

1 Peter

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? Peter writes to Christians who are suffering for their faith, encouraging them to stand firm in Christ.

WHO WROTE IT? The apostle Peter, with the help of Silas (see 5:12).

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? Between A.D. 60 and 65.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? Peter wrote from "Babylon" (5:13), which is probably a code name for Rome.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapter 1: A call to holy living
- Chapter 2: Our identity as believers
- Chapter 3: Submission in relationships
- Chapter 4: Suffering for Christ
- Chapter 5: Instructions for elders and young men

KEY CONCEPTS

- Salvation
- Holiness
- Chosen people
- Submission
- Suffering

READING TIME  IN HOURS

WHAT'S THE POINT OF

1 Peter?

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God's people won't always be popular—and that's okay.

WORTH MEMORIZING

- 2:11-12 Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.
- 3:15-16 You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see that a good life you live because you belong to Christ.
- 5:6-7 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

- **SUBMISSION.** Peter tells husbands to treat their wives with respect and understanding (3:7). If they don't, their prayers will be hindered. Also, elders are told to lead humbly, and young men are to submit to their leaders (5:1-5). In other words, the macho male who always has to be the boss is not our role model.

INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

BACKGROUND

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, was present when Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). In writing to Jewish and Gentile Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor, living among antagonistic pagans, Peter encourages perseverance, knowing that faith in Christ gives the believer hope. Peter knows that persecution is temporary and will prove the genuineness of their faith. His authorship is confirmed in the first verse: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. . . ." He says he writes from Babylon (5:13), which some believe is symbolic of Rome. In 5:12 Peter mentions the help of a scribe Silvanus (Silas).

MESSAGE

Peter reminds his readers to rejoice in the salvation they gain through God's grace. "The sincere milk of the word" (2:2) aids in spiritual growth. Peter ex-

horts his readers in practical matters—living honestly among nonbelievers, submitting to governmental leaders, loving the brethren, living peaceably in households. He gives direction for living faithfully in the face of persecution. He exhorts the older generation to be community leaders and the young to submit to their elders—all serving with humility. Final remarks include classic reminders: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith. . . . But the God of all grace. . . . make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (5:7-10).

TIME

Peter most likely wrote this letter from Rome between A.D. 60 and 64. Early nonbiblical writing indicates that Peter was crucified by Nero (who ruled from A.D. 54 to 68), probably between A.D. 64 and 66.

OUTLINE

I. Glories through God's Grace

- A. Greetings
- B. The promise of salvation
- C. Live for Christ
- D. Christ, the cornerstone

II. Follow Christ's Example

- A. The example of submission to government
- B. The example of submission in marriage
- C. The example of love
- D. The example of suffering

III. Comfort in Times of Persecution

IV. Peter's Final Greetings

- 1:1-2 1:1-2
- 1:3-21 1:3-21
- 1:22-2:3 1:22-2:3
- 2:4-10 2:4-10
- 2:11-25 2:11-25
- 3:1-7 3:1-7
- 3:8-22 3:8-22
- 4:1-19 4:1-19
- 5:1-11 5:1-11
- 5:12-14 5:12-14



If someone had the capacity to retain everything he read, of remembering every fact and date, of summoning to mind every particle of learning; if he could tell you the answer to every question on every exam and provide every statistic known to man—he still would have nothing valuable to say without one other component—experience.

That's why we read 1 Peter with such interest. Simon Peter was one of our Lord's original followers and he experienced every dimension of discipleship, both good and bad. He'd been on the mountaintop with Christ, had walked to Him on the water, had fled from Him at the cross, and had served Him in the early Church. In 1 Peter, the old fisherman drew from a lifetime of experience to tell us how to conduct ourselves as pilgrims and strangers in the world.

Peter hit several themes in his letter, including our conduct, the power of grace, the importance of submission and separation, and the role of tribulation in life. Much of his letter is written with suffering in mind, teaching us how to respond when grieved by various trials. We're to commit ourselves to God, to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and to give others an answer for the hope within us.

Peter's letter is a reminder for Christian pilgrims to look at their passports occasionally so we'll remember we're citizens of another kingdom, purchased by the blood of Jesus, and headed toward an inheritance that can never fade away.



KEY THOUGHT:

Suffering is an opportunity to walk in our Lord's steps and live as pilgrims in a pagan world.

KEY VERSES:

"Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings."

1 Peter 4:12-13

KEY ACTION:

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you."

1 Peter 3:15

KEY PRAYER:

Father, allow me to see the advantages of adversity and bring honor to You in every circumstance.

BASIC SURVEY

1 PETER

AUTHOR: The apostle Peter (1:1), with the assistance of Silvanus (5:12).

DATE: Approximately AD 65.

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

Suffering for the sake of Jesus is noble and good.

DETAILS, PLEASE

As the early church grows, the Roman Empire begins persecuting Christians—and Peter assures them that God is still in control: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (4:12 KJV). What is the proper response to such suffering? “Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (4:13 NKJV).

QUOTABLE

> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (5:8 NIV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Peter clarifies exactly how many people rode out the great flood on Noah’s ark: eight (3:20). Genesis indicates “Noah and his [three] sons and his wife and his sons’ wives” (Genesis 7:7 NIV) were in the boat.

SO WHAT?

Life may be hard, but God is always good. And for Christians, there’s a much better day ahead.

READ 1 PETER 1-2.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 267. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 265. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 265. →

HEART OF THE BOOK

THE APOSTLE PETER

The apostle Peter (also called Simon and Cephas) was one of Jesus’ earliest disciples, and along with his brother Andrew, was a fisherman. He first met Jesus along the Jordan River where John was baptizing (John 1:40–42) and traveled with Him through Galilee for a time. Then he went back to fishing. Later Jesus called him to full-time discipleship, saying, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” (Matthew 4:19 NLT).

The disciples realized from the beginning that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God (John 1:41, 49), but many lost faith during trying times. But Peter never doubted. After many disciples turned back, Peter declared his faith (John 6:66–69). Later, he once again clearly stated his certainty that Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 16:13–17).

Peter was the most impetuous, outspoken of Jesus’ twelve apostles. For example, when Jesus revealed that He would be crucified, Peter took it upon himself to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You” (Matthew 16:22 NASB).

Peter was so sure of himself that he boasted that even if all the other disciples abandoned Jesus, he’d never do so. But when confronted, he denied that he even *knew* Jesus (Mark 14:27–31, 66–72). God allowed this to show Peter that he needed the strength of the Spirit to make it. Later, when Jesus restored him and he received the Holy Spirit, Peter became one of the foremost leaders of the early church.

READ 1 PETER 3 AND LUKE 5.

- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 267. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 267. →



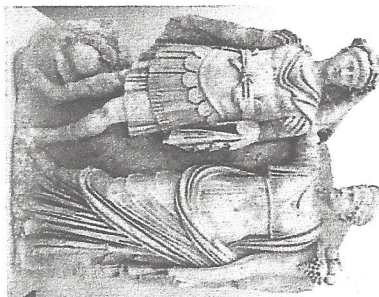
Peter was a fisherman who was commissioned by Jesus to become a disciple. He is depicted here in *Christ Calling the Apostles Peter and Andrew* by Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255–1319).

HIDDEN TREASURE

REJOICING DESPITE TROUBLES

In the middle of Nero's savage persecution, Peter wrote, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." He added that Christians should "greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible." Peter first acknowledged that the persecution caused Christians intense distress, then expected them to greatly rejoice. How? He knew that enduring such trials was proof that their faith was genuine, and would "result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-8 NASB). As Paul said, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18 NKJV).

Even when Peter was being persecuted by Nero, who is pictured here with his mother, Agrippina, he praised and glorified God.



READ 1 PETER 4 AND LUKE 17.

HIDDEN TREASURE

RESISTING FLESHLY LUSTS

Peter wrote, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11 NKJV). Giving in to lusts literally destroys and eats away the spiritual power in a Christian's life. One good thing about suffering—it makes people serious about their faith and gets them seeking God's will, not casually playing around with temptation and sins such as "lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties." As Peter explained, "He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-3 NKJV).

READ 1 PETER 5 AND PSALM 50.

PETER

PERSECUTION CAN CAUSE EITHER GROWTH or bitterness in the Christian life. Response determines the result. In writing to Jewish believers struggling in the midst of persecution, Peter encourages them to conduct themselves courageously for the Person and program of Christ. Both their character and conduct must be above reproach. Having been born again to a living hope, they are to imitate the Holy One who has called them. The fruit of that character will be conduct rooted in submission: citizens to government, servants to masters, wives to husbands, husbands to wives, and Christians to one another. Only after submission is fully understood does Peter deal with the difficult area of suffering. The Christians are not to think it "strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (4:12), but are to rejoice as partakers of the suffering of Christ. That response to life is truly the climax of one's submission to the good hand of God. This epistle begins with the phrase *Petros apostolos Iesou Christou*, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ." This is the basis of the early title *Petrou A*, the "First of Peter."

WATCH WORDS

- lust (strong craving; desire)—1:14
- word (the gospel preached and proclaimed)—1:25
- chosen (selected)—2:9
- defense (argument against a specific charge)—3:15

1 Peter 3

+++ Men, Women, & God

Honor One Another

1 Peter 3:1-7

SOME MEN RELISH the first six verses of this passage. They cheer when Peter tells wives to behave respectfully toward their husbands.

The most important verse for male readers, however, is number 7. Here the apostle calls on men to treat their wives with honor and understanding. "Treat her as you should," Peter says, "so your prayers will not be hindered."

Of all the reasons given by Bible teachers and writers these days for unanswered prayer, this one doesn't get much airtime. But there it is in black and white: *Mistreating your wife can short out your heavenly connection.*

Some women may not like Peter calling them "weaker." Perhaps the burly fisherman was thinking only about who would struggle more to pull a dripping net full of fish out of the Sea of Galilee. But in the very same sentence he also declares that a wife is an "equal partner" in the Christian life, which was a radical statement of spiritual equality for Peter's day and age.

So both spouses have food for thought in this section. Both may need to adjust their habits. God wants us both to submit to his direction, whether it's culturally "in" or not.

1 Peter

Ask yourself: If some extraterrestrial life form were to hover above your school for a while, observing the students' lifestyles and behavior—including speech, relationships, attitudes, and actions in the classroom, cafeteria, sports fields, and locker rooms, etc.—could the aliens tell the difference between professing Christians and everyone else?

That may be a tough, and somewhat painful, question. Here's another one: If that ET watched you, what would he conclude were *your* core beliefs and values? Could he differentiate between you and other students in terms of *your* speech, relationships, attitudes, behavior, and so on?

Those are tough questions for most Christian teenagers. In fact, they are difficult for most Christians, period. Yet the Apostle Peter says that God's people should be characterized by distinctly

different lives from the rest of the world. Peter was one of Jesus' 12 disciples (see Luke 5:1-11) and had lived with Jesus Himself for three years, observing firsthand how those who follow Him must be different from the rest of the world. So as Peter watched persecution arise against his fellow Jewish Christians dispersed around the world, he wanted them to hold on. So in his two letters, Peter issued at least three distinct calls:

1. A call to holiness: "As the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct" (1Pt 1:15). How are we to be holy in all we do? With gritted teeth, white knuckles, muscles stretched taut, straining every fiber of our being? It feels that way sometimes. But: how do children grow to look like their parents? By straining and stressing? No; children look like their parents because they are their kids! It's not about straining and struggling; it's about being in a relationship. The relationship produces the resemblance, not the other way around.

2. A call to self-discipline: You will need to understand that being a Christian sometimes means standing alone. We follow our Savior and "since Christ suffered in the flesh, equip yourselves also with the same resolve" (1Pt 4:1). And sometimes that will mean trials. Peter's original readers wondered if following Christ was worth it. Peter explained in no uncertain terms that the reward would far outweigh any suffering (1Pt 1:3-12; 4:12-19).

3. A call to growth: Getting our minds ready for action is a process—changing and even forgetting old ways of thinking, replacing them with new. *How?* It's been said that who you are is determined by the people you know and the books you read. Today we could also add the media you absorb—TV, movies, music, the Internet. Ask yourself: Who are my friends? What do I read? What TV programs and movies do I watch? What music do I listen to? What web sites do I visit?

If you bombard your brain with nothing but non-Christian, sub-Christian, or even anti-Christian input, guess what? Marinate your brain in that long enough, and it will soak in. Instead, saturate your mind in the Bible, spend time with other Christians, and engage in positive, uplifting activities. Peter calls you to stand up and be different; he calls you to grow in your faith (2Pt 1) and to patiently wait for the Lord's return (2Pt 3).

The little letter from Jude (Jesus' half-brother and brother of James, leader of the church in Jerusalem) is also an encouragement to hang on to the truth. Clearly, false teachers were as prevalent in the early church as they are today. Jude calls you to "build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jd 20-21).

If your major goal in life is just to fit in, you can forget living a worthwhile Christian life. But if you want to follow Christ, Peter and Jude call you to something different—something better. No, ET is not watching you to see if you fit in or not. Someone much more important than that is. If you live the way He calls you to, you will very much stand out from the crowd—as Jesus did.

Author: Peter wrote 1 and 2 Peter; Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote Jude

Date: First Peter was written between A.D. 62–64 in Rome with 2 Peter coming three years after 1 Peter. Jude was probably written before 2 Peter.

What in the world is going on?

- 1 B.C. Simon Peter is born
- A.D. 26–30 Years of Jesus' ministry
- A.D. 26–36 Pontius Pilate is the governor of Judea
- A.D. 30 Jesus is crucified, resurrected, and ascends to heaven
- A.D. 30 Holy Spirit's arrival at Pentecost

1 Peter

BOOK INTRODUCTION

When Peter referred to himself as “a witness of the sufferings of Christ” (5:1), it had deeply personal meaning for him. Not only did he witness the anguish others inflicted on Jesus, Peter knew the suffering his own denials had caused his Savior and friend. So it was practical theology that caused Peter to write, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (5:8).

These experiences must have influenced him:

Only one who had nearly lost hope at the sight of Jesus—the Messiah—dying on a cross could declare: “His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus” (1:3).

Only one who had fallen and been fully restored could write, “God gives grace to the humble” (5:5).

Only one who had yielded to Satan’s temptations could admonish, “Resist [Satan], steadfast in the faith” (5:9).

In the closing lines of this letter, it seems as if Peter is remembering his faith and failures regarding Jesus and then passing on the commission he received from his Lord on the shores of Galilee: “Shepherd the flock of God . . . being examples to the flock” (5:2, 3; John 21:15–17). Now in possession of a transforming future hope, he was able to remind his fellow elders that “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (5:1–5).

WHAT IT SAYS | *Remember Who You Are*

Peter was well-qualified to write a letter to those whose faith was being tried in so many ways.

Who were they? They were “pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”—Christians who were “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1:1, 2). The five regions to which Peter directed his letter were all in the northern part of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Jews from three of those regions had been in Jerusalem when Peter preached at Pentecost more than three decades earlier (Acts 2:9); no doubt they had taken the gospel back with them. They then went back to their own countries, shared their faith, and started local churches. Now, some 30 years later, Peter writes to encourage them as they face persecution in the Roman Empire.

1 PETER

When Peter calls his readers “pilgrims of the Dispersion,” he is certainly referring to Jewish believers who fled Jerusalem in the outbreak of persecution following the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1). But likely he is also referring to all believers—Jews and Gentiles—who are “sojourners and pilgrims” in this world (2:11), a “special people” called “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (2:9).

First Peter is more than a compilation of platitudes for passively enduring persecution. It is a forceful letter urging active faith and holy living. Driving home his central theme of righteous conduct in the face of persecution, Peter uses 30 imperative verbs—one in nearly every three verses—to make his points. The apostle’s vantage point in Rome (most likely the place to which he refers in 5:13) gives him good insight into the storms brewing across the Roman Empire. He knows very well that the “pilgrims” will need to remain steadfast against what will come.

WHAT IT MEANS | *Grow Up in Faith*

Peter’s letter to these scattered, persecuted believers turns on three points: first, a believer’s hope; second, a believer’s conduct; and third, how a believer faces suffering.

- **Christian Conduct:** Peter’s central theme is how to conduct themselves as God’s “special people” living among those who do not yet believe and who are looking for reasons to oppose the spread of Christianity (3:8—5:11).
- **Grace:** Peter reveals that grace is the foundation for one’s spiritual life—salvation, marriage, spiritual gifts, suffering, humility, and the first and second comings of Christ (1:2–13; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12).
- **Suffering:** During Emperor Nero’s rule of the Roman Empire, Christians became a persecuted minority. Peter provides a wealth of guidance on how to endure—with Christ as the example (2:19–25; 4:12–19).
- **Submission:** In order for the early church to maintain its testimony, Peter encourages submission as far as it is possible in all of life’s relationships: submitting to rulers, masters, wives to husbands, and young people to elders (2:13—3:7; 5:5).
- **Separation:** Peter’s audience had been dispersed because of severe persecution. All Christians, however, are temporarily deployed on assignment by God in a land that is not our own (Gen. 15:13; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 11:13–16; 13:14). Knowing this should give us proper perspective on evangelism and discipleship (2:11, 12), on living differently from the world (1:13—2:12), and on our purpose in all circumstances: to bring God glory (4:11).

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU | *Recheck Your Passport*

Peter was writing to men and women who were up against a crazy-quilt variety of challenges, heartaches, and peril. The differences among these believers did not matter nearly as much as what they held in common in Christ. They needed to remember their real identity—and their unshakable destiny.

So it is with us. We too are “pilgrims” passing through a sometimes treacherous world on the way to our true home in heaven. Peter’s letter is a reminder to check our passports now and then. No matter how anyone else regards us or labels us, we have been purchased by the blood of Jesus and given a magnificent, permanent inheritance that *nothing* in this world can shake.

As citizens of heaven on foreign turf, we can expect to be harassed from time to time. But no one can change our transforming purpose, our ultimate destination, or the royal welcome that awaits us. That should make a difference in how we live right now.

1 PETER

Essential Facts

PURPOSE:

To show us how to live well in a shattered and hopeless world.

AUTHOR:

The apostle Peter.

AUDIENCE:

Christians who were suffering persecutions for their faith.

DATE WRITTEN:

Around AD 64, just prior to Nero's persecutions of the early Christians.

SETTING:

This letter was written during a period in which Peter and other Christians were being tortured and martyred for their faith by both Jewish and secular authorities.

KEY VERSE:

"Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves" (2:16).

KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:

Peter with Silas and with John Mark.

FOR REFLECTION In His Footsteps • 221

The good people of Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, could never have imagined their pastor doing such a thing. Dressed as a tramp, Pastor Charles had spent the week wandering the streets of Topeka, his tattered coat offering little warmth against the cutting wind. His thin-soled shoes pounded the icy sidewalks. From store to store he had gone, seeking work, and asking for help during the blizzard. For almost a week, he drifted through the streets, seeking a kind word. He spied several of his parishioners, but they didn't recognize him. Finally he found a job shoveling coal for fifty cents a day.

The next Sunday, imagine the surprise on the faces of his listeners as he described his adventures and challenged them to begin walking as Jesus had walked. He wanted them to exhibit the compassion of Christ.

Out of his experiences, Pastor Charles Sheldon wrote one of history's best-selling Christian novels, *In His Steps*, published in 1896. This book posed the famous question, "What Would Jesus Do?"

Peter tells us: "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (2:21). Every Christian must ask these questions: Where is your daily walk heading? Are you in step with Jesus?

"Behold, I lay in Zion

A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."^a

THE BIG PICTURE

Peter's audience was composed of hurting people, suffering persecution from unbelievers in the form of rejection, torture, imprisonment and the threat of physical death. The price these believers paid for their faith included everything from broken relationships and loss of employment to physical pain and martyrdom.

Peter wrote this letter to encourage them. The wonderful part of his message lay in the perspective he offered his audience. In response to their cries of anguish he did not brush them off or flippanantly promise them an easy road ahead. Instead, Peter gave them this hope: They belonged to God. Peter's words offer this same hope to us.

Suffering is one of the most difficult aspects of life to accept, much less understand. Though we wish we were exempt or cushioned from life's harsh blows, pain is a reality. All of us suffer; suffering is part of life (see John 16:33). We must accept the fact that we will hurt from time to time.

Yet God has equipped us with the means to live at peace in the midst of tough times. We obtain God's powerful help when we hold fast to Christ and live according to his will.

This does not mean that our troubles will vanish because we believe in God. Instead, God offers to surround us with his love when problems seem overwhelming. The way out of the storm is to take comfort in God's presence and persevere through the hard times. As we do, God will use the trials to inspire our growth.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

GOD'S WAY CAN BE PAINFUL

We may be afraid of spiritual growth because the changes God asks of us may be painful. Each key to spiritual renewal holds the potential for pain on some level. Yet pain is always a part of life in a fallen world, whether we are changing for the better or for the worse. Our old way of life involved pain too, but we tried to find ways to escape it. When we decide to seek spiritual renewal, we willingly see the truth as God reveals it and release whatever we have been holding onto, including our pain. God's plan will lead to a life of joy, freedom and transformation, making all the pain worthwhile.

NOTHING IS HOPELESS WITH GOD

When we struggle spiritually, we may feel helpless and tempted to give up. But *feeling* helpless is different from *being* helpless. We are never really helpless, because with God, help is close at hand. We are not hopeless, for God is the source of all hope. When we struggle with feelings of despair, this letter reminds us to surrender our lives to God and to depend on his power. God will never leave us to face our trials alone.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Surrendering our lives in repentance to Jesus Christ makes us part of God's family. We enter into a community with Jesus Christ as its founder and leader. Everyone in this community is related; no one stands alone. All healing and spiritual renewal takes place in the context of relationships with others. Peter taught us how to manage those relationships: with loyalty, care and humility and prayer that we will become what God wants us to be.

First Peter 3:15 says Christians must "always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." Simply put, that's apologetics. But in this short description, we discover three important details.

Doing apologetics means playing defense. The Greek word for "defense" is *apologia*, from which we get the word *apologetics*. Think about a football game. At any time during the game, one team is trying to score (the offense) while the other is trying to stop them (the defense). If your team has a really bad defense, you'll get blown away. Similarly, maybe you've been roughed up by some really tough objections to Christianity. You've heard the challenges before: "How can a good God allow suffering?" "The Bible is full of errors." "Jesus can't be the only way to God." Apologetics helps us defend Christianity against tough questions like these.

Doing apologetics means playing offense. Back to the football analogy. A good defense is vital, but you can't win if you don't score. The offense must advance the ball to score points. In the same way, apologetics attempts to give a reason for our hope by advancing arguments in favor of Christianity. We offer evidence for God's existence, reasons to trust the Bible, and arguments for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. By playing offense, we give nonbelievers good reasons to decide that Christianity is true.

Doing apologetics means giving hope. For what are you defending and giving evidence? "The hope that is in you." Ultimately, apologetics points people to our hope, Jesus Himself. That's why "we demolish arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to obey Christ" (2Co 10:4-5). Objections raised against Jesus must be demolished. But notice something. The Bible doesn't say we demolish people. Rather, we demolish false arguments. Belittling others is not our goal. Merely winning arguments is not enough. Instead, we remove obstacles of doubt to Christianity so people can take a serious look at Christ, the only source of hope for this world. True apologetics is hopeful.

Further illustrating this point, notice that our earlier quote of 1 Peter 3:15 is sandwiched between two important sentences. Peter starts the verse with a challenge: "Honor the Messiah as Lord in your hearts." Apologetics should be done amidst a certain kind of life, one where we surrender more and more to Christ. When we do this, He transforms us. So a transformed life is the beginning point for our apologetics. What will this kind of apologetic look like? Defense doesn't mean being defensive, and offense doesn't mean being offensive. Rather, verse 16 tells us our defense is made "with gentleness and respect." Doing apologetics with Jesus as Lord and Master of our lives means our encounters will be marked by humility, warmth, grace, and love even while we stand boldly for the truth. By doing so, we follow in the way of Jesus, who was "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

Historically Speaking

A Way for Wives • 3:1-17

Peter wrote the words of this passage at a time of great upheaval in the culture. When people became believers under Roman rule, they were often singled out and persecuted. In the Roman Empire, women had a doubly difficult time, for they were also considered a man's property. However, once they came to Christ, the women of this era discovered that He had created a way for them to be valued and cherished. In Christ, those who were treated as nothing discovered that they were something.

Perhaps the greatest complication came within marriage: How should a newly converted wife now relate to her pagan husband? Some of these women believed that their allegiance to Christ replaced their responsibility to their spouses. (Slaves who became believers faced a similar challenge in their relationships with unsaved masters.) Peter preaches otherwise, encouraging wives to submit to their husbands as far as possible, because their conduct might actually win their unbelieving spouses to Christ.

It is important to understand that Peter does not call for a wife's unqualified submission—he does not say she should submit to an abusive relationship or obey a husband who tells her to give up her faith. In a typical marriage in that culture, however, a woman's quietly respectful attitude toward her spouse could have a powerful impact—not just on her husband but her household—for Christ.

SPEAK THE TRUTH

Refusing to Lie

1 Peter 3:10-17

If we truly desire renewal in our spiritual walk, we must learn to be truthful and turn away from lying. Lying can easily become a way of life. We can even lie to ourselves, covering up our problems and pretending they don't exist. But someday we must face reality. And when we do, we will see the pain caused by our lies—pain that has hurt us and our loved ones.

Think about these verses: "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech" (1 Peter 3:10). "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:9-10).

If lying is second nature to us, it may be difficult for us to change. But change we must. Lies will only hurt us and others. We must learn to guard our lips and our thoughts from lies. Then we can persevere in our spiritual growth.

Turn to 1 John 5.

Tough Questions

Why does God allow suffering? • 4:12-19

Earlier in his letter, Peter discusses one possible response to persecution—to give oneself over to the will of God (4:1-5). Now he turns to two other possible reactions.

First, believers may think they are being singled out and wonder why this "strange thing" is happening. Yet suffering should be expected for those who follow Christ (Matt. 5:11; Acts 5:41).

Second, Christians may think they are being judged for some reason. But if they are living above reproach, they can rejoice that they are suffering according to God's will and for His glory. They can also stand firm, entrusting the outcome to Him as they continue to do what is right (Heb. 12:7).

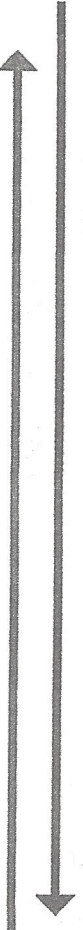
No matter what the reason is for suffering, God does use it—sometimes as discipline (Heb. 12:5-11) and sometimes as instruction. Here are some of those purposes:

- To train us in obedience (Heb. 5:7-8)
- To produce patience (Rom. 5:3)
- To prevent pride (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
- To teach His ways (Ps. 119:65-71)
- To prepare us to comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3, 4)
- To prove us (4:14)

In the end, just as the oyster coats an intrusive speck of sand with a smooth substance until it becomes a pearl of great value, God layers our difficulties with His greatness and glory until we develop our own pearl of great price—strength of character.

A man can never be the same after hearing God's truth spoken in the power of God's Holy Spirit; he will either obey and go forward, or ignore and die a little.

RICHARD C. HALVERSON (1916-1995),
U.S. SENATE CHAPLAIN



You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls.

1 PETER 1:8-9

TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

The Narrow Road

1 Peter 4:1-4

Spiritual growth takes place when we turn from our sins and turn toward the new life God has for us. When we have had enough of going our own way and doing our own thing and have finally asked God to redeem our lives, we begin our journey of faith. But the path Christ calls us to follow is narrow and difficult. Jesus said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Peter further pointed out, "You have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do . . . They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you" (1 Peter 4:3-4). People on the "road that leads to destruction" won't restrict themselves to the moral boundaries God calls us to maintain. However, when we realize the possibilities of the wonderful life here and in eternity that God has called us to, we will eagerly ask him to transform our lives and make us living testimonies to his grace.

Move on to Key 7 and turn to Matthew 26.

2:24 Not only did Jesus serve as our example for how to deal with suffering, but he also suffered for us. He received the punishment for our sin so we wouldn't have to. Instead of facing terrible punishment, we can receive his mercy. He desires to set us free from our bondage and heal us from the devastating effects of sin in our lives.

3:1-7 God's design for marriage is for the wife to respect her husband and the husband to be sensitive and loving toward his wife. Husband and wife are to receive through each other the blessings of God's loving grace and guiding truth. This sounds wonderful, but, as anyone who is married knows, it is often hard to carry out! It requires being vulnerable, resolving conflicts, and being confronted with the truth even when it hurts. Working through such difficulties is part of God's plan for helping us grow to full maturity.

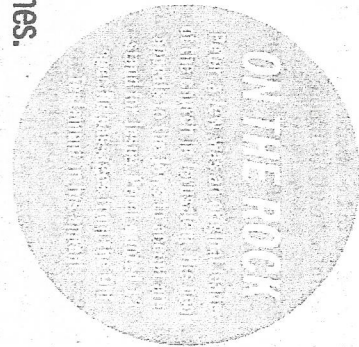
1 PETER

What's in a Name?

The name Peter (or Petros) means "Rock."

STANDING STRONG

Peter encouraged believers to stay strong in their faith during trials and persecution, referencing the word suffer (or suffering) 18 times.



KEY PASSAGE

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1:18-19).

BY THE NUMBERS

5	CHAPTERS	5	REACHING OUT
105	VERSES	scattered throughout the	Peter wrote to believers
2,495	WORDS	provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1).	

LIFE LESSONS: The world watches how you respond to and obey authority (2:13-15). Rejoice when you experience suffering because of your faith (4:14).

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW 1 PETER AND 2 PETER?

1 PETER IN REVIEW

CRYPTIC PHRASES

1. What does Peter mean by "pure spiritual milk"?
- A. The headwaters of Euphrates
- B. Clean water for missionaries
- C. Feeding on the Word of God
- D. The vision of the river flowing in heaven

WHO SAID IT?

2. "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever." Which prophet does Peter quote?

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

3. What does Peter say we should do "without grumbling"?
- A. Offer hospitality to one another
- B. Speak the truth in love
- C. Share our possessions with one another
- D. Pray and fast

TIME TRAVELER

4. Peter refers to you as his son. Who are you?

WHO SAID IT?

5. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer." Who originally said this?

HOT SEAT

6. I am what the water that saved Noah and his family represents to believers. What am I?

2 PETER IN REVIEW

HOT SEAT

1. I am the one Peter says "was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard." Who am I?

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

2. Peter quotes God, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." When did Peter say he heard God say it?
 - A. During Jesus' baptism
 - B. During the transfiguration on the sacred mountain
 - C. During the Last Supper before the crucifixion
 - D. During the moments just before Jesus' ascension

TIME TRAVELER

3. You are what Peter says will come like a thief. What are you?

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

4. What has Jesus' divine power given us?

HOT SEAT

5. I am what Peter says the present earth and heavens are being reserved for. What am I?

MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY

6. What did Peter say he thought was right to do?
 - A. Refresh his readers' memories
 - B. Point out his readers' faults
 - C. Share his belongings with his readers
 - D. Visit his readers as soon as possible

ANSWERS:

1. C (2:2)
2. A (4:9)
3. A (4:9)
4. Mark (5:3)
5. David (3:12); see Psalm 34 (12-16)
6. B (1:16-18)
7. 2 PETER: 1. Lot (2:7)
8. Lot (2:7)
9. 9 (9:9)
10. 10 (10:10)
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