

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Strangers and Exiles

A verse-by-verse adult Bible study of 1 Peter · ten sessions

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Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session One

Elect Exiles

1 Peter 1:1-2

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session One of Strangers and Exiles. You are beginning a ten-session study of the First Epistle of Peter. This guide exists to help you teach each session with confidence.

What you hold is a companion to the main Bible study book. The book itself is written for the student — a reader who will engage the chapter, look up the passages in his or her own Bible, and come to class prepared to discuss. This guide is written for you — the person responsible for shaping that hour of teaching and conversation.

Session One is especially important because it sets up the frame for the entire study. If your students leave today grasping the elect-exiles tension that will organize the whole letter, they will be prepared for everything that follows. If they leave today thinking this session was merely biographical introduction with theological payoff coming later, they may miss what is being offered. Your job today is to help them see that Peter's two-word theme — elect exiles — is the interpretive key that will unlock all ten sessions.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Christians are elect exiles — chosen by God and displaced in the world — and these two realities are not in tension but are two sides of the same calling. The letter's comfort, its ethic, and its baptismal theology all flow from this frame.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session One of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter in one sitting. It takes about fifteen minutes. Getting a sense of the whole letter will shape how you introduce the parts.
- Pay special attention to 1 Peter 1:1-2 and to the letter's closing (5:12-14), where Peter identifies his co-author Silvanus and signs off from Babylon (Rome).
- Review Luther's Small Catechism, Part Four on Baptism. First Peter is deeply baptismal, and you will want the Lutheran understanding of Baptism close at hand for the whole study.
- Read the entry on 1 Peter in the Lutheran Study Bible if you have access. It provides good background material at a level appropriate for class use.
- Pray. Ten weeks is a long time to walk with a congregation through a letter. Commit the study to the Lord's keeping from the start.

Materials to Have on Hand

- Your Bible, and ideally copies of the student book for any students who do not yet have one.
- A map of the Roman provinces in Asia Minor. Any basic Bible atlas will have one. Showing the class the actual geography of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia gives them a visceral sense of how far Peter's letter traveled and how large the area was.
- A whiteboard or flip chart for writing out the elect-exiles tension as a visual. This will anchor the session and can be referenced repeatedly.
- Name tags if you have new students.

Knowing Your Class

Different classes will bring different backgrounds to First Peter. A few patterns to anticipate:

- **Students from Roman Catholic backgrounds** may have specific associations with Peter as the first pope, and you may want to briefly

acknowledge the Catholic tradition on Peter without getting drawn into controversy. The letter itself does not make papal claims, and we will read it as apostolic witness to the Gospel, not as a document of Petrine primacy.

- **Students from evangelical backgrounds** may be familiar with First Peter as a "suffering" book but may not have thought much about its baptismal content. The baptism theme will develop across the study; you do not need to press it hard in Session One.
- **Students feeling cultural pressure on their faith** will likely find this session deeply resonant. The language of exile, of displacement, of being a minority in a hostile culture maps onto their experience in ways they may never have seen before. Be ready for some real emotional engagement with the exile theme.
- **Lifelong Lutherans** may know First Peter well but may not have thought about it as a systematic treatment of the themes that define Lutheran spirituality — baptism, vocation, and the Christian's life under the cross. Framing it this way at the start gives them a fresh lens on a familiar letter.

Suggested Time Plan

The following is one way to structure the sixty minutes. Adjust freely to fit your class, your venue, and the energy in the room.

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and introduction to the series
0:05–0:12	The apostle Peter
0:12–0:22	The audience and the Dispersion
0:22–0:32	The situation: social hostility and its modern parallels
0:32–0:38	Date and setting: the dying apostle in Rome
0:38–0:50	The theme: elect exiles (the heart of the session)
0:50–0:55	Three interpretive commitments
0:55–0:58	Discussion (choose 1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 2 assignment



Where to Slow Down

The elect-exiles frame in Part Five is the heart of the session. If time gets tight, cut minutes from the biographical material or the provincial geography — not from the theological frame. The frame is what students need to carry home with them.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

What follows is section-by-section commentary on the student chapter, with suggested emphases, pitfalls to avoid, and material that did not fit in the book itself but that you as the teacher may want at your fingertips.

Opening: Why Start Here?

The chapter opens by explaining why we are beginning with the address rather than with the more famous passages later in the letter. Do not apologize for this pacing. The temptation in any study of First Peter is to skip ahead to the famous verses — the living hope in chapter one, the royal priesthood in chapter two, the baptism passage in chapter three. If students sense that the introductory material is merely throat-clearing before the real content, they will not engage it. Make clear from the start that understanding Peter, his audience, and his situation is not preliminary to the study — it is part of the study.

A Useful Opening Line

"Over the next ten weeks we will walk through First Peter carefully. But before we open the letter proper next week, we need to understand three things: who Peter is, who he is writing to, and what their situation actually was. Once we have those in view, everything Peter says will land differently — and the theme he introduces in the first two verses will turn out to be the key to everything that follows."

Part One: The Apostle Peter

The Peter We Know

Students bring a lot of pictures of Peter from the Gospels. The impulsive Peter, the water-walking Peter, the denying Peter, the restored Peter. Let them share briefly. The point of this segment is not to teach Peter's biography but to set up a contrast: the Peter of the letter is not the Peter of the Gospels. Something has happened in the decades between. Draw the class into wondering what made the difference.

The Contrast

The key move in this segment is the contrast between the Peter of the Gospels and the Peter of the letter. The student chapter develops this carefully. The man who drew a sword now writes about non-retaliation. The man who denied his Lord now writes about the preciousness of Christ. The man who fled the arrest now writes from Rome, facing his own imminent martyrdom. This contrast is not incidental; it is a demonstration of what the Gospel does to a man over time.

For your class, this is an opportunity to say something pastoral. The Peter we read in this letter is what the Gospel produces when it is given decades to work in a man's life. You, too, are on that trajectory. The stumbling, uneven disciple you may feel yourself to be is being shaped by the same Gospel that shaped Peter. You will not become Peter in your own strength any more than he did. But the Gospel that changed him is changing you, too, and over years and decades the same transformation will be worked in you.

The Authorship Question

Briefly address the authorship question if the class is at a level where it may come up. The student book does this. Do not spend too long; most classes will not have encountered modern questions about Petrine authorship, and you do not need to introduce them if no one is asking. If someone asks about the polished Greek or the echoes of Pauline thought, the Silvanus answer is ready. Move on.

A Pastoral Observation

Peter writes from the shadow of his own coming martyrdom. This is not merely biographical detail; it gives the letter its weight. Peter knows what he is asking his readers to endure, because he is about to endure it himself. The counsel is not from a distance. It is from someone who is about to walk the same road. This makes First Peter read differently if students understand it — less like abstract teaching, more like the last testament of a father for his children.

Part Two: The Audience

Show the Geography

If at all possible, show the class a map. The five provinces Peter names cover the entire northern half of modern Turkey. This is a region hundreds of miles across, with major cities, Roman roads, Jewish synagogues, and Gentile populations. Seeing it visually helps students grasp the scope of what Peter is doing. He is writing to the Church across an enormous geographic region, and the letter traveled from city to city being read aloud in congregation after congregation.

Mixed Congregations

The point about mixed Jewish-Gentile congregations matters because Peter applies Israelite categories to these Christians. When he calls them a royal priesthood and a holy nation in chapter two, he is taking language God gave to Israel at Sinai and applying it to a mostly-Gentile body of believers. This is one of the most significant theological moves in the New Testament. Flag it here in Session One so that when you arrive at chapter two in Session Four, the class is ready for it.

The Dispersion

Spend time on this word. The Dispersion (diaspora) is a Jewish technical term, and Peter is doing something unusual by applying it to Gentile Christians. The Church is now the Dispersion. The scattered, minority, visibly different people of God. For modern Western Christians increasingly experiencing our own faith as a minority position in the culture, this framing is deeply useful. Make the connection explicit.

A Valley City-Specific Application

If your class is in a small or rural setting, the Dispersion frame may require some translation. Congregations in places where Christianity remains culturally dominant may not feel themselves as Dispersion Christians in the same way Christians in larger cities do. But the frame still applies — and increasingly will apply even in rural America as cultural patterns shift. The younger members of your congregation, especially those who attend college or work in larger cities, already know this reality. Encourage the class to hear Peter's letter as preparation for a Dispersion their grandchildren will certainly face if they do not face it themselves.

Part Three: The Situation

Not Imperial Persecution

Be careful about the kind of suffering Peter describes. This was not the empire-wide persecution of later centuries. Students who come to First Peter with images of the arena and the lions may miss what Peter is actually describing. The suffering is primarily social — slander, ostracism, economic pressure, household disruption. Take the time to clarify this.

Modern Parallels

The modern parallel is the one most students will find relevant. Christians in the modern West increasingly face what Peter's readers faced — not arena persecution, but social hostility, professional cost, ostracism, and the steady pressure of being visibly out of step with the surrounding culture. The student chapter develops this. In class, encourage honest engagement with it. Where has faithfulness to Christ cost your students something? Where do they see it coming in their own circles?

A Pastoral Caution

Be careful here not to let the session become a session of grievance against the surrounding culture. Peter's letter is not a lament about the world; it is pastoral counsel for Christians living faithfully in it. If the conversation starts to tip toward resentment, redirect to what Peter actually counsels — not retaliation, not withdrawal, but faithful presence with our hope set on the coming of the Lord. This is the shape of First Peter throughout, and it needs to shape the class's engagement with the letter from Session One.

Part Four: Date and Setting

The key point here is Peter's impending martyrdom. Rome as Babylon. The 60s A.D. Peter's own death likely within a few years of writing. This is not just historical detail; it gives the letter its character. Peter writes as a dying man — not weak, not afraid, but aware that his time is short. The steadiness of the letter's tone is the steadiness of an apostle preparing to leave his flock. Communicate this to your class. It will change how they hear everything that follows.

Part Five: The Theme — Elect Exiles

This is the heart of the session. Do not rush. If you run out of time later, you can cut from elsewhere. But this section is the frame for all ten sessions, and the class needs to carry it home with them.

Put It On the Board

Literally write on the whiteboard: ELECT | EXILES. Draw a line between them. Then work through each side with the class.

Elect

Work carefully through verse 2. The elect are:

- Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father (eternal grounding).
- Sanctified by the Spirit (historical application).
- For obedience to Jesus Christ (purpose in life).
- For sprinkling with His blood (covering by His atonement).

Each phrase carries weight. The class should see that Peter's election is not abstract predestination but richly trinitarian, rooted in the Father's eternal decision, carried out by the Spirit, and aimed at both obedience and cleansing. This is the Gospel compressed into a greeting.

Exiles

Then work through the exile side. Emphasize that this is not a spiritual posture to be adopted but a structural condition of Christian life in the present age. The Christian does not choose to feel like a stranger; the Christian is a stranger, by virtue of belonging to another kingdom. This reframe is liberating for students who have been struggling to feel at home in a culture that is increasingly uncomfortable with their faith. The discomfort is not a failure of faith. It is faith's ordinary inheritance.

The Two Held Together

Now the crucial move. Peter does not separate election and exile. He does not treat election as the good news that offsets the bad news of exile. He holds them tightly together. The exile is the form the election takes. The fact that we do not belong to the world is precisely because we belong to God. If we were not chosen, we would

not be strangers. If we did not belong to another kingdom, this one would not find us strange.

This is the interpretive key. The class should be able to state it back to you by the end of the session. If they can, they will be equipped to read the rest of the letter. If they cannot, no amount of subsequent teaching will fully land.

The Most Important Sentence of the Session

"Christians are not elect despite being exiles. Christians are exiles because they are elect." Write this. Say it. Repeat it. Ask the class to say it back. This sentence is the session's payoff, and it is what you want them to carry home.

Part Six: What First Peter Has Meant to Lutherans

Briefly contrast with the James study if your class has just come off it. James was a book Luther worried about; First Peter was a book Luther loved. The Lutheran tradition has had a steady, unambiguous relationship with First Peter for five centuries. It has been a source of comfort for the suffering, a guide for vocation, and a handbook for baptismal spirituality. Your class is entering deeply familiar Lutheran territory, and they should know it.

Part Seven: How We Will Read First Peter

Quickly go through the three commitments:

- Read as pastoral letter, not systematic theology.
- Let baptism and vocation surface as the central Lutheran concerns.
- Read as Scripture for the suffering Church.

Do not dwell on these in Session One; just name them. They will be reinforced naturally as the study proceeds.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

"Did Peter really write this letter? I've heard scholars question it."

Yes, the traditional and well-supported view is that Peter wrote it. The letter identifies itself as Peter's, and the early Church received it as such without dispute. Modern scholars who doubt Petrine authorship often point to the polished Greek as evidence that a Galilean fisherman could not have written it. The best answer is that Peter names Silvanus at the close of the letter (5:12), and the use of a bilingual secretary was standard practice in the ancient world. Silvanus provided the Greek polish; Peter provided the content, voice, and authority. This explanation has satisfied most readers across the centuries.

"The Roman Catholic Church says Peter was the first pope. How do we handle that?"

Gracefully. The letter itself does not claim papal authority or Petrine primacy. Peter calls himself a fellow elder in chapter five, not a supreme pontiff. Lutheran Christians can receive First Peter as apostolic witness without adopting the Catholic framework of papal succession. We respect the Catholic tradition and engage with it charitably, but we read the letter on its own terms — as the testimony of an apostle to the churches of Asia Minor, not as a foundational document for papal claims.

"When Peter says 'elect,' is he teaching predestination? Isn't that a Reformed emphasis?"

Lutherans have their own doctrine of election, and it is confessed carefully in Formula of Concord, Article XI. The Lutheran view holds that election is a comforting doctrine for the believer — I am chosen by God's eternal foreknowledge in Christ — but it is not to be speculated about apart from Christ. The Lutheran tradition has never taught the double predestination that some Reformed bodies have confessed (God actively willing some to damnation). Peter's language of election here is the comforting Gospel truth that we are chosen in

Christ from the foundation of the world, and it can be received in its confessional Lutheran form without importing Reformed frameworks.

"What's the difference between the suffering Peter describes and modern persecution?"

Peter's readers faced primarily social suffering — slander, ostracism, economic pressure, household disruption. They were not being arrested by the Roman state or thrown to the lions. That kind of suffering came later, in the imperial persecutions of the second through fourth centuries. For modern Western Christians, the Petrine suffering is closer to our situation than the imperial persecution. We are not being arrested for our faith in most Western contexts, but we are facing social cost, professional difficulty, and cultural hostility for visible Christian faithfulness. That is exactly what Peter is writing about.

"If we're exiles, should we withdraw from the world? Go into monasteries? Homeschool everything?"

No. Peter's exile frame is not a call to withdrawal. Read the whole letter. Peter will tell his readers to submit to civil authorities, to work honestly in their occupations, to live faithfully in marriage, to serve their masters if they are slaves, to engage the world they live in. Exile does not mean separation; it means faithful presence. Christians live in the world, work in it, serve it — but always as those whose true citizenship is elsewhere. Different Christian traditions have answered the specific questions of how to engage the world differently, and those are worth conversations. But the exile frame itself does not demand withdrawal.

"What's the difference between First Peter and Second Peter?"

Second Peter is a separate letter, written later (most likely), and addressing different concerns — primarily the rise of false teachers within the Christian community. We will not be studying Second Peter in this course. If students want to read Second Peter on their own, they will find it a valuable supplement to First Peter, but the two letters have different purposes and different occasions.

Leading the Discussion

The student chapter offers six discussion questions. Pick one for this session. The teaching content is substantial, and Session One needs to get the frame established clearly. Favor a single deep question that serves the frame over multiple questions that would dilute it.

Question 1 — Prior impressions of Peter

A good warm-up question. Most students have pictures of Peter from the Gospels. This question surfaces what they bring and often reveals interesting differences. Use it if you want a low-stakes opening.

Question 2 — Faith as displacement in your own culture

A searching question that works well if your class can be honest. Be ready for differences — students in different vocations experience this differently. Be ready also for some students to resist the framing; not everyone feels displaced, and some genuinely have not experienced cultural pressure on their faith. That is fine; do not insist they feel what they do not feel.

Question 3 — Parallels between Peter's readers and our context

A concrete application question. Best if you want to ground the theoretical frame in students' actual lives. Handle carefully; this can tip into political content if the class is divided, and it should not.

Question 4 — The elect-exiles tension

The theological payoff question. Best for classes that have been tracking with the teaching. If students can articulate in their own words how election and exile belong together, they have the session's key theological point.

Question 5 — What draws you to First Peter

A good question for a class already familiar with the letter. Students often have specific passages they love, and sharing them sets up the study well.

Question 6 — What questions do you bring

A good closing question. Records student expectations, which you can return to in Session Ten. Consider writing down the answers.

A Practical Recommendation

If you pick only one question for Session One, consider Question 4 — the elect-exiles tension. It is the most directly on point with the session's theological frame, and answering it requires students to articulate what they have just heard. This kind of articulation is the best way to cement the frame for the rest of the study.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Occasionally you will have a session compressed by a church event, a lengthy opening announcement, or late arrivals. Here is what to keep and what to cut if you have only forty-five minutes to teach this session:

Keep

- The elect-exiles frame (Part Five). This is the session's reason for being. Never cut this.
- A brief biographical sketch of Peter — enough to establish the contrast between the Peter of the Gospels and the Peter of the letter.
- The situation of the readers — enough to establish that the suffering was social rather than imperial.
- One discussion question, most likely Question 4.
- Closing prayer and Session 2 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- Detailed provincial geography. Name the provinces but do not dwell on the map.
- Extended discussion of mixed Jewish-Gentile congregations. This will come back in Session Four; you can develop it then.
- The authorship question. Mention Peter and Silvanus briefly; do not engage modern scholarly debates.
- The three interpretive commitments. Name them but do not elaborate; they will emerge naturally over the study.
- The Lutheran reception material. Save this for if a student asks, or for a natural opportunity later in the study.

The Single Non-Negotiable

If the session were reduced to one thing, that thing would be the elect-exiles frame. Everything else can be cut, compressed, or deferred. This frame is the interpretive key for all ten sessions. Get it clearly established in Session One, and the rest of the study will follow.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Acts 10-12 and Acts 15.** Peter's ministry after Pentecost, including the Cornelius episode and his role at the Jerusalem Council. Essential background for understanding the Peter who writes this letter.
- **John 21.** Jesus' restoration of Peter after the denial. The three "do you love me" questions and the commission to feed the sheep. This is the pastoral call that shapes the letter.
- **Galatians 2:11-14.** Paul's rebuke of Peter at Antioch. A moment of apostolic conflict that became, in the Lord's providence, a clarifying moment for the Gospel. Useful for seeing that Peter was still being shaped as an apostle even decades into his ministry.
- **Exodus 19:5-6.** The original covenant formulation Peter will echo in chapter two. Lay the groundwork now for understanding the royal priesthood language.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Formula of Concord, Article XI.** On the doctrine of election. The definitive confessional Lutheran treatment, avoiding both Arminian and Reformed errors and grounding election firmly in Christ.
- **Luther's Commentary on 1 Peter (Luther's Works, Vol. 30).** Luther preached through First Peter. His commentary is rich, pastoral, and thoroughly Christological. A strong resource for the teacher across the whole study.
- **Small Catechism, Baptism, Parts One through Four.** Essential background for the baptismal theology that will surface throughout First Peter and especially in Session Seven.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter (CPH).** The most thorough confessional Lutheran treatment available. If you buy only one commentary for this study, buy this one.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament).** A careful evangelical commentary with strong exegetical

work. Jobs is not Lutheran, but her handling of the text is consistently strong.

- **Thomas Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude (New American Commentary).** Reformed but careful. Useful for teachers who want to see how different Protestant traditions handle the text.

A Final Word

You are about to walk ten weeks with a group of students through a letter written by a dying apostle to a scattered church under pressure. It is a letter the Lutheran tradition has loved for five hundred years. It will form your students, and it will form you. Take the teaching seriously. Prepare each week. Pray for your class. Trust the Lord to do what only the Lord can do.

Session One is the foundation. If you get the elect-exiles frame established, the rest of the study has solid ground under it. Do not skimp on this session because it is "introductory." It is not introductory in the sense of preliminary; it is foundational in the sense of load-bearing. Everything else will stand on it.

Next week, the living hope of chapter one. Peter will move from his address into one of the most extraordinary doxological passages in the New Testament. The new birth, the imperishable inheritance, the salvation ready to be revealed — all of this is coming. Prepare carefully.

May the Lord bless your teaching, and may the same God who kept Peter through his stumbling and raised him to be the apostle of this letter keep you and your students through all the weeks ahead.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Two

A Living Hope

1 Peter 1:3-12

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Two. You move this week from introduction into the letter itself, and Peter has given you a remarkable passage for the transition. Verses 3 through 12 are, in the Greek, a single flowing sentence of blessing — a torrent of theological riches heaped upon the reader one after another. Before he asks his readers for a single thing, Peter reminds them of what they have already been given.

This is the Gospel-shaped pattern that will define the whole letter. Indicative before imperative. What God has done before what we are called to do. Peter did not learn this pattern by accident. It is how the Scriptures themselves work, from the Ten Commandments (which begin with the reminder that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt) through the letters of Paul. Your job this week is to let the passage do what Peter built it to do — to root your students firmly in what they have received before any further teaching arrives.

Pastorally, this is a rich passage for anyone who walks into your class carrying trials. Peter wrote to people who were grieved by various trials and he did not dismiss their grief. Neither should you. Hold both together as he does — the reality of trials and the deeper reality of the living hope that does not pass. If you have students in the room who are suffering, this session is for them in a particularly direct way.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Before Peter counsels his readers about their suffering, he reminds them what they already possess — a new birth, a living hope, an imperishable inheritance, the guarding power of God, a fire-refined faith, and a love for Christ that produces inexpressible joy — because this Gospel foundation is what makes all subsequent Christian endurance possible.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Two of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 1:3-12 slowly, several times. In the Greek it is one sentence; in most English translations it is broken into several. Try to feel the cumulative weight of Peter's piling up one glory on another.
- Read Ephesians 1:3-14 alongside. Paul's opening to the Ephesians is also a single Greek sentence of doxological blessing. The two passages share a form and illuminate each other.
- Read Luther's Small Catechism, Part Four on Baptism, with the daily dying and rising language. The baptismal frame that Peter lays in this passage deepens across the letter, and grounding yourself in it now will serve the whole study.
- Review Formula of Concord, Article XI on election if you have time. Peter's language of foreknowledge, guarding by God's power, and salvation ready to be revealed touches the same territory Lutherans address in this article.
- Pray. Pray specifically for any students you know to be suffering. This passage is for them in a particular way.

Materials to Have on Hand

- Your Bible, ideally a Lutheran Study Bible or one with good footnotes.
- Copies of the student book for any who do not yet have one.
- A whiteboard or flip chart. This passage benefits from listing the gifts Peter names as you work through the text.
- Optional: a small object of precious metal — a coin, a piece of jewelry, even a gold-plated item — to use when teaching the gold-refined-by-fire image. Physical objects help students remember the teaching.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Four theological points come into view in this passage:

- **The new birth as God's work.** Peter's language — He has caused us to be born again — places the new birth firmly in God's hands. The Christian is a Christian because God has made him one. This is baptismal theology in its classical form, and the passage sets up what will become explicit in chapter three.
- **The already-and-not-yet of salvation.** The inheritance is imperishable and already kept in heaven. The salvation is prepared and ready to be revealed in the last time. Both are true. This is the classical eschatological frame of the New Testament, and it structures the whole letter.
- **Trials as refinement, not abandonment.** The fire that tests faith is not a sign of God's absence; it is the instrument of His purposes. A faith that has been refined by fire is more precious than gold. This is not a cheap answer to suffering; it is a deep theological frame that places suffering within God's purposes without minimizing its pain.
- **Faith as love and joy for the unseen Christ.** The Christians Peter writes to love a Lord they have never seen, and they rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory. This is what faith produces when the Spirit works through the Word. It is the Lutheran understanding of faith as fiducia — trust, love, and confidence — not mere intellectual assent.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Do not teach this passage as six or seven separate points to be checked off. Teach it as a single sweeping declaration of what the Christian possesses. Let the cumulative weight build. Peter is not giving his readers a list; he is burying them under blessings. Your students should leave feeling that same weight — that they possess more than they have ever adequately reckoned with, and that whatever is coming in the rest of the letter rests on this foundation.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and brief review of Session One
0:05–0:12	Blessed be God — the doxological opening
0:12–0:22	Born again to a living hope
0:22–0:30	The imperishable inheritance
0:30–0:38	Guarded by God's power
0:38–0:48	Rejoicing though grieved — trials as refinement
0:48–0:54	Loving the unseen Christ
0:54–0:58	Prophets and angels; discussion (1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 3 assignment



Where to Slow Down

Spend your best time on two places. First, the living hope and the inheritance (vv. 3-5), because this is the Gospel foundation that sustains the whole passage. Second, the trials-as-fire image (vv. 6-7), because this is where the passage lands pastorally for anyone who is currently suffering. The other sections are rich, but if time is short, these two are where your students most need you.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verse 3a: Blessed Be the God and Father

Open by reading the whole passage aloud — all ten verses. In English this takes about a minute. The class should hear the sweep of it before you begin to unpack the parts. Do not start parsing immediately; let the cumulative weight of the passage land first.

