

Bible Study Discussion Guide

First Peter

In this letter, Peter encourages believers to persevere in the Christian life despite the persecution they were facing. He taught them that persecution was simply part of the privilege of belonging to Christ. Believers ought to expect persecution, prepare for it and respond in godly ways when persecution does occur.

The Knowing God Bible study discussion guides are provided to facilitate small group Bible study. We encourage everyone in the group to read or listen to the Bible text about ten times over the course of the study. We recommend providing a copy of these notes to each member of the group and selecting an individual to lead each week's study.

The book of First Peter takes approximately 16 minutes to read.

This discussion guides provides questions for four sessions.

Principles for use:

1. Encourage everyone in the group to read First Peter many times.
2. Trust God to help you understand and apply his Word.
3. Focus on what the book reveals about God/Jesus.
4. Focus on what it clearly reveals about how God wants us to live.
5. Don't get bogged down on minor, uncertain or controversial issues.

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To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 2:21

Introduction

The author of this letter identifies himself as Peter, and there is no reason to doubt that this was the apostle Peter, the fisherman from Galilee who became Jesus' disciple and close friend. The gospels present Peter as an impulsive, fearful man who frequently said foolish things. The book of Acts records the transformation of Peter into a bold preacher and leader of the church. This letter reveals a patient and mature Peter who dearly loved Jesus and was courageously willing to suffer for Christ.

Peter wrote this letter to encourage the believers to persevere despite the persecution they were facing. Peter did not tell his audience how to avoid persecution, rather he instructed his readers to endure persecution. He had three pieces of advice for them: make sure you don't deserve the persecution; don't take revenge on your persecutors and don't let persecution discourage you.

Peter reassures his readers that God would richly reward them when their lives here on earth are over. In the meantime he encourages them to live godly lives, submitting to one another and submitting to the state authorities.

Session One: A Letter from the Apostle Peter!

Discuss your responses as you read this letter. What passage or verses struck you as being particularly important? What passages or verses did you find hard to understand?

The apostle Peter had spent about three years of his life living and travelling with Jesus. He then saw his beloved friend arrested, before being unfairly crucified as a criminal. What can we learn about Peter from this letter he wrote? What do we learn about his relationship with Jesus?

Imagine being a part of the congregation who received this letter from Peter. What can we learn from the letter about the audience (people receiving the letter)? What do you think their response would have been to receiving this letter? What feelings or emotions may have been aroused?

What was Peter's purpose/s in writing to them? What might the audience have felt compelled to do in light of what Peter wrote?

What do you find most compelling about Peter's letter?

Session Two: Christ's Example in Suffering

In this letter, Peter assures his readers that suffering is a part of the Christian life. What type of suffering can the follower of Christ expect to face? What other types of suffering does Peter refer to? What sort of suffering should we seek to avoid (1 Peter 2:20; 4:15)? Have you experienced suffering for following Christ?

Peter presents Jesus as an example for us to follow: 'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps'. (1 Peter 2:21). In what ways did Jesus suffer? What can we learn about Jesus' example in suffering? (1 Peter 1:19; 2:4; 2:21-25; 3:18; 4:1)

There are many people around the world suffering for Christ. Open Doors estimate that 255 Christians are killed for their faith each month. In what ways can we help those who are suffering (Hebrews 13:3)? How might we be able to learn from those who do suffer imprisonment and martyrdom for their Christian faith?

How do you think you would cope if you were required to suffer for being a Christian? Do you think your relationship with Christ would change during a time of suffering? Is there anything you could be doing now to prepare for the possibility of Christian suffering?

Session Three: The tricky Submission passages

Read through 1 Peter 2:13-3:7 and 1 Peter 5:1-6 together as a group. What is Peter's reason for encouraging his audience to submit? What does he see as the potential positive outcome in each situation?

The word submission is generally not a very popular term and the passages particularly about wives submitting to husbands have been hotly disputed by many people, possibly in part because of a misunderstanding about the meaning of the term submission. How do you understand the meaning of the word submission? What would be the opposite of submission? Can you come up with a helpful working definition of what it means to submit?

In what ways does Jesus provide us with an example of submission (1 Peter 2:21-23)? Can you describe a situation when you chose to submit to someone and it had a positive outcome?

In what specific ways is God prompting you to submit to others?

Session Four: Holiness and Hope

Peter describes the high price that Christ paid for us (1:18-21; 3:18). He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24). What impact should this have on our lifestyle? What are the reasons Peter gives for us to seek to live holy lives? In what specific ways does Peter urge people to live holy lives?

Peter identifies many attributes, attitudes and behaviours that ought to describe the character and behaviour of a believer. On a white board or large piece of paper, as a group, make a list of these words or attributes. How can we develop these positive characteristics in our lives? How can we work together to nurture the growth of these characteristics in each other?

Which of Peter's instructions do you find hardest to follow?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-5. The book of 1 Peter indicates blessings for the believer, both in this present life and in the eternal life to come. What are some of the benefits for the believer in this present life?

Peter uses fairly general terms to describe our future inheritance. What can we know about this future from the book of 1 Peter? How might this message of hope help you as you live your life on earth?