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Introduction

Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies

Welcome to the conversation! The Bible study resources you are using are created to support the bold vision of the Book of Faith initiative that calls “the whole church to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.”

Simply put, this initiative and these resources invite you to “Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.”

We enter into this conversation based on the promise that exploring the Bible deeply with others opens us to God working in and through us. God’s Word is life changing, church changing, and world changing. Lutheran approaches to Scripture provide a fruitful foundation for connecting Bible, life, and faith.

A Session Overview

Each session is divided into the following four key sections. The amount of time spent in each section may vary based on choices you make. The core Learner Session Guide is designed for 50 minutes. A session can be expanded to as much as 90 minutes by using the Bonus Activities that appear in the Leader Session Guide.

• Gather (10–15 minutes)

Time to check in, make introductions, review homework assignments, share an opening prayer, and use the Focus Activity to introduce learners to the Session Focus.

• Open Scripture (10–15 minutes)

The session Scripture text is read using a variety of methods and activities. Learners are asked to respond to a few general questions. As leader, you may want to capture initial thoughts or questions on paper for later review.

• Join the Conversation (25–55 minutes)

Learners explore the session Scripture text through core questions and activities that cover each of the four perspectives (see diagram on p. 6). The core Learner Session Guide material may be expanded through use of the Bonus Activities provided in the Leader Session Guide. Each session ends with a brief Wrap-up and prayer.

• Extending the Conversation (5 minutes)

Lists homework assignments, including next week’s session Scripture text. The leader may choose one or more items to assign for all. Each session also includes additional Enrichment options and may include For Further Reading suggestions.

A Method to Guide the Conversation

Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies has three primary goals:

- To increase biblical fluency;
- To encourage and facilitate informed small group conversation based on God’s Word; and
- To renew and empower us to carry out God’s mission for the sake of the world.

To accomplish these goals, each session will explore one or more primary Bible texts from four different angles and contexts—historical, literary, Lutheran, and devotional. These particular ways of exploring a text are not new, but used in combination they provide a full understanding of and experience with the text.

Complementing this approach is a commitment to engaging participants in active, learner-orientated Bible conversations. The resources call for prepared leaders to facilitate learner discovery, discussion, and activity. Active learning and frequent engagement with Scripture will lead to greater biblical fluency and encourage active faith.

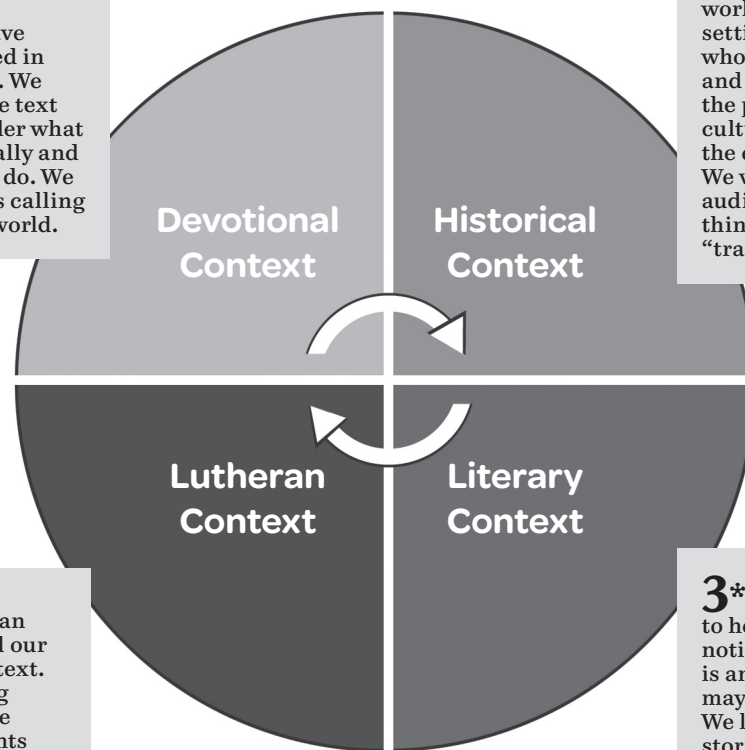
1 We begin by reading the Bible text and reflecting on its meaning. We ask questions and identify items that are unclear. We bring our unique background and experience to the Bible, and the Bible meets us where we are.

5 We return to where we started, but now we have explored and experienced the Bible text from four different dimensions. We are ready to move into the “for” dimension. We have opened Scripture and joined in conversation for a purpose. We consider the meaning of the text for faithful living. We wonder what God is calling us (individually and as communities of faith) to do. We consider how God’s Word is calling us to do God’s work in the world.

