents.
3. What are some nice ways to greet people, especially our friends?

4. Who are your friends?
5. How does it make you feel when your friends greet you lovingly?
6. What can you do to be nicer and kinder to your friends?

## **Witness # 6 – Faith**

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** Apostle

Peter begins his second letter by saying he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. God's senior leaders in the Old Testament were the prophets, and God's senior leaders in the New Testament were the apostles. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the prophets and the apostles wrote for us the Old and New Testaments (Eph. 2:20). Like the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament apostles preached and did many miraculous signs (Acts 2:43). The apostles were literally eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:21–26). For this reason, apostles do not exist today, though the function of their office does continue in a limited sense. For example, apostleship is used in a secondary sense to refer to such people as Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6) and Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7). They, like apostles today, were gifted individuals sent out to move from place to place in order to begin and establish local churches as church planters (Acts 13:3–4). This gift also includes the capacity to minister cross-culturally as a missionary (Acts 10:34–35; Eph. 3:7–8).

1. What is an apostle?
2. What kinds of things did apostles do?
3. Are there apostles today who can write the Bible?
4. What is church planting? Parents, Mars Hill is actively involved in church planting and you may want to show your child(ren) the Acts 29 Church Planting Network website ([www.acts29network.org](http://www.acts29network.org)) so they can see some of the church planters our church is helping to serve and so they can pray for those church plants.
5. What is a missionary? Parents, you may want to tell your child(ren) about a missionary named Arjuna Mars Hill has supported for years. Arjuna lives in India where he runs a school for orphans as part of his orphanage, has a seminary, and has planted hundreds of churches through Vision Nationals ([www.visionnationals.org](http://www.visionnationals.org)).

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** Equality

Peter says that all Christians have a salvation that is equal to his. This means that every person equally bears God's image, every Christian is equally forgiven and saved by Jesus, and that God is like a Father who does not favor any of his children but equally loves and care for every single one of his children. This means that even a young Christian or new Christian has the same access to God

the Father through Jesus as Peter the great apostle who was friends with Jesus and wrote two books of the Bible.

1. What does equality mean?
2. Is every Christian equally loved by God?
3. Is every Christian equally forgiven of all their sin by Jesus?
4. Does every Christian have equal access to God through Jesus Christ?
5. Who are some of the most influential Christian leaders you can think of? Do you think you have as much love from and access to God as they do? Why or why not?

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** Righteousness

Righteousness is being free from sin and condemnation in God's eyes. Peter says that our righteousness comes from Jesus. This is very different from other religions where people are wrongly told to make themselves righteous. In Christianity Jesus makes us righteous by his love and grace. Righteousness is having a right relationship with God. Jesus did two amazing things for us on the cross. First, he died to take away our sin. Second, he died to give us his perfect and holy righteousness. Therefore, God sees us as righteous through Jesus and gives us the Holy Spirit to live a righteous life like Jesus did.

1. What is righteousness?
2. What does Jesus take from us on the cross?
3. What does Jesus give to us on the cross?
4. Do we love God first and try to do good things so that he will love us, or does God love us first and help us to do good things?
5. Is righteousness something we give ourselves, or something Jesus gives us?
6. Who has Jesus given us to help us live righteous lives? The Holy Spirit.
7. Explain some ways the Holy Spirit helps us to live a righteous life like Jesus.

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** God – Jesus

Peter says that that Jesus Christ is “our God.” Some people say that Jesus was just a good man but not really God. But the Bible is clear that Jesus was and is God.

1. Jesus said he came down from heaven (John 6:38, 41–42, 60, 66). How does this show that Jesus is God?
2. Jesus performed miracles. How does this show that Jesus is God?
3. Jesus said he is God (Mark 14:61; John 10:30–33). Do you think Jesus was lying when he said he is God?

4. Jesus said he was sinless (John 8:46). Is there anyone but God who is perfect and sinless?
5. Jesus forgave sin (Mark 2:5). Can anyone but God forgive our sin (Ps. 51:4)?
6. Jesus said he is the only way to heaven (John 11:25; 14:6). Does anyone know the way to heaven or have the keys to open heaven besides God?
7. Do you believe Jesus was and is God? Why or why not?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** Savior

Peter says that Jesus is our savior. A savior is someone who saves other people from a terrible fate. Jesus saves us from Satan, sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God.

1. What is a savior?
2. Who is our savior?
3. What does Jesus save us from?
4. Can anyone else save us like Jesus?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** Divine power

Peter says that Christians have been given God's divine power. This means that the Holy Spirit lives in and through Christians to empower them to live the Christian life. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism and rested upon him to show that all of Jesus' life and ministry was done by the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who gave power to Jesus gives divine power to us.

1. What is divine power?
2. What does it mean that Christians have divine power?
3. What are some ways in which the Holy Spirit empowers us? Examples include to serve God, to say no to sin, and to grow as Christians to be more like Jesus.
4. What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:1–4 (Faith in Your New Birth)

**Word of the Day:** Promises

Peter says that God has given us promises in Scripture. The Bible's promises assure us of blessings in this life and in heaven. The blessings promised by God include adoption into his family the church (2 Cor. 6:16–7:1), forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9), answer to prayer (Luke 11:9), deliverance from temptations (1 Cor. 10:13), sustaining grace for difficult times (2 Cor. 12:9), provision for all needs (Phil. 4:19), reward for obedience (James 1:12), and eternal life (Luke 18:29–30;

John 3:16; Rom. 6:22–23). Faith is when Christians believe that God's promises are true and live that belief out practically.

1. What is a promise?
2. What are some promises God gives us in the Bible?
3. Why do you think God puts promises in the Bible?
4. Do you think there are any promises that God will not fulfill?
5. What are some of your favorite Bible promises? Why?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Virtue

This week we will examine seven character traits of a Christian that the Holy Spirit works to form in us. The first character trait Peter mentions is virtue. Virtue basically means excellence. When a person does what God intends for them, they are virtuous. Since God made us to glorify him, virtue happens when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we glorify God in whatever it is we are doing. Jesus is our perfect example because his virtue was perfect.

1. What is virtue?
2. How does the Holy Spirit help us to have virtue?
3. What are some ways the Holy Spirit has helped you to grow in virtue?
4. Who do you know that you think has virtue? Why?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Knowledge

The second character trait that Peter mentions is knowledge. Knowledge is learning about who God is, what the Bible says, and how to live our lives with God. Growing in knowledge takes time and work. There are many ways to gain knowledge, including prayer, Bible study, church attendance, book reading, and listening to wise people. Jesus is our example of knowledge because as a boy he grew in knowledge (Luke 2:52).

1. What is knowledge?
2. What are some ways to grow in knowledge?
3. What methods have been most helpful for you to gain knowledge?
4. What do you want to learn about?
5. Do you think you get enough time reading (or, if the children are younger, being read to)?

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Self-control

The third character trait that Peter mentions is self-control. Self-control is the ability to say no when you are supposed to. Self-control includes not letting your

anger carry you away, not letting your friends talk you into sin, and not letting Satan drag you into sin. To be good at something requires self-control. For example, athletes and musicians have to practice a lot and have self-control if they want to be any good. Like them, Christians need to work hard at practicing their faith and having self-control. And, Jesus is our perfect model of self-control because he never gave in to sin.

1. What is self-control?
2. What happens to people who do not have self-control?
3. Why is it good to have self-control?
4. In what areas of your life do you feel you have self-control?
5. What are some areas of your life that you need to grow in self-control?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Steadfastness

The fourth character trait that Peter mentions is steadfastness. Steadfastness is like patience and the ability to hang in there and persevere when life is tough. The opposite of steadfastness is simply giving up. People who give up when things get hard do not make good Christians, good spouses, good parents, good employees, or good friends. So, steadfastness is very important to develop so that you can learn not to be a quitter. Jesus is our perfect example of steadfastness because he did not quit even when they crucified him.

1. What is steadfastness?
2. What is the opposite of steadfastness?
3. Why is it bad to be a quitter?
4. In what areas of your life are you steadfast?
5. In what areas of your life are you a quitter?
6. Who do you know that is steadfast and what can you learn from them?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Godliness

The fifth character trait that Peter mentions is godliness. Godliness means “God-likeness,” or acting like God would act and wants us to act. In other words, godliness is worshiping God well by living like Jesus lived. Godliness is living our life for God, with God, and by God in both the big and little things. Godliness is very practical and includes how we speak to people, how hard we work, how honest we are, how truthful we are, and how loving we are. Jesus is our perfect example of godliness because he never sinned and he did everything God the Father wanted him to do.

1. What does godliness mean?
2. Why is it important to live our lives like Jesus lived his earthly life?
3. What are some practical ways for you to practice godliness?

4. Who are some of the godliest people you know? Why do you think they are godly?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Affection

The sixth character trait that Peter mentions is affection. The word in the original Greek, in which this letter was written, is the same word we use for the city of Philadelphia, which is called “the city of brotherly love.” The affection that Peter speaks of is brotherly love among Christians. Affection is not just pretending to love someone, but rather actually loving them with Jesus’ love given to us to share by the Holy Spirit. Affection helps us to be patient, serve, encourage, and rebuke people out of love as needed. Jesus is our perfect example of affection because he has loved us.

1. What is affection?
2. How is loving someone different from pretending to love someone?
3. What are some ways in which you can show your affection to people?
4. Who has been affectionate with you and how do you see their affection?
5. Is there anyone you have affection for?
6. Is there anyone you have difficulty having affection for? Explain.

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:5–15 (Faith in Your New Life)

**Word of the Day:** Love

The seventh character trait that Peter mentions is love. The kind of love that Peter is speaking of is sacrificial love (the original Greek calls this *agape*), by which we do not just feel loving, or say loving words, but actually do loving things that are hard for us to do. This kind of love includes loving people who are tough to love, and even loving our enemies. Jesus is our perfect example of *agape* love because he has loved sinners and even his enemies and went to the cross to die for them—the greatest act of love ever.

1. What is love? Parents, you may also want to read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, which is a good memory verse for kids about love.
2. Is love just what we feel and say, or also what we do? Explain.
3. How have people shown you they loved you?
4. Why should we love people who are hard to love, or even our enemies?
5. How does Jesus show his love to us?

### **Witness # 7 – Doctrine**

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Myths

Peter says that Christianity is built on historical facts whereas other religions and beliefs are built on myths. The facts of Christianity include Jesus being born, living on the earth performing miracles and teaching, dying on the cross, and resurrecting from death. Other religions and false teachings are not built on historical facts like these but rather on untrue myths and speculation. One example is Mormonism, which teaches that God the Father is a highly evolved man who became a god, that Jesus was the half-brother of Lucifer, that people can become gods and rule their own planets, and that the ancient Israelites migrated to the Americas and became the ancestors of the Native American Indians, which has zero genetic or archaeological support.

1. What is a myth?
2. What is the difference between a myth and a fact?
3. Is Christianity built on myth or fact? Explain.
4. Is there anything in the Bible you think may be a myth and not a fact? Explain.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Lord

Peter calls Jesus “Lord.” Peter means that Jesus is God who rules and reigns over everyone and everything from his exalted throne in heaven. Practically, this also means that every aspect of our life is under the lordship of Jesus. There is nothing in our life that should be disconnected from Jesus.

1. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord?
2. Is Jesus the only Lord, or are there other gods who are lords too?
3. Who and what does Jesus rule over?
4. Is there any part of our life that does not belong to Jesus’ rule?

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Son of God

God the Father called Jesus his Son at Jesus’ baptism. Jesus called himself the Son of God (e.g., John 10:36), and often referred to God as Father. Peter also calls Jesus the Son of God. He means that Jesus is the same as God the Father; they have the same attributes, such as both being the Creator. When the Bible says that Jesus is the Son of God, it means that Jesus is God. The Bible is not saying that Jesus is a created being whom God the Father made, but rather that Jesus existed as God with the Father in heaven in eternity past. God the Father sent Jesus into the world for the mission of saving sinners.

1. Is Jesus the Son of God?
2. When was Jesus first called the Son of God? At his baptism by God the Father.
3. What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God?

4. Is anyone else the Son of God just like Jesus is?
5. What does the language of Father and Son tell us about the love between God the Father and Jesus Christ?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Eyewitnesses

Peter says that he was an eyewitness to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In particular, Peter mentions being present at the baptism of Jesus when God the Father spoke from heaven and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove so that the entire Trinity was revealed. Peter was a disciple of Jesus who learned from Jesus as they spent time together for three years. Peter heard Jesus teach, saw Jesus perform miracles, saw Jesus die, and saw Jesus after his resurrection. Therefore, no one knows more about Jesus than Peter. Furthermore, since there was no technology in that day to record Jesus, the best way to know what he actually said and did is to believe the testimony of eyewitnesses like Peter. Peter had nothing to gain from telling lies about Jesus, and was even crucified upside down for worshipping Jesus—he would not have done that if he was not sure Jesus was God.

1. What is an eyewitness?
2. Why is it important to listen to eyewitnesses if we want to know the truth about something that happened?
3. List some parts of Jesus' life that Peter witnessed firsthand.
4. Why should we believe that Peter was telling the truth about Jesus and not lying?
5. Why is it important to know that the Bible was written by eyewitnesses to Jesus (e.g., 1 John 1:1–4) or from the testimony of eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1–4)?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Inspiration

Peter says that the men who wrote the Bible did not make up what it says. Instead, they said what God the Holy Spirit inspired them to say. Inspiration means that God the Holy Spirit helped men write the exact words that God wanted to have written (see also 2 Tim. 3:16). So, Peter is teaching that the Bible was written by men and God working together, with the Holy Spirit leading them to write God's Word perfectly. This makes the Bible perfect and unlike any other book that has ever been written or ever will be written.

1. What is inspiration?
2. Who wrote the Bible?
3. Is any book as perfect as the Bible?
4. How does God the Holy Spirit speak to us through the Bible?
5. Why do you think God went to so much trouble to give us the Bible?

## Friday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Inerrancy

Inerrancy is the doctrine that because the Scriptures are inspired by God the Holy Spirit, they are perfect and without error. This doctrine is inextricably tied to the character of God himself. God cannot lie (2 Sam. 7:28; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). So, the entire Bible is without any error or contradiction, unlike every other uninspired writing and utterance (Num. 23:19; Ps. 12:6; 119:89; Prov. 30:5–6).

1. What does inerrancy mean?
2. Do you believe the Bible is inerrant? Why or why not?
3. Is there any other inerrant book besides the Bible?
4. If the Bible is inerrant, why should we be careful to study it correctly and learn exactly what it is saying?

## Saturday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 1:16–21 (Doctrine from True Teachers)

**Word of the Day:** Scripture

Peter speaks of the books of the Bible as Scripture. The New Testament (NT) speaks of the Old Testament (OT) as Scripture, for which the Greek word is *graphe*, meaning “writing.” The word *bible* comes from the Greek word for book. Holy Bible, therefore, means the “Holy Book.” It contains sixty-six separate books. The thirty-nine books of the OT record the time from creation to Jesus’ life on earth. The twenty-seven books of the NT begin with the four gospels, which are biographies of Jesus’ life, and then proceed to instructions to various Christians and churches. The OT covers a few thousand years of human history, and was written over the course of more than one thousand years. The NT covers just the first century of church history. The NT was originally written in Greek and every book was completed by the close of the first century. The OT was originally written in Hebrew on papyrus—a form of paper made out of reeds; the New Testament was written on parchments (prepared animal skins). A lecturer at the University of Paris created the Bible’s chapter divisions in the early 1200s, which accounts for our current 1,189 chapter divisions. The Bible’s 31,173 verse divisions were fully developed by 1551, in an effort to provide addresses (not unlike those on our homes) that would help us find particular sections. Over 77 percent of the Christian Bible is the OT. The OT has 929 chapters and 23,214 verses. The NT has 260 chapters and 7,959 verses.

1. How many books are in the Bible?
2. How many books are in the OT?
3. How many books are in the NT?
4. What time in history does the OT record?
5. What time in history does the NT record?
6. What were the original languages of the OT and NT?

## **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** False teachers

Peter warns Christians that there are false teachers. False teachers pretend to speak for God, but what they teach is not true and does not agree with the Bible. They are simply liars. False teachers are always very popular. They tell people what they want to hear, rather than the truth. They often enjoy the power, fame, and attention they receive. Christians are warned not to believe their ideas, follow their teaching, read their books, or attend their meetings because they work for Satan and not God.

1. What is a false teacher?
2. What is the difference between a false teacher and a true teacher?
3. How can you tell who is a true teacher and who is a false teacher?
4. Why are false teachers so popular?
5. How should you respond to false teachers and their false teaching?
6. What are some examples of false teaching you have heard?

## **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** Heresy

In warning Christians against false teachers, Peter says that they teach destructive heresies. A *heresy* is a false teaching, or a lie, that does not agree with what Christians have always agreed that the Bible teaches. Examples of heresy include saying that God is not a Trinity, that there is more than one God, that Jesus is not God, that Jesus did not rise from death, that you can go to heaven without Jesus, and that you do not need to repent of some sins such as sexual sin (heterosexual and homosexual). Entire religions such as Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, along with very liberal "Christianity," are built on heresy. Heresy is destructive because it gives us the wrong picture of God and builds our life on lies instead of truth.

1. What is a heresy?
2. What do we call someone who teaches heresy?
3. What are some examples of heresy you have heard of?
4. How can we know what is a heresy and what is not?
5. What can we do to learn the Bible so that we don't believe heresy?

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** Blasphemy

In warning Christians against false teachers, Peter says that false teachers commit blasphemy. Blasphemy is telling lies about God to insult him, attack him,

mock him, and demean him. Someone has to be very arrogant to blaspheme God and they often encourage other people to do the same. One example would be devout atheists who say that there is no God and make fun of people who do believe in God.

1. What is blasphemy?
2. Is it okay to blaspheme God? Why not?
3. What is an example of blaspheming God?
4. Do you know anyone who blasphemes God? Explain.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** Greed

Peter says that false teachers are motivated by greed. Greed means that we love money even more than God and will do just about anything to get more money. False teachers do not teach what the Bible says because they would rather teach whatever people pay them to teach so they can make more money. Since people want to hear nice things, false teachers only say nice things and do not speak much about sin or call people to repent of sin so they can make lots of money speaking to people and selling their books (e.g., Jer. 6:14; 8:11; Isa. 30:10).

1. What is greed?
2. Why is greed a bad thing?
3. Should we do what is right, or what makes people happy?
4. Why do false teachers only say nice things?
5. What are some things in the Bible that are hard to hear but still true?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** Condemnation

Peter warns that false teachers will face condemnation when they stand before God. What this means is that some people teach a lot of lies in this life and lead a lot of people astray. But God is watching them and knows everything they think, say, and do. One day they will stand before God and he will judge them, condemn them, and sentence them to hell forever. This is a good thing because false teachers are lying about God and hurting people and they need to be dealt with by God.

1. What is condemnation?
2. Will God allow any non-Christian to avoid condemnation?
3. Why is condemnation from God a good thing?
4. Does God ever make a mistake and wrongly condemn someone, as sometimes happens in our courts when innocent people are condemned to jail?

## Friday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** Protection

In addition to promising the condemnation of false teachers, Peter reminds Christians that God promises protection for them. Protection means that God loves us, keeps an eye on us, helps us, and gets us through this world safely into heaven. As an example of protection, Peter mentions Noah, whom God saved from the flood, and Lot, whom God saved from the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by getting him out of town just in time. Peter is stressing that even if the world gets dark and false teachers are everywhere, we can trust God and his protection of us.

1. What is God's protection?
2. How did God protect Noah and his family?
3. How did God protect Lot?
4. Can you think of any other people in the Bible that God protected?
5. Do you believe God will protect you from condemnation and get you to heaven safely? Why or why not?

## Saturday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:1–10a (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 1)

**Word of the Day:** Despise

In warning Christians about false teachers, Peter says that they despise authority. To despise means that they do not listen to godly people, do not submit to godly people, and do not learn from godly people. Instead, they only believe themselves, and they only listen to people who agree with them. People who despise godly authority are proud and dangerous like Satan, who also despised God's authority. People who despise authority always want to teach but never want to learn and end up being false teachers who disobey and rebel against God. Sadly, those who despise godly authority also lead others astray to join them in fighting against God.

1. What does it mean to despise godly authority?
2. What kinds of things do people who despise godly authority do and not do?
3. Can you think of some examples in the Bible or church history of people who despised God and godly authority? If so, what happened to them?
4. What godly authority do you need to ensure that you do not despise?

## Sunday

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2) **Word of the Day:** Bold

In warning Christians against false teachers, Peter notes that they are often bold. This means that they are very confident, pushy, and certain that they are right and that other people are wrong. Even though they are wrong, their boldness makes them seem convincing so that some people wonder if they are not actually false teachers. What Peter is teaching is that someone can be sincere, confident, convincing, bold, and still wrong and a false teacher.

1. What is boldness?
2. How are bold people sometimes convincing?
3. If someone is sure they are right, does that always mean they are right?
4. Can you think of anyone in the Bible or church history who was bold but wrong?
5. Can you remember any of the times Peter was bold but was wrong in his life? Examples include when he told Jesus what to do, and when he cut a man's ear off with a sword when he was not supposed to.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2)

**Word of the Day:** Deception

Peter warns that false teachers practice deception. By deception, he means that they lie, do not tell the whole truth, and manipulate things to say what they want them to say. They are hypocrites who teach one thing but do another. Deception is a bad thing. The Bible says that Satan is the deceiver who deceived Eve; so, when we deceive people we are doing what Satan does.

1. What is deception?
2. Who was the first being to deceive people?
3. What are some ways people try to deceive other people?
4. Does God try to deceive people?
5. Why is it important to tell the whole truth and not try to deceive people?
6. Is there any deception, including secrets, in your life?

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2)

**Word of the Day:** Ignorant

In warning Christians about false teachers, Peter says that they are ignorant. To be ignorant means you do not know what you are talking about. Ignorant people often have strong opinions, boss people around, and loudly tell other people what they think. Regardless, ignorant people do not know what they are talking about so all of their beliefs, opinions, and judgments are foolish. When it comes to Jesus and the Bible, lots of people are ignorant and don't know what they are talking about.

1. What does it mean to be ignorant?

2. What do ignorant people need to do to learn about Jesus and the Bible?
3. Why do some people act like they know what they are talking about when they do not?
4. Do you ever pretend to know something you are ignorant about? Explain.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2)

**Word of the Day:** Sin

Peter says that false teachers like to sin and they encourage other people to sin too. False teachers often have something bad in mind that they want to do. But rather than repenting, they create ways to make it sound like doing the bad thing would actually be a good thing. Other people who also want to do the bad thing then listen to the false teacher so that they too can have a reason to do the bad thing.

1. What is sin?
2. How do false teachers and sin work together?
3. Why do people who want to sin like false teachers?
4. What kind of sins do you think false teachers today want people to do?
5. When you want to sin should you believe what the Bible says or go find a false teacher to say doing a bad thing is okay? Why?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2)

**Word of the Day:** Going astray

In warning Christians against false teachers, Peter says that they have gone astray. The Bible speaks of Christians as walking with God along a narrow path. Sin is when we go astray and wander from God to go and do our own thing. Peter has already told us in his letters that God is our Father and we are his children. So, wandering astray from God is like a child wandering away from their parent to get lost or even hurt.

1. What does it mean to wander astray from God?
2. What are some things people do to wander astray from God?
3. Why is it dangerous to wander away from God?
4. Why are some reasons that people wander astray from God?
5. Have you ever wandered astray from your parent(s)? What was that like and what does that teach you about the importance of not wandering astray from God?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2)

**Word of the Day:** Slavery

Peter warns that false teachers promise freedom but only provide slavery. What he means is that when people sin they become a slave to their sin. For example, if someone chooses to abuse food, alcohol, or drugs, they become a slave to it and cannot stop doing it. Their sin becomes like a slave master that rules over them and harms them. In this way, Peter is speaking about slavery that we choose for ourselves through our sin.

1. How does sin become slavery to us?
2. How are real slaves treated?
3. How does sin treat us like slaves?
4. Does God treat us like slaves? Explain.
5. How is true freedom the ability to stop sinning by Jesus' help?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 2:10b–22 (Doctrine from False Teachers, Part 2)

**Word of the Day:** Defiled

In warning against false teachers, Peter says that they are defiled. By defiled, Peter means that they are people who do dirty things and want other people to join them in doing dirty things. These dirty things are sins that make our soul dirty and do not help us grow to be holy like Jesus.

