



SUMMER 2020

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LEADER GUIDE INCLUDED

LIVING WITH HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD

A Bible study from 1 Peter on how to maintain hope in life.

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO POLITICS?

A Bible study on respecting authority.

WHY DO I NEED THE CHURCH?

A Bible study on the benefits of living in Christian community.

HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

You won't find it on a map, but a highway to heaven does exist. "The Roman Road" is explained in the Book of Romans in the Bible, and it tells how to go to heaven.

The road begins at Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." God is the source for our journey to heaven. He gives power for salvation to all who believe.

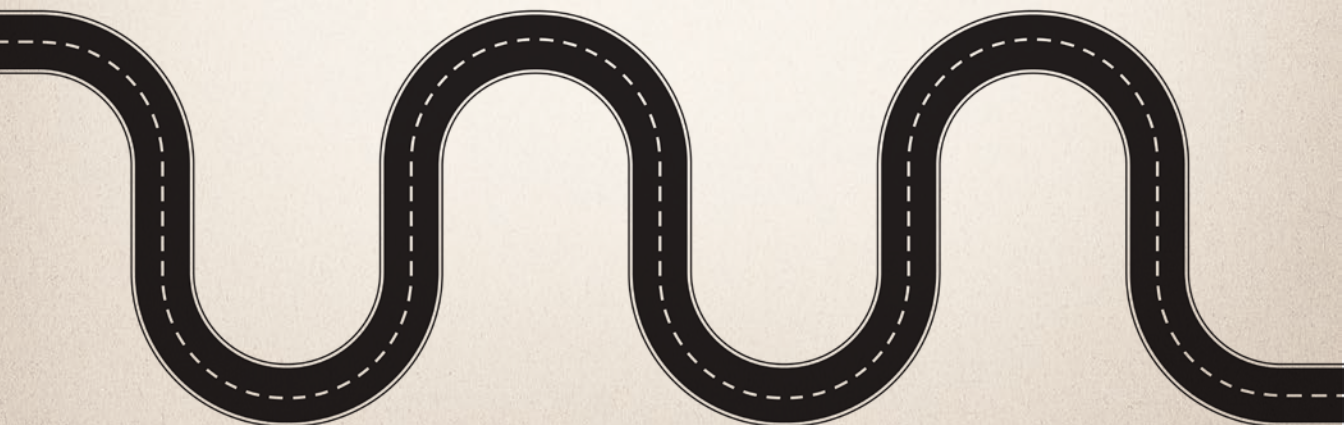
We need God's power because we have a problem with sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "Sin" means missing the mark or missing God's intended destination for us. None of us can reach that destination on his or her own because everyone is a sinner.

When we work, we earn money. Sin earns wages as well—wages of death. Because God loves all sinners, He has provided another route: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The highway to heaven is found in Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." We need to confess our sin and ask God for forgiveness. To confess Jesus as Lord involves agreeing with God about your sin and your need for salvation. You must repent of your sin, turning away from the direction in life in which you are going. To "believe in your heart" is to place your faith in Jesus, trusting that He died on the cross to pay for your sins. "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

If you would like to have salvation in Jesus Christ, sincerely pray a prayer like this one: "Dear God, I confess to You my sin and need for salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Amen."

Share your faith in Jesus with a Christian friend or pastor. Becoming a Christian is your first step on the lifelong road of spiritual growth and service God desires for you. Follow Christ in believer's baptism by immersion and join a local church.





Staying Fit ... Spiritually

We talk a lot about the importance of staying physically fit, but what about the health of your spirit? Connect, Grow, Serve, Go is a call to evaluate your present spiritual condition and discover ways to improve your spiritual health. Packed into each biblical concept—Connect, Grow, Serve, Go—is a simple way you can move forward, not remain stagnant. Best of all, these tools will stand the test of time—no “fad” diets here. They will help you become spiritually healthy, and stay that way.



WITH AN OPEN HEART
MARK 12:29-31



IN BODY, MIND, & SPIRIT
ROMANS 12:2



WITH WILLING HANDS
1 PETER 4:10-11



WITH READY FEET
MATTHEW 28:19-20





Connect urges you to worship, pray, fellowship, and relate to others in positive relationships at work, at home, and in other settings. Spiritual fitness results when you connect with God, with others, and with your church family.

Grow refers to learning and understanding more about God and His expectations of His people, which comes through Bible study. You grow by applying that knowledge to your everyday living.

Serve describes the work you do inside your church. Your church is full of ministry and service opportunities. You serve by using your spiritual gifts, skills, and passions to glorify God. All of us must work together for the church to function as God intended.

Go moves you outside the church and into the community and the world. Evangelism and missions are ways to go into your community and the world in the name of Jesus Christ. It might be uncomfortable at first, but you will experience firsthand the difference Christ can make through you.

Connect, Grow, Serve, Go must impact YOU, the individual, before it can permeate your circle of friends, your Bible study group, and then the church as a whole. But balance is the key! We must be actively participating in all four areas if we want to be spiritually healthy. All Go and no Connect with God or other believers results in powerless activity and wears you out. A steady diet of Grow without the action of Serve or Go leads to unhealthy spiritual obesity and laziness. We need a balanced spiritual diet to remain fit and able to serve God in the ways He has gifted us.

The *YOU* lessons will help you Connect , Grow , Serve , and Go . Look for these icons throughout this issue. They will help you check and maintain your spiritual health.

Summer 2020

VOLUME 12, NUMBER 4

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Printed in the United States of America

YOU (ISSN 1943-6230, Item 005030553) is published quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2020 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit lifeway.com, or write LifeWay Resources Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email orderentry@lifeway.com, fax 615.251.5933, or write to the above address.

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A Word from the General Editor

Have you ever played with Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots®? They came out in 1964 and are still sold today. The object is to cause your opponent's head to go up by punching it using little plungers.

One time my brother and cousin got into a real fight over them. Rather than fight like them, I let the robots do all my punching. I found it just took a good one-two punch to win at Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots.

Winning at life often takes a one-two punch, as well. We're going to be doing that with a series based in 1 Peter called "Living with Hope in a Broken World," before moving into a study from Ephesians called "Why Do I Need the Church?" First Peter is one of my favorite books. His readers were going through tremendous persecution, but Peter gave them a God-oriented point of view and a God-sized hope. He reminded them, and us, that the trials we go through will "result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7). Bam! That's punch one! Then we will learn from Ephesians exactly why the church is so important for all of us. Bam! That's punch two!

Finally, please plan to join me at our Black Church Leadership and Family Conference, July 20-24, 2020, in Ridgecrest, N.C. Each year we plan something new to keep it fresh and to make it better. This is the place to bring your church leaders and their families to be retooled, refocused, and refreshed. Get all the details at LifeWay.com/BlackChurchLife.

Now, grab your Bible and allow God to speak through YOU!

Dr. Mark A. Croston, Sr.

YOU General Editor

National Director of Black Church Partnerships

www.lifeway.com/BlackChurchLife





Keep Hope Alive!

by Mark Croston

People give up every day. We give up on friendships, marriages, sobriety, businesses, dreams, diets, you name it. Even life itself! Hard times come. We can't see a future—or we believe can't bear the future we see—and we give up. We give up because we lose hope.

My first wife, Karen, was diagnosed with stage 1 breast cancer and subsequently went through two rounds of chemotherapy and treatments of radiation. Five years later, the cancer returned as stage 3, and so did another brutal round of chemotherapy. In another five years, stage 4 appeared. There was more crippling chemo and then utterly exhausting special chemo trials. In all this, Karen kept going because she maintained the hope that God would heal her body. She held that hope until her last day. And our children and I needed that hope for the days and months that followed.

That's what hope is all about. In the face of life's longest, heaviest, and greatest trials hope is the motivation that gets us out of bed every morning. My favorite definition for hope is, "the belief that something good is going to happen to you."

What is most powerful about a Christian's hope in God is that even if things don't work out as we hope in this life, our hope does not die. First Corinthians 15:19 reminds us that "If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone."

Ultimately, our hope is only as great as what we put our hope in. Hope in the stock market, but it may fall. Hope in our marriage, but it may leave us frustrated. Hope in our health, but it may fail.

It's been said that, we can live forty days without food, eight days without water, and four minutes without air—but only a few seconds without hope! Not a week goes by when we do not hear about someone who needs hope. The Bible reminds us that the greatest three needs of the human spirit are faith, love, and hope (1 Cor. 13:13).

Christian hope isn't based on fuzzy dreams of the future. It's grounded in the remembrance of how we made it through the past with God's help.

In a recent *Psychology Today* article, Joseph Hallinan reviewed the experiments of Curt Richter, a researcher at Johns Hopkins. Richter conducted experiments to see if hope really had an impact on those going through difficult times. Two sets of lab rats were placed in separate large jars of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within minutes they had all drowned. The other rats were lifted out of the water just before they were expected to give up and die, and then returned to the water. When that happened, the second set of rats did not give up! They did not die! Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope!

"After elimination of hopelessness," wrote Richter, "the rats do not die." Hallinan concluded, "There are obviously many differences between humans and rats. But one similarity stands out: We all need a reason to keep swimming."

Did you know there are at least 3,622 Christian songs about hope? Here are the words from a few of those songs:

- O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home.
- Time is filled with swift transition, naught on earth unmoved can stand, build your hopes on things eternal. Hold to God's unchanging hand.
- In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song.