The Liturgical Form

Note for your class that Peter is using a Jewish liturgical formula — blessed be God — that would have been familiar to anyone with synagogue background. Peter is taking the ancient pattern of blessing God and giving it new Christian content. The God he is blessing is specifically the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Christological specificity is already the whole Gospel in a phrase.

The Trinitarian Opening

The passage begins trinitarian. The Father is blessed. The Lord Jesus Christ is named. And the Holy Spirit, who has sanctified the readers in verse 2, is implicit in everything that follows. Peter does not develop a doctrine of the Trinity here; he simply assumes it. The God to whom Christians pray is the triune God, and nothing else makes sense of what follows.

Verse 3b: According to His Great Mercy

This is the Lutheran pulse of the passage. Slow down here. Everything that follows — new birth, living hope, inheritance, guarding, salvation — is grounded in God's great mercy. Not in our worthiness. Not in our striving. Not in our cooperation. In His mercy.

For students who come from traditions that emphasize human decision or cooperation in salvation, this is a moment worth pausing on. Peter does not say God responded to our choice or noticed our willingness or answered our seeking. He says God, according to His great mercy, caused us to be born again. The cause

is God's mercy. The effect is our new birth. The order matters, and it is always this order.

A Classic Lutheran Move

Whenever a student asks how they can be sure of their salvation, this passage is worth returning to. The certainty rests on what God has done, not on what we have done. He has caused us to be born again. The inheritance is kept in heaven. We are guarded by His power. The salvation is ready to be revealed. Every verb of agency in the passage is God's. Our part is to receive by faith what He has given. This is pastorally stabilizing in a way that few other passages can match.

Verses 3c-4: Born Again to a Living Hope

The New Birth

The language of new birth is rich in the New Testament — Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3, John's first letter throughout, and here. Peter does not argue for the necessity of the new birth; he presupposes it. His readers are people who have been born again. The question is not whether they have experienced the new birth but what it means.

For confessional Lutherans, the new birth is not an emotional experience to be sought, distinct from Baptism. The new birth is what happens in Baptism, when the Word is joined to the water and the Holy Spirit works new life in the person baptized. The Lutheran tradition does not separate the new birth from Baptism; it identifies them. This is significant because much contemporary Christianity treats the new birth as a subjective experience (often called being born again or getting saved) distinct from the sacramental reality of Baptism. Peter and the Lutheran tradition both hold them together.

A Living Hope

The phrase rewards meditation. The hope is living. Spend time on why this matters. A dead hope is a wish without substance; it may comfort briefly, but it cannot sustain. A living hope breathes with the life of the one who gives it. The

resurrection of Jesus Christ is named as the means — through the resurrection. Our hope shares in His life because He is alive.

The Meaning of Biblical Hope

This is worth addressing explicitly for any class. In modern English, hope tends to mean uncertainty ("I hope it doesn't rain"). In biblical usage, hope means confident expectation of promises that cannot fail. Biblical hope is as solid as the God who promises it. Christians do not hope in the modern sense; they hope in the biblical sense. Make this distinction clearly; students will carry it into many other passages across their reading of Scripture.

Verse 4: The Imperishable Inheritance

Three negative adjectives: imperishable, undefiled, unfading. Each corresponds to a familiar disappointment of earthly life. Things perish. Things are defiled. Things fade. This inheritance does none of these. It is beyond the reach of the decay that marks everything else we have ever had.

The Old Testament Background

Briefly connect to the Old Testament inheritance — the promised land. The land was Israel's inheritance. It could be taken, and was. Peter's readers now have an inheritance of a different kind, kept in heaven rather than located on earth, imperishable rather than subject to conquest. This is a redefinition of inheritance in light of Christ.

Kept for Us

Emphasize the passive verb. The inheritance is being kept. By God. For us. It is not something we are building or earning or maintaining. It is something that is being held in trust for us, by the One who has promised it, against the day when we will receive it. For elect exiles facing the loss of ordinary earthly goods, this guarantee was and is enormously comforting.

Verse 5: Guarded by God's Power

The Military Image

The word translated guarded is a military term. It is the word for a garrison standing watch. God's power is the garrison. The believer is the city being kept safe. The

enemies that would breach the walls — outward persecution, inward doubt, accusations of the evil one — are held back by the Lord's own power.

For students, this image is worth letting land. The Christian is not keeping himself safe. He is being kept. The difference is enormous. The one who believes he must sustain his own salvation lives in perpetual anxiety. The one who knows he is being guarded by God's power can rest, even in the middle of threats, because the one keeping him is not a man but the Lord.

Through Faith

Do not miss the through faith. God's power reaches the believer through the instrument of his faith. This is the classical Lutheran balance — salvation is by God's grace, received through faith. God does not guard those who do not trust Him. He guards those whose faith He Himself has created by His Spirit through the Word and Sacraments. The whole process is God's, and yet faith really is the instrument by which His keeping reaches us.

Connecting to Formula of Concord XI

This verse is classical territory for the Lutheran doctrine of election.

Lutherans confess that the elect are kept by God's power, through the faith God Himself has created, for the salvation prepared for them. We do not teach that the elect can fall from grace through their own fault and be lost forever; neither do we teach the double predestination of some Reformed traditions. Peter's language — guarded by God's power through faith — is exactly the balance FC XI preserves. If a theologically inclined student raises the predestination question, this passage and FC XI together are the Lutheran answer.

Salvation Ready to Be Revealed

Address the already-and-not-yet pattern explicitly. The salvation is ready. It is prepared. It is complete. And yet it is not yet revealed in its fullness; it awaits the last time. This is the eschatological structure of the New Testament. The Christian is already saved (because Christ has accomplished salvation and given new birth) and not yet saved in the fullest sense (because the salvation that is ready will be revealed at the coming of the Lord). Both are true. Hold them together.

Verses 6-7: Rejoicing Though Grieved

This section is where the passage lands pastorally. Spend time here.

Both Real at Once

Peter does not deny the grief of trials. He does not tell his readers to suppress their sorrow. He names the grief openly — you have been grieved by various trials — and then names the joy that exists alongside it. The Christian's life can be marked by real grief on the surface while a deeper joy flows underneath. Both are real. Peter is describing what actually happens in the life of the baptized.

For students who are suffering, this distinction is crucial. They may feel guilty for grieving, thinking that faithful Christians should feel only joy. Peter corrects this. Grief and joy coexist in the Christian life, and Peter himself describes them coexisting in the lives of his readers. Your students should leave class knowing that their grief is not a failure of faith. It is the ordinary experience of the baptized in a fallen world.

The Gold-Refined-By-Fire Image

This is the most memorable image in the passage. Use it fully. In the ancient world, gold was refined by fire — heated until the impurities separated and could be skimmed off, leaving pure gold behind. Peter applies this to faith. Faith is tested by trials. The fire burns away what is false, weak, or superficial, leaving behind what is genuine.

Note carefully that Peter does not say the faith itself is destroyed by the fire. The faith is refined, not consumed. What is burned away are the impurities. What remains is more precious than before. This is a crucial distinction for suffering students. The fire of trials does not destroy genuine faith; it clarifies and strengthens it.

More Precious Than Gold

Peter contrasts the refined faith with refined gold. Both are precious. But gold perishes, even after refinement; the value is temporal. Tested faith does not perish; its value is eternal. At the revelation of Jesus Christ, the tested faith of the believer will result in praise and glory and honor. The grammar allows this to mean both

that the believer will receive praise, glory, and honor, and that Christ Himself will receive praise, glory, and honor through the believer's faith. Both are true.

A Pastoral Caution

Be very careful not to treat suffering lightly here. The temptation with this image is to say, effectively, "your trials are really a good thing, look on the bright side." Do not do this. Peter does not minimize trials. He describes them as grief. The refinement is not a cheerful alternative to real suffering; it is a deeper theological reality that coexists with real suffering without replacing or softening it. A student whose child has died does not want to hear that her grief is refining her. She wants to hear that Christ is holding her. The refinement interpretation is true, but it is the Lord's perspective to give; it is not the pastor's or teacher's to impose. Let students receive it for themselves as the Spirit applies it. Do not use it to tell them their grief is not real.

Verses 8-9: Loving the One You Have Not Seen

This is one of the most remarkable observations in the New Testament. Peter's readers have never seen Jesus. They love Him anyway. They rejoice in Him with inexpressible joy, filled with glory.

Why This Matters

This describes every Christian after the first generation. None of us have seen Jesus in the flesh. We come to love Him through the testimony of those who did, through the preaching of the Word, through the sacraments in which He gives Himself to us, through the fellowship of the saints in which the Spirit works. The Lord creates this love in ordinary people through ordinary means, and it is not less real than the love the apostles had for the Christ they walked with.

Joy Inexpressible and Filled with Glory

The Greek word for inexpressible is strong — beyond the capacity of words to describe. The joy is not thin or sentimental. It is filled with glory, weighty with the salvation it anticipates. This is not the joy of easy circumstances. Peter has just named the trials that grieve his readers. The joy exists alongside the grief, and it is the deeper reality.

Verses 10-12: Prophets and Angels

The Prophets Served You

Peter places his readers in the flow of salvation history. The Old Testament prophets, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, spoke of things they themselves did not fully understand. They predicted sufferings and glories. They searched and inquired. They were told that they were serving not themselves but the generation that would come after them — the generation that would see the fulfillment.

Peter's readers are that generation. They stand on the far side of the prophets' longing. What the prophets reached toward, Peter's readers have received. This places the ordinary Christian — a Galatian shopkeeper, a Cappadocian slave, a Pontic widow — in a remarkable position in salvation history. They live in the time the prophets hoped for.

Angels Long to Look

Even more striking. The angels, who stand in the presence of God and behold His face, long to understand the salvation that has come to humanity in Christ. The angels do not share in this salvation; Christ did not take on angelic nature. The mystery of redemption is something they observe from outside with wondering curiosity.

For students, this is humbling and exalting at once. Their ordinary, familiar Gospel is a wonder that holds the attention of the heavenly host. The salvation they sometimes feel is routine is a mystery that angels strain to see into. Peter wants his readers to see what they have been given as the angels see it — as a wonder worthy of their whole attention and love.

A Concluding Thought

End the teaching by returning to where Peter starts — blessed be God. The whole passage is a blessing of God for what He has done. If your class has tracked with the teaching, the natural response at the end is not applause but worship. Consider closing the teaching portion with a brief doxology or hymn stanza — "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" works well — before moving to discussion and closing prayer. This respects the liturgical shape of the passage itself.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

"When does the new birth happen? At Baptism? At a moment of conversion? When is someone born again?"

Lutherans teach that the new birth occurs in Baptism, when the Word is joined to the water and the Holy Spirit works new life in the one baptized. This is the sacramental understanding of the new birth. Much evangelical Christianity treats the new birth as a conscious decision moment, distinct from Baptism, when a person chooses to follow Christ. Lutherans do not separate these; the decision is itself the fruit of the Spirit's work through the Word and Sacrament. For adults, Baptism and the conscious reception of faith may coincide. For infants, Baptism precedes conscious faith, but the new birth still happens in it. Peter's language here — He has caused us to be born again — places the agency firmly in God's hands, which is the Lutheran accent throughout.

"If I'm guarded by God's power, can I lose my salvation?"

This is one of the classic theological questions, and Lutherans answer it with care. We do not confess the Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in its strong form (once saved, always saved regardless of what one does). Neither do we confess the Arminian position that the believer can casually lose salvation through minor failures. The Lutheran position, stated in Formula of Concord XI, is that the elect are kept by God's power, through the faith God has created, to the end. But a believer can reject the faith and fall away — not because God's keeping is insufficient, but because the believer can refuse the God who is keeping him. The passage here emphasizes God's guarding power, which is the primary note. But it specifies through faith — the keeping operates through the continuing faith of the believer, a faith that must be sustained by the means of grace. Stay close to Word and Sacrament. Do not treat the guarantee as license for spiritual neglect.

"Does 'the prophets searched and inquired' mean the Old Testament authors didn't fully understand what they were writing?"

Yes, in a measured sense. Peter says the prophets spoke by the Spirit of Christ about sufferings and glories, and they themselves searched and inquired to understand what person and time the Spirit was pointing to. This does not mean the prophets wrote in ignorance; they knew they were speaking God's word. But the full meaning of their words was not always clear to them in the moment. Some of their predictions pointed to fulfillment they could not see. This is a classical doctrine of Scripture — the human author may have written more than he consciously understood, because the Holy Spirit was the ultimate author and intended meaning that reached beyond the prophet's immediate horizon. This is why the New Testament authors can legitimately see Christ in Old Testament passages that the original authors may not have fully grasped; the Spirit who inspired them intended that reach.

"What's the difference between 'joy' and 'happiness'? Peter seems to be describing something that isn't mere happiness."

Right. Happiness in ordinary English tends to refer to a pleasant emotional state connected to favorable circumstances. The happy person is one for whom things are going well. Christian joy is different. It is a disposition of confidence and gladness rooted in what God has done in Christ, which does not depend on present circumstances. Peter's readers were grieved by trials — they were not happy in the ordinary sense. But they rejoiced with joy inexpressible and filled with glory — they had a deeper gladness anchored in the resurrection of Christ and the salvation awaiting them. Joy can coexist with grief in a way that happiness cannot. This is why the Christian martyrs could sing in prison and face death with peace; they were not happy about their circumstances but were rejoicing in what no circumstance could take from them.

"How do I love someone I've never seen?"

This is a real question, not just a rhetorical one. The short answer is that you come to love Jesus through the means by which He gives Himself to you — the Word preached and read, the Baptism you have received, the Supper you receive, the fellowship of His people. The Spirit creates this love in you through these means.

It is not a love you manufacture by effort; it is a love that grows as you encounter Christ in the places He has promised to be found. The longer you sit under the Word, receive the sacraments, live in the life of the congregation, the more the love deepens. This is why the Christian life is lived in the means of grace, not apart from them. The Lord uses ordinary means to create extraordinary love for a Savior His people have never seen.

"My suffering doesn't feel like refinement. It just feels like suffering. Is something wrong with me?"

No. Peter names the grief alongside the joy. The refinement interpretation of suffering is the Lord's perspective, and He sometimes makes it visible to us in the moment and sometimes does not. Many Christians only see, years later, how a particular trial shaped their faith into something stronger. In the moment of the trial, it may simply feel like suffering. That is not a failure of faith; it is the ordinary experience of the baptized. What the Lord asks of you in the trial is not that you interpret it positively in the moment but that you hold on to Him through it — that you continue to receive the Word, to pray, to come to the Supper, to be held by the fellowship. The meaning may come later. The Lord's keeping is real now, whether you feel the refinement or not.

Leading the Discussion

The student chapter offers six discussion questions. Pick one for this session. The teaching content is substantial, and the passage rewards letting its riches settle rather than fragmenting attention across multiple questions. Some notes on each:

Question 1 — Why Peter begins with the Gospel

A good opening question that surfaces a structural point about pastoral ministry. Students who see this will see it throughout the letter and across their reading of Scripture. Useful for setting up a pattern rather than solving a specific question.

Question 2 — The new birth as God's work

Theologically rich. Best for classes ready to think about the difference between sacramental and decisional understandings of the new birth. Handle with gentleness if there are students from evangelical backgrounds who may have strong associations with the new birth as a conscious decision moment; the goal is not to invalidate their experience but to deepen it.

Question 3 — Which adjective about the inheritance strikes you

A personal question that can open real pastoral territory. Students who have lost something imperishable may connect to the imperishable adjective. Students whose lives have been marked by defilement may connect to the undefiled. Students who feel the fading of youth, strength, or significance may connect to the unfading. Each answer reveals something about where a student is.

Question 4 — Fire-tested faith in your own experience

The most pastorally potent question, but also the most sensitive. Use only if your class has trust and time. Stories shared in response to this question can be long, and some students may share things that deserve care beyond what a class setting can give. Be ready to follow up individually after class with any student who shares something weighty.

Question 5 — Loving the unseen Christ

A good question for classes with mixed spiritual maturity. Longtime Christians often have thoughtful answers about how this love has grown; newer Christians sometimes ask genuine questions about how it grows at all. The exchange between them can be deeply valuable.

Question 6 — The prophets and angels

A question that lifts the class's horizon. Good for classes that have been in the weeds and need a wider view. Do not use if class energy is low; this is a question that rewards fresh engagement.

A Recommendation

If your class has students currently suffering, consider Question 4 — but only if you have time to honor the responses. If time is short, or if the class is new to itself, Question 1 or Question 3 is safer. Question 2 is the best choice for a theologically inclined class. Whichever question you choose, leave time for multiple voices. The riches of this passage are better surfaced by several students speaking than by one extended response.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

The pressure in this session, with only forty-five minutes, is to let the passage's riches fragment into a hurried checklist. Do not let that happen. If time is tight, cover fewer elements deeply rather than all of them superficially.

Keep

- The mercy-as-ground move (v. 3). The whole passage rests on this, and cutting it is not an option.
- The new birth and the living hope (vv. 3-4). This is the Gospel foundation.
- The imperishable inheritance (v. 4). Students need to carry this promise home.
- Trials as fire-refinement (vv. 6-7). This is the pastoral center of the passage.
- One discussion question, most likely Question 3 or Question 4.
- Closing prayer and Session 3 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- The liturgical-form note (the Jewish blessing formula). Interesting background but not essential.
- Extended discussion of biblical hope versus modern hope. The student book develops it; you can trust the reader to absorb it.
- The military image of guarding. Mention the guarding, skip the unpacking of the military metaphor.
- Detailed treatment of loving the unseen Christ. The point lands quickly; do not dwell.
- The prophets-and-angels material. Rich but lengthy. Mention briefly and move on.

The Single Non-Negotiable

If this session must be reduced to one thing, that thing is the mercy-new-birth-living-hope-inheritance sequence in verses 3-5. The rest of the passage develops these, but these are the Gospel foundation. Peter builds everything

else on them, and your students must leave with them firmly in hand.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Ephesians 1:3-14.** Paul's parallel doxological opening. Another single Greek sentence of blessing. The two passages illuminate each other and show the shared pattern of apostolic pastoral ministry.
- **John 3:1-21.** Jesus' teaching on the new birth to Nicodemus. The foundation for Peter's language here.
- **Romans 8:18-30.** Paul's treatment of the relationship between present suffering and future glory. A close parallel to Peter's teaching on trials and the salvation to be revealed.
- **1 Corinthians 3:10-15.** Paul's use of the fire-testing metaphor for Christian work. Different application but same underlying image.
- **Isaiah 52:13-53:12.** The Suffering Servant passage the Old Testament prophets pointed toward. Peter has this whole passage in mind when he speaks of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Small Catechism, Part Four on Baptism.** Essential for understanding the new birth in Lutheran terms.
- **Formula of Concord, Article XI on Election.** Critical background for verse 5. The guarding-by-God's-power-through-faith language is exactly the Lutheran balance FC XI preserves.
- **Luther's Commentary on 1 Peter (Luther's Works Vol. 30).** Luther is especially rich on this passage. His treatment of the living hope and the refined faith rewards the teacher's preparation.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter (CPH).** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Excellent on the structural analysis of the doxological sentence and on the background of the refinement image.

A Final Word

You have an unusually rich passage to teach this week. Its riches can overwhelm a class if the teacher is not careful to pace the delivery. Read the passage aloud at the start. Let the cumulative weight build. Do not fragment it into a checklist. And end where Peter ends — with the astonishing claim that even angels long to look into what your students already possess.

Pay special attention to any student who is currently suffering. This passage was written for them in a particular way, and the ordinary material of the class may land on them with unusual force. Be ready to follow up individually after class. The things people share in response to this passage sometimes deserve more care than a class setting can offer.

Next week Peter moves to his first major ethical section. Having laid the Gospel foundation, he begins to describe what kind of life flows from it. The passage develops the baptismal frame from this week's opening, grounds Christian holiness in the holiness of the Father, and speaks of the imperishable seed of the Word that abides forever. Read it carefully; it rewards the teacher who prepares well.

May the Lord bless your teaching this week. May the living hope Peter proclaims be alive in you as you teach, and in your students as they hear.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Three

Be Holy as He Is Holy

1 Peter 1:13-25

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Three. Your job this week is to help students see how Peter builds the ethical life of the Christian on the Gospel foundation he laid last week. The structural hinge is the word *therefore* at the start of verse 13. Everything that follows — the call to holiness, the reminder of the ransoming blood, the imperishable seed of the Word — rests on what has already been given. If you get your students to see that the *therefore* is not a throwaway word but the structural center of Peter's ethics, you will have taught them something they can use for the rest of their reading of Scripture.

The pastoral opportunity in this session is to help your students receive holiness as gift and calling rather than as impossible demand. Many Christians have been wounded by moralistic preaching that treats holiness as a bar they must clear on their own. Peter does not do this. Holiness is grounded in what God has done — calling, ransoming, regenerating through the imperishable seed. The imperatives rest on the indicatives. If you teach it that way, your students will breathe easier than they often do when they read biblical ethics.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Because Christians have been called by a holy Father, ransomed by the precious blood of Christ, and born again through the imperishable seed of the Word, they are now to live holy lives — not as a burden laid on top of the Gospel, but as the fitting response to what they have received.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Three of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 1:13-25 several times. Pay attention to the connectors — therefore, since, knowing — which carry the logical weight of the passage.
- Read Leviticus 19:1-2 and the broader Holiness Code. Peter quotes this directly and the Old Testament background shapes his argument.
- Read Luther's Small Catechism on the Ten Commandments, paying special attention to his structure — each commandment is preceded by the reminder that God calls us to fear and love Him. This is the same Gospel-grounded ethics Peter is modeling.
- Review Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed, especially the phrase about the Holy Spirit calling, gathering, enlightening, and sanctifying the Christian Church. This is the doctrinal engine of Peter's holiness call.
- Pray for any students you know to be wrestling with legalism or with moral discouragement. This passage can heal both, if taught well.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Four theological points come into view in this passage:

- **Gospel, then ethic.** The structure of verses 13-25 is the structure of all biblical ethics. Indicative before imperative. Gift before demand. This is a Lutheran hallmark and it matches Peter exactly.
- **Holiness as belonging, not unusual religious intensity.** The biblical word for holy means set apart. A holy person is one who belongs to God and whose life reflects that belonging. Peter is not calling for special spiritual achievement; he is calling for the life appropriate to those who have been made God's own.
- **Atonement by substitution.** The ransom by the precious blood of Christ (vv. 18-19) is classical substitutionary atonement. Christ, the spotless Lamb, paid the price that set His people free from the futility of their former lives. This is the Gospel that grounds the ethical call.

