

An aerial photograph of St. Louis, Missouri, featuring the Gateway Arch in the foreground. The arch frames a view of the city's skyline, including the Missouri State Capitol building in the center. The sky is a soft, hazy blue, suggesting a clear day.

1 Peter

STRANGERS ON EARTH

Introduction

Thank you. As your pastor, it is hard to express the gratitude I have for the commitment of your time and energy in hosting and leading this group. I believe that life-change happens in small groups in a way that can't be replicated elsewhere. Small groups take time and energy, so thank you for your commitment.

The Goal. The goal of small groups is to grow in discipleship. *A disciple is someone who is being transformed by the Gospel to serve God and others.* This transformation happens as we come into contact with the God of truth and grace, and we submit ourselves to his ways. The Bible is the only way to know God and his commandments, and so small groups are fundamentally Bible-centered.

The Most Important Thing. We believe that Jesus' work of salvation – his death on the cross, his resurrection victory over death, his opening the gate to eternal life – is the motivation for all that we do. Do not shy away from reminding or teaching about the Gospel!

The Inductive Method. The word "inductive" means to make conclusions about God and his ways by way of careful observation and analysis of the Bible. The three steps are observation, interpretation, and application. In other words, "What does it say," "What does it mean," and "What does it mean to me?" This way of studying the Bible helps us follow 2 Tim 2:15, that we would properly handle the word of truth.

Quick Inductive Method Tips. Slow down when it comes to observation. Every week your group will be pulling you in the direction of jumping right into how the text interfaces with the world today. You will see more of God and less of the world if you stay in the Bible longer, and your study will be more rich and encouraging. Regarding interpretation, always leave space for

asking: *Does anyone have any other questions about the passage?*
This would have helped the first go around of these booklets at St. Paul's.

Multiplication? Do you have anyone who is excited about small group, or people who just love it and never miss? These are future small group leaders. Perhaps they remind you of an earlier version of yourself! When you are out of town, hand off the study to them. Let Pastor Brian know of their love of small group, and we will encourage them to take the step of faith to lead coming Fall of 2017.

Don't Talk Too Much. Last reminder for your group – a good leader is one who is asking good questions and then stepping out of the way. People are prone to taking the path of least resistance. This means they would rather you answer their questions than think it through themselves. Instead of answering, ask, "What do you all think about that question?"

"Strangers on Earth" Small Group Lesson 1

1 Peter 1:1-2

Jan 8

Getting Started. To break the ice, let each person share a new year's resolution they made. If they didn't make one, let them share a goal they have made for themselves. It can be a life goal or a goal for the new year.

Prayer. How was the holiday break? Let each person share a prayer and praise from anything that happened over Thanksgiving and Christmas. Pray whenever it feels right for your group.

Studying the word. Today we are going to consider the issue of "context" as we get going in 1 Peter. Context can completely shape the meaning of a sentence. For example, yelling "Fire! Fire!" in a crowded auditorium could be very disruptive, if not outright dangerous. Yelling "Fire! Fire!" when there is, indeed, a fire would actually be life-saving. Context will shape the meaning of what we see in 1 Peter.

The Context

Have a volunteer read the following paragraphs.

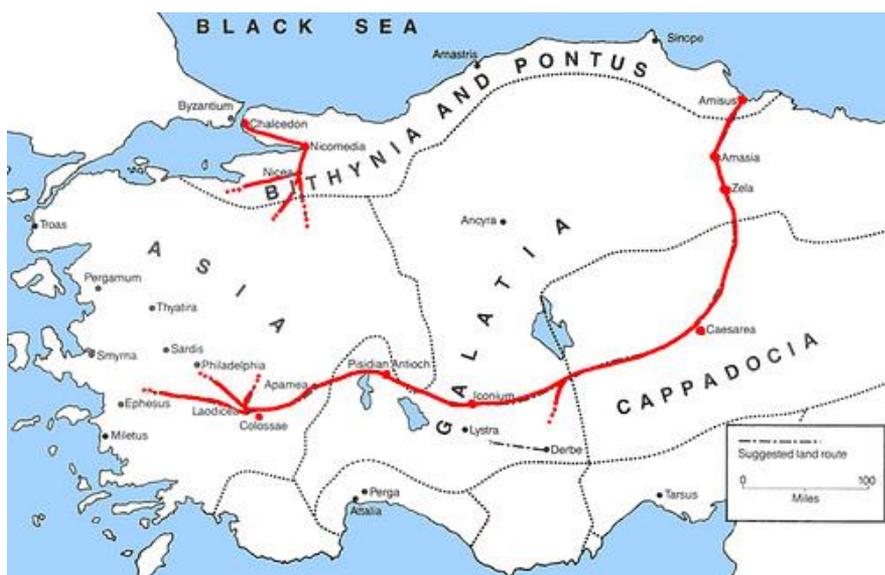
We are going to spend a little time looking at the audience and purpose of 1 Peter before we get into the text. This will be different than the normal way our inductive study works.

