
BUILDING WELL

Studies in 1 Peter Chapters 1-2



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Study 1 • 1 Peter 1:1-12

A Housing Opportunity

A well sited vacant block of land in a quiet area, close to civic amenities, employment opportunities, and educational facilities – what a great housing opportunity. Given these circumstances, many people start to think about their future: ‘Maybe I could settle down right here and find peace, grow a family, make friends, and live with hope’.

Everyone is looking for a house to provide them with lasting security.

Jesus offers such a house: *‘Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock’* (Matthew 7:24-25).

The foundation we build upon shapes our entire life. In a similar way, the design we follow and the care we take to build well also has a significant impact on our sense of security and peace. Every day we add or remove a brick to the house of our lives, we either make improvements, or we detract from God’s good design.

The Apostle Peter writes to ‘God’s elect Exiles’ to remind them of the foundation upon which they must continue to build their lives and of the good design God has drawn up and his eternal purposes – founded firm upon the finished work of Jesus.



Thought Starter

1) If you were to build a new house on a vacant block of land, what design features would you want to include?

How do you imagine these features would enhance your life?

Moving into a new house marks the start of a new phase of life. But Peter uses a far more powerful image to describe the new start the Christian experiences when they put their faith in Jesus as Lord. He doesn't talk about a new start in a new house, he tells us that we have been given a new birth.

And everything changes at birth. No longer are you floating alone, naked in your mother's womb. Suddenly you break into a new world of air and light and other sensations. To survive you must start breathing and drinking. Very soon you're washed and wrapped and placed on a bed. You begin to perceive life in new ways through your eyes and ears, nose, tongue and skin.

No longer a mystery, you now begin to know those in your life as you are truly known. You're given a name and legal status. You belong, hopefully, to a family and home in which you find comfort and security and love. Everything changes at birth.



Prayer Starter

Dear Father,

We praise you for your incredible mercy. Help us to willingly embrace the new status we have with you through your Son, Jesus Christ. Lead us into holiness by your Spirit so that we might increasingly become the people we were reborn to be.

AMEN



Digging Deeper

2) Peter writes a letter to persecuted Christians spread throughout the ancient region of Asia Minor (modern day Türkiye). READ verses 1-2.

In what ways are these believers described as being homeless?

In what ways are these believers described as being securely housed?

How do you reconcile those differences?

3) READ verses 3-5.

Loosen your imagination and see if you can draw a pictorial timeline of the changing circumstances described in Verses 3-5.

4) *'Praise be to the God and Father...'* (verse 3), *'In all this you greatly rejoice...'* (verse 6). List all the wonderful things in Verses 3-5 bracketed by these exuberant statements. What makes them so good?

Does one of these prompt you to praise more than the others?

5) The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus is the promised cornerstone¹ of Psalm 118:22-23 upon whom God's people must build their spiritual house.

In what ways does Peter confirm Jesus' role as cornerstone in verses 1-5?

¹ Mathew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4-7

6) Our completed and perfect home is laid up for us in heaven (verse 4). READ verses 6-7.

What can the believer expect in this world before we enter our eternal home and for what purpose?

7) READ verses 8-9.

How would you compare your relationship with our cornerstone, the Lord Jesus, with the description Peter gives in Verses 8-9?

8) READ verses 10-13.

What do these verses tell us about God's design for salvation (his building plans) and our place in them?

How should this impact the choices we make and our sense of hope?

"No one will make a good end to the life into which he is born unless he is born again before he ends it."

— Augustine of Hippo

New birth into a living hope! It's a brand-new day with our future secured by the resurrection of Jesus. Although exiles in this world, we have been granted an eternal home in the kingdom of God. Don't waste your life. Build well on the cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

Making It Real

9) Identify three trials you are currently facing. Underneath each one identify how God might be using this to help build you up in faith and shape you according to his design purpose.

Have you seized the eternal housing opportunity God offers: a life built on the unshakable cornerstone, the goodness and grace of Jesus?

Finish with Prayer. Following the pattern below:

Praise God for all the good things he has given you in Jesus.

Give thanks for those who have helped you to be built up evermore into the likeness of Christ.

Hand over to God those aspects of life in which you are struggling.

Ask the Father to work in you by his Spirit so you might grow in your love for the Lord Jesus.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-18).

Study 2 · 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

House Design

What freedom there is to see an eagle on the wing, a dolphin playing in the surf, a cormorant chasing fish beneath your boat. What glorious freedom they enjoy as they subject themselves to the elements they were created for and willingly become slaves to the air and water, the ocean and sky; their habitat, their body shape – the way God designed them to be.

But to see an eagle trying to swim and slowly drowning is shameful and disturbing. To see a dolphin stuck on the beach, robbed of its glory, is desperately sad. To see a cormorant covered in grime, unable to fly or swim after an oil spill, again, that's shameful. It's a form of slavery and entrapment that leads to death.

Only as we conform our lives to God's created design do we find true freedom and joy. Jesus calls us to 'build our house on the rock'. As we build, our best life will be realised as we submit willingly to his Word, and thereby conform our lives to his design.

In our previous study we saw that the Christian has been given new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus – a fresh start to a new life. In the passage before us today, Peter tells us what the finished product should look like. To extend our building analogy, Peter outlines the house design that's most fitted to new life in Christ and that sets us free to enjoy the life of hope and peace we were created for.



Thought Starter

1) What activities bring you joy and make you feel fully alive?

In what ways do those activities intersect with your natural gifts, capacity, and personality?

“ ”

Jesus said, *‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’*

John 10:10

“ ”



Prayer Starter

Almighty God,

Thank you for calling us out of darkness into your wonderful light. Help us to walk in the light as you are in the light, and thereby know fullness of joy in serving you as we serve others.

AMEN.



Digging Deeper

2) READ verse 13.

What is Peter asking us to 'set our hope fully upon'?

What does this say about the foundation we must build our lives upon as believers?

3) READ verses 14-17.

What motivation does Peter give for holy living?

How do these instructions relate to how we go about 'building our house upon the rock'?

The Old Testament Hebrew word translated 'holiness' or 'holy' has a basic meaning of being 'set apart' or 'dedicated to the ownership of'. Holy things are removed from the realm of the common and moved to the sphere of the sacred. The temple was holy because it was different from other buildings: set apart for God. The Sabbath was holy because it was different from other days: set apart for God.

The New Testament frequently calls God's people 'hagios' which literally means 'Holy Ones'. English Bibles almost always translate this word 'saints'. By God's mercy, those of us in Christ have been set apart for God. We are all saints. We are holy and have been called to live holy lives, set apart for God, standing out against a world opposed to his sovereign rule.

4) **READ** verse **18-21**. These verses describe how we came to enjoy our new born status as God's people founded on the rock.

What has God done?

What do we do to lay hold of these blessings?

What is the role of the Lord Jesus in establishing our new life?

5) READ verses 22.

What things are described in this verse for the believer in time...

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

What does this suggest about our 'design purpose' and how does that relate to the foundation Peter laid down in Verses 18-21 and his statements about holiness in Verses 15-16?

6) READ 1 Peter 1:22-2:3

What role does the Word of God play in shaping our lives to conform with God's good design?

Can you identify any ways that verses 1-3 are being worked out in your life?

'Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.'

1 John 3:2-3

Making It Real

7) Scan through the entire passage and identify one positive thing that you need to improve to align your life more in keeping with God's perfect design, and one destructive thing that you need to get rid of.

What practical steps might you take to make that happen?

Finish with Prayer.

Give thanks for the redemption and new life you have in Jesus.

Confess your sin and acknowledge those things you need to abandon in order to fulfil your God given calling.

End your prayer with a reaffirmation to live your life in this world as a stranger in reverent fear who seeks to be holy in all you do.

Study 3 • 1 Peter 2:4-10

Foundation

You've finally found the perfect piece of land on which to build your dream home. You've consulted with the architect and the design looks just right – it's exactly the sort of house you would like to spend the rest of your life in. You submit the DA and it's approved. Then you get the construction certificate. Oh my gosh! It's time to start building.

Yet, despite all the excitement, the building process will begin in the same, tedious way every building project begins. You begin with the most important step of all, laying down a solid foundation that gives shape and stability for everything that follows.

In the passage before us, Peter refers to a building metaphor already well established in the Old Testament. God provides the site for our eternal home. God also provides us with the perfect design. And then God demands that his house, his chosen people, be built securely on the solid foundation he lays down. – his 'chosen and precious cornerstone'.

None of us can ignore God's cornerstone. We're either built up on it, or we fall down over it.



Thought Starter

1) What foundations have already been laid that shape your life and given it a measure of stability (or otherwise)?

How do these foundations impact you as you continue to 'build your life' on a daily basis?

Jesus said, 'In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am'. (John 14:2-4)

Jesus is preparing an eternal home for his disciples (see also 1 Peter 1:3-4). Does it really matter what foundation we build our life upon? A few verses later he makes the answer to the question abundantly clear when he says, *'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'* (John 14:6).



Prayer Starter

Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.

From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For you have been a refuge, a strong tower against the foe.

I long to dwell in your tent forever, and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

AMEN. (Psalm 61:1-4)



Digging Deeper

2) READ verses 4-5

Do your best to draw a picture of the house described in these verses.

Where are you in the picture? What are you doing?

3) A stone is perhaps the most static and lifeless thing you could identify in our world. Why do you think Peter describes Jesus as a 'living stone'?

4) The Lord Jesus (*'the living Stone'*) and believers (those *'like living stones'*) are being built together into the one spiritual house. How are we like Jesus in this metaphor, and how are we different from him?

LIKE

DIFFERENT

5) Those built into God's spiritual house are called to serve as a 'holy priesthood' (See also verse 9). What, in your understanding, is the role of a priest and how might you exercise that role today?

6) Nobody has to be built into God's spiritual house. We have a choice. Peter quotes the Old Testament three times to make this point clear (Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, Isaiah 8:14). READ verses 6-8.

What determines whether one is being built up or falling over?

What does it take to trust in God's 'chosen and precious cornerstone'? Has that happened for you? Explain.

7) READ verses 9-10.

List out the privileges and associated responsibilities for those who belong in God's spiritual house.

PRIVILEGES

RESPONSIBILITIES

→

How does the list above make you feel? (Circle all those that apply and feel free to add your own)

GRATEFUL

OVERAWED

JOYFUL

HUMBLE

EXALTED

HOPELESS

NEEDY

DAUNTED

EXITED

Having a strong foundation and knowing with certainty where our ultimate security lies frees us up to press into the good works God has set before us. We can persevere when the going gets tough because we know that, although the building project is not yet finished, we're heading in the right direction and when it's done we will find perfect joy and rest and peace.

In Christ Jesus we have laid up for us '*an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade – kept in heaven*' (1 Peter 1:4).



Making It Real

8) Where do you run for security when the going gets tough?

What can you do so that you more readily invite your relationship with the living Lord Jesus into those situations?

Finish with Prayer.

Ask God to continue to build you up in his spiritual house.

Pray that you might persevere in your calling as one of his chosen people.

Offer yourself to him again as a living sacrifice and ask for insight as to where your sacrifice can be practically applied.

Give thanks for the privileges you enjoy as a believer.

Study 4 • 1 Peter 2:9-25

At Home in a Fallen World

Grown children of immigrants often speak of how they struggled to fit in when they first arrived in Australia. Mum and dad dropped them off at school with their lunch box full of parathas and curry instead of cheese and Vegemite sandwiches. Their skin was a different shade and they spoke with an accent, if they could speak English at all. They were different and they so desperately wanted to be just like the other kids.

