

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, unchanging, kept in heaven for you, whom angels are being guarded that you may be ready to be revealed. 5 Do not grieve, therefore, while you are waiting for this you rejoice, though sometimes, if necessary, you are grieved by various trials, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not

LIVING HOPE



A SERIES IN 1 PETER

STUDY GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

I sat behind a homeless man at the church I attended in Louisville. A friend challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and to embrace outcasts, and here was a man I thought fit the description. He wore tattered clothes and carried on his back a cloth sack where he kept his most valuable items. I thought I might encourage him, but instead, he encouraged me. A few weeks earlier he had become a Christian, and after being unemployed for several decades, he was convicted to start working again. The worship service began, and as the preacher delivered his message, a man dressed in old clothes, with not a penny to his name, pulled out a water-stained notebook and a cheap plastic pen. Smiling, he began to write down almost everything the pastor said. He was a desperate man and for the first time in decades, he had something to live for.

A few weeks later, I was taking a walk outside and I encountered another homeless man. I asked him, "How are you?" To which he simply replied, "Sometimes I just don't know." I kept pressing him with questions and I even tried to offer words of encouragement but every attempt I made was shot down with sustained negativity. What this second man lacked was hope found exclusively in the person and work of Jesus Christ. According to 1 Peter 1:3, God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." What sets our Lord apart from vain idols and perishable stock is that He has conquered death and promised eternal life to those who place their faith in His work on the Cross. We pray that as you read through this study guide you will experience for yourself what it means to trust in this Living Hope.

WEEK 1: HOPE IS ETERNAL

*Written by Chris Standridge
Ontario Campus and Communities Pastor*

Read: 1 Peter 1:1-12

Imagine living under the rule of a national leader so set on getting his way that he would burn the crown jewel city of his entire kingdom to the ground. History tells us this is what happened in 64 AD. Nero was the emperor of the Roman Empire at the time and had a plan for a beautification project of the city of Rome. However, months earlier the Senate had denied him the funding to pay for the urban restoration project. Rome was set ablaze, and for six days, Nero let the city burn and did nothing about it. Many scholars believe Nero himself had the city torched in order to force a rebuild project.

To evade political backlash, Nero blamed the Christians for starting the fire. This set off three of the bloodiest years of persecution in the entire history of the Church. Thousands of Christians were persecuted, tortured, and martyred. Some were draped with wild animal carcasses while others mauled to death by dogs. They were hung on crosses and set on fire. They were even tarred, hung on posts, and burned alive to serve as lampposts for Nero's gardens. As a result, Christians scattered throughout all of Asia. They were exiles living at death's doorstep with the possibility of martyrdom because they refused to conform to the culture.

Hope had turned into a precious commodity. Peter wrote this letter shortly after this great dispersion in order to offer words of encouragement. Jews who had converted to Christ knew something about the promise of a better hope. They knew the history of Israel and how they sojourned through the wilderness in hopes of a land that would become their inheritance. Peter draws upon this fact when he gets into the heart of the letter by emphasizing that through their new life in Christ, his readers are now Christians in search of an inheritance. The inheritance that belongs to believers is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It's literally an eternal inheritance. We can rest knowing that when we persevere with Christ through trouble and hardship, there is an inheritance kept for us in Heaven, and it is given to us and protected for us to be enjoyed forever.

Stop and think about the fact that all the beauty we're surrounded by in this world is still marred by the stain of The Fall. Yellowstone? Tainted. The Grand Canyon? Soiled. The Canadian Rockies? Tattered. Bora Bora? The Swiss Alps? Niagara Falls? All stained by original sin. But when we get to Heaven, the best of whatever we experience on this earth will pale in comparison to the worst of Heaven (if there even is such a thing). Millennia after we've realized our eternal hope in Jesus Christ, we will grow no more tired of it than the day we first received it.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun. We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. As a Christian, how do you feel like you're living as an exile?
2. How can embracing your identity in Christ help you when you struggle with your self-worth?
3. In a world driven by consumption and materialism, how should you live in light of a future inheritance that is incorruptible?
4. How could the hope of an eternal inheritance give you strength to persevere in the midst of trials and tribulations?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Ephesians 1:18

Day 2: Hebrews 10:23

Day 3: Isaiah 40:31

Day 4: Romans 8:23-25

Day 5: Romans 15:13

WEEK 2: HOPE IS A LIFE CHANGER

*Written by Nicholas Kelley
Pastoral Intern*

Read: 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

Whenever cultural Christianity is trending in our society, countless celebrities suddenly profess faith in Christ. You might call them “seasonal Christians” or “ideological chameleons” because they are quick to change their appearance to blend in with the environment. When I attended church camps years ago as a high schooler, one individual experienced a spiritual conversion every year I was in attendance. After the camps were over, and after this person had made emotional pleas to God and had promised to follow His will, they went back to their sinful pattern of life.

A common criticism I often receive as a Christian is that I belong to a community of hypocrites. The sad reality is that when people live contrary to the purity of the Gospel, when they grip their Bibles while clenching sin, the reputation of the Church and of Christ is tarnished. If we want to be effective evangelists and win souls to Christ, we must consider whether our lives stand in stark contrast to the passions and behaviors of this world.

Peter compares Christians to obedient children. As a son or daughter submits to their father’s will, so too must we obey our Heavenly Father. In verse 22, Peter continues this train of thought by teaching us that our souls are made pure by the truth. And so a question necessarily arises: what is the truth? In Chapter 1, beginning in verse 25 we are told that the Word of the Lord, the Good News that we have received, is the truth that purifies our souls. And just as newborn infants long for milk, we should long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word.

I am reminded of Jesus’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prays that the Father would sanctify His people in the truth and declares that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). When Peter is calling on Christians to be changed men and women by submitting themselves to the will of God, he is essentially voicing the same desire Jesus had. For the authentic Christian, internal change is inevitable because it is not dependent on our will or our feeble efforts, but upon the Holy Spirit who breathes into our souls a supernatural hope and a desire to be made new.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you regularly study Scripture with intentionality?
2. In what ways have you been obedient to the Lord's will? In what ways have you been disobedient?
3. Do you find it easier to obey God in public or private settings?
4. How can you take what you learn from a Sunday sermon and apply it to the rest of the week?
4. Have you ever been called a "hypocrite?" If so, how might you move from hypocrisy to authenticity and integrity?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: John 17:17

Day 2: Romans 12:2

Day 3: John 14:15

Day 4: Luke 6:46

Day 5: Deuteronomy 11:1

WEEK 3: HOPE IS A FOUNDATION BUILDER

*Written by Keegan McQuate
Waterford Campus and Interim Student Ministry Pastor*

Read: 1 Peter 2:4-10

In Chapter 2 verse 4, Peter calls Jesus a Living Stone and compares Him to the Old Testament Temple which was made of actual stone. Just as Christ was rejected by man, Christians will be rejected as well. And just as the temple was built to offer spiritual sacrifices to the Lord, the elect exiles have been built up with living stones. Believers in Christ no longer need to go to a priest as a mediator to repent from their sins. Instead, they can directly interact with God because Jesus Christ has become their Mediator. Now they can dwell with the Lord and offer spiritual sacrifices to Him. In verse 6, Peter states that Christ is the cornerstone and has replaced the temple, and that faith in Christ does not lead to eternal shame but to salvation.

Even though Christ was rejected by the Jews, God still used Him to establish the Church. Christ is a stumbling stone for those who do not believe because they disobey His Word (Verses 7 and 8). Peter states in verses 9 and 10 that the elect exiles were once a people living in darkness but now they are called "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession." (v.10) They have been transferred from a place of darkness into a "marvelous light." These wanderers, with no place to call home and virtually no identity, have become God's people!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of resistance should we expect in our lives as Christians?
2. What impact does the 'Living Stone' have on our lives?
3. Knowing that you have now received mercy, how can you show mercy to others?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Isaiah 28:16

Day 2: Psalm 118:22

Day 3: Acts 4:11

Day 4: Revelation 19:16

Day 5: John 15:18-25

WEEK 4: HOPE IS ALIVE IN US

Written by Nicholas Kelley

Pastoral Intern

Read: 1 Peter 2:11-4:11

Some people have fascinating testimonies of how the Lord saved them and brought them to the Church. Others of us possess more “mundane” accounts of the Lord’s grace in our lives. I cannot recall my conversion experience, because I can’t remember a definitive time, but I can remember my baptism. I had been asked a year prior if I wanted to take this next step in my faith, but like most things, my decision was complicated by worry. As a 16-year-old, I thought people might be shocked that I hadn’t been baptized earlier, given I had professed Jesus for some time. I was 17, and baptism weekend was a few weeks away. The same worry weighed on my mind. “Would people look down upon me because I waited this long?” I voiced my concerns with family and friends who reminded me that Baptism is merely an external proclamation of an internal reality.

I believed Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross was sufficient and necessary to save me from my sins. I had confessed my transgressions to God. And whenever I gave in to temptation I grieved. It was clear that I had exhibited the characteristics of a saved person. But I had met a hinge point. If I were to obey Christ, it would be uncomfortable because it would require me to face my biggest fear: people’s perceptions of me. I decided to get baptized not because people told me to but because this is what God wanted me to do, and His desires trumped my fears.

In Chapter 3 verses 18 through 22, Peter writes about a spiritual baptism that takes place in the hearts of every believer. In baptism, we declare Christ’s death and resurrection, and we declare an internal spiritual reality. Before we were Christians, we were dead in our sins and our desires were contrary to the will of God. When Christ came into our lives, He transformed our hearts so that we now have ability and temperament to live in conformity to God’s Word. In Chapter 4 verses 7-11, Peter speaks of glory that belongs to God through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Obeying God is not an end in and of itself. Obedience is meant to serve a more ultimate purpose: the glorification of God through obedience bought for us by Christ.

Jesus died for us on the Cross, not so that we could continue to live lives marked by sin and wickedness, but that we should be made new, and in being made new, display the glory of God's transforming, life-altering grace. There are 2 errors we might fall into concerning baptism. First, we might get baptized without having ever experienced an internal death to sin and resurrection unto righteousness. And second, we might overcomplicate what was meant to serve as a simple example to the Church. Baptism is a symbol of the physical death and resurrection of Christ and the spiritual death and resurrection of our souls.

If you are a new person in Christ Jesus, if the old is gone and the new has come, and if you display the characteristics of a Christ follower, hope is alive in you. How will you share this hope with others?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you been baptized? If not, what is holding you back from taking this next step?
2. What are some of the characteristics of a saved person?
3. What are some of the "false hopes" people put their trust in?
4. What are common misconceptions or errors people have concerning Baptism?
(Ex. "Baptism saves you.")

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: John 3:5

Day 2: Romans 6:3-4

Day 3: Galatians 3:27

Day 4: Galatians 5:24

Day 5: 2 Corinthians 5:17

WEEK 5: HOPE IS ENDURING

*Written by Mike Mahek
Shelby Campus and Missions Pastor*

Read: 1 Peter 4:12-5:14

Have you ever faced a season of suffering? Have you ever suffered for your belief in the Gospel? In this passage, Peter says that as followers of Christ, we should expect trials. To clarify, the suffering of the early Church was vastly different and far more severe than what most of us will experience. But we still need to expect "fiery trials." Not only should we expect them, but we should rejoice in them. Yes, you read that correctly. We should rejoice in our trials. But why? We rejoice amid adversity because we share in Christ's sufferings and the future glory that awaits when Christ returns.

Reflect on that for a moment. We are to rejoice in suffering because we share in Christ's sufferings. Christ suffered for the salvation of His people and for His glory. We get to share in that reality. In other words, we can become more like Christ when we suffer well. What does it mean to suffer well? We need only to look to Jesus. He suffered but remained steadfast in His relationship with the Father. He suffered with a purpose and with a will for the salvation of others. Adversity often makes us look to ourselves. Yet, before Jesus was crucified, He looked to the Father while in the Garden of Gethsemane and in His prayer, He considered the needs of His flock. When we face trials and hardships, we can do so with those things in focus. When we do, we can rejoice in suffering and set our minds on the glory that awaits His return.

How do we do that practically? We practice humility and cast our anxiety on Christ. Look at Chapter 5 verse 7. "We cast our anxieties on Him because He cares for us." It would be easy to forget the second part of that verse. We are often so focused on the anxieties of this world that we forget how much He cares for us. Trusting in faith, during suffering or anxiety, can only be done when we remember how much Jesus loves us. Whether or not our circumstances improve has little to do with our contentment. Our contentment is found in the overwhelming love of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Are we being bold enough in our Christian faith that we face trials or persecution? If not, how can we take bolder steps?
2. Are we rejoicing in difficulty and keeping our minds focused on the One who suffered for us? If not, how can we find that joy?
3. How are we handling anxiety? Are we dealing with it in a way that is God focused and remembering His care for us? If we are overwhelmed, how can we handle our anxiety when we can't necessarily change the circumstances causing it?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Day 1: Romans 8:7-18

Day 2: Psalm 31:14-16

Day 3: James 1:2-4

Day 4: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Day 5: Romans 5:3-5



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