

The Culmination of Our Hope

GETTING STARTED

DISCUSS: When have you had an “I can’t wait” attitude about a coming event?

RECAP (PAGE 47): C.S. Lewis lived through both World Wars and understood all too well the tumult and grief of that season of world history. Many were suffering greatly across his homeland of Great Britain and throughout Europe and the Pacific. Additionally, Lewis mourned the death of his wife, Joy, who passed away after an illness during their brief marriage. Yet, the sufferings and setbacks that dotted Lewis’s life only seemed to fuel his writings. In one of his greatest accomplishments, *Mere Christianity*, for example, Lewis wrote: “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. ... I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death.”⁸

Because Christians have been given eternal life in the coming kingdom of God, we have hope. The trials of this life will one day give way to a life of eternal joy and peace.

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Point** on page 48. Invite group members to fill in the blanks.

THE POINT: What we hope for in CHRIST will one day be fully ATTAINED.

STUDY THE BIBLE

GIVE BIBLICAL CONTEXT: Peter knew that the believers who lived in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) were facing attacks from their non-believing neighbors. Though these attacks were apparently not yet physical, they were still causing much pain and suffering. Peter had urged his fellow Christians to stand firm in their living hope (1 Peter 1:3) and remain faithful to God (4:19). He ended his letter with more specific guidance and encouragement.

RECAP (PAGE 48): In chapter 5, Peter concluded his letter with some practical wisdom and instruction for those facing persecution. However, his teaching may not be what his readers expected from him. When we think about standing strong against any kind of opposition, most of us would probably seek to be bold and courageous. However, Peter encouraged his “dear friends” (1 Peter 4:12) to face their trials with humility.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Peter 5:5b-7 on page 48.

GUIDE: Direct your group’s attention to the following heading on page 48: **When we HUMBLE ourselves, God exalts us.**

RECAP (PAGE 48): Humility creates an atmosphere of intimacy with God. No human can strut before the Savior. Humility is directly related to our submission to God and His authority. As we submit under His mighty hand, we recognize His sovereign control over our lives, His grace and provision in our suffering, and the sacrifice of His only Son to give us a living hope. Humility acknowledges that none of those gifts could have come from our own hand; rather, they are a gift of grace from a powerful, loving Father who cares deeply for us. In this position of humble surrender to God, we yield all our cares and anxieties to Him. We humbly acknowledge we can do nothing about those things that burden us, but the One who cares for us can.

DISCUSS: What are some characteristics of a person who is proud? [*ALTERNATE: How easy or difficult do you find it to give your cares to God?*]

DO: Instruct group members to complete the activity, **God’s Strength > Our Strength**, on page 48, on their own. If time allows, invite volunteers to share their responses.

God’s Strength > Our Strength: What are some specific ways Christians can “cast” their cares upon God? Circle the disciplines that help you let go of burdens and cares, and surrender them to God.

Prayer	Worship	Spiritual conversations	Reading the Bible
Silence	Fasting	Serving others	Fellowship
Journaling	Other: _____		

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Peter 5:8-9 on page 49.

GUIDE: Direct your group’s attention to the following heading on page 49: **When we resist Satan, we can REMAIN FIRM in the midst of suffering.**

RECAP (PAGE 49): Even as we humble ourselves before God, we should also be ready and watchful. We should not grow lax or underestimate the fierceness of the enemy. Peter described the devil with the vivid image of one who is strong, loud, and relentless. Certainly, these verses weren’t intended to scare us but to wake us up. The battle is raging, the enemy is real, the days are evil, and the time is short! We can’t afford to take a nap while Satan is on the prowl. The devil is strong, but our faith is the foundation for our resistance. We don’t resist through sheer determination or effort. We resist the devil in the firm assurance of our belief that he is a defeated foe and we serve a conquering King.

DISCUSS: How would you describe the way the devil works in our culture? [*ALTERNATE: What are some ways we can actively resist the devil?*]

DISCUSS: How can our group grow in awareness of and prayer for Christians around the world who are facing serious persecution?

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Peter 5:10-11 on page 49.

GUIDE: Direct your group’s attention to the following heading on page 49: **God will ultimately RESTORE US to His eternal glory.**

RECAP (PAGE 49): Peter magnified the brilliance of God from whom every single grace is given. The things we’ve been given—the hope, calling, provision, strength, restoration, joy, endurance, and reward—all flow from God’s grace.

- ▶ **Restore.** God is able to perfect us and mend anything that may need repair. This conveys the idea of mending a net or restoring a bone to its right place when out of joint. God Himself will set us right so that nothing is lacking as He shapes us into the image of His Son.
- ▶ **Establish.** This word means to ground someone, and it carries the idea of having a firm footing. Once He has restored us, God gives us a firm foundation under our feet.
- ▶ **Strengthen.** The root word *strength* is reminiscent of God’s promise to Israel: “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).
- ▶ **Support.** God has laid the foundation of our lives with Jesus Himself as our Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:6-7). Jesus used this same word when He described the wise man building his house on the solid rock foundation, thus enabling it to withstand the rains, rising water, and winds (Matthew 7:24-25).

