

ABIDE: A BIBLE READING CHALLENGE

# JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

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## SUFFERING AND GLORY

### *1 PETER*

Studying the life of Peter is always exciting because anywhere you go in the life of this man, for better or worse, he will teach you something either to aspire to or something to stay far away from, depending on where you decide to go in his life.

You can start with Christ's call on Peter's life. Peter threw down his nets and followed Jesus with a single command. You might learn something from his boldness, as Peter declared before Jesus, "... thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." You could follow Peter to that shocking scene where, just as Jesus predicted, Peter publicly, with that same gruff and powerful voice that he used to proclaim Christ, he used to deny Him as well. We could follow him out as he finally realized what he had done, and watched him as he sobbed uncontrollably because of his grief.

But as we come to the letters of Peter, we're many years removed from when Peter started his ministry. Peter is an old man now, and there is something refreshing about what you can learn from the life of Peter at this point.

This is a book that can strengthen you. Now, truly, every book contained in the Bible God wrote for our good, and it has an ability to strengthen. But this letter from Peter is specifically designed to give you the strength you need to make it through life's toughest assignments. However, to say 'tough assignment' in the context of this book would probably be offensive to the original readers of this letter, though.

The date for this letter is somewhere around the mid to late A.D. 60s, the exact time when Nero was on the throne of Rome. Nero, ambitious as he was, decided that he wanted to make way for some new architecture and buildings for the city of Rome, but there were just too many pesky older buildings that kept this project from moving forward. The solution? Burn it down. All of it. And that's exactly what he did. Nero burned his own city so that we could make it after his own image.

What about an uprising? What about people crying out for justice because they have just lost their homes and the businesses that enabled them to provide for their families? Well, Nero thought of that as well. "Blame the Christians!"

And that's exactly what happened.

To describe the following persecution that happened after Nero named Christians as his 'fall guy' would be beyond the scope of this chapter, but there are several resources available to study the horror that followed.

However, it is to these Christians that Peter was writing. Beaten down, afraid, and ready to give up, Peter boldly calls them, and us, to use suffering for the glory of Christ.

### *How to Think About 1 Peter*

In this letter, Peter is telling us about several different aspects of the Christian life. You can pull up a chair, and listen to this old soldier of the cross. Can you hear him?

**Let Me Tell You About Salvation (1 Peter 1:3-9)**— So many people miss the full value of their salvation in Christ. Peter doesn't want you to be confused. He doesn't want you to miss it.

**Salvation Gives Hope (1 Peter 1:3-4):** Peter calls our hope a 'lively' hope; and it's lively because it's a hope that points to the certainty of eternity because of the resurrection of "... Jesus Christ from the dead."

**Salvation Grows Faith (1 Peter 1:5-7):** Look at verse 7, carefully, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ;" There is an indication here that Peter was speaking both metaphorically and literally. With Nero on the throne, he was known to use fire to persecute Christians in horrifyingly creative ways.

**Salvation Guards Love (1 Peter 1:8-9):** You can't see God yet, but you still love God, and that fills you with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

**Let Me Tell You About Scripture (1 Peter 1:10-12)**— The prophets of old were waiting for the time that we get to experience now.

**Let Me Tell You About Sanctification (1 Peter 1:13-25)**— These verses have to do with being set apart so you can identify with God.

**Let Me Tell You About Separation (1 Peter 2:1-12)**— Being identified with Christ means being identified with everything God is, and everything God desires for you.

**A New Spiritual Desire (1 Peter 2:1-3):** When you're saved, God gives you a desire for His Word. That's why Peter says that we should want the sincere milk of the word so that we can grow like we should. You'll starve your spiritual life if you don't have God's Word.

**A New Spiritual Life (1 Peter 2:4-5):** As another means of study, look up the phrases, "lively stones" and "holy priesthood" and relate them to your new spiritual life. You are both to be built up with our church family and to offer spiritual sacrifices to God in service to him.

**A New Spiritual Longing (1 Peter 2:6-12):** When God saves you, He places within you a longing for your heavenly home. You have now become a stranger and pilgrim in this world and you work as hard as you can for Christ until He calls you home to heaven. Don't live like this world is your permanent home; it's not.

**Let Me Tell You About Submission (1 Peter 2:13- 1 Peter 3:13)**— Sanctification and separation require a certain kind of conduct before others. That's why Peter moves to different areas of our lives where we struggle and tells us the godly solution.

**We Struggle with Our Government (1 Peter 2:13-17):** As God's people, we need to submit to our government and be the best citizens we possibly can be.

**We Struggle with Our Work (1 Peter 2:18-25):** In the work life, even if we struggle in our workplace and feel like it brings out the worst in us; that's not an excuse. Because of Christ, we need to submit to those who are over us in the workplace and be the best employees that we possibly can be.

**We Struggle in Our Home (1 Peter 3:1-13):** This is a range from our marital home family and our church home family. Loving people is difficult because as one preacher said, "People are prickly." We have a way of wounding the people around us. And then, wounded people wound other people— even people they care about. But notice all of the words and phrases that Peter uses to describe our response, "Submit" "Honor" "one mind" "love"

“Good” and “refrain his tongue from evil”. Peter knows what it is to just react to a perceived or legitimate wrong. He even took off a man’s ear to demonstrate how upset he was. But he looks at us now and says, “Those kinds of responses are wrong. They don’t fix anything— But love does.”

**Let Me Tell You About Suffering (1 Peter 3:14-4:19)**— No one likes the idea of or experience of suffering. But God knows what He is doing when it is brought into our lives. When Christ suffered for us, it was not to take it [suffering] away from us, it was to show us how to suffer, and what suffering can accomplish.

**Let Me Tell You About Shepherding (1 Peter 5:1-14)**— As Peter is closing out his letter, he reminds us about the job of a pastor, and what his primary role is. The primary role of a pastor is to feed the congregation with the Word of God. He goes on to say that to do this, a pastor doesn’t have to crack a whip but give a call. The preacher’s job is to proclaim; the Holy Spirit’s job is to sift. This sifting is what keeps us focused on the reward Christ has for our faithfulness, the wisdom to learn from those who are older, and the protection we need from our adversary [the devil].

### *What to Look for in 1 Peter*

#### **Key Words—**

**Suffering:** Peter mentions suffering 15 times, and eight different Greek words to explain the role of suffering in the life of the believer.

**Glory:** Peter gives you this word 11 times as he points you to what is beyond this life.

**Grace:** Grace is mentioned at least once in every chapter of this letter. You’ll find Peter using this word 10 times during your study of this book.

### *What to Gain from 1 Peter*

**You Can Learn from Your Suffering—** We just got done talking about the keywords to look for in this letter, and they are the keywords to understand this book in general.

In other books, there are three words that we usually find together that help us in our Christian life, and those words are, faith, hope, and love. Well, in this letter, these are three words that go together which also help us understand the Christian life, suffering, glory, and grace.

There is no doubt that suffering exists among God’s people. We hate it, and we should. We should hate the fact that because of sin, suffering exists. Sometimes suffering is surprising in how it comes upon us suddenly, but we should never be surprised that it happens.

But it’s what we do with the suffering once it comes. We can let it make us bitter, but God wants it to make us better. If we start learning how to praise, love deeper, and draw ourselves closer to have in our suffering, Peter says that there is glory to be gained. God’s glory will start to fill your life.

Those are two of the words. Suffering and glory. But God also knows how hard suffering is to endure. He also knows that the more it intensifies, the more distracting it becomes. And that’s when the third word comes into the picture. God gives His grace that helps us focus on His hope instead of on our problems.



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