

PETER'S LETTERS



Fourthstream.com 

Welcome to the book of 1 Peter!

To begin your study of 1 Peter, meditate upon the content of the book reflected in the overview chart below. As you consider the five major sections we have outlined, what do you notice about the author’s purpose in writing this book? We have chosen 4:19 as a key verse that reflects 1 Peter’s overall theme of Trust in Trials. What do you learn as you meditate upon this verse?

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 PETER | | Trust in Trials | |
| A Sober Mind | Excellent Behavior | Harmonious Living | |
| 1:6,7,13 | 2:11,12,20-23 | 3:8,9,14,17 | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| Fervent Love | | Humble Example | |
| 4:8,12,13,19 | | 5:3,6,10 | |
| 4 | | 5 | |

"Suffering according to the will of God." 4:19

Also note the scripture references listed within the overview chart above. Take this opportunity to investigate each one, looking for relationships between the section titles and key verses. Use these passages as guideposts to unlock the message of the book. What have you learned thus far about the book of 1 Peter?

In 1 and 2 Peter we gain insight from a mature man who speaks from a wealth of firsthand knowledge. Through the experiences with Jesus during His time here on earth, as well as in his years of being poured out for the church, Peter's words provide much practical insight into a life of godliness.

Open your heart as you read!

Are you experiencing true trials of faith? How are you responding? Are you learning to trust God in the midst of your trials?

WELCOME TO THE BOOK OF 1 PETER!

AUTHOR

The apostle Peter was God's chosen man to write a treatise on how to trust God in the midst of trials. Peter's personal story is interwoven with this teaching. Peter had been so sure of himself when he said "Even if I die with you - I will not deny you" (Matthew 26:35). And yet, between intention and experience lay the arena of testing, and Peter, with cursing and swearing said "I do not know Him" (Matthew 26:74).

On another occasion Peter, seeing Jesus walking on the water, asked Him for permission to join Him on the waves. Peter stepped out and made it part way. But when he took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the waves, he began to sink. Reaching out to Jesus was his only hope.

In Acts it was Peter who learned to trust God in the midst of his imprisonment. Once again he was delivered, this time by an angel in the middle of the night. It is clear that when Peter writes about trust in trials, he has lived an engaged faith!

DATE

Probably written near the end of Peter's life, around 67 A.D.

OTHER BACKGROUND

1 Peter could be called a "syllabus for suffering saints." It presents solid and time-tested principles on how to "hold up and not fold up" in the midst of troubles and/or persecution. Fourteen times in this letter the word "suffering" or an equivalent is found. Two other words which are frequently used are "joy" and "glory." At least 26 times Peter focuses the joy and glory that are ours in the midst of our trials. This letter was in all likelihood written during the time of Nero's persecutions. Peter himself was, according to tradition, crucified upside down under this cruel ruler.

WHY STUDY PETER'S LETTERS?

1. While we are not undergoing persecution from a heathen emperor, we do face constant trials at the hands of difficult bosses, co-workers, classmates, and sometimes even family. This doesn't even take into account being the targets of the evil one: Satan. Peter provides words of hope to those who choose to endure such trials with patience.
2. Peter gives us the way to find joy in a dying world (3:10-12).
3. Peter helps us to not lose heart. Life is not always about being right, but having our hearts end up in the right place.



1 Peter Chapter Chart

A Bread of Life Bible Study Guide. Copyright 1990.

Titling Chapter note:

When you are searching for a key verse and a chapter title, look for repeated words or phrases, connecting words like therefore, but, etc; as well as movements in location or participants (subjects) of that particular book or passage. Highlight favorite verses and circle key words which get to the root of Peter's point.

Possible title for chapter 1: *A READY FAITH*. Corresponding Key Verse: **13**
(there are no right or wrong answers in this process - what is it YOU see?)

| Chapter | Title | Key Verse |
|---------|-------|-----------|
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | | |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | | |

READING ONE "A Sober Mind in Trials" Read 1:1-25

1. Locate on a map the area of churches Peter is addressing. What was Peter's hope for these churches?
2. Verses 3-12 describe a mind fixed upon principles of faith. To Peter, what formed the **bedrock of a living faith**? What was to give a Christ-follower **true joy**?
3. From these same verses determine what made those who were reading this letter unique or **special**?
4. According to Peter, how does one **gird his mind for action** ?
5. What makes a person able to **truly love another**?
6. What place did the Scriptures hold in Peter's understanding about honoring God?

