

A misty forest scene with tall, thin trees and a fallen log in the foreground. The ground is covered in green foliage and fallen leaves. The overall atmosphere is serene and slightly somber.

# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

by WAYNE PALMER

## 1 P E T E R





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## INTRODUCTION

Peter wrote this, his first letter, to the pastors of congregations in the Roman province of Asia Minor. These congregations were new, made up largely of Gentiles, and were suffering significant persecution because their new lives in Christ were starkly different from the lives they used to live—the lives their neighbors, family, and friends still lived in the corrupt culture around them.

## AUTHORSHIP

The Book of 1 Peter was written by the apostle Simon Peter, one of Jesus' twelve apostles. Yet Peter writes in great humility. Though he identifies himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ" in 1:1, he later identifies himself with the pastors to whom he writes—"I exhort the elders among you, as a *fellow elder*"—in 5:1 (emphasis added).

## PURPOSE

Peter wants to encourage pastors who are watching over and nurturing their congregations through difficult times of persecution and suffering. It offers us great comfort and hope when we pass through our own times of suffering—especially when we are being persecuted for the faith—and reminds us to pray for our fellow Christians who are undergoing persecution.

## OUTLINE

For the purpose of this study, we will divide 1 Peter into the following sections:

1. The Apostle's Salutation (1:1–2)
2. Introductory Thanksgiving (1:3–12)
3. Christians Are to Lead Holy Lives (1:13–2:10)
4. Specific Instructions and Encouragement for Holy Living (2:11–4:11)
5. Joy amid Suffering and Further Clarifications about What Is Expected of the Community (4:12–5:11)
6. Final Greetings (5:12–14)

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### THE APOSTLE'S SALUTATION (1:1–2)

Peter begins with a greeting to the Christians living in the Roman province of Asia Minor. He reminds them they are citizens of heaven, even as they struggle as exiles living in this hostile culture.

**Read 1:1–2.**

**Q 1: What does Peter mean by calling them “elect exiles of the Dispersion” (v. 1)?**

A 1: When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, they were driven out of the Garden of Eden. Since then, our whole human family has lived in exile from God, waiting for Christ to return so we can live in God's presence again. Beyond that, we Christians are scattered throughout the world, living in our sinful cultures as though we were aliens and strangers.

**Q 2: What works of the Trinity does Peter mention that make us elect exiles?**

A 2: Peter foreshadows the three articles of the Apostles' Creed. Besides creating and sustaining us, God the Father foreknew and chose us for salvation; Jesus sprinkles us with His saving blood in Baptism and His Holy Word to cleanse away all of our sin; the Holy Spirit created and sustains the saving faith in us, sanctifying us, or making us holy.

# INTRODUCTORY THANKSGIVING (1:3–12)

## **A. God Is to Be Praised for New Life in Christ.**

Peter points out the reason for our great joy in Jesus Christ.

**Read 1:3–5.**

**Q 3: In verse 3, what is Peter referring to when he claims we were “born again”?**

A 3: We were born again in Baptism, in which the Holy Spirit made us new creatures, children of God.

## **B. Christians Are Strengthened and Sustained in Their Suffering by Joy and Hope.**

Peter explains how the hope of eternal life carries us through times of suffering and persecution.

**Read 1:6–9.**

**Q 4: How does persecution reveal the genuineness of a Christian’s faith?**

A 4: Persecution is a test. If we did not have an eternal hope for which we held fast to Jesus, there would be no reason to continue to endure suffering without any hope of relief or reward.

## **C. Salvation was Foretold by the Prophets.**

Peter now describes the writing of the Old Testament prophecies which foretold the life and work of Jesus Christ.

**Read 1:10–12.**

**Q 5: What new light does Peter shed on the prophets of the Old Testament?**

A 5: In Old Testament times, God only began revealing the persons of the Trinity. The prophets sought to understand the nature of God more fully. But it was only through Christ’s coming and the New Testament writings that we can clearly see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as they are taught in the three articles of the Apostles’ Creed.

**Q 6: Why is Baptism such a pivotal part of our salvation?**

A 6: We are born in sin and continue to commit sin throughout our earthly lives. Of ourselves, we are doomed to suffer the wrath of God. But God works through Baptism to give us new birth, adopting us as His own sons and daughters through Jesus Christ and giving us the Holy Spirit to create and sustain our faith.