4 We consider the Lutheran principles that help ground our interpretation of the Bible text. We ask questions that bring those principles and unique Lutheran theological insights into conversation with the text. We discover how our Lutheran insights can ground and focus our understanding and shape our faithful response to the text.

2* We seek to understand the world of the Bible and locate the setting of the text. We explore who may have written the text and why. We seek to understand the particular social and cultural contexts that influenced the content and the message. We wonder who the original audience may have been. We think about how these things “translate” to our world today.

3* We pay close attention to how the text is written. We notice what kind of literature it is and how this type of literature may function or may be used. We look at the characters, the story line, and the themes. We compare and contrast these with our own understanding and experience of life. In this interchange, we discover meaning.



*** Sessions may begin with either Historical Context or Literary Context.**

The diagram on p. 6 summarizes the general way this method is intended to work. A more detailed introduction to the method used in Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies is available in *Opening the Book of Faith* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008).

The Learner Session Guide

The Learner Session Guide content is built on the four sections (see p. 5). The content included in the main “Join the Conversation” section is considered to be the core material needed to explore the session Scripture text. Each session includes a Focus Image that is used as part of an activity or question somewhere within the core session. Other visuals (maps, charts, photographs, and illustrations) may be included to help enhance the learner’s experience with the text and its key concepts.

The Leader Session Guide

For easy reference, the Leader Session Guide contains all the content included in the Learner Session Guide and more. The elements that are unique to the Leader Session Guide are the following:

- **Before You Begin**—Helpful tips to use as you prepare to lead the session.
- **Session Overview**—Contains detailed description of key themes and content covered in each of the four contexts (Historical, Literary, Lutheran, Devotional). Core questions and activities in the Learner Session Guide are intended to emerge directly from this Session Overview.
- **Key Definitions**—Key terms or concepts that appear in the Session Overview may be illustrated or defined.
- **Facilitator’s Prayer**—To help the leader center on the session theme and leadership task.

- **Bonus Activities**—Optional activities included in each of the four sections of “Join the Conversation” used by the leader to expand the core session.
- **Tips**—A variety of helpful hints, instructions, or background content to aid leadership facilitation.
- **Looking Ahead**—Reminders to the leader about preparation for the upcoming session.

Leader and Learner

In Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies, the leader’s primary task is facilitating small group conversation and activity. These conversations are built around structured learning tasks. What is a structured learning task? It is an open question or activity that engages learners with new content and the resources they need to respond. Underlying this structured dialog approach are three primary assumptions about adult learners:

- Adult learners bring with them varied experiences and the capability to do active learning tasks;
- Adult learners learn best when they are invited to be actively involved in learning; and
- Adults are more accountable and engaged when active learning tasks are used.

Simply put, the goal is fluency in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture. How does one become fluent in a new language, proficient in building houses, or skilled at hitting a baseball? By practicing and doing in a hands-on way. Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies provides the kind of hands-on Bible exploration that will produce Bible-fluent learners equipped to do God’s work in the world.

Together in Faith Series

Throughout its history, the church has established lists of Scripture readings appropriate for each Sunday and festival day of the church year calendar. These lists, called lectionaries, identify the Scripture readings used for worship in many congregations. While a lectionary-guided connection with the Bible typically occurs in the context of corporate worship, the thematic approach of Together in Faith can link the gathering of small groups around the Book of Faith with the congregation's gathering around the Word in worship. Online worship helps are provided so that preachers and worship planners can create congregation-wide experiences around each of the Together in Faith units. The flexibility of the Together in Faith online helps makes the units useful for any time of the year. The small group session materials are also designed to serve as stand-alone studies for anytime use.

God's Own People: Studies in 1 Peter Unit Overview

You came up short against the Law, but instead of facing God's wrath, you fell into God's arms of mercy and grace. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you came to believe that God's Son, Jesus, died on the cross for your sins and was raised from the dead as the first fruit of a new creation. You were baptized—chosen to be a child of God, called to follow Jesus as an example of the way God would have us interact with each other. You have found your new life to be fulfilling, but somewhat difficult, seeing that much of what Jesus modeled flies in the face of what the world tells us. Sometimes the world pushes back against the coming kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed. Sometimes we suffer for our beliefs and actions in Jesus' name. How can one deal with such negativity without losing faith?

