

UNMISTAKABLE

1 Peter Life Group Studies
10 July - 18 Sept

Why 1 Peter?

1 Peter is a powerful letter written to persecuted Gentile Christians, reminding them that they are chosen by God and have an unmistakable future hope in Jesus. It focuses on the importance of believers bearing up under unjust suffering yet continuing to live well (1 Peter 2:20). Peter maintained that this was the kind of true perseverance that God expects from His people.

Living in close proximity to Jesus Christ for more than three years had provided the apostle Peter the best possible example of what it looked like to live in holiness amid a hostile world. More than any other man who walked the earth, Jesus modeled that lifestyle. Peter therefore pointed his readers in the best possible direction, to Jesus Himself. He called Christians to “set apart Christ as Lord” in their hearts, that believers might live and act like unmistakable witnesses as Jesus desires during their short time here on earth (1 Peter 3:14–18). Jesus becomes the focal point for ordering one’s life in the midst of trials and tribulations.

What about you?

Thinking about your life and how often as a christian we too can feel like exiles, strangers scattered within our communities. The world can sometimes seem so overwhelming with the pressures of life and society pushing onto you.

How do you stay hopeful, how do you keep your eyes on Jesus through it all? Well the book of 1 Peter reminds us of the Living Hope that we have in Jesus an inheritance that cannot spoil or fade, an eternal life with God. This is secured for us by the power of God through faith! (1 Peter 1:3-5)



1. Unmistakable Hope

What does it mean to be a Christian and live like a Christian in a world that isn't? When feeling the tension of not belonging in this world, what are some of the ways people can be tempted to respond?

Read 1 Peter 1:1-12

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- In verses 1-2, Peter describes the readers and hearers of his letter by their identity. What words does he use to describe their identity? What strikes you about their (and therefore our) identity?
- What is the source and the implications of our identity?
- In verses 3-5, Peter, with great enthusiasm, describes the hope we have. What is this hope and why is it such a cause for celebration?
- What promise is attached to this?
- What do verses 6-9 reveal about the situation faced by the Christians hearing this letter?
- Rather than seeing their situations negatively, what opportunities (there are least 2) does Peter say arises out of hardship and suffering?

1. Unmistakable Hope

- Read verses 10-12. What does Peter say here in relation to the gospel as part of God's big story for humankind?
- How does knowing who you are (child of God), whose you are (belong to God) and where you belong (citizen of heaven) change the way you experience and live life as someone in but not of the world?
- Would you describe yourself as someone who lives with great hope and joy? Why/why not? How does 1 Peter 1 help re-frame hope and joy in light of our eternal relationship with God?
- How has experiencing grief or trials that come because of your allegiance to Jesus had a refining effect on your faith? In those experiences, did you come to a greater appreciation of the value of belonging to God? If so, how?

An opportunity to share or pray:

Where do you currently experience the greatest tension of being a believer among a people and culture who aren't?

Pray for and encourage each other to live faithfully for Jesus this week.

2. Unmistakable Holiness

What does it mean to be a Christian and live like a Christian in a world that isn't? When feeling the tension of not belonging in this world, what are some of the ways people can be tempted to respond?

Read 1 Peter 1:13-22

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- On a scale of 1-10 (10 being a lot), how much do you give thought to Jesus' return over the course of a week?
- Why do you think that might be? In this passage, Peter encourages us to live today in light of Jesus' return.
- What are the 3 things Peter encourages us to do (v. 13)?

"Prepare your mind for action" literally means "gird up the loins of your mind". Can you think of an example of when you have done that and were encouraged by how God used you? (share any stories)

- What things are helpful/unhelpful in having minds prepared for action?
- What can you do practically this week to do better? Being self-controlled is set in the context of living in our new identity.
- What are the ways that Peter describes our identity in this passage?
- Taking them one at a time, what impact does each description of our identity have on being self-controlled?

2. Unmistakable Holiness

- In 1:17 Peter refers to the Father judging each person's work impartially.

How do you feel about this? What encouragement can we draw from it?

- How does this knowledge spur you on to live today in light of Jesus coming?

Going back to the 1-10 scale earlier, how can you become more mindful of the truth of Jesus' return on a day to day basis?

Thirdly, set your hope fully on the grace to be given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Take time now to share together what you imagine it will be like...

Personally, what are you looking forward to? Is there anything that you are hesitant about?

An opportunity to share or pray:

The series that we are doing is called Unmistakable.

How might your life and witness be more distinct if you were living today in light of what is to come when Jesus returns?

An idea for prayer:

Thank Jesus for the truth of his return one day and pray in response to what we looked at in this study.

3. Unmistakable Good News

What is the Good News the Bible talks about? Why is it good news to you and others?

Read 1 Peter 1:23-2:3

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- What does it mean to be born again (v23)?
- How does Peter's quotation from the Isaiah 40:6-8 help to reiterate his point?
- In terms of your time, effort and money, which seems to come first for you: perishable or imperishable (forever) things? How can you rectify that?
- Now that these people put their faith in Jesus, what difference will that make in the way they think and act? (1:22-2:2)
- How can we grow up in our salvation (2:3)? What does such a life look like?
- How can we taste and experience that the Lord is good?

