
HOW TO USE THE LEADER HELPS

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will help your group members grow as disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

- ▶ Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- ▶ Read the passage in your Bible, noting key words and phrases.
- ▶ Review the Group Time pages. (See examples on pages 7–10.)
- ▶ Review the Group Plan (see examples on pages 112–116) in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* and adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
- ▶ Review supplemental teaching ideas at EXTRA! (BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra).
- ▶ Consult *Advanced Bible Study* for additional commentary on the Bible passage. Go to lifeway.com/advanced for further information.
- ▶ Consult *Biblical Illustrator* for articles that give biblical backgrounds to the passage. Go to lifeway.com/bi for further information.
- ▶ Read the Daily Study devotionals. (See examples on pages 11–14.)
- ▶ Gather the Leader Pack posters, handouts, and other items you plan to use in the group time.
- ▶ Pray for specific group members and their needs.

SESSION 1

The Basis for Our Hope

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS: When have you been glad you didn't give up?

RECAP (PAGE 7): Florence Chadwick was a champion long-distance swimmer. She swam twenty-one miles across the English Channel in 1950, and she did it faster than any other woman in history.

In 1952, she set her sights on a loftier goal: the twenty-six-mile route between Catalina Island and the California mainland. Through an oil leak, nausea, and fatigue she swam for more than fifteen hours. A heavy fog set in on the coastline, temperatures began to change, and Florence's breathing became labored. Since she couldn't see the shore, she feared she was swimming in circles and lost hope. The skilled athlete did something she had never done before: Florence gave up and asked to be pulled from the water.

She learned she had stopped half a mile short of her goal.

Like Florence, we too can lose hope. But the apostle Peter pointed to the sure hope we have in Christ. We may become weary and discouraged, but victory is much closer than we realize. It's all because of our hope in Christ.

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Point** on page 8. Invite group members to fill in the blanks.

THE POINT: Only HOPE in Christ is sure and certain.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item #1**, the "Living with Hope" poster, and give a brief overview of the session titles in this study.

STUDY THE BIBLE

LEADER PACK: In advance, make copies of **Pack Item #2**, the "1 Peter" handout, and distribute them to your group members. Provide some brief background information on this book of the Bible.

GIVE BIBLICAL CONTEXT: Peter, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, wrote this letter in the early AD 60s to believers in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) who were beginning to face opposition because of their faith. He wrote to affirm their



present faithfulness and to encourage them to persevere through the persecution they were suffering. The primary basis of his encouragement was their certain hope through their faith in Jesus Christ.

RECAP (PAGE 8): Peter had become one of the main leaders of the church after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. His ministry was primarily to the Jews (Galatians 2:7-8), and Jesus had charged him to tend the flock by feeding and nurturing them (John 21:15-17). Peter's letter reflects his care for God's people. Peter loved these Christ-followers and wrote to encourage them not to give up, lose hope, or grow weary.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, write the following phrases on a tear sheet or whiteboard: a new job, stocks worth half a million dollars, marrying Prince Charming/Cinderella, the home of your dreams. **Ask:** "How do these phrases communicate hope in our world today?" Allow time for responses. Then, **ask:** "What could happen that would empty these phrases of hope?" It's our nature to place our hope in things we want or have, but those things aren't promised to happen or last. Peter's words in these verses point us to a lasting source of hope.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Peter 1:1-3 on page 8.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item #3, "Exiles of 1 Peter."** Use this map to show the locations of the following cities mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to the following heading on page 8: **Our hope is based on the death and RESURRECTION of Christ.**



RECAP (PAGE 8): As we read through 1 Peter, it becomes clear these believers were facing opposition and suffering. Life wasn't all sunshine and rainbows for those who followed Christ. Nero was the Roman emperor at this time, and while he was known for his cruelty, Peter may have been writing before Nero's brutal opposition against Christians fully entered into the picture. Peter recognized that opposition would continue to intensify (1 Peter 4:12), and he wanted these men and women to be ready, holding fast to their hope in Christ.

Peter's message was a simple one: Christians have "a living hope" (1:3) because we place our hope in God. This "living hope" has been secured for us by Christ's finished work on the cross. It's not based on a positive mind-set, wishful thinking, or our striving to make things work. Living hope is rooted in the living Word (see 1:23), and it's ours because we've been chosen by God, saved by the death and resurrection of His Son, and set apart by His Spirit.

DISCUSS: What kinds of things do people place their hope in today? [ALTERNATE: What do you find most encouraging when you read verse 3?]

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Peter 1:4-5 on page 8.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to the following heading on page 8: **Our hope is secure for ETERNITY.**

RECAP (PAGE 9): Jesus' death and resurrection has secured for us a living hope now and forever. In verse 4, Peter described the inheritance that awaits each Christ-follower.

- ▶ **Imperishable.** The term *imperishable* describes a territory so secure that no invading force can destroy it. Israel had been overrun as a nation numerous times, but Peter assured these believers that would never happen to their salvation and inheritance.
- ▶ **Undeified.** This word relates to the purity of our inheritance. Our inheritance is thoroughly fire-resistant and in every respect unstained by the world. It is completely and wholly pure.
- ▶ **Unfading.** Our inheritance will never lose its glory. Other treasures may diminish in their appearance or value over time, but our inheritance in Christ will never grow dull, never become dim, never be destroyed, never fade.

DO: Instruct group members to complete the activity, **The Source of My Strength**, on page 9, on their own. If time allows, invite volunteers to share their responses.

