

God's Own People: A study in 1 Peter

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Bible Study Method: This study come from the Augsburg Fortress series called “Together in Faith.” As we journey through 1 Peter we will explore one or more primary Bible texts from four different angles and contexts—historical, literary, Lutheran, and devotional.

Devotional: In our first read through of the text we bring ourselves into God’s word. We ask questions and reflect on our initial insights.

Historical Context: Here we explore who may have written the text and why, who may have been the first audience or readers, and the social and cultural context of the time. These help us “translate” the text into our world today.

Literary Context: 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, all to discover meaning.

Lutheran Context: We consider the Lutheran principles that help ground our interpretation of the Bible text. We ask questions and try to discover how our Lutheran insights can ground and focus our understanding and shape our faithful response to the text.

Devotional Reading: We return to where we started, but now we have explored and experienced the Bible text from four different dimensions. We have opened Scripture and joined in conversation for a purpose: for faithful living, guiding us (individually and as communities of faith) to do God’s work in the world.

GATHER

Check-In

- Tell one thing that has been trying from this past month
- Tell one thing that has been a joyful surprise

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.*

All: *Amen.*

Sermon Reflection: What did you hear in the sermon on Sunday that stood out for you?

OPEN SCRIPTURE

Devotional Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-9

- What words and/or phrases stand out for you?
- 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 Peter is an *epistle* or a letter.

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.

Read 1 Peter 1:3–9. How is this similar or different from a letter or e–mail message you might send someone? Which part of the epistle is covered in these verses?

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. 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.

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 Reflection:

We have been living through a strange and challenging time this past month. How have you experienced new birth, living hope, baptism, or hope in the midst of suffering?

What might God be calling you or our congregation to do?

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!

Homework—Read next week’s text—1 Peter 1:17-23.

- **Challenge:** Read all of 1 Peter, possibly from different Bible translations.