- **The Word as means of grace.** The imperishable seed of the Word that remains forever is the instrument by which God produced the new birth (v. 23) and the good news preached (v. 25). Lutherans confess the Word as a means of grace, and Peter's closing verses are among the clearest New Testament statements of this.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Do not let students receive the call to holiness as a burden. It is not a burden. It is the fitting shape of life for those who have been called, ransomed, and regenerated. If your class leaves feeling overwhelmed by what is demanded, you have taught the imperatives without grounding them in the indicatives. If they leave feeling that holiness is the natural flowering of what they have already received, you have taught the passage rightly.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 2
0:05–0:12	The structural 'therefore' (v. 13)
0:12–0:22	Be holy as He is holy (vv. 14-16)
0:22–0:35	The ransoming blood of Christ (vv. 17-21)
0:35–0:42	Love one another earnestly (v. 22)
0:42–0:55	The imperishable seed of the Word (vv. 23-25)
0:55–0:58	Discussion (1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 4 assignment



Where to Slow Down

The two places worth your best time are the ransoming-blood section (the Gospel ground of the ethical call) and the imperishable-seed section (the Word as means of grace). These are the two deepest theological moments of the passage, and both are loaded with Lutheran significance. If the clock starts pressing you, cut from the earlier sections rather than from these.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verse 13: The Structural Therefore

Read the whole passage aloud first. Then draw attention to the word therefore at the start of verse 13. This word is the structural hinge of the whole letter. Everything before it has been indicative (what God has done). Everything after it will be imperative (what God calls us to do). The connection between them is the therefore.

Gird Up the Loins of Your Mind

The literal meaning of the Greek is worth naming. In the ancient world, men wore long robes that were loose for ordinary activity but tucked up (girded) when hard work or running was required. Peter applies this physical image to the mental life. Tuck up your thinking. Get ready. Do not be caught mentally flat-footed by what is coming. For students navigating a culture that pulls at their convictions, this is a concrete and helpful image.

Set Your Hope Fully

The word fully is worth pressing. Not partial hope. Not hedged hope. Not hope that keeps a foot in worldly possibilities. The object of the hope is the grace that will be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. For students whose hopes are scattered across career, retirement, relationships, health, and other worldly goods, Peter's call is to consolidate hope in one place. These other things are not forbidden to matter; they are forbidden to carry the weight that belongs to Christ alone.

Verses 14-16: Be Holy as He Is Holy

Obedient Children

Note that the first grounding of holiness is identity. The Christian is a child of the Father. Obedience flows from that identity, not the other way around. We do not obey in order to become children; we obey because we already are children. This

is a crucial pastoral distinction for students who have absorbed performance-based religion somewhere in their background.

Do Not Be Conformed

The word conformed (*syschematizo*) is the same verb Paul uses in Romans 12:2. It means to be pressed into a mold. Peter is warning against being re-molded into the shape of the culture the Christian has come out of. This does not require withdrawal; it requires resistance to the cultural pressures that would re-form the Christian back into his pre-Christian shape.

Holy as Set Apart

This is the most important definitional move in the section. The biblical meaning of holy is set apart. Not unusual religious intensity; belonging to God. Work through this for the class. A holy person is a person set apart for God, whose life reflects the fact that he belongs to someone specific. Holiness is not a sliding scale of spiritual achievement; it is a binary of belonging, expressed in visible ways.

A Rural Midwestern Application

For a congregation in farming country, the holiness language can connect to the agricultural reality of setting something aside — a field marked for a particular use, seed set aside for next year's planting, the best of the harvest kept separate for specific purposes. Holiness works the same way. God has set certain people aside for Himself, and their lives show the setting-apart by looking different from the ordinary ways of the world around them.

Verses 17-21: The Ransoming Blood

The Impartial Judge

Peter's logic is sharp. If you pray to God as Father, and you do, then you pray to the one who will judge impartially. No favorites. This is not meant to terrorize; it is meant to produce the fear — the reverent awareness — that takes God's holiness seriously. Christians sometimes forget that their Father is also their Judge. Peter is reminding them.

The Time of Your Exile

Note how Peter returns to the exile theme. The Christian life is the time of exile, and during that time, the Christian conducts himself with fear. The exile is finite — it has a duration — but within it, the Christian's conduct matters.

Ransomed

The language of ransom is worth unpacking. In the ancient world, ransom was the price paid to set a slave free or to recover someone captured by enemies. It was a concrete economic transaction. Peter says Christians have been ransomed — set free at a price — from the futile ways inherited from their forefathers. The futility is key. The old ways did not deliver what they promised. They could not produce the life they aimed at. The Christian has been set free from that futility.

The Precious Blood

The price was not silver or gold but the blood of Christ, the spotless Lamb. This is classical substitutionary atonement language, drawing on the sacrificial system. Christ's death was the payment. His blood was the currency. And His innocence — the spotless Lamb — was what made the sacrifice acceptable. This is the Gospel that grounds the whole ethical call. The one who has been ransomed at such a price now lives accordingly.

Connecting to the Lord's Supper

The precious blood of Christ is not only the ransom that saved us; it is what we receive in the Sacrament of the Altar. Peter's readers heard this passage with their Eucharistic practice in mind. Every time they came to the Lord's Supper, they received the very blood by which they had been ransomed. For your class, this is a natural connection to make, especially if your congregation observes the Supper weekly or frequently. The ethical life Peter is describing is sustained by ongoing participation in the very means by which Christ's ransoming work is given to us.

Foreknown Before the Foundation of the World

Peter grounds Christ's work in the eternal purpose of God. The cross was not an improvisation or a backup plan. It was foreknown before the world began. This is comforting for students who sometimes wonder whether God is making things up

as He goes. He is not. The salvation you now enjoy was planned from eternity, for you specifically, for your sake.

Verse 22: Love One Another Earnestly

The ethical summary. Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth, love one another earnestly from a pure heart. Note the tense of purified — it is completed. The Christian's soul has already been purified by the Word received in faith. The capacity for genuine love has been created. Now Peter calls for that capacity to be exercised.

The two adverbs are demanding. Earnestly — with intensity, with real effort. From a pure heart — without mixed motives, without hidden resentment, without the self-interest that often compromises Christian love. This is a high standard for the congregation. But it is a standard grounded in what has already been given, not in what must be manufactured.

Verses 23-25: The Imperishable Seed

The Agricultural Image

Seed is planted. Seed grows. Plants bear fruit. Peter applies this to the spiritual life. The Word was planted in the soil of the hearer's heart. The Word produced new life. The new life produces the fruit of holy living. All of it traces back to the seed — which is the Word of God.

Imperishable vs. Perishable

Ordinary seed is perishable. It can fail. It can be lost. The imperishable seed of the Word cannot fail. It carries within itself the life of the eternal God. And the life that sprouts from it shares the imperishable character of its source.

All Flesh Is Grass

Peter's citation of Isaiah is a stark contrast. All flesh — all human strength, beauty, glory, achievement — is like grass. It withers. It fades. Only the Word of the Lord remains forever. For students living in a culture obsessed with physical beauty, career achievement, and worldly success, this is a needed reframe. What looks permanent is grass. What looks modest — the Word preached in the assembly — is eternal.

The Word Preached to You

The closing phrase is crucial. This imperishable Word is the good news that was preached to you. The Word does not come to us through some esoteric channel; it comes through ordinary preaching, through catechesis, through the reading of Scripture. For Lutherans, this is the classical means of grace. The Word that gave us new birth is the same Word we continue to receive every week. The Christian life is sustained by the ongoing reception of this same Word.

A Lutheran Reception Note

Luther's high regard for 1 Peter traces substantially to these closing verses. The imperishable seed of the Word, the good news preached to you, the Word that abides forever — these are the building blocks of Lutheran theology of the Word. Luther's understanding of Baptism as Word-plus-water, of the Supper as Word-plus-elements, of preaching as the primary means of grace — all of this finds biblical warrant in passages like this one. If you have time, connect Peter's closing verses to your students' weekly experience of hearing the Word preached and receiving the sacraments. The imperishable seed is planted every Sunday.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

If holiness is set-apartness, does that mean Christians should withdraw from non-Christian society?

No. The biblical concept of holiness is not geographical or social withdrawal. Christians remain in the world, working, marrying, engaging civic life, and so on. What sets them apart is not their location but their shaping by a different Lord. The holy person lives in the same neighborhood as everyone else but his priorities, loves, and fears are organized around a different center. This is what visible Christian faithfulness looks like — not separation from society but distinctness within it.

Why does Peter tell us to conduct ourselves with fear if God is our loving Father?

The word Peter uses is the same word used throughout Scripture for reverent awe of God — not terror, but the deep seriousness of those who recognize who they are dealing with. A Christian's fear of God is not afraid of being rejected; it is the awed respect of a child who knows his Father is holy and takes his Father's will seriously. This is the fear that is the beginning of wisdom, in the Proverbs' sense. It coexists perfectly with filial love; in fact, it deepens it.

How is the blood of Christ 'precious'? Isn't blood just blood?

In the ancient world, blood was understood as the carrier of life. Leviticus says the life is in the blood. For a blood sacrifice to be acceptable, the life given had to be worthy of what was being done. The blood of bulls and goats could not finally accomplish what was needed — Hebrews develops this at length. The blood of Christ is precious because of whose blood it is — the incarnate Son of God, the spotless Lamb, the one person in all of history whose life was worthy of the ransom price. Only this blood could set us free. That is why it is called precious.

If God foreknew everything from before the foundation of the world, do my choices matter?

Yes, both are true, and Scripture holds them together without fully resolving the mystery. God's foreknowledge and eternal plan do not cancel human responsibility; they establish it. The Lutheran Confessions are careful here. Formula of Concord Article XI teaches that we are elect from eternity in Christ, and that our election comforts us, but it also teaches that we resist the Word by our own fault when we perish, not by any decree of God. Both the foreknowledge and the responsibility are real. If a student presses this question, direct them to FC XI and to the humility of acknowledging mystery where the Lord has not given us full disclosure.

How do I love people earnestly when my heart isn't pure?

Peter does not say you must manufacture a pure heart by effort. He says the soul has been purified by obedience to the truth — by receiving the Gospel in faith. The purification has happened. The capacity for genuine love has been given. What is asked is that you exercise that capacity, not that you produce it from scratch. When you find your heart mixed or impure, confess it specifically, receive forgiveness, return to the Word, and trust that the same Spirit who cleansed you in the first place continues to cleanse. The call to love earnestly is not a call to self-improvement but a call to live into what has been given.

What's the relationship between the Word preached and the Bible I hold in my hands?

The Word of God is bigger than any one form of its delivery. The Word was preached orally by the apostles before it was written down. It is written down now in Scripture, which is the Word of God in written form. It is preached again today as the ordinary Word is proclaimed in sermons and taught in classes. It is enacted in the sacraments, where the Word is joined to visible elements. All of these are forms of the one Word that remains forever. Peter's readers had less of the Scripture than we do but received the same Word through apostolic preaching. We receive the same Word through Scripture and preaching alike. The Word is one, though it comes to us in multiple forms.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question for this session. The teaching content is substantial. Some notes:

Question 1 — The structural therefore

The most theologically rewarding question. Best for classes that have tracked the indicative-imperative structure across the teaching. If students can articulate how the therefore functions, they will read Scripture differently from now on.

Question 2 — Where your hope is set

Personal and searching. Students often discover that their hope is more scattered than they realized — set partly on Christ, partly on health, partly on family, partly on career. The question surfaces this and invites consolidation.

Question 3 — Holiness as belonging vs. intensity

Pastorally important, especially for students recovering from moralistic backgrounds. The reframe can be deeply liberating.

Question 4 — Meditation on the cross and obedience

The most historically Lutheran question. Luther's own spirituality was saturated with meditation on the cross as both the ground of forgiveness and the motive for holy living. Good for deep classes.

Question 5 — Earnest love in your congregation

A practical question that can honor the specific life of your congregation. Use if you want to ground the abstract theology in the concrete relationships your students are in.

Question 6 — Grass vs. Word

A priority-examining question. Good for end-of-session use, as it invites students to leave with a specific reflection about where they are investing their lives.

A Recommendation

For classes new to thinking about Lutheran ethics, Question 1 is the most formative. For classes already fluent in that pattern, Question 3 or Question 4 goes deeper. For any class, Question 6 makes a good closing reflection even if discussion time is tight.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- The structural therefore of verse 13.
- Holiness as set-apartness (not the extended unpacking, but the definitional move).
- The ransoming blood of Christ. This is the Gospel center of the passage.
- The imperishable seed of the Word. This is the Lutheran means-of-grace center.
- One discussion question.
- Closing prayer and Session 4 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- Gird up the loins metaphor. Name it briefly, skip the extended unpacking.
- Impartial judge discussion. Mention but do not dwell.
- Foreknowledge before the foundation of the world. This is a rabbit hole for theological classes; skip it if time is short.
- Earnest love treatment. The student book develops this; you can trust the reader.
- All flesh is grass quotation. Mention briefly.

The Single Non-Negotiable

The structural therefore and the connection between the Gospel (ransoming blood, imperishable seed) and the ethical call (be holy, love earnestly) is the heart of this session. Everything else can be cut. Without this connection clearly taught, the passage becomes moralism.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Leviticus 19.** The source of 'Be holy, for I am holy.' The broader Holiness Code frames Peter's teaching.
- **Romans 12:1-2.** Paul's parallel call to non-conformity with the world, using the same 'conformed' verb Peter uses.
- **Hebrews 9.** The extended New Testament treatment of Christ's sacrifice and the superiority of His blood over the blood of bulls and goats.
- **Isaiah 40:6-8.** The 'all flesh is grass' passage Peter quotes in closing.
- **John 1:1-18.** John's prologue on the eternal Word. Companion to Peter's teaching on the imperishable seed.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Small Catechism, Third Article of the Creed.** Luther's teaching that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps the Christian Church through the Word. The doctrinal engine behind Peter's teaching.
- **Large Catechism, Third Article.** Luther's extended treatment. Especially helpful on sanctification as the Spirit's ongoing work.
- **Formula of Concord, Article VI on the Third Use of the Law.** The Confessional treatment of how the Law functions for the regenerate. Relevant for students who ask whether the ethical commands of this passage are Law or Gospel.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Luther's Commentary on 1 Peter (LW Vol. 30).** Luther's treatment of this passage is especially rich on the Word-as-seed imagery.

A Final Word

You are teaching this week's passage at the hinge point of the letter. Everything before has been Gospel foundation. Everything after will apply that foundation to the specific circumstances of your students' lives — their households, their work, their submission to authorities, their suffering. If you teach the hinge well, the rest of the study will stand on solid ground.

Pay particular attention to students who may have been wounded by moralistic preaching. For them, this session can be healing. The holiness Peter calls for is not a burden to be manufactured but a life to be lived out of what has been given. If you can help them see the difference, you have given them a gift that will shape their reading of Scripture for the rest of their lives.

Next week, Peter turns to the identity of the Church itself — a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. It is one of the most magnificent passages in the letter, and it rewards careful preparation.

May the Lord bless your teaching this week, and may the imperishable seed of the Word continue its work in you and in those you teach.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Four

A Royal Priesthood

1 Peter 2:1-10

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Four. This week you teach one of the great ecclesiological passages of the New Testament. Peter's identity statement in verses 9-10 — a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession — is the biblical foundation for Lutheran understanding of the Church, the priesthood of the baptized, and the unity of the people of God across ethnic lines.

The pastoral opportunity this week is substantial. Many Christians live with a dim sense of their own place in the Church. They feel peripheral, uncertain of their gifts, unsure whether their contribution matters. Peter has exactly the word they need. You are living stones. You are priests. You are a royal nation. You have been called by name into the people God has chosen. Teach this with conviction, and your students will leave with a clearer sense of their own dignity as baptized Christians than they had when they arrived.

Pay attention also to students from backgrounds outside the historic Lutheran and Catholic traditions. The priesthood of the baptized is sometimes treated in evangelical contexts as primarily meaning that there are no priests — that we have all become our own spiritual authorities, bypassing the church's ministry. This is not what Lutherans confess. Every baptized Christian has a priestly calling, but the pastoral office remains a distinct gift of Christ to His Church. Both are true. Do not let the class collapse one into the other.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

The baptized Christians Peter writes to are given the very identity Israel received at Sinai — chosen, priestly, holy, God's own possession — and this identity, grounded in Christ the cornerstone, is what makes them a people in the world, with a specific calling to proclaim the excellencies of the God who called them out of darkness into light.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Four of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 2:1-10 several times. Pay particular attention to how Peter weaves Old Testament citations into his argument.
- Read Exodus 19:1-6. This is the foundational passage for 'kingdom of priests and holy nation.' Peter's readers knew it; yours may not.
- Read Hosea 1-2, especially the naming and renaming of the children. The 'once not a people, now a people' language comes from here.
- Read Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14. These are the three stone passages Peter quotes.
- Review the Augsburg Confession, Article V on the Ministry and Article XIV on Ecclesiastical Order. These are important for holding the priesthood of the baptized together with the ordained ministry without collapsing either into the other.
- Pray.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Four theological points come into view in this passage:

- **The Church as the new Israel, not replacement but fulfillment.** Peter applies Israelite categories to the Church without suggesting Israel is discarded. The promises given to Israel find their fulfillment in Christ, and the Church is grafted into the ancient people of God.
- **The priesthood of all the baptized.** Every baptized Christian has priestly standing before God through Christ. This does not eliminate the pastoral office (AC V and XIV) but grounds all Christian life in a priestly calling.
- **Christ as the cornerstone.** The Church is defined Christologically, not ethnically or nationally. The same stone that supports those who believe is the stumbling block for those who refuse. This is not accidental but the inherent logic of divine revelation.
- **Identity leads to mission.** The Church's magnificent identity is given 'that you may proclaim the excellencies' of God. Identity is not for hoarding; it is for witness.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Do not rush verse 9. This is the passage's climax — the great identity statement. Read it slowly. Let the four phrases land one at a time. If you teach each of them briefly but clearly, your students will carry the identity home with them and it will reshape how they read the rest of the letter.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 3
0:05–0:13	Put away, long for the Word (vv. 1-3)
0:13–0:25	Living stones and a spiritual house (vv. 4-5)
0:25–0:35	The stone rejected and chosen (vv. 6-8)
0:35–0:50	The great identity statement (v. 9) — the climax
0:50–0:55	Once not a people, now a people (v. 10)
0:55–0:58	Discussion (1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 5 assignment



Where to Slow Down

The climax is verse 9. Give it your best time — at least fifteen minutes, unpacking the four identity markers one by one. The stone material in verses 4-8 is rich but secondary; if you need to cut, cut from there, not from verse 9.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 1-3: Put Away, Long For

The Vice List

Malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander. These are the ordinary social sins of every human community. Peter does not list exotic failures; he lists the ones every congregation struggles with. For your class, it may be useful to ask quietly whether any of these particularly trouble your own congregation, though without naming specific people. The passage calls for honest self-examination, not finger-pointing.

Like Newborn Infants

The image is vivid and unforgettable. A newborn has a single consuming desire — to feed. Peter calls Christians to that same kind of hunger for the Word. For students who feel guilty about not desiring the Word enough, reframe this as invitation rather than demand. The Word itself creates the hunger it satisfies. The more a Christian feeds, the more the hunger grows.

A Pastoral Reframe

Students sometimes report that they try to read Scripture daily and feel little. The Peter reframe is not that they should try harder or feel more. It is that they should keep coming back. The infant does not nurse once and conclude that feeding did not satisfy. The infant returns again and again, and the feeding produces the growth. The Christian life works the same way. The Word feeds. Trust the feeding, even when the subjective experience is modest. The growth happens.

Verses 4-5: Living Stones in a Spiritual House

The Rejection-and-Vindication Pattern

Christ is the stone rejected by men but chosen and precious to God. This is not merely biographical (the religious authorities rejected Jesus); it is paradigmatic. The world's estimate of Christ was wrong, and God's estimate was right. The same

pattern holds for those who belong to Him. When the world rejects Peter's readers for their faith, they are not being forsaken; they are being aligned with the rejection their Lord experienced first.

Living Stones

The adjective is critical. Christians are not dead stones in a pile. They are alive, sharing the life of the risen Christ, placed by God into a living structure. For students who feel peripheral to the Church's life, this image is pastorally important. No stone in a building is dispensable; each bears its load. The quiet widow who prays. The teenage catechumen. The deacon setting up for communion. Each is a living stone, placed specifically, bearing specifically. Make this concrete for your class.

A Holy Priesthood

This is the first time Peter uses priestly language for the Church. The contrast with the Old Testament is striking — then, priests were a specific tribe and family; now, the whole Church. Spend time here. Every baptized Christian is a priest. This means direct access to God through Christ, the offering of spiritual sacrifices, and participation in the Church's worship life.

Priesthood of the Baptized vs. Pastoral Office

Lutherans confess both, and it is important not to collapse either into the other. The priesthood of the baptized is universal — every Christian has priestly standing. The pastoral office is a specific gift of Christ to His Church (AC V), given to preach the Word and administer the sacraments publicly on behalf of the congregation. Both are biblical. Both are necessary. The Reformation recovery of the priesthood of the baptized did not eliminate the pastoral office; it recovered the dignity of the laity alongside the calling of the ordained. Make sure students leave with both ideas in hand, not with one displacing the other.

Verses 6-8: The Stone Rejected and Chosen

Peter weaves together Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, and Isaiah 8:14. These were key texts in early Christian reflection on the rejection of Jesus. Spend enough time here

to let students see that the rejection of Christ was not a surprise; it was foretold, and it places His followers in a particular relationship with the world.

Two Responses

The same stone is cornerstone for those who believe and stumbling block for those who refuse. This is not arbitrary; it is the inherent logic of revelation. Christ cannot be avoided. He can be trusted or stumbled over, but He cannot be ignored. This is pastorally important for students who have family or friends who reject the Gospel. Their rejection is not random and not final in the sense that God can still bring them to faith. But the encounter with Christ is unavoidable, and the response to Him is decisive.

As They Were Destined

The hard phrase at the end of verse 8. Do not avoid it. The most careful reading is that the rejection of the Word by those who refuse it is within God's foreknowledge and permissive purpose, without excusing their refusal or making God the cause of their unbelief. This is the same territory FC XI addresses for the Lutheran tradition. Do not try to resolve the mystery more than Scripture does; point your class to where the Lutheran Confessions treat the matter carefully.

Verse 9: The Great Identity Statement

This is the climax. Slow down. Unpack each phrase briefly but clearly.

A Chosen Race

Not ethnic identity. The Greek word means people, family, lineage. What makes Christians one 'race' is the common new birth through the Word. This is the deepest ground of Christian unity — we share a spiritual ancestry in Christ across all human differences.

A Royal Priesthood

The Old Testament separated kings and priests. In Christ they come together. Every baptized Christian shares in Christ's royal dignity and priestly standing. This is the doctrinal root of the Reformation recovery.

A Holy Nation

The Greek word *ethnos* was often used for the Gentiles in contrast to Israel. Peter turns this. The Church is now the *ethnos*, the nation — but a holy one, consecrated, distinct. The Gentiles have been made a holy nation before God.

A People for His Own Possession

Covenant language from the Torah. The Lord's treasured possession. God calls this people His own, values them as His treasure, guards them as His possession. For students who have ever felt unwanted, undervalued, or dismissed, this is a particularly healing word.

The Missional Purpose

Identity is given for mission. 'That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you.' The Church does not proclaim itself; the Church proclaims the God who saved the Church. For students who are uncertain how to share their faith, this verse gives a simple answer: proclaim God's excellencies. Tell what He has done. The witness is always to God, not to our spiritual achievements.

Verse 10: Once Not a People, Now a People

The Hosea reference. Hosea's children were named Lo-Ammi (Not My People) and Lo-Ruhamah (No Mercy) as signs of judgment on unfaithful Israel. But Hosea also prophesied reversal. Peter announces the reversal has happened. The Gentiles, who had no covenant claim, have been made God's people by mercy.

This is particularly striking for Gentile Christians. We would not be God's people if this had been left to the order of nature. We have been made His people by sovereign mercy, through the preaching of the Gospel that reached our ancestors and has been carried forward to our own day. Let your class feel the weight of this. It is not our achievement that we are here. It is mercy received.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

Does this passage teach 'replacement theology' — that the Church has replaced Israel?

Lutherans generally reject 'replacement theology' in the strong sense that implies the end of God's purposes for the Jewish people. What this passage teaches, rather, is that the promises given to Israel find their fulfillment in Christ, and the Church — the body of those who trust in Christ, from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds — receives the identity that was always meant to belong to the people of God. Paul develops this with particular care in Romans 9-11, where he is clear that the Lord has not rejected Israel and that the fulfillment of His purposes includes an ongoing work among the Jewish people. The Church is the people of God gathered from every nation, including from Israel. This is fulfillment, not replacement.

If every Christian is a priest, why do we need pastors?

