

# “A REASON FOR HOPE”

STUDIES IN  
1 PETER

Preparing for the

**JESUS IS\_\_\_\_\_.**

[jesus-is.org.au](http://jesus-is.org.au)

event

St Faith's Anglican Church



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## **“A Reason for Hope”**

### **1. Overview**

The letter “1Peter” is a confronting, unsettling letter for a modern “western”, Christian to read. Our lives are often so focused on the good things we are enjoying now, that talk of “future hope” seems a bit empty, even unnecessary. At first.

On the other hand, when things go badly wrong for us personally, or for those we love, then the Christian hope of ‘glory’ takes on more significance. Suffering drives us to hope.

Well, this letter written by the Apostle Peter was originally addressed to Christians who were suffering for being Christians. It is a letter written to encourage these early Christians to hold onto their hope of being with Christ in glory. It is written to urge them, as they have this hope, to live lives in this world that are consistent with this hope. And it is written to urge Christians to be ready to explain that hope, to defend it, to unbelievers who challenge them.

Peter writes:

“In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

1Peter 3:15

As we study 1Peter this term, we will particularly focus on three questions.

First, what is the substance of this “hope” that Peter writes about? What are we Christians to look forward to?

Second, what reasons are there for this hope? What is the basis for thinking that this future “state” is ahead, for the believer?

Third, what difference will this hope make to how we live now?

I believe we need this letter. We have an enemy who wants us to forget our hope. We have an enemy who wants to rob us of our inheritance. We need to help each other to resist him today.

## **2 “Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.” Mission**

As we study this letter, we will also be preparing for the “Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.” Mission, that will run from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April this year. (These are the four weeks leading up to Easter). This is planned to be an intensive period of outreach by over 20 evangelical churches on the Northern Beaches, from Manly to Avalon.

The major focus is getting people talking about Jesus, getting the questions of his identity raised in conversations. It is not about big events, so much as encouraging personal witness. (More details of the Mission are included in the appendix to this study booklet)

In preparation for this, we will be urging everyone to prepare to give their own personal “reason for this hope”. And, in our groups, help each other to make this explanation as clear and simple as possible.

As we do this, we are looking forward to seeing God use us all to bring Jesus glory. We are praying that God will save many whom he will call. And we look forward to hearing how “the Spirit of glory and of God” has rested on, and used, us his people. (1Peter 5:14)

Kerry Nagel

Jan 2014

## **Study 1**

## **“The Living Hope”**

(1Peter 1:1-12)

(For week commencing Monday 3rd Feb. Group Studies to follow after sermon each weekend)

### **1. Getting Started**

a) Hopes. What are some of the things you are looking forward to in the next few years? How do these “hopes” shape how you live now? Discuss.

b) When we use the word “hope”, in daily life, how certain or uncertain are the things we hope for? Discuss.

### **2. The Setting**

a) Read 1Peter 1:1-2. How does the author of this letter describe himself? From the records of Jesus’ life in the gospels, what do we know of this Peter? Discuss your picture of him.

b) What do people who are to receive this “circular” letter have in common? Discuss.

### **3. The Cause of Praise**

- a) Read 1Peter 1:3-5. From these verses, what are Christians to look forward to? When will they receive it? Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) What is the basis, or reason, for holding onto this hope, from verse 3?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c) How confident do you think a Christian can reasonably feel about actually receiving this hope? Why?

### **4. The Struggle**

- a) Read 1Peter 1:6-9. What struggles are the Christians in the region generally facing?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) Why, according to Peter, has God allowed them to undergo these struggles? Discuss.

## **5. Getting Personal**

a) To what extent can we share the same hope as Peter and these early Christians? Why?

b) What sort of “trials” are you facing at the moment?

c) Does this passage help you to face “trials” today? If so, in what way?  
Discuss



## **6. The Privilege**

If you have time, read 1 Peter 1:10-12

a) What did the Old Testament prophets predict?

b) What greater privilege do we as Christians enjoy, that these prophets could only yearn for? How does that make you feel?