Studying the Bible inductively is like being a detective, looking at the clues and trying to piece together the real meaning of what is going on. So in order to get the layout of the crime scene, our first study will include some background information that you can't get without research.

Where this happened. Verse 1 says 1 Peter was written to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. According to Peter Davids,

the provinces are named in the order in which a messenger might visit them. If the person landed on the Black Sea coast of Pontus, he would travel southeast, crossing into Galatia, and then Cappadocia, then swing west back across a piece of Galatia into Asia, then north into Bithynia, departing by sea. (See map on the following page).

This means that 1 Peter was written by Peter (or a contemporary writing on his behalf), and then sent via a messenger to the churches in the region which is modern day Turkey.



What they were facing. Divide the following seven verses up between the people in the small group. (1:6; 2:12, 15; 3:9; 4:14, 16). Have each person read their group, and answer this question:

- What is the nature of the opposition the Christians who received this letter were facing?
- Based on the passages we just read, would you agree or disagree with this quote from commentator Karen Jobes:

“In general, the specific persecution referred to throughout the book seems limited to verbal slander, malicious talk, and false accusations.”

- Have someone else read the following quote, and then discuss the following question “The persecutions referred to in 1 Peter [are] sporadic, personal, and unorganized social ostracism of Christians with varying intensity...”
 - Is it valid to call social ostracism, verbal slander, malicious talk, and false accusations “persecution?” Why or why not?
 - How is it helpful to compare our persecution to the persecution of believers in hostile situations overseas? How is it unhelpful?

Whether or not someone feels “persecuted” in today’s world will largely be shaped by their personal story. Some people today have felt persecuted by Christians.

Perhaps this is a generational difference in experience. Millennials and Gen-X’ers (aged 5-45) have lived in a largely non-Christian culture. For many of us, adherence to the doctrines of Christianity makes us frequently misunderstood and thus misrepresented by non-Christians.

There is a tendency to discount this sort of “soft persecution” and to say, “You are not persecuted like they are in Saudi Arabia.” True enough! But 1 Peter gives encouragement specifically for Christians who were culturally misunderstood, ostracized, marginalized, and mocked. This is not easy to navigate for many, and thus we need God’s help to get through this too.

The Recipients. There has been much discussion over whether the audience was mostly Jewish or Gentile. Have someone read 1 Peter 1:18. How does this verse help us conclude that the audience was

composed of Gentile converts, not converted Jews? Do you agree? (We're going to assume they were Gentile for the sake of the study)

Observation

- 🔍 Have someone read aloud 1 Peter 1:1-2.
- 🔍 Compare the NIV and the ESV for 1 Peter 1:1-2. What differences do you notice?
- 🔍 Who wrote this letter?
- 🔍 What words or phrases are used to describe God's people in these verses? (**elect, strangers, chosen, sanctified, sprinkled**).
- 🔍 What does each member of the Trinity do in verse 2?

Interpretation

- 💡 The phrase in the ESV "elect exiles of the dispersion" is a reference to a specific time in Jewish history. In 586 B.C., the Jews were expelled from their homeland and were dispersed (hence the word Diaspora) across the known world.
 - Why would Peter choose this as a way of referring to persecuted Gentile churches in Turkey?

In the context of persecution, this phrase makes perfect sense. Even though they are spread far and wide and are being mocked for their faith, they should have the attitude that they are not at their true home. Like the ancient Jews, they long to return, not to Jerusalem, but the heavenly Jerusalem. Not to the temple, but to the throne of God himself. Until then, they will live as chosen exiles and strangers in the world.

- 💡 What does the word "elect" mean? Do you see anything in verse 2 which could reinforce that idea?

Our church has not made a big deal of the issue of predestination/election, which is a discussion that could easily be raised here. The attitude of our leadership needs to reflect the attitude of the EFCA, that we are not going to turn minor issues into major issues.

That said, there is a sense in this passage that God has “chosen” a people for obedience to his name. Do not dismiss the power of this statement, and try to help your people understand that God has chosen them and has a special plan to use them in his kingdom. It is his plan and he is in control, and this is meant as a deep encouragement.

- 💡 Is it important to understand the different ways each person of the Trinity contributes to our calling? Why?
- 💡 According to verse 2, what is the ultimate point of our calling?

Application

- Are there any ways that you are being persecuted by those around you? Or is there anyone you know who is?
 - How can you give encouragement?
 - How can you have strength?
 - Are Christians the object of this sort of “soft persecution” in today’s culture? If so, what examples would you give?
- Do you feel like a stranger on earth? Why or why not? How can you stay focused on your true home?
- God the Father has called us for obedience to Jesus Christ, and strengthens us by the Spirit. Is obedience to Jesus one of your chief goals? What can you do to stay focused?

Close With Prayer.

“Our Hope”**Small Group Lesson 2**

1 Peter 1:1-5

Jan 15

Getting Started. Have each person share either a.) their best birthday memory or b.) their ideal birthday celebration.

Prayer. Have someone say a simple prayer that God would be present as you study the word today.

Studying the word. This week will be more of a “normal” small group experience. We will go straight into the inductive method of observation, interpretation and application. Otherwise put, “What does it say,” “What does it mean” and “What does it mean to me?”

Observation

- 🔍 Have someone read verses 1-5.
- 🔍 In the greeting (verses 1-2), how does Peter address the churches?
- 🔍 What does he wish for the churches in verse 2?
- 🔍 How does verse 3 begin? What reasons does Peter give for his attitude?
- 🔍 Verse 4 speaks of an inheritance – can you find four words or phrases used to describe this inheritance?

Never perishing, never spoiling, never fading, kept in heaven.

- 🔍 When do God's people receive the inheritance? What gives certainty regarding the inheritance?

This salvation is revealed in the last time. God's power shields us, giving us certainty. What a great promise!

- 🔍 How do God's people tap into the power that shields them?

Interpretation

- 💡 Keep in mind the context of this letter (suffering). Why does Peter begin the way he does in verse 3?

Praising God is a way of lifting our heads up from our circumstances and focusing on what is true because of Him. This helps change the attitude away from discouragement to hope.

- 💡 What is the “new birth?” (We will study this more deeply in a few weeks). What spiritual realities does the new birth indicate? How do we get it?

The new birth is one of many biblical metaphors for salvation. Here, the new birth signifies adoption into God's family and the inheritance we will receive through being his children.

- 💡 Meditate on the concept of “inheritance” – a word used to describe our heavenly hope.
 - What relationship needs to be established for an inheritance to be received?
 - What does the inheritor do to receive the inheritance?
 - What does this say about the net worth of the one giving the inheritance?
 - Anything else come to mind regarding this image?
- 💡 What does it mean that God shields us through faith?

This is a supernatural, God thing that is not explained but given at face value. In context, it seems to mean that God is going to preserve his people and shield them from anything that would cause them to walk away from their inheritance. This is contingent upon the continued faith of the person. Perhaps this is why Peter Paul, John, and other biblical authors write to encourage and deepen faith, not just issue commands.

- 💡 Any other questions about the passage?

Your people may have excellent questions, some that you don't know the answer to. That's OK, your job is not to be an answer-person. Ask the group what they think, and if it is a very hard and important question say that you will do your best to find an answer in the coming week and get back to them.

Application

- When you are feeling down, why is it hard to praise God? How is praise a great remedy for any ailment?
- What truths can help you praise regardless of your current circumstances? How will you focus on them this week?
- Is your heavenly inheritance something you are looking forward to? Why or why not?
- According to this passage, God's power is required to shield us, through faith.
 - How does this motivate our prayers for ourselves? For those we love?
- John Piper once commented that as Christians we fight an impossible battle, specifically regarding "the bondage of our wills to sin."
 - What hope for this "impossible battle" do we find in this passage?

God's power is clear in this passage. He is worthy of praise because he has given us new birth – this is not something we mustered up ourselves. Even more, after giving us faith, God's power shields us through that very faith, protecting us. We have a God who is committed to us from salvation, throughout our whole journey, and to our heavenly home. Praise God!

Close With Prayer. If it can be done well, without violating confidences or being judgmental, today would be a good day to pray for your lost loved ones. Pray that they would receive new birth, that God would shield them, that they may have faith.

"The Path of Suffering" Small Group Lesson 3

1 Peter 1:6-12

Jan 22

Getting Started. Let each person share their answer to: "What interest haven't you pursued, but have always wanted to and what draws you to it?"

Prayer. Pray for those in your group, or those that you know, who need encouragement as they walk through various trials or struggles. Allow people the chance to share if they have something difficult they are facing. Pray whenever it feels right for your group.

Studying the word. A reminder: the three symbols  ,  ,  , correspond to observation, interpretation, and application. Following this process will reliably help us get to the meaning of the Bible.

Observation

-  Have someone read 1 Peter 1:6-12.
-  What is the "in this" referred to in verse 6?
-  What does Peter say about the trials we face? (at least 4 things)

They last for a little while. They cause grief. There are various kinds of trials. They prove our faith is genuine.

-  Verse 7 – what is the purpose, from God's perspective, of these trials in the life of the believer?

They prove our faith is genuine, and by enduring them bring glory, honor, and praise to God.

-  Verses 8-9 – What are the results of believing in Jesus while facing hardship? (include present and future benefits)

Love for Jesus, inexpressible and glorious joy, and a present experience of his salvation. In the future, that salvation will be realized.

- 🔍 Verses 10-12 – What did the prophets do? What did they learn?

Interpretation

- 💡 Why is the grief faced by the Christians “just for a little while?” What does this phrase mean or indicate?

Most agree that “a little while” refers to this whole earthly life. Life is short, so endure and serve with what energy you have.

- 💡 What can you deduce from the image of a refining fire burning the dross off gold?
 - What does it mean regarding the pain of suffering?
 - What does it signify regarding our worth to God?
 - How does our suffering result in praise, glory, and honor? Who is this praise, glory, and honor for?
- 💡 Why does Peter include the phrase, “Though you have not seen him, you love him?” This is repeated twice, so perhaps it is important!

In times of hardship, we may doubt. Peter acknowledges the source of this doubt, that we do not see Jesus. He builds the faith of his audience by reminding them of their present experience of Jesus and their future hope. Look also at Romans 8:24-25.

- 💡 Notice in verse 9 the present progressive tense is used. It says “You are receiving the outcome of your faith.” How is this a present reality for the believer?

We have a relationship with God that begins now. That means we are already a new creation. We experience his power and transformative love now.

- 💡 **BONUS QUESTION.** Why did Peter choose to reflect on the prophets at this point in the letter? How does this serve the larger purpose?

My strong suspicion is that Peter is trying to instill a sense of wonder that will help the people to place suffering in its correct perspective.

Application

- Allow a time for people to share their hardships, if applicable.
- If you are facing a trial right now, do you know that “in a little while” it will be over? How can that encourage you?
- This passage says that God uses trials to refine us. How does this give us hope amid suffering?

For the unbeliever in modern America, the point of life is to have the freedom to make choices that make us happy. Suffering removes that freedom and the capacity for happiness, and thus makes life pointless.

For the believer, the point of life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Suffering produces character and makes our hope more precious, and thus we can be encouraged as we face trials.

- Is there any way that you can encourage a friend or fellow small group member who is going through a difficulty?
- How does Jesus who suffered (verse 11) give us hope in our suffering?

Close With Prayer.

"Girding Up the Loins of Your Mind"

Small Group Lesson 4

1 Peter 1:13-21

Jan 29

Getting Started. Since we're in the dead of winter... what's your favorite season (Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring)? Why?

Prayer. The passage which we are going to study has everything to do with the transforming of our minds. Let's spend this time to pray for the children and youth in our community, our schools, and of course our church and our own family. Pray whenever it feels right for your group.

Studying the word. Trust the process! And, leader, if there is someone who especially is excited about small group, think about having them lead lesson 5.

Observation

-  Have someone read 1 Peter 1:13-21. What change in tone do you notice in this section compared to the previous verses?

This section has the first commands in the letter.

-  Do you see any sort of structure to these 9 verses? If you had to divide this passage into two sections, where would you make the break and why?

A natural break would be in between verses 16 and 17. Commands in verses 13-16, and then reasons and encouragement in verses 17-21. The Scriptures always provide reasons for the commands they deliver.

-  Make a list of the commands you see in these 9 verses.

- 🔍 In verses 17-21, what do you learn about:
 - God the Father?
 - Jesus Christ?
 - God's people, to whom this was written (those who are elect exiles, strangers on earth)
- 🔍 What is the metaphor describing the relationship between God and his people in this passage?

The metaphor is that of a father and his children.

Interpretation

- 💡 What is the place of the mind in the life of the faithful Christian?

Contrary to what some people believe, the mind is an essential part of Christianity. Our faith is not blind, but thought through. We are not creatures of raw emotion. We do not go by mere feeling. Meditating on God, studying God's Word, and taking every thought captive to God are major components of being a Christian. If we do not fight the battle for our minds, we will end up being no different than the culture around us.

- 💡 What is holiness? How can a human being imitate God's holiness?

Holiness means literally to be "other" or "set apart." We can imitate God's holiness in not conforming to the sins of the world around us. We will never be as holy as God, but that is our goal.

- 💡 How does the judgment of our works (found also in several passages, such as Matt. 16:27, Romans 2:6) relate to forgiveness and salvation? How does God's final judgment of our works motivate us?

Even though salvation is by grace, there are many passages which say God will judge us by our works. This judgment will not be one of condemnation for the believer, but we should still have a reverent fear of that time!

- 💡 What is “reverent fear” (vs. 17)? Is it different from being scared? How so?
- 💡 What is “the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers?” Why is it empty?

This is a reference to Gentile paganism. It is empty of hope and true knowledge of the One God and the Savior, Jesus.

- 💡 What is the relation of the work of Christ (vss. 19-20) to the Christian life?

All throughout the Bible and this epistle, we see Jesus' work as clear motivation for us to live worthy of our calling. The Gospel gives us new power, through the Spirit, to live for God and die to self.

Application

- Is your mind prepared for action, that you would live obediently to Jesus? Or do you check out mentally? How can you maintain focus on God?
- Have you grown complacent in pursuing holiness?
- Do you view God as a loving Father, or as a judge? This passage employs both metaphors. How do you reconcile these two images?
- Peter encourages the people to focus on their salvation: the futility of their life apart from Christ, the greatness of Jesus' sacrifice, their new calling, and their hope. How can you focus on these great truths next week? Will that help you to live a life that is “holy, like God is holy?” Why or why not?

“Born Again”**Small Group Lesson 5**

1 Peter 1:22-2:5

Feb 5

Getting Started. Do you have a favorite comic? It can be a comic strip or comedian, whichever answer comes to you first.

Prayer. Read the quote below, and spend time praying that the following would understand God's word. Pray whenever it feels right for your group.

- The gathered small group.
- The church.
- Friends and family.
- The culture at large.
- America
- The whole world.
- Anyone else you can think of.

Studying the word. *“The power of God's Word comes not from the ink and paper of our printed Bibles or from the creative rhetoric of a preacher but from the work of the Holy Spirit... the prayer for illumination explicitly acknowledges the Spirit's work... by requesting the Spirit to act through the reading and preaching of Scripture.”* – The Worship Sourcebook, page 139. **So pray for illumination!**

Observation

-  Have someone read 1 Peter 1:22-2:5.
-  What imperatives (commands) does Peter give in 1:22-2:3?

There are three. **“Love one another from a pure heart,” “Rid yourselves of all...” and “crave pure spiritual milk.”**

-  Peter buttresses these commands by continuing to remind the people of their status in Christ. Find at least four truths that encourage this.

This passage is a classic example of the “indicative and the imperative” – “what is true, and what to do.” Examining both halves will tell us what obedience is, and also motivate us to do it.

-  What is God doing with the people who come to him in faith, according to verses 2:4-5?
-  What causes people to be born again? (See 1 Peter 1:12, 23, 25, 4:6) Is this for some Christians, or all? How do you know?