Because Christ gave the pastoral office to His Church as a distinct gift. The Augsburg Confession Article V teaches that God 'instituted the office of the ministry' to proclaim the Gospel and administer the sacraments, and Article XIV addresses the proper calling into that office. The priesthood of the baptized does not eliminate the pastoral office; it grounds it in the common Christian dignity that every baptized person possesses. The pastor is not spiritually superior to the laity; he holds a specific office within the priesthood of the whole Church. Luther himself was clear on this: every Christian is a priest, and every Christian is also rightly ordered to receive the ministry of the pastoral office for the sake of good order and faithful administration of Word and Sacrament.

What are the 'spiritual sacrifices' we are supposed to offer?

Not atoning sacrifices — Christ's sacrifice on the cross was final and sufficient. The spiritual sacrifices are the offerings of praise, thanksgiving, and service that flow from a redeemed life. Paul in Romans 12 calls us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Hebrews 13 speaks of the sacrifice of praise. Philippians 4 calls a

gift to Paul 'a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.' The spiritual sacrifices include worship, prayer, financial generosity, care for the poor, faithful work in vocation, love for one another, and witness to the Gospel. All of this is offered to God through Jesus Christ, whose one sacrifice on the cross has made our offerings acceptable.

How do I know if I'm a 'living stone' in the spiritual house?

If you have been baptized into Christ and continue in the faith, you are a living stone. Peter's language is descriptive of every baptized Christian, not prescriptive for unusual ones. You do not have to be especially gifted, especially visible, or especially successful in ministry to be a living stone. Every baptized Christian is placed in the spiritual house by God Himself, and every one bears a specific load in the structure. If you are wondering what your specific place looks like, the answer usually emerges in the ordinary callings of your life — your vocation, your family, your congregation, your relationships. These are where your life as a living stone takes shape.

The world seems to reject Christians increasingly. Is that normal?

Yes. Peter is explicit that the stone rejected by the builders is the cornerstone, and that the same rejection pattern extends to His followers. Christians should not be surprised when the world treats them the way the world treated Christ. This does not mean we should seek out rejection or manufacture persecution; it means that when rejection comes for the right reasons — faithfulness to Christ — we receive it as participation in Christ's own rejection, not as evidence that something has gone wrong with our faith. The pattern is biblical and ancient.

What does it mean to 'proclaim the excellencies' of God?

Simply to tell what God has done. This is not first of all a calling to formal evangelism — though that is part of it for some. It is the calling of every Christian to speak about the God who has saved them, in the ordinary conversations and relationships of life. When you speak of the mercy that has been shown to you, the hope that sustains you, the goodness of the Lord you have experienced, you are proclaiming His excellencies. This can happen in a family conversation, in a

workplace discussion, in a Facebook post, or in a formal sermon. The key is that the subject is not ourselves but God, and the content is what He has done.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question for this session. Some notes:

Question 1 — Infant hunger for the Word

A pastorally useful question, especially for students who struggle with daily devotional practice. Invites honest self-examination without requiring public confession.

Question 2 — Your specific place as a living stone

A concrete question that honors the individual calling of each student. Often surfaces previously unrecognized ways students are serving their congregation.

Question 3 — The priesthood of the baptized in practice

Theologically substantial. Best for classes ready to think about the implications of Lutheran ecclesiology for ordinary Christian life.

Question 4 — Which identity marker strikes you

Personal and searching. Students' answers often reveal where they have felt unseen or undervalued, and the identity Peter gives addresses those places.

Question 5 — The stone pattern in people you know

A question that opens conversation about the mystery of faith and unbelief. Use with care; students may want to talk about specific unbelieving loved ones, and the pastoral weight of such conversations can be significant.

Question 6 — Once not a people, now a people

The Gospel question. Works especially well for students who came to faith as adults or who remember the transition from unbelief to faith. Also works for lifelong Christians to meditate on the mercy that placed them in a believing family.

A Recommendation

For new classes or classes with diverse backgrounds, Question 4 is accessible and rewarding. For theologically mature classes, Question 3 opens the deepest territory. For classes with strong Gospel-formed students, Question 6 often produces the most moving conversation.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- The long-for-the-Word image (vv. 1-3). The Word as food for growth is central.
- The priesthood of the baptized (v. 5). This is the core Lutheran teaching of the passage.
- The four identity markers of verse 9. Do not cut these.
- Once not a people, now a people (v. 10). The Gospel summary.
- One discussion question.
- Closing prayer and Session 5 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- The vice list of verse 1. Name it, do not unpack.
- Extended living-stones imagery. The student book develops this; trust the reader.
- The detailed stone-passage citations (vv. 6-8). Summarize briefly.
- The 'as they were destined' phrase. Handle only if a student asks.

The Single Non-Negotiable

Verse 9, the four identity markers, is the climax of the passage and of much of the letter. Never cut this. If the session comes down to ten minutes, spend them here. The identity Peter gives his readers is what sustains them through suffering, and your students need to hear it.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Exodus 19:1-6.** The Sinai giving of the priesthood-and-nation identity to Israel. The source Peter quotes.
- **Hosea 1-2.** The naming and renaming of Hosea's children. Background for verse 10.
- **Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22.** The primary stone passages Peter weaves together.
- **Romans 9-11.** Paul's extended treatment of Israel, the Gentiles, and the people of God. Essential for understanding the 'replacement theology' question.
- **Ephesians 2:11-22.** Paul's parallel treatment of the Church as a temple being built together, with Christ as the cornerstone.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Augsburg Confession, Article V.** The ministry as the divinely instituted office through which the Gospel is preached and sacraments are administered.
- **Augsburg Confession, Article XIV.** The proper calling into the pastoral office, preserving the distinction between the priesthood of the baptized and the ordained ministry.
- **Luther, 'To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation' (1520).** The classic Reformation recovery of the priesthood of the baptized.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Especially strong on the Old Testament background of verses 9-10.

A Final Word

You have one of the great passages of the New Testament to teach this week. The identity Peter gives your students is real, biblical, and sustaining. Teach it with conviction. Let the four markers of verse 9 land with their full weight. And remember that many of your students have never thought of themselves in these terms. They know they are Christians, but they may not have thought of themselves as a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. Give them this language. Let them walk home with it.

Next week, Peter turns from identity to vocation. Having established who the Church is, he begins to describe how the Church lives in the world — as sojourners and exiles, submissive to authorities, faithful in work, following the example of Christ who suffered without retaliation. It is one of the most important passages in the New Testament for Lutheran vocational theology, and it rewards careful preparation.

May the Lord bless your teaching, and may the identity Peter proclaims take deep root in you and in those you teach.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Five

Living as Strangers

1 Peter 2:11-25

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Five. You are teaching one of the most important passages in the letter for Lutheran vocational theology, and also one of the most delicate to handle pastorally. Peter addresses submission to civil government, faithful work in difficult situations (including slavery), and the pattern of Christ's own suffering as the model for Christian endurance. The theological content is extraordinarily rich. The pastoral risks are real.

Three things to watch for as you prepare. First, the passage has been weaponized across history to justify oppression — from American chattel slavery to the silencing of abuse victims. Your students may carry the weight of this misuse, whether they know it or not. Second, the teaching on submission to civil authorities is uncomfortable in any age, and especially in politically polarized moments, where students may arrive wanting to apply the passage to their political opponents rather than to themselves. Third, the call to endure unjust suffering without retaliation is one of the hardest teachings in all of Scripture, and it cannot be taught glibly. Your job is to honor the text, honor your students' real experiences, and connect both to the Gospel that holds them together.

The Christological center of the passage — Christ who suffered without retaliation, entrusted Himself to the Father who judges justly, bore our sins, and brought the straying sheep home — is where the whole passage finds its meaning. If you teach the ethical instructions without grounding them firmly in the example of Christ, the passage becomes a burden. If you teach the example of Christ first, the ethical instructions become participation in what He has already done. This is the order that matters, and Peter himself builds it this way in the text.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Because Christ has suffered for us, leaving an example — innocent, non-retaliating, entrusting Himself to the Father, bearing our sins, bringing straying sheep home — Christians can live faithfully as sojourners in

difficult circumstances, honoring civil authority, enduring unjust treatment without returning evil for evil, not because such suffering is good in itself but because faithful endurance participates in the pattern of the Savior who went before us.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Five of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 2:11-25 several times. Notice how the passage moves from general exhortation (vv. 11-12) through civic submission (vv. 13-17) to household servants (vv. 18-20) to the Christological climax (vv. 21-25).
- Read Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 carefully. Peter's Christological section is saturated with this Servant Song, and your grasp of Isaiah 53 will deepen your teaching enormously.
- Read Romans 13:1-7 for Paul's parallel treatment of civil government. Note similarities and differences.
- Read Acts 5:27-29 for the apostolic precedent on the limits of civil submission — 'we must obey God rather than men.'
- Review Luther's treatise 'Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed' (1523) if you have time. This is the foundational Lutheran treatment of two-kingdoms theology as applied to government.
- Review Augsburg Confession Article XVI on civil government and Article XXVIII on ecclesiastical authority. Both bear on this passage.
- Pray — especially for any students in difficult work situations, political disillusionment, or abusive relationships. They may be particularly present to this passage.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Five theological points come into view in this passage:

- **Two-kingdoms theology.** God rules through two related but distinct kingdoms — the kingdom of the right hand (grace, through Word and sacraments) and the kingdom of the left hand (temporal order, through civil and social structures). Both are God's. The Christian is a citizen of both.
- **Vocation as priestly service.** Every faithful life in every faithful calling is a spiritual sacrifice offered to God through Christ. This is the Lutheran recovery of vocation — the farmer, the magistrate, the servant, the parent, all serving God in their callings.

- **The limits of submission.** Civil authority holds its office from God, but when it commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, obedience to God takes precedence. Acts 5:29 is the key apostolic precedent.
- **Christ as the Suffering Servant.** The Christological heart of the passage draws directly on Isaiah 53. Christ's innocent, non-retaliating suffering is both the substitution that saves us and the example we are called to follow.
- **Substitutionary atonement in pastoral form.** 'He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.' This is the Gospel proclaimed in some of the clearest and most beautiful language in the New Testament.

The Most Important Pastoral Caution

This passage must not be used to tell victims of abuse to remain in abusive situations. Peter speaks to Christians in difficult circumstances they cannot change (ancient slavery, subjects under an unjust empire). He never tells anyone to submit to abuse when escape or protection is possible, and the Lutheran tradition has always recognized that civil authority (including law enforcement and legal protection) is itself a God-given means of restraining evil. If you have any reason to believe a student in your class is in an abusive relationship, do not let this session's teaching on endurance become a barrier to their seeking help. State explicitly, if necessary, that Peter is not teaching what abusers have sometimes used this passage to teach.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 4
0:05–0:12	Sojourners and exiles (vv. 11-12)
0:12–0:25	Submission to civil authorities (vv. 13-17)
0:25–0:38	Servants and unjust suffering (vv. 18-20)
0:38–0:55	Christ as example — the Christological heart (vv. 21-25)
0:55–0:58	Discussion (1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 6 assignment



Where to Slow Down

The Christological section (vv. 21-25) is the heart of the passage, and it deserves your best time. The ethical instructions that precede it only make sense in light of the example of Christ. If the clock is pressing, cut from the earlier sections. Never cut from the Christological climax.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 11-12: Sojourners and Exiles

Read the whole passage aloud first. Then note the address at verse 11 — Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles. Peter returns explicitly to the exile frame of the letter's opening. The identity he has just proclaimed in verses 9-10 (chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation) meets the situation he names here (sojourners in a land not their own).

The Inward War

The passions of the flesh wage war against the soul. This is spiritual warfare language, though Peter does not develop it. For students who struggle with ongoing sinful patterns, this is pastorally clarifying — the passions are not neutral desires that happen to trouble Christians; they are actively hostile to the life God is creating. This is why resisting them is not a pleasant option but a necessary part of Christian life.

Honorable Conduct Among the Gentiles

The external side of the exhortation. The word play is important — Peter has just called the Church a holy nation (ethnos), and now he speaks of conduct among the Gentiles (ethnoi). The Church-as-nation lives among the surrounding nations, and how Christians live in that context is visible witness.

The Day of Visitation

A phrase worth unpacking briefly. In the Prophets, the day of visitation is when God comes — sometimes for judgment, sometimes for salvation. Peter seems to envision some hostile observers eventually being brought to faith by what they have seen in Christian lives. This is the slow, quiet work of faithful presence, and it rewards patience. Seeds planted by Christian witness may take years to sprout.

Verses 13-17: Submission to Civil Authorities

The Uncomfortable Context

Name the difficulty directly. Peter writes under the Roman Empire, whose emperor at the time was probably Nero. This is not a benevolent democratic government; it is an imperial autocracy whose policies included significant injustice and, within a few years, active persecution of Christians. And Peter says to be subject for the Lord's sake. This is the hard ground of the passage.

For the Lord's Sake

The crucial phrase. Peter does not ground submission in the authority's virtue but in the Christian's love for the Lord who has ordered human society. This is the Lutheran two-kingdoms insight. Government is God's gift for the preservation of human life in a fallen world, even when individual governments are flawed.

The Limits of Submission

Do not skip this. The call to submission is not unconditional. Acts 5:29 gives the apostolic precedent — when civil authority commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, the Christian obeys God. Martyrs across history have embodied this. If you have time, mention specific historical examples — Christians refusing emperor worship in Rome, German Confessing Church pastors refusing to serve the Nazi state's corruption of Christianity, Chinese and other house-church believers today.

A Teaching Warning

Students may want to apply the limits of submission specifically to their political opponents — the officials of the other party, the laws they disagree with. Gently resist this. Peter's submission call is primarily to one's own conduct in the ordinary structures of society, not a tool for declaring oneself exempt from laws one disagrees with. The limits of submission apply when a law requires sin or forbids faithfulness to Christ, not when a law is merely unwelcome or unjust in our view. The bar for civil disobedience in Christian tradition is high, and it should not be lowered to fit partisan preference.

Free But Servants

The paradoxical summary. Christians are free — the Gospel has liberated them from sin and Law. But they live as servants of God, which includes honoring the ordinary structures of society. Freedom is not a cover-up for evil. This is a good place to mention that Christian freedom is not the autonomy of the modern individualist; it is the freedom to serve God rightly, including through ordered life in community.

Honor Everyone, Fear God, Honor the Emperor

Note the crucial distinction Peter makes. Everyone receives honor. The brotherhood (the Church) receives love. God alone receives fear (in the reverent, worshipful sense). The emperor receives honor, not fear. The structure matters — the emperor is honored as holder of an office, but he is never to be worshipped or feared as God. This distinction is what made Christians martyrs under imperial persecution: they would honor the emperor but would not sacrifice to him as god. Students living under political leaders they dislike can be reminded that the same structure applies — the office receives honor; the fear that belongs to God cannot be transferred to any human ruler.

Verses 18-20: Servants and Unjust Suffering

Name the Misuse Explicitly

Begin by acknowledging directly that this passage has been misused across history — to defend American chattel slavery, to silence domestic abuse victims, to tell the oppressed they should submit passively. Peter is not teaching what these misuses have claimed. Name it so students can set aside the baggage and hear the text actually.

Ancient Slavery vs. Modern

Briefly distinguish. Roman household servitude was widespread and painful but differed from American chattel slavery in key ways — it was not race-based, many slaves held positions of trust and responsibility, manumission was common. Peter's instructions are to people in a specific ancient institution, not a blanket endorsement of slavery in general. The abolition movement of the nineteenth century, substantially led by Christians, drew on deeper biblical themes (image of

God, Galatians 3:28, the Exodus pattern) to oppose a system that Peter's first readers would also have recognized as different from their own.

The Pastoral Situation

Peter speaks to slaves — actual people in actual households. His pastoral question is how they live faithfully as Christians in a situation they cannot change on their own. Note that his teaching presupposes limits on their power, not a moral endorsement of their condition. He is not telling free people they should become slaves, nor telling masters to be unjust. He is telling those who are already in difficult circumstances how to honor Christ there.

Unjust Suffering as Gracious Before God

This is the heart of the section. Peter does not minimize the injustice — he names it directly, distinguishing just from unjust masters. He does not say the slave's condition is God's will or that suffering is somehow deserved. What he says is that the Christian who suffers unjustly while remaining faithful is doing something that is gracious in God's sight — participating, in a small way, in the pattern that reached its climax at the cross. This is not cheap comfort. It is a real theological insight into what faithful endurance accomplishes.

The Critical Application Note

Peter is speaking to people who cannot escape their circumstances. His teaching should not be applied to tell victims of abuse to stay in abusive situations when they can leave. Civil submission itself, properly understood, supports calling law enforcement, pursuing legal protection, and separating from abusers — because civil authorities are themselves God's instruments for restraining evil. A wife suffering physical abuse should call the police and seek safety; a worker in a hostile environment should pursue legal remedies; a child being harmed should be protected. The teaching on faithful endurance is for circumstances that cannot be changed, not for circumstances where Christians have been given means to seek help. Make this explicit in your teaching.

Verses 21-25: Christ as Example

Called to This

The transition sentence. For to this you have been called. The Christian life is not an accident or a misfortune; it is a calling, and the calling includes the pattern of suffering that Christ walked before us. The call is specifically to follow in His steps. The Greek word for example (hypogrammos) was used for the tracing patterns children used to learn to write — the letters they would trace over to learn the shapes. Peter is saying that Christ has traced a pattern that we trace over in our own lives, learning the shape of faithful existence by following His.

No Sin, No Deceit

The innocence of Christ is essential. He did not suffer for His own failures. This is the deep pastoral comfort for those who suffer unjustly — they are not being punished by God for their sins; they are participating in the pattern of the innocent one who suffered ahead of them. Note also the language is from Isaiah 53 — 'no deceit was found in His mouth' is a direct allusion. Peter's whole Christological section reads Isaiah 53 as fulfilled in Christ.

No Retaliation

The hardest verse in the passage to apply. Christ received the reviling without reviling back. He received the suffering without threatening. The natural human response — to return evil for evil, to threaten when threatened, to match wound for wound — is not what Christ did, and not what Peter calls us to do. Instead, Christ continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. This is the verb tense worth highlighting — an ongoing action, not a single act. Christ kept on entrusting Himself, throughout the suffering, to the Father who would judge rightly in the end.

The Substitution at the Heart

Do not hurry past this. 'He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.' This is the Gospel in pure form. Christ did not only leave us an example; He accomplished our salvation. The substitutionary atonement is here — He bore our sins in His body, in our place, as our substitute. And the purpose is transformation

— that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. The Gospel and the call to new life are held together inseparably.

By His Wounds Healed

The paradox. Wounds heal. What looked like catastrophe at the cross was actually the means of salvation. For Christians who suffer now and cannot see how it can ever be redeemed, this is a pattern to hold onto. The cross teaches us that God can bring salvation out of what looks like defeat. If He can bring our healing out of Christ's wounds, He can bring good out of our small sufferings too.

Returning to the Shepherd

The closing image. Straying sheep returning to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. This reframes everything. The sufferings Peter has been discussing are the sufferings of sheep who have come home. Whatever happens in this age, the sheep are under the Shepherd's care. The image should land warmly with your class — it is pastoral care of the deepest sort, and it is the note on which Peter chooses to end.

Connecting to the Lord's Supper

The Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep is the Shepherd we encounter in the Supper. Every time your students come to the altar, they are returning to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls, receiving from His own body and blood the grace that sustains them through all the sufferings of ordinary life. For a congregation that observes the Supper frequently, this is a natural connection to make. The ethical endurance Peter describes is fed every week by the Eucharistic return to the Shepherd.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

Does this passage mean I should stay in an abusive situation?

No. Absolutely not. Peter writes to people who cannot change their circumstances, counseling them how to remain faithful within those circumstances. He does not teach that Christians should refuse help when help is available. In the modern world, civil authorities provide legal protection against abuse, and seeking that protection is itself consistent with Peter's teaching on civil authority as God's instrument for restraining evil. A Christian suffering abuse should seek safety, call law enforcement if appropriate, and work with trusted pastors, counselors, or family members to establish protection. The call to endure unjust suffering is for circumstances that cannot be changed, not for circumstances where God has provided means to seek help.

If Peter calls us to submit to civil authority, how do we ever oppose unjust laws?

The same way Christians have always opposed unjust laws — through the ordinary means the political order provides for change (voting, advocacy, legal challenge, civil action), while continuing to honor the structure of government as God's ordering of society. The limits of submission (Acts 5:29 — 'we must obey God rather than men') apply when civil authority commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands. Short of that threshold, Christians disagree with policies, work to change them through legitimate means, and continue to live under the structure of government. The classical example is paying taxes we disagree with the use of — Jesus' instruction to 'render to Caesar what is Caesar's' covers this territory. We have no apostolic warrant for simply refusing to comply with laws we dislike.

How is Peter's teaching to slaves not an endorsement of slavery?

Peter addresses slaves pastorally, not because he endorses their situation, but because they exist in his congregations and need pastoral care for their actual

circumstances. Similar pastoral counsel in the New Testament — Paul's letter to Philemon, for example, which gently but firmly asks a master to receive a runaway slave back as a brother — shows the direction Christian teaching was taking. The full implications of Christian theology (image of God, Galatians 3:28, the Exodus pattern, the priesthood of all the baptized) eventually led to the abolition of slavery, substantially through Christian effort. Peter's pastoral counsel to slaves in his own day is not the whole Christian teaching on slavery; it is specific pastoral care for a specific situation.

Jesus turned over tables in the Temple. How is that consistent with 'did not retaliate when reviled'?

The temple cleansing was prophetic action on behalf of the honor of the Father's house, not personal retaliation for wrongs suffered. Jesus acted, in that moment, as the Lord of the Temple, defending what belonged to His Father. Peter's point in our passage is about how Christ responded to the abuse He personally suffered — during His trial, His mockery, His scourging, His crucifixion. In these, He did not retaliate. The distinction is between prophetic zeal for God's honor (which can include strong action) and personal retaliation for injuries received (which the Christian is called to forgo). Both patterns are in Christ's life, and both should shape Christian practice — we act zealously for God's honor where appropriate, and we refuse retaliation for wrongs done to us personally.

What does 'the day of visitation' mean?

A phrase drawn from the Prophets, referring to a day when God comes to His people — sometimes for judgment, sometimes for salvation. In this context, Peter seems to have in mind a day when some of those who currently slander Christians will themselves come to recognize what they have seen in Christian lives, and glorify God. The witness of faithful Christian life is not wasted even when it seems ignored; it plants seeds in the consciousness of observers that may bear fruit at the Lord's appointed time. This is a helpful frame for Christians who work in hostile environments and wonder if their witness matters.

Why does Peter quote Isaiah 53 so heavily?

Because Isaiah 53 is, arguably, the most important Old Testament passage for understanding the suffering of Christ. The Servant who bore the sins of many, who was pierced for our transgressions, who was crushed for our iniquities, who by His wounds healed us — this is Isaiah's portrait of the Messiah, written seven centuries before Christ, and fulfilled at the cross. Peter had clearly meditated on Isaiah 53 deeply, and he draws on it repeatedly in this passage. For students who want to understand Peter's Christology, directing them to Isaiah 53 is one of the best single steps you can offer. Reading Isaiah 52:13-53:12 alongside 1 Peter 2:21-25 will illuminate both passages enormously.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question for this session. The material is weighty, and one well-chosen question will serve better than rushing through multiple. Some notes:

Question 1 — Sojourner tension in your own life

A gentle opening question that invites students to name where they experience cultural tension. Good for classes new to the exile frame.

Question 2 — Civil submission and the limits

Theologically rich, politically sensitive. Use with care; in polarized political moments, this question can devolve into partisan venting. If you use it, keep the focus on the Christian's own conduct rather than the failings of political opponents.

Question 3 — Reading the slavery passage today

The most important question pastorally, especially given how this passage has been misused. Worth using if your class has the maturity and trust to handle it well. Not the best opening session question for a new class.

Question 4 — Entrusting yourself to Him who judges justly

The deep personal application of the passage. Students often have real situations in mind — difficult work relationships, family tensions, public disputes. This can surface significant pastoral needs; be ready to follow up individually.

Question 5 — Following in Christ's steps

A theologically careful question that acknowledges the difficulty of applying Christ's example directly. Good for classes that have been wrestling with how the New Testament commands apply to us.

Question 6 — The Shepherd and the sheep

The most pastoral question, ending with the image of being under the Shepherd's care. Good closing question for a session that has covered heavy material.

