

Adult Teaching Resources

April 19, 2020



Lent / Easter / Pentecost—All Things New

Psalms 118:1-4, 19-29—"A New Foundation"

Colossians 3:1-17 (RCL 1-11)—"A New Wardrobe"

1 Peter 1:3-9—"A New Future"

1 Peter 1:13-25 (RCL 1:17-22)—"A New Birth"

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A New Future

1 Peter 1:3-9

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

1 Peter 1:3—*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...”*

The Sunday after Easter can be a challenge. Not only is the celebration of Easter a thing of the past, the routine of normal life has taken hold again.

Celebrating the risen Christ is easy. Following the risen Christ, every day and with all that we are, is difficult. Today, we are reminded that we aren't the only ones who faced the challenge of remaining faithful to Jesus. The writer of 1 Peter gives us words of encouragement for our own faith journey.

Opening

After everyone arrives, ask everyone to find a partner. Once settled, ask everyone to think of a specific letter or personal written document like an email, that had a significant impact on their life.

Who wrote the letter?

What was the purpose of the letter?

When you first read the letter, what was your response?

After you had time for the content of the letter to sink in, what was your response?

How did the letter affect, or change, you?

Give each couple time to share their answers and have conversation about their letters.

Then, open the floor for volunteers to share parts of their letter story with the larger group.

Reading the Bible

What has God given us? (a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead)

What is special about the inheritance? (it is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading) Where is it kept? (in heaven)

What is God doing for us? (we are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time)

We rejoice, even if what happens? (for a little while you have had to suffer various trials)

What will happen to our genuine faith? (it will be tested by fire) What will be the result of that testing? (praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed)

How do we feel about Jesus, even though we haven't seen him? (you love him; you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy)

What are we receiving? (the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.)

Making Connections

If you were going to write a letter to an individual or a group struggling with their faith journey, who would you write to? What type of salutation would you use?

Have you ever been a part of a chain letter, or been asked to forward an email? What was the content of the letter? How quickly did you pass the letter on to others? How did you choose who to send it to?

How do you define hope? What role does hope play in your faith journey?

Our Lesson Writer says, "If there had been no resurrection, there would have been no church." Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?

The letter writer lists three adjectives that describe our eternal inheritance: imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. What do those three words mean to you when you think about everlasting life?

What does salvation mean to you? After reading this letter, does your understanding of salvation change at all? If so, how?

What are some examples of "various trials" we face as believers? How do those compare to the early believers? Why do you think trials are a part of our faith journey?

The letter writer used gold to describe true faith. Our Lesson Writer points out that, "Gold is fireproof, but not destruction-proof." What would you use to describe true faith?

Our Lesson Writer says, "Faith involves believing in something for which one has no visible proof," and our passage states, "Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy" (v. 8) What is it that keeps you faithful with something you can't see, can't touch, and have no visible proof?

So What?

Ask everyone to find their partner from the beginning of the lesson. Give each couple a piece of paper and a pen. Ask everyone to think about the letter from today's lesson, and have them think of the letter that needs to be written to their class or church.

What letter of encouragement does your class/church need right now?

What will you write about hope?

What will you write about salvation?

What will you write about trials?

What will you write about genuine faith?

What words of encouragement will you share to challenge the faithful to remain faithful?

If there is time, ask each couple to write an actual letter. If time is short, have them write out bullet points covering the questions and anything else they think is important to include.

Give everyone time to write, then ask each couple to share their thoughts with the larger group.

How much of the letter from 1 Peter is repeated in the letter to your class/church?

What is different from the original letter?

What is the one theme of the letter to your church?

What does your church need to do to remain more faithful?

Spend some time discussing the letters and have conversation about what the entire group thinks is necessary for your church to remain faithful as Easter people.

The Challenge

This week, think of a friend who needs some encouragement in their life. Regardless of what they are struggling with—spiritual, physical, emotional, etc. issues—write a letter to them, encouraging them to remain firm and faithful in their journey. Write the letter and send it.

Prayer

Loving God, we are an Easter people, celebrating the Risen Christ. As we get back into our normal routine of life, help us to remain faithful, knowing that you continue to be with us, knowing that you love us, and knowing that salvation is for now and evermore. Thank you for the encouragement you gave to the early churches that still speak to us today. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Who wrote 1 Peter?—The letter we call 1 Peter is written in an excellent, almost literary style of Greek, and it seems to address Gentile converts more so than Jews. Many modern scholars are convinced that the apostle Peter could not have written this book, since he is believed to have died before the outbreak of widespread Roman persecution, was described as an uneducated man (Acts 4:13), and was primarily known as a rustic fisherman who became an apostle mainly to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-9). Thus, they usually assign the book to one of Peter’s disciples, or to another early leader who used Peter’s name as a pseudonym, a common practice in the ancient world. Other writers find those arguments lacking and confidently assign the book to the apostle Peter himself. Some suggest that a professional writer in the church at Rome could have worked with Peter to compose the missive.