## Group Prayer List

Group Member	Concerns

## **Study 2**

### **“Living as Strangers”**

(1Peter 1:13 to 2:3)

(for week beginning Monday 10 Feb)

#### **1. Getting Started**

a) “Strangers”? The word translated “strangers” in Chapter 1:1 and Chapter 1:17 refer to people who are temporarily living in a country or place other than their homeland, where they belong.

Have you ever felt that you “did not belong” in this way? (e.g. if you moved countries?) What does this feel like? Why? Discuss.

b) How might such changes affect a person’s lifestyle?

#### **2. Living as Strangers**

a) Read 1 Peter 1:13-17. What “hope” are Peter’s readers to set their minds on? How is this a motivation to obey the instructions in verses 13-16?

b) What is the logical connection of verse 13 with what goes before?

c) If you “set” your hope and mind as Peter instructs, what changes in lifestyle must follow? (verses 14-16)

d) There is a strong instruction “do not conform” in verse 14. Discuss what “desires” are to be resisted. (See also e.g. Chapter 2:1, 4:3) How can we avoid conforming to these in practice? Discuss.

e) From verse 17, what is it about the judgement of God that should cause us to fear?

### **3. Read 1Peter 1:18-2:3**

a) From verses 18-21, what grounds for “hope” (verse 21) can you see? Discuss.

b) Peter next gives (verse 22) the first specific positive application of the command to holiness. What are Christians commanded to do, and why?

c) What reason is given for this behaviour, in verses 23-25?

d) If the Christians are to put Peter's instructions into practice (verse 22), what will they need to "resist"? (3:1) Why?

#### **4. Getting Personal**

a) From the verses above, what practical difference should our Christian hope make to how we live? Discuss.

b) What changes has God's Spirit challenged you to make to your lifestyle, as you seek to live as a "stranger in this world"? Be specific.

**“JESUS IS \_\_\_\_\_” Prayer List**

<b>Group Member</b>	<b>Non- Christian contacts</b>
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.
	1. 2. 3.

## **Study 3**

## **“The Christian Reputation”**

(1Peter 2:4-25)

(For week commencing Monday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb)

### **1. Getting Started**

a) How are Christians presented, often, in our television news reports etc?  
What impression are hearers given? Discuss.

b) How do you feel when you hear negative reports about a Christian's behaviour?

### **2. The Christian Identity**

a) Read 1Peter 2:4-8. What image does Peter use to describe Jesus, in verse 4? In what way is this an odd image?

b) How do the Old Testament passages quoted in verses 6 to 8 match the responses to Jesus described in verse 4?

c) From verse 5, what is God now doing to those who are “coming to Jesus” (verse 4)?



d) What does this mean? What will be the result?

e) Read 1 Peter 2:9-12. List the different ways in which Christians are described in these verses.

f) Applying these titles to yourself personally, how do they make you feel about yourself?

g) What is God's purpose for us? What tasks are we given in these verses?

h) If we live like "God's chosen people", what "reputation" should Christ have in the world? ( verse 12)

### **3. God's People in Action**

a) Read 1Peter 2:13-25. (Notice that we can see from verse 15, that Peter still has the reputation of Christians, and so the Lord Jesus, in mind). From verses 13 – 17, summarise the way Peter says Christians should treat those with authority in society. Discuss.

b) From verses 18 to 25, how are slaves then (and employees today) to treat those over them?

c) What reasons are given for this instruction?

#### **4. Getting Personal**

a) In what way can we “declare the praises of the one who called us....”?  
(verse 9)? How can we better do this effectively at St Faith’s?

b) What lifestyle changes might we need to make, so that our words are better supported by our actions? Discuss.

## Study 4

## “Wives and Husbands”

(1Peter 3:1-7)

(For week commencing Monday 24 Feb)

## 1. Getting Started

This passage challenges our culture and its accepted ideas on how husbands and wives should relate. It is directed at married men and women, but in some ways should also influence how we all (married and single) relate to the opposite sex.

## 2. For Wives

- a) Read 1Peter 3:1-7. Briefly list the things that wives are taught to do, or not do, in this passage.
- b) What is the reason Peter gives to wives, in verses 1-2, for the behaviour he instructs wives to display? (compare with 2:12). Discuss.
- c) What sort of beauty does Peter command?