A Recommendation

For a class with any members currently in difficult work, family, or church situations, Question 4 or Question 6 will land most helpfully. For a class ready for deep theological wrestling, Question 3 is the most important question we can ask of this passage in our own day. Whichever you choose, be ready to hear pastoral needs that may require follow-up conversation after class.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- The sojourner framing of verses 11-12 (briefly).
- The 'for the Lord's sake' grounding of civil submission (v. 13) and the distinction between honor and fear (v. 17).
- A brief, careful treatment of the slavery passage — emphasizing that Peter speaks to people who cannot change their circumstances, not endorsing oppression.
- The entire Christological section (vv. 21-25). Do not cut this.
- One discussion question.
- Closing prayer and Session 6 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- The inward war on the soul (v. 11). Mention, do not develop.
- Detailed unpacking of the day of visitation. The phrase is beautiful but not essential to the teaching.
- Extended examples of historical civil disobedience. Give one, skip the rest.
- Detailed Roman social-history background on slavery. Summarize in one sentence and move on.
- The limits-of-submission exception. Name briefly, skip the theological development.

The Single Non-Negotiable

Verses 21-25, the Christological heart, cannot be cut. This is where the ethical demands of the passage find their grounding and their healing. If you teach the ethics without the Christology, you have taught moralism, not the Gospel. Protect this section at all costs.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Isaiah 52:13 — 53:12.** The Suffering Servant Song that saturates Peter's Christological section. Read this before you teach.
- **Romans 13:1-7.** Paul's parallel treatment of civil submission. Compare similarities and differences.
- **Acts 5:17-42.** The apostolic precedent for the limits of civil submission. 'We must obey God rather than men.'
- **Philemon.** Paul's short letter to a Christian slaveholder about receiving Onesimus back. Complements Peter's pastoral approach to slavery.
- **Matthew 5:38-48.** Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teaching on non-retaliation, which stands behind Peter's application.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Luther, 'Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed' (1523, LW Vol. 45).** The foundational Lutheran treatment of two-kingdoms theology in political application.
- **Augsburg Confession, Article XVI on Civil Government.** The Confessional statement. Brief but essential.
- **Luther, 'The Freedom of a Christian' (1520).** Luther's classical treatment of Christian freedom and its relation to ordinary service. Relevant to Peter's 'free but servants' paradox.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Strong on the social-historical context of Roman slavery and the submission passages.

A Final Word

You teach a difficult passage this week, but one of the richest in the letter. The pastoral care you extend to your students in how you handle the submission and slavery passages will shape how they read Scripture for years to come. Do not rush. Do not soften the hard edges. Do not let the passage be weaponized against the vulnerable. And do not let the ethical demands stand apart from the Christological center, where the suffering Savior bore our sins, healed us with His wounds, and brought us home to the Shepherd.

Pay particular attention to any students who may be suffering unjustly — in difficult work situations, in strained family relationships, in political discouragement. This passage is for them, but only if taught rightly. The suffering is not denied. The injustice is not minimized. And yet, in the middle of it all, the Shepherd is keeping His sheep, and the pattern Christ walked is the pattern that leads through the suffering to glory.

Next week, Peter turns to marriage, with a passage that requires similar care in the modern context. The teaching is delicate — to wives about submission and inward adornment, to husbands about understanding and honor. Begin preparing now, as the passage is dense with both pastoral value and pastoral risk.

May the Lord bless your teaching, and may the Shepherd who keeps all our souls guide you and your students through this weighty session.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Six

Marriage and the Hidden Person

1 Peter 3:1-7

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Six. This is one of the most delicate passages in the letter to teach, for all the obvious reasons. Peter addresses marriage directly, in a cultural moment when questions about marriage and gender are deeply contested. The passage has been misused across history to silence women and to justify abuse. It has also been dismissed or explained away in ways that avoid taking the text seriously. Your job is to do neither — to take the text seriously as pastoral counsel for actual Christian households, to honor what it says and what it does not say, and to apply it faithfully to marriages in your students' lives.

Three things to keep in mind as you prepare. First, Peter addresses a specific situation — Christian wives married to unbelieving husbands in a first-century household structure that differs substantially from modern Western marriage. Without locating the teaching in its context, you cannot understand what Peter is actually saying. Second, the deeper principles beneath the specific instructions are timeless — the inward beauty of the gentle and quiet spirit, the call to husbands to live with wives in an understanding way, the shared inheritance of grace that grounds the whole. These principles apply to every Christian marriage. Third, the pastoral risks are real. Students may be in marriages where this teaching has been weaponized against them. Students may be unmarried and listening with particular attention to what Christian marriage means. Students may be divorced, widowed, or single, and the way you handle the passage should honor their circumstances too.

Pay attention especially to the distinction between what Peter says and what he is often assumed to say. He does not say women are spiritually inferior to men (he says the opposite — heirs together). He does not say wives should accept abuse (he addresses women who cannot change their circumstances, not women who have been given means of protection). He does not define femininity as silence or passivity (gentleness and quietness in biblical usage mean something specific that is not weakness). Clearing the misreadings away is a significant part of teaching this passage well.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Christian wives are called to the inward beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which God prizes above external adornment, winning even unbelieving husbands by faithful conduct; Christian husbands are called to live with their wives in understanding, honoring them, remembering they are heirs together of the grace of life — and all of this is a priestly vocation offered to God through Christ.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Six of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 3:1-7 multiple times, slowly. Notice that verses 1-6 address wives (six verses) and verse 7 addresses husbands (one verse). The balance of attention is worth observing.
- Read Genesis 18:1-15. This is the passage where Sarah laughs at the promise of Isaac and calls Abraham 'my lord.' Peter's reference to Sarah draws on this scene.
- Read Ephesians 5:21-33. Paul's parallel treatment of marriage provides essential context and fills in what Peter treats briefly.
- Review Luther's treatise 'The Estate of Marriage' (1522). Luther's recovery of marriage as a holy vocation is foundational for Lutheran thinking here.
- Review the Small Catechism's treatment of the Sixth Commandment (in the Ten Commandments section) and the Table of Duties section.
- Pray. Pray specifically for any students in difficult marriages, for any whose marriages have ended in divorce, and for any unmarried students who may find this passage either encouraging or discouraging.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Four theological points come into view in this passage:

- **Marriage as priestly vocation.** Every faithful act within the calling of marriage is spiritual sacrifice offered to God through Christ. This is the Lutheran recovery of vocation applied specifically to marriage.
- **Inward beauty over external.** The hidden person of the heart with the gentle and quiet spirit is what God prizes. This is a dignifying word for women in every age against cultural pressures to locate worth in appearance.
- **Spiritual equality of husbands and wives.** They are heirs together of the grace of life. Whatever social ordering a given culture gives to marriage, the spiritual equality of spouses is absolute and non-negotiable.
- **Horizontal relationship affects vertical.** The husband who mistreats his wife will find his prayers hindered. The Christian's relationship with God is

affected by his treatment of his spouse. This is a sobering principle and it applies to all Christians, not only husbands.

The Most Important Pastoral Caution

This passage must not be used to keep anyone in an abusive marriage. Peter addresses Christian wives in circumstances they could not change — a first-century wife did not have legal protection, divorce rights (in most cases), or social recourse against an unjust husband. The modern Christian wife has those resources, and using them to seek safety is consistent with Peter's broader teaching on civil authority as God's instrument for restraining evil. If any student in your class shows signs of being in an abusive marriage, do not let this teaching become a barrier to their seeking help. State explicitly, if necessary, that faithful endurance of suffering is not the same as remaining in danger when protection is available.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 5
0:05–0:15	The context of Peter's teaching (vv. 1-2)
0:15–0:27	The hidden person of the heart (vv. 3-4)
0:27–0:35	Sarah as example (vv. 5-6)
0:35–0:52	To the husbands (v. 7) — spend real time here
0:52–0:58	Marriage as priestly vocation — summary and discussion
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 7 assignment



Where to Slow Down

Give verse 7 more time than its single-verse length suggests. The instruction to husbands is the most counter-cultural part of the passage in the ancient world, and it carries the theological weight of the whole — spiritual equality, the call to honor, the connection between marriage and prayer. If your class skews male, or if students tend to focus on the verses to wives, balance the scales by giving husband-directed material its proper weight.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 1-2: To Wives Married to Unbelievers

Establishing the Specific Context

Open by establishing the primary pastoral situation Peter has in mind — Christian wives married to non-Christian husbands. This was common in the early Church, where the Gospel often reached women before men, and it was socially disruptive. In the ancient world, the expectation was that the whole household would share the religion of the head. A Christian wife in a pagan household was in a delicate position. Peter's counsel is specifically for her.

Submission in Context

The call to submission uses the same vocabulary Peter has used throughout — for all Christians toward civil authority, for servants toward masters. It is not a unique imposition on wives; it is part of Peter's larger teaching on faithful living within the structures of ordinary life. That said, the specific social ordering Peter addresses is not identical to modern Western marriage. Most Christian couples today make decisions together, share leadership, and order their households more egalitarianly than first-century Greco-Roman families did.

The Principle vs. the Specific Application

Help your students distinguish. The specific first-century application is a wife conforming to ancient household patterns. The deeper principle — mutual service, willingness to honor and respect the spouse, refusing to make marriage a power struggle — applies across cultures. Lutherans have generally found it acceptable to hold the principle firmly while applying it with pastoral flexibility to the specific patterns of modern marriage. The key is that Christian marriage, in any cultural form, is not a contest for dominance but a priestly vocation of mutual service.

Won Without a Word

Peter's pastoral wisdom. An unbelieving husband is not usually won by pressure, argumentation, or preaching from his wife. He is won — when he is won — by watching her faithfulness over time. This is a patient strategy, and it requires the wife to embody what she is trying to commend. For modern students who know Christian wives in this situation, Peter's counsel remains directly applicable: live faithfully, pray persistently, trust the Lord with the timing, and let your life speak what words cannot.

Verses 3-4: The Hidden Person

External vs. Internal Adornment

Peter is not forbidding braided hair, jewelry, or nice clothing. He is contrasting where the believer's beauty is primarily located. The world looks at the surface. God looks at the heart. Christian women — and men, by extension — are called to invest in the beauty that endures rather than the beauty that fades.

The Hidden Person

The phrase is striking. Peter points to the inner self — the core of who a person is, below the surface. This is what God values, and this is what Christian women are called to cultivate. For students immersed in a culture obsessed with external appearance, this is a liberating word. Your worth is not your appearance. Your worth is the person you are becoming through the Spirit's work — and this beauty is imperishable.

A Gentle and Quiet Spirit

This is where you do your most careful unpacking. Both adjectives are easily misread in the modern context.

Gentle

The Greek word (*praeis*) is the word Jesus uses to describe Himself in Matthew 11:29. It does not mean weak, timid, or submissive in the sense of having no agency. It means strength under control — power used for the good of others rather than for self-assertion. A gentle person is not a doormat. A gentle person has strength and chooses to use it gently. This is a strong word, and it applies to men

and women alike as a Christian virtue. Peter emphasizes it here because the particular cultural pressure on women of his day (as in ours) was often to define worth by other means.

Quiet

The Greek word (*hesychiou*) does not mean literally silent or passive. It means calm of soul, settled in peace, not tossed by every emotional current. A quiet spirit is an inward disposition, not outward behavior. A Christian with a quiet spirit can speak up in public, engage difficult conversations, lead with courage — all while maintaining the inner stillness that comes from Christ's peace ruling within. Do not let students conclude that Peter is calling for literal silence from women; the language is about inward disposition.

Why These Virtues Matter Particularly for Women Here

The cultural pressure on women in the ancient world was to find their worth in external beauty and social performance — hair, jewelry, clothing, the ability to impress. Peter redirects this pressure. Your value, he says, is not located in these passing things. It is located in the inward beauty of the person God is shaping in you. This is not a command for women to be quiet and passive; it is a liberation from the tyranny of the external. The same liberation applies to men, who face different but parallel cultural pressures to locate worth in power, accomplishment, or status. Biblical virtues are for all Christians, though they may be emphasized differently when different cultural pressures apply.

Verses 5-6: The Example of Sarah

Sarah as a Real Person

Peter's choice of Sarah is worth pausing over. She was not a meek or passive figure. She laughed at the angel's promise. She intervened with Hagar in ways the narrative judges rather than endorses. She was complex, flawed, and faithful. Peter does not idealize her; he points to the fundamental orientation of her life — hope in God, partnership with Abraham in the calling they shared. This is what Sarah's daughters imitate.

Calling Him Lord

The reference is to Genesis 18:12, where Sarah, hearing the promise of Isaac, says to herself, 'my lord is old.' This was ordinary ancient spousal respect, not evidence of Sarah being dominated. Peter is not commanding Christian wives to call their husbands lord; he is pointing to the underlying orientation of heart that respects one's husband and works in partnership with him.

Do Not Fear

The crucial close of the section. You are her children if you do good and do not fear. The first-century Christian wife had real reasons for fear — social pressure, abandonment, loss of status. Peter tells her not to let fear control her. Do good. Live faithfully. Entrust yourself to the God who sees. This is a call to courage, not to passivity. The daughter of Sarah is a courageous woman, not a timid one.

Verse 7: To the Husbands

Now you slow down. One verse, but theologically and pastorally dense.

In an Understanding Way

The Greek phrase is literally 'according to knowledge.' The husband is called to know his wife — her personality, her gifts, her struggles, her hopes — and to live with her in ways that take who she actually is seriously. This requires attention over time. It is the opposite of the husband who treats his wife as an accessory or an appliance. Christian husbands are to be attentive, thoughtful, engaged with their wives as whole persons.

The Weaker Vessel

This phrase requires careful handling. Peter does not mean women are morally, spiritually, or intellectually weaker than men. He means physically. Women are, on average, smaller and physically less strong than men. This is a biological observation that does not touch worth or dignity at all. And the instruction that follows is precisely what should follow from this observation — because the wife is physically more vulnerable in this sense, the husband is called to honor her rather than exploit his advantage.

Reading Against the Abuse

This passage has been misread for centuries to support the view that women are inferior to men. That is not what Peter teaches. The 'weaker vessel' language is immediately followed by 'heirs together of the grace of life' — which is an unqualified statement of spiritual equality. The two phrases must be read together. Physical vulnerability calls for masculine honor; spiritual equality makes the wife a full co-heir. Any reading that takes one without the other distorts the passage. For students who have heard this passage used to teach female inferiority, name the misreading directly and correct it.

Heirs Together of the Grace of Life

The theological heart of the husband's instruction. The language of inheritance recalls 1 Peter 1:4 — the imperishable inheritance. Christian wives are full co-heirs of this inheritance. They are not lesser recipients. They are equal before God, equally redeemed, equally called. The husband's honor of his wife rests on this equality. She is not beneath him; she is his sister in Christ and his fellow heir.

That Your Prayers May Not Be Hindered

The sobering close. A husband who mistreats his wife will find his prayers hindered. The horizontal relationship affects the vertical. You cannot be right with God while being wrong with your wife. This is a strong word for Christian men, and it is worth sitting with. The Lord takes the treatment of His daughters seriously. The husband who abuses his position is answering to the God who gave him that position. Do not soften this for the class; it is meant to be sobering.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

Does this passage teach that wives should always submit to husbands, even when husbands are wrong?

No. The teaching on submission operates within the larger framework of submission to God that Peter has established throughout the letter. When a husband commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, the wife's first loyalty is to God, not to her husband. Acts 5:29 applies to marriage as well as to civil authority. Moreover, the submission Peter describes is not a one-way hierarchy; it is located within a relationship where the husband is called to honor the wife as a fellow heir of grace. Any reading of this passage that ignores verse 7 or treats submission as absolute and unconditional has misread the passage.

Does Peter think women are inferior to men?

No. Verse 7 is clear — wives are heirs together with husbands of the grace of life. This is an unqualified statement of spiritual equality. The 'weaker vessel' language refers to physical difference, not to worth, dignity, intelligence, or spiritual standing. Peter's use of Sarah as an example of the ancient matriarchs, Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ there is neither male nor female, and the broader biblical affirmation of women as created in God's image all affirm full spiritual equality. Any reading that derives female inferiority from this passage has misread Peter.

What about modern marriages where leadership is shared more equally?

Lutherans have generally held that the specific social ordering of marriage in any given culture is not the primary theological issue. The primary theological realities are mutual service, willingness to honor and respect the spouse, spiritual equality before God, and the shared inheritance of grace. In the first century, these realities were worked out within a patriarchal household structure. In the modern West, they are typically worked out within a more egalitarian structure. The principles

are timeless; the specific application varies with cultural patterns. A Christian marriage today, whether more traditional or more egalitarian in its household ordering, is faithful to Peter's teaching if husband and wife serve each other in love, honor each other as co-heirs, and maintain the spiritual realities Peter describes.

What if my spouse is not a Christian?

Peter's specific counsel in this passage applies most directly to you. Live faithfully as a Christian. Do not use argumentation or pressure to try to compel faith. Let your conduct speak. Pray persistently. Trust the Lord with the timing. Many Christians in this situation have seen their spouses come to faith after decades of patient witness; others have not, and the Lord's purposes in those marriages are ultimately known only to Him. The call is faithfulness, not guaranteed results. And Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 7 that if the unbelieving spouse is content to remain in the marriage, the believer should not initiate separation. The marriage is a place of Christian witness, and it can be honored even when the other spouse does not share the faith.

What does 'a gentle and quiet spirit' mean for me as a man?

The same inward dispositions are biblical virtues for all Christians. Jesus calls Himself gentle and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29). Paul includes gentleness in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). The 'quiet' or settled inward disposition — being at peace rather than tossed by every current — is also a Christian virtue for everyone. Peter emphasizes these virtues for women in this passage because the particular cultural pressure on women was to find worth in external appearance. The same pressures on men take different forms (power, status, accomplishment), and the same redirection applies — your worth is not located in these passing things but in the hidden person of the heart that the Spirit is shaping.

What about same-sex marriages, divorced Christians, and single Christians?

This passage addresses marriage in its traditional biblical form. The Lutheran tradition, like most of the historic Christian tradition, has affirmed marriage as the union of one man and one woman. This is not the primary topic of this passage, but it is worth acknowledging briefly if it arises. For divorced Christians, the

Lutheran tradition recognizes that divorce, while not God's ideal, sometimes happens in a fallen world; God's grace continues to hold divorced Christians and their futures. For single Christians, the New Testament treats singleness as a legitimate vocation (see 1 Corinthians 7, and Paul's own life) — not a deficiency but a different calling. Peter's passage should not be used to make single or divorced Christians feel their lives are somehow less valid than the married ones.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question for this session. Some notes:

Question 1 — Christians married to unbelievers

A pastorally accessible question. Good opener. Invites concrete prayer and practical support.

Question 2 — The contrast between God's beauty and the world's

A personal and searching question. Often produces powerful reflections, especially from women in the class. Useful for any age range.

Question 3 — What biblical gentleness actually means

Theologically substantive. Good for classes ready to think carefully about virtue language and its misreadings.

Question 4 — Sarah as a real person, not an idealized figure

Gets at an important interpretive principle — biblical examples are not perfected but complex. Useful for students inclined to read Scripture in flat hagiographical terms.

Question 5 — The 'weaker vessel' language rightly understood

Addresses one of the most misused phrases in the passage. Use if your class has the maturity to handle it carefully. Important work when done well.

Question 6 — Marriage's effect on prayer

The deepest and most searching question. For classes with mature married students, this often produces meaningful reflection. Also valuable for single students, who can apply the underlying principle to other primary relationships.

A Recommendation

For a class with many married students, Question 6 is often the most rewarding, as it surfaces real reflection about the spiritual life and its connection to the primary relationship. For a class with mixed situations (married, single, divorced, widowed), Question 2 is accessible to everyone. Question 5 is worth doing if the class has wrestled with this passage before and has received bad teaching from other sources.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- The context note — wives married to unbelievers (vv. 1-2), briefly.
- The inward vs. external adornment teaching (vv. 3-4). Non-negotiable.
- A careful unpacking of gentle and quiet as strength-under-control and settled-inward-peace, not weakness or silence.
- The entire verse 7 — the instruction to husbands. Non-negotiable.
- One discussion question.
- Closing prayer and Session 7 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- Extended social-historical context on first-century households. Mention briefly.
- Detailed treatment of Sarah's example. Summarize and move on.
- The 'do not fear' application. The student book covers it; trust the reader.
- Extended philological discussion of gentle and quiet. Give the corrective and move on.

The Single Non-Negotiable

Do not shortchange verse 7. Even if you must cut everything else, the instruction to husbands — to live with wives in understanding, to honor them, to remember the shared inheritance of grace, or their prayers will be hindered — must be taught. This is the counter-cultural heart of the passage in the ancient context, and it is the theological counterweight that prevents the teaching to wives from being weaponized.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Genesis 18:1-15.** The annunciation of Isaac's birth and Sarah's laughter. Background for Peter's reference to Sarah.
- **Ephesians 5:21-33.** Paul's extended treatment of marriage, including mutual submission (v. 21) and the Christ-Church analogy. Essential companion to Peter's brief treatment.
- **1 Corinthians 7.** Paul's extended pastoral counsel on marriage, including marriage to unbelievers.
- **Proverbs 31.** The Old Testament portrait of the excellent wife. Complements Peter's teaching on the hidden person.
- **Galatians 3:28.** 'In Christ there is neither male nor female.' The foundational Pauline statement of spiritual equality.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Luther, 'The Estate of Marriage' (1522, LW Vol. 45).** Luther's foundational treatise on marriage as a holy vocation. Especially important given Lutheran recovery of marriage from monastic disparagement.
- **Small Catechism, Sixth Commandment.** Luther's brief teaching on the vocation of marriage.
- **Small Catechism, Table of Duties.** The section on husbands and wives, with scriptural references including this passage.
- **Large Catechism, Sixth Commandment.** Luther's extended treatment of marriage as among the highest Christian callings.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Strong on the social-historical context of first-century marriage and the specific situation of Christian wives with unbelieving husbands.

A Final Word

You have taught a sensitive passage. The way you have handled it will shape how your students read difficult biblical texts for years to come. If you have honored the text without weaponizing it, if you have named the abuses of the passage without dismissing its teaching, if you have held spiritual equality and the ordering of marriage together without collapsing either into the other, you have served your students well.

Pay particular attention to any students whose marriages are difficult, who are recently divorced, who are widowed, or who are single and wrestling with what this teaching means for them. This passage speaks into a particular situation, and not all of your students are in that situation. Make space for the complexity of real Christian lives, while honoring the specific wisdom Peter offers to the specific situation he addresses.

Next week we return to Peter's broader teaching on suffering and witness, with a passage that includes the important baptismal teaching of 3:21. This is one of the densest passages in the New Testament, and it rewards careful preparation. Begin thinking now about how you will handle the baptismal section, which has sometimes been sidelined in non-sacramental Christianity but which Peter treats as central.

May the Lord bless your teaching, and may the Christian homes in your congregation be strengthened by the faithful wisdom of the apostle's word.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Seven

Suffering for Righteousness' Sake

1 Peter 3:8-22

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Seven. You are teaching a dense and theologically substantial passage. It contains some of the most important material in the letter — the call to Christian community, the charter verse of Christian apologetics, the Christological heart, the famous but difficult passage about the spirits in prison, and the clearest statement in the New Testament about what Baptism does. Four of these alone could fill an hour. Your job is to serve all of them faithfully without trying to exhaust any one of them.

The pastoral opportunity this week is significant. Many of your students — especially those baptized as infants — may not have been taught a robust theology of Baptism. They may have absorbed the evangelical assumption that Baptism is a public testimony to a faith they already have, rather than a means of grace through which God gives what He promises. Peter's verse twenty-one is the place where this can be recovered in its full Lutheran force. Take your time here. The recovery of a high doctrine of Baptism has shaped more Lutheran spiritual formation than almost any other teaching, and Peter provides the biblical warrant in plain language.

