



**FLOURISH
BIBLE STUDY**

1-2 PETER

LEADER'S GUIDE



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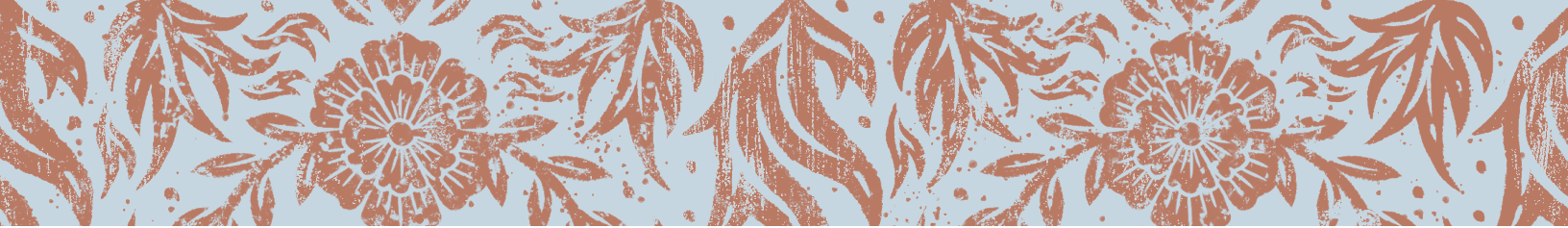


INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO THE EPISTLES OF PETER

Ideally, you'll cover the introduction at your initial gathering, setting the stage for the entire study. It would be good to touch on Peter's background and what qualifies him to write these two epistles. The fact that Peter was one of the few in Jesus's inner circle is a big deal. Also important is what Peter learned through his failure as a disciple, his denial of Jesus. You'll also want to note the primary themes in these two letters, but perhaps waiting to outline 2 Peter until you get to the end of week 5. Be sure to mention what we know about the people to whom Peter is writing because this supplies us with the reason for his letters.

A special note to those studying the version printed in 2021: *two original sentences got deleted and another one got tangled in. In the introduction under the subhead "The Recipients of the Letter," please replace what's in the book with this:*

2. *The recipients of the letter.* Was the author writing primarily to Jewish believers? Or was the letter directed more toward Gentile converts? Jewish people, Israel, had been set apart as God's special people way back, early on in the Old Testament. When Jesus came centuries later, only some of the Jews believed that he was the long-awaited Messiah. It was these Jewish Christians who were the primary focus of Peter's ministry. Even so, most scholars today believe that these letters were directed primarily to Gentile Christians although surely there were Jewish Christians among them. So why does this matter? It's important because it gives us a frame of reference. And this frame of reference matters because it guides our own understanding of the letter and shapes the way we apply it. This is why it's also good to note when a letter is addressed to a particular individual, or when a letter is "circular."



