

Introduction to Series Easter 2020

This six-week bundle of resources for messages, bible study, puppet shows, home activities, and devotions is based on the letter of First Peter. The series aligns with the Epistle readings for the Easter season (April 19 through May 24) but could be used at any time.

The series is in development from volunteers from the Missouri District of the LCMS. They have produced these materials with the desire to support churches in simple ways with a message of hope and generosity as followers of Jesus. Recognizing every church has different needs, these materials are provided in a format that will allow pastors, small group leaders and homes to adapt, print, post and use them in ways that best meet their needs.

We encourage you to make these materials your own! This permission is given to you with our blessing! None of these materials, however, may be adapted, or published for sale (or the promotion of any product or service) without the written permission of the Missouri District LCMS.

A special thanks to Pastor David Smith and Becky Hohenstein for their contribution to the sermon studies and puppet show videos. These materials remain a work in progress. Updates will be posted online and available for download as available. The folder for all materials can be reached at <https://cutt.ly/molcms-hope>. If you would like to contribute additional ideas and materials to this series, please contact Bill Geis:

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Description of Online Resources

Sermons: The sermon could be used as a brief devotion read in the home or as a tool to assist pastors in preparing their own messages. The sermon paragraphs have section headings provided to aid preachers, teachers, and family leaders see the overall outline and teaching points of the message.

Bible Study: The Bible study provides an opportunity for further discussion of the topic of the week drawing upon the sermon themes and puppet show. The Bible Study also engages homes in practical activities as stewards of our Hope in Jesus (see below).

Household Activity: The household activity is included in the Bible study and also as a separate sheet so that it may be used in homes or small groups. First Peter powerfully challenges us to respond to suffering with Hope that is sanctified in “doing good.” This is a tremendous opportunity for churches and homes to teach Biblical stewardship as they engage the mission of God.

Daily Readings and Reflections: These daily reading sheets offer the parts of 1Peter not covered in the sermon or regular readings over the six-week series. There are some daily questions and exercises.

Puppet Show: We value supporting faith formation in the home intergenerationally. These videos are available on our website.

Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Sermon Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

Introduction

Having trouble remembering what day it is? Our usual schedules are gone. You don't get up and go to church Sunday. You don't go grocery shopping Saturday. You don't get up and go to work or school Monday. All our usual weekday markers are gone. So, you wake up and wonder, "Now what day is this?"

There are other things we easily forget about during this time when nothing seems quite right. Sometimes we forget who we are. Now we don't forget we are husbands or wives, moms or dads or kids or grandparents. But do we forget what God says about us? Do we forget who we really are in God's eyes?

We are the Blood Bought Children of God

God tells us who we are through the Apostle Peter,

"knowing that you were ransomed from your futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with.... Him [you] are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." (vv. 18-21)

That is who we are! We are the blood bought children of God. Jesus saved us from our sinful ways inherited from Adam and all generations before us. He bought us with His own precious blood shed for us on Calvary's cross. We belong to Christ who purchased us not with silver or gold but with something more precious—His own blood. Then God raised Him from death on the third day.

God's Word Says So!

By God's power through Jesus Christ we have the forgiveness of all our sins and eternal life. God's Word says so. By God's power He has worked faith and hope in us as believers in this Jesus who did all this for us. We are God's children. We are people of faith. We are people of hope. God's Word says so!

It's Easy to Forget

It is easy to forget this in trying times like these. Sometimes it just doesn't cross our minds between the worry and anxiety and boredom of day after day, same old same old. We can lull ourselves into forgetting who we are. We never give it much of a thought.

The Danger of Forgetting

Who we are, however, has implications. *"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart."* (v. 22)

This is our calling as the blood bought children of God. We are purified through faith in Jesus Christ. So, now we turn our love for Christ to those around us. When we forget who we are—the blood bought forgiven children of God—we wind up forgetting about the needs of others. We become self-focused on what we need and forget about what others do. We forget about checking on loved ones or friends. We forget about the needs of our fellow believers in Christ in our own church. We forget about the elderly person living next door with no family. We forget about those out of work and in real financial danger. This is the danger of forgetting who we are.