What about today?

What are some trials that distress you? List evidences of fervent and sincere love you see in your own life. Evidences you see among your other Christ-follower friends? True faith must placed in God alone (1:21). If we hope in man our hope may result in disappointment and certainly disillusionment! Read **Proverbs 16:25** about placing your trust and hope in God!

READING TWO "Excellent Behavior" Read 2:1-25

1. What are we encouraged to set aside? What are the reasons for each?
2. Living stones "vibrate with life." What pictures does this fire in your mind?
3. Read Psalm 118 about Jesus being the Cornerstone. This stone is structural in nature. It holds the integrity of the building in place, and is foundational to strength and longevity. How does this analogy transfer to spiritual life?
4. How special are Christ's followers to His purposes? How are we blessed? Tested?
5. How does Christ's example play out in our everyday lives?

What about today?

1. There appear to be different reasons for suffering. What are they?
2. In what ways do you feel spiritually alive? A part of His spiritual house?
3. How does Jesus make you feel chosen, royal, and special to His purposes?

READING THREE "Harmonious Living" Read 3:1-22

1. Verses 1-7 teach us helpful perspectives on marriage. What is supposed to make a spiritual wife shine among others? Compare these qualities to those reflected in what you see in our marriage culture today. What are the similarities and differences?
2. What usually motivates a woman to be insubmissive? How can she overcome fear and destructive behavior (according to this passage)? Would you consider a submissive person an inferior one?
3. What is true strength in a man and what does it imply (vs 7)? What does it mean that wives and husbands are "joint-heirs"? How would you put this in your own words?
4. Verses 8-12 are a backdrop for ALL spiritual relationships. Wow - revolutionary!
5. What should people see and feel when we share faith concepts and stories with them?
6. What are the two kinds of suffering reflected here? Is it possible to suffer and have it produce no spiritual fruit?

What about today?

God places a high priority on harmony. What did you learn from this section that could help you to be a better wife? A better husband? A better person? As much as it depends upon us we are to "be at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18)!

READING FOUR “Fervent Love” Read 4:1-19

1. List ways a person can show **fervent love** to others.
2. What would be some present-day **lawless idolatries**?
3. How does one maintain a fervent love and what is the benefit of it?
4. What does verse 10 mean? What do our gifting have to do with love?
5. How are we supposed to view **suffering**? What are some other perspectives we could have?

What about today?

How important is it to you to live for **the will of God** (2, 6)?

Does **hospitality** come easy for you or are you prone to **complain**?

What is your "special gift" in the context of verses 10-11?

Read **Ephesians 4:11-16** to see the ultimate goal of spiritual gifts and **1 Corinthians 13** for the relationship gifting has to love!

READING FIVE “Examples in Humility” Read 5:1-14

1. What appears to have been Peter’s perspective on the place of elders in these churches?
2. What caution was given to both younger and older Christ-followers?
3. What qualities were elders supposed to display through their lives and choices to lead?
4. What do we learn about resisting Satan from these verses? About Satan’s schemes and the way he operates?
5. What can we learn additionally from this chapter about the nature of suffering that can help us keep our trials in perspective?

What about today?

As an older man, what type of example do you provide to younger men in your life?

As a younger man, how is your respect displayed?

What are the things which make you anxious?

CONCLUSION

It is cool to know that God is in control of everything - no matter what trials we encounter and endure. The One who called us **"will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you"** as you grow spiritually! It is pretty neat that we can count on Jesus to complete what He started.

EVALUATION

Meditate upon and review what you have learned in 1 Peter.

1. Recite from memory the major movements of the book. What prominent lessons do you recall from each section? What central principles?
2. What would you conclude is the key insight that God has for you from 1 Peter?
3. Reflect upon the concept of “Trusting in Trials.” What did you learn from Peter about suffering? About your attitudes toward suffering?
4. Review the highlights of the **What about today?** sections and the prominent ideas you encountered. What have you discovered or rediscovered about yourself? About God?

PROJECTS

These projects are listed to provide direction for further study.