The difficult passage about the spirits in prison (vv. 19-20) is worth a careful, measured approach. Be honest about the interpretive uncertainty. Do not pretend to resolve questions that the Church has debated for two thousand years. The Lutheran tradition has generally held to the *descensus ad inferos* — Christ's descent to the place of the dead — while leaving the details of what happened there in appropriate mystery. Your students deserve honesty about what we know and what we don't.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Christians who belong to the suffering and risen Christ — the righteous one who died for the unrighteous to bring us to God, and who now reigns at the right hand with all powers subjected to Him — are equipped by their

Baptism and their union with Him to live as a distinct community in the world, blessing rather than retaliating, always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with gentleness and respect.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Seven of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 3:8-22 multiple times. Note the passage's internal movement — community virtues (vv. 8-12), response to mistreatment (vv. 13-17), Christological grounding (vv. 18-22).
- Read Psalm 34 in full. Peter draws on it repeatedly across the letter, and seeing the whole Psalm will deepen your understanding of what he is doing.
- Read Luther's Small Catechism, Part Four on Baptism. This is the foundation for your teaching of verse 21.
- Read Luther's Large Catechism, Part Four on Baptism. The extended treatment is especially rich.
- Review Augsburg Confession Article IX on Baptism. Brief but authoritative.
- If you have time, read Luther's Treatise on Baptism (1519) for his early formulation. It is theologically formative even before the Small Catechism.
- Pray, specifically for students who may have lost confidence in their Baptism, those who are facing pressure to give a defense of their faith, and those wrestling with difficult passages of Scripture.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Five theological points come into view in this passage:

- **Christian community marked by specific virtues.** Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind. These are what the congregation looks like when the Spirit is at work.
- **Blessing rather than retaliating.** The Christian response to mistreatment is to bless. This is the pattern of Christ applied to the believer's ordinary relationships.
- **Always ready to give a defense.** The biblical foundation of all Christian apologetics. The Christian should know her hope and be able to articulate it, with gentleness and respect.

- **Christ's substitutionary atonement and cosmic victory.** The righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. He has gone into heaven, with all powers subjected to Him.
- **Baptism as a means of grace.** Baptism now saves you. Not as a merely external washing, but as the appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection. This is the biblical ground of the Lutheran sacramental teaching.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Do not let the difficult passage about the spirits in prison consume the session. Many teachers spend most of their time there, and then arrive at Baptism with no time left. Give the spirits-in-prison material honest but brief treatment. Protect your time for verse 21. The baptismal teaching is where the session lands pastorally and theologically, and if you have to shortchange something, it should not be this.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 6
0:05–0:15	Qualities of Christian community (vv. 8-12)
0:15–0:22	Suffering for righteousness' sake (vv. 13-17)
0:22–0:32	Making a defense with gentleness (v. 15)
0:32–0:40	Christ's suffering and descent (vv. 18-20)
0:40–0:54	Baptism now saves you (v. 21) — the climax
0:54–0:58	Christ at the right hand; discussion (v. 22, 1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 8 assignment



Where to Slow Down

Verse 21 is the heart. Give it fifteen minutes if you can. The Baptism section is where the Lutheran confession of the sacraments meets its clearest biblical warrant, and your students may never have been taught it this clearly.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 8-12: The Qualities of Christian Community

Read the whole passage aloud first. Then note how Peter opens with the general address — 'Finally, all of you.' The previous sections have addressed specific groups (wives, husbands, servants). Now he speaks to the whole congregation.

The Five Qualities

Walk briefly through the five. Unity of mind is common direction, not uniformity. Sympathy is feeling-with. Brotherly love is the familial bond. A tender heart is softness that stays sensitive. A humble mind is the low view of self that frees us to serve. These are worth naming individually; each describes something real about Christian community at its best.

Bless Rather Than Retaliate

The call is counter-cultural in every age. Ordinary human instinct is to return evil for evil. The Christian instinct is to bless. This is not natural virtue; it is the fruit of the new birth.

Psalm 34 Quotation

Peter grounds the exhortation in Scripture. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. God sees both sides of every dispute, which is why Christians do not need to retaliate — God is already on the watch. This is freeing rather than passivizing.

Verses 13-17: Suffering for Righteousness' Sake

Who Will Harm You?

Be careful with the rhetorical question. Peter is not promising that faithful Christians will always be safe. He is making the deeper claim that nothing can ultimately harm what is deepest about the Christian. The body may be harmed; the soul is kept by the Shepherd. The life may be taken; the life hid with Christ cannot be taken.

Have No Fear; Honor Christ as Lord

The redirection is classic. Fear of man is replaced by fear of Christ. When Christ is honored as Lord in the heart, human threats lose their power to terrorize. This is a practical teaching, not just a theoretical one — when the Christian's priorities are rightly ordered, the ordinary fears that grip the world lose their grip on the believer.

Verse 15: The Charter of Christian Apologetics

Unpack the verse slowly. Three elements.

When Someone Asks

The occasion is a question, not an ambush. Christians are called to be ready, but the giving of the defense happens in response to genuine inquiry. This is important to distinguish from aggressive proselytizing, which is not what Peter has in mind.

A Reason for the Hope

The content is hope-focused. The Christian should know what she hopes for and why. The inheritance imperishable. The resurrection. The return of Christ. The Small Catechism is the Lutheran tool for teaching these basics in a form the ordinary Christian can carry with her.

Gentleness and Respect

The manner matters. The Christian apologist is a witness, not a debater. The gentleness and respect are not tactical; they are part of the witness itself. A triumphalist Christian apologetic contradicts its own content, because the content is the Gospel of the Lamb.

A Pastoral Application

For students who feel unprepared to give a defense, don't shame them. The call is to become prepared. Point them to the Small Catechism as a resource — it is small enough to carry and to absorb, and it covers exactly what Peter says the Christian should know. For students who feel equipped but sometimes come across as combative in their apologetics, the gentleness-and-respect clause is worth returning to. Winning an argument is not the same as bearing witness.

Verses 18-20: Christ's Suffering and the Spirits in Prison

The Substitutionary Atonement

Verse 18 is one of the clearest atonement verses in the New Testament. Walk through it slowly. Christ also suffered — the Christian's suffering connected to His. Once for sins — singular, complete, unrepeatable. The righteous for the unrighteous — substitution. That He might bring us to God — relational reconciliation is the goal. Put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit — death and resurrection as the single saving event.

The Spirits in Prison

Acknowledge the difficulty openly. This is one of the most debated passages in the New Testament, and the Church has held various interpretations across history.

The main views:

- Christ descended to the place of the dead between His death and resurrection, proclaiming His victory to the spirits held there (classical Lutheran view, drawing on the Apostles' Creed).
- Christ's pre-incarnate Spirit preached through Noah to the disobedient of that generation, who are now spirits in prison.
- Christ proclaimed His triumph to fallen angelic powers at His resurrection or ascension.

Do not try to resolve what the Church has left unresolved. What matters for the passage's argument is the connection Peter is making to the Flood — Noah and his family brought safely through water — which sets up the Baptism teaching in verse 21.

Lutheran Perspective on the Descent

The Lutheran Confessions (Formula of Concord Article IX) treat the descent as a real event — Christ descended to hell after His death — though they are cautious about speculating on the details. The Apostles' Creed affirms it.

Luther himself considered the precise mechanics mysterious and counseled against too much speculation. For your class, this is the appropriate posture — affirm the reality of what the Creed teaches, acknowledge the mystery of details, resist the temptation to make this verse bear more weight than its purpose in Peter's argument.

Verse 21: Baptism Now Saves You

Slow down. This is where you spend your best time.

Baptism Saves

The plain sense of Peter's words. Not Baptism symbolizes salvation. Not Baptism pictures salvation. Baptism saves. This is the biblical warrant for the Lutheran high doctrine of the sacrament.

Not a Removal of Dirt

Peter anticipates the objection that this makes salvation a merely external ritual. It does not. The power of Baptism is not in the physical water. The water is ordinary water. The power is in the Word of God joined to the water, which is the Word of the Creator who makes what He speaks.

An Appeal to God for a Good Conscience

The Greek is difficult. What seems most consistent with the grammar is that Baptism is the place where the baptized person, by the promise of the Gospel, appeals to God and receives from Him a good conscience — the cleansed standing that only God can give. This is not a claim about the baptized person's subjective state; it is a claim about what God does through the sacrament.

Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The efficacy is grounded in the resurrection. Baptism unites the baptized to Christ's death and resurrection. Paul develops this at length in Romans 6. Peter states it compactly. The power of Baptism is the power of the risen Christ, applied to the individual through the Word and water.

Connecting to the Small Catechism

Luther's teaching in the Small Catechism is directly grounded in this verse. 'It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such Word of God in the water.' Consider walking your class through the Small Catechism's four questions on Baptism — What is Baptism? What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow? How can water do such great things? What does such baptizing with water indicate? Each corresponds directly to something in 1 Peter 3:21.

A Pastoral Word on Remembering Baptism

For students baptized as infants who have no memory of it, this teaching is especially important. Your Baptism is real. The Word was spoken over you. The water was applied in the name of the Triune God. Whatever has happened in your life since then — doubts, wanderings, sins, recoveries — your Baptism remains. Luther's counsel in the Catechism was to remember your Baptism daily, especially when the devil accuses. You have been named by Christ. No accusation can undo what He has done.

Verse 22: Christ at the Right Hand

The closing image. Christ has gone into heaven, is at the right hand of God, with all angels, authorities, and powers subjected to Him. For Peter's suffering readers, this was the deepest comfort. Whatever the immediate threats looked like, Christ is Lord. The enemies that appear so powerful have already been subjected. The Christian lives in the overlap of the ages, and the outcome has been secured.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

If Baptism saves, why do Christians who are baptized still sin?

Because the old Adam is not instantly eliminated at Baptism. The Christian lives in tension between the new life received in Baptism and the old self that continues to pull at us until death. Luther's image of Baptism as daily dying and rising is exactly right. We do not receive Baptism once and then graduate from it; we live out of it, returning to what was given there, letting the old self be drowned and the new self emerge, day by day. The Christian life is Baptismal life, not merely post-Baptismal life. If sin remains in the baptized, this is not because Baptism has failed; it is because the full consummation of what Baptism has given is still to come.

What about someone who was baptized and then fell away? Does their Baptism still count?

Lutherans confess that Baptism remains valid. The objective gift does not depend on the recipient's continued faith. A baptized person who has fallen away is not un-baptized; he is a baptized person who has rejected the grace he received. When such a person returns to the faith, he does not need to be re-baptized. His Baptism is re-received, in a sense — the Word that was spoken over him continues to be true, and he returns to live out of what he was given. Luther was strong on this: when you are baptized, you are baptized. The devil cannot undo what God has done, and neither can your own wandering.

How does infant Baptism work if the infant doesn't know what's happening?

The power of Baptism is the Word of God, not the recipient's cognitive understanding. God promises to give the forgiveness of sins, the new birth, and the gift of the Spirit to all who are baptized in His name. He makes no age qualification. Infants are included in the promises of God — Jesus Himself said 'let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.' The objection that infants cannot believe misunderstands the

nature of faith. Faith is not primarily a cognitive achievement; it is trust created by the Holy Spirit through the Word, and the Spirit can work trust in an infant as easily as in an adult. The infant's inability to articulate faith does not mean the infant lacks it; it simply means the infant cannot yet articulate what the Spirit has given.

Didn't Jesus say we need to believe AND be baptized? Doesn't that mean faith has to come first?

Mark 16:16 says 'whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.' Notice what it does not say — it does not say 'whoever is baptized without believing first will be condemned.' The condemnation is for unbelief, not for unaccompanied Baptism. And the second clause is about unbelief, not about the order of events. Lutherans read this as saying that faith and Baptism normally go together in adult converts, but it does not rule out Baptism prior to articulate faith. For infants, the Baptism is the instrument through which the Spirit creates the faith that will grow into articulate confession. For adults, the faith and Baptism usually come together as the person receives the Gospel and enters the Church.

What exactly happens at the descent of Christ?

The Church has affirmed the reality of the descent (it is in the Apostles' Creed) without reaching consensus on the details. The most measured statement is that Christ, between His death and resurrection, descended to the realm of the dead, and that His descent was part of His victory over death — the place where death's domain was entered by its conqueror. What precisely happened there, what He proclaimed and to whom, remains one of the genuine mysteries of the faith. Lutherans hold to the reality of the descent without speculating beyond what Scripture and the Creed give us. Your students should know that this is an area where humility before mystery is appropriate.

What if I don't know how to give a defense of my faith?

Then your work is to become prepared. Peter does not expect instant eloquence; he expects the kind of readiness that grows from catechesis, continued learning, and prayer. Start with the Small Catechism if you are Lutheran. It covers exactly

what Peter names — the creed, the commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments. These are the basics of the faith, and the Christian who knows them well has what is needed to give a reason for the hope that is in her. Beyond the Catechism, the ordinary life of the Church — Sunday worship, Bible study, adult education — continues to equip the Christian to answer questions as they arise.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question for this session. Notes:

Question 1 — The five community qualities

Accessible and personal. Invites honest self-examination about the state of the congregation and one's own contribution to it.

Question 2 — Blessing rather than retaliating

Often produces real stories from students' lives. Useful for practical application.

Question 3 — Preparedness to give a defense

Potentially shaming if handled poorly, very useful if handled well. Frame as an invitation to grow, not as a test of current readiness.

Question 4 — Gentleness and respect in apologetics

Good for classes that have encountered aggressive apologetics and want a healthier model.

Question 5 — Lutheran confession of Baptism

The theologically rich question. Best for this session. Students from evangelical backgrounds often have real reflection here.

Question 6 — Christ at the right hand as the frame

A good closing reflection question. Less demanding than Question 5 but still substantial.

A Recommendation

Question 5 is the most valuable for this session, given how central the Baptism teaching is. Students from non-sacramental backgrounds may need time to process a high doctrine of Baptism, and the discussion is a good

place for this. If the class has been heavy on the Baptism teaching, Question 6 provides a lighter closing reflection.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- A brief overview of the community virtues (vv. 8-12).
- The charter verse of apologetics — verse 15 — with its three elements.
- Verse 18 — Christ's substitutionary atonement.
- The entire verse 21 on Baptism. Do not cut.
- One discussion question — Question 5 recommended.
- Closing prayer and Session 8 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- The extended Psalm 34 discussion. Mention but do not unpack.
- The 'who will harm you' material. Summarize and move on.
- The spirits-in-prison passage. Be honest about the difficulty and move on quickly.
- Verse 22 on Christ at the right hand. Mention in summary if time permits.

The Single Non-Negotiable

Verse 21 must be taught. Baptism now saves you is the clearest statement in the New Testament of what Lutherans confess about the sacrament, and this may be the only Bible class where your students have ever been taught it in its full force. If you must cut everything else, protect verse 21.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Psalm 34.** The Psalm Peter quotes, read in full.
- **Romans 6:1-11.** Paul's parallel teaching on Baptism as union with Christ's death and resurrection. Essential companion to 1 Peter 3:21.
- **Matthew 28:18-20.** The Great Commission. Baptism as the means by which disciples are made.
- **Acts 2:38-41.** Peter's Pentecost sermon and the first mass Baptism. The pattern of the New Testament Church.
- **Genesis 6-9.** The Flood narrative that Peter uses as the framework for his Baptism teaching.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Small Catechism, Part Four on Baptism.** The foundational Lutheran teaching. Brief, classical, essential.
- **Large Catechism, Part Four on Baptism.** Luther's extended treatment. Rich, pastoral, thorough.
- **Augsburg Confession, Article IX on Baptism.** Brief but authoritative.
- **Formula of Concord, Article IX on the Descent of Christ to Hell.** For students asking about the spirits in prison passage.
- **Luther, 'The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism' (1519).** Luther's early treatment, theologically formative.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment, especially valuable on 3:21.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Strong on the spirits-in-prison passage and the Baptism teaching.

A Final Word

You have taught a passage of extraordinary theological density this week. The challenge was to serve all of it without trying to exhaust any of it. If you have given your students a clearer sense of the virtues of Christian community, a readiness to give a defense of their hope with gentleness and respect, a deeper grasp of Christ's substitutionary work, and — above all — a robust Lutheran confession of what Baptism does, you have served them well.

Pay particular attention to any students whose confidence in their Baptism has been shaken, whether by fall from faith, by teaching from non-sacramental traditions, or by spiritual attack from the devil. Peter's verse 21 is for them especially. Your Baptism is real. The Word was spoken. The water was applied. You belong to Christ, and nothing can undo what He has done.

Next week we continue with Peter's teaching on Christian suffering, as he writes about being done with sin, living no longer for human passions, and being ready for the end of all things that is at hand. It is another substantial passage, and it builds directly on what you have taught this week.

May the Lord bless your teaching, and may the Baptism Peter proclaims stand as the unshakable ground beneath everything you and your students are and do.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Eight

The End of All Things Is at Hand

1 Peter 4:1-19

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Eight. This is a long passage — nineteen verses covering a lot of ground — and it repays careful attention. You are teaching eschatology, ethics, spiritual gifts, and the theology of Christian suffering all in one hour. The common thread is living in the last days: how the Christian's conduct, community, and use of gifts all bend toward the consummation that is already at hand.

The pastoral opportunity this week is to help students receive the 'fiery trial' teaching as a reframe rather than a discouragement. Many Christians carry an unspoken assumption that faithful living should produce smoother circumstances — that if life is hard, something must be wrong with their faith. Peter directly contradicts this. Do not be surprised at the fiery trial. The Christian who expects suffering is not pessimistic; he is realistic, and he is ready. The one who is blindsided by suffering will struggle more than the one who has been warned.

A note on the eschatological urgency: Peter says the end of all things is at hand. Two thousand years later, this language can feel strained. Help students understand the New Testament frame — the last days began with Christ's first coming and continue until His return. The urgency is not dependent on a date; it is the disposition appropriate to those who know the consummation could come at any moment. Peter is not date-setting. He is calling for the ethical seriousness that matches the theological reality of life between the first and second comings.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Because the end of all things is at hand, Christians live in the present age with a particular shape — armed with Christ's mind, no longer living for the old passions, self-controlled and sober-minded in prayer, earnest in love, hospitable, faithful stewards of the Spirit's varied gifts, and ready to rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Christ — entrusting themselves to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Eight of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 4:1-19 multiple times. Notice how Peter weaves eschatology (vv. 7, 17) with ethics (vv. 1-6, 7-11) and suffering (vv. 12-19).
- Read Romans 12:1-21. Paul's parallel teaching on Christian living after the renewing of the mind. Useful companion.
- Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 on spiritual gifts for fuller treatment than Peter gives.
- Review Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism — the Spirit calling, gathering, enlightening, sanctifying, and keeping the Church. This is the theological frame behind Peter's teaching on the varied gifts.
- Review Augsburg Confession Article XVII on Christ's return to judgment. The biblical eschatology Peter draws on.
- Pray, particularly for students who may be in the middle of fiery trials right now.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Five theological points come into view in this passage:

- **The mind of Christ as Christian armor.** The willingness to suffer for what is right, embodied in the baptized life, is the defense against accommodation to the world's patterns.
- **Break with the former life.** Peter's list of the old patterns (sensuality, passions, drunkenness, idolatry) is specific. The Christian has made a decisive turn, and the ongoing life of the baptized reflects that turn.
- **Eschatological urgency.** The end of all things is at hand. This shapes how Christians pray, love, host, and serve. Not frenzy but steady seriousness.
- **Spiritual gifts for the body.** Speaking and serving gifts, both used by the strength God supplies, all oriented toward God's glory through Jesus Christ.

- **Fiery trial as sharing Christ's sufferings.** The Christian who suffers for Christ's name is not experiencing something strange; he is participating in the pattern of his Lord, and the Spirit of glory rests on him.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Don't let the session fragment across too many themes. The unifying thread is life in the last days. Every section of the passage — the break with the old, the urgency of prayer, the use of gifts, the fiery trial — is shaped by the eschatological reality that the end is at hand. If you keep this thread visible, the nineteen verses hold together. If you let them fragment, students will feel overwhelmed by the quantity of material.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 7
0:05–0:15	Arm yourselves; no longer for human passions (vv. 1-6)
0:15–0:28	The end of all things is at hand (vv. 7-11)
0:28–0:45	The fiery trial and sharing Christ's sufferings (vv. 12-16)
0:45–0:53	Judgment begins at the house of God (vv. 17-18)
0:53–0:57	Entrust your souls (v. 19); discussion (1 question)
0:57–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 9 assignment



Where to Slow Down

The fiery trial section (vv. 12-16) is the pastoral heart of the passage. Give it your best time. Many of your students are in some form of trial now, and Peter's teaching is for them specifically. Do not rush it to get through the rest of the passage.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 1-6: Arm Yourselves; No Longer for Human Passions

The Mind of Christ

The military image — arm yourselves — should land clearly. The Christian faces real combat, not figurative. The defense is the mind Christ had when He suffered. This is not passive acceptance; it is active engagement with the pattern of the Savior.

Whoever Has Suffered Has Ceased from Sin

Handle carefully. Peter is not saying suffering automatically produces purity. He is saying the Christian who has embraced the cost of faithful living has made a decisive break with the old patterns. The suffering marks a line: on one side, the old life of compromise; on the other, the new life of commitment.

The Vice List

The specific pattern Peter describes — sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, lawless idolatry — is the pattern of Greco-Roman life his readers had come from. Name this context. The Christians Peter writes to had lived in this world, and the turn away from it was visible and costly.

The Surprised Reaction

The hostility of former friends is ordinary, not exceptional. When a Christian changes, the friends who have not changed often feel judged by the change, even when no judgment has been spoken. The Christian does not need to argue with this hostility; she entrusts the outcome to the God who judges both living and dead.

The Gospel Preached to the Dead (v. 6)

Handle briefly. The most consistent interpretation is that Peter refers to Christians who heard the Gospel while alive and have since died, whose death does not cancel the Gospel they received. They live in the spirit the way God does. Do not dwell on this verse; it is brief in Peter and should be brief in your teaching.

Verses 7-11: The End Is at Hand

The End of All Things

This is the eschatological heart of the passage. Explain the New Testament frame. The last days began with Christ's first coming; they continue until His return. Peter is not predicting an immediate end; he is describing the era in which the Church has always lived. The urgency is appropriate to this era, whenever it may end.

Self-Controlled and Sober-Minded for Prayer

The response to eschatological urgency is not frenzy but steadiness. The prayer life of the Church in the last days requires disciplined minds, ordered hearts, settled inner lives. The Christian who is emotionally chaotic, theologically unstable, or practically disordered cannot sustain intercession.

Earnest Love Covers Sins

Peter draws on Proverbs 10:12. A community marked by earnest love absorbs many failures without fragmenting. This is essential for the ordinary life of the congregation. Weak love magnifies every offense; strong love covers many.

Hospitality without Grumbling

The practical application. Hospitality is costly, and the natural response is to complain about the cost. Peter names the temptation and rejects it. Open your home without grumbling. For modern congregations, this applies to the many forms of practical welcome — serving meals, hosting Bible studies, driving people to appointments, visiting the sick.

Spiritual Gifts (vv. 10-11)

Peter gives a compact typology — speaking gifts and serving gifts. Those who speak, speak as those handling the oracles of God. Those who serve, serve by the strength God supplies. The ultimate purpose is God's glory through Jesus Christ.

A Pastoral Application on Gifts

For students uncertain of their gifts, point them to the two categories. Either your gift is primarily speaking (teaching, encouraging, counseling, witnessing) or primarily serving (practical help, administration, hospitality,

visitation) — though many gifts include elements of both. The discernment of specific gifts happens in the context of the congregation, as believers try, are encouraged by others, and grow into their callings. Do not let students feel shamed for not yet knowing their gift; help them see that discernment is a process.

Verses 12-16: The Fiery Trial

The pastoral climax of the chapter. Slow down here.

Do Not Be Surprised

This is the key reframe. Christians have often treated suffering as indicating something has gone wrong. Peter rejects this framing. Suffering for Christ is not strange; it is the normal pattern of life between the cross and the consummation. The Christian who expects this is not pessimistic; she is realistic.

Sharing Christ's Sufferings

The theological key. The Christian's suffering is not isolated and meaningless; it is sharing in the sufferings of Christ Himself. The pattern of the Master is the pattern of the disciple. And the sharing is real, not merely metaphorical — Christ is with the Christian in the suffering, and the suffering becomes an occasion of deepened communion with Him.

The Spirit of Glory Rests on You

When the Christian is insulted for Christ's name, the Spirit of glory rests on her. This is an extraordinary claim. The moment of insult is the moment when the Spirit is most visibly present. The world's hostility does not chase the Spirit away; it is the occasion for the Spirit's glory to be displayed.