The one that continually sustains me is this one:

- My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Whenever you find yourself in a time of struggle, remember one thing—Keep Hope Alive!

The Pathway of Discipleship

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? LifeWay’s research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2022.

8 MARKERS	FALL 2020	WINTER 2020-21	SPRING 2021	SUMMER 2021
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS	After God’s Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments			
SEEK GOD	All In: A Life of Commitment			
OBEY GOD AND DENY SELF		When Emotions Rise		
ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE		Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus		
EXERCISE FAITH			The Essentials of Christianity	
SHARE CHRIST			How to Share Christ	
LIVE UNASHAMED				Walking in Confidence
SERVE GOD AND OTHERS				Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts



Unit 1

Living with Hope in a Broken World



A Bible Study on Life from 1 Peter

As a kid, you might have wished upon a star. Or maybe you threw a coin in a wishing well. Or made a wish while you blew out the candles on a birthday cake.

Those are just things kids do. But, as an adult, you learn pretty quickly that wishing isn't enough. You need hope.

That's one of the main things Peter taught his audience. They were suffering and struggling, so he wrote to them about what it means to hope in Christ. Over the next six lessons, you're going to learn what Peter had to say about hope. You'll discover . . .

- How to find genuine hope,
- How to live out that hope in the world,
- How to share your hope with others,
- How hope gets you through tough times,
- How hope produces joy in your life, and
- How hope affects your future.

Hope can be tough to find in this broken world. But Jesus wants you to find your hope in Him—and to let it make a difference in all you do.

The Basis for Our Hope

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: 1 PETER 1:1-12

LESSON PASSAGE: 1 PETER 1:1-9

THE QUESTION: WHAT CAN I REALLY COUNT ON IN LIFE?

THE POINT: ONLY HOPE IN CHRIST IS SURE AND CERTAIN.

LESSON PASSAGE

1 PETER 1:1-9

¹ Peter, an * **apostle** of Jesus Christ: To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen ² according to the **a foreknowledge** of God the Father, through the **b sanctifying** work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a **c living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

⁴ And into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. ⁵ You are being * **guarded** by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶ You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials ⁷ so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is **d refined by fire**—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

KEY WORDS

- a Foreknowledge:** Know beforehand. Since God is both omniscient and omnipotent, He not only knows everything, but He also has the power to work through people and events to accomplish His eternal plan.
- b Sanctifying:** Making something or someone holy. It also refers to people or things set apart for God's purposes.
- c Living hope:** The active confidence that this world is not all there is to life. Peter's audience was undergoing persecution, but he wanted them to hold tightly to the expectation that God had a secure and blessed future for them.
- d Refined by fire:** Like the heat of fire purifies gold, trials and persecution remove impurities from the lives of believers and allow them to reflect Christ more accurately.

For more information about key words (*), visit the glossary on pages 160–161.

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The Basis for Our Hope

1 Peter 1:1-9

What can I really
count on in life?



UNIT 1 LESSON 1

In 1950, champion long distance swimmer Florence Chadwick swam 21 miles across the English Channel faster than any woman in history. In 1952, she set a goal to swim 26 miles to the California mainland. Despite obstacles, she swam for nearly 16 hours. When she couldn't see the shore she thought she was swimming in circles so she lost hope and quit less than a mile from her goal. Like Florence, we can lose hope. The apostle Peter reminds us we have victory when our hope is in Christ.

Focal Passage Outline

OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

(1 Pet. 1:1-3)

OUR HOPE IS SECURE FOR ETERNITY

(1 Pet. 1:4-5)

OUR HOPE IS DISPLAYED THROUGH GENUINE FAITH

(1 Pet. 1:6-9)

OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS 1 PETER 1:1-3

Following Jesus' ascension, Peter quickly emerged as a primary leader of the new church. While he was among the first Christians to openly reach out to Gentiles (Acts 10–11; 15:6–11), His ministry was primarily as an * **apostle** to the Jews (Gal. 2:7–8). Jesus had commanded Peter to feed His sheep (John 21:15–19), and in 1 Peter, he wrote to encourage believers under stress not to give up.

Peter understood persecution. He had experienced his own fair share of trials as a Christ-follower. And church tradition says he eventually died as a martyr for his faith. But he also believed that God is always at work in every situation. And that's the message of hope he wanted his readers to embrace.

**When have you felt discouraged as a Christian?
What reminded you not to give up?**

Read 1 Peter 1:1-3. Among their other struggles, Peter's readers were living as exiles and scattered across northern

Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Although we often think of exile as a form of punishment, this exile was more spiritual. They were strangers and disconnected from the main centers of Christianity, so their exile was a reminder that this world was not their home.

