



Living in Hope

1 Peter

6 discussion guides for All Saints Church Homegroups
April – July 2021

Contents

Introduction & Background		p. 2
1. Living Hope	chapter 1:1-12 April 20 th /21 st /22 nd	p. 3
2. Living Word	chapter 1:13-25 May 11 th /12 th /13 th	p.7
3. Living Good Lives	chapter 2:1 – 3:7 May 25 th /26 th /27 th	p.11
4. Living in Harmony	chapter 3:8-22 June 8 th /9 th /10 th	p.15
5. Living for God	chapter 4:1-19 June 22 nd /23 rd / 24 th	p.18
6. Living Examples	chapter 5: 1-14 July 6 th /7 th /8 th	p.23
Final reflection : ‘Living in Hope’		p.26-27

How to get the most out of these studies

These studies have been written in anticipation of groups meeting via “zoom” where the dynamics of discussion are different from when meeting face to face.

- The numbered questions have been written to guide everyone’s personal preparation **before** each homegroup meeting.
- In the meeting itself, it may be good to begin with the “Getting Started” question, and then go on to discuss the Bible passage in greater depth using the lettered questions (A, B, etc.) which aim to help us to unpack the practical relevance God’s message to our circumstances.

Introduction and Background

The apostle Peter wrote this letter to Christians in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). He probably wrote from Rome, (which he refers to cryptically as “Babylon” in 5:13) between AD 60 and 67 during Nero’s persecution of Christians. Peter was martyred in AD 67.



Peter wrote this letter to encourage Christians facing misunderstandings and suffering because of their faith to stand firm and to live in hope. [By “hope” Peter means “confident expectation”]. He does this by teaching them correct doctrine and giving them practical advice on how to live as people who belong to Christ. He keeps pointing to Jesus who models what it looks like to live in holiness in a hostile world.

The themes of hope, suffering, grace and glory weave their way through the whole of his letter.

Here is truth to strengthen us as we live in a society that often seems not to understand what we, as Christians, are about and which is potentially hostile to our message.

Study 1 : Living Hope

1 Peter 1:1-12

Getting Started:

What are people likely to inherit from a member of their family?

In your wildest dreams, what would you like to receive as an inheritance from a long lost relative?

Read chapter 1:1-12

1. This letter starts with "From Peter, to ____" (vs 1-2)

- How does Peter describe the believers that he is writing to?
- These descriptions are true of all followers of Christ. What does this tell you about your identity in God's eyes?



2. In verses 3-5, Peter launches into praise to God for His gifts.

- What was your answer to the "Getting Started" question on receiving an inheritance? How is God's inheritance to us, (His children through "new birth") far better than any that we might receive from a human source?
- What further reasons to praise God do you find here?

3. Reflect on the reality of “all kinds of trials” (vs 6-9) in life.
- What does the image of a refining fire tell us about the purpose and outcome of suffering and trials?
 - What is the reason for joy, even in times of suffering?
 - How can each difficult experience help us learn something new about our Saviour Jesus?

“When God permits His children to go through the furnace,
He keeps His eye on the clock and
His hand on the thermostat.”

(Warren Wiersbe, Be Hopeful p29)

The purpose of verses 10-12 is to show Peter’s readers that the spiritual blessings they now have are greater than anything that was envisaged by Old Testament prophets or even by angels.

4. Some people like working out puzzles. What puzzle is Peter explaining here? What ‘extra pieces’ have his readers got to help them?

This salvation was something the prophets did not fully understand. Though they wrote about it, they had many questions as to what it all could mean. They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about, for he told them to write down the events which, since then, have happened to Christ: his suffering, and his great glory afterwards. And they wondered when and to whom all this would happen. They were finally told that these things would not occur during their lifetime, but long years later, during yours. (vs10-12a Living Bible)

Explore these truths together as a group :

- A. Peter encourages his readers to praise God – a helpful reminder for hearts weighed down with discouragement caused by trials.
- List all the reasons given in vs 3-12 for a believer to maintain hope in the middle of difficult circumstances.

- Now, turn these truths into prayers of thanksgiving.

- B. How can we use the teaching and promises of God's Word in this passage to encourage fellow Christians who are experiencing trials and griefs?
- What promises can we remind them of?
 - What promises should we **not** offer?

[When you seek to comfort to others, how can you ensure that your words are not just well-meaning platitudes, but full of God's truth and hope for His suffering children?]

- C. If you were asked to give a 2 minute talk on Christian joy from this passage, what could you say about it?

D. Which verse in this section has been most meaningful to you? What has God been saying to you through it?

In conclusion

In these verses Peter presents his readers with a panoramic view:

In the past, God has chosen them (and us!) to be His children.

In the present, life is full of all kinds of trials which are part of God's gracious plan to bring his chosen people into their glorious inheritance and salvation.

In the future, glory is ahead of us – for we have a hope for the future that is living and enduring, unfading and imperishable.

2. Living Word

1 Peter 1:13-25

Getting Started:

What are the first 3 words that come into you mind when you think of a holy person?

Introduction

In the previous study, we saw that Peter recognised the trials that his Christian readers were facing and that despite this, they were able to stay focussed on the bigger picture – the glorious inheritance that God had given to them, and rejoice.

This passage starts with “therefore”, pointing us back to the great salvation blessings explained in verses 3-12. It is because they possess these blessings that Peter’s readers are to think and act in certain ways.

Read chapter 1:13 – 25

1. Peter starts by saying “prepare your minds for action” (“Pull your thoughts together” ; “brace up your minds”; “get ready to think on God’s works”)
 - What other thoughtful responses are encouraged in verses 13-17?
 - What effect does your thinking have on your spiritual progress? Do you tend to rely on your feelings/emotions rather than your mind in your spiritual life? What has been the result?

2. "Holy" is a key word and concept in this section. Use the following questions to help explore what it means:

- Look for all the things Peter tells his readers to do in order to develop the family likeness - a holy character like God's.
- From this, how would you recognise a holy person when you meet one?
- What motivations for living a life of holiness are given to us in verses 17-22?

NOTE

Being Holy = living every part and every moment of our lives in the way God wants us to live - continually separating ourselves from sinfulness and dedicating ourselves to a life of righteousness.

The quotations about holiness in v16 are found in Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:1,2; 20:7

3. Make a list of all the things you need to do in the next few days.

- How can you begin to tackle this list with the goal "Be holy in every department of your lives"?
- How might the goal of being holy improve your relationships with people close to you?
- In what situations might it make you seem like 'a stranger' (v17)?

Things to do

4. Examine what is said about God's Word in verses 22-25

- How is His Word described?
- What truths are proclaimed about it?
- What is the result of obeying His Word?

Explore these truths together as a group :

A. Share what you have discovered about "being holy".
(refer to Questions 2 & 3)

- what have you found to be most encouraging or challenging about this?
- In which areas of your life do you struggle most to walk in holiness? Are there any circumstances that make this struggle particularly difficult?

B. In speaking of a Christian's relationships, Peter has contrasted "love for your brothers and sisters" (v22) and being "strangers" or "foreigners" (v17).

When have you experienced the sheltering love of your church family? Tell your story.

- C. Peter tells his readers to love one another deeply (i.e. constantly, or unfailingly) from the heart. (v22)
- Does it sometimes appear too hard even to think about doing this?
 - Are there ways we can do this in manageable “bites”?
- D. Which verse in this passage has been most meaningful for you?
- Share what God is saying to you through it.
 - Underline it in your bible, memorise it, or write it out and stick it where you will continue to see it.

In conclusion

In 1:7, Peter refers to the time “when Jesus is revealed”. We can rejoice in suffering because of our hope in Jesus’ return. Verse 13 starts with “therefore” and repeats “when Jesus is revealed”. It is with eyes on this certain future event that Peter proceeds to urge his readers to take on the family likeness – to live a holy life, worthy of our high privileges and glorious destiny as God’s much loved children.

3. Living Good lives

chapter 2:1 – 3:7

Getting Started :

Have you ever had food cravings? What did you long for?
(What food/snack do you find irresistible?)

Introduction

The first part of chapter two is all about salvation and people's response to it. Peter then goes on to call Christians to live distinctively in all aspects of life – in public life, in working life and at home, holding on to Jesus as the model of how to live.

Living Stones (vs 1-10)

1. Re-read chapter 1:23-25 and then 2:1-3. Just as newborn babies want nothing but milk, followers of Jesus (should) have the same kind of single-minded wanting that babies have.

- What should we be craving, and what should we be discarding?
- What might craving the spiritual milk of God's word look like in my everyday life?
- What actions can I take to ensure I "grow up" in my salvation?
- Is there someone I can approach, so we help each other do this?



2. In verses 4-10, Peter talks about the Christian community as a building, as a priesthood and as a family of God's people.

- What is said about being a building?
(and how can a stone be "living"?)
- What is said about being priests?
- What is said about being 'a people'?

Together, what are these images teaching us about our identity in Christ, our status and our priorities?

NOTE

the 'cornerstone' is the large foundation block which defines the angles and takes the stress of the whole building. Every other part of the building finds its right place by being properly joined to the cornerstone.

Explore these truths further:

A. Which image in 2:1-10 struck you most? Talk about this with members of your group when you meet.

Living Good Lives (2:11 – 3:7)

Peter urges his readers to live good lives (v12) and to “do good” (vs 15,20) in order to show the watching world that any accusations of wrongdoing are baseless.

The word “submission” he uses (in verses 13 & 18 and again in 3:1 and 5) has the sense of respect and deference ... not subservience.

3. Christians are called ‘aliens and strangers’ (v11) because as God’s people, the way they behave should be radically different from the way people around them behave. How should we differ from society

- in our view of authority? (13-15)
- in our view of freedom? (16-17)
- in our view of employers? (18-20)
- in our view of our spouse? (3:1-7)

4. “Show proper respect to everyone” (v17)

- Think of some examples of what this means.
- In what situations are you most likely not to show due respect to another person?

5. Jesus is our model and example. (vs 21-25)

- What links are there between Christ’s suffering and His submission?
- What were the effects of his suffering?
- What strikes you most about His attitude and behaviour?

Explore these truths together as a group:

(See also Question A on page 12)

- B. How does the teaching in this section challenge the way we behave as citizens, as employees (or employers) and as marriage partners?

Are there instructions here that you find hard to get your head around?

- C. Right in the middle of talking about human relationships, Peter presents the example of Jesus. How do the descriptions of Jesus' character and what He has done for us, help us when we face trials, suffering and injustices in life?
How do we 'follow in His steps'?

- D. Which verse has been most meaningful for you? What is God saying to you through it?
Underline it in your bible, memorise it, or write it out and stick it where you will continue to see it.

In conclusion

Peter talks about a variety of human relationships and right alongside this, he tells his readers to follow the example set by Jesus. He calls upon everyone to do good, even in the face of suffering, and to model our behaviour on Jesus who went through the most terrible and unjust suffering, in order to rescue us from our sin.

4. Living in Harmony

chapter 3:8-22

Getting Started:

What does singing in harmony add to a song?

How do we **think** harmoniously?



Introduction

“Finally, all of you” continues the theme of the previous sections and describes a new way of life for the whole believing community. As in chapter 2, Peter instructs his readers on how to live, and then follows this with a description of Jesus as the example to follow.

1. Read verses 8-12 and write down as many phrases as you can that describe what a Christian ought to be and to do.

Now, dig a bit deeper:

- What reasons are given for such behaviour and attitudes?
- What blessings accompany such conduct?
- What do you find attractive about living this way?
- Which aspect of living this way do you have most difficulty with?
What can you do about it?

2. In spite of living in a godly way, Peter knew that Christians could face hostility and hardship so he goes on to talk about this in verses 13-17.
- How are believers to respond when they suffer for doing right? What are they to do, or not do?
 - Peter doesn't say, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason why you **believe** what you do". Instead, Peter describes it as "the reason for the **hope** that you have". What's the difference?
 - According to these verses, what might cause people to ask us questions about our faith?
 - What 2 possible extremes in witnessing are we to guard against?

Parts of vs 18-22 are hard to understand, so it is important to focus on the main thrust of what is being said:- It is describing the triumph of Jesus over evil; and the assurance that God will save us, as he saved Noah, "through water" - not meaning the outward physical ceremony of baptism but rather, the inward spiritual reality which baptism represents.

“This passage should function today as an encouragement to us to be bold in our witness (as Noah was), to be confident that, though we may be few, God will certainly save us (as he did Noah), and to remind us that just as certainly as the flood eventually came, so final judgement will certainly come to our world as well, and Christ will ultimately triumph over all the evil in the universe.”

(1 Peter, Wayne Grudem, p161)

3. From these verses, what did Jesus do, and what are the results?

What saves us? What was the way to be saved in Noah’s time, and in our time?

Explore these truths together as a group:

A. Read 3:8-9. When has living in harmony within a church family been a faith-building experience for you? What obstacles had to be overcome in order to achieve this?

B. Can you think of situations in your life where following the instruction to ‘set apart Christ as Lord’ (v15) [“concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ in your hearts”] could lead to misunderstanding and suffering?

How do you naturally react in these situations?

What challenges does this passage have for you?

C. What picture of Jesus Christ do you get from verses 18-22? Note everything that has been mentioned about His work,
His purpose,
and what He achieved.

Turn this into prayers of thanks and praise.

D. Which verse in this section has been most meaningful for you?
Underline it in your bible, memorise it, or write it out and stick it where you will continue to see it.

Conclusion

Peter urges his readers: Be at one. Be loving. Be humble. If suffering comes, let it be undeserved, let it be for doing good. And to help them (and us) stay resolute, Peter reminds us that Christ's suffering was to Him an open door to a greater ministry and final glory.

5. Living for God

chapter 4:1-19

Getting Started:

Have you ever offended someone because you refused to do something which you knew was wrong?

Introduction

Peter again holds Jesus up as an example – this time, as an example of willingness to suffer. He tells his readers how to live in the light of all that Jesus has done for them. He repeats the theme of doing good in spite of suffering. He also speaks about relationships with non-believers, and how they react to our choices.

1. What changed mindset and behaviour does Peter describe in vs 2-4?
2. As all the major events in God's plan of redemption have occurred, and all things are ready for Christ to return and rule, believers should behave in a new way. (vs 7-11)

“For if you are willing to suffer for Christ, you have decided to stop sinning.”

NLT 4:1b

“the believer who suffers because they are living a life obedient to Jesus has given up on living in ways that obey the call of sinful life.” (4:1 Matthew Sleeman)

- What instructions does Peter give about how to live?
- What is the ultimate goal of this new way of living?
- How am I glorifying God in the use of gifts He has given me -
 - in what I say (v10)
 - in how I help others (v11)

Identify some practical ways (however small) to use these God-given gifts this week.

3. Read verse 12-19.

This section continues the long discussion, begun at 2:11, on living as a Christian in a world that does not comprehend the gospel message.

- Instead of being thrown off balance by trials, what should Christians do in these circumstances?
- How might verse 19 be both a comfort and a challenge to someone who is suffering because of their obedient faith in Christ?

Explore these questions together as a group :

- A. "Each one" (4:10) implies that every person in every church has received a "spiritual gift" and are to use it for one another's benefit,
- in any kind of purposeful speaking activity,
 - in any kind of helping or encouraging ministry.

When, and in whom, do we see spiritual gifts being used in the life of our church?

How can we encourage one another to begin using God-given gifts, and also affirm those who are already doing so?

- B. Some people wrongly think that followers of Jesus miss out on lots of good things in life. What good things are guaranteed to us, according to this chapter?
- C. Do you expect to experience opposition, hostility or suffering as a Christian. If not, why not?
- Do we need to learn a right attitude from God's Spirit towards suffering?
 - What do Christians and churches need to keep doing, to strengthen one another for the trials that we will all face at one time or another.
 - In some parts of the world the church is persecuted, yet flourishing. How do you explain this?

D. What has this passage taught us to pray for Christians who are facing difficult situations?

What opportunities and blessings, mentioned in these verses, can come out of their suffering?

E. Which verse in this section has been most meaningful for you? Share with others what God is saying to you through it.

Underline the verse in your bible, memorise it, or write it out and stick it where you will continue to see it.

Conclusion

Most of us don't like to think about judgement or suffering. But Peter says that the hardship and persecution experienced by God's people are the first stirrings of the coming judgement of God. This will spread to all the earth, but it begins with God's own house, to purify it.

Our sufferings as Christians prove and strengthen our trust in our faithful Creator. They sober us up and focus our minds on Christ who also passed through the fires of God's judgment on our behalf. And though we pass through the fire, we will be saved. Our suffering is brief, and our glory will be eternal – and so we can rejoice.

6. Living Examples

chapter 5:1-14

Getting Started :

Is there a Christian leader who has had a lasting impact on your life? What qualities did he/she possess?

Introduction

As he comes to the end of his letter, Peter addresses church leaders and calls them to have an attitude of service and humility modelled on Jesus. He also gives advice to the church members and sends final greetings.

1. What instructions does Peter give to the leaders in the churches? (vs 1-4)

- What motives are mentioned?
- Is our attitude to leadership in the church sometimes shaped by the society around us, rather than by God's word?
- If you were to write a personality profile for a leadership position in the church based on this passage, what would you include?

2. What instructions does Peter give to everyone in the church? (vs 5-9)

- What are the reasons for following each of these commands?
- Why is humility so important?



3. What do verses 8-10 teach us about the devil's power and God's power?

4. Look back over verses 5-12. What do they show us about what God is like and what He will do for His people?

Explore these questions together as a group:

A. Humility - Peter has already taught the believers to be submissive to government authorities (2:13-17), slaves to submit to their masters (2:18-25) and wives to their husbands (3:1-7). Now he commands all believers to submit to God and to each other.

- How is submission (to those who lead you; or other people in your family and church) an act of faith?
- What is the link between humility and trusting God?

B. In his commentary on 1 Peter, Tom Wright says verse 7 has the sense of – “pick up everything that is bothering you, everything that is weighing you down, and fling them on God’s back. He will carry them. He will be delighted to do so. He loves you, after all.”

- What anxieties weigh you down or pull you apart?
- Look at what is said about God’s character in this chapter - what do you need to keep remembering?

C. In this chapter, Peter mentions the theme of suffering 3 times. But in spite of the possibility of suffering, he also draws his readers attention to God’s grace (twice) and to His glory, and urges them to “stand firm”.

How can Peter’s teaching in this chapter help us to “stand firm in the faith”?

D. Which verse in this chapter has been most meaningful for you?

- Underline it in your bible, memorise it, or write it out and stick it where you will continue to see it.
- Tell someone what God is saying to you through it.

A summary

Peter started this letter with a greeting of peace and ends it with a blessing of peace – very apt in a letter that talks so much about fiery trials.

Yet Peter's attitude to suffering is remarkably positive:

- it tests the reality of our faith,
- it is a sharing in Christ's suffering,
- it is a reason for joy.

This is an uncomfortable thought to those of us who live relatively comfortable lives today.

Throughout this letter, Peter sets before us the example of Jesus. We are to live like Him and for Him in the present; and we will share in His resurrection glory in the future.

Final Reflection

Reflect on this meditation based on 1 Peter 1 written by Eddie Askew in his book 'No Strange Land'.

Living in Hope

Lord, I live in hope.

A lovely word.

Not the cheap cliché that shrugs its shoulders,
smiles, and says it'll be alright on the night.

But a deep root that holds me firm
in the bedrock of your love. Whatever comes.

That's what I look for, Lord.

That's how I want to live.

The trouble is,

it doesn't come to life without a struggle.

To find the hope to live by, first I have to die.

Face the slow, painful death of self,
the transfer of power.
A freedom fight in which I die to live,
surrender to find freedom.
All topsy-turvy.

And in the death of self,
hope comes delicately,
shimmering gossamer wings
alive with light.
Lifting the old drabness of despair
with rainbow glow,
Painting my life with new reality.

I hope for hope, Lord,
The seeds of light
sown in the darkness round your cross,
germinate, and flower and fruit
in the fallow fields of my small life.
My hope starts in your death and resurrection.
Continues in the certainty of your presence.
Fulfils itself in the clear calm confidence
of final victory.

For now, I cling to hope's small seedling.
Vulnerable. Not yet full grown.
Measuring each day
in the new leaves of little victories
and, help me, Lord, often in small defeats.
But still I cling to hope.
And know you walk with me.

Thank you, Lord.