



rsvp INLIGHT BIBLE STUDIES

# GRACE TO CARRY ON

---

TRUSTING THE GOD WHO CARES FOR YOU

**1 PETER**

Grace to Carry On  
Trusting the God Who Cares for You  
Written by Barbara Fuller

**Copyright by RSVP Ministries**

First Edition — 2020

All rights reserved.



Suite 300 - 990 Fort St  
Victoria, BC, V8V 3K2  
Canada

[www.friesenpress.com](http://www.friesenpress.com)

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188, USA. All rights reserved.

Scriptures quoted from the International Children's Bible®, copyright ©1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Tommy Nelson. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the The Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked (NRSV) are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

ISBN

978-1-5255-6842-8 (Paperback)

978-1-5255-6843-5 (eBook)

*1. Religion, Biblical Studies, New Testament, General Epistles  
Distributed to the trade by The Ingram Book Company*



# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Beginning with the Bible</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How to Use This Study</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Tips for Group Participants</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Introduction to 1 Peter</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Lesson 1 – Grace to Change – 1 Peter 1:1a</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>God's grace changes people.</i>	
<b>Lesson 2 – Grace in an Unfamiliar Place – 1 Peter 1:1b-2</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Our true home is not in this world, but in Christ.</i>	
<b>Lesson 3 – Born Again by Grace – 1 Peter 1:3-25</b>	<b>47</b>
<i>The new birth begins a life of joy, hope and holiness.</i>	
<b>Lesson 4 – Growing in Grace Together – 1 Peter 2:1-10</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Jesus gives us a new identity and purpose.</i>	
<b>Lesson 5 – Grace to Do Good – 1 Peter 2:11-25</b>	<b>79</b>
<i>Jesus is our example of doing what is right, whatever the consequence.</i>	
<b>Lesson 6 – Grace in Relationships – 1 Peter 3:1-22</b>	<b>97</b>
<i>Christ is to be Lord of our lives and our relationships.</i>	
<b>Lesson 7 – Grace for What Really Matters – 1 Peter 4:1-19</b>	<b>113</b>
<i>Jesus shows us how to live.</i>	
<b>Lesson 8 – Standing Firm in God's Grace for You – 1 Peter 5</b>	<b>131</b>
<i>God gives grace to the humble.</i>	

<b>The First Epistle of Peter</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>RSVP to The Greatest Invitation</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>A Note to Group Leaders</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>RSVP Resources</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>171</b>



# FOREWORD

Welcome to the third study in the RSVP *inLight Bible Studies* series, written by author Barbara Fuller. This study on the Book of 1 Peter follows on the heels of Parts One and Two of *The Life We Long For*, studies that help us look at the life, love and losses that Jesus experienced on earth, through the lens of the apostle John, author of the Gospel of John.

This study takes a turn from following the events in the life of Jesus to a consideration of his example, his teaching and his principles, in a letter written by the apostle Peter to the persecuted church. Barbara has dared to uncover the hard realities of persecuted Christians in Scripture and remind us of the harsh realities that still exist for some Christians yet today. Through this study of a letter written to people living in the time of Nero and Roman domination, you will find jewels, nuggets and insights that matter to you today.

Whether you believe or whether you don't, come ready to be inspired, shocked, encouraged and challenged by the ancient writings of the Bible. In its pages you'll find the grace and courage to carry on amidst your own trials, in your own setting. Barbara has done some of the tough groundwork that leads to our understanding and application of truths through personal story, historical insights and purposeful questions. The Holy Spirit is a reliable guide who will not resist any invitation to work amongst you or your group. The rest is up to you ...

Donna Lamothe  
RSVP Executive Director

# BEGINNING WITH THE BIBLE

**The Bible** is a book that tells the story of who God is, what God has done and how God has made it possible for people to have a relationship with our Creator.

**Who is Jesus Christ?** Jesus means 'Saviour' and Christ means 'Messiah' or 'Anointed One'. Jesus is God who came to earth in human form. He proved he was God by living a perfect life, dying for the sins of all people and then rising from the dead.

**The Old Testament** was written long before the coming of Jesus. It begins with the story of creation and tells the history of Israel, God's chosen people. God's principles and truths are revealed to leaders and prophets. Through Israel, God had a plan to bless all the peoples of the earth. The Old Testament contains 39 books written by numerous authors.

**The New Testament** tells the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also contains the account of early believers in Jesus, and how they spread the message and teachings of Jesus, which are still relevant today. The New Testament contains 27 books, also written by a variety of authors, many of whom were followers of Jesus during his years on earth.

**How are the Old and New Testaments connected?** All of the Bible reveals the ways and character of God. While the 66 books of the Bible are written by many different authors, the central theme of both Old and New Testaments is the person of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament there are more than 300 prophecies specifically pointing to Jesus. The New Testament tells about the fulfillment of those prophecies.

**Why should we read and study the Bible?** The Bible was inspired by God and is filled with eternal truths and principles that are as relevant today as they were when they were written. By reading the Bible we learn who God is, who we are, and where our salvation is found. It shows how God intends us to live lives of wholeness, justice, peace and blessing. The Bible contains answers to many of life's difficult questions, wisdom for living well and hope for the future.

**Where should I begin?** If you are reading the Bible for the first time, a good place to begin is in the New Testament with one of the gospels, the story of Jesus Christ. Many people start with the Gospel of John.

**How do I look up a Bible verse?** For convenience, the books of the Bible have been divided into chapters and verses. A Bible verse will be indicated with the name of the book, the chapter number and the verse number. For example, John 3:16 means that you will find the book of John, then look for chapter 3 and in that chapter you will look for verse 16.

**Why are there different translations of the Bible?** The Old Testament was originally written mostly in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in common Greek. Because translation is not an exact science and our use of language changes with time and according to culture, translators work to provide current versions of the Bible that will make sense to today's reader. Translations may also address various reading levels and competencies.

## The Books of the Bible

<b>OLD TESTAMENT</b>		
<p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>		<p><b>Pentateuch</b> – Referred to by Jews as the Torah, which means ‘written law’, the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch, are filled with foundational stories and fascinating characters who shaped the history of Israel.</p>
<p>Joshua Judges Ruth 1 and 2 Samuel 1 and 2 Kings 1 and 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther</p>		<p><b>History</b> – The colourful story of God’s dealings with Israel through kings, prophets and everyday people is unfolded in these books. The best and worst of humanity is recounted in gripping stories that also demonstrate the love, holiness and patience of God.</p>
<p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon</p>		<p><b>Wisdom &amp; Poetry</b> – These books include personal experiences, authentic emotions, thoughtful reflections and passionate prayers of the very human writers.</p>
<p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah</p>	<p>Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>	<p><b>Prophecy</b> – Prophets were spokespersons for God. These books are the written stories and revelations of the prophets, containing messages from God pertaining to future blessings, judgments and promises.</p>

NEW TESTAMENT		
<p>Matthew Mark Luke John</p>		<p><b>Gospels</b> – The word gospel means ‘good news’. Each of the four gospels tells the story of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through a different lens.</p>
<p>Acts</p>		<p><b>History</b> – This book tells the exciting story of the spread of Christianity after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.</p>
<p>Romans 1 and 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 and 2 Thessalonians 1 and 2 Timothy</p>	<p>Titus Philemon Hebrews James 1 and 2 Peter 1, 2, 3 John Jude</p>	<p><b>Epistles</b> – These are letters that were written by early Christian leaders to teach God’s truth and principles, and to encourage people to live out the Christian message, even in the face of persecution.</p>
<p>Revelation</p>		<p><b>Apocalypse</b> – Apocalypse means ‘unveiling’. This last book of the Bible gives a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and the ultimate revelation of the Kingdom of God in the end times.</p>

# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This study is part of the RSVP *inLight Bible Studies* series, which guide you through books of the Bible. RSVP *inLight Bible Studies* are primarily intended to be used in the context of a small group, but you will also enjoy working through them on your own. Each *inLight* study provides opportunities for interesting discussions as well as suggestions for exploring the Bible further. Why not find a friend with whom to share your experience of 1 Peter? Or better yet, gather a group of six to eight people; your discussions will be livelier and you will hear points of view that challenge and shape your own thinking and growth.

If you are leading a small group through this study, check out the notes for leaders in the back of the book. If you are a group participant, the next section has important tips for you.

As well as a theme phrase that gives the focus of the lesson, each lesson is comprised of seven sections.

**Setting the Stage** – Here you will find either a reflection to engage you or some historical, geographic, cultural, religious or theological insight to help you understand the passage you are considering.

**Today's Scripture** – The related Scripture passage is indicated at the beginning of each lesson. At the back of the book the complete text of 1 Peter is printed out. Any reference to those chapters will be indicated in bold print, for example, **1 Peter 2:10**, reminding you to look for it in the back. Additional Bible verses are printed out within the body of the lesson itself, except for those referenced in the Digging Deeper sections. Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible version used in this study is the New Living Translation.

**Our Questions to Discuss** – If you are studying with a small group, it helps to read through the Scripture passage and questions prior to meeting. But even if you don't, the comments and questions will easily guide your group through the passage, beginning with an icebreaker question that will help launch you into discussion.

**Worth Contemplating** – A Bible verse from the lesson is given for you to memorize or contemplate. Ask God to help you understand what it means and how he wants you to apply it.

**Sharing My Heart with God** – If prayer is new to you or you just don't know what words to say, a brief, simple prayer is provided for you to use. You can let it be a starting place for your own words. The important thing is to communicate with God and know that he is listening to your heart's cry—no matter whose words you use.

**Digging Deeper** – There's always more to learn, more to understand, more to knowing God than we can ever comprehend. You will be given options either throughout the lesson or in a section at the end to delve deeper into the Bible, and explore the resources, passages and activities suggested.

**My Question for God** – Once you are on your own, reflecting on your group discussion, you may have a question still burning in your heart. We all have questions. Some are personal and difficult to share in a group. Space is provided to write down the question that you aren't ready to share with others. Bring it to God, who knows your heart and invites you to share whatever you are grappling with. It might be helpful to share your question with a trustworthy friend who can help you think it through, or help you bring it to God. Asking the question is a step in the right direction, a step of faith.

You may want to have a Bible on hand for extra readings. Because there are many contemporary translations, for the person new to the Bible I would recommend the New Living Translation, the New International Version or—if English is your second language—the Good News translation. You can also find verses easily online or you can download a Bible app to your mobile device.

*Listen to wisdom.*

*Try with all your heart to gain understanding. . .*

*Search for it as you would for silver.*

*Hunt for it like hidden treasure. . . .*

*Then you will begin to know God.*

Proverbs 2:2,4,5 (International Children's Bible)

# TIPS FOR GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- ❖ This is your personal Bible study guide. Feel free to write in it, creating a journal of your experience in Scripture and with the group.
- ❖ Invite a friend to attend the study with you.
- ❖ If you have the opportunity, read through the five chapters of 1 Peter in one sitting, prior to the beginning of the group study. The entire book of 1 Peter is printed out in the back of this book.
- ❖ You may find it helpful to prepare for each session by reading through the material and considering the questions.
- ❖ Pray and ask God to help you and the other group members to grow and learn together.
- ❖ Participate in the discussion by sharing your thoughts, experiences and questions.
- ❖ Listen to those who share, expecting to learn from others.
- ❖ Try to stay on the topic, directed by the questions in the guide and the leading of your group facilitator.
- ❖ If you are someone who loves to talk in a group setting, be conscious of letting everyone have a chance to share, refraining from speaking up at times to allow for this.

- ❖ Ideas and comments shared in the group should be kept confidential.
- ❖ After the lesson, take some moments to consider My Question for God.
- ❖ If you leave the study eager to learn more, check out the Digging Deeper sections.
- ❖ Finally, look for opportunities to discuss and apply the principles of your lesson in your daily life.

# INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

It's not easy to be a scapegoat, being blamed for something you didn't do. It's not easy to have people call you names and slander your good reputation. It's not easy to live as a stranger in an unfamiliar culture where customs and language and values may be different from your own. Peter had faced opposition and persecution throughout his ministry and he understood that when you are suffering, a little bit of encouragement can go a long way. And so he wrote a letter to some believers who needed that encouragement. *"My purpose in writing,"* he wrote, *"is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God's grace for you. Stand firm in this grace"* (1 Peter 5:12).

All of us have times when we stand on shaky ground, either figuratively or literally. We face struggles and trials, health issues, relationship difficulties; some of us may even face persecution in varying degrees, whether it be ridicule, oppression, denial of rights or even violence. In fact, according to the World Evangelical Alliance website, approximately 100 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied fundamental human rights solely because of their faith.<sup>1</sup>

For any and all of these things, we need God's grace.

God's grace is his loving goodwill and care for those who don't deserve it. It is God's abundant and tailored provision for our need, whatever it is. Like manna, the food provided to the Israelites only one day at a time, grace is sufficient for the need at hand. And there is always enough.

1 <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/rlc/prayer-idop.htm>

Grace is not extended on the basis of one's merit or worthiness but God gives it because he loves us and sees our need. Grace does not always look like the answer to the prayer we prayed.

- We may pray for deliverance and God's grace provides the patience to endure.
- We may pray for freedom and in our imprisonment, we may encounter the living Christ in a way not otherwise possible.
- We may pray for healing and experience a sweetness of God's presence in our exile from normal daily routine that we would not trade even for healing.

We all need grace to carry on upon life's journey. God cares for each one of us. Peter experienced the love and grace of God in a way that transformed his life so that he could tell others to "*Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you*" (1 Peter 5:7).

In this study of the apostle Peter's letter to Christians who were being persecuted for their faith, we will include Persecution Stories of believers who have, over the centuries up to the present day, been persecuted because they refused to deny their Lord, and who have stood firm in the grace of God. According to Open Doors, a ministry to persecuted Christians, each year 245 million Christians are persecuted for their faith in Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

By reading these stories my hope is that:

1. Our understanding of God's grace will be expanded
2. We will be reminded to pray for those who suffer even now for Christ

2 [opendoorsca.org](http://opendoorsca.org)

3. We will turn our faces again to consider Christ's suffering and his unfathomable love for you and me
4. We will be inspired to trust that whatever God allows in our lives, his grace is sufficient to help us stand firm. And then to carry on.

“Not all of us are called to die a martyr's death,  
but all of us are called to have the same spirit  
of self-sacrifice and love to the very end as these martyrs had.”

—Richard Wurmbrand, *The Midnight Bride*



LESSON 1

# GRACE TO CHANGE

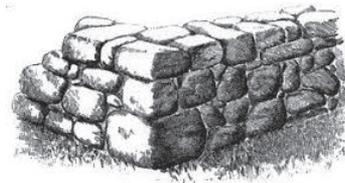


FIG. 21



# GRACE TO CHANGE

1 PETER 1:1a

*God's grace changes people.*

---

## SETTING THE STAGE

---

### **From Fisherman to Apostle**

The Bible is a book about Jesus. Although Jesus himself never wrote anything, many people wrote about him. In the Old Testament of the Bible, prophets were inspired by God to tell about a deliverer who would be sent from God to save his people. In the New Testament, those who followed Jesus wrote about the miracles he performed, the stories he told, the things he taught them, and the details of his life and death, and his rising from the dead! One of those who followed Jesus was a man known as Simon Peter.

Apart from Jesus, few New Testament characters have grabbed the attention of readers like Simon Peter has. Bold and blundering, Simon Peter asks the questions others only think of asking, and steps out to test the waters (quite literally) that others would never think of testing. Not one to mince words, Simon Peter speaks his mind, and not one to cower, Simon Peter acts on his impulses.

I imagine that as a child, Simon (as he was known then) was the daredevil in the group. If someone took a small risk, Simon would go one step further. If someone made a dare, Simon would be right on it. How far can you swim? How high can you climb? How fast can you run? Simon never wavered in pushing himself to go

one step further in outdoing others to prove his prowess. His competitive nature was part of his passion for life and his determination to squeeze every ounce of living from every moment. Just as he laboured intensely to gather a plentiful harvest from the sea, so he worked diligently at whatever he turned his hand to do or his heart to pursue.

There are more stories in the Bible about Simon Peter than any other disciple. For example, there was the time when he wouldn't let Jesus wash his feet or another time when he jumped to Jesus' defence and cut off a guy's ear. We sometimes laugh at Simon Peter or groan at his blunders but ultimately we relate to this man whose heart is in the right place and yet he is so human and makes so many mistakes. Perhaps it is at that level that we relate to him and sympathize with his weaknesses and misguided efforts to do right.

It may surprise us to discover that Jesus chose Peter (as he called him) to be in his inner circle, one of his best friends. Despite his foibles and flaws, Jesus called Peter to "feed his sheep"—to be the first leader of the early church, the apostle to the Jews and presenter of God's grace to the Gentiles.

Simon Peter is the author of 1 Peter and in this lesson, we're going to meet him. Maybe you have only heard about Peter walking on water, or how he denied knowing Jesus. From several incidents in his life, we will discover what kind of man Peter was and something of his journey and friendship with Jesus. Let's see how Jesus changed Simon, a person that we might consider a failure, and made him into Peter, 'the rock'—dynamic leader of a movement that changed the world. We will see how knowing Jesus changed his life, just as it can change yours and mine.

ICEBREAKER

---

Have you ever responded to a dare and done something crazy or outside your comfort zone?

---

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

---

**1 Peter 1:1a<sup>3</sup>**

---

OUR QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

---

As he writes this letter, Peter is older and wiser—a rock buffeted by waves of trials and weathered by the sands of time, but still solid and no less passionate in speaking his heart. Admonished in love, humbled by grace; empowered, restored and called to care for Jesus' sheep, Peter presents the reasons to rejoice and carry on, even in the face of trials and suffering.

### A Question of Identity

- Read **1:1a**. How does the writer introduce himself?

Although his given name was Simon, he uses the name Jesus gave him, which we will read about shortly. The name 'Peter' means 'stone' or 'rock'. Let's look at the beginning of Peter's close relationship with Jesus.

Read John 1:35-37, 40-42:

**3** 'a' indicates the first portion of the verse

 “The following day John [the Baptist] was again standing with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, ‘Look! There is the Lamb of God!’ <sup>37</sup> When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus ... <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means “Christ”).

<sup>42</sup> Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, ‘Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas’ (which means “Peter”).<sup>44</sup>

- When Andrew brought his brother to meet Jesus, what was significant or memorable about that encounter?

## A Fisherman Goes Deeper

The gospel writer Luke tells another story of an early encounter Peter had with Jesus. Read Luke 5:1-11:

 “One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. <sup>2</sup> He noticed two empty boats at the water’s edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.’

4 The word *Cephas* is Aramaic for ‘rock’ and ‘Peter’ is from *petros*, the Greek word for ‘rock’.

<sup>5</sup>‘Master,’ Simon replied, ‘we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.’ <sup>6</sup>And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! <sup>7</sup>A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

<sup>8</sup>When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, ‘Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.’ <sup>9</sup>For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. <sup>10</sup>His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!’ <sup>11</sup>And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.”

- How did Simon Peter react to the miraculous catch of fish? Why was he afraid?

Peter was the first person to declare his sinfulness to Jesus. In the Bible, we see many examples of people encountering God or the works of God in such a way that they understand their own unworthiness in the presence of a holy God. Peter and his fisher-friends had witnessed an astonishing miracle that demonstrated the extravagant generosity and grace of God. That demonstration of God’s reality brought Peter to his knees in fear.

- What new direction does Peter’s life take? Why?

One moment Peter is telling the Lord to go away. The next minute Peter is leaving everything familiar and safe and following Jesus.

- What would it take to convince you to leave home and all that is familiar to follow a new direction in your life?

## Water-Walker

From the miracle of the fish, Peter was gradually becoming aware of who Jesus was. As he spent more time following Jesus and listening to him, his faith began to grow. Let's look at another incident where Peter quite literally steps out of his comfort and safety zone. Jesus had just performed a miracle, feeding more than 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Afterwards, he stayed to pray and sent the disciples home in their boat. Read what happens next in Matthew 14:24-33:

 *"Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. <sup>25</sup>About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. <sup>26</sup>When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, 'It's a ghost!'*

*<sup>27</sup>But Jesus spoke to them at once. 'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'Take courage. I am here!'*

*<sup>28</sup>Then Peter called to him, 'Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.'*

*<sup>29</sup>'Yes, come,' Jesus said.*

*So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. 'Save me, Lord!' he shouted.*

<sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. ‘You have so little faith,’ Jesus said. ‘Why did you doubt me?’

<sup>32</sup> When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. <sup>33</sup> Then the disciples worshiped him. ‘You really are the Son of God!’ they exclaimed.”

Seeing their struggle with the wind and waves, Jesus went to be with his disciples, who thought they were seeing a ghost. As he had reassured them after the miraculous catch of fish, once more he reassures the disciples with three simple words, “Don’t be afraid.” And as a mother or father might comfort a fearful child in the dark, Jesus says, “I am here.”

The phrase Jesus used, which is translated here as ‘I am here’, is the Greek phrase *ego eimi*, which can also be translated ‘It is I’ or ‘I am’. It is the term by which God revealed himself in the Old Testament—the personal and holy name of God. So when Peter says, ‘if it’s you’, he may also have been daring to believe that Jesus is the one who fits a description of God found in the Old Testament: “*He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea*” JOB 9:8 (NIV).

Perhaps Peter was saying, “If you really are God, tell me to come...” When Jesus invited Peter to come (verse 29), Peter dared for a moment to believe.

- What crazy thing did Peter do and what were the incredible, then almost disastrous results? What caused him to doubt?

## GRACE TO CARRY ON

- What caused the disciples to worship Jesus?
- How do you think this water-walking experience may have changed Peter?
- In what way, if any, do you relate to Peter in this story?

## Denying Jesus

There are four books in the New Testament of the Bible, called gospels (gospel means 'good news'), which recount the words and deeds of Jesus from various perspectives and are directed to varying audiences. All four gospels tell the shocking story of Peter's denial. What could be more heart-wrenching than to be denied and disowned by one close to you who vowed to love you, no matter what? In Luke 22:31-34, Jesus tells Peter how he is going to fail him:

 *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."*

<sup>33</sup> *Peter said, 'Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you.'*

<sup>34</sup> But Jesus said, 'Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.'

- How does Jesus show grace and encourage Peter before he gives him the bad news (verse 32)?

Then in Luke 22:54-62, we read how Peter does the one thing he swore he would never do:

 "So they arrested him [Jesus] and led him to the high priest's home. And Peter followed at a distance. <sup>55</sup> The guards lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. <sup>56</sup> A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, 'This man was one of Jesus' followers!'

<sup>57</sup> But Peter denied it. 'Woman,' he said, 'I don't even know him!'

<sup>58</sup> After a while someone else looked at him and said, 'You must be one of them!'

'No, man, I'm not!' Peter retorted.

<sup>59</sup> About an hour later someone else insisted, 'This must be one of them, because he is a Galilean, too.'

<sup>60</sup> But Peter said, 'Man, I don't know what you are talking about.' And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

<sup>61</sup> At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: 'Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.'<sup>62</sup> And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly."

## GRACE TO CARRY ON

- Imagine the details of the scene. What emotions do you think Peter experienced in the course of this situation?
  
- What is it that causes us to do or say the wrong thing even when we fully intend and desire to do the right thing?

One of Peter's contemporaries, Paul, identified the problem:

 *“And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. <sup>19</sup> I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. <sup>20</sup> But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.”*  
ROMANS 7:18-20

### DIGGING DEEPER

The story of Peter's denial can also be found in:

Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75

Mark 14:29-31, 66-72

John 18:15-18, 25-27

Like all of us, Peter struggled with sin, which is the failure to live up to God's standard of right living. Our sinfulness is the reason Jesus came to the world. Let's find out how Jesus graciously deals with Peter's failure.