1. What does it mean to be defiled?
2. What is the dirtiest you have ever been? How did you get clean?
3. How does Jesus cleanse us from our sin?
4. After Jesus has cleansed us from our sin, why is it foolish to sin again and get dirty?
5. Do you know anyone who does dirty things and wants you to do them too? Explain.

### **Witness # 8 – Perseverance**

#### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Letters

Peter speaks about the letters he has written to the churches, which are now part of our Bible. Many of the books in the New Testament are also letters. In that day when it was hard to travel (there were no cars or airplanes) and hard to communicate (there was no radio, TV, Internet, or even printing press), people would often communicate by writing letters. It was a big treat to receive a letter and the letters that are in the Bible were read out loud to the whole churches that received them.

1. Why are many of the books in the New Testament letters?
2. Who got to hear the letter read when it came to the church?
3. How much do you enjoy getting mail?

4. What is the most fun thing you've ever gotten in the mail?
5. Who should you write a letter to because it would be very special to them?  
Parents, help your child write and mail a letter so they can do what Peter did.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Reminders

Peter tells the churches that much of what he wrote in his letters to them were reminders. Reminders are things that we know, but sometimes forget or do not do, and so someone has to tell us again. In Christianity, it is important to have reminders. This means that sometimes we review things we already know to make sure we understand them and are doing them.

1. What are reminders?
2. What kinds of things do you often have to be reminded of?
3. What things in the Bible are helpful for you to be reminded of?
4. What are some things you can do to help remind yourself about important things concerning Jesus and the Bible?

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Commandments

Peter tells Christians that they should obey God's commandments. By commandments the Bible means that God give us instructions that he expects us to follow. God's commandments are always good because God is good and loves us and his rules are to help us and protect us. Some people treat parts of the Bible like they are optional, but Peter says that the Bible is filled with God's commands to be obeyed.

1. What are commandments?
2. How many commandments did God give Moses on the stone tablets?  
Ten.
3. Can you name all of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17)?
4. Are there any of God's commandments that you wish you did not have to obey?
5. Are there any rules in your family (and school, if applicable) that you wish you did not have to obey?

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Scoffers

Peter warns Christians that they will meet scoffers. Scoffers are people who make fun of Christians, say the Bible is not true, and like to make us feel dumb and weird. Scoffers can really hurt our feelings and make us sad. So, Peter tells us that Jesus had scoffers too and that we should pray for them. We need to just

keep doing what is right and try not to worry about what scoffers think or say about us.

1. What is a scoffer?
2. What kinds of things did the scoffers say to Jesus?
3. How do scoffers make you feel?
4. Does anyone scoff you? Explain.
5. Do you scoff anyone? Explain.

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Sinful desires

Peter says that some people give in to their sinful desires. Sinful desires are temptations to do bad things and sin against God. Sinful desires are sometimes very strong, but they are wrong. If we ask him, Jesus will help us not give in to strong sinful desires.

1. What are sinful desires?
2. Are sinful desires sometimes really strong? Explain.
3. Is it okay to give in to a sinful desire, even if it is really strong?
4. What kind of sinful desires do you sometimes have?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Judgment

Peter says that some people will give in to their sinful desires and scoff Christians for their entire life. They laugh at Christians and think we are foolish for following Jesus and believing the Bible. And then they die. Peter says that when they die they will stand before God for judgment. Peter means that, just like a criminal who is caught and has to stand before a judge, non-Christians will stand before God for judgment. Because God knows our lives perfectly, he judges perfectly and no one will get away with anything before him.

1. What is judgment?
2. Who judges non-Christians after they die?
3. Is God a perfect judge? Explain.
4. Does God let any non-Christian get away from being judged for any sin?
5. Why is it important for Christians to not judge non-Christians, but rather do what is right and wait for God to judge them?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:1–7 (Perseverance Until Judgment)

**Word of the Day:** Flood

Peter says that the time before Jesus comes back will be like the days of Noah and the flood. In the days of Noah, everyone was sinning all the time and did not believe God would do anything about it. Then, God flooded the earth and all the

sinners drowned. The only people who lived were Noah and his family because God saved them with an ark (a large boat). God did not save them because they were better than the other people, but rather because “Noah found favor [*grace* in the original Hebrew] in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8). So, before Jesus comes back to send people to hell and establish heaven, people will be sinning and ignoring God like the people did in Noah’s day. But some people will be saved by God’s grace, like Noah and his family were. In that way, Jesus is kind of like our ark and he gets us safely to heaven.

1. What were people doing before the flood in Noah’s day?
2. Why did God save Noah and his family from the flood?
3. How will things be like they were in Noah’s day when Jesus comes back?
4. How is Jesus like our ark?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** Hell

Peter says that, sadly, for some people this life is as close as they will ever get to heaven. That is because they keep sinning and ignoring God until they die. They then stand before God for judgment and are sent to hell like prisoners are sent to prison. Peter learned about hell from Jesus, who spoke about it more than anyone else in the Bible. Hell is a terrible place where people who do not love God go so that they cannot sin anymore. Hell lasts forever because people last forever. In hell there is no love or joy and there is just misery.

1. What is hell?
2. Who judges people and sends them to hell?
3. Who talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible?
4. How long does hell last?
5. What do you think hell is like? Explain.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** Eternal

Peter says that Christians need to persevere, or keep living as Christians, even though it seems like a long time before Jesus will come back and set up heaven on earth. Peter explains that God does not see time like we do. God is eternal, which means he lives outside of time without beginning or end (even though he did create time and does work in time). From God’s perspective, Peter says, the two thousand years that have passed since Jesus walked on the earth are only like a few days. This is because only God is uncaused and eternal.

1. What does it mean that God is eternal?
2. Is anyone other than God eternal?
3. Does God have a beginning? No.
4. Does God have an end? No.

5. Does God get old like we do? No.
6. Does God see the future already? Yes.

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** Patient

Jesus came two thousand years ago and promised that he would come back to get rid of sin once and forever, and establish his kingdom. The two thousand years that have already passed make some people wonder if God is slow. Peter says that Jesus has not returned yet because God lovingly takes his time to save many people and make them Christians. This is because God is incredibly patient.

1. Why is it taking so long for Jesus to return?
2. What does it mean that God is patient?
3. Why is patience a good thing?
4. In what ways are you impatient?

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** Repentance

Peter says that Jesus has not returned yet because there are still people that will come to repentance. By *repentance*, the Bible means that our minds change so that we see our sin, our hearts change so that we want to change our behavior, and our actions change to show that God has changed us from the inside out. Repentance also includes telling God we are sorry, thanking Jesus for forgiving our sin, and asking the people we have sinned against to forgive us.

1. What does repentance mean?
2. Why does God want people to repent?
3. Give an example of a time when you repented. How did you feel afterward?
4. Who are not yet Christians that you could be praying come to Jesus and repentance? Parents, this is a good opportunity to pray for non-Christians your family knows and thus show how God is patient so that people would not perish but rather would come to repentance.

## **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** Day of the Lord

Peter says that there is a coming day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament as a day of judgment, on which God deals with sinners and their sins. The great day of the Lord will be one day in the future when Jesus returns, puts an end to all sin, and ushers in his perfect kingdom. Peter has in mind the day when we will see Jesus rule over a creation that no longer has any sin or curse.

1. What is the day of the Lord?
2. What will change when Jesus returns?
3. Are you looking forward to Jesus' return? Explain.
4. What do you think it will be like to meet Jesus and be with him forever?
5. What do you think you will say to Jesus when you first meet him face to face?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** New creation

In speaking of Jesus' return, Peter says that God will set up a new creation. This new creation will be like our world but without any sin or curse. That means there will be no sin, no Satan, no demons, no sickness, and no death. Our sin has affected all of creation so that it is cursed and not as beautiful or enjoyable as it should be. But all of that will be fixed in the new creation.

1. Why is our world not perfect like God made it?
2. What is the new creation?
3. What will not be in the new creation that is in our world because of sin?
4. What are you most looking forward to in the new creation?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:8–10 (Perseverance Until Jesus Returns)

**Word of the Day:** Exposed

Peter says that on the day of the Lord when Jesus returns to judge sinners and make the new creation, everything will be exposed. What he means is that there are a lot of sins committed by people who are never caught, arrested, or dealt with in this life. They seem to be getting away with sin. But when Jesus returns everything will be exposed, meaning it will be made known and no longer hidden in secrecy.

1. What does it mean for sin to be exposed?
2. Why is it a good thing that Jesus will expose all sin when he returns?
3. Have you ever tried to sin in secret and then got caught and exposed? Explain what happened and what you learned from that.
4. Why is it better to confess your sin to Jesus and your parents rather than waiting to get caught by Jesus?
5. Is there any secret sin in your life?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** Eternal living

Peter says that life is very short, Jesus is coming back, all sin will be dealt with once and forever, and that God's perfect kingdom will be established as part of

God's new creation. Since our lives are very short and heaven is forever, Peter says that we should live our lives with eternity in mind. Because our lives are short and heaven is coming, we should not freak out, excuse our sin, or be lazy. In this way, how we live is preparation for heaven, much like how we prepare for a great vacation by getting everything ready to get there and have fun.

1. What is eternal living?
2. Why should we live our life not as if it is all we have, but rather as getting ready for heaven?
3. How will heaven be like a super fun vacation that lasts forever?
4. What can we do in this life to get ready for the day when we see Jesus and go to heaven forever?

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** Holiness

Peter says that since God and heaven are holy, Christians should live holy lives to help them get ready to spend eternity in heaven. Heaven is our home and we are just visiting the earth to meet Jesus, serve people, and learn lessons before we go to our heavenly home. Holiness means living a life like Jesus lived by the power of the Holy Spirit because we love God.

1. What is holiness?
2. Why should Christians want to live a holy life?
3. Who lived a perfectly holy life? Explain.
4. How does the Holy Spirit help us to live a holy life?
5. What do you think heaven will be like when you never sin again?

### **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** Waiting

Peter says that because God tells us that Jesus is coming back, sin will be no more, and everything will be perfect, sometimes we can get impatient and want it all to happen right now. However, waiting is something that God wants us to learn to do. This waiting is important because while we are waiting, God is finishing his work with people and we get to help him by doing ministry.

1. Why is it important that we keep waiting for God to finish his work on the earth?
2. Why does God want us to do ministry while we wait for Jesus to return?
3. What is the longest you remember having to wait for something?
4. How good do you think you are at waiting patiently? Explain.

### **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** Righteous

Peter says that while we wait for Jesus to return, we need to work on living righteous lives. This is because in heaven there is no sin and only righteousness. Righteousness is what Jesus gives us, and how we are to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. What is righteousness?
2. What are some righteous things God wants you to do?
3. What are some specific unrighteous things God wants you to not do?
4. What do you think it will be like in heaven when everyone is only righteous all the time and no one ever says or does anything bad?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** New heaven and new earth

Peter says that one day Jesus will make a new heaven and a new earth. The new heaven and new earth will be heaven and earth coming together as one so that we are with God forever. The new earth will be like our earth but without any sinners, sin, curse, sickness, death, evil, injustice, or crying. So, the new earth will have all of God's people, plenty of good food to eat, and lots of music, fun, and laughter—like a really fun vacation or party.

1. What will the new earth be like?
2. What bad things are in the world now that will not be in the new earth?
3. Who do you want to meet in heaven from the Bible or church history?
4. Do you think we will be able to do things like play ball, go swimming, and have fun on the new earth?
5. What do you think will be fun for you to do in heaven?

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** Home

For the Christians who are suffering because people are being mean to them, Peter says that heaven is really the Christian's home. Before Jesus went back to heaven, he said he was going to God the Father's home and was building a home for us when we die. Just like sometimes it is hard to be away from home on the earth, so too it is sometimes hard to have this world feel like home. What makes a place a home is that our family is there, but until we get to heaven with God and all his people, we are not yet really at home. Still, since we love our family and enjoy our friends and church, we have a taste of our heavenly home here on earth.

1. How is heaven our home?
2. What do you like most about your home?
3. What do you think your home in heaven will be like?
4. What are some of your favorite memories with your family? Why?

### **Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:11–13 (Perseverance Until the New Creation)

**Word of the Day:** Fire

Peter says that when Jesus returns there will be a judgment of fire. What he means is that all the bad things of the earth will be burned up like garbage is burned up at the landfill. Because God does not want evil things in heaven, he will use fire to get rid of bad things so that only good things remain for heaven.

1. What is the judgment of fire?
2. Can you remember a time when you got to throw something into a fire? What happened to it?
3. Why is it good that God will throw all the bad things on the earth into the fire to burn them up?
4. What bad things are you looking forward to seeing God burn up in the judgment of fire?

### **Sunday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Beloved

As he closes his letter to his church, Peter calls the Christians “beloved.” This is a special name that means “the people who are loved.” Both God and their pastor, Peter, love the Christians, just as both God and the leaders of our church love you. It is a wonderful thing to be someone’s beloved, and you are God’s beloved.

1. What does beloved mean?
2. Name all the people you can think of who love you.
3. Name all the people you can think of whom you love.
4. Parent(s), please take some time for each person in your family to take a few moments and tell each other member of your family why they love them.

### **Monday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Salvation

Nearing the end of his letter, Peter speaks about God giving us salvation. Salvation, or being saved, is a very important concept. Salvation means that God

saves us from Satan, sin, death, hell, and wrath. God gives us salvation through Jesus who died in our place for our sins to rescue us.

1. What is salvation?
2. What are Christians saved from?
3. Who saves Christians?
4. What kind of life are Christians saved to?
5. What would happen to us if Jesus did not save us?

## **Tuesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Peace

Peter says that Christians can live with great joy knowing that they have peace with God. This is possible because Jesus is our God who forgives our sin so that we can have peace with God. Peace with God means that although we were enemies of God due to our sin, because of Jesus we have become friends with God and he has only love and kindness for us. This peace means that God is for us, loves us, helps us, serves us, cares for us, and will never stop being good to us.

1. What is peace with God?
2. What is the only way we can have peace with God?
3. Have you ever had an enemy become your friend? If so, what does that teach you about your relationship with God?
4. What does it mean that God will never stop treating us with peace as friends? Explain.

## **Wednesday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Paul

Near the end of his letter, Peter mentions other letters written by Peter's Christian friend and fellow apostle and pastor, a man named Paul. Peter says that Paul's letters are also Scripture, which is why they are in our Bible. In fact, Paul wrote more books of the New Testament than anyone else. Before he became a Christian, Paul hated Christians and even oversaw the murder of the early church deacon Stephen. But Jesus changed Paul's heart and made him a Christian. Paul became one of the most powerful and courageous pastors who ever lived. Paul and Peter were friends, and Peter learned a lot from Paul's letters that are now in our Bible, even though as Peter says they had some things that were hard to understand. This just goes to show that even Peter had to study the Bible to learn its meaning, even though he had written other books of the Bible! So, we should not get discouraged when some things in the Bible are hard for us to understand also.

1. Who is Paul?
2. What do you know about Paul's life and ministry?
3. How does Peter describe Paul's letters that are in the Bible?
4. Are there some parts of the Bible that are hard to understand? What should we do with them?

### **Thursday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Grow

Almost done with his letter, Peter reminds us that Christians should always keep growing in God's grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Peter is saying that, like children should eat well and exercise so they can grow physically, so we should build healthy habits so that we can grow spiritually.

1. What things in your life have helped you grow spiritually?
2. At what times in your life have you felt closest to God? Explain.
3. What good habits will help you to grow in your knowledge of Jesus?
4. Parents, share with your children evidences of God's grace that you see in their life and the ways in which you have seen them grow spiritually so that they are encouraged by you to keep growing.

### **Friday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Jesus Christ

With his letter nearly done, Peter mentions Jesus Christ. He does this because he loves Jesus, serves Jesus, worships Jesus, imitates Jesus, and wants the people in his church to do the same.

1. Where was Jesus born? Bethlehem.
2. Where did Jesus grow up? Nazareth.
3. Who was Jesus' mommy? Mary.
4. Who was Jesus' adoptive daddy? Joseph.
5. Who were Jesus' half-brothers? James and Jude.
6. Did Jesus have brothers and sisters? Yes (Matt. 13:53–56).
7. Who was Jesus? God.
8. Did Jesus ever sin? No.
9. Did Jesus ever marry or have kids? No.
10. Did Jesus love and play with kids? Yes.
11. How did Jesus die? Crucifixion.
12. Why did Jesus die? For our sins.
13. What happened to Jesus three days after he died? He resurrected.
14. How did Peter know Jesus? They were friends and Peter was Jesus' disciple. For three years Peter was with Jesus to see his miracles, hear his preaching, and be with him after he rose from death.

15. Where is Jesus today? In heaven.

**Saturday**

**Bible Reading This Week:** 2 Peter 3:14–18 (Perseverance Until God Is Finished with You)

**Word of the Day:** Glory

Peter's closing word of his two letters is "glory." The final thought Peter leaves with Christians is that we should do everything in this life and the life to come to God's glory. Because we were made for God's glory, when we live for God's glory we are happy. When the Bible says that God is glorious, it means he is amazing, wonderful, perfect, beautiful, majestic, holy, powerful, and overwhelming. To live for God's glory is to make every decision in our life based upon what God wants for us, what honors God, what is obedient to God, and what Jesus would do, because God alone is worthy of glory. So, the one short way of remembering to do everything that Peter teaches in both his letters is to simply remember to do one thing: live for the glory of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. What does it mean to live for the glory of God?
2. Why is God worthy of glory?
3. How is living for the glory of God really the key to obeying God?
4. Can we sin if we are living for the glory of God?
5. How happy does it make you when you do what is right and live for God's glory instead of sin? Explain.
6. In what areas of your life are you living for God's glory?
7. In what areas of your life can you grow to do a better job of living for God's glory?

## **Article 8 – 1-2 Peter Preaching Schedule (As bookmark)**

### Witness #1 – Trial

January 11-17, 2009 1 Peter 1:1-2 Trial and Sin  
January 18-24, 2009 1 Peter 1:3-9 Trial and Jesus  
January 25-31, 2009 1 Peter 1:10-12 Trial and Scripture

### Witness #2 – Temptation

February 1-7, 2009 1 Peter 1:13-21 Temptation from Sin  
February 8-14, 2009 1 Peter 1:22-2:3 Temptation from Hypocrisy  
February 15-21, 2009 1 Peter 2:4-12 Temptation from Worldliness

### Witness #3 – Submission

February 22-28, 2009 1 Peter 2:13-17 Submission to Godly Authority  
March 1-7, 2009 – Mark Gone – see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under  
“One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week  
March 8-14, 2009 1 Peter 2:18-25 Submission to Ungodly Authority

- *Daylight Savings Time*

### Witness #4 – Marriage

March 15-21, 2009 1 Peter 3:1-6 Marriage and Women  
March 22-29, 2009 1 Peter 3:7 Marriage and Men

### Witness #5 – Suffering

March 29-April 4, 2009 1 Peter 3:8-17 Suffering to Bless  
April 5-11, 2009 1 Peter 3:18-22 Suffering to Learn  
April 12-18 1 Peter 1:3 Born Again

- *Easter*
- 25 minute sermon with salvation invitations & baptisms at each service

April 19-25, 2009 1 Peter 4:1-11 Suffering to Serve  
April 26-May 2, 2009 1 Peter 4:12-19 Suffering to Worship

### Witness #6 – Humility

May 3-9, 2009 1 Peter 5:1-5 Humble Pastors  
May 10-16, 2009 1 Peter 5:5b Humble Mothers

- *Mothers Day*
- Short sermon (35-40 minutes) leaving room for baby dedications @ campuses

May 17-23, 2009 1 Peter 5:6-14 Humble Christians  
May 24-30, 2009 – Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under  
“One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

- *Monday May 25 Memorial Day*

### Witness # 7 – Faith

May 31-June 6, 2009 2 Peter 1:1-4 Faith in Your New Birth

June 7-13, 2009 2 Peter 1:5-15 Faith in Your New Life

Witness # 8 – Doctrine

June 14-20, 2009 2 Peter 1:16-21 Doctrine from True Teachers

June 21-27, 2009 2 Peter 1:16-18 Doctrine from Dad

- *Fathers Day*
- Short sermon (35-40 minutes) leaving time for baby dedications

June 28-July4, 2009 2 Peter 2:1-10a Doctrine from False Teachers (Part 1)

July 5 -11– Mark Gone - see Guiding Principle #6 Video & Live under “One Week Sermons” for pulpit directives on this week

- *Independence Day weekend*

July 12-18, 2009 2 Peter 2:10b-22 Doctrine from False Teachers (Part 2)

Witness # 9 – Perseverance

July 19-25, 2009 2 Peter 3:1-7 Perseverance Until Judgment

July 26-August 1, 2009 2 Peter 3:8-10 Perseverance Until Jesus Returns

August 2-8, 2009 2 Peter 3:11-13 Perseverance Until the New Creation

August 9-15, 2009 2 Peter 3:14-18 Perseverance Until God is Finished With You

## Part V- 1-2 Peter Research

**Note:** *The information in this section is from Pastor Mark's research assistant which is the Docent research group that is also available to serve other pastors and Christian leaders with such things as research and editing.*

**Docent Research Group**  
<http://www.docentgroup.com/>

To: Pastor Mark Driscoll  
From: Justin Holcomb  
Date: October 31, 2008  
RE: 1&2 Peter

**1 Peter: The Author**

Before looking at the authorship of 1 Peter, below is a helpful summary on the Apostle Peter. In the four lists of the twelve apostles in the New Testament (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13), Peter is always mentioned first. "Peter's original name was apparently the Hebrew Simeon (Acts 15:14; 2 Pet. 1:1): perhaps, like many Jews, he adopted also "Simon", usual in the NT, as a Greek name of similar sound. His father's name was Jonah (Mt. 16:17); he himself was married (Mk. 1:30), and in his missionary days his wife accompanied him (1 Cor. 9:5). The fourth Gospel gives Bethsaida, just inside Gaulanitis, and a largely Greek city, as his place of origin (John 1:44), but he had also a home in Capernaum in Galilee (Mark 1:21ff.). Both places were at the lakeside, where he worked as a fisherman, and in both there would be abundant contact with Gentiles. His brother's name is Greek. Simon spoke Aramaic with a strong N-country accent (Mark 14:70), and maintained the piety and outlook of his people (cf. Acts 10:14), though not trained in the law (Acts 4:13; literacy is not in question). It is likely that he was affected by John the Baptist's movement (cf. Acts 1:22): his brother Andrew was a disciple of John (John 1:39f.).

**Peter's Call**

The Fourth Gospel describes a period of Christ's activity before the commencement of the Galilean ministry, and to this may be referred Peter's first introduction to him, by Andrew's agency (John 1:41). This makes the response to the subsequent call by the lakeside (Mark 1:16f.) more intelligible. The call to the intimate band of the Twelve followed (Mark 3:16ff.).

It was as a disciple that Simon received his new title, the Aramaic Kepha ("Cephas"), "rock" or "stone" (1 Cor. 1:12; 15:5; Gal. 2:9), usually appearing in NT in the Gk. form Petros. According to John 1:42, Jesus conferred this title (not known as a personal name previously) at their first encounter. John's usual designation is "Simon Peter". Mark calls him Simon up to 3:16, and Peter almost

invariably thereafter. There is nothing in any case to suggest that the solemn words of Matthew 16:18 represented the first bestowal of the name.

### **Peter in the ministry of Jesus**

Peter was one of the first disciples called; he always stands first in the lists of disciples; he was also one of the three who formed an inner circle round the Master (Mk. 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; cf. 13:3). His impulsive devotion is frequently portrayed (cf. Mt. 14:28; Mk. 14:29; Lk. 5:8; Jn. 21:7), and he acts as spokesman of the Twelve (Mt. 15:15; 18:21; Mk. 1:36f.; 8:29; 9:5; 10:28; 11:21; 14:29ff.; Lk. 5:5; 12:41). At the crisis near Caesarea Philippi he is the representative of the whole band: for the question is directed to them all (Mk. 8:27, 29), and all are included in the look that accompanies the subsequent reprimand (8:33).