Ultimately, that's true for all believers in Christ. This world is not our permanent residence. This world is just a temporary stop on the journey toward our true home.

Along with being disconnected, they faced serious opposition. Nero, the reigning emperor, was known for his cruelty and his hatred of Christianity. Over time, his persecution of Christians only intensified. Peter knew things would get worse before they got better (1 Pet. 4:12), so he encouraged his readers to hold fast to their hope in Christ.

While going through trials, some of these believers thought they had fallen out of favor with God. Peter reminded them of their identity in Christ. God had chosen them by His **a fore-knowledge**, and He was **b sanctifying** them through His Spirit. Their salvation—and the favor of God—wasn't affected by persecution or struggle. It was secure in Christ.

Peter also reminded his readers that this security ensured something else: hope. Christians enjoy a **c living hope** because we completely trust God. This living hope was secured by Christ's work on the cross—not some wishful thinking or good deeds. It was all about what Jesus did, not what we do.

How do people try to find hope today? What makes them think these options are better than the hope Peter wrote about?

OUR HOPE IS SECURE FOR ETERNITY 1 PETER 1:4-5

What products come with an expiration date? What are the dangers of ignoring an expiration date?

We all understand the issues related to an expiration date. Nobody wants to deal with the pain and anguish of drinking milk that's gone bad or eating meat that is too old. Spiritually speaking, Peter reminded his readers that people technically have no expiration date. While our bodies die, this world is not



Diggin' Deeper



Kept in Heaven

In the opening words of this epistle, Peter emphasized the guaranteed permanence of each believer's inheritance by saying that it is "kept in heaven." Luke used the same Greek word (*tereo*) to describe the action of the Roman governor Festus, who ordered that Paul "be kept in custody" at Caesarea until the apostle went to Rome for his trial before Caesar (Acts 25:21). Peter also used it when he wrote that the current world is being "kept for the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 3:7). The emphasis is on something held fast so that the outcome is beyond danger or doubt.

- Based on this, what does it mean to say that your inheritance is kept by God in heaven?
- What impact should that truth have on the way you live here on earth? Why?

The Basis for Our Hope

1 Peter 1:1-9



Did you know?

Peter described his readers as exiles dispersed abroad. The phrase “dispersed abroad” translates one Greek word, *diaspora*. In Jewish history, *diaspora* referred to Jews scattered/exiled from the land of Israel through the centuries, many because of various wars (John 7:35). However, Peter and other Christians also used the term to describe Christians who were scattered due to persecution (Acts 8:1). In a sense, every Christian is living as a stranger in a strange land. **Read the following verses and record what each teaches about our “exile” on earth:**

- Matthew 22:15-22
- 2 Corinthians 5:20
- Philippians 3:20
- Hebrews 11:13-16

the end. He invited believers to see that our hope is secure for eternity. Nothing can change it or destroy it.

What are some things on earth that make you long for eternity? Why?

Read 1 Peter 1:4-5. Peter noted that our living hope should point us toward eternity. Hope is not rooted in anything earthly, and the apostle used three adjectives to emphasize the certainty of that inheritance.

First, our inheritance is imperishable. It can’t be corrupted, and it can’t be stolen. Nothing can destroy it. Second, our inheritance is undefiled. It’s entirely pure and protected from the perversions of the world. Finally, our inheritance is unfading. Other treasures may diminish in value, but our inheritance will never fade.

Our hope is tied to Christ’s resurrection, and our salvation is *** guarded** by the power of God. The Greek words Peter used here paint the image of a soldier protecting someone or something with his life. The idea is that he should do whatever is necessary to maintain security.

So, we can stand firm on the hope of Christ even when circumstances may tempt us to believe otherwise. When we remember who God is and what He has done for us, we can focus on what is reserved for us in heaven.

What painful or frustrating circumstances are you facing? How can you stay hopeful in those situations?

OUR HOPE IS DISPLAYED THROUGH GENUINE FAITH 1 PETER 1:6-9

When I was kid, my dad sometimes used a needle to remove splinters from my finger. But before he started, he would light a match and hold the tip of the needle in the flame for a few seconds. That was his way of sterilizing the needle. The heat removed the impurities that could cause an infection.

How do the difficult times you face feel like a fire? Why?

Live It!

Think about a time when you've started a task, only to be frustrated by the obstacles in the way. During those times, we should be trusting God to get us through, but we're just as likely to throw up our hands and quit! Sometimes, we're guilty of putting our hope in people and things, but those things change. Thankfully, we can always hope in Jesus Christ. He is faithful and never changes. Trusting Him gives us hope that we can depend on—and the strength to finish what we start.

This week, focus on a trial that's been worrying you. Ask God to help you hope in Him.

Read 1 Peter 1:6-9. Peter knew his readers were suffering. But he also knew something more. The pain they felt right now was temporary. It would pass and eventually seem like nothing compared to the glories of heaven. But his friends needed to realize that God still had a plan for everything they experienced—including persecution.

Our hope is best demonstrated through the way we live out our faith. For Peter's audience, their faith—and their hope—helped them endure their suffering. It also reminded them that He is all they needed in every circumstance.

To illustrate this idea, Peter pointed them to a process they would have understood well. Gold was purified by exposing it to extreme heat. When the temperature was turned up, the impurities rose to the top and could be skimmed away.

Eventually, when the gold was truly pure, the refiner could see his reflection. Like gold, we are **d refined by fire**. God uses our trials to purify our imperfections so the world can see His reflection in us.

When has a trial made your faith stronger? How did it help you face the next trial that came your way?

SO WHAT? How does this apply to me?

We all face trials. But we don't have to face them alone. Just like his first-century readers, Peter's words encourage us to remember the hope we have in Christ. We need to rest in that hope. What's more, we should encourage each other to hope in Christ. Genuine hope is not some wish upon a star. It's a firm foundation for enduring trials and growing stronger in our faith. If you want your life to be as pure as gold and reflect our Savior well, the path includes some hard times—and the hope to get through them.

• *After studying this lesson, what can you do to encourage another believer who's going through trials or suffering?*



• *How confident are you that God's power can guard you through your trials? Why?*

• *What is one thing you will commit to do this week to share your hope in Christ with someone else?*


HOW TO TEACH



Step 1: Read the Lesson and study the Leader Commentary.

Unit 1

Living with Hope in a Broken World



A Bible Study on Life from 1 Peter

As a kid, you might have wished upon a star. Or maybe you threw a coin in a wishing well. Or made a wish while you blew out the candles on a birthday cake. Those are just things kids do. But, as an adult, you learn pretty quickly that wishing isn't enough. You need hope. That's one of the main things Peter taught his audience. They were suffering and "grieving," so he wrote to them about what it means to hope in Christ. Over the next six lessons, you're going to learn what Peter had to say about hope. You'll discover...

- How to find genuine hope.
- How to live out that hope in the world.
- How to share your hope with others.
- How hope gets you through tough times.
- How hope produces joy in your life, and
- How hope affects your future.

Hope can be tough to find in this broken world. But Jesus wants you to find your hope in Him—and to let it make a difference in all you do.

UNIT 1, LESSON 1

The Basis for Our Hope

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: 1 PETER 1:1-12
LESSON PASSAGE: 1 PETER 1:1-8

THE QUESTION: WHAT CAN I REALLY COUNT ON IN LIFE?
THE POINT: ONLY HOPE IN CHRIST IS SURE AND CERTAIN

LESSON PASSAGE

1 PETER 1:1-8

¹ Peter, an ^a apostle of Jesus Christ, To those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen ^a according to the ^a foreknowledge of God the Father, through the ^a sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient and to be sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you. ^a Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a ^a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

^a And into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. ^a You are being ^a guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

^a You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials ^a so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is ^a refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ^a Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with unexpressed and glorious joy, ^a because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

KEY WORDS

- ^a **foreknowledge** Know beforehand. Since God is both omniscient and omnipotent, we not only know everything, but we also have the power to make things happen and events to accomplish His divine plan.
- ^a **sanctifying** Making someone or someone holy. It also refers to people of things set apart for God's plan.
- ^a **refined by fire** Like the heat of the refining gold, trials and persecution remove impurities from the lives of believers and cause them to reflect Christ more accurately.

Learn more about these words (1) and the passage on pages 101–102.

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 1:3

Remembered by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

STEP 1

GET ORGANIZED.

As you begin this unit, take time to plan through the lessons. Write special assignments in the Teaching Plan, the Object Lesson, or other specific instructions. Then start gathering the materials and doing the necessary research. Finally, write everything in a special place for easy access.

STEP 2

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY.

Teaching the Bible requires cooperative with the Holy Spirit. Take time to seek His anointing for the power you need to connect with the hearts and minds of group members. Through prayer and personal devotion, submit yourself to God rather than relying on your intellect. Without the Spirit's anointing, you are powerless to transform spiritual transformation.

STEP 3

LISTEN WELL.

The first question on the lesson pages requires deep thought as students reflect on personal challenges. Take time to listen well to their responses. The art of listening requires doing so without prejudice. Repeat back what you heard them say. If necessary, ask more questions for clarity.

STEP 4

BE RELEVANT.

Most of your students remember the hardships of past events, and many of them are personally dealing with their own hopes and dreams. This lesson can provide a step toward healing, include a personal or historical story that will connect to the struggles of Peter's audience—and the hope he offered them through Jesus.