- d) How might a woman “cultivate” or seek such beauty (that lasts and lasts)?

### **3. For Husbands (verse 7)**

- a) What common failings of husbands does this verse correct?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b) What things about wives are men told to be aware of, and shape their behaviour around?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c) In what way is the woman a “weaker partner”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d) What steps would a man take to put these instructions into practice?

## 4. Conclusion

- a) If you are married, what challenges does this passage put before you?
- b) If you are single, how might the pattern for marriage influence how you relate to the opposite sex, if at all? Discuss.
- c) The section starts with “in the same way” (verse 1). What do you think Peter is referring to? Why?

## **Study 5**

### **“It Is Not Fair”**

(1Peter 3:8-22)

(For the week commencing Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March)

#### **1. Getting Started**

If you can, think of a time when you were unfairly treated. How did you feel at the time? How did you respond?

#### **2. Listening to God about “opposition”**

a) Read 1Peter 3:8-17. From verses 9 and 16, what sort of treatment were Christians receiving at the time? (see also 2:12, 4:12-14)

b) From 3:9-13, how are Christians to respond? Why?

c) What is one possible reaction, by a Christian, when they are persecuted for speaking up about Jesus? (verse 14) Why?

d) How does Peter say we should respond to such opposition?  
(verse 15-16) Why? (See also Isaiah 8:12) Discuss.

e) Read verses 17-22. How is Peter's instruction connected to the example of Jesus, mentioned in these verses? (See also 2:21-25)

### **3. Conclusion**

How would you explain the Christian hope (verse 15-16), and your reasons for looking forward to it? Discuss.



## **Study 6**

### **“Pressure Tactics”**

(1Peter 4:1-19)

(For the week commencing Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March)

#### **1. Getting Started**

Can you think of a time when you were “pressured” by family or friends to do something you were not really comfortable with? If so, how did it make you feel? Did you “go along” with their wishes? Why or why not? Discuss.

#### **2. “For The Will Of God”**

a) Read 1Peter 4:1-6. What sort of things had these Christians done in the past?

b) How are their friends responding to their new “Christian” way of living?

c) From verses 1 and 2, what attitudes does Peter say will help the Christians not to be swayed by their non-christian friends to be ungodly?

d) From verses 5 and 6, what else must we keep in mind? Why?

### **3. For The Glory Of God**

a) Read 1Peter 4: 7-11. List the various things Peter urges his readers to do, and any reasons he gives.

b) Which of these instructions are most challenging for you, personally? Why? Discuss.

c) How would these things lead to “God being praised” (verse 11)?

#### **4. Conclusion**

We began by thinking about “unhelpful pressure”. As a group, how can you help each other - by “positive pressure”- to live lives that reflect the “deep love” Peter urges in verse 8? Discuss.

## **Study 7**

### **“Finishing Strong”**

(1Peter 5:1-14)

(For the week commencing Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March)

#### **1. Getting Started**

Think of a time when you were working on something, but were running out of ‘energy’. Maybe an actual race or physical contest, or just a problem you were trying to overcome. How did you feel? Why?

What, if anything, helped you persevere to the end – if you did “finish it”?

#### **2. About Leadership**

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4.

a) First, Peter addresses those in any leadership roles in the church.

Why do you think Peter includes himself at the start of this section?

(verse 1)

b) What three failings are christian leaders to be careful to avoid?

(verses 2-3)

c) Why, in practical terms, are each of these failings things that must be avoided in God's church? Discuss.

d) What motives are leaders given for avoiding these things? (verses 3,4)

### **3. For Us All**

Read 1Peter 5:5-7

a) From verse 5, what is the similarity between the behaviour urged on all of us in verse 5, and that of the "elders" in verses 1-4?

b) What reason for being humble are given in verse 5 and 6?

c) What would such humility look like in practical terms, do you think?

d) From verses 6 and 7, how can we be humble before God?

#### **4. Standing Firm**

Read 1Peter 5:8-14.

a) From verses 8 to 11, what reasons are given for being “alert”?

b) What are we urged to do, in regard to the devil?

c) What can we be confident God will do? How might this help us stand firm?