On any satisfactory interpretation of Mk. 9:1 the transfiguration is intimately related to the apostolic confession which precedes it. The experience made a lasting impression on Peter: 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:16ff. are most naturally interpreted of the transfiguration, and, for what they are worth, the Apocalypse and Acts of Peter show that their authors associated the preaching of this subject with Peter.

In a measure, the disastrous boast of Mark 14:29ff. is also representative of the disciples; and, as Peter's protestations of loyalty are the loudest, so his rejection of the Lord is the most explicit (Mk. 14:66ff.). He is, however, specially marked out by the message of the resurrection (Mk. 16:7), and personally receives a visitation of the risen Lord (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).

### **The commission of Peter**

Mt. 16:18ff. is one of the most discussed passages of the NT. Rejection of the genuineness of the saying is arbitrary, and generally based on dogmatic assumptions (sometimes the assumption that Jesus never meant to found the church). Others have argued that the saying is genuine but displaced. Stauffer would see it as a resurrection commission, like Jn. 21:15; Cullmann would set it in a passion context, like Lk. 22:31f. Such reconstructions hardly do justice to the distinctiveness of Mt. 16:18ff. It is a benediction and a promise: the other passages are commands. We need not undervalue Mark's vivid account of the Caesarea Philippi incident, which concentrates attention on the disciples' failure to understand the nature of the Messiahship they have just confessed, to acknowledge that the 'rock' saying belongs to the occasion of the confession.

There is still no unanimity in interpreting the passage. The suggestion that 'rock' is simply a misunderstanding of a vocative 'Peter' in the underlying Aramaic (SB, 1, p. 732) is too facile: the passage has obviously something to do with the significance of Peter's name, which various Gospel sources show as having been solemnly bestowed by Jesus. From early times two main interpretations have been held, with many variants.

1. That the rock is substantially what Peter has said: either Peter's faith or the confession of the Messiahship of Jesus. This is a very early interpretation (cf. Origen, in loc., "Rock means every disciple of Christ"). It has the great merit of taking seriously the Matthean context, and emphasizing, as Mk. 8 does in a different way, the immense significance of the Caesarea Philippi confession. In historical perspective we should probably see the rock as, not simply faith in Christ, but the apostolic confession of Christ, spoken of elsewhere as the foundation of the church (cf. Eph. 2:20). The "rock" saying touches the core of the apostolic function, and Peter, first among the apostles, has a name that proclaims it. That his own faith and understanding are as yet anything but exemplary is irrelevant: the church is to be built on the confession of the apostles.

2. That the rock is Peter himself. This is found almost as early as the other, for Tertullian and the bishop, whether Roman or Carthaginian, against whom he thundered in *De Pudicitia*, assume this, though with different inferences. Its strength lies in the fact that Mt. 16:19 is in the singular, and must be addressed directly to Peter even if, like Origen, we go on to say that to have Peter's faith and virtues is to have Peter's keys. Comparison might also be made with the Midrash on Is. 51:1. When God looked on Abraham who was to appear, he said, "Behold, I have found a rock on which I can build and base the world. Therefore he called Abraham a rock" (SB, 1, p. 733).

Many Protestant interpreters, including notably Cullmann, take the latter view; but it is perhaps significant that he cuts the saying from the Matthean setting. To read it where Matthew places it is surer than to treat it as an isolated logion.

It must be stressed, however, that the exegesis of this point has nothing to do with the claims for the primacy of the Roman Church or its bishop with which it has through historical circumstances become involved. Even if it could be shown that Roman bishops are in any meaningful sense the successors of Peter (which it cannot), the passage does not allow for the transfer of its provisions to any successors whatever. It refers to the foundation of the church, which cannot be repeated.

The words that follow about the keys of the kingdom should be contrasted with Mt. 23:13. The Pharisees, for all their missionary propaganda, shut up the kingdom: Peter, recognizing the Son who is over the house and who holds the keys (cf. Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 21:25), finds them delivered to him (cf. Is. 22:22) to open the kingdom. The "binding and loosing," a phrase for which there are illuminating rabbinic parallels, is here addressed to Peter, but elsewhere is assigned to all the apostles (cf. Mt. 18:18). "The apostle would, in the coming Kingdom, be like a great scribe or Rabbi, who would deliver decisions on the basis, not of the Jewish law, but of the teaching of Jesus which 'fulfilled' it".

But that here and elsewhere a primacy among the apostles is ascribed to Peter is not in doubt. Lk. 22:31ff. shows the strategic position of Peter as seen by both

the Lord and the devil and, in full knowledge of the approaching desertion, marks out his future pastoral function. The risen Lord reinforces this commission (Jn. 21:15ff.), and it is the Fourth Gospel, which demonstrates the peculiar relationship of the apostle John to Christ, that records it.

### **Peter in the apostolic church**

The Acts shows the commission in exercise. Before Pentecost it is Peter who takes the lead in the community (Acts 1:15ff.); afterwards, he is the principal preacher (2:14ff.; 3:12ff.) the spokesman before the Jewish authorities (4:8ff.), the president in the administration of discipline (5:3ff.). Though the church as a whole made a deep impression on the community, it was to Peter in particular that supernatural powers were attributed (5:15). In Samaria, the church's first mission field, the same leadership is exercised (8:14ff.).

Significantly also, he is the first apostle to be associated with the Gentile mission, and that by unmistakably providential means (10:1ff.; cf. 15:7ff.). This immediately brings criticism upon him (11:2ff.); and not for the last time. Gal. 2:11ff. gives us a glimpse of Peter at Antioch, the first church with a significant ex-pagan element, sharing table-fellowship with the Gentile converts, and then meeting a barrage of Jewish-Christian opposition, in the face of which he withdraws. This defection was roundly denounced by Paul; but there is no hint of any theological difference between them, and Paul's complaint is rather the incompatibility of Peter's practice with his theory. The old theory, of persistent rivalry between Paul and Peter, has little basis in the documents.

Despite this lapse, the Gentile mission had no truer friend than Peter. Paul's gospel and his had the same content, though a somewhat different expression: the Petrine speeches in Acts, Mark's Gospel and 1 Peter have the same theology of the cross, rooted in the concept of Christ as the suffering Servant. He was ready with the right hand of fellowship, recognizing his mission to Jews and Paul's to Gentiles as part of the same ministry (Gal. 2:7ff.); and at the Jerusalem Council is recorded as the first to urge the full acceptance of the Gentiles on faith alone (Acts 15:7ff.).

Peter's career after the death of Stephen is hard to trace. The references to him in Joppa, Caesarea and elsewhere suggest that he undertook missionary work in Palestine (James no doubt now assuming leadership in Jerusalem). He was imprisoned in Jerusalem, and on his miraculous escape he left for 'another place' (Acts 12:17). Attempts to identify this place are fruitless. We know that he went to Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff.); he may have gone to Corinth, though probably not for long (1 Cor. 1:12). He is closely associated with Christians in N Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1), and possibly the prohibition on Paul's entry into Bithynia (Acts 16:7) was due to the fact that Peter was at work there.

Peter's residence in Rome has been disputed, but on insufficient grounds. 1 Peter was almost certainly written from there (1 Pet. 5:13). That book shows

signs of being written just before or during the Neronian persecution, and 1 Clement 5 implies that, like Paul, he died in this outburst.”<sup>xvi</sup> Concerning the death of Peter, Jobes writes: “There is virtual unanimity that the apostle Peter died in Rome in the mid-60s during the reign of Emperor Nero.”<sup>xvii</sup>

### **Who wrote 1 Peter?**

“The writer says he is ‘Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ’ (1:1), and was a ‘witness of Christ’s suffering’ (5:1). He is writing with the help of Silas (Silvanus) from a place he calls ‘Babylon’, where his ‘son’ Mark is with him (5:12–13). As well as this direct evidence that Peter the apostle was the author, the letter frequently alludes to the life and teaching of Jesus. The verdict of F. H. Chase is that ‘No Epistle has caught so much of the spirit of Jesus.’

Many early authors referred to the letter and quoted from it, but in recent years five main reasons have been put forward for suggesting that the apostle Peter was not in fact the author.

First, Peter is described in Acts 4:13 as ‘unschooled’, and the style of Greek in which the letter is written is said to be too good for a Galilean fisherman to have used. Also, quotations are taken from the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek rather than the Hebrew version of the OT.

The style is, however, not so ‘educated’ as some would like to make out and in places it is much more the language of ordinary people. There is evidence that in Peter’s time Greek, as well as Aramaic, was spoken in Galilee, and as a fisherman living in Capernaum on one of the great trade routes he would have had to speak Greek regularly. The fact that his own brother’s name, Andrew, is a Greek one suggests that from boyhood Peter would have grown up with this language. Some thirty years’ work of evangelism and teaching in a church that contained an increasing proportion of Gentiles would have made him more fluent in Greek and prepared to quote the LXX as his ‘Authorized Version’. It is not certain, but Silvanus (5:12 may have acted as Peter’s amanuensis (i.e. composing the letter from thoughts Peter shared with him). If he did, then his background as a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37) of some breeding could well have affected the style and language.

Secondly, from the language of 4:14–16 some have built a case to suggest that the letter was written at a time when the very fact of being a Christian was a crime, and this is known not to have been the case until long after Peter’s death.

Peter’s argument in chs. 2–4 is, however, that Christians must take care to live an innocent life, so that, if they are falsely accused, such slanders will be without foundation. The book of Acts (e.g. 13:50; 14:5, 19; 16:19–24; 17:5, 13; 18:12–13; 19:23–29) shows that from the earliest days misunderstanding, personal prejudices and rejection of the gospel could lead to persecution ‘because of the name of Christ.’ 4:14–16 need have no further legal implications than similar phrases in Mt. 10:22 and Acts 5:41. In fact, what Peter says about the role of the

state in 2:13–14 suggests that he did not expect persecution from that quarter. The relationship between the church and the authorities indicated in the letter is basically the same as in Acts.

Thirdly, some object because the letter contains ideas found in Paul's writings especially in his letter to the Ephesians.

This argument is only valid if the theory is accepted that the two apostles disagreed and were never finally reconciled. The basic teaching in the early church was fairly standard, and it would have been strange had there been no similarities. If we accept that Peter and Paul may have been together in Rome (see below on where the letter was written) just before the letter was written they would doubtless have talked over many of the issues considered in it (see also Gal. 1:18).

Fourthly, according to Gal. 2:9 Peter and Paul agreed to work in different spheres, and yet the destination of 1 Peter is thought to be an area evangelized by Paul.

The arrangement referred to in Galatians was made at least ten years before the letter was written and in the interval the distinction between Jewish and Gentile churches would have become less clear. 1:12 suggests that Peter had not brought the gospel to his readers, but Acts 16:6–7 suggests that Paul had not visited all of them either.

Finally, some say that this letter does not contain the sort of personal references to Jesus one would expect from a writer who knew him as well as Peter did... The majority of the evidence, both external and internal, would appear to support the traditional view that Peter the apostle wrote this letter.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **1 Peter: The Audience**

Peter wrote his epistle to Christians scattered throughout the region of Asia Minor, that is, modern-day Turkey (cf. 1 Peter 1:1-2). "The letter of 1 Peter is addressed to Christians residing in Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Asia, and Bithynia, a vast area of approximately 129,000 square miles... (As a comparison, the state of California covers about 159,000 square miles.)"<sup>xix</sup>

Jobes writes: "The picture that emerges of the regions to which Peter wrote is one of a vast geographical area with small cities few and far between, of a diversified population of indigenous peoples, Greek settlers, and Roman colonists. The residents practiced many religions, spoke several languages, and were never really assimilated into the Greco-Roman culture... And yet this untamed region became the cradle of Christianity... To this remote and undeveloped region, the apostle Peter writes his letter to Christians whom he addresses as 'visiting foreigners and resident aliens' (1:1; 2:11), scattered across

the vast reaches of Asia Minor. We may surmise that, in no small part because of this letter and the faithfulness of those who received it, well-established churches flourished in all five of these regions by AD 180. Their bishops attended the great councils of the second through the fourth centuries, where the doctrines were forged that Christians hold dear yet today.”<sup>xx</sup>

### **Where and when was the letter written?**

“In 5:13 the writer sends greetings from ‘she who is in Babylon, chosen together with you’. This seems like a reference to the local church in Babylon, but it is unlikely that Peter would have gone to the former capital of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire. By Peter’s time it was a sparsely inhabited ruin (fulfilling Is. 14:23). In Rev. 16:19 and 17:5 ‘Babylon’ is used as a cryptic name for Rome, and Col. 4:10 and Phm. 24 (most likely written in Rome) show that Mark was there with Paul.

In 2 Tim. 4:11, Mark is in Asia Minor, and Paul sends for him to come, most probably to Rome. The fact that neither Peter nor Paul mentions the other in the list of those sending greetings from Rome merely suggests that they were not together at the time of writing their letters. All this points to the theory that Peter was writing from Rome, which is supported by the evidence of Tertullian (*Against Heresies*, 36) and Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2.25.8; 2.15.2 and 3.1.2–3).

In view of what was said above about Christians being persecuted, a date in the reign of Nero (AD 54–68) would seem best. Since Peter makes no reference to Paul’s martyrdom, which is thought to have taken place during the out-burst of persecution in Rome in 64, the letter was probably written before then (see also 2:13). Links with other writings are thought to suggest a date after 60. So far as we can draw any conclusions from the evidence, the letter was probably written c. 63–64.

### **To whom was the letter written?**

Peter answers the question in 1:1. The region described was in the Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) north of the Taurus mountains. It is difficult to be precise as the place-names can refer to both ancient kingdoms and contemporary Roman provinces, and the two did not always have the same boundaries.

The social status of the recipients probably reflected that of most of the churches of the day, as a cross-section of the community. There were husbands and wives (3:1, 7), slaves (2:18—but no reference to masters as in Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–4:1), younger men (5:5) and an eldership giving pastoral care (5:1–4). Some of the women appear to have been able to afford a comfortable lifestyle (3:3). The description of the readers’ pre-Christian manner of life (4:3–4) suggests that some of them might have been involved in the local pagan trade-guilds. Peter calls them ‘strangers in the world’ (1:1 cf. 1:17; 2:11) and this technical term has

led John H. Elliott in *A Home for the Homeless*, to develop the theory that they were 'resident aliens'. But the case is far from proven and the wording could be being used figuratively to reflect the way in which their Christian life-style had distanced them from their pagan neighbors. It also picks up the OT language of David and Solomon as they saw their life on this earth in the light of eternity (see Ps. 39:12 and 1 Ch. 29:15).

The religious background of the original readers appears to have been both Jewish and Gentile. We know from Acts 2:9 that there were Jewish visitors from Asia Minor in Jerusalem for Pentecost, and those among them who were converted at that time would have taken the gospel message back with them. Converts at Pisidian Antioch and Iconium came from the synagogue (Acts 13:43; 14:1), and Luke specifically mentions in the latter case that the church was formed both of Jews and Gentiles. So Peter's writing reflects such a mixed gathering of believers. He uses the OT to prove his points (1:24–25; 2:6, 7–8, 22–24; 3:10–12; 4:18; 5:5) and makes other allusions that would be meaningful to Jewish readers (e.g. in 1:1 'scattered' [Gk. diaspora] is the technical term for the Jewish community outside Israel; see also 2:4–10 and 3:20). Other comments he makes would be more relevant to Gentile readers (e.g. 1:18, 'the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers'; 2:10, 'Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God'; 4:3, 'you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans[Gentiles] choose to do').

Whether his readers were Jewish or Gentile Christians, Peter is keen to encourage them to believe that they are the 'new Israel'. In the Christian church they inherit all that God promised his chosen people in the OT (see 1:1; 2:5, 9–10).<sup>xxi</sup>

### **Were the majority of the original recipients of 1 Peter of Jewish or Gentile origin?**

While the modern consensus is Gentile, "most ancient exegetes except Augustine and Jerome understood the recipients of the letter to be converts from Judaism."<sup>xxii</sup> (For an extended treatment on the socio-historical background of the letter's recipients see Jobes, pp. 28-41). In summary, Jobes argues for what she calls the "colonization theory" which can be summarized as follows: "Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, was addressing Christians who had been converted elsewhere, with whom he shares an association with Rome, and he writes to encourage them in their Christian commitment when they find themselves scattered across a desolate and pagan Asia Minor. How should they live in such a place? How should they treat each other? How will their faith survive?... The perception of Christians as foreigners both in Rome and in their new location yields its power to the truth that Christians are foreigners and resident aliens anywhere in a world that is hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **A Suffering Audience**

The original audience of 1 Peter was a suffering audience. What was the nature of this suffering? Jobes writes: “Virtually all commentators understand the persecutions referred to in 1 Peter to be sporadic, personal, and unorganized social ostracism of Christians with varying intensity, probably reinforced at the local level by the increasing suspicions of Roman officials at all levels.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

Achtemeier agrees that the persecution in 1 Peter is “due more to unofficial harassment than to official policy, more local than regional, and more at the initiation of the general populace as the result of a reaction against the lifestyle of the Christians than at the initiation of Roman officials because of some general policy of seeking out and punishing Christians. That does not rule out the possibility that persecutions occurred over large areas of the empire; they surely did, but they were spasmodic and broke out at different times in different places, the result of the flare-up of local hatreds rather than because Roman officials were engaged in the regular discharge of official policy.”<sup>xxv</sup>

D. A. Carson explains exactly what kind of unjust suffering is being referred to in 1 Peter. Carson points to the specific times suffering is referred to in the epistle: “In 1:6, Peter refers simply to ‘all kinds of trials.’ We learn much more from 3:13-17, which mentions suffering in general (vv. 14, 17) but also refers specifically to people who ‘speak maliciously’ against the believers (v. 16; cf. also 4:5). Finally, in 4:12-19, Peter labels the suffering his readers are undergoing a ‘fiery ordeal’ (v. 12), speaks of their sharing in the sufferings of Christ (v. 13), and suggests that they are suffering because they bear the name ‘Christian’ (vv. 14 and 16)... The evidence from 1 Peter itself does not point to an official [Roman] persecution. What is implied, rather, is the hostility Christians were known to have faced from the general Roman population. By refusing to engage in the quasi-religious customs surrounding the official Roman governmental structures, by resolutely setting themselves against some of the immoral practices prevalent at the time, and by meeting so often on their own to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, Christians were regarded with suspicion and hostility. The readers of 1 Peter were probably being criticized, mocked, discriminated against, and perhaps even brought into court on trumped-up charges. This situation fully explains the references to suffering in 1 Peter.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

## **1 Peter: Text and Theology**

### **The Purpose of 1 Peter**

1 Peter 5:12 sheds light on the overall purpose of the epistle. Jobes writes: “As with all NT epistles, the purpose for which 1 Peter was written must be inferred from the text itself. Fortunately, the letter states a reason for its existence, at least in general terms. Peter concludes his letter: ‘This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!’ (5:12). Peter is concerned to present the nature of God’s true grace as it relates to the experience of his original readers, and is eager to see them standing fast in it. Peter’s stated concern implies that the situation of his

readers was causing them doubt or confusion about God's work and presence in their lives and that the temptation to abandon, or at least waver in, the Christian faith was a real and present possibility."<sup>xxvii</sup>

Jobes continues: "Therefore, the teaching of 1 Peter continues to be relevant to the church today as presenting the true grace of God, in which believers must stand. Peter's readers were experiencing various kinds of trials that were causing them varying degrees of grief and suffering. Their Christian faith was being slandered and maligned. Their social status, family relationships, and possibly even their livelihood were threatened. When one's Christian faith is criticized and even mocked, it is natural that one may begin to doubt the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is, after all, extraordinary to believe that the body of a dead man was raised to some kind of new eternal state of being. Ancient people no less than modern might understandably find that claim outrageous. And yet for Peter, the resurrection is the central point of the Christian faith by which God has extended his mercy and has given new birth into a living hope (1:3). Therefore, assuaging the doubt of his readers concerning their faith in Christ in light of society's response is one clear purpose of the letter."<sup>xxviii</sup>

David Wheaton provides a helpful overview of 1 Peter including an analysis of both the text and theology of the epistle:

Is the letter a unity?

"Those who say the letter is not a unity follow three main lines of argument: Some say that 1:1 and 5:12–14 were added after the letter had been written. There is no MS evidence for this, and there is still the reference in 5:1. Others say the letter originally ended at 4:11 and that the remainder was added at a later date. They argue that the possibility of suffering is remote in 3:17 but already being experienced in 4:12. 1:6 points, however, to the same situation as 4:12. It seems more likely that Peter's mind was moving between the experience of the church as a corporate body and that of its individual members. It is unlikely that 3:17 would apply to each reader. All churches may well suffer persecution in the near future, so that all members will suffer with one another (1 Cor. 12:26), but few individuals are likely to be called on to suffer in each wave of persecution. The doxology of 4:11 is not necessarily a conclusion. Rom. 11:33–36; 15:33 and Eph. 3:20–21 are other examples where the writer was so thrilled by the truths he was expressing that he was carried away into an outpouring of praise. Others see the letter as a liturgy written for baptismal use, a collection of sermons, instructions for new converts or fragments of early hymns. Peter may well have quoted a variety of sources for his purpose (or they may have quoted him!), but there is no reason to dismiss his own statement in 5:12.

The letter reads as a unity written to encourage Christian people, especially those new to the faith, and to declare to them the truth and reality of the grace of God in which they can stand firm with every confidence.

Why was the letter written?

From what has been said in the last section it will be seen that theories abound concerning the purpose of the letter. Fuller details of these can be found in other commentaries on 1 Peter. For our purposes it is sufficient to take Peter's words in 5:12 at face value. Peter sees Christians in danger of persecution (1:6) and not prepared for it (4:12). In the light of this he aimed to do two things: to encourage and to testify to the true grace of God (5:12) in which he urged his readers to stand. These two purposes are intertwined as Peter gives encouragement by declaring God's gracious acts in Christ, made known and mediated by his Spirit.

We can list some of the encouragements as follows: The scope and goal of God's purposes (1:3–9); The excitement of the prophets and eagerness of the angels to grasp this wonderful plan (1:10–12); The costliness of our redemption (1:18–21); The enduring nature of God's promises (1:22–25); The privilege of belonging to God's people (2:4–10); The example of Jesus (2:22–25); What Jesus has done for us (3:18–22); The confidence we can have in our Creator and his faithfulness (4:17–19); The certainty that God will triumph in the end, and that his own will share the victory (5:10–11; cf. 1:7). Such encouragements, and such a statement of the grace of God, offer an equally firm foothold for Christian believers facing whatever the twenty-first century after Christ may bring.

Is 1 Peter like other NT writings?

The author comes across as someone who knew his OT well, and ready to back up his teaching by quoting it, especially Isaiah and the Psalms (see on 1:18–20, 24–25; 2:6–8, 22ff.; 3:10–12; 4:17–18). While he does not quote directly from the gospels, Peter frequently uses words and phrases which remind us of incidents and teachings they contain. We shall draw attention to these in the commentary. There are also similarities with Peter's speeches in the Acts, e.g. Acts 2:23/1 Pet. 1:20; Acts 2:31/1 Pet. 1:11; Acts 2:34–35/1 Pet. 3:22; Acts 4:11/1 Pet. 2:7; Acts 4:12/1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 10:34/1 Pet. 1:17; Acts 10:39/1 Pet. 2:24. These are the main places where ideas overlap, and a detailed study of the passages will show many more words and phrases in common.

What theology does 1 Peter contain?

Peter wrote, as we have seen, with a practical purpose, and would no doubt have been surprised if asked about the letter's theological content. He did not write to set out a theology (as Paul did in Romans or Colossians) but, as a pastor, he based his ethical advice on his knowledge of the character of God. So the doctrines set out in the letter are those which provide a motive for Christian living.

Doctrine of God

In 1:1–2 Peter clearly sets out the practical relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. God is sovereign, and so can be trusted (4:19). He is holy, and so is to be copied (1:15–16). He is a Father, and so his children must live up to the family name (1:17), and the fact that he has redeemed his people is a ground for assurance (1:18–21).

### Doctrine of Christ

Christ is sinless, obedient and prepared to suffer to the limit. This is an example for us (2:21–24). He died and rose again, so we must die to sin and live by his risen power (2:24; 4:1). His work is described in terms of redemption (1:18–19), reconciliation and being the sin offering and the substitute (3:18), and he was predestined for this very purpose by the Father's love (1:20–21). He is also the foundation of God's church, providing the ground of faith and hope, and inspiring to holiness and love (2:16; 1:21–22).

### Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is seen as the agent of sanctification (1:2), the author of Scripture (1:11), the enabler of Christian ministry (1:12) and the encourager of Christians undergoing persecution (4:14).

### Doctrine of Scripture

The authority of Scripture is stressed by the way Peter appeals to the OT to support his teaching (e.g. 1:24–25; 2:6–8; 3:10–12; 4:18). Its source is seen to be in the guiding of the writers by the Holy Spirit (1:11; cf. 2 Pet. 1:21) and its enduring quality is underlined by a quotation from Is. 40:6–8 (1:23–25). Scripture is also pictured as a seed, by which the new birth is effected in human lives as people hear and respond to the preaching of the gospel (cf. 1:23 with 25), and as the means of Christian growth (if 2:2 is translated 'milk of the word').

### Doctrine of the church

Peter has a high regard for the corporate nature of the people of God, entered into by the individual believer at his or her new birth (2:2–5; cf. 1:22–23). The church is God's building, on the foundation of Christ himself (2:4–8), and as such it is the inheritor of the blessings promised to Israel (2:9–10). Its twofold function is to offer worship to God and witness before people (2:5, 9). Already in Peter's day the church had a corporate eldership, seen as a responsible and sacred office (5:1–4), but also encouraged the development and use of spiritual gifts by each member (4:10–11).

### Doctrine of the last days

Peter writes as one who looks forward to the great unveiling in the last days, and he uses the Greek root *apocalyp*—('revelation') to describe the return of Christ. So he reminds his readers that the unseen Christ is never far away, and points them to the glories they will share when Christ is revealed. Their salvation will be fully realized and they will enter into their full inheritance (1:5). Their faith will be finally honored (1:7; 4:13), and the full extent of God's grace discovered (1:13). Christ's glory will be shared (5:1) and faithful service rewarded (5:4). The expectation of Christ's return is a most compelling argument for holy living and careful stewardship now (4:7–11, 17–18).

What does Peter say to his readers?

Those who originally received this letter were Christians who were in danger of losing their way. Their new-found faith had severed the ties which had bound them to their non-Christian relatives and neighbors and was itself being tested because they were facing suffering. This situation was probably not what they had expected when they had first heard the gospel, and it is an experience faced by every generation since then.

Peter met their needs by reassuring them of the gospel. Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together to bring us a new life (1:3–5; 2:2; 4:1–6) in which the past is forgiven (2:24; 3:18), the present is protected (1:5) and motivated (4:2), and the future assured (1:4, 7). This is a way of life to be lived out in practical terms (1:13–16) and in everyday relationships (2:16; 3:1, 7). It equips the followers of Jesus for living in the real world of the here and now (4:1–4) and for that world of eternal glory for which Jesus is even now preparing us (5:10).

So Peter's response to the question of suffering is that it is a part of the journey of faith. It tests the seriousness of our discipleship (1:7), joins us to our fellow-Christians (5:9), and will be vindicated on the day of judgment (4:16–19). Though believers are 'strangers' and 'scattered' in this world (1:1), they are part of the pilgrim people of God (2:5, 9), journeying to the Father's home (1:4). They look forward to the day when Jesus will return for his own (1:7; 2:12; 5:4). These are truths which can motivate today's Christians to live for God's glory, just as they encouraged Peter's original readers. Peter writes as one whose heart has lost none of the fire of love stirred up by the Master at the Sea of Tiberias (cf. Jn. 21:1, 15–19 with 1 Pet. 1:8). In this letter there is all the vividness of the personal recollections of a follower of Jesus Christ.<sup>xxxix</sup>

## **1 Peter and Biblical Theology<sup>xxx</sup>**

"1 Peter is not a systematic treatment of Christian theology; nor does it present a complete picture of Petrine theology. The epistle is a practical document, in which the author expounds those theological themes most relevant to the circumstances of the readers. The first readers/hearers of the book were recently converted Christians (1:3, 18–19, 22–23; 2:2) who lived throughout the Roman provinces of Asia Minor (1:1). They were mostly Gentiles, who had recently abandoned an idol cult with its attendant debauchery (4:3; 1:14). Their rejection of the civic religion practiced by their families and their radical change of lifestyle brought them into acute conflict with their contemporaries, an experience described as a 'painful trial' (4:12, NIV).

While government officials may have been involved in the persecution at some point (2:13–17 may reflect official disapproval of the Christian sect), the hostilities mainly took the form of social pressure against the Christian community, expressed publicly in both verbal and physical abuse. Christians were reviled (3:9), slandered (3:16), maligned (4:4) and denounced as criminals (2:12, 14; 4:15). Particularly where close social ties existed, such as those

between masters and believing slaves (2:18–20) or husbands and Christian wives (3:1–7), there was the danger of physical hostility (4:1).

The reaction of the new Christians was grief (1:6; 2:19), fear (3:6, 14), bewilderment (4:12) and anxiety (5:7). The dishonor they suffered in their communities made them ashamed of their new faith (4:16), and they were tempted to retaliate in order to regain their honor (3:9; cf. 2:23). Some contemplated returning to their former lifestyle and abandoning their faith in Christ (4:2–3; 1:14); this was the goal of their adversary, the devil (5:8–9).

### The Setting in Salvation-History

1 Peter is addressed to Christians who, under pressure from the surrounding society, are tempted to relapse morally or to apostatize. The author shows them the true grace of God and calls them to stand in it (5:12; cf. 1 Thess. 3:8; Eph. 6:11, 13–14). This 'grace' reflects the nature of God (5:10), and is expressed in his saving activity predicted by the prophets (1:10; see Prophetic books) and to be realized fully at the future revelation of Christ (1:13). The principal demonstration of this grace is the 'sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow' (1:11). Thus Peter emphasizes the transcendent saving activity of God which embraces past, present and future. He lifts his readers beyond their immediate temporal and social concerns and helps them to understand their place within the eternal purposes of God.

This plan, centered in Jesus Christ, was generated before creation (1:20) and includes God's sovereign choice of his elect (1:2) according to his determinative 'foreknowledge' (\*cf. 1:20). Issuing from this plan came the promises given by the 'Spirit of Christ' through the OT prophets (1:10–12), who predicted both the 'sufferings' and the 'glories' of Christ, the benefits of whose work are received by Christians in the present through the preaching of the gospel (1:12). The cross, resurrection, ascension and future revealing of Christ are the fundamental saving events in God's plan (see Death and resurrection, Exaltation). While the incarnation is mentioned briefly (1:20), there are several references to the 'sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow' as the fulfillment of God's salvation (1:2, 3, 11, 18–21; 2:21–25; 3:18–22; 4:1, 13; 5:1; and implied in 2:4–8; 3:15; 4:11; 5:10).

The 'sufferings of Christ' include his death on the cross for sins (2:24) as well as the sufferings he endured beforehand (2:21–23). The 'glories' are his resurrection (1:21), ascension and authority over all powers (3:18–20, 22), and his reappearance (1:13). The importance of these events is underlined by the author's eyewitness testimony to Christ's sufferings (5:1) and by the prophetic and angelic interest in the fulfillment of the prophetic hope (1:11–12). Christians have become participants in this saving plan: salvation is 'to/for' them (1:10, 12, 20, 25; 2:7, 9) and is 'now' realized in the time of fulfillment (1:12; 2:10; 3:21). The 'last times' are upon them (1:20; 4:7).

1 Peter also links the present and the future. Future salvation is one with present salvation (1:5, 9, 10–12; 3:21). Similarly, the judgment of God also is realized in the past, present and future (3:20; 4:5, 17–18). The resurrection of Christ and his glorification are one with the glory of his future revealing (1:21;

4:13), and the grace of God in which Christians now stand (5:5b, 12) will be brought to them in full when Christ is revealed (1:13). The community's present praise and joy will continue beyond the end (1:3; 2:5; 4:11 and 1:6, 8; 4:13). The eschatology in 1 Peter is both realized and future (cf. 1:20 and 1:5) with the future being proleptically manifested in the present.

## God

The sovereignty and transcendence of God dominate the theology of the epistle, and are important for its readers, who have emerged from paganism and are undergoing persecution. God is the faithful creator (4:19), the author of salvation-history (1:2, 20), the eternal one (implied in 1:25; 4:11; 5:10), the Almighty (4:11; 5:6, 11), and the God of glory (4:11, 14; 5:10), who keeps for believers their final inheritance (1:4), and who is judge of both the living and the dead (4:5; 1:17; 5:5b).

Yet despite this emphasis on God's transcendence, the author is also keenly aware of his presence with his people. He is the source of their life (1:3, 23) and guards them for their final salvation (1:5). His eyes are constantly upon them and his ears are open to their petitions (3:12; Ps. 34:12–16); he is invoked as their Father (1:17; cf. Matt. 6:9), who has chosen them (1:2) and given them new birth according to his great mercy (1:3). He supplies his grace for believers to serve one another (4:10–11). His Spirit rests on those who suffer (4:14), and he gives grace to the humble and the oppressed (5:5, 10). Christians are conscious of his presence (2:19), and Christ, like a shepherd, leads them to God (3:18). In their adversity, believers can be assured of God's care for them (5:7). Yet Peter reminds his readers that the one whom they call Father is also their impartial judge (1:17; 4:17), whom they should honor with reverential fear (1:17; 2:17; 3:2). He is the holy one (1:15–16; Lev. 19:2).

## Christ

Christ is the pre-existent one (1:20), who is 'revealed in these last times' and whose Spirit spoke through the prophets (1:11). In describing the activity of Christ, the author focuses on his sufferings and glories (1:11), which include his redemptive suffering (2:24; 3:18), his resurrection from the dead (1:3, 21; 3:18) and the proclamation (at his ascension) of his victory and authority over all demonic forces (3:19–20, 22; cf. 5:8–9; see W. J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits*). At present Christ is not 'absent'; he is 'veiled' from sight until the time of his revealing (1:13; Peter does not speak of his 'coming', *parousia*). The time of this 'unveiling' is not far distant (1:7, 13; 4:7, 13; 5:4); Christ will bring both salvation and reward for the believers (1:4–7; 5:4) and judgment for their oppressors (4:5). Though Christ is not seen, faith and love can penetrate the 'veil' which hides him (1:8). Believers have tasted his kindness (2:3, possibly a reference to the eucharist) and have come to him (2:4); Christ in turn brings them to God (3:18). It is through Christ that the worship of the community is acceptable to God (2:5).

1 Peter includes an extremely high Christology. Jesus is both Christ and Lord (1:3), and in 3:15 Peter applies the reference to YHWH (LXX *kyrios*) in

Isaiah 8:13 to Christ: 'But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.' In 2:6 he interprets the 'stone' in Isaiah 28:16 messianically; people's relationship to it determines their eternal destiny (so also Paul in Rom. 9:33). In verses 7–8 he links this prophecy with Isaiah 8:14 and Psalm 118:22. But the transcendent and authoritative Christ also tenderly shepherds his sheep (2:25; 5:4) and has become their guardian (2:25).

The author's descriptions of Christ's character are full of OT imagery. He is called 'the righteous (one)' (3:18; Is. 53:11); as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 (Is. 53:9, 7, 4 and 12, and 6a are echoed in 1 Pet. 2:22–25) he 'committed no sin' (2:22). He inaugurates the new covenant through the sprinkling of his blood (1:2; cf. Exod. 24:3–8), and just as the paschal lamb was a ransom paid for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (1:18–19; Exod. 12:5–7), so his sacrifice redeems believers. He became a sin offering who bears the sins of the people (2:24; Heb. 9:28; Lev. 16:15–16).

### The Spirit

Peter seldom refers to the Holy Spirit; yet he ascribes to the Spirit a significant place in salvation history. In 1:11 the Spirit, called here the 'Spirit of Christ' (which implies that Christ is pre-existent), is said to have inspired the OT prophets to foretell the sufferings and glories of Christ (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 28:25; 2 Pet. 1:21). These key events of salvation-history were then proclaimed to Peter's readers in the gospel 'by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven' (1:12; cf. Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 2:3–4). The Spirit's work also includes conversion or 'the sanctifying work' (1:2, perhaps an allusion to his activity in baptism; cf. 3:21). The persecuted believers are assured that the Spirit rests upon them (4:14) and indwells the community (2:5; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16).

### The Christian Community

Peter does not use the word 'church' (ekklēsia), but he identifies the Christian community with the OT people of God. He sees the Christian community as the true Israel of God and heir to the promises of God. Believers have entered into the new covenant (1:2; cf. Exod. 24:1–8) and await their inheritance (1:4; cf. Deut. 15:4; Dan. 12:13). They are the elect (1:1; cf. Deut. 4:37; Ps. 105:6) and 'strangers' of the Dispersion (1:1; Gen. 23:4; Lev. 25:23), and are properly called by titles previously ascribed to the people of God: 'chosen people, royal household, priesthood, holy nation, people of God's possession' (2:9, author's translation; Exod. 19:6; Is. 43:20–21). Christian women are called 'daughters of Sarah' (3:5–6) and typology connects baptized believers with Noah and others who were saved through the flood (3:20–21). Believers were formerly 'not a people' but now they are 'the people of God' (2:10; Hos. 2:23). They have been chosen by God (1:2) and their new existence as the people of God has given them the social stigma of being non-citizens and resident aliens (2:11; 1:1, 17). Although Elliott (*A Home for the Homeless*) argues that the readers were non-citizens before their conversion, Peter links their alien status with their election (1:1; 2:10–11). They are part of the 'dispersion' (1:1) scattered in this world and separated from their true inheritance, which is kept in

heaven for them (1:4). Though rejected by their contemporaries, the Christians have a new social identity which is in continuity with that of the OT people of God and based on their new faith in God.

Peter reminds his readers that although they have no visible temple, they are 'being built into a spiritual house' (temple), and that they constitute a 'holy priesthood' who offer up 'spiritual sacrifices' (2:5 and 9). Christians are also witnesses in the communities in which they live, even in the face of severe opposition. They are called to 'declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (2:9). They are not to disengage from society, but are to witness both in word and conduct (2:12; 3:16) in order both to silence their accusers (2:15) and to make them ashamed (3:16). Peter tells the believers that their conduct should in no way justify the ill treatment they receive (4:14–16; 2:18–20); rather it should be such that those who oppose them may be won to the faith (3:1–2; implied in 2:12). The despised Christians are even called to become benefactors in the communities in which they live (2:13–15).

The sufferings believers endure are set within the larger framework of salvation-history. Peter presents Christ as the paradigm of those who suffer unjustly and do not then act unjustly themselves (2:21–23), though some aspects of Christ's suffering are inimitable (2:24–25). Believers are called to suffer (2:20b–21) according to the will of God (3:17; 4:19; 1:6), and in so doing they 'participate in the sufferings of Christ' (4:13). But just as his sufferings gave way to glory (1:11) so in their sufferings 'the Spirit of glory and of God' rests on them, and they are called to God's 'eternal glory in Christ' (5:10, 4). While they experience extreme dishonor in their towns and villages, they receive supreme honor from their God.

The community is exhorted to imitate the holiness of God (1:15–16; Lev. 11:44–45) and this call becomes the controlling imperative of the epistle. They should be 'holy in all [their] way of life' (1:15, author's translation); this is defined as 'doing good' (2:12, 15, 20; 3:6, 11, 13, 17), and is God's will for them (2:15; 4:2). The indicative of God's character contains within itself the imperative of their conduct. Similarly the indicative of Christ's innocence and non-retaliatory response to suffering (2:22–24) becomes an imperative for the community (2:21). Peter's call to those who contemplated a return to their pagan lifestyle is to 'act as God acts'. But he also exhorts them to live according to their new nature 'as obedient children' (1:14) and as those who have been 'purified' (1:22). Their lifestyle should reflect their existence as 'aliens and strangers' (2:11). Peter urges them, 'Act in accordance with your new identity!'"

## **2 Peter: Author, Audience, Text, and Theology**

Not every scholar has a very high view of 2 Peter. For example, Klein writes: "The author does a miserable job presenting his case... In spite of how vigorously he asserts himself he is basically helpless."<sup>xxxix</sup> Klein goes on to say that it is fortunate the letter was even included in the canon. James D. G. Dunn

remarks that some of the writings of Luther and Wesley are equal to, or even better than, what we find in 2 Peter.<sup>xxxii</sup>

### **Who wrote 2 Peter?**

Despite some scholarly doubt concerning the authorship of 2 Peter, Leon Morris writes: “The writer leaves us in no doubt on the matter. He says he is ‘Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ’ (1:1). He was on the mount of Transfiguration with Jesus (1:16–18) where only Peter, James and John were with him (Mk. 9:2–12). He had written on a previous occasion to the recipients of this letter (3:1) and is on familiar terms with them (3:1, 8, 14, 17). Furthermore, he calls Paul ‘our dear brother’ (3:15), and at the time of writing he was expecting to die quite soon (1:14).

There is no evidence to suggest that any of these facts were later inserted into the letter to make people accept it. However, there is a popular modern theory that the letter is a ‘pseudepigraph’, i.e. a writing put out after the death of a great man, published under his name as containing the kind of things he would have said in that situation. Thus it would do him honor by being ascribed to him. Arguments to support this view are as follows.

First, it is claimed that the language and style are not similar to 1 Peter. In places we find complicated phrases in an exaggerated style. This is particularly true in ch. 2 where the writer gets carried along by his theme as he did in 1 Pet. 3:18–22. In any case, 1 Peter was written on different matters, and may have had some input from Silvanus (1 Pet. 5:12). In fact, there are strong resemblances between the letters. Some words and phrases occur only in these letters and nowhere else in the NT, e.g. ‘goodness’ used of God (2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Pet. 2:9 [tr. ‘praises’]); ‘putting aside’ (2 Pet. 1:14; 1 Pet. 3:21 [tr. ‘removal’]); ‘never stop sinning’ (2 Pet. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:1 [tr. ‘is done with sin’]). Other words not common elsewhere are ‘brotherly kindness’ (2 Pet. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:22), the root of ‘eye-witnesses’ (2 Pet. 1:16; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:2) and ‘add’ (2 Pet. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:11). There are also similarities in the statements about prophecy (2 Pet. 1:20–21; 1 Pet. 1:10–12), about Christian liberty (2 Pet. 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:16) and about the last things (2 Pet. 3:3, 10; 1 Pet. 1:5).

Comparison of this letter with Peter’s speeches in the Acts shows a similar use of language: ‘godliness’ (2 Pet. 1:6; Acts 3:12); ‘lawless’ (2 Pet. 2:8; Acts 2:23 [tr. ‘wicked’]); ‘received’ (2 Pet. 1:1; Acts 1:17 [tr. ‘shared’]). Identical phrases can be found in 2 Pet. 2:13, 15 (‘paid back with harm for the harm they have done’, ‘the wages of wickedness’) and Acts 1:18 (‘the reward he got for his wickedness’). Both 2 Pet. 3:10 and Acts 2:20 draw on OT imagery of the ‘day of the Lord’ (Joel 2:31). More recent research has shown that objections based on the language have nothing like the evidence to support them that was once supposed.

Secondly, Peter's authorship of the letter is also held to be in doubt by some because the early church seemed hesitant to receive it into the NT canon. The fact remains that they finally did so, and this happened at a time when Gnostic writers were circulating definitely bogus writings claiming Peter's authorship.

Thirdly, because 2 Peter contains most of Jude many have assumed that Jude must have been the earlier writing. Had Peter written first, then there would have been no need for Jude to write. But, they argue, such a leading apostle as Peter would not have used material from a writer who, if he was the Lord's brother, did not believe until after the resurrection (see Mk. 6:3; Jn. 7:5). This argument is far from conclusive. Jude could well have made a digest of Peter's letter to send to churches who had not received it, and there is no reason why Peter should not have used another source. Both he and Jude might have drawn on other material being put out to combat false teachers.

Fourthly, others argue that the teaching of 2 Peter bears the mark of a late date. In fact, the seeds of the false teaching attacked in this letter were present, as far as doctrine is concerned, in Colossae (Col. 2:18) and, as far as morals are concerned, at Corinth (1 Cor. 5; 6:12–20). On the other hand, the teaching in 2 Peter about Christ's return reflects (with 1 Peter) the hope of his coming held in the early days of the church. The godly are looking eagerly for it (3:12) and only the 'scoffers' are trying to dispose of it (3:4). This doctrine provides here the same motive for holy living as it does in the former letter (cf. 3:11–14 with 1 Pet. 1:7, 13, 17; 4:7, 13).

More recently, conservative scholars have drawn attention to the fact that the theory of pseudepigrapha raised a significant moral problem. False teachers in NT times had written under assumed names, and they had been denounced for doing so by Paul (2 Thes. 2:2; 3:17). Later generations in the church also condemned the practice. It is unbelievable that a sincere writer could have included the false personal references of 1:1, 16–18 and 3:1 in a letter which lays such stress on holiness and truth (1:3–4, 12; 3:11, 17). Such a deceit could not have been accepted in a church which called its members to such high standards in every respect.

### **When and where was the letter written?**

According to 3:16 it seems that a number of Paul's letters had already been published by the time Peter came to write. Some conclude from 1:12–17 that the gospels were by this time also in wide circulation and 3:4 is sometimes taken to imply that the first generation of Christians had already died by the time the letter was written. References to 2 Peter in other writings show that, at the latest, it must have been written early in the second century. The heresy attacked in ch. 2 was still at a primitive stage, and this would argue for setting the date in the latter part of the first century. If we are prepared to accept Peter's authorship, then a date shortly before the apostle's death (1:14), somewhere in the sixties, seems most likely. The letter gives us no clues as to where it was written. If we accept

that Peter wrote it, and that he wrote his first letter in Rome (see the Introduction to 1 Peter), then this letter could also have well been written there.

### **To whom was the letter written?**

From 3:1 it could be concluded that the letter was written to the same groups of Christians as 1 Peter. Otherwise, 1:1 suggests it was written for a wider readership, which would have included those who received the first letter and to whom 3:1 would then refer. Those addressed are obviously Christian churches beginning to be undermined by the Gnostic heresy, and we know that this spread early in Asia Minor (see Colossians). These churches would have contained both Jewish and Gentile believers (see the Introduction to 1 Peter). Arguments about the recipients based on odd phrases in the letter are as inconclusive here as in the earlier letter, e.g. if 1:1 suggests Gentile readers, 3:2 can be used to argue for Jewish ones.

### **Is the letter a unity?**

Suggestions have recently been made that the letter originally consisted of chs. 1 and 3, with ch. 2 inserted later. Others argue that each chapter circulated separately at first, with ch. 1 being the earlier letter referred to in 3:1, ch. 3 the reminder promised in 1:13, and ch. 2, again, a later addition. Another approach has been to attempt to isolate sections of the letter which are thought to be genuinely by Peter, and claim that other material was added by a later editor. There are two strong arguments against these theories: no MS evidence supports the idea of any part of the letter at any time circulating on its own and all three chapters display a marked unity of style.

### **Why was the letter written?**

Three main thoughts dominate the letter. First, the writer has not long to live in this world, and has a pastoral concern that his Christian friends should keep on growing in their discipleship; secondly, false teaching is getting abroad which could prevent this growth, and so must be denounced; and thirdly, the return of the Lord Jesus is certain, and his people must be ready for that. Peter touched on the first and last of these themes in his earlier letter. The second seems to be a major reason for writing 2 Peter, but is best placed in the perspective of Christian growth and destiny.

### **Is 2 Peter like other NT writings?**

It takes only a casual reading to discover that 2 Peter contains most of Jude 4–18. This fact has given rise to the following theories.

Some say that Jude was written first. This is because Peter adds so much to Jude. If 2 Peter had been written first, then Jude would have added only a few verses to what was already in circulation. Jude could, however, have shortened Peter's letter to meet the needs of churches to which it had not originally been sent. Others who support the priority of Jude suggest that Peter softened the harsh tones of Jude, tele-scoped his metaphors and cut out his references to the

Apocrypha. These arguments could be turned in reverse to say that Jude felt he had to rewrite 2 Peter to make the language more harsh, develop an obscure metaphor, and back the arguments with apocryphal references.

Others say that 2 Peter was written first, and they cite the arguments above which can be turned either way. Some point out that a man of Peter's standing is unlikely to have quoted from an obscure person like Jude. It is also argued that dangers foreseen by Peter as in the future (2:1) have been present for some time in Jude (4). But Peter is not consistent in his use of tenses, and in 2:10b–19 he speaks of these dangerous teachers as having already begun their work. Others suggest there was a common source behind both 2 Peter and Jude. This alternative has been offered because of the problems with both the above theories. While solving some of them, it still does not explain why Jude bothered to write if he was merely repeating so much of the original source. It is far more likely that he abridged 2 Peter to meet his own needs. In all fairness it must be admitted that there is no final answer to this question of priority.

### **What does Peter say to his readers?**

1 Peter was written to strengthen scattered groups of Christians being called on to face sporadic outbursts of suffering. 2 Peter was written to encourage Christians beset by two dangers: seducers (2:1) who were spreading false teaching, which would lead to immoral behavior (2:2, 13–15; cf. Rev. 2:14–15, 20–24; Col. 2:8–3:17), and scoffers using the fact that Christ had not returned as an excuse for immorality (3:3).

Peter is firm to resist both groups by positive teaching. Just as the first letter emphasized the example of the Lord Jesus, this one underlines the facts of Jesus' life (1:16–18), the Christian faith as the way of truth (2:2) and the certainty of Jesus' return (3:10). In the light of this it is important for Christians to grow (1:5–8; 3:18) and to be preparing for his return (3:11–14). Evil desires are a snare (1:4; 2:10, 18; 3:5); by contrast the Christian is to be zealous for God's purposes (1:5, 10, 15; 3:14 all use variants of the root word for 'zeal'). We look for a new heaven and a new earth in which evil desires will be replaced by God's righteousness (3:13). In 3:1 Peter expresses his aim as being to stimulate wholesome thinking and he does this by summarizing the pattern of Christian growth in 1:5–8. His words in 1:10–11 give us the keynote of the letter. It is Christ-centered thinking, leading to God-directed living, which reassures us of our calling by God, and enables us to maintain an unbroken relationship with him. That spurs us towards the ultimate goal of the welcome into Christ's kingdom at his return. These truths are just as important for the contemporary Christian, facing the pressures of a multi-faith society or the seductive teachings of the so-called New Age, as they were for those to whom Peter originally wrote.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

## **2 Peter and Biblical Theology<sup>xxxiv</sup>**

“2 Peter is presented as a farewell letter from the apostle, in which he seeks to combat the teaching of unethical behavior and the denial of the return of Jesus Christ and final judgment. It makes extensive use of Jude (virtually the whole content of Jude appears in the same order and often in the same words in 2 Peter 2) and focuses on the much debated topic of eschatology.

### Ethics

According to 2 Peter, human culture is corrupted by desire (\*cf. Jas. 1:14; see James). Christian faith makes it possible to escape from these desires and to share in the divine nature. This unique expression is not explained in 2 Peter, although similar ideas are found in the Johannine literature (e.g. 1 John 3:9). It does not imply the divinization of the individual, but a sharing of the divine nature by the believer (perhaps equivalent to Paul’s indwelling of God’s Spirit or John’s ‘birth from above’). This participation in the divine nature is not something earned through human rites or effort, but is a gift of God that leads in turn to ethical living.

The teachers condemned in chapter 2 have, through their sexual indulgence, denied Christ (2:1; the denial is ethical rather than theological, as in 1 John), and have been trapped by desire once again (2:19–22). Secondary accusations made against them include greed and the slandering of fallen angels (cf. the same charges in Jude). The readers are exhorted instead to grow in virtue; this growth confirms their ‘calling and election’ and thus their eternal reward or entry into ‘the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (1:3–11; 3:11, 14, NIV).

### Eschatology

Apocalyptic eschatology is central to 2 Peter, since the false teachers reject the return of Christ and final judgment, instead teaching a steady-state universe (3:4). The argument is in six parts. First, in chapter 1 the expectation of Jesus’ glorious return is based upon the apostolic testimony to a proleptic glorification of Jesus in the transfiguration (1:16–18), which confirms previous prophetic announcements. Secondly, the final judgment with fire has already been prefigured by the judgment with water of Noah’s time (3:5–7). Thirdly, the parousia (Christ’s return) has not been delayed, for God works to his own timetable. He is patient, seeking the repentance and salvation of all people (3:8–10, 15). Fourthly, the Christian life is lived in the light of the transitory nature of the world as we know it and the permanence of the new heavens and new earth. Thus the promise of Isaiah 65:17–25, reflected in Revelation 21–22, is also found here. Fifthly, since Christians do not know God’s timetable, ‘the day of the Lord’ will come as ‘a thief’, that is, unexpectedly; this echoes the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 24:36–44; cf. 25:1–13). Sixthly, Christian living seems to have an effect upon God’s timetable, in that Christians not only wait for but also hasten the coming of the ‘day of God’ (3:12). This idea may be similar to the later rabbinic view that the purity of Israel would determine whether God brought the Messiah on schedule or delayed his coming. While the meaning of 2 Peter on this point is uncertain, the letter clearly teaches that the Lord will come, that the present world

is impermanent, that it will be transformed and that there will be a final judgment. Thus the false teachers will receive their punishment, while the faithful believers will receive their reward.

#### Scripture

The basis for this eschatology is twofold. First, the prophetic teaching of the OT warns of God's judgment. This teaching is not mere human insight, but divinely inspired (1:19–21). We do not know which scriptures the author regards as prophetic. Interestingly, he tones down or eliminates Jude's references to non-canonical writings, and like Jude his explicit references to the canonical books are all to the Pentateuch, with only allusions to the OT prophets. As a good Jew he takes the Pentateuch as his focal point and Moses as his chief prophet, using the rest of the OT to support their teaching.

Secondly, the apostolic witness to Jesus includes warnings of judgment; of all NT figures it is Jesus who spoke most extensively on the subject. This witness comprises narratives about Jesus and the teachings of Jesus (3:2).

2 Peter is the first work to refer explicitly to part of the NT, namely the letters of Paul.

These were probably being used by the teachers to justify their immorality as 'freedom in Christ'; thus Peter notes that these letters, as well as the OT prophets, have been misinterpreted by the teachers he is condemning. Since 1:20 and 3:15 are the only place where 2 Peter uses the Greek term *graphē* (writing, Scripture) he obviously thinks it permissible to group Paul's writings with those of the OT prophets, just as in 3:2 he groups the OT prophetic writings with the (largely oral) teaching of the apostles. This represents the first stage in the development of a written NT canon. We do not know what is meant by 'all his letters' (3:16), that is, whether the author is aware of a collection of Paul's letters or knows only that Paul has written several; so we cannot tell which letter or letters are being misinterpreted by the teachers."

### **A Summary of Petrine Theology**

"The two epistles ascribed to Peter in the NT are addressed to special situations and do not supply a systematic Petrine theology. At best it is possible to note the most significant emphases. 1 Peter provides a strong combination of theology and ethics. It is an essentially practical letter and yet it is far from being moralistic. It roots its practical advice in Christian experience. It deals with the way in which a Christian ought to behave in view of what God has done for him. Perhaps nowhere else in the NT is the inextricable connection between theology and ethics more clearly brought out.

Everywhere God is active in the lives of his people. The fact that he chose them and sanctified them (1:1) is stressed in the introductory words. Moreover it is God's power that keeps them (1:5). They are God's own people (2:9–10). God is concerned for them in their suffering (2:19–20). It is his will that should govern

them (3:17; 4:2). God is a God both of power (5:6) and of grace (5:10, 12). He has prepared a glorious future for his people (1:4; 5:10).

But Jesus Christ is equally active on the part of his people. Their regeneration is through his resurrection (1:3; 3:21); their redemption is through his blood (1:19). They are a holy priesthood acceptable to God through Christ (2:5). They are a spiritual house of which Christ is the cornerstone (2:6). He is an example to them when they suffer (2:21; cf. 4:1; 5:1). He is to be revered as Lord (3:15). He died for their sins once for all (3:18). It is through him that God is glorified (4:11). He is seen as the shepherd and guardian of his people (2:25; 5:4). It is striking that what Peter says about the atonement arises from essentially practical concerns. It is after mentioning that Christ is an example that he introduces the idea that he bore our sins in his body on the tree (2:24). In other words, an ethical need gives rise to a theological statement. A similar occurrence is the introduction of the ransom theme in 1:18. There is no doubt that the atoning work of Christ is seen as essential to man's deliverance. There is equally no doubt that Christ's redeeming work was accomplished because of his own sinlessness. The lamb was without blemish (1:19) and the righteous died for the unrighteous (3:18).

The purpose of the epistle is to encourage those who are suffering. The most essential feature is that suffering can be according to God's will (4:19). In addition to this emphasis, there is concentrated practical advice in chapter 5. In spite of the many assurances of God's care for his people, the readers are nevertheless called on to do their part. They are to resist the devil; they are to be watchful; they are to humble themselves before God; they are to cast their cares on God (5:6–9). In this way, the divine initiative is linked closely with human responsibility. Some have seen baptism as a key theme of 1 Peter, but there is only one specific reference to it (3:21). One of the peculiarities of the letter is the obscure reference to the preaching to the spirits in prison (3:19) and to the dead (4:6), but the difficulties of interpretation do not affect the over-all thrust of the theology.

Many scholars do not regard 2 Peter as Petrine, but there are good reasons for including this letter in a statement of Peter's theology, since it is attributed to his name. While the main interest of the epistle is to deal with false teachers who are troubling the believers, there are some significant theological statements. God is seen to be just in his judgments (2:4ff.). He nevertheless knows how to deliver the godly (2:9). He is not slow concerning his promise (3:8). His person is glorious (1:17). Moreover believers, as in 1 Peter, have responsibility to work things out (1:5ff., 10), although God will ensure that they receive an entrance into his kingdom (1:11). In the course of this letter, an important statement is made about the Scriptures (1:20, 21), which has exerted a powerful influence on Christian thought.<sup>xxxv</sup>

# Part VI - Ground War Support Article #1

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## 1 Peter: Strategies for Counseling Individuals on the Way to a New Heritage

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### Introduction

The pastoral counselor, as I understand the vocation, differs from the secular analyst in that he or she draws upon the resources of Christian spirituality, and, in particular, the resources of Scripture as a means of facilitating the healing and wholeness of the client. It is out of this conviction that a seminary will require the pastoral counselor, like the pastor-in-training, to take courses in Hermeneutics, Old Testament Introduction, and New Testament Introduction, and to be exposed, at least in a preliminary way, to the art of exegesis. The close, careful investigation of Scripture proves to be most fruitful to the counselor's task, if he or she pursues it with rigor, applying the tools she or he learns in those foundational courses and continuing to seek out books that open up Scripture from those angles. On the one hand, the counselor can then identify and deconstruct unhealthy applications of Scripture in the counsellee's situation or background — misreadings that conduce to psychic disease rather than wholeness. On the other hand, she or he is less likely to use Scripture in a superficial and inauthentic manner. Instead, the counselor who "does his or her homework," as it were, in Biblical study as well as the study of psychological and relational dysfunctions and their treatment will be able skillfully to identify metaphors and images from the Scriptures that will be healthful for clients and redemptive for their situations. The purpose of this article is to provide some indication of the fruitfulness of deep exegetical study of one particular text, 1 Peter, for the counselor's task, and thus to motivate the counselor to integrate ever more completely the study of Scripture with the study of souls.

### Setting of 1 Peter

The Greco-Roman world was filled with temples, shrines, and altars to various divinities. Piety was a primary component of the virtue of "justice," and people sought to give the gods their due in order to sustain divine favor toward their family, city and empire. Religion was not

compartmentalized in this world, but entered into political meetings, convocations of trade guilds, private dinner parties, public festivals, and family meals. It sheltered all aspects of life like a great canopy. Participation in these religious rituals was a sign of

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solidarity with one's fellows, a token of one's commitment to do one's part for the well-being of the group and to sustain the domestic and public order, the stability of which was regarded as a necessary good for a tranquil and well-ordered life together. Those who did not even believe in the gods nevertheless worshiped them and stood by their fellow-citizens or family members in domestic and public rites, recognizing the social importance of these observances.

Conversion to Christianity, like conversion to its parent religion, Judaism, meant abandoning participation in the worship of all gods other than the One God of whom no image could be fashioned. Avoiding all idolatrous cult was not merely a religious choice, but had profound reverberations in one's domestic and social life. Shunning the worship of all gods save the One tended to isolate the Christians from their former networks of patrons, friends and associates, as well as from non-Christian members of their household (unless, of course, the male head of the household, the *paterfamilias*, was himself a Christian, since the household was expected to worship of the gods of the *paterfamilias*). Absence at public occasions of worship and festivities would also come to be noticed.

Christianity would be seen from outside as an infectious superstition that turned solid citizens of the Roman world and reliable friends and members of one's own household into an unreliable and rebellious lot. Separation from idols meant separation from idolaters on many occasions, hence the Christians would begin to look like a faction, a divisive element within society. Separation from idols often meant refusing to worship the gods of the head of the household, hence the Christian wife or slave would appear to rebel against the domestic order, perhaps even to seek to subvert it. Separation from idols also meant refusal of participation in the cult of the emperor, which was a prominent expression of loyalty and gratitude to the fount of aid in time of need — hence a blot on the city should the emperor's local representatives take notice. Like its parent religion, Christianity called its adherents to a strict moral code. While the high-minded philosophers Epictetus and Musonius Rufus might have adhered to similar standards, many in the Greco-Roman world would at least have regarded some license in drinking and the occasional sexual indiscretion as welcome diversions. Avoiding the activities and company of those with whom the believers used to carouse would be received as implicit censure and reinforced the widening rift between converts and their former associates.

The Christians living in the five provinces addressed by 1 Peter—the Roman provinces of Asia, Bithynia, Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia,

which occupy most of what is now called Turkey—had so “distinguished” themselves in the eyes of their non-Christian neighbors. These neighbors were

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indeed “surprised” that the Christians “no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation,” as the author colorfully describes Gentile life, particularly in “lawless idolatry” (1 Pet 4:3–4). The result is that the non-Christians have been applying the basic kinds of pressure that groups tend always to apply on deviants to get them to conform to the norms of the larger group. They have subjected the Christians to slander, insult, and, where possible, physical abuse (2:12, 15; 3:9, 16; 4:14–16; 5:9) in an attempt to “rehabilitate” their neighbors, that is, to bring them back to their old way of life and cause them to stop challenging that way of life by their withdrawal from it. It is particularly the converted slaves who appear to have been subject to beatings for their disobedience, that is, their refusal to participate in domestic rituals involving idolatrous rites (2:18–21), though dark alleys also provide opportunities for free persons also to experience physical abuse at the hands of their disapproving neighbors.

1 Peter is written quite specifically to assist the Christians come to terms with, and respond nobly to, this situation. First, the author seeks to insulate the Christians against viewing these experiences as negative reflections on their own honor and their commitment to follow Jesus. He is concerned to defuse the power that such censure and abuse might have to make the believers withdraw back into the life they chose to leave behind at their conversion. Second, the author directs the hearers to orient themselves toward each other in ways that will build up the bonds within the Christian community. Mutual love, encouragement, and help is to offset the erosion from outside and to enable each individual’s perseverance in a way of life they have adopted as true and life-giving. Third, the author leads his addressees to make a response to their detractors that is in keeping with the way of life they have learned from Jesus, namely to bless those who curse and do good to those who harm. By studiously avoiding all actions that would confirm their neighbors’ suspicions that Christianity leads one to criminal or subversive activity, the author hopes that the unbelievers will themselves come to realize the error of opposing a noble way of life.

### **1. Parting with a futile inheritance**

The author develops a dominant image for the significance of the pilgrimage the Christians have made as they moved away from deep involvement in the idolatry of the Greco-Roman world, namely the image of a new birth. The Christians had previously been in bondage on account of the “futile ways inherited from [their] ancestors” (1:18). The heritage of this natural birth — the birth effected through “perishable seed” (1:23) — meant, according to the author, a sentence to an inauthentic life. The

addressees had already spent many years worshiping gods that were no gods, engaging in

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social relations that merely counterfeited intimacy and fellowship and were not conducive to the formation of a centered, whole person: “You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry” (4:3).

The message about Jesus changed their perception about this way of life, opening them up to an alternative that they recognized as more authentic, full of promise for deep human relationships built upon a stronger foundation of truth and mutual commitment. The author calls this conversion “a new birth into a living hope ... and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1:3–4). The believers have been granted the privilege of a renewed beginning, and so are called “like newborn babies” to “desire the pure spiritual milk” rather than sour that milk by allowing “malice, guile, insincerity, envy, and slander” to intrude upon their relationships with each other (2:1). “Like obedient children,” upon whom the patterns of the parents are imprinted, the believers are to imitate their new Father (1:14–16), who sired them with the “imperishable seed” of the Word of the gospel (1:23–25). They are called to grow into holiness, rather than to continue in those patterns learned from their families of origin and the unbelieving society into which they were socialized (1:14, 18). A certain obligation attaches to persevering in this new birth, new identity, and new patterning, since the transition from their pre-Christian lives to their birth into God’s household was effected only at great cost, namely the self-surrender of Jesus (1:18–21; 2:24–25; 3:18).

This image certainly advanced the author’s primary goal for the addressees, namely to insulate them from the social pressures they were experiencing. The image vividly reminded the hearers of the distance that existed now between them and the way of life they had chosen to leave behind in search of one that led them to a deeper communion with God and with each other. It reminded them, as well, of the undesirability of allowing those who still labored in slavery to that old way of life to pull those who had been liberated back into bondage. Finally, the image calls the hearers to persevere in living out that life for which they had been ransomed, growing into that person that their new birth enabled them to become.

The author’s image remains a powerful resource for assisting Christians to reflect upon the implications of discipleship, and it is a particularly potent resource for those on a counseling journey in particular. A great deal of attention is given in pastoral counseling to discerning the ways in which a person continues to be bound by defense mechanisms and dysfunctional patterns of behavior written deep into that person’s relational instincts by years of training in “futile ways inherited from one’s

ancestors.” The metaphor proclaims the real possibility of a decisive break with, and

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exodus from, that heritage, offering hope to those discouraged by the awesomeness of the journey they are attempting to make. As elements of that baggage are uncovered, the model also identifies those values, relational premises, and almost automatic reactions as elements of the “me” that the counselee is free no longer to be, as excluded from the “me” that the counselee is free to become.

This dissociative aspect of the metaphor of “new birth, new hope, new inheritance” is equally vital for all seeking to grow in discipleship. We are continually confronted in our reading of Scripture, our life of prayer, and in our hearing of the proclaimed word with the incompatibility of particular aspects of the way of life learned in our “primary socialization” (whether in our homes of origin, our formal education, or our observation and experience of “the way of the world”) and the way of life that reflects the holiness of God.

Within 1 Peter, several premises that remain fundamental to human relations are overturned. The first of these concerns the “get even” mentality, declaring the desire to return harm for harm (or at least to withhold good from those who have done us harm) to be part of this futile inheritance, which is corrected by the example of Jesus: “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly” (2:22–23). In keeping with Jesus’ teaching about what it meant to live as “children of the Father who is in heaven” (see Mt 5:44–48), the author of 1 Peter instructs the believers born into God’s family not to “repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called — that you might inherit a blessing” (3:9).

A second example can be found in the author’s instructions to women (specifically to wives, but this one point can be broadened): “Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God’s sight” (3:3–4). As with so many portions of the New Testament, these verses have been applied in literalistic, legalistic, restrictive ways. Taken rightly, however, the author offers a word of liberation from bondage to seeking approval and self-esteem based on one’s physical appeal (as well as the corollary, namely the tendency of men to measure women in this way). The author seeks to move the hearers toward more authentic interaction with and valuing of one another, receiving and giving affirmation based on the qualities of the soul rather than the appeal of the body (the latter being inevitably tied to sexual motivations, the former to harmony and partnership of the inner persons).

The image of leaving behind the values and relational patterns learned apart from God in favor of growing into the new person birth into God's family

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makes a possibility can thus continually hold before believers the challenge of “unlearning” and abandoning those premises and patterns that hinder the formation of Christ in us. The result of leaving behind a way of life that alienates one from God and from authentic and full relationships with other people means relief from the internal battle, from “the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul” (2:11). The author shares with Paul the basic dualistic understanding of the human person (see Gal 5:16–25): as one indulges the passions of the flesh one harms one's own soul. This understanding does not seek to destroy or suppress physical pleasure, but all those forces that contribute to inauthentic or hurtful or dysfunctional relationships, as the list of “passions” in Gal 5:19–21 makes clear.

The call to holiness (1:14–16) is a call to integrity, to commit wholly<sup>1</sup> to *one* set of values and way of life rather than limping between several mutually antagonistic ways of life. The author's direction to set all one's hope on the favor that comes with the establishing of God's kingdom serves to sustain this commitment and to sustain a single-hearted focus rather than allowing divergent hopes and ambitions to rob us of the integrity of living wholly in God's light and in response to God's call. The “ransom” provided by Jesus' giving of himself does not merely effect freedom “from” a destructive way of life but also freedom “for” a new life. Obedience to God's leading —discipline with regard to the temptations to return to the well-known ways learned from childhood — is essential for finding integrity and wholeness in the new person that Jesus enables the believer to become. With healing comes a new purpose, with freedom from dysfunctional and restrictive patterns and impulses comes a new direction for life (1:2; 2:9; 2:24; 3:10–12).

## 2. 1 Peter and Suffering

Perhaps no New Testament book is as dedicated to helping believers come to terms with, and respond to, suffering as 1 Peter. We must be very

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clear here about the precise *kind* of suffering about which the author speaks, or else we will come to misapply this resource. The author addresses people who have encountered resistance, insult, censure, and even physical abuse because of their commitment to respond to Christ and to do what God commands. It is their obedience to the commandment to avoid worship of other gods that, in the main, has led to the pressures being brought to bear on them in the household (in the case of wives and slaves) and in the street. The author is *not* speaking about suffering in general, encompassing all disease, chronic illness, domestic abuse, or

political oppression in his statements about suffering.

I must especially stress that domestic violence and abusive marriages are not “sanctioned” in some way by this text. The proximity of instructions to wives in 3:1–6 and discussions of suffering abuse (2:18–25; 3:13–17) has led to such problematic applications, with the result that some pastors or other Christian friends will advise a spouse to remain in an abusive relationship because this is God’s will (3:17; 4:19). Physical abuse between spouses, however, was not sanctioned even by Greco-Roman statutes, and so persevering in an abusive relationship cannot have been an aspect of the witness to the unbelieving spouse encouraged in 3:1–6. Rather, the author is speaking very specifically about suffering endured for “doing what is right” (2:20; 3:14), for “doing good” (3:17), “for the name of Christ” (4:14), and for “bearing the name” of “a Christian” (4:16). Suffering “in line with God’s will” (4:19) is quite explicitly limited by this author to suffering encountered because obedience to Jesus’ call, teaching, and example has brought one to that point of conflict with those who resist God’s vision for human relationships.

This is the condition of a considerable portion of the global family of God. I have found a general reluctance among Christians in the West to learn about and speak of the persecution encountered by sisters and brothers abroad, although I would not presume to diagnose the causes for this silence. Nevertheless, a part of the Body of Christ is subjected still to censure, discrimination, disprivilege, and even imprisonment and death on account of its confession of faith. It is also the lot of many who stand up for God’s vision of a just society, who take the lead against systems that guard the privilege of one group at the expense of the well-being of another group. One need only remember the resistance to, and suffering endured by, those who were “eager to do what was good” in recent history — Martin Luther King, Jr. and pastors and laity who sought to advance Civil Rights, Nelson Mandela and Allan Boesak, jailed for their witness in South Africa, and the confessors and martyrs of the Russian churches whose stories have become known since the dissolution of the Soviet Union are but a few examples. If “suffering for doing what is right” or for the sake of the name of Christ seem remote, it may be a sign that we have retreated far from those areas where the message of God

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would have us challenge the structures and practices by which our own land sustains its status quo.