DISCUSS: How does your hope for eternity influence your everyday life? In what ways have you experienced strength and support from God?

LEADER PACK: In advance, enlist a volunteer to read aloud **Pack Item #5**, the “**Monologue**” handout. Share that as Christians, we can look forward to the day when all suffering is over and we will gather in God’s presence. This monologue is a creative narrative that seeks to capture the triumph and joy of that coming day. Invite the volunteer to read it aloud.

LIVE IT OUT

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Bring a trophy to your group gathering. This could be a genuinely meaningful trophy or a toy trophy; it needs to convey the idea of a long-awaited prize. Pass the trophy around your group as you discuss this question: “Based on this six-week study and today’s passage specifically, what does 1 Peter teach us about the end result of a life spent following Jesus?” (Hint: What reward can Christians anticipate?) Allow time for discussion.



Share that the Christian life isn't guaranteed to be easy, but we are assured of a heavenly reward. As Christians, we can look forward to something of immense value: eternity spent in God's presence.

SAY: "What will you do to maintain an eternal perspective regarding the hope that is yours in Christ?"

GUIDE: Direct group members to review the three bulleted statements under **Live It Out** on page 50. 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 lives this week.

- ▶ **Write.** Review what this session—or the whole six-session study—has taught you about hope. Write down your understanding of hope and its impact on you.
- ▶ **Pray.** Write out 1 Peter 5:5b-11, and use it as a guide for praying. As you pray, surrender to the Lord and His eternal purposes for your life.
- ▶ **Pray together.** Gather with a few other believers and pray together for Christians across the globe. A helpful prayer list can be found at www.imb.org/pray.

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 50) 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 51–54).

PRAY: Close your Bible study time with prayer.

DIG DEEPER

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

[VERSE 5]: After giving instructions to the elders who led the churches in the region (5:1-5a), Peter gave guidance to those under their leadership. He urged the younger members of these congregations to "be subject to the elders" (v. 5a) so that they could all work together in unity and harmony. Peter then expanded this instruction by encouraging all of the members of these church bodies to act "with humility toward one another." He challenged his readers to clothe themselves with humility.

[VERSES 6-7]: The tense of the Greek verb for "humble yourselves" isn't what would normally be expected. Rather than putting the focus on the believer making the effort to humble himself, it has the sense of "make the effort to allow God to humble you." Peter was pointing again to the suffering his readers were facing. He was encouraging them to allow God to use their suffering to deepen their commitment to live in humility before Him.

[VERSE 8]: As confident as we are of God's love, we can also be certain about one of the primary sources of our pain and suffering—the devil. However, our faith in our sovereign

God can enable us to overcome the devil and his schemes. While we can remain confident of the devil's defeat and our victory (1 Corinthians 15:57), we must not be passive in regards to our enemy. Peter warned his readers to take several precautions. They were to "be sober-minded" and "be alert."

The believers to whom Peter was writing were facing a formidable foe, the devil. While the devil hates all humanity, once someone puts faith in Jesus, the devil becomes that person's adversary. Satan then tries to draw the believer away from faithful trust in and obedience to Jesus. Peter described the devil as "prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour."

[VERSE 9]: Peter pointed to two sources of strength that would aid his readers as they resisted Satan. First, he challenged them to remain "firm in the faith." Peter was talking about their personal faith in God, their absolute confidence in His love and power. Peter's second word of encouragement was the knowledge that their "fellow believers throughout the world" were experiencing "the same kind of sufferings" Peter wanted his readers to know that they were not standing alone. Suffering for Christ was a common experience for first-century believers. Knowing that their Christian brothers and sisters were facing similar trials would encourage these believers to resist the devil and remain firm in the faith.

[VERSE 10]: The apostle listed four terms to emphasize what God will do for the believer. First, God will "restore" His saints. In a literal sense the Greek word (*katartizo*) means to repair something that is defective or broken. In a spiritual sense it is used to mean equipping the saints for service to God and others (Hebrews 13:21). It also carries the meaning of making complete or bringing to maturity. Next, God will "establish" His saints. In Luke 22:31, Jesus challenged Peter to "strengthen" the other disciples after he was restored from his own failure to remain loyal (v. 32). This is the same word Peter used to describe how God would establish Jesus' followers.

The third word Peter chose was "strengthen" (*sthenoo*). Of course, Peter meant in a spiritual sense and probably pointed to his readers' ability to endure their suffering. The final word is "support" (*themelioo*) and has the literal sense of laying a foundation. Together these four terms emphasize that God will strengthen the Christian, enabling the believer to endure such sufferings and safely bring him through these trials to eternal life. Compared to the eternal inheritance that awaits every believer, such sufferings are momentary.

GROUPS MATTER.

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