Not as a Wrongdoer

Peter distinguishes blessed suffering from ordinary consequences of wrongdoing. If a Christian is suffering because she is a murderer, thief, evildoer, or meddler, the suffering is not blessed; it is correction. Peter's teaching applies only to suffering endured for the sake of Christ and faithful living.

Do Not Be Ashamed

The positive command. If suffering comes for being a Christian, do not be ashamed. Glorify God in that name. This is a word for Christians tempted to hide their faith under social pressure. The name is not embarrassing; it is the name of the Savior, and bearing it in suffering is glorifying God.

A Pastoral Caution

The 'fiery trial' teaching should not be turned into a blanket theology that every difficulty is blessed suffering for Christ. Illness, grief, relational pain, professional setbacks — these are the ordinary sufferings of life in a fallen world, and they are not the same as persecution for the name of Christ. Both are real, both require pastoral care, but they are different categories. Peter is specifically addressing suffering for Christ's sake. Do not let students conflate every hardship with the fiery trial, or they may miss the particular pastoral word Peter is giving.

Verses 17-18: Judgment Begins at the House of God

Peter draws on prophetic imagery. Judgment begins with God's own people — not as condemnation but as refinement. The sufferings of Christians in this age are, in a sense, the refining fire through which God is preparing His people. If the refinement of the righteous is costly, what will the judgment of the unbelieving world look like?

This is not triumphalism about outsiders. It is a sober reality about the scale of the judgment to come. Peter uses it to help his readers put their sufferings in perspective. The present fire is hard. It is not the worst thing. The worst thing is the judgment that falls on those who have rejected the Gospel entirely. Your readers should be grateful to be in the refining fire, not in the coming destruction.

The Righteous Scarcely Saved

Peter draws on Proverbs 11:31 LXX. The word 'scarcely' does not mean God's power is insufficient; it means salvation is costly, marked by narrow escape. The Christian life is the narrow way Jesus described. Those walking it must walk it seriously.

Verse 19: Entrust Your Souls

The pastoral close. Three elements — suffering according to God's will, entrustment to a faithful Creator, continued doing of good. The Christian does not escape suffering by disengaging; she continues to serve her neighbors while entrusting her soul to the One who made her.

The phrase 'faithful Creator' is worth pausing on. God is faithful (He keeps His promises) and Creator (He has the power to keep them, as the one who made everything). The Christian's security is in this God, not in her own grip on her soul.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

If the end was 'at hand' in Peter's time, why hasn't it come in 2000 years?

Because 'at hand' does not mean 'within twenty years.' The New Testament consistently treats the era between Christ's first and second coming as the last days — a period of indeterminate length that could be terminated at any moment by the Lord's return. Peter lived in the last days, and so do we. The urgency Peter calls for is not dependent on a specific date; it is the disposition appropriate to those who know the consummation could come at any time and will definitely come at some time. Two thousand years of waiting does not cancel the teaching; it extends the era. The Christian in 2026 lives in the same era Peter wrote about — and with the same urgency appropriate to those who do not know the day or hour.

Does Peter teach that all Christian suffering is sharing Christ's sufferings?

Not quite. Peter distinguishes suffering for the name of Christ — for faithful Christian living in a hostile world — from suffering as a murderer, thief, evildoer, or meddler. The first is blessed; the second is not. And there is a third category Peter does not specifically address here: the ordinary sufferings of life in a fallen world (illness, grief, aging, relational pain). These are real sufferings, and they deserve real pastoral care, but they are not the specific category Peter is addressing. The 'fiery trial' teaching is specifically about suffering endured for Christ's sake. Do not extend it uncritically to every hardship; the word Peter gives is more focused than that.

How do I know what my spiritual gift is?

Usually through a combination of four things: what you find yourself drawn to, what others observe in you, what the congregation needs and asks of you, and what bears fruit when you do it. Gifts are not typically identified by private introspection alone; they are identified in the context of the body, where others can see what you

cannot see about yourself. Peter's broad categories — speaking and serving — are a useful starting frame. If you find yourself helping, hosting, providing practical care, administrating, and so on, your gifts likely run in the serving direction. If you find yourself teaching, counseling, encouraging, preaching, witnessing, your gifts likely run in the speaking direction. Many Christians have both, in different proportions. The discernment happens over time, in the church, with the help of others.

What does 'the Gospel preached even to the dead' mean?

The clearest and most consistent interpretation is that Peter refers to Christians who heard the Gospel during their lives and have since died. Their death does not cancel what the Gospel did in them; they now live in the spirit the way God does. Some have connected this verse to the earlier spirits-in-prison passage (3:19), suggesting Christ's proclamation to those who died before His coming. This is a more speculative reading, and the Church has not resolved the question definitively. For pastoral purposes, the first interpretation is adequate — our loved ones who died in the faith are held by the Gospel they received, and death does not undo it.

Is it really possible to rejoice in the middle of suffering?

Yes, though the rejoicing is not the same as happiness about the suffering itself. The Christian who is suffering does not pretend the suffering is pleasant. She grieves real losses, feels real pain, carries real burdens. The rejoicing Peter calls for is at a deeper level — joy that her suffering is not random, not meaningless, not outside God's purposes, but is itself participation in the pattern of Christ. The rejoicing coexists with the grief, as Peter made clear earlier in the letter (1:6). Both are real. This is not denial of pain; it is the deeper recognition that the pain is held in a larger reality that gives it meaning.

How do I entrust my soul to God while doing good? What does that look like practically?

Practically, it looks like continuing the ordinary work of faithful Christian living — your vocation, your family, your service in the Church — while actively committing your soul's keeping to God through prayer, Baptism-remembrance,

Word, and Sacrament. The entrustment is not a single act but an ongoing disposition. You say, in effect, 'Lord, whatever happens, I belong to You; keep me faithful, and work out the outcome according to Your will.' And then you keep cooking the meals, teaching the children, visiting the sick, and doing the work in front of you. The entrustment frees you from having to manage the outcome; the good-doing is your part in the meantime.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question. Notes:

Question 1 — The mind of Christ in a tempting situation

A practical question with concrete application. Good for students who need to connect theology to daily decisions.

Question 2 — Former friends who turn hostile

Often surfaces real stories from newer Christians or those who converted from non-Christian backgrounds. Valuable for building empathy across the class.

Question 3 — Ordering life as if the end were at hand

The most searching question. Often reveals that students do not, in fact, order their lives this way, and the discussion invites reflection on what might change.

Question 4 — Earnest love covering sins

Gets at concrete experiences of grace in the congregation. Useful for building gratitude and naming the ways love has covered our failures.

Question 5 — Identifying your spiritual gift

Practical and often energizing. Students sometimes discover they have been using a gift without naming it, and the recognition matters.

Question 6 — Fiery trial as sharing Christ's sufferings

The deepest and most pastorally weighty question. Use if you have students in current trials; this reframe can be significant for them.

A Recommendation

For classes with current sufferers, Question 6 often produces the most meaningful conversation. For classes focused on congregational life,

Question 4 or 5 works well. Question 3 is the most challenging question for any class — it invites real self-examination about the gap between professed eschatology and actual priorities.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- Arm yourselves with Christ's mind (v. 1) and the decisive break with the former life (vv. 2-4).
- The end of all things is at hand (v. 7) with the call to self-control for prayer.
- Earnest love and hospitality briefly (vv. 8-9).
- The entire fiery trial section (vv. 12-16). Do not cut.
- Entrust your souls (v. 19) as closing.
- One discussion question — Question 3 or 6 recommended.
- Closing prayer and Session 9 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- The specific vice list. Name briefly, do not detail.
- The Gospel preached to the dead (v. 6). Mention in one sentence.
- Extended treatment of speaking and serving gifts. The student book covers it.
- Judgment begins at the house of God (vv. 17-18). Summarize.

The Single Non-Negotiable

The fiery trial section (vv. 12-16) is where the session lands pastorally. If you have students in the middle of trials, this is the word they most need. Do not cut it. If you have to cut everything else, keep this section at full length.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Romans 12.** Paul's parallel teaching on Christian life, including spiritual gifts and not being conformed to the world.
- **1 Corinthians 12-14.** Paul's most extended treatment of spiritual gifts.
- **Matthew 24-25.** Jesus' eschatological discourse. Foundation for Peter's eschatological urgency.
- **Philippians 3:10.** Paul's desire to know Christ and 'share His sufferings.' The parallel to Peter's teaching.
- **Hebrews 12:1-11.** Suffering as discipline from a loving Father. A complementary angle on Christian suffering.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Augsburg Confession, Article XVII on Christ's return.** The Confessional statement on eschatology.
- **Small Catechism, Third Article of the Creed.** The Spirit's work in calling and gathering the Church — the background for Peter's gifts teaching.
- **Luther, 'A Sermon on Preparing to Die' (1519).** Luther's pastoral treatment of death and suffering. Deeply relevant to Peter's fiery trial teaching.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Strong on the eschatological and suffering themes.

A Final Word

You have taught a long and demanding passage. Your students have been given the biblical framework for life in the last days, the theological meaning of suffering for Christ, the call to use their gifts for the body, and the pastoral summons to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while continuing to do good. If you have held the eschatological thread through the whole passage, the nineteen verses hold together as a unified vision of faithful Christian living in the era between Christ's first and second coming.

Pay attention to students currently suffering. The fiery trial teaching is for them in a specific way. The reframe — that their suffering is not strange, that it is sharing in Christ's sufferings, that the Spirit of glory rests on them — can be pastorally significant. Follow up individually after class if you notice a student particularly affected by the teaching.

Next week we move into chapter five, where Peter addresses the elders of the congregation specifically — the shepherds of the flock. We will see his teaching on pastoral ministry, his broader counsel about humility, and his warning about the devil prowling like a roaring lion. This is the classical biblical ground of the Lutheran pastoral office, and it is important territory for the congregation's understanding of its own life.

May the Lord bless your teaching, and may the God of all grace keep you and your students faithful in the last days.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Nine

Shepherds and Sheep

1 Peter 5:1-11

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to Session Nine. This is the pastoral office session — Peter's teaching about elders, the congregation's life under them, humility, spiritual warfare, and the closing benediction of the letter. The material is rich and practical. Your students will likely find this week's teaching more immediately applicable than some of the more theologically dense passages we have covered.

Two pastoral opportunities present themselves. First, this passage will shape how your students understand their own pastor and the pastoral office more broadly. Many people have formed their views of pastoral ministry from observation — sometimes positive, sometimes negative — without biblical framing. Peter gives the framing. Use it to help your students see pastoral ministry as it is meant to be, and to extend appropriate support and grace to the men who serve in the office in their own congregations. Second, the humility and anxiety-casting section (vv. 5-7) is accessible to every Christian regardless of office. Many students carry real anxieties that are poisoning their spiritual lives. Peter's word that they can cast these on a God who cares for them is exactly what they need to hear.

Handle the spiritual warfare section (vv. 8-9) with balance. Do not minimize it — the devil is real and Peter is serious. But do not sensationalize it either. Lutherans have always taken spiritual combat seriously without letting it become a fascination. The defense is always the same — Word, Baptism, Sacrament, faith. Keep students grounded in the means of grace as the Christian's defense, rather than letting them drift toward techniques or spiritual-warfare programs that operate apart from these.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

The flock of God is shepherded by elders who serve willingly and eagerly as examples under the Chief Shepherd, while all the baptized clothe themselves with humility, cast their anxieties on the God who cares for them, resist the prowling devil firm in faith, and trust the God of all grace to restore,

confirm, strengthen, and establish them after they have suffered a little while.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Nine of the student book carefully, at least twice.
- Read 1 Peter 5:1-11 multiple times. Notice the movement from elders (vv. 1-4) to younger (vv. 5-7) to all Christians facing spiritual warfare (vv. 8-9) to the closing benediction (vv. 10-11).
- Read Ezekiel 34, the Old Testament denunciation of wicked shepherds and promise of God's own shepherding. Essential background for Peter's teaching to elders.
- Read John 10, Jesus' Good Shepherd discourse. Connects directly to Peter's Chief Shepherd language.
- Read Acts 20:17-38, Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders. The most significant parallel passage in the New Testament for pastoral ministry.
- Review Augsburg Confession Article V on the Ministry and Article XIV on Ecclesiastical Order. The Lutheran framing of pastoral office.
- Review the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. Though polemical, the Treatise treats the question of pastoral authority directly and is relevant background.
- If you have time, read Luther's 'The Misuse of the Mass' (1521) or 'Concerning the Ministry' (1523) for his recovery of pastoral ministry from medieval distortions.
- Pray — for your pastor, for pastors who are struggling, for students wrestling with anxieties, and for the congregation's collective humility.

Key Theological Points to Anchor

Five theological points come into view in this passage:

- **The pastoral office as shepherding, not ruling.** Elders are shepherds of God's flock, exercising oversight by example rather than domination. They are fellow elders with Peter, not higher authorities over the congregation.
- **The Chief Shepherd as the horizon of ministry.** All pastoral ministry is accountable to Christ, who will appear and give the unfading crown to those who have served faithfully. This is the motive that sustains faithful ministry when recognition in this age is fragmentary.

- **Mutual humility across the congregation.** Not only the younger humbling themselves to the elders, but all of you — elder and younger alike — clothed with humility toward one another.
- **Casting anxieties on the God who cares.** The pastoral word at the heart of the passage. The Christian is not meant to carry what God has said He will carry. The casting is active, decisive, total.
- **The devil is real; the defense is faith.** Spiritual warfare is not metaphor. The enemy is personal, strategic, hostile. The Christian's defense is not technique but faith, grounded in Baptism and the means of grace.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Peter addresses the elders as a fellow elder, not as an apostle standing above them. This shapes everything. The pastoral office is not a higher plane of Christian life; it is a specific calling within the priesthood of the baptized (which we covered in Session Four). Hold these two together: every Christian is a priest, and some Christians have been specifically called to the pastoral office. Neither cancels the other. Both are divinely given. Both are necessary to the Church.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and review of Session 8
0:05–0:22	Shepherd the flock — the three contrasts (vv. 1-4)
0:22–0:30	Clothe yourselves with humility (vv. 5-6)
0:30–0:38	Cast all your anxieties on Him (v. 7)
0:38–0:48	The roaring lion and firm faith (vv. 8-9)
0:48–0:56	The God of all grace — closing benediction (vv. 10-11)
0:56–0:58	Discussion (1 question)
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and Session 10 assignment



Where to Slow Down

The shepherding section (vv. 1-4) and the closing benediction (vv. 10-11) are the theological anchors of the passage. Give both their full time. The anxieties verse (v. 7) is where the session lands pastorally — do not rush past it. If the clock presses, cut from the roaring lion section rather than from these.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 1-4: Shepherd the Flock

As a Fellow Elder

Peter identifies himself as a fellow elder. This is remarkable. An apostle — one of the original Twelve — takes his place alongside the local elders of the churches. He does not stand above them. He shares their calling. For students who think of apostles as existing on a different plane from ordinary pastors, this passage reframes the relationship. The apostolic ministry and the pastoral ministry share the fundamental shape of serving God's flock through Word and Sacrament. Peter's unique eyewitness credentials are real, but the office he exercises is the same office he commends to those he is writing.

A Witness of the Sufferings, a Partaker in the Glory

Peter's two credentials for giving this exhortation. He saw Christ suffer. He shares in the glory that is coming. Note that both credentials would apply, in some form, to every faithful pastor — every pastor is a witness to the Gospel of the crucified Christ, and every faithful minister shares in the hope of glory. Peter's specific eyewitness status is unique to the apostolic generation, but the pattern — witness and hope — describes every elder in every age.

Shepherd the Flock of God

The central command. Notice whose flock. It is God's flock, not the pastor's. This is liberating and sobering. Liberating: the pastor is a steward, not an owner. The ultimate responsibility rests on God. Sobering: the pastor will give account to the One whose flock it is. Neither the pastor's authority nor his burden is ultimate; both are derivative of God's, and both are bounded by what God has entrusted to him.

The Three Contrasts

Walk through them carefully. Each addresses a real temptation of pastoral ministry.

Not Under Compulsion but Willingly

The temptation: entering or continuing in ministry because it was expected, pressured, or the default rather than a chosen love. The sheep can tell. A pastor serving under compulsion cannot hide it over time, and the congregation eventually feels it.

Not for Shameful Gain but Eagerly

The temptation: pursuing ministry for the income, status, power, or benefits that accrue. Not that pastors should not be paid — Paul is clear they should. But compensation cannot be the motive. The pastor who is in ministry for what he can get out of it has stepped outside his calling.

Not Domineering but as Examples

The temptation: using pastoral authority as a vehicle for personal power. The pastor is not a little king of a little kingdom. His authority is in the Word, not in himself. He leads by example, by walking the path he asks the sheep to walk.

Connecting to AC V and XIV

Augsburg Confession V teaches that God 'instituted the office of the ministry' for the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of sacraments. Article XIV addresses the proper calling into the office. These Confessions protect both the office and its right exercise. The office is real and divinely instituted (against those who would erase it in favor of pure congregationalism). The exercise is constrained by what Peter describes here (against those who would make the office a vehicle for personal power). Both guardrails matter.

The Chief Shepherd and the Unfading Crown

Christ is the Chief Shepherd. All pastors are undershepherds. They will give account to Him, and those who have served faithfully will receive the unfading crown of glory. The 'unfading' qualifier recalls the imperishable inheritance of chapter one. What faithful pastors receive is not passing recognition but eternal reward. This is the horizon that sustains ministry across years of fragmentary human appreciation.

Verses 5-6: Clothe Yourselves with Humility

The Younger to the Elders

The Church has structure. The younger (whether by age or by not holding the office) submit to the elders. This is the biblical warrant for the ordered life of the congregation under its pastors. It does not cancel the priesthood of the baptized; it operates within it, giving the pastoral office its proper recognition.

Clothe Yourselves — All of You

The humility is not one-directional. It is mutual. All of you — elder and younger alike — are to be clothed with humility toward one another. The congregation marked by authentic Christian life is a congregation in which everyone is humbling themselves, not a hierarchy in which the bottom humbles while the top demands.

God Opposes the Proud

Peter draws on Proverbs 3:34. Pride is not a minor character flaw. It positions a person against God. The proud Christian is, in the act of pride, in opposition to the very grace he needs. This is why pride is so dangerous in the Christian life — it cuts off the channel of grace. The humble person, conversely, is flooded with grace. Grace flows to those who know they need to receive it.

Humble Yourselves Under the Mighty Hand

The positive command. The image of the mighty hand of God suggests both power and gentleness. God's hand is mighty — strong enough to do whatever He intends. The Christian places himself under this hand, trusting that the same hand that humbles will, at the proper time, also exalt. The pattern of suffering-then-glory that has run through the whole letter applies here too.

Verse 7: Cast All Your Anxieties

One of the most beloved verses in the New Testament. Walk through it slowly.

Casting

The verb is vivid — the throwing motion of unloading a heavy burden. Not gently placing. Not setting down temporarily. Throwing. The Christian who casts his anxieties on the Lord is making a decisive transfer. He is not keeping the burden. He is not managing it himself. He is transferring it.

All Your Anxieties

Peter does not say some of your anxieties or the big ones or the appropriate ones. He says all. Every anxiety. Big and small, reasonable and unreasonable, noble and embarrassing. The Christian is invited to cast them all.

Because He Cares for You

The ground. God is not indifferent to the small things. The Father who numbers the hairs on our heads and watches the sparrows is specifically and personally interested in each of His children. Every anxiety we carry matters to Him. The casting rests on this reality — we can cast because He cares.

A Pastoral Application

For students currently paralyzed by anxiety, this verse is not just theological comfort — it is practical instruction. The casting is an action. Specifically name the anxiety. Tell the Lord about it. Ask Him to carry it. Then release your mental grip on it. When it returns — and it will — cast again. This is not positive thinking; it is faithful use of the means of grace. Prayer is an ordinary instrument God has given for exactly this purpose. If a student is overwhelmed, offer to pray with them specifically and concretely.

Verses 8-9: The Roaring Lion

Be Sober-Minded; Be Watchful

The internal disposition. Not intoxicated by the world's patterns. Not asleep to spiritual reality. Alert. Aware. The Christian who takes the spiritual combat seriously is not the one who is fascinated by it; he is the one who is prepared for it.

The Devil Is Real

Peter names a personal adversary. This is not metaphor. Lutherans have always taken the devil seriously — Luther wrote extensively about demonic activity and counseled Christians in spiritual combat. The temptation in modern Christianity is to either dismiss the devil entirely (as outdated theology) or to become fascinated with him (through deliverance ministries and spiritual-warfare programs). Neither is right. Name him as real. Give the defense. Move on.

The Lion's Roar

The image is vivid. A lion's roar paralyzes the prey. The devil's intimidation, accusations, and fear-producing tactics are the roar. They are meant to freeze the Christian so he cannot move, cannot resist, cannot trust. Peter's counsel is to recognize the roar for what it is — a tactic, not the lion's actual power over the sheep.

Resist Firm in Faith

The defense is specific. Faith. Not personal strength. Not spiritual technique. Not specialized prayer formulas. Faith — trust in what Christ has accomplished and what He has promised. The Christian resists the devil by standing firm on the ground of his Baptism, the promises of the Gospel, the means of grace that feed him. This is where the Lutheran tradition has always stood. The defense is always the same, because the defense is always sufficient.

Your Brotherhood Throughout the World

The comforting note. The reader is not alone. Christians across the world are experiencing the same kinds of suffering. This was literally true in the first century (churches across the Empire all facing hostile cultures), and it remains true today. The global Church is a community of fellow-sufferers, bound together in Christ, facing the same adversary together. This solidarity is real comfort for Christians tempted to feel isolated in their struggles.

Verses 10-11: The God of All Grace

One of the most beautiful benedictions in the New Testament. Savor the language.

After You Have Suffered a Little While

The suffering is bounded. A little while. From the perspective of eternal glory, even a lifetime of hardship is a little while. Peter is not minimizing the suffering; he is placing it in its true frame.

The God of All Grace

Every kind of grace comes from Him. Saving grace, sustaining grace, comforting grace, enabling grace — all flows from the one source. The God we have been studying throughout the letter is the God of all grace.

Called You to His Eternal Glory in Christ

The calling is definite — not a possibility but a purpose. The destination is eternal glory. The location of that glory is in Christ. All of this is settled from God's side.

The Four Verbs

Restore, confirm, strengthen, establish. Each adds something. Restore — bringing back to wholeness what suffering has damaged. Confirm — making firm, settling in place. Strengthen — building up depleted strength. Establish — placing on a foundation that cannot be shaken. And God Himself does all this. The verbs are not what the Christian must accomplish; they are what God will accomplish in the Christian. This is the final comfort of the letter. Whatever the suffering has worn down, God Himself will restore. Whatever has been shaken, He will reestablish. The end of the process is not exhaustion but completion.

The Doxological Close

To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. A small liturgical moment. Peter ends the substantive body of the letter with worship. For your class, this is a good place to pause briefly in reverent silence before moving on. The God who is being described deserves the response the doxology gives.

Anticipated Questions and Suggested Responses

If every Christian is a priest (1 Peter 2:9), why do we need a specific pastoral office with elders?

Because Christ established both. The priesthood of the baptized is universal — every Christian has priestly standing before God through Christ. The pastoral office is a specific calling within that broader priesthood — a gift Christ gave to His Church for the public preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. Neither cancels the other. Augsburg Confession V teaches that God 'instituted the office of the ministry,' and Article XIV addresses the proper calling into it. Peter's teaching here assumes this structure. The priesthood of the baptized is the common dignity of all Christians; the pastoral office is a specific calling within it for the sake of good order and faithful ministry of Word and Sacrament.

How do I know if my pastor is a 'good' pastor by Peter's standards?

Peter gives us three markers and a horizon. The three markers: willing not compelled, eager not greedy, exemplary not domineering. The horizon: the Chief Shepherd. A good pastor is one whose ministry reflects these markers over time — genuinely willing to serve, not motivated by personal gain, leading by example rather than command, and oriented toward giving account to Christ. You are not looking for perfection; pastors are sinners too. You are looking for the basic shape of life and ministry. If your pastor fundamentally loves the Lord and loves the flock, serves without manipulation, and points toward Christ rather than himself, he is serving faithfully even if he has weaknesses. If the pattern is absent — if he is visibly domineering, grasping, coercive — that is a serious concern to raise with the appropriate church authorities.