The epistle or letter of 1 Peter provides an answer to that question. It reminds those who would follow Jesus that they are born anew into a wonderful inheritance—they are God's own people: trusted, called, made holy, and proclaiming. This doesn't guarantee that their faith won't be tested or

that they won't experience suffering, but 1 Peter assures its readers that their relationship with God is guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the end, we won't be put to shame. In the meantime, we cast our burdens on Christ, who loves us beyond measure!

Session One: A Tested People (1 Peter 1:3–9)

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.

Session Two: A Trusting People (1 Peter 1:17–23)

A multitude of worldly things and people vie for our allegiance, promising safety, health, fame, and fortune if we put our faith in them, but what they offer is transient. What God gives—Jesus—lasts forever and is worthy of trust.

Session Three: A Called People (1 Peter 2:19–25)

The life of a follower of Jesus is cruciform—patterned on the cross and its selfless implications. This is so different from the world's norm that as followers we are sometimes subject to suffering, but we don't bear the cross alone.

Session Four: A Holy People (1 Peter 2:2–10)

God works in surprising ways! Like a rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone, Jesus' startling rejection is only surpassed by the equally astonishing power of his death and resurrection—the cornerstone of our salvation and proclamation as God's holy people.

Session Five: A Proclaiming People (1 Peter 3:13–22)

Baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, tested and made new and holy, and trusting in God's mercy, we stand ready to proclaim the power of God in our lives.

1 Peter 1:3–9

Leader 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



Focus Image



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

© iStockphoto

A Tested People

Session Preparation

Before You Begin . . .

We are God's people. God loves us and has secured our future with the death and resurrection of Christ. That doesn't mean life is perfect. There is physical suffering. Our faith may also suffer. Rejection, temptation, and persecution are potent adversaries in the battle for our loyalty. The book of 1 Peter looks at suffering and tested faith, and encourages listeners to hold onto the hope that is Jesus.

Session Instructions

1. Read this Session Guide completely and highlight or underline any portions you wish to emphasize with the group. Note any Bonus Activities you wish to do.
2. If you plan to do any special activities, check to see what materials you'll need, if any.
3. Have extra Bibles on hand in case a member of the group forgets to bring one.
4. Think about times when your faith was tested. Be ready to share your story with the group. It will help others find the courage and comfort to speak.

Session Overview

As North American Christians we suffer more from irrelevance than intolerance, more from polarization than persecution. Other modern Christians do suffer—just as the early church did. In epistle form, the writer of 1 Peter speaks pastorally to churches. Their salvation has been won; they need only hold fast to Christ. This is difficult. But with living hope a tested faith can triumph, and a broken life can be transformed.

LITERARY CONTEXT

The book of 1 Peter belongs to the literary genre of epistle. Although epistles compare with our modern-day letters in that they have a writer and a recipient, in biblical epistles the writer may not be the person attributed and the intended recipient may be a wider church body, rather than the individuals or specific churches addressed. Because of this, it may be helpful to think of 1 Peter as a sermon or a teaching tool that was framed as a letter for literary purposes. It was meant, then and now, to be read to the people of God—wherever and whenever they gathered.

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? Dispersion:

In its strictest sense, Dispersion refers to Jews who for many reasons never returned to Judea after the exile. However, Paul J. Achtemeier explains that the writer of 1 Peter uses this term metaphorically in relation to new Christians, who like the exiles stood out in their behavior and beliefs, and suffered for it (*1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter [Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible]*, Augsburg Fortress, 1996).

? Suffering:

This term generally refers to a condition in which a person is in constant pain. In 1 Peter *suffering* is directly tied to persecution. It describes the pain inflicted due to one's belief in Christ and/or one's behavior in acting on that belief.

? Pseudepigrapha:

This term relates to documents that were written pseudonymously, that is, in someone else's name. These documents were often written by the person's named disciples, who sought to preserve teachings or speak to a contemporary issue with the teacher's voice.

The session Scripture text follows the opening section (1 Peter 1:1–2), which contains both the names of the sender (Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ), and the addressees (those in exile and the **Dispersion** in Asia Minor). Note how the writer ingratiates himself to the recipients with a salutation far surpassing our own modern-day “Dear....”

Then the main body of the epistle begins. In 1:3–9 the main theme is summarized, and the logic that will get us to that theme is introduced. The theme of 1 Peter is that we are God's own people, and part of our journey is **suffering** for our faith and having our faith tested by those who would have us falter. The end of this journey has been secured and promised to us by the resurrection, and will be revealed by the coming of Christ.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The subject is by no means closed on the authorship of 1 Peter. It's important to note that writing in or under the name of another (**pseudepigrapha**) was an acceptable and fairly common practice in New Testament times.