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Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Sermon Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

God's Words Reminds Us

So what does God do to help us, strengthen us? Listen again to what Peter says, “*since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...*” (v. 23)

God works in us new things. We are born again by His word of His Son and what He did for us. God surrounds us, immerses us in His Word. His Word is always there for us. “*All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flowers of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that we preached to you.*” (vv. 24-25)

God's Word Give Us Hope

God's word, God's promises, God's good news is for you and forever. This is what give us hope. This is what creates us and reminds us of who we are. As God's blood bought people we are His hands, His instruments in this world to show God's love to others.

God's Word is Overflowing with Promised for Us

God gives us His Word to speak to us, strengthen us and give us hope. He tells us over and over again what He promises each one of us—His children. So, He says,

- “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)
- “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:37-39)
- Still, He tells us more, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:27)
- He knows what we go through every day. “I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
- He loves to remind us who we are. “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” (Isaiah 43:1)

The Living and Abiding Word of God

We have a hope that is grounded in the living and abiding word of God. This is a word that will last forever—to all eternity. This word is for you, for your family, friends and loved ones. The word is for our world from God Himself.

Remember Who You Are!

So, even if you can't remember what day it is, remember who you are—the blood bought children of God. People of faith believing in Jesus Christ who bought us with His blood, His life, His resurrection. In the midst of this world we are people of hope. When we remember this hope, these words from God then we will be His instruments, His hands in this world. Amen.



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Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Bible Study Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

Note: Anticipating that social distancing may be necessary, this Bible Study can be adapted for a variety of settings. Whether you live alone or with others, be creative with ways to read and reflect on scripture with people intergenerationally in a broader community. Consider how a Bible verse, a question, an insight, or illustration can be a bridge to spiritual conversations.

Introduction

“You have been born again... through the living and abiding word of God.” (v. 23)

First Peter is often called a “Baptismal Homily,” a short sermon on the living Hope we have as baptized children of God. Baptism puts a new identity on each of us. We get marked with the family name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit! Even separated by social distancing, together we are family, the children of God!

This study explores the rich identity as baptized children who belong to the family of God. It reveals challenges to our family identity. It commissions us to be stewards who work in the family business. And it strengthens us with the commendation to daily soak up the wisdom and promises of God in the pages of the Bible. In these “last days” we wear our identity boldly as God’s children, stewards doing good because we know, “our Hope for years to come!”

Checking In

1. What activities do you miss because of social distancing?
2. What activities have you enjoyed in these changing times?

Word: 1 Peter 1:17-25

Read the Bible verses and reflect on the following questions.

3. How would people who know your calendar, spending, media, passions, and joys describe what is important to you? (Be gracious to one another and share what you see.)
4. Find words and phrases that Peter uses to describe the value God places on your life. How do they add meaning and depth to your identity as a person?
5. What specific influences do you feel are trying to devalue, distort or destroy your identity at this time? (Examples could include specific people, events, crises, activities, failures, disappointments, excesses of any kind, etc.)



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Bible Study Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

Video

St. Paul's Lutheran (Des Peres) H.I.S. Puppeteers have produced a video puppet show to compliment this study. Youth and adults will enjoy watching it.

Simply visit: <https://mo.lcms.org/our-hope-for-years-to-come-week-2/>
And select the "puppet show" button.

What superheroes did our friend in the video try to be? Describe a time when you tried to be a superhero or wished you could be one.

Our friend in the video gave you a different hero's cape. He said, "you are a child of God." In your own words, what does it mean for you to be a child of God?

Creed

The word, "creed" means, "I believe." Do you believe you are a child of God? Do you really believe that defines you in beautiful, graceful ways at home, school, work, online, in all your activities and relationships? Are you comfortable wearing Jesus' robe instead of superhero's cape? These words from The Small Catechism boldly speak to our identity.

Speak them together. *I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.*

Look back at what you spoke. Make some notes on what it means to be a child of God from this simple creed below and share with one another.

In 30 words or less, write down a statement of your identity influenced by the words you have read today from Peter, discovered in the creed exercise and any other Bible promises meaningful to you).

I am...

Take time to share what you wrote and why you wrote it with your family group or at least one other person. Get comfortable with the identity God gives you, rather than what temptations press you to be.



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Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Bible Study Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

Household Activity

Review: Last week's activity asked you to reach out to someone, possibly in your neighborhood, and bless them in a specific way.