WEEK 1: A LIVING HOPE

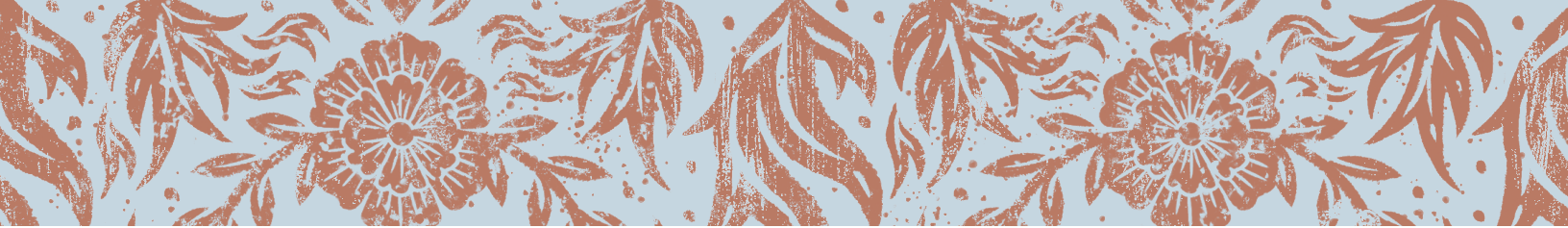
1 PETER 1:1-12

Talk about what it means to live in exile, both in Peter’s day and in ours. *Exile* is a primary theme this week and can give good shape to your discussion. God’s election, or choice, of believers for salvation is a challenging doctrine for some to accept, so you might want to plan ahead how you’ll answer any questions that arise as well as keep the discussion moving forward. If you decide to give the topic a portion of your discussion time, you might want to bring in Romans 8:28–30; 9:13–24; and Ephesians 1:1–12. Accepting the truth of election takes humility and trust, but since it is clearly taught in Scripture, it is a doctrine that we must wrestle with. Another doctrine to touch on this week is the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Primarily you want to be sure to note that each person of the Trinity plays an active role in salvation. After touching on these weighty doctrines, it’s a good time to turn to the theme of *hope*. How has life in Christ brought hope to those in your study group? Answers can range from big-picture, long-range hope to seemingly small desire. Of course, you’ll want to dive into the theme of suffering this week, noting in particular God’s good purposes in allowing it.

WEEK 2: GROWING UP IN CHRIST

1 PETER 1:13-2:3

Holiness is an important topic for discussion. Peter instructs believers to be holy, even in difficult circumstances. Talk about the nature of holiness, specifically what holiness is and how we become holy. A good follow-up resource to recommend is Jerry Bridges’s book *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Another important focus this week is *ransom*—in salvation we are ransomed from sin and death by the blood of Christ. Be sure that everyone in your group understands this aspect of the gospel. Also, Peter mentions living in “fear” of God. Be sure also that everyone understands the difference between terror and the sort of fear Peter has in mind here, which has to do with reverence. You might want to take the group to Proverbs 3:5–8 and 9:10–11. When the conversation comes to Peter’s words about brotherly love, ask for testimonies from the group of occasions when they’ve given or received this sort of love. After touching on the sins Peter identifies at the beginning of 1 Peter 2, wrap up with a focus on how believers grow up in their faith in practical ways, which leads naturally into the “Let’s Talk” questions at the very end of the lesson.



WEEK 3: A SPIRITUAL HOUSE

1 PETER 2:4-25

Begin the session by talking about *home*. Why do we tend to find that word so heart-warming? What does it symbolize? From there, touch on the theme of growing up in Christ because it'll thread all through your discussion this week. Also, be sure group members understand the term *sanctification* and how it gets worked out in our lives. Touch on the role we play as the Spirit works within us. Another important topic is the concept of believers as *priests*. This might seem strange, especially to members of your group who were raised in the Roman Catholic faith. Be sure everyone is clear on what Peter teaches about it. Then when the discussion gets to the spiritual house we're all a part of, discuss the nature of a *cornerstone*. What is a cornerstone, and why does Peter apply that term to Jesus Christ? Once this is clear, talk about why this cornerstone is vital to our growth in the faith. The later minutes of your gathering are likely to focus on the topic of *authority*, so after you've worked your way through the main part of the lesson, you might want to begin the "Let's Talk" section with the second question, which addresses this topic. *Finally, an important correction to note: From Thomas Kidd's recent well-researched article on slavery, I learned that my understanding of the practice back then, while commonly held, has been sugar-coated. Sure, there was some debt-based voluntary slavery, as I note on page 53, but the majority of those enslaved in Peter's day were not enslaved voluntarily. Many thanks to Thomas Kidd for this timely article!*

WEEK 4: LIVING IN LOVE

1 PETER 3:1-22

No doubt much of your discussion will be taken up with *submission*, most especially submission in marriage. Be sure that group members grasp the context for Peter's words to wives, which is gospel witness. Be sure also that your group understands what submission entails—and what it does not entail. Also cover from 1 Peter 3:8 the five traits that ought to define the life of growing Christians. When you get to the section on laying down rights for the sake of love, talk about what this might look like in practical terms in your own lives. Be sure not to skip over 1 Peter 3:18–22, this most challenging passage about Christ preaching to spirits in prison. You can review in your discussion the possible interpretations, but the primary thing to bring out here is that when it comes to mysterious Bible passages such as this, it's better to say, "We don't know for sure," than to try to force a particular answer.



WEEK 5: THE GOD WHO PURIFIES

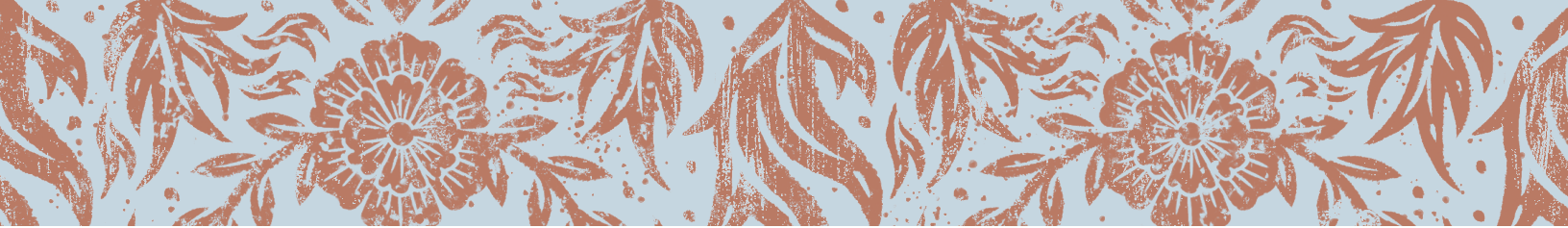
1 PETER 4:1-19

Although the theme of suffering comes up in each week's lesson, it's a primary topic this week. Vastly important is the role our thought life plays in how we experience times of difficulty and how Jesus's suffering serves as a model for us. Be sure also to cover overindulgence or any sort of indulgence that crosses the line into sin. What actually makes an indulgence sinful? It would probably be good to mention Christian freedom as well, specifically 1 Timothy 6:17: "As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy." You might want to touch on what tempts us to overindulge, which could lead naturally to a discussion on the link between self-discipline and prayer which Peter notes 4:7. Finally, ask participants how this week's lesson expands their understanding of Christian love and the way love gets lived out in day-to-day life. Bring in the link between love and spiritual gifts as well, asking group members to name their spiritual gifting and how they use it to build up other believers.

WEEK 6: THE WAY HOME

1 PETER 5:1-14

Open the gathering with a discussion about homesickness—who has experienced it, what it felt (or feels) like—and then tie that back to the discussion on living in exile from Week 1. If you already touched on homesickness earlier in the study, you can simply reference that earlier conversation here and simply move on. Talk about the biblical requirements for spiritual shepherds and how group members see the blessings of godly shepherding play out in their own churches. Then open up a conversation on humility by discussing Peter's quote of Proverbs 3:34—"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." How does Peter instruct us to go about humbling our hearts? Afterward you can segue into the emphasis Peter places on *sober-mindedness*. Cover what sober-mindedness looks like practically by asking participants to identify how they can practice sober-mindedness in their own lives. Mention the devil in your conversation and talk about how Peter guides us to deal with this spiritual enemy.



WEEK 7: KNOWING AND GROWING

2 PETER 1:1-21

Knowledge is going to be a focal point of your discussion this week. Be sure to clarify the nature of biblical knowledge, especially what Peter has in mind, and talk about the link between knowledge and spiritual growth. Peter outlines what godliness looks like in his list of virtues (1 Peter 2:5-7). Ask participants to identify one virtue they'd like to cultivate at present and how they will proactively pursue growth in this area. Be sure to allow time for discussion of Jesus's transfiguration so that group members understand its significance.

WEEK 8: FRENEMIES AND FALSE TEACHERS

2 PETER 2:1-10a

False teaching and teachers should be the primary focus this week. Peter outlines how false teachers can often be recognized. Discuss those traits and how they we might identify them in our own day. Be sure to touch on what can make us vulnerable to false teachers. Review also why Peter includes the Old Testament stories in this section: it's to show how God both judges and rescues. You'll likely want to focus in on the story of Lot and his family from Genesis 19:1-38.

WEEK 9: WATERLESS SPRINGS

2 PETER 2:10b-22

More on false teachers this week, particularly how they appeal to people's sensuality as well as their underlying greed. Make the connection from Peter's day to ours. What should be aware of and watch out for? We want to be spiritually intelligent women who can discern sound teaching from false teaching. Be sure the group understands why the story of Balaam from Numbers 22 is relevant at this point in the letter. Of course, discussion this week ought to include the terrifying reality of God's wrath, but along with this be sure your group understands what "perseverance of the saints" is.



WEEK 10: THE DAY WILL COME!

2 PETER 3:1-18

Remembering is an important theme this week, especially since it's the final week of our study. It's vital to remember the truths of the gospel but also that Jesus is going to return to judge unrepentant sinners and to take his own people home to heaven. We can get lazy about obedience, and although those in Christ cannot lose their salvation, we don't want to be caught up in some sin when Jesus returns. Remembering also gives us an urgency about sharing our faith with those who don't know the Lord. Include the nature of scoffers in this discussion and how Peter's insights about scoffers can give us wisdom in speaking to them. A great way to end this week's gathering is with 2 Peter 3:11-13.