

Our Home, Our Hope, Our Holiness

1 Peter 1:1–2:3

Purpose...

Mind: What do I need to know from this passage in Scripture?

- ◆ The same God who has chosen me out of His love and grace also secures my home, my hope, and my holiness.

Heart: How does what I learn from this passage affect my internal relationship with the Lord?

- ◆ I am a kingdom disciple who rejoices in my salvation and reveals a genuine faith in the midst of trials.

Hands: How does what I learn from this passage translate into action for God's kingdom?

- ◆ I will help others set their hope fully on Christ.
- ◆ I will exhort others to holiness.
- ◆ I will help others learn God's Word.
- ◆ I will pray that the Lord would save my non-Christian family, friends, and neighbors.

Personal Study...

Pray. Ask that God will open up your heart and mind as you study His Word. This is His story of redemption that He has revealed to us, and the Holy Spirit is our teacher.

Ponder the Passage. Read 1 Peter in its entirety. Then reread 1 Peter 1:1–2:3.

- *Point.* What is the point of this passage? How does this relate to the point of the entire book?
- *People.* Who are the main people involved in this passage? What characterizes them?
- *Persons of the Trinity.* Where do you see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in this passage?
- *Puzzling Parts.* Are there any parts of the passage that you don't quite understand or that seem interesting or confusing?

Put It in Perspective.

- *Place in Scripture.* What is the original context of this text? What is the redemptive-historical context—what has or hasn't happened in redemptive history at this point in Scripture? How does this text connect to Christ?



The following questions will help if you got stuck on any of the previous questions, and they will help you dig a little deeper into the text, putting it all into perspective.

1. **1:1–2.** (a) The Gospels and the book of Acts give us a lot of background on the apostle Peter that is helpful to know as we read 1 Peter. Using a concordance or another Bible tool, what do you learn about Peter from these books?

(b) To whom is Peter writing? How does what he calls his readers (“pilgrims,” or in some Bible translations “exiles”) make them identify with Old Testament Israel, which was taken into captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians?

(c) According to these verses, why does Peter call them “pilgrims,” or, in some Bible translations, “exiles”?

(d) How are all three persons of the Godhead involved in our salvation?

(e) Read Exodus 24:3–8. What is happening in this passage? Which part of 1:2 references this passage?

(f) Using Scripture, how would you define God’s grace and peace?

2. (a) How did Jesus experience exile for our salvation?

(b) Like Peter's readers, the church today lives in the world as pilgrims. How does looking back toward Jesus's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, as well as looking forward to His return, help us endure as pilgrims?

3. **1:3–5.** (a) What does it mean to bless God (for example, see Ps. 34:1)? Why can we bless God (see Num. 6:24–27)?

(b) What attribute of God does our salvation reveal?

(c) To what are we born again?

(d) What is the foundation of our hope?

(e) What is being reserved in heaven for us?

(f) How does the description of our inheritance contrast with the promised land Old Testament Israel received (see Isa. 24:3–4; 40:8; Jer. 2:7)?

(g) By what and through what are we being kept?

(h) According to Scripture, what is faith (see Heb. 11:1)?

(i) For what are we being kept?

(j) How has our salvation already been revealed on the one hand, and not yet on the other?

4. **1:6–9.** (a) In what do we rejoice?

- (b) How do trials test the genuineness of our faith?
- (c) What will result in praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Christ?
- (d) How are we to respond to Jesus, even though we have not seen Him?
- (e) What is the end of our faith?

5. 1:10–12. (a) About what did the prophets prophesy, search, and inquire carefully?

- (b) Who was at work in them, indicating the prophecies they gave?
- (c) How did they know they were serving future believers, not themselves, when they prophesied?
- (d) Who was at work in those who preached the gospel to Peter’s readers?
- (e) Into what things do angels desire to look?
- (f) Compare this passage with Luke 24:25–27, 44–49. What do you learn from your comparison?

6. 1:13. (a) In verse 13, “therefore” is an important word because it shows that Peter is going to be building on ideas he has previously mentioned. What are these ideas?