LOOK BACK

Review last week's lesson by highlighting the title, Scripture passage, and object of the lesson. Give students an opportunity to share how that lesson changed their outlook on life or the way they relate to family and friends. Share your own personal story about how the lesson has influenced your life. Share that this week's lesson starts a new unit of lessons with hope. Point out that hope is a big deal in this world and challenge learners to see how what Peter taught his readers intersects their own lives.

YOU OBJECT LESSON

EDITOR

Use this object lesson with verses 6–7. Bring a guitar to class and display it in front of the class. Say, "This object is made of wood and it has been transformed so that it's not just a log and can even be strummed. It's a volunteer to play the strings on the guitar. We know that in order for the strings to make a pleasing tone, some tension must be placed on them. Ask, 'Why do you think it is necessary to place tension on the strings to create sound?' Say, 'Adding tension plays a huge role in the sounds that come from the guitar. Explain that in the same way, a believer's faithful response to God during times of trials can produce beautiful praise, glory, and honor for Him.



102 FOR A LEADER PAGE

THE BASIS FOR OUR HOPE (TEACHING PLAN)

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

INTRODUCTION

In addition, download the Emily Dickinson poem, "Hope Is the Thing with Feathers." Make enough copies for each learner to have one. During the lessons, share a brief summary of Emily Dickinson's life, then read the poem aloud. Ask, how does the poem describe hope? Encourage several learners to share their thoughts and reflections on the poem.

Say, We don't usually view hope in the same way as Emily Dickinson did in her poem. Her description of hope gives it a unique characteristic—like, in some ways, she has created a metaphor of the hope we have in our hearts. Because our hope is a Living Hope.

Use the unit introduction on page 10 to provide an overview of this new unit. Explain that Peter was writing to a group of exiled believers who were suffering persecution and were feeling a desperate need for hope. Say, That's not unlike a lot of people in our world today. They are feeling and need hope.

Transition into today's lesson by explaining that Peter's primary goal was to encourage these believers not to give up, lose hope, or grow weary. Provide additional background information from the commentary on pages 105.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

1 PETER 1:1-3

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Peter 1:1-3. Summarize the first two paragraphs on page 12 to set the context. Lead learners to discuss the question: "When have you felt discouraged as a Christian?"
- Lead a discussion on what the believers were facing. Point out that he also lives in a land of exile today. Say, He is as exiles here because he never is in his real home. Discuss the role hope plays when believers are suffering. Say, Peter encouraged his readers to hold on to their hope in Christ.

OUR HOPE IS SECURE FOR ETERNITY

1 PETER 1:4-5

- Write this statement on the board: "Nothing can stop hope, because hope changes hope, more hope, or better hope." Read aloud 1 Peter 1:4-5. Then read the statement on the board. Ask, How does Christ make this statement true?
- Invite a volunteer to read the second paragraph (v. 14) that includes the three attributes that Peter used to describe the inheritance of the hope we have received. Guide a discussion of the questions in the middle of page 14. "What, precisely, or troubling circumstances are you facing? How can you stay hopeful in these situations?"
- Re-emphasize that we hope in God to Christ's resurrection, and our security is tied to the power of

Step 2: Prepare to teach an exciting lesson using the Before You Teach page for each lesson.

Step 3: Use the Teaching Plan for each lesson to prepare and facilitate an in-depth discussion of the lesson passage. Don't forget that you can cut out the Teaching Plan if you want to be on the same page as members of your group.

LEADER COMMENTARY

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

The Basis for Our Hope

Lesson Passage: 1 Peter 1:1-8

The Question: What can I really count on in life?
The Point: Only hope in Christ is sure and certain.

FOCUS ON THESE POINTS

Our Hope Is Based on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:1-3)
Peter opened his letter by identifying himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He wrote this letter to believers living in the Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The phrase "dispersed abroad" was both literal and metaphorical. These "chosen" describe all believers in Christ.

Every believer is chosen according to the foreknowledge (foreknowledge) of God. The Holy Spirit's work in our salvation sets us apart for holy living and faithful service (Eph. 1:3). Our salvation was this life comes through the blood of Jesus Christ, through which we have forgiveness and redemption (Eph. 1:7-10).

Peter encouraged his readers to praise God. Peter referred to Jesus as Lord over all creation, including all humans. God showed us great mercy by sending His Son to die in our place. God then confirmed that Jesus' sacrifice was acceptable by raising Him from the dead.

Those who have been born again through faith in Jesus have a living hope. These believers, who were suffering for their faith, had a sure hope that would endure even if they died. All Christians who have this hope of eternal life through their faith in Christ.

Our Hope Is Secure for Eternity (1 Pet. 1:4-5)
Peter wrote that a believer's new birth includes an inheritance. The term refers to a believer's salvation and all the accompanying blessings (Eph. 1:3, Gal. 3:2-14, Heb. 9:15). Peter used three words to describe the believer's inheritance in Christ. It is imperishable, meaning it's not susceptible to decay or corruption. It is undefiled, which is wholly pure and untainted by sin or evil. And it is unfading, unlike an earthly inheritance which is faith, our inheritance in heaven is eternal.

While our eternal inheritance is kept safe by God in heaven, He also uses its inheritance power to guard believers. God can be trusted in this because He is all-powerful and omnipotent, and because He never lets down His word.

Peter also explained that God granted believers through faith in Jesus Christ to be certain of our hope and our inheritance in Christ. Peter noted that the inheritance of our salvation will be revealed in the last time when Jesus returns to earth. Regardless of our trials and temptations, we can look forward to the glorious hope that awaits us when Jesus returns!

Our Hope Is Unshaken Through Genuine Faith (1 Pet. 1:6-8)
Though the believers' sufferings in this life may seem to reverse and, the duration is short compared to our eternal blessings. The various trials Peter's audience faced came from two primary sources: the governing authorities and the pagan society.

Suffering demonstrates the proven character of believers' faith. God's power also protects us in the present. As we experience trials, our faith helps us develop the endurance that powers us to face trials as Christians and carries us to the end of our journey.

Despite their lack of firsthand experience of physically being with Jesus, these Christians still trusted that the confidence that He was coming back, as well. Their confidence led them to love and trust Him.

In addition, these believers had a deep and abiding sense of joy. This joy was grounded in the reality of their salvation and the future that Christians will have with Jesus in eternity. All of these truths make it possible for them to rejoice in their pain.

The believers of culture will come at the end of time when believers are glorified. Our new hope that awaits us for our living hope in our future—a hope that remains sure and certain.

Read more commentary (1) to increase your understanding! (1) www.lifeway.com/101



LEADER PAGES | YOU 101

Step 4: Visit www.lifeway.com for more leader commentary, articles to enhance your understanding of the lesson passage, and a midweek plan that can be adapted for midweek or worship services.

STEP 1 GET ORGANIZED.

As you begin this new unit, take time to skim through the lessons. Note special assignments in the Teaching Plan, the Object Lesson, or other specific instructions. Then start gathering the materials and doing the necessary research. Finally, keep everything in a special place for easy access.

STEP 2 PREPARE SPIRITUALLY.

Teaching the Bible requires cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Take time to seek His anointing for the power you need to connect with the hearts and minds of group members. Through prayer and personal devotion, submit yourself to God rather than relying on your intellect. Without the Spirit's anointing, you are powerless to nurture spiritual transformation.

STEP 3 LISTEN WELL.

The first question on the learner pages requires deep thought as students reflect on personal challenges. Take time to listen well to their responses. The art of listening requires doing so without prejudice. Repeat back what you heard them say. If necessary, ask more questions for clarity.

STEP 4 BE RELEVANT.

Most of your students remember the hopelessness of past events, and many of them are presently dealing with their own hopeless situation. This lesson can provide a step toward healing. Include a personal or historical story that will connect to the struggles of Peter's audience—and the hope he offered them through Jesus.



BACK

Briefly review last week's lesson by highlighting the title, Scripture passage, and object of the lesson. Give students an opportunity to share how that lesson changed their outlook on life or the way they relate to family and friends. Share your own personal story about how the lesson has influenced your life. Share that this week's lesson starts a new six-lesson unit on hope. Point out that hope is a big deal in this world and challenge learners to see how what Peter taught his readers intersects their own lives.

YOU OBJECT LESSON



GUITAR

Use this object lesson with verses 6-7. Bring a guitar with you and display it in front of the class. **Say:** *This guitar string is made of metal, but it has been tempered so that it's not too rigid and can even be stretched.* Invite a volunteer to pluck the strings on the guitar. Tell learners that in order for the strings to make a pleasing tone, some tension must be placed on them. **Ask:** *Why do you think it is necessary to place tension on the strings to create sounds?* **Say:** *Adding tension plays a huge role in the sounds that come from the guitar.* Emphasize that in the same way, a believer's faithful response to God during tension or trials can produce beautiful praise, glory, and honor for Him.

THE BASIS FOR OUR HOPE (TEACHING PLAN)

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

INTRODUCTION

In advance, download the Emily Dickinson poem, “Hope Is the Thing with Feathers.” Make enough copies for each learner to have one. During the session, share a brief summary of Emily Dickinson’s life, then read the poem aloud. **Ask:** *How does the poem describe hope?* Encourage several learners to share their thoughts and reflections on the poem.