The Source of My Strength: What kinds of things apart from Jesus are you tempted to place your hope in? Circle your responses below.

<i>Financial stability</i>	<i>My own ability to make wise choices</i>
<i>Good health</i>	<i>My job and future career advancement</i>
<i>My spouse and family</i>	<i>Other: _____</i>

What words or phrases would you use to describe a hope placed in Jesus?

DISCUSS: How should we understand our "inheritance" as children of God?

DISCUSS: What can we know for certain about our "inheritance" from these verses? [ALTERNATE: *How does it make you feel knowing that you're being "guarded by God's power?"*]

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Peter 1:6-9 on page 9.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to the following heading on page 9: **Our hope is displayed through GENUINE FAITH.**

RECAP (PAGE 9): For the believers Peter was addressing, their present faith helped them endure the suffering they currently were facing, and their faith in the future. Their hope kept their hearts fixed on where Christ is seated in heaven with an everlasting inheritance for His saints.

DISCUSS: What's the connection between our faith and our hope? [ALTERNATE: *How can trials develop, rather than dim, a believer's hope?*]

LIVE IT OUT

SAY: “When tempted to despair and give up in defeat, remember that you have a living hope secured by Christ.”

GUIDE: Direct group members to review the three bulleted statements under **Live It Out** on page 10. Call on volunteers to share (1) which of these statements is something they want to pursue further, or (2) ways this study will transform their prayer life this week.

- ▶ **Recognize.** Admit to God the areas where you’re losing hope. Confess any sin, and ask Him to open your eyes to the reality of living hope in Christ.
- ▶ **Remember.** Read back through 1 Peter 1:1-9, and make a list of how Peter described those who follow and trust in Christ. Place this list in a prominent place to remind you of who you are in Christ.
- ▶ **Restore.** Is there someone the Lord has brought to your mind who is losing hope? Take time to meet or call them this week and share the truths the Lord has shown you in this study.

GUIDE: Invite each person to gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender this week for a deeper discussion, using **Talk It Out** (page 10) to guide their discussion. Encourage group members to spend time each day in God’s Word with the devotions found in the **Daily Study** section (pages 11–14).

PRAY: Close your Bible study time with prayer.

DIG DEEPER

Use the commentary below as you prepare to lead the session.

[VERSE 1]: Peter wrote this letter to believers living in five Roman provinces in Asia Minor (in modern Turkey). The phrase “dispersed abroad” translates one Greek word, *diaspora*. Peter and other Christians used the term in a figurative sense to describe all Christians, especially those who had been scattered due to persecution for their faith (Acts 8:1).

[VERSE 3]: Peter encouraged his readers to praise God as the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The term “Father” does not suggest that God created Jesus but that they existed in eternity in this unique relationship, both fully God but as separate persons. Peter referred to Jesus not only by His human title “Jesus” but also as “Lord.” Jesus is Lord over humanity (Romans 14:9), over all creation (1 Corinthians 15:28), and is Lord (or “the head”) of the body of Christ, the church (Colossians 1:18). Jesus is also the Christ, the anointed one God promised to send to establish a new covenant (Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 31:31-34). God showed us “great mercy” by sending His Son to die in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21).

[VERSE 4]: Peter wrote that part of the believer’s new birth in Christ includes an inheritance. Having an inheritance usually means receiving money, property, and/or other

forms of material wealth. However, for Peter this word (Greek *kleronomia*) had a much fuller meaning. In the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), this same word was used for allotted sections of the promised land given to each tribe of the Israelites (Numbers 26:54), a literal, physical inheritance. However, in the New Testament the term refers to a believer's salvation and all the accompanying blessings (Ephesians 1:14; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 9:15).

[VERSE 5]: While our eternal inheritance is being kept safe by God in heaven, God also uses His sovereign power to guard believers in this present life. *Power* translates a Greek term (*dunamis*) meaning force, strength, or ability. God can be trusted to guard believers because He is all-powerful (omnipotent). The Greek word (*phroureo*) translated “guarded” has a military background; it was used of the actions of soldiers guarding a city or a military fortress. The Greek verb tense emphasizes that believers are continually being guarded by God.

[VERSE 6]: When Peter wrote his readers' trials would occur “for a short time,” he was speaking from an eternal perspective. Though the believers' sufferings on earth in this life may seem never-ending, the duration is short compared to the eternal blessings that await us. Peter reminded the believers that some trials were necessary. Peter acknowledged that they were having to “suffer grief in various trials.” Their trials came from two primary sources: the governing authorities and the pagan society in which they lived.

[VERSE 7]: Suffering in the lives of believers proves the genuine nature of their faith (Romans 5:3-5). The believer's response to suffering in faith demonstrates “the proven character” of his or her faith. God's power, which preserves our inheritance in heaven, also protects and preserves us in the present. What connects us to God's power is our faith (1 Peter 1:5). As we experience trials and tribulations, through our faith we develop the endurance that proves our true status as Christians and carries us all the way to the end of our journey in this life (Matthew 24:9-13; Revelation 13:9-10; 14:12).

[VERSES 8-9]: Though Peter and the other apostles had seen Jesus while He was on the earth (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1-3), most likely none of Peter's readers had seen Him. Despite their lack of firsthand experience of physically being with Jesus, these Christians still trusted that Jesus was who He claimed to be. They were still confident that He was coming back as well.



Free additional ideas for your group are available at
BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra