

JEN WILKIN

# 1 PETER

A LIVING HOPE IN CHRIST



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# HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH GOD'S WORD?

## OUR PURPOSE

The Bible study you are about to begin may be different than studies you have done in the past. It will not cover a specific topic from all angles. It will not have poetry or stories that leave you laughing, crying, or inspired. It will not focus on answering the question, “What does the Bible say about me?” It will not aid you in self-discovery, at least not as its primary intent.

What it will do is teach you an important passage of the Bible in a way that will stay with you for years to come. It will challenge you to move beyond loving God with just your heart to loving Him with your mind. It will focus on answering the question, “What does the Bible say about God?” It will aid you in the worthy task of God-discovery.

You see, the Bible is not a book about self-discovery; it is a book about God-discovery. The Bible is God’s declared intent to make Himself known to us. In learning about the character of God in Scripture we will experience self-discovery, but it must not be the focus of our study. The focus must be God Himself.

This focus changes the way we study. We look first for what a passage can teach us about the character of God, allowing self-discovery to be the byproduct of God-discovery. This is a much better approach because there can be no true knowledge of self apart from knowledge of God. So when I read the account of Jonah, I see first that God is just and faithful to His Word—He is faithful to proclaim His message to Nineveh no matter what. I see second that I, by contrast (and much like Jonah), am unjust to my fellow man and unfaithful to God’s Word. Thus, knowledge

of God leads to true knowledge of self, which leads to repentance and transformation. This is what Paul meant when he wrote that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2).

Women are good at loving God with their hearts. We are good at engaging our emotions in our pursuit of God. But the God who commands us to love with the totality of our heart, soul, and strength also commands us to love Him with all of our minds. Because He only commands what He also enables His children to do, it must be possible for us to love Him well with our minds or He would not command it. I know you will bring your emotions to your study of God's Word, and that is good and right. But it is your mind that I want to engage. God intends for you to be a good student, renewing your mind and thus transforming your heart.

## OUR PROCESS

Being a good student entails following good study habits. When we sit down to read, most of us like to read through a particular passage and then find a way to apply it to our everyday lives. We may read through an entire book of the Bible over a period of time, or we may jump around from place to place. I want to suggest a different approach, one that may not always yield immediate application, comfort, or peace, but one that builds over time a cumulative understanding of the message of Scripture.

### **READING IN CONTEXT AND REPETITIVELY**

Imagine yourself receiving a letter in the mail. The envelope is handwritten, but you don't glance at the return address. Instead you tear open the envelope, flip to the second page, read two paragraphs near the bottom, and set the letter aside. Knowing that if someone bothered to send it to you, that you should act on its contents in some way, you spend a few minutes trying to figure out how to respond to what the section you just read had to say. What are the odds you will be successful?

No one would read a letter this way. But this is precisely the way many of us read our Bibles. We skip past reading the “envelope”—Who wrote this? To whom is it written? When was it written? Where was it written?—and then try to determine the purpose of its contents from a portion of the whole. What if we took time to read the envelope? What if, after determining the context for its writing, we started at the beginning and read to the end? Wouldn't that make infinitely more sense?

In our study we will take this approach to Scripture. We will begin by placing our text in its historical and cultural context. We will “read the envelope.” Then we will read through the entire text multiple times, so that we can better determine what it wants to say to us. We will read repetitively so that we might move through three critical stages of understanding: comprehension, interpretation, and application.

### **STAGE 1: COMPREHENSION**

Remember the reading comprehension section on the SAT? Remember those long reading passages followed by questions to test your knowledge of what you had just read? The objective was to force you to read for detail. We are going to apply the same method to our study of God's Word. When we read for comprehension we ask ourselves, “What does it say?” This is hard work. A person who comprehends the account of the six days of creation can tell you specifically what happened on each day. This is the first step toward being able to interpret and apply the story of creation to our lives.

### **STAGE 2: INTERPRETATION**

While comprehension asks, “What does it say?,” interpretation asks, “What does it mean?” Once we have read a passage enough times to know what it says, we are ready to look into its meaning. A person who interprets the creation story can tell you why God created in a particular order or way. She is able to imply things from the text beyond what it says.

### STAGE 3: APPLICATION

After doing the work to understand what the text says and what the text means, we are finally ready to ask, “How should it change me?” Here is where we draw on our God-centered perspective to ask three supporting questions:

- What does this passage teach me about God?
- How does this aspect of God’s character change my view of self?
- What should I do in response?

A person who applies the creation story can tell us that because God creates in an orderly fashion, we too should live well-ordered lives. Knowledge of God gleaned through comprehension of the text and interpretation of its meaning can now be applied to my life in a way that challenges me to be different.

### SOME GUIDELINES

It is vital to the learning process that you allow yourself to move through the three stages of understanding on your own, without the aid of commentaries or study notes. The first several times you read a passage you will probably be confused. This is actually a good thing. Allow yourself to feel lost, to dwell in the “I don’t know.” It will make the moment of discovery stick.

Nobody likes to feel lost or confused, but it is an important step in the acquisition and retention of understanding. Because of this, I have a few guidelines to lay out for you as you go through this study:

1. **Avoid all commentaries** until comprehension and interpretation have been earnestly attempted on your own. In other words, wait to read commentaries until after you have done the homework, attended



small group time, and listened to the teaching. And then, consult commentaries you can trust. Ask a pastor or Bible teacher at your church for suggested authors.

2. For the purposes of this study, **get a Bible without study notes**. Come on, it's just too easy to look at them. You know I'm right.
3. Though commentaries are off-limits, here are some **tools you should use**:
  - **Cross-references**. These are the Scripture references in the margin or at the bottom of the page in your Bible. They point you to other passages that deal with the same topic or theme.
  - **An English dictionary** to look up unfamiliar words.
  - **Other translations of the Bible**. We will use the English Standard Version (ESV) as a starting point and the New International Version (NIV) as our secondary translation. You can easily consult other versions online. I recommend the NASB or NKJV in addition to the ESV and NIV. Reading a passage in more than one translation can expand your understanding of its meaning. Note: a paraphrase, such as The Message, can be useful but should be regarded as a commentary rather than a translation. Paraphrases are best consulted after careful study of an actual translation.
  - **A printed copy of the text**, double-spaced, so you can mark repeated words, phrases, or ideas. The entire text for this study is provided in the appendix of your Bible study book in the ESV translation.

## STORING UP TREASURE

Approaching God’s Word with a God-centered perspective, with context, and with care takes effort and commitment. It is study for the long-term. Some days your study may not move you emotionally or speak to an immediate need. You may not be able to apply a passage at all. But what if ten years from now, in a dark night of the soul, that passage suddenly opened up to you because of the work you have done today? Wouldn’t your long-term investment be worth it?

In Matthew 13, we see Jesus begin to teach in parables. He tells seven deceptively simple stories that leave His disciples struggling for understanding—dwelling in the “I don’t know,” if you will. After the last parable He turns to them and asks, “Have you understood all these things?” Despite their apparent confusion, they answer out of their earnest desire with, “Yes.” Jesus tells them that their newfound understanding makes them “like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old” (13:52, NIV).

A storeroom, as Jesus indicates, is a place for keeping valuables over a long period of time for use when needed. Faithful study of God’s Word is a means for filling our spiritual storerooms with truth, so that in our hour of need we can bring forth both the old and the new as a source of rich provision. I pray that this study would be for you a source of much treasure, and that you would labor well to obtain it.

Grace and peace,

Jen Wilkin

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study book is designed to be used in a specific way. The homework in the Bible study book will start you down the process of comprehension, interpretation, and application. However, it was designed to dovetail with small group discussion time and the video teachings. You can use the Bible study book by itself, but you are likely to find yourself with some unresolved questions. The video teaching is intended to resolve most, if not all, of your unanswered questions from the homework and discussion time. With this in mind, consider using the materials as follows:

- If you are going through the study on your own, first work through the homework and then watch the corresponding video for that week.
- If you are going through the study in a group, first do your homework, then discuss the questions your group decides to cover, and then watch the teaching.

Note: For Week 1, there is no homework. The study begins with a video introduction. You will find a fill-in sheet on pages 14-15 that you can use as you listen to the introductory material.

## HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

At the end of each week's personal study you will find a leader guide intended to help facilitate discussion in small groups. Each guide begins with an introductory question to help group members get to know each other and feel comfortable contributing their voices to the discussion. These questions may prove to be most helpful during the early weeks of the study, but as the group grows more familiar with one another, group

leaders may decide to skip them to allow more time for the questions covering the lesson.

The remainder of the leader guide includes four questions to help group members compare what they have learned from their personal study on Days 2 through 5. These questions are either pulled directly from the personal study or they summarize a concept or theme that the personal study covered. Each two-part question covers content from a particular day of the personal study, first asking group members to reflect and then asking them to apply. The reflection questions typically ask group members to report a finding or flesh out an interpretation. The application questions challenge them to move beyond intellectual understanding to identify ways to live differently in light of what they have learned.

As a small group leader, you will want to review these questions before you meet with your group, thinking through your own answers, marking where they occur in the personal study, and noting if there are any additional questions that you might want to reference to help the flow of the discussion. These questions are suggestions only, intended to help you cover as much ground as you can in a 45-minute discussion time. They should not be seen as requirements or limitations, but as guidelines to help you prepare your group for the teaching time by allowing them to process collectively what they have learned during their personal study.

As a facilitator of discussion rather than a teacher, you are allowed and encouraged to be a colearner with your group members. This means you yourself may not always feel confident of your answer to a given question, and that is perfectly OK. Because we are studying for the long-term, we are allowed to leave some questions partially answered or unresolved, trusting for clarity at a later time. In most cases, the teaching time should address any lingering questions that are not resolved in the personal study or the small group discussion time.

## **ABOUT THE GOSPEL COALITION**

The Gospel Coalition is a fellowship of evangelical churches deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures. We have become deeply concerned about some movements within traditional evangelicalism that seem to be diminishing the church's life and leading us away from our historic beliefs and practices. On the one hand, we are troubled by the idolatry of personal consumerism and the politicization of faith; on the other hand, we are distressed by the unchallenged acceptance of theological and moral relativism. These movements have led to the easy abandonment of both biblical truth and the transformed living mandated by our historic faith. We not only hear of these influences, we see their effects. We have committed ourselves to invigorating churches with new hope and compelling joy based on the promises received by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We believe that in many evangelical churches a deep and broad consensus exists regarding the truths of the gospel. Yet we often see the celebration of our union with Christ replaced by the age-old attractions of power and affluence, or by monastic retreats into ritual, liturgy, and sacrament. What replaces the gospel will never promote a mission-hearted faith anchored in enduring truth working itself out in unashamed discipleship eager to stand the tests of kingdom-calling and sacrifice. We desire to advance along the King's highway, always aiming to provide gospel advocacy, encouragement, and education so that current and next-generation church leaders are better equipped to fuel their ministries with principles and practices that glorify the Savior and do good to those for whom He shed His life's blood.

We want to generate a unified effort among all peoples—an effort that is zealous to honor Christ and multiply His disciples, joining in a true coalition for Jesus. Such a biblically grounded and united mission is the

only enduring future for the church. This reality compels us to stand with others who are stirred by the conviction that the mercy of God in Jesus Christ is our only hope of eternal salvation. We desire to champion this gospel with clarity, compassion, courage, and joy—gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic, and class lines.

Our desire is to serve the church we love by inviting all our brothers and sisters to join us in an effort to renew the contemporary church in the ancient gospel of Christ so we truly speak and live for Him in a way that clearly communicates to our age. As pastors, we intend to do this in our churches through the ordinary means of His grace: prayer, ministry of the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the fellowship of the saints. We yearn to work with all who seek the lordship of Christ over the whole of life with unabashed hope in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform individuals, communities, and cultures.

WEEK 1:

# 1 PETER INTRODUCTION

Who wrote 1 Peter?

When was it written?

To whom was it written?

In what style was it written?

What are the central themes of the letter?



WEEK 2:

# **A LIVING HOPE**

1 PETER 1:1-12

Each week we will begin our homework by reading through the entire Letter of 1 Peter from start to finish. Then we'll focus in on a particular passage to discover its message and how it fits into the greater context of the letter as a whole. By the time you complete the study, you will have read 1 Peter at least nine times. As it grows more familiar to you, watch for how your understanding expands and deepens. Your first task each week will be to note how this process is taking place. To help you read for detail, you'll also be asked to mark certain words or phrases in the copy of the text in the appendix of this Bible study book. So keep a set of colored pencils handy as you read. If you haven't already, take time to read the introduction to the Bible study book before you start this week's questions.

This week we will focus our efforts on dissecting the first 12 verses of chapter 1. Peter begins his letter with a greeting that does more than introduce the author—it is packed with intentional speech, speech that illuminates the nature of salvation, interweaving New Testament Truth with Old Testament imagery. We'll examine what it means to be “born again,” a phrase that is so familiar to us we can lose sight of its miraculous nature. And we'll consider our inheritance as the children of God, both in this life and the next.

## DAY ONE

---

READ 1 PETER FROM BEGINNING TO END.

1. Which section of the letter seems the most unclear to you?

Which section seems the most straightforward?

NOW LOOK BACK AT 1:1-12.

Remember our premise that the Bible is a book about God? We want to know Him better at the end of our study. On Day 1 of each week's homework, we'll take time to read through the text and note everything we learn about God. Your notes might center on one member of the Trinity or the Godhead as a whole. Read asking these questions:

- What is He like?
- What has He done? What is He doing? What will He do?
- What pleases Him? What displeases Him?

2. Do this now for 1:1-12. Some examples have been given to get you started.

*The father has foreknowledge about us and all things (1:2).*

*The Spirit sanctifies us (1:2).*

*Christ's blood was sprinkled for us (1:2).*

3. What do you think Peter wants to communicate in these first 12 verses? Based on what you know from the introductory material, how do his opening lines speak directly to the needs of the people to whom he writes?

## DAY TWO

### READ 1:1-2.

1. The first two verses of the letter serve as the “envelope” for Peter’s message. To whom is Peter writing?

2. On the map to the right, circle the names of each of the regions Peter mentions.

Each of the regions is located in modern-day Turkey. Peter most likely wrote his letter in Rome. His letter would have traveled 1,500 miles to reach the churches to whom he wrote.



How far has his letter traveled to reach you? Google the distance from Rome to your city. \_\_\_\_\_ miles

We learned last week in our introduction that Peter wrote around 64 A.D. Across how many years has his letter traveled to reach you? \_\_\_\_\_ years

3. In 1:2, what important doctrine does Peter illustrate in the way he speaks about God? Fill in the blanks below to help with your answer:

*according to the foreknowledge of \_\_\_\_\_*  
*in the sanctification of \_\_\_\_\_*  
*for obedience to \_\_\_\_\_ and for sprinkling of his blood*

*important doctrine illustrated here: \_\_\_\_\_*

4. Some of the terms in 1:1-2 deserve our close attention. Read the verses in the ESV and then look up the following words in a dictionary, writing a brief definition for each:

*elect (adj):*

*exile (noun—the verb definition will also be helpful):*

*dispersion:*

*foreknow:*

*sanctification (see also sanctify):*

5. Paraphrasing a verse or passage (rewriting it in our own words) can help us to focus on its meaning. It is a useful study tool for a student of the Word. We will use it often in this study. Based on your definitions above, rewrite 1:1-2 in your own words.

6. In what sense are you and I “elect exiles”? How is Peter’s letter a letter with our names on the envelope? How do you think his message will be relevant to us 2,000 years later and halfway across the globe?

## DAY THREE

NOW LOOK AT 1:3-5.

1. What does it mean to be “born again to a living hope” (1:3)? Look up the following passages and note what each adds to your understanding of this phrase:

*John 1:12-13*

*John 3:3-6*

*Galatians 4:4-7*

2. In what sense is our hope in God a “living hope”? What other forms of hope are there? How is our hope superior to those? Write your thoughts below.

3. What is our living hope (1:4)?

An \_\_\_\_\_ that is \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ .

Where is it kept (1:4)?

4. Look up the following verses and note what each adds to your understanding of the nature of our inheritance in Christ:

*Psalm 16:5-6*

*Romans 8:22-25*

*1 Corinthians 15:19-26*

*Ephesians 1:13-14*

*1 John 3:1-3*

5. Our inheritance through Christ is imperishable, undefiled, unfading. What are you seeking to inherit in this life? Think about your desires and wants. List some of them below.

Which of the things above will not perish, spoil, or fade over time? How should this knowledge affect your priorities? Specifically, what priority do you need to change?

6. Rewrite 1:3-5 in your own words.



## DAY FOUR

NOW LOOK AT 1:6-9.

1. In 1:6, Peter says “In this you rejoice ...” To what is he referring?  
In what do we rejoice?
2. What do you think is meant by the phrase “at the revelation of Jesus Christ”(1:7)? Hasn’t Christ already been revealed during His incarnation? Look up 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 to help you with your answer.
3. With a green pencil circle every occurrence of the word *revelation* or *revealed* in your copy of the text of 1 Peter (see appendix). Underline the phrase in which it occurs in green. Draw an arrow from the circled word to what was revealed. An example is given below:

1:5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a  
salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

How many occurrences did you find? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think Peter emphasized this theme to his original readers?

4. What role does Peter say trials play in our lives (1:7)?

Look up the following verses and note what each adds to your understanding of the purpose of trials in our lives:

*James 1:2-4*

*Romans 5:3-4*

*Romans 8:18 (Note the similarity of Paul's thinking and word choice to Peter's.)*

5. Why do you think Peter mentions that his readers have not seen Jesus, nor do they see Him currently in their circumstances? What point does he imply?

6. Does 1:9 teach that we earn our salvation by enduring trials? Give a verse from elsewhere in Scripture to support your answer.

7. What difficult circumstance are you currently facing? How does 1 Peter 1:6-9 apply to your situation?

8. Rewrite 1:6-9 in your own words.

## DAY FIVE

---

NOW LOOK AT 1:10-12.

1. In this passage, what do we learn about the prophets of the Old Testament? Specifically, what do we learn about:
  - The content and purpose of their prophecies?
  - Their method of seeking truth?
  - Their understanding of the prophecies they delivered?
  - Their understanding of an OT prophet's role in the "big picture" of salvation?
2. In 1:12, who does Peter mean by "those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven"?
3. According to 1:12, who gave aid to both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament preachers of the gospel?
4. Why do you think Peter would tell his original readers that angels long to look into the things they themselves understand about the gospel (1:12)?

How might this observation be an encouragement to them?

How might it encourage us?

5. In what ways are you challenged to be more like the prophets of old?

Like “those who preach the good news”?

Like the angels described here?

6. Rewrite 1:10-12 in your own words.

## **WRAP-UP**

---

What impacted you the most within this week’s passage of 1 Peter? How has Peter challenged you to look beyond your current circumstances to a future inheritance? How has he encouraged you?

## WEEK 2 GROUP DISCUSSION

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTION:** Have you ever inherited something?  
If so, what was it?

**1. OBSERVE:** (question 5, Day 2) Discuss as a group how you wrote 1:1-2 in your own words.

**APPLY:** (question 6, Day 2) In what sense are you and I “elect exiles”? How do you think Peter’s message will be relevant to us 2,000 years later and halfway across the globe?

**2. OBSERVE:** (question 2, Day 3) In what sense is our hope in God a “living hope”? How is our hope superior to other forms of hope?

**APPLY:** (question 5, Day 3) Our inheritance through Christ is imperishable, undefiled, unfading. What are you seeking to inherit in this life?

Which of these things will not perish, spoil, or fade over time? How should this knowledge affect your priorities?

**3. OBSERVE:** (question 4, Day 4) What role does Peter say trials play in our lives (1:7)?

**APPLY:** (question 7, Day 4) What difficult circumstance are you currently facing? How does 1 Peter 1:6-9 apply to your situation?

**4. OBSERVE:** (question 1, Day 5) In 1:10-12, what do we learn about the prophets of the Old Testament?

**APPLY:** (question 5, Day 5) In what ways are you challenged to be more like the prophets of old? Like “those who preach the good news”? Like the angels described in 1:10-12?

**WRAP-UP:** What impacted you the most within this week’s passage of 1 Peter? How has Peter challenged you to look beyond your current circumstances to a future inheritance? How has he encouraged you?