Several other ancient works were attributed to Peter, though they are clearly apocryphal. These include The Acts of Peter, the Gospel of Peter, the Preaching of Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Judgment of Peter.

For a recent comprehensive and accessible discussion of these matters in more detail, see Richard Vinson, “1 Peter” in 1 & 2 Peter, Jude, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentaries (Smyth & Helwys, 2010), pp. 1-26.

When was 1 Peter written?—Empire-wide outbreaks of persecution against Christians arose under Nero (c. 62-64 CE), Domitian (ca. 90-97 CE), and Trajan (ca. 111 CE). However, Peter’s readers probably faced local pogroms of a more personal nature. Those who accept Petrine authorship date the book from 60-64 CE, since an old church tradition holds that Peter was executed in Rome during the persecutions of Emperor Nero. The tradition claims that Peter insisted on being crucified upside down, saying he was unworthy to die in the same way as Jesus. Roman Catholics hold that the Clementine Chapel, beneath St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, marks the site of his execution. A tomb said to hold his bones is also inside the basilica.

Those who believe another author who was influenced by Peter’s teaching typically cite evidence suggesting that the letter was written late in the first century.

Convolution—One bit of evidence against Simon son of Jonas being the author is that he was said to be an unlettered man, but the Greek of 1 Peter is of a high order, if sometimes difficult to read. For example, in Greek, vv. 3-12 consists of a single lengthy and convoluted sentence, not the sort of structure one would expect from someone with Simon Peter’s background.

Alliteration—The author’s use of alliteration goes beyond the adjectives in v. 4. The word for “inheritance” and the repeated word for “and” (kai) both begin with the letter “k,” so there

Digging Deeper *continued*

is an artful repetition between words beginning with “k” or “a”: klēronomian aphtharton kai amianton kai amaranton.

Persecution—Few Christians in America suffer persecution as did the recipients of 1 Peter. We may feel slighted or disrespected for our faith, but physical or social repercussions are rare.

Sometimes the fiercest criticism we get comes from fellow believers. Persons who hold very conservative social values they identify as “Christian” or as a “biblical worldview” may feel rejected or looked down on by those who take a more liberal or progressive stance and hold different values. At the same time, more socially progressive believers who emphasize Jesus’ teachings about showing preference to the poor may find opposition from conservative folk who preach self-sufficiency.

Some cry “persecution” when the courts do not allow them to open municipal meetings with a Christian prayer, or to erect a monument containing the Ten Commandments in front of the courthouse, or to refuse service to gay or lesbian persons. That is not persecution, but a practice of honoring the constitution in a pluralistic society that respects all beliefs, as the founders intended.

Nevertheless, trials and tribulations are often our lot in life, whatever the cause, and hard times put our faith to the test. Can you remember any experiences in which your faith was tested by fire, and you found yourself strengthened by the experience? If not, have you wondered why?

Faith in what you do not see—Compare Peter’s assertion about belief without seeing to a similar passage in Hebrews:

1 Peter 1:8-9 —“Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Hebrews 11:1—“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

And as the Apostle Paul put it, “We walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Love and persecution—Can you think of a time when you felt ridiculed or put down because of your faith? Has something like that happened recently? If so, how did you respond?

Jesus’ central command is for Christians to love God, and to love each other (Mat. 7:12). He clearly taught his followers to respond to others with love, even when persecuted (Mat. 5:38-48). If someone should put you down because of your faith, what might be an appropriate response?

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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What does it mean to have a “living hope”?

The most powerful phrase in this text, in my view, is Peter’s prayerful claim that the resurrection of Christ can bring a new birth “into a living hope.”

We like the notion of being alive, and we know something of the importance of hope that keeps the windows of the future open, but what did Peter mean in saying that we are born through Christ into “a living hope”?

I can still remember a statement from a “January Bible Study” book written almost 40 years ago. In 1 Peter: Message of Encouragement, John McClanahan wrote: “A living hope is hope which refuses to give up and die” (Convention Press, 1982, p. 17). I can also remember times in my life when I was tempted to give up hope, I didn’t. Hope kept me going.

Still, we should acknowledge that there is a difference between just keeping on, and truly living. In a 2013 “Ted Talk,” therapist Esther Perel spoke of growing up among Holocaust survivors in Belgium. Her neighbors could be divided into two groups, she said, “those who didn’t die, and those who came back to life.” Those who simply “didn’t die” became closed in, insecure, unwilling to open themselves to risk and love and the larger world. Those who “came back to life,” in contrast, had hope enough to believe there was life beyond the traumas they had faced. They learned to live again.

Richard Vinson, in his commentary for Smyth & Helwys, emphasizes that “hope is ‘living’ because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead” (p. 52). It is Christ’s life that give life to our hope.

Those who have a living hope don’t just muddle through, continuing to breathe but with no discernible purpose or joy. When we have a living hope that is grounded in Christ’s resurrection, we can learn to find growth and strength even on difficult days. We can trust in God’s good future for us. We can refuse to give up or hide from risk, opening our hearts to live fully into every moment of life, even the hard ones. That is a living hope.