## **5 Getting Personal**

a) If you are in any leadership role, how do Peter's words encourage and challenge you personally?

b) What can you do personally to be humble in how you treat  
i) those who lead you

ii) others at home and at church

iii) God himself?

## Appendix 1

### Jesus Is Preparing Us!

Dear Friends, as you may have heard last year, with other churches on the Northern Beaches, we are running the “Jesus Is \_\_\_\_.” month of mission in March and April 2014. The aim is threefold:

1. Encouraging *personal evangelism* as Christians use the “Jesus Is \_\_\_\_.” phrase, via T-shirts, caps, business cards, social media, surveys etc.
2. *Public gospel preaching* on topics, which complete the “Jesus Is \_\_\_\_.” sentence. (e.g. in church)
3. *Internet evangelism* via the Australian “Jesus Is \_\_\_\_.” website, [www.jesus-is.org.au](http://www.jesus-is.org.au)

We want to get people talking about Jesus again. And we want to do this in the growing digital world, as well as in face to face communication.

The web-site and other aspects of the campaign that goes with it has been used in a number of other parts of Australia, with good results. And I’m excited about the way it can harness social media, as well as inspire Christian people to own up to following Jesus in other aspects of daily life..

Whether in the digital world or face-to-face, we want to encourage Christians to take an extra step in seeking to promote the gospel of Jesus. Wear a T-shirt. Share a page from the website. Try to engineer a conversation. Ask others for their opinions. Prepare your own. Issue an invitation to hear more. And do it in a contemporary and professional way.

**JESUS IS \_\_\_\_.**  
[jesus-is.org.au](http://jesus-is.org.au)

I am asking leaders of our Small groups to help us use the first few weeks of school term 1 in 2014 to help prepare for the four weeks of mission leading up to Easter . There are at least three ways.



We will ask each group member to name two people they'd like the group to pray will discover that "Jesus is... *for them!*" and then do it persistently throughout term 1.

We're also going to ask everyone to prepare their own favourite way to complete the "Jesus Is \_\_\_\_\_." sentence. We are looking at a single word or phrase, plus 2-3 bullet points which explain your point of view.. This models 1 Peter 3:15 - always being prepared with an answer for our hope.

And we are going to invite everyone to memorise a brief "opening line" to use as a gambit to get into "Jesus Is \_\_\_\_\_." conversations. It might feel silly, but the idea is to get a plausible introduction rolling off the tongue and sounding normal, so that we don't feel so quite stuck or hesitant in raising the "Jesus Is \_\_\_\_\_." conversation. Of course, it will still take courage!

Yours in Christ's service,

Kerry Nagel

## Appendix 2

### “Jesus is .....” Mission Preparation

#### A. Encouraging Conversations

If our advertising works, then people up and down the Northern Beaches will become curious about the *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* thing. You can imagine wearing a *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* t-shirt while you're in a queue at the coffee shop. After you place your order, the barista asks you, “What is this *Jesus is \_\_\_\_* thing all about?” You could respond by saying that it is a series of events being run by the local church. True. End of conversation.

Alternatively you could say, -

*“I belong to one of the local churches on the Northern Beaches. We are wanting to hear how people would complete the sentence Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_. How would you fill in the blank?”*

You may at that point be really eager to give your own opinion, but remember the first thing we want to do is get other people thinking about who Jesus is. So, letting them think, come up with a few possibilities, hesitate, and talk about past church experience etc is all part of starting a real conversation with the person. So, the most helpful advice for the Christian in these situations is, “Don’t speak, listen.” Ask them questions about what they think to clarify their views.

Even though it may seem very simple, it is worth practising this response in your groups. Role play the above example, (or one more likely for you if you do not drink coffee!) in your group.

Try to memorise the response, or your own preferred version of it.

But remember, the aim is to listen, and start a dialogue that may well be continued in a week or two when the person wants to talk more. God is in charge of all this- so- “Don’t speak, listen.”

## **B. Preparing your own response.**

After listening to the other person, you should be ready to give your own response, your own way of finishing the phrase.

The person may well say they do not know, and want to know your answer straight away.

So, we should have a response ready , in case they ask us for your own way of finishing the phrase. Keep it short, engaging and Jesus-centred.

