

Week One Assignment: 1 Peter 1:1-12

Please prepare for the first week of the Women's Bible Study by reading through the entire letter of 1 Peter at least two times, making note of general themes and key words. At this point, you are familiarizing yourself with the letter. It is important to read a letter in its entirety in one sitting in order to get a general sense of the purpose of the letter and its points of emphasis. And, it was intended to be read as one unit of thought.

Next, read more carefully 1 Peter 1:1-12. Read it devotionally, coming into the presence of the Lord. It is beneficial to pray before reading, asking for the Holy Spirit to lead you to a clear understanding of the passage. Have a notebook handy to jot down questions and insights from the passage.

Now consider these questions:

1. So much is contained in first two verses (1 Peter 1:1-2) of the letter. What is the significance of the opening two verses? (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:5-12, and Ex. 24:3-8 to understand the allusion to "sprinkling with blood).
2. Every disciple of Jesus will, in part, be an outsider, an exile, a stranger, a sojourner (1 Peter 1:1; 1 Peter 2:11) in his own land. What is Peter conveying to the believers of his time? In what ways are we, too, "exiles" or "aliens" in our own land? Take some time to think through the positive and negative aspects of this.
3. Peter begins with a strong defense of Christianity. It is based upon a "living hope," a person, who is Jesus Christ. Therefore, our hope rests not in teachings, nor even a teacher, but in the Redeemer who rose from the dead. Peter writes that "**according to his great mercy,**" God has given us this living hope. The Greek word for mercy is *eleos*, which is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew word for mercy, *hesed*. When the Old Testament talks of *hesed*, it is talking about an idea that may be new to our understanding. The LORD is full of *hesed*, or "unfailing or steadfast love." *Hesed* is difficult to translate because it stands for a cluster of ideas—love, mercy, grace, kindness. It wraps up in itself all the positive attributes of God. *Hesed* is one of the Lord's most treasured characteristics. *Hesed* is a quality that moves someone to act for the benefit of someone else without considering "what's in it for me?" It may be translated as "loyal love." It brings to mind the covenantal aspects of God's love, who declared, "I will be your God and your will be my people." God chose us and saved us, according to his great mercy. Peter is bringing to mind all of this, when he begins his beautiful defense of Christianity in verses 3-9. What encourages you or surprises you in vv. 3-9?

4. Peter ends with what seems like a digression about Old Testament prophets. How do these verses (1 Peter 1:10-12) connect with the previous verses?