Being different is not easy. But God expects his children, who live as exiles in this current fallen age, to be different. We are to stand out and bring the light and life of Jesus Christ into a dark, lost world.

We live as citizens of two different kingdoms that often seem at odds with each other: the kingdoms of this world, and the kingdom of God where Jesus reigns as Lord.

The passage we are looking at in our final study draws attention to what it means to live well in this world, whilst our hope and home are firmly established in heaven on our cornerstone, Jesus Christ.



Thought Starter

1) Think of a time when you felt you didn't quite fit in. How did you respond and was your response motivated more by self-preservation or concern for others?

If you had your time over again, how might you respond today?

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.

(Philippians 2:14-16)



Prayer Starter

Father,

As we study your Word, grow in us a heart of great compassion for our world and a deep love for you so that we might live lives that glorify your name and bear witness to your goodness and majesty.

AMEN.



Digging Deeper

2) READ verses 9-12.

What do these verses say about a Christians...

True home

Primary Identity

Present Reality

3) What sort of 'missional' activities does Peter expect Christians to be practicing in verses 9-12?

How do you see these mission activities being practiced in your own life, or in the life of our church?

4) Peter is writing to Christians facing intense persecution for their faith. He speaks about them being at war (verse 11). What does the battle look like?

In what ways do you feel as though you are at war in this world? How do you think you should be fighting in the light of Peter's instruction?

5) READ verses 13-17.

How do you reconcile Peter's call for Christians to 'live as free people' (verse 16) with the rest of his instructions in these verses?

6) What is the opposite of each action Peter commands in verse 17?

Now describe, as specifically as it can be applied to you, how you should be acting in each of the relationships mentioned.

7) Daniel lived far from home, as an exile in Babylon. Nevertheless, he found security and a sense of home through his relationship with his God. From what you know of his story, how did his conduct exemplify Peter's instructions in verses 11-17? (*If you don't know much about Daniel, read Daniel Chapter 1 as a starting point*).

8) **READ verses 18-25.**

Approximately one third of people in the Roman world were slaves ranging from household servant/slaves with considerable freedoms to galley slaves chained to Roman warships with next to no freedom.

What instruction does Peter give to Christian slaves as they 'live good lives amongst the pagans'? What is your initial reaction to Peter's teaching?

Peter puts forward the example of Jesus as motivation and a model to help Christian slaves follow his advice. What are the things that Christ did *not* do? What *did* he do?

Did *not* do

Did do

In what ways might you be able to apply Peter's instructions to your life today?

9) In a fallen, insecure world of injustice and suffering, what does verse 25 say about the Christian's ultimate security and everlasting home?

“Home is people. Not a place. If you go back there after the people are gone, then all you can see is what is not there any more.”

Robin Hobb

Home, for believers, is likewise not founded upon a place but realised through relationship: the relationship we enjoy with God through the finished work of our cornerstone, Jesus Christ.



Making It Real

10) The Christian lives with the tension of being a citizen of two different, sometimes opposed, kingdoms.

What pinch points in that tension are you experiencing and what can you do to greater affirm your primary commitment to the kingdom of God?

What do you believe you can do, in every sphere of your life, to 'live a good life among the pagans', serving a fallen world with joy even when faced with injustice and suffering?

Finish with Prayer. Pray to God about:

- a) A readiness to suffer and do his will.
- b) A firm commitment to put his kingdom and righteousness first even as the world and your own sinful desires try to pull you in the opposite direction.
- c) Those who are still to accept the gospel and find home and belonging with Jesus.
- d) A deepening of your commitment to live a life modelled on the love of Jesus so that you might further reflect and declare the glory of God.

'And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.'

1 Peter 5:10-11



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