

# A Living Hope

A close-up photograph of a small, vibrant green seedling with several leaves growing out of a crack in a concrete sidewalk. The plant's stem is a reddish-purple color. The background is a blurred, light-colored surface, likely the rest of the sidewalk or ground. A horizontal yellow bar is positioned below the title text.

Studies in 1 Peter

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## Study 1: 1 Peter from 30,000 feet

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***If you were to write a letter to a new Christian – to encourage them – what are some of the things you would want to include?***

**Taking turns, read all of one 1 Peter out loud**

As you go, write down some of the themes you identify throughout the letter in the table below:

Theme	Chapter/verse
e.g. Holiness	1:15-16; 2:5, 9; 3:5

**What do these themes tell you about who Peter is writing to and why he is writing?**

1. What does Peter share about himself and about his trust in Jesus? (1:1; 5:1;12)

Peter was one of Jesus' closest disciples. In fact, Paul calls Peter a '*Pillar of the Church*' (Gal 2:9). Yet his trust in Jesus wasn't always perfect. When Peter testified that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, Jesus proceeded to teach that,

*“the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again”* (Mark 8:31).

At this, Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him, demonstrating his ignorance of the purpose and role of God's Messiah. "*Get behind me, Satan!*" is Jesus' response, "*You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.*" Peter was not always the model believer.

### **Read Luke 22:24-34, 54-62**

2. The apostle Peter might actually be well qualified, by personal experience, to write a letter to young Christians who are learning to trust in Jesus. Looking back over your table of themes, are there any connections with what you've just read in Luke's gospel?

After His resurrection, Jesus confronts Peter again – John records it for us. However, *this* interaction was a little different. Here, we see Jesus' forgiveness, love and patience with a stubborn sinner like Peter (and all of us!)

### **Read John 21:15-19**

3. Thinking through your table of themes of 1 Peter again, what do you think is the significance of Jesus' words to Peter in John 21:18-19?

In many ways, Peter's life reflects the same tendencies to doubt, cowardice and sin as the rest of us. However, by the time he writes 1 Peter it seems as though something has changed.

4. In your own words, what is the focus of Peter's encouragement to his audience, despite the threat suffering and persecution?

5. Looking at your table one last time, how does Peter direct our focus to the future?
  
6. Re-read 1 Peter 5:12 and talk about how we can encourage one another to 'stand fast' in the 'true grace of God'.

**Pray:** Give thanks for Jesus' patience with us. Ask him to help us to keep encouraging one another to keep our eyes on the salvation secured for us in heaven (1:5).

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## Study 2: Rejoicing in Christ (1 Peter 1:1-12)

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***When do you rejoice most in life? Are there times where you rejoice more than others?***

### Read 1 Peter 1:1-7

1. What adjectives does Peter use to describe his readers?
2. In v. 3 Peter describes a 'new birth' into a 'living hope'. How does Peter describe a Christian's hope?



Map of the provinces Peter is writing to (1:1). Taken from the ESV® Study Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), Copyright © 2008 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

3. On the diagram below, plot a timeline of salvation from vv. 1-7



4. Referring to the timeline above, what do you think Peter means when he describes our salvation as being revealed in the last time?

5. Is our salvation complete? Why/why not?

**Read 1 Peter 1:8-9**

6. What is our '*inexpressible and glorious joy*' based on?
7. Do you always feel this way as a Christian? Why/why not?
8. In what ways could you grow in joy, or encourage others to do the same?

**Read 1 Peter 1:10-12**

9. Who knows more about the Messiah, the prophets or us today? (look back to the timeline you created)
10. Why did God reveal these things to the prophets?

**Read Isaiah 53**

11. This is one of the most well-known Old Testament chapters about the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that follow. How does this chapter help us grasp the significance of 1:10-11?
12. Looking back to the timeline of salvation, how does the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that follow help us with in our journey as Christians today?

