



TRIAL BY FIRE

1 PETER

1 Peter • June - August 2023

Overview

Our world is addicted to comfort and allergic to suffering. We run after what feels good, making emotions the litmus test for right and wrong and making anything that hurts or appears difficult something to be eliminated rather than worked through. Resilience is lacking, anxiety permeates our culture, and it's infected the Church, making us unprepared to cope with suffering and persecution. And we must be prepared. Blind optimism is insufficient in the face of suffering; we must have something solid on which to stand, something to put our hope in when all hope seems lost - and we do. His name is Jesus.

Outline

1. The Joy of Salvation (1 Peter 1:1-12)
2. Holiness And Hope (1 Peter 1:13-2:3)
3. Living as God's People (1 Peter 2:4-10)
4. Living As God's People: At Home and Public (1 Peter 2:11-3:7)
5. Living With Christ as Lord (1 Peter 3:8-22)
6. Living With An Eternal Perspective (1 Peter 4:1-11)
7. The Joy of Suffering for the Name (1 Peter 4:12-19)
8. Holiness and Endurance in the Church (1 Peter 5:1-14)

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Week 1 • 25 June 2023 • 1 Peter 1:1-12

Peter's message to the scattered church is one of hope grounded in the greatness of the gospel.

1. What do you know about the life of Peter?
2. Read the passage together and make a note of all of the things that we have because of this message of Jesus.
 - a. What resonates with you most and why?
 - b. How might this be specifically comforting to his readers in suffering?
3. Have a look at this quote:

“Like fire working on gold, suffering can destroy some things within us and purify and strengthen other things. Or not. It depends on our response.”

(Tim Keller in Walking with God Through Pain & Suffering)

- a. How does Tim's quote fit with Peter's teaching on suffering in this passage?

- b. To what extent have you seen this in your life?
4. What trials are going on in your world right now?
- a. What encouragement is there in this passage?
 - b. How can you remind yourself of this?
5. This passage contains some incredible truths about Jesus. Why not take time to thank and worship God for them together in prayer.

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Week 2 • 2 July 2023 • 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

In light of last week's great call to the hope of salvation, Peter now urges the church towards holiness in light of it. This is what we look at over the next two weeks.

1. What's the biggest culture shock you've had in your life?

2. What reasons does Peter give to motivate us towards holiness in this passage?

3. Peter is writing to people who were scattered across nations and uses being a foreigner as a metaphor for our place as Christians in this world. Holiness, meaning set apart, therefore makes sense in this context.
 - a. In what ways does following Jesus make you feel most like a foreigner?

- b. Why is living as a 'foreigner' in this world so important?

4. What is the step of obedience you feel God is calling you to out of this passage (v22)? Why not pray for one another about those things.

5. One of the things that results from obedience to Jesus is a deep love for one another. Have a look at John 13:34-35 together.
 - a. How have you seen growth in this in your group?

 - b. Where is the Lord calling you to progress?

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Week 3 • 16 July 2023 • 1 Peter 2:4-10

This week can seem like a tricky week because of the OT quotes and imagery. Remember that Peter is continuing the theme from the previous passage—the call to living set apart as holy foreigners in light of the hope of the gospel.

1. What steps of obedience did you talk about last week, and how did that go?

2. Knowing that Peter's readers are scattered, persecuted and living like foreigners:
 - a. What encouragements does Peter give?

 - b. How are these specifically relevant to how they might have been feeling?

3. Jesus is consistently referred to in this passage as 'the stone.'
 - a. How did different people respond to or perceive this stone according to the passage?
 - b. How have you seen these reactions in your world?
 - c. How does that affect your approach to reaching out with the gospel?

4. These Christian readers are described in the same way Israel was (Ex 19:4-6). They were chosen, precious and a special possession. Special possession referred to the king's private personal wealth.
 - a. If you're a follower of Jesus, you are described in this way. To what extent are you able to see yourself in this way?
 - b. What might change if you fully embraced this reality?
 - c. Why not spend some time thanking God together that it's true?

5. The church is also referred to in a special way. We're a spiritual house where God is present (v5).
 - a. How does this make you reflect on the gathering of the church?
 - b. Is there anything that might need to change in your group as a result?

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Week 4 • 23 July 2023 • 1 Peter 2:11-3:7

Peter continues his theme of how we are to live our Christian lives as ‘foreigners’ on earth. This week he looks at a posture of submission.

1. Have a look at v11-12. What is Peter’s overall “why” and how does it affect how you read the whole passage?

There are four different areas that Peter looks at either side of the example of Christ in v23-25: Government, employment, husbands and wives. For the sake of time, you may want to just discuss one area.

2. What is the nature of submission in the area you’ve chosen?
 - a. What is the reason Peter gives for it?
 - b. What would it look like practically to live it out?
3. One issue that has arisen in recent years has been protests against the government. To what extent do you think such a response is appropriate in light of this passage? Why? Why not?

4. The passage is built around the example of Jesus in v23-25.
 - a. What strikes you most about the example of Jesus as Peter describes it?
 - b. In what way does it challenge you personally?
 - c. What would it look like for you to seek to imitate Jesus more closely in this today?

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Week 5 • 30 July 2023 • 1 Peter 3:8-22

Peter continues his encouragement on living as foreigners with teaching around the idea that we can and will suffer for doing good.

1. Is 'suffering for good' something you have experienced? What happened? What was it like?
2. In verse 8, Peter gives helpful insight on our posture with one another.
 - a. What stands out to you as important in the context of caring for one another in suffering?
 - b. Where do you think there is the most room for growth for you?
3. Have a look at verses 10-12 where Peter quotes Psalm 34 when David was suffering:
 - a. Why is this extract relevant? What is the point that Peter is making?

b. What is encouraging for you in this Psalm?

If this Psalm feels particularly relevant for the group, why not take the time to have a look at the whole Psalm. Ask yourselves what it tells us about God, about ourselves, and what assurance there is for those who are in suffering.

4. Verses 15-16 are well known for being used by Christian apologists. If Jesus was truly and fully Lord (*kyrios* - supreme) in your life, what would/do people notice about your life?

5. When people ask you for the reason for the hope that you have, what would you say?
 - a. Can you answer in less than a minute?

 - b. Why not take the time to share together the answers you would give to both encourage one another and to practice.

 - c. Pray that God would help us live lives that provoke questions about the hope we have and for opportunities to share our answers with people who don't know the Lord.



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Week 6 • 6 Aug 2023 • 1 Peter 4:1-11

This week continues the theme in this section of the book around suffering and how to live in the midst of it.

1. Peter's focus at the outset is on no longer living as we did before believing in Jesus.
 - a. Why is this change so important?
 - b. Where are you most striving to live in repentance right now?
 - c. What support would be most helpful and how can we keep each other accountable?
2. Peter teaches a common theme around how we treat one another (v8-9). This makes sense because the community of the church needs to be a safe space for Christians struggling in a secular context. What can we learn from these verses on the way we journey with one another? What is one step you could take to respond to the teaching on 'one anothers' in the following verses?



- a. 1 Peter 4:8-9
 - b. John 13:34-35
 - c. Galatians 6:2
 - d. Colossians 3:13
3. It is loving one another deeply that is also the context for serving.
- a. What are the gifts and skills you think God has given you that could be used to serve others in this way?
 - b. Why is this so important in the context of suffering?
4. In the middle of the passage Peter calls the church to be alert and sober minded so that you can pray.

What are things relevant to this passage in your own life, the church, or the city we live in that you could pray about together?

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Week 7 • 13 Aug 2023 • 1 Peter 4:12-19

This week's passage rounds off the section on suffering within 1 Peter.

1. Thinking about 'tests' in general - think sport, education, medicine - what is their purpose?

2. As you think about 1 Peter 4:12 and Deut 8:1-5, what is God's purpose in testing us? How is it different or the same to your answer to question one?

3. As you read today's passage, what does Peter say are the celebrations and purposes of suffering as Christians?
 - a. How do John 18:15-25 and Acts 5:40-42 add to this?

4. How do you see suffering and persecution as followers of Jesus present in our culture?



- a. If and when it gets worse, in what ways might that be a good thing?
 - b. What might be different or need to change for us as the church as that increases?
5. Peter closes the section with an encouragement to commit themselves to God and continue to do good (v19).
- a. How does that align with Luke 6:26-37?
 - b. What is the good that you can focus on doing right now?

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Week 8 • 20 Aug 2023 • 1 Peter 5:1-14

1. Peter calls church leaders to “shepherd leadership”, the number one leadership paradigm in Scripture.
 - a. What are the key things about a shepherd that Peter points out?
 - b. Why are these things important for the people he’s writing to given what you know about their context?

2. One of the encouragements Peter gives is that we’re not alone in our suffering—other churches are going through the same thing (v9)

Open Doors is an organisation that advocates for churches in the hardest places in the world. Why not head to their website and read a couple of their [prayer stories](#).

- a. How does reading this affect how you see your own situation?

- b. Why not spend time praying about those people right now?

3. These suffering churches are also the proper context of casting all our anxiety onto Jesus (v7).
 - a. What is the anxiety you have over either your present situation or the potential for what could happen around suffering for Jesus?
 - b. Take some time to pray for one another about this.

4. Out of all we have looked at in this series, what is the main thing you are taking away or the main thing God has done in you? Share and thank the Lord together for these things.