The evidence for and against Peter's authorship provides a great avenue for exploring the text. For instance, the language used in this epistle is thought to be beyond the verbal capabilities of the fisherman Peter. The image of a “living hope,” in which what was perishable becomes imperishable, leads seamlessly to the message that the people's suffering is transient and will be dispelled when Christ is revealed. No matter who wrote that, its message is clear: Our trust in God is not misplaced. You might ask participants if they think Peter could have written such prose.

The question of authorship is also a springboard for studying Roman policies regarding religions other than their own. Does the epistle's description of widespread persecution intersect with known persecutions under the rise and fall of the emperors in that era? Again, this is a question that can lead to deeper consideration of the text.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

One important way that Lutherans look at the Bible is through the lenses of law and gospel. We often think of law as lists of do's and don'ts, but it's more helpful to think of law in terms of what God asks of us. In contrast to this, we can think of the gospel in terms of what God does for us.

As with most Bible texts, both law and gospel are present in the session Scripture text. The text encourages God's own people to do what God asks of us: to stand firm in adversity, to be exemplary in our behavior so as to avoid negative attention, and to endure suffering for our faith. Because we are unable to do all that God asks of us, the law points us to Christ and sends us to the sweet, soothing blessings of the gospel. The gospel gives words of promise and blessing, as we also see in the session Scripture text, from the blessings of God, through the transformation brought about in us by the power of Christ, to receiving the outcome of faith—the free gift of salvation. Because of what God does for us, the Spirit calls us through the gospel to live lives of obedience to Christ.

In Christian life, there is suffering and testing that may be endured because of faith, and **sanctification** that takes place on a day-by-day basis. The word *sanctification* is often avoided because it can appear to promote works righteousness. And Luther's main thesis was that we are justified not by works of the law, but by faith in Christ Jesus. But sanctification is not our work, but the Spirit's, beginning with the call through the gospel and continuing to make God's people holy by the transformation of their lives.

DEVOTIONAL CONTEXT

Whenever the Bible talks about suffering and testing, two paths open up for us. The first path is a highly personal interpretation. Here suffering is understood as being affected negatively by something, such as an illness or loss. The definition of testing then is God giving or using a negative situation to see if one can withstand adversity while staying true to Christ and his teachings. A good number of people, looking at a passage like 1 Peter 1:3–9, derive from it a theological commentary on physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual suffering and testing.

The other path of understanding suffering and testing in the Bible is informed by an interpretation that seeks to hear the passage with the ears of the first listeners. When we do this, the cause of the suffering and testing is found not in God, but in others' response to God. The suffering is directly related to another's adverse reaction to the telling of God's story. And being tested refers to the challenges one faces as a Christian. We cannot go down these two paths at once. Discerning which way to go is a job not only for the historical and literary contexts, but for the devotional one as well. As participants think about



Sanctification:

The process of making God's people holy by the transformation of their lives is sanctification. This is part of the Spirit's work.

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Tip:

Put together a “supply box” for this study, containing items you will need on a session-to-session basis. Paper (notepads are great), pens, blank name tags, a Bible dictionary (check the church library or ask your pastor), markers or chalk, and index cards are some of the basics. Having these on hand saves time and keeps the group focused.



Tip:

If you wish, begin the session with a few “ice breakers” or non-threatening games that get people talking on a head-to-head level. To get to the heart-to-heart level where individuals bond and open up, trust must be built through confidentiality and compassion. Make your discussions “word traps”—where the words spoken there remain there.



Tip:

As facilitator for the group, you should work towards everyone being heard during a session. That means some who enjoy speaking may need gentle “reining in.” Those who tend to speak less may be drawn out with clarifying questions. And even those who never say a word might participate in simple opinion questions asked of all in the group.

God and meditate on suffering, testing, and living hope, allow them to explore and discuss both pathways.

Facilitator’s Prayer

God, thank you for the gift of faith that made me one of your people. When this world draws me away from you, when I am tested by the difficulty of living according to your radical grace, pour that grace even more on me and renew me with a living hope. Guide me now as I prepare to lead your people in the study of your word, that they might know you more fully. Amen.



Gather (10–15 minutes)

Check-in

Take time to greet each person and invite learners to introduce themselves to one another.