**Pray:** Give thanks that Jesus suffered to secure our salvation. Pray that we would rejoice greatly in these things, even as we go through trials for bearing the name 'Christian'

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## Study 3: Be Holy (1 Peter 1:13-2:3)

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***Talk about a time when you were underprepared for something really important. What outcome did it have?***

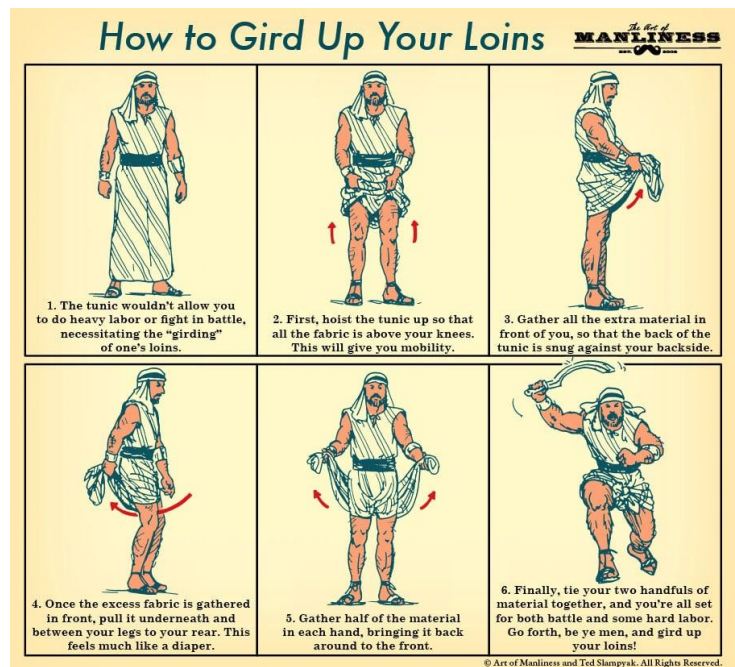
1. Peter begins this next section with the word ‘therefore’ (v. 13) – what is it there for? (Think back to last week’s study).

### Read 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

2. What is the importance of the ‘mind’ in vv. 13-15?
3. What is the temptation for Peter’s audience in v. 14?

The King James Version translates v. 13 as **“gird up the loins of your mind”**. This picture<sup>1</sup> demonstrates how to *literally* gird up your loins! Discuss how doing something like this might help you in battle?

4. How does this illustration help you understand Peter’s call to “gird the loins of your mind” in v. 13?
5. What is the opposite of being ‘alert and fully sober’ in the Christian life? What would this look like?



6. What is the *key* characteristic we are striving for in vv. 13-15?

In v. 16 Peter quotes from Leviticus - a book in the Old Testament explaining how a sinful people like Israel can live with a perfect and righteous God in their midst

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.artofmanliness.com/skills/manly-know-how/how-to-gird-up-your-loins-an-illustrated-guide/>

(in amazing detail!) On several occasions we see the idea of ‘holiness’ being mentioned.

**Read Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:1-2, 20:7-8.**

7. In your own words, how would you define holiness from these parts of Leviticus? How does this help you understand Peter’s call to holiness here in 1 Peter 1?
  
8. Twice, Peter contrasts a ‘holy’ life with the former life of his readers (1:18b, 2:1). List some of the habits of the old life:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How do these compare with the call to holiness in Leviticus?

**Read 1 Peter 1:17-21**

10. If we’re saved from our sin and have full assurance, why should we live in ‘reverent fear’?
  
  
  
  
  
11. Verses 17-18 are different sentences in the NIV, however the logic of these verses goes something like this: “Live ... *because* you know!” What is it that we know?

The image Peter uses here is one of redemption from slavery in ancient Rome. Occasionally slaves could earn their freedom (i.e. ‘redeem’ themselves) by serving above what was required of them, or if the right price was paid by someone else.
  
  
  
  
  
12. What was the price paid to redeem *us*?

Like the theme of holiness, here Peter uses yet *another* image from Leviticus, this time from chapter 16... the blood of the Lamb without blemish or defect.