- a) Were you able to do that? If not, who might you reach out to this week?
- b) How did each member of your household add their God-given gifts to the effort?
- c) How well do you know the person you served?
How are they uniquely blessed as a child of God? How might you explore that more?
- d) What might be helpful in following up with them this week?

Exercising Your Gifts: In your baptism, God put His family name on you. He also commissioned you to be a steward (manager) in His family business! While many businesses in our communities are struggling, God's family business is thriving and will shine. Everyone in the family has abilities, talents, and gifts to use to bring hope to our communities.

You can do the following exercise with your home or with friends you reach out to. It is helpful to have at least two people (in addition to yourself) involved so they can help you see the gifts you might not see.

- a) For each person involved, including yourself, write down as many abilities and talents that you celebrate in that person as gifts from God.
- b) Share all your notes with each other.
- c) Let each person pick one ability they will explore this week to use in a new way in serving others as God's "family business."
- d) In this time when things are very different and difficult for so many, ask yourself,
How can I use my gift in a slightly different way that might be God's purpose for this very time?
How can I be intentional in sharing grace and glorifying God with this plan?
- e) Choose something that you can do in less than a week's time.
- f) Share your ideas, work together as God provides & pray for each other as you use these gifts.



Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Bible Study Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

Blessing

It's easy to forget that we are children of God. It's easy to be lured into temptations to be what pride or peers want us to be. That's why it's so important to hear the daily affirmations and promises of the Bible in your life.

If you haven't done so already, make use of the Daily Reading and Reflections provided with this study. It will help you grow more confident in who you really are as a child of God.

Close by taking turns using verses 22 and 23 to bless one another. An example of how you can modify it to be a blessing might go like this:

{Name} You are a child of God!

He has purified your soul.

Be obedient to the truth.

Love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

You have been born again,

not of things that die, but with eternal gifts from God
through the living and abiding word of God.



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Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Household Activities

Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

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Hope Immersed in the Word of God

Daily Bible Readings

Week 2 1 Peter 1:17-25

Introduction

Many have lost their jobs in recent days. Others are working or going to school at home. Some are working less, and some are working more under enormous pressure. Wherever we are in this struggle, we all feel insecure. We all need real hope.

Real hope is found in the word of God. It is our defense against all the assaults of our minds. The word of God is cover to cover, page after page, verse by verse immersing us in the promises of God. Look for Him and you'll find the love of Christ all over your Bible. If we are honest, however, we spend most of the day listening to garbage. We need more quality time in the word of God to get through this.

You don't have to quit your job, neglect the housework, or silence the kids to wade in the refreshing promises of God. A consistent, daily time dose of the word of God is something you can draw from all day long. These short readings and questions are designed to immerse you in the word of God where your true hope is found.

Set aside at least five minutes for these daily exercises and you will end up carrying them for hours! You can do this alone or a family group. You can hold on to the treasures you find, creatively decorating your thoughts, household, workspace, and online activities.

Read the Bible verse one or more times. Before you go to the reflection questions, ponder what the Spirit of God is saying. The Word of God is powerful! Expect the Spirit to inspire you, teach you, grow you and guard your thoughts throughout the day. This week you will read, "All flesh is like grass... The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." (1 Peter 1:24)

Monday

Read: If you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile. (1 Peter 1:17)

Reflect: Stuck at home? Feel exiled? Remember you are a child of God! How will call on your Father today? How will you fear, honor, and trust Him in your work and conduct?



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Hope Tested in Suffering

Daily Bible Readings Week 2 1 Peter 1:3-9

Tuesday

Read: [Live] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Reflect: What words express money transactions or valuables? How do these words describe the value God places on your life? How will it impact your valuables?

Wednesday

Read: [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:20-21)

Reflect: What familiar Bible verses best support your faith, your hope and your focus on Jesus? Recall (or search for) two different Bible verses to write down, remember, and use in your conversations today.

Thursday

Read: Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart. (1 Peter 1:22)

Reflect: How is the word of God challenging you to love more obediently, sincerely, earnestly and purely in your relationships?

Friday

Read: Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. (1 Peter 1:23)

Reflect: How has this crisis humbled your trust in things perishable? How is the living and abiding word of God producing repentance and new life in you?

Saturday

Read: For “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:24-25)

Reflect: The Small Catechism commends Sabbath to be a time for you to “hold the word of God sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” How will you this weekend give priority and devotion to the word of God in multiple ways available to you?



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