## Restored and Reinstated

- Other than introducing himself by the name Jesus had given him, what other term does Peter use to introduce himself in **1 Peter 1:1a**?

The word ‘apostle’ means ‘one who is sent’. It is used to refer to the twelve disciples to whom Jesus gave his authority to preach and teach and heal. The apostles were appointed by Jesus after his resurrection to go and take his message to the world. So as an apostle, Peter had the authority of Jesus, and a mission he was sent to fulfill.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples numerous times. In his gospel, the apostle John recounts one of those experiences, which began with another miraculous catch of fish, and breakfast on the beach, prepared by Jesus. Then Jesus and Peter have a walk on the beach and a significant conversation. Read John 21:15-19:

 *“After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’*

*‘Yes, Lord,’ Peter replied, ‘you know I love you.’*

*‘Then feed my lambs,’ Jesus told him.*

<sup>16</sup> *Jesus repeated the question: ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’*

*‘Yes, Lord,’ Peter said, ‘you know I love you.’*

*‘Then take care of my sheep,’ Jesus said.*

<sup>17</sup> *A third time he asked him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, ‘Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.’*

*Jesus said, 'Then feed my sheep.*

*<sup>18</sup> 'I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go.' <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, 'Follow me.'"*

- What would it mean to Peter for Jesus to give him a mission, even though he had let him down?

Jesus asked Peter the same question three times, probably as a reminder of the three times Peter had denied knowing him.

- What was to be the motivation for Peter's ministry? Why was that important?
  
- Think of a time when you were motivated by love and a time you were motivated by fear. How do those motivations affect our behaviour?

## **Peter the Rock**

After Jesus' resurrection, the continuation of the story is told by Luke in the book of Acts. God sent the Holy Spirit to fill and

empower the disciples to spread the news about Jesus. Filled with the Spirit, Peter steps up as the leader of the disciples and preaches his first sermon. Let's listen in on the last bit of it and see what happens next. Read Acts 2:36-41:

 *“So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”*

*<sup>37</sup> Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’*

*<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, ‘Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.’ <sup>40</sup> Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation!’*

*<sup>41</sup> Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.”*

- What was Peter's message and how confident was he in preaching it? What were the results?
  
- From the stories we have read, in what ways did Jesus—by his grace and power—change Peter's life?
  
- If you feel comfortable, share with the group some way in which God has changed your life, or that you would like him to.

A prophet named Isaiah wrote these words:

 *“Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.”* ISAIAH 26:4

Peter had failed time and again, but he came to know the One who is the Rock, the firm foundation for life. Peter was changed forever by the grace and forgiveness of the eternal Rock, Jesus.

#### DIGGING DEEPER

---

You may want to read more from Peter's first sermons in:

Acts 2:14-40

Acts 3:11-4:3

Are these sermons surprising in view of what we have learned about Peter so far?

---

### WORTH CONTEMPLATING

---

 *“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”* 1 PETER 5:10 NIV

---

### SHARING MY HEART WITH GOD

---

Dear God,

I am intrigued by Peter. He tried so hard but sometimes failed so miserably. And yet you seemed to see his heart. Do you see my heart, Lord? It's clear that you loved Peter and by your grace you changed him to become a powerful and compassionate leader. Can you change me, and give me a firm place to stand? Not sure if I'm ready to walk on water yet, but I'm listening for your voice. In Jesus' name, Amen.

---

## MY QUESTION FOR GOD

---

After denying Jesus, Peter may have wondered if Jesus could ever forgive him or if God would ever use him. Is there a 'wonder' or a question in your heart that you have been holding on to? Bring it to God. You can write it out in the space below or in your own personal journal. Or maybe you just need to take a walk and share those thoughts with Jesus. He will meet you there.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### PERSECUTION STORY – JAMES AND PETER

---

One of the first stories of the persecution of the early church.

*"About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword. When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration.) Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him." ACTS 12:1-5*