

Begin Here



“WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?” a tiny voice from the middle row of the minivan demanded to know. Even as a toddler, our daughter noticed if we veered off our usual route. Emma knew her way around town and could tell us which way to turn to get to Mimi and Papa’s house and which route to Grandma and Grandpa’s might include a stop at her favorite playground.

I, on the other hand, am directionally challenged. Words like *east* and *northwest* are meaningless to me. I don’t have an internal compass, and if it weren’t for my car’s navigation system, I would barely find my way to the grocery store.

But I do know where I want my life to go and how and when I expect to get there. The path for my career is carefully plotted, along with milestones for my retirement account. I’ve mapped out my ideal family. There will be some adorable grandchildren at the end of my trip as my husband and I grow old together, side by side in our rocking chairs overlooking the Rocky Mountains, or maybe under palm trees at the beach.

Oh, I know the Bible says God has perfectly good plans for me—but it also says his ways are not my ways. I happen to like my ways, thank you very much, and I spend a lot of time and effort making my careful plans. My plans are safe and easy, and I’m quite committed to them.

Now, you don’t need me to tell you that life doesn’t always go

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according to plan. Marriage is rarely easy. Your empty arms may ache to hold a child. Sickness can put you on the sidelines. Abuse and addiction weren't on your agenda, and you didn't schedule the day you'd be let go from your job or released from a relationship. These detours are more than traffic jams that make you late for work: they're BRIDGE OUT barricades that stop you in your tracks.

When I hit a dead end, brakes screeching and tires squealing, I remind God that this isn't what I had in mind when I booked this adventure. Like a little girl buckled up in the back seat for a bumpy ride, I cry out, "Where are you taking me?"

There's a name for this phenomenon when your hopes and dreams come to an abrupt dead end: TEOTWAWKI (pronounced *tea-ot-wab-key*). No, it's not a Greek or Hebrew word from the Bible; compared to these ancient languages, TEOTWAWKI is brand-new. This acronym has been in use for a few decades, and it stands for "The End of the World as We Know It."

Ever received a phone call that altered your entire world by the time you hung up? Have you sat through school conferences that enraged you or marriage counseling sessions that infuriated you? Me, too. I've answered the doorbell to find an IRS agent at my doorstep. I've taken a friend shopping for the outfit she would be buried in. I've raced to the accident scene, waited for the ambulance, done vigil in the hospital room, and held hands as the doctor delivered a devastating diagnosis and grim prognosis. I've received texts with pictures of shiny headstones instead of smiling selfies. I've comforted friends as they've lost their homes and their jobs, their marriages and their parents.

Perhaps you're dealing with a personal tragedy you never saw coming. Perhaps someone you love is. Perhaps you're struggling to understand the view from your window as our culture morphs into something you don't even recognize anymore. Or maybe life's inevitable ordeals and daily frustrations are slowly eating away at your soul one little bite at a time.

Following Jesus doesn't exempt us from earth-shattering, heart-

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breaking events in our own homes. We still have cancer and car accidents. Our kids are still suicidal; our marriages are still struggling. Our parents still have Alzheimer's. Our loved ones are still making bad decisions with big consequences.

These are the moments when our faith in God collides with real life and crises pile up like cars on an icy interstate. When life as we know it is upended and disrupted, we crawl through the ambiguity like a car with a burned-out headlight. We drift between the lanes of dark hopelessness and dim hopefulness:

It's hopeless; she'll never get better.
Hopefully, we have one more Christmas.

It's hopeless; this marriage is over.
Hopefully, the rumors aren't true.

It's hopeless; my prodigal is too far gone.
Hopefully, my son will be safe.

It's hopeless; I'll never be out of debt.
Hopefully, I'll find a job soon.

In seasons of uncertainty and anguish, a catchy Bible verse on a T-shirt or cute wall art from Hobby Lobby just doesn't cut it. How does God's hope-filled plan for your future work when your life is falling apart (Jeremiah 29:11)? Did he take a wrong turn as his hand guided you to a place you never wanted to go (Psalm 139:10)? Did he get the memo about that urgent thing you needed, like, yesterday (Matthew 6:25)?

These tests of my faith feel like drinking from a teacup while driving through a pileup, trying not to spill a single drop. My dreams slosh over the sides and stain my carefully laid plans until my cup is dry.

Can I borrow a cup of hope?

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Know Peter, Know Jesus

The New Testament book of 1 Peter is where we'll learn how to find faith for hard times and refill our sloshed-over, drained-dry cups with abundant hope. This letter from the apostle Peter to the first Christians comprises only 105 verses, five short chapters, and maybe three or four thin pages in your Bible. But even though it's short, as you get to know Peter, his words will become as comforting as a personal note from a dear friend. In his letter, Peter will help us set aside our hopeless fears and hopeful fantasies and instead set our hope fully on God's faithfulness. We want to know Peter so we can know Jesus.

Peter watched as his hopes and dreams were hauled away in handcuffs, then crucified and buried. When Peter didn't handle himself well, he created a whole new set of problems. Key events of Peter's life story, embarrassingly well-documented in Scripture for all to see, are a series of contradictions. Sure, he walked on water . . . and sank like a cinder block. Peter boldly proclaimed he was Jesus's most loyal follower . . . and that same night denied he even knew him. Peter's world was divided between hopefulness and hopelessness, trust and fear, confidence and uncertainty, comfortable "old normal" and terrifying "new normal." Peter summited the highest spiritual peaks then plunged into deep valleys of failure—sometimes on the same day. If you can relate to someone who does everything wrong before they finally get it right, you'll come to love him like I do. "He is just like you and me, only more so," wrote musician and author Michael Card.¹

Peter was also fully forgiven by Jesus and restored to the friends who'd been eyewitnesses to his downfall. He became a pillar of the early church and is revered as an apostle today. Once a denier of Christ, Peter never again stopped talking about his Savior! Peter lived for the glory of God, and that's also how he died. Peter's passing isn't included in Scripture, but we'll learn how historians say he and his wife raised a toast with their cups of hope as they faced death together.

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How It Works

Working sequentially through Peter's letter, we will find solid hope to sustain you through life's storms. The first-century advice Peter gave to the early church can be applied and be useful to your present-day relationships. Each chapter of this book will help you navigate the hurts and hardships that have detoured the plans you meticulously mapped out. You'll learn to react to chaos and confusion with calm, clear-headed, Christlike responses. You'll even learn five Peter-inspired coping strategies to use when your world is turned upside down in a chapter called "How to Survive the End of the World." That's where you'll discover a prayer that never fails and see how it helps us win the ultimate victory in every ordeal. You'll also be encouraged by five modern-day women who are facing great sorrow with incredible grace. Finally, using Peter as your role model, you'll shed the shame of past mistakes and see God's glory in your story.

You can read this book straight through without taking a breath if you'd like. I hope you'll mark it up and make notes in the margins. (I always read a book with a pencil in my hand.) There are questions at the end of each lesson for reflection, discussion, and further study called "A Second Cup," in case you want just a little bit more. I'd suggest purchasing a journal where you can record any insights and respond to that deeper section. By the time you reach the end, you will be able to understand unsettling current events through the lens of faith and apply practical biblical wisdom to your daily life.

You can also use this book as a Bible study to do on your own or with a group of friends. Each chapter is divided into five lessons; if you read one lesson every weekday, you'll complete one chapter a week for a six-week Bible study. Each member of the group will want a journal to keep track of their answers to "A Second Cup." The Second Cup questions for lesson 1 in each chapter start off light and conversational—there are no wrong answers!—to break the ice if you're reading this book with a

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group. Then the Second Cup delves deeper into Scripture and real-life application. While the lessons stick to the book of 1 Peter and Peter's life recorded in the Gospels and Acts, the Second Cup will cover Scripture from all over the Bible. Since a small group won't usually have time to talk about every Second Cup question, look for the questions with a black cup to guide rich conversation in a gathering of friends.

I want to make it as easy as possible for you to get into God's Word, so all the Scripture references in this book are available at www.amylively.com/cup-of-hope (along with lots of online bonus content!). At the beginning of each of the six chapters, you'll find scannable codes that will quickly take you to the Bible reading. Simply open the camera app on your smartphone and point it at the code, then tap the banner that appears on the screen (or if you're reading an ebook, just tap the code to open the link). Give it a try right now:



You can also use *Can I Borrow a Cup of Hope?* as a devotional. A short prayer, intended to ease your sorrow as you lean into the suffering of Christ, concludes each lesson. Together we're going to discover how to transform uncertain seasons of fear and confusion into a new normal full of hope and purpose!

I've been studying 1 Peter for over a decade (I'm a slow learner!). Each verse has spoken to me in different ways at various times, sometimes waking me in the middle of the night with a fresh application for a new problem. Most of the time, Peter tells me exactly what I *don't* want to hear. I don't want to be silent when I'm offended; I want to give a snarky reply. I don't want to bless people who hurt me; I want to hurt them right back. And I definitely don't want to endure suffering; I want it to end, right now.

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I sense it's the same for you.

Here's hope, friend.

The end of the world as you know it is only the beginning of Jesus.

A SECOND CUP



Can you find your way without GPS, or are you directionally challenged like me? Share about a time when you were lost in a strange place or when your travel arrangements didn't go as planned.



Read Jeremiah 29:11, Psalm 139:7–12, and Matthew 6:25–34.

If Jeremiah 29:11 is true, your future is _____.

If Psalm 139:10 is correct, God is _____.

If Matthew 6:32 is right, God knows _____.



Can you think of a time when your faith had a head-on collision with a real-life crisis and these verses felt insufficient—or even untrue?



Read the book of 1 Peter. It's only five chapters, 105 verses, just a few pages in your Bible.



Dear heavenly Father, please reveal your Son to me during my suffering and open your Word to me in new ways. I need your grace more than ever, and I am desperate for your hope. In Jesus's name, amen.

CHAPTER I



HEAVEN AND THE HERE AND NOW

1 Peter 1

“WHAT TIME IS IT, MAMA?” Emma asked from the back seat. I told her it was five o’clock. “No, it’s not,” she scolded me. “It’s 4:59. Why do you lie to me? It makes me feel like I can’t trust you.”

This saying has remained a family joke since our then-kindergartner learned how to tell time, but it took me a while to realize how often I ask God the same question. “What time is this problem going to end, Lord? Were you lying when you said you had plans for a good future filled with hope? When you don’t give me the exact answer I’m expecting, it makes me feel like I can’t trust you!”

When unwelcome trials and troubles destroy our carefully constructed timelines, our hope floats right out the window. Happiness, peace, and security pack their bags and take the next bus out of town. In uncertain seasons of personal crisis, national chaos, or global catastrophe, we distrust God’s timing and doubt his good intentions.

Peter got what that is like. He had left everything to follow a new rabbi—his home with his wife, his career as a commercial fisherman, his community in Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—and

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his work with Jesus was drawing attention. Jesus liked Peter so much that he gave him a special nickname and even hinted at a future promotion, something about being the foundation of a new organization (Matthew 16:18). Then Peter went from a hopeful future to a hopeless failure overnight. His hope didn't just fade away: it was arrested, crucified, and buried. To make matters worse, Peter publicly failed every test of his faith—and each mistake was witnessed by his entire community and written down, ensuring no one would ever forget his failure.

One day you're living your best life and the next you're facing your worst fears. But do you know one thing I love about Jesus? He allows us—encourages us even—to ask hard questions when we're hurting. "Are you really who you say you are? Can you be trusted? Are you still here? When are you going to make things right?"

His answer is always, "Yes! I'm still watching over you, and I'm here in the waiting with you. I'm by your side and on your side for all time, forevermore." God takes a longer view of time than a kindergartener's view of an hour when she is first learning how to read the clock. The minute between 4:59 and 5:00 is no different to God than the millennium between 459 BC and AD 500.

God's never-changing character and never-ending calendar are the theme we're going to uncover in the first chapter of 1 Peter. Whenever we read a verse or phrase about God's eternal timeline, draw a simple illustration of a clock beside it, like this:



Come with me to meet Simon Peter and the recipients of his letter and to understand why they were just as shocked as we are by his advice to rejoice in suffering. Together we'll unpack the living hope Peter wants us to have and see what a difference it makes when we insert just

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enough space between *hopefully* and *hope fully* to allow God's power to enter in. Then Peter's mysterious wife will make her first appearance! Finally, you'll be inspired and encouraged when you meet my good, godly girlfriend Michelle, as you read the story of how she has kept her eyes on Jesus during suffering and loss.



Scan this code or visit www.amylively.com/cup-of-hope/#chapter1 to access online resources and read the Scripture passages online.

Lesson 1



Say Hello to Simon Peter

Read 1 Peter 1:1–5

I HAD WALKED AWAY FROM God for twenty years (more on that later). But now I was back, fully in love with Jesus and eagerly walking in his ways. A friend invited me to a Wednesday night Bible study at her church where she introduced me to her pastor and his wife (more on them later, too). We didn't get far that evening; in fact, the pastor only covered the first three words of the book they were starting:

Peter, an apostle . . . (1 Peter 1:1)

So that's how I met Peter, and as the weeks of the Bible study continued, I realized more and more how his story sounded a lot like mine—a follower of Jesus who had a major fall from grace. I was curious to see how that turned out for him (and maybe for me).

Peter answered to several names. His given name was Simon, which means “hearing with acceptance, or to hear and understand.”¹ Simon was a common Hebrew name, and there are at least nine different men named Simon in the New Testament. Jesus, speaking a language called

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Aramaic, gave our Simon the title of Cephas (*kay-fas*), which means rock.² The New Testament was written in the Greek language, which translates Cephas (“rock”) as *Petros* (“rock”). In English, we say Peter.

Whatever you call him, the meanings of Peter’s names are significant in his testimony. For example, Simon—“to hear and understand”—is similar to the definition of *disciple*, meaning a student who hears Jesus’s teaching, listens and understands, then follows and obeys. Peter was the first to proclaim that he understood that Jesus was the Christ, the son of the living God; he was also called the rock upon which Christ would build the church. Peter’s names tell a story about his character.

Before Peter became an apostle (“special messenger”) of Jesus Christ, he was a disciple—the first one Jesus called. Peter is always named first when Jesus’s twelve core disciples are listed. But Jesus also had many faithful female disciples who are named in the New Testament, and we still name our daughters after them today: Anna, Joanna, Lois, Lydia, Martha, Phoebe, Priscilla, Suzanna, Tabitha, and of course Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary, and Mary—there are a lot of Marys!

One woman who is not named in Scripture is Peter’s wife. We know Peter had a wife because he had a mother-in-law who was healed by Jesus. We also know from Paul’s writing that the apostles’ wives traveled with them, and he specifically referenced Peter’s wife (1 Corinthians 9:5). Although Peter’s wife’s name is never given, her marriage with Peter was likely the model for his writing about women, husbands, and wives, which we’ll study together. And if being married for over thirty years myself has taught me anything, I’ll bet she proofread this letter to the early church before Peter mailed it.

Peter’s wife would have wondered why he was late getting home from work the day he met Jesus, because she was probably waiting for his fresh catch from the sea to prepare their dinner. Jesus stayed at her home and knew her name, and she would have hugged him tight after he touched and healed her mother. It’s quite likely she was at the Last

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Supper with the other disciples' families. She would have held Peter as he wept after betraying Jesus, she was probably hiding with him in the upper room after the crucifixion, and she surely would have rejoiced with her husband when he was reaffirmed by Jesus after his resurrection. She would have been worried for Peter when he was in prison, and she traveled with him while he ministered to the church and wrote his letters. We'll read all these stories about Peter in upcoming lessons.

Elect Exiles

After identifying himself as “Peter, an apostle,” Peter addressed this letter:

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . . (1 Peter 1:1)

Located in modern-day Turkey, these regions are listed from east to west. While there aren't any references in the Bible to Peter having traveled to these regions, it's possible that he was writing to people he met as he passed through on his way from Jerusalem to Rome. The Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54) colonized all five of these regions to create routes for commerce, develop a strong military presence, and expand Roman culture (read: money, power, and control). It was common Roman practice to fill up new territories with merchants, military veterans, and slaves (along with a few troublemakers, foreigners, and others who were perceived as disruptive).³ This territory was full of Christians who had been forced to relocate their families across the Roman Empire and now found themselves far from home in hostile environments.

Archaeologists recently unearthed an entire city hidden beneath the earth in the modern-day Turkish city of Midyat, located near the region known as Cappadocia in Peter's time. This underground network of caves included interconnected chambers used as anything from homes to wells for water, to silos for storing grain. Although only

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partially excavated, archaeologists believe the colossal complex could have housed up to seventy thousand people! Known as *Matiate*, which means “City of Caves,” the excavated area was also found to contain “a Christian church and a large hall with a Star of David symbol on the wall.”⁴ Archaeologists believe *Matiate* may have been used by Christians seeking refuge from the persecution of Rome in the second or third century. Can you imagine if committing your life to Christ meant moving your family to an underground cave city just to survive persecution?

Yet Peter calls them *elect*. They were carefully chosen and specially selected to be cast out of their comfort zone, evicted from their spiritual homeland in Jerusalem, and scattered into strange, dark places. “Elect exiles” is an oxymoron, two contradictory terms that don’t go together—like giant shrimp, deafening silence, civil war, or social distancing. “Elect exiles” is a paradox that only makes sense in Christ’s upside-down kingdom where the first are last, we die to live, and we’re carefully chosen and specially selected for suffering. (If that’s confusing or hurtful, please hang on until we get to 1 Peter 2.)

We’re not just talking about first-century Christians anymore, are we? We are all exiles, tired travelers who are watching the clock and wondering, “Are we there yet? How much longer?” With a longing for heaven imprinted in our DNA (Ecclesiastes 3:11), our hearts can never be fully satisfied with the here and now. God uses earthly scenes of beauty and every second of suffering to turn our hearts toward our one true home. Until then, he gives us grace and peace as the minutes slowly tick by.

Grace and Peace

Both Peter’s contemporaries and scholars today don’t quite understand how a fisherman from a poor Jewish village became such a sharp theologian, but this short letter has been called “one of the noblest books in the New Testament”⁵ and is one of the most often preached books

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in the Bible.⁶ In fact, by the second verse, Peter has packed in so much important doctrine that you could spend a lifetime studying it. Our fisherman's pen captures the entire Trinity in a single Scripture:

According to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*,
in the sanctification of the *Spirit*,
for obedience to *Jesus Christ*
and for sprinkling with his blood:
May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:2)

Before he invented time by separating the day from the night, your Father knew you. He planned this day for you—right here, right now—before the first sunrise in Eden. He knew you, and he saw you, and oh sweet friend, how he loved you—even then. And especially now.

The Holy Spirit is the whisper of Jesus to your soul, reminding you of everything Christ said and did and taught by his example. When you are a believer in Jesus, the Spirit lives within you, giving you strength and energy, counsel and encouragement and helping you to grow in your faith, understand your purpose, and carry out God's will for your life.

When you're a believer, you're free and fully able to obey all Jesus Christ's commands . . . and there must be a lot of them, right, if your obedience came at such a high price? Nope: just two—love God and love your neighbor. And you're not even expected to muster up this affection on your own! The love of the Father flows through Christ's outstretched arms on the cross, where he shed his blood for you. Through the chalice of his Spirit, Christ's love is poured into your heart so it can flow back to him and to others.

As God's children, we can experience what Peter wishes for us to have overflowing abundantly in every part of our lives—grace, the good things we don't deserve, and peace, that inexplicable feeling of confidence and calm even when everything is falling apart around us.

Wow, that's a lot! Did you get all that? Do you understand how the

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whole Holy Trinity operates? Don't worry. You don't need a seminary degree to experience God working in your ordinary life. The Father, Spirit, and Son delight to help you love God with all your heart, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Born Again to a Living Hope

This sweet knowledge of the Trinity makes Peter (and us) burst into spontaneous praise!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

If you've ever wondered where that churchy phrase "born again" comes from, here it is. The Amplified translation of this verse nicely defines what it means to be born again:

[To be reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] to an ever-living hope and confident assurance. (1 Peter 1:3 AMP)

God's mercy gives us a second chance at life, made possible by the death and resurrection of his Son. When we're born again, we receive a hope-filled infusion of Christ's blood that he shed on the cross. If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was crucified for the forgiveness of your sins, then rose from the dead so you could have a living hope, then you, friend, are born again. Mark it down in your planner, repeat it out loud, and never forget it: "I am at peace with God. I am born again."

To be a born-again believer in Christ comes with all kinds of perks. Peter describes it so:

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To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:4–5)

Heaven is for real, Peter writes, and that future day and place is when God will finally and fully reveal the joy of our salvation and our inheritance as his children. Later, much later than now, we'll have it all—Jesus, face-to-face. Our Father, wiping away our tears. His church, without the brokenness. Today we just get a little sneak peek. Remember that clock we drew at the beginning of this chapter? Draw a clock beside this verse in your Bible to remember that God's power protects us until the coming day when his strong arms embrace us.



A SECOND CUP



What is the meaning of your name? What is your nickname, or what is your name in another language? How has the meaning of your name proven significant in your life?



Have you ever moved to a new community? How did you make friends? What did you do if you felt alone, isolated, or even exiled?



Think of a time when you experienced grace and peace—*grace*, something good you don't deserve; and *peace*, confidence and calmness even when everything is falling

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apart. How does this help you trust God's hand in your present circumstances?



If you're watching the clock and wondering when God is going to show up, you are not alone. Many times in the book of Psalms the writer cries out, "How long, O Lord?" before remembering God's faithfulness. For each of these psalms, record in your journal how the psalmist feels about their situation and the fact about God that gives them comfort.

Psalm	Feeling	Fact
13	Verses 1-2	Verses 5-6
35	Verse 17	Verse 27
74	Verses 9-11	Verses 12-17
94	Verses 3-7	Verses 9-11
119	Verses 82-84	Verses 86-88



How do you feel as you wait for God to come through for you? What facts about God's unchanging character bring comfort to you?



Dear heavenly Father, thank you for grace and peace as I wait for you. Even when I feel all alone, I know you are near. Help me to stay strong until I receive all you have promised me. In Jesus's name, amen.