The idea here is to keep it brief and to the point. Say, about five sentences that take no more than a few minutes to speak. This is where we are preparing to give the 'reason for the hope we have' – to use Peter's language.

So, in your own time, try and write down what you might say. Then when you come to your group, spend a time sharing what you have thought up with the group.

Other group members could then give you some feedback-

1. Is your main point clear?
2. Are you using technical Christian words, or words most people could understand?
3. Is what you are saying correct- from the Bible?
4. Will it lead the person you are talking with to want to consider Jesus for themselves?

Once you have their feedback, revise your answer. In the end, it is your own faith you are sharing here, so feel free to say what is in your heart!

Because we all get nervous when put on the spot, it is best either to memorise the sentences you come up with, or at least a few “dot points”. It may also help to get a verse from the Bible that communicates your point.

(If you struggle to get started with this whole process, you could look at some of the answers on the web-site, and get some ideas from there.)

### **C. Going further**

1. **Responding to objections.** We will have a week or two at the end of the term free to focus on responding to questions that people commonly ask about the Christian faith. We (staff) will make available some material to help with this if needed. Or you could research your own responses.

Typical questions include things like –

- a) Hasn't science disproved Christianity?
- b) Can the New Testament stories about Jesus be trusted?
- c) Why does God allow suffering?
- d) Etc

Having some brief answers ready, so you can respond to such questions, may help you feel more confident.

2. **Meeting to investigate further.** If a person you are speaking to shows interest in finding out about Jesus, perhaps the best next step is to invite them to read the Bible with you (offer to read a gospel- Mark for example). Last term we looked at some material on the Swedish Method which you could use. If you feel unable to do this, think of getting a book about Jesus for them to read. Or invite them to church with you. During the Mission Period, sermons at church will focus on this question.

3. **Host a Discussion Night** Also, your group could actually host a “discussion night” on the subject ‘How would you finish the phrase “Jesus Is....”’. members simply invite friends along to hear a brief introduction to the subject from the group leader, then open up for anyone who wishes to share their ideas.

## Summary

# JESUS IS \_\_\_\_.

jesus-is.org.au

## Preparing our groups for the “*Jesus Is \_\_\_\_.*” month of mission

### Understand: the threefold aim

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Group Preparation (1 Peter 3:15)

#### A. Praying for the lost

1. Ask each group member to name two people they'd like their group to pray will discover that "Jesus is... *for them!*"
2. You all record the names of each member's two friends in our booklet.
3. Each week thereafter (and hopefully in between in private), *the group prays for these people by name*, and for the coming mission.

#### B. Practise the “opening line”

1. This 'conversational gambit' aims to provide a plausible-sounding, introduction to the topic, which rolls off the tongue, and is concise enough to be memorised.
2. Here's a possible introductory sentence to memorise: (or customise your own)

*“(We're interested in people's opinions.) Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.? What goes in the blank?”*

3. The preamble is optional, depending on context, but should be learned. Also note that you don't say 'blank' for '\_\_\_\_\_.' End with the tone of a question, or gesture to the logo (if available).
4. Each week, divide into pairs with one person practising saying the gambit by rote, and the other responding simply with their favourite 'completion' (see below). Swap and repeat in the opposite roles.

### **C. Prepare your favourite way of completing the phrase**

1. Select your favourite response (from options on the website, or your own creation).
2. Double-check for theological/apologetic pros and cons (e.g. any unintended pitfalls, does it lead to or from the gospel?)
3. Find a verse to helpfully back up the point, if you can (not too obscure).
4. Write a very brief script. Aim for no more than 5-6 sentences max!
5. Memorise the key points as 2-3 dot points; and memorise the verse.
6. Each week, one group member practices delivering their 30 second response (without notes).
7. Every other group member writes down one thing they liked about the response and one thing they think could be different or improved.

### **D. Other options for preparing well**

1. Know the follow up responses to others' answers:
  - *"Tell me more..."*
  - *"What makes you think that?"*
2. Brainstorm responding to one "negative completion" each week (see website for examples or think of your own).

*Exercise: Draft up your own favourite completion, using the guidelines above.*