- (b) What does Peter call his readers to do?
- (c) How does he tell them to do this?
- (d) Read Exodus 12:11. What is the context of that verse? How does “gird up the loins of your mind” allude to it?
- (e) Peter tells his readers to “be sober,” rather than being drunk. How would drunkenness hinder them from fully setting their hope on the grace promised at Christ’s revelation?

- 7. 1:14–16.** (a) What is and is not to characterize our relationship with our heavenly Father?
- (b) Look up Leviticus 11:44 (see also Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7). How does Peter reference these passages here?
- (c) What does it mean to be holy?
- 8. 1:17–21.** (a) Peter emphasizes that God is our father and judge. What else is He to us (see v. 18)? How are we to respond to Him as such (see also Ps. 34:11)?
- (b) What are some examples of “aimless conduct” Peter’s readers inherited from their forefathers? Contrast your examples with the Lord’s ways (see Ps. 34:22).
- (c) How are “corruptible things” different from the “precious blood of Christ”?
- (d) Read Exodus 12. What is happening in that chapter? What language does Peter use in verse 19 that references Exodus 12?
- (e) From what time was Christ foreordained?
- (f) When was He made manifest, and for whose sake was He made manifest?
- (g) What two things did God do for His Son?
- (h) In what are the believer’s faith and hope to rest?
- 9. 1:22–2:3.** (a) How does embracing the truth of the gospel enable us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ?
- (b) How does Peter use the imagery of procreation to contrast how we are born naturally with how we are born into God’s family? What role does the word of God serve in this?

- (c) What is the contrast depicted in Isaiah 40:6, 8, and what is Peter emphasizing by using it?
- (d) Of what does the word consist?
- (e) To what does the “therefore” of 2:1 refer, and why is it important in light of Peter’s imperatives (what we are to do)?
- (f) How does Peter use the imagery of a newborn infant to urge his readers to grow in salvation?
- (g) Using your cross references, find out what psalm Peter is alluding to in 2:3.

Principles and Points of Application

- 10. 1:1–2.** (a) How does Peter’s testimony (an unconverted fisherman in Galilee to an apostle of Jesus Christ) encourage you?
- (b) In what ways are you experiencing exile right now?
 - (c) In the midst of your exile, consider that Christ endured exile from heaven to save sinners like you and me. How does that encourage you?
- 11. 1:3–12.** (a) Use 1:3–9 as a guide to write out a prayer of praise to the Lord.
- (b) What have you learned about the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament in this passage? How has 1:10–12 encouraged you to see Christ in all of Scripture?
- 12. 1:13–2:3.** (a) How will you set your hope fully on Christ this week? (Be specific as you think through how you will prepare your mind for action and how you will be sober-minded.)
- (b) Living a holy life sounds daunting, but we must remember that we are children of the Holy One and He is conforming us to Christ’s image. His power enables us

to live in holiness (see 2 Peter 1:3). What areas of your life need to be brought into conformity with God's holiness?

(c) If you are a true believer, spend time in prayer today, thanking the Lord for redeeming you.

13. 1:13–2:3. (a) How does God's Word both inform and transform your love for your brothers and sisters in Christ?

(b) How often do you ingest God's Word (see Ps. 119:103)?

(c) With whom do you need to share the gospel this week?

(d) What malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander do you need to repent of today?

(e) How have you tasted that the Lord is good in your study of Scripture?

(f) How will you prioritize Bible study, recognizing that you cannot know the Lord apart from His Word?

(g) How will you teach those under your leadership to do the same?

Putting It All Together...

After forty-nine showings to sell our old home and living for five months in an apartment, we were excited to finally move into our newly built house. The reason for our move was to be closer to our church family, and we thought we had chosen a great location. But after we moved in, I learned that facts about our family had been misconstrued before we arrived, leading people to believe all kinds of interesting things about us. After our arrival it became obvious that we did not fit into the established friendships and lifestyles around us. Rather than having backyard barbecues to share the gospel with my neighbors, I found myself tempted to retreat into the walls of my house. I felt like an exile on my own street, unwelcomed by those around me.