1 Peter speaks to all who encounter resistance and suffering because they are going where God leads them, speaking up for God’s truth, searching for a new model for human relationships built on a stronger foundation than individual or systemic defense mechanisms. The author’s desire is that the believer not be defeated or intimidated by such resistance (3:14), but rather be faithful to God’s leading whatever the cost. He seeks to embolden believers to heed God’s leading wherever that

would take them: if it takes them into places where they will encounter the resistance of family, friends, or those who have power over life and freedom itself, it still has not taken them out of God's favor nor deprived them of the honor in which God holds them (4:14–16). At many points in this letter, the author specifically speaks of the honor — the dignity — that these marginalized believers have by virtue of their place in God's family (2:4–5, 9–10; 4:14–16). He also encourages them in the midst of their trials that honor will be the outcome of their perseverance (1:7; 2:6–8; <sup>2</sup> 5:6). These passages are resources for the encouragement of all who must persevere in the face of hostility if they are to arrive at the growth that God desires for them.

As 1 Peter gives us a window into the experiences of rejection and “rehabilitation” suffered by Christians at the hands of their non-Christian neighbors, it also connects with the experiences of many who, whether deepening in their discipleship or pursuing the healing of a counseling journey, encounter resistance from their natural families or circles of associates. When one member of a co-dependent team reaches for a more authentic existence, the other member is likely to respond negatively, to exert whatever pressure possible to maintain the relational patterns that, though mutually harmful, are controllable, known, and safe. When one member of a family ceases to play the

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games endemic to a dysfunctional family, the other members are likely to endeavor to pressure that individual to resume the role assigned him or her. Why? One member of the system may be ready to call those games into question, to set them aside, and discover a new and more authentic way of relating, but the others may not respond kindly to having those games, forged and perfected through years of practice and maintained by the weight of strong defense mechanisms, critically examined and threatened. This can be observed on the societal level as well: when beloved systems or values, however evil and hurtful to human relationships, are called into question rather than sustained through quiet participation, those who depend on those systems or values respond violently. These dynamics were very much on the surface as apartheid in South Africa or segregation in America were challenged from within; they were equally on the surface as Roman imperial ideology was challenged by Christian prophets in the late-first/early-second centuries.

The author's words to people facing this kind of pressure from those who embraced the life they left behind may still prove helpful when counseling or encouraging fellow-believers facing similar pressures today. First, he reminds them of the undesirability of returning to that way of life (1:18; 4:1–5). There were strong reasons for leaving it in favor of a new one, and those reasons urge perseverance in the way to life. Though resuming society's or one's family's dysfunctional games and values would bring relief from tension on some fronts, it would also bring the

greater tension of having exchanged the hope of freedom for a return to slavery. Second, he instructs them to show their detractors that the way of life they have found is a good one, one productive of what is noble, kind, and beneficent. The author trusts that the quiet display of virtue and authenticity has its own power of persuasion (2:12, 15; 3:1–2). Third, he urges them to be directed by God and by the example of Christ in all their dealings with other people. The laws of retaliation, of acting toward others as they act, inflict their own slavery upon the human soul.

The author is concerned that believers respond to those who have grieved them in such a way as reflects God's kindness rather than the hostile society's malice. Not returning ill for ill, but extending blessing remains the hallmark of Christian response. The Christian response to hostility is not to accept that the hostile ones have become a "them" divided from some "us." We are not free to hate those who hate us, nor to curse those who injure us. The task of pastoral counseling is not completed until the patient so experiences God's love that he or she can see that love extending to the other members of a dysfunctional, hurtful household (even if he or she will not be the one to take that love there). The persecuted one who learns to hate the persecutor has lost the best part of his or her faith, namely the love that is more valuable than martyrdom (to borrow from 1 Cor 13:3).

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### 3. The Church as Household of God

In light of the numerous and variegated struggles encountered by individuals and groups as they follow the leading of God's Spirit — whether that leading invites them on journeys toward inner healing and the resistance one can encounter on such journeys, or compels them to take a stand against prevailing social norms, marking them as targets for those who have much invested in the status quo — it is not surprising to find most New Testament authors emphasizing the importance of the community of faith as a resource for the individual believer.

1 Peter opens by giving voice to, and legitimating, that sense of not belonging yet yearning for belonging. He calls the hearers "exiles of the Diaspora" (1:1), applying to these (mostly) Gentile Christians titles taken from Israel's experience of being removed from their homeland and being scattered amongst the Gentile nations. As he continues, he gives instructions for their conduct "during the time of your exile" (1:17) and acknowledges their lack of place "as aliens and exiles" (2:11). It has been suggested that the terms "resident alien" and "sojourner" speak of the legal, non-citizen status of the Christians in Asia Minor: lacking a real place in their cities, these people were drawn to the Christian movement as a place where they could "belong." Others have taken issue with this reading, viewing the terms as more metaphorical, speaking of their lack of citizenship on earth because they now are citizens of heaven.<sup>3</sup> The former position suffers from the fact that there is no way to prove that the author

uses these terms in a legal, non-figurative sense (especially when other early Christian writers do employ the language metaphorically), but the latter position also suffers from not reckoning with the difficult social and economic circumstances that many early Christians faced.

I would suggest that, prior to their conversion, the addressees were very much “at home” with their neighbors and in their cities. They have, however, suffered a serious loss of place and loss of any sense of belonging as a result of their conversion, their withdrawal from so much of the way of life that formerly connected them with their neighbors (4:3–4). They have become outcasts in their own city. 1 Peter stresses, however, that they have also at the same time “come home.” They have returned to their home in God’s love (“you were wandering like sheep, but you have returned to the Shepherd and

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Guardian of your souls,” 2:25; 3:18) and in the love of the community of sisters and brothers in Christ (1:22; 3:8; 4:8–10). The community of Christians must function as a place of belonging during the time of exile — an exile that ends only with this mortal life. Each member is brought, as it were, to a construction site where God is fitting them together into a “spiritual house” (2:4–5), an honored household serving the One God as priests.

The ethos of the local church can be much informed and formed by some words from Philo of Alexandria, perhaps the most famous first-century Jewish philosopher. Articulating the obligation laid upon Jews to welcome converts from the Gentiles, he writes:

Having given equal rank and honour to all those who come over, and having granted to them the same favours that were bestowed on those born Jews, Moses recommends those who are ennobled by truth not only to treat the converts with respect, but even with special friendship and excessive benevolence... Those people who have left their country, and their friends, and their relations for the sake of virtue and holiness, ought not to be left destitute of other cities, and houses, and friends, but there ought to be places of refuge always ready for those who come over to religion (*The Special Laws* 1.52).

Philo recognized that the Jewish community needed to compensate the loss suffered by Gentiles leaving behind all the associations built around idolatry with their own acceptance, support, love, and friendship. Jesus no doubt had a similar vision in mind when he assured those who had left family and house for his sake that they would find a much larger family and many houses open to them in the movement they were starting (Mark 10:28–30). Individual perseverance would depend in large measure upon the acceptance and attachments each found within this new family.

Realizing the importance of building up this network of support, the author of 1 Peter also urges the local congregations he addresses to work toward being the “household of God” one to another: “now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart” (1:22). The word translated “mutual love” in the NRSV actually connotes “the love of siblings toward one another” (*philadelphia*). The author taps into the ethics of kinship to fill out his vision for life as a church. The love of siblings expressed itself in considering property to be held in common for the good of all, in cooperating rather than competing in endeavors, and in preserving unity and harmony within the group. Siblings, ideally, operated with complete honesty and trust toward one another. Several of the author’s exhortations capture aspects of this

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ethic quite explicitly:

Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander (2:1).

Have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind (3:8).

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies (4:8–11).

The early Christian leaders sought to form this ethos within the church empire-wide, which had become a single family related in fact by blood, but now the blood of Jesus.

In countries where converts to Christianity face the same loss of family and other support networks on account of their confession, the author’s words continue to be vital instructions for the survival of personal faith. Western churches, however, also need ever to strive at becoming well-functioning, supportive, caring families both to enable individuals’ perseverance and growth in discipleship and to enable the healing of those whose natural kinship groups are the source of psychological or physical injury. Congregations can become the most important partners to the pastoral counselor in the healing of the emotionally and psychologically wounded, as the latter find in a church not merely “nice people” but people willing to take on the roles of sisters and brothers, providing friendship, listening ears, open homes.

Hospitality was essential to the success of the early church since teachers and messengers of the churches relied on willing believers to open their homes to them, but hospitality was also the visible sign that the believer had joined a global family. Wherever he or she went, he or she

would not be without the ties of mutual affection and help that came from devotion to the One Lord. The reality of the family of God continues to come to expression when believers open their homes to a wife who needs to distance herself from an abusive husband, to Christians from abroad sojourning here (whether as students or as refugees), to the youth of the church as a place for mentoring and fellowship, and the like. “Show hospitality without grumbling” (4:9): take the family of God into your natural family domicile.

Churches are filled with gifted people. Some have an abundance of money and goods to share; others have compassionate hearts for listening and visiting; others have the gift of being spiritually centered people able to lead

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others to that same centeredness. Whatever the gifts, the author avers that God has planted them in each of us for the building up of one another. His directions in 4:8–11 especially lead us to continue to ask ourselves and our churches what these gifts are and how they can be used for God’s family locally and globally. The most important vehicle for God’s healing, deliverance, and transformation is the local congregation, and 1 Peter invites each congregation to set aside every distraction and focus completely on sustaining one another — the habitual church member, the counsellee who comes for the first time at the suggestion of a pastoral counselor, and the family in Indonesia that has had its house burned to the ground in an anti-Christian terrorist act — on the journey to the imperishable inheritance that God would bestow on each of us. Pastoral counselors, pastors or missionaries from abroad, and local congregations and their pastors would do well to dialog with one another concerning how a local congregation can best serve as an agent of healing and support for the whole family of God.

#### **4. The Natural (Christian) Household**

1 Peter, like Ephesians and Colossians, includes codes for conduct within the household. Unlike Ephesians and Colossians, which give reciprocal instructions to all three sets of relationships in the typical household (master and slaves, husbands and wives, parents and children), 1 Peter only addresses slaves, wives, and, most briefly, husbands. Since it is often the case that more fundamentalist groups will teach that these rules are still binding upon wives and husbands, it would be fitting to consider their significance and purpose so as to forestall (or remedy) unhealthful applications of these passages.

The author’s instructions to women bear a marked resemblance to the picture of the ideal wife in the writings of Greek and Latin ethicists, as well as to Hellenistic Jewish authors.<sup>4</sup> Submission to the husband’s authority, modesty, and quietness were the major components of this portrait. This submission did not include, however, acceptance of domestic violence,

which was actionable then as now as a category of assault. Nor was submissiveness meant to limit or downplay the contributions of the wife in a household. Xenophon, for example, regarded men and women as differently and complementarily gifted for the effective management of a household and rearing of children, each contributing essential strengths not possessed by the other. Neither did

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submissiveness mean doing everything the husband said: the believing wife was certainly obliged to disobey an unbelieving husband's urging to return to the worship of his gods. The wife is called by the author to "do what is good" and not to yield to intimidation (3:6).

We must also reckon with the agenda behind the author's instructions. It was critical for him that unbelievers should understand that Christians did not seek to subvert the domestic and social order, one of the primary suspicions cast upon them. Their refusal of certain obligations (mostly those that included some idolatrous component) did not mean that they sought to bring unrest to homes and cities everywhere. Seeking to appear not to subvert these domestic norms is a very different goal from seeking indefinitely to perpetuate them. Those who read such passages as 3:1–6 as a template for husband-wife relationships as God meant them to be enacted through all time fail to take into account the author's very specific and culture-bound purposes in giving these instructions. Positively, the author wants unbelievers to see that responding to this Jesus resulted in the formation of many of the virtues prized by the dominant culture as well. This would, he hoped, make their neighbors revise their opinion of the Christian group and perhaps grow to accept it, if not join it.

The most important safeguards against applying the instructions to wives in a manner that acts to suppress a wife's growth, harm her self-esteem, or undervalue her contributions to home, church, and world, are the instructions to husbands. Where these are taken seriously, it is less likely that the instructions to wives will be applied in ways that appeal to the carnal mind—that mind shaped in us not by God but by the "futile ways inherited from our ancestors." I cannot help but recall here the ugliness of a man who rejoiced to share with me how submissive his wife was, how women were in their "proper place" in their church (i.e., veiled and in the back), and so forth. Such emphasis on domestic hierarchies and the reinforcement of the female's second-class status in the spatial arrangements of the church are far from the author's vision of a Christian marriage.

The English translations tend to skew the Greek text once again (as at 2:7). Consider, for example, the NRSV of 3:7: "Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life — so that nothing may hinder your prayers." This translation obscures the motive clauses given by the author for each

action, namely “showing consideration” and “paying honor.” A better rendering would read: “in your living together, show consideration for your wives as to the weaker sex, offering honor to the woman as also to joint heirs of the gracious gift of life.” Greco-Roman authors also held that the physical vulnerability of the female

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ought to provoke gentleness and consideration from the husband, tempering rather than inviting any domineering spirit. 1 Peter, however, goes further than this by drawing attention to the Christian wife’s status as a co-heir of that gift toward which all Christians’ hope is directed. This status must result in the husband honoring the wife as one favored and honored by God, and to filter all his words, attitudes, and actions toward her through this lens. Any attempt to apply 3:1–6 in a way that violates the wife’s honor as co-heir of God’s kingdom must therefore be ruled out-of-bounds.

The author offers a second safeguard in his concluding summary exhortations in 3:8, which functions here much as Eph 5:21 does for that household code: “Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another [specifically, again, love for one another as that between siblings], a tender heart, and a humble mind.” The fact that Christian couples are also children of the same Heavenly Parent, that is, sister and brother, overlays another code of ethics upon the typical patterns of marital roles. The ethic of siblings promotes the quest for harmony and concord — agreement rather than suppression of one voice in favor of another’s voice, cooperation for the good of the whole family rather than competition for power and precedence (such as lurks not far beneath the surface of many attempts to revive the patriarchal models of the first century in twentieth and twenty-first century homes). Sympathy, tenderness, and, especially, humility, are antithetical to forcing one’s way on another or attempting to assert dominance over another. Perhaps it is here, in the example of Jesus the humble one, that one finds the most powerful, yet overlooked, death-blow to hierarchical and authoritarian arrangements of the Christian household.

Counselors and pastors need especially to be aware of the way the household codes in the New Testament have been used in the lives of their charges (not to mention be cautious about their own application of them to family life). The very Scriptures that can heal are frequently used as weapons of ideological warfare in power struggles and other divisive and hurtful games, and it is sorrowful that the Scriptures are frequently invoked to demean those very daughters God seeks to elevate.

## **5. Where is God in the midst of Suffering?**

In a letter so focused on the problem of suffering, it is natural to inquire into what this author may contribute to finding God and encountering God’s sustaining strength in the midst of suffering. First, it is imperative to

remember that 1 Peter does not address suffering in general, such that his remarks on suffering can be applied to the experience of disease or violent crime or mental anguish. Rather, as we have already discussed, the author speaks to the situation of suffering for the sake of doing what is just and for the

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sake of being associated with Jesus and his challenge to the world.

The author assures Christians facing such trials that God is present with them in the midst of suffering. It was important to help the believers understand that the resistance they encountered and losses they endured were *not* a sign that they were out of favor with God, but rather assured them that they were moving in precisely the direction that God was leading. First, it was God who provided for their redemption from a futile way of life, dissociation from which is the cause of their present suffering (1:19). God set them on the journey they have begun, and the believers remain “protected by the power of God ... for a deliverance about to be revealed” (1:5) in the midst of their trials. In the midst of the censure and insult they endure, God associates God’s own Spirit with them personally: “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you” (4:14). Far from separating them from God, their endurance of trials confirms their intimacy with God.

Moreover, the author assures them that God is intensely concerned about each believer in the midst of trial. Quoting [Psalm 34:15](#), he writes: “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.” This he turns into a reassuring exhortation in [5:7](#): “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.” As did Jesus, Paul, the author of Hebrews and as would John, this author also calls the Christians to take hold of prayer as a powerful resource by which to counter anxiety and fear and to find the strength to persevere. He fully expects that God will intervene to “restore, support, strengthen, and establish” those who have endured suffering for righteousness’ sake (5:10). God is also present to help in the community of faith: “Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies” (4:11). Words of encouragement and direction, acts of love and service, are all signs of God’s power at work to sustain God’s sons and daughters.

As Jesus himself had “entrusted himself to the one who judges justly” (2:23), so Christians who encounter undeserved resistance and deviancy-control measures are called to “entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good” (4:19). Vindication may not come in this life, but the vindication of Jesus’ honor at his resurrection continues to provide the assurance for believers that their dignity and worth, too, will be vindicated by God — on that Day when their present perseverance in suffering will be awarded its due “praise and glory and honor” (1:7).

1 Peter's assurances about God's presence and aid in the midst of suffering still offer words of encouragement and strategies for perseverance in cases where the search for light — whether that light means the discovery and relinquishing of dysfunctional relational habits or the exodus from societal

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values in favor of God's vision for humanity — results in the experience of hostility, censure, and even violence. It is important to emphasize for such people where God is *not*: God is not in the reproaches and abuse of the unbelievers punishing the sufferers, but *with* the believers in the midst of their experiences of hostility and resistance.

That these believers are “suffering in accordance with God's will” means that their obedience to God's will and alignment with God's cause has resulted in suffering, not that God delights in abusing God's faithful ones nor that God seeks to make life difficult for those who seek to leave behind death-dealing and inauthentic ways of life. Early Christians spoke of sufferings being endured in accordance with God's will as a way of expressing the conviction that the experience of persecution for righteousness' sake was not something beyond God's power, nor did it place one beyond God's favor and help. It also expressed the conviction that the experience of resistance and suffering provided the fire by which the human soul was rendered workable by God, like gold or silver in the smith's oven (see 1:6–7).

Such a view of God's place in the sufferings of the believers ultimately was intended to assist the believers to withstand the pressures that weighed upon them from without, to empower them to remain true to their own choices and to the vision they had accepted for themselves. It also sought to redeem those very experiences by calling attention to the good purposes God could achieve in the believer's life and in the shape of the believer's character by means of the crucible of suffering: the Christian was able to focus thus not on being victimized by unbelievers, but to search out the ways in which his or her virtue, character, and inner strength was being refined. These formulations resulted, of course, in a theological problem with no solution in sight — but it may help to keep pushing past the problematic formulations and inquiring into the pastoral goals that gave rise to them in the first place.<sup>5</sup>

## 6. A Word to Elders from an Elder

The author, “a fellow elder,” gives some directions to “the elders” among the many Christians communities in the five provinces he addresses (5:1). One difficulty in knowing how to take his directions is our lack of clarity concerning the organization of the church in the first century. “Elder,” “overseer,” and “deacon” all appear to have been “offices” by the end of the

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first century, the latter two receiving much attention in the Pastoral Epistles with regard to qualifications for serving in these capacities. By “elder,” did the author have in mind people named to an appointed office or simply those who, by reason of their seniority in the community, were the “natural” leaders within a particular Christian community? The contrast between the “elders” addressed in 5:1–4 and the “younger ones” in 5:5 suggests that seniority and leadership were closely linked in the early church, as would be expected in the Mediterranean cultures where age, wisdom, and authority were regarded as natural counterparts. The possibility of exercising oversight “under compulsion” (5:2), however, suggests that congregations called upon some of their senior members to look after the local Christian community. We might expect these duties to have included aspects of pastoral care, orchestrating relief within the local church, and presiding over assemblies (not necessarily doing all the teaching or praying or the like, for several local Christians would be regarded as spiritually gifted in such areas).

We should not merely apply the author’s exhortations to “elders” here to “paid staff” (e.g., pastors), although as representatives of the general ministry of the whole church it must apply to them as well. The exhortations need to be extended, however, to all the “natural” leaders in a congregation. Many churches suffer from a lack of indigenous, “natural leadership,” whether because responsibility is deferred to the “paid staff,” because the “elders” in a church are overlooked when responsibilities are delegated, or because those with experience and giftedness nevertheless avoid responsibility within the church. The other side of the spectrum is just as problematic, where a few “elders” attempt to control the congregation. 1 Peter calls for leadership that is both healthy and strong, challenging the elders in churches at both ends of this spectrum.

Caring for one another in the family of faith is no less an obligation than caring for one another in a natural family. Just as the well-functioning natural family exercises this care in diligent and healthful ways, so the well-functioning family of God does the same. Where we err either to the side of neglecting the care of the family or to the side of using care as a means of control, we move toward a dysfunctional family. Lay leadership within the church, whether in administrative capacities, in pastoral care ministries (like the *Stephen Ministries*), or in outreach or education is essential to the growth and health of the family of God. Being nominated to a committee or asked to teach the Senior High can be approached as an unwanted burden or an opportunity to “exercise the oversight” for the good of the family of God. The author clearly hopes that such leaders will adopt the latter approach, understanding that God equips and strengthens those whom God calls out in such ways (4:11). He urges lay leaders (and today we must include paid staff) to understand their

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work as an invitation to work with God to strengthen and build the church,

and thus to give specific expression to the general obligation to show love for their sisters and brothers.

What motivates these leaders? The author excludes two possible motives immediately, namely material gain and the enjoyment of power over others. In the first century, local leaders would not have been paid but still would have had opportunity to use their position to increase their wealth. Being in charge of relief funds, for example, might have made it tempting to skim off an administrative or handling fee. They might have thought to extort gifts, services, and favors from their sisters and brothers, presenting requests for such goods and services as the suitable “return” for their own generosity and service. Reciprocity was a core value in the Greco-Roman world of patrons, friends, and clients, and could be exploited. This remains a danger facing leaders in the church. Giving of oneself to the young, the homeless, the shut-ins, the unchurched is not to be approached as an opportunity for worldly gains, whether community prestige or networking for one’s business, or the like. Moreover, some of the most important work we will ever do in this life is the work for which there is no paycheck. Many are losing sight of this as they shy away from making commitments to services and responsibilities apart from their “paying” jobs.

“Elders” are not to be drawn into the trap of working for money or seeking other temporal compensations for their labors in the family of God. Their reward is imperishable, namely unfading honor in Christ’s kingdom: to set one’s mind to calculating how to wrangle material or temporal rewards alongside this shows a small spirit. Since many churches have moved to a situation in which some of its leadership is salaried — that is, since the apostolic situation no longer holds — application of the author’s words to paid pastors and other staff must take this shift into account. In this regard, pastors are reminded that they went into the work of full-time ministry not for the money but in response to God’s call. Salaried church leaders cannot forget this. It does happen from time to time that ministers and their families are unable to meet their necessary expenses because of inadequate compensation. In such cases, ministers need to be honest with their congregations about their needs and congregations need to respond as God (not fiscal conservatism) leads. It is also the case, however, that American culture approaches money and material possessions from the standpoint of “more” rather than “enough.” Part of being “examples to the flock” includes modeling some very un-American values, such as discerning when a salary, however small in comparison with many professionals’ salaries, is “enough,” and understanding that “more” is not necessarily “better.” Compensation for one’s labor and a benefits package are not the same thing, at least where one takes the promise of 5:4 seriously: “when

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the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of honor.”

Healthful leadership also resists the temptation to dominate, and it is a powerful temptation to resist. An “elder” in a local church might regard his recompense for good and faithful service to be the unspoken “right” to have things go his way, both within and beyond his sphere of immediate involvement. A pastor or counselor might forget the healing arts as she seeks to “dominate” the patient in her role as “expert” in a theological disagreement. Whatever the scenario, good shepherding requires the dismissal of every inner drive to dominate. The hierarchy described by the author of 1 Peter is helpful in this regard: there is one chief shepherd. To all other shepherds belongs neither the flock nor the turf, but only the opportunity and obligation to tend what is another’s.

Those who are able to lead without concern for gain or self-assertion are indeed powerful examples to the flock, living parables of Jesus’ own leadership style. There are other ways in which Christians “elders” and other leaders can distinguish themselves for Christ as they distinguish themselves from Western styles and expectations of leaders. One of these involves modeling transparency and vulnerability, refusing to perpetuate the widespread conspiracy of hiding one’s brokenness under a thin veneer of cheerful appearances for fear of non-acceptance. Avoidance of self-disclosure out of this fear is a basic dysfunction in human relationships, although it is often perceived as “strength” in a leader. Within the context of the church, however, any such strategies that limit knowledge of and care for one another — in short, limit opportunities for God’s healing power to be at work — should be rejected.

If leaders are to devote themselves to the care of the family of God, the reciprocal responsibility is clear. Those who benefit from the self-giving of others ought not to make the faithful exercise of vigilant oversight any more difficult than it needs to be: “in the same way, you who are their juniors must submit yourselves to the elders” (5:5). Humility (acting with respect for the honor and contributions of the other) in all our dealings with one another is again the key to the well-functioning church family.

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## The Importance of Literary Argument for Understanding 1 Peter

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James R. Slaughter

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A survey of the literature dealing with Peter's epistles, including New Testament introductions, commentaries, Bible encyclopedias and handbooks, and even journal articles reveals a serious lack of consideration for the argument that flows through each letter. Much attention has been given to identifying Peter's sources and the original form of 1 Peter, and to exegeting and expounding the text. But scholars have expended little energy on thoroughly articulating Peter's comprehensive message and demonstrating the immense influence this message has on the various sections of 1 Peter. Studies in 1 Peter often identify the themes of persecution and suffering, usually in a summary statement regarding the letter's purpose, but those studies seldom demonstrate how these themes are recapitulated throughout the different segments of the work. Some commentators do not address Peter's purpose, theme, or argument in any way.<sup>1</sup>

The neglect of Peter's argument and its influence on his words and their interpretation in individual passages is typical of many expositions of 1 Peter.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the apostle's instructions

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are usually presented as a kind of teaching catechism without consideration for the basis on which the instruction builds. But the argument of the epistle, particularly the element of the believer's lifestyle in the face of unfair circumstances, is crucial for understanding the full range of Peter's injunctions.

### The Function of Argument in a Literary Work

Because 1 Peter constitutes a literary work, it should be studied as literature having purpose, themes, and a message that influence the meaning and impact of its various parts. Such features as allusion to and citing of Old Testament Scripture, the use of metaphor and simile, and the elements of rhetoric and style, characterize the New Testament epistles as literature.<sup>3</sup> Deissmann argues that as an epistle 1 Peter "is an artistic literary form, a species of literature, just like the dialogue, the oration or the drama."<sup>4</sup> He distinguishes between a true epistle and a letter, suggesting the letter is simply a personal "piece of life," not literary at all,

while the epistle is a “product of literary art.”<sup>5</sup> Longenecker denies this difference between letters and epistles but does affirm that both are literary in nature.<sup>6</sup> He agrees with Deissmann that 1 Peter is genuinely epistolary and therefore literary.<sup>7</sup> “When the Bible employs a [particular] literary method, it asks to be approached as literature and not as something else.”<sup>8</sup>

No principle of literary study is more important than that of grasping the overall message of a literary piece as a single work.<sup>9</sup> Though the idea of the whole must arise from an encounter with parts, the entire work controls, connects, and unifies one’s understanding of the parts.<sup>10</sup> As Ryken suggests, the most basic of all artistic principles is unity, and the literary approach to the

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Bible accordingly looks for literary patterns and wholeness of effect.<sup>11</sup> By way of contrast the form-critical approach studies the small constituent parts of a work. But in reading literature the pattern of the whole should be noted first. “One thing all of these [New Testament letters] do have in common is that they will yield most if they are read as literary wholes.”<sup>12</sup>

Considering the whole in relation to the parts of a literary work is essentially noting the author’s argument, that is, the flow of his thought or how his controlling message is developed. Therefore reading a piece of literature, including a New Testament epistle, as a literary whole means reading to understand the author’s argument. It means tracing the author’s train of thought and seeking to understand why he includes a particular section at a particular place within the manuscript. It means trying to understand what he is saying and why he is saying it where he does. Portions of a text have meaning only as they relate to what precedes and what follows, for this reveals how the individual parts relate to the argument (the whole) that controls them. Rollin Chafer calls the argument of a biblical book its scope or design, and he contends that attention to a book’s design helps in interpreting its individual parts.<sup>13</sup> Fountain calls a New Testament author’s argument his plan for the book: “The reader should always recognize that each writer had some specific purpose in mind for writing; and followed some predetermined plan.... The plan is the literary form used by the writer in carrying out his purpose.”<sup>14</sup> Inch and Bullock, in their discussion of Petrine literature, earnestly defend the importance of understanding the argument of 1 Peter in order to understand its component parts. This approach is crucial and effective because of “the cohesive flow of argument” through each section.<sup>15</sup>

One must not mistakenly identify the passages in 1 Peter as independent sections. Only as the argument of the book is developed, and each individual section is studied in relation to the whole, can a fully accurate interpretation of individual passages be obtained. And only as each passage is interpreted accurately

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can the full implications of Peter's words be comprehended by church leaders who teach the apostle's instructions to modern listeners who need to hear and heed them every bit as much as the author's ancient audience.

## The Motifs and Message of 1 Peter

Peter constructed the message of this epistle by weaving together five primary motifs: the believer's behavior, the believer's unfair treatment, the believer's deference, the believer's motivation by Christ's example, and the believer's anticipation of future glory. The apostle emphasized these themes by using a number of words that occur throughout the document. Taken together the five motifs form the underlying message Peter communicated.

### The Motifs of 1 Peter

*The believer's behavior.* As Senior and others have noted, a concern for good conduct is typical of the epistle.<sup>16</sup> Most of the letter's sections emphasize the expectation of excellent behavior on the part of the believers Peter addressed. The stress on behavior begins with a call to holiness in 2:1–10, and continues with an explanation of how to behave in a holy way toward Gentile neighbors (2:11–12) and in all other relationships including associations in legal-political affairs, in domestic affairs, and in civil and church affairs (2:13–5:5). The word ἀναστροφή (“behavior,” “conduct,” “manner of life,” “walk,” “action”) most commonly communicates this theme. Moulton and Milligan note that inscriptional use often associates the term with πάροικοι and παρεπιδήμιοι, which is similar to 1 Peter.<sup>17</sup> He wrote to his audience, “But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your *behavior*” (1:15); “you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile *way of life*” (1:18); “Keep your *behavior* excellent among the Gentiles” (2:12); “wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that...they may be won without a word by the *behavior* of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful *behavior*” (3:1–2); and “Keep a good conscience so that...those who revile your good *behavior* in Christ may be put to shame” (3:16).

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The aorist infinitive βιώσαι (“to live”) in 4:2 likely carries the nuance of “to walk,” or “to conduct one's life,” thus reinforcing the emphasis on behavior in the epistle. The noun βίωσις often means “manner of life” (Acts 26:4).

In 1 Peter 4:3 κατεργάζομαι restates the motif of the believer's behavior, “For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles.” In other versions the word is translated “to have wrought” (KJV), “to do” (NEB), “to behave or live the sort of life” (JB). Its lexical meaning is “to achieve, accomplish, do something.” The word

therefore appropriately expresses the author's concern for and primary theme of the believer's behavior. Another term Peter used in expounding this theme is συντρέχω: "They are surprised that you do not *run with them* into the same excess" (4:4). This figure of close association emphasizes again the aspect of doing or behavior.

*The believer's unfair circumstances.* The unfair treatment Peter's readers suffered comprises the second motif of his letter. Their "troubles are the ever-felt background of every paragraph."<sup>18</sup> Davids calls suffering the central concern of 1 Peter,<sup>19</sup> though the believer's behavior in suffering might be a more accurate identification of that central issue.

In the broad sense of trial, tribulation, hardship, and suffering the apostle frequently used the following words: πάσχω ("to suffer, endure," 2:19–21, 23; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 15, 19; 5:10),<sup>20</sup> πάθημα ("suffering, misfortune," 1:11; 4:13; 5:1, 9), πειρασμός ("test, trial, temptation, enticement," 1:6; 4:12), and πύρωση ("fiery test, fiery ordeal," 4:12). The presence of suffering is expressed in 4:12 ("Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you"), and 5:10 ("After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace...will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you"). The problem of suffering is demonstrated further by the readers' responses of fear (φοβέομαι, 3:6, 14) and anxiety (μέριμνα, 5:7) to their situation. The atmosphere created by suffering evoked these emotions in the hearts and minds of Peter's audience and he sought throughout the letter to exhort and encourage them in view of their sentiments.

Of greater importance to Peter's argument, however, is his consistent emphasis on the more restricted sense in which the readers suffered as victims of unjust hostility and malice. They suffered deprivation, effrontery, and indignity under the rule of a government that demeaned them by assigning them to an

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inferior class of citizenry without rank or privilege. They were resident aliens (πάροικοι) and visiting strangers (παρεπιδήμιοι) who received only limited protection under the law and grudging acceptance by the citizens of the region.<sup>21</sup> In many respects their persecution took on a local and private character, originating in the hostility of the surrounding population toward this Christian minority.<sup>22</sup> Much of the persecution they suffered was verbal in nature as verified by Peter's use of καταλαλέω ("to slander," 2:12; 3:16), βλασφημέω ("to injure the reputation, defame," 4:4), ὀνειδίζω ("to insult, reproach, denounce," 4:14), λοιδορέω ("to abuse verbally, insult, speak evil of," 2:23) and ἐπερεάζω ("to mistreat, insult, threaten, abuse," 3:16). Such abuse was undeserved, a fact represented by the meanings of the words themselves, but more directly through Peter's descriptions of his readers as bearing up "under sorrows when suffering unjustly" (2:19), "suffering for the sake of righteousness" (3:14) and "for doing what is right" (3:17), and suffering "according to the will of God" (4:19).

The New Testament especially develops the concept of innocent suffering. The early church experienced great amounts of unfair treatment, and entire books such as 1 Peter are devoted to the issue.<sup>23</sup> Peter addressed this situation, making it one of his points of emphasis. But his message involves more than innocent suffering. It is a matter of suffering while doing good, an issue Peter dealt with in discussing the believer's deference.

*The believer's deference.* First, Peter makes abundantly clear how believers should behave when they suffer, even when they suffer unjustly. Unfair treatment at the hands of unreasonable, often unbelieving people never justifies an offensive spirit or an attempt at retribution. Peter called believers to a different spirit, a spirit of deference—even while experiencing undeserved persecution. The word “deference” conveys the idea of thoughtful consideration of another individual's desires or feelings or the courteous, respectful, or ingratiating regard for another's wishes.<sup>24</sup> “Respect” or “honor” are close synonyms. Deference does not necessarily connote acquiescence, agreement, or passivity, though it does rule out retaliation. Senior rightly observes, “1 Peter is encouraging neither suffering for suffering's sake nor an opium-like religious passivity.”<sup>25</sup>

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“Deference” refers to a proper attitude that results in behavior characterized by respect. It is not the same as submission to authority, though submission may represent an expression of deference. Deference may be shown in other ways such as treating people respectfully and honorably, which Peter urged Christians to do in all their relationships (2:17). For wives the expression of deference toward their husbands means submitting to them (3:1); for husbands the expression of deference toward their wives involves honoring them (3:7).

As with the first two motifs the apostle's vocabulary demonstrates the importance of this theme. Peter's readers, though pressed, stressed, and beleaguered unfairly were, depending on the relationship involved, to obey (ὑπακούω, 3:6), to honor and respect (τιμάω, 2:17), or to subordinate themselves (ὑποτάσσω, 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5; 5:5) even to those who treated them wrongly. They were to submit not because of coercion but by intention. Their submission was to be freely assumed, conscious, and with the Lord as its only criterion.<sup>26</sup> Peter wrote in 3:8 that they were to be harmonious (ὁμόφρονες), sympathetic (συμπαθεῖς), brotherly (φιλάδελφοι), tender-hearted (εὐσπλαγχνοὶ) and humble toward each other in spirit (ταπεινόφρονες). They were to be hospitable and without complaint (φιλοξένοι, ἄνευ γογγυσμοῦ, 4:9). These words typify the true Christian response to unfair treatment. They were not to return “evil for evil or insult for insult” but were to give “a blessing instead” (3:9). Even church leaders were to minister “not out of compulsion, but voluntarily” (5:2), and not “lording it over” those under their care, but “proving to be examples” (5:3).

*The believer's motivation by Christ's example.* A fourth motif is the recurring emphasis on Christ's example. Jesus' excellent behavior during His undeserved ill treatment in His trial and crucifixion becomes a strong motivation for His followers. Every chapter of 1 Peter includes some reference to the motivational model provided by Christ in His sufferings. Reflecting on the Lord's sufferings helped Peter's audience better anticipate, understand, and endure their own trials. "The example of Christ made the sufferings of Christians plausible, predictable and even tolerable."<sup>27</sup> The apostle admonished, "Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves" (1:15). "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up" (2:4–5); "Christ

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also suffered for you, leaving you an example [ὑπογραμμός] for you to follow [ἐπακολουθέω] in His steps" (2:21). "It is better...that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins...the just for the unjust" (3:17–18). "Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose" (τὴν αὐτὴν ἔννοιαν, 4:1). "Share the sufferings of Christ" (4:13). "Be examples [τύποι] to the flock," as Christ has been an example to believers (5:3).

Peter's exposition of the example of Christ is seen most clearly in 2:21–25. Here an extended and impassioned exposition of Christ's innocence in unjust suffering appears as a foundation for the believers' deference when they were treated unfairly. Peter said that Christians had been called to suffer unjustly (referring to vv. 19–20), which agrees with other New Testament teaching (e.g., John 15:18–20; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess 3:3). But why were they to suffer? Because such suffering was part of the life of Christ, which they had been called to imitate: "Since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps" (v. 21).<sup>28</sup> As the Master was called to suffer unjustly, so the followers also were called, and His attitude was to be theirs. "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats" (v. 23).

Peter set the stage for Christ's example in 2:21–25 with the stone *testimonia* of 2:4–8. While Jesus is precious in the sight of God, He nevertheless was rejected by the nation Israel. Since the believers' experience was similar, remembering Christ's example would spur them to righteous deference in the face of injustice.

*The believer's anticipation of future glory.* Peter's fifth motif serves as a second motivational factor in the believers' quest for holy living when they are treated unfairly.<sup>29</sup> In addition to being motivated by Christ's example, they were to be motivated by the promise of reward when Christ returns.

The letter has a vibrant and optimistic eschatological viewpoint. The final day will be one of triumph when God's salvation will be revealed (1:5), a day of "glory" (4:13) that will reward the faithful and purge the sinful (4:5)....

Confidence in this day of victory does not lead to vindictiveness but to a positive hope.<sup>30</sup>

Simply put, “Christians are exhorted to rejoice wherever they share in Christ’s sufferings, for in this way they shall also

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partake in the revelation of eternal glory.”<sup>31</sup>

Peter’s broad vocabulary depicts this glory to come. His readers could anticipate with assurance an “inheritance” (κληρονομία) which is “imperishable and undefiled” (ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον), according to 1:4 . It would certainly come, for it is reserved in heaven for them. Demonstrating their genuine faith throughout their unjust trials would result in their receiving “praise” (ἔπαινος), “glory” (δόξα) and “honor” (τιμὴ) when Jesus returns (1:7 ). Peter also referred to their future glory as the “salvation” (σωτηρία) of their souls (1:9 ), “glories” (δόξαι) that would follow (1:11 ), and “grace” (χάρις) to be given to them (1:13 ). He said they would inherit a “blessing” (εὐλογία, 3:9 ), and affirmed that they were blessed because the spirit of “glory” (δόξα) rested on them (4:14 ). They would share in the “glory” (δόξα) to be revealed (5:1 ), and in the future they would receive the “crown of glory” (τῆς δόξης στέφανον, 5:4 ). God would “exalt them” (ὑψώω, 5:6 ) at the proper time, and would then “perfect” (καταρτίζω), “confirm” (στηρίζω), “strengthen” (σθενάω) and “establish” (θεμελιώω) them in Christ (5:10 ). The assurance of future glory brought by such promises served to motivate believers to carry out good behavior.

### **The Message of 1 Peter**

When taken together the motifs of 1 Peter embody a message that may be expressed as follows: “The behavior of believers when they encounter unfair circumstances reflects a spirit of deference in all relationships as they follow Christ’s example and anticipate future glory.”

### **The Argument of 1 Peter**

#### **Peter Extended Greetings to Believers Encountering Unfair Circumstances**

The epistle opens with greetings to believers being treated unfairly (1:1–2 ). The author revealed his name, Peter, and his authoritative ministry, apostle of Jesus Christ (v. 1a ), in characteristic literary fashion, thereby establishing his spiritual and ecclesiastical credibility for those who would receive this message. He addressed the letter’s recipients by identifying their status, location, and position (v. 1b–2a ). On the earth they resided as visiting strangers (παρεπιδημοί) who were scattered throughout the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They were displaced persons, foreigners in the broad

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sense, but in the technical sense belonging to a category of people

specifically identified, acknowledged, and cataloged by Roman authorities as “resident aliens.”<sup>32</sup> Resident alien status brought few privileges but many burdens and much affliction. The government considered them second-class citizens, and while they may have worked the land they were not permitted to own land, to vote, or to hold public office, but were subject to military conscription and the payment of taxes and tribute.<sup>33</sup>

Public hostility and resentment were directed to Peter’s audience by the pagan communities in which they lived. Such hostility found its roots not only in the inferior political status of the addressees but also in their religious beliefs, which their neighbors failed to understand or accept. The Christians were viewed with suspicion and contempt, verbally abused and ostracized by their non-Christian counterparts. Thus the apostle early identified his readers as believers who were being treated unfairly, in a foreign environment, surrounded by neighbors who abused them, and governed by a system that took advantage of them. The persecution they experienced was undeserved and the apostle consistently exhorted his readers to excellent behavior so that when they suffered it would be because of their commitment to Christ, not because of legal offense. The fact that Peter’s readers were believers being treated unfairly is fundamental to his argument and finds a place in his document almost immediately.

Just as crucial to his argument is Peter’s conviction that while his readers lived as strangers and aliens on the earth, intimidated and abused by their adversaries, in the Lord they were people of inestimable value, chosen according to God’s eternal knowledge and predetermined plan (1:2a ). By the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work they were selected for a twofold divine purpose: to obey Jesus Christ, and to be cleansed by sprinkling with His blood (v. 2b ).<sup>34</sup> To God they were not strangers; they were

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well known personally and were a unique part of His divine plan. Being aware of this plan would allow them to suffer unjustly at that time, but their suffering would not diminish the fullness of their sanctification by the Holy Spirit. The author thus introduced the tension between the believers’ vexation at being treated unfairly and their assurance that God was working in their lives because they belonged to Him.

Peter’s greeting ends with an appropriate blessing for his beleaguered hearers: “grace and peace be yours in fullest measure” (v. 2c ).

### **Peter Assured Believers of Future Glory to Encourage Them During Their Encounter with Unfair Circumstances**

In the first major section of his letter Peter discussed the assurance of future glory for believers who encounter unfair circumstances (1:3–2:10 ). The certainty of their future glorification serves as one of two motivational factors to encourage readers in their struggles and to spur them on to

godly behavior. His reasoning begins with the assurance of future glory based on their new birth in Christ (1:3–5). Born again in Christ, Peter's readers enjoyed a living hope for future glory, the eager, confident expectation of life to come, which grows and increases in strength year by year.<sup>35</sup> In addition to this sustaining hope, the new birth brought them three promises which assured their future glory (vv. 4–5). Their conversion promised, first, the glory of an inheritance reserved for them in heaven, an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and never fading (κληρονομίαν ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον καὶ ἀμάραντό).

A second promise accompanying the new birth was that of God's sustaining power for obtaining future glory (v. 5a). God was their fortress to arrest any forces bent on depriving them of glory in the time to come.<sup>36</sup> The third promise given with the new birth was eschatological salvation itself (v. 5b), the focal point of the believer's future glory. Stibbs comments on this focus:

This eschatological emphasis means that, however truly salvation may have already begun...and however much it may be a daily experience...its full character and wonder will be disclosed only in the crowning day that is coming. What Christ's people then enjoy will be "salvation" indeed.<sup>37</sup>

However, the weight of severe trials no doubt dimmed the hopes of glory for Peter's readers. Persecution seemed their

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eternal lot in life, hobbling them in their spiritual journey. So the apostle continued to assure them that the new birth would secure their future glory in spite of present trials (vv. 6–12). These trials were real and varied (1:6), but necessary in order to demonstrate the genuineness of their faith (vv. 7–12). Peter revealed the precious nature of this true faith (vv. 7a–8) when he described it as tested by fire and found pure (v. 7a), and as loving Christ (v. 8a), believing in Him (v. 8b), and rejoicing (v. 8c) while not yet seeing Him. The present trials of these abused believers created an environment in which the true nature of their genuine faith might be demonstrated to all. And so instead of acting as an agent of condemnation, casting doubt on their receiving future glory, these various testings were to be considered elements of encouragement, revealing faith through which future glory was certain to come. God would use this genuine faith to produce a bountiful harvest of blessing and glory for them when Christ returned. They were guaranteed praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus (v. 7b), and again, salvation on that day (v. 9–12).

This salvation was a certainty (v. 9), having already been predicted by the prophets of old (v. 10). Those early predictions foresaw the exemplary sufferings of Christ and His subsequent glories (v. 11). These predictions were given primarily to serve believers in and after Peter's day. The content of the gospel his readers heard was the declaration of these prophecies and the announcement that they had found their fulfillment in

Christ (v. 12).<sup>38</sup> Just as surely as Jesus suffered and was glorified, they who suffered would receive glory. His example of suffering was a second factor motivating these believers in their walk through unjust persecution<sup>39</sup> (the first factor being the assurance of future

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glory). Should not the servant be willing to follow the Master? In chapter 2 Peter developed more fully this concept of Jesus' example as a motivational factor for believers.

Having assured his readers of future glory through their new birth in Christ in spite of their present trials, Peter then introduced a new theme. Their assurance of future glory created the expectation of holy living regardless of their trials (1:13–2:10). Thus the author inserted into his argument the element of the believers' righteous behavior, the primary theme of the epistle.

Peter's readers were to fix their hope completely on the grace to come, girding their minds for action and keeping sober (1:13). Verse 13 serves as a hinge to connect 1:1–12 (assurance of future glory through new birth in Christ) with 1:14–5:11 (expectation of righteous behavior in spite of unfair circumstances). Grudem offers a helpful summary of the relationship of these passages:

Such hope in great blessings when Christ returns not only encourages downcast Christians; it also prompts a reordering of priorities to God's agenda (Matt 6:19–21, 24) and inevitably leads to ethical changes in one's life (cf. 1 John 3:3). Since Peter is about to launch into an extended section of moral commands (beginning at v. 14 and continuing with only a few interruptions through the rest of the letter), this exhortation to hope appropriately forms the transition point to the rest of the letter. If Peter's readers will first know the great truths about their salvation (vv. 1–12) and then begin a habit of visualizing themselves personally on a path of life leading without fail to unimaginable heavenly reward (v. 13), they will be mentally and emotionally ready to strive for a life of holiness before God (vv. 14–16, etc.).<sup>40</sup>

Encouraged by the assurance of the hope to come, they were to be holy in all their behavior, not being conformed to their former lusts (1:14–16). They were to conduct themselves with reverent fear during their stay on earth (vv. 17–21). They were to long for the pure milk of the Word, putting aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and slander (2:1–10).

The Word they were to long for would enable them to grow with respect to their salvation (2:1–2). The Word would nurture their growth, with Christ as their Cornerstone, into a spiritual house (vv. 3–4). The Word would teach that they who believe in Christ the Cornerstone will not be disappointed (v. 6). The Word insured that those who rejected the

Stone would stumble, but they who believed were special to God and would receive mercy (vv. 7–10 ). They were a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, the people of God (vv. 7–10a ). They had received mercy from Him (v. 10b ).

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### **Peter Expected Believers Encountering Unfair Circumstances to Behave with Deference in All Relationships**

Peter explained how believers’ behavior should reflect a spirit of deference when they encounter unfair circumstances (2:11–5:11 ). Peter’s emphasis regarding holy living in the midst of harsh trials was the believers’ responsibility for deference in all relationships. They were to exhibit genuine respect and thoughtful consideration of other’s feelings and desires. They were always to be humble, courteous, respectful, and grateful in their regard for each other. Peter’s readers would be living in a holy way when their behavior reflected this spirit of deference in all relationships, especially when they were treated unfairly. The motivation for such holy deference was identified as their anticipation of future glory. Deferential behavior also is motivated by the believer’s desire to follow the example of Christ Himself, who suffered unjustly. This holy deference on the part of suffering Christians greatly pleases God because it represents the response His Son made to unfair treatment. This should be the normal Christian response.

Peter began this section by expounding broadly God’s expectation of righteous behavior before Gentile neighbors who treated his readers unfairly (2:11–12 ). The pagans’ abuse of Christians was a crucial issue. How should believers behave in the midst of trials? With excellence! They were expected to abstain from fleshly lusts as they lived among Gentile agitators (v. 11 ). They were expected to behave excellently among neighbors who slandered them as evildoers (v. 12 ). Their excellent behavior (2:12a ), would cause these very neighbors to glorify God when Christ returns (v. 12b ).<sup>41</sup> Excellent behavior excludes retribution on the

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believers’ part and requires constructive behavior. It is entirely possible, though the text does not confirm it, that retribution may be considered among the fleshly lusts the believers were to avoid. Excellent, righteous behavior, with no spirit of corresponding antagonism or retribution, would demonstrate to the unbelieving community the supernatural work of God’s grace in the believers’ lives. The pagans would praise Him for it in the coming day when every knee will bow to Christ.

At this point Peter narrowed his concept of the righteous behavior Christians were to exhibit during periods of unjust persecution. Absence of retribution became the dominant issue as the apostle clarified the expectation of deference in all relationships when Christians encounter unfair circumstances (2:13–5:5 ). For example deference on the believers’

part was expected in legal and political affairs (2:13–17 ). They were to subordinate themselves to every human institution including kings and the governors who represented them (vv. 13–15 ). Though they suffered inordinate limitations of status, they were to act as people who were free with respect to the state but slaves to God for performing righteous service. They were not to use their status as freemen to do evil in political affairs (v. 16 ) but were to treat all with honor, love, and respect—that is, with deference (v. 17 ).

Peter's readers were to act with deference toward those who took advantage of them not only in legal and political affairs, but also in domestic matters (2:18–3:7 ). First was the issue of the deference of believing household slaves to unfair masters (2:18–25 ).<sup>42</sup> Peter described the experience of the slaves (vv. 18–20 ), calling them to place themselves willingly under their masters' authority regardless of whether the masters were gentle or harsh (v. 18 ). Special favor from God rested on them when they endured sorrows when suffering unjustly (vv. 19–20 ). God's favor accompanied such deference because through it they were following Christ's example (vv. 21–25 ), which forms the basis for the

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believers' response to unjust treatment. Peter exhorted them to emulate Christ's behavior during His suffering (v. 21 ). They were to remember the deference of Christ to unjust men, His humility before them, His submission to them, His lack of retribution toward them, and His consideration of them. They were to realize that through such behavior even in His crucifixion, Jesus bore their sins,<sup>43</sup> and He made it possible for them to follow His example as sheep follow their shepherd (vv. 22–25 ). Peter viewed Christ's example, along with the anticipation of future glory, as a primary motivational factor for the believers' righteous, deferential behavior when encountering unfair circumstances.

From his instructions to slaves about deference toward harsh masters the apostle moved to the matter of deference of believing wives to their husbands, even unbelieving husbands (3:1–6 ). Peter called Christian wives to subject themselves voluntarily to their own husbands (v. 1a ). This responsibility was not limited to relationships in which both partners were believers, but extended even to marriages of believing wives to unbelieving husbands. The likelihood existed that believing wives, through voluntary subjection, might win their unbelieving husbands to Christ (v. 1b ). The wives' most powerful evangelistic tool would not be argumentation, but Christlike behavior (v. 1c ), again, the subject of Peter's argument. What would impress unbelieving husbands would be their wives' sincere and respectful behavior (v. 2 ) and their true, inner beauty (vv. 3–4 ). Wives were not to waste their time trying to manipulate their husbands through the wearing of ostentatious and sensual apparel (v. 3 ), for this would oppose the spirit of deference Peter stressed. Instead, wives were to allow their true beauty to show to their husbands. Impressive to

husbands antagonistic to Christ would be their wives' gentle and quiet spirit (even in living with unbelieving, unfair husbands), which is precious in God's eyes (v. 4).<sup>44</sup>

Such a spirit of deference exhibited by wives encountering unfair circumstances in marriage was reasonable since godly women of former times had exhibited the same spirit (vv. 5–6). They “dressed themselves” in this same manner, hoping in God, and subjecting themselves voluntarily to their husbands (v. 5).

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Sarah, the chief example of this spirit of deference, subjected herself to her husband, Abraham (v. 6a). The wives in Peter's audience became her “daughters” in a figurative sense when they espoused her convictions and reflected them in their relationships to their own husbands. They would be following Sarah's example when they did what was right (obeyed their husbands), without fearing what would happen (v. 6b).

Peter then turned his attention to the responsibility of Christian husbands to behave with deference in their marriages (v. 7). He called husbands to live with their wives in the various aspects of married life, in accord with knowledge (v. 7a). A husband's knowledge of the principles of the Word of God (e.g., [Ps 34:12–16](#); [Isa 53:9](#); [1 Pet 2:22](#); [3:10–12](#)) would require him to behave toward his wife with a spirit of deference, even when she had caused unfair circumstances for him. These unfair circumstances may have been the result of her being in certain ways the weaker partner of the two ([3:7b](#)). But regardless of the wife's part in her husband's hardships, he was not to belittle her nor intimidate her, but to honor her as a Christian, an heir together with him of the gracious gift of life (v. 7c). Such honor toward one's wife reflected the spirit of deference required by the Scriptures. If a husband failed to render such honor to his wife, he might find his spiritual life affected adversely in that his prayers would be hindered (v. 7d).

Peter's emphasis then shifted from the political and domestic spheres of the readers' lives to the sphere of civil affairs and the corresponding expectation of deference ([3:8–4:19](#)). He introduced this section with a reminder of the expectation of the believer's deference in all relationships, but especially in unfair circumstances ([3:8–12](#)), in which all were to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble (v. 8). Similarly, they were not to return evil for evil, or insult for insult, but to give a blessing instead, because as a result of such deferential behavior they would inherit a blessing (v. 9). Quoting [Psalm 34:12–16](#), Peter emphasized that when they encountered unfair, perhaps even desperate circumstances, God would bless them when they rendered a blessing in return for insult, but God's disfavor would rest with those who did evil ([1 Pet 3:10–12](#)).

Following this section Peter then addressed a major, current issue facing his readers—their unfair treatment by neighbors in their

communities (3:13–4:19 ). The apostle restated the assurance of God’s blessing when they proved zealous for what is good while suffering unjustly, sometimes because of their own righteousness (3:13–14 ). They were not to be fearful or troubled by their neighbors’ intimidation but were to be ready to give a defense of their hope, in a spirit of deference demonstrated by gentleness and

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respect (v. 15 ). Their obviously good behavior would become a source of shame for those who continued to slander them (v. 16 ).

Actually their unjust suffering was of great value to them (vv. 17–22 ). Suffering for doing what is right is vastly superior to suffering for having done wrong (v. 17 ). This fact was emphasized and exemplified through the death of Christ, the just One dying for unjust ones (vv. 18–20 ), whose passion brought salvation to all who appeal to God through Him (vv. 21–22 ).

Peter confirmed the notion that his readers should expect to experience suffering as had their Lord (4:1–6 ). He challenged them to follow the example of Christ’s behavior in suffering, living not for lusts that had motivated them in the past, but for the will of God (vv. 1–2 ). They were being abused by their neighbors because they no longer participated with them in their sinful activities (vv. 3–4 ), but their abusers would be judged by God. Any retribution on the believer’s part was not fitting with a spirit of deference and was God’s prerogative and responsibility, not theirs (vv. 5–6 ).

The suffering of Peter’s readers was certain to continue (vv. 7–19 ). During this time of trial it would be important for believers to strengthen their bond with each other. They would need to be alert to pray for one another, to love each other fervently, to be hospitable to each other, and to serve each other with their spiritual gifts (vv. 7–11 ).

It would also be important for believers to continue following Christ’s example when He experienced unjust treatment (vv. 12–19 ). They were not to be surprised at their serious time of testing (v. 12 ) but were to respond to it with rejoicing, knowing that when they were reviled for the name of Christ they were blessed (vv. 13–14 ). They were to be careful to avoid suffering that came because of punishment for real crimes (v. 15 ), but they were not to be ashamed to suffer because of their Christian faith (v. 16 ). Judgment needed to begin with God’s people and they were experiencing that refining process through their trials. Sinners had no recourse in judgment, but Christians can enjoy the comfort of entrusting their souls to a faithful Creator when they behave with deference in their unfair circumstances (vv. 17–19 ).

Peter also instructed his readers to behave with deference when they encounter unfair circumstances in church affairs (5:1–10 ). Church elders were not to shepherd their flock from a sense of duty or for financial gain, but voluntarily and eagerly (vv. 1–2 ). They were not to dominate those

under their authority, but were to serve as examples to them (v. 3 ). The Chief Shepherd would give to these shepherds of the flock the unfading crown of glory when He appears (v. 4 ).

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Young people, who often face the temptations of impatience and willfulness, were not to rebel against authorities in the church but were to subject themselves to the elders God had placed over them in positions of leadership (v. 5a ).<sup>45</sup>

All in the church were to behave with humility toward others. No one needed to exalt himself, because God would exalt him when the time was right (vv. 5b–6 ). When they became anxious about their harsh, unfair circumstances, they were to cast those anxieties on Him because He cares for them (v. 7 ).

The unfair circumstances and suffering experienced by Peter’s readers were due, in large measure, to the work of their adversary, the devil, who sought to “devour them” (vv. 8–9 ). Peter cautioned Christians to be serious about the devil, being on the alert for him (v. 8 ), and resisting him with a firm faith, as did other Christians around the world (v. 9 ). Peter listed many sources of the believers’ unfair circumstances as he developed the argument of his letter, including political authorities, harsh masters, husbands, wives, and neighbors. Believers were to reflect a spirit of deference in all these relationships, but the devil was the only antagonist they were to resist.

Peter closed the major portion of his letter by encouraging his readers about the outcome of their deference in unfair circumstances (vv. 10–11 ). They would not always be victims of such unfairness and suffering. Compared to eternity, these harsh experiences would last only a little while, and then God Himself would perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish them (v. 10 ). A final benediction reminded Peter’s audience that no matter who exercised authority over them on earth at the present time, true dominion belonged to God forever and ever (v. 11 ).

### **Peter Wrote His Final Words to Believers Encountering Unfair Circumstances**

The apostle’s final words to these believers encountering unfair circumstances (vv. 12–14 ) began with a charge to those who suffered (v. 12 ). Peter had written to them briefly through Silvanus, exhorting and testifying that his message was the true grace of God (v. 12a ), in which they were to stand firm (v. 12b ).

Peter added a personal touch to his epistle by including

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greetings from the church in “Babylon,” greetings from Mark, and an invitation to greet one another with a kiss of love (vv. 12–14a ).

Peter ended his epistle with a simple blessing to these believers who

were suffering unfairly: “peace to all” (v. 14b ).

## Summary

Commentators must identify and develop the literary argument of 1 Peter if they hope to interpret and expound the apostle’s instructions accurately. Teachers of 1 Peter must understand how the author wove his argument throughout every segment of his epistle. Each individual passage must be studied in light of the author’s argument which controls it, not interpreted separately from the overall message of the epistle. Only then do Peter’s words achieve their full impact and effectiveness.

When the motifs of 1 Peter are taken together, they produce a message or argument that may be expressed in the following way: “When believers encounter unfair circumstances, their behavior should reflect a spirit of deference in all relationships as they follow Christ’s example and anticipate future glory.” This controlling theme influences every passage in 1 Peter and provides greater understanding for people who want to apply Peter’s principles to their own relationships with the government, neighbors, business colleagues, marriage partners, and Christians in the church fellowship. Only by understanding a passage in light of Peter’s overall argument can one achieve the most productive and authoritative application of the apostle’s instructions.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

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ch. 24:6

Luke 14:31

<sup>i</sup> 2 Tim. 4:2.

<sup>ii</sup> 2 Tim. 3:16–17.

<sup>iii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary (1 Pe 1:1)* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989).

<sup>iv</sup> D. R. W. Wood, “Peter” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall et al., 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 905.

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- <sup>v</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 8.
- <sup>vi</sup> Quoted in David H. Wheaton, “1 Peter” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, electronic version, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- <sup>vii</sup> David H. Wheaton, “2 Peter” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson, electronic version, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- <sup>viii</sup> D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986/2007), 136.
- <sup>ix</sup> Peter Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 35–36.
- <sup>x</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 19.
- <sup>xi</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 22–23.
- <sup>xii</sup> *Against Heresies*, 36.
- <sup>xiii</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.25.8; 2.15.2; 3.1.2–3.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 9.
- <sup>xv</sup> Peter Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 35–36.
- <sup>xvi</sup> D. R. W. Wood, “Peter” in *New Bible Dictionary*. Ed. I. Howard Marshall, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 905.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 8.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Peter Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 35-6.
- <sup>xix</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 19.
- <sup>xx</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 22-3.
- <sup>xxi</sup> David Wheaton, “1 Peter” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, Ed. D. A. Carson, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).
- <sup>xxii</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 23.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 41.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 9.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Peter Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 35-6.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 638-9.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 42.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 42.
- <sup>xxix</sup> David Wheaton, “1 Peter” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, Ed. D. A. Carson, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).
- <sup>xxx</sup> G. L. Green, “1 Peter” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Eds. Desmond T. Alexander, Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 346-9.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Cited in J. D. Charles, *Virtue amidst Vice: The Catalog of Virtues in 2 Peter 1*, JSNTSup 150 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997), 19-20.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1990), 386.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Leon Morris, “2 Peter” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, Ed. D. A. Carson, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> P. H. Davids, “2 Peter” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Eds. Desmond T. Alexander, Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 350-1.

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<sup>xxxv</sup> D. Guthrie, “Petrine Theology” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, Eds. Sinclair Ferguson, and J.I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 507.

<sup>1</sup>1. The homophony of “wholeness” and “holiness” is more than a serendipitous pun. Defilement and uncleanness in the Jewish purity codes were often directly related to lack of wholeness (= holiness) of the skin, the bodily orifices, and other representations of boundaries. On this topic, see further Mary Douglas, “Atonement in Leviticus,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993/94) 109–130.; J. H. Neyrey, “Body Language in 1 Corinthians: The Use of Anthropological Models for Understanding Paul and His Opponents,” *Semeia* 35 (1986) 129-170. Readers may also wish to consult chapter 4 of D. A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup>2. 1 Pet 2:6–8 is one place where close attention to the Greek text is more helpful than most available English translations. These latter rather consistently mistranslate 2:7 as “to you then who believe, he is precious” (NRSV; see also the NASV, JB, RSV, and NIV), as if the author were still speaking about the believers’ perception of Jesus, the cornerstone. The Greek has not the adjective “precious” (*timios*), however, but the related noun, “honor” (*time*: “Honor, then, is for you who believe.” The author is developing a projection of the consequences of trusting Jesus introduced in the Psalm text quoted in 2:6, which promises that “whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” The Christians will come to honor for their commitment, while their detractors will come to shame (they will “stumble” and “fall”).

<sup>3</sup>3. J. H. Elliott (*A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation, and Strategy* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981]) pioneered the former hypothesis; Troy Martin (*Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* [SBLDS 131; Atlanta: Scholars, Press, 1992]) has more recently criticized it in favor of a metaphorical interpretation.

<sup>4</sup>4. For a more thorough introduction to this topic, please see “Management of, and Behavior within, the Household” in chapter 3 of D. A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>5. Perhaps no better formulation has been made than Gen 50:20, in which God’s ability to redeem and use even that which humans enact with harmful intent comes to powerful expression: “you intended to do harm to me, but God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people.”

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ashland Theological Seminary. (2000; 2006). Ashland Theological Journal Volume 32 (32:33). Ashland Theological Seminary.

<sup>1</sup>1. Two well-recognized and often consulted commentaries on 1 Peter that do not address these issues are those by Robert Leighton, *Commentary on First Peter* (London: S. Keble and J. Taylor, 1701; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972), and C. E. B. Cranfield, *The First Epistle of Peter* (London: SCM, 1950).

<sup>2</sup>2. However, three recent commentators who have given consideration to Peter’s argument and its influences are Peter Davids, *First Epistle of Peter* (Grand

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), and to a lesser degree Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), and J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988).

<sup>3</sup>3. Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 157.

<sup>4</sup>4. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder, 1910), 229, 242.

<sup>5</sup>5. *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>6</sup>6. Richard N. Longenecker, "On the Form, Function, and Authority of the New Testament Letters," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 101.

<sup>7</sup>7. *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>8</sup>8. Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, 11-12.

<sup>9</sup>9. Richard G. Moulton, *The Modern Reader's Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), 1719.

<sup>10</sup>10. E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 76.

<sup>11</sup>11. Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, 29.

<sup>12</sup>12. *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>13</sup>13. Rollin T. Chafer, *The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics: An Outline Study of Its Laws* (Dallas, TX: Bibliotheca Sacra, 1939), 77.

<sup>14</sup>14. Thomas E. Fountain, *Keys to Understanding and Teaching Your Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 75.

<sup>15</sup>15. Morris A. Inch and C. Hassell Bullock, ed., *The Literature and Meaning of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 249.

<sup>16</sup>16. Donald Senior, "The Conduct of Christians in the World (1 Peter 2:11–3:12)," *Review and Expositor* 79 (1982): 427-38; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 26; and Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 43.

<sup>17</sup>17. James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930), s.v. "ἀναστροφή," 38.

<sup>18</sup>18. D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 20.

<sup>19</sup>19. Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 23.

<sup>20</sup>20. Only twice is the word used for an experience other than suffering.

<sup>21</sup>21. Senior, "The Conduct of Christians in the World," 427.

<sup>22</sup>22. J. L. DeVilliers, "Joy in Suffering in 1 Peter," *Neotestamentica* 9 (1975): 64-86.

<sup>23</sup>23. Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 36.

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- <sup>24</sup>24. Webster's *Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Webster, 1972), 216.
- <sup>25</sup>25. Senior, "The Conduct of Christians in the World," 433.
- <sup>26</sup>26. F. Refoule, "Bible et Éthique sociale lire aujourd'hui I Pierre," *Supplément* 131 (1979): 457-82.
- <sup>27</sup>27. Norbert Brox, "Situation und Sprache der Minderheit in ersten Petrusbrief," *Kairos* 19 (1977): 1-13.
- <sup>28</sup>28. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* , 128.
- <sup>29</sup>29. L. M. Antoniotti, "Structure littéraire et Sens de la première Épître de Pierre," *Revue Thomiste* 85 (1985): 533-60.
- <sup>30</sup>30. Senior, "The Conduct of Christians in the World," 429.
- <sup>31</sup>31. T. Kayalaparampil, "Christian Suffering in 1 Peter," *Biblebashyam* 3 (1977): 7-19.
- <sup>32</sup>32. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), chaps. 1–2.
- <sup>33</sup>33. Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup>34. Hiebert (*1 Peter*, 39-40), and Davids (*First Epistle of Peter* , 48-49), say obedience in 1:2 is obedience to the gospel, that is, faith in Christ, the "human side of salvation." Sprinkling with Christ's blood thus refers to the sealing of the New Covenant by the sacrifice of Christ, and the believer's entrance into that covenant.
- On the other hand Alan M. Stibbs (*The First Epistle General of Peter* , Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974]) and Grudem (*The First Epistle of Peter* , 51-54), view obedience and sprinkling here as the believers' life of obedience, the failings of which are cleansed by the blood of Christ.
- The latter view may fit Peter's argument better, introducing the balance between the truth of his readers' salvation ("chosen," v. 1 ), and the expectation of holy living ("obey, sprinkled with His blood," v. 2 ). Peter maintained this balance in 1:3–12 and 1:13–5:11 , respectively.
- <sup>35</sup>35. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* , 55.
- <sup>36</sup>36. Davids, *First Epistle of Peter* , 53.
- <sup>37</sup>37. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter* , 67-77.
- <sup>38</sup>38. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* , 71-72.
- <sup>39</sup>39. Kendall suggests that 1:3–12 reflects the major emphasis of the following parnetic section (1:13–5:11 ) and therefore constitutes a summary of Peter's message in microcosm. The Christian life involves both affliction and hope as seen in Christ's sufferings and subsequent glories, which are the basis of the Christian life (1:10–12 ). Kendall argues that 1:3–12 serves as the foundation for the exhortations which comprise the bulk of the epistle to follow. First Peter 1:13–2:10 constitutes general implications of Christian existence—being true to their calling as God's people. These general implications are specified in 2:11–4:11 .

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Negatively Christians must repudiate fleshly desires; positively they must maintain good conduct among the pagans. This good conduct is expressed primarily through submission and humility, characteristics preeminently illustrated in the sufferings of Jesus who serves as a model for appropriate Christian response to all forms of conflict. Peter's main concerns are summarized in 4:12–5:11, as his readers face a hostile world, as they relate to one another in the community of believers, and as they battle in their cosmic conflict with the devil (David W. Kendall, "The Literary and Theological Function of 1 Peter 1:3–12," *Perspectives on First Peter*, ed. Charles H. Talbert [Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 1986], 103–20).

<sup>40</sup>40. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 76-77.

<sup>41</sup>41. The meaning of ἡμερᾶ ἐπίσκοπης ("day of visitation") in this passage is explained by three major views: (1) any time in this life when God may deal with unbelievers to bring them to repentance and faith (Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, 108; Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 248-49); (2) an unspecified time of visitation when believers will glorify God (Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 117-18), and (3) an eschatological day of judgment in which all people will give glory to God (Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 106; Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 96-97). The third view fits well with the statement in verse 12. The term ἐπίσκοπης may reflect either a visitation of demonstrations of power in a good sense or in an unpleasant sense (Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 209), and in ancient, extrabiblical literature it was used of penalties incurred for making false returns in connection with government inspections (Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Sources*, 244). Kelly notes the eschatological tension presupposed in 1 Peter and believes the "visitation" of verse 12 refers to God's "final visitation." He sees it as a time of blessing for those who will glorify God in that day (Kelly, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 106). Davids also believes the visitation in verse 12 is eschatological, but he views it in the negative sense of judgment. He comments: "The day of visitation is mentioned in the NT only in Luke 19:44 (cf. Luke 1:68), but it appears in the Septuagint in Isa 10:3 (cf. Gen 50:24; Job 10:12; Jer 11:23; Wisd 3:7). While visitation by God can mean salvation, in the Isaiah passage, which is the only exact parallel, it indicates the day of judgment. All people will have to confess God's powerful display in his people, that is, 'give glory to God,' on that day, even if they have not previously acknowledged his (and their) rightness (cf. Judg 7:19, where 'give glory to God' is an exhortation to acknowledge God's justice and righteousness by a full confession before execution)" (Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 97). Either Kelly's positive view of the day of judgment in verse 12, or Davids's more negative one is possible. The eschatological tone of 1 Peter and the use of "visitation," especially "day of visitation," seem to point to the return of Christ in judgment as the meaning of the term in 2:12.

<sup>42</sup>42. Though Peter's discussion involves house servants (οἱ κῆται) due to his focus on household relationships, it does not preclude the responsibility of all

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slaves (δοῦλοι) to behave with deference toward their masters.

<sup>43</sup>43. For a discussion of “by his wounds you have been healed” see Davids, *First Epistle of Peter*, 112-13; Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 178-79; and Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 848.

<sup>44</sup>44. It is important to understand that deferential behavior, while prohibiting retaliation and returned abuse, does not necessarily rule out the use of legal channels for change or efforts toward dialogue. Indeed Peter charged all believers to be ready to give a reason for their hope (3:15). Deference does, however, rule out an argumentative spirit (3:16).

<sup>45</sup>45. Hiebert (*1 Peter*, 290-91), Davids (*First Epistle of Peter*, 182-85), and Grudem (*The First Epistle of Peter*, 192-93) believe “elder” in 5:5 refers to church leaders, not all older people. “Younger” refers to young people in the church, who would most need a reminder to be submissive to authority. Elliott takes the view that by “younger” (νεώτεροι) Peter means “neophyte” believers, those ready for baptism (John H. Elliott, “Ministry and Church Order in the NT: A Traditio-Historical Analysis (1 Pet 5:1–5 & Parallels),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 [1970]: 367-91).

<sup>xxxvii</sup>Dallas Theological Seminary. (1995; 2002). *Bibliotheca Sacra* Volume 152 (152:72). Dallas Theological Seminary.