An opportunity to share or pray:

If the message of the gospel truly is good news should we keep it to ourselves?

How can we be more faithful this week with sharing this Good News with others?

Let's pray for each other to afresh have a revelation of who Jesus is and to be bold in sharing about him this week.

4. Unmistakable Priests

Who are the Priests in the OT? What was their role? How have we as Christians now become priests according to Peter?

Read 1 Peter 2: 4 -12

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- What similarities does Peter show between Christ's experience and that of these people?
- How is Christ a cornerstone? Why would people stumble over the stone rather than build their lives on it?
- How can one reword in practical terms the pictures in verses 5 and 9? In what ways would it be difficult for Peter's original readers to think of themselves in these terms?
- How is their new status with God meant to change the way they live (v11-12)?
- If you were to build a spiritual house from the living stones in your group, where would each member be positioned (Walls, Roof, Phone, Structure etc.) to help realise his or her gifts? How does this fit with who you are in Christ?
- How does it make you feel to be chosen, royalty, and God's possession? When is it the most difficult time to remember this?

An opportunity to share or pray:

Pray for each other that we may live lives set apart, to be like Priests - pointing others to Jesus.

5. Unmistakable Submission

Do you think submission has become a lost art? Does our western world struggle with authority? Why do you think so?

Read 1 Peter 2: 13 -25

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- When you were growing up which authority figure did you find hard to respect? Why?
- What does Peter mean by "submit" in this context? What equivalent verbs do you see in this passage?
- How does their relationship with God influence their regard for human authority?
- Peter wrote to people who had no civil or employee rights. How would this advice be different to people in a country where their legal rights were being violated by authority gone bad (see Acts 16: 35-37)?
- How can the suffering Christ (v21-25) help in situations far beyond our control?
- From v21-25, how would you explain Christ's death to one unfamiliar with the atonement?
- How could Jesus example help when you face hardships you can't change? How do you know when to submit and when to resist?

An opportunity to share or pray:

Pray for each other that we may live as servants of God, showing respect, loving one another, fearing God and honouring authority in a way that honours God.

6. Unmistakable Relationships

What is the greatest commandment? How does it reinforce the fact that we were created for relationship? How can our earthly relationships reflect God's character?

Read 1 Peter 3: 1-7

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- Peter begins both 3:1 and 3:7 with the phrase "in the same way." What do you think he means? In other words, "in the same way" as what? (Check the extended context preceding these verses for clues.)
- How is submission here similar in purpose to that in 2:13-15? What qualities are singled out? What does Sarah's example add?
- What would a marriage built on mutual submission actually look like?
- In 2:18 Peter speaks directly to slaves. In 3:1-6, he speaks directly to wives. Both of these audiences would have been surprising to the original audience. In moral writings of their day, people did not address the moral conduct of slaves (because they were considered less than human), or wives (because it was assumed that they would just do what their husbands did.) What does it tell us about God that He would have Peter address women in this way in 3:1-6?
- Does this passage instruct women to not care for their physical appearance? If so, why do you think that? If not, what do you think it is saying about physical appearance? What is the application of these verses for women? For men?
- 3:7 is a great challenge to husbands. How would you summarise Peter's commands to husbands in these verses?
- Is Peter advocating that spouses stay in cruel situations? Why or Why Not?

6. Unmistakable Relationships

- What do you think the phrase, "treat them with respect as the weaker partner" means practically for husbands?
- In what ways might a husband's prayers be hindered because of problems with their relationship with their wives?

* More questions for couples to consider or for groups with married couples to unpack:

In their book "You and Me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity" Francis and Lisa Chan makes the following statement:

"When we think about marriage and life. Who are we for? Who put us here and designed marriage? What is it for? For His glory, for His purposes? It's not about us. We need to pause, and change our thinking a little bit..."

- How does looking at your marriage in the light of eternity change your perspective?
- What does a marriage that glorifies God look like?

For more info see the book: "You and Me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity" OR follow the free online video course with discussion questions for couples:

https://youtu.be/8liBQmc_0dl

An opportunity to share or pray:

How can a marriage be an effective witness to others?

If marriages are the cornerstone of any healthy community - we should pray for our marriages, pray for the marriages in our community and in our church.

7. Unmistakable Witness

Have you had ever experienced a person with strong feelings against the Church or the Christian faith? What accusations or grievances against the church did they raise?

- How did you respond?

Read 1 Peter 3: 8 - 22

• What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?

Peter's letter is written to believers who are facing increasing opposition to their faith in Christ. They face the choice as to whether they will live their faith visibly and bear testimony to the truth of Jesus, or they will stay silent and avoid trouble.

- What advice or encouragement does Peter speak into this dilemma?
- In what ways do you think we might be blessed for doing what is right? "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord" (v15).
- If Christ is truly Lord in our hearts how should that impact our public witness of Him?

Our persecuted brothers and sisters today ask us not to pray that persecution will stop. For it to stop all they would need to do is be silent about their faith. Instead they ask for the courage to keep speaking.

- In what ways might this challenge many Christians in Australia?
- Why might we be more silent about giving public witness to our faith than our persecuted brothers and sisters? Is there an aspect of your life or a relationship where you need to be more open in your witness of Christ? What might that look like?

7. Unmistakable Witness

Read 1 Peter 3:18 – 22

As he did in the previous chapter, Peter again brings us back to the suffering of Jesus. Rather than debating what Peter is meaning regarding Noah and imprisoned spirits, what is he encouraging the hearers of his letter to do by pointing them to Jesus?

An opportunity to share or pray:

Peter says, “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.”

Whilst apologetic and theological answers have their place, it is our stories that are often most memorable and impacting.

Take a few minutes to think through how you might use a snippet of your testimony to answer a person who asks, “So why are you a Christian?”

If you are with a group, share a snippet of your testimony (3 minutes) to one another.

Share the places where you are seeking to be salt and light.

Pray for one another for:

- Opportunities to share Christ to come up
- Wisdom to recognise opportunities
- Courage to speak

8. Unmistakable Serving

- What are you grateful for in this past week?
- What has been challenging?

Read 1 Peter 4: 1-11

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?

Live in the Spirit (v1-6).

- What does it mean that “since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude?” How does suffering help to purify us? (v1)
- What are we to live for (v2)? Do you find it easy to live this way?
- What does it mean that “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do”? Is Peter calling them to live differently to the culture (v3)?
- Are any of your friends/co-workers surprised when you don’t join in their worldly activities? How should we respond if they make fun of us for this (v4)?
- What does the phrase “give an account” mean? (v5)
- Who does the “dead” refer to in verse 6?
- How can you live in the spirit? (v6)

8. Unmistakable Serving

Make use of our short time to serve God and man (v7-11).

- How could the end have been “near” almost 2000 years ago (v7)?
- What applications does Peter give them based on the fact that the end is near (v8-11)?
- What is it to be clear minded and self controlled (v7)?
- How is your prayer life? Are you satisfied with your prayer life? What is one specific, simple step you could take to improve it in the coming week? (v7)
- As a group see if each person list 1 way he/she can (in their current situation) show hospitality to others. (v9)
- Why would someone complain after doing these things? What would that show about their heart?
- Have you received a gift? How do you know? (v10) What is the gift for? How could you find out your gift and is it important to find out (v10)?

An opportunity to share or pray:

How can you place what you have learnt from this study into action this week?

Let's pray for one another that we may not grow complacent from serving and loving others!

9. Unmistakable Suffering

Why does human suffering exist in our world?

1 Peter talks about suffering for being a Christian, this letter might even be called the Job of the New Testament, providing encouragement for the true believer to continue on in the way that Jesus has laid out for all His followers. The endurance Peter called these believers to is similar to Job's, a man who suffered despite his righteousness. Peter maintained that this was the kind of true perseverance that God expects from His people.

Read 1 Peter 4: 12-19

- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- What does Peter say about the experience of persecution?
- In what ways is persecution a participation in the sufferings of Christ?
- How does Peter link their experience of persecution with the return of Christ?
- What encouragement does Peter give the hearers?
- If we are suffering, how should respond in the midst of it v19?

An opportunity to share or pray:

Take time to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Ask for the courage to keep strong in the faith and to continue speaking about Jesus.

[Open Doors Australia have prayer resources on their website]

10. Unmistakable Humility

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.” C.S. Lewis

Do you agree with C.S. Lewis?

Read 1 Peter 5:1-14

- When you think of humility, how do you understand it and is there someone who comes to mind who is a good example of it?
- What has the Lord drawn to your attention from this passage or from the message last week?
- In verses 1-4, Paul addresses the elders in the churches, appealing to them to exercise their leadership in a certain way. How are they to exercise it? In what ways is Jesus their model?
- In what context do you exercise spiritual leadership or influence over others? How does Peter’s appeal relate to your context?
- In verses 5-14, Peter’s instructions are expanded to all those listening. Why would Peter (and elsewhere Paul) be so concerned that Christians pursue humility as a lifestyle?
- What is the relationship between humility and agape love? Between humility and submission? Between humility and knowing our identity in Christ?
- Peter comes back to addressing the impact of increasing persecution on the church. In addition to humility, what responses does he call for from the believers? What reasons does he give for doing so?

10. Unmistakable Humility

- What encouragements does Peter provide for the hearers of this letter?

Here are 7 examples of ways that we can practice humility.

- Seeing people as God sees them
- Admit our mistakes
- Learn from others
- Listen more, speak less
- Value integrity over image
- Give credit to others
- Be satisfied with God's commendation

- Which (if any) of these speak most powerfully to you in your own context?
- Which one do you find the hardest to practice? Why?

Is there a specific resolve you can make in response to this passage?

An opportunity to share or pray:

People are drawn to true humility - Let's pray for one another that we can practice humility as Christ did - laying down our desires and living for Christ!

As the series draws to a close let's consider each of the topics covered over the last 10 weeks and how we can live with the knowledge that Jesus is Unmistakably Lord and that he calls us to live Unmistakable as his followers!

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UNMISTAKABLE