I shouldn't have been as surprised as I was that all my neighbors didn't welcome me with open arms. Ultimately, they weren't rejecting me, but Jesus, whom I professed to be Lord. Though long, the trial ingrained a truth in my heart that I had been slow to learn. The very faith that saves us is also the faith that sets us apart from the world and often

invites others' dislike. Jesus showed us that the way to glory is through suffering. We must fix our eyes on Him, the builder of our heavenly home.

Peter reminds us in his letter that this world is not our home, our hope is not in earthly treasure, and our holiness is to reflect our heavenly Father. Trials often serve to remind us of these truths. Feeling like a stranger on my own street nailed me to my knees, riveted my eyes to my Redeemer, and drove me to delight in His Word, not the world around me.

Living as Saints: Our Home (1:1–2)

One of the first things I do before I read a book is identify the author. Knowing the author helps me understand the worldview that informs his or her writing, which is important. When we come to 1 Peter, the information on the author is scant: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1), yet in that one phrase we immediately recognize that Peter’s writing will be informed by Christ. Indeed, the Spirit of Christ wrote through Peter (2 Peter 1:20–21). There is much more we can learn about Peter though from the Gospels and the book of Acts. It would be wise for us to turn our attention to his background before we read his letter. It will inform and illuminate his letter and bring us to a deeper appreciation of what he says and why he says it.

Peter, an ordinary man from Bethsaida, a city in Galilee, knew what it was to be transformed by grace, receiving a new name. Instead of calling him Simon, Jesus changed his name to Cephas, which means “Peter,” from the word *rock*. The trade he knew and loved so well as a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee paled in comparison to the trade he learned when Christ made him a fisher of men and to the love and grace he experienced when Jesus saved him. He was called by Christ to be a kingdom worshiper, appointed by Christ to be a kingdom worker, and sent out by Christ to be a kingdom witness (Mark 3:16).

Because Peter was called as one of God’s children, he was able to confess Jesus as the Christ (Mark 8:29). He knew that Jesus alone had the words of eternal life and was the Holy One of God (John 6:68). He had witnessed the miraculous power of God when Jesus raised Jairus’s daughter from death to life (Mark 5:35–43) and healed his mother-in-law’s fever (Matt. 8:14–15). He also knew the mighty power of God when he witnessed that Jesus walked on the water and then enabled him to walk on the water as well—until he doubted, that is. But even when Peter doubted, Jesus graciously reached out His hand to save him from sinking, displaying His grace and love to him (Matt. 14:28–29).

Peter had watched as Jesus was transfigured before him on the mountain and had been overwhelmed with terror by the event. When he suggested making three tents, one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, he learned a lesson concerning Christ’s pre-eminence. The Father will not give His glory to anyone other than His Son. He also learned that day that Jesus would rise from the dead, but he had no idea what that meant (Mark 9:2–13).

Peter was also acquainted with the truth that in God's kingdom, the first will be last and the last will be first (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30). Peter had heard Jesus curse a fig tree and had seen it wither, learning a lesson in faith, prayer, and forgiveness (Mark 11:21). He had privately sat on the Mount of Olives with Jesus, along with James, John, and Andrew, and had received a lesson on the signs of the end of the age (Mark 13:3–37). And he had eaten the last Passover with Jesus before His death (Mark 14:12–25).

Peter had learned many lessons in humility as well. When he confidently asserted before Jesus that he would never fall away from Him, Jesus corrected him by foretelling his three denials. Peter confirmed his need for correction when he not only denied Jesus three times but also when he fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane when he was supposed to be praying (Mark 14:29–72). On the occasion when Jesus stooped to wash Peter's feet, he wanted no part in it until Jesus informed him he would have no part with Him if he refused. Then Peter wanted Jesus to wash his hands and head as well (John 13:6–37). When he tried to defend Jesus with the sword, cutting off Malchus's ear, he was reprimanded by Jesus, in whose kingdom suffering, not the sword, is the weapon to wield (John 18:10–27).