Being born again is necessary to inherit the kingdom of God, and thus it is for all Christians. This happens when the Gospel is presented to a person and they respond in faith – the Holy Spirit imparts new life to them at that moment.

Interpretation

-  What does it mean to love one another deeply, from the heart? Is this different from normal love? Why or why not?

Perhaps Peter modifies the command to love one another in this way to bring extra emphasis to what should be a key Christian distinctive. Based on 2:1, there was some strife in the church.

-  What does it mean that the Word of the Lord endures forever? Why was that important for the people receiving this letter?

They needed to know that they had embarked on something of eternal worth, considering the earthly trials they faced.

-  Put on your thinking caps! What is the relation of verses 4-5 to the main command of verses 1:22-2:3? Do you see it?

Simply put, the “spiritual house” isn’t very spiritual if there is conflict and animosity between its members.

- 💡 Define these words from 2:1 – “Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander.”
- 💡 What is spiritual milk?

This is a euphemism for the Word of God which is especially needed for new Christians. Eventually, we learn to eat solid food, but it is OK to need milk, when you begin! (See 1 Cor. 3:2, Heb. 5:12-13).

- 💡 What is growing up in your salvation (vs. 2?)

Application

- Why is it that churches fall so short of living up to the unity and harmony that God commands? What can you do to “live at peace with everybody?”
- We are to live out our salvation in a community, as a “spiritual house.” What does this mean for Christians who prefer not to be a part of a church? What are they missing out on?

You cannot be a faithful Christian and not participate in a local body of believers. You may be “saved,” but you are falling short of God’s calling on your life.

- Being a “born again” Christian sometimes carries negative connotations, such as a Christian with an expressive emotional temperament. What is the Bible speaking of when it says “born again?” (See also John 3:1-8, 2 Cor. 5:17, James 1:18). Have you been born again? How can you know?

If there is a person not yet committed to Christ, it would be good to share the Gospel with them!!!

"A Kingdom of Priests" Small Group Lesson 6

1 Peter 2:4-10

Feb 12

Getting Started. Today's icebreaker: "What's your idea of the perfect day?"

Prayer. Share prayer concerns, and have each person pray for the person to their left. Pray whenever it feels right for your group.

Studying the word. Just a tip. Don't skip from observation to interpretation too quickly or you will miss what God is saying, and end up putting in what you already believe! Observation is the key to a good Bible Study.

Observation

-  Have someone read 1 Peter 2:4-10.
-  Do you see any repeated words or images? What are they?

The image here is of a house being built of stones. The stones, obviously, are people who have been born again into the faith.

-  What contrasts do you see in this passage? Name at least 5.

1.) Jesus – rejected by men, but chosen by God. 2.) The stone is precious to those who believe, but not to those who do not believe. 3.) The rejected stone is the cornerstone. 4.) They stumble because they rejected the message, but you are a chosen race... 5.) Darkness vs. light. 6.) Once you were not a people, now you are. 7.) Once you had not received mercy, now you have.

-  Is there anything in this passage that is surprising, or difficult to understand? Anything you like or don't like?

Interpretation

- 💡 Earlier we made a list of contrasts. How does that communicate Peter's main idea in this section?

God's people are experiencing rejection because Jesus experienced rejection!

- 💡 What is the significance of the image of a stone and a spiritual house? Is there an Old Testament reference in this?

This seems to be a reference to the temple, when David built a "house for the Lord." Christians, together as the body, are a temple. The point of the temple in the OT was to be God's presence in the world, and that is what the church is today.

- 💡 What is a "holy priesthood?" What does it mean that all Christians are priests?

A priest is someone who bridges the gap between God and man. We do that as we make known God to the world.

- 💡 What does it mean that unbelievers were "destined" for stumbling? What is stumbling? How do you reconcile this with God's love?

Very tough question, but the Bible presents us tough questions regularly. There are many passages which speak of God's love for all people, even the lost. How you interpret this usually comes down to your theological system – Calvinism or Arminianism.

Without declaring a preference for either of these, I would encourage you to consider the plain meaning of the passage and live in the tension that it causes. It is deeply reassuring that God has chosen us, and it was meant as comfort to Peter's audience, too.

- 💡 Verses 9 & 10 contain a host of Old Testament references, now all applied to Christians. What does each mean for Peter's audience?

