

# CONTENTS

---

<b>1</b>	A Tested People <i>1 Peter 1:3-9</i>	5
<b>2</b>	A Trusting People <i>1 Peter 1:17-23</i>	11
<b>3</b>	A Called People <i>1 Peter 2:19-25</i>	17
<b>4</b>	A Holy People <i>1 Peter 2:2-10</i>	23
<b>5</b>	A Proclaiming People <i>1 Peter 3:13-22</i>	29

---

## SESSION ONE

1 Peter 1:3–9

### Learner Session Guide

#### Focus Statement

As we strive to lead godly lives, there are times when our actions provoke a negative reaction from others. In those times the living hope given through Christ's resurrection can sustain us.

#### Key Verse

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. [1 Peter 1:3](#)

## A Tested People

Focus Image



God has given us a living hope through Christ's resurrection. © iStockphoto

### Gather

#### Check-in

Welcome! Take this time to connect or reconnect with the others in your group.

#### Pray

(L=Leader; R=Response)

*L: God, we come together to explore the book of faith, your word.*

*R: Open our minds, Lord!*

*L: Let the history behind the scriptures lead us to further knowledge.*

*R: Open our hearts, Lord!*

*L: Let these ancient words speak to us today in meaningful, exciting ways.*

*R: Open our mouths, Lord!*

*L: Let our discussion be lively, respectful, and engaging.*

*R: Open our lives, Lord!*

*L: Let us carry the gift of a living hope into our communities. Amen.*

## SESSION ONE



### Focus Activity

For each question below, raise your right hand to answer “yes,” and your left to answer “no.” Be ready to give a reason for your opinion.

- As followers of Jesus, are we ever called to act in ways that are countercultural?
- Is the world opposed to all the ideals of Christianity?
- Do we sometimes experience a backlash for acting as Jesus would have us act?
- If we experience a negative reaction for following Jesus, does this constitute “suffering”?

### Open Scripture

Read 1 Peter 1:3–9.

- What words and/or phrases stand out for you on the initial reading of this text?
- What do you think the writer means by “suffer various trials” and “tested by fire”?
- What in this portion of the letter encourages you?

### Join the Conversation

#### Literary Context

1. The Bible contains many genres or types of literature. This book, 1 Peter, falls under the genre of epistle or letter. In many ways it is like any letter you might write to a family member or friend. In some distinctive ways it is not.

- Read 1 Peter 1:3–9. Make a list of the similarities and differences between this text and a letter or e-mail message you might send someone.

2. An epistle has three parts: the opening, main body, and closing. The opening contains the *prescript* and thanksgiving. The prescript lists the sender's name and titles, names the addressee(s), and offers a salutation. The main body of an epistle begins with a short summary of what is to come, and continues with a logical argument designed to meet the writer's goals. The closing summarizes the main point again, offers greetings, and gives final instructions and benedictions.

- Review 1 Peter 1:3–9 again, and skim the sections immediately before and after it. What parts of an epistle do you see?

### Historical Context

1. Peter, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, went on to become a leader in the early church. It is difficult to determine, however, whether he is the writer of 1 Peter. In ancient times writing under someone else's name was an acceptable practice, especially for a student writing in the name of a great teacher. Scholars offer evidence for and against Peter writing this epistle, including the use of language, the historical context, the content, the time of the writing, and the literary style.

- How does the idea that Peter himself may not have actually written this epistle affect your attitude towards it? How might the Word of God be present in words written by someone other than Peter?

2. Knowing some of the history lying behind a Bible text can help us more fully understand what the text is saying. This often involves finding out what we can about the first hearers or readers of the text—about their culture, economy, religion, and so on (sometimes called their *Sitz im Leben*, a German phrase for “setting in life”).

- Read 1 Peter 1:1–9. What can you determine about the people to whom this epistle is written?



Notes



### Lutheran Context

1. Lutherans look at the Bible through the lenses of both law and gospel. The law is about what God asks of us, while the gospel is about what God does for us.

- Review 1 Peter 1:3–9 and decide which words or phrases sound like law to you, and which sound like gospel to you. Use the chart below to list your choices.

Law	Gospel

2. 1 Peter is written to people who have been given “a new birth” and “a living hope” (1:3) in Christ. They were perishable, now they are imperishable. They were defiled, now they are undefiled. This new identity is a *paradox*—it holds two seemingly opposite things to be true at the same time. In talking about this paradox, Martin Luther said we are simultaneously saints and sinners, claimed and saved by God, yet continuing to sin.

- How do you understand this new identity given to you? In what ways do you reveal your new identity to the world?

### Devotional Context

1. Look at the Focus Image at the beginning of this session. Consider what this picture says to you about new birth, living hope, baptism, or hope in the midst of suffering.

- Where is God in this picture, and what is God calling you or your congregation to do? Write down your thoughts about this, using capital letters for words that give you hope, and small letters for words that describe suffering as you have experienced it.

- Look again at 1 Peter 1:3–9. Place an asterisk next to words or phrases which you would describe as the “snow.” Underline words or phrases which you would describe as the “flowers.”

2. List some songs or hymns that convey the same message of living hope that is presented in 1 Peter 1:3–9. Pick one or two of these songs to sing together if you wish.

### Wrap-up

Be ready to look back over the work your group has done in this session.

### Pray

*God of hope, make us new each day. New to proclaim your salvation throughout our community. New and sustained by living hope through Christ's ultimate victory over death and sin. New to rejoice in your promises in times of suffering or testing. We pray this through Jesus Christ our risen Savior and our living hope. Amen.*

Go with God. Live and share what you have learned. Return hungry for more!

## Extending the Conversation

### Homework

1. Read the next session's Bible text: 1 Peter 1:17–23.
2. Take time during the next few weeks to read all five chapters of 1 Peter. (Don't worry! It won't take long—it's quite short.) Try reading sections of the epistle from more than one Bible translation (for example, Today's English Version, New International Version for Readers, or the Message). As you read, underline or highlight what you believe to be key passages and important words.

### Enrichment

1. Epistles, though written, were intended to be spoken and heard. The writer generally dictated the words to a scribe. The finished epistle was not intended for a single recipient, but for the church. It was spoken to the church by someone who had memorized the content. The congregation heard the epistle then, similar to the way the scribe heard the writer.



Notes

## SESSION ONE



Notes

2. If possible, memorize the Key Verse (p. 5) and say it to your pastor next Sunday. If that's too daunting, listen to the epistle as it's read in worship next week, instead of following along in a written text. And if that's not possible, have a family member read 1 Peter 1:3–9 to you several times as you listen carefully.

3. Skim through Luke and Acts, or look up the word *Peter* in a Bible concordance, to learn more about the disciple Peter's story—his previous job, family situation, experiences with Jesus, work as an evangelist after Pentecost, and so on. (Check your church library for a Bible concordance, or locate one that can be searched and studied online.)

4. Reflect on what Peter might say to encourage a pair of feuding friends or family members to forgive one another. You may want to write this down as a journaling exercise. Or write Peter's "curriculum vitae"—a list of all the important events in his life. For Peter, this list would start with "fisherman" and end with "crucified upside down."

### For Further Reading

*Apprenticed to Hope: A Sourcebook for Difficult Times* by Julie E. Neraas (Augsburg Fortress, 2009).

*Reason for Hope* by José Luis Martín Descalzo (Augsburg Fortress, 2007).