Say: *We don’t usually view hope in the same way as Emily Dickinson did in her poem. Her description of hope gives it a unique characteristic—life. In some ways, she has created a metaphor of the hope we have in our hearts, because our hope is a Living Hope.*

Use the unit introduction on page 10 to provide an overview of this new unit. Explain that Peter was writing to a group of exiled believers who were suffering persecution and were feeling a desperate need for hope. **Say:** *That’s not unlike a lot of people in our world today. They are hurting and need hope.*

Transition into today’s lesson by explaining that Peter’s primary goal was to encourage these believers not to give up, lose hope, or grow weary. Provide additional background information from the commentary on page 105.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

OUR HOPE IS BASED ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS 1 PETER 1:1-3

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Peter 1:1-3. Summarize the first two paragraphs on page 12 to set the context. Lead learners to **discuss the question:** “When have you felt discouraged as a Christian?”
- Lead a discussion on what the believers were facing. **Point out that we also live in a kind of exile today.** **Say:** *We live as exiles here because heaven is our real home.* Discuss the role hope plays when believers are suffering. **Say:** *Peter encouraged his readers to hold on to their hope in Christ.*
- Invite volunteers to **share what causes them to lose hope while facing suffering.** **Explain** that Peter reminded us that we have “the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit” (v. 2). Share that **sanctification gives us a new identity.** **Say:** *We are sanctified (set apart) to be like Jesus.* Explain that through salvation, we have hope in Christ. As a result, our hope is not based on anything we can do. Emphasize that our Living Hope died on the cross and was raised from the dead. **Ask:** *How does our hope in Christ help us to face suffering and opposition?* Discuss responses.

OUR HOPE IS SECURE FOR ETERNITY 1 PETER 1:4-5

- **Write this statement on the board:** “Nothing can stop hope, decrease hope, change hope, move hope, or destroy hope.” **Read aloud 1 Peter 1:4-5, then read** the statement on the board. **Ask:** *How does Christ make this statement true?*
- **Invite a volunteer to read the second paragraph (p. 14)** that includes the three adjectives that Peter used to describe the inheritance of the hope we have received. **Guide a discussion of the questions in the middle of page 14:** “What painful or frustrating circumstances are you facing? How can you stay hopeful in those situations?”
- Re-emphasize that **our hope is tied to Christ’s resurrection, and our security is tied to the power of**

THE BASIS FOR OUR HOPE (TEACHING PLAN)

FOR UNIT 1, LESSON 1 (pp. 11–15)

God. Ask: *How aware are you of God’s protecting power?* Ask learners to share what role we play. Read the final paragraph under “Our Hope Is Secure for Eternity” (p. 14). **Emphasize the importance of staying grounded in God’s**

Word and remembering who He is and what He has done. Challenge learners to identify ways they can put those principles into practice this week. **Say:** *And never forget that God loves you and holds you in His hands.*

OUR HOPE IS DISPLAYED THROUGH GENUINE FAITH 1 PETER 1:6-9

- **Invite a learner to read aloud 1 Peter 1:6-9.** Point out that Peter used these verses to address the present faith and the future faith of believers. **Ask:** *How does our present faith help us endure suffering?* Explain that our present faith reminds us that we have a brighter future in Christ.
- Use the Object Lesson (p. 102) to help learners understand why they can praise God despite their hardships. **Say:** *We can rejoice in whatever we are going through because of the faith we have in Christ, who is our hope.*
- **Direct learners to reflect on the illustration of gold refinement on page 15.** Emphasize that God always has a purpose for our suffering. **Say:** *Our pain makes us more like Him. Plus it provides a witness to the world around us.* Share that this is what genuine faith looks like.

SO WHAT? HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

Today’s lesson has focused on the point that our hope in Christ is sure and certain. Life’s difficulties may cause us to place our hope in money, our jobs, our families, even our churches. But if that is what we are trusting in life, then our hope is misplaced. God has given us a living hope because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. He is the only One who can enable us to rise above our circumstances and praise God through in every situation.

- *How has this lesson influenced the way you feel about hope? Why?*
- *What can help you be more aware of the hope you have in Christ during times of difficulty?*
- *In times of personal crisis, what can you do to lean more on Jesus and not on anything else?*
- *Describe the role of praise in the hope you experience right now? How does it make you stronger in your faith?*

CLOSE THE SESSION

Direct learners’ attention to the Live It! challenge on page 15. Summarize the first paragraph. Invite learners to briefly review the plan of salvation on the inside front cover of this book. Encourage those who have not accepted Christ to consider making the decision today. Encourage believers to use this page as a resource in leading others to Christ. Read aloud the Memory Verse for this lesson, 1 Peter 1:3. Refer to the Memory Cards on pages 99-100 and encourage learners to meditate on this verse throughout the coming week. Before closing in prayer, challenge learners to complete the Live It! activity and to be ready to share what they learn.