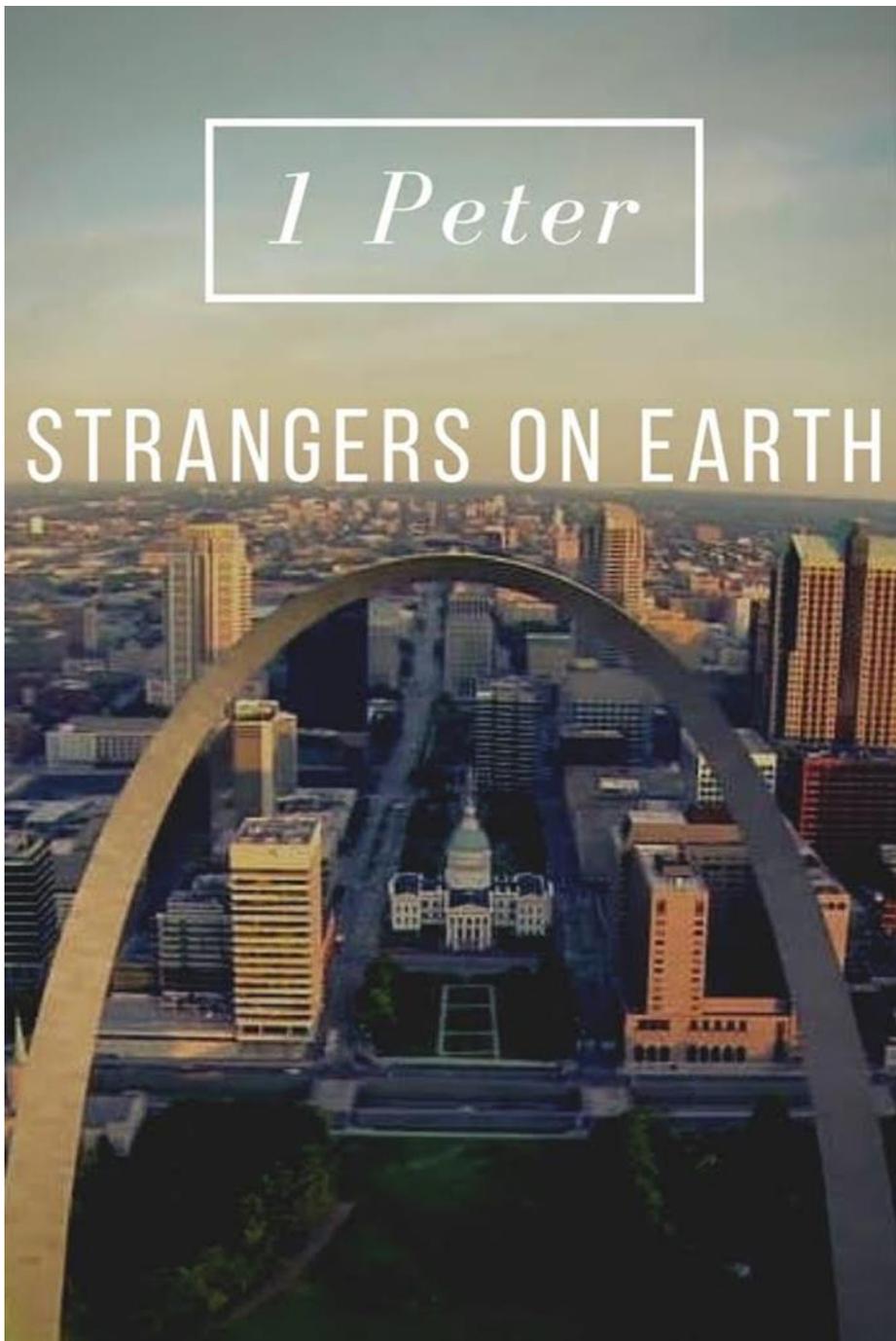


*1 Peter*

STRANGERS ON EARTH



## **“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.

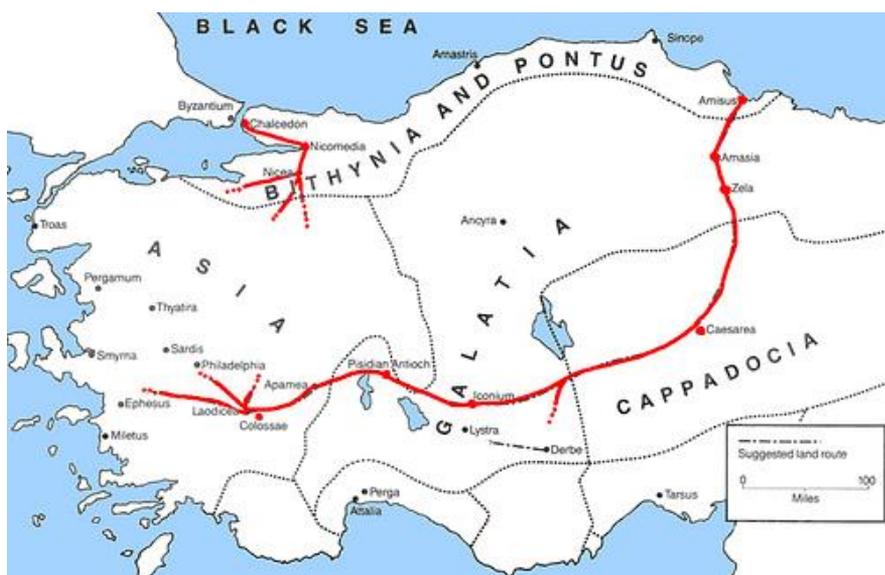
We are going to spend a little time looking at the audience and purpose of 1 Peter before we get into the text. This will be different than the normal way our inductive study works.

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 it is unhelpful?

**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?
- 🔍 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 Gentile churches in Turkey?
- 💡 What does the word “elect” mean? Do you see anything in verse 2 which could reinforce that idea?
- 💡 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?
-  When do God’s people receive the inheritance? What gives certainty regarding the inheritance?
-  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?
-  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?

- 💡 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?
- 💡 Any other questions about the passage?

### **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?

**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)
-  Verse 7 – what is the purpose, from God’s perspective, of these trials in the life of the believer?
-  Verses 8-9 – What are the results of believing in Jesus while facing hardship? (include present and future benefits)
-  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?

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

### **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 like fire. How does this give us hope amid suffering?
- 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?
- 🔍 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?
- 🔍 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?

### Interpretation

- 💡 What is the place of the mind in the life of the faithful Christian?
- 💡 What is holiness? How can a human being imitate God's holiness?
- 💡 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?
- 💡 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?
- 💡 What is the relation of the work of Christ (vss. 19-20) to the Christian life?

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

### **Interpretation**

- 💡 What does it mean to love one another deeply, from the heart? Is this different from normal love? Why or why not?
- 💡 What does it mean that the Word of the Lord endures forever? Why was that important for the people receiving this letter?
- 💡 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?
- 💡 Define these words from 2:1 – “Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander.”
- 💡 What is spiritual milk?
- 💡 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?
- 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?

## **“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?
-  What contrasts do you see in this passage? Name at least 5.
-  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?
-  What is the significance of the image of a stone and a spiritual house? Is there an Old Testament reference in this?
-  What is a “holy priesthood?” What does it mean that all Christians are priests?
-  What does it mean that unbelievers were “destined” for stumbling? What is stumbling? How do you reconcile this with God’s love?

- 💡 Verses 9 & 10 contain a host of Old Testament references, now all applied to Christians. What does each mean for Peter’s audience?
- 💡 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?
- 🔍 What does Peter say about governing authorities?
  - What are they supposed to do? (vs. 14)
- 🔍 What does he say about those who oppose Christians?
- 🔍 What is God’s will according to this passage?
- 🔍 Are there any other observations you make in this passage that you find interesting?

### **Interpretation**

- 💡 How do sinful desires war against your soul?
- 💡 When is the “the day that God visits us” (vs. 12)?
- 💡 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?
- 💡 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.**