What if my pastor is domineering or manipulative? What does Peter's teaching mean for that situation?

Peter is explicit that pastors are not to be domineering. If a pastor consistently exhibits the negative pattern Peter warns against, this is a real problem for the

congregation and for that pastor's own soul. The appropriate response depends on the situation and your Church's structure. For serious and persistent patterns of abuse, coercion, manipulation, or misuse of the office, the matter should be raised with your congregation's leadership (board of elders, deacons, or equivalent) and, if necessary, with the pastor's accountability structure in your broader church body. This is not gossip or backbiting; it is the appropriate use of the Church's ordered life to address real problems. Peter takes the question of pastoral conduct seriously, and so should we.

How do I actually 'cast' my anxieties? I try but they keep coming back.

The casting is an action of faith, and it often needs to be repeated. Specifically name the anxiety. Pray it concretely to the Lord. Ask Him to carry it. Release your mental grip on it. When the anxiety returns — and it will, sometimes within minutes — cast again. This is not a one-time fix; it is a habitual practice. Over time, the repeated casting trains the heart to return to the Lord rather than to spiral. Many Christians find it helpful to connect the practice to Baptismal remembrance — each casting is a return to the identity that was given in Baptism, the Lord's claim on our lives that supports us in every circumstance. If you are struggling to cast a particular anxiety, pray with another Christian about it. Sometimes another person's voice helps us release what we have been holding too tightly.

Does the devil really 'prowl' like a lion? Isn't this just metaphorical language?

The metaphor is vivid but the reality it describes is not merely figurative. Peter is speaking of a personal enemy who has intent, strategy, and hostility. The metaphor communicates how this adversary operates — the roaring that paralyzes, the prowling that looks for vulnerability, the aim of devouring rather than merely troubling. Lutherans have always taken the devil seriously while resisting both dismissal and fascination. The reality is real; the defense is faith in Christ's accomplished work, lived out through the means of grace. You do not need special spiritual-warfare training. You need what every Christian has been given in Baptism — the promise of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the armor that the Spirit provides through the Word.

What about pastors who ARE in it for the money, status, or power?

They are stepping outside their calling, and Peter is explicit about this. The office does not legitimate its misuse. A pastor who is in the ministry for shameful gain is failing his calling, and both the pastor and the congregation bear consequences. For the congregation, this is a hard situation. The appropriate response is prayer for the pastor, constructive engagement through the proper channels, and, when patterns are egregious and persistent, the use of the Church's structures to address the problem. For the pastor himself, Peter's teaching is a call to repentance — to return to the shape of ministry Christ has commanded. Neither the congregation nor the pastor serves Christ by pretending the problem does not exist.

Is there a conflict between humbling yourself AND taking action against real problems (like abuse)?

No. Humility is not passivity. The humble Christian is not required to accept any treatment any person chooses to inflict. Humility is the disposition of heart that knows its need of grace and does not insist on its own importance; it is entirely compatible with speaking up against real wrongs, seeking protection when harm is being done, and using legitimate means to address injustice. Peter's whole letter has been careful about this — his teaching on civil submission includes the limits (Acts 5:29), his teaching on unjust suffering presupposes circumstances people cannot change, and his warnings against false shepherds in this very passage show that he expects the congregation to recognize and address misuse of the office. Do not let any teacher weaponize the call to humility against your ability to seek protection, justice, or appropriate correction.

Leading the Discussion

Pick one question. Notes:

Question 1 — Peter as fellow elder

A thoughtful question for classes ready to think about the nature of the pastoral office. Can open good conversation about how to relate to one's own pastor.

Question 2 — Which of the three contrasts matters most today

Invites real reflection on the state of pastoral ministry. Handle with care — students may have complaints about specific pastors, and the discussion should focus on the positive shape of ministry rather than on criticism of individuals.

Question 3 — Pride in your life

Personal and searching. Often produces honest self-examination when handled well.

Question 4 — Anxieties you need to cast

The most pastorally useful question for many classes. Many students are carrying real anxieties and the question invites them to name and release them.

Question 5 — Spiritual warfare experience

Interesting but potentially sensationalizing. Use with care. Keep students focused on faith as the defense rather than on unusual experiences.

Question 6 — Which of the four verbs do you need

A beautiful closing reflection. Students naming their specific need (to be restored, confirmed, strengthened, or established) is often moving.

A Recommendation

For classes with concrete pastoral needs, Question 4 is often the most useful. For theologically mature classes, Question 1 or 2 goes deeper. Question 6 makes an especially good closing reflection for the session, as it gathers everything toward the benediction.

If You Only Have Forty-Five Minutes

Keep

- The shepherding section with the three contrasts (vv. 1-4). Non-negotiable.
- Humble yourselves under the mighty hand (v. 6), with brief treatment of God opposing the proud.
- The anxieties verse in full (v. 7). Non-negotiable.
- The God-of-all-grace benediction with the four verbs (vv. 10-11). Non-negotiable.
- One discussion question — Question 4 or 6 recommended.
- Closing prayer and Session 10 assignment.

Cut or Compress

- Peter's credentials (vv. 1). Name briefly.
- Detailed unpacking of each of the three contrasts. Compress if needed.
- The Chief Shepherd material. Brief mention, skip extended treatment.
- The younger-to-elders instruction (v. 5a). Mention briefly.
- The roaring lion section (vv. 8-9). Summarize if the clock presses.

The Single Non-Negotiable

The shepherding three-contrasts section and the God-of-all-grace benediction are the structural poles of the session. The first sets out the shape of pastoral ministry; the second gives the comfort that sustains the whole Christian life. Keep both. Everything else is negotiable.

For Further Study

For Deeper Biblical Context

- **Ezekiel 34.** The denunciation of wicked shepherds and the promise of God's own shepherding. Background for the shepherd imagery throughout the New Testament.
- **John 10.** Jesus' Good Shepherd discourse. Direct background for Peter's 'Chief Shepherd' language.
- **Acts 20:17-38.** Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders. The most significant pastoral-ministry parallel in the New Testament.
- **1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.** Paul's qualifications for elders. Complements Peter's treatment of the exercise of the office.
- **James 4:6-10.** James' parallel teaching on humility, God opposing the proud, drawing on the same Proverbs text Peter uses.

From the Lutheran Tradition

- **Augsburg Confession, Article V on the Ministry and Article XIV on Ecclesiastical Order.** The Confessional foundations for the pastoral office.
- **Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.** Addresses pastoral authority in polemical context but with enduring relevance.
- **Luther, 'Concerning the Ministry' (1523).** Luther's recovery of pastoral ministry from medieval distortions.
- **Small Catechism, Table of Duties.** The section on what hearers owe their pastors and what pastors owe their hearers.

Commentaries

- **Concordia Commentary: 1 Peter.** The standard confessional Lutheran treatment.
- **Karen Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT).** Strong on the pastoral and spiritual-warfare sections.

A Final Word

You have taught a session that has immediate practical bearing on the life of your congregation. Your students have been given a clearer picture of the pastoral office, a summons to mutual humility, the pastoral word to cast their anxieties on the God who cares, a realistic understanding of the adversary, and the beautiful benediction that closes the main body of Peter's letter.

Pay particular attention to students carrying heavy anxieties. Verse 7 is for them specifically. If you notice a student particularly affected during the session, offer to pray with them concretely — not generically, but naming the specific anxiety and casting it together. The practice itself often breaks the grip of the anxiety in a way that reading the verse alone does not.

Next week we conclude our study of First Peter with the capstone session — the closing greetings (5:12-14) and a synthesis of the whole letter. This is an opportunity to look back across everything we have covered, gather the threads, and leave our students with the overall shape of Peter's pastoral vision for elect exiles in a world that is not their home. Begin thinking now about how you want to close the study. Some congregations invite testimonies; some do a simple celebration; some suggest a next step together. Consider what will serve your class best.

May the God of all grace Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after this week of teaching, as He will do for your students across all their sufferings and all their years.



Soli Deo Gloria

Strangers and Exiles

Teacher's Guide

Session Ten

Final Greetings and the Letter in Review

1 Peter 5:12-14

A free companion to the Bible study

Larry Herzog Jr.

A Note to the Teacher

Welcome to the capstone session. After ten weeks together, you have walked your class through the entire letter of First Peter. This final session is different in character from the ones that have come before. The biblical text (5:12-14) is brief, and most of your time will be spent on synthesis — gathering what you have taught across the weeks and helping your students see the whole of what they have received. The pastoral weight of this session is also different. It is a closing. Classes that have traveled together through a demanding study form real bonds, and the parting matters.

Your job this week is threefold. First, teach the actual closing verses with care — the Silvanus note solves the literary-Greek authorship puzzle raised in Session One, the Babylon reference connects to the whole letter's exile frame, and the kiss-of-love greeting grounds our weekly passing of the peace in apostolic practice. Second, synthesize the letter so students can carry its overall shape away with them. You have taught nine sessions of detail; this one gathers the detail into a single vision. Third, close the study well. Honor what has been done together. Recognize the work of the class. Point toward the continued Christian life that the letter has been preparing them for.

Pay particular attention this week to students who have been significantly affected by the study. The letter has touched deep places for many students — particularly the sections on suffering, Baptism, vocation, and the pastoral office. This closing session is a good time to follow up pastorally with those who need it, whether in the class itself or in individual conversations afterward.

The Big Idea in One Sentence

Peter closes by naming his amanuensis (Silvanus), his sister-congregation (Rome-as-Babylon), and his spiritual son (Mark), and summing up the whole letter in a single summons: 'This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it' — the same grace that has run through every chapter, from election before the

foundation of the world to the unfading crown at the Chief Shepherd's appearing.

Preparing to Teach This Session

Before You Walk In

- Read Session Ten of the student book carefully.
- Read 1 Peter 5:12-14.
- Read the entire letter through in one sitting. This is the most important preparation for this week. You need the whole in your mind to teach the synthesis.
- Skim back through the previous nine teacher's guides. Note the themes you have most developed and the pastoral notes you have given. The synthesis should reflect the journey you have actually taken with this specific class.
- Think through your class specifically. Who has been there? What have they wrestled with? What have they found most helpful? Let the specific pastoral needs of the class shape your closing.
- Decide on the form of the closing. Options to consider: testimonies from willing students about what they have received; a simple closing prayer and benediction; an invitation to commit to a next step together (another Bible study, continued Sunday school, deeper engagement with the Catechism); a celebration of what has been accomplished. Choose what fits your class.
- Pray — for each student by name if possible, for the fruit of the study, for the continuation of what has been planted.

Key Moves for This Session

Four moves distinguish this capstone from the sessions that came before:

- **Brief biblical work on the closing verses.** Silvanus, Babylon, Mark, the kiss of love, the peace benediction. Shorter than usual teaching on the text itself.
- **Synthesis of the whole letter.** Walk back across the nine sessions, gathering the themes. Elect exiles. Living hope. Holiness and ransoming. Royal priesthood. Vocation. Suffering and the Gospel. Apologetics and Baptism. Fiery trial. Chief Shepherd. Each of these should be briefly recalled and located in the overall pattern.

- **Pastoral closing.** Recognition of the journey. Invitation to what comes next. A sense of benediction for what has been given.
- **The class's own voice.** This is the session, more than any other, where the students should speak. Their testimonies of what they have received, their reflections on what has stayed with them, their commitments to continued engagement. Create space for this.

The Most Important Teaching Move

Do not try to re-teach the whole letter in an hour. You already taught it. The synthesis is not a condensed version of all nine sessions; it is the gathering of themes into a single vision. Trust what has already been taught. The job is to frame the journey, not to repeat it.

Suggested Time Plan

Time	Segment
0:00–0:05	Opening prayer and warm welcome to the final session
0:05–0:20	The closing greetings — Silvanus, Babylon, Mark, the kiss
0:20–0:45	Synthesis of the whole letter (the main work)
0:45–0:53	Student voices — testimonies of what has been received
0:53–0:58	Looking ahead — what comes next for the class
0:58–1:00	Closing prayer and benediction



Where to Slow Down

The synthesis section (0:20-0:45) is the heart of this session. Give it the full time. The student voices section (0:45-0:53) is also crucial — do not cut it. The closing verses (0:05-0:20) are briefer than usual. The time balance is different from previous sessions, and that is appropriate for a capstone.

Teaching Notes, Part by Part

Verses 12-14: The Closing Greetings

By Silvanus

This is the key note that resolves the authorship puzzle from Session One. Peter was a Galilean fisherman; the letter is in polished literary Greek. How? Peter wrote 'by Silvanus' — an amanuensis who took the apostle's content and put it into the Greek of the letter we have. This was standard ancient practice. The authorship is Peter's (his content, his authority, his commissioning of the letter). The drafting was Silvanus's. This distinction rescues the apostolic authorship from the literary-Greek objection without abandoning it. Take a few minutes to make this move explicitly — it closes a loop you opened in the first session.

Silvanus Himself

Brief biographical note. The same man as Silas in Acts. Traveled with Paul. Co-sender of both Thessalonian letters. Trusted by multiple apostles. Peter calls him 'a faithful brother.' He represents the wider network of co-laborers through whom the apostolic witness was actually delivered. The early Church was a fabric of relationships, not a set of isolated geniuses.

She Who Is at Babylon

Almost certainly a local congregation — Peter is personifying the sister church greeting the churches of Asia Minor. Babylon is a code word for Rome. The actual city of Babylon in Mesopotamia was an insignificant town by this time; Rome was the imperial capital and the place early Christian tradition places Peter at the time of his martyrdom. The book of Revelation uses the same code. The use is theological as well as practical — Rome was, for first-century Christians, Babylon, the great world-power opposed to God. The code protects from imperial surveillance while communicating richly to those who understand it.

Connecting to the Exile Frame

The Babylon reference is more than a coded place name; it is the full-circle completion of the letter's exile frame. Peter opened by addressing 'elect exiles' scattered across the provinces. He closes by identifying the congregation writing to them as the sister church 'at Babylon' — elect like them, exiled like them, facing the same hostile empire. The whole letter has been written from exile to exile, from Babylon to the diaspora provinces. The sending and receiving churches are in the same situation. This is why the letter has such enduring power — it is one exile church writing to other exile churches, and the Church has always lived somewhere in this pattern.

Mark, My Son

John Mark, the evangelist, traveling companion of Paul at one time, now with Peter in Rome. The relationship described is spiritual-paternal — Peter has mentored Mark, and their bond is familial. Early Christian tradition connects Mark's Gospel with Peter's eyewitness preaching. Whatever we make of the details, the spiritual kinship is clear. The Church creates family relationships that transcend biology, and this is visible in the closing.

The Kiss of Love

The standard Christian greeting in the apostolic Church. Paul refers to it repeatedly. It marked the congregation as family. Today, in most Western congregations, this survives in the passing of the peace — a handshake or embrace in place of the literal kiss, but with the same meaning. Make the connection for your class. The passing of the peace on Sunday morning is what Peter asked for in the first century. Take it seriously; it is a small liturgical expression of the spiritual kinship the whole letter describes.

Peace to All of You

The closing benediction. Peace — shalom, eirene — is comprehensive wholeness under God, not merely absence of conflict. The letter that began with 'grace and peace be multiplied to you' closes with peace to all who are in Christ. The frame of peace holds the whole letter. Between the opening and the closing has come everything you have studied together.

The Synthesis: Gathering the Threads

This is the heart of the session. Walk back across the letter, gathering the themes. You have about twenty-five minutes for this. Do not try to cover every point; cover the structural themes that run through the whole.

The Structural Frame: Elect Exiles

This is the frame that holds everything else. Address it first. The Christian is always both chosen and exiled. Chosenness is the secure ground. Exile is the ongoing condition. Both at once. This is the distinctive shape of Christian identity in this age.

The Theological Engine: Living Hope

The resurrection of Christ is the engine of everything. Christians have been born again to a living hope, an imperishable inheritance, a faith tested like gold. This hope runs through every chapter. When you ask, "Why can the Christian face suffering without despair?" — the answer is the living hope, grounded in the resurrection.

The Ethical Shape: Holiness and Ransoming

Holiness as set-apart belonging (not unusual religious intensity), grounded in the ransoming blood of Christ. The ethical life flows from the Gospel. Indicative before imperative. Gospel first, ethic second. This is the Lutheran pattern Peter models.

The Ecclesial Identity: Royal Priesthood

The great identity statement of 2:9. Chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's own possession. Once not a people, now God's people. This identity holds the Church across ethnic and geographic lines and grounds every Christian's standing before God.

The Vocational Application

The priestly identity expressed in ordinary callings — civic life, work (including slavery), marriage. This is the Lutheran doctrine of vocation, biblically grounded in Peter's text. Every faithful life in every faithful calling is priestly service offered through Christ.

The Christological Heart

Christ's substitutionary suffering — righteous for unrighteous, bearing our sins in His body, bringing us to God, His wounds healing us. This is the Gospel in its purest form, and it grounds everything else.

The Sacramental Confession: Baptism

'Baptism now saves you' in 3:21. The clearest New Testament warrant for the Lutheran high doctrine of the sacrament. Baptism unites us to Christ's death and resurrection, gives us the good conscience appealed to God, saves through the resurrection.

The Eschatological Urgency

The end of all things is at hand. Self-controlled and sober-minded for prayer. Earnest love covering a multitude of sins. Spiritual gifts for the body. The fiery trial as sharing Christ's sufferings, not as something strange.

The Pastoral Horizon

The Chief Shepherd and the unfading crown. Shepherd the flock willingly, eagerly, as examples. Humility for all. Casting anxieties on the God who cares. Resisting the devil firm in faith. The God of all grace restoring, confirming, strengthening, establishing after a little while of suffering.

The Whole in One Sentence

If you want to try to state the whole letter in one sentence: Peter writes to elect exiles to remind them, in the midst of their suffering, that they have been born again to a living hope, made a royal priesthood in Christ, baptized into His death and resurrection, and called to faithful vocations as strangers in the world — always looking to the Chief Shepherd who will appear in glory with the unfading crown. This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

Student Voices

This is the most important pastoral moment of the session. Invite students to share what they have received. You can structure this several ways:

- Open-ended: 'What has most stayed with you from our study?'
- Focused on specific teaching: 'Which of Peter's teachings has most affected how you think or live?'
- Gratitude-focused: 'What are you most thankful for from our weeks together?'
- Forward-looking: 'What is one thing you hope to carry forward?'

Choose based on what will best serve your specific class. Do not pressure students to speak if they would rather not. Create space, invite voices, listen carefully, and thank people for what they share. This is a pastoral moment — your job is to hold the space, not to evaluate what is said.

A Pastoral Note for the Teacher

Take time after the class to write down what was said. In the coming weeks, you will have opportunities to follow up with individual students — to check on the anxieties they cast, the trials they are in, the commitments they have made. The study ends in the formal sense this week, but the pastoral care continues. Your faithful listening today is the seed of that continued care.

Looking Ahead

Address the question of what comes next. Options to suggest:

- Another New Testament letter as a next study — 2 Peter, the letters of John, a shorter Pauline letter, or Hebrews.
- Continued deepening of the Catechism. Luther's Small Catechism is an ongoing resource for all of life.
- Participation in the regular Bible studies and Sunday school your congregation offers.
- Some form of continued engagement with this class, if appropriate — a standing prayer group, a future study together, etc.

Be specific to what your congregation actually offers. Do not promise what you cannot deliver. And do not make the continued engagement feel burdensome. The goal is to send students back into the ordinary rhythms of Christian life with a clearer vision of what those rhythms are for.

Closing Prayer and Benediction

Close in prayer, drawing from the letter itself. A possible pattern:

- Thank God for the weeks together and what He has given through Peter's letter.
- Commend the class to the Lord — each student, by name if you know them all, or by reference to their specific needs.
- Pray the God-of-all-grace benediction (5:10-11) over the class.
- Close with Peter's own closing: 'Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Amen.'

If you are comfortable, give a brief benediction in the traditional liturgical form — the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24-26, or the trinitarian blessing, or the grace from 2 Corinthians 13:14. Any of these suit the closing of the study.

What You Have Taught

A note of encouragement for you, the teacher. Over ten weeks, you have taught one of the most important letters in the New Testament. You have walked through difficult pastoral territory — the slavery passage, the marriage passage, the spirits-in-prison passage, the Baptism passage, the fiery trial. You have held together sophisticated theology and concrete pastoral care. You have helped your students see Scripture not as a collection of isolated texts but as a coherent word from the Lord to the suffering Church.

This is significant work, and it has mattered for your students in ways you may not fully see. The seeds of faithful Christian living take years to bear fruit. Some of what has been planted will sprout in the coming weeks. Some will sprout in the coming years. Some will come to full harvest in circumstances you cannot foresee. The imperishable seed of the Word has been planted. The growth is the Lord's.

You have also, across these weeks, become something like an elder to this class — a fellow-Christian who has guided them through a body of teaching, cared for their questions, attended to their struggles, and represented Christ to them in the office of teacher. This is real pastoral work, even if you are not ordained, and it fits within the priesthood of the baptized Peter has described. The gift you have given is real. Receive the gratitude of those you have taught as itself a gift from the Lord.

Suggestions for Closing a Ten-Week Study Pastorally

Every class is different. Here are several forms a closing might take, any of which can fit your circumstances:

The Testimony Close

Invite willing students to share briefly what they have received. Keep it short (2-3 minutes per person) and do not require participation. This works best for classes that have developed genuine community over the ten weeks. Follow the testimonies with a closing prayer and benediction.

The Quiet Close

Some classes prefer a simple, dignified ending without extended sharing. Walk through the synthesis, offer a brief word of thanks for the weeks together, pray, bless, dismiss. This works for classes that are less demonstrative or that include members who would find testimony-giving uncomfortable.

The Celebration Close

Include something that marks the completion — a shared meal, a special treat, a photograph, a small token gift. This works especially well for classes that have traveled through heavy material and benefit from a moment of lightness at the close. If you go this direction, keep the food and celebration simple; the focus should remain on the Word, not on the party.

The Continued-Journey Close

Close with an invitation to a specific next step — the next study, the next class, the next opportunity to gather. This works well if you are offering a next study that builds on this one, or if the class would benefit from formal continuation. Do not guilt or pressure students to continue; make it an invitation.

Follow-Up Plan

Regardless of the closing form you choose, plan for follow-up. In the coming weeks, reach out individually to any student who seemed particularly affected by the study or who has ongoing pastoral needs. Send a brief note of thanks to the class as a whole. Make yourself available for questions. The formal study is ending; the pastoral relationships that have formed during it can continue in new forms.

For Further Study

Next New Testament Letters to Consider

- **2 Peter.** Continues many of First Peter's themes with new attention to false teaching and the delay of the Lord's return. Natural follow-up.
- **The Letters of John.** Some of the most tender pastoral language in the New Testament, with clear teaching on assurance of salvation and the love of God.
- **Philippians.** Paul's joyful letter from prison. Rich on joy in suffering, Christ's example of self-emptying, the peace that passes understanding.
- **Colossians.** Strong Christological focus and practical ethics. Shorter than some of Paul's major letters.
- **Hebrews.** The most developed New Testament treatment of Christ as High Priest and of the new covenant. Longer study, but very rich.

Ongoing Catechetical Resources

- **Luther's Small Catechism.** The lifelong companion of every Lutheran Christian. Brief enough to carry, deep enough to sustain a lifetime.
- **Luther's Large Catechism.** The extended treatment for adult study.
- **The Augsburg Confession.** The foundational statement of Lutheran theology. Accessible for laypeople with some guidance.

A Final Word to the Teacher

You have completed a significant work. Ten weeks of teaching. Ten weeks of preparation. Ten weeks of leading your students through a demanding letter with care and faithfulness. The fruit of this work will continue to grow in ways you may not see directly, and the seeds planted through your teaching will bear on your students' Christian lives across the years to come.

Thank you for the care with which you have served. Thank you for the study you have put into each session. Thank you for the prayers you have lifted for your students. The Lord sees what has been done, and the Chief Shepherd whose appearing Peter anticipates will, in His time, bring the unfading crown to those who have served faithfully in the offices He has entrusted to them.

May the God of all grace, who called you to teach this study, Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. May He use what has been taught for the sanctification of your students. May He keep you steady in the continued work He is preparing for you. And may He bring you, with all your students, safely home to the inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and kept in heaven for all who have been guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria