

**Peter's First Letter**  
**1 Peter 1:1–2:17**

**Memory Verse:** *“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”* 1 Pet. 2:11 (ESV)

**Background Helps:**

Peter's life can be divided into four parts: (1) from his birth to his first meeting with Jesus (We know very little about this phase: he was from Bethsaida, he was a fisherman, he was married, etc.); (2) from his first meeting with Jesus to the ascension of Christ (covered in the four Gospels); (3) from the ascension of Christ to the Jerusalem Council (covered in the book of Acts); and (4) from the Jerusalem Council to his martyrdom.

Our information about this last phase of his life again is quite meager, some of it drawn from references in the New Testament and some from early church traditions. Specifically:

- Peter made a visit to Syrian Antioch where he was rebuked by Paul (Gal. 2:11-21).
- Peter *may* have visited Corinth, where his name was used as a rallying point for one of the factions in that church (1 Cor. 1:12).
- Peter traveled extensively with his wife presumably doing missionary work (1 Cor. 9:5).
- Peter *may* have visited the churches in the five provinces of Asia Minor to whom his first letter is addressed (1 Pet. 1:1).
- Peter spent time with Silas *perhaps* ministering to Jewish believers in Babylon, from which he wrote his first letter (1 Pet. 5:13). (However, many Bible scholars believe “Babylon” is a code name for the city of Rome, from which he wrote the letter.)
- Early church tradition asserts that Mark wrote his gospel as an “interpreter” of what he learned from Peter. Mark is mentioned in close association with Peter in 1 Peter 5:13.
- Peter wrote two letters to the churches of Asia Minor that are included in the canon of the New Testament, 1 and 2 Peter.
- Early church tradition also asserts that Peter died by crucifixion in Rome during the persecution of Christians under Emperor Nero about AD 68. (See John 21:18-19 and 2 Pet. 1:13-15.)

In John 21:15-17 Jesus charged Peter with the responsibility to “shepherd my sheep.” The two letters of Peter in the New Testament, which we will be studying over the next three weeks, show him carrying out this responsibility.

**Lesson Helps:**

Review: May I suggest (especially for the children's classes) that you conduct a review of the life of Peter covered over the last ten weeks. Two possible methods of review: (1) Ask your class to brainstorm as many incidents from the life of Peter as they can remember. As they call out the events, list them on the whiteboard in two columns according to whether the events occurred before Jesus' ascension (Gospels) or after his ascension (Acts). Then ask your students if they can figure out why you have grouped the events into these two columns. (2) Have someone come in dressed as Peter with a prepared list of events from Peter's life. Write two headings on the

board: (a) “Before Jesus’ Ascension” and (b) “After Jesus’ Ascension.” As “Peter” reads off the events, ask your pupils to place them in the appropriate column.

**Map Study:** Read 1 Peter 1:1 and 5:13. Have your students locate the five provinces listed in 1:1 and the city mentioned in 5:13 on a Bible map. (Explain that “Babylon” may be a code name for Rome. Find the city of Rome on the map also.)

**Phase #4 of Peter’s life:** Use the material under “Background Helps” given above. Also, consult F. B. Meyer’s book *The Life of Peter*, chapters 24 and 25, to tell the story of the last years of Peter’s life. Continue your map study pointing out Antioch and Corinth as well.

Two alternative lesson aims: (1) My students will learn about the closing events of Peter’s life, so that they will serve Christ all their lives through. This lesson is intended mainly for children’s classes with an emphasis on events, including the review of Peter’s life suggested above and a narration of the closing events of his life, incorporating the map study and the traditions about his death based on John 21:15-17. Urge your young students to serve Jesus all their lives, as Peter did. (2) My students will learn about the shepherding ministry of Peter to believers through letter-writing, so that they will give heed to the exhortations in 1 Peter. This lesson is intended mainly for adults. Review the closing events of Peter’s life, as reviewed above. Notice especially Jesus’ charge to Peter in John 21:15-17 and the purpose of his first letter in 1 Peter 5:12. Pick out the exhortations in 1 Peter 1:1–2:17 that seem to you to be most needed by your students. Encourage them to give heed to these exhortations from “Pastor” Peter.

### **Home Assignment:**

 Read 1 Peter 2:18–5:14.

 Memorize 1 Peter 2:24.