1. Complete the insert **Aliens & Strangers** for a further consideration of eternal perspective on daily living.
2. Complete the insert **Ready and Willing!** as you seek to add personal insight into being an effective conveyor of the Good News!
3. Examine each chapter of 1 Peter looking for key words, recurring phrases, and prominent ideas. Use these to choose key verses for each chapter. You may wish to give brief summary titles that reflect the content of each chapter (previous pages).
4. Share your understanding. Take one or two of the prominent challenges you have encountered in 1 Peter and talk about them with someone else. Use these truths to provoke and encourage yourself and others as you pursue a life filled with **trust in trials**.

MEMORIZE

4:19 which reflects the confidence of one who trusts in trials: **“Therefore, let those who also suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”**

2:9 that tells us about our identity as Christ-followers: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”**

ALIENS & STRANGERS

"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

- 1 Peter 2:11

Hebrews 11 describes a group of people who chose to live for what was promised rather than what could be attained in this life. It is obvious that Jesus' closest followers understood that "the world was not their home" and they had chosen to give up things here in order to experience blessing and reward in the life to come. This is a chief earmark of living by faith and not by sight, and made the men and women mentioned in Hebrews 11 a very special group.

Briefly scan Hebrews 11 and see what you glean about faith in relationship to today and tomorrow. What do you conclude about your own life of faith when reading about these special people?

A City with foundations...

Apparently God views our life here as temporary, and to a great extent, subjected to the importance of the life to come. The cities we live in have human foundations, but these will not last. Our homes here are only temporary and will soon pass away. Living for what will be and limiting and even rejecting self-gratification and our dreams for this life is easier said than done. These people: Abraham, Sarah, Rahab, Daniel; etc. - all investigated God's future promises and welcomed them from a distance, knowing their true reward would arrive in the life to come.

In 1 Peter the disciple Peter is trying to help us keep perspective on what is really important. In chapter one, list the things which Peter considered valuable. How are we to live in light of the imperishable future God has prepared for us?

Some good questions for aliens to ask ourselves:

How important is it for me to achieve ultimate comfort, wealth, and recognition for who I am and what I do?

What must I do to not succumb to becoming too comfortable in my "earthly skin"?

What do I think about heaven and eternal life...do they exist? Are they attainable?
Will I be in a position to enjoy heaven?

MY LIFE AS AN INSIDER

One of the incredible things about God is that no two humans born into this world are exactly alike. This means our life-paths all look different when it comes to our relationships. This is a very powerful truth within the human family. When this uniqueness is used for the purposes of God and for the benefit of others, men and women find their place not only within the will of God but also the heart of God.

Those who wish to be “used” by God go to great lengths to find dynamic, useful, and compatible situations in which to express our passions. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with this, it is secondary to the love and enjoyment we should experience in the process of knowing God. I believe that if a person never found a dynamic “ministry” opportunity and simply devoted himself or herself to those people and situations God has already or continues to bring into our lives, our productivity and peace with who and what we engage would be huge!

According to many passages we are already equipped to serve God in this way when we come to know God. This does not take the place of discipleship, teaching, shepherding or training. But if we believe God is the power for delivering men’s souls, wouldn’t our submission to Him be much more important than any training we might receive or status we might achieve?

Jim Peterson and Mike Shamy have written a book entitled [The Insider](#). It is available from Nav-Press. For our purposes here, let me paint a possible alternative picture of ministry based upon a Kingdom - Insider paradigm..

“Sharon and James became followers of Jesus through a reading group in their neighborhood. Their neighbors, Alex and Rhonda, had shown great kindness to them a year earlier when they had lost their first child to a miscarriage in their fourth month. Rhonda had bought meals and comforted Sharon, and James and Alex had engaged in several backyard discussions during the time Sharon was recovering from their loss.”

“Over time Sharon and James expressed interest in spiritual matters and the four began reading the book of John. Several months later Sharon and James embraced Jesus as their Savior and dedicated their lives to His Kingship.”

“The new believers were encouraged to show the same care and concern for those in their sphere of living that had been shown to them. Church attendance was placed second to active involvement with neighbors. Weekends were spent sharing meals and pursuing opportunities with co-workers, neighbors, and extended family. Every Friday night a group gathered in Sharon, James, Alex and Rhonda’s homes to sing a few songs, pray for neighbors and personal needs, and to talk about what each person was learning from God through prayer and reading the God Story.”

“The two couple’s relationship began to grow and extend to other people with like minds with children who were their same “neighborhoods.” They stuck together through thick and thin and many years later saw the fruit of many people coming to know Christ and carrying on this pattern of open hearts, open homes, and open lives.”

In principle this is a Kingdom picture which should be more normal than an exception. It’s not that church and church life are wrong (I have been a pastor in my local fellowship for 35 years). It just seems more on target to shift spiritual life into people’s homes, personal lives, and then more naturally out into the community. It is a liberating principle which will not only energize people’s lives, but American church-life as well.

Do you know what it means to be an insider? What types of relationships are you cultivating “outside” of your church-life?

Welcome to the book of 2 Peter!

To begin your study of 2 Peter meditate upon the content of the book reflected in the overview chart below. As you consider the three major sections we have outlined, what do you notice about the author’s purpose in writing this book? We have chosen 1:19 as a key verse reflecting commitment to true knowledge. Also note 1:8 for further insight into the theme of full knowledge.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>2 PETER</p> <p>IN GODLINESS</p> <p>1:3,9,19</p> <p>1</p> | <p>Full Knowledge</p> <p>AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS</p> <p>2:1,10,17</p> <p>2</p> | <p>THE DAY OF THE LORD</p> <p>3:8,11-14</p> <p>3</p> |
|---|---|---|

*"Until the day dawns and the Morningstar rises
in your hearts." 1:19*

Also note the scripture references listed within the overview chart above. Take the opportunity to investigate each one, looking for relationships between the section titles and key verses. Use these passages as guideposts to unlock the message of the book. What have you learned so far about the book of 2 Peter?

Open your heart as you read!

Do you view the “qualities” mentioned in chapter one as increasing in your life? Do you know how to discern false teachers and false teaching? Do you find yourself motivated as you consider the coming Day of the Lord? Are you increasing in true knowledge?

WELCOME TO 2 PETER!

AUTHOR

2 Peter received delayed inclusion into the recognized letters because of the apparent absence of direct, regular usage in the first two centuries. If anyone was qualified to write on the subject of true knowledge through much tribulation, it was Peter! We join with those in the mid-Third Century in ascribing this second book to Peter the Apostle, writing again to the same group as his first letter (1 Peter 1:1). His first letter was written to encourage Christ-followers to take heart in the midst of various trials and suffering. This second letter is addressed to those who will combat destructive heresies creeping into the church (2:1).

DATE

Tradition states that Peter was killed for his faith in 68 A.D. His apparent knowledge of this (or his old age) would indicate a late date for this letter.

OTHER BACKGROUND

An old proverb states that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Peter is, in a moving way, attempting to keep these believers from **craftily concealed heresy**; heresy of a kind which would soon shake the young church. False prophets are combated by true and full knowledge. Full knowledge is rooted in the Scriptures (1:19) - the Bible interpreting itself! 1 Peter can be read in conjunction with Jude; where false teachers are exposed, accused, and rejected.

Nowhere is 2 Timothy 2:15 more graphically portrayed than in Peter's second letter. Check it out!

WHY STUDY 2 Peter?

1. To learn about specific **qualities of godliness** that make us mature and complete.
2. To view principles which help us **recognize false teaching** and false teachers!
3. To keep perspective on the transitory nature of life and the **surety of our end...** whatever God's timetable might be for each one of us!



2 Peter Chapter Chart

A Bread of Life Bible Study Guide. Copyright 1990.

| Chapter | Title | Key Verse |
|---------|-------|-----------|
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | | |

READING ONE “Full Knowledge in true godliness” Read 1:1-21

1. What was specifically given to us when we embraced Christ's Kingdom?
2. Note each time **true knowledge** is used in this chapter.
3. If one is diligent in pursuing spirituality, what should be evident in his or her life?
4. How can one **never stumble**? Is this even possible? What does it mean?
5. What was Peter's stated **purpose** for **writing**?
6. Why is 1:16-21 important to **sound doctrine**?

What about today?

1. If God has granted us **everything pertaining to life and godliness**, should we complain that we don't have what is necessary to thrive physically and spiritually?
2. In what ways do you evidence each of the **qualities** listed in verses 5-7?
3. In what ways do you see yourself **paying attention** to the Word?
4. In what ways would you consider yourself **dull of hearing**?

READING TWO “Full Knowledge of False Prophets” Read 2:1-22

1. In what ways do false teachers operate?
2. What is the **motivation** behind the actions of a false teacher?
3. Five examples are given to **expose** a false teacher. What are they and why do you think each was used?
4. Reference and read about **Balaam**. What light does this shed on the false-teacher concept?
5. What are God's feelings about false teachers?
6. What is at the root of their downfall?

What about today?

1. Develop a list of **tests** to determine if someone is indeed a false teacher. What would this passage imply we would need to look for?
2. The motivation of a false teacher is the epitome of the evil which resides in the heart of mankind. How can you take instruction and admonition about your own life of faith from this concept of false teachers?

READING THREE “Full Knowledge and the Day of the Lord” Read 3:1-18

1. Where have you previously seen the topic of 3:1, 2?
2. What is the reason behind the mocker's statement?
3. Note the phrase **escape notice**. What is this trying to tell us?
4. Make a list of characteristics which describe what the **Day of the Lord** will be like.
5. What should be true of our lives **since things are to be destroyed in this way**?
6. What significant **claim** does Peter make with regard to Paul's teaching?

What about today?

1. In what ways is the Lord's Coming escaping your notice?
2. Of what benefit can this passage be in helping you with your testimony to others?
3. What did you learn from Peter about the Day of the Lord that you had not known before?

CONCLUSION

Coming to a true and full knowledge of God means to rest in the purifying work of the Spirit as God produces godliness in our lives. We must be careful not to be sidetracked from **true knowledge** by **false knowledge** that is propagated by those who have false hearts and motives. We must never forget **the end** as the Bible describes it, and be just as motivated by God's **justice** as we are by His great **mercy**!

EVALUATION

Meditate on and review what you have gleaned from the book of 2 Peter.

1. Recite from memory the major movements of the book. What prominent lessons do you recall from each section? What prominent principles?
2. What would you conclude is the central lesson God has for **you** in this book?
3. Review the highlights of the “**what about today?**” sections and the concepts you encountered. What have you discovered or rediscovered about yourself? About God?

PROJECTS

These projects are listed to provide direction for further study.

1. Complete the insert “**Fool Knowledge or Full Knowledge**” as you further consider what it means to experience true knowledge of God.
2. Examine each chapter of 2 Peter looking for key words, recurring phrases, and prominent ideas. Use these to choose key verses for each chapter. You may wish to give brief summary titles reflecting the content of each chapter (earlier chart).
3. Share your understanding. Take one or two of the prominent concepts you have encountered in 2 Peter and share them with someone else. Use these truths to provoke and encourage yourself and others as you seek to pursue proper, meaningful worship of the Living God!

MEMORIZE

1:19 reflecting the theme of paying attention and pursuing true knowledge: **“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”**

3:8 reflecting the concept of the Day of the Lord in 2 Peter: **“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”**



FULL KNOWLEDGE OR FOOL KNOWLEDGE

Circle each time you see the word "knowledge" referred to in 2 Peter, chapter 1. Also note where it occurs in the other two chapters. Again Peter is trying to make plain what it means to enter God's Kingdom in an "abundant" way. This is to be a full and rich entrance rather than skimpy or lame. There is knowledge which flows from God, and conversely, knowledge that comes from men. One is sure. One will always let us down. In **Hosea 4:6** one of God's prophets explains why full knowledge is so important:

*"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge,
I also will reject you from being My priest.
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,
I also will forget your children." - Hosea 4:6*

In **Romans** God makes it clear through Paul that there is a knowledge of the earth and a wisdom from God, and that they have decidedly different outcomes:

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." - Romans 1:18-23

Proverbs indicates it is the "fear" or reverence for God which is the gateway to knowledge. Fools ignore the rigorous path of humility and choose rather to immerse themselves in self-gratifying pursuits. God wants us to engage a path of increasing knowledge or "full knowledge" so our perspectives about life will be noble and pure.

How do you feel about your knowledge about God? About your knowledge of God's ways?

In what ways do you feel that you know how God thinks? That you don't have a clue?