13. What does this imagery tell us about the story of salvation? (think back to 1:10-12)

**Re-read 1 Peter 1:22-2:3**

14. Why is it important that we're saved (or born again in v. 23) first, and *then* called to live godly lives? How might this help us reach others for Jesus?

Last week we were reminded that, as Christians, we are able to *rejoice* in the salvation God has revealed to us through Jesus Christ – even if it means suffering in this life. We also saw that the Old Testament prophets had predicted the suffering of the Messiah and the glories that would follow (1:11). While Jesus, the Messiah, has entered *his* glory, we are still awaiting our future glory to be fully realised. Until then, we have been given instructions from Peter on how to prepare ourselves for the suffering that will inevitably come our way as we live out our time as foreigners on this earth.

**In 2:3, Peter quotes part of Psalm 34. Verses 7-11 of this Psalm are given below. What themes/ideas from today's passage do you recognise in these verses?**

*<sup>8</sup> Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. <sup>9</sup> Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. <sup>10</sup> The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. <sup>11</sup> Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

**Pray:** Pray that we would live godly lives here on earth while we await the full nature of our redemption in Christ. Pray that we would encourage one another fix our eyes on the hope we have in Jesus.

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## Study 4: The Rock of Salvation (1 Peter 2:4-10)

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**What are some words or phrases you've heard used to describe Christians? How would *you* describe what a Christian is?**

This week's passage is a shorter one – however, it's jam packed with meaning that we might, at first, not fully appreciate or understand. It's a passage which draws on a number of Old Testament images for the nation of Israel and applies them to us, the New Testament church, today.

### Read 1 Peter 2:4-10

1. If Peter drew picture of vv. 4-5 – what would his picture look like?



2. What is the significance/consequence of Jesus being the “Living Stone” and us being “*like* living stones”?
3. After his short thesis (vv. 4-5), Peter reinforces the illustration of the ‘living stone’ with several Old Testament passages. As you read vv. 6-8, note down what the ‘stone’ does for those who believe (or ‘trust’) and those who don’t.

Believe	Don't believe

The first quote Peter uses (v. 6) comes from Isaiah 28:16. This part of Isaiah fits within a larger section of the book [chapters 28-37]. These chapters highlight God's sovereign rule over everything despite what things might look like at first. In 1 Peter 2:6, Peter draws from Isaiah 28 - the first prophesy concerning Ephraim.

**Read Isaiah 28:1-22**

4. What are the priests and prophets of Ephraim doing in these verses?
  
5. What does Isaiah say about the people who rely on the “tested stone” in Zion, and those who don't? What depth does this add to your understanding of Peter's quote in v. 6?

Peter sees a direct correlation between Israel rejecting the stone in Zion (choosing disobedience, apathy, and indulgence) and many people's response to Jesus in his day. While Old Testament Israel had God's promises, symbolically represented by a 'stone' in Zion (the Temple), they had rejected the *giver* of these promises. So, God chose to “sweep” them away in judgment (Is 28:17-19).

While the stone was meant to be a source of *salvation* for God's people (1 Pet 2:6), it ended up becoming a source of *judgment* for those who rejected it (vv. 7-8).

**Re-read 1 Peter 2:9-10**

6. Which of these descriptions of God's people have you heard Christians use to describe the Church, or themselves? How frequently?

In these verses Peter uses many images that may not immediately resonate with Aussie Christians today. Phrases such as “living stones,” “a holy priesthood,” “spiritual sacrifices” will hardly spark the same deep joy in our hearts as it would have for the Old Testament people of Israel. Most of these titles can be seen in Exodus 19:5-6:

*<sup>5</sup> Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

7. Turn to Exodus 11-20 and flick through the paragraph headings in your Bibles. In your own words, sum up the content of these chapters. Where does Exodus 19:5-6 fit within these chapters?
  
8. How might this speak into the larger themes of 1 Peter (e.g. holiness, suffering, awaiting a new home etc), and to us as Christians today?

What are several ways can we learn to place our trust in Jesus, the “living stone” more?

**Pray:** Jesus was both “*rejected by humans*” but also “*chosen by God*” (v. 4). Give thanks that we too can share in worldly rejection with the knowledge that we too are a chosen people (v. 9) through Christ Jesus.

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## Study 5: Living as Foreigners (1 Peter 2:11-3:7)

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**Have you ever had moments where you were treated unfairly and wanted to take justice into your own hands? What did this look like? How did you feel at the time?**

As Christians, we live *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Peter calls us foreigners in 1:17 and exiles in 1:1, another translation is sojourners. This comes with challenges. In this section Peter addresses how we ought to live among the people around us even if it means standing up under unjust suffering.

### Read 1 Peter 2:11-20

1. List some of the ways Peter calls on God's people to be different to those around us?
2. What reasons, or motivation, does Peter give? (for example in verses 12, 15, 20)
3. How does submission to authority (including masters) fit into this?

Much of Rome was destroyed by a great fire (around 64 A.D.). Emperor Nero blamed 'Christians' for starting the fire. While his claim is unlikely to be true, it reveals two things: firstly that Christianity had spread significantly and secondly, that Christians were singled out for persecution. There are other early writings that accuse Christians of disloyalty to Cesar and of engaging in cannibalism as they ate and drank the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, and many other things.



*Fire in Rome* by Hubert Robert (1785)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Fire\\_of\\_Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Rome)

These things may give us some insight into what it was like to be a sojourner in Peter's day, and to face strong opposition from those around.

4. Can anyone share personal examples that relate to what Peter details in vs 11-20?

**Read 1 Peter 2:21-25**

5. How was Jesus able to withstand unjust suffering?
6. What might it mean for us to follow in his steps?
7. We know we have a righteous judge in heaven, how does this help us endure unjust suffering on earth?
8. How does the image of sheep a shepherd help us understand our situation as Christians?

**Read 1 Peter 3:1-7**

In 1 Peter 3:13 Peter instructs Christians to submit to every human authority, for the Lord's sake. He then addresses how Christians live in society, now he narrows in on the home. In 3:1 he continues with 'in the same way', and again in 3:7.

9. What does Peter encourage wives to focus on?
10. How is this consistent with ('in the same way') 1 Peter 3:13-25?
11. Carefully put 1 Peter 3:1-2 into your own words. Share your 'translation' and discuss how these verses might be put into practice.

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12. What does Peter encourage husbands to focus on?

13. How is this similar or different to what Peter encourages wives to focus on?

14. Carefully put 1 Peter 3:7 into your own words. Share your 'translation' and discuss how to put this verse into practice.

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15. How will a Christian sojourner's household look different to those around?

Note: In 1 Peter 3:7 the wife is called the "weaker partner", but this is not to be understood morally, spiritually, or intellectually. It simply means that the woman has less physical strength. Peter calls husbands, who may be physically stronger, to be compassionate and respectful toward their wives because they both share together in the gift of life.

If we summarise 1 Peter 2:12-3:7 it might be something like this: "Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor, even when this means going through unjust suffering like our Lord and Saviour." By living this way Christians will appear remarkably 'alien' to the world in a way that glorifies God! And by living in this way others might even be won-over to the gospel of Jesus.

16. How can we encourage one another to follow the example of Jesus in our marriages, in the workplace, around church?

**Pray:** Give thanks for the gospel, which enables us to live as examples of what it means to trust the true judge. Pray that we would be strengthened to stand firm, even through unjust suffering for our faith.

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## Study 6: Suffering Well (1 Peter 3:8-22)

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**How often do people suffer for doing the right thing? Have you seen any examples of this? What makes it so hard?**

A central part of this passage comes from Peter's use of Psalm 34

### **Read Psalm 34**

1. Why does David praise God in verses 1-7?
2. What does he encourage others to do in verses 8-14?
3. What does David have to say about the righteous and the wicked in verses 15-22?
4. Share what you come away thinking about after reading Psalm 34?

### **Read 1 Peter 3:8-12**

5. How does Psalm 34 shape the way you understand these verses?
6. Give some examples of what it might look like for us to put 1 Peter 3:9 into practice? (How might 2:21-23 help shape your answer?)

### **Read 1 Peter 3:13-18**

7. Summarise Peter's instructions in as few words as you can.
5. How are we to deal with our fear when we are given a hard time for living for Jesus? What might this look like?
6. How would you encourage someone who is beginning to doubt God's goodness as they go through hard times for bearing the name 'Christian'?



11. What might it mean for us to keep a clear conscience when we respond to those who speak against our good behaviour?

7. Multiple Choice: Is Jesus' life:

- A. an example for us to follow?
- B. a preview of how we will be treated?
- C. a symbol of victory over death to motivate us?
- D. other?

8. What does Peter say about Jesus in 1 Peter 3:18?

### **Read 1 Peter 3:19-22**

1 Peter 3:17-4:1 are challenging verses, and you'll even notice a couple of footnotes in your English Translation – meaning there is some translation uncertainty too. When we encounter parts of the Bible like this, it usually helps to step back and consider the context and flow of argument – in this case it helps, a lot!

While we may think of suffering in completely negatives terms, as a curse, or a waste or a loss - Peter is in the process of encouraging Christians to have a different perspective – suffering can achieve great good. Peter points to Jesus as the example.

Jesus' suffering bookends the section (look at 3:17 and 4:1). By suffering, Christ achieved a great deal. By his suffering Jesus brings us to God (v. 18). He made proclamation to spirits (v. 19). He makes consciences clean (as symbolised by baptism v. 20-21) and he is now seated at God's right hand (v. 22).

Whatever specifics Peter has in mind, they are examples of good that has come from Jesus' suffering. We'll leave you to your best-guess as to what exactly the spirits in prison are!

9. How does it help us to reflect on Christ's sufferings like Peter encourages us to in these verses?

10. Looking back over 1 Peter 3:8-22 how are you encouraged to keep proclaiming Jesus (or to “give the reason for the hope you have”) – even in difficult situations?

**Pray:** Ask God to help you live for and proclaim the hope you have in Jesus, even in difficult situations.

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## Study 7: Suffering and Judgment (1 Peter 4:1-19)

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Share what you think can be good about judgement in the following areas:

**food**  
**sport**  
**crime**

It's easy to think of judgement as a negative thing. But without judgement our world becomes a very messy place. 1 Peter 4 gets us thinking about human judgement and God's judgement. There are a couple of tricky bits in the passage, so take care to read those bits in their context.

### Read 1 Peter 4:1-2

At first glance 1 Peter 4:1-2 sounds a little tricky or odd. But read in the context of 1 Peter it is a continuation of thought. Have a look for yourself. Read 1 Peter 1:3, 2:24 and 3:18.

1. With that background, try putting 1 Peter 4:1-2 into your own words.

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Hopefully you came up with something in your own words that express the idea that as followers of Jesus, who are included in Christ's death and resurrection, we are done with sin. We now live for God.

### Read 1 Peter 4:3-6

2. How does Peter say pagans will treat followers of Jesus, and why?
3. Have you ever experienced what Peter describes in v. 4?
4. How does Peter contrast human judgment and God's judgment?

5. What differences does Peter observe between spirit and body?

There's a second tricky bit in our passage. Those who are now dead (in verse 6) could refer to followers of Jesus who have died. When Jesus returns everyone will be judged, both the living and those who have already died. Followers of Jesus may well be abused (v. 4) as we are judged according to human standards. But when God judges, we will be declared alive according to the spirit.

**Read 1 Peter 4:7-11**

6. Knowing that the time of God's final judgment is near should urge us to live as those who are dead to sin - so that God would be praised (v11). List the examples/instructions that Peter gives.

v7

v8

v9

v10

v11

If you contrast the life of people who are dead to sin (v. 7-11) with the lives of pagans (v. 3-4) the difference is stark. Being a Christian WILL mark as out. We SHOULD expect to be judged by the world (v. 4). But as we suffer for being dead to sin - we ought to rejoice and praise God.

**Read 1 Peter 4:12-19**

7. Explain how verses 14-16 unpack what it means to 'participate in the sufferings of Christ'?

8. What do you think it means for judgement to 'begin with God's household'?

Twice in today's passage Peter gets us to think about the sufferings of Christ. In verse one, Jesus' suffering is the motivation for us to be dead to sin. And in verse 13 and following, it urges us to endure the suffering that will come to those who identify with Christ.

**Pray** that we would look to Christ as the end to all our sin and live in a way that reflects this. Pray for Christians around the world who are suffering under persecution for living Jesus as their King.

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## Study 8: Stand Firm (1 Peter 5:1-14)

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Time for some rapid-fire word associations. As one person reads each of these words aloud, everyone else call out your opposite:

*trusting*

*serve*

*humble*

*anxious*

*firm*

That may have been an odd exercise but it gets us thinking about some of the key qualities that are mentioned in today's passage.

We're going to start part-way through the passage.

### Read 1 Peter 5:5-7

1. If you, as a Growth Group, were to each 'clothe yourselves with humility toward one another' - what sort of things would you do? What would it 'look like'?
2. What possible connections are there between humility and anxiety in verse 6 and verse 7?

Peter quotes Proverbs 3, "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble". He urges Christians to humble ourselves before God, in the hope that God will indeed show favour - including by comforting us when we are anxious.

Our humility before God will be reflected in the way we behave toward each other. When we trust God we can afford to be more humble toward others because we don't have anything to 'prove' to them. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in God - who we know cares for us.

With all that in mind, turn back to the start of our passage.

### Read 1 Peter 5:1-4

When you read ‘elders’ don’t automatically think ‘Presbyterian Elder’. Keep a little more open mind than that. The ‘elders’ Peter has in mind have been appointed to lead, or as he says - to shepherd and Peter counts himself an elder.

3. How does Peter want elders to shepherd?
4. Whose sheep are the leaders shepherding, and what implications might that have?
5. Should leaders like this expect a reward?
6. 1 Peter v. 5 opens with ‘in the same way’ you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. What do you think ‘in the same way’ refers to?
7. How ought we behave towards our leaders?

Putting verses 1-4 together with verses 5-7 we see that humble trust and putting God first in everything will shape the way we treat each other, even when we are called on to lead. Humble trust in God will also help us cope with challenging and anxious times too.

In the next few verses Peter encourages us to stand firm in all this.

### **Read 1 Peter 5:8-11**

8. What do you think of this statement: “1 Peter 5:8 conjures up images of physically fighting a wild beast, but the battle Peter is really describing is all in the mind.”?
9. Look at v. 9. Discuss how it can be helpful to know that we’re not alone as we fight to ‘resist the devil’?
10. How does Peter refocus us - with his description of the length and the end of our suffering (v. 10-11)

Glance back at the word associations at the start of this study. 1 Peter 5 gets us thinking

about what it means to humbly trust and serve God and each other, even in situations which may cause us to feel anxious.

As Peter closes this letter he calls to mind, one last time, the image of being exiles. From the opening verses of chapter one Peter has likened the Christian life to that of the Israelite exiles - a long way from home. As Peter refers to 'she who is in Bablyon' - perhaps he means the church in Rome, the 'capital city' of the 'Babylonian exile'. Language that reminds us that we are not home yet – we have a certain future, a sure home. Until we get there, we're just passing through.

**Read 1 Peter 5:12-14**

...and reflect back on all that we've covered in this short letter.

11. Peter says he writes to encourage Christians to stand firm in the grace of God. List of some of the things that encourage you to 'stand fast' in the 'true grace of God'.

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**Pray** together allowing each person the opportunity to give thanks for something that you have been encouraged by.