

1 Peter 1:1-2 – God’s Elect

1. You are at a party. You meet someone for the first time and they say – “so tell us about yourself”. How would you answer? How do people in our society generally describe/categorise people?

2. 1 Peter is written to Christians scattered around the ancient world (in the area of modern day Turkey). It seems they were suffering for being Christians (see 4:12-16 & 5:6-11). Peter calls them “aliens and strangers” (2:11), and reminds of them of who they are in Christ. Read 1:1-2:12...
 - a. What different descriptions/images are used to describe our identity as Christians?

 - b. From the passage itself, why is it important for us to know who we are in Christ?

 - c. From the passage and your own experience, what can happen if we aren’t clear about who we are?

3. Focusing on the opening 2 verses....
 - a. How might knowing that we are “God’s Elect” spur us on in the Christian life?

 - b. What do we learn here about the roles and relationships of each person of the Trinity in bringing someone to Christ?

God the Father...

The Holy Spirit...

Jesus Christ...

 - c. From these verses – what is a Christian? (Try and use your own everyday language).

 - d. Even from these opening verses, what implications flow from understanding who we are – especially regarding the purpose for which we have been chosen? How might this work out in daily life?

4. How does this introduction help Christians who may feel like “strangers in the world”?

5. What can we pray as a result of reading these verses? (Think about how you can praise God, what you need to confess, how you can thank God and what you can ask God for. What can you pray for each other, and for the church as a whole – or individuals or groups in the church?)

1 Peter 1:3-13 – God’s Privileged People

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “hope”? What is one thing you’re hoping for? How certain is your “hope”?

2. Read 1 Peter 1:1-9
 - a. According to this passage, what is the shape and focus of a Christian’s “hope”?

 - b. Why do you think Peter calls the Christian hope “living”?

 - c. On what basis, and to what extent can we be confident of this future?

 - d. How does our Christian hope impact our experience of and reaction to “trials” in this life?

 - e. What do we learn here about the relationship between “hope”, “faith” and “joy” in the Christian life?

3. In what ways is the Christian hope superior to the hopes of those who haven’t been born again? On what inferior hopes are we tempted to set our hearts?

4. According to verses 10-12 we are more privileged than the Prophets and even the angels. Why?

5. What difference to daily life does it make to have a certain future?

6. Verse 13 begins to draw out the implications of understanding the Christian hope. In what practical ways can we put verse 13 into practice? (ie. How do we set our hopes on something?)

7. Pray together. Praise God for what he has done for us – past present and future. Confess our unbelief and commitment to alternate hopes. Thank God for the privilege we have to know Christ and to be shielded by his power until Jesus returns. Ask for God’s help to trust his promises in all of life’s situations. Pray that your family and our whole church will be people of hope.

1 Peter 1:13-21 – God’s Obedient Children

1. “The Christian life demands slavish obedience to God.” Do you agree or disagree with this comment?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:13-21. A prominent feature of this passage is that the instructions given are supported by powerful motivations (which come before or after the instructions). Try and summarise the instructions and the accompanying motivation(s).

Instruction	Motivation(s)
V 13	
V 14	
V 15-16	
V 17-21	

3. How are the instructions given here similar or different to “slavish obedience”?
4. To what does the “therefore” in verse 13 refer? In practical terms, how can we do the instructions listed here?
5. Verse 14 reminds us that we are children of God. According to this passage, what will being obedient children involve? In what areas of life do these instructions have particular relevance for you (at the present time), and/or for our church?
6. What do you think it means to live here as strangers with reverent fear (v17)? How do the reasons given in verses 17 & 18-21 encourage this?
7. How might understanding the connections between instructions and motivations help us (and help others) to live as obedient children?
8. Spend time praying to together. From this passage, for what can you praise or thank God? What do you need to confess? From your discussion, what can you pray for yourself, for each other and for our church?

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 – God’s Loving Family

1. What are the joys and privileges of being part of a loving family?
2. According to verse 22 who/what is a Christian, and how do you become one? What implication does Peter draw from this?
3. What does it mean for us to “love one another deeply from the heart”?
 - a. What might this look like in our church? What might it look like in your growth group? What might it look like outside our formal structures? (See also 2:1)
 - b. What hurdles/barriers do you find in doing this? (What makes it hard?)
 - c. In verses 23-25 Peter emphasizes the imperishable nature of the Word of God. How might understanding and appreciating this help us to love one another deeply from the heart? (ie. What is the connection between verses 22 & 23, and between 1:23-25 & 2:1 ?)
 - d. (*Optional Question*) Isaiah 40:6-8 is quoted in verse 24. These are profound words of comfort addressed to people in exile. Read Isaiah 40:1-11. How might reflecting on this passage add weight to Peter’s call to love one another deeply from the heart?
 - e. In 2:2 Peter gives a “formula” (pun intended!) for Christian growth. What is this “pure spiritual milk” to which he refers? How does this help Christians to love one another deeply from the heart?
4. What one thing could you do to more thoroughly apply this passage in your own life?
5. Spend time praying together. From this passage what characteristics of God and the way he relates with us can you turn into praise? What do you need to confess? For what can you thank God? For what can you ask God?

1 Peter 2:4-2:12 – Aliens and Strangers

1. In 1 Peter 2:11 Christians are described as “aliens and strangers in the world”. In what situations do you feel like you don’t belong in the world, or imagine you might feel this way?

2. Through this series we have been considering who we are – our identity as Christians. This theme continues in the next section. Read 2:4-10.
 - a. What are the privileges of having “come to him” (Jesus)? Can you sum up in a few words who we are as Christians?

 - b. For what purpose(s) has God given us this identity?

 - c. What do we learn here about Jesus and how different people (and God) regard/respond to him? How might this encourage us when we are rejected or feel alienated from the world?

3. Read verses 11-12. Knowing who we are, two implications follow...
 - a. “Abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul”. What particular desires wage war against your soul? How can you “abstain” from them?

 - b. “Live such good lives among the pagans”. Get a feel for what Peter has in mind from the kind of instructions that follow in 2:13, 2:18, 3:1, 3:7, 3:8, 4:7-11 & 4:19. In what areas do you think that “living such good lives” will most clearly stand out in our culture?

 - c. When we live like this, how do people around us respond? According to the passage, what will be their ultimate response?

4. From what you’ve learned in this series, how can we help each other, and our children, to stand firm as Christians who are “aliens and strangers” in the world?

5. Praise and thank God for the blessings of being Christians. Pray for each other about the specific “battles” that have been mentioned in your discussion. Ask God to help you help yourself and others to have the desire and ability to apply the words of verses 11 & 12.

1 Peter 2:11-25 In his steps: Submission

The first main section of 1 Peter concludes in 2:10. The main theme so far has been about our identity as Christians. Although we are “temporary residents” in this world, Peter reminds us that we are in fact God’s chosen people – born again into His family, given a certain hope of future salvation, and even now experiencing joy, meaning and purpose in life. This is all part of the “true grace of God” to which Peter testifies (5:12).

In the next main section of the letter (2:11-4:11), the main theme shifts to application. In particular, we are urged to follow In Jesus in submission to authorities, even in the face of unjust suffering.

1. To what extent do you think the concept of “submission” to authority is admired or despised in our world today (especially when it is costly to do so)? What does it actually mean to ‘submit’ to somebody?

2. Read 2:11-12. These verses contain general instructions, which are then applied in what follows.
 - a. What are the general instructions here?

 - b. The main motivation given is that people will “glorify God on the day of visitation”. What do you think this means?

3. Read 2:13-25.
 - a. How do you feel about this teaching? Why do you think some might find this difficult?

 - b. What reasons are given to submit to human authorities?
 - v 13 & 15

 - v 19-20

 - v 21-23

 - v 24-25

 - c. What would you say to someone who says “this is dangerous teaching because it perpetuates injustice and discourages people from agitating for change”?

 - d. Who are the various human authorities in your life? What attitudes, behaviour or motives in yourself do you find challenged by this passage? What can help you to faithfully follow Jesus in this regard?

4. Pray together. Confess any failures to submit appropriately to human authorities. Thank God for the submission of Jesus that brought us salvation. Ask God to help you to follow Jesus in this area of life.

1 Peter 3:1-7 In his steps: Marriage

1. God's Word is always good, but often profoundly challenges us and our culture. Read 1 Peter 3:1-7. From your first reading, what aspects of this passage are challenging to our culture's current ways of thinking and behaving? How do you feel on first reading it?

2. The instructions to both wives and husbands begin with "in the same way". To what do you think this is referring (ie. in the same way as who/what)?

3. Focusing on the instructions to wives in v 1-6...
 - a. Here is a definition of Biblical submission: "the voluntary placing of yourself under another person's authority which has been delegated to them by God". To what extent do you think this definition is consistent with verses 1-6 (& generally helpful)?

 - b. What reasons are given for wives to "submit yourselves to your own husbands" (even if they are not Christians, or Christians but still not 'perfect')?

 - c. Do these verses give the impression that this will be an easy thing to do? Do they give the impression that it is a weak or passive ('doormat') way to be?

 - d. What attitudes/actions/words would be consistent with submission in marriage? What would normally be inconsistent?

4. Focusing on the instruction to husbands in v 7...
 - a. What does it mean to "live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature"? Think about this both positively, and also negatively (ie. what attitudes or behaviour would be inconsistent with this?)

 - b. What motivations are given for husbands to live this way?

5. In what ways might working on this benefit marriages? In what ways might failure to live this way contribute to problems in marriages?

6. What practical steps could you take to put these words into practice in your own life, and in the lives of others in our church? What help do you need?

7. Pray together about what you heard from God's Word, and for each other to put it into practice?

1 Peter 3:8-22 In his steps: When Wronged

1. Think of a time when you (or someone else) did or tried to do what was good and right, but suffered loss, criticism or insult. How did you feel in this situation, and what was/is your most natural response?

The theme of doing good even when opposed is introduced in 1 Peter 2:12. As Christians we are called to follow Jesus who also suffered even though he did no wrong (2:21-25). After addressing what this means for citizens, slaves, wives and husbands, Peter addresses all Christians who 'suffer for righteousness' in this world. Read 3:8-22.

2. In verses 8-12 Peter instructs Christians how to live as peacemakers in the church and in the world.
 - a. Some positive instructions are given in verse 8. Why do you think these might be particularly important for Christians living in a world that opposes them?
 - b. According to verses 9-12, what are we not to do, and what are we called to do instead? What reasons are given to support this? (Note: To 'bless' someone is to ask God to bestow his grace or favour on them).
 - c. (As time permits) In v10-12 Peter quotes Psalm 34. Read the Psalm together. Why is this such an appropriate Psalm to quote? What hope does the Psalm hold out?
3. From verses 13-17 Peter gives instructions and assurance in the face of 'unjust' suffering.
 - a. Following from verse 12, what answer do you think Peter expects to the question in verse 13?
 - b. According to verses 14-17, how should we think and act if we 'suffer for righteousness'? What might these responses look like for us today?
4. The final section of this passage (v 18-22) can seem strange, but its purpose is clear – to provide further reason to follow the teaching of verses 13-17 (note the "for" in v18). To see the big picture...
 - a. How does the section begin and end? How might being reminded of Jesus' suffering and ultimate victory help us when we suffer unjustly at the hands of evil people & forces?
 - b. How does thinking about the proclamation of Jesus' victory (in his death and resurrection) to those who disobeyed God in the days of Noah, and the way God saved his people through the ark, help us not to fear those who disobey God and oppose his people today?
5. From what you have seen in this passage, for what can you praise and thank God? For what do you need to ask for God? Spend time praying together.

1 Peter 4:1-11 In his steps: Living for God

1. Do Christians in our society “suffer” for choosing to live a godly life in a world that doesn’t? If so, what forms does this suffering take?

The middle section of the 1 Peter (2:11-4:11) urges us to live as God’s people, even when it brings suffering from a hostile world. To help us, Peter points us to the example of Jesus who entrusted himself to God as he suffered (2:21-23), and was then raised to glory. Jesus’ suffering to bring us to God (2:24-25 & 3:18), and his rising to rule over all (3:22) is not only an example for us, but a profound motivation to live a new life.

2. Read 1 Peter 4:1-11. From verses 1 & 2, what do you think Peter has in mind by “the same resolve”? What motivation(s) are we given to equip ourselves with this resolve?
3. Verses 3-4 provide further reasons to resolve to live God’s way. To what extent does this description match your own experience? When do you feel pressure to “plunge” into the same flood of wild living?
4. Although faithful Christians may be ‘slandered’ by the world (and even be killed), what else (from verses 5-6) motivates us to persevere in living God’s way? To what extent are you conscious of this reality?
5. The final section speaks to the church about how to live together in the midst of a hostile world, and in light of the “end of all things”. Try and summarise (in a single phrase) each of the verses... .

v 7

v 8-9

v 10-11a

v 11b-c

Why do you think each of these instructions are important for Christians who suffer in the midst of a hostile world?

For each one, what do you think this ‘looks like’ for your group and our church?

6. In light of this passage, are there any changes you need to make to your thinking or living? What can you do to not only have this resolve, but to ‘live it out’?
7. Pray for each other, and for those known to you (both locally and overseas) who feel the weight of ‘slander’ for living God’s way.

1 Peter 4:12-19 When Christians Suffer

1. Read John 15:18-25. Although we do experience some rejection and mockery, in Sydney we are currently largely spared of significant hatred, discrimination, threats & persecution. Why do you think this is?

2. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. This begins the final section of the letter (note “Dear friends” at 2:11 & 4:12), but continues the theme of standing firm in the face of suffering. When suffering (because of Christ) comes, what are we Christians called to do, and not to do?

3. What implied promise is given in verses 13 – causing Christians to rejoice even when suffering comes? (See also 1 Peter 1:5-9, 1:11, 3:18 & 22, 5:1). What further assurance is given in verse 14?

4. Read verses 15 & 16. In what situations are you most tempted to “be ashamed” of the name of Jesus, or being called a “Christian” (even in subtle ways)?

5. How does the argument of verses 17 & 18 motivate us to live out the instruction of verse 16? (Hints: What are the different situations of Christians and “the ungodly” in the present and in the future? Note that “judgment” (v 17) is not used here in the sense of specific punishment for sin, but refers to the painful ‘trials’ that come to Christians on account of Christ - see also 1:6-7. (If time permits you might also like to read and reflect on Romans 5:2-5, Hebrews 12:7-12 & James 1:2-4.)

6. The Christian response to suffering for the name of Christ (according to God’s will) is summed up in verse 19.
 - a. Instead of continuing to do what is good (cf 2:12, 2:15-17, 3:13-17), what alternate paths might we be tempted to take when suffering comes?

 - b. How do these verses further encourage us to entrust ourselves to God - 2:21-23, 5:6, 5:10?

7. How do these verses challenge common views and attitudes in our church?

8. In light of these verses, how do you think we can prepare ourselves for the day when “the fiery ordeal” comes to us?

1 Peter 5 Take your Stand in God's Grace

1. What particular temptations do you think might come to a church under pressure from persecution?

2. Read 1 Peter 5. These are Peter's closing words to the scattered and persecuted churches of the ancient world. In verses 1-7 he gives instructions for different people....
 - a. What role & promise is given to the "elders among you"? What should characterise their ministry? (v 1-4)

 - b. Who are the "elders" in our church? In light of this passage what could you pray for them?

 - c. What role & promise is given to "younger men" and then to "all of you"? (v 5-7)

 - d. Might the instruction of verses 5-7 look like in our church? What could you pray in response?

3. The letter finishes with stirring words. What challenges and encouragements do we find in verses 8-14?

4. Peter wrote the letter "to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God" – and ultimately to urge you to "take your stand" in it (v12). As you think back over the whole letter...
 - a. What has particularly encouraged you? (If you need some reminders - read these key verses again: 1 Peter 1:3-4, 2:9-12, 2:21-25, 3:18 & 4:1 & 19).

 - b. In what ways have you been helped or challenged to take your stand?

5. Pray for each other, for church leaders and for our whole church. Thank God for his 'true' grace. Ask that you and our whole church might stand firm in it.