A little bit of Biblical-theological history will help you here. The point of Israel was to be a light to the nations, so that through the descendants of Abraham "all the nations of the Earth would be blessed," by knowing God and his ways. God's people were to live out this calling as they kept the OT law. But they failed.

So in the NT, Jesus Christ brings a blessing to the nations by overcoming the power of sin through his death and resurrection. He imparts this power into a new people, not descended from Abraham, that now live out Abraham's original calling.

- 💡 Do you have any other questions about the meaning of this passage?

Application

- Where is God calling you to live out your calling as a priest? How can you do that?
- What does it mean to be one stone of many? What is your value in the structure, as one part of the whole?
- Verse 4 says that to be a Christian means to be "rejected by men." If you are comfortable, is there a way you can share with the group a way you have experienced this?
- How do the words of Scripture following verse 4 encourage you that this rejection is worth it?
- Is there any way that God is speaking to you through this passage and tonight's study that you would share with the group?

Close With Prayer.

"God and Government" Small Group Lesson 7

1 Peter 2:11-17

Feb 19

Getting Started.

Prayer. Pray whenever it feels right for your group. Spend time praying for government at the local, state, and federal level, as well as for our local schools.

Studying the word. Let each person share what quality they find most important in a friend. If you know why, say why.

Observation

- 🔍 Have someone read 1 Peter 2:11-17.
- 🔍 What does Peter command in this section for Christians to do?

1.) Abstain from sinful desires. 2.) Live such good lives that... 3.) Submit for the Lord's sake to every human institution. 4.) Live as free men, but do not use that freedom as a cover-up for evil.

- 🔍 What does Peter say about governing authorities?
 - What are they supposed to do? (vs. 14)

Governing authorities are in place only because God allows them to be in place. Governing authorities are supposed to punish wrong and commend what is right. As a note, Nero, an evil despotic, heretical, idolater was on the throne at the time.

- 🔍 What does he say about those who oppose Christians?
- 🔍 What is God's will according to this passage?

They are full of foolish talk and ignorance, and it is our job to prove them wrong with our lives.

- 🔍 Are there any other observations you make in this passage that you find interesting?

Interpretation

- 💡 How do sinful desires war against your soul?

Sinful desires will enslave us, leaving us unable to do the good things we are called to do. They wage a war for our soul, trying to control us and distract us from the good we would otherwise do with our lives.

- 💡 When is the “the day that God visits us” (vs. 12)?

A clear reference to the second coming.

- 💡 Is there a unifying, main idea to this passage?
- 💡 Are there situations where the king should not be honored? How would you know that from the Bible?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously tried to assassinate Hitler as part of a conspiracy. However, as far as the Bible goes, it is not easy to find examples of armed resistance to the government, especially in the New Testament. Jesus eschews that path (John 18:10-11).

God's people were always in a position of weakness as a minority when the New Testament was written, so we don't really have much teaching on how to wield political power. The principles of love of neighbor and servant leadership are probably our best guides to facing these tough issues. We should view dishonoring the government leaders as an absolute last resort in the most extreme circumstance.

- 💡 What did Peter mean when he said “the ignorant talk of foolish men?”
- 💡 What is the point of freedom (vs. 16)? How can that be abused? How can that be leveraged for God's glory?

Application – A Case Study

The Jones family was composed of Steve, his wife Tina, and their three grown children, Tom, Michael, and Susy. Steve was very passionate politically, and spent a lot of time reading about politics and listening to news radio. They were also involved in their church as committed Christians.

Throughout the Obama years, it was very common for Steve to express his disapproval of what Obama was doing. Sometimes, his language would even insult or condemn the president.

Steve's middle child, Michael, ended up leaving the faith during college. He married a woman who was very committed to the opposite political party as Steve. She was equally passionate in her views. This created friction in the family, but they still did their best to get along.

- What did Steve instill in his family that was positive? What did he instill that was negative?
- Based on the Bible, was Steve obeying God with his harsh language? Why or why not?
- Does 1 Peter have anything to say to a person like Steve as he seeks to "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." Does he need to change anything? Does he need to abandon his views? Why or why not?
- Do you think the church can be a place where people of different political stripes can work together for the Gospel?
- What truths about God can motivate us to submit to human authorities that we do not trust or agree with?
- Are there any ways that you need to change your behavior based on this passage?

Close With Prayer.