Pray

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.*

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 (10–15 minutes)

If you have the space, set up a special reading table. On a small table, place a candle, a Bible (the lectionary book might be borrowed for this), and an evergreen branch to symbolize the timelessness of God's word. Other items (a cross, icon, etc.) can be used at your discretion. The reading may end with the following call and response:

L: *Holy wisdom, holy word; R: Thanks be to God!*

OR

Since this reading evokes the language and images of baptism, take the group to the sanctuary, and read it by the font. (Make sure the font is filled with water.) During the reading, participants might listen for those words and images, and point them out afterwards. Before returning to your space, suggest that participants dip their fingers in the font, and mark someone's forehead with the cross while saying, "You have been born again into a living hope!"

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 (25–55 minutes)

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.



Tip:

Plan out in advance the group's movement from place to place during session. Make sure the spaces you will need are available. Moving about is good, but should not disrupt other classes, or derail your own.



Tip:

Outlines of books of the Bible can be found in many study Bibles, and also on the Internet (search for "biblical books outlines").



Bonus Activity:

Consider the image of "living hope." It refers to the never-failing, always-fresh promise of the resurrection. Use a Bible concordance to explore how hope is used in other epistles, especially Romans 15:13, 2 Corinthians 1:10, and Hebrews 6:18. If we were making a banner for 1 Peter 1:3–9, what might we use to symbolize living hope?

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Bonus Activity:

Be a hope detective. Look through 1 Peter 1:3–9 and circle words or phrases that are reasons for hope. Which of the reasons you circled also help sustain our faith in times of testing? Mark them with an exclamation point!



Tip:

Some in your group may find it unsettling to question the authorship of 1 Peter. Affirm their conviction. But also explain that, in Jesus' day, writing in someone else's name was viewed very differently than it is today. And the debate over authorship has prompted further historical study, which helps us better understand and interpret 1 Peter.



Bonus Activity:

Distribute index cards and pens. Invite each participant to write a sentence or two in the style of someone famous. Collect the cards and read them one by one, trying to guess whose style it was written in, and who wrote it. Discuss the various reasons one might write under a different name in modern times.



Tip:

Have participants form pairs to discuss their findings on the original hearers of the text.



Bonus Activity:

What is your *Sitz im Leben*? What are the people in your neighborhood like? Construct a profile of a typical person from your location. Write down this person's characteristics. What are the similarities and differences between this person and what you know about first century Christians? How might these characteristics, ancient or modern, impact the way we interpret Scripture?

2. An epistle has three main 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?

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 following chart 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.



Tip:

Again in pairs, have participants explain their law and gospel choices.



Bonus Activity:

Identify ways that God is at work in us—saints and sinners at the same time—based on 1 Peter 1: 3–9.



Bonus Activity:

The Luther Rose, an emblem of Martin Luther’s theology, continues to be the most prominent symbol of Lutheranism. Each of its parts symbolizes an aspect of belief. Invite participants, as a group or individually, to design an emblem that represents 1 Peter 1:3–9. Use paper and pens, or a whiteboard and colored markers. Work with the whole passage, one or two verses, or a topic suggested by the text.



Tip:

If possible, listen to “The Rose” (performed by Bette Midler, written by Amanda McBroom, from the album *The Rose*, 1979) while reflecting on the Focus Image.



Tip:

Have available copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) or another book of songs and hymns.



Bonus Activity:

Sing the hymn “O Savior, Precious Savior” (ELW 820), or read the lyrics together. The song is a devotional reflection on 1 Peter 1:3–9 (especially verse 8). Discuss what might have caused Frances R. Havergal to write such words of joy and thanksgiving while focusing on this text about suffering and testing.

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Tip:

Since time usually runs out at wrap-up, appoint one or two people to be wrap-up questioners. They will have the honor of asking the last one or two questions before time runs out on the session.



Tip:

Speak the blessing to the group as you stand with your arms outstretched.

Wrap-up

1. If there are any questions to explore further, write them on chart paper or a whiteboard. Ask for volunteers to do further research to share with the group at the next session.
2. Go around the group and have each participant give just one word—an emotion, an insight, a living hope, a complaint, or a thanksgiving. The rest of the group can ask questions about your word—but the individual gets to pick who will ask. (In a large group, have participants do this in pairs instead.)

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 (5 minutes)

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.

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 up 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).

Looking Ahead

1. Read the next session's Bible text: 1 Peter 1:17–23.
2. Read through the Leader Guide for the next session and mark portions you wish to highlight for the group.
3. Make a checklist of any materials you'll need to do the Bonus Activities.
4. Pray for members of your group during the week.
5. Gather an assortment of old magazines to use during the next session's Gather time.