How gracious it was that the Lord would have Peter, in light of all his failures, be one of the first to see the empty tomb and the first of the Twelve to behold the Savior (John 20:2–6; 1 Cor. 15:5). He was also privileged to privately hear the gracious, forgiving voice of his Master asking three times if he loved Him (to match Peter's three denials) and instructing him to feed His sheep and follow Him. At the same time, he learned that following Christ would end in a martyr's death (John 21:15–19). Peter's failures would have disqualified him for the ministry except for the forgiving grace of God. He also received the greatest class in teaching Christ in all of Scripture when Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand everything written about Him in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44–48). As Paul so beautifully reminds us, "All the promises of God in Him are Yes" (2 Cor. 1:20).

Peter was not only impacted by Jesus's life, death, and resurrection but also deeply influenced by His ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the beginning days of the New Testament church (Acts 1:6–20). Peter put the preaching lesson given by Jesus into practice on the day of Pentecost, proclaiming a redemptive-historical message to his listeners (Acts 2:14–38). His days were busy with teaching about the kingdom of God and performing signs and wonders that pointed to God's power and saving grace (Acts 3:1–12; 9:32–43). He knew what it was to suffer in prison for the sake of Jesus and at the same time God's miraculous power to release him (Acts 4:1–23; 5:17–42; 12:3–18). He boldly confronted the sin of Ananias and Sapphira as well as Simon the magician (Acts 5:1–11; 8:9–24). Peter went with John to Samaria when they heard the Samaritans had received the word of God and prayed that they would receive the Holy Spirit also (Acts 8:14–17). After Peter received a vision that Jesus had made all foods clean and learned that God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles, the Holy Spirit

fell on the Gentiles while he preached to them in Cornelius's home (Acts 10:5–48). Peter told the Jerusalem church of the Gentile conversion, acknowledging he had been appointed by God to share the gospel with Gentiles so that they might believe and be saved (Acts 15:7).

Peter also knew the apostle Paul. Paul visited Peter in Jerusalem and stayed with him for fifteen days (Gal. 1:18). Paul tells us that Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the Jews and that he was a pillar (along with John and James, the Lord's brother) of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:7–9). Peter extended fellowship to Paul, blessing his calling to the Gentiles and asking him to remember the poor as he ministered (Gal. 2:8–10). Paul also exposed one of Peter's weaknesses when he opposed his hypocrisy of eating with Gentiles when the circumcision party wasn't around, but not eating with Gentiles when they were. This revealed Peter's fear of man, and Paul corrected him, reminding him that the Lord had made all foods clean (Gal. 2:11–14), a lesson Peter had previously learned (Acts 10:9–33).

As important as it is to know about Peter, we also need to know about his original readers. As we learn about Peter's readers and their home, we also learn about our home. Like Peter's original readers who were pilgrims (some Bible translations say "exiles") of God living in dispersed places, we are pilgrims of God living in a place that is not our true home. Peter pulls his language from the Old Testament, alluding to the exile of the Jews at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians.¹ The reason for Israel's exile was judgment, but the reason for the readers' exile was grace. Christ's first coming had inaugurated the kingdom of God, and they were living as pilgrims, knowing their inheritance of their heavenly home was already in place for them. They may have been exiled and scattered across regions in Asia Minor (places that were located in what is today Turkey), but they were elect, God's chosen children. Their scattering was sure to end in God's sweeping finale of salvation history, Christ's second coming, which will bring judgment on those who refused to bow their knee to Christ on this earth and salvation for all who believed in His name. Christ will usher all of God's children to their heavenly home.

Not only was their past certain (they had been chosen by the foreknowledge of God the Father, their salvation applied by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and their redemption bought by the precious blood of Jesus) and their future secure (He had chosen them to be His for all eternity), their present was filled with grace and peace. God's foreknowledge has nothing to do with whether we've been naughty or nice; it has everything to do with God's gracious lovingkindness. The Spirit sanctifies us, bringing us from death to new life at our initial conversion, and then progressively working in our lives to conform us more and more to the image of Christ, a

1. The term *Dispersion* referred to the Jews who had been scattered throughout the world following the Babylonian exile that happened in three deportations (605, 597, and 586 BC). Initially the scattering was forced, but over time Jews chose to emigrate. Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988), 37.

process that won't be perfected until glory. Jesus has lived a life of perfect obedience on our behalf, and now the Spirit enables us to live in obedience as children of our Father. Christ has sprinkled us with His blood, atoning for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to God. All three persons of the Godhead are intricately involved in our salvation, a truth that should lead us to a life of praise for God's glorious grace.

Peter alludes to the covenant God made with Old Testament Israel when he speaks of the sprinkling of Jesus's blood (Ex. 24:3–8). After the Lord had delivered Israel from Egypt and brought them safely to the foot of Mount Sinai, the people entered into a covenant with Him to obey all His commands. The Lord had saved them and brought them to Himself, but they had to keep His covenant in order to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Throughout the history of redemption, we learn that Israel failed to do this. It was only the true Israel, Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the law perfectly as the greatest and final priest and Holy One of Israel, and enables God's people to be holy as well (2 Peter 1:3–5). Because we are in covenant with God and with one another, our lives that may appear to be wracked with gruesome trials and petrifying suffering are instead wrapped in the grace and peace of our great God, who has loved us and redeemed us as His own and is keeping us safe until He takes us to our true home.

Living as Saints: Our Hope (1:3–12)

Peter bursts forth with blessing, praising the God who has blessed him. He knows God as Father because he knows Jesus Christ as Lord. God the Father, in His mercy, has caused believers to be born again to a living hope, which is founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We do not hope in the worldly sense, wishing that we'll get lucky and some large fortune will come to us. We hope in God. Our hope is certain because Jesus's resurrection is already a fact in history that has been accomplished. His resurrection in the past secures our inheritance in the future, an inheritance that is kept safe for us in heaven. Unlike the promised land of Canaan, which perished, became defiled by Israel's sin, and faded before Israel's eyes while the people were carried off into exile (see 2 Kings 24:10–25:21), our heavenly inheritance will never grow corrupt, will never become defiled, and will never fade. It is eternal and pure, inhabited by glorified saints and filled with the immeasurable glory of God and Christ. Peter's words echo Christ's as He preached the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19–21).

God's power is guarding believers through faith for a coming salvation that has already been inaugurated. Such a salvation is cause for rejoicing, regardless of wretched circumstances that swirl around us and threaten to undo us at every point. Such trials test our faith, revealing whether it is genuine. Genuine faith is lasting faith. Unlike gold that ultimately perishes even though it is refined by fire to remove impurities,

saving faith results in eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom all praise, glory, and honor is due. Our entire lives should be lived for His glory, including the grievous parts. Our suffering is not in vain; it showcases our Savior, who suffered first on our behalf.

Peter had seen Jesus and loved Him, believed in Him, and rejoiced with inexpressible and glorious joy in the faith that he had received. He must have been encouraged that his readers, who had not yet seen Jesus, also loved Him and believed in Him. When Thomas refused to believe the disciples' report of the resurrection, Jesus appeared to him, letting him place his finger on His hands and side and imploring him to believe, which Thomas did. Jesus replied to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Peter's readers not only loved Jesus and believed in Him but also rejoiced with inexpressible and glorious joy in the faith they had received. One reason the salvation of our souls is cause for rejoicing is because it is the fulfillment of redemptive history. All through the Old Testament, the prophets proclaimed the coming Christ. The Spirit of Christ was in them, indicating His own sufferings and glories to come. The Christ who is the fulfillment of Scripture is also the Christ who is the author of Scripture. As Scripture moved forward toward the climax of His life, death, and resurrection, His Spirit moved men's pens to record redemptive history. It was even revealed to the prophets that they were serving future generations of believers as they wrote of things that pointed forward to the good news of Christ. The Holy Spirit continued to work in the lives of the apostles as they taught the gospel in the days of the early church, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, truths that are so glorious even the angels long to look into them.

Jesus told His disciples, "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matt. 13:16–17). Peter stressed to his suffering readers that they were privileged people indeed. They were living on this side of the cross and had the privilege of hearing the apostle's teaching, which continues to proclaim the kingdom of God and teach about the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ through the written Word of God.

Perhaps you feel void of hope today. Take heart in the word of the living God that reminds you of the hope you have, which is founded on the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has mercifully given us new life in Christ, is keeping our inheritance for us, and is guarding us by His power. Our hearts, no matter what our circumstances, should rejoice in who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. Our hands, no matter our trials, should be raised to Him in adoration and praise. Our eyes, no matter our weakness, should be fixed on His glory. And our feet, no matter our fears, should be steadfast on His path. We have something far

better than good days ahead of us. We have the inheritance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who loves us and gave Himself for us.

Living as Saints: Our Holiness (1:13–2:3)

The hope of the gospel reminds us that our heavenly home is secure, our temporary trials are purposeful, and our holiness is the right response. God's grace saves us for a life of holiness, not licentiousness. His power has provided what we need for holy living (2 Peter 1:3–5); we don't conjure it up by our own strength and willpower. Setting our hope fully on the coming grace that has already been inaugurated is work, but it is work done in the power of God's Spirit working in us.

To fully set our hope on grace, we must gird up the loins of our mind, an allusion to how Israel ate the first Passover as they prepared to leave Egypt in a hurry (Ex. 12:11) and possibly to Jesus's words in the parable about being ready for His second coming (Luke 12:35–36). Our minds will be assaulted with all kinds of temptations to take our hope off the grace of Jesus Christ, so we must be prepared to fight such temptations with truth. We must also be sober-minded. Drunkenness dulls our senses and prohibits us from setting our hope fully on God's grace. When we are drunk, our hope is usually set on something else. We hope the drink will drown our despair, but it does the opposite—it drowns us in despair.

Peter reminded his readers that they were children of obedience; they have a perfect heavenly Father and a Savior who obeyed the law on their behalf. Therefore, they were not to live as children of disobedience with the Father of Lies and the false saviors of the flesh they formerly knew before they were converted. Instead, they were to be holy because the One who called them to Himself is holy. The imperative (what we are to do) is grounded in the indicative (what God has already done for us). Peter quoted from Leviticus 19:2, a powerful reminder that although the ceremonial law is no longer binding on God's people, the moral law continues to teach us many things.² It has not been displaced, but fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and now gives us a track on which to run the race of grace. Holiness is not possible apart from Christ to be sure, but it is certainly possible with Christ. Grace transforms us from the inside out, changing our lives to reflect Jesus, though not perfectly on this side of glory.

Peter had learned that his heavenly Father judges impartially according to each one's deeds (Acts 10:34). All those who are His children are to conduct themselves accordingly. Reverent fear before the Redeemer is the right response during our pilgrimage on this earth—not casual conduct before the Creator. Peter's readers had

2. It informs us of God's holy nature and will, convinces us of our inability to keep it, humbles us in our sense of sin, helps us to see our desperate need of Christ and His perfect obedience, shows us how much we are bound to Christ for His fulfilling it and enduring the curse of God in our place, provokes us to more thankfulness, and helps us conform to it as the rule of our obedience. See the Westminster Larger Catechism, answers 95 and 97.

been ransomed by Jesus Christ, who bought them back from slavery to sin and freed them to new life.

The Gentiles to whom Peter was writing had been steeped in futile ways from their forefathers, seeking precious metals of this world. Since they had been sought by God and bought by Christ's blood, Peter told them that they were to live a different way. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) and has always been the way since before the foundation of the world. He was the Lamb of which all the sacrificial lambs of the Old Testament were only shadows. God had required Old Testament Israel to bring unblemished lambs to the tabernacle and temple for sacrifice because they were types of Him who was to come, the perfect One. Peter's readers, living in the last times (just as we are), had the privilege of looking back toward the resurrection and forward to His second coming, knowing their faith and hope were secure in the God who raised Jesus from the dead and who will send Him again to save those eagerly waiting for Him.

Peter points his readers to the truth. Immersing ourselves in the truth, the word of God, is a means of grace God uses to purify our souls, leading to a right relationship with Him, but also to a right relationship with others. We can love our brothers and sisters earnestly only from a pure heart. At salvation we receive a new heart (not a perfect heart), and the Spirit who writes God's word upon our hearts also enables us to obey it (Jer. 31:33; 2 Peter 1:3–5). Peter's exhortation to love one another earnestly is rooted in the concept of covenant. When we enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord, we become part of the family of God. No longer lone rangers, we are placed in the community of faith. Isolationism and individualism must be abandoned and the covenant community embraced. Just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit retain their distinctions within the Godhead, so too we retain our individual callings and gifts in the midst of unity and community.

Peter compares our new birth with our physical birth. We have been born again of seed, but it is seed that is imperishable, like our inheritance (1:4). We have been born again through the living and abiding word of God. Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6–8 to contrast the glory of mankind with the glory of God. Our physical birth that brings us into life on this earth begins to perish and fade the moment we are born. In contrast, the word of God remains forever—glorious, steady, strong, and sure. This word of God is nothing less than the gospel, which unfolds on the pages of both the Old and New Testaments. We must study the whole word of God, Genesis through Revelation, teaching Christ in all of Scripture.

Since we have received the good news by faith and have been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are to put away those things that characterized our old life. Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander are not to characterize Christians. We have been freed from sin in order to live holy lives by the power of the Spirit who sanctifies. Peter has already compared our new life in Christ with the beginning of our physical life. We have been born again through the imperishable

seed of the word of God, and it is this same word that will continually nourish our souls. Peter exhorts his readers to long for the pure spiritual milk, which is the key to their growth in salvation.

If you've ever been around a nursing newborn, you know what longing Peter is talking about. Newborns don't settle for milk substitutes easily, and they cry loudly for such sustenance. Likewise, believers shouldn't settle for milk substitutes, even good ones like devotionals and Christian literature. Reading Christian books isn't harmful until they become a substitute for the Bible. Our hearts should cry loudly to be fed the word of God. Once we have tasted that the Lord, the living Word who reveals Himself in the written Word, is good, we will hunger for more and more of the word. Peter again alludes to Psalm 34, this time to verse 8: "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Christians should love their Bibles and read and study them often. Like John Bunyan, the Puritan and author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, we should bleed the Bible when we are pricked.

Bunyan had tasted that the Lord is good, and he kept going back for more. I pray that you and I would do the same. It is time for us to stop saying we are too busy to read the Bible. Indeed, we are too busy *not* to read it. In it Christ reveals Himself to us. Apart from it we make saviors of our own liking. Such saviors prove to be false, futile, and fleeting in the end. But the word of God lasts forever. We should feed upon it as often as we satisfy our hunger and thirst with food and water, crying out with the psalmist, "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps. 119:103).

Perhaps you can relate to my new-neighborhood experience, or maybe today you have lost all hope, or perhaps you are living in licentiousness with holiness far from your mind. Whatever the case, I hope you have been encouraged by Peter's words this week. Our heavenly home is secure. Our hope is certain. And our holiness is being worked out by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Processing It Together . . .

1. What do we learn about God in 1 Peter 1:1–2:3?
2. How does this reshape how we should view our present circumstances?
3. What do we learn about God's Son, Jesus Christ?
4. How should this impact our relationship with God and with others?
5. What do we learn about God's covenant with His people?

6. How are we to live in light of this?
7. How can we apply 1 Peter 1:1–2:3 to our lives today and in the future?
8. How should we apply these verses in our churches?
9. Looking back at “Putting It in Perspective” in your personal study questions, what did you find challenging or encouraging about this lesson?
10. Looking back at “Principles and Points of Application,” how has this lesson transformed your life?