# CHRISTIANS ARE TO LEAD HOLY LIVES (1:13—2:10)

## **A. Newfound Status Demands That Christians Be Holy, as God Is.**

Peter calls the Christians to lives of holiness, reflecting God's holiness.

**Read 1:13–16.**

**Q 7: Why does Peter tell us to set our hope fully on Jesus' return?**

A 7: If we place our confidence in our works, our pride will fail us. If we place it in people's reactions to our deeds, we will be sorely disappointed. Remembering Christ's second coming keeps us grounded, encouraged, and strengthened for the sometimes difficult tasks we face.

## **B. Believers Are Mindful of the Price of Their Redemption.**

As we set our hope on Christ's return, we call on God, our Father, in prayer, never forgetting the price Jesus paid to redeem us from sin and make us ready for the great Last Day.

**Read 1:17–21.**

**Q 8: What does it mean to “conduct [ourselves] with fear throughout the time of [our] exile” (v. 17)?**

A 8: This fear is not terror, but the deep and humble respect toward God revealed in Martin Luther's explanation of the First Commandment, “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things” (Small Catechism). We are repentant because we know our greatest deeds are insufficient to earn God's acceptance and forgiveness. Only the blood of Jesus Christ makes us acceptable to God.

## **C. Christians Turn Away from Malice as They Mature in Faith and Love.**

As the Word of God has given us new birth, we grow up in faith and love toward our fellow Christians and all people.

**Read 1:22–2:3.**

**Q 9: Why are patience and forgiveness toward our brothers and sisters in Christ a vital part of growing in spiritual maturity?**

A 9: They are sinners, just as we are. Just as God has patiently forgiven us without holding our sins against us, we are to do the same toward one other. Jesus taught this in the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

**D. As Living Stones in God's Temple, His Royal Priesthood and Chosen People, Christians Proclaim His Excellencies.**

Peter builds on Jesus' referring to His body as the temple of God to state that all Christians are the temple of God as well.

**Read 2:4–10.**

**Q 10: What does it mean for us to be living stones in God's temple?**

A 10: Just as many stones are carefully arranged and joined together to build a temple, likewise, God chooses, cleanses, and knits together all Christians to be His temple, the Body of Christ. God dwells in us and declares His salvation to the world through each of us and all of us.

**Q 11: How can the Ten Commandments inform our new life as Christians?**

A 11: We frequently think of the Commandments in their second use, a mirror that shows us our sins and our need of the Savior. But for Christians, a third use comes to play after we are justified. The Law teaches us how to live toward God and one another.

# SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR HOLY LIVING (2:11—4:11)

## **A. Peter Explains the Purpose of Holiness.**

Peter encourages his readers to abstain from the passions of the flesh to protect their own souls and their neighbors who observe them.

**Read 2:11–12.**

**Q 12: What Old Testament people does Peter want us to identify with when he calls us “sojourners and exiles” (v. 11)?**

A 12: The sojourners remind us of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who sojourned in the land of Canaan, living in tents. Exiles remind us of the people of Judah who were taken captive and lived seventy years in Babylon. Each of these was surrounded by cultures that obeyed their sinful passions and served false gods.

**Q 13: Why does Peter use such a strong expression as “wage war against your soul” (v. 11) when describing the temptations that arise from the passions of our flesh?**

A 13: It is easy to downplay the significance of our passions and permit ourselves to entertain them without recognizing we are playing with fire. In his explanation of the Sixth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer (“And lead us not into temptation”), Luther wrote, “We pray . . . that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory” (Small Catechism).

## **B. Christians Submit to Civil Authorities.**

In a time of trial, Peter commands his readers to submit themselves to the civil authorities.

**Read 2:13–17.**

**Q 14: Does this imply that the Christians in Asia Minor were suffering governmental persecution?**

A 14: In Acts 5:29, Peter told the Jewish council, “We must obey God rather than men.” If the governmental authorities were persecuting the Christians, then it would have been wrong for Peter to tell them to submit to the civil authorities. Since he did not, the persecution was coming from sources other than the official government.



### **C. Household Slaves Submit to the Authority of Their Masters.**

Peter calls us to willingly suffer, especially when we are being treated unjustly because we are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Read 2:18–25.**

**Q 15: Peter’s call to endure mistreatment hinges on Jesus’ patient endurance in His passion, and how He “bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (v. 24). How does this tie into Baptism?**

A 15: As Luther wrote, “[Baptizing with water] indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever” (Small Catechism, Baptism, Fourth Part).

**Q 16: When have you faced opposition because of your faith in Christ?**

A 16: Whenever this may have happened in your life, it is helpful to remember Luther’s explanation of the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer (“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”): “God’s will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come” (Small Catechism).

### **D. A Wife Yields to Her Husband’s Authority as Head of the Household.**

Peter urges wives to submit to their husband’s authority so the witness of the inner beauty of their faith and the new life that Christ gives might lead their husbands to faith.

**Read 3:1–6.**

**Q 17: Why does Peter consider the inner beauty of a Christian wife more important than her outward beauty?**

A 17: Peter encourages women to “let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious” (v. 4). Reading through the good deeds attributed to the excellent wife described in Proverbs 31:10–31 helps us understand how a wife’s inner conduct can make the Gospel attractive to her unbelieving husband.

### **E. A Husband Demonstrates Godliness by Respecting His Wife.**

Peter now turns to husbands, urging them to remember God's plan for marriage and to give their wives the honor they deserve.

**Read 3:7.**

**Q 18: What does Peter mean by calling the wife “the weaker vessel”?**

A 18: Peter reminds men that typically women are smaller in size and weaker in strength, and thus vulnerable to abuse from men. But the wife's God-given role in marriage and the family is indispensable. Husbands who abuse their wives are hindering their own prayers.

**Q 19: How does Peter's advice to wives and husbands in verses 1–7 illustrate God's intent behind the Sixth Commandment?**

A 19: In his explanation of the Sixth Commandment, Luther wrote, “We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other” (Small Catechism). These verses provide practical ways wives and husbands can love and honor each other.

### **F. Humility, Unity, a Tender Heart, and Brotherly Love Characterize Christian Brotherhood.**

Peter teaches us how to respond to those who oppose us and cause us trouble for our faith.

**Read 3:8–12.**

**Q 20: How do the characteristics Peter describes in verse 8 help us bless those who do evil to us in verse 9?**

A 20: Unity of mind among Christians comes from the common faith in Christ, which we all share. Sympathy helps us identify with our enemies, who often act in ignorance. Brotherly love reminds us that God has made us all His children in Baptism, brothers and sisters to one another. A tender heart means we have compassion for others. A humble mind means we consider the eternal needs of others more important than our own. We can do this because Christ has already taken care of our eternal needs.

### **G. Christian Virtue Sends a Powerful Message to Outsiders and Gives Opportunities for Witnessing.**

Peter shows how our loving response as we bless those who persecute us can open the door for the Holy Spirit to work repentance and saving faith in their hearts.

**Read 3:13–17.**

**Q 21: What is the key to being able to bless those who treat us shamefully?**

A 21: When our difficult circumstances drive us to find help and comfort in Jesus Christ, we remember His sufferings for us, we gain an eternal perspective on our momentary troubles, and we are given a peace that will lead our enemies to ask the reason for our hope and faith.

### **H. Jesus Was Treated Unjustly and Then Gloriously Vindicated.**

Peter points us to Jesus' Passion to give us confidence that God will vindicate us after our sufferings, just as He raised Jesus from the dead.

**Read 3:18–22.**

**Q 22: How was Jesus vindicated in His descent into hell?**

A 22: Jesus went to hell, not to suffer, but to proclaim God's justice and His victory over sin, death, and Satan. He showed that He had won the victory.

### **I. Jesus' Example Inspires His People to Overcome Surrounding Evil.**

Peter now calls us to rise above the evil that surrounds and tempts us.

**Read 4:1–6.**

**Q 23: What does the phrase "arm yourselves with the same way of thinking" (v. 1) mean?**

A 23: Peter calls Christians to be committed to God's salvation as Jesus was. Not that we earn salvation by our works, but we have the same dedication to God and loving concern for our neighbor as Jesus demonstrated in His suffering and death for our sakes.

## **J. Nearness of the End Stimulates Christians to Faithfulness.**

In view of the coming end of this life, Peter advises us how to live in love toward our neighbors.

**Read 4:7–11.**

**Q 24: How does being self-controlled and sober-minded benefit our prayer life?**

A 24: The key to sincere prayer is focusing our attention on God and His promises. Self-control and sober-mindedness keep us from turning our attention on ourselves.

**Q 25: How do our lives as Christians flow out of what Christ Jesus did for us on the cross?**

A 25: Jesus took our guilt and sin upon Himself, freeing us from the curse of sin and God's wrath. Set free of the fear of death and judgment, we can "serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness" (Small Catechism, Apostles' Creed, Explanation of the Second Article).



# JOY AMID SUFFERING AND FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS ABOUT WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE COMMUNITY (4:12—5:11)

## **A. Suffering for the Sake of Christ Is a Sharing in Him.**

Peter speaks of two kinds of sufferings God permits to come into our lives.

**Read 4:12–19.**

### **Q 26: What are the two types of suffering?**

A 26: We suffer the consequences of our sins, and we innocently suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

### **Q 27: How can we deal with times when we must suffer for living or sharing our faith?**

A 27: Keep focused on Jesus Christ and how our sufferings remind us of what He suffered that we might live eternally. Now we suffer to share that glorious salvation with our enemies, who need that salvation just as we do.

## **B. Elders Have Special Responsibilities and Promises.**

Peter gives counsel and advice to pastors who are leading their members through fiery trials.

**Read 5:1–4.**

### **Q 28: What attitude should pastors have as they shepherd Christ's flock?**

A 28: They should serve willingly and eagerly, being humble examples to the flock and fierce defenders against false teachings.

## **C. Younger Men Are to Submit Humbly to the Community's Elders.**

Peter describes the proper attitude members—especially the young men—should have toward their pastor(s).

**Read 5:5.**

### **Q 29: Why is humility so important among all the members of a congregation?**

A 29: Selfish pride in pastors or members is destructive and disruptive to God's efforts to care for His sheep.

### **D. Peter Gives a Concluding Exhortation to Humility and Trust.**

Peter reminds us of God's care and promises in these times of fiery trial.

**Read 5:6–11.**

**Q 30: How does Peter contrast God's activities with Satan's activities in these fiery trials we sometimes face in life?**

A 30: God's mighty hand is always there, reaching out to us and setting limits on the devil. His purpose is not to destroy us but to lead us to find our strength in Him through faith. Satan prowls like a roaring lion wanting to devour us, but God will exalt us, strengthen us, and restore us after the time of trial and testing is complete.

**Q 31: Why is being actively involved in our congregation important as we go through the trials in our lives?**

A 31: God gives us pastors who help us keep straight the reasons for our sufferings and point us to God, who will work through Word and Sacrament to strengthen our faith, restore us, and exalt us at Christ's return. "In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ" (Small Catechism, Apostles' Creed, Explanation of the Third Article).

# FINAL GREETINGS (5:12-14)

## **A. Silvanus Had Helped Peter.**

Peter passes along greetings from the man who is assisting him in his ministry by handwriting this letter.

**Read 5:12.**

**Q 32: What role did Silvanus (possibly Silas) play in Peter’s ministry?**

A 32: He was the scribe who wrote this letter as Peter dictated it to him.

## **B. Other Brothers from the Church in “Babylon” (Rome) Send Greetings.**

Peter reminds the congregations of Asia Minor that they are not alone. They are part of a larger Christian Church.

**Read 5:13.**

**Q 33: What is the significance of calling Rome “Babylon”?**

A 33: The Babylonians persecuted the people of God and destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Calling Rome “Babylon” reminds Peter’s readers in Asia Minor that they are not alone in facing persecution for the name of Christ—their brothers and sisters in Rome are suffering persecution as well.

## **C. Peter Concludes with the Holy Kiss and the Peace of Christ.**

Peter closes with a common greeting between friends and families and a reminder of God’s grace through Jesus Christ.

**Read 5:14.**

**Q 34: How are these two forms of greeting—a physical gesture like a kiss and a voiced reminder of God’s peace in Christ—appropriate ways for us to greet our brothers and sisters in Christ?**

A 34: Instead of a kiss, we would usually use our customary handshake. We also verbally share the peace Christ won for us all in our liturgy when the pastor says, “Peace be with you,” and the congregation responds, “And also with you.”

**Q 35: What is Peter’s secret for Christians to endure persecution?**

A 35: Keep our eyes on Jesus, who suffered persecution and death to save us from our sins. “I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death” (Small Catechism, Apostles’ Creed, Explanation of the Second Article).